

## **A Study on the Perception of the Consumers on Social Media Marketing and Brand Image with Respect to Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to examine and evaluate how social media can be used for branding purposes and to understand the consideration to be made while branding using social media and the impact of social media on brand image in comparison to the conventional media. Brand image refers to consumers' perceptions of a brand. After a significant literature review, a questionnaire was constructed. The questionnaire was distributed through online using google forms. The research consists of a quantitative consumer survey among Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore between the ages of 17 to 64. The tools are analysis used are percentage analysis, weighted average and correlation. The results of the questionnaires conclude that overall significance of social media for branding and its impact on brand image is equal to traditional media. However, it may be concluded that there may be significant differences in the result when different type of consumer is being targeted. The result of the research proves that demographics and social media usage show correlation with the perception of the consumers with the impact of social media and brand image.

**KEYWORDS:** Advertising, Social Media Marketing, Digital Branding, Brand, Brand Image, Online Shopping, Traditional Media, Traditional Marketing.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In today's world, Social media have developed effective communication channel and a cost-effective method for spreading the message by word of mouth. The consumer can ask their queries and doubts are clarified through social media as the companies answer the questions spontaneously. The social media constantly work on keeping the image of their product

This research is conducted to prove that social media is type of communication used by the marketers to communicate with consumers. Currently, a variety of products have been introduced in the market due to the development of technology. So, there is high demand then the required supply for that product in the market along with the number of alternatives. Therefore the Brand is very important and essential for the consumer to purchase the product. A brand is an overall experience of a customer that distinguishes an organization or product from its rivals in the eyes of the customer. Brands are used in business, marketing, and advertising. The brand building for the product is very essential so that the consumer will have closer relationship, which will help in consumer decision process.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Branding

Kotler et al., (2013) states that brands are more than names and images. He speaks about the purchaser's discernments and sentiments about the item and its execution, so marks really exist in the personalities of the clients.

### Social Media

Yan (2011) states that main aim for social media to use for a brand building, it is a sense of membership with the organization, communicate brand values, encourage the audience to engage in a dialogue. In turn, this dialogue helps the organization to maintain a competition between its competitors, it also informs the brand's vision, it helps to assess whether the brand is being communicated properly and promptly, and to build positive brand associations and brand awareness.

Weinberg and Pehlivan (2011) states that the social media marketer must keep consumers engaged in conversation by creating a space in the social media for them to post their reviews and comments and feedbacks and ultimately create brand advocates and supporters through this conversation.

Mangold and Faulds (2009), the second role of social media is to enable word-of-mouth communication from consumer to consumer. This is crucial for brands, as this word of mouth is much faster and more far-reaching than Conventional word of mouth.

Obal, Burch, & Kunz (2011), Word-of-mouth is a critical component of social media marketing and IMC strategy

### Brand Image

Yuan et al., (2016); Lahap et al., (2016) Brand image refers to consumers' emotional and rational perception and is connected with a brand. Brand image plays a main role in business markets, particularly if distinction of products or service is difficult based on their tangible quality features; and buyers show different reactions to mental image of a company or brand if supplied goods are similar.

Keller, (2013); Lee and Tan, (2003) Brand image has a positive impact on customers' desire to buy; and customers are also keen to do online purchase of famous brands.

Casado-Diaz et al. (2017) recently examined effects of electronic word of mouth (EWOM) advertising on customers' willingness to purchase based on the role of brand image,

Seo and Park (2018) investigated the role of social media on brand management and Concluded that brand image has significant effect on EWOM.

Yunus et al., (2016) investigated the effect of brand image on customer behaviour according to EWOM and Concluded that the brand image has positive effect on EWOM.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method of research chosen was quantitative. Quantitative approach was chosen in order to produce comparable data about the usage of social media and conventional media and consumer perceptions on branding in these channels.

Quantitative research approach was chosen as appropriate for collecting enough data that was intended to be suitable for statistical analysis and interpretation.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The data was collected through an online questionnaire/ Google Online Forms. The questionnaire consisted of 30 closed-ended questions including the demographics questions. The sample population is from the students of Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore. The consumers are between the age of 17 to 45. The aim of the questionnaire was to find out strength of the potential impact of social media on brand image and brand awareness in comparison to conventional media is. The target sample size was defined to 146 respondents, which means that margin of error is within 8% with a confidence level of 95%, using normal distribution for calculation based on a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, calculated using normal distribution.

## LIMITATIONS

1. It was difficult to find what were the relevant variables that are related to subject of the study and what were the questions could be used to accurately measure these variables in a questionnaire that was sent to the consumers (respondents).
2. Time was a constraint to collect the data.
3. Sample size is also limited.
4. Some of the questions in the questionnaire was not completed or filled out because the all the data was self-reported by the respondents.

