Topic: A critical evaluation of the effects of social media in promoting businesses - a case study

# Abstract

The study has been undertaken with a primary intention to evaluate the consequences of social media promotions faced by business organisations and thus provide for measures to derive positive outcomes. The study uses a mixed method in which quantitative data is collected from 100 consumers through surveys using a questionnaire and qualitative information is collected from 3 marketing managers through interviews using interview schedules.

From the study it has been found that social media is emerging as an integral marketing platform which is widely used by both consumers and marketers. Hence, this platform cannot be avoided. Consumers seek this platform for searching information and taking decisions where as marketer use this platform for branding, selling and relationship management. Based on the findings it has been recommended that companies need to enhance their security features to deal with issues faced by consumers while using social media thus reaching larger sets of consumers in an effective manner. It has also been recommended that there should be transparency in the complete mechanism from marketer’s side as well as provision for online post-purchase support.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Chapter Introduction

The chapter begin with providing for a background for the chosen topic of research. In the chapter a brief outline of how social media is being used as one of the most significant channels of communication across the world is being provided. This provides for an insight to the significance of social media for consumers as well as business organisations thus developing the foundation of this research. Further, the research problem, objectives and research significance are being highlighted.

## Background

There has been a surge in the growth of social media users across the world making it an important platform of communication. This is evident from reports by Pew Research Center in the year 2016, it has notified the usage of social media platforms amongst American adults. As per this recent report, approximately 68% belonging to this group are operators of Facebook (Greenwood, et al., 2016) . The report also brought to light the usage of social media amongst the elderly people in America where it has been stated that 37% from this age category are users of social media (Greenwood, et al., 2016). Similar reports have bene found with regard to differing nations as depicted in figure below:



Figure 1 Social Media Users Across World

Source: (Smith, 2017)

In a report by Gartner in the year 2008 by Sarner, et al. it has been stated that people have been resorting to social networking in order to form opinions based on information derived from these websites. It is mainly because the information is not in the control of the business organisation. The information available on social media is not only based on those provided by organisations but also related to experience of consumers and the organisational employees. This provides for a holistic information to consumers thus making decision making easier for them.

This fact is one of the basic reasons that draws the attention of business organisations to use this platform for promoting themselves and thus derive benefits. Social media has been identified to be one of the strongest platforms to enriched communication with consumers (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). This media is found to have positive impact on the relationship of business organisations with the consumers. Owing to such benefits social media has emerged to be one of the most integral elements of promotion mix that is being used by business organisations.

## Research Problem

Every business organisation seeks to develop and thus be in a position to provide for enhanced products and services to their target consumers. In order to support this growth, it is important that all the stakeholders of a business organisation actively involve in information sharing thus providing for enunciation thoughts and desires (Schemm & Legner, 2008). With social media, this sharing of information has been easy with stakeholders getting connected over a common platform. The stakeholders irrespective of their individual size and geographic area are connected with the organisation thus putting forward their views. These views when considered can render organisations with innovative ideas to improve themselves.

From the statistics that has been identified in the earlier section it is evident that social media is emerging to be a platform with enormous scope for the business organisations. These platforms ranging from Facebook to Youtube and from Twitter to Linkedin are turning out be reservoir of information that is not only moulds the decision taken by consumers but also have implications on approaches resorted to by the business organisations (Kwok & Yu, 2013; Edosomwan, et al., 2011). Though business organisations are using this platform aggressively for promoting themselves but yet they need to have a conscious approach to the same. it is mainly because while resorting to social media companies need to indulge in expansive can careful planning without which they might fail in using this medium effectively. In appropriate usage of social media might have negative implication resulting in damage of brand reputation in which case the company would lose out on its competitors within the industry forget about gaining competitive edge (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Thus, the primary intent of this study is to identify the effects of social media advertising for companies thus assisting them to deal with these problems in an effective manner.

## Research Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of this research is to evaluate the consequences of social media promotions faced by business organisations and thus provide for measures to derive positive outcomes.

The research objectives are:

* To determine the effectiveness of social media as an advertising mechanism for both business organisations as well as the consumers
* To identify the social media effectiveness with regards to Technology Adaptation Model (TAM)
* To critically evaluate the challenges that are being faced by companies while resorting to social media advertising
* To determine the effectiveness of social media as a relationship marketing tool of advertising for business organisations

## Significance of the Study

Though there has bene a series of studies on social media but most of them have been undertaken from the context of consumers. There are very limited studies on effectiveness of social media for the business organisations. However, there are studies which has been explored to support this topic under study but no concrete study is being undertaken in this sphere. Social media is a dynamic platform for which companies need to be o their toes round the clock to change based on information circulated on these platforms (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This creates new set of challenges as well as redefines the significance of social media for business organisations with each passing moment (Edosomwan, et al., 2011). This makes it important to study the topic as with passing time the effects of social media are also evolving and changing. The study is considered to be significant for the business organisations mainly for strategists and marketers as it unfolds the effectiveness and issues related to this new promotion mix as well as for the students of marketing. The study provides them with insights as to how to use this platform for the benefits of consumers as well as business organisations.

## Chapter Outline

The research study is divided into 5 significant chapters which determines the flow of this study thus assisting in achievement of research objectives. These chapters are:

**Chapter 1:** This chapter is the Introduction chapter which presents the background of the study followed by research problem and research objectives. The chapter at the outset provides an brief idea about the subject matter that is researched upon.

**Chapter 2:** This is the Literature Review chapter in which information from secondary sources are critical reviewed and presented thus developing a theoretical background.

**Chapter 3:** This is the Research Methodology chapter. In this chapter the scientific method adopted for meeting research objectives has been illustrated. The research is based upon a mixed method in which both qualitative and quantitative techniques are being used together.

**Chapter 4:** This is the Data Analysis and Interpretation chapter. In this chapter the information collected from primary sources for both qualitative and quantitative techniques are presented after analysis and interpretations are drawn.

**Chapter 5:** This is the Conclusion and Recommendations chapter. In this chapter a brief summary of the study is developed determining the findings of the study and justification of meeting research objectives. Finally, based on the findings the recommendations are put forward for business organisations.

**Chapter 6**: It is the final chapter which is about Reflective Statement. In this chapter the overall experience undergone by the researcher has been put forward thereby identifying challenges faced, solutions to the same and comprehensive researcher’s learnings.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

## 2.1 Chapter Introduction

For developing a strong and comprehensive understanding of the topic under study, an extensive reading of information available in various secondary sources has been undertaken. This information comprised of readings from books, journals, articles of news and internet sites has been compiled in this chapter in order to meet the research objectives cited in the prior chapter. In this chapter the review of literature has been done to develop constructs from findings on topics like social media as a tool of advertisement, social media and relationship marketing, social media and profitability, role of TAM in social media adoption and overall benefits and limitations of social media advertising.

## 2.2 Social Media – a new tool for advertisement

### 2.2.1 For business organisations

A variety of opportunities has been offered by social media to different organisations in promotion of their product, services and brands. Con (2015) was of the opinion that it was in the year 2007 when the companies started to advertise their product in social media like Facebook when it allowed the organisations to create their social page on their website. This led organisation realise the prominence of social media platform for their brands and they started capitalising in superior teams and extra thought-out social approaches (Al-Sadani, 2915).

