



Social Media for Business

Social Media for Business

- Stories from Indian Brands

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Preface

Social media for business - story of Indian brands is my take on how social media can be perceived differently from various aspects of business. Social media has become a part of our daily life, just as brushing our teeth is. Many of us have looked at social media from a very personal perspective but very few have explored the most potential side of it - while it adds amusement to our daily lives - it has become a means of engagement for many brands across the world and especially for many Indian brands targeting the youth of India.

In the past five years, I have met people who have asked me. “You keep Tweeting and Facebooking what do you do for a living?” I have met several prospects and clients who thought social media is all about the “number of likes” on Facebook. I have come across students who are not even aware of social media having a business side as well; I have also had an opportunity to interact with several professionals who believed that social media for business is to derive sales out of it. I have met PR professionals who have started exploring social media as a component for their clients. There is a huge gap between social media execution and understanding, and this inspired me to write a book on the various facets of this medium.

Through this book, I share various case studies, tips, and perspectives on how social media is a virtual world that provides various opportunities apart from regular networking. My book is all about business philosophies of social media that is a confluence of what I have experienced (and still experiencing) in my practice of social media training, consulting, and services. Over the years, I have come to understand that the objectives set by brands for using social media will change from time to time as per the need arises.

I have also tried to put my views across in a way that all of us without a background in social media business strategies will understand. Throughout the book, I have liberally used the experiences of my clients, my personal experiences, and a few stories of some great brands. I feel that all of us will be motivated with some of the real life examples and interviews shared in Chapter 7 of this book.

The subject “social media for business” is very close to my heart and I have tried my level best to simplify the subject to enrich your knowledge. In Chapter 1, my story will portray my addiction towards social media, which is the key reason for the birth of this book. It took me almost a year and half to compile the stories and draft a layout across it. I have used tips all across the chapters that can be directly implemented by practitioners of social media business strategies. I had a great time writing these tips and I hope that you find them useful as well, as you read and unread.

This book is a complete story and will urge you to think differently about social media. Social media will no more be a usual platform for you; you will start looking at activities on the social platforms from business perspectives. I sincerely hope that it does.

Acknowledgements

I have many friends, colleagues, and members of family to thank for helping me out throughout the journey and who directly or indirectly had a hand in making this book possible.

First and foremost, I thank my extremely supportive dad and mom. I thank my wife, Meghana, who encouraged me to start this book and sacrificed her evenings and weekends when I was busy drafting the first layout of this book. My two-year-old nephew, Rain, has given me an opportunity to grow up all over again and amazed me with his iPad and touch screen using skills inspiring me to believe the world is going to go digital!

Special thanks to Prakash Savariappa and Nishita Mantry, my buddy from college for helping me draft a storyline for this book.

Thanks to all the marketers, professionals, and individuals who purchased tickets of my workshop or hired me to teach and offer my services. This has helped me grow immensely.

Thanks to the readers of my blog www.soravjain.com to have motivated me to write a book by sharing my content on your personal social channels.

Huge thanks goes to my team at echoVME who are extremely talented and passionate about social media. Special thanks to social media executive, Amrutha Kuber, at echoVME for pushing this book into completion during its final days. Thanks to creative lead, M. Prashanth, at echoVME for the creative touch to the book's outlook.

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Finally, thanks to my belief in God and a very special thanks to Mahatria and Infinitheism for instilling me some values that made the execution of this book possible!

Not to forget, @echoVME, will always carry a special place in my heart. My three-year-old enterprise made it all possible!

About the Author



Sorav Jain is a qualified Masters, in International Marketing Management from Leeds University Business School (the United Kingdom) and also an alumnus of Loyola College, Chennai, which are the finest institutions renowned globally. He started his career at the age of 17 as an SEO executive and freelancer content writer.

Professional world embraced him with his skills showcasing effectively in CMO Axis as a market-ing program specialist and online marketing head. In this course of time, Sorav consulted top IT companies and leading e-Commerce portals of India designing and executing their social media marketing campaign. Seamless in spirit, he started

his own venture “echoVME” with a passion to deliver his superior social media marketing expertise that he learned and developed all the years.

An accomplished trainer by himself, Sorav teaches social media marketing and personal branding subjects at Madras Advertising Club. He has trained employees of Times Internet Limited, 2020 Media, Hanmer MSL, Bosch India, and lot of other leading advertising, PR, and internet marketing agencies of India.

Sorav believes in sharing whatever he learns! He is a learner on first hand and trainer on second! He is one of the organizers of *India Search and Social Summit 2010* and *International Social Media Marketing Summit* in association with M.O.P. Vaishnav College in November 2011. A well-known face wherever he goes, he is born with socializing skills that he strengthens and revitalizes every second, with passion!

Connect with Sorav on various Social Media Channels:

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Please join the official page facebook.com/echovme to give your feedback on this book or tweet the same to @SoravJain using hashtag: #SMBIndia



The Story Begins...

—How It All Began!

Addiction, in my formative years, was a bad word. Most likely, even now, the word has its negative shades; thanks to the tireless campaigning by philanthropists against drug addiction, substance addiction, and their likes. However, as I grew up, and even now, when I sit to write this book, I realize that addiction can be actually good and it can bring you fortunes. Therefore, when my friends and family called me an “Orkut addict” way back in 2004, it did not bother me; in fact, I had this secret pride in being someone who mastered something that was becoming popular amongst the people.

Hi5 did enter the country first; however, among us, Orkut was a runaway hit. Primarily, Orkut (or any other social media) started as a leisure media; however, later it became a part of our lives. During my college days, social media was a new and exciting thing to do. Back then, not everyone knew about it; therefore the one who introduced it had a small pride. Orkut with its own scrapbook and testimonial features attracted me and made me spend time with it. It became virtually and literally my “second home”, a “kingdom come” after college hours. Quite excited about the possibility of socializing with people from around the world and playing around with real-time friends, it made me befriend about 2000 people and to have around 60 testimonials. The testimonials feature was so addictive; I wrote testimonials on request, in favor, for a return testimonial (lot of transactions you see!) or as a surprise—it was one feature that made lot of us say things about each other that you would not share otherwise. By uploading crazy pictures and checking scrapbooks and testimonials of others, I was actively using Orkut for more than three years.

Social media, then again, was a part of my life. Of course, you learn, unlearn, and relearn many things while you are still on the journey. Fortunately, during my Orkut years, I had stumbled and later learned the wise use of social media for fun, friendship, serious networking, career, etc.

In 2006, a close group of college mates created a community on Orkut called 04-PB-Loyolites to discuss various...uh no...just to ridicule professors! A few of my friends and I created some fake profiles of professors and wrote some hilarious testimonials to each other with some crazy profile information that made the Orkut crowd literally laugh out loud; however, with the fear of cybercrime in mind, these profiles were deleted later. By the way, the community created for classmates became an alumni community and the most responded activity in the community of boys was a poll as simple as “Who is the cutest female professor in the department?”).

Orkut was also a platform for not-so-publishable entertainment. In internet cafes and browsing centers, it was also getting to become a sextertainment spot where the fake profiles of girls and boys met and had virtual relationships. Like with any technology, boys and girls always found a way out!

One valuable lesson I learned as early as the Orkut days was to never publicly use social media to express anger against close friends or relatives. Throughout my second year of college, I used to vent

anger, express my feelings, and share all my thoughts through my virtual avatar. I never knew that a simple status message could make a small misunderstanding into a huge rivalry, which I am still unhappy about. How else would you feel when your genuine thoughts are bullied upon? I laugh about it now, but a valuable lesson was learned.

After my graduation, when I wanted to do post-graduation in the United Kingdom, the first ever time in an unknown country, I was confused where to go and what to do—the usual anxiety for a first-time visitor (usual now, creepy then). As I had various offers from many universities in the United Kingdom, I used Orkut extensively to join communities relevant to education abroad, education in the United Kingdom, and specific communities of institutes. In the mean time, I made several friends on Orkut; talking to them helped me finalize University of Leeds. A community of University of Leeds on Orkut helped me answer some queries related to the UK culture, weather, part-time jobs, etc. It helped me network with all other individuals from various parts of India who were planning their post-graduation from University of Leeds in the same year. Orkut helped us connect and network even before we met in person in Leeds. We planned our travel together, decided on things to take along, talked about scholarships, etc. In fact, some of the friends I made via Orkut through the community of “University of Leeds” are now my most valuable assets for lifetime.

Even though some of the Orkut users were using the platform for other purposes, I was glad that I was able to pull this out for the most important decision in my life—a game-changer.

Four months after completing my graduation, I was in the United Kingdom with friends from across the globe. Most of them were not aware of Orkut, the period when I realized that Orkut was not the only virtual social world; it was popular only in India and Brazil. It was informed among us that all official information at our university will be shared through e-mail/internet and all informal communications—the ones apart from academics—will be shared through Facebook. Facebook. Now what on earth is that?! That was the first time I was hearing of it. A ‘closed group’ was created on Facebook and I was in.

I soon realized that all my friends from different countries were also part of this community and this helped me boost my networking abilities. I was still active on Orkut as my 2000+ friends were still in India and wanted to know my stories from the United Kingdom. In 2008, Facebook was very simple to use. It’s pages never existed as it is now. The groups ruled the Facebook world and so did the community-centric networking. It became very popular among the Indian students in the United Kingdom as it gave us lot more opportunities of entertainment, engagement, and networking.

However, how did Facebook attract me so strongly? A simple but very effective tool called “Gaming” can make your audience stay put with you throughout.

Texas Poker was the first game that I joined on Facebook. I liked the social feature of this game more, which allowed us to play with other users at the same time sitting on table (especially with people from all over the world). There used be a chat box where global players could chat, discuss, share poker chips, and literally discuss about anything under the roof giving a complete club experience.

Poker became a fascinating part of my life in the United Kingdom as I used to compete with my roommates who were sitting in different hostels. Virtual chips were almost conversed enough, begged enough, and were the talk of pride in my friends group.

The magnetic nature of gaming is infectious. When I took a one-month break from my regular UK

lifestyle and was back to my country, I introduced Facebook to my siblings and friends, teaching them the global poker with virtual chips, which made my younger brother addicted to it.

My orthodox Indian parents blamed me for being the root-cause of bringing in the westernized culture of using internet 24/7. Now as I see my mom posing for photographs asking if I will post on Facebook, I wonder how social media has become one with us—it is no more a western thing. For me, Facebook started gaining traction slowly until I was back to India with people realizing the value of the social networking platform.

As the inventions of applications on Facebook have grown with time, my addiction shifted from Farmville to Mafiawars to Cityville to Petstore, Friend-based Quizzes, Anita Predictions, etc. and slowly I moved on from one to one until one day I thought that my own page is my identity. Of course, I will try and develop new applications on Facebook; however, stick on to my core—my own page.

An identity well gotten was through Facebook. The more I was attached to it, the more personal it got. The more personal it got, I decided to quit Facebook as a sign of venting my anger. However, that did not stay for long. I came bouncing back to Facebook—I just could not stay away from it. A new profile was created and I added whoever sent me a friend request. I had to relearn that my social life is to be controlled and regulated by me and only me, according to the people around. By learning the regulation of friend contacts, with enormous amount of socializing, making many friends, and joining network groups, I got into the skin of the true spirit of Facebook. Through Facebook, I got my identity which started giving me a voice and a place that I liked.

That is when I realized that addiction can be synonymous with passion. With my passion growing stronger, not only on Facebook but also on other channels of social media, I understood the value of this goldmine, in the field of marketing. I was vaguely giving a thought about taking up a career with social media.

Ah, there came my first job. First jobs are always special to anyone. I joined a popular marketing process outsourcing startup in our city in April 2009 after I returned from the United Kingdom and I was quick to grab the opportunity when my management gave me social media-related marketing. As I was in a startup, I was given clients to consult on digital and social media marketing. Apparently, the clients were globally renowned IT giants, nationally renowned ecommerce sites, and some more awesome brands to work with. This phase was important in shaping my once-a-vague-thought to a channeled career.

When I began blogging on www.soravjain.com with tips, how to's, strategies, and lot more information on digital marketing, it helped me get a lot of attention globally. To promote my blog posts, I joined Twitter, which made my blogs reach further. Those initial days at Twitter were boring until I started following some fabulous conversationalists and social media professionals who inspired me to further research on the topic “The Social Media for Business” and write more about what I am doing right now.

My blog, as a social media tool, has played a very important role in helping me position myself as a practitioner of social media for business globally. As I used very simple language to write blogs, my blog posts on strategies were avidly read in non-English-speaking countries such as Spain and Germany. A few of my readers from a company in Spain called Elitad (a personal branding company for celebrities and politicians) connected with me on Orkut, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter in order to check my credibility before offering me to join Elitad in as their board of advisor.

At the age of 22, I was not too sure about the job offer; therefore, I declined the offer, but instead suggested them that they may consider outsourcing their requirements to India. That is how I had quit my first job and echo- VME was born.

echoVME Takes Shape

echoVME was primarily focusing on serving individuals and businesses with social media marketing services. Later on, we began delivering social media marketing training as the Indian market was still not mature enough to understand the value of social media in marketing, which was merely considered as a hobby tool.

Ever since I started echoVME, my company has benefited and is benefitting from social media in various ways. Some of the benefits of using social media are as follows:

- It helped connect with some top journalists fetching me media coverage.
- It helped share my knowledge that got me customers.
- It helped showcase my speaking skills that got me students and requests for training.
- It has helped build my identity and credibility that got me connected with business tycoons.
- It has helped me connect with many individuals to organize social media summit and my workshops.
- It has helped me get many affiliates for workshops and services.

Social media is the base for the sales of echoVME's services and training programs. Since the inception of my entrepreneurial journey, it became an inevitable part of my life. It may be tough for me to get published in a newspaper or get notified on a TV channel however, it is quite easy to build up my own communication channel on social media.

What's more! I proposed to my wife by changing my Facebook relationship status from "single" to "committed" and tagged her.

Social media did not just create many good experiences however it has a few negative ones too. There have been seasons when some fights resulted in my un-following people on Twitter and un-friending them on Facebook. But as it is always said, it is your choice, as life here too is *kabhi khushi, kabhi gum*; sorry, it is actually *humesha khushi thoda gum*!

I am sure that there is more to come in the years ahead.

In this book, you will explore the various perspectives of social media for business, highlights on social media in India, interesting Indian case studies, and marketing tips on social networking sites.

Remember that social media is not just about marketing, it is much more and you will realize that as you live with it. It is real and can be prospective for anyone's growth. It takes time to build a reputation online, but the patience is worth it. You can try various forms and platforms and socialize crazily—all for a good reason—for your growth.

You can be everything on social media; be all the time hooked to it! After all, remember, "addiction is not a bad thing."

Social Media India

Answering, What Is Social Media

Understanding social media is a very important factor for marketers. More for those who are looking at adapting it as a tool for business or marketing. A marketer needs to understand that there is a vast difference between social networking sites and social media. Social networking sites are online networking hub where people connect with each other. Social media is the content created on these networks while connecting or posting, the connections is done to initiate conversations and socialize within the network. It can also be defined as an interactive communication tool that allows users to share information and create communities of their choice of people. From a business perspective, social media is the creation of content and technical applications that are valued by brands or consumers, which can be shared online by the means of social networking sites.

Social Media Is a Chai Party!

Social media is almost equivalent to the Indian evening social gatherings where a couple of men meet at a tea stall or bar and a couple of ladies meet at a common place in their locality to discourse daily life. In a real life incident, usually people discourse conversations with the known individuals of the same locality (network), sometimes with the individuals recommended by other members in the locality (recommendation/referral based) and sometimes when there is someone new in the locality and he/she joins the conversation in the group by introducing himself/herself (friendship request/seeking for networking).

In the above incident, all the individuals are creating conversations and are listening to each other's opinion. Sometimes conversations are fun, sometimes it is a gossip, and sometimes it is around the tea that is being served and everyone leaves back with the taste, with conversational memories and some discussion remaining, which they continue in their next meet.

In *chai* party, the conversations are made through word of mouth; it is still limited due to the platform limitations. In social media, platform is huge and

opportunity to network and converse is more. *Chai* party is merely speaking and listening whereas social media conversation materials are more such as YouTube videos, blog posts, tweets, status updates, photographs, and polls that result in technologically advanced conversations.

These elements of conversations can be categorized according to the different purpose they serve ([Table 2.1](#)).

Table 2.1: Social Media Channels—Purpose They Serve

Tools	Purpose they serve	Categorization
Blogs, Microblogs	Blogs are popularly known as online personal diaries. They help you share your thoughts in detail (unlimited words). Microblogging sites limit content sharing per update. Examples of blogs sites are WordPress, Blogspot, Livejournal, and Typepad. An example of microblogging site is Twitter.	Maximum used for authoring.
YouTube, Vimeo, Pinterest, Instagram, SlideShare	They are hubs that host rich media content and play a vital role in creating the 'attractiveness' and 'various forms of content' on social media.	Maximum used for sharing.
Facebook, Google+, Twitter	These hubs are responsible for networking. Be it they appealing to mass or creating one-on-one buzz, they are the most used social networks in the world. They are where the major chunk of the audience, especially in India is found to reside.	Used for social networking.
LinkedIn, Xing	In these networks, there are no photo sharing and no conversations over petty issues. LinkedIn showcases the professional side of a person. The platform is designed in a way that can help you highlight your professional attributes to the world more evidently and network with like-minded individuals globally.	Professional social networking.
Wikipedia, Google Docs	Globally people use this platform to share content/ documents and collaborate them with other people to work out on the same content remotely at the same time. Officially many project managers remote to each other use these tools to work on a common topic.	Collaboration platforms.
Foursquare, Google Latitude	These networks allow people to check in a particular location online and find out nearby areas and great deals provided by the different stores in the locality. One can also observe the reviews of the place and learn online from the other visitors of the place. These networks can be mainly accessed via smartphones.	Location-based social networking.

Media in India

Communication is an art that every Indian has mastered!

Indians communicate in numerous ways; every Indian loves to converse, mingle, network, and socialize. In spite of being the most linguistically diverse country in the world, India has no barrier to communicate. For instance, people are taught to welcome others with warmth and affection; the Indian hospitality is unique, reflects the reverential culture, and is beautifully spread across the country.

In India, communication via media has been relentlessly evolving, giving us newer and wider options. We have been lucratively encouraging, emotionally engaging, and precisely leveraging every media until today.

History of Media in India, Evolution!

In the olden days, our ancestors used hosting pigeons as messengers (the foremost eco-telecom service, isn't it?).

- Postal services in India began in 1764. The foremost postal service was initiated in Mumbai,

- Chennai, and Kolkata. Today, there are around 1, 54, 866 post offices.¹ A whole lot of people still continue to make use of postal services. With stamps, envelopes, and red postboxes, Indian postal service is still very close to the heart.
- In 1780, the first newspaper was published in India - Bengal Gazette. The Indian newspaper industry has flourished and eventually grew to become the second largest newspaper industry in the world with a whopping 99 million copies being sold every day in 2007.² Newspapers are still our great admiration.
 - In 1882, India has launched its first telecom services. In 1997, Indian telecom had 14.8 million subscribers. In 2007, there were 269 million subscribers. In 2010, Indian telecom has leaped to more than 846 million subscribers. India has the world's second largest mobile phone user base with over 951.34 million users as of March 2012.³ Today, telecom is an integral and inevitable part of our lives.
 - The first Indian radio 7BY was launched in 1927 in Mumbai.⁴ In 1970, there were 14 million listeners; in 1994, there were 65 million listeners; and in 2010, there were 140 million listeners in India. All India Radio (AIR) boasts one of the largest networks in the world. With 231 radio stations, the radio market promises to grow.⁵
 - In the 1960s, television (TV) has entered Indian homes. The number of TV homes in India has grown from 120 million in 2007 to 148 million in 2011; more than 95 million access cable networks.⁶ In the international market, India stands fourth in TV broadcasting. TV has been our regular dose of entertainment.¹⁷
 - Can you guess the cost of the first computer (with 1k memory) in India in 1955? It was Rs. 2 lakhs; but five decades later, the number of computers in India rose to 15 million and there were 5 million internet connections. Indian population is 1.2 billion; it has increased 16 million more in 2012. About 56% of Indian population is under the age of 30 and about 30% of Indian population is below the age of 15 and that is bigger than the population of Japan. Internet penetration in India is just 11%, which is three times lower than the global average penetration of internet but still India has the world's third largest internet user base with over 137 million as of June 2012.⁷
 - The number of internet users in India is growing by more than 1.5 million every year, there by adding a new internet user in every 2 seconds. With about 41% increase in internet users in 2012, we are the fastest growing online market in the world. About 75% of Indian internet users are below the age of 35, of which about 39.3% users are female. Males in the age group 15-24 account for about 21.9% of the total audience while the females in the same age group account for about 13.7% of the total audience. Similarly, males in the age group 25-34 account for about 23.7% of the total audience while the female in the same age group account for about 15.3% of the total audience.

Can this whole thing made a bit more interesting? Convert to a diagram or graph showing changes over the years ([Figure 2.1](#)).

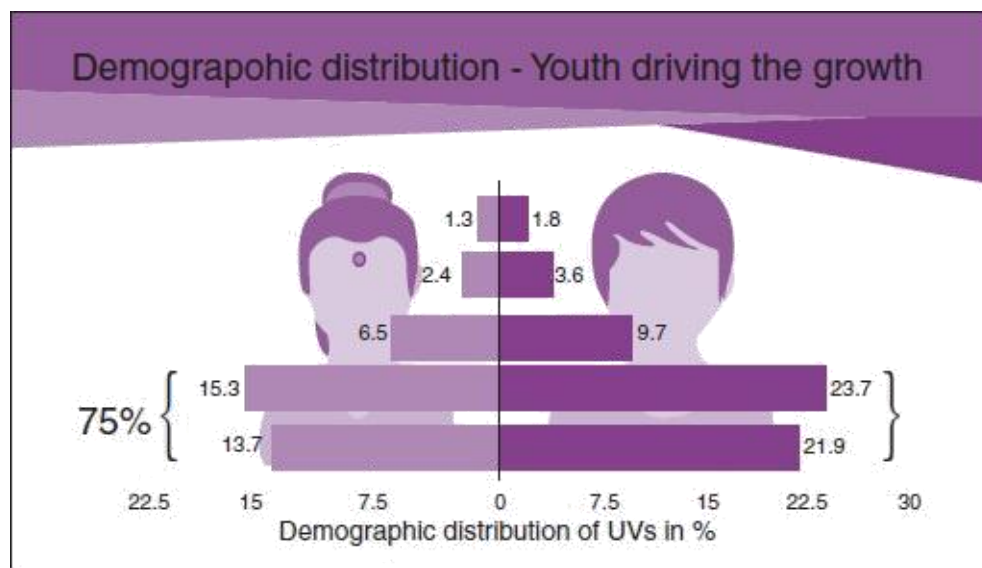


Figure 2.1: Demographic Distribution of Internet Users in India.⁸

Source: ComScore.

- About 72% of Indian internet users live in urban areas; the main reason why they come online is to communicate and use social networking sites.²⁵ About 38 million internet users belong to the rural parts of India, of which more than about 50% come for entertainment and communication.⁹
- As per a report published in *Times of India* in 2012, on an average desineti- zens spend 8 hours a day on internet and about 83% of netizens believe that they cannot live without internet for more than 24 hours.²¹ As per the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, with more than 150 internet services provided in India, we have 23.1 million Indian households accessing the internet today, of which about 14.57 million households are subscribed to broadband services.¹⁰

The Social Media Revolution in India, a Promising Beginning

In India, every media has had a humble beginning; however, over time, they grew stupendously. We sent doves, we wrote letters, we listened through radios, we watched through TVs, and started networking through internet. What next?

With an astounding technology support and the desi-zeal imbibed in every Indian, we have welcomed and are nurturing yet another media! This media enables us to chat, write, listen, watch, and network on a single platform— “the social media.” What socializing was in the past, social networking is today! Some might disagree to this statement. A survey conducted by a popular antivirus company in March 2012 among 500 Indians has revealed that the internet users in India spend online an average of 58 hours a week and they suffered from the absence of the internet within three hours of being cut-off from the web. As per the survey, about a period of 15-20 hours a week is spent on socializing and e-mail activities on the web.¹¹

By Nielsen’s count, there are more than 60 million active users on social media sites such as Orkut, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter, of which about 80 percent spend more than 15 minutes on social media every day.¹⁸ As per ComScore, one in four online minutes is spent on social networking sites by Indians.^{12 24}

As per another report by AC Nielsen’s research in July 2012, there are around 27 million smartphone

users in India, of which 22 million people use smartphones mainly for social networking. The major smartphone user age group is 18-24 years. As per ComScore report in August 2012, social networking is the primary drive for online activity in India. There is massive growth in online and social gaming industries in the country (Figure 2.2).

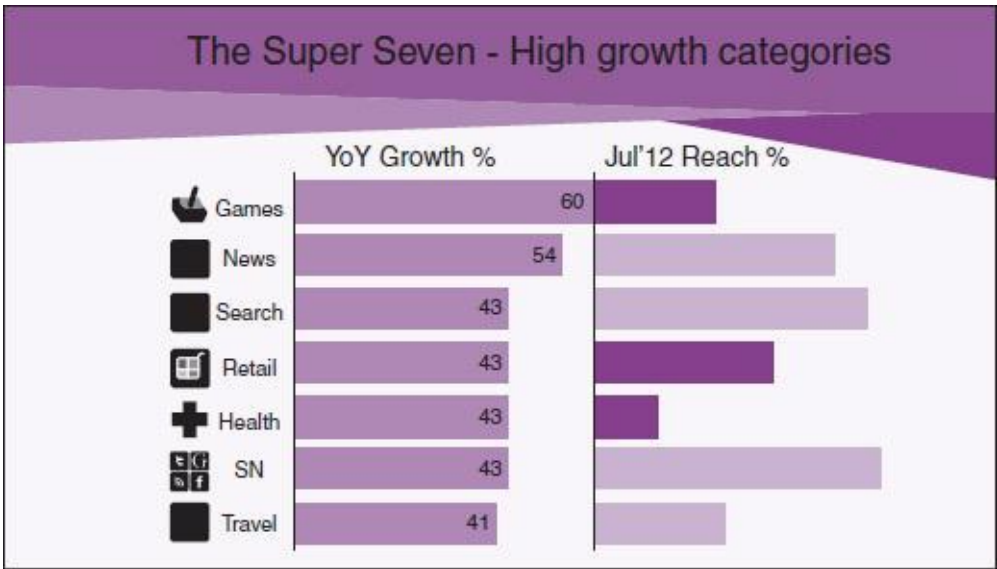


Figure 2.2: High Growth Sectors on Internet.

Source: ComScore.

Professionally, social networking sites are popular among Indian users. As per the Cyber Media Research Social Media Survey done from December 2011 to February 2012 with 300 business executives as respondents from different business industries and verticals, more than 90% of respondents in India use social media; of which, about 82% use social media at their workplace, about 15% indicated that they do not access social media at work, while 3% are non-users. About 88% of ‘users’ classified their primary purpose of accessing social media platforms as ‘professional networking,’ about 75% indicated ‘social networking,’ while about 18% go online for ‘job search.’ Social media takes up a good part of an executive’s day—time spent online ranges between 30 and 60 minutes and goes up to 6 hours a day; however, it helps executives multitask productively.

As per the report by a popular anti-virus company and by Cyber Media; people mainly access social media through laptops/PCs and fairly equal number of people use it through smartphones and some use it via tablets too. The above facts shows how the usage of internet is rapidly growing in India and as internet penetrates through mobile and other means the socializing possibilities via social networking sites will be on the rise in the years to come.

As seen above, every form of media and communication mode in India has grown up to a phase where we pioneer; social media is still in the growth and nascent phase, yet growing rapidly. Below are some facts of some of the most popular social networking sites in India, currently

Statistics	Facebook	Twitter	LinkedIn	YouTube	Google+	Pinterest	Foursquare	Blog
Number of users/viewers in India	72 Million+ members.	33 Million+ active users	20 Million+	55.8 million viewers	50 million	10.4 million	0.33 million	NA
Global users	1.11 Billion+	More than 517 million members	225 Million+	1 Billion month active users	More than 500 million members	48.7 Million Pinterest users.	More than 25 million users	More than 100 million members
India's position	<p>*Currently, only 5% of total Indian population is using Facebook.</p> <p>This 5% of population mainly comprise of highly affluent, educated, English speaking individuals.</p> <p>*A new Facebook signup in India happens every second, of which about 30% comes from mobile.</p> <p>*India is the third largest Facebook user in the world.</p> <p>*Facebook hosts majority of netizens.</p>	<p>*India is the sixth largest Twitter-using country in the world.</p> <p>*Indian users account for about 2.87% of total global users</p> <p>*About 29% of Indian netizens have used Twitter in August 2012.</p>	<p>*India is the second largest LinkedIn user in the world.</p>	<p>*More than 400 million videos are accessed by Indians each month.</p> <p>*YouTube accounted a majority share of the time spent on the online property with 1250 Indians visiting YouTube every minute.</p> <p>*About 25% of YouTube viewers' share comes from mobile devices in India.</p> <p>India has the largest number of content uploaders in Asia for YouTube</p>	<p>*About 14% of global Google+ users are from India.</p> <p>*About 3.86% of Google+ users are from Bangalore – the highest in the world.</p> <p>*Though India has 50 million Google+ users, the active numbers are not available.</p>		<p>About 5% of global Foursquare users live in India.</p>	

Source: Facebook Facts taken from Facebook Ads platform (as of June 2013) LinkedIn facts taken from LinkedIn Blog (as of May 2013) Active Twitter users in India (Forbes: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/victorlipman/2013/05/01/the-worlds-most-active-twitter-country-hint-its-citizens-cant-use-twitter/>) 1 Billion Youtube monthly users (http://news.cnet.com/8301-1023_3-57575491-93/youtube-breaks-records-with-1-billion-monthly-users/) India has the largest number of content uploaders in Asia for Youtube <http://www.firstpost.com/business/youtube-key-to-googles-india-strategy-341577.html> ¹⁶

Factors and Popular Incidents Favoring the Growth of Social Media in India

What social media is today viz. communication and media has been relentlessly evolving, giving us newer and wider options. We have been lucratively encouraging, emotionally engaging, and precisely leveraging every media until today. There are various cultural, economical, and behavioral factors that can be considered as factors favoring the growth of social media in India. In India, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Orkut are not just sites but statements! We just do not talk about them or use them; we create possibilities that the audience on social media will enjoy. The new generations peoples have started living on social media than in real life; they are socializing more on social networking sites than in reality. Social media has given us freedom to be democratic, expressive, entertaining, and responsible. Some reasons of social media's rapid growth in India are discussed in the following sections.

Social Culture

Recall your last travel experience via flight/train and your interaction with your co-passenger, your in-depth questions to him/her, or conversations on general topic resulting in exchange of cards, business, and casual or personal relationships. We are from a land of socializing; it runs in our genes. Relate it to the *Chai* party incident where many others join the party casually for conversations. In

school, parents interact with other parents to understand if their kids have completed the project and what marks their kids score in the subjects. We love to interact with other people in the same colony and exchange sweets during festivals and delicacies on ordinary days. People in India love to converse, interact, and help other people; social media channels are the easiest platform for them to connect, converse, interact, and help likeminded individuals. Families in India have started becoming nuclear; however, they are still joint because of social media. Friends from schools, colleges, and workplaces are no more just part of memories; they have become a part of your social network forever. Social culture has made communication easy and is immensely helping preserve the culture in its own foundation.

Be in News

For many of us, being in news channels or newspapers is always a fantasy but not everyone is able to succeed to reach there. Social media has helped people create their own news channel and have their network of known individuals as its subscribers. ‘Showing off’ or ‘flaunting’ has become a part of our

lives these days. I still remember my neighbor buying a car not because I saw him driving, just because he shared a picture of it directly from the showroom to Facebook even before he drove it. We are invariably becoming part of the new social culture that is compelling us to share more and be in the limelight. People no more click pictures and give it for printing; they rather upload it on social channels and preserve and share memories with the world around them. As a general human tendency, we love to flaunt (I know, many would contradict!) and social media has made it easier. Just observe your social network today and you will notice many of them sharing pictures from festivals they have celebrated, places they have visited, new things they have purchased, and the reviews of the movie they have experienced—why so? Answer yourself!

In this book, I have given a few case studies that will showcase how some Indians have used social media extensively to highlight their talent and become popular in their area of expertise.

We Love Gossiping!

If you are an urban Indian and are reading my book, you may do this task for sure! While you go to a posh restaurant or a popular food joint in your city, keep your ears open to the conversations happening in the table next to yours. Listen to the conversations carefully and you will notice people talking about activities their friends do on Facebook, Twitter, etc. I have always observed this and it has proven to me that social media channels give us enough tidbits to gossip about people. If there are individuals flaunting, there are people gossiping. The ecosystem is well balanced.

We Follow and Get Addicted to Trends

Orkut was the charm once upon a time when the ‘keeda’ of social media got into us a few years back. We used to scrap, create albums, share videos, and wrote testimonials to our friends. However, today, not any would like to say that they are active on Orkut (even if they are, discreetly), as that is no more part of the trend. Celebrities from India dominating Twitter encouraged more and more people from the rural parts of India to join Twitter to get updates from their favorite celebrity. I have personally observed many of my friends complaining about Twitter not being a good social network just because they do not get responses when they tweet and when I observed their tweets, it was a question

posted to a popular celebrity who has got lakhs of followers and thousands of questions each day. My mother is not a Facebook user and she is not at all computer savvy; however, whenever there is an event at home, she insists to post pictures on Facebook—for the world to see! I always wondered how she knows how Facebook works when she is not a part of it at all. I just blame it on the trend. A cousin of mine is facing a ‘notification syndrome’; this comes soon after she posts a status update of pictures on social media channel. She often logs in to see how many people liked or commented on the recent share and gets really upset when she does not get enough responses! Social media trend in the country has just started; if you are an urban youth and are not part of Facebook, do not even say this in public, as they shall give you a weird look and say, ‘Jeez, you are not on Facebook?’

We Love Getting Entertained!

More than anything else, social media channels have become a source of entertainment. With different features it innovates everyday, people are getting glued to this medium more and more. On Twitter, people love to gossip with the mass on a particular topic that is trending. In addition, on Facebook, people love to share and watch photos and videos (the most entertaining activity); YouTube is becoming a compulsory tab on the browser while accessing the internet; Instagram has made photo sharing sexier and easier; Foursquare is making travel experience more social; and blogs are always busy establishing your brand in detail. Overall, social media, a free medium, is just becoming a reason to spend some time with the world.

Social Media Playing Politics

Many politicians and political incidents in India have brought social media into the limelight. When leaders use this medium, they acknowledge this to their fan base or followers and thus bringing various moments, movements, and controversies for people to participate. The following quotes are some of the interesting instances.

1. Narendra Modi’s strong social media presence especially on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. His Google+ Hangout incident hosted by the Bollywood actor Ajay Devgan allowing a common man to ask him a live question; it had hosted millions of viewers curbing mainstream media completely and directly connecting with people by means of social media and internet.
2. Shashi Tharoor’s Twitter activities quoted in mainstream media and statements such as mentioning an economy class travel as cattle class created a whole lot of chaos.
3. Digvijay Singh’s tweet on comparing Arvind Kejriwal with Rakhi Sawant going mainstream and provoking Rakhi Sawant to file a case against Digvijay Singh.
4. Mamta Banerjee’s Facebook presence for seeking support to have Mr. Abdul Kalam as president again and further using this medium to share her views on different incidents.
5. Kapil Sibal’s statement on censoring social media making social media population ferocious and created comic moment around him. I remember #IdiotKapilSibal was trending on Twitter for consecutive two days, with some hilarious cartoons and tweets made about him.
6. Opinions of public and conversations over 2G scam, CWG scam, Parliament toilet, Coalgate, Robert Vadra’s DLF scam, presidential elections and so on.
7. Anna Hazare’s social media campaign against corruption, which was the prime incident in Indian politics showing the power of social media. The India-against-corruption activists hosted a splendid social media presence with every movement live updated.
8. The arrest of a Pondicherry-based businessman for posting “offensive” tweets against Karthik

Chidambaram, son of the Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram, stroking the free speech and internet governance debate.¹⁹

9. Arrest of popular cartoonist Aseem Trivedi who made cartoons on the Indian constitution and symbols, stroking the freedom of expression debate.
10. On M.K. Stalin's (son of the DMK's leader) 59th birthday, there were posters all around the Chennai city with a logo of Facebook alongside; Stalin's photo stating that he has got maximum friends on DMK's Facebook page.
11. The blocking and suspension of the fake Prime Minister of India twitter account: PMOIndia spoofing tweets of the original account of PMOIndia.
12. The arrest of two girls from Palghar who updated their status against Mumbai Bandh during the death rally of Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackeray. One girl was arrested for raising her voice against the bandh on Facebook and the other for liking the status update that went highly controversial.

Social Media and the Movies

Indian film industry and celebrities always have been having incidents of social media in movies, provoking many thoughts to the rural, urban and viewers from different age groups of the movies.

1. Kadhalil Sodhappuvadhu Yeppadi: It is a popular Tamil movie, which got immense popularity when it was released a year back on YouTube as a 10-minute short film, widely appreciated by audience on social media, which made the director believe in the story; finally, the actors and actresses were hired to make a complete movie on the short film. The movie also quotes several incidents of the usage of Facebook by the parents of the lead actors in the movie.
2. Popular movie Golmaal 3 named the pet dog in the movie as Facebook and made Kareena wear a T-shirt with message 'Lets Tweet,' thus giving enough social media chunks for people to talk about and raise curiosity.
3. A low-budget Tamil movie 'Yen Ennada Mayakkam' is all about a girl falling in love with a stranger on Facebook, which turned out to be disastrous.
4. The movie 3 Idiots of Aamir Khan, which is the most popular one, showed how he has used to learn about his friend's success from his information technology blog; at the same time, this movie set the trend by giving Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube media partners' credit in the beginning of the movie.
5. Amitabh Bachchan's initial blog debut that was followed by popularity on Twitter and then entering Facebook in 2012 with more 32 lakh fans in just 1 month of time has always been the talk of the town and mainstream media.
6. Abhishek Bachchan's announcement on Twitter about his baby girl became a moment of celebration online with five trends dedicated solely to Bachchan's family on Twitter: BigB, BabyB, Bachchan, Aishwarya Rai, Aradhya, BetiB, etc.
7. Celebrity fights on Twitter that always got mainstream media's attention, ex: when Ayesha Takiya and Siddharth Mallya had picked up a quarrel on ill treatment of Ayesha's sister by a Kingfisher Airlines staff bringing a lot of support to Ayesha's concern and criticism to Siddharth's ignorance.
8. The first episode of a popular TV show by Aamir Khan called 'Satya- mev Jayate' had made Indians to come together on Facebook with more than 6 Lakh people joining the movement on the first week of the show, more than 3 Lakh people talking about it on Facebook at that instance, 35,306 tweets on topics female feticide making #SMJ, Satyamev Jayate, Female Foeticide, and

Aamir Khan trends on Twitter. On May 6, 2012, SMJ became the most searched topic on Google and the videos uploaded on YouTube had more than 3 Lakh views on the first day of the show, thus creating some history in social media.

9. The popularity of the song 'Why This Kolaveri' of the popular Tamil movie '3,' which was an accidental social media case study, has been extremely successful in setting the social media marketing standards high. The song was released on November 16, 2011 and within five days the song had got more than 56 lakh views on YouTube, #Kolaveri was trending for 3 consecutive days on Twitter. On Facebook, this song was shared round about 20 million times in just five days. The virality of this song via social media took it all the way to radio stations in Mumbai; it was one of the important Tamil songs played on MTV. This song got most of the music sensation awards for the year 2011 and this song was the most talked about by celebrities on Twitter. This song was first shared on YouTube.
10. In the year 2009, when we had very few social media and internet savvy users in India compared to what we have now, #Chetanblocks became a sensational topic across India. On December 7, 2009 (Monday), sometime in the evening, the Indian author Chetan Bhagat blocked a few people from his Twitter account. He (@chetan_bhagat) was having a debate with a journalist (@jojiphilip) on books and piracy, when he had received some tweets that did not gel with him. The result has made him blocking those people from his Twitter account. This conversation started a massive surge of tweets with the hashtag #chetanblocks. There were many who were related and many who were not related to the incident; however, everyone found an opportunity to talk about the issue and tease Chetan Bhagat and made #Chetanblocks trend, thus spoiling his reputation. This was the first Indian trend that was in the list of the hottest trends and it did show India how social media is leveraged by Indian to showcase the power of expressions.

