

Communication Strategies, Brand Communication and Social Media

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ABSTRACT

Internet is the emerging information technology with the credibility of immediacy and fastness, thus, it brings globalization in every aspects of communication. We live in the midst of global communication boom where the use of social media between individuals for personal and professional use is widespread. Social media and social networking are no longer in their infancy. Social media continues to grow rapidly, offering global consumers and meaningful ways to engage with brands and people. In recent days, internet advertising has taken new forms which have more advantages over the traditional mediums like print media, television and radio. Marketing communication is becoming precise, personal, interesting, interactive and social. The purpose of this paper has been to look at how social media used for brand communication. Brands use different strategies to communicate with their Target audience and to create impact over to make them interact. People get attached to brands in social networking sites more than usual banner and pop up ads. These sites become interactive platform for audience and for advertisers. The primary and secondary method of data collection will be used. In which online survey and published material will be data for study. This research will reveal the effectiveness of brand communication in promoting, advertising brands in social networking sites.

Key Words : Social networking sites, Brand, Communication, Strategy, Social media

INTRODUCTION

A human social network can be a group of friends living within a city, or a group of college classmates who remain in frequent contact socially. Humans in all cultures at all times form complex social networks; the term social network here means ongoing relations among people that matter to those engaged in the group. Since the explosion of the web as a business medium, one of its primary uses has been for marketing. Soon, the web could become a critical distribution channel for the majority of successful enterprises. Social networking websites are online communities of people who share interests and activities or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others.

In 2002, social networking era really started. In 2006,

anyone with and email address could sign up in social networking sites (Zarella, 2010)

Social Networking Sites:

Social media is a phrase being tossed around a lot these days, but it can sometimes be difficult to answer the question of what is social media. The best way to define social media is to break it down. Media is an instrument on communication, like a newspaper or a radio, so social media would be a social instrument of communication. Think of regular media as a one-way street where you can read a newspaper or listen to a report on television, but you have very limited ability to give your thoughts on the matter. Social media, on the other hand, is a two-way street that gives you the ability to communicate too. Social networking sites have turned

out to be a raging craze for teens nowadays giving a blow to age restrictions of 13 years. Social networking sites as web based services that allow individuals to construct a public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections. Other way of defining Social networking sites is that it is a place where people can use networks of online friends and group memberships to keep in touch with current friends, reconnect with old friends or create real-life friendships through similar interests or groups. Besides establishing important social relationships, social networking members can share their interests with other like-minded members by joining groups and forums. A social networking service is an online service, platform, or site that focuses on facilitating the building of social networks or social relations among people who, for example, share interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections. Social media can be comprehended as shared or collective method of communication. Though this form of collaborative communication is not a recent phenomenon, the advent of information technology based social media has transformed its scope and reach. A recent study by Stanford based Gartner Inc, a research based firm, has before and after making a purchase decision. As such sites like Twitter and Facebook have become important tools for shopping. It has been observed that people in the developed and developing countries having access to the internet have been increasingly using social media for entertainment, socializing and information gathering.

Social Media Advertising:

Advertising on social network websites is a great way to promote both services and products offered by your company. Because of its massive popularity online there is a huge audience waiting to be targeted and because websites such as Facebook and Twitter are free to register with you won't be spending much money unless you are going to hire someone to do the advertising. Social Media Marketing refers to marketing done through social media or social networking websites. While most companies and organizations have their own websites, it can be difficult to reach users who do not already know about the organization. Therefore, many organizations have found it useful to also develop a presence on websites, such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter as well. Lazer and Kelly's (1973) define social marketing

as "concerned with the application of marketing knowledge, concepts, and techniques to enhance social as well as economic ends. It is also concerned with the analysis of the social consequences of marketing policies, decisions and activities."

Less than half (43%) of marketers plan on increasing their online advertising efforts, which includes pay per-click ads. Mid-sized businesses (250-999 employees) were most likely to increase online advertising (51%). Social media marketing provides a low cost way for businesses to reach large numbers of users and gain brand recognition. Since social networking websites already have large established online communities, businesses and organizations can gain exposure by simply joining these websites. Organizations can create custom social media profiles, and then build their own communities within these sites by adding users as friends or followers.