A report by Misnistry of Education and Employment (2013) mentioned social media as a game changer and elucidated that companies are now being able to reach to their target audience. Moreover, it is now being able to communicate with its customers. This is a game changer for companies involving in advertising, transactions, client service and other commercial doings. Further the report pointed social media as a very powerful tool that is quite superior and effective than traditional marketing.

While the above report and scholar were of the opinion that social media brought revolution in the world of advertising, Evans & Bratton (2008) was of the perception that though companies can well advertise their products on social media but what certainly matters is the remarks and gratitude left by the consumers. He regarded social media as very challenging and that it can prove scary and detrimental to the growth and profitability of the organisation if not handled properly. This is because negative word of mouth can spread across the globe in few seconds tarnishing the image of the brand.

Neti (2011) and Mangold & Faulds (2009) explicated that one of the best opportunities available to a product for linking with potential consumers is the social media. By connecting with the customers deeply through social media, companies win the trust of the consumers. In the contemporary marketing scenario, vendors are taking note of numerous diverse social media prospects and initiating to execute innovative social ingenuities at a higher rate than ever before.

Talking about the growing prominence of social media marketing to the organisations, Ciprian (2015) enumerated that social media is very inexpensive and yet very effective. Very little time and petite efforts are required to reach large count of the target audience. Further branding of the products can be well done on the social media sites. In addition to this, companies also witnessed an increase in their sale and profitability after advertising their product on social media.

While the above scholar largely showed the brighter side of social media, Siddiqui & Singh (2016) pointed out the risk involved in using social media as a marketing tool which was also mentioned by Evans & Bratton (2008). They stated that many of the huge companies have fallen prey to the hackers. The erroneous virtual brand approach can trouble a business and put at a vast viral communal hindrance. Moreover, getting tangled with Social Media requires lot of time. Above all many companies have also found it very intricate to measure the outcomes of social media advertising.

### 2.2.2 For Consumers

The prominence of social media for consumers cannot be ignored. Internet offers freedom and personal autonomy to the consumers and hence they are actively engaged on social media sharing their experience and views about the brand Mangold & Faulds (2009). Hajli (2014) mentioned that there has been dramatic increase in the impact of social media on the purchasing behaviour of the consumers. The purchasing process of the consumers is substantially affected the undesirable and constructive comments of the consumers. Mangold and Faulds (2009) elucidated in Hajli (2014) that the opinion, awareness, attitudes, acquisition of information, purchase behaviour, and post-purchase interaction and assessment are influenced by the various social media tools such as chat rooms, blogs, e-mails, Facebook to cite a few.

In the subsequent year, Miller et al. (2009) elaborated in Mishra & Tyagi (2015) that the significance of social network media rests in the communication between customers and the public and in the expedition of asynchronous, instantaneous, collaborative, low-cost interactions. Customers still fundamentally select out when it comes to societal media advertising, favouring to admire peer commendations of brands and merchandises rather than hitting it off on commercials. They also put on an extremely discriminatory methodology to using social media as a channel for interrelating with brands in general.

Ertemel & Ammoura (2016) was of the opinion that social media is moving the power from vendors to customers, since concerning to the social equality permissible in social media all users as customers can now be in communication with each other trading the info about merchandises and services, which drive vendors altering their old approaches to complement the novel requirements of customers, and interact with them in person as likely as they can, particularly in their purchasing behavior via social media as advertising network in both unrestricted as word-of-mouth and waged as social media publicity. Stephen (2016) observed that people are uncovering themselves to more and more social and digital media. This is for many reasons, comprising in their characters as customers as they hunt for info about merchandises, buy and utilise them, and interconnect with others about their feelings and experience about the merchandise.

 While the above scholars talked about the various ways in which consumers are benefitted from the social media in making purchase decision, Koprulu, et al. (2016) revealed that the customers often get confused while looking at the different reviews of the people on the social media. Moreover, some people post faulty reviews misleading the people and breaking their trust on the comments and recommendation of the people. In the same way, Raudeliuniene, et al. (2018) mentioned that addiction of social media can prove detrimental to consumers when it comes to the point that every purchase made by them hinge on decision that is taken on recommendations.

In the above section, a brief overview was presented on the benefits drive by the businesses and consumers from the social media. It was witnessed that every coin has two side and so has social media. The marketers have to implement social media as a marketing tool with great care so that it may not ruin their reputation.

## 2.3 Analysing Profitability and Relationship Marketing in Social Media Marketing

While researching upon social media platforms and costs involved Con (2015) stated that such platforms especially Facebook endows companies with abilities to undertake promotion for the masses by reaching them and spreding the message at lowest possible costs. It is mainly because the investments demanded by such pltforms for promotions is very less with positive returns on invetsments. Though it was determined that identification of the returns with regards to social media was difficult but yet they were considered to be successful. The study also highlighted that with incrasign usage of social media it is critically essential to determine the returns thus assisting companies to channelise their resources in an effective manner as well as take quality decisions.

Evans & Bratton (2008) in their book had stated the importance of organisations seeking to reduce their costs to gain competitive advantages. It was notified that with organisations facing intense competitive pressure and seekign ot survive in the long run it is important to cut down their unneccesary costs which in the long run would assist in increasing profitability. They further denoted the role of social media played in this. It was found that social media advertisements helps companies to minimize their costs thus gaining competitive edge over others through increased profitability. This is in sync with findinsg by Con (2015) who identified returns availed from social media promotions which when clubbed with lower organisational costs supports enhanced organisational profitability.

In another study by Kim & Ko (2012) a positive association between various marketing activities undertaken by companies to enhance corporate brand image and enhanced organisational profits has been identified. The study highlighted that with the use of social media, companies are in a position to not only augment their brand image amongst their target audiences but also enhance profits through enhanced customer relationships. Thus, social media is considered to be a tool for relationship marketing too for enhanced organisational profitability. Aijo, 1996; Grönroos, 1989, 1994; Gummesson, 1994, 1996; Morgan and Hunt, 1994 defined relationship marketing in Moretti & Tuan (2013, p. 254) as *“Relationship Marketing is to identify and establish, maintain and enhance, and when necessary, also terminate relationships with customers and other stakeholders, at a profit, so that the objectives of all parties are met, and this is done by a mutual exchange and fulfilment of promises”.* From 2007 onwards Customer Relationship Marketing which a tool of relationship marketing, powered by the arrival of the social media, instigated a revolution from its conventional emphasis on augmenting customer-facing contract processes in order to embrace approaches and technical procedures evolving collective and communal links with consumers, contractors and even opponents (Moretti & Tuan, 2013).

Abeza, et al. (2017) stated that when social media is talked about, relationship marketing comes in complete explosion. It is mainly because through enhanced communication and interaction between organisational stakeholders especially consumers, business organisations are able to generate value which results in augments profitability. Similar findings with regards to enhanced relationship marketing through social media was also identified by Hall & Peszko, (2016) in their recent study in educational institutions. The study found that students had positive reactions towards higher usage of social media by universitities for branding and developing relationships. To this, Achen (2017) added that social media is considered to be a toll that provides for positive business consequences. These consequences are both monetary and non-monetary in nature. These consequences are derived as social media endows companies with abilities to develop strong relationships with their consumers thus enhancing connections with them.

