

Relationship between social media and indian cultural collectivism



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Prakash Thakur, an Indian student in London, has once said that Internet and his iPhone are parts of his life and cannot live without it, not even get off home without his smartphone.

He is an active Facebook user, log in several times a day via iPhone and relies on this networking website to stays in touch with his friends and colleagues, receives his beloved brands' promotions, suggests/comments/complains about products, services and every other things that pass through his life and share it regularly with his connected friends.

After being in the UK for almost 2 years, he is now called himself Internet savvy. He is more likely to purchase products or services that one or more of his friends or colleagues use or recommended, more likely to search for reviews and comments and the best deal online rather than walk around the high-street, and more likely to say it out loud in every possible ways he can – online and offline.

The author has been amused of how important of Internet in Prakash and her life nowadays. Distance does not matter anymore to get in touch with family and friends. Only few mouse clicks, we are real-time connected – through texts, pictures, audio voices, and videos.

Physical textbooks, novel, and newspaper are less important when we could find, read and download almost everything on Internet via laptop, PDA and smartphone like BlackBerry, iPhone, HTC, Nokia, Sony Ericsson, and etc.

Study in MIB course has been made a significant change for me to rely more on electronic resource and database through GGSB's e-library and started to read the whole series of Twilight Saga e-book version on my laptop. A thought of having an e-book reader is more attracted when iPad is launched into the market to make my life easier to read e-book and it will make me look in-trend.

All above are the examples of our everyday life. Internet and Web savvy that is what we are. We acquaint in searching for best deal and become astute online customers.

Internet is EVERYTHING; up-to-date all sort of information, shopping, chatting with friends (or to the world), learning, working, finding a date, and finding a job.

Thanks to technology that allowed us to access to the Internet everywhere, anytime and any devices we want where there are an access point.

Internet may make our life easier and more convenient, however, there is always one major problem for every internet and web users – “ too much”.

For example, when I thought about buying e-book reader, I did not know where to start, then easiest way that everyone in this generation knows – ‘ Googling’ it. By typing ‘ e-book reader’, the result would be 13. 4 million Webs for me to have a look. That’s far too much and actually, it is impossible to expose all those results.

As a business student, I realise that it is challenging for any companies or any brands to stand out among the crowd – to be at the top of 13. 4 million.
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And this is just the beginning. Consumers are now have more choices to choose and more power on brands they consumed about their opinions and more likely to spread out their words like virus.

To be continuing....

The clearer definition of Web 2. 0 by O'Reilly (2005) said that the 7 characters of Web 2. 0 are 1) the web platform that 2) harnessing collective intelligence where 3) data is the next Intel inside which 4) allowed companies to have co-developer and work together daily to end the software release cycle. In addition, Web 2. 0 will also create 5) lightweight programming models including 6) software above level of single device which 7) rich in users experiences

II. Digital Life: Facts & Figures

Everyday, or almost everyday in the UK, according to Statistical Bulletin: Internet Access 2010 (Office of National Statistic, 2010), there were 30. 1 million out of the total of 38. 3 million adults internet users in the UK used the internet from their homes, workplace and when they were on mobiles.

As shown in Figure II-1, unsurprisingly, internet was used primarily to send or receive emails as high as 90 per cent while it was used to search for information about goods and services just 75 per cent.

In addition to that, there were 51 per cent of internet users used internet so as to read or download online news, newspapers or magazines meanwhile watching web television or listening to web radio were counted only 45 per cent.

Interestingly, another 43 per cent of internet users posted messages to chat sites, social networking sites and blogs , and 38 per cent were user-generated content as they uploaded their photos, music or videos to a website (Office of National Statistic, 2010).

According to the report, majority of youngster age 16 to 24 years old, in the report, 75 per cent of them posted messages on Internet whilst half of them uploaded self-created content.

Figure II-1 Internet activities in the UK 2010 (Office of National Statistic 2010)

Moreover, Digital Influence Index studied of how the Internet has transformed the consumers' behaviour around the world, McRoberts et al. (2010) found that in the UK, individuals spend about 14 hours per week using the internet.