Many companies attract users by posting frequent updates and providing special offers through their social media profile pages. Social network advertising is a term that is used to describe a form of Online Advertising that focuses on social networking sites. Social networks can take advantage of demographic data on your profile and hence target the advertisement directly to you. Direct advertising based on the network of friends is the most effective format but also causes the most controversy. Indirect advertising is an innovative marketing technique in which a company will create a 'page' or 'group' those users can choose to join.

There are a variety of ways to use SNS, and the different features allow creativity and experimentation in advertising. For instance, in Facebook, when users log-on, they are taken to a homepage called a "News Feed," where they were allowed to view those advertisements. Consumers use the net to see what they want, when they want it.

Facebook:

Facebook was launched on February 4, 2004 and it's a pioneer in social networking with 800+ million active users worldwide. Its motive is to make the world a more open place by helping people connect and share. In India, Facebook is used by 42 per cent of mobile users but only accounts for 27 per cent of all mobile page views in the country. Social networking is the most preferred activity of a majority of mobile users around the world who surf internet on their handsets, a survey has revealed.

Twitter:

Twitter is the second largest social network site in the world with 300+ million active users' worldwide. Its motive is to follow your interests. Service type of Twitter is micro blogging. Its revenue is about \$140 million as per the latest data available. It's based on the principle of followers for a celebrity and total number of tweets. 57% of all Indian Twitter users have joined the platform in less than a year! With such quick rise in popularity and with masses coming into fold, brands and advertisers are having to quickly adapt to the ever changing dynamics of this medium.

Growth Of Social Media Marketing:

A recent study, "The State of Small Business Report," sponsored by Network Solutions, LLC and the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business, points to economic struggles as the catalyst for social media's rapid popularity. The study results show that social media usage by small business owners increased from 12% to 24% in just few months, and almost 1 out of 5, actively uses social media as part of his or her marketing strategy.

Here's a breakdown of what the small businesses reported as the main uses of social media marketing:

1. 75% have a company page on a social networking site.
2. 69% post status updates or articles of interest on social media sites.
3. 57% build a network through a site such as LinkedIn.
4. 54% monitor feedback about the business.
5. 39% maintain a blog.
6. 26% tweet about areas of expertise.
7. 16% use Twitter as a service channel.

Social Media Marketing In India - An Overview:

India has 71 million active internet users. Social Media is really picking up new heights in India. According to Regus Global Survey of business social networking, India tops the usage of social networking by business – it has the highest activity index, 127, far more than the US'97, and 52% of the Indian respondent companies said that they had acquired new customers using social networks while 35% American companies managed that. Many companies are coming big way for Social Media Optimization for their Product or Services nowadays.

During elections Social Media was used to influence Indian Voters. Social Media Marketing in India is being

undertaken by brands like Tata Docomo, MTV India, Channel V, Clear Trip, Tata Photon, Axe deodorants, Microsoft, Naukri, Shaadi and many more. Besides, numerous Indian celebrities are also using SMM platform to promote their movies, music and events via Twitter, Facebook and personalized blogs. Social Media Marketing is also boosting public relations business. Several PR agencies in India are undertaking brand building exercises for corporate organizations, brands and celebrities. Several Campaigns like 'Bell Bajao' and 'Jaago Re' have been quite successful on Social Networking Sites. These campaigns have been spreading the word about their cause through blogs, Twitter and Facebook.

Why Social Networking Sites as an Advertising Tool?:

From the last decade, social networking is on the rise for business reasons and also for personal use. With its popularity increasing day by day, the need for business tables to go social is indispensable. There are four main reasons for social networks used as advertising tools.

Cost efficiency:

Advertising on social networks is relatively cheap compared to other Traditional media; it usually has a similar or expanded reach at much lower costs. In Addition, it is possible for companies to generate free publicity through creative Advertising techniques. There have been a number of successful viral marketing Campaigns in Twitter and Facebook in the recent years for e.g. Kotak Mahindra (Save with Subu), Reliance 3G Tweet-a-tab contest. Creating a page for a brand in Facebook is free which is cost efficiency and also creates a large number of active followers.

