

Social Media Brings Paradigm Shift in Brand Management

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Abstract—Social Media is an emerging tool in the field of marketing communication. In barely a decade old existence it has redefined the parameters of communication and brand building. As more corporates are getting sucked into its charm of quick and mass communication it is a double edged sword. Use it strategically and it can be a great brand equity creator. Be indifferent to it and social media has the potential to dilute a lot of the equity you may have created over the years.

In a dynamic era of swiftly evolving brand value for corporates social media has come to acquire center stage as tool for evaluation and fine tuning of brand metrics to prevent erosion. It has emerged as quick, cost effective and real time check of brand value. In fact its impact has been intense to the extent well entrenched corporates has been placed on the level as upstarts.

The importance of social media has been so emphatic that it has become germane to ideas for conventional media due to its quick permeation of the consumer psyche. You can see a TV channel with news, but there are tickers around Twitter and Facebook also running at the same time.

Ironically most of the corporates in India are yet to develop in house social media strategist. You can safely say that in India, including the MNCs, less than 5% of established companies are really able to use social media in building a brand. It deserves a unique place away from corporate communication owing to its potential and perils in brand building.

However in the overdrive for adopting social media as the prime mode of communication and brand building the companies should be cautious about losing on human touch. The core idea being that a personal emotional attachment to the company is valued much more highly by customers. By being smart about how they manage their digital and human capital, companies can manage to cater to both these customer needs.

One way of doing this and bringing in the human touch is by having an emotional layer built into your digital strategy. Factually there are three elements of this human touch that cannot be created through digital interactions: empathy, passion and creativity.

Keywords: Social media, Marketing Communication, Digital interactions

1. INTRODUCTION

The early part of the 21st century witnessed explosion in the number of media that marketers employed to reach their customers. This began in the 1990s with the use of the Internet as an advertising medium. Web pages became the “new”

medium with banner and other types of similar ads (e. g., buttons, rectangles, etc.) seeking customers to click on them and be sent to the advertiser’s web site. Internet advertising augmented the set of communications tools that marketers had used for 50-100 years: television, radio, print (magazines, newspapers), and outdoor. These traditional media are not disappearing. Radio is experiencing a new boom with the advent of satellite and other digital formats. Outdoor ads are becoming more creative all the time with digital technology enhancing the potential interactivity with customers in urban areas. Finally, while newspapers and magazines have been the most negatively affected by new media, they are still important for business-to-business and retailers, among others. However, it is clear that major marketers are shifting their budgets today into new media categories. Marketers today are talking of creating “experiences” for their customers in an attempt to differentiate their products and services from competitors. It is difficult to do this with the traditional media that tend to be one-way communications from seller to buyer. As a result, marketers are looking for ways to interact more with their customers as well as to allow their customers to interact more with them. While advertisers still talk about the popular 18-34 year old demographic, there are vast differences in the media habits and how information is obtained when an 18-year old is compared to someone who is 30. The general comment that is often made is that markets are becoming fragmented with the traditional demographic breakdowns become less and less useful. Marketers are more interested in “behavioral targeting,” that is, focusing on developing personalized messages based on what people are doing on the Web (tracking “clickstreams” or the paths that people take when surfing the Web) or where they are by their personal GPS “system,” the cellphone.

2. MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS ALTERED

Until the mid-1990s, the traditional concept of the communications “mix” included

- Advertising (TV, print, radio, outdoor)
- Sales promotion

- Direct marketing
- Publicity/Public relations
- Personal selling.

The classic communications assumed that the marketer had control of the flow of communications from the company through the media to the consumers. In addition, the mantra of advertisers was Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) where all of the communications adopted a similar positioning and “look and feel” and thus were mutually supportive in order to generate not only main effects on sales of each media but interaction effects as well. The typical decisions that had to be made were:

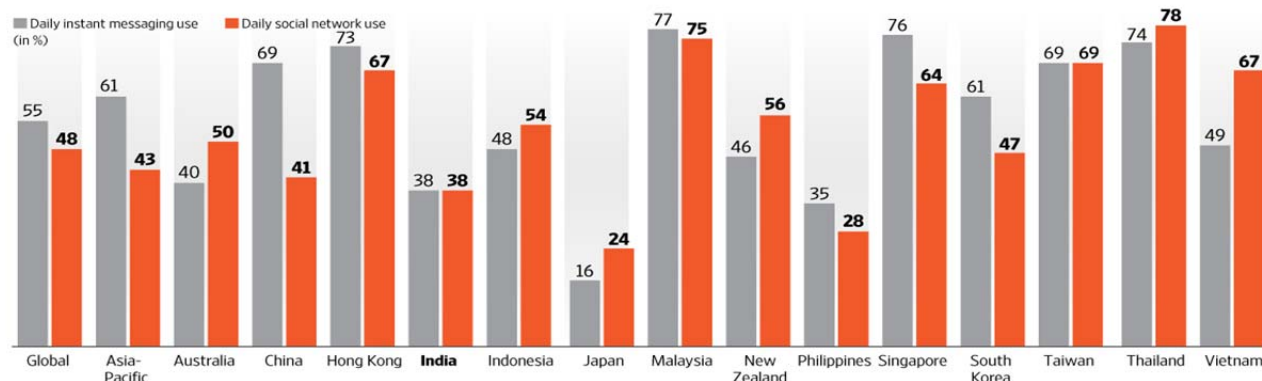
- The objective of the communications
- The target market
- The strategy (copy, media, timing)
- Budgeting

- How to evaluate whether the objectives were being met.

With the shift to what has been called a “hypermedia” environment (Hoffman and Novak, 1996), the nature of the communications model has changed. The central themes today are *interactivity* and *digital*. Consumers are now interacting with the company, the media, and, importantly, each other through social networking and other new media. This has given rise to a large number of new media, some of which are under the control of the marketing manager but many of which are not. At the same time, most of these media are Internet- or digital technology-based. While the mantra of communications is still IMC and the same communications decisions have to be made, the large increase in the number of media alternatives has made the job of the marketing manager much more difficult not only because the brand is not fully under his/her control any more but that the problems of coordinating a message across the large number of media and making media choices have been exacerbated.

GROWING USE

Messaging services have drawn high numbers of daily users across many regions in the Asia-Pacific: 77% users in Malaysia, 73% in Hong Kong, 69% in China and 38% in India. In contrast, some Western markets are trailing, including the UK with 39% and the US 35%.



The most popular

The most popular			Top three social networks (daily use by all Internet users)		Top instant messaging platforms (daily use by all Internet users)				
Global	1. Facebook	30%	1. WeChat	29%	Malaysia	1. Facebook	73%	1. WhatsApp	81%
	2. Moments (WeChat)	20%	2. WhatsApp	17%		2. Google+	36%	2. Facebook Messenger	41%
	3. QQ Space	15%	3. Facebook Messenger	15%		3. Instagram	25%	3. WeChat	33%
Asia-Pacific	1. Moments (WeChat)	33%	1. WeChat	48%	New Zealand	1. Facebook	59%	1. Facebook Messenger	23%
	2. QQ Space	25%	2. QQ	40%		2. Google+	11%	2. WhatsApp	5%
	3. Facebook	16%	3. Facebook messenger	9%		3. Snapchat	9%	3. Viber	5%
Australia	1. Facebook	53%	1. Facebook Messenger	23%	Philippines	1. Facebook	45%	1. Facebook Messenger	37%
	2. Instagram	16%	2. iMessage	10%		2. Google+	14%	2. Yahoo! Messenger	8%
	3. Twitter	11%	3. Whatsapp	10%		3. Instagram	6%	3. Skype	7%
China	1. Moments (WeChat)	49%	1. WeChat	69%	Singapore	1. Facebook	64%	1. WhatsApp	79%
	2. QQ Space	37%	2. QQ	60%		2. Instagram	25%	2. Facebook Messenger	19%
	3. Weibo	21%	3. Sina UC	6%		3. Twitter	17%	3. Line	14%
Hong Kong	1. Facebook	72%	1. WhatsApp	81%	South Korea	1. Facebook	33%	1. Kakao Talk	73%
	2. Google+	25%	2. WeChat	31%		2. Kakao Story	30%	2. Nateon	9%
	3. Instagram	19%	3. Facebook Messenger	29%		3. Kakao Group	21%	3. Facebook Messenger	9%
India	1. Facebook	51%	1. WhatsApp	56%	Taiwan	1. Facebook	75%	1. Line	76%
	2. LinkedIn	3%	2. Facebook Messenger	28%		2. Google+	22%	2. Facebook Messenger	37%
	3. Snapchat	1%	3. Yahoo! Messenger	4%		3. Instagram	8%	3. Skype	12%
Indonesia	1. Facebook	53%	1. Iackberry Messenger	64%	Thailand	1. Facebook	78%	1. Line	79%
	2. Twitter	20%	2. WhatsApp	33%		2. Instagram	20%	2. Facebook Messenger	48%
	3. Google+	18%	3. Facebook Messenger	18%		3. Google+	16%	3. BeeTalk	3%
Japan	1. Facebook	15%	1. Line	16%	Vietnam	1. Facebook	66%	1. Facebook Messenger	48%
	2. Twitter	15%	2. Facebook Messenger	3%		2. Google+	24%	2. Zalo	40%
	3. Instagram	4%	3. Skype	2%		3. Instagram	2%	3. Viber	8%