Social Media and Cricket Strokes

Cricket is India's weakness; assume that there is a disaster or any other epic moment in the country when Indian team is playing cricket on the same occasions, the internet world is dominated by the conversations on team's performance, not on any other important events. Whenever India is playing, the hottest trends on Twitter are dominated by cricketers or incidents relevant to it. Some of the important instances are as follows.

1. In 2010, Indian Premier League (IPL) was the first sporting event ever to be broadcasted live on YouTube. By the end of the tournament, YouTube was reporting 55.7 million channel views and 31.7 million video-on-demand views. With over 93,000 subscribers, the channel was rated as the "#1 Most Subscribed Channel (All Time)—India." Fans from over 200 countries watched IPL 2010 on YouTube—India had the most views, with the United States in second place.
2. IPL's social media presence also hosted a lot of official bloggers for each of the teams; the invitations for nomination of bloggers are always announced in public.
3. The IPL matches in 2012 were even more social media savvy with teams actively participating on social media platforms engaging their fans on regular basis; at the same time, the screening of IPL on Set Max channel had also displayed tweet scores, best tweets of the day, etc. Thus, it was connecting the live incidents to social media. IPL is one of the most entertaining sports reaching to the cricket fans all across the country.
4. Suresh Raina's tweet against Pakistan's defeat in T20 World Cup created a spur of controversial moment, which he later clarified as a tweet made by his nephew and not by him. The damage to his sportsman reputation was already done by then.

5. ESPN hosted a contest to choose a commentweeter, sponsoring two winners to South Africa to live tweet the match.

Crime, Disasters, and Quotes on Social Media

1. Nowadays, in India, you will always find some of crimes or criminal instincts being connected to social media channels. I have read enough on mainstream media on how successful the CBI or Indian Police have been in cracking a case by using profiles of the murderers or the culprits.
2. Delhi Traffic Police's Facebook Presence: This was a trend started by the Delhi Police and followed by many others in the country. It was a key highlight point for the government officials on 'social media' put to good use. On the Facebook page of the traffic police, one can register a complaint by posting photographs of the vehicles, report about rash drivers, faulty number plates, get queries solved, and seek information on the traffic status every day.
3. A few tweeters were recently arrested in India for making vulgar tweets about popular singer Chinmayi Sripada and her mother, which regulated the people from posting anything and everything they feel is right.
4. Indian Express has a separate column for the tweets of the day, highlighting a few tweets. In a similar way, Times of India (TOI) and Deccan Chronicle had also started quoting tweets from celebrities to the mainstream media.
5. Earth Quake Reporting, Mumbai Blasts, Neelam Cyclone, and many other incidents in India have always encouraged citizen journalism and people who share live news out to the world with involvement of mainstream media. In fact, NDTV encourages people to post videos and pictures from their area during the times of disaster, thus making the news a complete social news!

Social Media and Business in India

Many Indian brands have started investing in social media; on the one hand, brands are thinking of different ways of engaging; on the other front on marketers and branding managers. Business school students have started investing time or money to learn more about this medium to get certified or to become an expert in this field and pursue a career in this field. Job hubs such as LinkedIn Jobs, Naukri.com, and Timesjob.com are all flooded with requirements for individuals with social media and digital marketing skills. Social media, which was once considered a time pass medium, has started taking a serious shape in the country with brand allocating budgets and resources, corporate roping in training programs, and business schools considering social media marketing courses or modules for students.

Professionally, there is enough pressure on marketers, PR professionals, branding experts, and journalists to start using social media to be ahead of competition. Social bakers have listed more than 1,000 Facebook pages of brands whereas Media2win has highlighted more than 250 active brands on Twitter in India. Many of the Indian brands on Facebook are now having million-followers-mark and more. The numbers of pages on the popular channels Facebook and Twitter would be fairly high if small businesses, freelancers, social businesses, and organizations are taken into consideration. The social media and business sidelines have been phenomenal in the country.

In 2009, there were hardly 25-30 (as observed and listed on my blog www.soravjain.com) fully-fledged social media agencies in India; however, now the number has crossed 100, which involves full-fledged advertising, PR, SEO, digital marketing, and web-designing agencies having a social media wing serving their clients demanding social media services. As per survey released by the

Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), in October 2011, India Inc. is increasing their marketing spend on social media marketing to a whopping Rs. 1,200 crore, which is expected to cross Rs. 10,000 crore during the course of the next three to four years.²⁵ From a global perspective, goods and services worth about Rs. 23,000 crore are traded currently through social networks across the world. In addition, the figure is likely to swell to about Rs. 1.35 lakh crore by 2015.

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Transparent Piggy Banking Theory!

Transparent piggy banking theory is one that I often use in my workshops while teaching what social media or community marketing is. When I was a kid, I was always attracted to piggy banks. There were various incidents when the attraction towards those colorful piggy banks which were made up of clay in different shapes—pig, fish, house, etc.—used to be my favorite ones. The reason why I liked these earthen piggy banks was that the money added by me or the members of my family was not visible and they did not have locking or unlocking facility; therefore, I had to wait until the money reached the brim of the piggy bank and one had to break it to see the savings.

It was fun, had a surprise element, and needed patience; however, the victory was sweet and watching the money had created a great joy.

As time went by and I grew up, I started becoming impatient toward these earthen piggy banks, because I never knew how much money it had. I was not sure how much others in the family were contributing and it was not attractive to me anymore. It was for the first time I decided to buy a piggy bank that was made up of glass in a German fair held in the city, as it made things clearer. The transparency helped me know the status of the saved money, which had given me more patience until the money reached the brim.

Usually, my workshops are conducted in a conference or banquet hall of four-star or five-star hotels. Once when I was explaining the concept of social media marketing, I had taken out a transparent piggy bank that was made out of glass and rolled it out among participants in the hall asking them to donate money. I had clearly specified them that the money they shall donate that day will go to an NGO and not to me and I reassured them, ‘I do party and have a good time, but not with this money; therefore, be assured that the money will be going for a noble cause’ after I ensured that, people started dropping pennies. Considering the above act, I had explained to them how social media marketing is related to the transparent piggy bank ([Table 3.1](#)).

Table 3.1: Social Media and Piggy Banking Theory—Relevance

Incidents	In a social media scenario
The banquet room/hotel	Web 2.0 Platform
The people inside the room under my workshop banner	Members/audience as a community
Myself/speaker/one who is initiating the conversation	Social media marketing manager/communitymanager
Piggy bank	Content
Pennies received	Audience's action

The Banquet Room/Web 2.0 Platform

If this did not exist, the rest of the action would not have taken place. As a marketer, it is crucial to identify the right social media platform to match with the right kind of audience and content. Different

social media platforms serve different purposes. The platforms such as YouTube, SlideShare, and Blogs are considered to be content hubs where various contents can be uploaded and stored for lifetime. The sites such as YouTube and SlideShare have search engines by themselves; in addition, the content uploaded here are very much accessible to the popular search engines such as Google, Yahoo, and MSN. The sites such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook are considered to be social networking sites where people network, converse, and the content posted on the content hubs can be used here as an engagement element by brands.



Figure 3.1: Crowdsourcing Ideas.

People/Community

Many marketers do not really understand the importance of building a community. I have seen many Indian brands or small businesses that do not have many spectators or people in the community who would respond to their queries. Posting content to a platform without having audience is equal to addressing a press conference without having journalists. To bring the right kind of audience, a brand needs to invest in promotion for promotional channel. The marketers need to invest in promoting their presence on social media through traditional ads, Facebook ads, e-mail campaigns, and product packaging to make their audience aware of the brand's presence on social media and bring in the right kind of audience to the platform.

Many marketers also believe that the number of people in the community is equal to the success of the social media campaign, which is not true. It is more important to have the right kind of people in the community than just having them and having random people just joining the community. For example, if I am hosting a social media course with 100 participants and just because I hosted a free session, I could have 40 social media enthusiasts and the other 60 who are not aware of social media or who are not keen to pursue a career in this space. It might make more sense to the 40 individuals and sound boring to the rest of the 60 individuals how much ever good my content is. Those 60 will just want to leave the premises or will not concentrate what I am saying. Therefore, the number of likes or followers matter as long as they are relevant and targeted.

From my viewpoint of the businesses in India, most marketers or small-scale business individuals invite their friends and family members to join their business pages or their social media channels. It is a good step to increase the number of followers/fans; however, the response ratio to the content they post will be barely minimum. The followers and fans just join such pages not because they like

the subjects or the brands; but because they are the marketers' friends and they are just doing them a favor by joining their page and encouraging them.

Community Manager

A community manager is the initiator of conversations; he or she is the one who administrates the concerns of the audience on social media. The role of the community manager completely depends upon the brand's objectives of going on social media. It might be a customer service focused or marketing,

sales, legal, HR, product development, or a mix of all of these. A community manager sets specific targets and plans daily schedule of posting updates to engage audience; he or she is responsible for administering comments and charting out the weekly plan of activities to actively run the social media channels of the brand. A community manager is also denoted as a social media marketing manager and is creative enough to distinguish activities compared to that of the other brands and competitors on social media.

With established brands on internet in India, the position of 'online community manager' is not a new position. However, this is a new position for many businesses that are planning to develop a platform to interact with their customers. Many small and medium businesses hire community managers who can engage, cultivate, and manage the social media channels by offering the finest service through various forms using internet as a business extension. Established brands prefer to consider these roles in the middle level management and are meant for professionals with prior skills in customer service, social media, and marketing. Since social media space is mostly dominated by young minds, the one who comes with a good social media marketing experience is a rare case to see and that is why many small and medium enterprises in India forced to go for someone with less of experience.

A good social media community manager is the one who juggles between internal and external communication goals of an organization. He or she is also responsible for carefully laying out the company's holistic presence on the web. In India, career opportunity in social media is increasing and many organizations are hiring social media community managers to structure their business toward the customer and customer relationships. Doesn't your company still have an online community manager? It is right time to hire one!

Content

If I had not have rolled out the transparent piggy bank, I would not have really raised funds for the cause. The reason why I chose to pick a transparent piggy bank is for the act to showcase how transparency of communication is essential in social media. The content you post on the web are transparent enough and so are the contributions by the customers' similar to people dropping in pennies in the transparent piggy bank. Everyone can see everything.

It is often said that content is the king of social media and so is the reality! Sometimes, content by itself forms a community; for example, the song Why This Kolaveri from the Tamil movie "Moonu" did not really have to have a community; however, the song went viral and there where many communities created later by the fan club of the song, conversations were triggered by them, and it was a complete viral phenomenon. Social media may be a free platform (to an extent); however, a brand's establishment on this platform does not lead to success quickly. A brand needs to hold persistence and the right strategy with some fantastic contents to execute a social media campaign. In

addition, to get the strategy right, one needs to have good content and the following are various reasons for the same:

Good content

- creates and adds value to the conversation
- drives interest
- shows you care
- positions you as a trusted advisor
- is authentic and believable
- makes your brand a thought leader

Pennies/True Value Received

In the act, when the transparent piggy bank is sent on rounds, people start contributing to it. Some contribute less, some contribute more, some prefer to skip, and some definitely share the experience with their friends. In a social media marketing scenario when content is posted on the platforms, some audience react to it and some do not. The audience who majorly react would also share about the incident with their friends. There could be many reasons why people would have dropped a penny or why audience/customers contribute in the social media marketing scenario, they are as follows:

- **Platform Impact**—The impact of the platform and the general mindset of the audience associated with it. For example, people on Facebook usually tend to like, comment, and share as that is the limitation of the users of what they can do with a brand's page and they follow these steps if they like the content posted by a brand. Similarly, on Twitter, retweeting or responding back is the maximum a customer can do for a brand or create conversations about the brand to achieve some value out of the relationship. It also depends upon the community and the kind of social media positioning the brand does. For example, if a brand's objective is to use social media for customer service and the marketers spread awareness about it, they will see people posting their concerns and queries on their social media platforms. If their aim is to generate leads, they will run campaign accordingly. Similarly, in the piggy bank act, people dropped pennies just because they were at the hotel under 'Echovme's Learn Social Media Banner' and wanted to learn about social media marketing.
- **Content Impact**—It was made very clear that the money will go to an NGO and not for my partying and this could be one of the prime reasons of contribution. This message went along with visually appealing packaging, which is 'Transparent Piggy Bank.' Remember that in a social media marketing scenario, content plays more importance than anything else to obtain audience's feedback. Today, visually appealing contents such as video and pictures get more popularity on social media channels than a plain blog post and that is the reason why you will notice brands on Facebook prefer to post updates along with images, as image attracts the audience to react. Pinterest, a social networking site is completely based on pictures and people first get attracted to the image, they will then be lead to the information page on clicking on the image. It is very important to understand that the content needs to be decided depending upon the community, audience, and the platform chosen for marketing.

To avail pennies (value) from the customers or prospects a smart marketer designs the content considering the age, gender, time they prefer to get on social networking sites, language preferred, expectations with the brand, status of the brand awareness, market penetration, emotional quotient of the market, and lot more. Remember that in social media marketing, your

context of content and messaging are highly important. One needs to be transparent and cohesive when vouching for responses from the audience. Since the communities formed on social networking sites are owned by brands and the accessing of the channel is a cost-free solution, brands will have to test their audience with different tones and trials of communications to understand what really their audience like. Considering the feedback analysis using analytic tools, brand managers can decide what content works well for their brands and what does not. This can help them streamline their future tone of communication.

- **People Impact**—With reference to the piggy bank act, I have always noticed that when the first person drops a penny, most of the audience in the room also follows that; sometimes, when the first person starts with a larger amount, the others do follow the same. Similarly, in the social media scenario, a content that gets more feedback attracts lot more other people. For example:

1. On Facebook, when a brand posts a update that goes viral with its fans commenting, liking, and sharing it, the friends of the fans get to know about it and thus they start reacting to the same, as it has reached them via their friends (who in reality turn out to be brand advocates unknowingly or willingly). Thus, an update that gets more number of comments and likes usually attracts audience and they tend to participate just because they want to be a part of the viral, share their opinion, and be part of the viral conversations.
2. On Twitter, when a hashtag is introduced, brands usually vouch for influencers to use it, as they have more number of followers and have stronger impact on the audience; through them, it reaches the mass and as people start participating in the hashtag-based activity, the words just spread through their followers. That is why you will notice a lot of Indian brands create a common hashtag-based contest, encouraging people to participate and spread the word about their new product for a free give away to the winner—this just spreads like wildfire. On another note, people usually participate in the conversation that occurs between people they follow and that shows conversation or a mass impact does matter.
3. On YouTube and SlideShare, apart from the context and quality of the content, audience also get attracted to the number of views that video or presentation has obtained. The video that obtains more viewers also obtains more comments, likes, and dislikes.

In a social media marketing scenario, each platform has its own judging variable. Most of these variables are driven by content. If a content is attractive, the wavelength of variables increases with people; however, if the content is just plain, the wavelength dies with time. The wavelength in the context of a content can be defined as its ability to go viral and reach more number of audience. Remember that each platform on social media has its own set of variables, which denotes directly to the reaction of the audience and that ultimately impacts the wavelength of the content. Anyways, it is also very important to the kind of audience in a social media marketing scenario that usually favors the wavelength of the content.

They are distinguished in three different levels: Known - Unknown - Popular ones. Each level is explained in detail below:

The Known Ones

In a small- or medium-scale business, they are individuals who are closely connected to the business or the leader. They could be members from your family or friends group or loyal customers who are closely associated with the business. In a large-scale business, these people are employees, well-wishers, prospects, customers, and the loyal members existing in the pre-built community on social

networking platforms. If a brand's objective is to make its content go viral, they are the first ones who react to the content or requested to react to it. They can be also called 'primary individuals.'

The Unknowns Ones

First-Level Unknown Individuals

As the content goes viral among the primary individuals, they spread the word about it to these unknown ones. They are usually people in the network of the primary individuals who are closely connected to a brand. They are not directly connected to the brand; however, they get to know about it through their friends and react to the content considering the participation or references made by their friends. This can be termed as a chain reaction, which usually takes place in word-of-mouth marketing. Through these unknown ones, it reaches to their friends and the process goes on in the same fashion on the same platform.

Second-Level Unknown Individuals

They are basically those individuals who pick the information from one platform and share it on another and try to create an impact and make the word reach through similar chain fashions on different social networks.

The Popular Ones

Since the content goes viral on different social networking sites, it grabs the attention of the media, influencers, thought leaders, and bloggers through them and the content reaches to the mass. For example, the song Why This Kolaveri first grabbed the attention of radio stations, then reached the news channels, newspapers, music channels, etc., and finally it reached the masses through these popular channels. Similarly, when a content posted by Ticketgoose.com on Chennai-based MTC Bus issue went viral on Facebook, which was shared by more than 12,000 individuals, the story got picked up and published by a journalist from *The Times of India*. There are many such case studies that you will come through in the later chapters.



Social Media Business Ecosystem and Non-Social Media Marketing

If I logically or say ethically look at the concept of 'social media marketing,' I would say that it is an act of 'spamming' by brands. Social networking sites were initially meant for people to network and interact; brands took this as an opportunity to sneak into the conversations and start offering services. Thanks to Mark Zuckerberg for considering a business value for Facebook by allowing brands to have business pages on it. There are various Facebook features that are closely associated with business and together they make Facebook a complete package for businesses when compared to the other social networking sites. After Facebook offered IPO, there have been many changes or inventions made especially for businesses to use Facebook.

Twitter was primarily meant for celebrities to be a 140-character messaging service, which was then followed by the general public, and brands, and then followed by new features for brands where Twitter came up with promoted tweets, new brand pages, promoted trends etc.

With sites such as SlideShare, the features such as pro-account integrated with lead generation form came later when SlideShare became one of the active social networking sites. However, YouTube has been fixed to the sponsored video and the AdSense models since its inception.

Well, each of these social networking sites are becoming popular by selling their space or creating opportunities for businesses and increasing their revenue streams. Many businesses have been smartly using social media from various perspectives of business and not just marketing.

Be There Where Your Customers Are

As stated, the objectives of social networking sites were to help people stay connected. Marketing was the next angle that happened knowingly and unknowingly. Knowingly because brands started creating their presence on social networking platforms and started communicating with the audience and unknowingly because customers started talking about the positive and negative experiences they started having with brands. India is now pepping up to the concept 'Be there where your customers are and where your prospects are going to be.' 'Social media is where the urban youth populace of India is dwelling and as stated earlier in Chapter 2, we have seen every form of communication growing in India and social media is just in the beginning of the growth phase.

Social Media Is an Opportunity!

The cosmopolitan businesses seek opportunities and Social Media is an "opportunity." More than marketing, Social Media is about establishing your brand's presence in a way that can be considered

as virtual office connecting customers, well-wishers, stakeholders, prospects, employees and others through one single platform. In the past, we had only internet properties such as website or blog; however, now, we have social media channels customized to our businesses. Social media is an opportunity because the young today dwell on these sites and you are officially allowed to enter in their most comfortable zones through social media channels.

Social Media Business Ecosystem—Mix and Match!

Till date, I have not been able to understand why the term ‘social media marketing’ was coined. Today, a brand uses social media not only to promote their products, announce their deals, or generate leads, but also to talk about their staff/employees and opening of a new store, distribute press releases, listen to customer queries, manage relationships with customers, engage prospects, announce work opportunities, create a strong online presence, etc., which make them become thought leaders. A brand’s relationship with social media is a mix and match. Depending on the brand’s convenience and objectives, social media platforms can be customized.

Social Media Business Ecosystem

Social media business ecosystem is a concept that I strongly believe in. Considering social media for business should not be the point to ponder for the marketing wing alone; going on social media is a decision that needs to be taken considering the opinion of every wing of the business such as Marketing, Public Relations, Business Development, Human Resource Management, Customer Service, and Finance.

After looking at various brands using Social Media with different objectives and my perspectives on Social Media Business Ecosystem, I conclude with the ring system in [Figure 4.1](#).



Figure 4.1: Rings of Social Media Business Ecosystem.

[Figure 4.1](#) shows how they are all closely interconnected and entangled to the businesses getting

established on social media. In the following chapters, each ring has been considered to be explained in detail with relevant case studies from India and with some guidelines.

Social Media and HR



Figure 5.1: Employees on Social Media.

In a typical corporate scenario, IT and marketing are — two departments that quickly adapt to change. On the one hand, IT adapts to the change because the objective of IT is to protect the department from data theft and protect its knowledge base; however, on the other hand, marketing strives to adapt a novel idea to market its product in an innovative and cost-effective way. HR department in an organization was usually the last to adapt the change mostly because HRs were the keepers of policy, procedure, order, and employee until social media changed the game.

From networking with established or new contacts, hiring employees or communicating with both present and prospective employees, social media usage can improve your world in ways that HRs never thought about, a few years ago. There are various ways that HRs in India are using social media; some of which have been discussed in this chapter.

Employer Branding via Social Media

A few years back, posting online about official parties and fun outings with the team was a tough job and required a lot of technical help. The websites designed in the past were primarily focused on some business-related content, search engine optimization, and banner advertisements. Other than hosting a careers' page on the website it did little to promote the company brand to potential candidates. Companies in the past preferred to post the job description and requirement on their websites and advertise it on job portals such as naukri. com and timesjob.com.

However, today, the process has become much easier with the advent of social media. People do not require a technical person to post things up and at the same time the information gets quickly disseminated via social networking sites unlike posting on some site and waiting for the people to access the updates on the humane side of an organization. Social media has made it easy for small and

large organizations to harness the power of internet to connect with prospective employees and use innovative ways to attract talent.

Remember that if the HRs in an organization don't use social media, their employees would anyways do (Refer [Figure 5.1](#))! The internet world is now allowing HRs to peep into the personal life or after-office-hour life of an employee; do not really let the opportunity go.

The most distinguishing feature of social media is its ability to make your brand stand out; nowadays, most of the service-based companies in India, which are available on social media, highlight their work culture via social media. Generally, employers' presence on social media helps them communicate with their employees and at the same time helps the employees and prospects know about the work culture of the organization via social networking channels.

Ramco Systems, a Chennai-based global cloud computing and ERP services provider, on its official Facebook page, posted how its employees celebrated green day by wearing costumes made of greens along with pictures, which not only engaged its employees but also attracted prospective employees, well-wishers, customers, and a lot more people.

Though Ramco System's Facebook page is positioned as a cloud computing community, its employees tag the brand page whenever they feel good about that they are working with Ramco.

Similarly, on Echovme's official Facebook page, [Facebook.com/echovme](https://www.facebook.com/echovme), we have been posting updates on parties, book-reading habits, night outs, photos of lunch, and the photos of various fun events that we host on Facebook, which helps a prospective employee to understand the kind of work culture we share and at the same time attracts the customers on the happy atmosphere we have. After all in a services organization what matters more is the happy employees that ultimately result with happy customers.

A Delhi-based social media agency called 'Iffort' has positioned its Facebook presence as work, which shows the creative side of an employee, the hidden side at work, the pictures of parties, and lot other fun elements at work that help position the agency that stands for its creative beliefs and distinct values. Refer [Facebook.com/iffort](https://www.facebook.com/iffort).

Many employers in India are really concerned about their brands' reputation online maintained by their employees and now have a social media policy in place for their employees, which showcases do's and don'ts of social media considering company's sentiments and information security and that is why many employees in the IT companies crib about blocking access to Facebook and Twitter in their organizations.

Believe it or not, HR managers are no different than marketers, as they really need to find potential ways to attract and recruit talent on a timely basis and position their brand in a way that showcases it as a 'people's preferred brand.' Though almost all the top Indian IT companies such as Cognizant, Infosys, Wipro, HCL, and TCS have a visible presence on social media, as the corporate companies, they also have a separate presence on these social networking sites for their career section and as the actual team members behind the corporate page are marketers, the members behind the career pages are people from the HR wing of the organization. These are some of the HR-related Twitter handlers of top Indian IT companies: @JoinCognizant, @HCLCareers, @HCLTech-Jobs, @InfosysCareers, and @WiproCareers. Of all these brands, @Cognizant has a very visible and conversable presence on Twitter and HCL (www.facebook.com/HCLTech.Careers), Wipro (www.facebook.com/WiproBPOCareers), and www.facebook.com/WiproBPOCareers) have been

engaging with the audience and answering queries of prospective recruits on Facebook too.

Social Media Is a Cost-Effective Recruiting Tool

Look at the following ‘screenshot’ (Figure 5.2) of the e-mail that I received from the HR Lead of Infosys a few days back on LinkedIn.



Figure 5.2: LinkedIn Social Media.

Well, this came as a surprise to me as I had not applied for a social media position in Infosys; I did not communicate on any of the social media platforms that I am looking for a job; however, a senior associate lead talent acquisition from leading IT company had contacted me by searching my profile on LinkedIn using terms such as social media India and social media Chennai.

The LinkedIn search feature is well designed in such a way that an HR can easily access a candidate's profile even before he or she applies for the job or even if he or she is not interested; at the same time, it helps the individuals keep their profile active and credible enough to attract HRs. LinkedIn has a smart tool of people search that helps.

Currently, LinkedIn is being used extensively in India by more than 20 million professionals; it has now started competing with all the leading job portals such as naukri.com and timesdeal.com. Though the competitiveness has just begun, LinkedIn as a professional social networking site can give them a tough fight. Job portals meet just one objective while searching a job (for the employees) and look for candidates (for the employers) on social media; these are two opportunities that are developed as the brand's visibility starts increasing.

On LinkedIn, it becomes easier for a recruiter to search for a candidate (Figure 5.3), as the portal is being extensively used for professional networking and at the same time a candidate's profile is updated with their latest information and recommendations. On LinkedIn, candidates cannot take the risk to misrepresent their employment history on their profile as LinkedIn allows companies and legitimate employees to flag their profiles or take them out of the system for good.

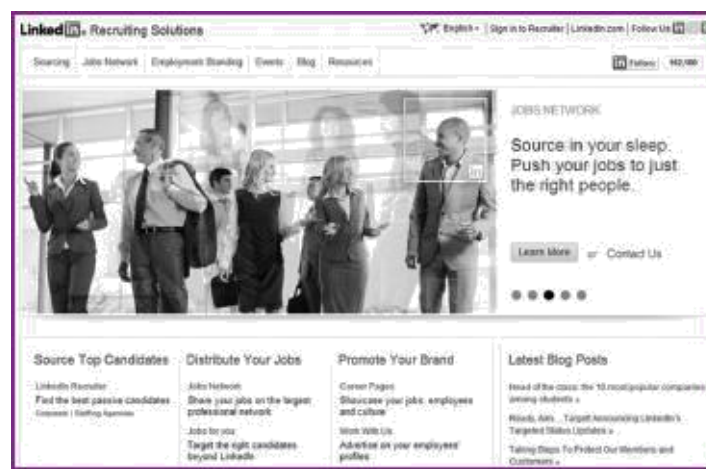


Figure 5.3: LinkedIn Recruiting Solutions.

Through LinkedIn, a company can hunt for candidates, targeting different geographies at the minimal cost, share their jobs in the recommended professional network, host a career page showcasing jobs, employees, and culture, and advertise on the prospects profile using ‘work with us’ feature. This is just the value of one social networking site.

However, on Twitter, syndicating a tweet to the mass becomes easier if your brand or the one who tweets about it is influential. For example, I was just recently looking for a social media enthusiast individual from Chennai to work with a leading Chennai-based NGO ([Figure 5.4](#)).



Figure 5.4: Tweet by Sorav for recruitment.

When I tweeted my requirement, within a few minutes 28 people retweeted it making it reach thousands of people in fractions of seconds. Luckily, I had also sourced a few fantastic resumes via this incident. In a similar situation, when I was looking for a content writer executive, I received several resumes via Twitter and they also gave me a sample articles on the topics of my choice to further evaluate them and we closed two such resumes as our full-time employees working distantly. In a similar fashion, these requirements are posted on Facebook through the career pages of brands, which reach in a visually appealing way to the mass.

On LinkedIn, there are various groups that can also help in recruitment process or sourcing for candidates; eight writers associated with Echovme today are sourced from a job requirement posted on the “Content Writer—Technical Writer” (refer to [Figure 5.5](#)) group on LinkedIn. Similarly, a recruiter can find many other groups relevant to jobs, HR and industries.



Figure 5.5: LinkedIn groups.

The best part of sourcing candidates via tweet or posting a requirement on relevant LinkedIn groups is that they are completely cost-effective solutions; however they require influential social media presence to derive fruitful results.

Social Media Helps in Background Check of a Candidate

A Mumbai-based HR consulting and recruiting firm called ‘Sutralite’ regularly uses social media to do a credibility check of a candidate before sending the profiles to the client and sometimes client demands social media credibility especially when it is for communications specialist position. A social media background screening is a popular trend these days among HRs.

Many people who are available on social networking and casually comment or share contents may not even realize that the updates and comments made

by them are public (at times) and can be found by search and that is why it is recommended to avoid posting abusive comments or sexually explicit pictures on web.

Today, a social media search is not just used to find candidates but also to allow the employer to look underneath and find out who the person really is. For instance, if a person’s social media activities on any of the social networking sites show threats of violence or inappropriate sexual activity, a recruiter may avoid hiring the candidate especially when the position is aiming to interact with children or the aged. Similarly, any HR man-ager would be keen on knowing if a candidate has been cribbing a lot about his or her present employer and has made unprofessional comments about the coworkers or past employers.

Through social media, an employer/owner generally checks the followings.

- Candidate’s style of communication on social networking platforms; it is judged based on tweets, status updates, blog posts, videos, and presentations. Sometimes interesting content may fetch the candidate a job, especially, when the candidate is positioning himself or herself as a thought leader in the Industry.
- Candidate’s updates about his or her present employer or past employers, coworkers and involvements.
- If a candidate shares a lot of personal information or too much of professional information during working hours, it shows how the candidate is dedicated toward his or her job.
- Candidate’s photographs and videos, how he or she portrays himself or herself to the world, and

what kind of personal and professional lives he or she has. This generally helps them decide on the personality.

- Candidate's credibility is checked via the recommendations made on LinkedIn and the number of people following him or her on Twitter, kinds of comments posted on the blog, and the number of reader base/ viewer base to his or her online channels.
- Accuracy of the information posted about job, qualification, and experience. Mostly, candidates are found faulty here.

Candidates with 'I-do-not-care' attitude mostly consider social networking sites with limitations on subjects and discussion points so as to avoid the 'first- level' block on social media while they apply for the job; at the same time, employers should not avoid doing a social media screening to understand the candidate completely. However, the conclusions made by the recruiter may not be true sometimes!

Social Media Favors Innovation in Recruiting

This is applicable to both candidates and employers, as both can use this platform to showcase innovation in the process. Today, social media is not only used externally to attract or evaluate talent, but also used internally to engage audience and recognize talent. Deciding to adopt social media for recruitment itself is the first step towards innovation, as this is something that brands would not have experienced before.

Case Study 5.1: How “Miller—High Life” used Facebook for Recruiting Talent: In most of the case related to social media and HR, you might have noticed that brands use their company's identity prominently and runs a standard recruitment process even on social media channels, i.e., by posting requirement, evaluating a candidate, etc. “Miller—High Life” was in search of candidates who live by the motto “work hard party harder” and it chose Facebook as its tool to do a nationwide search through gamification.

Case Study 5.2: What it did?

- “Miller—High Life” created a Facebook and Twitter page “The Coolest Job” (Figure 5.6) and Facebook application to attract and interact with the audience without revealing its identity.
- It used this campaign integrated both offline and online simultaneously by launching it on media by running a banner across websites; the identity of the employer was not issued.



Figure 5.6: Poster.

- The brand also invested in traditional newsprint and radio ads to increase the visibility of th

campaign (Figure 5.7).

A renowned global beverage company with a presence in more than 75 countries is launching one of its flagship brands in the country and is looking for qualified individuals who embody and endorse the brand's spirit - "Work Hard, Party Hard"

THE COOLEST JOB IN THE WORLD

Qualification Have you been walking the earth for over 21 years? Do you work till your last breath and still come alive in the club? Are you the kind who meets deadlines by the day and **best friends** by night... We have a job just for you!

Description It's not easy. You'd have to travel far and wide to the **latest clubs**. Sometimes when work gets real hectic, you'd have to attend high profile **parties** and have your pictures taken with celebrities. 'Coz this time, the spotlight's on **YOU!**

Perks Apart from going to the most happening parties, you get to play the perfect **host** throwing the best bashes in town! Oh by the way, you don't need to quit your **current job**, just loosen your tie after work each day and get down to party the night away. All this and you even get paid. Not much. Just over a **lac** every month.

We know it's tough. But someone's gotta do it!
Feel up to it?

Figure 5.7: Coolest job in the world.

- On Facebook, the brand built a cool application that allowed people to post their pictures, which showed their 'work hard party harder' attitude.

Click **Like** to know more

Miller HIGH LIFE

THE COOLEST JOB

FEATURED RECRUITS

Shirin Saman Satish Raga Mayank Agarwal Abhishek Jain

Privacy Policy | General Terms & Conditions | Contest Conditions

This promotion is in no way sponsored, endorsed or administered by, or associated with, Facebook. You are providing your information to CoolestJob and not to Facebook. The information you provide will only be used for getting in touch with you to inform you about the contest result and information about our brand.

Visitors and fans to this language must be 21 years of age or above or of the age of majority as stipulated in various statutes applicable to your jurisdiction. If you are under the age of 21 years or not of the age of majority as stipulated under various statutes applicable to your jurisdiction, whichever is higher, please do not attempt to "LIKE" this page.

Go To APP for The Coolest Job.

What is The Coolest Job?

To attend the most happening parties, be the perfect host for the best bashes in town, wear the coolest crown and be the "Talk of the Town". All this and you get paid more than a lakh rupees a month! Claim What you don't even need to quit your current job! Become more...

Do I qualify?

- ☐ If you live by the motto of "Work Hard, Party Hard"
- ☐ If you are between 21 - 30 years of age
- ☐ If you can handle the spotlight

What next?

- ☐ Click on "Apply now" and "Join" the application
- ☐ Complete your profile
- ☐ Finish your resume
- ☐ Go viral about it

Shortlisted candidates will be contacted for the final round of selection.

Sounds exciting? So hurry up and apply for The Coolest Job. Call for entries closes on 28th September 2011.

Go To App

By clicking I agree to the Terms and Conditions

FEATURED RECRUITS

Shirin Saman Satish Raga Mayank Agarwal Abhishek Jain

Figure 5.8: Application on Facebook.

- The application was inbuilt with a video that was uploaded on YouTube ([Figure 5.8](#)), which allowed people to learn more about the campaign in a visually appealing way. A voting system was also integrated with the application, which allowed candidates to promote themselves by unlocking missions of reaching more people, getting recommendations, and uploading part pictures. More actions leading to more scores helping brand scrutinizing profiles.

Response of the Campaign

- The campaign received tremendous response from the audience across the country. In 60 days, the employer had received 36,098 applications and about 1,10,000 ‘work hard party harder’ people on their ‘The Coolest Job’ Facebook community.
- 64 candidates were shortlisted, of which four became, work hard party harder, ambassadors.
- The community is still active on Facebook with about 2,45,000 people and they are now running the show from different angles of marketing and branding.

(Source: <http://www.geekcreativeagency.com/tcj2/>)

Tips for Employers Considering Social Media

There are different social networking tools and each of these tools works as messengers for the HR department in different ways ([Table 5.1](#)).

Table 5.1: Communication Tools and Objectives from HR Viewpoints

Communication tools	Objectives from HR viewpoint
LinkedIn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having updated company profile on LinkedIn allows candidates to view your company activity and request referrals from contacts within their personal network. • LinkedIn job features allow the employers to source for resume via posting job openings. • LinkedIn search feature can help the managers of the employers to find the right candidate or relevant contacts. • LinkedIn groups relevant to specific industry helps the employers to recruit freelancers or full-time employees. • LinkedIn also helps the employers to evaluate a candidate's accuracy of information, recommendations received, and the level of contacts on LinkedIn even before interviewing the candidate. • There are many HR-specific groups that HR managers can join to interact with likeminded individuals from similar industry.
Facebook/Google+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook allows the employers to position themselves as people's choice brand. • Facebook allows the employees and prospect access to all the personal and minute information of an organization such as work culture, parties, events, and outings. • Facebook allows people to access all the milestones achieved and helps the employees position their brand stronger. • Just being on Facebook allows the employers to be visible and be tagged in the updates made by their employees or prospective recruits. Thus, hearing what they feel. • The employers can run recruitment campaigns by creating applications or integrating a requirement form on the landing page and running Facebook advertisements to the specific demographic.
Twitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twitter helps the employers disseminate information to larger audience via influential tweeters. • As there are about 16 million Twitter users in the country, the employers can tweet content about why their companies are a great places to work by sharing information about corporate and financial scenarios, CSR activities, training programs, fun events for team building, and accolades received. • The employers can discreetly follow their employees and understand the kind of conversation they pick directly and indirectly about the organization. • The employers can also tweet about their job postings or link their job postings on Twitter.
Blog, YouTube, and SlideShare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are the content platforms that help content to be preserved for historic evidence in a detailed way in blogs, visually appealing and interactive way on YouTube and SlideShare. • In detail, one can show the work culture via video and encourage recruits to submit their resume in video or presentation format via YouTube or SlideShare. • Create content in text, video, and presentation formats that give recruits a multi-dimensional perspective of why they should consider a company for employment opportunities. • And to take advantage of more of these, whatever shared here can be shared on other social networking sites.
Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The employer should encourage their employees to use social media, as they are potential referrals of their brand; as an employer showcasing enough enthusiasm encourages others to indicate that their organization is a great place to work. • An employer should not complicate their social media policy and give their employees the freedom to talk about the brand on social networking sites by clearly communicating their expectations in social media policy.



Opportunities in Marketing

Marketing is a specialization and a choice; however, every individual is born with a marketing ability, and we all have practiced marketing tactics in some form or the other in our lifetime. Sometimes we try to brand ourselves and position amongst others in a corporate world, sometimes we tend to dress up well to impress and attract the opposite gender, and many a times we have strategized and packaged ourselves enough to win a competition. This is a fair play! “Life is marketing. And marketing is life of any business.” If you run a business and do not MARKET your product/services, you shall NEVER succeed.

Social media as an activity starts with social networking that goes through the route of personal branding and if you are an entrepreneur you will also end up figuring out getting your business on these channels. There are hundreds of small and large enterprises who have invested their time, resources, money, and brains in executing innovative and smart social media marketing, and in this chapter we shall look into those various components:

- Branding and design opportunities
- Messaging and value based communication opportunities
- Opportunities to showcase innovation in marketing

Choosing new platforms

Driving enthusiasm technically

The marketing mixture

Novelty in customer engagement

Scope of listening

- Customer service - A way forward
- Social Media - A story telling
- Social advertisements
- Experiential marketing and social media wedding

Opportunity 1: Branding and Design Opportunities

The finest of all marketing advantages that social media provides to a brand is its positioning and opportunity to create awareness through various means. The first thing you will notice that any brand do on social media is setting up the design elements of the channel in a way that syncs with the branding guidelines of the organization or the present offline or online campaign and strategies. Sometimes it depends completely upon the target audience, the situation, and the texture of the business.

Fastrack, the popular youth accessory brand in India, has a very old presence on social media in India.

Fastrack was one of the first Indian brands that crossed 1 lakh fans, and today it claims to have more than 40 lakh fans on Facebook and 12,000+ followers on Twitter. Fastrack till date ensures to aptly use the landing pages, logo, time line banner on Facebook, background on Twitter, and images used while updating content to engage the audience completely in line with the seasonal theme of the brand in the offline world. A full-fledged timely connection with its offline promotion helps customers on social media understand what the brand is up to. With 77+ different profile pictures posted on Facebook since 14 March 2008 itself indicates that Fastrack is one of those very few Indian brands that understands the importance of social media branding. Be it Virat Kohli or Genelia as the ambassador of the brand, they all have their regular displays on the social media branding elements.

Brands usually adapt to different design elements suiting a particular theme, season, festival, or promotional campaign. Profile picture is stagnant in all possible social media channels; however, other branding specifications with different social networking sites differ. Like the clothes you wear to meet your first date or to attend a job interview, a smart looking social profile creates the first impression and is definitely taken seriously.

