BUSINESS ACTIVITIES MARCHING TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE MARKETING AND SALES

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Abstract:

In the era of modern technology, social media has become the oxygen for company's survival in the long run. Social media is one of the rising and successful tools to market and to sell the products online. Social media are used to create brand awareness and reach potential audience. The aim of this study is to understand the importance and effectiveness of social media as a marketing and sales tool post covid-19 as well as its impact on the start-ups like mCaffeine and Fabric Pandit. These companies are marching towards sustainability and are contributing to the well-being of the environment. The findings indicate that social media is one of the most effective platforms that reduces huge costs and to increase sales of these business enterprises. mCaffeine and Fabric Pandit are creating awareness about the importance of being sustainable and encouraging the "Make in India" products.

Keywords: Social Media, mCaffeine, Fabric Pandit, Sustainability.

Introduction:

Social media marketing refers to the use of social media to communicate about and sell the company's products and services. Social media helps the marketers to get connected with the existing customers and also reach out to the new customers. Some of the social media platforms are – Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest and so on. The main objective of the use of social media marketing program is to create a unique content, attract the target audience and increase the traffic by making your network to share it. Social media marketing has raised in recent times, especially since COVID-19 outbreak, as to reach large audience. It has many benefits such as word of mouth, less expensive platform, easy accessibility, quick reach and brand awareness. Public use social media platform to build their network and stay connected whereas companies use it for building their brand and to market their products and services. Social Media has become a vital marketing tool and contributes towards the company's success to a great extent. mCaffeine and Fabric Pandit are such companies that uses social media platforms extensively in order to reach prospect end users and increase their sales.

Review of Literature

(Ruby, 2016) In the era of Globalisation, customers have no geographical restriction to access the products of their taste and preference. Rise in the standard of living, availability of wide range of products of various brands, busy lifestyles, at the comfort of home, discounts and offers are some of the key drivers that pulls customers towards online shopping. The growth of the Indian retail sector has been providing employment opportunities to many. The growth will be humongous if the e-retailers use a mix marketing strategy to attract and retain their customers and strives to understand and satisfy their needs.

(Elena, 2016) The social media as a marketing tool reflects the development of the "Customer Relationship Management" (CRM). This paper highlights the importance of transition from traditional customer relationship management to social customer relationship management. The study represents how companies can be benefited with the use of social media to market their products or services and how it leads to growing sales and profits. CRM through social media aid companies to get access of customer preference information that can be used to predict the consumers' buying behavior.

(Reguraman, 2019) The study highlights the brand trust as one of the major factors that influences the customers to shop on their favorite omni channel e-tailers. People tend to visit the website that offer more personalized promotions of the products. On the other hand, the customer can directly make purchases with the distributor or the original merchant without any middlemen. It also helps e-tailers to sell their products with less cost involvement. The customers of this omni channel play a critical role for the e-tailers. The omni channel e-tailers must invest more in the technology as the experience of the customers influences their repurchase decisions.

(Abrar et al., 2019) Online customer engagement demands commitments and trust of the customers which is required more on the online platforms. This paper highlights the service quality, brand experience and online customer engagement majorly influences the e-trust. The brand familiarity is a major aspect that positively impacts the online customer engagement. It is assumed that higher the brand familiarity, greater the trust towards the brand and higher the customer satisfaction.

(Julianne, 2020) Small businesses need not invest extra in order to reach huge population. Social media is a free tool that is been already used by the retailers and customers. This is also the solution for small enterprises to continue their business without the need of closure during global pandemic. The only difference between social media marketing and social commerce is that social commerce guide users in their purchase journey unlike social media marketing which redirect users to the online store. Digitisation has made it easy for small businesses to connect and communicate with customers do it was hard to adapt to the drastic changes.

(Jamil et al., 2021) Social media marketing is a two-way form of communication as the end users can visit again and review, rate and share their experience with company's products and services. Some products with the option of customisation and quick interaction would significantly impact the customer's purchase intentions and also increases the brand equity. The company's brand must be socially identified

by the users and building a community who actively take part in the activities and discussions is vital. Also, customer satisfaction impacts their loyalty towards the brand. The satisfaction of the customer influences two intentions, that is, continuance intention (active participation and being a part of the brand community) and recommendation intention (word of mouth marketing).

(Dubbenlink et al., 2021) Due to covid-19 outbreak, there is a tremendous growth in e-commerce business as customers preferred online shopping. Social media marketing is effective tool to reach audience and research shows that consumers shop from independent retailers they discovered on social media. When customers are satisfied with digital services, they tend to buy regularly and turn to be the loyal customers. The second factor that impacts the brand equity is brand engagement. It has become vital to create an online presence and has given an opportunity to communicate and/or interact with customers that helps in building a positive brand equity. The third factor is finance. Due to covid-19, there is a drastic change in the financial decisions of both buyers and sellers.

