The Social Media as a Tool of Marketing Communication: A Descriptive Study

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Abstract

This study aims to discover the implication of social media in the enhancement of marketing communications in Carrefour chain stores in Erbil Province -Iraq. Current years have witnessed the rise of new media channels such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. These platforms allow consumers to take additional active flexible roles as market players and reach almost everyone anywhere and anytime. Also, the new media will put pressure of long established business models and company strategies, but in the same time it will provide plenty opportunities for growth through new adaptive strategies. Social media marketing domain represents a influential instrument for businesses to reach, connect and build strong relationships with their customers. Software package SPSS-20 has been used to analyze the data in order to run statistical tools like average, frequency analysis and chi square. Based on the analysis a conclusion has been drawn that use of social media will enhance marketing communications in Carrefour chain stores in Erbil.

Keywords: Social Media, Marketing Communications, Social Networking.

1. Introduction

New trends affected communication newly, adjusting the essential facets and attitudes of organizations and customers. Many businesses believe that their attendance on platforms of social media represents the essential element towards the successful way of activity [1].Throughout their connections with others, customers can have great power,

Journal of University of Babylon for Pure and Applied Sciences, Vol. (28), No. (1): 2020
Online ISSN: **2312-8135**, Print ISSN: **1992-0652**
The First International Scientific Conference for Pure and Human Studies, University of AL-HAMDANIYA, 20-21 November 2019

engaging in activities that can enhance — or reduce — a brand's profitability. Furthermore, a lot of customers look to put up their own brand online, which can contain a self-driven association with an organization [2]. Social media helps businesses world to be in touch directly with consumers with low cost and high levels of effectiveness compare to traditional communication tools. Hence, social media domain will be pertinent to large multinational, medium-sized, nonprofit and governmental organizations [3]. Vries et al. (2012) [4] presented their work about "Popularity of Brand Posts on Brand Fan Pages". They highlighted the significance of commenting as well as liking on brand posts in social media. As such they indicated how this will affect brand post popularity. And they conclude the possible drivers for brand post popularity. Zubcsek et al. (2011) [5] introduced a model to help the organizations calculate best budgets for advertising campaigns through social media using word-of-mouth communication model (WOM) with customers. Paul et al. (2013) [6] proposed a new notion that is 'Enterprise Social Media' they attempted to discover the "consequences-positive and negative-social media" used for communication and interaction inside the organization. This paper is keen to reveal the importance of social media in the said industry. As such it examines how the social media can enhance the relationship and communications of Carrefour Chain Stores in Erbil Province-Iraq with their customers.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Media

Currently, using social media is very usual and essential, as it engages with daily life styles and of people like individual-to- individual communication, collaboration within the firm, and the process of commerce, which is within all types of communication technology [7]. Social media is redefining the understanding of customer behavior. The social network environment adds in the commercial businesses activity beside the establishment of successful interaction between the customers and the brand. The mass using of internet with the fast grow-up of the customers digital media world have forced firms occupied in diverse businesses sector in order to adopt new ways of communication with clients. Applications such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, have made managers in all organizational levels to discover ways, which can achieve a profitable use of them [8] [9] [3]. As such all web applications, and also every form of media can be consider as social

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as they store and transmit 'human knowledge' that form in social relations in society. Whenever anyone uses a computing system or a medium, then she or he cognize based on 'objectified knowledge' that is the out- come of social relations. Direct communications between humans cannot be always supported by all types of computing systems and web applications, in which at least two users mutually replace symbols that are interpreted as being meaningful. For example 'Amazon' primarily gives information about books as well as goods, it is not primarily a tool of communication, but rather a means of information, while Facebook has in-built communication features that are frequently used "mail system, walls for comments, forums, etc." [9]. Social media enables organizations to engage customers in timely and direct manner with low cost and high levels of efficiency than beside more traditional communication tools. This will make social media applications will be appropriate for small, medium and large organizations [3].

2.2 Marketing Communications

Grow of the Internet has had a new effect on society [2]. The World Wide Web was born on August 6, 1991, hence the first web page launched by Tim erners-Lee. He stated that the Web is more a social creation than a technical one. He further assumed that social effect will help people work [10]. Grow up and pervasive use of internet beside fast-growing customer's digital media use allowed firms occupied in diverse business segments to discover new way of communication with consumers [11]. The sharing of media content between users represents the main purpose of content communities [3]. Communications through social media has to be taken as a competitive advantage especially in the business environment [5]. Businesses environment nowadays offers more marketing communications opportunities than ever [12]. Social media make communications more accessible to those with lower levels of literacy [13]. A value of customers and organizational participants through social media will bring as they "gather 'round and talk", bearing in mind opening up a dialog gives firm a natural way to communicate with costumers [14].