From the above review, it can be determined that profitability, relationship marketing and social media marketing are interrelated. However, the intensity of this relationship has not been explored by any of the studies in direct terms.

## 2.4 Social Media and Technology Adoption Model (39)

TAM is considered to be by one of the most successful models to study the adoption of technology by people from differing categories. It is mainly because the factors of this model are considered to be positive in determining and providing an explanation to the usage of a particular technology as notified by Amin (2009). In the words of King & He (2006) “*TAM is considered to be a valid and robust model that has been widely used, but which potentially has wider applicability*”. Social media being a new technology, the usage of TAM is also applicable in its context.

The primary objective of this model has been to determine and analyse the potentials of new and innovative technologies especially those related to information technology within the markets. With the help of TAM model as per Parker & Castleman (2009), it is possible to determine and anticipate the future in a instant manner and thus measure the success of a proposed technology. Further, the research enumerated that with the help of this model it is convenient to study the attiude of a consumer towards the new technologies on the basis of its perceived usage and perceived convenience thus determining ultimate intention to adopt for the technology.

Considering the case of social media technology, Dahl (2018) stated that in order to determine the success of social media in accordance to TAM it is imporant to ensure that social media is not only easy to use but also has widespread usage. Considering both the parameters, of ease and convenience, it can be denoted that the adoption of social media is higher thus making it a successful approach for its users. Thus, considering the business organisations it can be cleary determined that social media is bound to render benefits to them if used in the right way thereby developing appropriate attitude amongst consumers.

## 2.5 Benefits and Limitations of Social Media Marketing to Business Organisations

Talking about the benefits of social media marketing, Paquette (2013) explicated that many business organisations are extensively engaging into social media marketing as it is cost effective. Moreover, in contrast to the other marketing tools, social media can be used with an ease. Customer loyalty, brand awareness, web traffic can be increased through social networks and launch of a new product can also be successful by the use of social media. He further added that social media platforms nurture communication about brands and merchandises, augmenting constructive as well as deleterious word-of-mouth about a company and its merchandises and services. Any communication or part of information revealed on the social media networks can be watched by thousands of individuals in a tremendously short span of time.

While Paquette (2013) gave his own opinion, Neti (2011) was of the perception that intensification of likelihood of income generation and cost decline by lessening staff time are the two major benefits derived by the business organisations. She further added that social media also empowers businesses to involve prospects through purchaser evangelism, understand the perception of their customers, and share their know-how and awareness. Si (2016) also affirmed the opinion of Neti (2011). He also pointed out that benefits of social media embrace, item realization and interest, consumer communications through trades, recommendations and acknowledgment management. It was also elucidated that one of the biggest advantages of social media is that an organisation can address large number of audiences. Moreover, hunting for fresh prospective consumers and subcontracting occasions becomes far stress-free to link to at petite or no cost to the enterprise. This benefit exclusively advances more paybacks that can assist to motivate or subsidise to the development of a business.

Every coin has two side as so has social media, apart from the various advantages of social media discussed above, it also has various disadvantages. Adams-Mott (2018b) enumerated that though greatest strength of social media is that it helps an organisation in developing a persona to the target audience alongside their merchandises or service. Yet this benefit can turn into disadvantage if the company have an unwell implemented branding drive that turns off possible consumers and makes the company appear forged. Further, a displeased consumer can blaze the company, a dissatisfied worker can also smash the organisation, and one blunder may end up describing the company. In fact, customers frequently take accomplishment matters, delivery glitches or quality-control concerns to social media ignoring official resolution networks.

Adams-Mott (2018a) elucidated that companies are often in dilemma as to which social media site is apt for their brand so that it can fetch large number of customers. Ever-changing landscape is yet another biggest disadvantage of social media marketing. In early 2000s, MySpace was quite prevalent which is now not in much vogue. This points out that today's prevalent websites may not be eminent in the near future. It was also found that as the market vagaries, social media necessitates companies to hinge, and as each site employs innovative strategies.

## 2.6 Chapter Conclusion

From the review of literature above, it can be determined that social media has positive implications for the business organisations irrespective of limitations and challenges faced. Social media not only helps companies to develop a strong brand image but also is cost effective and profitable approach which helps them to build strong relationships with consumers (Kietzmann, et al., 2011). Hence, it is considered to be an effective advertising tool. However, companies are faced with issues of uncontrolled advertising which can be negative also thus having negative impact on organisational goodwill. Social media is also higher dynamic which again raises issues for the companies to manage as an effective advertising tool.

# Chapter 3: Research Methodology

## 3.1 Chapter Introduction

Information search and its analysis are the most intricate activity of any research and thus this research is no different mainly because this study also encompasses such activities. In order to meet the challenges, put forward by a research study, it is important to pursue the same through a methodological approach. This chapter provides for an insight to the procedures that has been adopted for completing the research successfully and thus attaining its objectives. Research methodology is basically an action plan that highlights the techniques that has been adopted in a systematic manner by a researcher to collect and analyse data (Jackson, 2011).

## 3.2 Philosophy for Research

In order to conduct an effective research, it is important to have a belief. Research philosophy is that belief which supports a researcher to adhere to a basic credence on which the study will be based upon. The various research philosophies are ontology, epistemology, axiology and rhetoric (Mertens, 2014). This study has been developed on the idea of rhetoric philosophy. This research philosophy was chosen owing to the fact that it offers opportunity to pursue a research study based on the requirements of the researcher instead of being dependent on any other component. With the help of this research philosophy, it is possible for a researcher to gain in-depth knowledge about the research topic under study and thus frame views on the basis of this knowledge (Klenke, 2008). In such philosophy, data is gathered from the real environment and analysed rationally. In brief, it assists the researcher in undertaking a study based on complete concentration in a reasonable style.

## 3.3 Research Design and Approach

A research design in simple words is the outline of a research process that a research study is based upon (Bryman, 2016). There are three main types of research designs which a research a choose from. They are quantitative design, qualitative design and mixed method. As the name suggests, mixed method is one in which both qualitative and quantitative research designs are merged to meet research objectives. This study resorts to a mixed research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This implies that information collection has been done through using both quantitative and qualitative tools. the information has been collected from both managers as well as from consumers. A mixed method has been espoused mainly because it is a comprehensive method and assists in undertaking a research that has wider implications. Also, this method provides for a scope of overcoming lacuna of each of the methods when undertaken individually (Kumar, 2010).