(Shahbaznezhad et al., 2021) The research studies the social media contents' contribution towards users' engagement behaviour. The companies are majorly focusing on their presence on social media and increasing the social network. This is because of the customer relationship and engagement with the brand. The content type and the format used to deliver the content must be suitable for greater rich and engagement.

(Mankani, 2022) The paper highlights that the terms like phosphate free, recyclable, reusable, environmentally friendly are mostly used and assumed for green marketing. It includes consumer goods, industrial goods and services as well as production process that cause less or no harm to the environment and leads to sustainable development. The green marketing claims of the firms must clearly state the environmental benefits which is the result of the green marketing practices. In green marketing, consumers are willing to pay more to the green products keeping in mind the social responsibility. India is ready for green marketing few challenges that needs to be addressed.

(Jothikumar, 2022) Green marketing is not limited only to sale of products that are environmentally secure, rather includes product modification, changes in the production process, sustainable packaging as well as modifying advertising. Green marketing is accepted as an environmental sustainability among consumers and has been a concern towards the environment by them. Sustainable development should be included in the company's goals and objectives. Green marketing is also referred as environmental marketing, sustainable marketing and natural marketing. Green marketing helps customers to make educated choices. Though green marketing seems expensive to the companies initially, it is cost effective in the long run. It helps companies to get into new and innovative market along with long term progress and profitability.

Research design

Statement of Problem

The presence of Business enterprises on social media, irrespective of the type of business, is not only effective but also a necessity for potential growth and being competitive in the market. Marketing the products and services and carrying out various business operations on different online platforms is the initiative to march towards sustainable development. This research helps us to understand such initiation taken by the two Indian Companies, mCaffeine and Fabric Pandit. This research helps to understand the effectiveness of the Social Media Marketing campaign to reach the large population and to attract prospective audience in post COVID-19. We will also study how vital the customer engagement is, that directly influences the customers' impression about the brand.

Scope of the study

The outbreak of pandemic has changed the approach of business enterprises to reach their target audience and also has an impact on the buying patterns of the consumers. There is a shift from the conventional methods to the modern methods of marketing, buying and selling of goods and rendering of services. Though there exist the concepts of e-tailing and social media marketing prior, it suddenly became a part and parcel of the customers during the period of national crisis. The companies are making optimum utilization of the opportunity which in turn is benefitting them in term of costs and profits. Customers now being aware of the importance of the environmental conservation, are choosing the products that are eco-safe and ready to pay more than that of its usual price. The purpose of this research is to study the impact of usage of social media in increasing the prospect customers in post COVID-19 and the shift towards sustainability. This research also helps us to understand the importance of customer relationship and its contribution towards the profitability of the business enterprises.

Objectives

- To know the importance and effectiveness of social media as a tool to get social recognition and reach in post COVID-19.
- To display how a business can cut down costs using social media as a platform to market and sale the products.
- To highlight the importance of customer engagement and its impact on the loyalty of the customers.
- To understand the environmentally safe initiatives of mCaffeine and Fabric Pandit in their business operations.
- To study how these companies accomplish Sustainable Development Goals of United Nations.

Sources of Data

The data used in the research study are sourced from some of the websites that includes Google Scholar, Research Gate and web articles.

Methods of data collection

The research that carried out is conceptual in nature, supported by secondary data. The data that's collected and analysed are according to the theme of the research paper.

Limitations of the study

There is no previous research done for the companies, mCaffeine and Fabric Pandit. Even the official websites of the companies provide limited information. As social media took its position as an effective marketing and sales tool during and post pandemic, most of the data collected for the study falls under this timeframe.

Interpretation

Importance of social media as a marketing and sales tool

Social media fills the gap between the marketers and their target audience. Here are some of the reasons that justify why social media is an effective marketing tool.

- *Awareness about the brand in detail* – Customers now are not only aware of the brand and its products but also are updated with the latest news. Continuous engagement with customers builds trust among them. Influencing marketing too contributes towards the brand awareness.

- *Increase Customer Base* – Posting videos, attractive images, captivating quotes and meaningful conversations with the audience not only helps in retaining the old customers but also attracts the new ones.

- *Instant Feedback* – Social Media is very much helpful in collecting the feedback about the brand and its products and/or services. It is easy, quick and instantaneous.

- *Measurement of performance* – The performance, customer engagement and reach can be measured using management tools.

- *Build a community* – Reaching and retaining your potential customers can build a community. Your customers would stay active and loyal to your brand. Content marketing plays a vital role here.

