

USING SOCIAL NETWORKING AS A MECHANISM TO ACHIEVE BRAND RESONANCE: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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Abstract— Brand resonance is the psychological bond and engagement that a customer shares with a brand and the challenge of branding is to develop and augment this interface between brands and customers profitably through deployment of state of the art marketing programmes that can render delighted customers and infuse community-feeling centring the brand. Thus, greater numbers of marketers are using social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn etc. to enhance brand visibility and resonance. The aim of this study is to find out the extent to which brand resonance is possible through social media marketing and the dark sides of it. For this an online survey of 300 users selected through convenience sampling was used over a period of one month. The findings are of indicative nature which may be a limitation to draw independent conclusion. However, the study emphasizes that social networking is a strong mechanism to resonate brands as it has manifold potentialities of spreading awareness, generating opinions, influencing consumer behaviour and diffusing viral content. The paper is managed in four sections; the first section being an introduction, the second part explains the methodology adopted, the third part bearing discussion on findings, and lastly the paper concludes with important managerial lessons for digitally marketing brands in line with resonance and high visibility. In a nutshell, the study presents an analysis of the role of social networking or social media marketing in creating brand resonance.

Keywords— Social Networking, Brand Resonance, Social Media Marketing, Virality

I. INTRODUCTION

This is an age of interactive technologies, the frequent users of which are the Gen Y people, who are tech-savvy multi-taskers, interested to engage in loaded digital experiences over the social and mobile platforms. Being the click 'n go generation, they want to fetch productivity at the workplace and in their personal lives by leveraging social media. It is presumed that by 2020 they will be the largest comprise of the workforce and to get on to this lucrative consumer group, companies will increasingly start harnessing better ways to communicate and engage them. But it is more intricate to tap their attention and manipulate their buying behaviour as these digital natives have a propensity to peer-pressure and are highly aware. They are supra-active when it comes to sharing,

liking, tagging, following through tweets, posts, updates, video and picture etc. Hence, social media have a vibrant impact on a brand's resonance and visibility, because it calls for instant feedback from the users which are likely to be wilful and emotive. Marketers need to understand that creating brand resonance on social media platforms require touchy evocative messages that can infiltrate customer's minds and do not flood them with messages. Brand resonance online is the casual connectivity "in sync" to create loyal customers through judgements, responses and community-feelings. Therefore in the battle of resonance, more brands are trying to capture social-space online, but the question remains as to how far social networking is credible in terms of salience, performance, imagery, judgements, feelings and resonance.

II. THE SOCIAL MEDIA SYNERGY AND BRAND RESONANCE

Companies try to build and convey the presence and visibility and consequently synchronize their brands with the consumers over the internet on three bases – relevance, resonance and significance. Moreover, there is word of mouth communication from peers and community that does most influence the sync between brands and consumers. However this synchronization is difficult to understand; content (feedback and participation), collaboration (collective action through two-way communication), community (sharing of common interest between 'me-too' people), and collective intelligence (growth through improved use of resources, sites and people) governs the social media framework. Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, Forums, Maps etc. are the prime consumer engagement platforms leveraged by marketers to synergise the show. Some statistics on social media will reinforce this fact. In India, the growth of FB users has grown from 17 million to 28 million during 2010-11. 47% of Indian FB users are from Gen Y. According to Nielsen's research in 2011, nearly 30 million Indians are members of social networking sites and 17 million people shop online which is 29% of the total Indian internet users. According to Nielsen's Global Online Shopping Report 2011, while buying online, 71% of Indian shoppers trust recommendations from family members, 64%

trust peer group recommendations and 29% trust online product reviews. According to January 2013 Social Media Report by Socialbakers, total FB users in India touches 62 million; the top 5 FB brands by Post Engagement Rate (% of fan base interacting on average with a post) are Amity University, Royal Enfield, Greenpeace India, Johnnie Walker India and Revlon India; the top 5 socially devoted FB brands on average response rate (% of user wall posts that get responded by the company) are Samsung Mobile India, Airtel India, Vodafone India, Samsung India and HDFC Bank. Thus, social media marketing has redefined customer engagement by creating new avenues of customer touch points. Consumers not only wilfully engage with their favourite brands and indulge in lasting resonance based on trust and transparency but also shape brands through advocacy. This synergy between consumers and social networking sites is the essence of brand visibility and resonance.