So, to answer the question why there were so many adult users actively use Internet? McRoberts et al. (2010) revealed that 30 per cent of the UK consumers trusted internet as the most important(main) source of information rather than e-mail or information received from family, friends and/or colleagues which represented 19 per cent and 16 per cent respectively.

Moreover, more than half of the UK respondents (54 per cent) believed that the online communication with others was a safe thing to do and over one third of consumers did not read printed newspaper or magazine anymore, instead, they go online.

However, internet has been allowing users to participate or response back to the web as user-generated contents and share information online, still, more than of the UK consumers think there was an excess of sharing personal information and many things that was said online is boring (McRobert et al., 2010).

Clearly, internet has been influencing and continuously changing the user's way of life. People are just not only retrieving information from web sites but also able to create, upload, and participate or even express opinions back to the web in a real-time.

All of these impacts from the internet are credited to the term “ Web 2. 0”, therefore, it is very crucial to understand and embrace the definition and effect of Web 2. 0 in our life.

2. 1 Web 2. 0

The term Web 2. 0 is considerably a vague meaning. Web 2. 0 is defined internet users as ‘ user-generated content’ which can be seen in public reviews and comments, blogs and video in two way communication (Fenn, 2009; Ryan & Jones, 2009). ??????

In addition, with Web 2. 0, Internet users relatively have more control and interactivity of the content rather than just being viewers sites owners (Funk, 2009).???

The clearer definition of Web 2. 0 by O'Reilly (2005) said in the 7 characters of Web 2. 0 are as follow;

The web as platform – Website is considered as a station for two-way communication whilst user controls the data or called “ The network as platform”. It is a platform for people to; tagging: del. icio. us, Flickr and Furl, contribute in page rank: TripAdvisor, Amazon review and epinion, participation in blog, enabling the long tail

Harnessing Collective Intelligence – Massive numbers of internet users are associating with and creating the network. They are dominating the market exponentially and producing an astonishing collective work – in real time. This concept is so called ‘ Crowdsourcing’. On the other hand, the Web is learning from the users and become gradually smarter. ????? Such as results and location in web search will now show you the most likely what you want in your local area.?????

Data is the Next Intel Inside – Web 2. 0 companies’ core competency is database management. Therefore, the company strives to be the first who gain and restrain the data assets and put it into their system services.

End of the Software Release Cycle – The daily basis operations – expertise matching development, is the core competency for Web 2. 0 companies. At the same time, the companies’ co-developer is the users as seen in open source development platform in Gmail, Flickr, del. icio. us and Google map. Together, developers and co-developers (users) are working in at least daily basis to upgrading their software.

Lightweight Programming Models – As seen in RSS (Really Simple Syndication) and REST (Representational State Transfer), “ Innovation in

assembly” is a must to create the effective new business model from syndicating reusable commodity components.

Software Above the Level of a Single Device – Concept of two-way communication is applied to many digital devices to be connected in real time. More than one device is needed, for example, one computer hosting the browser while another one is used to host the server. This is the basic requirement for the basic web application. Moreover, not only the PC that can access to the internet application, but any handheld devices with internet service can also do.

Rich User Experiences – Web 2. 0 can benefit from shared data by creating and developing their products and services by learning from their users.

Apparently, Web 2. 0 is about people communicating, generating and engaging. Web 2. 0 usages can be seen in blogs, wikis, social network websites, web applications, video-sharing websites, folksonomy and more.

Significantly, we are now communicating more and more everyday through digital world in the global scale. Therefore, Web 2. 0 can attract business people to pay attention to it, especially marketer.

III. Digital Marketing

Nowadays, internet is not just one of marketing channels; instead, it is the significant part for business’ future (Chaffey and Smith, 2008).

Marketing strategies on the internet have been changing. Strauss and Frost (2009) explained the significant impacts of Web 2. 0 in today’s market that;

Power??? shift from sellers to buyers. Consumer and business buyers are now easily to make an online post that have a massive impact to the business. Buyers' attention and relationship are vital. The companies need to listen and learn to engage with their customers.

