



Understanding the Role of Snapchat in Promoting National & International Trade

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ABSTRACT

Technology today has revolutionized interpersonal communication. People are more into virtual social networking than face to face social interactions. Virtual interactions take place in the form of voice calling, video calling, texting, sharing photographs, opinions etc. The wave of social networking which started with the WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook have simply heralded the interactions between family and friends. Apart from the existing applications, Snapchat is an upcoming platform that is one of the latest and most popular forms of communication enabling people to share their daily stories across the globe. A clear sign of its popularity and extraordinary achievement in a span of only four years, is evident from the fact that there are now over 150 million Snapchat users, who access the app. Snapchat is being used for increased engagement and creative directions. Through this paper, the authors have made an attempt to understand the role of Snapchat in promoting national and international trade. Primary information was collected through a questionnaire survey of 400 individuals from India (Pune, Hyderabad, Delhi, Gwalior and Odisha) and Dubai. The secondary information was drawn from journals and business websites.

Keywords: Snapchat, Brands, Communication, Marketing, Promotion

1. INTRODUCTION

The fast development and adoption of online digital technologies had profound impact over the social relationships through evolution of different social networking sites like Orkut, Facebook, Instagram and now Snapchat, alongside many others. Snapchat has rightly given meaning to the famous English idiom, "A picture is worth a thousand words" by offering a platform to share visual stories through pictures and videos, making it a more real-time form of communication. While it is a mostly personal platform, it also favours mass communication through options like Snap Stories, Live Stories, Our Story, Story Explorer, Snap Map etc. These in turn enables the users to get an idea of what's happening all around the world.

1.1 ADVERTISING THROUGH SNAPCHAT

In such a world with generations who have a much shorter attention span, advertising and marketing methods should be much smarter to grab their attention. This in turn implies that in order to get through ads require a shorter message. This is what Snapchat took into consideration by adopting the idea of 10 second advertisements. In John Ramirez's words (the CEO of digital marketing firm IOKON Media), "If you only have a few seconds to see someone's content before it's gone, you're really going to pay attention to that content"[1].

It has also been observed that marketing through Snapchat has not only proven to be beneficial to marketers but also to the consumers. Its unique features enable it to create a more authentic, truthful, honest line of communication beating the competitors (with their provision of an illusion of perfection). As a result, it was noted that this has inculcated a sense of brand loyalty amongst the consumers.

All of this has led to a more mobile focused marketing that ensures that the users are engaged, creative, with their unique features and fun filters, which in turn has achieved significant growth over a period of time counting more than 100 million daily active users.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to E. Glynn Mangolda and David K. Faulsb, 2009 [2] with the advent of internet based online networking, it is now possible for an individual to speak with a large number of other individuals about anything they wish, be it items



or organizations. This in turn has led to a multifold increase of buyer to shopper correspondence in the commercial center.

Jen Sanfillipo's, 2016 [3]observed that the features of Snapchatlike emojis, filters, etc. helpintensify face to face communication, alongside guiding its users and encouraging them to interact in a different manner. They have also revolutionized the concept of communication since its launch, from a shift of intimate communication to day to day happenings around the world.

Jason Abbruzzese, 2016 [4]inferred that the Facebook and Snapchatseem to have elder-younger sibling dynamic. Both of them have a strong base, fast evolution and almost same demography. Facebook had a seven-year head start and in any case, has officially experienced the vast majority of ups and downs. He also emphasizes on the evident rivalry between the two with Snapchat going on to become their biggest competitor.

According toKurt Wagner, 2015[5]roughly 44% (of the 1117 U.S. based Snapchat users) of the millennialc usingSnapchat to share stories with friends in the age group of 13-24 years use the Live Stories and/or Discover options on daily basis.

According to Christina Newberry, 2016 [6] over 38% of smartphone users in the age group of 25-34 years and 14% of the smartphone users above 35 years of age use Snapchat. Gradually the application is becoming more popular in the age group of 18-24 years. Its rate of penetrationfor this age group is approximately 69%. Amanda Lenhart, 2015 [7]found that according to Snapchat's own figures, on an average 41% of people belonging to the age group 18-34 years seems to use the app. According to Douglas Macmillan, 2013[8] approximately 70% of Snapchat users are women.

