

# Influence of Social Networking Sites in Brand Development Practices from Marketer's Prospective

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## Abstract

Popularity of social networking sites with deeper penetration of internet enables marketers to exploit it as new emerging medium for brand developing exercises. Interaction of social networking sites with brand results in positive positioning in prospective and current customer base. The medium can be exploited by marketers for developing strong brand and pushing their messages out through a variety of media. Effective and timely execution in social-media networking sphere will serve a paradigm to differentiate brand, drive brand identity and reputation through loyal consumer bases.

**Keywords:** Brand, Social Networking Sites, Marketers.

## Introduction

Unlike other communication mediums, social networking sites not only provide the ability for users to communicate with each other but also enable users to find like-minded individuals. Once users of online social networking sites discover other members they can form own communities based on their mutual interests. Online social networks have changed not only the way people communicate, work and play, but the way they consume products and perceive different brands of products and services. (Marsden, 2010) Today, it is not uncommon for many organizations including profit and non-profit sectors to implement their social networking media campaigns for developing branding exercises. Market researchers have agreed that a social networking websites are radically changing the marketing landscape and will continue to be a critical driver of successful marketing communication. Social networking sites have the ability to democratize news and entertainment through posters of videos linked to members and according to their preferences. Amazon.com has reading list as per preferences of readers. It would continue to expand with larger number of prospective customer registering themselves with social networking sites. Companies such as Toyota (which using social networking software to connect Pries owners), and the NHL are using it to strengthen their base as well as allow prospective

members of the community to learn about it online by connecting with existing users . Over the coming years larger number of firms will joint the race creating and positioning branding exercises through networking sites .It also provides unique value to the visitors through customized content as per user requirements.

The term “social networking website” appears in brand developing practice is an open social organization because anyone who is interested in a particular brand can freely join the brand networks on social networking sites helps companies to recognize their brand to targeted audiences. Social media is the engine that has transformed the web from being a one-way information tool to a two-way collaboration mechanism. It influence people to join the group of networking space and in turn influences their taste and preferences. Brand networking leverages social media by a brand to build brand equity. The returns on involvement in terms of association with the brand in operational terms and turning members of networks becoming brand loyal . Systematic management of brand through networking sites can lead to performance improvement of the brand management, which in turn can drive ROI. Customers experiencing consistent, positive interactions with the brand are likely to build trust and loyalty while those with negative experience are likely to tell others about their experiences which have the ripple effect of losing potential customers. Sites engage customers with brand encourages customer brand advocacy. Social media gives holistic view about the brand developing exercises especially with popularity of social networking sites reason being playfulness, pleasure of social connection with penetration of Internet. The example of a face-book brand Page that exhibits best practices of Coca-Cola. They project their brand image on its page with a clear call-to action “Like Coke” There is a button for that” among visitors to this page who are less familiar with Face-book or “Liking” a page, they can easily find the button and begin their relationship with Coke. The pages are generally controlled by company, it does feature user-

generated content, which encourages users to interact with the brand not only online, but also elsewhere and then post their experiences and contribute online. By posting this content, the brand is offering users a reward for their interaction. The vast potential of social networking sites enables marketers to reach there brand to million of customers. The statistics of top ten networking sites is shown in Table 1

**Table 1**

**Top 10 social networking sites in the world**

S. No.	Social Networking Site	Number of Visitors Per Month
1	Face-book	550,000,000
2	Twitter	95,800,000
3	My Space	80,500,000
4	Linkedin	50,000,000
5	Ning	42,000,000
6	Tagged	30,000,000
7	Classmates	29,000,000
8	Hi5	27,000,000
9	Myyearbook	12,000,000
10	Meetup	8,000,000

Source Das B.and Sahoo J.S (2011),”social Networking Sites –A critical analysis of Its Impact on Personal and Social Life” International journal of Business and social Science, july p 223  
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## Literary Contributions

According to Sampad (2009) due to the increase use of social media websites by the consumers, it provides a platform for brands and also helps people to make purchase decisions. Consumers rely on various types of social media websites for product and brand information. As a result, companies that utilize social media engage directly with consumers and thus they have a great opportunity to reach more target customers and lots of advertisement cost can be reduced.

Dan Shaver (2007) in his research established that customers are being influenced by social media. In order to attract customers positively towards a product, a company needs to build a strong social media presence. Building a strong social media presence enables customers to make them brand loyal.

