

Social Media Marketing in creating Brand Awareness and Brand Trust

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ABSTRACT

Small as well as big businesses these days are largely making use of social media platforms to enhance their visibility and to promote their brands/products/services. By interacting more with people, the marketers can easily create brand awareness and establish brand identity, which gradually can help gain trust in the brand. Two hypotheses were formulated to examine the impact of social media marketing on brand awareness and brand trust. One of the most popular social networking sites, Facebook, and two most popular e-commerce brands Amazon and Flipkart were considered to study the effect. Data was gathered from 394 students/research scholars from the University of Jammu, using a well-structured questionnaire, employing convenience sampling. Data analysis was done using statistical tools like percentages, correlation, regression etc. Results signify that though social media platforms serve as a major tool in creating awareness and building trust, these cannot solitarily help develop and grow a business.

Keywords: *Social media; Facebook; Social media marketing; Firm-created content; Brand awareness; Brand trust.*

1.0 Introduction

Social media, in recent times, has evolved as a global phenomenon where people of all ages, professions, from different locations all over the world can be seen trying to connect with each other. Once registered on some social media platform, a person can start socialising and building his/her own network of friends or people sharing common interests. Various social media platforms like social networking sites (Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+), Micro-blogging sites (Twitter, Tumblr), photo sharing sites

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(Instagram, Snapchat) etc. are influencing the way users begin, cultivate and sustain their social relations starting from casual connections to close friendships. These platforms facilitate networking, sharing experiences, posting pictures and videos, and even shopping recently. Such transformations in the ways of human interactions from physical world to the virtual one have forced the large and even small businesses to establish and maintain their presence and visibility in the virtual spaces. Since, the similar and rapid advancements in mobile-based technologies have further enhanced the social media accessibility (Bond, 2010), people can be seen surfing the Internet more than a radio or TV. This indicates that businesses can attract the attention of the customers more from their presence on more recent social media platforms than from the traditional ones. Social media, in actuality has become a very important component of marketing mix and is reforming the way companies interact with their customers. Businesses these days are extensively using social media in their marketing activities as a means, to communicate, engage and build relationship with their customers. The use of social media in influencing consumer behaviour comprises of a number of activities like informing (to create awareness), gaining attention of the people through attractive posts, engaging them by triggering conversations, envisaging their purchase intentions and post-purchase behaviour even without an actual purchase (Tatar & Erdogmus, 2016). Such social media practices help the companies to be more interactive and hence, discover better and novel ways to make their offerings more affordable and easily accessible through social media channels.

Also, by interacting with and engaging more and more people, the marketers can easily create brand awareness and establish brand identity (Sri Jothi, Neelamalar, & Prasad, 2011), which gradually can help gain trust in the brand. One important aspect to be noticed here is that the businesses don't rely on just one social media channel. In fact, their social media marketing strategy includes a mix of these channels. So many companies, small as well as big, have resorted to these newer platforms to establish their brands through marketing campaigns. In an article, Jackson (2018) has presented a list of eight brands that have managed to increase their revenue and grow their brand by using social media. For example, a cell phone case company, Peel, uses Facebook video ads to inform people how their products are different from other players. The company also has a very cohesive and visually appealing Instagram feed. These campaigns have helped the business with around 16 times increase in revenue and 3 times return on investment. Similarly, Casper (a mattress company) has been able to lead among others with their active presence and involvement on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Even being a newer research area, the power of social media has attracted the attention of a number of researchers from varied fields in the recent years. Still there are

so many aspects yet to be explored. The present study, however, aims at investigating the marketing and branding power of these channels from a business point of view. Bearing this in mind, the present study was undertaken to examine the impact of social media marketing activities in creating brand awareness and trust, which traditionally used to be done utilising the services of radios, televisions, newspapers, magazines, etc. The purpose of this study is to examine how successful the brands (e-commerce brands to be specific) have been in creating brand/product awareness and trust among the masses, utilising the services of social media platforms. Out of several social media channel options available, one of the most successful social networking site Facebook, has been considered for the study and among various e-commerce brands, the most popular ones in India, Amazon and Flipkart have been chosen.