Search engines are now reputational engines. Search marketing is the important part of marketing plan as a search engine result pages (SERP) and its popularity are improving can increase brand exposure and awareness, site traffic, company's image and sales.

Market and media fragmentation. There are an increasing specific-interest market and declining mass market which mean that market and media are now customised according to the consumers' needs.

Content is still king online. Contents change quickly in digital word and are driven by consumer-generated media. Marketers need to engage and respond back to the network.

Connections are critical. Social networking is unavoidable. " It is about who you know online and what they say about you".

Improve online and offline strategy integration. As in multichannel marketing – offering more than one channel to the consumers to buy products and services.

Intellectual capital rule. The crucial resources are not money, but instead, they are creativity, imagination and entrepreneurship.

The long tail. The term is coined by Chris Anderson. The concept refers to the economy of abundance where small amount of products sales can collectively increase the revenue significantly. The example from Amazon shows that 57 per cent of total sales come from the small quantities of very different kind of hard-to-find books in a large volume.

Benefits of Web 2. 0 have been used widely by businesses as material marketing strategies in epidemic rate to communicate to their customers and prospects and enhance their brand experiences.

Chaffey and Smith (2008) illustrated how people in online marketplace communicate to each other which he called the “ web-based community communications model” as shown in Figure II-2.

Communications are facilitated by the sender or the company to both customers, opinion leaders and opinion formers who will encourage word-of-mouth online and spread the message to other customers. Furthermore, the company needs to listen and keeps an eye on the customers closely about what they have been talking about in order to improve its brand values.

Figure III-1 A web of conversations – accelerating word-of-mouth. C, customer; OL, opinion leader

Furthermore, within this model, brand awareness is spreading among the relevant community members who will then pass along the viral messages to other members as a form of Affiliate marketing (Chaffey and Smith, 2008).

From this model, the online marketer has to carefully select the appropriate channel of online media used in particular community or network so as to achieve the company's objectives.

When Web 2. 0 is used collectively to connect people together through PC or any other handheld devices like model above, it is called Social Media (Strauss and Frost, 2009).

Social media is also called User-generated media (UGM) or consumer-generated media (CGM) which Strauss and Frost (2009) defined as "...these are Web pages allowing social networking and are primarily authored by internet users...User-generated media are the norm."

The impact of Web 2. 0 and the web-based community communication pattern indeed influenced the online customers and their behaviour. Chaffey and Smith (2008) mentioned that ' brand control' is unlocked from marketers, the customers have their own brand discussions.

Moreover, Harris Interactive, (2007) as cited in Chaffey and Smith (2008), reported that 80 per cent of consumers who have a bad or negative experience in customer services, they will not go back to the company ever again. The angry customers could be lurking in the various brand's attacking blogs or websites.

Also, the consumer communications in the market are effected by cultureAs a result, shared patterns were created in terms of thoughts, emotions, and behaviours (Pennington, 2009).

Therefore, to understand customers' behaviour inside out, it is vital to the companies and marketers to appropriately approach their customers and prospects with the right message at the right time and using the right communication channels.

3. 1 Digital Customers

Digital, or online, customers are also called as the ' Net Generation' has significantly 8 characteristics that Tapscott (2008) referred as "' norm' – distinctive attitudinal and behavioural characteristic". These norms differentiate the Net Geners??? from any other generations. Tapscott (2008) explained the eight norms as follow;

Freedom – the internet gives Net Geners to have freedom of choice to do whatever they want anywhere they want it.

Customization – Net Geners will make what they want and make it right to their needs and desires.

Scrutiny – the internet provides information for Net Geners to scrutinise the products and services. For the company, candour is the best way to reach the Net Geners with easy access information.

Integrity -Net Geners are increasingly favoured for the company or any organizations that behave honestly, considering and transparent???.

Collaboration - Net Geners collaborate to each other online and influence each other to discuss their opinions on products, services, brands and companies.