2.3 Social Networking:

A social network is a social structure comprised of people and firms called "hubs", which associated by a few specific types of interdependency, for example normal intrigue,

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companionship, money related trade, aversion, and learning or distinction [15]. In the end of 1990s, profiles of client wound up basic normal for person to person communication locales. Enabling them to gather arrangements of friends and search out for new clients with comparable interests. New social networking methods were created giving further developed highlights for associations to set up and oversee interchanges with costumers [16]. Social network sites like Facebook, MySpace and so forth created accumulation client bases in first decade of the twenty-first century [17]. What makes social network sites exceptional isn't that they enable people to meet outsiders, yet rather that they empower clients to expressive and make noticeable their social systems. This can bring about associations between people that would not generally be made, however that is regularly not the objective, and these gatherings are much of the time between 'latent ties' [18].

3. Research Methodologies

Iraq represents an emerging market. A according to the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), 58% of all Iraqis and 71% of Iraqis ages 15 to 24 have used the internet in 2016, compared with 18% and 27%, respectively, four years ago. At the same time, the social platforms, Facebook and YouTube are rising in popularity in many of Iraq's provinces especially Erbil [19].

It is possible to explain the methodology of this work through the following main features.

A. Problem Identification

The research problem can be identified through raising the following questions:

(1) Do the target stores have an idea about the benefits of social media applications in marketing?

(2) Do social media applications help in managing communications with customers?

B. Hypothesis

It is possible to answer the questions faced in the research problem through the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1:

H0: Target stores do not have an idea about the benefits of social media applications in marketing.

H1: Target stores have an idea about the benefits of social media applications in marketing.

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Hypothesis 2:
H0: A social media application doesn't help in managing marketing communications.
H1: A social media application helps in managing marketing communications.

4. Data Analyses and Results Dissections

Primary and secondary data have been utilized in this work. Secondary data collected from books and journals, whereas primary data have been collected from Carrefour Chain Stores in Erbil-Iraq. Target respondents were the employees of the sample stores, approached randomly, because they were considered best suited to answer questions about both their management domain and firm communications. 100 employees from all stores have been taken randomly, so all together there are 300 respondents. Out of 300 questionnaires, 235 questionnaires has been collected, 12 of them have been removed due to uncompleted question answers. The questionnaire[1] was developed using a five-point Likert scale to measure the ratings of the respondents. In rating scale, 5 is highest and 1 is the lowest ratings. Whereas 2, 3, 4 are "I don't agree", "Neutral", and "Agree" respectively. Table (1) shows number of questionnaire which has been distributed and collected.

Table 1: Number of Questionnaires distributed, collected, and analyzed

Name of the Store	Number of Questionnaires distributed	Number of Questionnaires collected	Number of Questionnaires analyzed
Carrefour Store in Family Mall	100	86	80
Carrefour Store in Tablo Mall	100	71	68
Carrefour Store in Royal Mall	100	78	75
Total	300	235	223

Source: Questionnaires analysis

4.1 Reliability

Reliability is similar to dependability, stability, consistency, predictability and accuracy. The authors used Cronbach's Alpha test in order to establish internal consistency.

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[1] See the appendix

It is a coefficient of reliability. It is normally used as measure of the internal consistency or reliability. Cronbach's alpha measures the internal consistency- how closely set of items are related to each other as a group. It is measure of scale reliability.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics of the Questionnaire

Reliability of the questionnaire	Cronbach's Alpha
	.81

Source: SPSS Results

The alpha coefficient calculated above in the table 2, found 0.81. This means that the items have relatively high internal consistency.

4.2 Frequency Distribution, Percentages Main and Standard Deviation

In order to disclose the nature of the denote parameters adopted in this work, variables have been tabulated in order to process. This include the primary analysis of data using the Frequencies distribution, Percentage, Mean, and Standard Deviation for all variables as clarified in table (3).

