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A STUDY ON CONSUMERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES IN INDIA

C.Magesh
Assistant Professor
Department of Business Administration
Annamalai University

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to scrutinize the consumer attitude towards social networking sites (SNS). It focus on their target social media marketing is a recent addition to organization's integrated marketing communications (IMC) plans. Integrated Marketing Communications is a data-driven approach that focuses on identifying consumer insights and developing a strategy with the right (combined online and offline) channels to forge a stronger brand-consumer relationship. As one of customer touch point, social networking sites have spectacular benefits making number of Indian corporate adopt it. Present study explores consumer attitude and the shopping experience shared by other users, which can be taken care in applying social media in marketing practices e.g. branding, image-building, new product launch, communication and customer- servicing. Manager should develop the proper strategies for being socialized on social-networking sites. The paper enables marketing managers to assess how to utilize the newer media in order to generate value for consumers and get maximum long-term benefits for the company.

Keywords: Consumer Attitude, Social Networking Sites, Social Media Marketing

I. INTRODUCTION

Social Networking Sites

"Social networking sites (SNS) are applications that enable users to connect by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to these profiles, and sending e-mails and instant messages between each other" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). The profiles can include any type of content, photos, videos, audio files and blogs (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Boyd and Ellison (2008) define social networking sites as; web-based services

ISSN: 0971-1260
Vol-20-Issue-04-Oct-Dec -2017

that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

SNS enable individuals to maintain blogs and encourage group interactions through chat rooms, instant messaging and e-mails (Gangadharbatla, 2008).



Figure 1: Examples of Social Networking Sites in India

Social networking sites are probably the most popular and consumer oriented in the world of social media. Today there exist many social networking sites, like Facebook, Linkedin, Google+, MySpace, Dogster and others. Some are targeted to all users while others focus on certain groups of consumers.

From the descriptions above on options in social media it is clear that it is an active and fast moving domain. The possibilities are many and what may be up-to-date today can be obsolete tomorrow. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the options social media brings and see how they can complement a persons' or an organisations' strategy in online activities and help them accomplish the goals they have.

ISSN: 0971-1260
Vol-20-Issue-04-Oct-Dec -2017

Attitudes toward Social Networking Sites

It is important to understand users of social networking sites and their attitudes towards these sites. Attitude is a disposition that influences behaviour (Allport, 1935), but the general conclusion in regards to the relationship between attitude and behaviour suggests that a person's intention to perform an action is influenced by the attitude toward a certain action and subjective norms, which as a result influence a person's behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Ajzen, 1988).

Industry surveys indicate that people join and use social networking sites for several reasons, such as to stay in touch with friends, make plans with friends, make new friends or flirt with someone (Lenhart and Madden, 2007). Other reasons may be feelings of affiliation and belonging, need for information, goal achievement, self-identity, values and notions of accepted behaviour (Ridings and Gefen, 2004). These factors are all connected to the individual user's need for cognition, need to belong and level of collective self-esteem (Gangadharbatla, 2008). Also, the successful adoption of technology depends on the perceived ease of use (Davis, et al., 1989), which is often referred to as Internet self-efficacy (Eastin and LaRose, 2000; Daugherty, et al., 2005).

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Consumer Attitudes

It is vital for retailers and marketers to be aware of the factors that affect consumer attitudes and motives because consumers are increasingly creating content about brands, something previously controlled solely by companies (Heinonen 2011). As a result, current research has examined what aspects of social media sites affect consumer attitudes and motives. Chu (2011) examined the link between Facebook brand related group participation, advertising responses, and the psychological factors of self-disclosure and attitudes among members and nonmembers of Facebook groups. The study determined that users who are members of groups on Facebook are more likely to disclose their personal data than nonmembers are. Chu (2011) that explains group participation and engagement with online ads requires a higher level of

ISSN: 0971-1260
Vol-20-Issue-04-Oct-Dec -2017

personal information because users openly reveal their connections with Facebook groups and promote brands or products when they pass on ads to their friends. "Facebook groups provide channels that consumers deem useful when seeking self-status in a product category, as does passing on viral content about brands to their social contacts" (Chu 2011).