Source: TNC Connected Life study 2015

Top 5 Facebook User Countries	
	Users (million)
US	182
India	100
Brazil	83
Indonesia	65
Mexico	49
<i>India figure as of March 31; others as of December 31</i>	
<i>Facebook is blocked in most of Mainland China</i>	
<i>Source: Facebook</i>	

Source: ET 8/4 /14

These changes have impacted marketers in that the increase in the number of “alternative” media and the increased competition in many markets has fragmented markets, shifted power in the transaction to buyers, and resulted in less TV viewing. The same trends are occurring in other countries. In India, people of undergraduate age are just as familiar with and use social networking and other similar media just as frequently as their counterparts in Western countries. The same holds true for China, Singapore, Korea, and Japan. As a result, while there is still a considerable amount of experimentation and searching among these new ways of reaching customers, it is clear that many of them are here to stay and that we will witness the continued expansion of the list of ways that companies are attempting to reach their customers. At the same, users of these new media face an array of problems in implementing and measuring communications campaigns that integrate the “old” and “new” media.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of some of the new media being employed by marketers and describe some of the major issues facing Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs) and other senior marketers in employing these media. . In 21st century, the MC platforms show a tendency to shift towards people networking which is innovative and technology bound. It is also becoming an acceptable domain of interaction. Though the Traditional Marketing Communication (TMC) channels like TV, print media, physical public relations, trade fairs etc. are still active and prominent in MC, the presences of the Internet and more specifically the Social Media Networking (SMN) has revolutionized the way individuals and business enterprises communicate to build brands.

India is the second largest base for Facebook with over 125 million users of the social networking website. Photo: Bloomberg Among India’s Internet users, WhatsApp tops the list of instant messaging (IM) apps and Facebook is the most popular social networking site.

As a society we are getting more assertive and traditional power structures are eroding. Consumers are getting more unforgiving, fully aware of their buyer power and considerably aided by social media weapons which allow them to express their displeasure and cause reputation damage, This is very true in a world where news of a company failure can go viral on social media reaching millions in minutes.

Lack of any credible response, even if it's only a heartfelt apology, can lead to intense ridicule. This is very true in a world where news of a company failure can go viral on social media reaching millions in minutes. Lack of any credible response, even if it's only a heartfelt apology, can lead to intense ridicule.

With the growing reach of social media, consumer opinion has the power to shape perceptions and thus it is imperative that brands should be humble and responsive. But apologies by Indian CEOs have been fewer than in most countries. Globally, CEOs are quicker to the trigger when it comes to owning up their mistakes.

Mark Zuckerberg admitted messing up the 'news feed' launch in 2006; Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer apologised when an email outage affected a million users; Apple founder Steve Jobs apologised in 2007 after cutting iPhone prices from \$599 to \$399 just two weeks after launch; his successor Tim Cook said sorry when Apple's new Map app didn't work smoothly; Mary Barra, General Motors' CEO recently expressed remorse for death and injury arising out of faulty ignition switches; JP Morgan's Jamie Dimon said sorry when the bank's stock prices dropped 26% in three months after it completed a \$4. 4-billion buyback. It would have been wiser to wait. Facebook, Twitter and other were considered as supper effective ways to build brands however now they are eroding them as well

An American citizen, claimed he was served a deep fried rat instead of chicken at a California KFC outlet. He posted a picture on Facebook that went viral across the globe. KFC denied the allegations, it said looks like a hoax. KFC India posts a Facebook message: "KFC takes customer claims very seriously, and they are investigating this matter. 'A DNA test confirmed the product was chicken and the incident was a hoax. KFC asked Dixon to apologise.

