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The Importance of Social Media ads in Enhancing Brand Equity: A Study on Fast-Food Restaurants in Lahore

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Abstract: *Social media platforms are used in many businesses for the marketing of their products and operations. The Lahore based restaurants are under observation of this research, and the impact of social media is highlighted in the meantime. The major objective of this study is to examine the impacts of social media in doing food business and how it influences their activities. A mix of qualitative and quantitative methods along with individual interviews was conducted. The results of the study showed that in the case of the restaurants business, social media has a positive impact and an increment in sales and flow of consumers. Facebook and Instagram are the major social media platforms used by restaurants. Word of mouth also plays a huge role. Nonetheless, social media provides cheap and accessible marketing to reach numerous people instantly.*

Key Words: Social Media, Brand Equity, Fast-Food, Lahore, Pakistan, Facebook

Introduction

Social media is a reason for a restaurant's success. The bad reviews have prevented the 94% of the members by their visit. Social media takes care of your reputation and show consumers what you're serving. Social networking sites have become anan essential tool for promotional campaigns by restaurants, as it generates substantial relationships between the customers and the restaurants.

Effective social media presence for restaurants appeal more customers engagement, draws in new business and establishes brand authority. (Agresta & Bough, 2011)

The basic aim behind this research is to discover and analyze the impact of social networking sites which they play in the form of promotions for food chains and restaurants while focusing on those which are situated in the Lahore region. The scale of business and restaurant doesn't matter while considering the effect of social

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networks on corporations as they affect almost all kind of companies. No matter on what scale a business is running, social media can provide benefits of marketing. It becomes more important for new entrepreneurs to know their niche and target customers who can be covered through social media campaigns.

Now a days, the outreach of social media is expanding, and almost all corporations are exploiting social media sites as their basic tools for marketing. In last 10 years Social media sites such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Flickr and even other digital websites are developing new marketing strategies to attract the corporations which use these sites as a medium to propagate their interests and products to the general public while emphasizing on targeting the potential customers for their products through different algorithms. This is how the corporations are expanding their loyal customer pool while attracting the new ones simultaneously (Agresta & Bough, 2011). It's equally powerful to realize the importance of popular social media sites to remain in the loop with the contemporary trends among the general public through which corporations can easily pick and choose their potential customers (Chaffey, 2019). As per a survey made by Webs, companies prefer Facebook due to the following factors; Catching customers, marketing of their brand, and staying in contact with their customers for a longer period of time (Loten, Janofsky & Albergotti, 2014). Not just this, but also companies stay in touch with their customers through different means of engagement such as likes and comments. Also, the options of using different hashtags and trending topics has also become a tool for marketing and acquiring the attention of customers (Copp, 2016).

Feedback mechanism for businesses can be established by remaining in contact with your customers through reading their reviews and comments on your brand. This is why the active presence of companies on social is considered as one of the crucial aspects of marketing. (Caruso, 2016). The proper use of promotional techniques like word of mouth, customer services and engagements, sales, and lucrative promotional campaigns almost always result in the success of the company (Kelly, 2017).

Capitalism is all about healthy competition, where different corporations remain in competition with each by targeting customers in novel way and attracting them through lucrative offers. Social media sites are used to keep check on one's competitors as well, as then companies would how their competitors are acquiring the attention of customers. Through this analysis and information, the company could easily offer and design better strategies and perks for its clients. The old marketing methodology proposed that in order to achieve awareness accomplish set sales targets, an organization must compete in a clutter of unlimited websites from around the globe. (Richardson, Gosnay & Carroll, 2010)

As per studies, the most difficult task for many corporations is to put in the effort of time to maintain the social media platforms for their businesses. This becomes more difficult for small enterprises as they do not have much of the resources to hire a social media team. Big businesses might be able to do this but still it demands constant diligence from them. Customers get attracted to those companies which really try to maintain their social media pages by constantly engaging with customers. Due to the advancement of social media, it has become an important organ for getting feedback in the form of reviews. Customers have developed a habit of looking at already existing reviews about a certain product they are going to use. As positive feedback help businesses getting expand, the negative reviews result in negatively affect the business. This social media awareness has really exposed those businesses which used to sell low quality products while still attracting new customers solely due to marketing strategies. Social has become an important part of the lives of Pakistanis. It has gained momentum in recent years. Innovation is found in every bit of the technological country of Pakistan.

