

Social Media Marketing in India

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ABSTRACT

Social Media, today, is among the 'best opportunities available' to a brand for connecting with prospective consumers. Social media is the medium to socialize. These new media win the trust of consumers by connecting with them at a deeper level. Social media marketing is the new mantra for several brands. Marketers are taking note of many different social media opportunities and beginning to implement new social initiatives at a higher rate than ever before. Social media marketing and the businesses that utilize it have become more sophisticated. One cannot afford to have no presence on the social channels if the competitor is making waves with its products and services. The explosion of social media experience is as mind boggling as that and the pace at which it is growing is irritating. Global companies have recognized social media marketing as a potential marketing platform, utilized them with innovations to power their advertising campaign with social media marketing. This paper discusses about the concepts of social media and social media marketing and other aspects like the growth and benefits, role and relevance of social media in marketing, social media marketing strategies. It also presents an overview on social media marketing in India.

Key words: Social media, social media marketing, growth and benefits of social media, social media marketing strategy, social media marketing in India.

Introduction:

Social media is hot. Social Media is now the trend. And for businesses it represents a marketing opportunity that transcends the traditional middleman and connects companies directly with customers. This is why nearly every business on the planet—from giants like Starbucks and IBM to the local ice cream shop—are exploring social media marketing initiatives. A year ago, businesses were uncertain about social media. Now it's here to stay and companies are rapidly adopting social media marketing. Much like email and websites first empowered businesses, social media is the next marketing wave. Social media marketing

is marketing using online communities, social networks, blog marketing and more. It's the latest "buzz" in marketing. India is probably among the first proponents of social media marketing. These days, the organizational cause has replaced the social cause as companies seek to engage with their audience via the online platforms. The explosion of social media phenomenon is as mind boggling as that and the pace at which it is growing is maddening. Trust and goodwill are the basis of social networking, and by marketing in the realm of social media these fundamental notions need to be adhered. It is probably the only marketing platform that

encourages fool proof communication and accountability among sellers as well as consumers. Global companies have recognized Social Media Marketing as a potential marketing platform, utilized them with innovations to power their advertising campaign with social media marketing.

Social Media:

Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. The meaning of the term 'social media' can be derived from two words which constitute it. *Media* generally refers to advertising and the communication of ideas or information through publications/channels. *Social* implies the interaction of individuals within a group or community. Taken together, *social media* simply refers to communication/publication platforms which are generated and sustained by the interpersonal interaction of individuals through the specific medium or tool. Wikipedia has a general definition of the term: Social Media is the democratization of information, transforming people from content readers into content publishers. It is the shift from a broadcast mechanism to a many-to-many model, rooted in conversations between authors, people, and peers.

There are two **benefits** of social media that are important to businesses, they include:

1. Cost reduction by decreasing staff time.

2. Increase of probability of revenue generation.

Social Media Marketing:

Social media marketing consists of the attempt to use social media to persuade consumers that one's company, products and/or services are worthwhile. Social media marketing is marketing using online communities, social networks, blog marketing and more. Lazer and Kelly's (1973) define social marketing as "concerned with the application of marketing knowledge, concepts, and techniques to enhance social as well as economic ends. It is also concerned with the analysis of the social consequences of marketing policies, decisions and activities." Social media marketing is not merely about hitting the frontpage of Digg or any other social news website. It is a strategic and methodical process to establish the company's influence, reputation and brand within communities of potential customers, readers or supporters.

Social media itself is a catch-all term for sites that may provide radically different social actions. For instance, Twitter is a social site designed to let people share short messages or "updates" with others. Facebook, in contrast is a full-blown social networking site that allows for sharing updates, photos, joining events and a variety of other activities.

Benefits of social media marketing:

Increased Brand Recognition. Every opportunity you have to syndicate your content and increase your visibility is valuable. Your social media networks are just new channels for your brand’s voice and content. This is important because it simultaneously makes you easier and more accessible for new customers, and makes you more familiar and recognizable for existing customers. For example, a frequent Twitter user could hear about your company for the first time only after stumbling upon it in a newsfeed. Or, an otherwise apathetic customer might become better acquainted with your brand after seeing your presence on multiple networks.

Improved brand loyalty. According to a report published by Texas Tech University, brands who engage on social media channels enjoy higher loyalty from their customers. The report concludes “Companies should take advantage of the tools social media gives them when it comes to connecting with their audience. A strategic and open social media plan could prove influential in morphing consumers into being brand loyal.” Another study published by Convince & Convert found that 53% of Americans who follow brands in social are more loyal to those brands.