Barnes, N. G., & Mattson (2008) discussed social media takes less time to reach out to customers and have endless possibilities from marketing prospective. It helps to grab attention of a customer by writing a blog or leaving a comment on someone else’s blog. One can reach out to potential clients in a cost effective manner by advertising on social websites, especially if one is a small business owner who doesn’t have the budget for television and advertising campaigns. Marketer can also receive and send relevant information, connect and network with groups and individuals through social media sites like Boyd and Ellison (2008) define social networking sites are web-based services that allows individuals to construct a profile within a bounded system, to articulate a list of other users with whom they are connected, and to view and traverse their list of connections. The next step arose out of the ability to let people post individual profiles on a website to that others could search by specific characteristics to reach people with specific knowledge or connections. These formed as networks which were primarily social, such as MySpace, The Face Book, Bebo, and Friendster, or primarily professional, such as LinkedIn, Ryze, and eCademy. There remains the issue of effectively reaching the right person as well as the ability to build trust online.

SCOTT (2007) concluded that social media for brand awareness includes different activities from planning and design to frequent updates and maintenance. As social networks are free, the time one spends on social media to build brand awareness is very valuable and company can better target and focus their activities in social media

towards a well-defined strategy that really helps to develop

Weston (2008) discussed that social networking, if approached correctly, can help find talent, build brand awareness, find new customers, and help to conduct brand intelligence and market research. The two main ways of advertising in a social network are through wish list features and tell-a-friend applications. The communication in social network gets shoppers to listen to one another, review ratings for products and services, and provide product knowledge and personal information. Social networks protect users from interaction with the outside world, and keep information and interaction away from strangers.

Skul (2008) advises, there are ways that social network marketing can be advantageous in business. Although some businesses may find it unnecessary to position themselves on social networking sites, it is a good way to advertise their products/services and know what consumers think and want. He continues to say that social network marketing may play a very important role when it comes to the online success of a business. He further goes on to explain social network marketing allows the business to get connected to the public and build their brand.

## Objectives

1 To explore the potential of social networking sites in brand development exercises from marketers prospective

2 To explore the benefits of social networking sites from markets prospective.

3 To draw out implication mechanism for marketers in harnessing the potential of social networking sites.

## Types of Social Networking Sites:

### 1. Professional oriented

Websites like as LinkedIn, Viadeo or Xing. Their aim is to create a set of relationship and feedbacks on workers, so to help both the flexibility of employers, that can built their professional trustworthy with references and feedbacks, and the workers recruiting of companies, that can have an on line easy accessible archive of workers.

### 2. Interests oriented:

Flickr, a Nobii, devian Art, Live Journal. Here, users are usually linked by common interests as photography, Digital arts, writings, and we can think about the topic as the knot of the web around which discussion and interaction takes place.

### 3. Socialize oriented:

Facebook, MySpace, Badoo, Netlog, Friendster, Twitter. With these sites you can trace the activities of your friends, chat, have a look at their profile, share pictures with others, link music, post articles or videos and comment on people's profiles.

## Social Networking Sites for Developing Brand Association

While Twitter is often hailed as a relationship with the brand .Social media tools that serve the same purpose. Facebook, YouTube, Blogs and even LinkedIn all have merit when it comes to the establishment and development of customer relationships.

- YouTube is slowly being adopted by more and more companies as they figure out how to use it to project brand advantage to the customers.
- Facebook's groups and "fan pages" features allow regular users to create pages and join in on conversations about everything for brand association to TV shows and food. With a wide range of topics, incorporating your business or product is easier than ever. The new trend is to mentioning the facebook URL on product packaging in order to develop deeply association of brand with their potential and existing customers.
- Blogs help engage conversation through posts using an authentic voice, the opportunity for customers and readers to provide feedback about brand and in turn developing brand loyalty.
- LinkedIn helps representatives connect to the people in need and develop consistent and real relationships with customers,

leads and fellow industry professionals. If a rep is a new user, they can instantly find people they already know by uploading e-mail contacts during the sign-up process—LinkedIn matches addresses with existing users, making the transition that much easier and increases brand recall among the prospective and existing customers.