Research approach highlights the reasoning that has been chosen for conducting this research. The reasoning adopted for this study is abductive in nature. It is mainly because this reasoning format is a combination of both inductive and deductive reasonings thus assisting the researcher to meet the criteria for both qualitative and quantitative research studies. In this abductive reasoning, the conclusions are developed on the basis of information that is available and thus provide for decision-making (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

## 3.4 Type of Data

A research study is merely compilation of data and thus it is important to identify the source from which this data has been derived. According to Krishnaswamy, et al. (2009, p: 32), “*there are two sources of data: primary data which are specially generated in a research and secondary data which are already available*”. This research study has derived information from both possible sources. Secondary information has been availed for this study from sources like journals, reports, books, internet, newspapers, public libraries, university libraries, reports and other official documents (Yin, 2013). Primary information has been collected from real world from the consumers and managers using differing tools of data collection for both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

## 3.5 Plan for Sampling

In research studies based on primary data it is important to determine a sample size. It is mainly because, the population for any study is very large and collection of information from the entire population is not possible. Hence a sample is chosen which represents the population. The analysis of information from the sample is then generalized for the overall population and thus drawing conclusions for the same (Krishnaswamy, et al., 2009).

In this study, as information is to be collected from two different sources, sampling has also been done using two techniques. They are purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Snowball sampling has been used for quantitative analysis wherein consumers respondents have been chosen using this technique (Daniel, 2012; Cochran, 2007). Initially a set of 20 consumers were approached whose information was availed through social media networking platforms and then they were requested to provide for names of other respondents who would be likely to be a part of this study. In this study a total 128 consumers were approached. But only first 100 consumers on a “first come first serve” basis were selected. It means those 100 entries which were appropriately filled and received at the earliest were chosen as sample size. Purposive sampling was used for qualitative approach which required collection of information from managers. 3 marketing managers especially dealing in social media marketing were chosen for the study. Purposive sampling was chosen mainly as it endows with the opportunity of collecting information on the basis of researcher’s knowledge about the subject under study and the overall population (Rubin & Babbie, 2009). It is a non-probability sampling approach.

## 3.6. Data Collection Tools and Process

Data collection has been executed with the help of two tools namely, questionnaire for surveys and interview schedules for interviews. Survey has been undertaken for collection of quantitative information (Miller & Brewer, 2003). The questionnaire contains a list of questions with pre-defined answers giving respondents an option to choose from (Saris & Gallhofer, 2014). Hence the format is close-ended and structured for the questionnaire. This questionnaire is used as it endows the researcher with the convenience of data collection as well as analyse the same without much complications. It also helps the researcher to focus on given research objectives and thus minimise intricacies in data analysis. Contrary to this are the interview schedules that comprise of open-ended questions and thus is semi-structured in nature (Vellnagel, 2011). This helps in collection of qualitative information. The researcher uses this method to get in-depth understanding of the research objectives in hand and thus undertaking comprehensive analysis. The information provided by interviewee is generally detailed and free from restrictions.

For collection of primary information online mechanisms has been used. The information about the respondents was availed from the social media networking platforms and they were sent intimation through emails. Once they agreed to participate, the questionnaire was sent and leads for other respondents was generated from them. The entire survey thus took place online through exchange of emails. A total span of 20 days was spent in this process of data collection. For the interviews, the details were again availed from social media networking websites and online interview was conducted. This interview was conducted based on prior appointments and approval provided by the mangers through exchange of emails (Information Resources Management Association, 2017). However, the interview was conducted over Skype which provided the facility of video conversations through virtual world. It took approximately 25 days for the overall process right from requesting for interviews to conducting the same.

## 3.7 Analysis of Data

As two types of primary data is involved in this study, the analysis has also been done using two different methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). For quantitative approach, the information from the questionnaire was at the outset recorded on MS Excel. Once all the responses were recoded the same was analysed using mathematical and statistical mechanisms like frequency analysis. The qualitative information that has been collected was critically examined and analysed based on the investigative reasoning of the researcher. Even secondary information was critically reviewed and presented in the literature review chapter.

## 3.8 Data validity and Reliability

The validity and reliability of data in research studies is important as they ensure about the validity and reliability of the overall study. In this study a mixed method has been used. The validity and reliability of data in this study has been ensured through following parameters:

* **Triangulation**: Information has been collected from multiple sources ranging from primary to secondary and from multiple instruments like questionnaires and interview schedules and from different stakeholders that are consumers are marketers. All this information has been triangulated to ensure that a strong analysis is developed by overcoming biasness and weakness of individual set of data (Zohrabi, 2013).
* **Face and Construct Validity**: Prior to conducting the surveys and interviews, a sample testing of the instruments was undertaken (Bryman, 2012). In this approach the questionnaire was sent to 10 consumers and 1 marketer to undergo a mock test. Based on the feedback regarding the questionnaire and interview schedule, the changes were made and the final events (surveys and interviews) were conducted.
* **Internal Validity**: This validity is established in case of qualitative data where the researcher is in a position to develop an analogy between observations made and concepts (Bryman, 2012). This is true in this study as the observations made during interview process are used for developing concepts.
* **Internal Reliability**: The study has been undertaken using Likert Scale where respondents have been requested to rate their feelings on a scale of 1-5. This scale has consistent pointers as there is relationship between respondent’s score on one pointer with that on other pointers (Bryman, 2016). It has been ensured that data has been collected through structured questionnaires and interview schedules (refer annexure 1 and 2).
* **Stability as a measure for Reliability**: The sample tests with the questionnaire as well as the interview schedule was done which yielded similar results as procured from final data collection. This ensures that the data collection and analysis tool are stable and thus reliable.

## 3.9 Ethical Consideration

Firstly, it was ensured that the respondents’ participation was free and not coercion was practiced. Secondly, all the sources of information used as secondary ones were acknowledged and referred to in the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Thirdly, measures have been taken to ensure that the confidentiality of information and identity of the respondents have been duly maintained. Finally, the respondents were provided with all the requisite information related to the study and thus transparency was maintained.

# Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Interpretations

## 4.1 Chapter Introduction

In this chapter the information collected from both the primary sources are analysed, interpreted and presented. The chapter in segregated into three major heads one is quantitative analysis, second is qualitative analysis and finally a section of limitations of the study has been provided.

## 4.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

In this section the information collected from the consumers as sample respondents through survey using questionnaire has been provided. The data was collected from 100 respondents, recorded in Ms Excel and then analysed.

### 4.2.1 Demographic Profile Analysis

The demographic profile of the respondents throws light on three major parameters namely, age, education and gender. All the three parameters are analysed and interpreted in this section.

**Age**

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Table 1 Age Analysis

Of the 100 respondents who participated in the study majority were from the age group of 18-30 years comprising of 39%. This has been followed by 28% respondents which belong to the age group of 30-40 years. Respondents from 40-50 years of age group formulated 20% of the sample size and 9% belonged to the age group of 50-60 years. Merely 4% respondents were from the older age group that is above 60%.

Figure 2 Age Analysis

Fr\*om the above table and graph it can be interpreted that majority of the respondents belonged to the youth age group belonging to the age group of 18 years to 40 years.

**Gender**

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Table 2 Gender Analysis

The gender of respondents has been almost equal as out of 100 respondents, 52% of males participated in the survey and 48% female participated in the same. Though there is a slight majority of male gender but yet the gap between both gender respondents is number can be ignored.

Figure 3Gender Analysis

Based on the above table and graph it can be derived that social media is used by both male and female and thus there is no clear dominance with respect to a particular gender group.