Even as KFC's 'fried rat' finally turned out to be a canard, for a good 10 days the brand was roasted on social media. But the damage done to the brand's equity, and sales, in those 10 days

Social media has always been a word-of mouth medium, and where there is word of mouth sometimes there are half-truths or hoaxes. Brands need to have an agile crisis management team in place along with a 24/7 social monitoring team to ensure that instances of mischief are nipped in the bud before they bloom into a full-fledged crisis. "Brands in India have a long way to go on this front. Consumers do not always use the

power that social media gives them to express themselves responsibly. More often than not, they utilise the medium to shame a person or a brand, what can be called as social bullying. A brand can easily become a victim of this public shaming. A late response always makes people feel that the brand is a culprit. While a brand is burdened under the pile of ignorance, protocols, nervousness, bureaucracy and corporate policies, social media makes the news spread like wild fire. KFC couldn't contain the wild fire, back home Mother Dairy acted quickly to douse the spark.

The Uttar Pradesh Food and Drug Administration (UPFDA) had found detergent in one of the samples of milk of Mother Dairy. Social media started buzzing, people start reacting. However, the head of milk, fruit and vegetables section at Mother Dairy insisted its product is safe and fit for consumption. The managing director of the brand posted a statement on the company's Facebook page assuring people that the milk is safe and explaining why the collected sample would have never made its way into the final product. The issue died down and did not snowball into a crisis because of quick response from Managing Director of Mother Dairy Fruit and Vegetable. A glance at Mother Dairy's Facebook page showed that after Nagarajan's post, people were convinced by his replies and the milk adulteration talks duly died out.

Two crucial components of handling any social media crisis: listening closely to the people and having a team that can be accessible and can respond in an emphatic manner. Brand reputation was taken care of if one responds quickly. "Mother Dairy's response was matched in equal measure by Nestle India's handling of the Maggi crisis. But the results were diametrically opposite as Maggi was pulled out from the market. Reason: the brand lacked conviction in its communication. It's not only the speed of your response, but also the 'honesty' in it which determined the outcome.

UPFDA found traces of lead and high percentage of MSG in samples of Maggi. The brand denied the allegations, said it's safe for consumption. Rumours of a Maggi recall flooded social media. The brand acted promptly and said all talks of recall were baseless and the product was safe. Nestle India's extensive testing revealed no excess lead in Maggi. Maggi was taken off the shelf but the brand still maintained that it was 'safe'. Loss of face for the brand and consumer trust got eroded. Social media is where it takes only one person to call your bluff. So it's best to be honest. Best to acknowledge, accept and apologise. More often than not this would turn the tide in your favour with appreciation coming your way. "Running away, staying silent and being defensive only adds more fuel to fire.

Consumers are doing their bit to shame brands and companies with a vengeance. A resident of Mumbai L Krishnamurthy ordered a Samsung phone on Snapdeal and instead received a Vim Bar, a product of Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL). He posted the faux pas on Facebook with HUL and Snapdeal getting caught in the crossfire. Snapdeal owned up to its

mistake and a week later refunded the money; HUL converted potential shame into momentary fame by sending the consumer the Samsung phone he ordered "to cheer him up" along with a Vim liquid cleaner.

