

# *Social Media Marketing: An Approach To Brand Recall and Reinforcement*

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## **INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING**

Social media, a short while ago, was utilized more for personal pleasure and interaction with likeminded groups. These groups could be amongst the school mates, communities, professionals, friends and families. It means that the social media seeks to influence the social behavior of individuals, decision making process, perception about tangible or intangible objects, to benefit the society or the target audiences. In the year 1971, Kotler and Zaltman recognized the importance of this media and developed 'social marketing' concept. They defined it as: "the design, implementation and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communication, distribution and marketing research". As the e-commerce is maturing, companies have realized the importance of social media sites and the potential they offer for enhancing market reach, brand awareness, transaction management and customer retention.

Unlike commercial marketing in Brick and Mortar world, the social marketing leverages networking strength for increasing the brand value by recall and reinforcement. Every organization faces a major task particularly when the customers have a wider choice of product and services from global sources as we open up the economy for completion. Every product has a substitute. So, the major issue is to adopt strategies which are effective in a way to retain the customer and to get their loyalty, as retaining a customer is more economical than acquiring a new one.

The value propositions of products and services offered in the physical world are essentially limited "point solutions" that meet only part of a consumer's need or want. In the online world, even a simple banner advertisement can be both an advertisement and a direct marketing service. The banner raises the passive consumer's awareness of a product. Yet it also encourages the consumer to pursue action by clicking on it. Consumer's online experience of the product, from first encounter through purchase to delivery and beyond is the best performance criteria for retention. Attention is to be given consumer's online experiences for the simple reason that all of them -- good, bad, or indifferent -- influence consumer perceptions of a product or a brand. The web offers companies' ownership and control of all interactions with customers and thus creates both the ability and the need to improve their overall experience. Consumer experience and delight is what need to nurture by giving attention to all

aspects of their digital brand's interactions with the consumer, from the design of the product or service to the marketing message, the sales and fulfillment processes, and the after-sales customer service effort.

## **PURPOSE AND THE OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

This article explores as how companies presence on social media sites influences the consumer's experience by shaping the dialogue for increasing the value of its brand by continuous recall. It provides an insight as how companies could leverage the speed, access, connectivity and economy created by Web technologies to extend their business vision and organize social media based business strategies for brand recall and reinforcement. Research paper establishes that more and more companies are diverting their resources to social media sites for creating awareness, brand creation, recall and reinforcement.

## **HYPOTHESES**

Established business organizations are setting out to take advantage of social media sites, tools and techniques because, it is much cheaper to create brand awareness, brand creation, brand recall and reinforcement particularly amongst internet savvy customers as compared to conventional media mix.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

To draw conclusions, the study covers desk research of the literature available on social media, published sources, reports and the internet.

For the field research, a sample size of 10 organizations was identified consisting of MNCs, large Indian corporations, SMEs and e-companies. These companies included – Dell, Asian Paints, KFC, Pizza Hut, Maruti Suzuki RITZ, Starbucks Coffee, Hindustan Unilever, ITC- Welcome Group. Sample framing was based on web presence of the companies, google search of social media sites and online marketing product and tools. The study was carried out those companies who have their business in India.

Analysis of their websites, statements made by their CEOs and other dignitaries, utilization of different social media sites, market share and customers' testimonials was undertaken. Personal interviews were also conducted to ascertain as how social media has been useful to the companies for brand recall and reinforcement.

During in-depth interviews, the focus was to ascertain whether the companies were using social media as one of the marketing mix, strategies pursued for e-marketing (B2C),

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percentage of budget allocated for social media sites, customer delight based on product/services experience, customer retention and market position, testimonials, market growth using networking sites.

## **BRAND EQUITY**

Brand equity means the brand value. Those products which have brand value are able to generate more revenue from products with that brand name than from products with a less well known name. Effective brand management requires taking a long-term view of marketing decisions. A long-term perspective of brand management recognizes that any changes in the supporting marketing program for a brand, by changing consumer knowledge, affect the success of future marketing programs. Generally companies pursue brand awareness, brand creation, brand recall and reinforcement strategies for brand equity. The study focused on brand recall and reinforcement and utilized Keller's model for brand reinforcement strategies.

