A STUDY ON CRITICAL ISSUES EXISTING BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA AND BRAND ENGAGEMENT

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PURPOSE

With relative changes happening in the area of brand engagement and changing perceptions about brand in the minds of consumers, it has become important for marketers to understand the reactions happening in the market. To understand this change reaction, a new tool called social media has been experienced and experimented by many marketers. Market has made companies witness a lot of activities getting executed everyday which are specific to brand. Circumstances become adverse when social platforms do not entertain brands getting marketed through them. In this review work, we shall get an insight of various challenges faced by marketers while establishing engagements between brands and consumers over social media platforms.

Methodology: *Secondary literature review on the available papers pertaining to brand engagements and social media has been done. Apart from this, certain articles and journals have been referred to make the work more useful.*

Findings: *Even with the change of time consumers have only shown interests over sales campaigns and hence marketers have no choice left but to entertain existing customers over social media. Acquiring new customer is a far way ahead to be executed via social media.*

Practical Implications: *Marketers have still not used social media, the way and in the manner it can provide opportunities for long term benefits. Their attraction towards social media has only made them look and aim at short term gains.*

Keywords: ***Social Media, Customer Acquisition, Brand Engagement***

I INTRODUCTION

It is almost a decade now that academicians have researched to create a better understanding on the formation and sustainability of consumer brand engagement (Bowden,2009 , Sprott et al.,2009 : Schullan & Block , 2012) . Researchers have given a number of definitions about consumer brand engagements with the common elements being proactive engagements (Keemar et al ., 2010) perceptual attachment with emotions (Wefard & Downey , 2009) rational bonds (Mc Ewen ,2004) commitment (Alloza , 2008) , loyalty (Kerr , 2009) intensity of participation (Wagner & Makchrzak , 2007) etc. Still Academicians believe that consumer brand engagement has

to be dealt beyond this and we should yet explore other points of consumer interactions with brands which have the potential to address.

Previously the most common belief was that consumer brand engagement was formed wherever there was a direct touch point available with the consumer that included experience through store , product /service advertisement ,retail outlets , public relations , personal selling , WOM & product /brand usages (Bridgen,2011 ; Lin et al ., 2012 ; Pagani & Mirabello 2011 , Peacock et al ; 2011) with the development of digital environment ,researchers have gone down deep to understand & explore the ways of interactions happening virtually (Keller 2010) . The most common aspect of interest is benefits from social media for creating consumer brand engagement by looking at the customer experience overall (Dix , 2012) customers can easily looking into the information through web in the form of reviews given by people , recommendations made online & discussions among the people on pre and post purchases experience (Court et al., 2012)

Although one can say the brand engagement & its co-creation is an important aspect of IMC mix (Kumar & Mirchandani, 2012) yet social media has taken over a major mindset of consumers, infact the whole market place.

Looking at the pace by which interest of marketers and people is growing towards social media ,most of the multinational companies have already taken a step ahead in social media , most likely with the absence of any strategic plan of action (Harvard Business School , 2010).There are advantages that attract marketers for using social media with its technical innovations witnessing the decrease in the attention sought through traditional mediums & declining shares ,companies are moving the latest innovations named Social Media (Maylor et al., 2012)

Although marketers are making use of this newly explored tool Social media to the best way possible , but one should understand that social media was created as a bridge for connecting people to converse and not for sale of branded products .With the increasing activities for branding , marketers faced problem that not all brands are receiving on Social media Platforms (Forvaire & Allery , 2011) consultancy firms and service providers are injecting social media in their marketing plans by promoting use of social media techniques through webinars , conference , seminar etc. which are intentionally designed to create interest of marketers . The most common perception about Social media is that it is the quickest tool of marketing with the electronic development of information in the form of messages .Marketers are participating at all levels (Evans, 2010).Interactive and inter connections which have developed in the recent times marketers and consumer would now give a new paradigm towards an interactive model of communications (Jansen et al., 2011, Martin & Todorov, 2010).

The bitter truths on Social media include its centralized impacts on increase sales, ROI and competitive advantages on the basis of consumer (Kumar & Mirchandani, 2012, Lapointe, 2011). The common challenge of Social media is its measurement (Lapointe , 2012), moreover the difficulty to perceive and think about the positive impacts about consumer's engagement with brands, (Christodocilides et al ., 2012; Protor et al., 2011) and lastly on overall

revenue generation activity termed sales. (Scnnier et al ., 2011) . Business houses usually do not face any issues towards the development and launch of campaigns on social media. But the problems are faced in turning them valuable and highly engaged for consumers. The leader on social media, facebook has yet not been able to give a model which is viable enough got making consumer and marketer engagement.