In her blog, Ayesha (2011) compared the rise of social networking platforms in Pakistan from 2011-to 2016. She compared the state of social media sites among different age groups in the previous 5 years. Around 56% of rise has been reported in Pakistan. The overall increment had

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gone up to 3%. Moreover, the Statistics Pakistan report interpret that 23% of Pakistanis usually use social to stay in contact or in touch with their favorite brands or to get information about new brands. In contrast, 21% population preferred to use social networking platforms to engage with the commodities which is distributed in the general public. Similarly, 14% were following fan pages or using social media as fans.

This research is based upon both mix method one is qualitative and the other one is quantitative methods. To extract the in-depth information, interviews of some restaurant owners were conducted and a questionnaire was forwarded to the 189 students from Lahore just to collect the final result. Face-to-Face (F2F) meetings with people make it easier to gain a deep understanding of the current market for including data collection. (Marshall) Facts provided from books, websites, articles, journals and schools database were used to gain a finer product. Moreover, the researcher's social media experience and his own previous research work has also been included.

Problem Statement

The research area has been picked due to the curiosity of the researcher in social media marketing with the context of restaurants, café's and food chains. The researcher is determined to explore the potential of social media for promotions in depth. This is why the research topic has been chosen and the research scope has been restricted to the cafes and restaurants in the Lahore region, which were installed with relatively lesser initial investments and which exploited social media as a tool for marketing and promotions.

The research techniques such as the range of data, research questionnaires, analysis of data, results, conclusion and critical analysis has been explained by the researcher in the end. In this research following research question have been tried to be answered.

How social media is influencing food related businesses positively or negatively?

Objectives of the Research

This research would revolve round following objectives:

- To study the social networking promotions in the business of eateries.
- To investigate the dynamics in which social media is impacting.
- To study how new business openers are indulged in social media campaigns in order to increase their enterprises?
- To discover the positive and negative effects that social media has over the food business.

Significance of the Study

Social Media Users eat out more regularly than non-users. As indicated by a review directed by the NRA, the overwhelming majority of regular web-based networking clients visit a semi-formal eatery once per month, contrasted with 84% all things considered. Thirty-two percent of users message or associate on a cell phone during supper time, which means about 33% of eatery clients are presenting their plates to thousands, directly as they're eating.

Considering the previously mentioned realities, this investigation will give us a more profound understanding of how online networking can be used in promoting eateries. By collecting information through meetings and the overview poll we will be better ready to comprehend and dissect the impacts of online life showcasing on eatery, the tools and tactics to expand café enterprises and the effects that promotions have on them.

Readers would be able to comprehend and apply these promotional techniques in their business and eventually would be able to expand them.

Literature Review

Social media platforms were initially intended for the socialization of the people and to let them stay in touch with their loved ones despite the geographical boundaries. However, later on, it turned into a marketing platform by companies as

well. Now a days corporations especially restaurants use these social media networks to advertise their products as well as to stay in touch with their customers. "Technology related developments, for example the rise of powerful search engines, modified mobile devices and interfaces, peer-to-peer communication sources, and online social networks have expanded marketers' ability to reach buyers via new touchpoints (Shankar et al, 2011)."

It becomes equally important to explore the consumer interaction with social media promotions. Previous studies reveal how different sectors (product and service sector) can get more awareness by engaging customers on social media. "As more shoppers are using social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Myspace, and LinkedIn) and rely on them for marketing shopping decisions, promotion through these media has become important (Shankar et al. 2011, 32)."

