HVS

MARKET REPORT

Social Media And The Entire Buzz...

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With close to a 100 million users on Facebook & search giant Google trying to step-up into the Social Media world, is it time that businesses shift focus away from traditional tried-and-tested forms of internet marketing & get more 'Social'?

Let's Take A Peek Into The Past

The breakthrough technology of radio transmission took as many as 38 years to reach 50 million users. Next came television - another revolutionary technology, which took about 13 years to reach the same user base and then came the World Wide Web – Internet, which spread like fire and achieved the same user base in four years that its predecessors took decades to reach. The latest buzzword Social Networking breaks all records, with the Social Media giant Facebook having added 100 million-plus users in its first nine months and 500 million in five years, and continuing to grow at rapid speed.[1] Companies around the world now actively use social networks like LinkedIn to find new recruits, while brands like Southwest Airlines, Starbucks and JDV Hotels communicate with thousands through Twitter and Facebook, and use these platforms to share updates, address customer concerns, and receive feedback. Celebrities the world over have a following on Twitter; indeed, some even have a following larger than the population of an entire country, and a negative experience of a product or service shared by these people could cause more than just a little damage. Content is now able to multiply and travel by leaps and bounds, and this has significant implications for customer-centric industries.

The Times We Are In Now

With a total of about 200 million blogs worldwide half of which see daily-basis activity, and with more than 1.5 million pieces of content (web links, news stories, blog posts, notes, photos, etc.) being shared on Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr DAILY, Social Media is emerging as a powerful tool of word-of-mouth marketing. There is a sizeable – and growing – number of individuals who care about what others think of the products and services they consume. As much as 34% of bloggers post opinions just about products and brands. Do you like what they are saying about your brand?[1]

In the near future people will no longer have to search for services and products; the products will find them via their Internet surfing patterns.

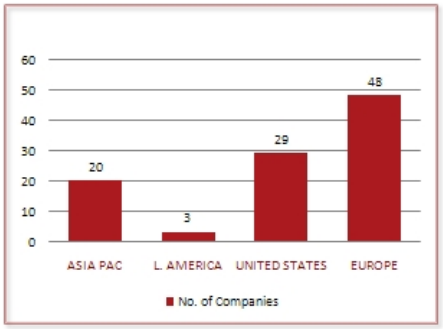
Few people would disagree that Social Media has revolutionized the way people communicate, share and search for information. The big questions are: “Is Social Media here to stay?”, “Is Social Media a permanent shift?”, and “Will it or should it be the centre of your Internet marketing strategy?”

The Approach - "Yes, Everyone Seems To Be Getting 'Social' so I'm Doing It Too" - Doesn't Work!

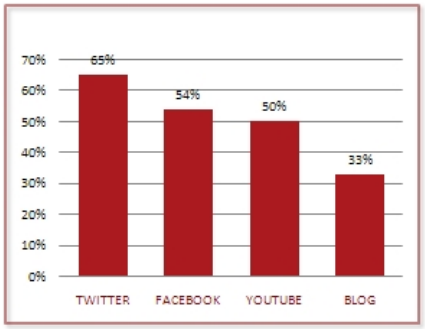
Social Media through various platforms has definitely seen an impressive growth over the past year which has led to its zealous adaptation by brands across different industries trying to join this bandwagon. As a result, it is easy for brands to spend lot of money on 'Social Media campaigns' and still get lost in the crowd. However, Social Media, at many levels, is chaotic at the moment with brands in a mad rush to get a piece of this pie.[2]

Several of our clients tell us that they have a Facebook page for their business, a Twitter account, a YouTube channel and a Flickr photo stream; and in that they have covered the entire gamut of Social Media marketing. To this we reply that having a presence on multiple channels without a strategic plan to be able to manage the content on them is, in fact, worse than having no Social Media presence at all. We have come across business Facebook pages and Twitter handles which haven't seen any activity in months, with fan posts and room enquiries going unattended, and this is hurting, rather than helping, their Social reputation. There is a plethora of social networking platforms that businesses can use today, but what is a good fit for one may not be a good fit for the other.

The charts below depict how Fortune's Global Top 100 companies embrace Social Media[3]