Tips

- Add a lot of creative touch on regular basis to your social profile, you increase the chance of creating a charm around your designs on web
- Keep your design in sync with the offline theme
- Follow the norms and specifications of the design as per the rules of social networking sites
- Keep it unique and clean

Opportunity 2: Messaging and Beyond

Social media allows brands to host their communication channels for free and promote it in an inexpensive way. Today many businesses in the world have considered the usage of social media for their brands. Social media helps your brand's message get popularity, reaches with ease, creates elements of interactivity, and allows you to communicate at your comfort, liberty, and control.

What Fastrack cannot do via traditional channels or via physical presence it tries on social media. It adds the sexy, naughty element to its communication, branding and regular engagements to appeal the youth segment—the actual target audience of the brand. Example of the engagement (Figure 6.1) is as follows:

“Both words begin with ‘B’. Girls like one kind, guys like the other. Bags and bikinis.

Summer Bags from Fastrack—<http://bit.ly/L1efQt>”



Figure 6.1: Summer Bags from Fastrack (example).

On the other hand, when brands are trying to go little naughty to attract the youth segment, the popular baked chips brand “Hippo” keeps a third party tone making “Hippo” an imaginary character/mascot in the conversations, which is also the case in packaging and traditional way of advertising. Though the messaging is the extension of its offline branding, the communication through social media is not just limited to the brand alone; however, the Hippo shares its personal view in his way on current affairs too (Figure 6.2).



Figure 6.2: Hippo on Twitter (example).

Messaging on social media can be considered out of control as you are not really given a specific time or allocation of a particular space to be aligned with while conveying your message. While you are trying to position your brand on social media, your choice of social networks and messaging in a particular topic of your business specialization is highly essential.

Case Study 6.1: How Zara Tapas Bar Made People Drink and Drive Responsibly

When Yamaraj Went Viral!

On Saturday the 16th, our Facebook and Twitter accounts had one common post from friends (Figur 6.3); a reality video of Yamaraj inside people’s car, leaving them baffled. An initiative taken b Chennai’s Tapas bar Zara’s with the Chennai City Traffic Police, it was made to create awareness fo ‘drunk and driving’. Titled “Drink and Be Driven,” the campaign’s focus was to remind peopl leaving the bar of Yamaraj, widely known as the God of death in Hindu mythology who is considere scary. Without taking their lives, however, Yamaraj blesses them with a “Drink and Be Driven” card prompting visitors to hire a driver to drive them home. The video, within hours of being uploaded o YouTube clinched up to 85,000 likes and became immediately popular, having gone viral. Elicitin numerous responses, the initiative received widespread attention and made it to the newspapers th next day. Rathish Subramaniam of ad agency McCann Erickson who conceptualized the ad said th idea was to drive home the point that drunk driving is not safe. Having had to capture the reaction o people coming out of the bar and seeing the lord of death in their car was not a daunting task for Mr Subramaniam. “Many reacted emotionally and the ones in the video are only the subtle reactions” h added. Having dangerous roads and ones no stranger to those who frequent, Chennai has had 141 accidents in 2012, the highest in the country.



Figure 6.3: When Yamraj went Viral.

Tips

- Test different facets of your brand’s avatar to understand what message or content works well for your customers on social media.
- Choose a particular subject or topic in relevance to your industry to keep your positioning right and not confusing.
- Be informative but not boring.
- Be humorous but not insulting.
- Do not use abusive language.

Opportunity 3: Value-based Positioning Via Contents

“Value-based positioning” is the best opportunity social media can offer to any business. “Value-based positioning” is either not possible or very expensive to maintain on traditional media channels. Social media helps brands create their own editorials, which is very much handy and allows live interaction with the audience. Many businesses miss out on this chunk of social media marketing practice for their brands; they rather spend on announcing promotional and sales offers or keep boasting about their products which put audience off at the end of the day.

Businesses today practice value-based communication in relevance to the industry they belong and also in relevance to the positioning they have in mind for their brand. These contents benefit audience in some way or the other at the same time creates a thought leadership image towards the brand in the space they are offering value-based content. Followings are some examples: (Table 6.1)

Table 6.1: Value-based Positioning Via Contents

Brands	Tools Used	Positioning
Lifelong Wellness	Facebook	Predicts and offers personalized guidance to delay lifestyle disorders based on genome testing. On Facebook this brand posts daily health tips and guidance on health food with regular offers on services and thus trying to position itself as a health care brand offering good valuable tips on healthy food. Value: Tips on Healthy Food.
Amrutanjan Health Care	Facebook and Twitter	Popular south Indian based traditional and age-old health care brand that produces products for chest congestion, headache relief, and more. On Facebook and Twitter, the brand offers regular tips on how to cure cough, cold, and headache using home-made remedies and some regular hygiene tips to prevent diseases. Value: Home-made remedies on cough, cold, and headache. Regular tips on prevention.
Chings Secret	YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook	Chings Secret was considered one of the active brands on digital media space in India. Chings Secret is a product brand selling Chinese sauces, noodles, and more. To attract audience, Chings Secret created a YouTube channel with its own cookery show showcasing how to cook Chinese food using Ching's products and thus attracting the women community of India on Facebook with regular cooking tips and videos of their homemade cookery show. Value: Cookery show and cooking tips.
Standard Chartered Bank—India	Facebook and Twitter	Unlike other brands, Standard Chartered Bank did not follow the typical process of establishing bank's presence on Facebook, however, rather created a food community on Facebook—India Food Explorer. With more than 650K fans the page regularly offer information on food joints and offered deals that can only be availed using Standard Chartered Credit cards. Value: Information on food joints and good deals.
Olay India	Facebook	A woman's bible is dos and don'ts in fashion, health, and beauty tips. Olay India clearly knows this and has beautifully and cleverly used this as a strategy for its Facebook business page. It is a well-known fact that talking only about yourself on your page is not going to help. Instead when you give importance to your audience and talk about something they would be interested in, they will be excited to listen to you. Beauty tips, much needed health tips, ways to denounce stress, simple quotes, things such as "laugh to feel healthy," "what is your favourite kind of music," etc. are posted by Olay India. It is in between everyday posts that Olay has updated about their products and has balanced both. The page has 651,727 likes overall with regular engagements.

Tips

- Be consistent on a particular subject to become a thought leader in the social media space.
- Build a community before adding content-based value.
- Be unique and regular.

- Encourage dialogue.

Opportunity 4: Innovation in Marketing

If your organization is traditional and you are opting to go for social media marketing, then you are adapting to innovation. In this era of competition, there are many businesses that are showcasing innovative practices in social media marketing. Considering social media in a different way is innovation that marketing could ever have, and considering innovation in social media marketing is uniqueness that industry can look upon to. Based on some examples here are some ways that a brand can consider going on social media in a unique way.

Choosing New Platforms

There are many social networking sites in the world today; some are popular globally, some are known in a particular nation or region, and some do not even get the limelight. With time some channels slowly become popular and brands trying to adapt a new marketing strategy show interest in trying new channels with an innovative idea of being present. Facebook and Twitter are choice of almost all the brands. How about being different?

Case Study 6.2:

Zomato, a popular restaurant review site, hosted a contest for Instagram users (a popular photo sharing network/app on smart phones) that asked participants to post pictures of the food they eat in the restaurants with the name of the dish, restaurant, and hashtag #ZOMATO in order to track the photographs. Though this contest could have been hosted on Twitter and Facebook too, believing in Instagram was definitely thoughtful.

Case Study 6.3:

Pepe Jeans India used Pinterest to display nine of its products and announced a contest via Facebook asking people to follow the brand on Pinterest and re-pin the photographs in order to win a freebie from the brand. Pinterest is an upcoming picture-based networking platform and brands turning toward it can be called an innovative thought. Slowly brands in India such as Lavasa, Croma, and Vivanta by Taj have started looking at using this picture-based social networking site from different perspectives of promoting destination, driving traffic, and engaging audience, respectively.

Case Study 6.4:

Sunburn, a popular music fest of Goa, used Google+ to host a “Sunburn Contest” encouraging people to share the Google+ page on their circles and answer why should they be at the Sunburn festival. The most creative and the most +1ed update received a free ticket to the event. Google+ was also used by the Bollywood movie Don 2 where the movie, actors (Priyanka Chopra, Farhan Akhtar, and Sharuk Khan) had their presence on Google+ sharing regular updates and hosting hangouts on Don 2, encouraging people to re-share them.

Fanta Rescue Operation on Facebook

Facebook's timeline was met with mixed emotions when it was launched in the late 2011. People cribbed and whined and complained about being thrust yet another change in the site without prior notifications. We are not sure how brands responded to the change; however, some brands creatively used it up to their advantage, such as Fanta.

Since 2012 was a leap year, Fanta ran a contest that brought its characters Fanta characters, Gigi, Lola, Floyd, and Tristan back from time on the 29th of February ([Figure 6.4](#)). The characters were hidden in the timeline, so that the audience could scroll down to the particular year and were made to like the post, thus bringing back the character to the present, 2012. The first character to be hidden was Gigi in the year 1956 so the audience had to like the post 1956 times!



Figure 6.4: Fanta Rescue Operation on Facebook.

Femina's Made by You Issue

Femina India took its magazine to the next level by deciding to crowdsource its stories. It campaigned on Facebook, Twitter, Video Ads, and Google+. An app was created on its Facebook page where it reached almost 21k followers. The articles were contributed by the audience; a Google+ hangout was created to make the audience at ease with the editors, and therefore everyone could join and interact with the editors and break ice between them. It was a huge hit, bringing in women from all over the country.

Google+ Sings Main Hoon Don for Don2



Figure 6.5: Google+ Sings Main Hoon Don for Don2.

Don2, instead of going the usual way by creating a Facebook page and marketing the movie, took a detour and opened a page on Google+ instead, paving the way for users to join the bandwagon (Figure 6.5). Joining in was actress Priyanka Chopra and director Farhan Akhtar. The page was circled by more than 9500 people. Later a Google+ hangout was hosted featuring Farhan Akhtar talking about the movie.

Driving Enthusiasm with Technology

Businesses that have a huge budget on social media marketing and believe in not just creating the regular engagements and conversations prefer to invest in a technology-based idea that can be integrated with social networking sites.

These applications are widely talked about and creates enormous amount of enthusiasm amongst the audience at the same time stands out due to innovation.



Figure 6.6: Titan on Facebook.

Case Study 6.5: Titan on Facebook

Titan on Facebook came up with exclusive application (Figure 6.6) to showcase its HTSE watches tha run on light.In order to check how the light works in the watch the audience had to throw light o

their webcam (mobile display/flash torch/night lamp/bulb, etc.) As soon as the app is powered, the screen gets brightened and the battery cell shown becomes green. Once you have powered the app you get to see all the latest models and descriptions of the HTSE watches (Figure 6.7). Select the one that you like and you are given two options “TRY NOW” and “KNOW MORE.” “TRY NOW” feature uses “Augmented Reality” that brings your chosen HTSE watch in front of your webcam display, and you can place your wrist and take a picture of it (refer the image below).

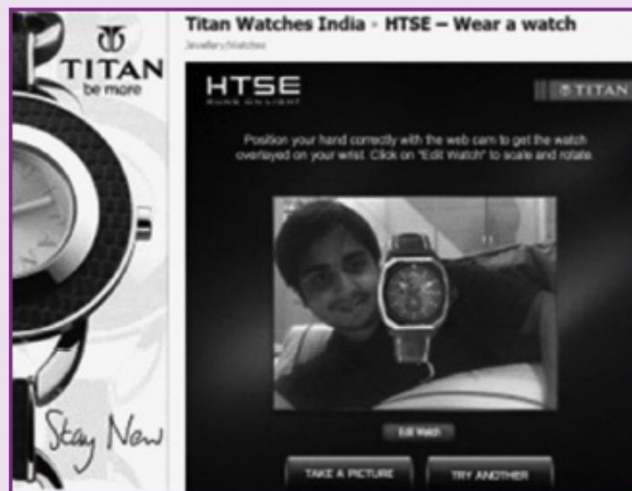


Figure 6.7: Titan App on Facebook.

Case Study 6.6: Barfi on YouTube

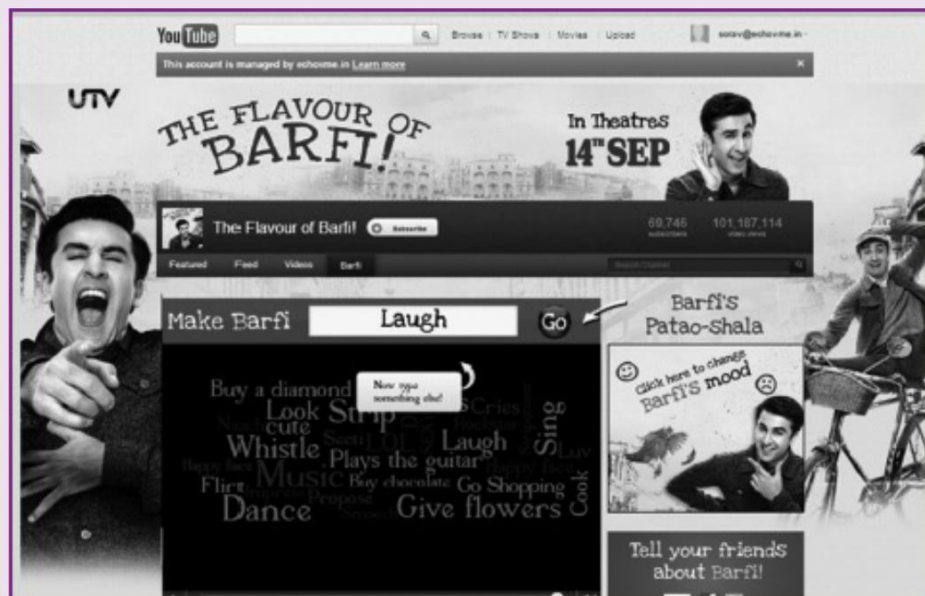


Figure 6.8: Barfi on Youtube.

Barfi A Bollywood movie directed by Anurag Basu starring the popular Ranbir Kapoor came up with an interesting concept on YouTube by creating a separate tab on the UTV Motion Picture's official YouTube channel titled “Barfi” which has a video showing the actor Ranbir Kapoor introducing his character “Barfi” in the movie. He later asks people to play with the character by typing the emotion they want Barfi to enact. Viewers can type cute, dance, give flowers, go shopping, plays the guitar and lot more (Refer Figure 6.8) to learn from Barfi how to impress girls in different ways and different expressions.

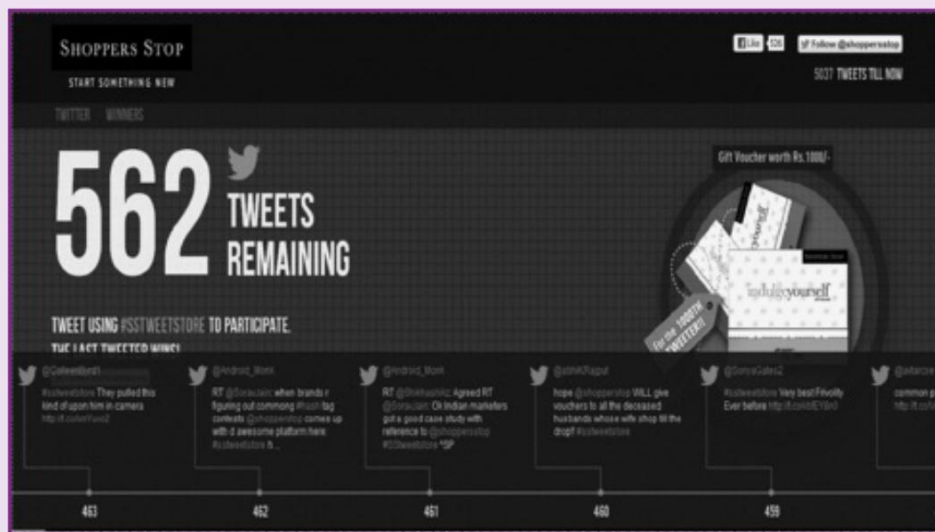
The choice of platform is not unique as almost all the Bollywood movies host their trailers on YouTube, however, customizing the channel and making it interactive by allowing people to type

expressions that they want the character to play is the innovation that has been very well though processed by the digital team.

Case Study 6.7: Shoppers Stop #SSTweetStore App on Twitter

@Shoppersstop on Twitter came up with amazing application and hashtag-based contest that stand unique when compared to all other hashtag-based contests till date in the country. This time the contest is not about quality of tweet or creativity of tweet or number of tweet, it was about probability of the tweet.

Figure 6.9: Shoppers Stop #SSTweetStore App on Twitter.



- @Shoppersstop came up with an external shoppers stop tweet store application first of its kind in India with an inbuilt Twitter API that can track all your tweets with #SStweetstore.
- @Shoppersstop announced giveaways for every 850th or 1000th tweet or was fixing up from the lot on different giveaways at different numbers for tweeters tweeting with #SStweetstore. For example the one displayed in the picture above (Figure 6.9) shows a gift voucher worth Rs 1,000 on 1000th tweet and there are about 500 tweets remaining to win that one up.
- The application is smartly built, and it tracks and displays every tweet with #SStweetstore. Every tweet is counted and a serial-wise number is allocated to every tweet, which is displayed on the tweet store. As the tweet reaches the bidding point or the announced number, the tweeter is declared a winner.

The contest resulted in numerous tweets on Twitter making the hashtag go literally viral and attracting more people to join the contest, and the application was much talked about in the marketing world.

The Marketing Mixture

Social media marketing works really well when your communication online and offline are well integrated with a right blend of communication that serves different purposes on Twitter and Facebook. Though many businesses try to co-relate their offline and online communication, some go in an extraordinary integration of different platforms and different objectives showcasing innovation.

Case Study 6.8: #Anything4Jetta Campaign

Volkswagen hosted a contest integrating the print media and social media. While launching its new

car “Jetta,” the brand advertised in almost all popular national dailies on the front page asking people “What will you do for all the new Jetta?” To answer the same, the readers had to log on to Twitter and tweet their responses with #Anything4Jetta. As per the contest rules, amazing responses were to be awarded daily with grand prize for the winner of final day. “The Jetta Itself”. The responses started pouring in thousands making #Anything4Jetta a trending topic in India on Twitter.

The trend #Anything4Jetta made the contest go really viral; more and more people participated in the contest and became aware of the new car. Thus brand met its purpose of making people aware about the launch of the car through the blend of traditional and social media - showcasing innovation in integration of distinct channels.

Case Study 6.9: #InViratsHead by Cinthol

Godrej Cinthol roped in the young and dynamic Virat Kohli for its campaign “Alive Is Awesome.” teaser campaign showing Virat in his dressing room just about to go into the field and Virat asks what do you think is going on in his head was released. People were asked to guess what went on in his head and tweet their guesses with #InViratsHead hashtag. A Facebook app was made to participate from Facebook. Leading to Cinthol’s microsite, one can participate in the contest from the site. The winner would receive an autographed merchandise, IPL tickets, iPads, iPods, and more.

The strategy was understandably successful as the hashtag trended for a couple of days with everyone tweeting with #InViratsHead. Going a step ahead from its previous “Alive Is Awesome” campaigns this time there was a twist. Few selected questions posted by audience during the contest were answered by Virat himself.

Novelty in Customer Engagement

The possibilities of customer engagement on day-to-day basis in reality require a lot of resources, uniqueness and expense in order to manage them. The primary or well, secondary objectives of most of the businesses on social media is to engage audience. Social media has given immense opportunities to the brands to showcase novel ideas to engage audience. Refer [case study 6.10](#)

Case Study 6.10: Gangs of Wasseypur—Bringing Characters Online

Gangs of Wasseypur a famous Bollywood movie having its presence on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube had ventured in something novel while launching the Part 2 sequel of the movie in order to engage the audience

and fans of the Part 1. This movie is based on a political scenario, the marketing agency of the movie created the virtual presence of the characters of the movie by creating Twitter profile and gathering support to win the election battle (a sequel of the movie) ([Figure 6.10](#)).

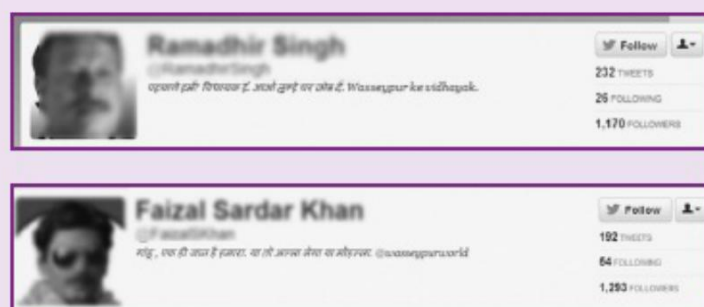


Figure 6.10: Bringing Characters Online.

The characters of the movie @RamdhirSingh, @FaizalSKhan on Twitter communicated with the tweeters in the same tone that they have it in the movie, thus making audience excited to participate and respond to them. In the reality world the actors usually go as characters in events and reality shows to promote the movie. And in social media world creating profiles of characters to engage audience was a really unique concept and clearly a winner.

Scope of Listening

Social media has become frustration/discussion/appreciation/complaint hub for people. Whether or not your business enters into social media, people will still talk about it. Small brands promote their presence on social media to get responses from their audience whereas, large enterprises are mostly discussed on social media that can be monitored using listening tools. Most of the brands today hire full-time resources or employee agencies to listen to what customers are talking about them so that the brand can respond to the customer concerns online. This is a complete innovation that social media can offer to your business, helping you control your reputation online and also offline.

Case Study 6.11: Amrutanjan Listening to People Suffering on Social Media

Relief (@WuhooRelief) and Roll On (@KickOutPain) from the Amrutanjan family found a unique way of positioning the brand on social media by using Twitter to offer home remedies first and their products later to people using words such as head ache, nose blocked, cough, cold, sore throat, sardi jhukaam, gale mai dard, and many other words representing cough, cold, and headache in different regional languages. Imagine you tweet to the world saying “Hey I am not feeling well my nose is blocked” and Amrutanjan from nowhere listens to your concern and shows sympathy towards you suffering and offers a remedy to you for quick relief, wouldn’t it be surprising? It definitely was for many Indians who tweeted about their sufferings and received a get well soon message and a quick home remedy from Amrutanjan.

In less than 2 months, the brand received more than 1000 retweets to their tweets showcasing concern. Below is the example of the conversation that was built only on the basis of listening: (Figure 6.11)



Figure 6.11: Conversations based on Listening.

Tips for innovation in Marketing

- Research and invest time in understanding new social networking sites, be an early adapter—think of something different on these platforms—have a social media expert in-house.
- Track relevant businesses in your industry space in different markets to understand what their strategies are to engage their customers in their market—Successful campaigns can be adapted to your country or market (with due credits)
- Have a small portion of your budget allocated towards developments of technical aspects of social media—Engaging audience with a technically strong application will help you engage and showcase innovation.
- There is no standard process to engage the audience. Test and play and understand what your audience really like.
- Set up listening channels to all those keywords relevant to your business, surprise people by hearing them and joining in a healthy conversation and thus creating your brand image.

Opportunity 5: Customer Service—A Way Forward

If your business's objective on social media is not to serve customers then getting your business on social media is not suggestible, rather let not enter your brand in the public world. A research report from customer service company "Genesis" shows more than half of fortune 500 companies are socially shy, and they see social media as just another marketing channel and not as a channel to serve the customers. Though many companies have readily embraced social media for marketing, the customer service desk is yet not ready or taking time to establish. Source: Forbes: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/alexknapp/2012/08/24/big-companies-arent-using-social-media-for-customer-service/>

Four Reasons Why Customer Service Is Important on Social Media?

- **Customer Expects:** On social media if your customer subscribes to your communication channels they also reach to you when they are not happy with your services or products.
- **You Learn the Loopholes:** As they approach you with their problems, you learn from the glitches the loop holes in the services or products sold to them. Learning which, you can make your process or product better for customer satisfaction.
- **Spreads Positivity and Controls Negativity:** The quicker you solve their concern, the better as it will help you control the negativity on time; at the same time there is a fair possibility that your customer come back appreciating your prompt service.
- **Research Ground for Your Customers:** If your business misses out on sorting these customer concerns, they get accumulated in abundance on your social media platforms and thus causing hindrance to people who are still in decision phase to become your customer who has just turned to your online channel to see reaction of customers in the past.

Angry Customers: While I was planning to buy my smart phone I was confused between Samsung Galaxy S3 and HTC One X, I preferred to log on to communication channels of both the brands on Facebook and evaluated what customers were saying about the products. Upon evaluation, I could see complaints (Figure 6.12) about post sales service on the platform of both the brands and found HTC One X extremely responsible to the queries coming its way than its competitor; at the same time I could also notice some angry customers campaigning against both the brand and making inquiring people aware of why not to purchase the product, ensuring to spread negativity.

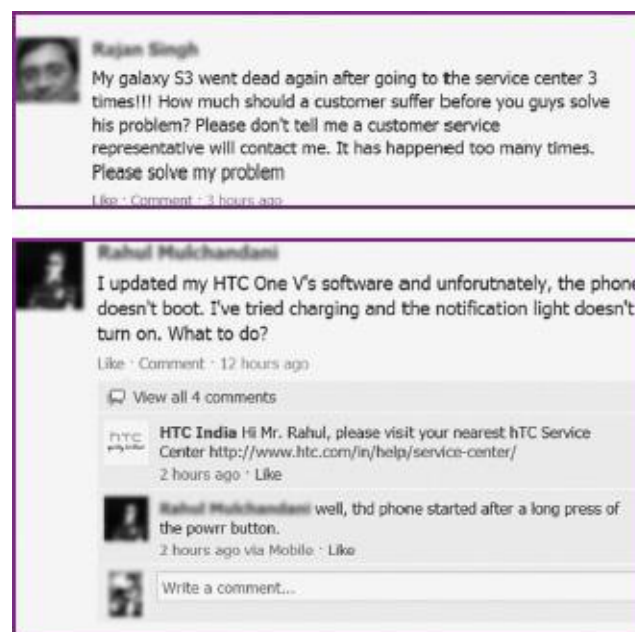


Figure 6.12: Customer service is Important.

The images above are from the official page of HTC and Samsung India. On the complaint made on Samsung page, the query is yet not answered; on the other hand HTC has replied back with a generic response which customers know it anyway.

Considering best practices of social media, here are a few suggestions that businesses can follow to help their customers and help protect their brand from negativity.

1. **Set Up “Customer Service” as an Objective:** Inviting customers to ask questions or register complaint on social media might require a lot of backend work, set them all. Put yourself into the shoes of customers and evaluate your product from different phases of its life cycle. Write down all those questions that you as a customer would have in mind. Find answers for the same.

2. **Get Answers Links Fixed:** On a blog or on the website, answer all the questions which could be frequently asked questions (FAQs) and suggest the relevant links whenever customer ask queries.
3. **Showcase FAQs:** Have a separate tab on the social media platforms wherever possible or on the website with FAQs and thus officially helping customers to get answers in advance.
4. **Be Quick:** People asking queries on any platform expect quick response. Brands need to be prepared with the customer service team to sort out problems in any given volumes.
5. **Be Polite:** Avoid using abusive or rude tone while conversing with people, a brand's response is always evaluated. Confrontation is what people are looking for; therefore do not take the bait, rather be humble and say things like "thanks for the feedback, we are working towards making experience better in future."
6. **Take It Personally:** If there is a complaint registered, try talking to the person and get it solved. Do not run the conversations on the platform itself as the entire world is watching it and waiting for conclusions. You might not really want to offer a refund on a product in full view of thousands of people on Facebook.
7. **Solve It Day and Night:** Brands usually do this; they have a resource person answering queries between 9 AM and 7 PM. Brand must allocate another resource person to answer queries from 7 PM to 9 AM. This will not just surprise your customers; it will also help you control the negativity that could spread during the non working hours of your business.
8. **Avoid Generic Responses:** What really annoys people are those set of generic responses that has no conclusions to it. Example: email us on _____ or please click here to register your complaint.
9. **Involve Experts:** Pass on the relevant questions to the relevant people. A complaint to the customer service person, a query related to the process to the process expert, and any query related to the industry trends to the analysts or relevant thought leaders in the organization etc.

Opportunity 7: Social Media—A Story Telling!

The prime reason why timeline was introduced on Facebook was to help you showcase your story right from the birth and later this concept was introduced to the Facebook business pages too as every brand has its own story to share as well. Traditional media in most business cases helps in promoting the finalized products to the consumers; whereas on social media, a consumer can become part of the product journey, it can learn from brands on why, how, who, and where exactly the product they purchased was manufactured. I always believe social media is all about storytelling; it is the story that inspires people and provokes thought process to make perception towards the brand resulting in conversations or actions.

If you compare your daily activities to social media, you probably will conclude yourself as a "storyteller" who shares life stories through words, videos, and pictures. This is either done to generate perceptions or preserve memories for lifetime. As soon as Facebook timeline was introduced for business pages, many brands took opportunity to show customers what they were in the past. Popular brands such as BMW India updated its timeline since 1916 onwards highlighting all those milestones achieved throughout the journey of the brand ([Figure 6.13](#)).

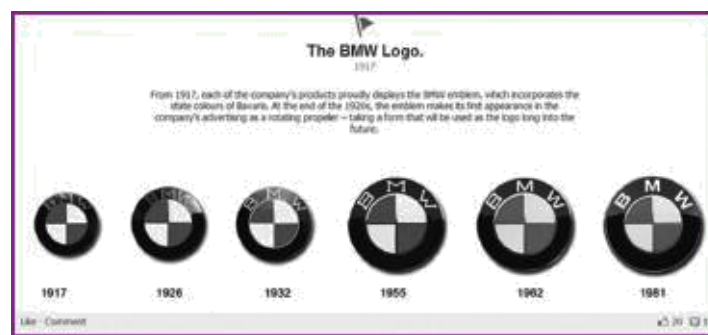


Figure 6.13: BMW logo dates back.

In a similar manner blackberry India used Facebook timeline to showcase its story from its first mobile launch since 2002, thus making all the information about the loyal brand lovers easily accessible.

On channels such as YouTube, Blog, SlideShare and Pinterest when stories are shared in the format of a video, blog post, presentations, or pictures, respectively, it becomes a part of Internet world and can be ever accessible via respective search engines or through the links, thus the content uploaded ever since your entry in the internet world will by itself showcase what you were in the past, what you are today, and what are you intended to become in future

Businesses need to understand that there is a difference between brand's promotion and storytelling; both need to have different objectives. Three things brands can do while sharing its story:

- **Share the "Making Of":** Did you ever imagine why people love discovery or animal planet? Not just because it shows mind-boggling things but also because it shows what goes in making of a forest, what goes in making of wildness in an animal, what goes in making of exotic travel plan, what happens to wildness when the conditions of drought exists, etc. I would always be excited to learn what goes in making of my favorite recipe at a restaurant. If you are a car manufacturer, use social media to let your consumers know why you chose yellow color for the car—it definitely will help them buy your decision in creating an experience. A 3-min video on the making of product would be a great idea.
- **Share Backstage Activities:** Behind every successful business there are many processes, people, promotions, practices, etc. Not all are exposed via your promotional campaigns or product packaging. Let consumers know how much fun you have at work or how many people are involved in making of one dream product. Story of first employee to the best employee in the lowest category will definitely help you create an emotional bond with your customers.
- **Show the Human Side:** Going green, using solar power, raising trees, supporting needy, working with NGOs there might be some corporate responsibility that your business might be following. Showcase that, let the world know what steps their favourite brand is taking to make the world a better place to live.
- **Capture Milestones:** 100th employee, 1 year successful completion, 1000 products sold, success figures achieved, launching of a new product and opening of a new office all this happy information helps you spread the positivity around the brand. When a customer invests in your product or idea, he or she would love to be a part of the organization that is growing leaps and bounds and also sharing the same via social media.
- **Use Real Life Examples:** Testimonials of your happy customers, case studies of your work and sharing of customer experiences is always a good way to let your audience know what customers felt in the past. Sharing story of your customers will help you make impact on your readers and that in turn will help you spread the word via them.

Opportunity 8: Social Advertisements

Social Advertisements are main reasons why Mark Zuckerberg is a billionaire today and why Facebook and LinkedIn entered IPO. If you look at some of the activities of Google in the last few years, you will realize how enthusiastic Google could be to make its brand Social. It launched Google Buzz, Google Wave, and later Google+ to make things really social for its users and at the later introduced Social Advertisements to enjoy new share of ad revenues besides its regular search engine advertisement platform.



Figure 6.14: Social Advertisements.

Most of the popular ecommerce sites use Social Advertisements to run targeted advertisements and drive traffic to their website to increase sales. The advertisement above (Figure 6.14) was captured when it was displayed on my profile on clicking which it led me to the website where the product was displayed in much better fashion with all the information and offer price. I later realized this advertisement started displaying soon after I joined some pages of popular innerwear brands. Very much apt to my behaviour is it not? This ad was either targeting the youth men of the country or was targeting audiences who showed interests in innerwear and briefs through their activities.

When you create your profile on LinkedIn or Facebook you tend to define yourself with your age, gender, nationality, sexuality, marital status, interests, education, designation, city, and your activities on these platforms by further joining groups and pages. These help Facebook or LinkedIn categorize your profiles better. The information provided and activities performed by people help advertisers to refine their target audience and reach only to the key niche through the advertisements.

Social Advertisements have become a popular phenomenon globally and marketers must know why:

- **The Ads Are Social:** Social Advertisements are excellent media for community-building. If your ads are compelling enough it will convince your target audience to interact with your company on Facebook, that action in turn will advise all their friends in their network about his or her interest in your company (in case of Facebook).
- **You Know Who You Are Reaching:** Unlike traditional ads where a particular space or tie slot is purchased and advertisement is designed considering the target audience in mind with no control over the reach and no direct interaction, Social Advertisements come with advantage of defining and refining your TA, can avail quick response and allows you to directly interact with the audience.
- **You Define and Limit the Budget:** If you are a startup or small business owner and your budget on marketing spend is limited, Social Advertisements are not going to be heavy on your pockets. As you can run ads even if your budget is as less as US\$1 on Facebook and around US\$10 on LinkedIn. Your budget defines your reach here.
- **Enhances Possibilities of Lead Generation:** For consumer brands or ecommerce portal selling consumer goods, Facebook advertisements are effective way of lead generation. At the same

time if you are targeting the higher officials or senior level executives or professionals in the corporate world LinkedIn Ads is a must try. Social Ads are unlike search engine ads where the ads are shown as a result of search made by people, hence meeting the demand. Social Advertisements help creating demand by increasing visibility of ads while your target audience surf through the social networks. Refer to the case study in “Lead Generation” chapter about how EchoVME generated leads via Facebook Ads for our social media workshops.

- **Creates Your Communication Channel:** Social Advertisements are effective way to grow your community on web and, help promote any specific contests or content of your business that you think can go viral but needs an initial spark through first level reach. Most of the popular brands on social media invest in Social Advertisements to grow their community as it is important to have audience to make creativity, promotional offers or content to go viral.
- **You Need Not Be Tech Savvy:** To run advertisements on LinkedIn or Facebook you do not have to learn any special coding or do not have to be a marketing genius. The Social Advertisements platforms are devised conveniently with a lot of resources available on the web or can be obtained from the help centre of respective channels. Social media advertisements come along with a dash board that allows you to control the ad and make necessary bids in format of cost per click or opt for cost per impression. I still remember when a participant of our social media workshops after learning how to advertise on LinkedIn and Facebook Ads said “Oh my god! They are so easy, I was a fool to shed Rs. 30,000 as a agency fee to run these! No More!”

Opportunity 9: Experiential Marketing and Social Media Wedding

To create emotional or rationale responses and have the engagement edge to the relationship with customers many brands today are embracing the opportunity of linking experiential marketing and social media together as one. As many brands globally are getting on social media platforms, the social media sphere is getting cluttered adding the strategic marketing value considering experiential marketing makes the social media marketing practices stand out.

Experiential marketing is a popular process that a brand adapts to create two ways communication with customers to generate emotional connections and establish a strong identity of the brand in the minds of consumers. Both experiential marketing and social media marketing aims at engaging audience through different channels. Kingfisher Beer has strategically married its experiential marketing campaign with social media effectively to produce incredible results. Refer the following case study:

Kingfisher Beer—#KFbeerup—Social Media Case Study



Figure 6.15: Kingfisher Beer–Social Media Case Study Strategy.

Strategy

If you love drinking beer and are offered FREE unlimited with your friends, what more will you ask for? I am sure you will glorify the various attributes of host for a long time to offer you that unlimited FREE beer experience with your friends. Kingfisher beer, a very popular brand known nationwide, organizes something similar for the Twitter community. Kingfisher announces a tweetup for beer lovers every week on Saturday that limits to “Twitter Users” only! In fact, this beer up is announced on Twitter and restricts to 50-80 twitteratis registering first-come first-serve basis.

Kingfisher promises #KfBeerup in a city 1 month in advance and if you have registered, you can drink as much Kingfisher Premium Beer as you can. No conditions apply. 😊

Outcome

- From the time, Kingfisher announces the #KfBeerup in a city with Invitation (Figure 6.15) for registrations (on twitvite.com). The word starts spreading, Twitter world starts buzzing (Figure 6.16) with hashtag “#Kfbeerup”, people start tagging their friends on Twitter to inform them about the #Kfbeerup and many make fake profiles of their friends for sake of registrations



Figure 6.16: Kingfisher Invitations on Twitter.

- Experiential Marketing:** While the participants have unlimited free beer during the #KfBeerup, there is a tweet wall displayed at the venue that adds to the enthusiasm. The organizers host some contests or bring in some performers such as standup comedians to make the sharing fun and

memorable.

- The videos and photos of the event are later posted on their social media channels for more fun conversations to happen.

Result

A very smart way to build relationship with people is to encourage word of mouth. This event is completely aimed at creating brand advocates on social media. Very few brands in the world believe that the usage of Twitter is beyond limitations and when used they can create wonders. Kingfisher brand have linked their experiential marketing strategy to Twitter by pre-promoting the experiential marketing event (Twitvite) or generating buzz during the event by using the #KFBEEERUP or creating conversations after the incident by posting photos and announcing next events.

Below are some benefits that the brand avails by hosting #KfBeerup:

1. The event helps spreading the word of mouth about the brand when people talk about the registrations, live-event activity and post-event experience, thus reaching thousands of people with #KfBeerup.
2. While people tweet about the incidents and number of beers they are gulping down, their followers from other cities who are curious and excited starts requesting @Kingfisherworld to host the next #Kfbeerup in their city. Thus generating demand for creating brand advocacy.
3. The event creates brand enthusiasm amongst the Twitter community and the enthusiasm impacts the brand equity.
4. Brand is well aware that the Twitter is the new trend in the country and going with the trend in an innovative way is the need of the hour. Thus it secures the future communication strategies and+ attracting the mainstream media to cover the innovation.
5. The aim of giving customers an experience definitely impacts the brand loyalty and thus anticipating sales in the future as the experience results in memorability of the event and the unlimited free beer.

Experiential marketing and social media is a perfect combination and their complimentary relationship can see brand messages reach to the mass through valuable and personalized experiences. Brands and organizations have started to create user experiences to amplify activities on social media or achievements on the same. For example, US Consulate of Chennai organized a networking party at a city-based cafeteria to mark 2 years completion of their Facebook presence. This helped brand in different ways; (1) By showing how serious the organization is with their Facebook presence and it is not mere a presence. (2) By giving people a real-life experience of the organization. This clearly shows that online activities performed are more relevant to the people or are made relevant to them by organizing the meetup, and (3) finally US consulate invited some celebrities and clicked pictures and re-posted it on their Facebook page to interact the audience again, thus making it a complete life cycle.



Personal Branding on Social Media

Did you hear the joke that a girl who wears make up and posts a picture gets more number of friendship requests on Facebook than with the picture without makeup? Well, this is the reality of social media. A person who portrays himself/herself well on social networking sites is more popular than the others. It is not just brand that can market themselves on social media or strategize their presence; many individuals today in India have become celebrities or thought leaders because of their active presence and contribution to the social media ecosystem. It is a myth that personal branding is to do with celebrities and politicians only; the truth is we all have a personal brand and social media helps us enhance it. There is no reason why you cannot or you should not develop your own personal brand.

As believed every individual has his/her own uniqueness. This uniqueness along with your appearance, your opinions, and your expertise & knowledge makes your personal brand. A brand differentiates and positions your product, service, or experience in customer's mind; similarly a personal brand differentiates your personality within the blend of professional, personal, and social aspects of life. Social media has helped many individuals extensively to build a brand around their key skills.