According to Pedro Longart (2010), people use positive word of mouth through social media which helps restaurants to advertise their products while considering that the restaurants have limited recourses for promotions. On the other hand Elzbieta Lepkowska-White (2019) conducted a study on promotional tactics used by small restaurants showed that small restaurants mostly post on Facebook related to their products and services. Potential growth is the inherent part of social media promotional campaigns for restaurants to improve customer base, to increase sales and to build relationships with customers (Schaupp and Belanger, 2013). Kwok and Yu, (2013) conducted a study on US restaurants, and results showed that feedback from the customers on Facebook and any other social media is very important for them to pay attention to reviews and act accordingly.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Both the quantitative and qualitative research methods were used for the purpose of study. A face-to-face interviews were also conducted with the restaurant owners or the restaurant representatives.

The reason for face-face interviews was that it allows the interviewer to observe impressions like facial expressions, body language and confidence which give the interviewer more in-depth answers. (Wyse, 2014)

Population

This study was conducted on the population sample which consisted of students and restaurants owners. The students from different universities were randomly selected for this survey. The reason behind choosing university students was that there is more probability of students being a consumer of restaurants through online marketing. The young generation has more interest in going for eating out and additionally they have the advantage of staying in touch with social happenings around them. Secondly Restaurant owners were chosen as they are the direct beneficiary of online marketing and they know how to promote their businesses on regular bases and as they possess the experience.

The population of restaurant owners is represented by the following restaurants.

- Hatchery
- Burger Hub
- Café Solasta
- Sarpinos
- Wayback Burgers

Sample Size and Sample Technique

The sampling technique for this study as for choosing students was random, but for restaurants, the selective method was adopted in which small to medium size cafes and restaurants were contacted. Students were distributed with survey questionnaire which consisted of different questions regarding their experience

and tendencies towards online marketing. However, live interviews were conducted to record the response from restaurants. A total of 189 responses from students in the form of answers to questionnaires were recorded while 5 restaurants agreed to include themselves in this study. So, there concerned personals were interviewed.

Statistical Tools

Statistical Analysis

As for statistical analysis of collected data, SPSS software was used. This is how the responses and data were analyzed arithmetically. In statistical analysis frequency, percentage mean values and standard deviation values were determined for the data.

Results

Demographic Profile

Demographic and interpretation of the results are presented in this section.

Table 1. Results of the Demographic Variable: Facebook Profile

Facebook Profile	*f*	%age
Yes	170.00	89.90
No	19.00	10.10
Total	189.00	100.00

Table 1 shows the number of people that have a Facebook profile. 90% of the users had a Facebook profile.

Table 2. Results of the Demographic Variable: Gender

Gender	*f*	%age
Male	98	51.90
Female	91	48.10
Total	n l= l189	100.00

Table 2 shows that the male participants were more in numbers than the female participants. Almost 52% of the population is male and the rest is female.

Table 3. Results of the Demographic Variable: Log on Period

Log on period	*f*	%age
One time within a month	27	14.3
After two weeks	44	23.3
One time within a week	16	8.5
On daily basis	43	22.8
More frequent in a day	59	31.2
Total	189	100.0

The results shown in table 3 show the population that log on to Facebook. More than half of the people come online on Facebook at least once a day. This suggests that there is a great chance that the user had seen the advertisement when it is posted.

Table 4. Results of the Demographic Variable: Age Group

Age Group	*f*	%age
15-25	70	37.0
26-35	96	50.8
36-45	17	9.00
46-55	4	2.10

Age Group	f	%age
55-65	2	1.10
Total	n l=189	100.00

Table 4 shows that 87% of the users are younger than 35 years. This indicates that such advertisements should be made to fulfil the expectations of these people and appeal to them.

Table 5. Results of the Demographic Variable: Time Spent on Facebook

Time Spent on Facebook	f	%age
0-10 minutes	83.00	43.90
11-20 minutes	67.00	35.40
21-30 minutes	20.00	10.60
31-50 minutes	7.00	3.70
51-60 minutes	2.00	1.10
More than 60 minutes	10.00	5.30
Total	189.00	100.00

The Table 5 shows that the time a very small number of people use Facebook for more than 30 minutes i.e. only 10.1% of the users whereas the user who use it less than 20 minutes are 79.3% in number. This information can be very important for the advertisers as they need to focus on this time period that their ad should be viewed within this time. Advertisers should advertise their ads during the time when the user is online.