Kurt Wagner's 2014[9] found that the majority of college students having Snapchat accounts would prefer to open a snap from a brand that they've never heard of and 73% believed that they would open a Snap from a brand they would know. This is positive news for the brands which are already users of Snapchat to engage with customers and hit shows like HBO's Girls use the series to interact with fans.

According to Paresh Dave and David Pearson, 2015 [10], Snapchatholds a reputable position today in the marketing& promoting of business in the international platform. The social world clearly believes that Snapchat has a very bright future ahead. What puts the app above the rest is the fact that it has an estimated 200 million monthly active users and 100 million daily active users.

3.OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives behind the research were:

1. To understand different modes of communication.
2. To understand the concept of Snapchat.
3. To find the current status of advertisements on Snapchat and their viability.
4. To find out the impact and role of Snapchat over national and international marketing.

4.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research in hand is based on both primary as well as secondary sources of information. Primary data was collected through online questionnaire survey of 400 individuals from India (Pune, Hyderabad, Delhi, GwaliorandOdisha) and Dubai. The sample comprised of people from urban India and Dubai hailing mainly from 15 years to 25 years of age as the literature review and pilot survey inferred that these age groups represent the most active user group of Snapchat. But the author has also collected data from other age groups i.e., 25 to 40 years and 40 years and above for comparing and verifying the results. Secondary information was collected from research papers, articles, journals and reference books.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data analysis and interpretation of the findings have been summarized here under.

5.1 AGE WISE USER MIX OF SNAPCHATTERS:

42% of the sample actively used Snapchat. Age groups of the sample were 15-25 years, 25-35 years, 35-45 years and 45 years and above respectively in the equal proportion. Reviewing data within the age group revealed that Snapchat as an application appeals most to people belonging to the age group of 15-25 years.

5.2 REASONS BEHIND USING SNAPCHAT

The sample gave following reasons for using Snapchat.

5.2.1 Platform to share: Snapchat renders a platform to share user's daily experiences in the form of pictures, videos, music and stickers. It was noted that 63.9% of the sample used the app to share videos, pictures or music and 53.2% also used it to share their daily experiences.

5.2.2 People look for little pleasures of life and this is something that the Snapchat filters are fulfilling through its playful dog filters and serious Marie Curie filters on International Women's Day and is substantiated with attracting 44% of the sample group to use Snapchat and 58.3% of the same group considering these filters to be the best feature available.

5.2.3 Snapchat offers a blend of effective communication with fun. Survey revealed that 43.7% of the sample uses it to stay in touch with friends and family members. 7.5% of the population preferred it because of its speed and user-friendly features. 19.8% of the sample uses it to find information, both personal and professional. Information available through Snapchat stories and Discover feature helps users stay updated or assists them in other activities. The 'Discover' feature being the most unique feature allows users to view content compiled by publishers, brands, etc., which means better quality content and better user experience. 37.3% of the sample liked this feature the most. 14.3% of them use Snapchat like any other social media account, to get opinions on particular things.

5.2.4 12.7% of Snapchatters use it to make new friends like any other social networking site. 9.9% of the sample use it for getting updates of others' lives. 56.3% found the temporary nature of Snapchat very attractive as this helps in keeping the privacy of an individual, making it a low stake sharing platform. Furthermore, people prefer the concept of sharing mundane daily events that wouldn't otherwise make it to other platforms in fear of misappropriation, not enough likes etc.

5.3 SNAPCHAT - AN EFFECTIVE MODE OF COMMUNICATION

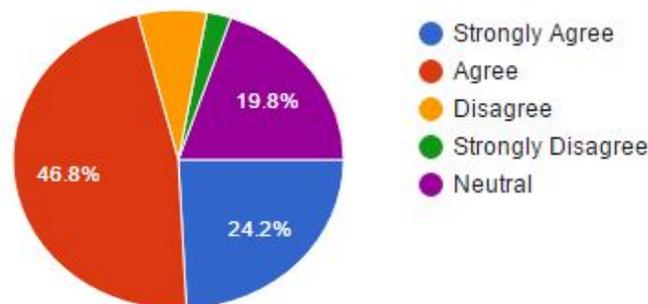


Figure 1

71% of the sample group agreed to Snapchat being an effective mode of communication, while 9.4% of them disagreed, and the rest 19.8% took a neutral stand (Figure 1).