Top 100 brands prompted through social networking sites is shown in Influencing Factor of Social Networking Sites in table 2

**Table 2**

**Top 100 Brands on Face book**

Product/service categories <sup>2</sup>	Number of brands	Brand name
Apparel	26	Converse All Star, Converse, Victoria's Secret, Adidas originals, ZARA, Nike Football, H&M, Burberry, Lacoste, DC shoes, Puma, Gucci, Forever 21, Nike, Levi's, Adidas Football, CHANEL, Ralph Lauren, Dolce & Gabbana, Bershka, Louis Vuitton, Vans, Mango, Old Navy, Coach
Snack	16	Oreo, Skittles, Pringles, Ferrero Rocher, Starburst, Reese's, 5 Gum, Dippin' Dots, Kit Kat, Lay's, Skittles, Frito Lay, life Savers Gummies, Stride Gum, Trident Chewing Gum, Cadbury Crème Egg
Consumer technology	14	PlayStation, iTunes, Windows Live Messenger, iPod, xbox, Blackberry, Sony Ericsson, Nokia, iPhone, Adobe Photoshop, eBuddy, Tata Docomo, Vodafone Zoozoos, Windows
Restaurant/coffeehouse	11	Starbucks, McDonald's, Subway, Taco Bell, Starbucks Frappuccino, Buffalo Wild Wings, Chick-fil-A, Pizza Hut, Dunkin Donuts, Domino's Pizza, Hard Rock Café
Drink/Alcohol	10	Coca-cola, Red Bull, Monster Energy, Dr. Pepper, Mountain Dew, Pepsi, Sprite, Slurpee, Arizona Iced Tea, Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey
Discount/Specialty retailer	7	Walmart, Kohl's, Target, Best Buy, Ben & Jerry's, MAC Cosmetics, Macy's
Car/Motorcycle	5	BMW, Ferrari, Audi USA, Mercedes-Benz, Harley Davidson
Etc	11	Google, Disney, Disney Pixar, Barbie, Nutella, Kellogg's Pop-Tarts, Nutella Italy, Skins, Shameless, Tattoos by myttoos.com, explotar burbujitas de plastic

Source: [www.socialbaker.com](http://www.socialbaker.com)

### Advantages of Social Networking Sites

The best component is that you can take benefit of this marketing technique without expensive software or technological expertise. The major benefits exploited by marketers include

### 1 Product and Brand Awareness

Marketing on social networking sites will increase awareness by increasing the online presence of products and brand. Marketers forms a group or organizes a promotion on a social networking site, the members are reminded of market's brand and website with every interaction.

## 2 Web Traffic

Communications, recommendations, and other postings on social networking sites often contain web links. Marketers can include link of company's website and results in driving traffic for brand awareness among prospective and exiting customers. Due to the makeup of social networking sites, these links are naturally targeted to potential customers that key targets for markets

## 3 Search Engine Optimization

Social networking sites enable the marketers post content registered with different search engines by web links. More linkage with contents on sites results in higher ranking in search engine results resulting in more people exposed to literature relevant to brand. Consequently, social media marketing campaigns should be an integral part of any Search Engine Optimization (SEO) strategy. Search engines weigh the value of each link in context, and as they related to website. As a result, links from social networking sites have more value as they are sharing content perceived to be valuable in linking back to brand. Not only are these links more valuable than paid links, but also they are significantly less expensive. The sites such as reddit, Delicious, Digg and others enable the sharing, tagging and book marking of news, articles, postings, and other information.

## 4 Customer Loyalties

If brands are appropriately associated with customers through social networking sites customer loyalty can be greatly enhanced .If participation of users are consistent and honest, adds value by supplying useful content and personalized content which greatly enhance company's reputation by building trust and credibility.

## 5 New Product Launches

Social networks provide a unique opportunity to survey the relevant community on their products wants and needs and brand can be positioned accordingly. The community formed on social networking sites can guide and participate in the branding exercises by marketers.

## 6 Targeted Communications

Users of social networking sites profile themselves upon joining a network. These profiles can be very detailed, and their purpose is to help the user connect with others who share similar interests and activities. In the case of LabRoots, the profiles contain, not only basic information about the user, but also information on their education, areas of technical expertise, publications, memberships in other groups, geographic location, and job position (among other information). For marketers, this information is invaluable in relating brand with customer value system.

## 7 Hedonic benefit

The existence of the hedonic aspect social networking results in types of entertaining content (e.g., games, videos) provided by the Brand Page. Many companies attempt to integrate their community content such as consumer contests and brand developing campaigns with entertaining elements by offering a fun, easy way to engage marketers to deploy brand engagement strategies.