Table 6. Results of the Demographic Variable: Educational Status

Educational Status	f	%age
Matric	11.00	05.82
Diploma	14.00	07.41
Graduate Degree	105.00	55.55
Post Graduate Degree	59.00	31.22
Total	189.00	100.00

Table 6 contains the results of the educational status of the survey participants. Users with tertiary education are greater in percentage i.e. 94.18% of all users. This may suggest that these people are looking for their old friends, school friends and present connections. Remaining in touch via Facebook is much easier than LinkedIn as people don't reply there that often. When these people are present on Facebook, they are more connected.

Mean Values

The mean values and the standard deviations of the research criterion were calculated. The mean values of the criterion were calculated in the percentage format after converting the responses into percentage on 7point Likert scale. The following guidelines have been adopted to interpret the results. Under 60% = Not Important Between 60% land 75% = Under the Acceptance Range Over

75% and Higher = Extraordinary.

In Table 7 the result of the mean values is presented. All of the SD values are up to the mark. Fair discontent has been shown in several classes of mean values below the undesirable level of 60%. Also, some significant variables have a mean value of 60% to 75% and some very high rank criterion have mean value equal and above than 75%.

Table 7. Mean Values

	Howdy		McDonald's		Hardees		Subway	
Personal Profile	**Mean %**	**SD**	**Mean %**	**SD**	**Personal Profile**	**Mean%**	**SD**	**Mean %**
The brand of this restaurant provided me a better lifestyle.	70.2	1.25	75.54	1.26	72.24	1.25	80.54	1.02
I would be inclined to buy from this restaurant brand over other brands.	65.89	1.24	77.98	1.23	67.23	1.36	70.82	1.25
I love this brand.	71.56	1.68	70.14	1.08	69.65	1.45	71.14	1.12
This brand makes me feel good.	77.65	1.68	72.24	1.65	71.14	1.32	68.54	1.36
I respect this brand.	75.26	1.75	78.45	1.75	70.86	1.23	75.16	1.24
Advertising Personality								
The social media advertisements for this restaurant's brand are frequently seen.	60.26	1.95	68.51	1.02	52.16	1.23	51.75	1.68
The level of the social media advertisements for this restaurant meet my expectations.	79.25	1.65	72.14	1.36	68.25	1.45	62.54	1.65
The social media advertisements for this restaurant are very attractive.	80.25	1.68	71.98	1.85	65.21	1.63	60.21	1.75
The social media advertisements for this restaurant brand perform well in comparison to those of other restaurants.	70.21	1.11	68.15	1.45	50.84	1.58	44.5	1.26
This restaurant's brand offers extensive advertisement on social media.	56.27	1.69	74.85	1.85	50.48	1.57	40.21	1.36
Consumer Engagement								
I like to go this restaurant more than others.	65.84	1.01	70.21	1.62	69.41	1.45	75.69	1.35
I would continue to visit this restaurant even if its prices increase somewhat.	66.21	1.68	50.54	1.85	52.95	2.88	65.24	1.32
I recommended this restaurant to others.	70.05	1.69	66.21	1.35	64.21	1.24	74.55	1.32
This brand communicates well with me.	69.56	1.45	55.54	1.45	45.24	1.63	65.29	1.74
This brand comes to mind immediately.	65.45	1.64	77.89	1.86	44.85	1.22	65.26	2.42
Brand Reputation								
The brand of this restaurant has many visitors every day.	67.85	1.26	88.54	1.65	75.21	1.12	70.14	1.62
The brand of this restaurant has a fashionable and trendy image.	92.14	1.86	84.62	2.01	71.21	1.02	66.83	1.69
The brand of this restaurant has unique features.	88.13	1.45	80.84	1.25	75.21	1.26	40.21	1.86
This restaurant is my preferred choice over others.	76.52	1.62	71.14	1.75	50.21	1.86	75.21	1.46
This brand is a pure delight.	74.21	1.63	76.32	1.36	65.21	1.85	69.65	1.33
Brand Attitude								
This restaurant brand is growing in popularity.	87.36	1.12	50.21	1.85	40.25	1.75	46.35	1.32
This restaurant brand provides good care to its customers.	75.65	1.96	74.25	1.45	72.85	1.42	71.26	1.55
I approve of this brand's performance.	76.32	1.35	72.23	1.63	71.26	1.96	70.78	1.42
This brand is honest to me.	70.26	1.24	68.21	1.75	50.21	1.75	90.24	1.24