Entertainment – amusement and fun are the point of interest for the Net Geners

Speed – immediate response is preferable. Net Geners often e-mail to people at work because it is faster.

Innovation – Net Geners prefer the greatest and newest innovative products to make them up-to-date within their social group and create their positive images.

Therefore, for marketers, to use the available technology both effectively and efficiently to communicate to the Net Geners or the online consumers is considerably critical.

The behaviour of online consumers have been changing. They are now trust each other rather than advertisings or company's websites (Strauss and Frost, 2009).

Ideal online customer, as Chaffey and Smith (2008) suggested, is the person who rates and reviews the product or service online and his opinions could influence another 100 persons regardless of how regular he buy. This group of individuals is called 'engaged customers' whose marketers must try to strengthen the relationship with and stimulate the word-of-mouth.

The freedom of communication and choices in digital world are now make consumers are more sophisticated than ever as information is overloaded to them (Strauss and Frost, 2009).

Therefore, the concept of “attention economy” is created where Strauss and Frost (2009) explained that it is “the idea that information might be infinite, but the demand for it is limited by human capacity”.

Moreover, there is a trend that online consumers will participate and engage in a group of people whom they share interests and consider other as a “person like themselves” (Strauss and Frost, 2009).

Obviously, online consumers are grouped together and form their own communities – they are segmenting themselves.

3. 2 Market Segmentation

Segmentation is the vital starting point for marketing strategy.

It is relevant to the marketer to segment the market according to the group of people who share similar characteristics and preferences which differentiate them from the others in the market. (Strauss and Frost, 2009).

There are four types of market segmentation which are based on geographic location, demographic, psychographic and behavioural related to the uses of products.

In the digital world where there is no physical boundary, the population cannot be accurately justified and online consuming behaviour is changing rapidly. However, the observation showed that online users have grouped themselves according to their interest.

Therefore, the psychographic segmentation is the most effective to be applied to the digital world where the group of people who share the similar

activities, interests, opinions, attitudes, lifestyles, and value. (Strauss and Frost, 2009).

Psychographic segment is significantly related to culture because culture is “ what we defines a human community, its individuals and social organisation” (Mooij, 2009).

3. 3 Culture

Culture, a sophisticated word, is described in Mooij (2009) that culture produces individual’s ideas, values, acts, emotions and even part of identity.

Hofstede (1984 cited in Cry et al., 2008) defined culture as “ the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the member of one group from another”.

Pennington (2009) also explained the term culture as the ‘ shared, learned patterns of thoughts, feelings, appetites, and behaviours, based upon a climate of values, for organizing or adapting to the natural and social environments’.

People mostly unconsciously absorb their cultures. And culture defined their perspectives toward things differently, including themselves, others, societies, organisations, nature and universe (Kotler and Keller, 2006).

For marketer, cultural differences play an important part of both marketing communication and brand management strategies, especially in the global scale (LaPlante, 2005).

Geert HofstedeTM cultural dimensions – power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, and uncertainty avoidance had been used in management and marketing perspective to better understand national culture (Cry et al., 2008).

Specifically considering in individualism-collectivism, this dimension is described as relationship of individual toward others. Individualism society will value personal interest, individual decision-making, and lose social bounding (Cyr et al., 2008).

On the contrary, collectivism is the society where social members are integrated strongly into cohesive groups (Itim International, 2009).

In order to identify the level of collectivism in particular culture, Shulruf et al. (2003) presented the measurement tool for individualism and collectivism in a practical way.

The measurements for collectivism society are interdependent to each other or relatedness, has sense of in-group belonging, and prefers harmony by seeking advice. Whilst individualism's measurements are the opposite – independence, self-reliance, and self-focused (Shulruf, et al., 2003).????????????????????????????

3. 4 Brand

According to the American Marketing Association (AMA), brand is defined as a ' name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors' (Heding et al., 2009).

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Consumers use brand names to identify what products or services that would satisfy their purchase (Rowley, 2004).

While Pennington (2009) mentions that brand is important to social objects to communicate, identify and distinguish consumers in their market culture.