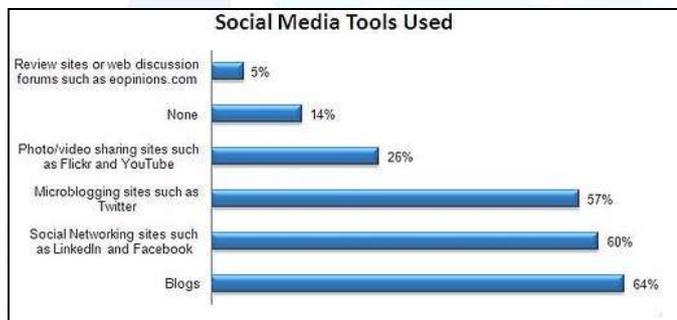


Fig. 1 Commonly used Social Media Tools (Source: adamsherk.com)



Fig. 2 Most common activities Indians perform on SNS (Source: Nielsen Company, AbsolutData)

III. METHODOLOGY

All data necessary for the research was collected through a self-structured questionnaire which was distributed through e-mail to a target group of 400 people selected through convenience sampling, who are deemed to be active on some or the other social networks like LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Myspace etc. There was no bar in terms of gender, age, education or income level of the respondents. A total of 300 questionnaires were returned deemed to be sufficiently complete in all respects (yielding a response rate of 75%).

A. Hypothesis Formulation

Two sets of hypothesis have been formed for the study.

Null Hypothesis H_0 : Social networking sites have not much influence on brand resonance.

Alternate Hypothesis H_1 : Social networking sites have much influence on brand resonance.

Null Hypothesis H_0 : Presence on social networking sites does not help in brand salience and credibility.

Alternate Hypothesis H_1 : Presence on social networking sites helps in brand salience and credibility.

B. Data Analysis Procedure

Data collected has been analysed as per requirement with the help of SPSS 17 and chi square test is applied for hypothesis testing.

C. Findings and Interpretation

1) For the first set of Hypothesis:

The table below shows the observed, expected and residual values of brand loyalty variable.

TABLE I
BRAND LOYALTY COMPARISON

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Never	40	45.8	- 5.8
Occasionally	30	45.8	-15.8
Considerably	90	45.8	44.2
Almost Always	100	45.8	54.2
Always	40	45.8	- 5.8
Total	300		

The table below shows the observed, expected and residual values of brand engagement variable.

TABLE II
BRAND ENGAGEMENT

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Never	45	50.3	- 5.3
Occasionally	40	50.3	- 10.3
Considerably	95	50.3	24.7
Almost Always	85	50.3	14.7
Always	35	50.3	- 15.3
Total	300		

TABLE III
TEST STATISTICS

	Brand Loyalty	Brand Engagement
Chi square	42.207 ^a	58.034 ^b
df	4	3
Asymp.Sig.	.000	.000

- a. 0 cells have expected frequencies less than 5. The min. expected cell frequency is 45.8.
b. 0 cells have expected frequencies less than 5. The min. expected cell frequency is 50.3.

The table above shows that Chi square value of 42.207(df = 4, N = 300), p < 0.05 and Chi square value of 58.034 (df = 3, N = 300), p < 0.05 is significant at 4 degree and 3 degree of freedom respectively. Therefore, there is significant difference in expected and observed frequencies. Hence, we reject Null Hypothesis 1 and accept Alternate Hypothesis 1, inferring that social networking sites have much influence on brand resonance.

2) For the second set of Hypothesis: Cross tabulation technique and chi square test has been used.

Crosstab between Q.10 and Q.11

Q.10) Do you ever notice ads on social networking websites for various brands?

Q.11) How much do you trust the makers of these brands?

TABLE IV

Respondent Count	How much do you trust the makers of this brand?				
	Never	Sometimes	Yes, mostly	Blank	T
Do you ever notice ads on social networking websites for various brands?					
Yes	-	28	44	-	72
No	10	11	-	7	28
Total	10	39	44	7	100

It is found from the above table that to 28% users ads viewed on social networking sites are sometimes trusted and 44% of the users mostly consider the makers of those brands in the ads to be trustworthy.