Large reach:

Since social networking websites has millions of active users, it has become more popular and acts as a good medium for sharing their SOCIAL EXPERIENCE and helps in building relationships. The impact for a social network is the reach of an advertisement on a large scale. With its demand for advertisement is on the rise, displaying an advertisement is significant in such networks is essential for its improvement in potential. The reach by a social network is greater than any other mass media of its kind.

Targeted advertising:

Advertisers have access to a great deal of information about Users and their interests, allowing them to customize and target their advertisements to a degree not yet seen in any other advertising medium.

Time spent online:

People are spending increasing amounts of time online, especially on social networking websites, at the expense of traditional advertising media such as television and newspapers. This can be viewed as a result of many of the traditional functions – news, television shows – of the old advertising Media being shifted online to social networks. As a result, Advertisers are increasingly looking for ways to reach out to consumers who are spending more and more time online.

Brand Communication:

Branding your products and effectively communicating that brand is essential in determining success in marketing and building value of your products and organization. Brand communication is a vital process in keeping brand alive in the minds of the target. Brand communication done properly helps in building trust and equity. So, it is essential to remain visible otherwise the brand is doomed already. It is clear to everyone today that building trust is not a day's job but a daily job of continuous effort. Advertising is central to create and maintain a wider meaning of brand communication. Brands such as Mercedes-Benz, Gucci, Parada and Rolls-Royce have powerful significance for non-consumers as well as for consumers. Branded item carry promise of quality and value. Advertisements have become such a feature of daily life in developing standards. We are struck, then, when particular ads become topics of general conversation.

Brand Communication Through Social Networking Sites:

Some brands are associated with colours. When you think of Coca-Cola, you probably think of Soda, but probably think of red colour. The strong the association people have with coke and the red colour. The visual identities of early 21st century digital businesses sprang out of no barriers, globally accessible, spontaneous, individual participation on internet. Blue colour of digital media, users will associate it with Facebook. Likewise, Google celebrates its everyday appeal by changing its own logo to mark famous anniversaries and contemporary

events.

Certain types of brand communication give information or are aimed at leading directly to coupons, mail shots, direct response ads and social networking websites. It stimulates short term behaviour. Ads give a real short term nudge towards increased choice of brand. If at first the same brand has been chosen before and if second it is being to be chosen by other people (conformity). Exposure to an advertisements can also increase the probability of the brand being bought, the single nudge repeated overtime.

Review of Literature:

In a survey conducted by Marketing Sherpa, a US based marketing research company, it was observed that out of the 1886 marketing and PR professionals surveyed, 68% thought that Social media is changing the way companies communicate. And around 90% agree that social Media is most effective in brand building. Interestingly, around 46% respondents quoted a lack of knowledgeable staff rather than the notion of ineffectiveness of social media to be the reason for not employing it. Internet marketing has had an immense impact in the recent years. Most prominently in UK, where internet advertising spends has overtaken popular mass media like print and television.

According to a report by Price Waterhouse Coopers, as reported by Fox News, online advertising accounted for 24.3% of total spend on advertising in the UK; UK being the first developed economies to have such a large scale expenditure on Internet advertising. Considering the growth of the medium, other major economies are expected to follow suit soon.

Borges reported that today's buyers want to be engaged differently than in years past and many traditional marketing tactics simply do not work anymore. Social media marketing is a revolutionary way to build solid relationships with buyers. Low cost, brand building, staffing advantages, loyalty and level playing field are key benefits of social networking sites as a successful marketing media

Lacy and Hernandez (2009) says Twitter gives the ability to share nearly 140- characters thoughts in a split second, where user can easily share links to press releases and stories about their business, service or product. Making tweets interesting and diverse, there is a more possibility of increasing the followers, by consider with news sharing and stories about the industry that they

serve.

Ricadela (2007) says, Coca-Cola has been running promotions on MySpace for the past two years for brands including Cherry Coke and Fanta and has promoted Diet Coke and other drinks on Google's YouTube.

Smith (2010) says that Face book is becoming one of the great internet communications of people time now days. Whereas many companies have tried to emulate Face book's success or challenge it in one geography or another, Face book has proven that the core asset on which all of its services are built - the social graph - is much more defensible and powerful than many others once anticipated. Visitors to social networking sites are significantly more likely than average to visit leisure-oriented retail site categories, such as music, jewellery/luxury goods/accessories, consumer electronics and apparel. Heavy social networking visitors are defined as the top 20% of visitors based on time spent on social networking sites.