2.0 Literature Review and Hypotheses Building

2.1 Social media marketing

Social media can be referred to as one of the brand new, up-to-date and most preferred source of information for the customers (Hamid et al., 2016) because of its capability to make available the information almost instantly in real time. Contrary to the traditional communication channels that provided one-way communication from businesses to customers, social media offer two-way communication where businesses not just communicate but interact with their customers through content sharing (Wang, 2012). The way people react to this firm-created content helps the companies to understand the customer behaviour towards their offerings in terms of opinions, suggestions, or feedback they provide (Vukasovic, 2013). Social media marketing refers to the use of various social media channels to connect with current and potential customers. But before resorting to social media channels for marketing campaign, a business should clearly identify its goals that it intends to achieve.

The main objectives of opting social media for marketing purposes include enhanced brand awareness, increased traffic, better search engine rankings, and sales growth. Apart from these, one another main objective of social media is to keep people engaged for this engagement can lead to desirable outcomes (Safko & Brake, 2009, as cited in Eriksson, 2012). Through their work, Mangold & Faulds (2009) contend that freedom to give feedback is an aspect that can help engage people with the company and its products/services. Also, people are more likely to spread words regarding something they feel they know well about. The option of feedback encourages honest communications and conversations. Social media platforms also enable the customers to find other customers using the products and/or services, talking about their

benefits/flaws, thereby further facilitating the engagement process. Tsimonis & Dimitriadis (2014), in their work, have identified social media as becoming central part of current business strategies. Also, various benefits that these popular channels offer, like cost-effectiveness, mass targeting, customer interaction and engagement, and activities of competitors on social media, instigate and encourage the marketers to actively employ these platforms for their marketing and branding activities.

Various researchers have offered different classifications of social media marketing activities. Kim & Ko (2012) based their work on luxury brands for which they classified the marketing activities on social media into five components, namely, entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customisation, and word-of-mouth communication. Jo (2013), as cited in Bilgin (2018), categorised the marketing activities in terms of events, information and advertising on social media platforms. Considering insurance services, Sano (2014) presented the constituents of social media marketing as interaction, trendiness, customization, and perceived risk. Taking into account the airline industry, Seo & Park (2018) identified entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization and perceived risk as important aspects of social media marketing. Keeping in view all these parameters, the present study expresses the social media activities with the help of 10 items in general, based on entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customisation and perceived risk.

Brands from various sectors like insurance, food and beverages, FMCG, e-commerce etc. are capitalising on the power of internet marketing. They are extensively considering social media communication channels as a part of their marketing mix. In an article, Vinaya (2015) made a mention on 21 best social media marketing campaigns of the year 2015, in India. The list contains popular brands like Lenovo, Pepsi, Britannia, Mountain Dew, Amazon India, and MRF Tyres among others. Various e-commerce brands like Flipkart, Amazon, Jabong, Snapdeal, Myntra etc. actively post content on different social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, in order to keep their customers informed of latest ongoing and/or upcoming offers, sales events, contests etc. They also try to engage in conversations with the people commenting on their posts. They tend to respond as soon as possible to the queries and complaints people make on their respective social media pages. It is this two-way communication that helps them to create awareness and build trust among the masses.

According to the RedSeer E-tailing Leadership Index (ELI), compiled by a research and advisory firm RedSeer Management Consulting, the e-commerce brand Flipkart (with a score of 91) was found to be little ahead of Amazon (with a score of 87), while pushing Snapdeal to the third position (Dalal, 2016) Trust Research Advisory in its fourth report on “India’s Category-Wise Most Attractive Brands” in 2017, Amazon

ranked 2nd, with Flipkart at 4th position, followed by Snapdeal, Myntra and Jabong at 13th, 17th and 18th positions, respectively, falling in Internet category (M4G Bureau, 2017). Flipkart also secured 11th position in BrandZ's list of the 75 most valuable Indian brands in 2018 (ET Brand Equity, 2018). An article "The 10 Most Innovative Ecommerce Brands of 2018" mentions Amazon as one of the best and leading e-commerce brands among the other budding smaller companies providing innovative business solutions (Watts, 2018). Fifth in its series, the Trust Research Advisory (TRA), in its report on "India's Most Attractive Brands in 2018" indicates Amazon at 47th position in general and mentions it to be at the top among other online retail brands. The list in the report is based on the attractiveness of the brands and tendency of the people to purchase them (Mitter, 2018).