## RESULTS

1. The survey was sent out to approximately 250 people. The non-response rate was 41%. In other words, the completion rate of the survey was 59%. The total amount of completed responses was 146.
2. The 64% of the respondents were male and 36% of the respondents were female, which depicts that there was an over-representation of male respondents in the sample.
3. Distribution of the age:

Age	No. of Respondents
16 - 20	19
21 - 25	28
26 - 30	40
31 - 35	21
36 - 40	23
41 - 45	15
Total	146

4. The percentage of respondents who were active social media users, 94% of the respondents were active social media users. A person who had used social media in past 30 days was named as a social media user.
5. The result shows that the respondents spent on average 2 hours 25 minutes on social media and 1 hour 44 minutes on Conventional media per day.
6. The result implies that people of older age use conventional media and less social media, when compared to respondents of younger ages.

7. The result indicates that much time is spent on social media than Conventional media on average. The age group 20-25 spends the most time per day on social media. Females spend more time in social media in comparison to males in all age groups, except in the age group 40-45 where males seem to use social media slightly more. It is likely that there is some form of bias in male respondents in the age group 30 - 35, assuming from the unexpectedly low result in this group. The number of hours spent per day on conventional media does not show significant differences between the age groups, except for the age group 41 - 45 where the time spent on Conventional media by male respondents is visibly higher than in the other age groups.
8. YouTube is the very popular and most used social media platform, followed by Facebook. The difference from the second most popular to the third most popular social media platform is significant. It could be said that YouTube is the number one 'mass media' of social media platforms due to its number of users. Based on the results, Facebook should generally act as the main platform for communicating and building relationships with consumers, because it has the largest number of users of social networking platforms and it enables direct communication with the consumers.
9. Most social media users have 'liked' or followed a brand or company page at least once on social media in the past 30 days. This is an important piece of information, since by 'liking' or 'following' a brand on social media, the user becomes part of the audience that directly receives content and communication created by the brand on social media.
10. As a negative implication of social media to brand image, according to these results, people are more likely to post negative comments about products or services than they are to recommend a product or a service. However, negative word-of-mouth will take place online, no matter whether a brand chooses to be present or not on social media, and therefore it is better for a brand to take active part in online conversations to guide the outcome of these conversations towards a better result with regard to their interests.
11. A significant amount, 16%, of social media users have recently used social media to request customer support. This result implies that social media may also be used for other non-branding related business functions, such as customer service in this case. Altogether 71% of social media users have recently used social media in ways that have a direct or indirect effect on brands. This result implies that social media users are actively engaging with brands and therefore this adds to the impact of social media on brand image.
12. The average would suggest that females tend to have more friends or followers on social media, and therefore their user activity would have more reach. The median shows the most significant difference between males and females in the amount of 'friends' or 'followers' on social media. The results, it can be said that the average amount of 'friends' or 'followers' on social media is somewhere near 200, but the median is less. This means that most users have less than 200 'friends' or 'followers', but a minority of users have significantly more.
13. The results imply the existence and scale of the potential of user activity in influencing other users to engage with a brand on social media, by using one of the possible variables that could be used to observe this. Based on these results, at least 45% of social media users have at least once engaged with a brand on social media as a direct result of other users' social media activity.

14. The females are at least twice as likely as males to have ‘liked’ or ‘followed’ a brand because their friend has ‘liked’ or ‘followed’ it. The results shown in Figure 22 imply that brands that target female consumers, are more likely to succeed in engaging more users of their target market through viral campaigns on social media.
15. The positive influence of presence and the negative influence of non-presence are shown as percentages of the results on the four dichotomous questions that measured consumer perceptions on these variables. The negative influence of non-presence is presented as negative percentage in order to visualize better the scale of the total influence of presence and non-presence on trust. Based on these results it may be said that the mere presence on social media has slightly more importance to consumers regarding having trust towards a brand or not.
16. The results show the consumer perceptions on the influence of social and conventional media on functional and experiential brand image. The results of the whole sample did not show significant differences in the measured variables. The influence of social media was ranked only slightly higher in experiential brand image than functional brand image. Conventional media’s influence on functional brand image was ranked slightly higher than the influence of social media. The influence on experiential brand image does not show significant differences between social and Conventional media.
17. Pearson Correlation of age with brand image variable:  
 The results in Table 2 show that there were significant negative correlations between age and consumer perceptions of social media’s influence on functional brand image, brand recall and positive brand image. Respondents of older ages were more likely to rate social media’s influence on functional brand image, experiential brand image and brand recall lower than respondents of younger ages. Conversely this means that respondents of younger ages were more likely to rate social media’s influence on these variables higher than respondents of older ages.  
 There was no significant correlation between age and consumer-perceived influence of Conventional media on these brand image variables.