People typically enjoy sharing their experiences with these products, whether it is to talk about their new iPhone or the pair of designer jeans they just bought. Social networking sites offer the venue for those conversations to occur. Social media advertising is ideal for promoting brand recognition, although click-through rates are not so strong. Still, there is no doubt that advertising via social media sites is an effective way to increase your overall revenue stream (Brinlee, 2007).

METHODOLOGY

Objectives:

- To analyze brand communication strategy through social networking sites.
- To find out advertisements effectiveness and what attracts the target audience most.

Purpose of the Study:

The aim of the study to explore what is more beneficial for brands and companies for communication either advertising or engaging prospective consumers through social media or social networking sites.

Methods of Data Collection:

To analyze and find the effectiveness of communication strategy in developing brand, and what attracts the target audience the most through social networking sites was done with the survey method in the research. The survey research strategy is the most popular

and common for social research. This method helped to identify the reach of the brand among its target audience, ways of impact, usage of these social networking sites and access to these form of communication.

Research Design:

This research study adopted survey in order to find the effectiveness and the impact of advertisements of any product or the service among the target market through social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter.

Sample Size:

The respondents chosen for this study is constrained to the target population like young adults, Graduates within the age of 16 years to 30 years. Probability sampling technique is used in which randomly questionnaires were mailed. The sampling size is hundred (100).

Survey:

Survey was conducted randomly among Face book and Twitter user community, by sending questionnaire online to collect the individual opinion from the respondents.

Data Analysis Method:

Data was entered, edited and analyzed by using the SPSS. Statistical tools such as weighted average and Factor Analysis was applied to analyze the data. The scope of this research is limited to understand the brand communication effectiveness through advertisements in SNS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From this result it is observed that, 68% of the internet users use Face book to be socially connected. Whereas 20% use twitter for social communication and 12% of the users use both Face book as well as twitter. Not until recently Face book and twitter gained popularity among the internet users. But Face book outnumbered twitter users by having 900 million users with 500 million users. Social networks have grown rapidly, and some like face book and twitter have achieved the mass market and penetrated in a few months since their inception, such applications have infringed their users in different strategy to interact with more people (Table 1 and Fig. 1).

The study found that 52% among the Social Networking Sites users log into their account every day.

Face book	Twitter	Both	Others
68	20	12	0

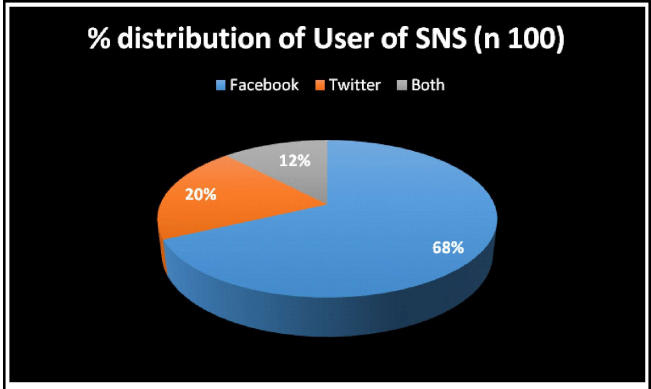


Fig. 1 : % distribution of User of SNS

18% of the users are 24x7 connected to their SNS accounts. It is found that 16% of the users log in to their account 2-5 times in a day and 14% of the populace log in only once a week to their SNS accounts. Twitter has 2 million tweets a day whereas there are more than 250 million uploads on Face book every day. Users and usage of SNS has boomed drastically in recent times. Using sites such as Face book and Twitter basically take the place of television. According to the article “Watch out for Addiction to Social Networking Sites,” “Psychiatrists say users of social networking sites are extending their sense of identity, their sense of self” (Table 2 and Fig. 2).