Chu (2011) has also found that users who are Facebook group members maintain a more favorable attitude toward social media and advertising. Users who have more positive attitudes toward advertising are more likely to join a brand or a retailer's Facebook group to receive promotional messages. Based on this result, Chu (2011) suggests that a link exists between consumers' use of and engagement in group applications on social media sites. The relationship between consumers' use of and engagement with group applications influences the rate and effectiveness of advertising on social media, particularly Facebook. Generally, as Chu (2011) notes, Facebook's college-aged users have the most favorable attitudes toward social media advertising and are the largest growing demographic, which suggests that social media sites are a potentially rich platform for online advertising campaigns, especially for companies with a younger target market.

Cox (2010) also investigated the correlation between age and attitude and found that social network user attitude toward online advertising formats (i.e. blogs, video, and brand channel or page) differed to some extent across age groups. She explains that users who fall in the 18-28 age brackets had strong positive attitudes towards blogs, video, and brand channel ad formats. This was because users found these ad formats to be eye catching, informative, and amusing. The 35-54 age groups preferred ad formats on video and brand channels because they found them to be more eye catching, informative, and had better placement within the online page layout. Overall, online advertising formats with positive attributes are welcomed by users; however, ads that are intrusive or interfere with online social networking activities, such as pop up, expandable, or floating formatted ads were disliked by network users (Cox 2010).

According to Chi (2011), users perceive advertising differently depending on the social network, which suggests user motivations for online social networking may play a vital role in defining consumers' responses to social media marketing. As mentioned previously in the explanation of Pookulangara and Koesler's (2011) study, the technology acceptance model

ISSN: 0971-1260
Vol-20-Issue-04-Oct-Dec -2017

(TAM) was also used by Harris and Dennis (2011). Harris and Dennis (2011), however, used TAM as a loose framework that combined trust and the factors associated with TAM (i.e. perceived enjoyment, ease of use, and usefulness). The TAM determined that consumers, specifically students, hold a hierarchy of trust when using social media such as Facebook. Students trust 'real' friends, then Facebook friends, followed by expert blogs and independent review sites and lastly celebrities and e-retailer sites (Harris and Dennis 2011).

Di Pietro and Pantano (2012) conducted further research using the TAM to discern that enjoyment is the major factor that influences consumers to use social networks as a platform for assisting in their buying decisions. They found that the fun provided by Facebook, as well as the opportunity it provides users to ask for suggestions in an easy and entertaining way, motivates individuals to pay more attention to the products promoted on Facebook. "Facebook promotes a consumer to consumer approach, exploited by consumers to share experiences and create a common knowledge on products and services; on the other, it provides managers a direct channel for communicating with clients through a business to consumer approach" (Di Pietro and Pantano, 2012). Retailers can improve their Facebook page appeal by adding games, contests, and interactive applications, which can attract more users (Di Pietro and Pantano, 2012).

However, retailers also need to be educated on consumers attitudes when it comes to social media marketing. A deeper understanding of how consumers perceive social marketing will help ensure marketing strategies are effective. Consumer activities of consumption, participation, and production are not related to just one motivation according to Heinonen (2011), who concluded that consumer activities are a combination of a variety of motivations. The classic notion of individuals as mere consumers is outdated; consumers can now be seen as active producers of business value because user generated content is reducing the influence of traditional marketing tactics (Heinonen 2011). Awareness of consumer's motives is important because it provides a deeper understanding of what influences users to create content about a brand or store.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study falls under the category of ‘descriptive studies’, as the nature of the problem is to determine the relationship among the different variables. This type of research is

ISSN: 0971-1260
Vol-20-Issue-04-Oct-Dec -2017

also called survey-based study. The major strength of survey research is it is, wide scope and ability to collect detailed information from a sample of large population.

Measures

The questions related to general attitude about SNS were asked in this section like frequency of using SNS by friends or families, SNS is a useful technology, wonderful innovation, valuable social networking service, time appears to go very quickly, block out most other distractions, fun interacting, enjoy using SNS, control over interaction, imagination, meet a variety of needs, well organized appearance, trustworthiness, accurate information, up to date information, easy to use, connect with others, enhance personal effectiveness, usefulness, learning more from others, keep in touch with old friends and to meet new people. These statements are developed by the researcher. The opinion measuring questions were measured using 5 point Likert scale.