Everything can be branded; products, services, stores, individuals, places, or ideas (Kotler and Keller, 2006)

Especially in this digital-driven market, products and services are rather imitated easily but not brand, therefore, to create strong and powerful brand is extremely crucial (Chernatony and McDonald, 2005).

The successful brand can be seen in Millward Brown Optimor (2010) cited in Clark (2010) reported that Google has the highest brand value with \$114, 260 million in 2010, 14 per cent increase from last year and its rank is unchanged from 2009. People know what Google is, they even use the brand as a verb to search online is 'to google' (Kotler and Keller, 2006).

So, to brand a product or service, it is about making consumers know the differences especially in the intensely competitive market.

To Rosen and Rosen (2009), building a brand is 'the artful masters of awareness' and marketers have to be careful with every aspect of brand.

Brand equity is explained as '...the power of a brand lies in what resides in the minds of customers.' and the concept plays critical role in branding process (Keller et al., 2008).

To acquire brand equity, Keller (2008) suggested that marketer have to establish high level of brand awareness, in which consumer's ability to recognise and recall brand, and strong positive attitude toward brand image which will result in brand association that consumer perceived the uniqueness of brand.

In Pappu's research (2005), it had proved that brand awareness is one of the two distinct attributes of brand equity.

3. 5 Brand Awareness

Kapferer (2008) said that brand awareness is a collective phenomenon that holds a reassuring message from individual level and have a correlation with many aspects i. e. trust, closeness of people, accessibility, reliability and traditional styling.

Brand awareness is defined as ' ability to identify (recognise or recall) the brand within the category, in sufficient detail to make a purchase' (Kotler and Keller, 2006).

It is the likelihood of the brand trace in memory in the different conditions that will come to consumers' mind (Keller, 2008).

Brand awareness can be measured by 1) recognition – ability to identify brand in different situations and 2) recall – to retrieve brand element when some probe or cue is given (Keller, 2008).

Since brand awareness is the fundamental step to acquire brand equity, therefore, it is also the most important step to start building brand especially in online market.

To be 'top-of-mind' in consumer's mind in the product that relatively low-involvement choice such as electronic book or e-book, the awareness of brand is suggested to be the first criteria that consumer will choose unless other new brands draw their attention (Elliot and Percy, 2007).

Therefore, efficient and effective communication channels that influence brand awareness must be carefully selected in order to create, sustain, and strengthen brand (Kotler and Keller, 2006)

3. 6 Marketing Communication Media, Viral Marketing and Brand Awareness

Marketing communication (MarCom) is the brand building tool used with other strategies to acquire and enhance customer relationship in the long term (Strauss and Frost, 2009). Consumers need to be aware of the product before anything else.

Digital Media is nowadays used to communicate to target market as one of the tool for Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

Digital media includes E-mail, web sites, and social media. According to Strauss and Frost (2009) social media here consists of;

Blogs – 'online diaries, or journals, frequently updated and presented in chronological order on Web page (from the term Web log)'.

Social Networks – ‘ social structures made of nodes (which are generally individuals or organizations) that are tied by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as values, visions, idea, financial exchange, friends, kinship, dislike, conflict, trade, web links ... disease transmission (epidemiology), or airline routes’. Social network idea is based on theory of six degree of separation where individual is able to connect to every other person within six other people or less.

According to Kirby and Marsden (2006), viral marketing refers to any strategies that make people pass along marketing message to others in exponential growth like virus and this occurred among social network as well (Strauss and Frost, 2009).

De Chernatony and McDonald (2005) suggested that critical successful communication is the understanding of brand in social media context and consumers.

In Cruz and Fill (2008) research to identify key criteria of viral marketing, one of their findings is that to evaluate the viral marketing, the most popular criterion is awareness.

IV. E-book

The definition of e-book or as known as ebook or digital book from the NetLingo (2010) is that ‘ it is a book that can be downloaded and read on a computer or other digital device’.