I always wished my stories got published in newspapers; I had a lot of followers and fans, and I was known in the industry. And this happened only when social media came to limelight. Branding through social media is easier for authors, small business owners, entrepreneurs, employees, top management individuals, artists, and specialists. This chapter is all about positioning yourself on social media. There are two ways you can view personal branding online:

- a. Supporting Offline Brand Online: An example of this could be celebrities and politicians (they create a personal brand via mass media and use social media to amplify it).
- b. Creating an Offline Brand due to Online Popularity: Example Lakshmi Rebecca who first became popular on Internet via her online show (chaiwithlakshmi.in (refer case study number) and now shares a fair amount of credibility in the offline world.

Case Study 7.1: Shradda Sharma and Her Social Media Popularity

Shradda Sharma a 16-year-old girl from New Delhi uploaded her first video; a teary song sung by her, on her parent's living room sofa, dedicated to her friend who was leaving her forever. One after another she uploaded five videos of her singing and within 16 weeks her YouTube channel [youtube.com/shraddharockin](https://www.youtube.com/shraddharockin) became the highest subscribed channel of India. Thirteen of her videos have got about 7.5 million viewers and 50,000+ subscribers.

Ever since she was liked by many individuals:

- Shraddha Sharma has become a popular Internet singer in the country, a brand created by herself and rejoiced by the audience. Her official Facebook page is managed by her fan at free of cost

with more than 2,00,000 active fans.

- She has been invited by popular reality shows such as India's Got Talent (By Colors) and SaReGaMaPa (by Zee TV) directly for auditions (In reality, people struggle to get there however she was invited due to her popular brand on Internet).
- Her internet popularity story has been covered by the traditional media thus making her household name.
- With her increasing popularity, she has become the brand ambassador for Hair n Care and MT MBlaze. The advertisements made by these brands revolve around her internet popularity story.

Social Media and You

Social media is very incidental to your personality and the opportunities are now global. The challenge today is to be always thinking of global village and going digital.

Table 7.1: Personal Branding Purpose for Individuals on Social Media

For whom	Purpose
For celebrities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To connect with their fans and reach out to them directly avoiding the media filter. • To make some news and noise. • To promote movies and shows. • To get some direct feedback from their fans.
For politicians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To run election campaigns. • To connect with public directly. • To showcase thoughts at an open platform, supporting democracy.
For leading entrepreneurs and senior officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To showcase their thought leadership, lifestyle, and vision. • To reach out to their network, for fan following as an engaging expert and promote their brand. • To helps customers, analysts, journalists, and media to connect with them directly • For example: you will always notice when people tweet to @kingfisherworld or @kingfisherairlines, they also tag @vijay-amallya in their tweets.
For small medium businesses owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To become a thought leader in the industry of their expertise. • To connect with like-minded individuals. • To become popular in their domain and increase their credibility while making responses in an offline and online conversation. • A human being networks faster on social media than a brand; acceptance level for human beings are higher on social media than for brands.
For authors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To showcase their thoughts and writing talent. • To connect with the readers directly. • To create a fan base around their style of writing. • To eliminate publishers and establish direct selling through the already established thought leadership and fan base via regular personal branding tactics. • To market the book published by publishers.
For specialists and artists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To showcase their talent and build a fan base around their talent. • To uniquely stand out from the crowd while contesting at an event or reality show due to the internet popularity owned. • To become a global rockstar.
For employee and jobseekers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To standout in the crowd with a niche • To showcase the knowledge level owned in the industry they want to excel at. • To own a fair amount of credibility, helping them network with the right set of audience.
For housewives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To showcase their cooking talent. • To showcase their artistic, creative, and handicraft skills. • To use social media as an opportunity to brand the talent of their kids. • To earn a fair amount of popularity.

The above tabular column (Table 7.1) shows how from various perspective social media can be used for branding an individual. Since this book is aiming at the social media and business opportunities, we shall concentrate on how a small and medium business owner, entrepreneur or an individual can use social media to position him/her and build a brand around their expertise.

Interview with Wilbur Sargunaraj: How Social Media Took Individual Artist's Talent across the World

As per Wikipedia Wilbur Sargunaraj belonging to Madurai, Tamil Nadu, is widely known as India's first YouTube sensation with nearly 5.5 million views to its YouTube Channel for his 160 music and instructional videos uploaded from two different albums "Wilbur Sargunaraj" and "Simple Superstar." Some of his videos showing a common man's feeling such as singing to "Mummy, Daddy" that he wants "the Love Marriage" has gone extremely popular on the web. Sargunaraj has also been touring the world with an aim of "making the common man extra-ordinary."

I had an opportunity to personally interview this YouTube sensation to understand how social media has helped showcase his talent across the world and made him a globally renowned personal brand. The conversation below is in question and answer format:

Me: Which was the first video that went popular and how many videos are produced since then?

Wilbur: The first video that went popular was the Blog Song, a satirical music video on Blogs. I did not start entertaining people at the beginning of all the social media hype. I loved performing and had been doing it for a while...the old-fashioned way of networking and performing in person. Performing and touring was the "youtube" of the past, something I loved and did often. Now to get your music heard, all you have to do is upload it, tweet it, and facebook it, etc.!

Around 160 videos have been produced till then, however that's since YouTube came along. I can't count how many performances I've done since I was a little boy!

Me: How did social media help you?

Wilbur: Social media played a great part in rallying the community of Wilbur World Wide so I didn't have to travel from city to city to get my music heard! It's being adjustable and malleable. Changing with the times and using technology to its greatest capacity to get your message and art out into the world has benefitted me!

Me: Which social media platforms has benefitted you the most and how?

Wilbur: I have a personal blog and a Twitter account, but I am still exploring its potential and believe I will soon use them more extensively. Face- book is the platform I use the most and I have my Twitter account linked to it as well. Facebook really is a first class platform where I have found the most success in social media. Maybe I like it because I'm not limited to a certain character amount like in Twitter and there is more of a relational and community aspect to it. The ability to showcase photos, music, and being able to highlight links and content is really superb.

"YouTube," I must say has revolutionized the way we perform as independent artists! How else can we get our music videos out there? No big record labels or music TV channels are going to approach the common person so having YouTube to get my content out is priceless in this day and age.

Me: If I have to ask you pick one social media platform that has worked most for you, which one it would be?

Wilbur: I believe that all social media platforms work hand in hand. Some could argue that YouTube would be the most that could benefit you but if you take Facebook away from YouTube, I find you lose a good chunk of your following. Twitter is so hot in India now and a friend of mine in the film industry said that people are gauged by the amount of Twitter followers they have! This is all very fascinating for me as I come from the era of tapes! Yes I know that dates me!!!

Me: How much credit you give to social media for your success?

Wilbur: I totally give social media the credit, but there is a balance! As I said in an interview on BBC radio last year, “social media and technology is just a way that brings me face to face with my fan base and allows me to develop community.” I have been able to travel around the world and meet with the Wilbur World Wide community because of social media! I’ve had some amazing conversations on Facebook with fans who have gone through hard times and just want someone to talk or listen to! I was even encouraged by a fan from Calcutta when I was going through a serious sickness last year.

Me: Any message to Young India?

Wilbur: Social media is important but do not get addicted to it. Technology in this day and age can be abused. Think about it! If you are on the internet all day and not developing face-to-face relationships, look what you are missing out on! We were created as relational human beings! We were meant to be in community! How many people miss out on the moment while they are at a concert or special event...“I have to take a picture of this and tweet it”.... and you know what happens. they miss experiencing that moment! How many thousands in the stands missed seeing Usain Bolt cross the finish line in 9.6 some seconds because their heads were down on their mobile phones or gadgets! They missed the moment! We truly have become the culture of “I” Me! Me! Me! Look at me! Are we self promoting the trivia these days?

Personal Branding on Social Media—How?

1. Identify Your USP

Before you plan to establish yourself on social media you need to chart out your value proposition and understand your expertise, core competencies, and define how you stand out from the crowd. Choose a topic, in which you want to become a thought leader, this needs to be relevant to your business, your career or your talent. Something, which makes you compelling and that you live with your passion. Remember, you are responsible for the niche you select and this will make your identity.

In 2008, when I decided to use social media as a personal branding tool I decided to position myself as a social media and digital marketing expert, I kept my USP broad because social media is a niche and digital marketing is a broad category so I had loads to do, say, and share in this space as both are relevant to each other. And that’s what my first thought on positioning myself on web. With time, I understood social media is where I wanted to be and my conversations, discussions, and all the activities on web started revolving around social media.

Think several times before you identify your niche or before you pick up the area or subject you want to become an expert at. You should really be good at it (not a compulsion, but that’s the first step of success).

2. Do Some Research

In the previous chapters of lead generation and online reputation management, you should have learnt about the importance of process of listening. The research done here is to benchmark some of the key players in the industry you want to excel at. Identify key players in area of your expertise and understand the following contexts:

- Their presence on all the social networking sites.
- What is the USP defined in their description of the profiles.

- The flashy element of their presence: display pictures, background of Twitter, and design of their blog.
- Level of activities they do every day (number of blog posts, number of tweets, number of visitors to the blog (through alexa), number of presentations and videos they share, number of people who share their updates, the kind of content that become popular, and responses to the queries they raise.

This will help you understand their presence from contextual and popularity perspective.

When I was positioning myself I followed the following personal brands and their blogs: scottmonty.com, jeffbullas.com, and erik qualman (@equalman) whose footsteps I followed while understanding what to write, what to discuss, how to promote, and how to become a thought leader.

3. Establishing a Credible Presence

Many of us have our presence on social media. We have been using social networking sites on day-to-day basis to converse, network, and share. Having a credible presence in social media is a lot different than just having a presence and here are few ways that can help you make your profile credible.

Choosing the right platform and username: Owning a web presence is the first thing that you should do and for that you should have your own blog with its own domain name and self-hosted. This domain name could be www.yourname.com or www.uniquename.com. With the same username you should also register with other social networking sites such as YouTube for videos; Flickr and Pinterest for images, Twitter for communication, LinkedIn and Quora for professional networking, and of course Facebook. A self-hosted blog booked on your domain name is important as that is your home-to-personal brand (unless you are an artist and YouTube is where your crowd is) and shows your thought richness as the content shared here is traceable on Google search and visible from the scratch to the visitors.

Choosing a common username for all your social media profiles is essential; it has to be professional and straight forward. They look highly organized as you show them on your email signature, visiting cards or resume. *My*

usernames are generally booked under “soravjain” domain:

- *Blog: SoravJain.com.*
- *Facebook: Facebook.com/SoravJain*
- *LinkedIn: LinkedIn.com/in/SoravJain*
- *Twitter: Twitter.com/SoravJain*
- *Youtube: Youtube.com/SoravJain*
- *Slideshare: Slideshare.net/SoravJain*
- *Pinterest: Pinterest.com/SoravJain*

A Pleasing Display Picture: Your profiles on social media must always carry a clear distinct image of yours. An apt image is the first step to evaluate credibility of a profile and a profile without image is always considered fake. Avoid using images of flowers, cartoons, landscapes, or any object. Profiles carrying any of these images are not much recognized and usually not responded. Use your profile suiting your positioning, you will always notice people on LinkedIn have a picture in professional attire where as people casually pose for a photograph on other social networking sites. A singer posing with mic is a great idea, if not so dramatic.

Complete Profile: Complete all the necessary details as per the requirements of a social networking

site to make your profile complete. An incomplete profile lags behind. Identify those words associated with your niche and specialization; use those keywords while describing your profile on all possible social media channels and optimize them to put your personal brand in front of as many people as possible that displays your knowledge, credibility, and influence in the most professional manner possible. Each of these social media channels gives you opportunity to integrate or mention your presence on other social media channels.

4. Start Offering Value

Execute your consistent message via online and offline ways and look for opportunities to establish yourself as a thought leader. Considering your key niche as per the positioning, one can start offering value by writing interesting blog posts, uploading videos, sharing relevant photographs, sharing a lot of industry insights and opinions, and giving tips relevant to the expertise. Foy my use, I use social media channels in different ways mentioned in tabular column to share and obtain value relevant to social media and digital marketing (my expertise and my positioning). The same model can be adapted by small medium business owners, budding entrepreneurs, job seekers, and employees.

Table 7.2: Content Ideas for Personal Branding on Social Channels

Channel	Content Shared	Frequency
Blog	Blog posts on case studies, tips, how to's, interviews with expert in this domain, thoughts on latest happenings and changes in the industry, personal opinions on strategies, updates on relevant events, link rolls of popular blog posts and interesting photographs.	Initially one blog post per day till it got some limelight, followed by two blog post per week after 6 months.
SlideShare	Interesting presentations on current topics, tips, processes and opinions, keynote presentations.	One presentation in 2 months. Contents mostly uploaded here are from talks and workshops. Use presentations while you host a workshop or talk at a conference and later add it on your slideshare account (downloadable version)
YouTube	Videos of testimonials received, videos of work culture, videos of your talk, videos showcasing processes in your business, videos showcasing your speaking skills, any exclusive videos created from viral marketing purpose, video blogging your thoughts, podcasting.	As per availability and positioning. If you are musician or a dancer you might want to consider posting a lot of videos on YouTube.
LinkedIn	Joining relevant groups, using LinkedIn Answers feature and posting, answering relevant questions to the industry, seeking recommendations and growing network, sharing industry news, relevant blog post, presentations and videos uploaded, sharing industry relevant articles by influencers.	Regular activity, participating in daily link sharing, participating in daily group activities (two groups a day), sending networking request to the ones conversed with on groups or answers feature.
Twitter	Participating in the relevant hashtags, sharing daily industry news, sharing links to the personal blogs, presentations and videos, seek opinions and suggestions from experts, participating virtually in industry relevant events via hashtags, updates on projects or activities relevant to the niche, festive wishes, opinions on trending topics, listening to people followed, responding to interesting and relevant tweets, asking for feedbacks on blog posts, crowdsourcing information and opinion of the mass, regular tips, regular recommendations on who to follow on twitter.	On an average 10 tweets a day. Sometimes more while live tweeting or participating in a hashtag-based conversation.
Facebook / Google+	Many people would like to keep Facebook very personal and do not want any professional contacts to join them on board. Enable Facebook's subscribe feature that allows people to subscribe to your public updates. People can share what they have shared on Twitter and Facebook allows:	About 2-3 updates a day on Facebook at different time intervals. Preferably, morning, noon, and evening.
	you to make it more interactive and entertaining as the videos and photos shared gets embedded. Facebook page for your personal brand is suggestible it should be subject based and not person based (initially) as it will help you grow your community around the subject which can be administered by you.	
Pinterest	Create virtual boards with reference to the niche and pin relevant pictures. Repin pictures posted by others in the industry.	As and when available. Pinterest is a must for people positioning around jewelry, holiday packages, food stuffs, handicrafts, apparels, etc.

Sharing content has no specific policy or limitations; it is up to you how you put across your thoughts in front of public ([Table 7.2](#)). You need to think like a publisher and get out of the safe zone of sharing regular things, get out of regular process and think of something that gets shared and talked about. As Seth Godin mentions in his book “the Purple Cow,” “No one stops to look at a black and white cow but a ‘Purple Cow’.”

5. Discover Influencers and Network

All the above tactics increases your credibility and visibility on web, visualize yourself walking into a conference with no experience and you definitely are scared to speak out because the other members in the conference room are experts. Similarly, before you start networking with an individual on social media you need to be stuffed up with the regular process of contribution. On regular basis, you then start connecting with influencers in your niche on Twitter, join communities or make friends with like-minded individuals on Facebook and LinkedIn, start sharing their content, start responding to their thoughts, regularly follow to the industry-based conversations and join in the same with your opinion Daily search for relevant professionals or target audience on LinkedIn and find out opportunities via references, LinkedIn answers and groups to make professional network with them.

Networking with influencers must also be followed by networking and building up conversations. with the already growing fan base or one who rejoices your contents. For you are their influencer and this is the chain that needs to be continued on a day-to-day basis.

- a. On Facebook: Join communities, subscribe to influencer’s updates or make friends with them, advertise your community on Facebook.
- b. On Twitter: Follow relevant influencers, follow industry-based hashtags and find out like-minded individuals follow them, follow who your influencers are following, participate in the live tweeting of industry-relevant updates to increase visibility.
- c. On Blog: Regularly comment on other bloggers’ blog. Recommend other authors via your blog (give them a referral link), join the network of bloggers.
- d. On YouTube, Pinterest, and Slideshare: Subscribe to others updates and regularly share and comment on them.
- e. Ensure you use the right set of words while tagging and describing your content. Make your titles on Blogs, YouTube, and SlideShare search engine friendly.
- f. Promote your presence on social media through email signatures, visiting cards, resume, and places where your personal brands get visibility in the offline world.

Increase in level of activities with increased level of networking, will help your personal brand grow on social media with time.

Case Study 7.2: How Lakshmi Sarath Left Her Full-Time Job and Became a Travel Expert via Socia Media

Lakshmi Sarath started blogging around 2004-2005 on backpacker. blogspot.in, to keep up with he writing skills; she started writing various personal blogs on another newly created blog, but was ver serious with travel blog that opened a world full of opportunities after she had quit her job as a VP—Head of South, Big 92.7 FM. Ever since then, she took blogging seriously and travelled across worl and made numerous friends due to her regular blogging on travel experiences. As she starte blogging on travel, her passion for travelling developed, became stronger and she was passionat enough to close down all the other personal blogs and stick to the Travel blog merging it with he

photography blog. Lakshmi has covered over 25 countries, 5 continents, and nooks of India in he blog.

Besides completing 500 blog posts, Lakshmi is an active Twitter user with more than 2,000 followers hosts a community page on Facebook and various boards on Pinterest, an inactive YouTube channe and she has been using all of them to promote her blogs on travel.

Lakshmi’s passion for travelling which she developed via blogging earned her a lot of respect an opportunities. Because of social media, her identity as 15 years experienced Media professional ha been changed to a travel writer and blogger. Here are some of her achievements which she earned vi her new personal brand developed via social media:

- Lakshmi is invited by the following tourism boards: Singapore, Jordan, Ireland, and Poland t name a few to cover a story on their country and culture.
- She is regularly invited by many luxury travel and hospitality brands to cover a story on them i return of either money or experience.
- With years of experience in writing gained via blogging, she started a venture with a partne called “Content Shop” which helps both travel and non-travel related clients to develo interesting contents for their web presence and marketing collaterals.
- She became a columnist with “The Metro Plus,” *The Hindu*, one of the widely read nationa newspaper in India.
- She is also a passionate photographer. Her photos from the blogs got published several popula publications and books, websites, newspapers, magazines, and blogs such as *Deccan Herald Hindustan Times, Sunday Express, Bangalore Mirror, and Rediff.com.*
- Lakshmi consults for travel companies and resorts such as Club Mahindra, Jungle Lodges an Resorts, Orange County Resorts, Hoysala Village Resorts, Nature Zone, Munnar to promot their destinations through blogs and social media. She is the editor of the Club Mahindra Trave Blog called CLAY.

With rising popularity in online world, a story on Lakshmi Sarath has been covered by man magazines and newspapers.

The Rise of Twitter Celebrities

With growing popularity of Twitter in India and about 33 million Twitter users (refer Table 2.2) there are many who are considered celebrities and thought leaders in their industry as they share a fair amount influence in the area of their expertise. Twitter is a channel that relishes short conversations and opens a global horizon of networking without any barriers of networking restrictions as one can talk to anyone globally. Some of the thought leaders who I have come across while my journey I would like to mention in this book (Table 7.3)—who have tweeted and blogged enough about happenings in the area of their expertise to become a thought leaders in the industry they belong to.

Table 7.3: Popular Twitter Influencers from India

Twitter Handle	Expertise
@Jessie_Paul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First CMO on Twitter. • Identified as a marketing expert, author and powerful women entrepreneur. • Shares regular thoughts on marketing and promotes relevant events she hosts. • 21643+ followers. • Blogs on www.paulwriter.com.
@Surekhapillai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PR expert with 13,000+ followers on Twitter. • 18+ years of experience in PR field, independent PR consultant. • Regular on the conversations and hashtags with an opinion on communication and media.
@flyyoufools (Saad Akshtar) @meerasapra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified as Web Comic Experts on Twitter. • Meera (3,000+ followers) posts her comic strips on lifesacomicstrip.blogspot.com/. • Saad (10,000+ followers) shares his comic strips on flyyoufools.com.
@kishiarora, @saffrontrail (Nandita Iyer) @madmanweb (Madhu Menon) ,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified as Food experts on Twitter. • Kishi (5,500+ followers) is a pastry expert blogs on: foodaholics.in/blog/. • Nandita (6,500+ followers) blogs about dhal, vadas, brownies, pan-ner and lot more. She is blogging since 2006 at http://saffrontrail.blogspot.in/ and has shared more than 200 recipes on web. • Madhu (7,500+ followers) runs a personal blog on www.madmanweb.com/ with diverse opinions but owns a fair amount of credibility on Twitter as a chef.
@beasoftraal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karthik Srinivasan (8,000 followers) blogs regularly on /beasoftraal.com with varied opinions on branding, marketing communications practiced by various organizations. • Identified on Twitter as marketing communication expert and a music blogger at www.milliblog.com/.
@tinucherian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified on Twitter as Wikipedia Expert and an Influential Indian with more than 1,70,000 followers. • Blogs on dreamingcherries.com/.
@Vijayanands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Startup Specialist. • Shares regular opinions and tips on what startup should do. • Answers curious mind's queries on startups. • Blogs on startup-related concerns at www.vijayanand.name.

How Sajeev Nair Used Social Media to Establish His Brand and Create a Marketing Channel for His Book “Tathastu”

Sajeev Nair, a successful entrepreneur, Diamond member of Amway in India, turned transformational success coach and author wanted to create a digital presence positioning himself as a motivation trainer and to share his knowledge level based on the research he has been doing on the influence of luck and coincidences in the lives of successful people. Before establishing his presence on social media he had authored two bestselling books in Malayalam and was contributing as a columnist in various journals in the same language. His aim was to create visibility on social media before his third book “Tathastu” was launched which was targeting the global audience.

Mr. Sajeev created his presence on the following channels: Facebook.com/iamsajeev, a community with 11,000+ fans twitter.com/iam-sajeev with daily motivational tips, stories and quotes, updates about book sharing of blog post and showcasing the leisure life style of the entrepreneur. He used YouTube.com/iamsajeev to show his training skills with more than 10 videos uploaded and 90,000+ viewers, He used sajeevnair.com/blog to showcase his writing skills. He entertained audience using slideshare.net/iamsajeev with some motivational presentations.

Results

- All in all, with common username and with regular content sharing on motivation, life, success he positioned himself on social media as a success coach, trainer, and author.
- Social media has helped him connect with his reader base of both Malayalam and English books.
- Sajeev has extensively used social media to talk about his book and promote it regularly.



Public Relations, Event Promotion, and Social Media

The Era of Business to People (B2P)

Both Public relations and social media are about creating and fostering relationships. They both serve the same purpose, but the process is different and so are the perspectives. In the past, to reach people and to build relationships, brands actively used to engage the traditional media to cover a story about them and to reach out to their potential customers via them. The relationship was very much one-way, where the brands could communicate to the customers through the traditional forms but customers could not. Journalists were highly regarded and so were the relationships with them, but social media has completely changed the scenario today. Previously the combination was business to media and media to mass, but with social media there is a shift today, it is now business to people, people to people, and people to many. Social media tools such as Blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and videos help brands communicate with customers directly in a form that is easy to access, convenient to respond to, and entertaining ([Figure 8.1](#)).

A brand should slowly bring down the focus on spending more money monthly on a media relation program or to a PR agency that tries to convince a handful of reporters and selected magazines, newspapers or news shows to cover a story on your brand. PR today is not about your senior managers seeing your brand on TV; it is about your customers reading about you on the web. Brands should start investing in different ways to target the bloggers, influential tweeters, web-based news sites, online press-release hubs, social media journalists that are reaching the target audience who are looking for what we have to offer. The rules of the PR world are slowly changing and a customer today loves to participate than being part of media hype. As stated in previous chapters, social media in India is still in its growth phase and brands should now focus on creating their own channels through social media. One can easily create their own media brand in the niche of their own and communicate directly with the audience, avoiding the media filter completely.

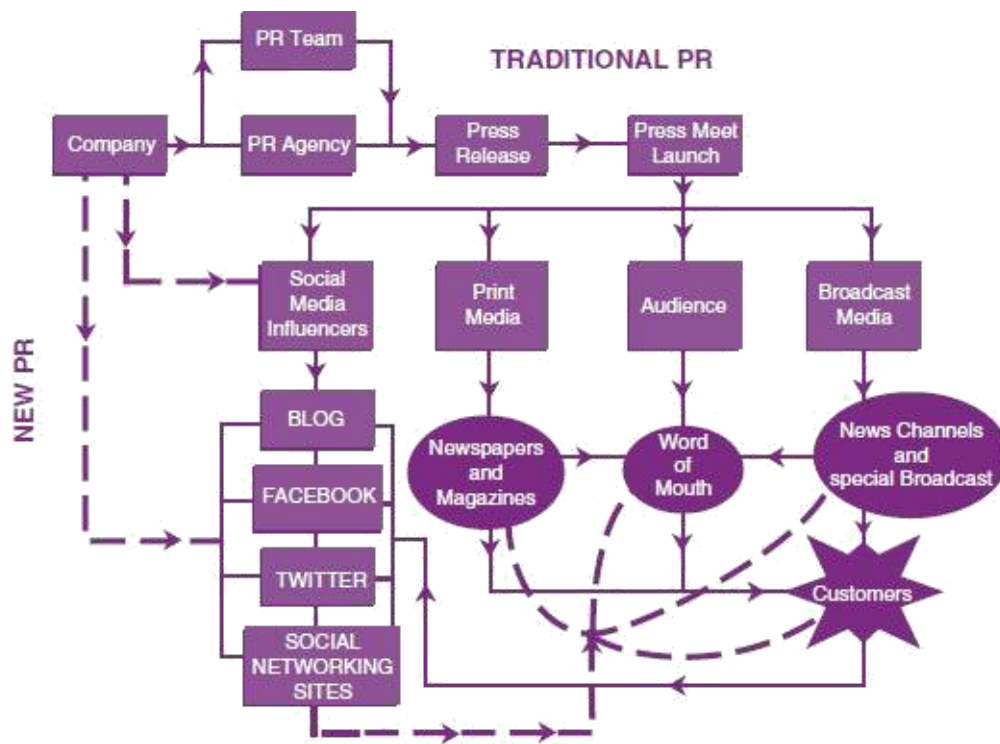


Figure 8.1: New and Traditional PR.

Case Study 8.1: How Lakshmi Rebecca Made Herself a Web Journalist

PR world is definitely changing. Everything matters today from priorities of marketers to the opinion of a citizen/social media journalist. It is well known that in the past how a mass communication graduate or a person with a degree in journalism struggled enough to enter into the media industry and to work as a journalist. Today, social media is changing the game. Lakshmi Rebecca, Bangalore-based model, had a dream to become an anchor person and journalist to cover amazing insights into the lives and pursuits of really interesting people, and she did become one by creating an opportunity for herself using web, social media.

She created an online show of her own, called “Chai with Lakshmi.” Her web channel [youtube.com/chaiwithlakshmi](https://www.youtube.com/chaiwithlakshmi) or chaiwithlakshmi.in is an immensely popular online show among the urban populace in India. With interviews and coverages on steaming sensation topics, her videos on YouTube channel have got more than 80,000+ views and 180+ subscribers in less than a year and hundreds of subscribers and followers to her updates. Her webisodes are telecast three times a week and get an average 600+ views every time when a new one is uploaded. Besides developing more than 50 episodes and sharing them on her official site and YouTube channel, she also shares a lot of opinion on urban India, hot tips for making good tea and baking recipes on her blog.

PR today is about being always facilitating the ongoing conversations across the web. It is great to have our businesses profiled in *Forbes*, *Times*, or *India Today* magazine. However, putting all the public relations efforts to get mentioned in one magazine would not be that great as to have some bloggers or influencers publish your story and reach to the niche audience who are interested in what we have to offer, that they are looking for. On social media, the brand or organization by itself becomes a spokesperson and plays a role of HR manager, marketer, PR manager, customer service representative and business development manager. In which PR plays the stronger part as social media is all about managing relationships with people.

The Changing Rules of PR

Years ago, brands issued press releases, targeting media, hoping someone would take it on and do a cover story helping them reach to customers via traditional media. The real purpose of using PR was to create some buzz in the market about your organization, product, or service. Press releases were sent through fax machines or hand delivered, followed by reaching out to potential media personnel or journalists and waited for the broadcasting to happen.

Social media is not different; the social networking sites are communication channels that help brands connect with customers and converse with them. The only difference is that it allows brand to connect with customers directly, engage them convey message reaching the mass via people, and create buzz about the organization and its products or services. The idea on social media should be unique. Similarly it should be in the conventional PR practice too to reach out to customers. In PR, we are never sure if the news will attract key journalists and go viral and spread. Similarly on social media too, brands are never too sure if their content will reach influencers and go viral.

Consumers today are influenced by what they read online, and social media plays an important role in making the information to reach people. Brands cannot afford to ignore social media, and it is going to be part of PR campaigns in some way or the other.

The world of PR and social media are the same just with a few differences mentioned in [Figure 8.2](#).

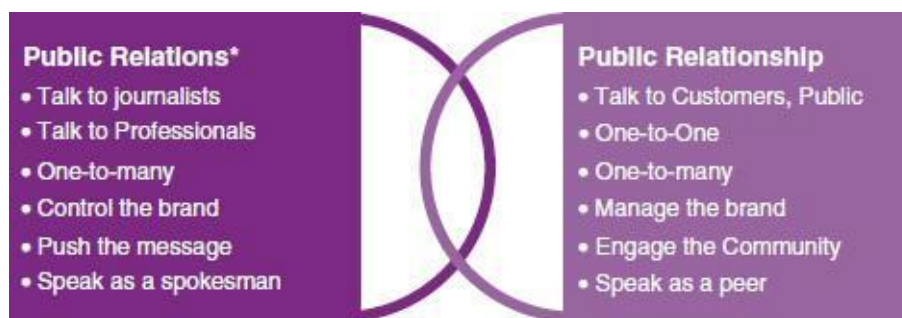


Figure 8.2: How Social Media Changed the PR and Journalism.

Source: B2B PR blog.

Initially, there was little acceptance of the impact of social media on journalism. This was because journalism was considered a profession that required discipline, analysis, explanation, and context. However, with the changing times, journalism comprised social media as yet another source that can be used to provide information to its users. Journalism is undergoing a transformation into apart from being a space that provides information in traditional ways, to also ensure that their news and opinions are available in the instant format using social media or involves social media in developing them. This means that while adapting to the changes, they are ensuring that the profession is still following the principles that govern the profession of journalism.

- **From Press Releases to Social Media Releases:** The concept of press releases is slowly taking on a different meaning. Brands are finding different ways to attract the mainstream media today via social media. Rather than sending press release through emails, PR professionals are uploading press releases in the various press release hubs (to be traceable on search engines) or they create a customized landing page with rich media incorporated for that specific announcement and contacting reporters or journalists via Twitter by sharing the link with them. They also take routes to direct the reporter to a YouTube video where a CEO is making the announcement.

There are services such as PRXBuilder.com and MindTouch that are changing the facets of press releases with embedded media and easy distribution through various social media and web channels.

- **Two-way Communication Versus a Speech:** The old rule of PR allowed only broadcasting, and it was like standing on a mountain and speaking through a loud speaker to make it audible to everyone standing down; however, what they replied was not audible to the spokesperson. Social media changed this rule completely. Two-way communication with consumers helps brand gets real-time feedback and opinions. The ongoing communication with consumers on day-to-day basis helps brand refining and improving their products and services to make a deeper connection with the target audience. Social media helps humanizing a brand and not broadcasting, which helps develop a feeling among consumers that they are talking to a brand and not just listening to their tactics of sales.
- **News, a Tweet Away:** In the past the newspapers used to quote a person making a statement, the same is now replaced by a “tweet.” It is noticed how journalists are quote tweets as thoughts of an individual these days. A tweet makes news when it becomes highly controversial or creates high amount of conversations. For example, a recent picture shared by the Indian actress Madhuri Dixit on Twitter posing in disguise by covering her face along with her family at Taj Mahal became the talk of the country with coverages in almost all the newspapers, online news hubs, Twitter, and more with media raising questions why did Madhuri cover her face? For another instance, when a video of Bollywood actor Jackie Shroff abusing while shooting for a polio campaign run by government came in to notice Indians on Twitter started talking about it making words such as Jackie Shroff, #Abusivewords used in the video trending in the country thus making that video reach to many individuals who were not aware of the incident. Today, through various social media listening tools PR professionals and journalists can get updated with what is happening in the industry. A thread of conversations or complaints on a digital forum can become news.
- **Journalist Database and Easy Access:** In January 2011, I had launched a video called “Social Media Revolution in India,” and this was a web launch, done on a customized landing page on a pre-fixed time. To reach out to the reporters and journalists informing them about the launch of Social Media India video, we did make a press release, uploaded it on the same landing page where the video was supposed to be webcasted and figured out the potential journalists and reporters available on Twitter. With more than hundreds, we individually tweeted them and invited them to be part of our web launch. Twitter made our process easier, and it helped us build instant conversations with those journalists who were interested to know more about the video and the happenings in the Indian social media space. <http://listorious.com/arunram/indian-journalists> has got about 58 of them listed or you can use followerwonk.com to track them - location based.
- **Citizen Journalism:** Another aspect of social media journalism is the increasing popularity of the term “citizen journalist.” A citizen journalist is someone who does not have the authority to be a traditional journalist; nevertheless, they have the tools to report news as they see or interpret it. This means that more and more individuals from outside the world of journalism are involved.

Journalism is also learning to accept citizen journalists under their wing and giving them the power of expression and the importance that they so deserve. This too has been a drastic change from yesteryears where journalists were providers of information, while people were consumers of information. Today, more and more journalists are turning to social media as a

source for forming public opinion and are giving the audiences a voice to represent themselves in mainstream media.

Citizen journalism is a popular concept where the process is very simple and personal. A social media enthusiast who owns his own social media channels and shares a fair amount of influential credibility, thought leadership in web sphere and is an opinion maker can be called “social media journalist” or “social media influencer.” Social media journalist’s visibility majorly comes through her Blog, Twitter presence, videos on YouTube, pages on Facebook, etc. Attracting bloggers, tweeters, and podcasters and making them talk about your brand, captures the real essence of social media. Apart from your own contents about your own brand, people tend to trust what the mob follows. Social media journalists, by their own virtue of influence, make this easily possible. A smart way is to attract key influencers in your industry and have them talk about you.

PR Through Bloggers/Tweeters—Encouraging Citizen Journalism

Vipin Sachdeva, a Chennai-based owner of chain of restaurants such as Burgundy, Kryptos, Subway, Tuscana, bar, regularly invites food bloggers and influential tweeters from Chennai for lunch or dinner at any of his restaurants.

While having them on board, he personally connects with them and shares detail of every dish served on the table. The invited bloggers are later sent an email with photographs and details of the dishes served to them, with a request to share their experience on social networking sites and review based sites. On a personal invitation, I have been part of one of the similar meetup and I had realized almost everyone goes back and blogs something positive about the restaurant at the same time reviews them on popular review sites and share their experience on Twitter and Facebook thus generating positive word of mouth. The relationship Vipin develops with these bloggers, gaining them as customers is another value-build in itself.

Reasons Why Social Media Journalists Are Essential

- 1. They Stay Connected:** Social media journalists are usually active on social media space to obtain more traffic to their blog or YouTube channel and also to attract audience to the conversations they raise on social networking sites.
- 2. Social Media Journalists Are Influential:** The social media profiles you have created for your brand might have very less number of audience/ community members/reader base/follower s. A social media journalist’s influence or a well established blogger’s reach will be better than the business profiles recently created on social media.
- 3. Endorsement Matters:** A social media journalist is not just someone who shares the link but also a thought leader in his space or industry. They are also known as the influencers of social media. When these influencers cover your story, their identity endorses your brand and influences many other individuals to talk about you. Remember, their thoughts are respectful, so ensure there is no negativity in the air when you address them and want them to address the larger audience on behalf of you.
- 4. Frugally Yours:** Word of Mouth Marketing is to be considered the most power tool of marketing. Reaching the non-conventional social media journalist to talk about your brand is a cost effective solution for your brand, provided you do it right!
- 5. The Social Way:** Inviting social media influencers to cover a story on your brand is a wise

choice to understand the reaction of social media towards your products as these influencers will not just write about you on their blogs but will also share what they have written on blog through Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other social networking sites they on. This is the only way where a brand can test the power of social media even without having a visible presence on social media territories.

I had the opportunity to work with TiE Chennai team (TiE is a global, not-for-profit network of entrepreneurs and professionals dedicated to the advancement of entrepreneurship) - during 2010 and 2011 to promote their business conference “TieCon 2010 and 2011” on social media through the social media journalists. We first announced the requirement of social media enthusiasts from Chennai city who would be willing to cover and promote the event through their social media channels. After we received few entries, we finalized enthusiasts who had influential reach and started promoting the event via social media by creating a common hashtag on twitter and also by establishing presence on all social media channels to reach out to different audience. The social media journalist team was involved in giving a running commentary on the complete event through their social media profiles using a common hashtag, thus reaching to their followers and also to people searching for the information via pre-announced hashtag. The social media journalist team talked about registration counter, speakers of the event, context of the discussions, content shared, details of sessions, food, caterers to cleaner, aiming to show all those happenings of the event that went in the spirit of making the event successful. The event was later re-buzzed on social media with its pictures, comments and cherish-able memories. The moments shared on social media are captured for life time and the event happenings now remain historical. In a similar fashion a team was formed to live cover the entire event Social Media Summit 2011 that echoVME had organized with national and international speakers and more than 1000 participants.

Citizen Journalism via Bloggers—The Process

Citizen journalism is other word for social media journalism as stated earlier. Inviting bloggers for a product launch or an event to cover a story or to generate buzz has now become regular practice for many brands. Inviting bloggers is beneficial for various reasons:

1. Bloggers will write a story on your product - increasing your chance to get visibility on search engines also to reach out to their regular reader base.
2. Bloggers will share their experience on their social media channels - increasing your chance to go viral on social media.
3. Bloggers can become your long term brand advocates.

Citizen Journalism via bloggers is a six-step process, mastering which brands can start inviting bloggers on regular basis to create a buzz about their brands on the web ([Figure 8.3](#)).

Step 1—Objective: The first and most important step is to define your objective of the campaign. Your objective could be anything: create awareness, increase visibility on search engines, get a review done about your products or services, get influencers speak about you, live tweet the event, have bloggers to create buzz on social networking sites, review the product or restaurant etc. You need to have your vision clear before defining it setting up your objective, appointing a social media manager who can work along with the bloggers throughout the process will be a fair idea as this process needs to be done with focus and needs a lot of hospitality. A person dedicated to this campaign will bring in a lot of difference.

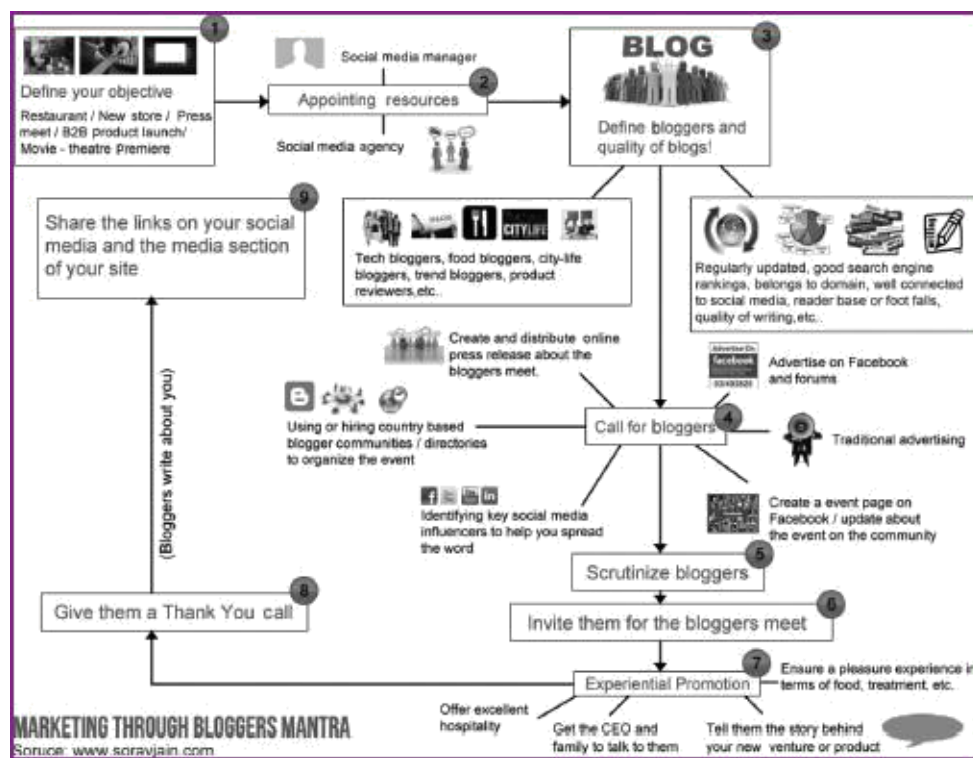


Figure 8.3: Marketing Through Bloggers Mantra.