**Education**

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Table 3 Education Analysis

Technology usage is to a larger extent associated with level of education and thus a study of this parameter was considered to be significant. The information collected revealed that majority of the consumers were graduates as they formulated 41% of the sample respondent. This was followed by 21% respondents who were from high school. Next were 19% respondents who underwent post-graduation followed by 14% respondents who took up specialisation courses. Merely 5% of respondents did not avail any formal education.

Figure 4 Education Analysis

Based on the above table and graph it can be derived that the majority that is 95% of the users of social media had some basic qualification. However, majority were graduates and post graduates forming 62% of the sample respondents.

### 4.2.2 Consumer Approach Towards Social Media

1. **How much time do you spend on social media?**

This question was asked understand the pattern of usage of social media by sample respondents.



Table 4 Time Spent on Social Media

It has been found that majority of the respondents that are 78% used social media on a daily basis and spent approximately 1-2 hours. This was followed by 20% respondents who used social media on a weekly basis by spending 1-2 hours during the week and only 2% respondents spent 1-2 hours in 15 days on social media.

Figure 5 Time Spent on Social Media

From the above responses it can be inferred that majority of the consumers who are present on social media use this platform on a daily basis depicting the widespread popularity of this medium.

1. **What activities do you pursue on social media?**

The three main activities pursued by respondents on social media were general browsing, chatting and looking for promotions.



Table 5 Activities on Social Media

Equal number of consumers were found to be pursuing activities like general browsing and chatting with 39% belonging to the first category and 38% belonging to the later one. 23% of respondents however accepted that they sought for promotions on social media.

Figure 6 Activities on Social Media

From the responses it can be inferred that general browsing and chatting are the most popular activities and looking for promotions is yet to become popular irrespective of 1/4th respondents approximately indulging in this activity.

1. **Platforms explored**

This question was put forward with an intention to understand the kind of platform that is popularly used by consumers.



Table 6 Platforms Explored

From the responses it is evident that majority of consumers used networking websites which was followed by microblogging with 33% respondents’ option for the first option and 32% for the later. This was followed by 25% respondents who explored social media platforms supporting sharing of photos and videos. Only 10% respondents explored blogs and other such forums on social media.

Figure 7 Platforms Explored

Based on the responses it can be inferred that mainly consumers used microblogging and networking platforms within social media thus making them popular and most widely used ones.

### 4.2.3 Consumer Attitude and Social Media Marketing

1. ***Do you prefer advertising on social media platforms?***

This question was put forward with an intention to study whether target consumers seek to social media for any kind of advertisement.



Table 7 Preference for Advertisements

Figure 8 Platforms Explored

As can be seen in above table and diagram a mixed response was availed from the target consumers. Majority of consumers that is 58% had a positive preference social media. However, the gap with those denied it was less as 42% said no. But from the above responses it can be derived that most consumers seek for advertisement on social media.

1. ***Social Media provides for complete information about products/services***

The primary intention of this question was to comprehend the perception of consumers with regards to information efficiency of social media.



Table 8 Social Media provides for complete information about products/services

Figure 9 Social Media provides for complete information about products/services

To this question majority of the respondents that is 53% (21% strongly agreed and 32% agreed) that social media provides for complete information. However, a large portion of the sample respondent that is 44% (26% disagreed and 18% strongly disagreed) denied this statement. 3% respondent were neutral to it. Hence it can be derived that sample respondents have positive attitude towards social media and perceive that it’s a platform that provides for complete information.

1. ***Social media supports in purchase decision making***

The motive of the question was to understand the role played by social media in assisting consumers to take decisions.



Table 9 Social media supports in purchase decision making

Figure 10 Social media supports in purchase decision making

From the responses it can be identified that majority of sample respondents that is 64% (45 % agreed and 19% strongly agreed) accepted that social media played a positive role in supporting their decision making. However, 34% (21% disagreed and 13% strongly disagreed) denied to this statement. 2% respondents were neutral to it.

1. ***The promotions on social media are striking***

The question was undertaken to understand the appeal of social media promotions.



Table 10 The promotions on social media are striking

Figure 11 The promotions on social media are striking

The responses indicate that majority of the consumers do think that social media promotions are striking. This is evident from above table and diagram where 39% respondents agreed to the statement and 26% strongly agreed to it formulation a total of 65% accepting the statement. However, a negative response was availed from 30% respondents comprising of 17% who disagreed and 13% who strongly disagreed to the above statement. 5% respondents were neutral to this statement.

1. ***Social media is a good platform for information search***

Though consumers accepted that social media did provide for information but this question was asked to understand behaviour of consumers towards considering social media as an option for searching information.



Table 11 Social media is a good platform for information search

Figure 12 Social media is a good platform for information search

To this question majority of the respondents that is 53% (21% strongly agreed and 32% agreed) that social media provides for a strong platform for searching information. However, a large portion of the sample respondent that is 44% (26% disagreed and 18% strongly disagreed) denied this statement. 3% respondent were neutral to it. Hence it can be derived that sample respondents have positive attitude towards social media and perceive that it’s a platform that supports them in searching information.

1. ***Social media is easy to use***

One of the major factors associated with social media is convenience. This question has been put forward with the intent to throw light on this aspect.

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Table 12 Social media is easy to use

Figure 13 Social media is easy to use

A strong and positive opinion was derived from the sample respondents towards ease of using social media. 44% respondents agreed to the statement and 33% strongly agreed to it making a total of 77% accepting the statement. However, a negative response was availed only from 20% respondents comprising of 10% who disagreed and 10% who strongly disagreed to the above statement. 3% respondents were neutral to this statement. Hence it can be derived that social media is considered to be easy is usage by sample respondents.

1. ***It is technically feasible to access social media***

Social media is a new technology and hence understanding its technical feasibility for consumers is significant.



Table 13 Technically feasible to access social media

Figure 14 Technically feasible to access social media

Based on the responses it can be derived that majority of sample respondents that are 75% (43% agreed and 32% strongly agreed) agreed that it was technically feasible to use social media. 22% (12% disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed) respondent denied to this statement and 3% were neutral to it. This response can be related to ease of usage which was also accepted by majority respondents. Thus, social media is both technically feasible to use and easy to use for consumers.

1. ***Social media advertisements direct to e-commerce thus making purchasing convenient***

One of the primary objectives of social media promotions is to convert viewers into consumers. This question seeks to derive a response towards this question.



Table 14 Social media advertisements direct to e-commerce thus making purchasing convenient

Figure 15 Social media advertisements direct to e-commerce thus making purchasing convenient

A majority of sample respondent agreed to this statement as to social media and e-commerce were interrelated. 45% respondents agreed to the statement and 19% strongly agreed to it making a total of 64% accepting the statement. However, a negative response was availed from 34% respondents comprising of 21% who disagreed and 13% who strongly disagreed to the above statement. 2% respondents were neutral to this statement.

1. ***There are security issues in social media***

Security in social media has been a major concern that affects its usage. This question was undertaken to understand consumer perception regarding the same.



Table 15 Security issues in social media

Figure 16 Security issues in social media

Based on the responses it can be derived that majority of the consumers consider presence of security issues in social media. This was accepted by 57% (38% agreed and 19% strongly agreed) of the respondents. 37% (20% disagreed and 17% strongly disagreed) respondents denied to the presence of security issues in social media. 6% were neutral to this statement. Thus, it can be derived that majority of consumer irrespective of using social media consider it to be an unsafe platform as they are subjected to security issues.