2.2 Impact of social media marketing on brand awareness and brand trust

Every business organisation works towards achieving its mission and vision. While there are so many milestones which a business wishes to attain during its lifetime, its primary objective is always to enhance its profitability. For an organisation to sustain itself in the market for a longer period, it has to maintain and keep increasing its customer base. The companies need to constantly work towards improving the stream of customer purchases over its lifetime. For this, the foremost thing to do is to make people aware of the company's offerings. Only when the people are aware of products and services, they can consider them for purchase (Baker, Hutchinson, Moore & Nedungadi, 1986). Brand awareness, as defined by Aaker (1991), is "the ability of a potential buyer to recognize or recall that a brand is a part of a particular product category". Brand awareness is thus, the possibility that the customers have the knowledge about the availability and accessibility of an organisation's offerings. It refers to making current as well as potential customers constantly aware of company's products and services (Gustafson & Chabot, 2007).

However, simply knowing about the brand or having just heard about it once or twice doesn't imply brand awareness in the true sense. Only when the brand has been able to occupy some space in the customer's mind and a strong association with his/her memory (Stokes, 1985, as cited in Malik 2013), can we say that the company has been successful to a great extent in creating brand awareness. The extent of brand awareness can be measured at different levels, with the help of the concepts like brand recognition, brand recall, top of the mind brand and brand dominance (Aaker D., 1996). Creating strong brand awareness may lead to good reputation in the market and is very essential for any business as it helps making its products/services more easily acceptable by the people (Gustafson & Chabot, 2007). Also, it is expected to reduce the time and risk

involved in purchase process (Verbeke, Vereir, Pieniak, & Brunso, 2005, as cited in Bilgin, 2018).

Traditionally, the channels used by the business organisations like newspapers, radio, magazines, TV ads, were mere broadcasters of information. There was no way to know or measure the extent of awareness about products/services among the receivers. Social media, on the other hand, serves the dual purpose of information dissemination as well as ascertaining that the people have actually received it by finding them talking about it. Social media today, among other channels, has become an essential tool for marketing and developing brand awareness (Odhiambo, 2012). Weber (2009), as cited in Johansson (2010), claims that social media channels are the best in building brand awareness. They provide a company with the capability of involving customers into conversations and stimulating word-of-mouth communication, where people in a way recommend the brands to others. The author also argues that instead of measuring brand awareness through brand recall, it should focus on how many people are talking about it.

Carlsson (2010), as cited in Johansson (2010), states that social media provides a great opportunity to a company or a brand to position itself within a particular category. Social media platforms, like Facebook or YouTube, may be used by the companies to communicate the company ideology while giving its fans a chance to further extend the corporate culture. Various activities like making use of company blog can help it in creating brand awareness and subsequently, build long-term relations with the customers. A study done by Zailskaite & Kuvykaite (2013) posited that constantly triggering the process of communication in social media while engaging the customers may help in brand building which can further reinforce the brand's likeability. They considered the Coffee Inn brand for their work and empirically demonstrated the capability of social media communications in creating brand awareness and building a positive brand image.

One another aspect of branding that is considered pivotal in many studies is the brand trust (Doney & Cannon, 1997; and Kabadayi & Alan, 2012). Brand trust refers to how readily a customer relies on a brand's functional ability (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001), that is, expected performance. Thus, it helps in reducing the feeling of uncertainty among the consumers (North & Fin, 2011). The three authors, Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman, & Yagiie-Guillent (2003), through their work, define brand trust as "the confident expectations of the brand's reliability and intentions in situations entailing risk to the consumer". Only after the brand awareness stage where a company tends to provide sense of safety, feeling of honesty and beliefs of reliability about its brands/products/services, brand trust can be expected to be generated eventually

(Kabadayi & Alan, 2012). Brand trust develops as a consequence of consumers' evaluation of the promises made by the companies about their offerings.

