EXAMINING THE FACTORS AFFECTING SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY OF UK BUSINESSES OPERATING ON BOTH GLOBAL AND LOCAL LEVELS

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**Introduction**

In the current world which is mostly driven by technology, social media and social sites are platforms where business people can extend their marketing activities. This is to reach as many customers as possible. With more than six hundred million users of Facebook and over 200 million users of Twitter, there exists a phenomenal interaction sheer of social media. Campbell (2011) has defined marketing on social media to be an existence of relationship amidst a certain brand inclusive of the consumer that gives a means which is personal and appropriate means of reaching out to each other among users. Various tools used as a means of approach to achieve communication with customers in the United Kingdom have changed upon the coming up of social media. Businesses have therefore learned how to make use of social media in ways which it goes along with the plan the businesses have adopted. This mostly applies to companies whose aim is to achieve competitive advantage. As a result, it’s good to look into various elements bringing influence on social media as a strategy adopted by businesses in the United Kingdom which operate globally and locally.

**Preliminary Literature Review**

**Defining social media**

For a business person to adopt making use of media which is social as a means of marketing, the vitality of understanding aspects which are involved should be a priority. Bampo (2008) defines social media as some applications which are based on the internet which facilitate the building of foundations built on ideologies and give a chance for creating and exchanging content which is user-generated. Social media is a wide term used to describe tools in software that is involved in the creation of content which is user generated which one can share. There, however, exist necessary basic features that should be part of a website for it to be termed as a website for social networking. Part of the website should be user profiles, information, means facilitating the ability of users to connect through posting and commenting on pages and a means through which users can join virtual groups depending on where their interest lies.

Social networking site is used to replace the term social media. Noting that the term media which is social highly differs from the term is of vitality since it enables participants to come together through ensuring that they generate information which is personal in their profiles and be in a position where they can invite friend and colleagues to be able to reach various profiles (Belch, 2004). Media which is social therefore may be termed as a platform where social networking happens and has changed ways through which most of the consumers acquire information and make decisions for what they wish to buy.

The sediment a consumer has towards marketing is a factor which researchers put into consideration when measuring the level of perception consumers hold towards social media marketing. Consumer sediment towards marketing is defined as the overview of feelings which consumers possess towards the marketplace and market environment. The perception held by an individual towards the marketplace is a determinant of whether they are at will to be part of activities of consumption(Saravankumar, 2012).To be in a position where a marketing campaign is successful by use of social media, the consumer must have access to technology.

There has been an advancement of social media in that besides facilitating communication between friends and families; consumers can learn about their favorite products and their best companies. Companies can advertise their products and communicate effectively with their services by use of social media.

**Virtual Brand Community**

A major topic under study that involves media which is social as a means of marketing is Virtual Brand Communities. This refers to the coming together of consumers on the internet due to the interest they have on a certain product. According to (Akar, 2011), a brand community refers to people who feel the same about their level of interest in a certain product. Virtual brand communities are platforms for the creation of meaning of brands, and efforts of consumption. Members who lay their trust in the virtual brand communities often are high participants and have their loyalty towards the particular item (Hassanein, 2005). For virtual brand communities to survive there has to be an existence of the trust. Security is among the most important factors that affect the opinion a consumer has towards a certain site for networking. It also has a major impact on the trust of a consumer. Because virtual brand communities highly depend on the participation of the user, the unity and awareness of a group often strengthen the satisfaction of a user. The virtual brand communities highly influence the buying behavior of a consumer.

There are also new interaction forms which take place within the virtual brand communities. These include interactions among people who make use of e-services. They are referred to as Electronic consumer to consumer interaction. The opportunity to come together and interact with persons is viewed as a major element of the experience of the customer, and networking sites which are social have grown into means which consumers are in a position to interact. Due to the Electronic consumer to consumer interactions, consumers highly influence each other in the decisions they make toward consuming a certain product. According to Georgi (2012) there exist seven factors which have a great contribution towards the success of Electronic consumer to consumer interactions. They are the availability of security, emotional connection of the consumer to a product, quality products, efficient environment, customer suitability and aspects which are social.