Source: www.soravjain.com.

Step 2—Define Bloggers: To attract bloggers, you should be clear on the type of bloggers and the quality they can offer. You need to define the kind of bloggers you are attracting to cover a story. Bloggers are of three types:

- a. Niche bloggers—Specific topic writers, it can be about food, city, marketing, finance, etc. They are preferred partners to market your specific products/brands, since people follow them for their thought-leadership.
- b. Personal bloggers—Poetic and storytelling ones, who share their life, life-styles their philosophies. Not greatly appreciated for marketing, unless their blogs are very famous.
- c. Corporate bloggers—usually involved in describing products and services, sharing the humane side of the corporate, processes involved, etc. They are not in our area of interest.

You may also want to check the quality of the person’s writing, their reach, their influence level on the web and their popularity on social media. For example, if you are targeting to have your restaurants reviewed you might want to invite food or city bloggers to cover a story on you, inviting bloggers who writes on environment or finance will not make sense as the audience for each of their blogs differ and so is the author’s mindset.

Step 3—Defining the Quality of the Blogs: In the web world, a relatively older blog is known to be more popular than a new blog both in terms of credibility and visibility. A marketer should consider the following components while deciding the quality of the blogs:

- a. Relevancy of the blog to your business.
- b. Page rank of blogs and their visibility.
- c. Regularity and credibility of updates.
- d. The social media connect of the blogs.
- e. Viral reach of their earlier blog posts.
- f. Quality of the content, the flow of language, and the presentation of the blog posts.
- g. Quantity: Number of subscribers to the RSS Feed or Feed burner.

h. Reach of the blogger on social networking sites.

i. Online influence of the person.

The above specifications of the blog will help you scrutinize the bloggers.

Step 4—Promotion for Promotion (P4P): In this stage a marketer needs to promote the blogger meet-up to drive the interested bloggers to participate - this can be called as 'Promotion for Promotion stage' as you are trying to promote a meet up, the sole purpose of which is to promote a particular objective of your organization.

The P4P announcements could be via: Facebook advertisements, existing bloggers communities, online PR, traditional advertisements, announcements via existing social media channels, regular and targeted tweeting (database based), social media influencers etc. Once you start receiving entries you can scrutinize the bloggers on the basis of specifications previously made. Remember, the entry for the event should be free!

Many brands in India have been using the services of indiblogger.in - a community of bloggers with more than 40,000 active Indian blogs registered. Indiblogger.in helps brand organize a blogger meet-up by planning the complete agenda and by inviting the niche bloggers (as defined by brands) from their existing database of bloggers.

There was a Stayfree Indiblogger Meet, hosted on 27 May in Mumbai, which was only targeting the women community. More than 100 women registered for the event. The event was webcasted virtually where many men and women watched it live. A social issue "healthy and hygienic life is every girl's right" was associated with the event which was powered by UNICEF. Prashoon Joshi (One of the popular writer and lyricist) was available at the event live performing and sharing his thoughts. The event was very thought provoking and appreciated by the bloggers who participated. Many blog posts and tweets about the event were later generated (With #VoiceofChange), that helped brand spread word of mouth.

Step 5—Experiential Treatment: This is the most crucial part of your entire strategy. Every second of this treatment will be reflected in the words they are going to utter through their blogs. Bloggers need to be treated with a wonderful experience. For example, if the bloggers are invited at a restaurant to write review on the food you serve, they need to be given the best of the hospitality, finest of the dishes, and should be treated personally. The CEO must dine along with bloggers, sharing stories about the launch and various processes involved to add the personalized touch. Chef may visit to know if there are any customized requirements by the participants.

Similarly, if the bloggers are invited to cover a store launch or product launch and if they are huge in number then there should be enough space given for them to network with each other. Hosting fun moments, contests, and opinions on the industry can make them converse about your brand and make their experience memorable. In such cases the products or services are launched at the end of the show so as to make bloggers feel the event is not very promotional.

In the whole P4P scene, social media connect becomes very essential. Bloggers can be asked to live tweet the event, live photograph the moments, and later share their opinions on the blog. Brands mostly run best tweet, best picture and best blog contest with an expensive give away to encourage participation. This who planned to come will help create charm among those bloggers in the network but could not turn up and also among the registered ones who did not get selected and of course gives food for discussion for people who are attending the P4P party. Give bloggers a souvenir to take along - could be a product sample or a freebie such as Tshirt, Umbrella with brand's key message for

them to remember and flaunt.

Step 6—Post Bloggers Meet: Following up, asking them how their experiences were and thanking them for being there, will prove to be a great gesture. This is essential! When the whole campaign is over you just need to wait for the magic to happen.

Case Study 8.2: How Univercell—The Mobile Store Organized the Indiblogger Meetup

I remember I was part of a bloggers meet organized by Indiblogger.in in association with Univercell (chain of mobile stores) in March 2010. More than 200 bloggers gathered at the event, and Univercell launched its blogging platform encouraging bloggers to write about the products they sell, few products were put on display and bloggers were asked to review. The event was informally welcome by the Univercell Marketing Head, with display of tweet walls where the tweets with common hashtag such as #indiblogger #Indichn were on display. The event had fun elements, few games, and some food. A T-shirt was given to all the bloggers which did have a Univercell logo on it. Many of the bloggers were tweeters and they actively spread the word about what Univercell do and how thankful they are to Univercell for hosting this event, and there were many who took part in the Univercell blogging contest and many blogged about the event, giving a thanks note to Univercell. In April 2010 this was hosted in Hyderabad attracting Hyderabad bloggers. Even today if you Google “Univercell Blogger Meet” you can see a lot of praises and experience. In a similar fashion, Indiblogger hosted a blogger meet in 2011 which was sponsored by TATA Grande. Though I was not part of this event, I learnt from the tweets of bloggers I follow that the brand gave its car for test drive for bloggers to drive an experience the car, later blog about it, if they wished (which was the actual purpose). Many have clicked the photos of the car and its accessories, which was live tweeted and later blogged. Some of the popular brands that have been hosting bloggers meet: Samsung Tablet, HP, Spice Mobiles, Aksha Patra, Kingfisher, etc.

Many companies in India have still adapted to promote their products via bloggers without hosting meet up. This is hosted in the form of a blogging contest which is advertised and promoted through traditional media, and the community members or followers on social media are encouraged to participate. Many a times bloggers are asked to collect votes and sometimes it is judged by a panel of popular bloggers: Brands such as Apollo Hospital (Billion Hearts Campaign), Lakme (Diva Blogger Campaign), Bombay Store (Bangalore Blogathon Campaign), Castrol Power, and Mahindra Holidays have been hosting such regular campaigns.

Making Your Event Social Media Friendly

If your corporate event today is not social media friendly, you are losing the major chunk of PR and Word of Mouth marketing. Companies in India have started using social media to promote prior, during and post event activities. In fact, most of the case studies given above on social media and PR are mostly events based. Adding the social media touch to the event makes it more engaging, people friendly, and globally visible. Why confine audience to a room when the world is there to listen?

By organizing and hosting several events and forming the social media journalists team for TieCon 2010 and 2011, Search Marketing Summit 2010, Social Media Summit 2011, and more than 70 social media workshops in the country, here are some take aways based on my experiences that can make your event a social media friendly event:

1. Online Ticketing Solution: It is essential to allow registration of the event online when you are

planning to promote event via social media. Today, online event registration integration is just a call away. With sites such as ayojak.com, doattend.com, and meravevents.com having a payment gateway for selling your tickets online is just easy. As a loyal eventnu.com (the service is now closed) customer, I easily integrate the payment gateways on my website and keep track of all the registrants and their details on the Google document shared by the admin for every event we organize. Ensure, you ask for social media details of the participants while they register for the event. Ask for their Twitter handle, Facebook URL, and LinkedIn URL, this will later help you in engaging them on social media.

- 2. Presence on Social Media Channels:** Having a Facebook event page is just not the solution. If you are planning your company's signature event and are planning to host it every year, then it is suggested to create a presence for your event on social media from a long-term branding perspective. For example, the mistake I did while registering my username for Social Media Summit event's business page on Facebook was the fixation of the year in URL, it is Facebook.com/ SMSin2011 which has got more than 2000 audience in the community. It is suggested to use common titles and name without fixation of year of hosting or the theme in title, URLs while registration. Registration on Facebook (for updates), Blog (for updates in detail), Twitter (for engaging audience, live tweeting, and promoting), YouTube (for sharing videos on backstage activities and later sharing the videos of events and podcasts), SlideShare (to share the decks shared by the speaker), and Flickr (for the pre and post photos of the event) are highly recommended.
- 3. Deciding a Twitter Hashtag:** twubs.com/registerhashtag/ is a popular service that helps you register for a hashtag and let world know that you have already claimed the conversations built over it (unofficially) and also helps you understand if the hashtag you are planning to launch is available or not. It is suggestible that your hashtag should be small and must be between 10 and 12 characters considering the Twitter limitation of 140 characters in a tweet. For example, #SMSin2011 was the hashtag for the conversations on Social Marketing Summit India 2011, it is #SMSin2012 or #SMSin2013 for the consecutive years.



- 4. Promoting the Social Media Presence:** While you are promoting event via emails, brochures, sold tickets, posters, online banners, advertisement on social media platforms, online and offline PR, showcasing your social media links on the official event page will be a smart idea. Look at the top right-hand side corner of the advertisement above, which was published in *The Hindu*, it shows the Facebook links of the event and the introduced hashtag. Promoting the event's social media presence helps you to sell and engage audience better. Many people start using hashtag as a meeting ground for other participants of the event, they engage with each other on social media first and meet in real world during the event.

5. Engaging Audience on Social Media: The regular updates made through social media on the making of the event and backstage activities makes audience more enthusiastic and excited about the event. During SMSin2011 we had shared following information through event's social media channels to keep the audience updated, engaged and excited:

- Profile of the speaker.
- The photographs of the team members working on the event.
- The photos of the event (the pre- and post-arrangements made for event).
- Stage decoration and the design of the backdrop.
- The names tags made read for the participants.
- The kind of seating arrangement.
- The menu.
- Announcements about performance and the entertainment.
- Photos of the event kit in making.
- Tagging the participants and speakers on Twitter by using common hashtag (the Twitter handles and social media profile details of the participants are collected while they register for the event).
- The CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) activities associated with the event or the NGOs who are given a free stall to exhibit.
- Announcements about sponsors, their branding element is included in social media banners and backgrounds.
- Announcement about the contest.
- Encouraging social media journalism, pre announcing the availability or non- availability of WiFi for participants to live cover the event or share their experience.

There are lot more creative things that one can think of. Keeping your audience updated about the minute details of the event (prior to the event) is totally impossible or a very expensive deal on traditional media, you cannot aim your media partners to cover all these minute stories about the event. Agree?

6. During the Event:

The following activities needs to be performed during the event to add the social media touch:

Webcast Your Event: If you have planned your event considering all the above steps, then it is suggestible to host a live webcast of the event as there would be many among the audience who have followed all the updates about the event but could not come to the event due to pre-fixed schedules, location, illness, cost of the event ticket, emergency, etc. Webcast will help you overcome all the barriers and make your event visible and accessible throughout the world. This will also encourage more and more people to discuss about the event, live.

Encourage Usage of Tweet Walls: Today many international summits and conferences host a Twitter wall that allows tweets with the common hashtag display. One can create a Twitter wall using [www. tweetwally.com](http://www.tweetwally.com). It is suggested to have two big screens, one at the networking area and the other inside the event hall just behind the speaker. The tweet wall allows event managers to display the tweets from the audience inside the venue hall and from others who are watching it live through webcast. A tweet wall is the fun element as you will notice audience giving honest feedbacks about the event or the speaker at the same time they are spreading the word about the event through their social media profiles encouraging more people to know what is happening at the event. A tweet wall also encourages social networking on the web and in the real world.

Remember on the landing page where the webcast is hosted, a tweet widget should also be integrated on the right side of the video to display the tweets with the introduced hashtag. This will help audience listen to the speaker while watching the conversation around it.

Host Social Media-Based Contest: To encourage people to live tweet or update about the event right from the venue while the event is on, companies can think of creative contests. For example, at SMSin2011, we encouraged surprise giveaways to participants who shared the first tweet of the event, first picture of the event shared, first blog post about the event and more. To make the participation go little creative we also hosted a question “A Day Without Social Media is like _____” and there were many from the audience who tweeted their answers using #SMSin2011 to participate in the contest. This question was just raised before the lunch hour, which added a fun element while people enjoyed the food served for appetite and funny tweets for gossips, gag and more.

- 7. Social Media Remembrance Flavor:** This will help you make your customers loyal to your event or to your presence on social media and will act as memoir. In case of TieCon 2010 we hired a professional photographer from the city and ran a “Display Picture Campaign,” which allowed participants of the event to get their professional picture clicked for free that was then later posted on the event’s Facebook page (to increase the number of visitors and likes). Similarly, at SMSin2011, we hosted a backdrop with the branding of the event (look at the image below) called as the “Photocorner” that allowed participants to get their pictures clicked by the hired photographers at the event or using their own gadgets.

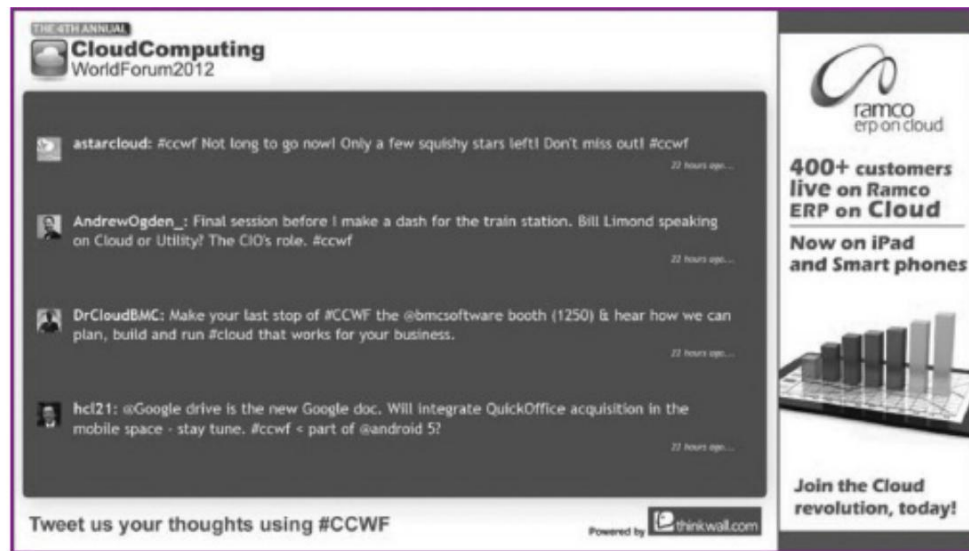
There are many other options that you can think of: T-shirts, stickers for car, customized mugs, etc that can be taken as a souvenir back home.



- 8. After the Event Get Over:** Even before your participants start asking you, your social media team must be quick enough to post the photographs of the event, videos on YouTube as many participants would want to listen to speakers again and again (have an editing team ready to get this done) and the presentations in PDF format on SlideShare (downloadable version) for audience to access. Send a thank you note to all the participants who helped promote your event online by talking about it through their social media profiles.

How Brands on Social Media Get Unique Sponsorship Opportunities

Ramco Systems, a global organization serving ERP on Cloud services, not only participated in the Cloud Computing Forum which held at London but also sponsored the tweet display wall at the event. Previously, brands used to sponsor to get their visibility on the banners on the dias or across the venue. @RamcoSystems preferred to sponsor the tweet wall as the brand has a very active twitter presence and it believed many eyeballs these days constantly vouch out for audience reaction through the displayed tweet wall. To add further to the value and visibility @RamcoSystems was live-tweeting the event with the common hashtag introduced for the event.



Case Study 8.3: How Indian Automobile Brands Are Doing Their PR Through Influencers

Automobile companies have a different funda on social media. Videos and contests with free giveaways have become the norm now. Like how Volkswagen ran *#Anything4Jetta campaign* asking people to tweet to win a car. However, brands either invest in the development of expensive application or a flashy video to engage audiences about their new luxury car and very rarely go the extra mile—to engage influencers in hitting the right chord.

Here are a few stories on how the influencers have been exposed to these marketing stunts by receiving cars for a day or two or for long drives to experience the luxury and share their experience on social media channels.

In turn, brand receives some honest opinions from them, which reaches out to mass through their profiles—We can probably call this as a Public Relation Campaign that comes with ease of amplification

Ford Affords a Long Drive for *Lakshmi Sarath*

Ford helped *Lakshmi Sarath*, a popular travel blogger in the country (Lakshmi has received numerous opportunities to travel abroad for free to cover stories on different cultures and tourism before), by letting her drive a Ford car to Bekal in Kerala from Bangalore. Ford's intention was simply to give her an experience, not a part of any contest. By choosing Lakshmi, Ford made a subliminal advert.

Aarti Tries a Tata Indica Vista d90 for 3 Days from Blogadda

The Automobile industry often leverages blogger communities such as a *blogadda*, *indibloggers* to

reach out to Indian bloggers. *Aarti Krishnakumar*, an active twitterati , a popular food and travel blogger and an influential Facebook persona was given an opportunity to drive Indica Vista d90 for 3 days. It came with a full tank and liberty to drive wherever. She later received a Rs. 2500 Chroma voucher to redeem.



She was one among the many bloggers who were approached to do the same.

@TinuCherian Lost the Contest, But Still Won a Mercedes Car for a Weekend

When it comes to luxury @TinuCherian (active Twitter user) won it all. As part of its promotion, Chetan Bhagat and the #KaiPoChe promotional team ran a business idea contest by asking followers to tweet using #MyKaiPoCheDream.



Tinu received the maximum retweets that shot to the top tweet and trended (with 144 RTs & 52 Favorites—check the pic below). Despite this, Tinu lost and decided to ask Audi for a car for the weekend with an exceptionally smart tweet (he tagged Mercedes and Audi in the same tweet—check the pic below). The tweet got him 147 RTs, catching the Mercedes India's attention instead of Audi's and hurried to contact him. In addition, sent him a SLK 350 (90+ lakh worth model?) all the way from Pune to Bangalore, for an entire weekend as requested. Now, that's brilliant isn't it?



Tinu did full justice! He shared pictures and the experience of driving a Merc with his internet fan followings.

@Dhempe Gets Lucky with Mercedes as Well

Savaari.com (a portal to book cars—for hiring) hosted a Valentine's Day contest on Facebook asking participants to post their best couple pictures. The one who got highest number of votes won a free luxury car ride for a day. @Dhempe (active social media personality) had achieved about 132 votes, becoming the runner up and Madhumita Ghosh won by gaining 235 votes. Both won a free car drive. Dhempe being highly influential on his social media platform, did justice to savaari.com and Mercedes by sharing his experience on Facebook and on Twitter, winning a Mercedes E Class!



How Brands in India Are Leveraging Twitter to Make Their Hashtags Trend and Reach Out to People Across the Country:

Before I begin this case study let me explain you what hashtag is all about:

If you are using Twitter, you must be already aware of what a Hashtag is. But, if you are not using Twitter then for your understanding “Hashtag” is basically a keyword that is used to assimilate all the tweets at one place when searched for. If a tweet of yours considers a word with hashtag, for example: *#ForYourUnderstanding* —the word becomes hyperlinked by itself, which on clicking goes to a separate page which displays tweets of all the tweeters who have used *#ForYourUnderstanding* in their tweet. So it basically can be called a “Content Aggregator.” When a hashtag is used by thousands of tweeters at a particular instance the chance of it becoming a trending topic is high on Twitter. However, Hashtags can also be used on Facebook, Google+, Pinterest, or Instagram to aggregate content at one place. In simple term Hashtag = Grouping of Messages.

What Is Trending Topic?

When a hashtag is more often used by people and by various numbers of people more frequently at a steady pace, the topic becomes a trending topic on Twitter. In simple terms, things that is most discussed becomes trending. For example, Anna Hazare was trending on Twitter for more than 4 days as it was the most discussed topic of a particular season. On a similar note, KolaveriDi was trending for more than 3 days as the video kept going viral across the globe. Though there are many hashtags, many discussion topics that goes on Twitter but the topic which is discussed by vast number of people at a particular instance in a particular geography has golden chance to become a trending topic

(globally, nationally, locally).

How Brands Leverages It?

Brands use hashtags and trending topics in different ways:

- By using hashtags in their tweets to be part of industry-specific conversations or events. For example, echoVME often uses #SocialMedia while tweeting an information related to the topic.
- By participating in the trending topics or hashtags of the day to be part of limelight.
- By introducing a hashtag-based communication for an event they organize.
- By hosting a hashtag-based contest to generate conversations around the brand and make it trend.

The following hashtag based contests were hosted by some of the popular brands of India that got trending nationwide:

Brand Contests	Nationally Trending Hashtag	Impact
Ebay India Giving a personal touch to engagements, Ebay India on turning 8, ran a contest asking followers to reminisce on what happened in their lives 8 years back, urging them to “scream” about it using hashtag and ran contests that awarded ipad mini for the winners.	#8yearsback	Since the topic got trending in India many people got to learn that Ebay has actually completed 8 years of its existence. That was a very smart way to celebrate.
Appy Fizz Appy Fizz, along with Saif Ali Khan (Actor) brought out a “Dream Hangout” which is directed at a social media hangout. Followers were asked to participate in the contest by posting pictures, sharing about one’s favorite place to hangout. The contest lasted for several hours and the topic trended successfully all over India.	#SaifNFizzHangout	The choice of hashtag is wise. As the topic got trending many people could relate to the popular brand and its association with Saif Ali Khan as a brand ambassador. In a similar format, #SRKlovesfrooti was trending and that was when the first official video of the ad was launched and a contest was planned around it.
Vogue Eyewear	#IStayInVogueWith	Followers were asked to tweet using #IStayInVogueWith with the recent trends or something that they are always updated with. The winners were awarded an eyewear by Vogue.
Cadbury Silk	#BidForSilk	Are you ready to bid for the biggest cube of indulgence? Reads the contest for Cadbury Silk with a hash that says #silkaholics. It ran contests by bidding for the biggest bar of silk and by replacing movie titles to silk. The topic trended on Twitter and over 10 winners were awarded with a Silk.
OLX India	#ReplaceMovieTitleWith-BechDe	BechDe that got trended saw hilarious tweets like “I hate luv - Bech De,” “Social Network Bechde” and “#ReplaceMovieTitleWithBechDe people have sold everything with this hashtag but they forgot about Deshdrohi BechDe” among a series of BechDe contest OLX India is running. #ReplaceMovieTitleWithBechDe was the most popular and hilarious one. The topic trended at #1 on the very first day in India.



CrowdSourcing

Introduction to Crowdsourcing

Crowdsourcing on social media has always been my favorite subject and there are two reasons for it; firstly, crowdsourcing has immensely helped me fetch a lot of answers to serious queries that I had raised on social media (both professional and personal). Secondly, I believe that crowdsourcing is one of the finest benefits that social media can offer to businesses or their owners by involving a cadre of customers in key research, marketing, branding, product, and business development processes.

Crowdsourcing has always been there, only being revamped now after the advent of the internet. Soliciting contributions from followers for your services is crowdsourcing. In the past, this would have been a tedious process but now with the advent of social media, the process has become easier and has enabled a better reach for its audience. In Chapter 3, we saw the concept of a transparent piggy banking theory. Collecting funds for an NGO, like asking your followers to comment or tweet or share is a way of crowdsourcing. You can see what others are contributing and you also enable others to see the same, thus staying transparent.

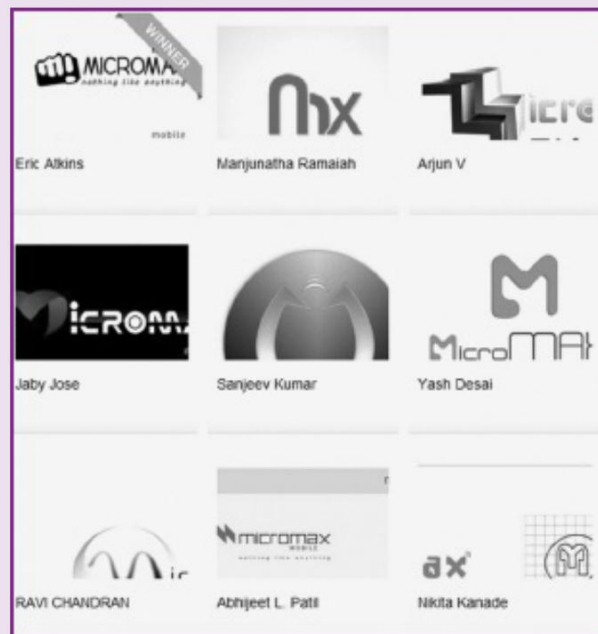
Reasons Why Businesses Should Crowdsourcing

In the process of crowdsourcing, a brand taps into the collective intelligence of its audience openly at large to accomplish tasks related to business that company would either perform or assign a designated agent (usually an employee) or a third party vendor. Crowdsourcing can be of many types: Crowdsourcing of creative work, Crowdsourcing of ideas, Crowdsourcing of tasks, and Crowdsourcing of expertise and intelligence. Social media has helped obtain collective intelligence in an easier way and many businesses use social media to crowdsource for various reasons:

- 1. Expand Size of Talent Pool:** Have you ever come across a brand that hosts contests such as design a logo, pick a tagline for the brand, and create an advertisement contest? Well, these are the brands that are testing the power of crowdsourcing to find out a better solution to their problems. Instead of just hiring an agency or employing one person to meet the objectives, the brand hosts a contest and seeks responses from the audience to get work done. In return, most participants simply want some personal recognition, a sense of community, or at most, a financial incentive. With increasing entries of the contest, brands search for the value in the pool of talent.

Case Study 9.1: Micromax in association with Talenthouse India (community of artists) hosted logo re-design contest on Facebook as well as on the host site and the winner in return receive

personal recognition on Micromax's website + an Apple MacBook Pro.



Participants were asked to design the logo, before a given date, on the young and dynamic theme of the brand and the best entries were decided on the vote it received from the audience in the community of Talenthouse India and Facebook (crowdsourcing again to finalize!).

2. Understand Customer's Perspectives and Quickly Develop Product as Customer Wants:

When a participant participates in the crowdsourcing task hosted by the brand they tend to give honest opinions, creative entries, and feedback for following reasons:

- Loyalty towards the brand.
- Incentives offered by the brand to respond.
- Desire for personal recognition.
- Restructure their thought process.

Brands can use crowdsourcing concept in different phases of product or marketing life cycle to learn from customers or to make use of their talent. When customers use their creative talent they also put their perspectives in place while designing them.

Community platforms can also be used to launch the first look of the product by sharing photos and videos and can seek public opinion before launching the finalized product (provided if you really would like to showcase the innovation to the world).



For Example: Crowdsourcing ideas for “Things that Indians Say” was the campaign launched by Chumbak a popular Indian startup that manufactures creative magnets, mugs, posters, etc. The responses received via these campaigns helped the brand engage audience, get quotes from different parts of India representing different regions, and help developing products with the most creative, popular, and used quotes by Indians.

- 3. Immensely Helps Understand Market Behavior:** Geographical barriers of culture and communication are so strong that you will always realize brands are perceived differently in different countries and there are differences in communications, emotional connections, and overall culture in a nutshell. Crowdsourcing of creative ideas or opinions on a particular subject through social media platforms helps brands understand the behavior of the market towards the brand and the communication. The whole process of seeking and understanding brainstormed ideas from different people across the world helps brands track and optimize their marketing to reach a broader market and save cost.
- 4. Minimize Labor and Research Expenses:** For many brands crowdsourcing just happens as and when the community is developed on social media in the format of conversations with customers. The Return On Investment of crowdsourcing is not just about getting the end product of your desired objective, it is also about how much you gain out of your campaign, how innovative they are, how much it engaged your audience, and how your business ended up saving money by eliminating the costs of marketing practices.

To get lots of brainstormed ideas from your target audience you need not have to organize a focus group or run surveys physically you can ask your network on social media or members of your community to give suggestions for the business problem. Thus helping you save penny and at the same time get amazing ideas from your real evaluators, your customers! Remember as seen above in the case studies, giving an incentive or running a contest can help you get more inputs and exposure for your crowd sourced brainstorming. Brands also get database of responses which can be archived for references.

- 5. Engaging to Create Anticipation, Excitement, and Brand Value:**

To engage audience on a regular basis and to get the brainstormed ideas from the experts in the community, excitement can be created by posting difficult cases, Echovme regularly hosts “Solve Case Study” on its Facebook page—a basic marketing problem is posted in the format of an image-seeking solution from the community, resulting in responses from experts which help

us learn more from the real life experiences and practices and at the same time educating other people in the community .

The usual objectives of crowdsourcing campaigns are to achieve the desired value and responses from the audience and also to create excitement in the community. The more the excitement you generate via the announcements for crowdsourcing, the more the anticipation you create among the target audience.

For Example: HP hosted a crowdsourced community song engagement activity encouraging its fan base on Facebook to participate with lyrics, video, and music for the first ever community song called “Rise Up,” a song created by the community, for the community on the occasion of crossing 1,00,000 fans on Facebook.

The sourced lyrics of the song from the community were given to a young talented musician who had earlier won “Beats Audio Music” contest hosted on the HP fan page in the past year of its social media presence. Pictures of participants who gave lyrics were used in making of the video for the song. Thus making it a complete “Social Media Community Song” crowdsourced from the community and produced for the same. Thus making it a really exciting campaign.

6. **Crowdsourcing Community, a Business Idea:** Using a network or community to crowdsource is not just a campaign; it could be a business idea too. There are many platforms or networks that help businesses crowdsource talent or ideas. Such platforms are neither social networking sites by itself nor are they a hub for the businesses and individuals to post requirements and community members to pick it up. Jademagnet.Com in India is one technology platform and a marketplace of opportunities for those with a creative inclination and technological background at the same time businesses can look at the profiles of designers associated, if impressed they can host their requirements in the format of contests which goes to the network and the best response selected by the business gets the prize money.
7. **Helps Spread WOM:** It's the era of crowdsourcing ideas as well as crowdsourcing decision making based on received ideas. Most brands prefer to run voting mechanism for the ideas received through crowdsourcing contests, based on the votes the winners are decided—putting the burden on the participants to get enough votes for their idea to win, resulting in ample word of mouth.



photo contest for picking the Facebook timeline cover image of a baby. The contest was announce via Facebook status updates and through advertisements for which the brand received more than 74 entries from different parents across India.

The winner was to be decided on the basis of the most number of shares a photo received, tha encouraged participants to share and requested others to share the photograph thus helping spreadin word of mouth about the contest as well as increasing the visibility of the brand. The picture of th baby who won the contest received more than 200 shares from different original profiles thu standing ahead of all the other 740 entries.

What Did Brand Achieve?

- a. Helped business spread the word about firstcry.com through personalized way of communication by asking parents to post pictures and later share it from the album of brand's Facebook page. Let us assume that there were about 740 entries to the contest, if on an average 1 photo received 20 shares based on campaigning it becomes about 14,800 shares. If on an average each person who shared has 100 friends in their network, the personalized visibility of Firstcry.com reached to 14,80,000 people, thus reaching a huge mass.
- b. Since FirstCry.com is all about buying products for toddlers, this was an interesting way to engage audience to create brand awareness and establishing its identity.
- c. Brands can also learn how aggressive Indian parents are to promote their kids, thus using such concepts in the future can benefit brands further.

8. Helps in Recruitment: “Miller—High Life” was in search of candidates who live by the motto “Work hard party harder” and it chose Facebook to crowdsource talent in an innovative way and was highly successful in receiving thousands of profiles (refer to the case study “The Coolest Jobs in the HR and Social Media”). In a similar fashion FOX Traveller, a TV channel, created an interactive application to source for a new candidate for their new show “Freaky Traveller Hunt,” the application sought interested fans to submit application with crazy videos and photographs via the application itself. Crowdsourcing concept can be applied to different aspects of business provided your objectives are clear and your execution is clean, creative, and non-biased.

By getting your customers involved in campaigns and contests, you end up making them advocates of your brand. With time this relationship of giving and taking will become a complimentary advantage.

Tips for Crowdsourcing

Considering real value in crowdsourcing on social media, here are some generic tips that your business might want to consider while investing in social media. An important mandate of crowdsourcing is to develop a com- munity before asking questions and investing in promoting your campaign (if sourcing for talent/ideas). To get some more thoughtful and collective intel- ligence, here are some points that you need to take care of:

Keep Asking: Ask open-ended questions to your customers on social media to facilitate conversations or ask for their opinion about the prod- ucts you serve. A restaurant owner might want to ask these:

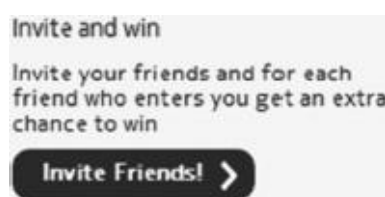
- What do you eat for breakfast?
- Share what you eat for breakfast and we will tell you how many calories you eat.

- Do you like the breakfast spread we have at our restaurant?
- What do you want us to add or remove from our breakfast spread?

The feedback received can be evaluated collectively which later can be activated as per the requirement of customers and market the “Feedback in Action” feature to create further engagement and customer enthusiasm. Do not forget, your customers are your best evaluators and critics!

Run Polls: Poll is an easiest way for your consumers to share their ideas and feelings and keep them connected with brands as their opinion is just a click away and do not really require a lot of brainstorming. The responses received in the poll can also be put into the “Feedback in Action” category or can become a topic for your brand’s next conversation on social media platforms. For example, about 70% of the respondents of the recent poll conducted feels “More fruits should be added in the breakfast spread;” what fruits would you like to see in the spread?

Host Contests and Add the Social Spark:



Contests are a crucial part of crowdsourcing as it helps spread word about the event across networks, your customers become your promoters to spread the word about your contest. A recent contest by Nokia that was hosted on Facebook to learn its fans’ perspectives on different smart phones and what they perceive about Nokia, asked for “Tell us a reason why would you like to #Switch to Nokia Lumia 800 from your current smart phone,” with a line below “invite your friends and for each friend who enters, you get an extra chance to win”. This helps brand spread the word through customers only to those people who are most likely to participate in the contest.

It is advisable to host contests around festive seasons as it gives your customers an opportunity to participate with all the enthusiasm and make their festival special. You will always notice brands hosting “Colors of Holi” contest during Holi season and encouraging their audiences to click pictures and post it to participate in the contest. In a similar fashion Kurkure came up with a crowdsourcing contest using Talenthouse, India—design the Diwali gift box contest for its products with prize money of Rs. 1,00,000 as first prize and Rs. 25,000 for the first runner-up.

Ensure to add social features to the contest to make sharing possible and help spread word of mouth about the contest.

Give Incentives and Recognitions: Incentives and recognitions are crucial aspects of crowdsourcing. A free product or a discounted product or services can be offered to the winners and since the brand name is going to be in the top of the mind because of their participation, the brand can offer all of them a special discount to increase the footfall. If the crowdsourcing contest’s aim was to source talent or design, the brand can choose top three or top five winners instead of just choosing and awarding only one design which is finalized. Announce the name of the winners with their photographs on your social media channels (after their consent) with display of their ideas alongside to give their talent some more exposure.

Ensure the prizes you offer are relevant to your brand!

People on social media love sharing their opinions, ideas and talent on different platforms. When you ask for feedback, do not be discouraged if you receive a negative feedback; consider it as a collective constructive criticism that helps shape your business better. While crowdsourcing, engage people differently; keep a mixture of poll, contests, questions, and surveys to keep it interesting.

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Lead Generation and Sales on Social Media

Many people say that Social Media is not a sales channel, but it is not so. If there is no sales element, why would brands want to invest in social media marketing or advertising? Sales is done in social media; however, the process is long and most of the times not transparent. If your objective is to obtain leads via social media and drive sales, this chapter is just for you.

Lead generation on social media is a process that starts with the right objective and a series of different practices. Generating lead on social media can also be called as an opportunity that arises when brands' position itself as a thought leader and keeps its ears open on the listening tools. There are different ways brands can generate leads on social media which is a direct component of patience and persistence on social media and content.

Today, when we conduct a workshop on Social Media, most of our tickets are sold via Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Blogs, or referrals that we obtain from the participants. The major chunk of leads for our Social Media marketing services are all routed through Social Media. We follow an essential process while generating leads on social media. However, sometimes we do not really follow the process but still are successful in generating leads via Social Media (Figure 10.1).

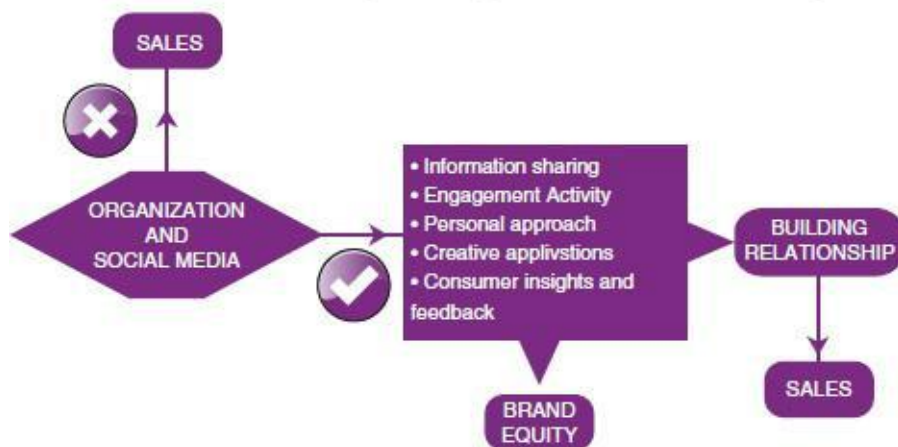


Figure 10.1: Role of Social Media in a Firm's Promotional Mix.

Sales or lead generation happens when a brand invests time and effort in engaging their audience, offering customer service, giving value by offering exclusive contents and information, tracking consumer insights and feedbacks. These processes impacts the overall brand equity building trust and relationships with customers and thus generating leads and leads to the brand closing it as sales. This looks like a tedious process; however, with every step involved in brand equity building, there are fair chances to generate leads, most of the time. If you are aiming at instant sales then you are setting yourself up for a fall. You need to focus on attracting audience with innovative offers or discounts. There are certain steps to be followed.

Various Process of Lead Generation on Social Media

Step I: Define Who You Are Targeting

As is the case with every process of Social Media or traditional marketing, defining the target audience is essential and this applies to lead generation as well. For many consumer brands, lead generation through Social Media is a secondary objective as their primary focus is on using social media as a platform to build awareness, manage relationship with customers, and give customers an experience, etc. In many B2B organizations, using social media as a lead generation tool is the primary focus.

Social media marketing process is successful only when your target niche is well defined. Here are some tips that will help you define your target audience better. Remember, these tips will help you define your target audience while setting up any primary or secondary objectives on social media.

A. Customer Analysis on Social Media: Understanding your customer's behavior on social media is highly essential. Make a list of 20-40 of your customers on social media and track what kind of activities they do on social networking sites. Take a spreadsheet and track the kind of content your customers share or read; the time they are usually active, the various kind of activities they do on social media (such as engaging with an application, sharing content, sharing family photos, sharing funny stuff, etc.; you can set various decibels as per your brand). Profiling each customer and their behavior will help you understand the commonalities and differences.