Studies indicate that brand trust acts as a mediator between customers' pre- and post-purchase behaviours while strengthening the bond between the parties involved (Liu et al., 2011; Geçti & Zengin, 2013). Studies in the past have discussed that social media activities smoothens the way for knowledge and experience sharing among different customers and also significantly affects the trust and purchase intentions (Lu and Hsiao, 2010; and Hajli, 2013).

A number of studies in the past have indicated that trust is developed when a customer interacts several times with the brand (Lassar et al., 1995; Kumar et al., 2011; and Sadek, Elwy, & Eldallal, 2017). And since, social networking channels enable frequent interactions between brands and customers; they can help the brands to develop trust among the customers gradually. In their research article, Tatar & Erdogmus (2016) have asserted that the use of social media for marketing activities has a positive effect on customers' brand trust and hence the brand loyalty. Khalid (2016) proposed that firm-created social media brand communication has a positive impact on brand trust. He based this finding of his study on the source of reliability. He pointed out that customers can easily rely on the feedback shared by their friends, relatives or other customers relating to the brand content posted by the businesses on social media. This reliance further propagates the feeling of trust in the brand. Thus, the brand related content shared by the firms on social media in a way significantly affects brand trust.

Taking into account the great significance that brand awareness and trust have in creating and enhancing brand equity, and how the recent studies emphasise upon the indispensable use of latest technologies (Internet and social media) by the businesses, in addition to traditional ways of working towards creating brand awareness and developing trust, the present study focuses on these aspects of branding.

Based on the above review, following hypotheses are proposed:

H1. Social media marketing has a significant impact on 'brand awareness'.

H2. Social media marketing has a significant impact on 'brand trust'.

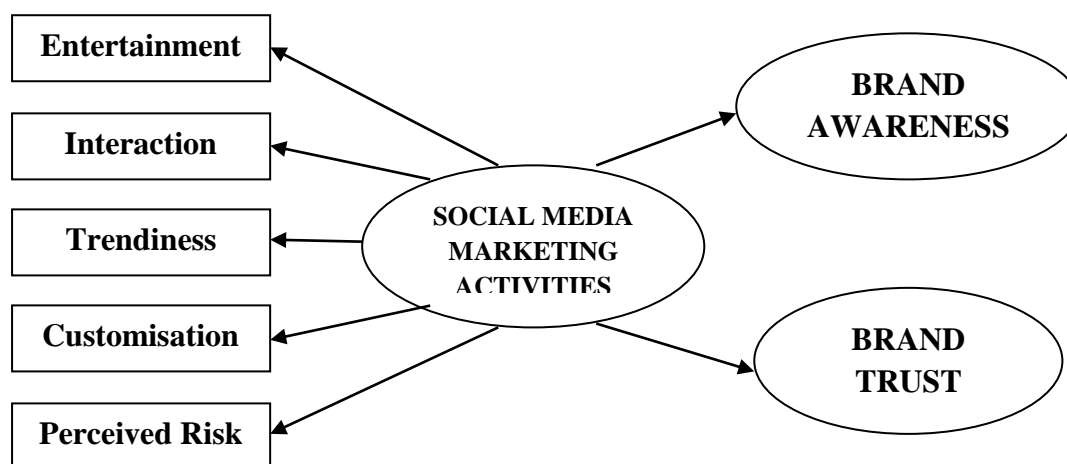
3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Conceptual framework

The present study aims at achieving two objectives. One of the objectives is to examine the influence of social media marketing activities on brand awareness, and secondly on brand trust. Figure 1 below shows the research variables, relationship

between the variables, and the conceptual framework proposed for testing the hypotheses. Correlation and liner regression analysis were conducted to find the relationships, test the hypotheses and to achieve the desired objectives.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Own understanding from literature review

3.2 Population and sampling

The population for the current study consists of those who are active social media users and who know well about the presence of e-retailers on these platforms and follow some of them and also make purchases online. By being active users means those who spend a lot of time, say more than 2-3 hours a day, on social media platforms, which allows them to come across different advertisements or posts about various products, companies, brands, etc. this makes the population for the study to be infinite.