More Opportunities to Convert. Every post you make on a social media platform is an opportunity for customers to convert. When you build a following, you’ll simultaneously

have access to new customers, recent customers, and old customers, and you’ll be able to interact with all of them. Every blog post, image, video, or comment you share is a chance for someone to react, and every reaction could lead to a site visit, and eventually a conversion. Not every interaction with your brand results in a conversion, but every positive interaction increases the likelihood of an eventual conversion. Even if your click-through rates are low, the sheer number of opportunities you have on social media is significant. And as I pointed out in my article, “The Four Elements of Any Action, And How To Use Them In Your Online Marketing Initiative,” “opportunity” is the first element of any action.

Higher conversion rates. Social media marketing results in higher conversion rates in a few distinct ways. Perhaps the most significant is its humanization element; the fact that brands become more humanized by interacting in social media channels. Social media is a place where brands can act like people do, and this is important because people like doing business with other people; not with companies. Additionally, studies have shown that social media has a 100% higher lead-to-close rate than outbound marketing, and a higher number of social media followers tends to improve trust and credibility in your brand, representing social proof. As such, simply building your audience

in social media can improve conversion rates on your existing traffic.

Higher Brand Authority. Interacting with your customers regularly is a show of good faith for other customers. When people go to compliment or brag about a product or service, they turn to social media. And when they post your brand name, new audience members will want to follow you for updates. The more people that are talking about you on social media, the more valuable and authoritative your brand will seem to new users. Not to mention, if you can interact with major influencers on Twitter or other social networks, your visible authority and reach will skyrocket.

Increased Inbound Traffic. Without social media, your inbound traffic is limited to people already familiar with your brand and individuals searching for keywords you currently rank for. Every social media profile you add is another path leading back to your site, and every piece of content you syndicate on those profiles is another opportunity for a new visitor. The more quality content you syndicate on social media, the more inbound traffic you'll generate, and more traffic means more leads and more conversions.

Decreased Marketing Costs. According to Hubspot, 84% of marketers found as little as six hours of effort per week was enough to generate increased traffic. Six hours is not a significant investment for a channel as large

as social media. If you can lend just one hour a day to developing your content and syndication strategy, you could start seeing the results of your efforts. Even paid advertising through Facebook and Twitter is relatively cheap (depending on your goals, of course). Start small and you'll never have to worry about going over budget—once you get a better feel for what to expect, you can increase your budget and increase your conversions correspondingly.

Better Search Engine Rankings. SEO is the best way to capture relevant traffic from search engines, but the requirements for success are always changing. It's no longer enough to regularly update your blog, ensure optimized title tags and meta descriptions, and distribute links pointing back to your site. Google and other search engines may be calculating their rankings using social media presence as a significant factor, because of the fact that strong brands almost always use social media. As such, being active on social media could act as a "brand signal" to search engines that your brand is legitimate, credible, and trustworthy. That means, if you want to rank for a given set of keywords, having a strong social media presence could be almost mandatory.

Richer Customer Experiences. Social media, at its core, is a communication channel like email or phone calls. Every customer interaction you have on social media is an opportunity to publicly demonstrate your

customer service level and enrich your relationship with your customers. For example, if a customer complains about your product on Twitter, you can immediately address the comment, apologize publicly, and take action to make it right. Or, if a customer compliments you, you can thank them and recommend additional products. It's a personal experience that lets customers know you care about them.

Improved Customer Insights. Social media also gives you an opportunity to gain valuable information about what your customers are interested in and how they behave, via social listening. For example, you can monitor user comments to see what people think of your business directly. You can segment your content syndication lists based on topic and see which types of content generate the most interest—and then produce more of that type of content. You can measure conversions based on different promotions posted on various social media channels and eventually find a perfect combination to generate revenue.

Role of Social Media in Marketing:

Social media is now increasingly becoming an ingrained aspect of political campaigns, national defence strategies, public policy, public relations, brand management and even intra company communication.

Since the major task of marketing as tool used to inform consumers about the company's products,

who they are and what they offer, social marketing plays an important role in marketing. Social media can be used to provide an identity about the companies and the products or services that they offer. It helps in creating relationships with people who might not otherwise know about the products or service or what the companies represent. Social media makes companies "real" to consumers. If they want people to follow them they need not just talk about the latest product news, but share their personality with them. Social media can be used to associate themselves with their peers that may be serving the same target market.