	Howdy		McDonald's		Hardees		Subway	
Personal Profile	Mean %	SD	Mean %	SD	Personal Profile	Mean%	SD	Mean %
The brand of this restaurant provides good value to its customers.	84.26	1.42	78.24	1.96	68.54	1.63	84.65	1.75

By taking a gander at the individual profile and the comparing rate mean qualities, obviously McDonalds is showing improvement over the others as the entirety of its mean qualities are significant, and 3 of them are exceptional. Trams receipts the peak of receiving an amazing estimation of 80.54% which underwrites their motto of giving a superior way of life their sound and nutritionist dinner.

The percentage of mean for Howdy in Consumer Engagement is 70.05% on the other hand, 74.55% for Subway shows the significance of informal exchange and portrays that both are doing admirably in keeping up their notoriety among individuals to where individuals educate others concerning them. A

45.24% and 55.54% for McDonald's and Hardees individually shows that the brands are not discussing great with their clients. Right now mean estimation of 77.89% is of extraordinary significance and supports the brands promoting methodologies to associate with individuals.

The manner in which they have named their fundamental progressions and the general brand picture is very exceptional, and the mean level of 92.14 obviously recounts to the story. Mcdonald's, likewise, is doing very well in brand notoriety with all the estimations of mean rates being worthy and three of them being extraordinary. A mean estimation of 40.21% for Subway shows that the eatery needs to add novel highlights to pull in clients.

Average Mean Values

In table 7 the normal mean qualities and the normal standard deviations of the five eateries. It tends to be seen obviously observed from these normal mean qualities and the estimations of the standard deviation that which factors really assume a significant job in the viability of an ad. The estimations of standard deviation are genuinely low that proposes that the vacillations are genuinely negligible.

Results Gathered from Restaurants Representatives (Interviews Results)

This chapter scrutinizes the results of the research found through interviews. The restaurants are listed below to whom we interviewed.

Table 8

Social Media Sites	Name
Facebook, Instagram	The Hatchery
Facebook, Instagram	Café Solasta
Facebook, Instagram	Wayback burger
Facebook, Instagram	Sarpino's
Facebook, Instagram	BurgerHub

The restaurants were contacted by referring ESR. Appointments were booked online then the concerned personals were interviewed. The entire process for interviewing the restaurants took around three weeks. Afterwards, the responses gathered through these interviews were analyzed and evaluated to answer the research questions.

Size and Age

We got 5 responses among 43 restaurants to whom we interviewed. Following are the credentials of the respondent's restaurants:

Table 9

Respondent	Range
Respondent 1	Range between 1 to 5 years
Respondent 2	Range between 1 to 5 years
Respondent 3	Range between 10 to 15 years
Respondent 4	Range between 10 to 15 years
Respondent 5	Range between 10 to 15 years

A number of employees are varies from 6-9 (60% respondents) employees to 10-14 (40% respondents).

Analysis of Research Questions

Results of Research Question

The F2F interviews uncovered some fascinating outcomes. Almost all the respondents claimed that they have no specifications or customizations for some specific type of customers and they never design their campaigns while keeping in mind the certain type of customers. All kinds of customers are welcomed at their eateries, and they always try to promote their businesses for all kinds of customers. So, it can be concluded that the restaurants covered in this study are of general nature.