Employing the convenience sampling technique, the data, with a response rate of approximately 93%, was gathered from 394 students/research scholars from the University of Jammu, believing that this is the segment (age-group of 20-35 years) expected to be most active on social networking sites (Mikalef, Giannakos & Pateli, 2013). All of the respondents contacted were having Facebook accounts and leaving a few, had enough awareness and knowledge of the different product/brand advertisements that get displayed on their homepages, either because of their liking and subscribing the brand page or due to their friends liking, sharing or commenting on such posts. To be

more specific, the respondents chosen were those who maintained Facebook account and who knew about the two e-commerce brands under consideration, Amazon and Flipkart, and had done some purchases (at least twice) through either or both of them.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

To get the responses, a well-structured self-designed questionnaire was used as the instrument. The questionnaire consisted of 2 main sections. The first section was about the demographics of the respondents, consisting of closed-ended questions regarding gender, age, occupation, and income. The second section contained questions on respondents' social media usage, like the various social media accounts they had and the most preferred by them among all. Lastly, the third section comprised of the questions in the form of statements based on social media marketing activities, brand awareness and brand trust. The statements were all in five-point Likert-scale format (1 to 5, i.e., strongly disagree to strongly agree) to analyse the level of respondents' agreement with them. The various items were adapted from the works of various authors and were modified to some extent as per the requirement of the study. The different dimensions and items along with their sources have been mentioned in appendix 'A'. Brand Awareness was measured with the help of an 8-item scale adapted from Lee & Leh (2011), Schivinski & Dabrowski (2013) and Schivinski & Dabrowski (2014), brand trust was measured with the help of 3-item scale taken from Tan et al. (2012) and Chinomona (2013) and lastly the 12-item scale for social media marketing activities (or firm-created content, FCC) was adapted from Mikalef, Giannakos, & Pateli (2013), Alsamydai & Al Khasawneh (2013) and Bilgin (2018). The reliability of the scales was checked with the help of Cronbach Alpha, by conducting a pilot survey on 50 respondents (all values were above 0.7). Also, the validity of the research instrument was confirmed by referring to various experts.

Also, one-to-one interaction with the respondents (approximately 50 in number) helped in getting further insights into their engagement with the brand/product advertisements and promotions displayed on their homepages while browsing through their networking accounts. Out of various sampling techniques, convenience sampling was employed for administering the survey. After data collection, the responses were analysed with the help of different statistical devices. Various demographics and the social media use were examined with the help of percentages. Further, to study the degree and nature of relationship between firm-created content on social media and brand awareness and brand trust, correlation and regression analyses were carried out. All the analysis was done with the help of SPSS software (version 22).

4.0 Results

4.1 Descriptive statistics

First of all, the demographic aspects of the respondents have been analysed. Out of 394 respondents:

- 213 were females (54.06%) and 181 were males (45.94%)
- most of them (around 40.6%) were in the age-group of 20-25 yrs, while 31.7% fell in 25-30 yrs and remaining 27.67% were in the age-range of 30-35 yrs
- around 75% of them used to spend more than 8 hours on social media (including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube)
- more than half of the respondents (approx. 54%) were found to be using Facebook alone for around 2-4 hours a day
- all the participants contacted followed both of the brands (Amazon and Flipkart) on Facebook
- almost 55% of the respondents preferred Amazon over Flipkart

4.2 Reliability of scales

The reliability of the dimensions was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the internal consistency of the scale. Table 1 tabulates the reliability of all the scales used for measurement.

Table 1: Reliability of Scales

Scales	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand Awareness	8	0.755
Brand Trust	3	0.832
Social Media Marketing Activities	12	0.864

Source: Data Analysis

All the scales produced an alpha value above 0.7, thus, passing the reliability test, and making their way to be included in the study.