From the data, it is found that 58% of SNS users

Daily	24x7	2-5 times a day	Once a week
52	18	16	14

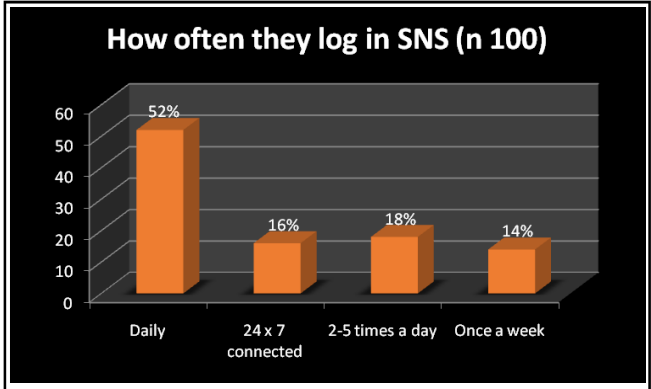


Fig. 2 : How often they log in?

spend 30 minutes-1 hour daily on their SNS accounts. 14% of the users spend 2 hours-3 hours on their accounts whereas 10% spend 4 hours-6 hours on their SNS accounts and 18% of the users. Today a large part of the youth is addicted to social networking. Addiction can be defined as spending too much time on social networking sites rather than doing what’s important. Certain people get so caught up in knowing what everyone is doing; it becomes a routine for them to follow their every move online (Table 3 and Fig. 3).

From the survey data, it is understood that 36% of

30 mins-1 hour	2 hours-3 hours	4 hours-6 hours	More than 6 hours
58	14	10	18

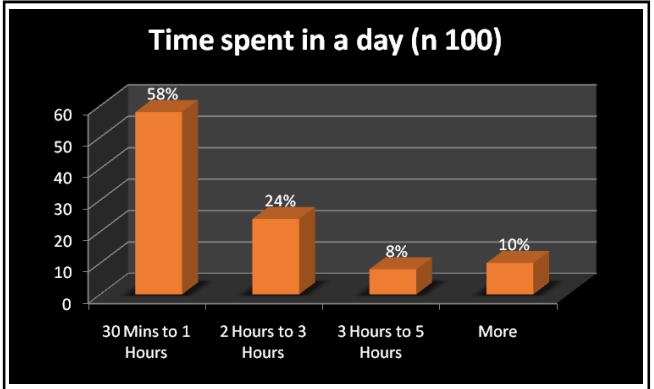


Fig. 3 : Time spent in a day

the users are attracted by the fan pages on Social Networking Sites such as face book and twitter; whereas 18% of the users get attracted towards the tweets posted online and advertisements catches attention of 46% of the users. Social media advertising is the most innovative way used by the companies for interacting with public. Advertising through social media has also comforted the public in a way that they could get to know about things when they log into their SNS accounts. 9 out of 10 businesses use social media as a platform for interaction with the audience. Companies use social media for accomplishing their variety of marketing goals (Table 4 and Fig. 4).

From the previous table it was made out that more

Fan Pages	Tweets	Advertisements
36	18	46

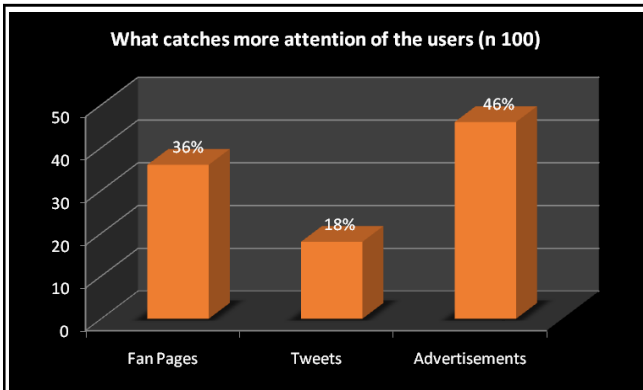


Fig. 4 : What catches more attention of the users?

percentage of users is attracted toward advertisements compared to fan pages or tweets. But then the question rises is that how many times do they react to such advertisements? From the data we got from the survey, it is made out that 10% of the users react to the ads every time they log in; whereas 70% of the users react to these ads some times and 20% of the users do not react to such advertisements. It often turns to be irritating when these advertisements are screened online. The viewers are many a times distracted by these advertisements but at the same time they are proved beneficial. Online advertising gives a wider range of coverage; they are more informative than the offline advertisements. Online advertising allows you to target your audience so well, that you only need to pay when someone chooses to find out more information after seeing the advert (Table 5 and Fig. 5).