To visualize your customers, it is better to define your target based on a story that you can develop using the profile:

Example: "Ravi is a 28-year-old man and is in a relationship with a girl. He works for a software solution-providing company and earns about Rs. 40-50 thousand per month. He usually reads and shares a lot of contents from Technorati, WSJ, and Forbes on the emerging trends in technology. He is an active member of so and so group on LinkedIn. Most of the updates that he shares are through LinkedIn and Twitter. His Face- book presence is very much personal."

Similarly, you can develop a story on other customers to understand in detail about what your customers really do on social media.

B. Benchmark Your Top Three Competitors:

Following in the footsteps of your competitors is always a smart strategy for the beginners on social media, provided you considered yourself the followers of the innovator. Choose three competitors who have already entered the social media territory for promoting their brands. Competitor analysis is the best way to understand who their customers are, which social media platforms they use to engage your customers, and what kind of content they share on social media to attract audience. One needs to track the kind of give away, thought leadership, contest-based element, content they share, design, involvement of employees, brand positioning and the brand's behavior, characteristic and performance on social media. Compare the profile of your competitor's customers with the profile you have created of your customers. Understand the similarities and differences in their profile. Track what is that your competitors are being good at and where is that you are better than them.

C. Consider Demographics and User Behavior:

It may be helpful to list your target audience's demographics and psychographics. In fact, in step

one you already defined some of these attributes. Listing as many out as possible will help you get a glimpse of the big picture.

Demographics:

- Age
- Location
- Income Level
- Education Level
- Marital or Family Status
- Occupation
- Ethnic Background

Psychographics:

- Personality
- Attitudes
- Values
- Interests/Hobbies
- Lifestyle
- Behavior

You can use this information to figure out how your customers think.<represent this through images>

D. Testing:

Once you have chosen a target audience, test it! Use the conclusions you have drawn to shape your communication tone. Try some things and see what happens. Take notes on the responses you get. Do the amount and quality of comments or responses go up if you talk a certain way, or share certain content? Use this information to improve your communication with your audience.

With the above analysis you should be in a position to derive the questions below. These are the main points that you need to vouch for while understanding your customers on the web.

- Who are your customers?
- What channels do they prefer?
- What are their content preferences?
- What is their usual behavior towards a brand on social media?
- What kind of content do they share?
- Where do they discuss about the product/services or the industry you belong to on web?
- What is their demographic and geographic history?
- Where do they seek solutions for their problem related to product/ services or the industry you belong to on web?
- What are the keywords that you can use to track conversations regarding your industry, problem (for which you have solution), or brands?

Step 2: Landing Page

A landing page is essentially designed considering the specification of who your customers are and what kind of information they would like to read on the landing pages, depending upon the analysis you have done. A landing page is an essential component in any form of Internet marketing, and it is a deciding factor for the conversions to happen or leads to generate. When the audiences you are targeting get to your website or to a customized Facebook page, you should take advantage of these

opportunities as a brand.

As it is said, the first impressions are the best ones, a landing page will help the customer decide, create an image about you, your business, and whether or not they will proceed further or exit. You can prefer to have a landing page on the Facebook business page if you are targeting your customers there, and whereas targeting other social networking, a landing page needs to be built on the website.

Direct your customers from social media to the most relevant, specific URL on your website and not to the main website. By doing so, you are meeting those expectations and strengthening their purpose of coming to the site thus helping you build the trust to obtain their details.

What Should Go in a Landing Page?

A. Call to Action:

When running a lead generation campaign the ultimate goal is to obtain genuine leads and convert the prospects to customers. Driving customers to the landing page is one of the most crucial steps to reach the end goal. And the beauty of having a landing page with a “call to action” strategy implemented is that you influence and control what you want your prospects to do on your site.

Use the chosen “call to action” strategy creatively, for example you can highlight the content with a box around it which completely contrasts from the landing page to point out where the customers need to fill in details or take necessary step as per the objective.

- **Call to Action on Facebook Landing Page:** The Facebook landing page is the result of advertisements that your prospects have just clicked or product of tab that is visible on the Facebook business page of your brand. Your landing page is essential targeting either to generate leads or to generate more number of relevant people in the community. The most common ones are requesting people to click “like” to join the page, click “like” to avail an offer (which is accessible on the next page) or fill in the details. Below are some examples.
- **Call to Action on Social Media Channels:** Besides all the descriptions and details about your brand that you mention on social media channels on “call to action” mentions in your content and your channels, is essential after all your prime objective is to generate leads, give it enough exposure. On the branding elements you create for your presence on social media such as Twitter background, customized YouTube, and SlideShare dashboard, a creative header for the blog and any other element for giving a space for “call to action” must be a high priority. For example, do you want us to design your website? Click here or visit us on xyz.com/designforu.
- **Call to Action in Content and Conversations:** Sticking by the rule, every content that you develop in the season when your prime objective is to generate leads you need to highly consider the inclusion of “call to action” as an end note to your blog post, presentations, videos, photos, and the conversations you build around it. For example, whenever I post a presentation on my SlideShare account I always add all my contact details in the final side with a note: “Talk to Sorav, To Find Solutions to Your Social Media Problems.” Even when conversations are built across on social media on a topic initiated by your brand when you see your customers or prospects are raising questions, you should address the queries and end up adding a call to action note “for further details or queries about the products /services please feel free to connect with us @ “. You should give enough opportunities for your customers to remind that you are there to serve or offer.

B. Maintaining Relationship Between Call to Action and Landing Page: There is a strong

correlation between call to action and a landing page. A call to action in the promotions, content, announcements or advertisements drives customers to landing page and acts as a strong support to the drive. If you, as a brand, drive your customers through a newspaper advertisement saying there is a 50% discount in the store and you are only offering 5% you definitely disappoint them as your “call to action” sets an expectation in customers’ mind which you have not met in reality. A landing page is where you meet the promises and the expectations that you set via “call to action” mentions.

C. Simplifying Design

If you believe in being straight forward, you need to implement the same on your landing pages too. Keeping it simple is the key mantra of a landing page.

- Avoid using different font sizes, styles and colors on your landing page. Follow a standard header, body and format.
- Do not add a lot of images or rich media content unless it supports your conversion goals and is a great way to convey important message. If your product/services are complicated and cannot be explained in limited words, then a quick 1 min video presentation can help.
- Having a form that allows your prospects to enter their contact details is essential.
- A toll-free number displayed on the top right-hand-side corner of the landing page will be a value add as your customers would want to talk to you to understand your product/service better, provided you have a 24x7 support.
- Having a live chat facility integrated on your landing page will help you track your customers and allow them to ping you if they are looking for an instant solution. Provided you have 24x7 support.
- Images are impactful on the landing pages, having an image that gives a visual representation of products or services is suggestible as long as they are not too large and complex and is properly sized.
- If you are planning to use a similar landing page for your Facebook business page, you will have to customize the same to 1100 height and 850 width pixels.

Since you are aiming at lead generation, having fewer content on the landing page is suggestible to distract the audience. Instead of writing in paragraphs make your description in bullet points and if there is something that you want to share in detail, have it linked to the footer and make it accessible on supporting pages.

D. Credibility of the Brand

Gaining the trust factor from the audience who visit your landing page is necessary, for conversion to happen or leads to be generated. A good design and call to action strategy alone will not help in the decisionmaking process. On your landing page you may also want to have:

- Logos of your clients you have served before. Use the recognized ones (link these logos to case studies on supporting pages—if available).
- Badges of the media who have covered a story on your company or your product (link these logos to original story).
- Testimonials of your customers: Display the ones who are well known in the industry.
- If you are aiming at obtaining their information to sell your services later, have a note below the form “The information you will share will remain confidential and we will not spam your inbox.”
- If you are planning to sell via landing pages, make your customers feel secure about transactions by adding logos of the secure payment gateways.

- The logos of trade associations, acceptable payment methods, and money-back guarantee seals will be add-ons.

E. Enabling Social Sharing and Social Login

Having social media share buttons integrated with the landing page is an add-on to the entire experience of your prospects. A customer sharing your landing page shows he/she endorses the brand and that the content and offer is worth it. Allowing social media sharing icons on the page will also show the number of people who have retweeted on Twitter, liked on Facebook, or total number of times it has been shared on sites such as Google plus, LinkedIn, and bookmarking sites that shows how credible the brand is. There are popular social sharing widgets that you can use using sharethis.com and addthis.com. Allowing customers to share your landing page will increase its visibility on social channels and enhance its search engine positioning.



If you are too sceptical that your customers would not enter their details to contact them, you can enable social login feature; this feature allows people to access your site and continue “call to action” by logging in through the id and passwords of social networking sites they already have registered in. Many social networks today allow you to pull in contact details from the user (such as an e-mail address), making it very easy to allow you to communicate with users.



Step 3: Lead Generation Battle Ground

In the step 1 of the process you have taken all the necessary steps for understanding your customers and prospects better. It is time to put all that you have learnt about your customers there in action here. When a warrior enters a battleground he has a specific goal in mind for the day; it could be conquering a specific land or killing these many warriors of the enemies. Similarly, when a marketer enters social media landscape he/she needs to have a specific goal in the mind. The goals could be:

Based on Your Customer Analysis:

- Number of social media channels to approach
- Number of contents to be released in a week
- Kind of contents to be released in a week

- Number of prospects to reach every day through listening (tangible), advertisements (tangible), and virality of the content (intangible depends upon the content).
- Number of prospects to reach based on profiling and availability.
- Participate and pitching in number of conversations through listening
- Number of leads to be generated through advertisements
- Number of leads to be achieved through the content released
- Overall visibility to obtain: Community to develop favoring future lead generation activities, such as number of likes and number of followers

All the goals mentioned above have a co-relation with the customer analysis you have done. For example, if you are a consumer brand targeting youth in India via social media you will have a lot more choices as they are more social media savvy and they are like the soldiers in the battle ground. However, if you are a B2B organization and trying to target CXOs or manager level, individuals' choices and activities get limited as the social media literacy or accessibility is still limited. It is like targeting the majors in the battle ground; you will reach them but there is a lot to do.

1. Targeting Your Prospects Through Listening:

Listening on social media is a key element to generate leads which is available up in the air. Social media has today become a ground where many individuals seek for answers. For example when I was going to Colombo for a workshop, I had just tweeted "I am looking for a vegetarian cafeteria in #Colombo, any recommendations?" Someone who was following the #Colombo listened to my query and recommended to a cafeteria called @Cocoveranda which was also available on Twitter. The one who was managing @Cocoveranda quickly responded to my query with the menu of vegetarian dishes and warmly welcomed to the cafeteria via Twitter even before I landed to Colombo.

The queries raised on social media by prospects help raise their collective decisions from peers which are also accessible to the brand to pitch.

A. Listening on Twitter: By using various listening tools (refer to chapter on online reputation management) a company or an individual can set up those keywords that users use to search you. The words could probably be one of the following:

a. Broad Search: Name of the brand or competitor's brand.

b. Narrow Search: Prefix or suffix to the brand name or competitor's name or the products and services your company sells. For example: looking for a Lenovo laptop, any Dell dealers:



c. Search for the Need: Looking for jeans, any social media expert, any recommendations for laptops?



d. Search for Plans and Problems: Small businesses can prefer to search for words that people

use while describing their activities which could be related to the services or products your brand offers. For example you own a cab service company and to look for customers even before they reach your city you can use Twitter extensively to listen to people who are travelling to your city. For example search for, going to Chennai, visiting Chennai, Chennai, here I come, etc. and then tweet them with a pitch.

Similarly, many a times brands take advantage of people sharing their problems online and pitch to them with the solution which helps them engage with the individual and recommend them their products and services as a better solution to their problem.

Case Study 10.1: How Amrutanjan Relief (@WuhooRelief) and Amrutanjan Roll On (@KickOutPain) Listened to People Suffering on Twitter. This is the detailed case study of the one discussed in Chapter 6.

The case study shows how Amrutanjan created demand on social media by listening to people's generic problems and pitched them with solutions that the health care brand Amrutanjan offers.

What did the brand do?

Relief (@WuhooRelief) and Roll On (@KickOutPain) two healthcare products from a popular South Indian brand called Amrutanjan became popular on Twitter by providing homemade remedy solutions and recommending products to people suffering from cough, cold, sore throat, an headache.

In less than 4 months Amrutanjan Relief and Roll On reached more than 2000 people on Twitter who were suffering from cold or headache and offered them home remedies and the healthcare product to get some quick relief.

How did the brand do that?



The company first made a list of keywords that people usually use when suffering from a cold or headache such as suffering from cold, nose blocked, head is aching, sardard (headache in Hindi) could not breathe properly, coughing, sardi—jhukaam (cold in Hindi), and other hundreds of words in different regional Indian languages that were associated with the problem.



After running a search on these words on a daily basis, the brand identified many who were suffering from this problem or have been conversing about it and that is when the brand joined the conversations by checking with them how they are feeling and offering them some tips to get a quick relief (thus not being promotional on the first instance) and ended up recommending their products.

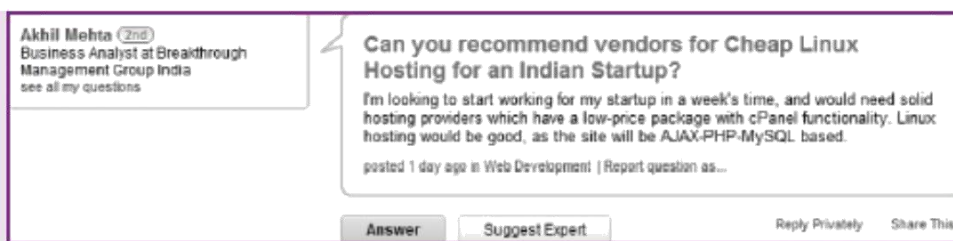


As a result:

- More than responding back to the concern raised by the brand, people shared that concern with their followers on Twitter because it was surprising to have a brand showing sympathy when the person is sharing his problem on a public platform. With RTs the communication of the brand reached to thousands on a day-to-day basis.
- The sympathy raised and suggestions that were given not only created brand advocacy but also helped create a brand identity and an increase in sales.

B. Leads Through Question and Answers and Groups

- Quora and LinkedIn Answers (feature of LinkedIn) are two places that can help you get answers to your queries on the web. Quora is more to do with queries personally and professionally whereas in LinkedIn Answers are very much confined to the professional questions alone. Both of these sites are full of opportunities as you not just answer the questions and gain credibility or respect but also get an opportunity to address some of the direct leads.



The image above from LinkedIn shows a direct requirement to which a sales executive can contact and privately respond to close. On a similar note, sites such as Quora.com and Yahoo answers can help you with a lot of open questions relevant to your business that could be a direct lead.

Apparently, LinkedIn has removed the LinkedIn Answers features. However, relevant LinkedIn group are where you can benefit from or Quora is where you would want to be for this feature.

There are various communities and groups on LinkedIn and Facebook where conversations on certain topics are built and so are the discussions on requirements. Obtaining leads on these place can be related to a cafeteria experience. For example, you are in the queue of a cafeteria to pick your coffee and two persons behind you are discussing a certain issue for which your company has solution. You tap on the shoulder of the person and offer him to join in a conversation where you show him the solutions you have and exchange cards. These groups run in similar fashions where conversations and leads are out there and you need to figure it out. A company needs to be a part of the relevant groups of their industry where their target audience usually dwells and converses with other like-minded individuals.

For Example: A popular group on Facebook called “Chennai Shopping” (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/chennaishopping/>) with more than 17,000 members is a place for Chennaites to source information related to their requirements and at the same time a platform for local vendors to showcase their products. Many women on Facebook keep dumping their queries and get responses in a crowdsourcing pattern from the members or a response directly from the vendor too, times. Check the example of requirement and conversation below.



The image shows how a member raises a question and how members of the community respond back with the solutions recommending different service providers. If in case the builder is also here on the platform this can be considered as an open lead for them. Similarly, there are many groups and communities relevant to regions and industries.

<again, you might want to mask the names>

2. Lead Generation Through Content and Thought Leadership:

SlideShare, a popular presentation and document sharing website has a feature that allows

brands to source for leads when people access the presentations they upload. The pro account o SlideShare allows a minimal number of leads based on different packages. Ramco Systems, a ERP on Cloud service provider extensively uses SlideShare to share contents on pro accoun that generates a form while the viewers access the presentations. This has helped them sourc numerous leads and close a few. Ramco Systems has shared more than 200 documents an presentations which has gotten 70,000+ spectators. The process of uploading a presentation i simple and so is the lead generation process on SlideShare, provided the brand has grea presentations to share or if it can start investing in creating new. SlideShare is a very effectiv tool for B2B marketers.

Case Study 10.2: *Ramco System’s 360 Degree Social Media Approach - B2B Social Media Marketin Case Study*

For B2B Marketers, Social Media is a tool for lead generation which comes with a lot of credibilit on the web and thought leadership. Ramco Systems and many other IT companies such as Wipro Infosys, HCL, and TCS have a holistic presence on social media channels. Thought leadership over concept on web is always well recognized by analysts, customers, search engines, authors, an bloggers. Ramco Systems has created its active 360 degree presence on all the social networking site positioning itself as a “Cloud Computing” thought leader.

Various brands’ 360 degree presence and social media activities are presented in [Table 10.1](#).

Table 10.1: Ramco system’s 360 Degree Presence and Social Media Activities

Channel	Activity
<i>Blog</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily blog posts on Cloud computing trends and ERP. • Blog posts on the recent happenings and events in the organization. • Blog posts about the external events Ramco Systems is sponsoring or participating in. • Blog posts on the keynote speech the senior management share at the event. • More than 400 blog posts have been written. • Brand runs banner advertisements about its product which on clicking leads to a product detail and lead generation form.
<i>LinkedIn</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramco Systems runs advertisements for lead generation, driving traffic to a landing page created on the website. • Ramco Systems hosts a specific group for CXOs called the cloud “Computing group for CXOs powered by Ramco Systems” that regularly engages the CXO level individuals. • Ramco’s top management authorities are active on LinkedIn frequently mapping customers, prospects and generated leads and maintain a professional relationship with them.
<i>YouTube</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 88 videos shared on Cloud Computing, ERP. More than 19,000 spectators have viewed the videos.
<i>Slideshare</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 204 presentations and documents on press articles, cloud computing, ERP processes, company presentations, key note talk presentations have been shared. More than 70,000 presentation views till date. • Ramco Systems has also opted for a premium SlideShare account that helps in generating leads.
<i>Facebook</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 10,000 members in Ramco’s Facebook business page. • Brand runs regular advertisements on Facebook targeting the technology crowd (Cloud Computing centric) and senior officials (the key decision makers for Ramco’s products) with a relevant customized landing page. • Regularly updates Facebook page with industry news, links from the uploads made on Blogs, SlideShare, and YouTube and daily quizzes and poll.
<i>Twitter</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 30,000 followers on Twitter. • Regular mapping of analysts and journalists in the technology space and picking up conversation with them or re-tweeting their relevant tweets. • Regular mapping of customers, prospects, and employees and listening to their conversation. • Regular tweeting on industry trends and virtual participation by using hashtags of global cloud computing events. • Sponsoring social media components at the global cloud computing events. Example: tweet wall.

Result:

- Ramco Systems claims to have obtained leads and sales via its social media presence.
- Increased visibility of the updates related to cloud computing made by Ramco Systems on search engines and increasing leads through the lead generation forms.
- Loyal base of followers, fans and subscribers resulting in inquiries and sales.
- Shows credibility and content richness of the brand related to the subject thus making it a thought leader.
- Customer relationship management through regular mapping on LinkedIn and Twitter

Sharing a lot of content on a regular subject helps brands position themselves as a thought leader in the web sphere and that ultimately results with people approaching you or your brand to avail expert advice. Making full use of sites such as YouTube, SlideShare, Blogs, and Pinterest to upload contents and promote it via sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn with a “call to action” will help brands to promote themselves and avail leads.

3. Driving Leads Through Social Media Advertisements

Many brands do not enter social media, however prefer to advertise on these platforms and drive traffic to their website or generate direct leads. LinkedIn and Facebook are two popular sites that allow people to use their advertising dashboard and run advertisements on their own. These ads are called social advertisements. Social advertisements are way too different than traditional advertisements; it allows brands to reach the customers based on their specifications (such as age, gender, sexuality, profession, education, marital status, and designation), social activities and interests which is not in the case of traditional ads. There are few but major differences between them, which are presented in [Table 10.2](#).

Table 10.2: Difference between Traditional Ads and Social Ads

Traditional ads	Social Ads
Broad approach: Based on geographics and subscriptions	Narrow approach: Based on the demographic, psychographic, and interest of a consumer
Broadcasting: Users can watch them, hear them, or read them and cannot respond to them (directly), conversations cannot take place	Engaging: Prospects can respond to them, share them, and can take part in the conversations
Cost as per the space and reach: Brand follows the budget defined by the newspaper ad selling agencies based on reach and space	Cost as per click or per impression: Reach is defined on the budget of the brand
Advertisements here are one time: Brands need to invest on advertisements to re-approach the people	Activities here are community centric: People join a community or have subscriptions options in response to the ads. This becomes part of the database which brands can re-approach later

Many ecommerce websites in India invest in Facebook ads to showcase their offers and products to the defined audience. Websites such as snap- deal.com, hushbabies.com, lenskart.com, myntra.com, and inkfruit.com regularly advertise on Facebook to increase traffic to their website to generate leads and direct sales. Communities such as Cafe Coffee Day, Fastrack, Kurkure, and Chumbak use Facebook ads to drive traffic to the community and increase subscriptions.

How Echovme Generates Leads for Workshops Through Facebook and LinkedIn Ads

Facebook.com/echoVME is a community to learn about social media and digital marketing on Facebook where my team from echoVME updates about our social media workshops, pictures of our work culture, pictures of the workshops, daily tips, and engagements models. The prime objective of hosting this page on Facebook is to:

- Gain Thought leadership on social media marketing
- Generate leads for the workshops on social media
- To keep the audience informed, engage them, and avail their feedback.

To meet the purpose of Gaining Thought leadership on social media marketing and keeping the audience engaged we regularly update about the recent happenings in the organization, latest happenings in the social media scenario, opinions, case studies, quizzes, polls, event pages, and sharing of links. To generate leads for the workshops and meet the objective of Generating leads for the workshops on social media we created a specific landing page with a form integrated and ran advertisements targeting the niche audience of only those cities where the workshop was to be hosted. The audience was defined on the basis of the age, education level, interests (designations, company, subjects), and advertisements were run as low as \$10 budget a day.

Advertisements

SocialME - Learn About Internet...
GET SOCIAL MEDIA CERTIFIED
 Facebook Marketing Workshop in Bangalore on 7th July. Register Now for Early Bird Offer.

You like this.

SocialME - Learn About Internet...
 Social Media Marketing Workshop in Bangalore on 17th & 18th Feb with expert speakers Mr. Sorav Jain & Mr. Ramesh. Register Now!

You like this.

facebook

SocialME - Learn About... Workshop Details

Landing Page on Facebook

HURRY!
REGISTER NOW
ARE YOU CERTIFIED IN SOCIAL MEDIA?
JOIN OUR EXCLUSIVE WORKSHOP AND GET CERTIFIED TODAY!

July 16th - Chennai
 July 21st - Bangalore
 July 28th - Delhi

TRAINER

Social Media Workshop Inquiry Form

Interested in participating in our Workshops? Fill your details below.

* Required

Full Name *

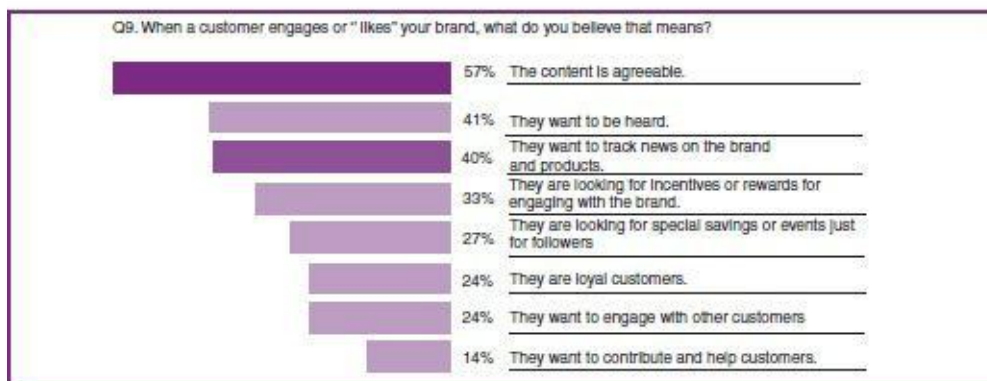
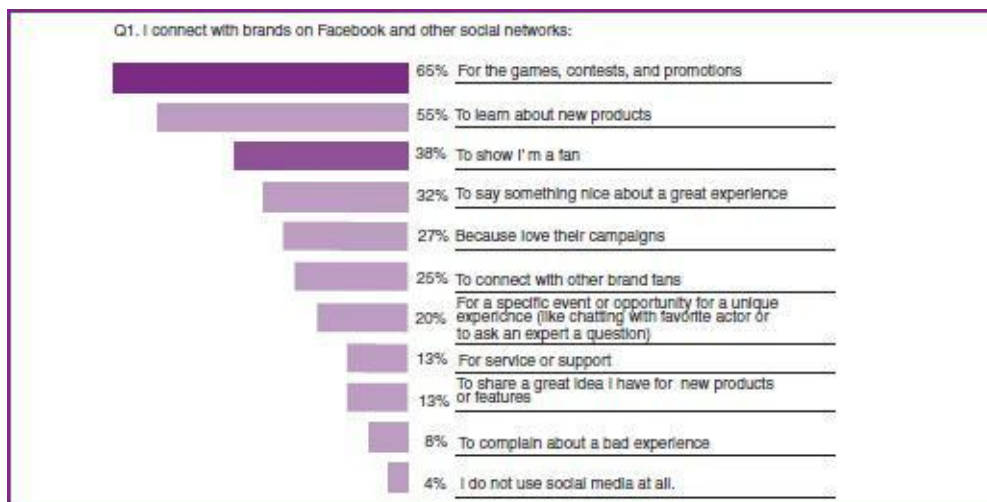
Company & Designation *

Form to Obtain Contact Details (Lead)

Result of the Advertisement:

- By investing \$10 a day, we have been successful in sourcing round about 20 leads a day.
- Besides 20 leads we have close to about 100-200 members joining our Facebook community through the same ads.
- The tickets of our workshop are mostly sold to the leads generated via the advertisements and most of the inquiries in the communities are raised by members who have joined the page via advertisements.
- As Facebook allows integrating conversion pixels with the process, it also becomes easy to track how many people have registered for the workshop.

4. Driving Sales Through Social Community Offers:



By now, you would have learnt that a continuous social media presence of a brand helps to develop a community or followers of groups of individuals who has believed or are looking for communication from the brand. A Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) Council and Lithium global report on a survey taken by 1300 consumers and 120 CMOs shows about 65% of the consumer connect with brands to participate in games and contests and avail promotions, discounts that the brand offers where as only 33% of the CMOs perceives that as a purpose of consumer coming online. This shows that a brand's presence on social media can go buzzing if it regularly introduces entertaining offers for its social media crowd.

Based on my experience, if you really want to get your community active, rolling a discount or offer can help you not only just create enthusiasm but also increase some quick revenue. Some of the popular Indian brands regularly announce offers and discounts on online platform encouraging more people to respond, purchase, and benefit from the offer ([Table 10.3](#)).

How Dominos Pizza Creates Buzz and Increases Sales on Social Media

Dominos Pizza India announces exclusive offers on the first day and the last day of the week via social media (Facebook and Twitter) and other digital means (SMS and digital banners). On the other regular days it offers regular special discounts. The discounts aims people to use the online sales channel of Dominos Pizza thus encouraging online purchase behavior. To track the sales the brand offers coupon codes through social media channels.

These offers not only just encourage online purchase but are also cost-effective strategy to increase sales without investing in traditional advertisements which is rather expensive. With these offers Dominos Pizza has been successful in creating its identity and increase sales by offering regular discounts.

A discount or an offer is an effective way to measure the enthusiasm of audience in community and to measure the reach of the communication both offline and online.

Some Relevant Social Media Case Studies:

How “Yatra” Created Its Facebook Presence and Increased Sales

Yatra.com is a very popular Indian travel portal generated about 1.5 Million from its social media presence especially Facebook. Yatra's prime objective was to use social media channels to engage customers, create strong brand recall and source feedback from customers for products and services.

What did the brand do?

- Yatra positioned its Facebook page around “Happy Traveler's Theme” with attractive cover picture made up of photos sent by its happy customers. The brand encouraged customers to use message feature on Facebook for inquiries.
- Yatra targeted its audience via Facebook advertisements, driving the traffic to the specific landing tabs and through sponsored stories to increase the number of likes.
- Yatra's customer service team responded to queries within 12 hours.
- Brand regularly engaged with offers and promotions during festive season.
- Hosted applications like the “Happy Travel Jigsaw” which helped fans on the page solve puzzles.

- Posted regular engagements on weekend and on other days about travel destinations.

Result of Its Presence:

By promoting exclusive deals and engaging customers on day-to-day basis has helped them drive traffic to the online booking application resulting in sales of 1.5 million of Yatra products and services.

Table 10.3: Case Studies of Social Media Advertisements

Source: Taken from Facebook.com/ads.

Invested in Social Ads	Result
Olympic Gold Quest: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographics such as age and education were targeted, page post ads were created, and ads were run around the time the athletes were in the news to capitalize on the PR. • Sponsored stories were used to generate fans for the Page. • Friends of connections targeting was used to spread the message to friends of current fans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built support base of 90K engaged fans that doubled contributions in past 12 months. • Grew Page fans by 4000% in last 12 months. • Sales increased by 300% in the second year of operations. • Received 5.3 M viral impressions to Facebook page during 2012 Olympics.
Chumbak <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Users to engage with brand, drive new connections to page, increase traffic to its product catalogue, drive users to "Brand New!" tab for a sneak peek at products and promote special offers and discounts. • Crowdsourced ideas for new launches and targeted sponsored stories about products to friends of its 100K+ Page fans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% of online revenue comes from Facebook, with a very high degree of repeat purchases among Page fans. • 5× ROI on total advertising spend with Facebook. • 30–40% of website traffic comes from Facebook.
Eristoff Invasion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Users were targeted geographically based on where the event was planned. • Events were advertised to prospective fans. • Friends of connections targeting was used to reach friends of the fans. • Sponsored stories were used extensively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30× ROI on spend on Facebook Ads from sale of tickets. • 10,500 tickets sold directly using Facebook Ads. • 35% of all ticket buyers were invited by a Facebook friend to the event.
EMC Academic Alliance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic targeting is used in conjunction with country targeting to reach students from particular universities. • Ads for career opportunities, technology write ups, and other infographics are targeted to relevant students. • Page post ads targeted to current fans are used to boost specific posts. • Sponsored stories are used in conjunction with country and age targeting to reach friends of current fans who are likely to be interested in the program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% of all student enrollment queries originate from Facebook. • 10% increase in students enrollment. • 400% increase in website traffic over the last year. • 2× increase in enquiries from universities/institutions to join the program. • 1 million users on Facebook educated about EMC World, an annual IT conference, due to Page posts.
Volkswagen India (LinkedIn) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ran recommendation ads, the first to use them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2700 product recommendations in 30 days. • 2300 new followers on VW India Company Page. • 9,60,000 viral updates about VW car models.

Online Office and Collaboration

Introduction

Some organizations are so small that they either do not have a need or cannot afford to create an internal intranet to collaborate and network with other individuals within the organization. On the other hand, there are some organizations that are so large that they cannot afford to use social media platforms to engage their employees for privacy and security reasons. Yes, social media platform or technology is the answer for both the needs! The smaller organization prefers to use existing social media platforms, whereas the larger one creates a social networking site of its own for internal references. Some companies that are making use of social media efficiently for internal collaboration in the organization either use the tool in an impromptu manner or as a testing pilot to experiment at a smaller level in a department or among a group of employees.

Junior-level executives who are glued to the trend of social media love channels such as blogs, social networking sites, and video platforms because they are entertaining and adds to the social element to both personal and professional lifestyles. However, senior-level executives in an organization are reasonably cynical about social media's impact on productivity of employees and profits of business. Social media tools in an organization are increasingly becoming adopted as tools for collaboration, networking, and information sharing and thus bringing changes to the traditional business operations process.

Leveraging Social Media Technologies inside Organization

This chapter takes the context in a little unusual direction; I derive suggestions and ideas based on what exactly Cognizant is doing and how your organization can benchmark the strategies put in place by Cognizant.

By the way, Cognizant Ishanaa, a New Jersey-based IT services company with several thousand employees in India, seems to be implementing social media with clear business benefits internally in the organization. The company has leveraged social media platform that has integrated knowledge management, work management, and partner engagement strategies ([Figure 11.1](#)). The various stakeholders of Cognizant have their own profiles that highlight their expertise, work experiences, and business expertise serving different purposes based on three different strategies. The point of amalgamation of these three strategies is a content-in-context professional network.

Through the social media technology, the organization and its stakeholders have benefitted in various ways; some of them are as follows.

- 1. Connecting Employees:** Social media technologies internally have helped employees share knowledge with other like-minded individuals, which remain constructively inside the compound

of an organization. Better connected employees produce better ideas together.

2. **Build Community:** Social media platform has helped build community around a particular topic, cause, interest, or skills. Many CSR and go- green activities are carried out using this platform.
3. **Talent Opportunity:** Management brought change and talent management through social media, which could easily discover artistic and professional skill-based talents in employees. Cognizant employees enhance their personal brands through thought leadership—sharing their research with others and engaging in dialogue with industry experts and practitioners.
4. **Availability of Thoughts:** The knowledge shared on the internal platform is pertaining to project-specific inquiries, needs of the client, current industry trends, or conversations on recent policies in the organization. As the knowledge shared is in conversational or question- and-answer format, this cannot be stored in the content repository— but this can be located and found easily enough through social ties, the personal relationships among colleagues. The knowledge shared and stored helps employees learn, which in turn increases the productivity of employees.
5. **Client Relationships:** As employees are part of this platform, the company also invites clients and industry partners to tap into the knowledge platform and share their relevant expertise and experiences thus helping develop or maintain client relationships. They also update about the current trends and changes in the industry, policies.

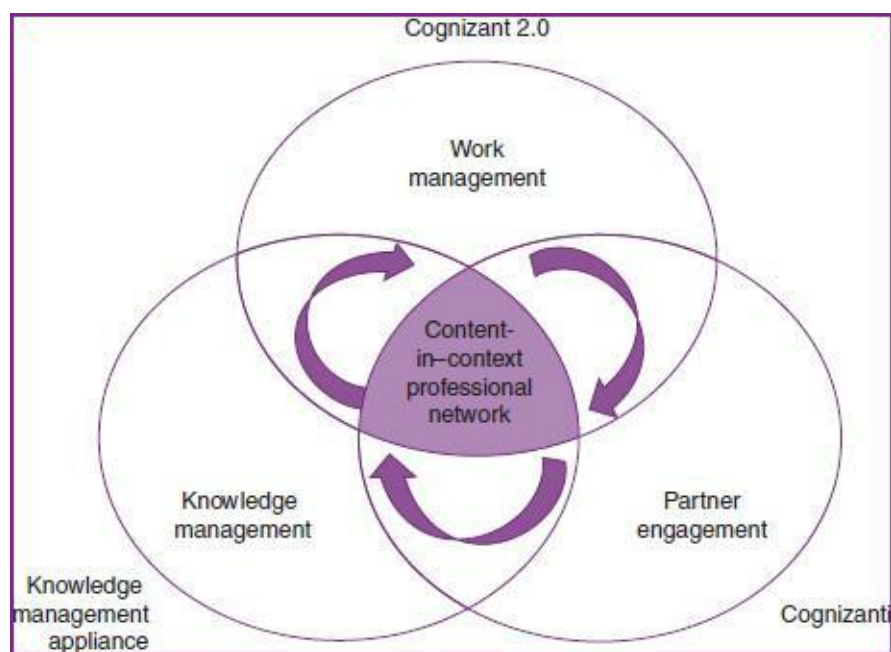


Figure 11.1: How Cognizant has integrated Social Media Marketing in their organization.

Source: IveyBusinessJournal.com.

Social media platform that connects partners, clients, employees, and key decision makers in the organization forms a virtuous cycle.

- Employees learn from other employees through blogs, wikis, tagging, bookmarking, and other community-based activities, which also helps brand in effective project management as well as employee engagements.
- Cognizanti: Project and industry knowledge are shared with Cogni- zant’s business partners.
- Organization, in turn, learns from clients and industry experts about market place.

Table 11.1: Cognizant’s Way of Internal Collaboration on a Social Platform

The Key Elements	Cognizant's Take Away
Social media and knowledge management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Platform established in 2006 called knowledge management appliance. Knowledge management appliance is effective in finding and sharing expertise and in building professional networks. Features many social media tools such as blogs, wikis, tagging, bookmarking, and discussions forums that allow content to be both pulled and pushed to Cognizant employee. One can tag people and documents based on their expertise and purpose, respectively, which helps build a personal pool of specific expertise. When an employee searches for a particular topic, he or she gets access to the relevant content and relevant experts.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Around 80% of the employees have used the system to read the content. The participation of employees has resulted in one million blog posts and comments.
Social media and context of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched in October 2007, this is called Cognizant 2.0. It helps one track the work process and offers continuous process guidance. C2 is a platform that delivers knowledge 'just in time' to consultants, as they are performing their work tasks. Helps project managers get an overview of the current status of the project. For any task, the system provides any task dependencies, guidance information, templates, similar project artifacts, notes, and checklists. Integrated with knowledge management appliance, enabling project members to ask questions that may be answered by the Cognizant community. Or directs to find out experts who could answer them. By the mid-2009, more than 3200 project teams were using the platform. By December 2010, the workflow side of C2 had also reached over one million milestones in terms of the total number of tasks, defects identified, process packages, documents, and guidelines.
From Internal Collaboration to Connect External Stakeholders	
Social media and relationship with external stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiated in 2007, it is an exclusive online community that allows members to network professionally called Cognizanti. Cognizanti is a trusted environment, in which thought leaders inside and outside of Cognizant can have a dialog on current and emerging IT topics, across many industries and geographies. Cognizanti leverages social media to create a business-oriented social networking site for easy collaboration and content sharing. Member profiles contain photos, company and industry affiliations, job roles, areas of expertise, and personal information such as hobbies. Cognizanti serves as a learning environment for both Cognizant and its partners. Discussion boards, blogs, connect feature, white papers, and presentations are all part of this environment. Cognizanti helps external members benefit by building a closer relationship with senior Cognizant leaders.

The above case study shows enormous potential of having an internal social media platform, serving different purposes and immensely helping organizations in different ways.

Many large or small organizations are skeptical about investing in designing an internal platform. To them the existing social media platforms can be a handy solution to test and decide or the platforms can be a solution by itself if properly governed. As understood from the example above by Cognizant, ([Table 11.1](#)), social media is not only a value-added medium for marketing, but there are many benefits of this wonderful medium. Many organizations have banned the use of social media inside the organization, i.e., access to social networking sites via computers at work place is banned. Not so long ago, companies that had banned social networking websites at workplace to restrict their employees from spending too much time on it are now realizing its worth in increasing the bonding between its employees. Let us have a close look at the case of India's biggest power back-up company,

Case Study 11.1: How Su-Kam Used Facebook Groups to Connect Its Employees:

Su-Kam is headquartered in Gurgaon but has branches throughout the country, and it has a dealer network of more than 20,000, worldwide. It also has offices in Dubai and Nigeria and has its presence in more than 70 countries. When a company is so spread out and diverse, managing the employee and keeping them motivated becomes challenging. The company noticed that there was a lack of communication among its various offices, and the work done by individuals in different departments often went unnoticed. Frequent e-mail blasts to make announcements or appreciate the great happenings in the country were still useful but it was clearly evident that something was missing. It is then that the company decided to turn to Facebook for improving its internal communication and marketing.

Case Study 11.2: Su-Kam's Social Media Scene

Though the company has had a blog, pages on Facebook, and a Twitter account, the employees were not allowed to access Facebook from the office. When the company set a group on Facebook, which was exclusively meant for all its employees, this restriction was lifted. As the point of having a group was to ensure frequent communication between the various departments and branches of the company, the employees were encouraged to join the group and make posts related to their work or how they felt about the company; of course, a social media policy was put in place to regulate obscene content, enormous negativity, and only topics related to work were allowed to discuss; if an employee found failing this condition, he or she is warned and later banned from the group. This change was welcomed by the employees, and the activity started increasing in the group.