Social media can be used to communicate and provide the interaction that consumers look for.

Why businesses need to consider social media marketing services?

Here are nine reasons social media marketing should top your to-do list:

- 1.) **You get to see your target market, up close and personal.** Part of what makes marketing with Facebook and Twitter so cool is the interaction you get to have with your customer base – you can read their tweets and status updates to get insights into their daily lives (and maybe adjust your marketing strategy as a result).
- 2.) **You can respond to problems immediately.** If there's a problem with your product or service, you want to know about it immediately. With the feedback you get in the process of social media marketing, you'll be the first to know when there are issues – and

you can take steps to resolve them right away. Study after study has shown that consumers appreciate companies that respond to customer complaints (and don't hesitate to rant online to anyone who will listen when companies don't take the time to make things right).

3.) **Your competition is Tweeting and Facebooking like crazy.** The early bird gets the worm, and the sooner you start up Facebook and Twitter pages, the sooner you can start amassing a ton of fans and followers. This isn't something you want to fall behind the competition on, because it's much harder (and more expensive) to play catch up than it is to get in on the game early. Truth be told, your competition is probably already marketing with Facebook, and maybe even Twitter and LinkedIn, too.

4.) **People are receptive to your messages.** People view Twitter and Facebook as social networks, not marketing machines. As a result, they're less likely to see what you post as an advertisement and will be more likely to hear what you have to say.

5.) **It will get you more sales.** Not surprisingly, when you stay in front of your customer base, they're more likely to buy from you when they need the products you sell. Social media marketing doesn't just keep your company's name in front of potential buyers, but it also gives you the opportunity to constantly give them incentives to buy. Try

Tweeting or posting coupon codes, good only to those who are your Facebook fans or Twitter followers (around The Content Factory, we call them "Tweeps"). You'll be surprised at how many people make purchases using the code!

6.) **You will find customers you didn't know existed.** If you follow specific keywords in Twitter, you can find people who are looking for the products you sell (and then direct them to your site). Using Twitter for marketing is great that way - telling people who want your products how to get them from your company is just an @ sign away.

7.) **Customers you didn't know existed will find (and buy from) you.** In the process of marketing with Facebook, you'll probably join a ton of groups related to your products, industry and customer base. By posting links in these groups, you'll help influence customers to check out your site. Post a link today, and two weeks later you might see a sale from it.

8.) **It's free.** How can you argue with that? If you handle your own social media management, running a social networking campaign is as cheap as it gets. If you hire a social media management or online PR agency, it will cost at least \$1,000/month, but it'll be an investment that you'll be likely to see a return on. If you're intimidated by interacting with people online or your writing

skills leave something to be desired, hiring an online PR agency is definitely the way to go. Posting poorly written content or conveying the wrong kind of messages on social networking sites can seriously affect your web PR.

9.) **The social media marketing arena is a (fairly) level playing field.** Unlike the brick and mortar world where you need to have millions of dollars to run traditional ad campaigns, all companies start off on pretty equal footing when it comes to social media marketing. The people who thrive and go viral in cyberspace are the people with the most clever, attention grabbing tactics and the most useful, link worthy content. If you want to get lots of traffic and really increase your sales online, you're going to have to outwit, outnetwork and outwrite your competition while offering superior products and customer service. Isn't that what business is all about, anyway?

Simply put, social media marketing is part of doing business in the new millennium. Marketing with Facebook has been hot for quite a while now, but recently more and more companies have been using Twitter for marketing. If your business isn't already active on social networking sites, now is the time to start. Who knows, you could be missing out on sales opportunities *right now*.

Increase your online exposure and look legit

Your digital storefront isn't limited to just your website. Your Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn all represent your company in the eyes Internet browsers and buyers. In fact, some may even say that your business' Google results (relevant, irrelevant, positive and negative) all constitute parts of your digital storefront.

People *expect* businesses to have Facebook and Twitter accounts, and they *expect* to be able to use them to get in touch with company representatives, if necessary. If you don't have social networking profiles set up for your company, you look less legitimate. Ditto if your website looks like it was ripped off of somebody's GeoCities page circa 1998.

Social media marketing is a must-have for businesses, but it's also just the tip of the iceberg. Having website content that drives sales, a solid SEO strategy and products that consumers actually want to buy are all important pieces of the web PR puzzle, too.