Main Study

Since, the population is not defined; it is difficult to trace the respondents. Hence, Snowball sampling method was used to locate and enroll participants in this study. Snowball or chain referral sampling is a method that has been widely used in qualitative research. The method yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest. The researcher initially identified a seed of 50 respondents and personally contacted them over phone and email and explained the purpose of research. The researcher sent the online questionnaire link http://info-syst.com/snssurvey.php via Facebook message chat application and email. The researcher asked the respondents to suggest several others. Almost every seed respondent's participant in this study was able to direct the researcher to identify three or more new participants and every new participant become seed respondents. The data collection process was started during February 2013 and finished during July 2013. At the end of the data collection phase, the researcher received 769 questionnaires. Among 769, 106 questionnaires were found to be improperly filled and hence they were rejected and therefore 663 questionnaires were included for the research. Out of 663, 443 were male and remaining 230 were female. After collecting online questionnaire

ISSN: 0971-1260
Vol-20-Issue-04-Oct-Dec -2017

the responses stored in MYSQL database have been exported into SPSS compatible file format for further statistical analysis.

ISSN: 0971-1260
Vol-20-Issue-04-Oct-Dec -2017

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of SNS general attitude

Sl. No.	SNS Attitudes	Mean	SD
1.	Many of my friends or families use SNS frequently.	3.89	1.194
2.	From a technical viewpoint, SNS is a useful technology.	3.86	1.035
3.	SNS is a wonderful innovation.	3.87	0.998
4.	SNS is a valuable social networking service.	3.89	0.980
5.	Time appears to go very quickly when I am using SNS.	3.90	0.970
6.	While using SNS, I am able to block out most other distractions.	3.66	0.987
7.	I have fun interacting with SNS.	3.83	0.930
8.	I enjoy using SNS.	3.87	0.905
9.	I feel that I have control over my interaction with SNS.	3.71	0.975
10.	Using SNS arouses my imagination.	3.58	0.998
11.	SNS can be adapted to meet a variety of needs.	3.70	0.917
12.	The user interface of SNS has a well-organized appearance.	3.70	0.941
13.	SNS is trustworthy.	3.36	1.047
14.	The information provided by SNS is accurate.	3.33	1.046
15.	The information from SNS is always up to date.	3.50	1.040
16.	I find SNS easy to use.	3.90	0.822
17.	Using SNS helps me to connect with others instantaneously.	3.80	0.952
18.	Using SNS enhances my personal effectiveness.	3.62	0.971
19.	I find SNS to be useful in my life.	3.56	1.024
20.	I use SNS to learn more about other people in my classes/works	3.64	0.965
21.	I use SNS to learn more about other people living near to me	3.70	0.940
22.	I use SNS to keep in touch with my old friends	4.03	0.943
23.	I use SNS to meet new people	3.68	1.068

ISSN: 0971-1260
Vol-20-Issue-04-Oct-Dec -2017

Table 1 shows mean and standard deviation of general attitude towards SNS. The general attitude is measured by 23 items, among the 23 items the respondents response they use SNS to keep in touch with their old friends (mean=4.03; SD=0.943) and time appears to go very quickly when they using SNS is high mean value (mean=3.90; SD=0.970) and followed by they find SNS easy to use (mean=3.90; SD=0.822).

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of the Respondents Attitude towards Social Networking Sites

Attitude Level	Attitude Score	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Negative Attitude	23	0	0
Negative Attitude	24-46	8	1.2
Neutral	47-69	48	7.2
Positive Attitude	70-92	430	64.9
Strongly Positive Attitude	93-115	177	26.7
	Total	663	100.0

It is inferred from the Table 2 that 64.9 percent of the respondents are having positive attitude towards SNS, and 26.7 percent of the respondents are having strongly positive attitude. Respondents with neutral attitude are only 7.2 percent and merely 1.2 percent of the respondents are having negative attitude towards SNS. Therefore, it is concluded that majority of the respondents are having positive attitude towards SNS.