Case Study 11.3: Meeting the Purpose

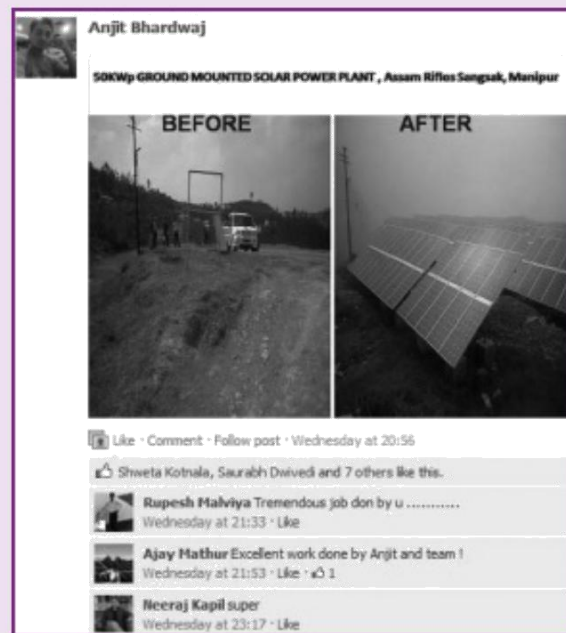
Employees of Su-Kam use this group for different aspects: connecting with other individuals, sharing information on fruitful completion of project or status of a project, news spotted in media with regards to the company, seeking help or solution for a particular problem in the company, support for a good cause (from CSR perspective), personal invitations to weddings, and sharing of fun-filled moments at work across various departments. To keep the employees' engagement rolling, the admin organizes various contests on the platform to encourage participation and to crowd-source opinions. All of these conversations are personally governed by a team of social media specialists inside the organization and is regularly visited by the senior management and the conversations pertaining to the organization are responded by the management officials.

Facebook platform for employees at Su-Kam has helped in increasing transparency in the company. Employees are allowed to post their suggestions about how to make the company better, and make complaints if they are not happy. The most useful part is that everyone knows what is happening at the company by just visiting the group. The group administrator does not allow anyone else to be part of the group other than the employees of Su-Kam.

The company has also included a presentation on its social media presence in their inductions for new employees. The new employees are told about the Facebook group and are invited to join in. They often find it interesting that the company is asking them to spend time on Facebook and learn from experiences.

Case Study 11.4: Some Sample Examples of Communication Inside the Group

Example 1: Employees frequently post updates on their latest projects happening around the world.



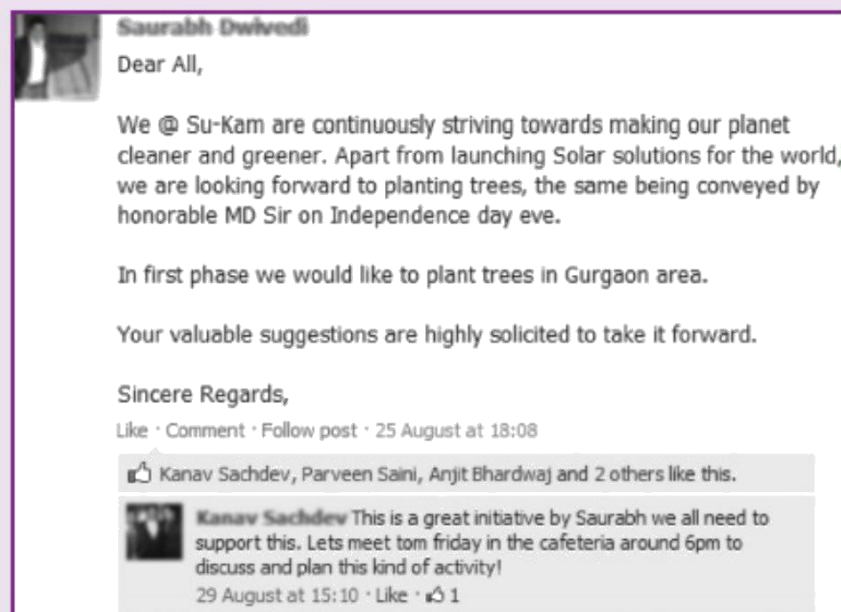
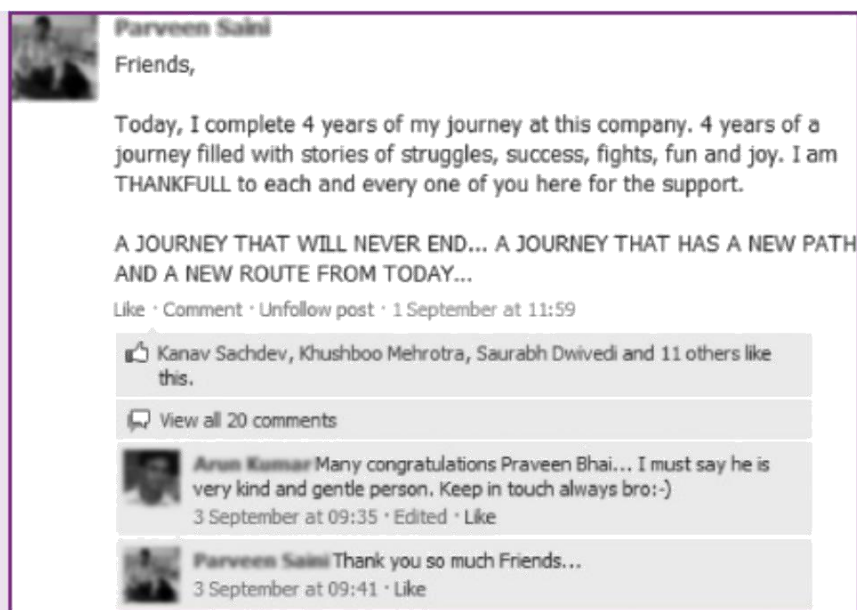
Announcements similar to these are now made through the Facebook group. It is very motivating for employees to get a positive feedback about their work and ideas from their co-workers.





Employees are also welcome to share their ideas on how to help the society at large.





Distance is no more a barrier in communication. The Facebook group allows members to post from anywhere.



By seeing their co-workers win prizes, the employees are motivated to participate in contests tha happen on Facebook.





Employees love sharing their happy moments at work with the group, online.



It is an excellent platform to pilot test new ideas.



This is a perfect example to show how everyone becomes ‘one’ when it comes to help their co workers. After learning about the demise of an employee, many volunteered to donate their salarie to the family of their late co-worker.



The group has about 500 members out of the total staff of more than 2000; the increasing activit points out toward the success of the group in getting all the employees connected with one another The company now plans to start another group exclusively for its dealers who are located in differen parts of the world.

Tips for Using Social Media for Engaging Employees

If you are planning to use social media technology to engage your employees and collaborate with them, you need to consider the following:

1. **Start Small:** Understand how exactly a community on social network works for employee collaboration in a group of individuals before i nviting the whole lot. Running a pilot test must involve both senior- and junior-level employees in an organization and run it from different communication aspects that can benefit the organization; however, at the same time, it entertains and encourages employees to contribute more to the ecosystem.
 - The pilot test must be run among 30-50 most active social network users in the organization.
 - Fix a community manager to initiate and regulate conversations and allow employees to freely express their thoughts (of course with some restrictions on aspects that do not hurt the values and sentiments of the organization and people).
 - Connect the HR team or HR manager to understand this process and record necessary and relevant conversations for future references.
 - Observe the user behavior and kind of communication pattern followed to address the queries raised by administration on behalf of the organization.
 - Understand and make analysis of what worked well and what did not in terms of engaging audiences and how the behavior is with regards to policies, processes, and employees of the organization.
 - Ask for feedback from the active participants.
2. **Social Media Policy:** Many organizations across the world have started leveraging social media,

if not they have started involving policies on social media regulating communications via employees about the organization. Incidents are coming to limelight when employee fails to follow the policy, thus losing their job. The social media policy usually conveys what and how the employees communicate about its organization or express their feelings toward any particular instance at work on any of the web or social network platforms.

While running a pilot, your focus point is to understand on those communication points published by the employees that do not fit with the values of the organization. Include all those do's and don'ts of this network and make this policy a must-read and must-sign agreement. You must make this document also available on the network for the employees to access and set regular reminders of their behavioral controls. Once this is set and signed, use the same pilot model at the larger level— communicate and run campaign internally encouraging people to join your network for internal collaboration and communication.

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Reputation Management on Social Media

Have you ever noticed that bad news or negative experiences/reviews about a product or a brand spreads faster when compared to the positive or good qualities of the same? For example, you go to a restaurant and spend a good time with your loved ones there, you probably will remember the experience; however, in most cases, you will not really share it; alternatively, if overwhelmed, you will definitely share it with your friends when there is a discussion on food or restaurants in your city. On the other hand, when you face a bad experience, you will want to share it with a lot more people so as to caution them to not to eat food at the restaurant that has not treated you well.

What It Was Before?

Let us date back to the generations of the past, when my parents and grandparents had negative experiences with the street-side storekeeper or at the hotel they visited; they used to caution us and also inform the neighbors about their negative experiences. That is the limitation of negative word of mouth unless media intervenes and it goes mainstream. However, things today have changed.

What It Is Now?

With the advent of technology and the reach of social media, people from all over the world share their negative experiences with the global audience just soon after the incident takes place. Thanks to smartphones that make sharing of these experiences handy and thanks to social media for making them reach the mass. If you keenly observe your friend's activities on Facebook or Twitter, you will notice that many of them love to share their travel, movie, food, or day-to-day experiences. In their activities, you will always find more complaints than appreciations. It is simple, when a customer is agitated, he or she is the weapon against the business and the brand really needs to pacify him or her to control the negativeness of the scenario. This process of brands pacifying customers who talk negatively about their brand on social media sites or sharing their negative experience with the brand is called 'social media reputation management.'

Case Study 12.1: *How Leading IT Company, Manages Its Reputation on Social Media*

This case study of online reputation management is based on my personal experience.

What Actually Happened?

I was very excited when I had received an Indian IT giant as my client while working with the marketing process outsourcing company CMO Axis, an agency located in Chennai, India. I was working on building an external community of top-management-level individuals of leading bank

worldwide.

Excited, while I was strategizing the social media marketing for the brand late night and was deciding on the best practices of community marketing I had tweeted “working on the social media marketing of ‘name’ brand” and went to sleep. I woke up to a call at 8 AM from my boss. He was furious and wanted me to reach office as soon as possible. I could sense from his tone that he was literally angry and it perplexed me more. I was scared and rushed to office to realize the project on which I was happily working on was put on hold just because I tweeted about it. According to the privacy agreement as an employee of CMO Axis, we were not supposed to reveal the name of the brand that we were working with. In addition, ignorant of this fact, I had tweeted about it—to a global audience!

How Did They Figure Out My Tweet?

The leading IT giant had set up social media listening tools on their brand’s name that helped them receive updates made by people globally using their brand name. My single tweet went as an alarm bell to all the senior officials as no leading corporate with a huge workforce would want the world to know that they have hired an external agency to manage their social media marketing, it was a matter of reputation after all!

What Was the Conclusion?

I was first asked to delete that tweet from Twitter and later after detailed conversations, we became more cautious about privacy concerns! Well, we really got the project back again. I really do not know how, thanks to my ex-boss Vinod Harith!

In an online reputation management process, a brand manager fixes listening tools and runs a sentiment analysis to understand the level of positive and negative conversations across the web on different social media channels. Through these listening tools, one can also track the concerns based on geographies and set up a mechanism to address the issues raised by customers.

If your brand is not available on social media, that does not mean that people will not talk negatively about your brand; they will anyways do. It is advisable to establish your brand’s presence on social media at least to listen to your customers talk negatively about your brand and to try solving their concerns. This will help control the reach of the negativity. The quicker you pacify an angry customer, the lesser the negativity reaches.

Why Is Reputation Management Important?

- 1. Social Media Reputation Management (SMRP) Takes Your Brand One Mile Ahead:** Imagine that you are walking by road along with a friend complaining about how poor your air conditioner is and all of a sudden a person dressed in professional attire bumps in and introduces himself as the service manager of the same brand whose air conditioner is poor and extends his hand to serve your problem, how satisfying you would feel? In a social media scenario, a listening brand can easily listen to the concerns in conversations (on social networking sites) or the not-so-direct casual concerns (but brand manager gets to know by running a research on the brand name using listening tools) and reach out to them with the solution or pacify customers that the brand is concerned about the problem faced and it shall be soon solved. A brand talking to its customer on social media is definitely the first step to humanize the brand and it also takes

your brand one mile ahead.

- 2. SMRP Controls the Negativity in the Air:** On social media, a conversation spreads like wildfire; the sooner the brand intervenes the negative conversation, the faster it's controlled. If a brand takes necessary steps to find out the root cause of negative conversations on the web, it can contact those individuals and try to control the negativity to spread further.
- 3. Reputation Management May Bring Positive Word of Mouth:**

When a brand manager contacts the customer who has suffered an issue and tries to get the issue sorted in time, the unhappy customer overwhelmingly reports back to the social media on how the brand had responded to its concerns and solved it. This in return helps save the brand's reputation as the one who was cribbing about it is now talking good about the brand. This completely helps brand save its reputation online. Provided that the company representatives should request customers to share about the concerned solved issue on social media. Airtel practices this in India while solving customer issues via social media.

- 4. Online Reputation Management (ORM) Makes Your Brand Distinct and Visible:** Today, every industry has many players and customers have a wide variety of choices to pick from the brands of their choice. For example, in telecom, apparels, fashion, food, and retail chains, each and every category has got many players. Shifting brands or products is an easy choice for customers; to retain the loyalty factors of customers, a brand goes an extra mile by having better customer support, giving extra warranty, offering free services, etc. Reputation management on social media can help your brand be visible and distinct and gain attention of marketing thought-leaders. Reputation management tactics helps in reputation enhancement.

Nine Tips for Reputation Management on Social Media

- 1. Listening Tools:** Set up listening tools for your brand that will help you track the conversations on social media. Some of the tools will also help you dig out all the conversations from across the web. Below are some tools that you can use them for free or pay a premium to access:

Track all the conversations over web; especially, social media blogs, social networks, Twitter, Facebook,

www.Trackur.com forums, images, and video. It also shows how influential people talking about your brand are. One can

access to this tool by choosing from a 10-day free trial options to various paid versions.

An apt tool for corporates if there are many people involved in tracking the conversations online and

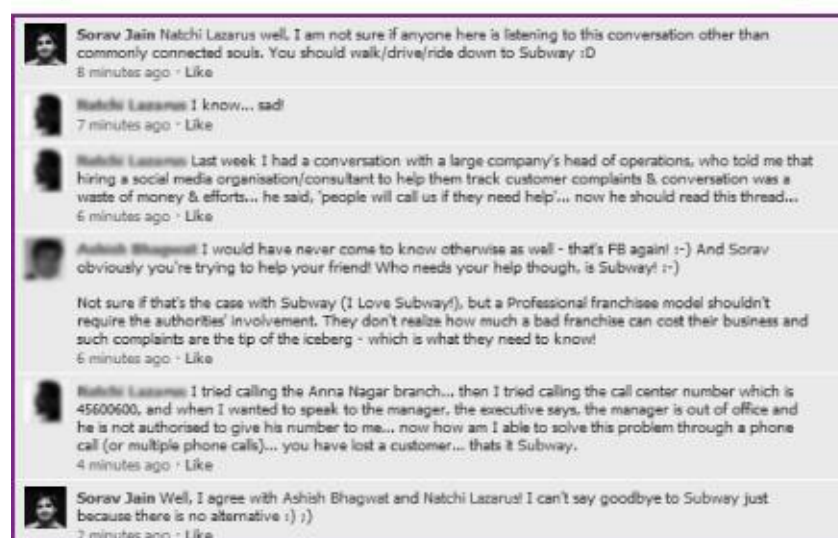
www.BrandsEye.com responding to the same. BrandsEye.com allows you to receive notifications via RSS, e-mail, or SMS for the

fixed monitored phrases. Using BrandsEye.com can help you track the activities of competitors.

- 2. Run Detailed Search:** It is recommended to do a detailed search on social media by using company name, company URL, name of the products, competing products, phrases such as "company name + sucks", "company name + rocks", and "company product + review + sucks" to track all the mentions about your brand on web.
- 3. Take It Personally:** The complaints, bashing, and dissatisfaction of the customers should be taken as opportunities and not as problems, as there are chances that a customer can turn into a fan. Consider the problem as a personal problem with utmost concentration on solving the concerns raised.
- 4. Be Quick:** The sooner you handle the concerns raised on social media, the easier they are resolved. Appoint a higher authority to respond to the complaints than having an executive-level individual or an agency who would delay the responses, waiting for the hierarchy to respond internally in the organization to the concerns raised on social media. It is recommended that brands should not concentrate on customers to remove posts but must work harder to handle the situation and solve customers' concerns. Social media platforms are built in a way that

complaints raised are very much transparent and can be heard by anyone; the quicker your brand responds to the concerns and solves it, the less the community intervenes.

For example, Natchi Lazaruss, an entrepreneur based out of Chennai, had posted on Subway India's Facebook Business Page about how they boast about their home delivery system but do not really door-deliver the subs when customers ask for it. As I was connected to Subway India page and other common friends of Natchi were connected to it, the conversation triggered about how poor Subway is from a customer service perspective. If the administrator of Subway India would have responded to the concern raised by Natchi, the conversation would not have been triggered and made into a big issue; it would have helped Subway save a customer.

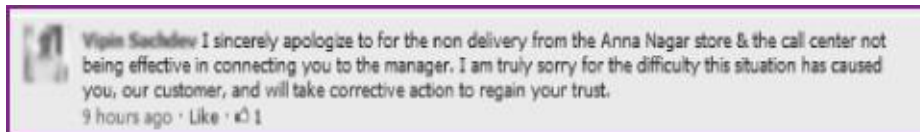


5. **Talk to the Customers First:** Besides responding to any negative comments on social media, it is recommended to figure out a way to talk to the customers discreetly via e-mail, phone, or direct messages, as quickly responding to a negative concern of the customer will raise more curiosity.
6. **Share a Lot of Good Stuff about Your Brand:** Start collecting customer testimonials, positive feedbacks, video record your happy customers, and upload them on social media channels. The more you share them, the more positivity you create in the air. Recommend your happy

customers to write a review about your brand and share their opinion on your social media channels. Doing so will help you outweigh any negative post.

7. Learn to Avoid: Not all complaints made on social media channels are an opportunity. There are chances that some people might just complaint creating fakes profile to damage your brand's reputation; therefore, you will have to decide to walk away from it once you run an detailed analysis on the credibility of the customer complaining (If his/her profile is too fake, avoiding is a better opportunity). Apart from fake ones, there are some customers who are only interested in creating a fuss; just stop engaging with them.

8. Accept Your Fault: There is no point of arguing with the customers on social media when they raise a concern. If you think that your brand or product would have created the glitch, do not hesitate to apologize and accept the fault. For example, in the above example of how Natchi Lazarus faced an issue with Subway delivery, the franchisee head of Subway in Chennai, Mr. Vipin, finally responded in an apologetic tone:



9. Request for Removal of the Negative Statement: Once you have solved the customer query and have made the customer happy with your customer service, you may politely request them to remove the complaint raised on social media or go and share about the complaint being solved. Whenever, I raise my complaint to Airtel (@Airtel_Presence) on Twitter, my issues get solved and I am also politely requested to report back to social media if the complaint is closed.

Case Study 12.2: How Cafe Coffee Day Managed Its Damaged Reputation on Twitter - #CCDSucks

This is one of those incidents that can be marked as the first milestone of online reputatio management in the Indian social media history. This incident took place in the early 2010 an triggered a mass conversation over Twitter.

How Did #CCDSucks Come into Place:

#CCDSucks is a hashtag (most commonly used on Twitter to aggregate content) started by a fe influential bloggers/tweeters based out of Chennai in response to a bad experience. They had tweetup (when group of tweeters met in reality, it is called tweetup) organized at Cafe Coffee Da (CCD) in Isphani Centre, Chennai. This incident took place when a group of bloggers/tweeters wer asked to shell out a cover charge if they wanted to use their premises for a tweetup, failing which the should vacate the space. The angry tweeters left the venue after paying the first bill for the coffee an snacks they had and decided to vent out their anger against CCD on Twitter.

Result of the Anger:

- On the evening of the incident, the tweeters vented their anger out by expressing their shock i 140 characters.
- 65% of the respondents were talking negatively about the brand.
- Out of 754 tweets, 153 were made by high influencers, 214 by influ- encers, and the rest b casual Twitter users.
- CCD that is also active on Twitter with @CafeCoffeeDay had responded to the tweeters b apologizing on the next day morning.

Expressing their shock in 140 chars



CCD sucks... @cafecoffeeday at Ispahani center is kicking twitter out.. #ccdsucks

Tweet from @PPrakash (Prakash P) at 7:50 PM Feb 4th from Snapto



#ccdsucks cover chrg not defined but threats turning up frm mgr

Tweet from @idlee_amin (Tushar R) at 7:51 PM Feb 4th from Snapto



Cover charge for sitting in this place RT @PPrakash: CCD sucks... @cafecoffeeday at Ispahani center is kicking twitter out.. #ccdsucks

Tweet from @metalsaint (gautham govind) at 7:52 PM Feb 4th from Snapto



Cover charge for @CafeCoffeeDay? Screw you. #ccdsucks

Tweet from @surajran (Surajran Kumaravel) at 7:55 PM Feb 4th via web



Approx 30 more #ccdsucks tweets do the round that evening.

Next morning, CCD wakes up and smells the coffee



@gopal_b :O We're v sorry about this! It is not CCD's policy to charge a cover. Thanks for letting us know. We're checking on it right away!

Tweet from @CafeCoffeeDay (Café Coffee Day) at 10:44 PM Feb 5th via web



@narayananh @bombaylives @additiyom @wiredvijay @ubiquitense CCD does not charge a cover. Thanks a lot for letting us kno n we're v sorry!

Tweet from @CafeCoffeeDay (Café Coffee Day) at 10:47 PM Feb 5th via web



@PPrakash @AmolMathur @ahmedhussain @idlee_amin @CreativeWolf Tnks for leting us kno ppl! We don have a policy to chrg a cover. Chking rt nw

Tweet from @CafeCoffeeDay (Café Coffee Day) at 10:52 PM Feb 5th via web



@AmolMathur @PPrakash We really want to resolve this issue. pls help us do that. Give us a no. to call so we can personally apologize.

Tweet from @CafeCoffeeDay (Café Coffee Day) at 12:14 PM Feb 5th via web



#ccdsucks #ccd CCD does not have a policy to charge a cover anywhere in India. We apologize for the goof up. This will nt be taken lightly.

Tweet from @CafeCoffeeDay (Café Coffee Day) at 12:17 PM Feb 5th via web



#ccdsucks #ccd Like we said, give us an opportunity. Give us a no. to call. When resolved, we'll tell evryone bout it on Twitter. Publicly

Tweet from @CafeCoffeeDay (Café Coffee Day) at 12:40 PM Feb 5th via web

But, word of mouth spreads...



@SathyaBhat got thrown out of @CafeCoffeeDay for no reason. They asked for cover charge 1 hr later, after everyone had ordered. #ccdsucks

Tweet from @narayananh (Narayanan Hariharan) at 12:15 AM Feb 5th from HootSuite



@CafeCoffeeDay y do u need a number to talk? use twitter! @PPrakash @mad_nad @AmolMathur @javashri @ubiquitense @idlee_amin #ccdsucks

Tweet from @narayananh (Narayanan Hariharan) at 12:45 PM Feb 5th from HootSuite



Here is the #ccdsucks FAN page on #fb. Join in. <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Cafe-Coffee-Day-Sucks/291737396851> RT to ur frnds.!

Tweet from @Pricelessdream (@AmolMathur) at 5:56 PM Feb 5th from Echofon



Watch power of Indian web users Live on Twitter: unhappy customers vs brand defense #ccdsucks #cafecoffeeday @cafecoffeeday

Tweet from @reemsaied (Reem Saied) at 7:08 PM Feb 5th from LinkedIn



Interesting how @CafeCoffeeDay had to use the #ccdsucks hashtag in all their sorry tweets! :D #selfabuse

Tweet from @neelannair (Neelakantan Nair) at 11:04 PM Feb 5th from Echofon




Another 100 #ccdsucks tweets bash Café Coffee Day.

Many wonder, many watch...

 #ccdsucks has become a pressure cooker.

Tweet from @rkavan (Kavan Ravi) at 5:49 PM Feb 4th from Tweetie

 OK, what has Cafe Coffee Day done now? I see the #ccdsucks tag going around, but can't trace the original incident

Tweet from @madmanweb (Madhu 'MadMan' Menon) at 6:01 PM Feb 5th from TweetDeck

 They made a fan page now for #ccdsucks, <http://bit.ly/cQ79HH> itna kya kar diya bhai ccd ne


Tweet from @ankitagaba (Ankita Gaba) at 6:14 PM Feb 5th from TweetDeck

 #ccdsucks is loads of fun for me! RT @startonomics: when did @cafecoffeeday started sucking ?....people who go there sucks... coffee... :P

Tweet from @svsashank (Venkata Sashank) at 6:22 PM Feb 4th via web

 In fact, nearly 500 #ccdsucks tweets had a neutral flavour


And then, there's support for CCD

 @mad_nad Ok, nw I know what you're trying to do. U're frm a PR agency so u'll bash them up and den go to them wid a pitch to handle their PR


Tweet from @indrani84 (Indrani) at 12:34 PM Feb 5th via web

 @mad_nad why do they 'owe' u an explanation on twitter – so long as they've acknowledged the problem & r fixing it?! don't get it really


Tweet from @dina (Dina Mehta) at 4:32 PM Feb 5th from Seesmic

 #ccdsucks #ccd I think @CafeCoffeeDay seems genuine in their efforts.. Give them a chance instead of beating them dwn further


Tweet from @sanjay_sahay (sanjay sahay) at 6:44 PM Feb 5th via web

 @sumants exactly. the #ccdsucks twitter mob needs to stop being unreasonable

Tweet from @twilightfairy (sanjay sahay) at 9:59 AM Feb 6th from Seesmic

 Kudos to @cafecoffeeday for handling the #ccdsucks meme well by listening quickly & responding openly. cc: @evansdave @nidhibhasin

Tweet from @Gauravonomics (Gaurav Mishra) at 10:50 AM Feb 6th from TweetDeck

 Surprisingly, close to 68 #ccdsucks tweets expressed support for Café Coffee Day

Result of the Conversation

- The Brand responded as quick as possible to the concerns raised, being apologetic, thus gainin a reasonable number of followers.
- Despite after apologies made by brand, the conversation did not die, which showed that th customers were really angry about the incident. However, it did raise many supporter supporting CCD. They were advocating the issue and tweeted in favor of CCD.
- CCD's apologies were very much appreciated by many. The brand drew more than 30 followers.
- #CCDSucks became a phenomenon for many; until a week at least, people at CCD with an negative experience started using #CCD- Sucks in their tweets.

Source of the Cafe Coffee Day Case Study and Pictures: <http://www.slideshare.net/saltsocial/when-cafe-coffee-day-had-to-defend-itself-on-twitter-3605195#btnPrevious>

Case Study 12.3: @Airtel_Presence Solves Issue on Social Media?

Airtel, which is one of the - most popular and strongest telecommunication networks in India, has very encouraging and engaging presence on social media, especially on Twitter and Facebook. The main objective of Airtel using social media is not to promote its products or services alone, but to offer customer service to the social-media-savvy customers. In a country where mobile penetration will take up 72% share in the year 2016, the competition among network providers is increasing day by day; in addition, as per the June 2011 statistics, Airtel has taken about 28.26% of the total India telecom usage market share, which comprises to about 160 million users that is totally 50 million more than the total internet penetration in the country, which is about 110 million as per the recent statistics, of which around 40-50% of users are social media savvy and use social media extensively for day-to-day communication. Despite Airtel being greatly penetrated in India compared to internet it still has its evident presence on social media serving its niche social media savvy customers and there could be various reasons behind it, which we shall explore in the following story.

My experience with Airtel customer service traditionally had always been bad. If you are an Airtel customer, you might probably know what my feelings are. There are times when I call them to figure out routes to reach to the customer service executive, the numbers to reach is like a maze that you can get lost in and most of the times the call gets disconnected once you figure out what number to press to speak to a customer service executive.

If by luck you get a chance to speak to the executive, you further get annoyed by their scripted tone. Some usual questions they ask to verify us are irritating enough and they irritate more, as some answers you seek from them are not in the script they handle. Look at the following cartoon to get hang of how they usually behave.



Well, in most cases, they do not have a quick solution to your problem and there is a standard process of complaint registration, complaint number, automated text message on mobile about the complaint made, and 'Wait,' 'wait' until you really get it solved, especially if issues are related to billing shifting landline, issues with pre paid number, etc.

The above was my case until I start registering my complaints on Twitter. My perception about Airtel's customer service has changed after that. I had registered a request to shift my Airtel landline connection to my new office and I was told within a week this shall be solved after doing a feasibility check on the location of new office and they promised to call me within 24 hours to let me know the status of the feasibility check they shall do. Apparently, they did check feasibility only upon following them up on the third day of the complaint made; I was told that the feasibility was checked and they have assured me that on the given location the connection shall be shifted in the stipulated time.

It was April 1, 2012 and we were hoping to have our Airtel connection in place; my colleagues and employees were excited to start working at the new office; however, later, we realized that Airtel had

not transferred the connection yet. I tried calling the customer service people and apparently they told me that based on the feasibility check, they cannot transfer the connection to our place; we would have to go for a new connection which we weren't agreeing to and a complaint was registered and as per the customer service, it could have taken 24 hours to resolve this issue up. It was a completely uncertain situation! First day of office, no internet and Airtel perplexed me by scripting their customer service guys! It was a panicking situation. All I did was vent out my anger and I had sought for help from @Airtel_Presence on Twitter and the conversation goes this way:



Within 2 hours, I had got a call, they took responsibility of the issue and within 8 hours, the issue was resolved. I was getting constant calls from the central office to check if the issue has been resolved and when I told my issue was resolved, they politely requested me to tweet about the closure of the request made, which I had happily did! Thus, managing to save its reputation!

The complaints made in the past cases were very much one-to-one reaching to the executive level however, complaints now we register on Twitter/social media channels make it very much public. By using social media, you are registering a complaint in front of the audience who use the services/products of Airtel daily and it becomes the brand's compulsion to listen to the customer's concern and respond to it on time in front of all the audience.

Case Study 12.4: Starbucks India's First Social Media Failure: As discussed earlier, the online reputation management is the most crucial aspect of strategic social media marketing. However, no matter how much you invest in social media marketing, if you fail to manage your reputation online and do not meet your customer's concerns on time, all your efforts of spending on an online channel for promotion are worthless.

I always used to say that "if your brand has faced a negative concern from your customer, solve it, then delete or defend it" to avoid nuisances. Here is a perfect example of the same, Starbucks India quickly deleted one of the posts made by their angry customer and that triggered a viral rage on Facebook and Twitter. Let us look into what has happened:

Issue Faced by Customer (@ArmaanKapur):



The above concern was posted on 'Starbucks' Facebook page on February 7, 2013 and the post triggered 5,100+ likes and 250+ comments within a few hours. Armaan awaited response from the brand and later posted a screenshot of the post made on Starbucks India on the Global Starbucks page on February 12, 2013. Both Starbucks and Starbucks India removed the post from the wall, as it was getting more attention than their regular updates, triggering more criticism against the brand. Angry @ArmaanKapur had by then tweeted a screenshot of the post made on the Starbucks India's Facebook wall that also showed a number of likes and comments received, which got him more attention from the Twitter Community resulting in further damage of Starbucks. The following are some screenshots and responses from the active Twitter community:



Starbucks India did not respond to the issue on Facebook and deleted the post made by Armaan. It stayed silent on Twitter despite many people asking for a response to the issue. Starbucks India

remained thickskinned and continued to do its other social media marketing content activities! This is definitely shameful! Yes, it is!

The tweet made by @ArmaanKapur had received 211 automated retweets and more than 70 manual retweets, which included tweets from many influencers and RTs obtained via them, thus making this incident reach thousands of individuals including journalists from the mainstream media and triggered awesome support from the Twitter community.



The brand that has just established its presence in India had a great opportunity to show people that they do not only claim to sell the best coffee in the world but also offer best customer service—even on social media. However, I always believed that many Indian brands lack social media etiquette especially when it comes to 'social media and customer service'. Starbucks India has just fallen into that category—maybe this could be a part of globalization!

The Best Way Starbucks Could Have Handled This:

1. By taking a call personally/offline with a customer and solving the issue amicably, requesting him to remove the post himself.
2. Identifying those bouncers and manager involved in the scene, recording an apologetic statement from them and posting the video on YouTube—just going one step ahead to showcase 'the best customer service' practice.

By the way, Starbucks later claimed that they did not delete the negative post that was going viral! Therefore, my question is "Then who did?"

Remember, the bigger you become, the bigger the responsibilities, expectations, and repercussions are to meet. Looks like some brands found this out the hard way thanks to their social media presence. Having jumped into the bandwagon, they found that the gap between them and their customers was bridged beautifully, thus being subjected to open criticism, abuses, complaints, etc. like never before.

Come to think of it, all these years, when you had a grievance on the brand, you had to write a letter, post it, and wait for the response. For how many days, weeks, months, or years - no one knows. You would not even know if they had received it and if they were ignoring the letter or answering. And then, social media marketing came along, changing everything. You could clearly see if they have

ignored you, take proof and give it to the press and see it become a headline the next day. The replies will come then, battered and bruised.

Therefore, when it came to responding and engaging, which is what social media was all about, it was no surprise that many brands failed miserably. It gave us a picture of what really went behind the glass doors and exposed their vulnerability in handling negative feedback, criticisms, and comments.

Case Study 12.5: Volkswagen Goes Sexist

On September 11, 2012, Volkswagen's print advertisement in the Times of India shocked and annoyed a million people. A gizmo attached to the paper vibrated and the Ad reads as "Feel the shiver of excitement?" This prompted not one but too many reactions and the Twitter bashing began. After many 'vibrator' jokes, the social media executive lost it and said:



Belatedly realizing the horror, Volkswagen tried to cover up by saying



A brand calling women dumb, #sexist saying they do not have real driving experience, is another fail and deliberately using #PunIntended, is yet another fail.

Lesson

Do not take negative comments and feedbacks personally and most of all, never get angry and lash out foolishly—you will pay a huge price for it later.

Brands that try to hide their negative feedbacks or ignore them, especially in a medium as transparent as social media only go down infamous. Moreover, many brands are finding this out the hard way. In addition, at the end, better apologize than running away!

Case Study 12.6: The Curious Case of the Audi at Midnight

Vishal Gondal, CEO of Indiagames and managing director of DisneyUTV Digital, had given his Audi Q7 for service in an authorized Audi service station at Kalina. On November 23, 2012, Friday around 3.30am, he received an automated message from his TechnoPurple GPS tracker that hi

Batmobile is being taken for a joyride. The reports generated by the tracking software helped in verifying the route and the stoppages of the car. An online map indicated that his car was driven from Kalina to Juhu, Marine Drive, Ghatkopar, Chembur, and Kurla. Moreover, the car was stopped in scrapyard for a short while.

Being a very influential social media person, he updated on his Facebook and Twitter profiles including Audi India's Twitter account, promptly, replete with every location the car went to. However, the timely response cost Audi badly. It replied after a long 3 hours; by which time, BMW grabbed the opportunity and presented Gondal with a Mini Cooper as a comfort car for a few days.



When customers, connect with a brand on its social media site, they expect an immediate reply and a honest reply. A delay in reply and manipulation of the truth can make your case worse on socia media.

Source of Images: From Omkar's Blog: <http://omkarsapre.in/blog/interesting-pr-social-media-blunder-audi-india-time/>

Market Research on Social Media

Previously, I have given enough incidents in HR, lead generation and crowdsourcing chapters that prove social media platforms can help businesses do some basic research using listening tools or by asking questions in communities and seek consumer opinions. In this chapter we will explore how social media is benefiting market research in detail.

A blog post made by Tamara Barbara, an analyst at Forrester, shares three main trends in how market researchers are using social technologies;

- **Accessing** consumers through social sample.
- **Embracing** customers via social tools.
- **Listening** to audience by mining the social web.

To further explore on this subject, I managed to do an interview with Mr. Pravin Shekar who is a council member at ESOMAR | kreator-in-chief at Krea (an India-centric panel research firm focusing on healthcare and youth). The objective of the interview with this international speaker on market research was to gain insights on how social media is used from market research perspectives. According to him, the information gathered on social media is more timely, accurate, and honest than the one received on surveys these days. Having said that, he also believes social media gives market research a new horizon completely. In the past, market research analysts used to research on data to bring conclusions or host focus group interviews and surveys, whereas social media has made things simpler. Communities now allow people to ask questions and get responses from the people from different parts of the globe in fractions of seconds. Responses = Perspectives = Data = Deriving Conclusions or Making Assumptions. However, he believes social media research is built on top of traditional research and therefore a mix of tools and methodologies are at play.

While discussing further with Pravin on trends, I have received some insights on how social media is used popularly in market research process.

- 1. Collecting Surveys:** Social media has become a mode of collection opinions—through platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn Groups or LinkedIn InMails, research analysts or students doing dissertations have started sending online surveys across communities, individuals, and groups. The process of reaching out to relevant people through relevant community has now become easier. Various cloud tools such as surveymonkey.com, Google Forms (in Google Drive), and Facebook and LinkedIn polls have helped further market researchers.
- 2. Identifying Right Respondents:** Social media has been used for finding out, validating, and recruiting the right respondents to obtain insights. When some employees from Beroe Inc. (a market intelligence company) had participated in my social media workshop, they showcased how they used LinkedIn Answers and Quora to get their country-based research questions

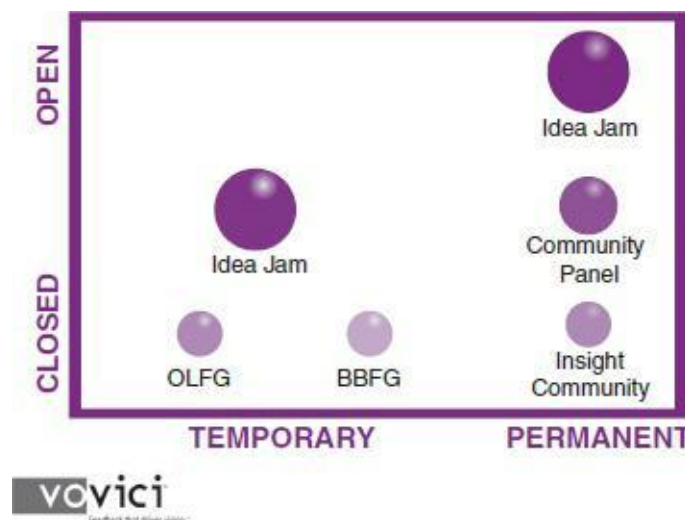
answered and the respondents who were identified as relevant analysts, thought leaders in the space were employed to get further insights.

3. **Social Media Ethnography:** A process that involves studying or analyzing social media setting while being immersed in it, is now practiced by MR professionals to collect relevant and on-time data on variety of topics. This could be made through observation or listening or analyzing content and blog posts.
4. **MROC (Market Research Online Communities):** Researching on existing online communities or developing a new one extensively to understand market has now become a process run by various market research companies across the world. The post made by Tamara Barabar on Forrester Blog also supported the concept of MROC. There are various types of online research communities as explained in [Figure 13.1](#).

There are about six different types of online research communities discussed in a Vovici blog, which can be distributed in temporarily (for specific projects, short period) and permanently (regularly engaged community), which are sometimes closed or open communities.

- **Permanent**

- Insight Community—Highly interconnected communities of 300-500 members. Helpful for in-depth qualitative research. Data mined here are highly insightful.
- Community Panel—*An adjunct to an online panel, where only some panelists engage in discussions with one another.* The community may be



vovici
Feedback that drives action

Figure 13.1: Types of Online Research Communities.