As if you needed another reason to use social media for business

At the very least, social media marketing will help drive traffic to your site and increase brand awareness. That's a huge part of web PR in and of itself, and is an outcome anyone would be happy with. Have questions about how to get started? Get in touch with a reputable online PR agency, and they'll help point you in the right direction.

Social Media Marketing in India - An

Overview:

In year 2013, we witnessed hell lot of changes, emergence of new trends, and innovations in social media marketing industry that may continue in 2014.

In 2013, Google+ emerged dominant in SEO and social media strategies, while Facebook and Twitter improved their advertisement targeting and performance, and Twitter acquired Vines, and Facebook pushed Instagram further. Snapchat became more popular that many brands started using it, Pinterest shed its women oriented image, and LinkedIn introduced influencers' publishing.

Now, what is 'in' for Social Media Marketing in 2014?

I've created a list of top 15 social media marketing trends in India 2014, to summarize all these happenings and what to expect in 2014.

1. Social Media Marketing to be an integral part of Digital Strategy
2. Spotlight on Engagement and Building Community
3. Focus on Content Strategy, Content Development and Content Marketing for Social Media
4. Blogging For Social Media Marketing
5. Meaningful Engagement Vs. Return on Investment

Social Media Marketing Strategies:

#1: Identify Business Goals

Every piece of your social media strategy serves the goals you set. You simply can't move forward without knowing what you're working toward.

Look closely at your company's overall needs and decide how you want to **use social media to contribute to reaching them.**

You'll undoubtedly come up with several personalized goals, but there are a few that all companies should include in their strategy—increasing brand awareness, retaining customers and reducing marketing costs are relevant to everyone.

I suggest you **choose two primary goals and two secondary goals to focus on.** Having too many goals distracts you and you'll end up achieving none.

#2: Set Marketing Objectives

Goals aren't terribly useful if you don't **have specific parameters that define when each is achieved.** For example, if one of your primary goals is generating leads and sales, how many leads and sales do you have to generate before you consider that goal a success?

Marketing objectives define how you get from Point A (an unfulfilled goal) to Point B (a successfully fulfilled goal). You can determine your objectives with the S-M-A-R-T approach: **Make your objectives specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.**

Using our previous example, if your goal is to generate leads and sales, a specific marketing

objective may be to increase leads by 50%. In order to measure your progress, **choose which analytics and tracking tools you need to have in place.**

Setting yourself up for failure is never a good idea. If you set an objective of increasing sales by 1,000%, it's doubtful you'll meet it. **Choose objectives you can achieve,** given the resources you have.

You've taken the time to **refine your goals so they're relevant to your company,** so extend that same consideration to your objectives. If you want to get support from your C-level executives, **ensure your objectives are relevant to the company's overall vision.**

Attaching a timeframe to your efforts is imperative. When do you intend to achieve your goal(s)? Next month? By the end of this year?

Your objective of increasing leads by 50% may be specific, measurable, achievable and relevant, but if you don't set a deadline for achieving the goal, your efforts, resources and attention may be pulled in other directions.

#3: Identify Ideal Customers

If a business is suffering from low engagement on their social profiles, it's usually because they don't have an accurate ideal customer profile.

Buyer personas help you define and target the right people, in the right places, at the **right times with the right messages.**

When you **know your target audience's age, occupation, income, interests, pains, problems, obstacles, habits, likes, dislikes, motivations and objections,** then it's easier and cheaper to target them on social or any other media.

A buyer persona is a fictional character, not a real one!

The more specific you are, the more conversions you're going to get out of every channel you use to promote your business.

#4: Research Competition

When it comes to social media marketing, researching your competition not only keeps you apprised of their activity, it gives you an idea of what's working so you can integrate those successful tactics into your own efforts.

Start by compiling a list of at least 3-5 main competitors. Search which social networks they're using and analyze their content strategy. Look at their number of fans or followers, posting frequency and time of day.

Also **pay attention to the type of content they're posting and its context** (humorous, promotional, etc.) and how they're responding to their fans.

The most important activity to look at is engagement. Even though page admins are the only ones who can calculate engagement rate on a particular update, you can get a good idea of what they're seeing.

For example, let's say you're looking at a competitor's last 20-30 Facebook updates. Take the total number of engagement activities for those posts and divide it by the page's total number of fans. (Engagement activity includes likes, comments, shares, etc.)

You can use that formula on all of your competitors' social profiles (e.g., on Twitter you can calculate retweets and favorites).