1. ***Personalisation in social media helps companies to manage quality relationships with you***

In social media, each individual has a unique page which indicates that this platform supports personalisation. This question was asked to understand whether such personalisation supports companies to manage relationships with its customers.

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Table 16 Personalisation in social media helps companies to manage quality relationships with you

Figure 17 Personalisation in social media helps companies to manage quality relationships with you

From the responses, a positive outlook of the consumers was derived. Around 47% respondents agreed to this statement and 16% strongly agreed. Nevertheless, 20% respondents disagreed and 15% strongly disagreed to it. 2% were neutral to this statement. Thus, it can be derived that consumers consider personalisation as an important element which helps companies to manage relationships with them.

1. ***Companies promoting on social media pay more focus on relationships that purchases***

Long term relationship develops loyal customers. This question seeks to verify this in context of social media marketing.



Table 17 Companies promoting on social media pay more focus on relationships that purchases

Figure 18 Companies promoting on social media pay more focus on relationships that purchases

The responses highlight that majority of the consumers consider that the primary intention of companies is to maintain relationships with their clients rather than focusing on pushing them towards purchases. This is evident with 47% respondents accepting it and 16% strongly supporting this statement. However, 20% disagreed and 15% strongly disagreed to this statement. 2% of respondents were neutral. This is contradictory to the statement where sample respondents have accepted association between e-commerce and social media. The other aspect can be that consumers consider that companies focus on purchases by developing strong relationships and thus e-commerce options are available for consumers.

### 4.2.4 Recommendations to Marketers

The recommendations were asked to the sample respondents so that the marketers can be guided as to how to use the social media in a better way thus overcoming issues faced and deriving mutual benefits.



Table 18 Recommendations to Marketers

Figure 19 Recommendations to Marketers

From the responses it can be derived that majority of consumers want marketers to resort to a transparent approach with 31% respondents opting for the same. This is followed by 30% respondents who want marketers to provide for enhanced security features in social media platforms. Consumers also seek online post-purchase support features with 20% of consumers opting for it. Finally, 19% of consumers want marketers to endow consumers with more information through social media platforms.

## 4.3 Qualitative Data Analysis

In this section, the responses collected from 3 marketing managers of companies promoting themselves on social media platform was collected and analysed. The responses are categorised on the basis of themes.

***Social Media and its Reach***

The reach of social media was considered as one of the major factors for which companies opted for social media promotions.

According to marketing manager A, he said that *“One of the most crucial aspect of digital marketing is social media. With the help of this marketing strategy, we are able to reach millions of audiences all over the world.”* He further added that social media also offer incredible advantages to the organisations.

Marketing manager B, she explicated that *“One cannot deny that social media provides several benefits to not only established brands but also to the start-ups. By employing apposite social media strategy, one can attain increased traffic, enhanced brand loyalty, consumer gratification and superior SEO.”*

Marketing manager C expressed his opinion elucidating that social media is opted by our company because it is cost effective. He additionally added that *“Social media is lucrative digital marketing platform and also stress-free. It is an efficient way of interacting and engaging with the probable customers. We chose this platform as it also helps in improving brand loyalty. Further, it also plays significant role in networking and customers also appreciate personalised reply to their queries than computerised messages which is also possible through this platform.”*

***Social Media vs. Traditional Media***

This section probes the perception of the marketing managers about the social media’s prominence over traditional ones.

Marketing manager A mentioned that *“Traditional marketing was basically push advertising while social media marketing is pull advertising and hence are more effective.”* Mr. A also added that in terms of cost, the social media marketing strategy are more cost-effective.

When marketing manager B was asked about her opinion about the effectiveness of social media marketing strategy, she pointed out that *“Social media helps us to entertain large number of customers across the globe which is not possible through traditional marketing.”*

 Finally, when marketing manager C was asked about his opinion, he also substantiated the views of both the marketing managers. He further said that *“In certain industries, traditional marketing is equally important. Hence it is imperative for every organisation to balance out their investment in both of these promotional mediums.”*

***Social media for boosting sales and enhance profitability***

This theme unearths the advantages availed by the organisation by employing social media marketing strategy.

Marketing manager A pointed out that *“There was tremendous increase in sales by employing this marketing strategy. We also witnessed increase in profits.”* He also affirmed that by managing this strategy efficiently and strategically, we were able to nurture and develop our business enormously.

Marketing manager B also agreed to the opinion of Manager A. She also avowed that *“Our profitability increased as there was increased brand awareness and brand recognition. People also recommended our product and services on social media which also led to the rise in sales.”*

Marketing manager C also looked quite satisfied when this aspect. His gestures itself explicated he was also of the opinion that sales and profitability of their organisation increased with the help of social media. He also added that *“Reputation of our company is also enhanced through social media. We received lot of recognition and acceptance by way of this platform.”*

***TAM for consumers in social media***

This section elucidates the viewpoints of the marketing managers about the acceptance of this marketing strategy by the consumer.

Marketing manager A said that *“In this contemporary web world, almost every individual is active on social platform. Hence we found that consumers are appreciating this strategy which is also evident from our increase in sales and profits.”* He said mentioned that with the help of this innovative marketing tool, brands and consumers are associated without any limitation in time and location.

When marketing manager B was enquired about her perception, she cited that *“This growth in marketing media has created innovative potentials and prospects within business and trade to such degree that it is altering how customers react to making acquisitions as exposure to a range of brands of merchandises and services become available.”* She also referred that this novel marketing attempt by our organisation has fetched customers as contributors instead of spectators.

Marketing manager C also affirmed the lookouts of both the marketing managers. Additionally, he mentioned that *“There has been rapid acceptance of social media by the consumers. People are more comfortable with digital marketing. This is because social media has become part of everyone’s life. This platform also facilitates consumer engagement.”*

***Social Media Adoption by Companies***

This section unearths the challenges faced by the marketing managers while promoting through social media.

When this question was asked to marketing manager A he said that *“Every coin has two sides and so social media is not an exception. We initially faced the challenge to align our social media marketing strategy with our broader marketing strategy and business goals.”*

Marketing manager B also came out with lot of challenges that was faced by their organisation. She figured out that *“It becomes quite difficult to measure the social media return on investment (ROI). Moreover, we have to be 24\*7 cautious about the reactions and comments of the consumers to avoid any negative impact on the company.”*

When marketing manager C was asked about his perception about the challenges of doing promotion through social media, he stated that *“We primarily faced the challenge of coming out with the content on social media which is educational, engaging and entertaining. Further, we also keep legal team ready with us to that they keep eye on our promotion and make sure that social media practices are compliant with the guidelines and principles to avoid any discrepancies.”*

***Relationships with consumers***

This section probes the belief of the marketing managers whether social media a right platform for maintaining relationships with consumers.