The survey shows that 78% of the SNS users follow

Every time you log in	Sometimes	Does not bother
10	70	20

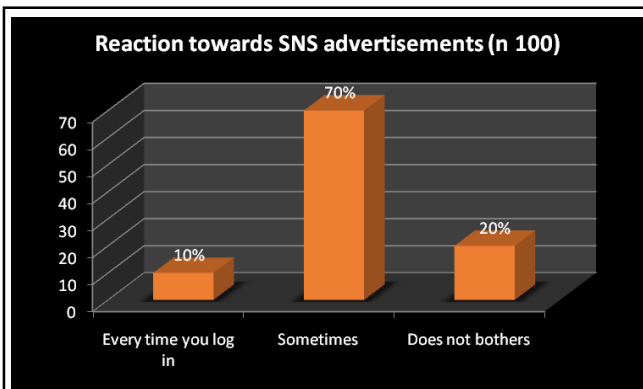


Fig. 5 : Reaction towards SNS advertisement

the pages of their favourite brand and 22% of the users seem uninterested in following the brand pages. Brand page following has become a new trend among the SNS users. They follow their favourite brand pages in order to get timely notifications to their SNS accounts. This certainly helps them to know what is new in their favourite brands. This following also proves beneficial for the companies. This page following creates a better brand communication between the companies and the followers. This automatically develops brand loyalty in the follower of the brand (Table 6 and Fig. 6).

The companies of different brands share the pictures

Table 6 : Q7. Brand page following (In %)

Yes	No
78	22

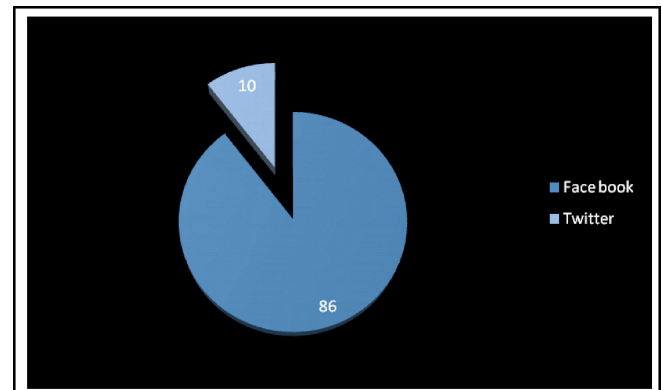


Fig. 6 : Brand page following

of their products, etc. on these SNS so as to keep their followers update with their latest releases, etc. Coca-cola is the best brand on social networks with 60,908,733 followers. According to the surveyed data, it is found that 38% of the users say yes when asked the question and 10% of the users said no. 52% of the users said that these shared posts are somewhat useful to them (Table 7 and Fig. 7).

There are many types of online advertising such as

Table 7 : Q8. Do you find the posts shared by the brands useful? (In %)

Yes	No	Somewhat
38	10	52

newsletter advertising, floating ads, interstitial ads, pop-under advertising, etc. Four other forms of advertisements are web banner, pop-ups, flash advertisements and video advertisements. From the data it is concluded that 34%

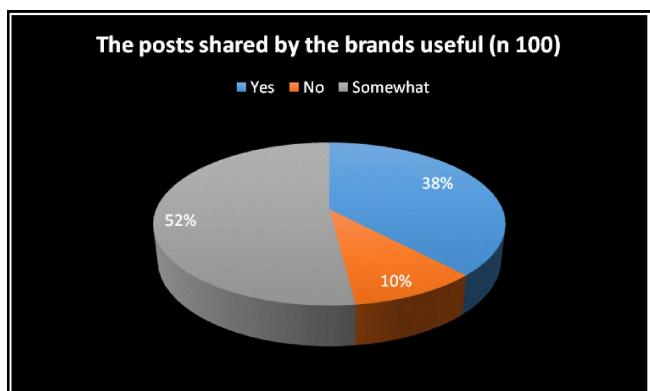


Fig. 7 : Reaction towards SNS advertisement

find web banners more attractive, 18% go with pop-ups and 24%-24% users are attracted by flash and video advertisements. These ads play a very vital role in communication. Banner ads provide direct traffic to your website as just one click of a mouse button gives them information on a company’s products and services. Banner ads are useful to companies in that they help them gain recognition in the market. These results prove beneficial for the companies, as they can make out what kind of ads attracts audience the most (Web Banner according to the survey data) (Table 8 and Fig. 8).