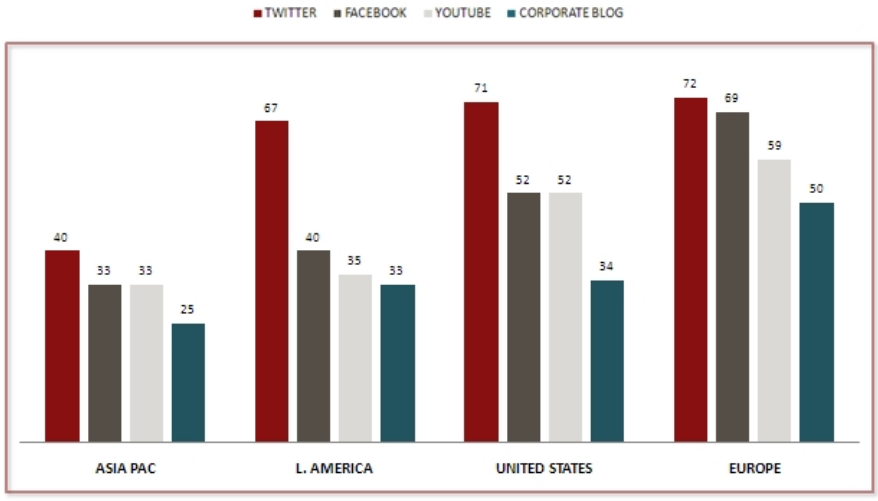


FORTUNE GLOBAL 100 COMPANIES - BY REGION



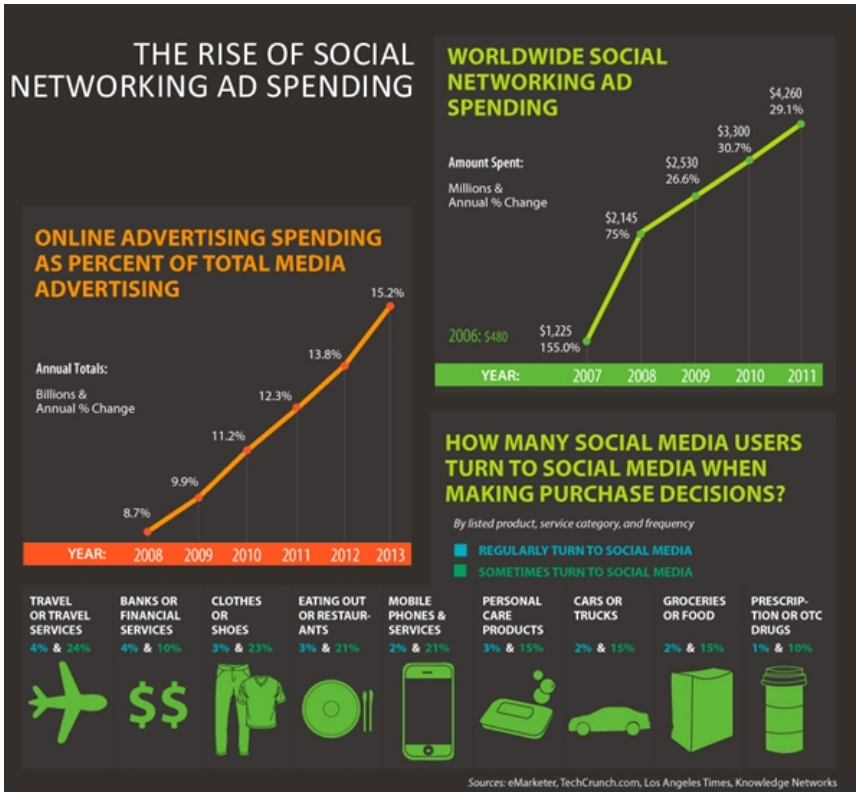
FORTUNE GLOBAL 100 COMPANIES AND THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Global Top 100's Social Media Accounts by Region



Future of Social Media And Search Marketing

Marketers confirm that with Google, Bing and other engines now integrating real-time search into their search results, Search Engine Optimizers (SEOs) are given all the more reason to start integrating Social Media into their offering.[2] This also ties in perfectly with companies' off-page SEO activities bringing out the huge potential from referral site traffic. For example, when you post a link or a package deal, your followers will notice it. If they read and like it, they'll in turn refer more individuals. It is not uncommon to see Twitter handles and Facebook pages to start out with ten followers or likes and have several thousand within a short span of time. The conventional ways of internet marketing still stand very important. Now as the marketers plan the internet marketing strategy for clients, Social Media is added as a channel of distributing content, acquiring new links and interacting with the existing and the potential customer. The new marketplace has now become more creative, making it easier to reach out to potential customers. Below is an interesting demographic, which shows how the Social Media users turn to Social Media when making purchase decisions with a distinction across the various industries.[3] Importantly, it all begins with a Search, and this still remains the base and essence of Internet marketing. As people start to realize the importance of search, it will be about how the new media blends with search rather than how search adapts to other new media.



Conclusion

Internet marketing has always been a rapidly evolving field and a challenging one to keep a pulse on everything that's going around. Content in search marketing has always been of prime importance. With the emergence of Social Media, it has now taken on a new life, by opening new avenues for distribution in the form of blogs, micro blogs, videos, social networking platforms, and a lot more as it continues to evolve. Marketers have now moved on to Pull marketing from Push marketing (newspaper and TV advertisements, radio jingles), enabling people to interact with products and companies directly. And this is where the marketers see more and more synergy between the conventional 'Search' (internet) marketing and Social Media marketing.

A Case In Point

Client – A Luxury Resorts & Spa Brand

Challenges:

- The website had very poor and almost no presence on Search Engines, Social Network sites
- As a result, very little traffic on the website
- The client had negligible reservations and conversions from the website

The Project:

- To overhaul the web presence of the brand
- Complete overhaul of the website to make it search engine and user friendly
- To create and promote brand's online presence via online promotions and Social Media channels.

Results:

- Website traffic - In 6 months, # visitors increased from 567 to 43,049. Pageviews increased from 1,806 to 1,45,184
- Ranked #1 on Trip Advisor.com
- Thousands of fans on Social Media profiles like Facebook, Twitter
- Over 1,200 reservation enquires from organic traffic (SEO driven). Conversion rate of lookers into bookers averaged as high as 60% for all the brand properties.

HVS – Web Strategies offers a wide spectrum of Internet and Web services to hotel and resort owners, operators, developers and investors, who recognize the key role technology can play in improving operations and financial performance. Our line of services comprises Graphical User Interface (GUI) Design Restructuring, Online Branding and Internet Marketing & Social Media campaigns, Custom Web Development, and Multimedia and Graphic Design.

1 Socialnomics

2 Interview transcripts on Instant E Training

3 Socialmedia stats as on DigitalBuzz