 An instance where electronic consumer to consumer interaction is relevant can be a situation where a consumer asks a query concerning how the color of a certain product which has been displayed and a certain consumer answers the query. The electronic consumer to consumer interaction is considered of high quality if the response to the question is done promptly, correctly and in a manner which is friendly. This aspect is based on the seven factors under quality, the social aspect, and convenience for the customer. Most of the consumers are comfortable with products and companies if they are provided with platforms where they can give their feedback (Kotler, 2007). It is therefore important for the sellers of a product to beware of their presence in social media as much as they have consumers to market their products. Most of the companies should be in a position where they can know the factors that affect their presence in social media, for instance, the online identity of a consumer.

**Consumer Attitudes/Motives**

Knowing the various elements that highly influence the way consumers view a product and motives is of vitality to people whose aim is to promote a certain brand. This is because most of the consumers tend coming up with content about brands, something that was previously under the control of companies. Due to this, there has been an examination of aspects affecting the attitudes and aims of consumers by social media sites. Chi (2011) was able to examine the link that existed between participation in Facebook-related groups, responses for advertisements, factors of psychology aimed at revealing disclosure of oneself and attitudes in Facebook members and non-Facebook group members.

According to the study, Facebook users who belong to a certain Facebook group are in a position to disclose data which is personal when compared to members who do not belong to a certain group. This is because to be a group participant and being part of online advertisements need information which is personal. This is because most of the users give open revelations on the connections they have with the groups on Facebook and engage in brand promotion by passing the information to their friends. Groups on Facebook come up with platforms that consumers consider to be of use when they are looking for status in a certain category of a product and when they are transferring content which is viral on various brands. Members of groups on Facebook also have an attitude which is favorable towards advertisement and social media. Users whose attitude towards advertising is positive have a high likelihood of joining brands or groups on Facebook to receive messages of promotion. As a result, a conclusion is made on the existence of a link between usage and engagement of consumers in sites of social media.

**Research Question(S)**

1. What elements affect the use of media which is social as a strategy for business operation of UK globally and locally?
2. What are the major contributors to these factors?

**Proposed Research Method(S)**

The study is research which is descriptive because it aims to look into the factors that affect social media strategy of UK business operating on local and global levels and major influences on the factor. There exist two elements of methods of research. These are one based on aspects of quality and quantitative. Currently, I will make use of quantitative research method since it is quick and observes high levels of accuracy. A research method carried out for academics are often limited to a certain period hence the quantitative method.

**Ethical issues**

Marketing of media which is social, an avenue of global and local awareness and promotion for businesses in the United Kingdom is a major step for consumers and the public. It is therefore important to ensure that ethical practices are adhered to achieve large market share.

Part of ensuring that ethics are observed is in being able to know the audience of a product. The businesspersons should seek to know preferences and have an overview based on demographics and psychographics. The audience on target will, therefore, be refined. Audience segmentation will also be achieved, making audiences engaged.

People in business and marketing should keep off biases by avoiding any form of political, religious or cultural form of biases that people may claim to be controversial. Otherwise, this may bring about poor public relations, and in other cases, jobs may be lost.

Marketers should be in a position where they value privacy since it is a very sensitive aspect. Rules on privacy should never be violated at any one time. Marketers of social media are also often faced with the challenge of transparency during their operations. In cases where they are trying to endorse a product or an idea, it is important to give disclosure as to why the product is being endorsed. The marketer or business person should be keen to mention the kind of relationship they share with the product.

Marketers should acquire the virtue of honesty. If one feels that they have interest or affiliation to something under discussion, it is important to communicate in a manner which is polite. Explaining one’s interest may not be as important as telling why they support the particular item. It is important to be true to oneself as well as the audience.

The internet is a platform where several pieces of information are unauthentic. As a result, the job of businessmen and marketers has become complicated. Marketers should be in a position where they verify what they may be willing to share before releasing out to prospects. An error may cause embarrassment and lead to a poor perception of a brand. In cases where information is being shared a social channel gotten from a third party, it is important to ensure that one gives disclaimers which are clear to ensure that suspicions on conflicts of interest are avoided (Andreason, 2001). How the public perceives certain brand matters. For instance, one may tweet what a politician has said as a means of spreading news, but there are people who may view it as offering support to that person. The brand might be at risk as a result of this.

**Timetable/Plan for the Research:**

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| Activity | Timeframe |
| Come up with objectives for research | One day |
| Designing protocol for research | Two days |
| Adapting research instruments | One week |
| Data collection | One week |
| Translation and analysis of data | Three days |
| Preparation for presentation | One day |
| Preparing the report | One week |

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