These results reveal that 86% of the users find Ads

Web Banners	Pop-Ups	Flash Advertisement	Video Advertisement
34	18	24	24

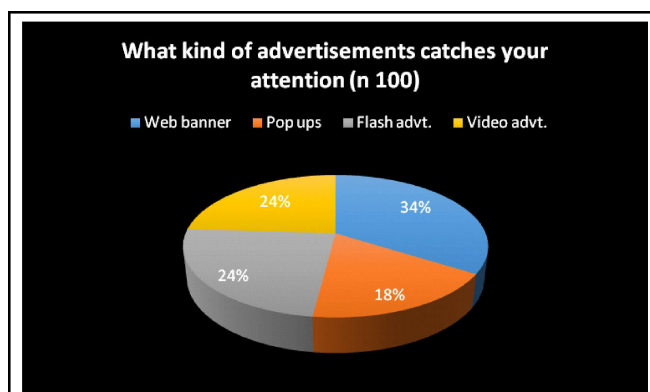


Fig. 8 : What kind of advertisements catches your attention

on Face book well communicated whereas 10% go with Twitter rest 4% other’s (YouTube). Advertising on Face book has tripled in last the year. The above data goes

with Face book ads as number of users on Face book are more as compared to other SNS. The companies who promote and advertise on social network prefer face book as it is most popular sites among internet users. Smith (2010) says that Face book is becoming one of the great internet communications of people time now days. Whereas many companies have tried to emulate Face book’s success or challenge it in one geography or another, Face book has proven that the core asset on which all of its services are built (Table 9 and Fig. 9).

By surveyed results, it is concluded that 46% of the

Face book	Twitter	Other’s
86	10	4

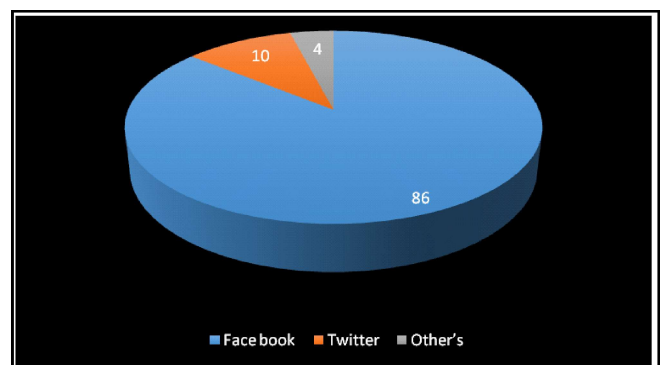


Fig. 9 : In which SNS do you find advt. communicated well

users of SNS click on the advertisements when it is about their favourite brand. This percentage shows brand loyalty and consciousness towards the brands of the people these days. Now a day’s people chose brands and follow them thoroughly. These results also show that if the user for example has 5 brand advertisements in front of him, he will only click to the one which is his/her favourite brand or the brand he/she uses, neglecting the other. The data also showed that 16% of the users click on the advertisement because of their jingles. If a person finds the jingles catchy he/she will click for the advertisement. It also revealed that 18% of the users go for the aesthetics of an advertisement and 20% users only click the ads when they have to buy (Table 10 and Fig. 10).

From this data it is found that 31% of the users are

Catchy Jingle	Favourite Brand	Aesthetics of an advertisements	You were thinking to buy
16	46	18	20