Effectiveness of Social Media in modern era

In today's market scenario, it is highly impossible to formulate effective marketing strategies without considering social media as one of its tools. Use of social media as one of its marketing tools would be effective only when the timely information is provided that customers are in need of. One of the main ways that public would be aware of the brand is when it is shared by their peers. Followers would turn as loyal and active followers of the brand when they are constantly engaged and by building trust in them. Also,

the community members would purchase the products of the brand when their expectations are met. But there is a gap between expectations and the actual service of the brand. Customer won't be provided with the information they are in need of at the time of requirement. Brands do not even respond to the issues faced by their customers. When these are taken care by the company, the social media will help to reach larger prospect audience.

How Social Media Marketing is better in reaching larger audience when compared to traditional marketing

Traditional marketing strategies are one-way system wherein the brand sends messages to the mass audience in the form of television ads, radio, etc. These strategies have minimal potential for interaction with target audience. While social media is an interactive platform where the brand gets a chance to directly address customers and interact on one-on-one basis.

Social Media Marketing in post Covid-19

Use of social media as a platform to market and sell the brand's products and/or services increased during the outbreak of covid-19. This is because there was risk involved in visiting the stores. This opportunity was optimally utilised by many business enterprises and built trust amongst customers regarding the safety purchase. The main objective of the use of social media is to reach larger potential customers and to enhance the sales. Companies were able to generate revenue due to increased sales through social media. During global crisis, social media was a very effective marketing tool to continuously communicate about the brand and its products and services.

Social Media Marketing and Cost Reduction

Advertisements on newspapers, radio, television ads are usually unnoticed or skipped by people. Also, traditional way of marketing is comparatively very expensive. While social media marketing is cost effective as the company has to pay minimal amount to reach more people and also helps in generating leads. Marketing and answering the customer queries or issues would require very few employees and resources.

Even recruiting those employees would save cost as the company need to post across its social media platforms regarding the job openings than printing flyers and in newspapers. Public will not choose a brand that is unknown to them.

Brand recognition plays a vital role while making a purchase. Posting regularly and engaging your customers will make them recognise the brand. Providing offers and discounts to your followers will be one of the strategies to make purchases. The company need not worry about the customers' perception regarding the brand as collecting the feedback is free and quick. Any customer will make a purchase from the brand with good review and ratings. The company with more positive reviews and ratings would generate more sales and revenue.

Content Strategy for Customer Engagement

Developing a content that is connecting, useful and relevant helps in customer engagement. The provision of such information should be the primary focus of the company. Customer engagement means providing good experience to customers and answering their queries and issues. Strategizing the content to engage the target audience is essential in attracting and retaining them. Customer oriented content and relevance are key factors for customer engagement. The consistent and high-quality content has its own benefits.

- When the brand provides positive experiences to its audience, the chances of retaining customers is more.
- Unique and catchy content creation will help in lead generation.
- Providing the right content at the right time to the right audience will build a healthy relationship between the brand and its customers.
- Often interactions with the customers, builds trust.
- High quality content increases the awareness about the brand and the traffic.
- Connecting content increases loyal brand customers.
- Best content marketing is a cost-effective marketing strategy.

Quality content marketing helps in generating revenue and also one of the reasons why people will follow on various social media platforms of a particular brand.

mCaffeine

mCaffeine is an Indian company that was established in the year 2015. It's the first caffeinated brand in India with wide range of caffeinated personal care products that are available both online and in physical stores. The company mostly targets youth without being gender specific or skin tone biased is the highlight of the brand.

mCaffeine produces top-class products using Coffee, Green tea and Chocolate that contains caffeine in it. The products so produced are Made in India, 100% vegan, cruelty free, dermatologically tested, FDA approved, with no SLS and paraben in it. The company is more socially responsible towards the environment and has achieved zero plastic footprint. The brand's stand for clean and sustainable self-care as well as being gender neutral made it to be on a spotlight.

mCaffeine has its presence on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and even has its official website. The brand uses digital marketing strategies to great extent and is clearly big with customer engagement.

The social media influencer strategy has worked well for the brand in marketing the products and in reaching wide range of customers. mCaffeine is more focused and consistent on social media to market their products with comforting visuals.

mCaffeine says get "Addicted to good" in its latest campaign. The brand collaborated with actors Radhika Apte, Shruthi Hassan and Vikrant Massey for its social cause. The campaign aims at highlighting the benefits of caffeine present in its products. This ingredient helps its end users to feel good about their own selves. The whole point of this campaign is to feel good and be the best version of themselves.