## **BRAND RECALL AND REINFORCEMENT**

Market environment for the industry and the company evolves and changes often in a various significant ways as contemplated by Michael Porter in his 'Five Forces Model' for examining competition that transcends industries, particular technologies, or management approaches. Shift in consumer behavior, competitive strategies, government regulations and other marketing environment profoundly affect the brand acceptance. Firms engage themselves in many activities and continuously change their strategic focus to acquire and retain customer.

Brand recall happens when consumers are well aware of the brand and hold positive and strong image of it. Managing brands for the long run involves reinforcing brands or, if necessary, revitalizing brands. Reinforcing brands involves ensuring innovation on product design, manufacturing, and merchandising and ensuring relevance in user and usage imagery. Another critical consideration in reinforcing brands is the consistency of the marketing support that the brand receives, both in terms of the amount and nature of that support. Social media is a boon in today's era for brand recall and reinforcement.. In terms of brand awareness, social media having its very wide reach, just by a click, customer gets full knowledge of what product does the brand represents, what benefit does it supply and what needs it satisfy. These tools and sites help to convey brand meaning. For example, if a customer is happy, satisfied and the fan follower of say 'X' brand on a social sites, he gets a quick recall of that 'X' brand whenever looking for a similar kind of product. A brand (Bisleri) is said to have recall if it comes to consumers' minds when its product class (mineral water) is mentioned.

## **BRAND RECALL**

It indicates stronger brand position in the mind. Still at a higher level is the top of the mind recall; it is the brand, which comes first to the mind. The top of mind awareness indicates a relative superiority a brand enjoys above others. Sometimes a brand becomes so dominant that it becomes the only recalled brand in the product category. Very few brands are able to

achieve dominance. The cases may include Johnson & Johnson baby powder, Dettol antiseptic, Colgate and Cadbury.

Effective brand management can only be done when marketing decisions are taken keeping in view the long run, which requires reinforcing brands. Reinforcing brands involves ensuring innovation in product design, manufacturing, and merchandising and ensuring relevance in user and usage imagery. There are two approaches which can be used to solve the purpose: either to expand the depth and/or breadth of brand awareness by improving brand recall and recognition of consumers during purchase or consumption settings; and improving the strength, favorability, and uniqueness of brand associations making up the brand image (either in terms of existing or new brand associations). (Keller, 1999).

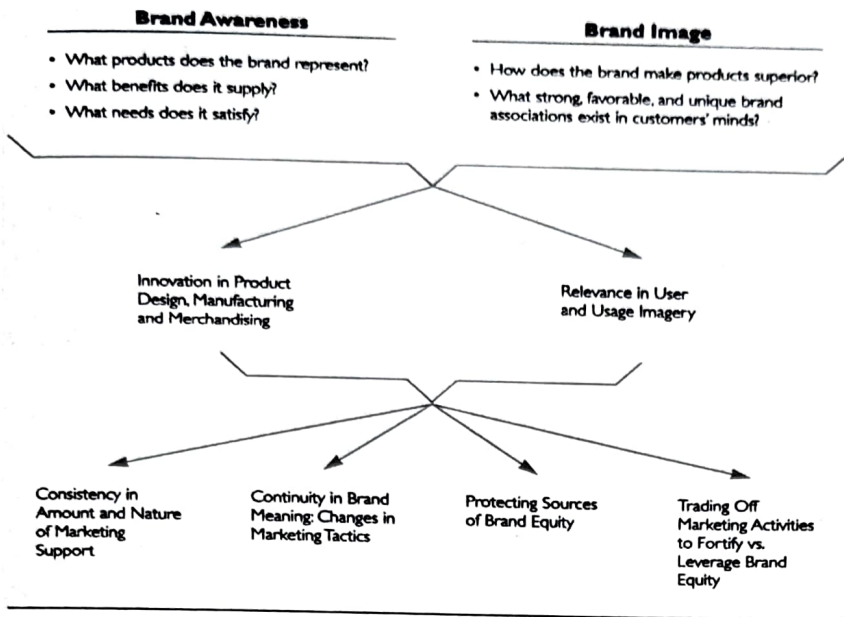
## **BRAND REINFORCEMENT**

Effective brand management requires proactive strategies designed to at least maintain and enhance brand equity in the face of these different forces. For such activities variety of activities and strategies are to be adopted. Social media is one of the effective tools for doing so. Customer knowledge of the brand can be characterized in terms of brand awareness and brand image. For the reinforcement of brand, marketing actions should constantly and consistently convey the meaning of brand to consumers- in terms of brand awareness and brand image (Kevin K. Keller, 1999). There are number of ways to create those knowledge structures in the minds of consumers. Talking broadly, they involve choosing brand elements, developing supporting marketing programs, and creating secondary associations.