Source: Vovici | The size of each bubble reflects the relative size of the typical community of that type.

either public or private. Typical sizes range from 10,000 to 100,000 members, who have weak relationships with one another. Qualitative insights raised within the community site can be tested for representativeness using surveys of the panel (assuming, of course, the panel itself as representative of a target audience).

- Idea Voting—People are not interconnected or relationship oriented on these communities. Some members of the community posts some ideas and other members validate it by voting it thus helping new ideas evolve with mass support. This requires extensive vetting and prioritization.

- **Temporary**

- Idea Jam—Bringing offline community to online platform to discuss on a particular topic. The Idea Jams are usually a three-day-long community built and dissolved once the ideas evolve. Usual purposes of such community are brainstorming and planning.
- BBFG—Bulletin Board Focus Groups last for 3-7 days or more than that depends upon the depth of research. Around 30-50 participants are involved in the community to discuss on a particular subject. With time the relationship and interconnections among participants happen.
- OLFG—Online focus group chats are hosted for a few hours. Usually hosting happens only with the small size for few hours. It is quickly formed involving a group of individuals. Interconnections and relationships are rarely possible here

Different Research Reports Generated Using Social Media:

Essentially market research agencies or individual research analysts observe or collect information into a database and mine millions of posts (tweets, updates on Facebook and LinkedIn, opinions on blog, review sites, and more) to understand the motivations behind people buying a product, responding to a trend, sentiments behind experienced service or purchased product, and demographic behavior from sex, age, and cultural perspectives. However, social media is the easiest place to share opinions and hear the same; the reports that are usually generated are as follows:

- **Brand-Monitoring Reports:** Understand customer's opinion about the latest product or services or evaluate their opinions on competitors by surveying online, listening on social media channels, and initiating conversations with MROC methodologies. The other name for this could be sentimental analysis mostly done post-launch of a product or service.
- **Analyzing Market Trend Report:** Many thought leaders, popular opinion makers of industry, and individuals share their opinion on different industry perspectives and they are heading to help marketers to analyze current trends.
- **Mapping Customers and Vendors Report:** Social media has been used extensively by businesses to map their customers, track them, and connect with them or run a virtual credibility check before they own them as a client.
- **Figuring Out Unmet Needs:** This process helps report deep and unanticipated consumer insights about unmet needs and alternate uses for products. Process involves a lot of behavioural studies of existing customers and the defined target audience on social media with reference to industry or products.

Advantages of Using Social Media for Market Research

1. There are no limitations on survey questions; the on-going engagements in community help marketers learn almost everything in minds of target audience at different time intervals (as and when required).
2. Hearing social media buzz helps marketers understand customers in their own words. While hosting surveys or running a focus group, a marketer might look at questions from a particular angle, whereas customers might have opinions from all the possible perspectives of product.
3. The insights received on social media are timely unlike the traditional survey processes that take long time in due course of which the actual incidents might change. Insight on a new movie launch is available from day one on Blogs and Twitter and public Facebook updates come direct from theatre in fact from the premier launch show of the movie itself.

4. Surveys and questions limit the depth of research; you are to know what you have asked for and you have to know what you need to ask in order to get solutions. Social media listening has helped many brands discover intelligence and opinions that could be directly incorporated in business or that favors business value in a completely unusual way. For example, The Blue Eno (a digestive soda powder) was used for digestion purpose; usually only after looking at some cake recipes and discussion forums online, I had realized that this could also be used for baking cakes—so that is a two-purpose solution from a single product.
5. No limitation on size unlike panels and forums. Helps get larger perspective and opinions from the online discussions.
6. Market research on social media is cost effective. An organization with effective listening tools and a full-fledged community can always benefit from it by obtaining regular insights and save cost on involving a market research agency or expensive tools.

References:

Forrester Blog: http://blogs.forrester.com/tamara_barber/10-05-11-trends_and_challenges_social_market_research

Voivici Blog: <http://blog.vovici.com/blog/bid/33769/Online-Research-Communities-by-Type>

3Es of Strategic Social Media Marketing



Figure 14.1: 3Es Social Media Strategy.

As social media marketing has moved from the trial phase to the promotion phase, many more brands are now looking at social media from a strategic viewpoint and have started planning a step-by-step approach to the complete process of execution. Brands considering social media for a quick-return-on-investment model always tend to lose the strategic approach to social media. Brands that rather have a quick result-oriented approach, works well at times if the content is fantastic and if promotion for the same has been done. However, most of the times, it does not work well, as the content exposes itself as a mere promotional material and promotional content with a push always makes it look like a spam. Strategic social media marketing defines each stage of a process as a phase of the activity. At Echovme, we have been following a three-phased approach to strategic social media marketing for the brands we work with and teach this to participants at our workshops; we call it '3Es strategic social media marketing.' Strategic social media marketing undergoes three stages of activities: (Figure 14.1)

Phase 1: **Establishment**—Establishing the presence of the organization or business on social media.

Phase 2: **Engagement**—Promoting the presence to the target audience and creating regular engagements.

Phase 3: **Extravaganzas**—Take the social media presence to the next level by involving activities such as contests, events, and freebies around your social media campaigns.

Talking in detail, each phase has its own processes and set of deliverables that a business must consider while implementing, which we will explore in this chapter.

Phase 1: Establishment

A business enters this phase to lay the foundation of its brand's social media presence. Businesses must consider this stage from various perspectives of analysis such as, decision making, setting

objectives, and setting up channels for the process to begin, to name a few. Establishment stage is where I always suggest a brand to decide if they really want to enter social media, as there are various incidents that they might face unlike traditional media or regular mode of communication. A business owner deciding to enter social media platform must first educate himself or herself about how social media works, the transparency factors, day-to-day commitment to communicate, creativity in communication, investment, best practices, and practical idea of popular platforms operations, to be prepared to face the new mode of communication and understand the possible issues that it could bring.

This phase of social media marketing must be considered from a business perspective rather than from a campaign perspective. In a social media scenario, the shelf life of a particular campaign is always small—it tends to lose its charm after a point of time. A campaign should always be considered to be a part of a business's presence on social media and the main objective of 3Es strategy is to look at the bigger picture of social media—a long-term communication channel that can be customized, used, and promoted as per the convenience of your business.

In the establishment stage of your social media marketing plan, the brand should consider the following attributes of the process:

1. Primary research (industry analysis, competitor analysis, playground analysis, SWOT analysis).
2. Defining the purpose of going on Social Media.
3. Setting up the team.
4. Defining budget (fixed and variable budget)
5. Creating presence on social channels.

Primary research

Research helps businesses make the right path to reach the objectives that are decided considering the researched results. Brands usually tend to miss this chunk of the process. As stated in the earlier chapters, opening accounts on Facebook and Twitter do not mean your social media process is initiated. For larger brands, considering a social media presence should come along with a fair amount of analysis. You need not be a market research expert or might not necessarily require a market research agency to help you. This research can be based on observation and qualitative analysis of various data in the relevant space. Small business owners might want to spend lesser time on research or analysis aspects when compared to the larger ones, as a large organization's entry on social media is huge news and so is the stress of being responsible, outstanding, and visionary. Small business owners enter social media to create news and announce their business using social networking platforms.

- **Industry Analysis:** In India, the telecom sector is the most active sector on social media and the brands planning to enter social media in this space can run analyses of the standard process that the industry follows, their level of acceptance, drawbacks of the presence, best practices, worst practices, and practices that have made enough news and buzz in the market. The manufacturing industries have still not explored social media up to a great extent, maybe because of the seriousness of the business or maybe because the products do not directly connect with people on an engaging way.

Well, there might be lot more questions that you would like to be answered based on your analysis. Every Industry works differently on social media. In most cases from what I have noticed a customer expects and accepts *customer service from telecom industry, offers and*

discounts from retail industry, insights and pictures from the food and beverages industries, information and fun elements from entertainment industry, and acquiring thought leadership content, work culture showcase, and news from information technology industry. Though the expectations of the customer might differ and so will the priorities for the brands, a brand manager needs to learn that trying each of these components will help him or her know what really customer wants on social media. An industry analysis will lay a clear pathway on the choice of social networks, kind of content, understanding audience response, best practices by players in the Industry, and caution points that will help businesses jot all the points for their reference.

- **Competitor Analysis:** Sometimes, industry analysis will pressurize a business to enter social media as all the key players have already taken up the platform. If the competitors have not entered the platform, the business would force to make the prime-move as the first one to enter is always rejoiced. Vodafone and Airtel are available on social media; they both are very active on the social media front and offer customer service via Facebook and Twitter platforms; an analysis by social bakers in June 2012 shows that Airtel is ahead of Vodafone in terms of customer service, which definitely is a unique selling proposition after all—be it offline or online.

The top-five socially devoted brands are listed in [Table 14.1](#).

Table 14.1: Top -Five Socially Devoted Brands

	Questions Response Rate	Number of Questions Answered
Airtel India	39%	132
flipkart.com	52%	120
Vodafone India	49%	114
Nokia India	29%	108
Samsung Mobile India	21%	99

A business should consider making a list of top competitors and start tracking its activities very keenly on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and other sites such as YouTube, Quora, or Google+ and make note of all the minute details such as:

- Variety and frequency in posting content.
- Content or campaign that gets maximum responses.
- Content that are created by the brand on its own and contents that are sourced.
- Customization and use of social networks.
- Regular user response rate (in terms of overall likes, shares, number of followers, visits, and influence scores).
- The sentiment analysis of the customers from competitor's perspectives.
- Advertisements run to promote presence or campaign on social media.

Also do a qualitative analysis on:

- Campaigns that are most talked about (from media, citizen journalism, and marketing case studies perspective).
- The agencies hired by competitors or the size and quality of the internal team involved in running social media campaigns.
- Budgets spent on social media marketing.

You should make a visit to their websites, blogs, and home pages to check if they have any other social networking site mentioned for connection to take place. Track their resource centers and learn from them the virality of the content shared. Integrated Social Media buttons such as Follow, Share and Like buttons on their blogs or resource centre will give you a clear picture on how well are they established on Social Media. These integrated social media icons will give you an quick brief of the kind of contents that gets most number of shares and the choice of platforms it is shared on. Learn from the numbers, the best networks for your competitors. Brands can use tools such Radian6 to understand how their competitors are perceived globally and use platforms such as Unmetrics that gives you a detailed overview of how your competitors are performing on social media with insights on the varieties of content they post. Competitor analysis must always be a starting point at the beginning of your social media presence and must be ongoing throughout your adventurous moments on social media. Every month, the performance on the social networking sites of your competitors needs to be evaluated from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. The prospective customers of you and your competitors are same; tracking every minute detail will be helpful from a market intelligence perspective. Remember that social media campaigns always have a shelf life, if your competitors are running some awesome campaign, you must try to launch a better one.

- **Playground Analysis:** A playground analysis is the process of listening to your customers on social media. By making use of listening tools, you can easily evaluate how your brand is perceived on the web. A playground analysis is highly important for larger brands, as the larger brands have more visibility and are more talked about on social media when compared to the smaller brands. The process of playground analysis will make brand learn about the negativity in the air. Their social media objectives could be how well can they curb it or find a solution. Looking at the positivity in the air about the brand will help the brand enter social media with confidence and also does highlight and concentrates on things that are keeping the customers happy, which could become a selling proposition on social media. If you are a huge organization, a playground analysis is a must, as social media is the most common place where people crib about a negative experience with a brand.
- **SWOT Analysis:** Now assume that you have evaluated your industry and your competitors, threats on social media based on your analysis of external factors (industry and competitor) and considering the internal factors such as (resources, budget). However, opportunities are completely relevant to the objectives and the vast possibilities on social media such as; choosing new social networks, new campaigns, establishing novel ideas etc. A SWOT analysis will help you create goals and execution tactics that are tangible and actionable. SWOT analysis in most case gives you a clear picture of your social media pathway; this can also be done on regular intervals during execution to re-visit where your business stands on social media. The most possible strengths and weaknesses at the beginning stage would be related to the creative resources, budgets, the status of competitors, industry using social media (e.g. your business can have the first mover advantage), number of employees using social media who can be your brand advocate if trained in a right way, sentimental analysis report (negative, positive, or neutral), how well the industry is accepted on social media and lot more. However, opportunities are completely relevant to the objectives and the vast possibilities on social media, based on analysis choosing new social networks to engage audience, running new campaigns completely different from competitors, and establishing novel ideas. All these can be counted under opportunities. Online reputation spoilers can be the biggest threat to an organization's social presence, the weakness (if continued to be) can be threat moving forward.

A SWOT analysis in the intermediate stage would differ from both expectations and results

perspectives when compared to the beginning stage of the process.

Strength	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good number of people who are talking about your brand (as per the statistics).• Things that you are good at, when compared to your competitors.• Overall advantage of how brand is perceived and the equity share when compared to other players.• Content being much appreciated, shared, and rejoiced (based on statistics).• Increasing good word of mouth about your brand on the web space.• Results of activities on social media resulting in business value.• More and more employees getting trained, to use social media as brand's ambassadors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your content strategy on social media not working particularly well evaluated on the basis of responses.• Your competitors are doing better on any particular social media platform (Facebook, Twitter, Blogging, etc.).• A particular campaign of your competitor on social media overshadowing your efforts.• Unable to handle negative word of mouth about your brand on social media and control the same (failure of crisis management).• Losing sales due to poor social media presence.• No proper ROI in terms of qualitative and quantitative objectives set.• No employee involvement.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Channels that are new and emerging and have not been explored by your brand yet.• Based on your response analysis, learning content that works well for your brand—further opportunity to create more and relevant content.• Use latest technology to engage audience by hosting contests, games, and more.• Streamline the process for customers to buy from/interact with your company besides regular engagement.• Using customer engagement analysis data for business intelligence.• Narrowing down the thought leadership subjects to focus on.• Employee involvement and creating first-level brand advocates (not just charity begins at home).• Hearing customers suffering and extending your help on social media.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Obstacles that you face on social media on regular basis (such as frequent complaints).• Budget and resources constrained.• Competitors' Activities of way ahead of, what your business is currently doing, on social media.• Too much of information sharing by employees causing privacy havocs.

Defining Your Purpose

Defining the purpose of going on social media completely depends upon the participating department in the organization. Some organizations connect social media to each vertical of business and horizontally as well, each vertical/ lateral having its own set of objectives that are delivered across channels. Marketing department is always the first department that usually tends to get its hands on social media before any other departments get onto it. By understanding the power of this medium, it is the marketing department that invites and sets guidelines for the other departments in the organization. A brand's purpose on social media can be defined in primary and secondary categories as adapted by various brands across the world, which is listed as follows.

- Create awareness about the brand or product.
- Lead generation or increase sales.
- Establish an identity in relevant space and create thought leadership.

- Engage audience or customers to build relationships.
- Create brand advocates to evangelize brands.
- Get customer insights for product designing or service improvement.
- Collaborate with employees internally for improving employee relationships and enhance productivity.
- Talent recognition, recruitment, and retention.
- Create communication channel of own.
- Crowdsourcing ideas.

A business might want to keep all the above as its purpose to get started but their priority can be one. The one of priority can be called the primary purpose which keeps shifting with campaigns, processes, and verticals in an organization.

Setting up Team

Social media marketing is never a one-person task unless the person owes skills of content writing, technical application development, graphic designing, and strategic marketing skills. In India, many larger organizations have started incorporating social media team in their regular routine—this is either outsourced team or inbuilt team. The competition in social media scenario has increased in India and in various countries across the globe and setting a social media team is good in two ways: social media campaigns management can be instant and personalized at the same time. A social media team would typically require the followings.

- **For Really Small Businesses:** For individuals who have just started to think of starting their own business or running an organization with 1-5 employees must have visibility for their personal brands more on social media than for the organization in the initial level. Building a personal brand is easy on social media than creating an awareness for a business since the key feature of social media is social networking and when done personally the value is immense. Speaking about a particular subject/industry that you want to be thought leader in is a smarter choice. Creativity and content on a very limited level can be outsourced to build your personal brand better. I have personally seen lots of bakers, photographers, artists, and small shop owners using social media at a personal level to increase the visibility for their talent or for their businesses/stores.
- **For Mid-Sized Businesses:** A mid-sized business must hire a social media manager with skills to manage social media channels, write content, and have a creative idea of portraying a design. He/she must be connected to all the sales, marketing, production, and visionary actions of the organization. A designer alongside will be an added advantage as social media is all about visually pleasing your audience in this era of engagement. The team must have one more member who can be responsible for the execution tasks completely. Personal presence and presence of organization are the combination that businesses need to set so as to create a two-way communication for the organization. The first way would be reaching out the personal network of individuals in the organization; the second way would be to reach out to people through the channels created for the brand thus having a fine balance of both personal and professional reach via social media channels. Having more than one voice in a department is essential or your campaign will stagnate. Remember that the team can be utilized for multipurpose reasons from a marketing communications perspective.
- **For Large Enterprises:** Strategic social media manager, social media executives/analysts, content innovators, and graphic designers are essential for a large enterprise. The role of social

media manager here is more from strategic, analytic-oriented, and innovative viewpoints, whereas executives are the individuals involved in communicating, executing campaigns, listening to audience, monitoring feedbacks, work on daily reporting and creating the first level of enthusiasm on the web. Involving an analyst from ROI perspective is essential, as a creative person would hate being constrained to numerical values. A graphic designer with best skills is always a must for large organizations to customize every update with a attractive picture that goes on social media, whereas content innovators are individuals in charge for varieties of content: videos, presentations, blog posts, status updates, puzzles, and so on. On the whole, this comprises a complete social media management team, and if the budget allows, the team can have a person with technical skills to build and develop application-based campaigns. It is also suggested to find out individuals with social media marketing skills in the organization and loop them in various communication tasks to avoid employing new individuals and use the existing one who is well versed with the organization's values.

- **What Can Be Outsourced?** To some degree, the complete social media marketing itself can be outsourced to an external agency but, as I always suggest, social media marketing is way too better if done internally. The outsourcing can be done at various intervals, which are as follows:

Beginning Phase	Social media research, playground analysis, and establishing social media channels with all the creatives.
Engagement Phase	Outsourcing of creatives, content, analytics, and advertisements
Extravaganzas	Hiring a third party to host an event-based campaign or build a technical application to host contests on social media channels or engage audience technically.

In most cases, a large enterprise would like to have an in-house team for beginning or engagement phases, whereas the extravaganzas stages are usually outsourced.

Tips

- Have composed and matured personnel as social media marketing managers since this medium involves transparent communications and at times facing unpleasant remarks.
- Have more than two people in a social media team.
- Involve employees to increase brand evangelism.
- If you are hiring an agency, look at their working mechanism—go visit their office and see how fun-loving people they are. A social media agency can never be boring.

Define Your Budget

A marketer must remember that social media is always part and parcel of marketing and it is not a onetime cost; it is an online asset that matures and grows with time. Though social media tools are free, people who run them come with a price tag. Take budgeting seriously, as it will help you set a better pathway. The budget can be allocated on the fixed and variable spending bases. (Figure 14.2)

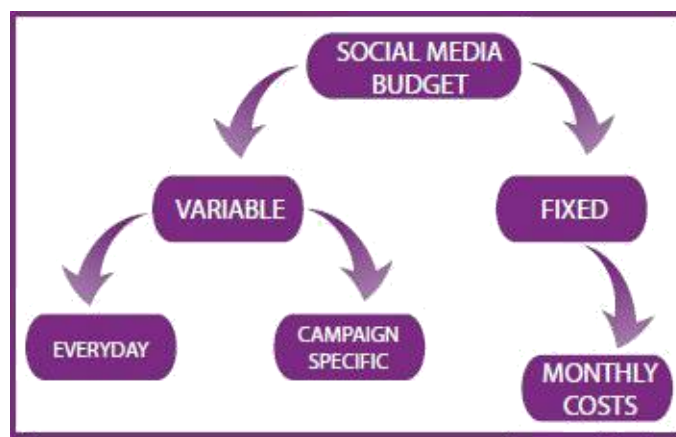


Figure 14.2: Social Media Budgeting Model.

- **Fixed Budget:** A fixed budget in social media could be the salary of team hired, which would probably grow with time or it could be the retainer fee that you would offer to the agency involved in handling social media channels on your behalf. The retainer fee completely depends upon the scope of work and the social media team's salary depends upon their expertise and knowledge in social media for business. This is where the business has little control, as they have to work according to the industry standards.
- **Variable Budget:** A variable budget in a social media scenario can be defined as costs involved in running campaigns and everyday communications. Businesses here have complete control, as they can modify or define their objectives based on the variable budget they have in mind.
- **Everyday Spending:** Advertisements to build community, costs of subscribing to third party analytical or management tools, and costs involved in refurbishing or creating daily engagements.
- **Campaign-Specific Spending:** Creating an application to engage audience or host contests, running a particular event to promote social media presence or create social media evangelism, creating specific video or infographic from viral marketing perspective, and running advertisements or PR activities specific to a particular campaign. Campaign-specific spending is usually optional.

Tips to Take Away:

- Have budget allocated for both fixed and variable expenditures. Many brand managers believe that fixed spending is more than enough for activities to run. Failing to spend on the variable spending such as advertisements, campaigns, and applications will not really help in the long run.
- Plan your social media spending as per strategy, your budget needs to be widely spread for a period of six months and should not be a onetime investment to avoid worse money constraints when it is actually required to run campaigns.
- The six-month budget allocation must not be identical; it should be as per the campaign or plan of action for each month; for example, you might need more funds in the initial month to run advertisements and grow community than on the following months.

Create Your Presence, Creatively

The complete analysis and research done from industry, competitors, SWOT, and playground perspective will help you decide on the choice of social media tools that your brand would want to employ for business purposes. While setting up social media channels for brands, one needs to consider the following important things:

- **Separate e-mail Address:** Create a separate e-mail address for registering all the social media channels for the company to keep a separate tab on all the social media related communications. Also, separate e-mail address can be given access to agencies or employees involved in social media marketing. Example: companyname@gmail.com or social@companyname.com.
- **Common Username:** Register a common user name in all the social media channels that you are planning to use for your business. A username on social media is your identity, registering a common user name will help you save your common identity in all the social media channels as well as help increase your visibility in search engines. A common username is also important for publishing them in brochures, visiting cards, e-mailers, newspaper ads, TVCs, and so on.
- **Involve Keywords:** While describing about your company in description, bio, about us, or about company section of social media profiles, do not forget to involve keywords that you want to be identified with or listed in search results while your target audience searches for you. Keywords need to be researched upon and involved in all possible places (definitely not in abundance) but smartly while describing it.
- **Get Creative:** Using profile picture wherever necessary, background and header images on Twitter, timeline banners on Facebook, customized tabs landing pages on Facebook, and banners or backgrounds wherever necessary on other social media channels, can show world how serious are you with your social media presence. Also it can be a visual treat while you start communicating with your target audience. Creativity matters here! In addition, as creativity is very subjective to different industries and social media platforms, I leave it on readers to decide how they would like to portray themselves on these channels.
- **Complete Your Profile:** A complete profile on social media channel can be called as one that has got all the information about the organization and has the profile picture, customized URL, description, and customized backgrounds and pages (wherever possible).

Phase 2: Engagement and Promotions

This is the most important phase of your social media marketing strategy, as this will determine your success and this will also require a lot of out-of-the-box thinking, creativity, team efforts, and regular management. At Echovme, we have been strategizing the second phase of social media marketing using posting/month model, which needs to be planned every month. Posting/ month model is drafted considering the following reasons on why a brand fails on social media marketing front, which are as follows.

1. Long achievement models (yearly), initially followed with spark and lost in-between.
2. No proper tangible objectives. Objectives were too long and mere assumptions. They were social media tool centric and not people centric.
3. Strategy was generalized; there was no segmentation and targeting accordingly.
4. No budget for or not interested in, growth of community—no promotions about social media presence
5. There was no relationship between the target audience and kind of social media tool employed.
6. Lack of guidance and no control over interactive measures.
7. Lack of creative approach and excessive dumping of boring content.
8. No management of feedbacks and opinions given.

Keeping all the above negative points into consideration, the POSTING/month is drafted to take the social media marketing activities to the next level. It is a model that concentrates on social media marketing strategy month-on-month basis and works well if drafted every month, with different set of

tangible objectives. POSTING/month stands for:

- P - People/Promotions for promotional channel (P4P)
- O - Objectives for the month
- S - Segmentation of the activities
- T - Tactics to engage
- I - Interactive measures
- N - Network matters
- G - Gearing up

They are discussed in the following paragraphs.

P—People/P4P

As SMM is a people-centric approach, it is crucial to identify or define your target audience first. For example, if you are targeting audience is China, then you might want to use social networking sites such as Renren, Q51, and so on. If you are running a travel company, you might want to target people in the review sites such as Travel Buddy and Trip Advisor. Your choice of platform completely depends upon who you are targeting.

- By sending e-mailers/SMS/post mails to all the existing employees.
- Doing a press release/press meet on the launch of innovative social media campaign or special offers for social media audience.
- Run advertisements across traditional and social media platforms (Facebook ads, LinkedIn ads, Banner ads on targeted sites, ads on newspapers and radios, etc.).
- Usage of URL in all possible places such as product packaging, brochures, e-mailers, letter pads, visiting cards, etc.
- Doing an in store branding about social media presence, especially in the trial rooms, outside restrooms, or at billing counters (for retail).
- Marketers need to allocate suitable budgets to promote their organization's social media channels to later use the social media channels as permanent promotional tools. Hence, this stage is also called Promotions for Promotional Channel (P4P).

O—Objectives for the Month

As a marketer you need to set tangible objectives that can be directly derived out of social media marketing practices. The results of these objectives are met both qualitatively and quantitatively. Objectives can be set in two different stages as mentioned below:

Initial Objectives: Objectives at initial stage of social media marketing can be set every month.

- The number of engagements planned (the number of tweets per day, the number of status updates on Facebook, the number of blog posts, the number of pictures to be pinned on Pinterest or shared on Instagram, the number of videos or presentations to be made/uploaded, etc.).
- The number of people to be reached, to promote social media presence or campaign (the number of ads to run, the amount to be spent on ads (per week)), the total number of impressions the ads create).

Advanced Objectives: The initial objectives are to be used as performance metrics and the results derived out of it needs to be the benchmarked for future activities. The first level of objectives in both

the stages are planned on the basis of assumptions, the results derived after few days/months are again used as benchmarking figure for future activities. Below are some examples of advanced objectives that needs to be achieved to calculate Return on Investment:

- The number of people to be engaged or reached out to spread word of mouth (decibels like the number of RTs, the number of shares, the number of endorsements to a particular post, etc.).
- The volume of user generated contents to be obtained (the number of opinions, the number of comments, etc.).
- The number of subscriptions to be obtained (for blog or newsletter or a particular channel that you are driving traffic to).
- The number of feedbacks to be received (complaints, appreciations, opinions received about the product, etc.).
- The number of leads or inquiries to be received.
- The number of new joiners (followers, likes, subscriptions, visitors, search volume, search ranking, etc.).

The objectives need to be recorded on a weekly basis on a single Excel sheet, which can be uploaded on a Google Drive to see the growth or downfall in activities week on week. Find the following example; The below mentioned variables can be set based on competitor analysis as task to be achieved in a month's time.

Activities	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Number of tweets				
Number of Facebook updates				
Number of blog posts				
Time spent on listening				

S—Segmentation of Activities

Based on the research done in phase 1 and by understanding how your competitors work on the social media front, you will have to plan your strategy. Segmentation of your social media activity will involve the time of action (updates, tweets, blog posts, pins, etc.), geography targeted, language to be involved, social behavior to be watched out, the timing of the responses, allocation of tasks to the team members, age targeted, and timing of updates (for example, if you are targeting a school-going individual, you would like to make updates for the same post 5 PM—their usual time to visit social media after coming back from school; if you are targeting a home maker, noon would be an ideal time to reach out to them, as they are usually free after their routine tasks). Age, gender, geography, time, and team needs to be taken into consideration to plan the complete segmentation of the activities.

Usually, businesses fail to do a proper segmentation of their target audience and they forget to completely redefine their target audience from the perspectives of age, gender, geography, and time to reach. Segmentation will not only help you decide the time to make these updates but also help you decide on what kind of updates you need to post. Competitor analysis will help you understand the timings of activities performed by similar brands in the industry and will also help you record the response ratios of the audience who are existing in your competitor's communities; for example, an Indian client of mine serving customers in the US market failed in its social media activities because the employees were making their updates on Indian Standard Time and not on the US time zone, thus not reaching to the audience. In another case, a business was regularly updating interesting content on Twitter in the morning hours instead of sharing them throughout the day and thus missing to reach

out to different people who visit Twitter in the noon or evening hours.

Allocating different people in a team to work or observe social media channels at different time intervals or time zones will help the brand control online reputation on time. For example, a complaint made on Vodafone’s Facebook page after 9 PM will be only observed by the representative on the next working hour, the chances of the damage caused by the complaint made is higher, as many common people in my network on the same page of Vodafone can notice the same. At the same time, the members working in the night shift can respond to the complaint made and try to moderate the situation and pacify the complainer.

T—Tactics to Engage

The role of content begins here the variation of content differs and the quality of content matters in this phase the most. The industry analysis, competitor analysis, and the trend completely matter here to decide on the weekly/monthly content (as per the interest of resource and the type of industry). The key rule of posting/month model is to create a content bank for the entire month or at least for a week. In this phase, the communication, creative, and messages are planned well in advance. The social media team or agency can use the content from the content bank to broadcast on day-to-day basis and spend more time in listening and engaging. Many a times, the social media team deciding on daily communication, spends more time on designing of the content and less on listening and engaging. The content bank will keep your activity continuous, planned; anything on high priority can always be added in between as and when necessary.

Engagement tactics are purely dependent upon content and choice of technology, social media platform. Some businesses prefer to use technology or contest-based model (which we shall discuss in the phase 3 of 3E SMM model). The tactics phase is purely content based in posting/month model, which allows any small or larger enterprise to use social media as platform for engaging audience and does not handicap the activities due to expensive application-based activities. Considering various platforms here, the following are some best practices and suggestions that businesses can implement to start creating conversations on the social media sphere. ([Table 14.2](#))

Table 14.2: Tactics of Engagement on Different Social Media Channels

Examples of Tactics for Engagement	Channels, Style of Posting
Daily industry news* and perspectives on it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook (picture, brief text, and link) • Twitter (news title and link with opinion about it) • LinkedIn (the link gets embedded and opinion is given) • Blog (only if there is an opinion that you would like to add)
Relevant facts, regular tips, and remedies or solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook (with relevant picture—little in detail) • Pinterest (a fact in picture format—can be pinned) • Twitter (in 140 characters with relevant hashtag) • Blog—facts round up can be done; for example, 40 best social media facts; this can be again shared on LinkedIn Groups, Facebook, Twitter, etc. • SlideShare—same as for blog, single fact in single slide presented visually appealing • YouTube—Facts can be made in a 2.5–3.5-minute video
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blog, YouTube, or SlideShare (in detail) • Can be circulated on social media channels • To quickly disseminate: Facebook
Thought leadership content (In detail)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blog, YouTube, or SlideShare to establish the content • Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn—to promote the established content
Case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blog, YouTube, or SlideShare to establish the content • Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn—to promote the established content • A brief case study can be directly posted on Facebook along with a relevant image
Testimonials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook—to be posted along with the logo of the company or the photo of the person • YouTube—if a video testimonial is recorded • Blog/SlideShare—to do a compilation of testimonials
Polls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook, LinkedIn Groups, Blog, or Twitter
Quizzes (multiple choice, fill in the blank, and Q & A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook—to be posted in format of images or along with an image • Twitter
Puzzles (crosswords, solve case study, match the relevance, identify the hidden words, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook—posted in format of a picture (can also be uploaded on infographics) • Can be posted on blog as well
Case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blog, SlideShare, or YouTube—for publishing • Facebook—to promote the brief of case study with a relevant picture and link (for audience to read in detail) • Can be circulated on Twitter or LinkedIn

Examples of Tactics for Engagement	Channels, Style of Posting
Product-based updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook—variations in views can be displayed in an album • Blog—a detailed overview of the product can be written here • Pinterest—pictures of new products can be uploaded here • YouTube or SlideShare—for catalogs upload
Discounts and offers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook, Twitter, or Blog (in detail about the offer or a banner on the right-hand side of the blog)
Infographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posted on Blog • Circulated on Twitter, LinkedIn, or Google+ • Pinned on Pinterest • Can be posted on Facebook (if resolution allows; if not, link can be circulated)
Cartoons and jokes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook, Twitter, or Pinterest (cartoons or jokes in picture format)
Picture-based quotes and picture-based updates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pinterest or Facebook
Weekend updates/casual updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook or Twitter
Current affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook, Twitter, or Blog (current affair should be relevant to the subject) • Example: Using current affairs by the way Amul does—making it customized to the brand and its messaging • Not to do: Wish celebrities on their birthdays through your brand pages using their images, just to create some irrelevant engagements based on fan following of the celebrities
Work culture showcase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blog, Facebook, YouTube, or a presentation on SlideShare can also be made
Updates on recruitment (or HR related)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blog, Twitter, LinkedIn Groups, or Facebook
Press releases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uploaded on SlideShare or shared on Twitter, LinkedIn, or Facebook
Company financial news or any kind of news on acquisition, new office, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook, Twitter, Blog (in detail), or LinkedIn Groups (if managed by company/company owned)

For thought leadership, content on social media has to be relevant to your subject or matter of expertise. Any form of engagement done from the above tabular column must be revolving around the subject matter, strictly! Relevant and good and varieties of content are important for various reasons:

- It positions your brand better—as a trusted advisor.
- It drives interest of the community.
- It shows that you really care for your audience.
- It impacts the brand equity, thus impacting the overall relationship with the audience.

I-Interactive Measures

Weekly tracking of social media marketing activities needs to be performed in order to derive at conclusions and decide on what is next. In the stage of phase 2, a business needs to strictly evaluate the performance of promotional activities done, content posted, and audience reactions in order to understand what is working well and what is not working well on social media front. As ROI on social media is always a subject of discussion, controversy, and confusion, concentrating on performance is more important on social media than on the ROI on the first go. The simplest way to

evaluate your performance, week by week is by creating an Excel sheet for recording performance in a similar fashion as created in objectives stage of phase 2.

The following example of Excel sheet would help you on how the recording sheet could be drafted for Twitter. ([Table 14.3](#))

Table 14.3: Example of Recording/Reporting

Activities	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Twitter				
Number of tweets				
Number of retweets				
Number of followers				
Number of following				
Number of lists mentioned in				
Number of mentions				
Number of people listened, responded				
% of positive tweet				
% of negative tweet				
Number of clicks to the link shared on Twitter				
Number of inquiries				
Number of Facebook updates				
Number of blog posts				
Time spent on listening				
Klout and Peer Index Score				
Traffic received on website via Twitter				
Most well performed tweets				

As shown above, the Excel sheet can be used to keep track of activities across Blog, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, and SlideShare, accordingly. The above set decibels can be recorded manually or existing measuring tools can be taken into consideration to derive at conclusions. Your focus on first few months should be to increase the performance, week on week for a period of six months to start seeing results of time and money spent on social media marketing. As the brand awareness increases, so will be the visibility and efforts of building the credibility resulting in leads or value in generating word of mouth or deduction of costs for some tangible elements of marketing. Some third party tools that can be taken into consideration, which generate weekly report automatically, can be used to record the above decibels such as social- bro.com, sproutsocial.com, twitonomy.com, and hashtrack.com/tweetreach. com (for tracking hashtags) ([Table 14.4](#)).

Table 14.4: Measurement Tools to Evaluate the ROI of Social Media Marketing

Sproutsocial.com , socialbro.com , and simplymeasured.com	Complete social media analytics and integrate platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. It gives you a comprehensive report. You can have free trial versions.
Twitonomy.com	Complete analysis of a Twitter profile. The reach, retweets, mentions, most-performed tweet, etc.
Tweetreach.com and hashtracking.com	For tracking a reach and performance of hashtag on Twitter.
Facebook Insights	Facebook Insights for pages gives you accurate data on the performance of your community page.

N—Network Matters!

Your objective should always meet to grow your network. Be it from personal or professional perspective, a social media marketing campaign should always end up in the growth of a particular social or subscription channel employed while running the campaign. The network can be called “the

home or final network” of your social media campaign. The final destination or a home network could be Facebook page, e-mail subscriptions for newsletter/ blog, followers on Twitter, or a subscription to any specific group or social media channel that you believe is the most important of your entire social media strategy.

While in the first six months, your concentration should be to engage your audience on home network as well as bring people from other social media channels to the same, your next six months should be about concentrating on creating exceptional content, campaigns, and offers for the audience in home network to increase the credibility of your presence and continue to interact with audience on other channels meeting different purpose at the same time convincing them enough to be part of your home network. This will also help brands have all its well-wishers at one place.

When you start communicating about your presence on social media, when you start sharing regular content on social media channels, when you start conversing with people on social media channels, your aim should be to increase the home network subscriptions or follower base; for example, if your aim is to make people join the Facebook page, you can make a mention of it at the end of every blog post or presentation or video inviting people to join the brand’s Facebook page; you can also tweet about your Facebook presence and similarly mention the same during conversations in other channels. While in the first year of your social media campaign, you shall run ads to bring traffic to your page at the same time your aim should also be to communicate about the home network in any other social media channel that you are using to communicate with the world out there.

Some brands might want to create different home networks for different business objectives, that is fine too as long as there are enough resources and content creators to manage it.

G—Gearing up!

Based on the first month’s performance and the recordings (reports) of the same, businesses must plan up the activities for the next month keeping in reference the competitors and the results of the first month of activity. This stage is also where you shall conclude what is working well and what is not; it will also help you understand how far your target audience reacted to your engagement tactics. Revisiting objectives, target audience, and reactions is highly recommended. Evaluate all the negative feedbacks received and addressed and take away all the key points mentioned by audience to make your services and products better to avoid negative feedbacks in future.

Phase 3—Extravanzas

Extravanzas stage is where a marketer needs to think beyond the regular way of interaction. This stage is called Extravanza because a marketer needs to plan an activity in a way that excites the entire community to participate either online or offline and make the relationship with the brand stronger.

Amidst competition, your focus should be to do things differently and this phase of your social media marketing will take your presence to the next level technically, physically, or with monetary benefits. For some businesses, this phase is completely no-no and for some, this is clubbed with the engagement phase; however, only a select few believe in the phase 3 of social media marketing activity. Extravanzas phase in an organization is usually outsourced. A brand in this phase can organize event-based extravanza (refer social media journalist case) and application-based extravanza (refer innovation in marketing case study on technical applications) and develop some

offline campaign, integrating it with social media. Extravaganzas are equivalent to experiential marketing, giving your audience some fantastic experience to remember for a long time. From social media marketing perspectives, they are important because:

- They keep the audience amazed and glued to your social media channels.
- They show innovation in marketing and help brand to stand distinguished.
- They easily disseminate word of mouth about a particular campaign in short duration (especially if they are event-based extravaganzas).
- They bring more people to the social media channels and help increasing subscriptions.
- They connect with the online community, offline! Thus, making it a real social experience.

Explore the Boundless Opportunities on Social Media

It would be to wear blinkers, to dismiss Social Media just as a socializing individual-oriented platform. Indian brands are soon realizing that Social Media can be hotspots to reach their audience on a personal level. But unfortunately, the realization stops with just that.

Social Media for Business: Stories of Indian Brands by industrial expert Sorav Jain takes you through thoughts, illustrations, examples and proven models to go beyond just the realization. The author effortlessly illustrates his Social Media philosophies by giving an insider's view of the challenges and opportunities for Indian brands to turn to authentic execution of branding in Social Media - the phenomenon that has already delved deep into the Indian fabric.



Sorav Jain dwells on Social Media and has made art of marketing on social media platforms as his profession. The mere addiction of social networking and passion of marketing has made him work with several esteemed brands of India. He has offered them Social Media Marketing Training, Services and Consulting.

An accomplished trainer by himself, Sorav teaches social media marketing and personal branding subjects at Madras Advertising Club. He has hosted more than 75+ social media marketing workshops and has trained employees of Times Internet Limited, 2020 Media, Hanmer MSL, Bosch India, and lot of other leading advertising, PR, and internet marketing agencies of India. Sorav also runs a digital marketing agency called Echovme, serving some of the esteemed brands of India.

₹350/-

Dedicated to ***Rahul Jain***,
my elder brother, for introducing me to Orkut...