Table 3: Frequency Distribution, Percentages Main and Standard Deviation

Sn.	Strongly Agree (5)		Agree (4)		Neutral (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly Disagree (1)		Mean	Standard Deviation
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%		
X1	73	32.7	143	64.1	7	3.1	00	00	00	00	4.29	.52
X2	54	24.2	159	71.3	3	1.3	7	3.1	00	00	4.16	.59
X3	22	9.9	185	83.0	16	7.2	00	00	00	00	4.02	.41
X4	27	12.1	161	72.2	35	15.7	00	00	00	00	3.96	.52
X5	22	9.9	160	71.7	29	13.0	12	5.4	00	00	3.86	.65
X6	43	19.3	139	62.3	41	18.4	00	00	00	00	4.00	.61
X7	57	25.6	102	45.7	64	28.7	00	00	00	00	3.96	.73
X8	65	29.1	137	61.4	12	5.4	9	4.0	00	00	4.15	.69
X9	40	17.9	150	67.3	24	10.8	9	4.0	00	00	3.99	.67
X10	61	27.4	113	50.7	49	22.0	00	00	00	00	4.05	.70
X11	91	40.8	84	37.7	48	21.5	00	00	00	00	4.19	.76

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X12	38	17.0	166	74.4	19	8.5	00	00	00	00	4.08	.49
X13	28	12.6	157	70.4	19	8.5	19	8.5	00	00	3.87	.73
X14	38	17.0	162	72.6	4	1.8	9	4.0	10	4.5	3.93	.86
Total	21.10		64.62		11.85		2.7		0.32		4.03	.59

Source: SPSS Results.

In the above table, XI stands for question no 1 of the questionnaire i.e. whether business depends on a Social Media in order to create a good relationship with the customers. Out of total number of the respondents i.e. 223, 216 are agreeing that Carrefour Chain Stores in Erbil using Social Media to create a good relationship with the customers. On the other hand 7 were neutral. X2 that is question no 2 of the questionnaire i.e. whether the main reason behind using the social media applications is to increase the sales or not? Out of total number of respondents, 213 are having positive thoughts about usage of social media to increase the sales. On the other hand 3 were neutral and 7 were disagreeing with that. X3 i.e. the main target of using Social Media applications is to engage customers. Out of total number of respondents, 207 believe that the main target of using Social Media applications is to engage customers. On the other hand 16 were neutral. X4 stand that understanding of customer needs is the most important target behind using social media in the said industry. Out of total number of respondents i.e. 223, 188 are agreed that using social media will help to understand costumers need. On the other hand 35 were neutral. X5 stand that using of Social Media applications like Facebooke allows a lot of personal and social data about users to be generated. Out of total number of respondents i.e. 223, 182 are agreed about that. On the other hand 29 were neutral and 12 were disagreeing. X6 stand that the most important targets behind using Social Media techniques is to increase brand awareness between customers. Out of total number of respondents i.e. 223, 182 are agreed about that. On the other hand 41 were neutral. X7 stand that Carrefour Chain Stores in Erbil are using Social Media applications like Facebook to communicate with stakeholders. Out of total number of respondents i.e. 223, 159 are agreed about that. On the other hand 64 were neutral. X8 stands for question no 8 of the questionnaire i.e. whether these stores are using social media applications like Facebook to keep communicating eternally or not? Out of total number of respondents i.e. 223, 202 are agreed about that. While 64 were neutral. And 9 disagreed. X9 stand that Social media applications like Facebook offer a moderating service which checks comments from users for

appropriateness before posting them on the site. Out of total number of respondents i.e. 223, 190 are agreed about that. On the other hand 24 were neutral. And 9 disagreed. X10 stand that Social Media is using in order to create a good relationship with other businesses. Out of total number of respondents i.e. 223, 174 are agreed about that. On the other hand 49 were neutral. X11 stand that social media applications like Facebook and YouTube help more to interact within the organization. Out of total number of respondents i.e. 223, 175 are agreed about that. On the other hand 48 were neutral. X12 stand that it should be integration between Social Media and Traditional Media in order to communicate with costumers. Out of total number of respondents i.e. 223, 204 are agreed about that. While 19 were neutral. X13 stand that Social Media helps us to respond quickly to both positive and negative feedback. Out of total number of respondents i.e. 223, 185 are agreed about that. On the other hand 19 were neutral. And 19 disagreed. X14 stand that Social networking sites help to get new ideas for future products or tweak to current ones from the costumers. Out of total number of respondents i.e. 223, 200 are agreed about that. On the other hand 4 were neutral. And 9 disagreed. Overall averages of these i.e. X1 to X14 are 4.03 with standard deviation 0.59.

4.3: Chi-Square Tests

Results for Chi-Square test clarified in table (4) below:

Table -4- Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	56.842a	1	.000		
Continuity Correction	46.803	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	31.008	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	56.368	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	223				

Source: SPSS Results.

Since Sig<0.05. H0 for both hypotheses have been rejected, which means there is an association or using tools of social media for facilitation of marketing communications.