## 8 Economic benefits

The economic benefits of social networking is apparent in terms monetary benefit such as sales coupon, promotional code for sales, free products, and gift cards.

## 9 Trusts

The trust components of social networking website relationship quality is probably best illustrated by many of consumer inquiries responded by a company. Members throw out the questions on a variety of topics regarding product availability, employment, detailed information about promotional event.

## Business Initiative Prospective of Social Networking Sites

The social networking sites can be exploited for in following prospective for marketers of different Brands

- Amplifying word-of-mouth marketing
- Market research
- General marketing
- Idea generation & new product development
- Co-innovation
- Customer service
- Public relations
- Employee communications

### Strategies for building Brand Through Social Networking Sites

1. **Give away information** to customers and include back links to web site. Interesting contents from user's prospective like books or special reports on e-Book directories, give away sites. It encourages people to pass the information along to their friends who have an interest in the topic.
2. **Tell-A-Friend script** Customer and visitors easily share website contents depending upon markets intention in promoting the brand. Incentives can be provided free information that is delivered directly after the tell-a-friend script has been executed.
3. **Funny video clips** from friends and family Clip may not be selling anything the concept of passing from person to person results in developing closely association with brands.
4. **Undercover marketing**, done well, can be fun and intriguing. Mystery surrounding can be created for niche customers . Yanik Silver has been doing this for some time with his Underground Marketing Seminar. The whole event is cloaked in mystery.
5. **Pass along Communication** are here to stay. They often evolve around a particular topic. The information on social networking sites is searchable and can be easily develop a list of people interested in topic of niche customers

### Marketing Mix for Promoting Brands through Social Networking Sites

7 P's are very important in deploying marketing through social networking sites

**1. PRODUCT:** Marketers needs to assess the market and the customers' mood to understand if the brand value can be enhanced through social networking space. Appropriate research should be done ahead of time from firm's prospective. They should look for right market, demographic, and best time of year for promotion brands then campaign should be deployed.

**2. PRICE:** By assessing spending of people in online space for different pricing levels information can be gathered regarding the brand value the customers are willing to pay for it End goal of every campaign in cyberspace should be focused towards increased profitability, reducing costs and increasing market share for marketers.

**3. PROMOTION:** Marketers promoting the brand on the social space need understand the question whether marketers are addressing the right target audience. The marketers can use advance advanced behavioral analytics and predictive analysis to get more profitable customers to your business.

**4. PEOPLE:** Marketers can look people who join the brand campaign and understanding their brand expectation unable to exploit future business opportunities.

**5. PLACE** Marketers should look that social networking sites should consider user friendliness, ease of accessing a particular group ,test color schemes, buttons sizes, images, photos, layouts of interest to the prospects.

**6. PROCESS:** is very important for Internet marketing. The marketer should look for ability to handle large number of customers, the proper support at all times, and a system to answer queries generated by the users.

**7. PHYSICAL EVIDENCE:** In Online, it is difficult for the customer to know how the product is going to benefit them. So it will be necessary for marketers to communicate with brand and products

so that customer to feel confident in associating with brand.

### Implication of Study

Brands must socialize with consumers in social networking space. It won't be enough for brands to craft powerful messages and consider social networking as different media channel. Brands must develop a credible social voice. Brand must focus on platform to provide a return on emotion to their consumers. Presently, loyalty between consumers and brands is asymmetric in social space. The more consumers sense a symmetrical relationship, the more loyal they will be. Social media is a great tool for building symmetrical brand relationships, in which both the brand and the consumer reap equal returns from their relationship. Focus should be on value exchanges in social media campaign. Brands should explore new ways of marketing on the social platforms that help build trust and credibility. It is no use devoting significant marketing efforts to this space unless figured out how to serve a trusted brand.

### Conclusion

Social networking media has huge opportunity for brands, if they learn to influence the collective wisdom of the crowd, to be able to build a significant and defensible market social networks are changing the way in which brands are disseminated, and this has to be taken into account when it is decided what to be communicated through brand. The social networking sites enables marketers for influencing social media, public relation, brand involvement and brand commitment. In conclusion, social network advertising is flourishing in the era of social networking end-user interaction. Therefore, it is advisable that businesses not ignore the opportunities to jump in and expand their customer base.

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