A long-term perspective of brand management recognizes that any changes in the supporting marketing program for a brand may, by changing consumer knowledge, affect the success of future marketing programs. Additionally, a long-term view necessitates proactive strategies designed to maintain and enhance customer based brand equity over time in the face of external changes in the marketing environment and internal changes in a firm's marketing goals and programs. The goal should be creating strong, favorable, and unique brand associations in the minds of consumers. The most important consideration in reinforcing brands is the consistency of the marketing support that the brand receives, both in terms of the amount and the nature of that support.

Brand equity is reinforced by marketing actions that consistently convey the meaning of the brand to consumers in terms of: what products the brand represents, what core benefits it supplies, what needs it satisfies, and how the brand makes those products superior. Consistency does not mean that marketers should avoid making any changes in the marketing program and, in fact, many tactical changes may be necessary to maintain the strategic thrust and direction of the brand. Unless there is some change in the marketing environment, however, there is little need to deviate from a successful positioning. In such cases, the critical points-of-parity and points-of-difference that represent sources of brand equity should be vigorously preserved and defended.

## Brand Reinforcement Strategies



(Adapted: Keller, 1999)

Reinforcing brand meaning depends on the nature of the brand association involved. For brands whose core associations are primarily product-related attributes and/or functional benefits, innovation in product design, manufacturing, and merchandising is critical to maintaining or enhancing brand equity. For brands whose core associations are primarily non-product-related attributes and symbolic or experiential benefits, relevance in user and usage imagery is critical to maintaining or enhancing brand equity. In managing brand equity, it is important to recognize the trade-offs that exist between those marketing activities that fortify the brand and reinforce its meaning and those that attempt to leverage or borrow from its existing brand equity to reap some financial benefit. At some point, failure to fortify the brand will diminish brand awareness and weaken brand image. Without these sources of brand equity, the brand itself may not continue to yield as valuable benefits.

### GROWTH OF SOCIAL MEDIA SITES, TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

The rapid advent of social media and social networking is disrupting the way marketing professionals communicate with clients and prospects. While blogs are influential in forming consumer opinion about a brand, Wikipedia entries not only help to add value but also lead to hire search engine, YouTube and Flickr build customer identification with the brand, while Tumblr allows customer to provide information on the variety of documents formats. Help for users can be offered through Knowledge Portals such as Answer.Com or Yahoo! Answers, thus increasing customer loyalty.

Popular Web sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter provide compelling and previously unimaginable ways to communicate with family, friends, allied professionals, clients,

and prospects. But with this rapidly growing medium comes significant uncertainty about how planners can leverage social media to meet business objectives and do so without violating regulatory or compliance requirements. According to The Nielsen Company, global time spent on such sites increased 82 percent from December 2008 to December 2009. There are hundreds of social media web sites competing for the attention of billions of users, but according to DiscoveryNews following are the sites of interest for implementing brand recall and reinforcement strategies:

1. Facebook
2. Twitter
3. LinkedIn
4. Youtube
5. Hi5
6. Skyrock
7. Friendster
8. 51.com
9. Orkut
10. MySpace

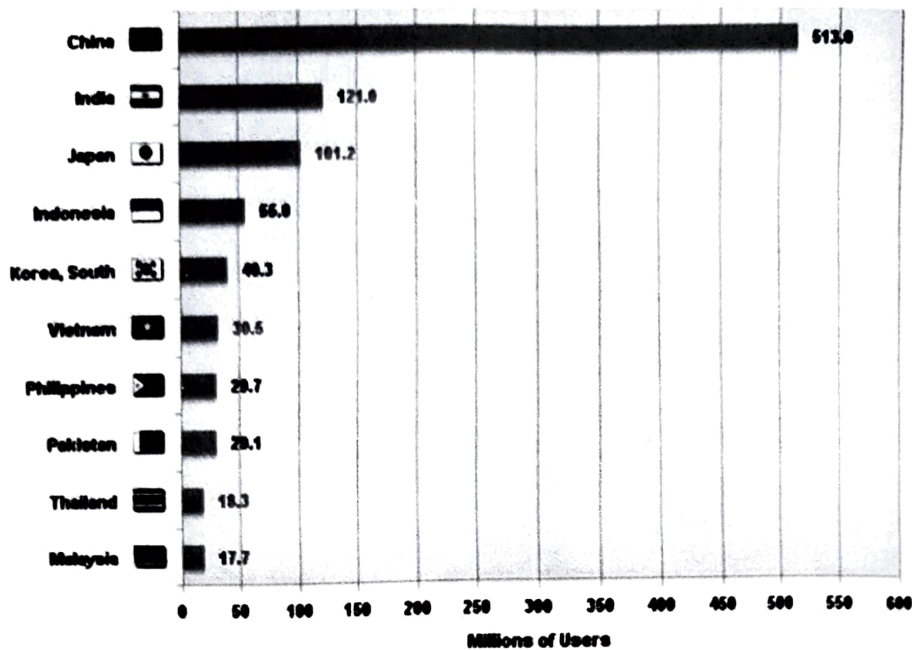
(Source: <http://news.discovery.com/tech/top-ten-social-networking-sites.html>)

### INTERNET USAGE GROWTH IN INDIA, E-COMMERCE AND USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

According to IMRB survey on 'Internet in India 2011' there were 112 Million Internet users in India out of which 88 Million users are from urban cities and 18 Million are from rural villages. Internet population has grown by about 13% in 2011 over the previous year and it is estimated to reach to 121 Million internet users by 2012. Table below shows that India is emerging to be a top internet user country in Asia.



## Asia Top Internet Countries December 31, 2011



Source: Internet World Stats - [www.internetworldstats.com/stats3.htm](http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats3.htm)

The internet growth in India is fueled by low-cost smart phone devices, high-speed 3G services and the planned advanced 4G mobile services rolled out by 2012. Youngsters in India are driving the internet usage. Emails, Education, Social Networking, Music and Text chatting are the most popular activities amongst these users. Amongst the most popular social sites, Facebook users are about 45 million, Twitter 23 million, YouTube 30 million etc. This population is growing at a rapid pace and the commercial companies are focusing their media mix strategies to address the growing market of internet users.

### ANALYSIS OF WEBSITES, SOCIAL MEDIA AND IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

In order to ascertain these trends in India, as mentioned above, a few organizations were investigated namely – Dell, KFC, Pizza Hut, Maruti Suzuki, RITZ, ITC Welcome Group, Unilever, Asian Paints, Starbucks Coffee, and IndiaMart for drawing conclusions for brand recall

#### • Dell.Com

Dell in 2009 revitalized the brand and increase awareness of Dell's solutions capabilities using the social media sites. According to Rishi Dave, Executive Director, Online Marketing, Dell, the social media as a platform is used to support the campaigns. It has been integrated in their communication and planning road map as one of the media mix. Today Dell's Social Media Ground Control Centre monitors 22,000 online mentors both posts and tweets. Twitter, YouTube, Flickr etc. are also being used to provide additional information. It was also found out that most active user in the Dell community has already posted over 20,000 replies. This led to additional sales and

huge savings in tech support.

#### • Asian Paints

Asian Paints created an online Tag-A-Friend-Holi application campaign to target everybody who is present on Facebook. The campaign created a lot of curiosity by engaging users in social interaction. They were able to maintain an active buzz during the festive period of Holi. In a period of 8 days, 16,755 monthly active Face book users with 924 face book fans were developed.

#### • KFC

KFC has done a very interesting campaign. It has a tv commercial for one of its drink, Krushers Kafecchino, where a group of youngsters click the expression their friends immediately after they taste it for the first time. The application allowed youngsters to upload similar kind of pictures and earn points for this. Thus, with the similarity of advertisement on social media and other web applications, the recall and attention of customer increases. Its presence over facebook was fruitful with this case.