II SOCIAL MEDIA AND BRAND ENGAGEMENT

The will and wish of any marketer is to see his prospective customer and consumers to be either "engaged with or by" this brand even after knowing particularly what exactly engagement is .With this, one can easily make out that when marketer speak of or think of engagements they perceive he engaged customer is believing, purchasing and supporting his brand at his own self as well as amongst others too. If we clearly say Social media, the sense it gives us among friends, acquaintances or participants who are no better off than idles are engaging in either way .This very activity is perceived as the popularity that the brand is gaining.

Even though knowing all the facts and looking at the way these brand related activities are shifting from traditional mediums to e-mediums , marketers face a big problem with a truth this platform is meant and originated for conversing and at no point for the Brands (Fournier & Allery, 2011) , Academicians even argue that popularity if taken for brand engagement is the centre focus point for the marketers , rather than experimenting ways to question what influenced consumers who participated over Social Media to favor or buy any brand or Product (Divol et al., 2012) with the perception ,marketers have created business with attention over " likes " , " views " and "tweets ", knowing the trend is with short term orientation .(Nelson-Field & Klose , 2010).

Going back, "Engagement with the Brand" clearly states that the engaged person has experienced the brand, showed his likeness towards it and if it was delightful enough has made him loyal and do WOM (Cheema & Kaikati, 2010). The clear difference of present and past marketing by academicians state that the engagement has been re – created in an internally new format while eliminating our past learning's .Many marketers are being charmed while forgetting the impact of face to face engagement . In this view, there is one technique being spoken of as net Promoter Score (NPS) (Richfield, 2003) to estimate the futuristic value of a brand. NPS gives its core meaning in the form of number of users of the brand who shall promote it further in their own social circle. This number is further compared with the people who deny not to promote it further .if the promoters of the brand are more than the detractors then the NPS is treated to be positive and if vice-versa happens it turns out to be negative.

If the NPS is positive then the perceptions generated out of the value are the growth of brand and prosperity from WOM is what a brand can get with the growing interest of brand engagement, there has been a witnessed growth in the number of analytics and measurements too. Many companies have turned up with their present CRM databases to find out directions in coming up with prominent engagement and taking up the same for further measurements while supporting the assumed value of the brand .Where we can see a lot of communication with primary focus towards interactions, a major issue faced is the boundaries for such interactions are twisted –turned to recommend

.Very few people know and have an understanding of what engagement means , how does it function and its meaning (Van Doorn et al .,2010 ; Vivek et al., 2010)

Another issue that arises if how to measure brand engagement with the reference of Social Media. With the above mentioned concerns the arguments that arise is the identification of the meaning of engagement rather than its function .If we can solve it , then measurement no longer is a problem .This brings is to the under mentioned views . The way engagement has been defined and is being practices in present times with the support of academicians is nothing better than a new way of adopting Sales Promotion .Let us take an example here –A chain of retailers are making heavy use of Social Media tools such as Facebook , Twitter etc. for Sales promotion activities . Accepting it engagement can be generated else wise also.

One common aspect of all sales Promotional techniques are they have an opening and closing dates freezed to keep discounts that customer would receive . Both these things oppose Social Media's goal of assuring consumers brand engagement over a long period of time (Schultz & Block, 2012). The activities practiced on a real time may increase attention to promotions but not towards emotional bonding with the brand (Gambetta & Graffigna, 2010).Many Marketers believe that an online offers of products where everything looks alike, something must be done to create a differentiation among our brand with those others. Many marketers also agree to a fact that to make their Sales Promotion work by using any tool, the tool should be efficient enough to at least recover the cost of promotion by the sales, addition of new Customers or through other positives responses of the Customers. Surprisingly, these aspects get ignored by Social Media users.

III CONCLUSION

Social media is still an explored venture to the core. Brand engagement needs to be worked out with certain more research. From the above viewpoints we can conclude that Social Media offers limited opportunities towards the development of Brand engagement. New customer acquisition is still a challenge on social media. Over social media, the only thing that catches the attention is the execution of certain sales campaigns and tapping up of already paneled customers. Marketers have been infatuated for term gains when it comes to making proper use of and extracting benefits out of social media. Marketers should be directed and shall be imparted with learnings on how to use social media for long term gains. Most of the efforts made on Social Media have gone into vain and others seem to be alike activities only pertaining to Sales Promotion that too for those customers who are already associated with the brand. Academicians still have to find and workout innovative ways and methods to create meaningful engagements on Social Media Platforms.

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