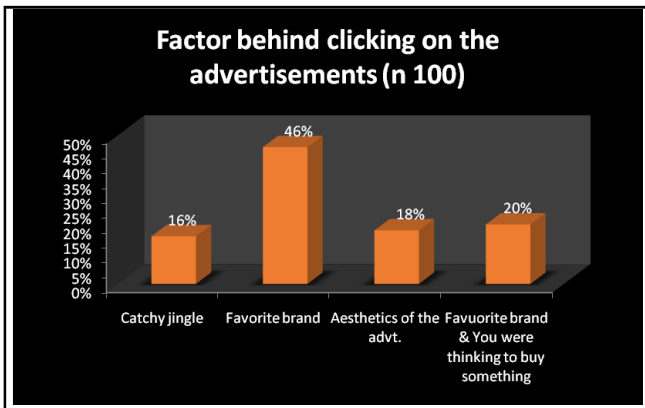


Fig. 10 : Factors behind clicking on the advertisement

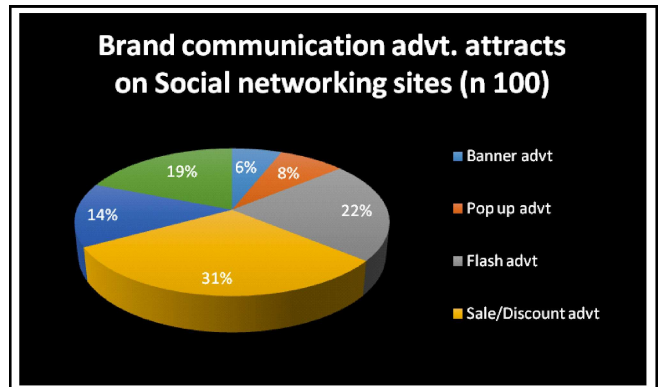


Fig. 11 : Brand communication advt. attracts on Social networking sites

Table 11 : Q12.What kind of brand communication advt. attracts you on Social networking sites? (In %)

Interactive Advt.	Banner Advt.	Pop-up Advt.	Flash Advt.	Sale\Discount Advt.	Promotion Page Advt.	Game/Quizzes/Update Advt.
0	6	8	22	31	14	19

interested in ads of sale/discount advt. this is also the result of growing brand consciousness among people. These results also revealed that 22% are attracted to flash ads. Flash ads are more eyes catchy and are more graphically equipped. Therefore, after sale/discount ads it is flash ads which catch attention of the users. 19% of the users get attracted by Game/Quizzes/Update Advt. as audiences get to know what’s new in the products/ services as well as through contests interactive communication takes place which interests the users. 8% users go with pop-up ads as pop-ups are sudden and catchy whereas remaining 6% rose for banner ads.

Suggestions and Conclusion:

Communication about the product or service provides a major contribution to brand competition in the market. It not only provides information about a product or service but also promotes creative innovation. Social media as a medium of communication has many distinct features from other media. Customer engagement could be defined as involving the customer in building the brand. This means making customers opinion a part of the brand building process. Social media provides an excellent platform for active customer engagement. Besides advertising, it also facilitates consumer satisfaction. Fundamentally, Facebook is a social network and Twitter is an interest network. That’s why ‘Add Friend’ is used on Facebook and ‘Follow’ on Twitter. Someone had once mentioned this interesting quote describing the difference

between Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn - ‘Facebook is for people you knew, LinkedIn is for people you know and Twitter is for people you want to know’. Due to this fundamental difference, the way a user participates on Twitter is different from the way she/he participates on Facebook. Besides, Facebook is much easier to use and logical to participate as compared to Twitter and accordingly, there is a high percentage of non-active users on Twitter (Pradeep Chopra, co-founder and CEO, Digital Vidya).

The hidden fact is that no brand can progress without effective communication strategy to attract their customers or users. Big and small variety of brands nowadays laid their base on social network communication to get recognized in the target market. Social networking sites users of Face book, Twitter have become a personal, product and corporate branding hub in India nowadays in digital era. Every brand to have more interactive factors in fan pages and group would benefit the brand user. By making consumers part of the company’s social media profile, the visibility of the brand and brand profiling could be achieved. Instead of spending on Television and other print media, a social media profile like a Facebook page, Twitter etc.

Unlike internet advertising where most of the communication is in the form of pop-up or banner ads, social media calls for a subtler communication. The advertisements in this innovative communication platform are less obvious and more engaging. Instead of direct

advertisements, products or services are placed in the social media as a blog or a profile page in facebook.com, or a conversation topic like in twitter. Facebook is the most popular social networking site and claims to have over 800+ million users. Facebook under its advertising program offers a number of opportunities for businesses to show case their products and services using this innovative communication platform. Flexibility is the key in advertising on Facebook. This calls for understanding some basic tenets of Facebook advertising. It therefore, requires very careful planning and most importantly transparency in the affairs of business. There is little possibility of manipulation of information by the marketers because the locus of control is the customer not the producer.

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