There are several e-book formats nowadays including The Mobipocket Reader, The Adobe/Glassbook eBook Reader, Microsoft Reader, PALM OS or

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WINDOW CE, HTML format, The Open eBook Publication Structure, The Rocket eBook, the SoftBook, Adobe PDF, Rich Text Format, and ASCII (NetLingo, 2010).

The market value in terms of online book buying, Fenn (2009, p. 46) reported that in 2008, the figure revealed at £415 million and accounted for 13 percent of all new book sales.

Now, the fact that there are at least about 3.5 million e-books available to download for free (World Public Library Association, 2009) from only one website called WorldeBookFair. org has been attracting more consumers to own e-books.

As technology changing rapidly, market recently experienced more brands of electronic reader device (e-reader or e-book reader) in the market such as Sony PRS 505, Amazon Kindle 2, iRex Iliad 2, Bebook, Cybook Gen 3 and the list continue (ebook-reader-guide. com, 2009).

Especially, the entrance of new Apple's newest device called ' iPad' has been triggering the e-book market to be more popular. As Jobs (2010) cited in Stone (2010) that for each iPad that the Apple's sale in last two month, 2.5 e-books were downloaded or more than five millions books.

The trend of e-book is on the rise as e-book buyers bought less printed books than before, not buying printed books at the rate 25 and 15 per cent respectively (Book Industry Study Group (BISG) (2010) cited in Holt, 2010).

As Epps and McQuivey (2009) said that two new e-readers will be launched in India which will allow Indian consumers to start catching up with the e-book trend.

Obviously, e-book market is growing and still has very high potential room to grow in the digital world.

V. India

India is the country that holds several reputation names. It is the world's second largest population after China which has approximately 1, 157 million people in July 2010 (CIA, 2010), the fourth largest, after the United State, China and Japan, in terms of oil consumption in 2009 (eia, 2010), and one of the “ BRIC” countries – the world fastest growing and largest economies (O'Neill, 2001 cited in Rozhnov, 2010). Therefore, it is important to see overview of the country.

From CIA (2010), India governed as a federal republic where the government share the power with another 28 states. The English common law is used as a based legal system in India.

Economic in India is growing, 6. 5 per cent in 2009, and is regarded as the world second highest growth within major economies. Service sector accounted for 54. 9 per cent in GDP. Inflation rate is still as high as 10. 9 per cent in 2009 (CIA, 2010).

In term of society, 29 per cent of population is classified as urban where the literacy rate is 61 per cent. Even though India consists of variety of

language, however, English is still widely used to communicate among national, political, and commercial people (CIA, 2010).

As a culture, Indian was identified as ‘collectivist’ where family is the central of the society and people value group performance (Banerjee, 2008).

For technology, CIA (2010) reported 81 per cent of Indians are internet users. The penetration of internet users, 51 million are active users, 40 million in urban area and 11 million in rural area (Juxt, 2010 cited in India Microfinance, 2010).

Moreover, in India, 40 per cent of online consumers bought products online which increased 18 per cent from last year. As a result, the growth in online shopping has increased by 33 per cent (Juxt, 2010 cited in India Microfinance, 2010)

As a consequence (has as a result previously), India is one of the high potential markets for e-book industry due to its population size, economic growth, unique social and cultural context, as well as technology development.

VI. Research Methodology

This project is exploratory market research as the paper aim to gather unique information and develop relevant strategies from the information derived as well as relationships between variables (Aaker et al., 2010; Saunders et al., 2009)

This chapter will summarize the research methodology used to achieve the projects objectives as well as research philosophy, approach, strategies, and method choice. Furthermore, the conceptual framework is also described in this chapter.

The selection of research methodology is determined by objectives and research questions which also will be demonstrated in this chapter.

6. 1 Research Question

The research question for this paper is “ How the social media with viral message should be used among Indian as a collectivism culture to enhance brand awareness in e-book market?”

The following research objectives are established to address the research question stated above. By the end of this paper, all answers would be issued.

How much social media with viral message is used in Indian cultural collectivism?

How much Indians aware of e-book?

What is the relationship between social media with viral marketing and Indian cultural collectivism?

What is the relationship between Indians cultural collectivism that rela