Crosstab between Q.12 and Q.11

Q.12) How often do you like /click /comment on the ads shown on your profile?

Q.11) How much do you trust the makers of these brands?

TABLE V
CASE PROCESSING SUMMARY

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
Trust on brands * Click on ads	N	%	N	%	N	%
	300	100	0	0	300	100

The above table shows case processing summary with valid and missing values of the two variables. After applying cross tabulation on the two variables of the study, i.e. trust on brands and frequency of clicking, liking, commenting on ads, we derive the following results as shown in Table VII.

TABLE VII
CHI-SQUARE TESTS

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig.(2-sided)
Pearson Chi square	114.470 ^a	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	51.847	12	.002
N of valid cases	300		

a. 17 cells have expected count less than 5. The min. expected count is 1.05.

The above table shows that Chi square value of 114.470 (df = 12, N = 300), p < 0.05 is significant at 12 degree of freedom, showing that there is significant difference in expected and observed frequencies. Thus, Null Hypothesis 2 is rejected and we accept Alternate Hypothesis 2, i.e. presence on social networking sites helps in brand salience and credibility.

However, study of secondary data also reveals that there are instances when people stop following or liking brands on social networking sites. The reasons behind are attributed to irrelevancy of posts, overloading frequencies of posts, mismatch between customer expectation and offerings, incongruity of feeling with the brand etc. Therefore, we may regard this aspect as the dark sides of marketing on social networking sites, which are threats to building brand resonance online.

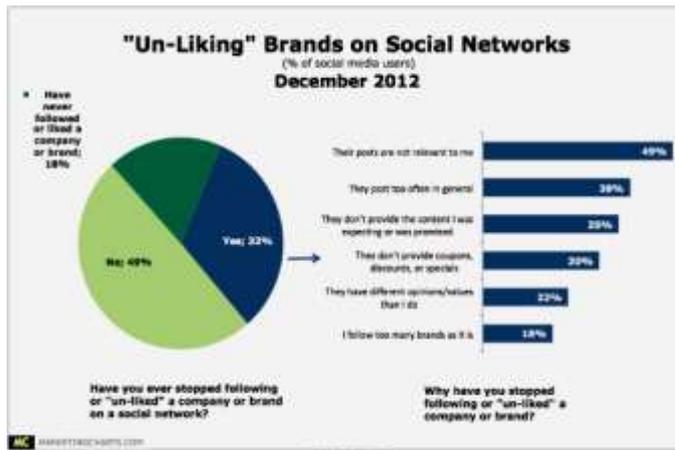


Fig. 3: Reasons for not following / unliking brands by social networking users (Source: www.performics.com)

IV. CONCLUSION

In this study, for understanding the extent to which SNS can contribute to brand resonance, salience and credibility, the questionnaire was framed accordingly so as to evoke best responses from the sample group. Keeping in view Keller's CBBE model, questions related to brand resonance, salience and credibility has been used in the questionnaire. As such, use of brand engagement and brand loyalty variables has been used in testing of the first set of hypothesis, which reflects brand resonance. For the second set of hypothesis, variables like trust on brands visible on SNS and frequency of liking / clicking / commenting on ads for such brands were used, which again measures salience and credibility of a brand. It has been observed that there has been a tremendous and increasing change in marketing with the advent of social networking websites, making it easier for the brands to build strong salience, credibility and resonance. However, it is not enough for a brand to be present on any social networking website; marketers need to understand that the brand resonance network revolves around four relationships – consumer-company relationship, consumer-consumer relationship, company-brand relationship and consumer-brand relationship. Hence, marketers should focus on doing something that strengthens the above relationships. Social media marketing can be worthwhile for a company with limited marketing resources, as it is like a silent salesman in disseminating viral contents. Social networking is indeed a strong mechanism when it comes to engaging customers and evoking responses from them. Aggressive use of social networks in marketing strategies can also give rise to brand advocates from mere brand loyalists. The prudence lies in

intelligent use of social networks as negative word-of-mouth or virality can distort brand resonance.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors wish to acknowledge Dr. S. L. Gupta and Hitesh Gupta and International Book House for their invaluable contributions in introducing the book "SPSS 17 for Researchers", which has helped immensely to understand how to analyze and obtain output data for this research.

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