This can be substantiated by taking into account that it has a good network to be used to share experiences, photos, videos with friends and family, being inexpensive, modern and fast in terms of communication, providing a chance to be up to date with the happenings around the world and being creative with their communication. It does not replace any other application, and is unique, which adds to its benefit.

From the sample group, 71.7% considered that social-life communication was strongly affected by Snapchat, whereas 9.2% did not agree with the same. The remaining 19.1% chose to remain neutral.

5.4 EFFECT ON SOCIAL-LIFE COMMUNICATION

Snapchat has revolutionized modern forms of communication. Since Snapchat is short and sweet, revolving mainly around pictures, which are the spice of social media along with encouraging non-permanence, the application is affecting how people communicate with each other. This is further substantiated with 71.7% agreeing that Snapchat has a substantial effect on social-life communication with only 9.2% disagreeing (Figure 2).

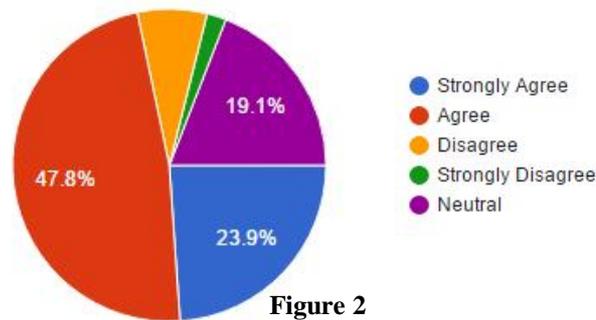


Figure 2

5.5 FREQUENCY OF USE OF 'DISCOVER' FEATURE

63.5% of the sample group used the 'Discover' option on Snapchat very often, while 22.2% of them used it occasionally and 14.3% never used it (Figure 3). 'Discover' provides users with a user-friendly mode of being updated on news related to the categories including fashion, food, world news, world events, etc. available on the application, which call for a much fun and interesting way of being updated with news, hence, this increases the viewer base for this feature available.

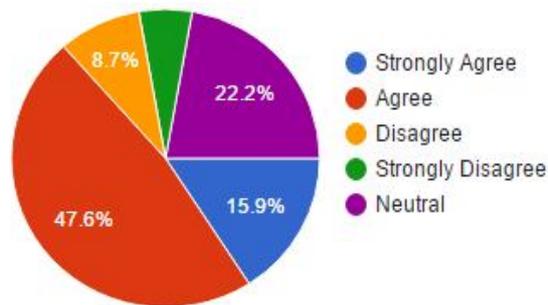


Figure 3

5.6 USERS ATTITUDE TOWARDS INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM DISCOVER

61.7% of the sample group found the information obtained from 'Discover' informative, whereas 11.2% did not, and the rest 27.1% took a neutral stand (Figure 4). Considering the perspective of each user, one user may find brief pointers of certain information to be informative as it can be interpreted easily. While on the other hand, another user may find the same to be in extensive and detailed to be considered as informative. 61.7% of the sample group which found 'Discover' to be informative find it so, owing to the fact that it provides information collectively from various sources, on varied topics ranging from celebrity gossip to tutorials to headline news, which in turn ensures that it caters to

multiple needs.

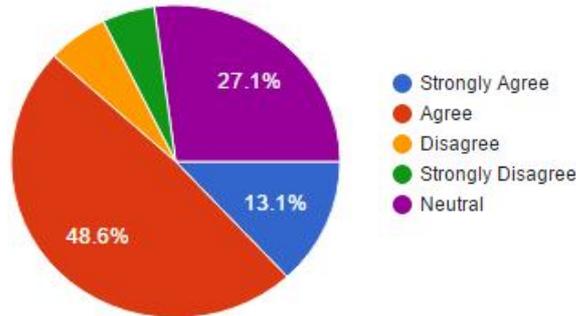


Figure 4

5.7 SNAPCHAT ADVERTISEMENTS' INFLUENCE ON BUYING BEHAVIOR

60% of the sample group disagreed with Snapchat advertisements influencing their buying behavior, while 16.7% differed saying their buying behavior was influenced. The remaining 23.4% chose to remain neutral (Figure 5). This turnout of responses can be adjudged to the fact that business houses that run advertisements on Snapchat fail to recognize the consumer attraction need and focus only on trying to send across the idea of the product they are offering, instead of creating a clear-cut mind for the consumers to buy the product. Further it can also be deduced by the percentage of people who seem to be unaffected by the advertisements, do so as most consumers have an inherent tendency to not accept being affected by advertisements and other promotional strategies.