Marketing manager A revealed that “*In the past decade, the omnipresence of social media in our civilization has anesthetised us to what’s actually going on. Large number of consumers are present on this platform. From promotion and publicity to customer service and entirety in between, social media has had a measurable influence on the way companies involve customers.”*

Marketing manager B also affirmed views of marketing manager A. She also said that *“Looking at our sales and profitability, I can say that this is one of the appropriate platforms for maintaining relationships with consumers. However, one should maintain a balance between the digital marketing and traditional marketing strategy to play safe in this highly competitive environment.”*

Substantiating the opinion of both the marketers, marketing manager C added that *“There is an undeniable impact of social media on modern customer service. Social media simplifies the associations in a regular manner that’s favourable to timely support. Moreover, organisations are enhanced equipped to manage more client matters with the support of social media.”*

***Recommendations***

This section unearths the modes in which issues of social media can be overcome.

Marketing manager A and C were of the same opinion. They said that “*We need to split the responsibilities in our organisation to handle the issues arising from social media marketing. We also strive to generate content that make sense to engage our customers.”*

However, when marketing manager B was asked about her endeavours to overcome issues faced in social media marketing, she explicated that *“We can turn out to social media influencers in case if we lack employees to successfully undertake the task pertaining to social media marketing. Further we should be always be on toes to handle the intricate situations arising on this platform.”*

Further it was important to understand how positive attitude of consumers can be developed towards promotions done through social media platforms.

Marketing manager, A and C said that *“We can develop positive attitude of the consumers by making them aware of social media promotions through television and newspaper. Further we can also strive to generate content on social media which is attractive and engaging.”*

Further marketing manager B also stated that *“Consumers can be made aware of social media as a marketing platform. This would result in surfing these websites for commercial purposes. Additionally, we can also make them aware about the ease with which they can shop products by referring social media sites.*

## 4.4 Limitations of the Research

Though a mixed method has been adopted to undertake a comprehensive research but yet there is certain inherent lacuna that confines the scope of thus research. Firstly, the sample size chosen for collection of primary information is very limited considering the size of population. But as the study is limited by its nature that is it is an academic research with limited access to time and financial resources, it was not possible to increase the size of respondents. Secondly, there will be some element of randomness and biasness as the study is based upon secondary information whose authenticity cannot be assured. Though secondary information has been collected from reliable sources but yet this lacuna persists (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

# Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

## 5.1 Chapter Introduction

In this chapter a crux of the complete research has been put forward. This is done by bringing to light the significant findings of the study with regards to the research objectives. The achievement of the objectives of the research are an indicator of the fact that the research study to a larger extent has been able to fulfil the expectations and thus contributing positively to the available literature. On the basis of the analysis and findings therefrom the suggestions are also put forward which will help the marketers in using this platform in a more effective manner thus promoting their businesses to the right set of target audiences and deriving maximum benefits. Lastly, a brief sketch of scope for future studies has also been provided.

## 5.2 Conclusion to the Study

***To determine the effectiveness of social media as an advertising mechanism for both business organisations as well as the consumers***

From the secondary data it has been found that social media is a strong platform that has a powerful impact on both the business organisations as well as the consumers. Findings by Ciprian (2015) and Misnistry of Education and Employment (2013) present the effectiveness for business organsiations in form of increased influence on consumers and cost effectiveness of social media which makes it a popular platform. Mangold and Faulds (2009) and Hajli (2014) focus on consumers perspectives and bring to light the importance of social media platform in every stage of consumer purchase related decision making.

The primary findings also confirm the secondary findings as majority consumers preferred advertisements made on social media. Further, they also accepted that social media provided for information and they hunted the same while making purchase decisions. This is a positive indicator for the business organisations as consumers from both the genders belonging to differing age groups and from different educational background used this platform thus formulating a huge target set of audience.

***To identify the social media effectiveness with regards to Technology Adaptation Model (TAM)***

From both primary and secondary findings of study by Dahl (2018) it has been identified that in accordance with the TAM, the acceptance of social media has been swift and is high. Parker & Castleman (2009) were of the opinion that through deployment fo TAM model it is feasible to study the behavior and consumers in an appropriate manner.

Even the primary analysis undertaken in this study assisted in developing an understanding about the behaviour of consumers towards social media. From the primary study it has been determined that though the social media usage is exposed to security issues but yet, consumers consider this platform to be technically feasible and easy to use which has increased its popularity. Thus, irrespective of being a new technology its acceptance is widespread. Hence, primary information to a larger extent confirms the findings by secondary information about behaviour of consumers. The primary information also clarifies the secondary information by adding the fact that irrespective of security issues, technological adoption for social media is high which according to secondary information is a hindrance in social media adoption.

***To critically evaluate the challenges that are being faced by companies while resorting to social media advertising***

Findings from secondary data brings to light that dynamism of social media is one the major challenges that companies are exposed to while resorting to social media advertising as denoted by Adams-Mott (2018a). Further inability to establish a sync between brand image and promotional strategies on social media as identified by Adams-Mott (2018b) was another rmajor challenge.

These findings from secondary information has been in a way challenged by the primary findings as this study revealed that the most significant challenge is to ensure security to the consumers who use social media. However, as no particular enquiry with regards to dynamism of social media and inability to establish a sync between brand image and promotional strategies on social media has been done it can be considered that the security issue is an extension to findings by secondary sources. This comes as a third major challenge for the business organisations thus adding to existing pool of literature.

***To determine the effectiveness of social media as a relationship marketing tool of advertising for business organisations***

Findings by Kim & Ko (2012) and Abeza, et al. (2017) reveal that companies use social media primarily for enhancing organisational sales and profitability by creating a strong brand image as well as mainatining long term relationships with them. Thus, the secondary findings put forward organisational focus on end results that are to be received by the company though enhanced sales and profits.

This is different from the findings of primary data. From the perspectives of consumers as identified in primary information, social media is considered to be a platform that is used by marketers to maintain relationships with consumers rather than pushing sales through this channel. Thus, the findings from primary data challenges the findings by secondary information. Further, this primary finding might also be considered as an extension to secondary finding by adding relationship management with consumers as another additional organisational focus with sales and profitability.

## 5.3 Recommendations

Overall, from the analysis it can be derived that social media is a strong and unavoidable platform for business organisations to promote themselves. But in order to escalate benefits derived from this medium it is important for the marketers to consider the following recommendations:

* **Focus on Transparency**: It is important for marketers to ensure that complete information is provided to the consumers are they are transparent to them. This will help the marketers to gain consumer trust as well as trust of other stakeholders thus ensuring development of strong and long-term relationships with all the stakeholders. Another feature of transparency is provision of quality information. The outcome would be long run sustainability of the company irrespective of competitive pressures.
* **Security Feature:** Another major is that marketers need to focus is upon provision of enhanced security features thus restoring consumer faith. This will not only help in maintaining existing consumers but also lure other new consumers too.
* **Online Post-Purchase Support:** Consumers seek social media not only for purchases but also post-purchases. Hence, companies need to ensure that such features are being promoted on social media platforms with linkages like done for e-commerce.

## 5.4 Scope for Future Study

The study though makes attempts to focus on differing aspects of social media with regards to its effects in promoting businesses but yet it is subjected to limitations. Owing to constraints of resources, further studies can be carried out on the basis of this study. In future, studies wherein a comparative analysis of companies belonging to the same industry and nation can be done to identify the success ratio of social media marketing. Further, a comparative analysis between companies from a single industry but from differing nations can also be done to get a more in-depth understanding of the subject matter.