	1.A	1.B	1.C	1.D	2.A	2.B	2.C	2.D
Age	<b>-,23</b>	-,10	<b>-,20</b>	<b>-,29</b>	-,08	,08	,00	-,01
1 – Social Media 2 – Conventional media	A – Functional Brand Image B – Experiential Brand Image C – Brand Recall D – Positive Brand Image <b>Significant correlations are bolded</b>							

18. Pearson correlation of time spent on social and Conventional media with brand image variables.

	1.A	1.B	1.C	1.D	2.A	2.B	2.C	2.D
1.Time Spent	-,04	<b>,18</b>	,06	-,01	<b>-,19</b>	-,05	,04	<b>-,28</b>
2.Time Spent	,00	,07	,00	-,09	<b>,17</b>	<b>,32</b>	<b>,23</b>	<b>,16</b>
1 – Social Media 2 – Conventional media	A – Functional Brand Image B – Experiential Brand Image C – Brand Recall D – Positive Brand Image							

	<b>Significant correlations are bolded</b>
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The correlation between time spent on social and Conventional media and the variables that measured the consumer-perceived influence of social media and Conventional media on functional brand image, experiential brand image, brand recall and positive brand image there were significant correlations with time spent on social media on social media's consumer-perceived influence on experiential brand image and Conventional media's consumer-perceived influence on functional brand image and positive brand image. The former of these correlations was positive, and the two latter correlations were negative.

The amount of time spent on Conventional media correlated significantly with Conventional media's consumer-perceived influence on functional brand image, experiential brand image, brand recall and positive brand image. All these correlations were positive. Time spent on Conventional media did not have any significant correlation with social media's consumer-perceived influence on the measured variables.

In other words, respondents who used social media more rated the influence of social media on experiential brand image higher than respondents who used less social media. Respondents who used social media more also rated the influence of Conventional media on functional brand image and overall positive brand image less significant than respondents who used fewer social media.

Meanwhile, respondents who used Conventional media more rated the influence of Conventional media on all measured variables as more significant than respondents who used less Conventional media. There was no significant correlation between the use of Conventional media and perceptions on social media's influence on the measured variables.

19. The results show that a larger percentage of respondents had bought a product after first being exposed to it through Conventional media. However, this result does not give details of the reasons behind this. There may be several different reasons. One reason might be that Conventional media is being used more to promote products. The result does not, however, necessarily imply that Conventional media would be a better marketing channel to promote product sales.

## CONCLUSIONS

The prevalence of social media in society is now at least as significant as the one of Conventional media channels. Most consumers between the ages 16 to 45 are now active social media users. On average, the respondents of the questionnaire spent more time on social media than Conventional media per day.

The results show the general distinctions over branding in social and Conventional media, but they do not provide a large amount of detail on specific segments of the consumer population or the reasons behind the observations.

Based on the results, brand presence on social media is generally regarded as slightly more important to consumer-perceived trust on a brand. Additionally, brand social media communication was perceived as having slightly more influence on the overall positivity of brand image. Despite of this, the data did not present any generalizable, significant differences regarding direct influence on functional or experiential brand image by brand communication itself on social and Conventional media.



However, the overall impact of Conventional media on brand image seems to be consistent on all age groups, while the overall impact of social media on brand image is the most significant in younger age groups and females. The results therefore imply that there may be significant differences of the impact on brand image depending on more specific targeted segments of consumers.

Unequivocally the impact of social media on brand image is strongly linked to the media usage of the target market, more specifically to how much time the target market spends in social media. To reiterate the results of this study, there may be significant differences in the social media usage with strong correlation to attitudes on brand communication on social media between genders and age groups.

The study did not measure other socio-demographic variables in addition to age and gender, which most likely could be used to identify more differences between the subgroups of the population. Therefore the evaluation of the target market's social media usage and attitudes on brand communication on social media is a task that is left for the marketers, and the results of this study are only to be used to identify the broad differences between social and Conventional media's impact on brand image.

In order to identify these differences amongst the consumer segments, research must be made with more detailed socio-demographic variables and there must be development of more accurate and detailed ways to measure the impact on brand image.

The section that compared advertising channels, showed that social media ranks well compared to other advertising channels regarding irritation caused by advertising (seventh out of nine compared channels) and perceived usefulness of advertising (third out of nine compared channels).

About brand strategy, the study found that there may be significant differences in the demographics of each social media service and brands should determine which social media services to use based on their target market. Additionally, the results show that fast response time in messages and comments is the most important factor to consumers about brand activity on social media. The second most important brand activity was posting relevant content.

The conclusion of the relative impacts of social media and Conventional media on brand image, is that brands should start out with the presumption that social and Conventional media are equally significant regarding the brand image, when they begin forming their branding strategies. The differences in nature of social media and Conventional media should be accounted for and used as channels that support each other creating a synergy of each channel's strengths. Furthermore, even if there was a case where a company would not agree with social media having the benefits that it is said to have, it would be unwise to exclude it from their strategy and leave untapped a channel that the vast majority of consumers is using.

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