#### • Maruti Suzuki

The 'Live the Moment' social media campaign was launched by Maruti Suzuki during January 2011 - March 2011 in which a car was actually given away as a prize through a social contest. The objective of the program was to use social media to let people share the moments of their lives. It was intended to get 'Ritz' car owners together on a social platform and build pride and excitement among the 'Ritz' owners and their friends and family. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, auto blogs and forums and culminated in a microsite which helped collate all the moments from participants and viral them out to

their friends and family. Close to 50,000 unique entries submitted by users. More than 2 lakh votes received by entrants and more than 2.2 million users visited the microsite. Moreover, more than 1 lakh fans added on the Maruti Suzuki Ritz Facebook page.

#### • Pizza Hut

Pizza hut launched an online campaign "ICC Cricket World Cup Fever" during February 2011. The application was ported on Facebook as the objective was to focus on Pizza Hut Facebook fans and drive them to the retail outlets. An application in the form of Game was created which incorporates the core idea of celebrating World Cup centuries with friends and family. After registration on the site, during match days, users were to click 'Play The Game' button before a batsman crosses 99 runs. If the batsman crosses 99 runs, users who played the game got a voucher which they could then redeem at any of the Pizza hut dine-in outlets. Total registrations happened during that period were 42,328 and fan base increased during that period was 1,18,398. Over 21,000 walk-ins happened to retail outlets with a redemption rate of over 15%.

#### • Starbucks Coffee

Starbucks used <http://mystarbucksidea.force.com> to improve its image and to bring its customers closer to the brand. Everyone can post suggestions on what could be improved or done differently at Starbucks. Consumers can also submit wish lists for new products. The site users get to vote on what will eventually be turned into reality. Starbucks increased its online presence with Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. 70,000 suggestions from Starbucks clients were received. The top idea received 95,000 votes and over 1,000 comments. Starbucks has over 1.7 million fans on Facebook engaging themselves in applications such as the event calendar, discussions and notes.

#### • ITC-Welcome Group

ITC is using social media to revive their presence, engage with influencers to create buzz, build engagement and excitement online. Customers are invited to participate in online discussions and forums. Platforms like facebook and twitter are used to tap the guest and address them quickly, at the same time discussion forums like Trip Advisor and Flyer Talk were initiated to participate in conversations occurring around the brand. ITC shared a social media releases on unique offers to spread awareness during April 2010, wherein if any room is reserved in advance, a complimentary room upgrading is done. This was a big buzz and it received over 1500 views in a month.

#### • Hindustan Unilever

Surf Excel, a leading detergent brand of Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) celebrated Joy of Giving week (October 2 to October 8, 2011) through a unique social media initiative contributing products to NGOs. HUL created a Facebook page

wherein for every like (contributions) on the Surf Excel page, HUL would be donating Rs 11 worth of goods requirements to charity organizations around Mumbai. The objective was to bring together Indians from all walks of life, to celebrate "giving". This campaign got huge support on Facebook.

#### FINDINGS

1. The study revealed that social media sites have an ability to reach a large audience and get participation from a larger section of society with a very small media budget. Also the Regus Business' global surveys for business use of social networks in June 2011, as many as 47% of firms globally are successfully using social networking to find new business, as compared to 40% a year ago. China and India are leaders in this activity with fully 65% of Chinese firms and 61% of Indian firms declaring that they successfully use social media to acquire new customers.
2. The study in India also revealed that more and more youngsters are approaching companies through these sites for inquiring, online purchasing, interaction, sharing experiences and product feedback. It was also observed by Regus Business' global surveys that 44% of businesses globally also believe that more new customers are reaching out to them through social networks. China (65%) and India (58%) are yet again at the fore front of this trend.
3. In India, a positive correlation between social media pro-activity in prospecting and improved business performance is reflected, as found out during the interview with companies, who are using social media effectively. Development of consistent corporate image and customer delight was acclaimed by companies using social media.
4. It was also noted that given the personal use of social networking and the applications available to the business, the natural use of social networks is to keep in contact with customers and clients. The most common use of social media is to keep customers updated about products, brands, feature, services, etc. It facilitates companies to remain in contact with their customers and prospective buyers, with a central point of contract.
5. The study revealed that globally companies are allocating higher budget (up to 10% of their advertising budget) in order to keep customers up-to-date. This trend was revealed by the companies interviewed by the researcher.
6. The survey reported that 74% of the businesses mentioned that the social networking was an essential activity for success of their business and acquiring customers. With growing populations of users of India, this trend is gaining momentum.



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