# Chapter 6: Reflection Statement

## 6.1 Chapter Introduction

A reflective statement has emerged to be one of the most significant aspect of a research study. It is mainly because through reflective practice a student is in a position to judge the overall journey of research study that one has treaded upon. This results in determination of one’s strengths and weakness areas along with the learnings that has been gained during this journey. In this chapter a brief reflective statement has been generated depicting the opportunity that an individual need to grab to change and thus overcome one’s weakness and strengthen competencies.

## 6.2 The Reflection

“***I use social media as an idea generator, trend mapper and strategic compass for all of our online business ventures***.” – ***Paul Barron***

**Description**

Presently, I am pursuing MBA at Cardiff University.

In the modern-day environment companies of different scales of operations are progressing beyond leaps and bounds. The companies are resorting to innovative approaches and are ready to take the risks. This is what is amusing. I am surprised by the way right from start-up companies to multinational ones are taking measures to lure people and thus convert them from mere audiences to ultimate customers. The companies are making efforts to connect with their stakeholders and change their approach from pushing products and services into the markets to pulling consumers as a team. To quench my thirst of understanding the significance of business activities I took a decision to take up MBA as a study. The choice of Cardiff university was obvious. The kind of exposure this university was to provide name owing to its reputation and quality of teaching was not possible anywhere else. The city is affordable to stay and has ample opportunities to equip oneself to get employed in the long run.

**Feelings**

I was perplexed in the beginning and my nervousness knew no limits as it was my first experience of undertaking the sources and the research study. I release that undertaking a research study is completely different from making a proposal which is general and common. Further while exploring data I release that even determination of significance of social media for marketers was a vast area and my knowledge was extremely limited. It was difficult to present a single perspective through primary data which increased my confusion. At this point of time my research guide proposed me to focus two perspective and thus undertake a research based on mixed method. The two-perspective proposed were that of the marketers and the consumers. As these two stakeholders play a pivotal role in social media marketing I considered going ahead with data collection. Upon analysis I was able to compare and contrast the information collected from both these primary sources as well as secondary sources thus undertaking a comprehensive and significant research work.

**Analysis**

The overall experience of undertaking this research activity assisted me in acquisition of required competencies for pursuing a research study at different points of the research projects I had to resorted to extensive reading thus adding to my theoretical knowledge which can be adopted in the practical environment. Prior to the making of the proposal I explored ways and methods of doing a research thus understating every aspect related to it along with gaining an understanding to use referencing skills. I was also influential by my conversations and discussions with my guide, supervisor and other associates thus pursuing an effective research study. Lecturers and preaching of our faculty members were of great help and guided me through the entire journey of my research.

At the inception of the research study I faced difficulties in determining the research objectives that I determine initially were considered to be broad and vague. This consumed a lot of time which aggravated my nervousness. Upon consultation with my guide I realised my mistake and went back to exploration of information from existing studies in this research topic. I designed a new set of aims and objectives which I considered to be relevant and better then before. To verify the same, I consulted my guide and upon detailed conversations I was able to design the appropriate aims and objectives for the study.

**Conclusion**

To conclude I would like to confess that the overall experience of undertaking a research study was challenging yet enduring. I was not only able to test my skills and apply my theoretical knowledge into practice but also identify my skills which were not explored until pursuing this research. I convey my deep appreciation to all those who have helped me throughout this journey and thus supported me in completing the research activity successfully.

It is because of the learnings from this course that I consider myself to be a confident person and well equipped to deal with the challenges of corporate world that I intend to enter in near future. Being able to take decisions the right time, managing time, effective communication and considering efforts of others are the major takeaways that I think I have learned from this course in general and research study in specific.

**Action Plan**

Overall the journey was enduring and a positive learning experience. Upon beginning with the research, I realised that this journey would be thought-provoking. However, considering the time constraints associated with the research it found it to be challenging. To deal with this problem and ensure that I meet all the time limitations I designed a time table wherein I assigned deadlines to each activity and ensured that I am able to meet the same. I had kept one-week time extra with me to accommodate contingencies if required. This planned and orderly approach helped me in successful completion of my research study without any delay.

The research work provided with an opportunity to test my skills of analysing information and presenting them to generate meaning thus contributing to fill up the gap in existing literature. I developed and nurtured my skills of taking decisions and using techniques like Ms Excel.

The outcomes were putting forward a research study that is not only appropriate but also filling up the gaps present within the existing literature by throwing more light on social media as a tool for promotions.

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# Annexure

## Annexure 1: Customer Questionnaire

**Part I: Demographic Profile**

*(Tick the Right Option)*

**Age:**

* 18-30 years
* 30-40 years
* 40- 50 years
* 50-60 years
* Above 60 years

**Gender:**

* Male
* Female

**Education:**

* High School
* Graduate
* Post Graduate
* Specialisation Courses
* No formal Education

**Part II: Consumer Approach Towards Social Media**

1. **How much time do you spend on social media?**
* 1-2 hours in a day
* 1-2 hours a week
* 1-2 hours in 15 Days
* Others …………………………………… (please notify)
1. **What activities do you pursue on social media?**
* General browsing
* Chatting
* Looking for promotions
* Others ............................................... (please notify)
1. **Platforms explored**
* Networking Websites like Facebook
* Microblogging like Twitter
* Sharing of Photos and Videos like Youtube
* Blogs and other forums

**Part III: Consumer Attitude and Social Media Marketing**

1. **Do you prefer advertising on social media platforms?**
* Yes
* No
1. **Evaluate your opinion about social media marketing on the scale of 1-5 where 1= strongly agree, 2= agree, 3= neutral, 4= disagree, and 5= strongly disagree**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Statement**  | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| Social Media provides for complete information about products/services |  |  |  |  |  |
| Social media supports in purchase decision making  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The promotions on social media are striking  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Social media is a good platform for information search |  |  |  |  |  |
| Social media is easy to use |  |  |  |  |  |
| It is technically feasible to access social media |  |  |  |  |  |
| Social media advertisements direct to e-commerce thus making purchasing convenient |  |  |  |  |  |
| There are security issues in social media  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Personalisation in social media helps companies to manage quality relationships with you  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Companies promoting on social media pay more focus on relationships that purchases |  |  |  |  |  |

**Recommendations for Marketers**

* Provide for quality information
* Maintain transparency
* Enhanced security features
* Online post purchase support
* Others …………………………………………………. (please specify)

**Comments (if any)**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you!!!*

## Annexure 2: Interview Schedule

**Interview Questions**

1. What was the primary reason behind opting for social media promotions?
2. Do you think social media promotions are more effective that traditional ones? Please elaborate
3. Do you that social media has helped the organisation to boost its sales and enhance profitability? Please elaborate
4. What is your perception about readiness and acceptance of consumers towards this new technology?
5. What are the major issues that you face while promoting through social media?
6. According to you is social media a right platform for maintaining relationships with consumers?
7. What according to you should eb done to overcome issues faced in social media marketing?
8. How in your opinion can a positive attitude of consumers can be developed towards promotions done through social media platforms?