Table 3: Influence of various aspects of SNS towards SNS General Opinion

Various Aspect of SNS	Mean	SD	F	P
Frequency of Checking personal SNS Account				
Many time a day	86.56	12.09	0.665	0.617
Once in a day	85.40	11.42		
3 - 4 times in a week	84.53	13.23		
Once in a Week	85.29	10.35		

ISSN: 0971-1260
Vol-20-Issue-04-Oct-Dec -2017

Whenever need arises	84.61	14.26		
Duration of Time spent in minutes				
Less than 16 minutes	87.98	10.72		
16 - 30 minutes	85.15	10.01		
31 - 60 minutes	82.93	15.46	3.457	0.008
61 - 120 minutes	86.67	12.81		
More than 120 minutes	86.59	13.78		
Longevity of purchasing the products through SNS				
Less than 13 Months	85.83	10.80		
13-24 Months	85.14	13.76		
25-36 Months	84.87	15.74	0.488	0.785
37-48 Months	86.68	10.00		
49-60 Months	88.85	5.06		
More than 60 Months	83.29	10.22		
Amount Spent Per Year For Purchasing				
Less than 5000	86.29	10.99		
5001-10000	85.55	12.34		
10001-15000	85.52	15.31	1.248	0.289
15001-20000	85.15	10.31		
More than 20000	82.68	14.30		
Worrying about privacy problem when using SNS				
Always	86.58	11.90		
Sometimes	85.58	11.53		
Occasionally	81.54	15.94	3.360	0.010
Rarely	86.49	10.86		
Not at all	87.92	9.46		

The mean and standard deviation general attitude of SNS with respect to the checking of SNS account, duration of time spent, longevity of purchase, amount spent for purchase and privacy problem of the respondents is shown in the in table 3. In order to identify the existence of mean difference with regard to frequency of checking, ANOVA was performed and the result

ISSN: 0971-1260
Vol-20-Issue-04-Oct-Dec -2017

shows that the respondents differ significantly with respect to duration of time spent on SNS (F=3.457; P=0.008) and worrying of privacy problem (F=3.360; P=0.010), whereas they do not differ significantly with regard to their frequency of checking SNS account towards general attitude (F=0.665; P=0.617), longevity of purchase (F=0.488; P=0.785) amount spent for purchasing products through SNS (F=1.248; P=0.289).

With regard to duration of time spent the respondents who spent less than 17 minutes (mean=87.98; SD=10.72) have significantly differ from the respondents who spent 31-60 minutes (mean=82.93; SD=15.46). Regarding the worrying of privacy problem, it is noted that who are not at all worry about privacy problem (mean=87.92; SD=0.9.46) significantly differ from the respondents who occasionally worried about privacy problem (mean=81.54; SD=15.94).

Though the results are insignificant for frequency of checking SNS account, longevity of purchase and amount spent for purchasing products through SNS, the mean values are comparatively higher for the respondents who check their account many time in a day (mean=86.56; SD=12.09), who purchasing for 49-60 minutes (mean=88.85; SD=5.06), who spent amount less than 5000 (mean=86.29; SD=10.99).

Hence, the result concludes that the respondents/consumers who spent less than 16 minutes have high general attitude on SNS. In addition to this the respondents who are not at all worry about privacy problem show regards towards general attitude. However, frequency of checking SNS account, longevity of purchase and amount spent for purchase have no effect on general attitude on SNS.

Among the different aspects of identifying attitude of SNS, only five aspects are found to be most important by the researcher and they are frequency of checking SNS account, duration of time spent, longevity of purchase, amount spent per year and privacy problem. Hence, detailed analyses have been performed by considering various aspects of SNS as independent variables and advertisement, eWOM, etc as dependent variable individually.

V. CONCLUSION

ISSN: 0971-1260
Vol-20-Issue-04-Oct-Dec -2017

Social networking sites are most popular nowadays and several activities are being performed through this medium like business, politics and networking. This study contemplated on the business aspects in social networking sites in general, and Facebook in particular. The majority of the respondents have positive opinion towards SNS; few respondents are checking their account once a week and many respondents averagely spend 16-30 minutes a day for checking their SNS account. However, fewer respondents rarely worry about privacy problem of SNS and most of the respondents spend less than Rs. 10000 per year towards the purchase of products through SNS advertisements. It is identified that the respondents do not differ significantly with respect tochecking of SNS accounts, duration of time spent, longevity of purchase, amount spent and privacy problem towards brand attitude. But they differ with respect to frequency of checking personal SNS account. The brand attitude of respondents who check for once in a day is significantly higher than other categories of respondents. The opportunity for growth is more in SNS especially for marketing of goods and services, because more than three fourth of the respondents are willing to stay back in their respective media in future. Hence, companies can use this medium to promote their products effectively to reach their target audience.

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ISSN: 0971-1260
Vol-20-Issue-04-Oct-Dec -2017

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