5. Conclusions

The use of social media is valuable and is likely to become an enduring part of the organizations strategy. By using applications that are in social media the organizations can attract different people to the products and business. As such it's possible to say that social media represent constitute and perpetuate communications between the organizations and costumers. In the same time social media is a digital platform communication in contrast of physical communications. Social media applications provide proper, visible, and transparent connections that link organization with its customers. Depending on social networking, social media applications can help an organization to increase brand exposure and broaden customer reach. Two hypotheses have been developed and tested to know whether there is Significance in marketing communications through using social media. It has been found that there is Impact on marketing communications through using social media applications. Marketing communications becomes easier and more effective through using social media.

Conflict of Interests.
There are non-conflicts of interest

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الخلاصة

تهدف هذه الدراسة الى اكتشاف دور استخدام شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي في تعزيز الاتصالات التسويقية في سلسلة متاجر كارفور في محافظة أربيل – العراق. شهدت السنوات الحالية بروز قنوات تواصل جديدة مثل فيسبوك، يوتيوب، وتويتر. ان بوابات التواصل هذه، تمكن الزبائن من أن يكون لها أدوار مرنة ومتفاعلة كمتحكمين بالسوق، فضلاً عن امكانية الوصول على مدار الساعة. ان وسائل التواصل الجديدة من شأنها ان تولد ضغوط كبيرة على شركات الاعمال فيما يتعلق بتأسيس نماذج الاعمال وتطبيق استراتيجيات الشركة. ان بيئة شبكات التواصل التسويقية تمثل أدوات مؤثرة لشركات الاعمال للوصول والاتصال وبناء علاقات قوية مع زبائنها. تم استخدام حزمة البرنامج الاحصائي SPSS-20 لتحليل البيانات واستخراج الاوساط الحسابية والتكرارات. تم التوصل الى مجموعة من الاستنتاجات، من أهمها ان شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي لها دور مهم في تعزيز الاتصالات التسويقية في سلسلة متاجر كارفور في أربيل.

الكلمات الدالة: وسائل التواصل، الاتصالات التسويقية، الشبكات الاجتماعية.

Appendix

Dear Sir/Madam:

This "Questionnaire" represents a partial requirement of accomplishing a paper entitled: "**The Significance of Social Media in the Enhancement of Marketing Communications: an Empirical Study in Carrefour Chain Stores in Erbil Provence - Iraq**". It is hoped that your high-credibility participation would have a clear positive impact in directing this paper with the required level. You are therefore requested to tick **(√)** the paper answer according to your choice without passing any question in order to achieve the required credibility, bearing in mind that the listed data are completely confidential.

Wishing you all the best

Authors

1- General Information
Gender
• ☐ Male   • ☐ Female
Age
• ☐ 15-25   • ☐ 25-35   • ☐ 35-45   • ☐ 45-55

Education

• ☐ Graduate   • ☐ Post-Graduate • ☐ Other

Specialization: ☐

Years of Service
• ☐ 1-3 years • ☐ 3-6 years • ☐ 6-12 years • ☐ 12 years plus

Social media : is a computer-mediated technologies that help the creation and sharing of ideas, information, career interests and other forms of expression through virtual communities and networks. It is the collective of online communications channels keen to community-based content-sharing, input, interaction, and collaboration.

Marketing Communications: represent the ability and willingness to grow, organize, and manage a business project along with any of its risks in order to make a profit.

S	Sentences	Choices				
		Strongly agree	agree	neutral	I don't agree	Strongly disagree
1	We depend on a Social Media in order to create a good relationship with the customers.					
2	The main reason behind using the social media applications is to increase the sales.					
3	The main target of using Social Media applications is to engage customers.					
4	Understanding of customer needs is the most important target behind using social media in our stores.					
5	Using of Social Media applications like Facebooke allows a lot of personal and social data about users to be generated.					
6	One of the most important targets behind using Social Media techniques often is to increase brand awareness between customers.					
7	Our stores are using Social Media applications like Facebook to communicate with stakeholders.					
8	Our stores are using social media applications like Facebook to keep communicating eternally.					
9	Social media applications like Facebook offer a moderating service which checks comments from users for appropriateness before posting them on the site.					
10	We depend on a Social Media in order to create a good relationship with other businesses.					
11	Social Media applications like Facebook, YouTube helps more to interact within the organization.					
12	We believe that it should be integration between Social Media and Traditional Media in order to communicate with costumers.					
13	Social Media helps us to respond quickly to both positive and negative feedback.					
14	Social networking sites help us to get new ideas for future products or tweak to current ones from the costumers.					