It has been found out in this study that small to medium restaurants spend an average of 60K PKR per month on advertisement. These advertisements campaigns include the hiring of professionals to run their social media pages, who are also responsible for staying in constant touch with their customers. This money is also being spent in designing of posts and generation of different promotional videos which may include the hiring of some models. This money could also be spent on the promotion of social media pages. Many new restaurant owners claim that these promotional packages and an initial investment in their businesses literally helped them expand their business.

This study shows that almost all the restaurants are using Facebook and Instagram for promoting their businesses s these two platforms have the highest following among all the social media platforms. Also, it is convenient to conduct business over these two platforms due to their retailer friendly user interfaces and their economical packages for marketing. These platforms are also necessary to keep tabs on your counterparts. Though, 20% of the restaurants were being too modest by claiming that they do not keep check on the progress of their counterparts.

Table 10. Contains the Results of the Research Questions

Research Questions	Results	
To what extent social media ads in restaurant businesses are effective?	62.40%	
By what means social media take influence in the restaurant business?	72.615	
To promote the restaurants business, tell us about the social media strategies the entrepreneurs are using now a days?	WOM and eWOM	Discounts and other promotional deals
	80%	20%
Is there any connection between social media promotion and increase in sale of restaurant business?	Increased sales/popularity	Don't know
	80%	20%

Table 10 Results of research questions

Discussion

Social media channels are an enormous community of people worldwide. In merely a few years, the acceptance rate of social media has increased exponentially. Amongst all the social media platforms, usage of Facebook is on the top.

Like all the other channels, social media too has positive and negative impacts, but a proper utilization of the tools can help businesses achieve their desired goals. The most important part is to identify the target customer before initiating business. Majority of the interviewee's failed to identify their target customer. Had they identified their target customers; they could've had more turnover than their present one.

Being a keen social media user, I had a special interest in this research topic. I have learnt many things regarding during the research process marketing strategies of social media, its history and how the social media has dominated the traditional media so quickly. I was really surprised by the power of word of mouth the exceeded my initial expectations and I feel delighted to share my work experience with the people that share the same interest as mine. I want to pursue my career in social media marketing so the skills and knowledge that I have gained from this research will help me a lot in my professional life.

I had some difficulties while carrying out my research. The main problems were the facts like the restaurant's owners were not fully aware of the topic as it is a vague subject, so I was not getting the replies of my emails in time. Very vast and generic information is available on the internet which made it difficult for me to select and process. It would not have been possible without the guidance and the help of my supervisor.

The research focuses on the small-scale businesses of Lahore that too in restaurant's niche. With the small number of respondents, the quality of the research is affected. It would have been much more encompassing had the number of respondents were great in number. In any field in social media, many topics of though research can be adopted as the changes in it are pretty fast. Every now and then a new social media site arises and extinct.

Conclusion

The principal target of this examination was to contemplate the effects of web-based social networking in the neighborhood eatery organizations and establish how it is influencing nearby café business. 83% of the respondents concurred that the adjusted showcasing procedure has positive a few outcomes on their eatery business. So, it can be concluded that the restaurants covered in this study are of general nature.

It has been found out in this study that small to medium restaurants spend an average of 60K PKR per month on advertisement.

The right utilization of internet based life straightforwardly influences the deals and increment in the client footfall. Greater part of the eateries (80%) said that their clients had expanded with the astute utilization of internet based life. half of the respondents referenced utilizing markdown offers helped increment their deals and appointments in the eateries though 20% of the respondents said that their prominence has expanded using online life.

Recommendations

Areas for Future Research

Any further study can be carried out to determine the trends among customers with regards to the type of content they want to see in advertisements. These customized ads can then be used to enhance the quality of promotional campaigns. Also, the companies can be compared in light of their ads quality and how they attract the customers.

Future research can be cater the side of social media usage to deliver food to door step by the use of social media. After this research, a promotional model can be generated which can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of marketing strategies by corporations. The ads can be built as per the desires of the customers, and a yardstick can be established to measure the impact of that advertisement. In this way corporations could be able to design their customized advertisements.

Further study could be consist of restaurant management managing the funds and all other aspects of managing the food chain business.

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