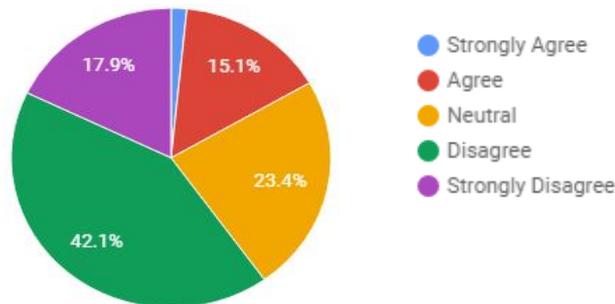


Figure 5

6. CONCLUSION

Snapchat's main market difference is from two features: **passion and promotion**. When people are passionate about a brand that people are already drawn to, it creates a great platform to be on because people are eager to get messages from such brands. Its unique features - sponsored filters, stories, and Snapchat Discover appeals to the users and provides value to marketers who wish to advertise their brands due to the relative ease and accessibility of the platform to the general public making them feel like they are connected to the entire world with a simple click of a button.

Brands have to face various challenges while promoting through Snapchat. One of its biggest weaknesses is its inability to stand on its own. Having grown up with dynamic changes throughout their lives, the youth tend to expect such changes which then forces brands to keep up with the user's changing wants, needs and constantly keeping in track of what is popular. This leaves brands with more challenges in order to measure the success of their campaign. The benefit that would be gained from using Snapchat as a marketing resource would speak volumes over the minute struggle that would have to be overcome, in order to build community and loyalty. It is especially beneficial for fashion brands looking to reach a young, visually-oriented audience (whose attention span is of less than 10 seconds) as well as for the brands seeking to portray a more authentic and honest line of communication with their consumers.



The largest group of Snapchat users belong to Generation Z, and marketers can use this knowledge to appeal the younger demographic by connecting with their interests as well as taking advantage of technology to reach them quickly and effectively. Many businesses use Snapchat to generate a wide consumer base by appealing to the different demographics of users and cultivating new markets from previously untapped age brackets. By using Snapchat to its full potential, marketers are looking at a powerhouse of advertising possibilities that is easily accessible and readily embraced by the entire world.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Partner with Influencers-** The benefit of partnering with influencers is the rapid spread of awareness to a demographic that may otherwise be hard to reach through traditional media. Many companies have already harnessed this source via Instagram and other social channels.
- **Feature Your Followers-** In order to ensure companies do not lose followers and become too self-involved, they have to involve the public to create a sense of belongingness. This could be via featuring their followers, offering them value, etc.
 - To illustrate, take the example of GrubHub, an online mobile food ordering brand which launched its first Snapchat campaign in 2013. They featured their own weekly content, gathered stories from user-generated content and sponsored giveaways and promotions.
 - This in turn lead to a 20% increase in their followers and was contributed to being one of the factors that contributed to its Wall Street public offering debut.
- **Finding interns-** Being a little tricky, this recommendation would only apply for those companies, which encourage casual communication through the use of photos and videos.

Revisiting the example of GrubHub, the company utilized Snapchat Stories and a photo slideshow of six images, with which they explained how interested candidates could apply for an internship with a snap of their best doodle with “SnapchatSkillz”.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE

This study has limited itself to the educated and mostly urban population of India. Lack of awareness of the topic among senior age groups was the major challenge before the researchers. The researchers were required to explain the discover feature to the sample.

As in the future the competition for such sites would just increase and new problems will keep on springing up. The research in future could include people from rural class of the society and maybe other parts of the world other than India.

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