Keep in mind that the calculation is meant to give you a general picture of how the competition is doing so you can **compare how you stack up** against each other.

#5: Choose Channels and Tactics

Many businesses create accounts on every popular social network without researching which platform will bring the most return. You can **avoid wasting your time in the wrong place** by using the information from your buyer personas to determine which platform is best for you.

If your prospects or customers tell you they spend 40% of their online time on Facebook and 20% on Twitter, you **know which primary and secondary social networks you should focus on**.

When your customers are using a specific network, that's where you need to be—not everywhere else.

Your tactics for each social channel rely on your goals and objectives, as well as the best practices of each platform.

For example, if your goal is increasing leads and your primary social network is Facebook, some effective tactics are investing in Facebook advertising or promotion campaigns to draw more attention to your lead magnets.

#6: Create a Content Strategy

Content and social media have a symbiotic relationship: Without great content social media is meaningless and without social media nobody will know about your content. Use them together to reach and convert your prospects.

There are three main components to any successful social media content strategy: type of content, time of posting and frequency of posting.

The type of content you should post on each social network relies on form and context. Form is how you present that information—text only, images, links, video, etc.

Buffer understands their audience will respond to content that keep them updated on changes in social media.

Context fits with your company voice and platform trends. Should your content be funny, serious, highly detailed and educational or something else?

There are many studies that give you a specific time when you should post on social media. However, I suggest using those studies as guidelines rather than hard rules.

Remember, your audience is unique, so you need to **test and figure out the best time for yourself**.

Posting frequency is as important as the content you share. You don't want to annoy your fans or followers, do you?

Finding the perfect frequency is crucial because it could mean more engagement for your content or more unlikes and unfollows.

Use Facebook Insights to see when your fans are online and engaging with your content.

#7: Allocate Budget and Resources

According to recent data from Google, 30% of respondents say that social media has its own new and distinct budget. Of those respondents, 8.7% say their social media budget is pulled from traditional marketing media (i.e., TV, print and radio).

I found it interesting that 2/3 of respondents say they plan to increase their social media budget during the upcoming cycle.

Social media marketing is increasingly becoming a priority.

To budget for social media marketing, **look at the tactics you've chosen to achieve your business goals and objectives**.

Make a comprehensive list of the tools you need (e.g., social media monitoring, email marketing and CRM), services you'll outsource (e.g., graphic design or video production) and any advertising you'll

purchase. Next to each, **include the annual projected cost** so you can have a high-level view of what you're investing in and how it affects your marketing budget.

Many businesses establish their budget first, and then select which tactics fit that budget. I take the opposite approach. I **establish a strategy first**, and then **determine the budget that fits that strategy**.

If your strategy execution fees exceed your budget estimate, **prioritize your tactics according to their ROI timeframe**. The tactics with the fastest ROI (e.g., advertising and social referral) take priority because they generate instant profit you can later invest into long-term tactics (fan acquisition, quality content creation or long-term engagement).

#8: Assign Roles

Knowing who's responsible for what increases productivity and avoids confusion and overlapping efforts. Things may be a bit messy in the beginning, but with time team members will know their roles and what daily tasks they're responsible for.

Conclusion

- There is no escaping social media these days, either for individuals or for businesses. Today, it is impossible to separate social media from the online world.
- The social media conversation is no longer considered a Web 2.0 fad -- it is taking place in homes, small businesses

and corporate boardrooms, and extending its reach into the non profit, education and health sectors.

- From feeling excitement, novelty, bewilderment, and overwhelmed, a growing number of people now speak of social media as simply another channel or tactic.
- Blogging can have a very positive effect on your Company's branding & growth.
- As per the Hub spot report, Customers with blogs gathered 68% more leads than customers without blogs.
- It is imperative to understand that today, social media have exponential potential. They are part of an ever-growing online network of people who discuss, comment, participate, share and create.
- Whether you are an individual, a start-up, small business or a large corporation, an online presence and an ongoing conversation with your constituents is a baseline requirement – and will take time and expertise.
- Companies are diverting resources and rethinking their traditional outreach strategies. And as the social media wave dissipates into the vast ocean of connected experiences, the term itself will become an entry in dictionaries and encyclopaedias and we will embark on a

new era of knowledge, accessibility and experiences unbound by distance, time or it is high time that every business adopts social media and takes it seriously!

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A wise man makes his own decisions; an ignorant man follows the public opinion.

- Chinese Proverb