Fabric Pandit

Fabric Pandit is a D2C (Direct to Customer) ecommerce start-up that was established in June 2020. The products of this Indian company comprise of fabric materials, masks, unstitched suits and sanitary pad pouches. The fabrics are manufactured by a team of in-house designers who are spread across the country and focuses on providing the best designs to its buyers. The target segment involves both men as well as women and serve mostly to small businesses, fashion designers, boutiques and fashion enthusiasts. The aim of Fabric Pandit is to supply high quality fabrics at factory rates to their customers by eliminating all the intermediaries. The company curates, source, manufactures, designs and sells fabrics and the related products at the most affordable prices. Being empathetic, trustworthy, accountability and moving towards growth are the core values of Fabric Pandit. Customers' comfort, protection and reusability are prioritised and imprinted in the minds of the manufacturers while producing the finest fabrics to them. The company has sold over 4+ million masks and did their part of contribution to the country during pandemic. The company has 70+ employees working to provide quality service to the end users. The products of Fabric Pandit reaches to over 15000+ pin-codes across India and has delivered approximately 5,20,000 orders. The team strategises and implements them faster as they always strive to achieve customer satisfaction.

Fabric Pandit markets its products on various social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Website. It has its presence even on LinkedIn. The customers can track their orders using the links and order ID sent through mails, SMS and WhatsApp message. The existing customers are retained by sending them timely personalised messages on WhatsApp regarding the new stocks and offer or discount sales.

Findings

- Social media marketing is the most effective marketing strategy to reach more potential customers and to create brand awareness.
- If the brand offers positive experience to its customers, it in turn enjoys the benefit of word of mouth.

- Social media helps the company to increase sales, revenue and also contributes to the company's success.

- Social media is an effective tool as it assists the company to measure the performance.

- As public mostly spend more time on social media, reaching them is easy when compared to traditional marketing.

- One-on-one communication between the brand and the customers, helps to build trust in them.

- Using social media as a marketing tool is cost effective as it requires minimal resources and employees.

- Easy and quick accessibility to the customer feedback.

- Only when the content shared is of high quality, connecting and useful, the customer engagement is possible.

- Social media marketing was in existence pre Covid but it had a tremendous growth post Covid-19.

- Global crisis did not stop the company from marketing their products rather provided an opportunity to communicate continuously with prospect customers.

- mCaffeine is being sustainable by producing products that are 100% vegan, cruelty free, dermatologically tested, FDA approved, with no SLS and paraben in it.

- The brand's objective is also aligned with the Central Government's campaign, that is, encouraging "Make in India" products.

- The company is more socially responsible towards the environment and has achieved zero plastic footprint.

- The brand uses digital marketing strategies to great extent and is clearly big with customer engagement. Also, it is more focused and consistent on social media to market their products with comforting visuals.

- The social media influencer strategy has worked well for the brand in marketing the products and in reaching wide range of customers.

- "Addicted to good", the latest campaign emphasises on the benefits of caffeine and unearthing and embracing the best version of oneself.

- Fabric Pandit's operations are completely online. It's being sustainable by using no or minimal use of papers.

- The company focuses on reusability of its products without throwing much waste to the environment.

- Social media platforms are extensively used by the company to reach large audience and to attract the new users.

- As the marketing is completely through online, Fabric Pandit cut the costs down and sources it to various other business operations.

- No intermediaries, the products are directly sold to customers by manufacturers.
- It sends personalised messages to its prospect audience that makes them feel special and included. This in turn helps in strengthening the buyer-seller relationship.

Suggestions

- Both the companies, mCaffeine and Fabric Pandit, must highlight their steps towards sustainability as well as create awareness about the importance of being sustainable.
- Customer engagement and reach is the constant task for the companies to retain the prospect customers.
- Focusing on providing the right and captivating content aids in going viral.
- Sponsoring to the social cause events will help in reaching large audience and creating brand recognition.
- Fabric Pandit has to reduce the number of days in delivering the order as there are chances of customers shifting to other brands.
- Fabric Pandit has to look into its stocking system as that directly affects the customers' loyalty towards the brand. The option called "notify me" points out the weakness of the company with regards to stocking of the final products.
- The products of mCaffeine and fabric Pandit are not affordable by all the classes of the society.

Conclusion

During the outbreak of COVID-19, there was a drastic rise in the use of social media as a marketing and sales tool. Every business, be it micro, small, medium or macro enterprises, made their presence on social media. This was essential in order to reach their prospect customers and stay connected with them, even during the global crisis. Due to their presence on various social media platforms, public were able to make purchases and felt safe and secured to order online. Marketing the products and selling them online was beneficial for the companies such as to reduce costs, to increase sales and to gain profits.

Use of social media as a platform to market the companies' products are more sustainable as compared to traditional marketing. The existing companies are marching towards sustainability while the new start-ups like mCaffeine and Fabric Pandit are more conscious and are highly contributing for the well-being of the eco-system. Even the end users are aware and are accepting the concept of sustainability. They are ready to pay more than that of the usual rates to the eco-safe products.

Concluding, in today's competitive world, social media is not an option of marketing strategy but a vital choice. Customers too are making a way out to contribute their share towards sustainability.

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