4.2 Testing the research hypotheses

Correlation for the Facebook users, who follow some retail brand (under *consideration) on Facebook and see or engage themselves with social media marketing Activities (or firm-created content, FCC), was run to see the relationship between FCC (Mean= 3.941, S.D.= 0.626) and Brand Awareness (Mean= 4.076, S.D.= 0.565) & Trust

(Mean= 3.934, S.D.= 0.818). FCC was found to correlate significantly with brand awareness, $r(394) = 0.551$, and brand trust, $r(394) = 0.730$.

Further, two regression tests were carried out in order to test the hypotheses. The first regression run was done to examine the impact of social media marketing activities on brand awareness. The value of Adjusted $R^2 = 0.302$ (Table 2), implied that the regression model was significant enough in explaining 30.2% of the variance in brand awareness. As can be seen in the regression model below (Table 3), social media marketing activities (Beta = 0.551, $p < .05$) surfaced as a significant predictor. Thus, the first hypothesis, H1 was supported.

Table 2: Adjusted R-Square for Brand Awareness

Model Summary ^b									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.551 ^a	.304	.302	.4723310	.304	170.943	1	392	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), mean social media marketing									
b. Dependent Variable: mean brand awareness									

Table 3: Regression Test: Impact of Social Media Marketing Activities on Brand Awareness

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.116	.152		13.936	.000
	Mean social media marketing	.497	.038	.551	13.075	.000
a. Dependent Variable: mean brand awareness						

The second regression run was administered to examine the impact of social media marketing activities on brand trust. The value of Adjusted $R^2 = 0.532$ (Table 4), implied that the regression model was significant enough in explaining 53.2% of the variance in brand trust. As again can be seen in the regression model below (Table 5) social media marketing activities (Beta = 0.730, $p < .05$) surfaced as a significant predictor. Thus, the second hypothesis, H2 was also supported.

Table 4: Adjusted R-Square for Brand Trust

Model Summary ^b									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.730 ^a	.533	.532	.55960	.533	447.693	1	392	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), mean.social_media_marketing									
b. Dependent Variable: mean.brand_trust									

Table 5: Regression Test: Impact of Social Media Marketing Activities on Brand Trust

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.175	.180		.974	.330
	mean.social_media_marketing	.954	.045	.730	21.159	.000
a. Dependent Variable: mean.brand_trust						

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

In current times, social media has become an essential and indispensable part in our daily lives as a means to communicate, through which people tend to share their good and bad times, express emotions, display talent, travel diaries, and even their shopping experiences. These virtual platforms where people interact at large with their peer groups, friends, family, has offered the marketers with great opportunities to target their marketing activities at the expense of little resources. To serve the purpose, many businesses have created their brand pages/profiles on different platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc., and work towards attracting and engaging the masses with the brand-related ads/posts. In light of this, the present study has attempted to determine whether these marketing and branding activities are effective in creating brand awareness and developing trust among the consumers. It has been found that these activities by the businesses on social media do affect brand awareness and trust in a positive way, while the influence is seen to be more on brand awareness. This might mean that more the exposure of brand-related content on social media accounts, more it helps in creating awareness, but when it comes to trusting the brands, consumers do not rely just on what companies say. There must be other factors that influence a customer's disposition to trust. For example, what others are saying, that is, the word-of-mouth

communication significantly impacts the trust factor. This can be said so because people generally tend to trust what their family and friends tend to believe. Thus, more insight is needed in knowing how this brand trust can be created through social media communications by the businesses. The results of this study have been drawn from the customers by considering only those who follow either or both of the two e-commerce (or e-tailer) brands, Amazon and Flipkart, on Facebook.

In future researches, the effect of social media marketing activities can be examined for various other brands in different product categories. Furthermore, these influences can be observed for other brand-equity constructs also, like the impact of these marketing activities on brand associations, perceived brand quality, brand loyalty and also on consumer behaviour, like purchase intentions. Moreover, further studies can include other social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, LinkedIn, etc. Beside these, comparative studies can be undertaken to find out the effectiveness of different social media platforms in influencing branding activities for different brands.

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