

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON BRAND PERCEPTION



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ABSTRACT

Evolution of social networking sites through many generations and eras, it has been defined in various ways by different authors, researchers as well as academia. Some argue that it stems from the very early forms of interpersonal communication via email, while others solely accept it as the more recent form of social interaction on social media sites. Despite all the different arguments that exist regarding social media, extant academic literature on the topic is rather sparse. That being said however, the topic of brand perceptions has been studied and researched in depth in both the academic and corporate worlds. The understanding of brand perceptions has been the source of many debates which has resulted in a wealth of literature to draw on for this research study.

Our core motive of the carried out research is to calculate the relative influence imparted by social media specifically Facebook on brand perceptions of consumers, with a specific focus on Facebook. In order to add structure and guidance to the research study, three research objectives were set. The first objective was to review extant conceptual models and theoretical frameworks related to social media and brand perceptions. The second was to evaluate Facebook and consumer blogs in their role as reference groups on consumers. The final research objective was to determine optimal strategies to improve sales and brand reputation of businesses through an increased presence on social media platforms.

The researcher deemed it appropriate to conduct this investigation from a qualitative research paradigm. Given the nature of the topic under investigation, qualitative research would allow the researcher to delve deeper into the subject matter. Consequently, the study was carried out in an inductive approach using questionnaire method. This data collection was coupled with online survey in-depth.

The findings from this research study revealed that in principal, consumers and management accept and appreciate the importance of the impact that social media has on brand perceptions. It would seem, based on the results that the challenges boil down to the execution of social media marketing activities. Essentially, Facebook and the blogosphere fulfill distinctive roles in communicating marketing messages, both consumer and company generated. Where Facebook is considered to be a social interaction space, blogs are seen to serve an information providing role. Based on the results of this research study, cosmetics companies have failed to recognise these critical differences.