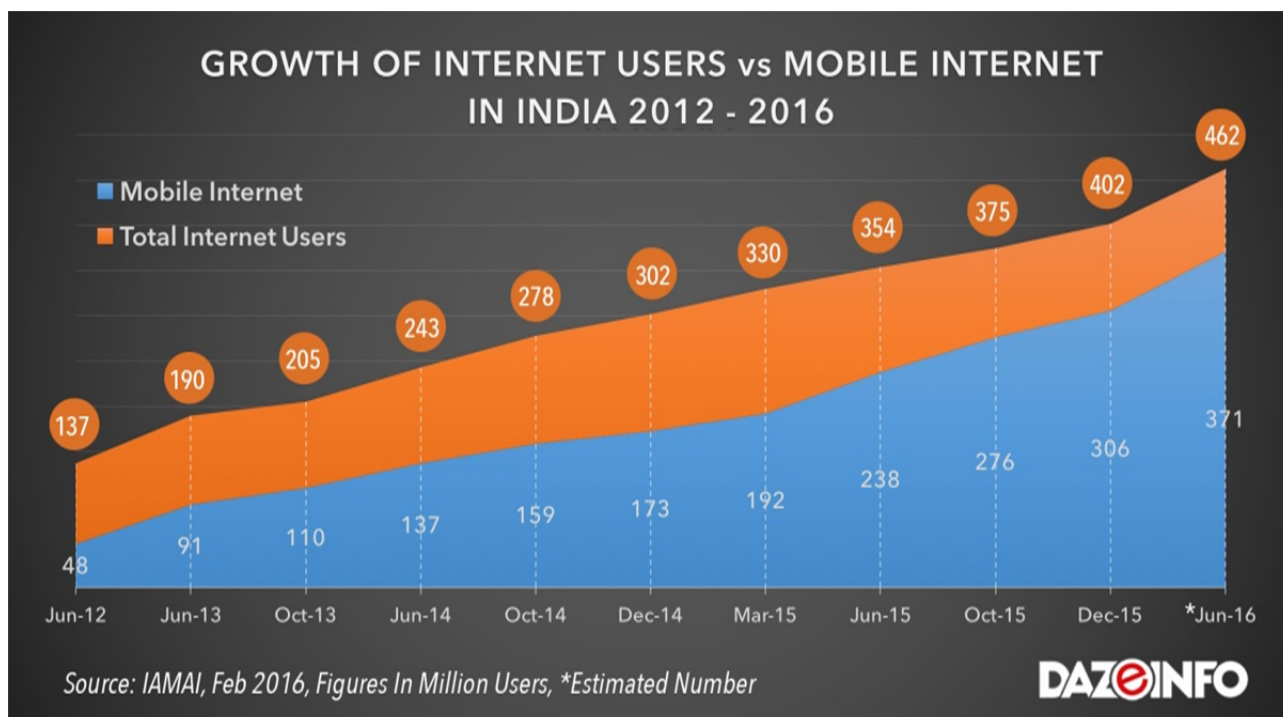
Brands, it seems, are learning the hard way to deal with social media.

3. CRISIS TO BE DEALT

1. Be quick in response
2. Apologise if at fault or clarify if on the right side
3. Don't get offensive or defensive. Communication should be assertive.
4. Avoid blame games

Globally, 30% of all Internet users are on Facebook daily. Consumers are more connected to each other, and across multiple platforms. While Instant Messaging popularity is rising, traditional social media platforms are still holding strong, allowing content to go viral more quickly. The challenge for brands is to create content that consumers actually want to share. India had 132 million Facebook users in June 2015. Among India's Internet users, WhatsApp tops the list of instant messaging (IM) apps and Facebook is the most popular social networking site. While 56% of Internet users in India use WhatsApp every day, 51% use Facebook.

As Indians continue to gain access to cheaper smartphones and data plans, with shifting platform preferences, it is imperative that brands shift focus to social mobile communications to reach out to an audience that are always on the go. The future of social media marketing is expected to be mobile driven and in the year ahead it is most likely that we will be seeing more contextual and location centric content, helping brands to evaluate the different platforms better with accurate reporting capabilities for tracking engagement. India's post-millennial generation, those people born in 1996 and afterwards, seem set to overtake the preceding millennial generation, taking communication over social networks.



Social media assists in brand management because it:

- **Provides valuable and helpful content for the organization's consumers and fans.**

Socialnomics: Content is “the #1 factor to take into consideration when you are establishing your presence on social networks.” Without valuable, engaging and useful content, a brand's digital presence is practically worthless. A social page is a direct line of communication to a brand's most valuable audiences. To test the worthiness of your content, keep track of engagement levels on your social channels.

- **Offers a constant opportunity for fans to interact with the brand.**

Social media has opened a new door for brands. Fans are able to connect and interact with organizations and companies like never before. A consumer can now ask a question of a product or service at anytime, anywhere—and he or she will expect a direct and timely answer in return. This presents so many more opportunities for brands to humanize and connect with consumers and fans.

- **Acts as “home base” in the midst of a crisis.**

This is one aspect of social media brand management I never realized would be so valuable. A brand's social page is not only a convenient location to share timely, accurate information in a crisis—consumers and reporters will go directly to a brand's channels when they want to know what happened and why. It provides an opportunity to respond to users in a timely manner with a personalized

comment or statement, making it much easier to handle the crisis as a whole.

Brand Mangers analyze social data to help craft successful positioning strategies. By placing a new lens on the broader online conversation to uncover the key demographics—and even psychographics—of the conversation participants are having right now or over any specified time period. For example, you could determine the product qualities that are most talked about over the past six months by these consumers, and then emphasize the most favorable ones in your product's new messaging.

Brand managers also perform competitor product analysis to understand the appeal of other products that are currently on the market. These insights provide guidance on the frame in which you position a new product relative to the competition.

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