

# Role of Content, Interactivity and Word of Mouth in Brand Engagement Online

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Sunetra Saha, <sup>2</sup>Dr. Ruchika Nayyar, <sup>3</sup> Dr Sonali P. Banerjee

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## Abstract

This research studies the meaning and significance of social media in today's world where everything is just a click away. The paper also entails upon different social media channels that serves as an important asset for the brand indulging into brand engagement especially external brand engagement. The objective of this report is to throw light on building brand identity via social media. Engaging consumers via social media has become an elixir for brands wanting to position themselves with a positive brand image. It also entails on various factors that pays role in brand engagement on social media platforms specially LinkedIn and Instagram. Using correlations, the study shows that the higher the use of emotionality, use of visuals & graphic content, interactivity and word of mouth, the better is the brand engagement online.

*Keywords: Brand Engagement, Brand Image, Content, Online Customers, Social Media*

## <sup>1</sup> Dr. Sunetra Saha

Assistant Professor  
Amity Business School,  
ssaha1@amity.edu

## <sup>2</sup> Dr. Ruchika Nayyar

Associate Professor  
Amity Business School  
rnayyar@amity.edu

## <sup>3</sup>Dr Sonali P. Banerjee

Assistant Professor  
Amity Business School  
spbanerjee@amity.edu

## 1. Introduction

Brands are always looking for novel and innovative ways to interact with their target audience and establish meaningful relationships in today's digitally driven environment. Businesses must recognise and capitalise on the importance of content, interactivity, and word-of-mouth marketing as customers spend more and more time online.

Every great online marketing strategy is built on content. It includes a range of formats, including textual content, blog entries, visual content, infographics, social media updates, and more. In addition to being useful for grabbing and holding consumers' attention, compelling and pertinent content is also important for communicating a brand's message, values, and personality. Brands can position themselves as thought leaders, subject matter experts, and other authority figures by producing high-quality content that appeals to their target audience.

However, creating excellent content alone is insufficient. Online brand engagement is greatly improved through interactivity. Consumers now anticipate being active participants rather than passive viewers because to the growth of social media and other interactive platforms. Brands may encourage a sense of connection and co-creation with their audience by embracing interactivity and implementing elements like quizzes, polls, contests, interactive movies, and live broadcasts. Brands can increase engagement, strengthen customer relationships, and gather insightful information about consumer preferences and behaviour through fostering interaction.

The value of word-of-mouth marketing has long been acknowledged, and in the digital age, it has evolved significantly. Consumers share their thoughts, experiences, and recommendations about companies and products on a variety of online platforms, including as social media, review sites, forums, and blogs. This practise is known as online word of mouth (OWOM) or electronic word of mouth (eWOM). Since customers are more likely to believe recommendations from friends, family, and even complete strangers than traditional advertising, positive eWOM can have a big impact on brand engagement. On the other hand, unfavourable eWOM might harm the reputation of a brand. Brands may expand their reach, establish trust, and improve brand engagement by actively managing and promoting positive eWOM through social listening, influencer partnerships, customer reviews, and testimonials.

Online brand engagement is greatly influenced by content, interaction, and word-of-mouth. Brands can successfully catch and hold the attention of their target audience, forge deep connections, and ultimately fuel commercial success in the digital sphere by developing captivating content, encouraging participation, and nurturing good eWOM.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

Through theoretical frameworks like communication theory, social exchange theory, consumer behaviour

theory, social identity theory, network theory, and relationship marketing theory, the importance of content, interactivity, and word-of-mouth in brand engagement online can be studied. These frameworks include information about how customers interact with interactive experiences, how brands communicate through content, and how word-of-mouth affects brand engagement. These theories can be used by marketers to construct tactics that produce useful content, encourage interaction, and foster positive word-of-mouth, all of which result in increased brand engagement and enduring client connections in the online environment.

According to social exchange theory, the advantages and costs that are exchanged between businesses and customers are the basis for the functions of content, interaction, and word-of-mouth in brand engagement online. Consumers interact with and benefit from the rich content and interactive experiences that brands offer. Engaged customers then give back by spreading favourable word of mouth, further boosting the brand's reputation. This interaction encourages consumer and brand engagement, loyalty, and a sense of shared value. Brands may create a mutually beneficial relationship that promotes brand engagement online by continuously providing useful information, promoting interaction, and building favourable word of mouth.

### 2.1 Online Branding

For online businesses and brands optimizing their online presence would serve as a key to increase the lead and sales at a larger extent along with creating a better brand image. Enhancing a brands online image significantly helps in improving its brand awareness, recognition, and the reputation of the brand.

Some of the major objectives that brands get or focus while online branding are as follows:

- a) create a brand story to connect with the consumers.

- b) identify the target customer base and potential ones.
- c) optimise the brand awareness in the mind of consumers.

## 2.2 Brand Engagement

Brand Engagement talks about creating attachments and relations between consumers and brands which may be emotional attachment or rational attachment which leads to brand loyalty over time. A brand having a solid engagement with its consumers can abstract benefits from providing a better customer experience. It helps to build a trust and loyalty factors towards a brand which affects the overall brand's position in the market. It's often seen that the brands indulging in regular brand engagements tend to attract more consumers and spread awareness about the brand and its product among the consumer.

Brand engagement is of two types:

1. Internal Brand Engagement: It revolves around the internal employees and talks about attachment and relation of employees with the brand. It covers all the stakeholders of a business and focuses on engaging them with the brand for building better brand engagement.
2. External Brand Engagement: This field takes into consideration the consumers and focuses on building relations and engaging consumers with the brand to ensure a strong brand identity. It tracks the touch points of the consumers to look out for opportunities to track the interaction.

## 3. Review of Literature

Globalisation has brought in ample opportunities for the companies but at the same time has brought in a challenge of increased competition. Customers today are not limited to what a brand offers rather they are exposed to a variety of alternatives of the same product and if

talk about brands the biggest and the strongest advantage a brand has over its competitors is engaging its customers. A brand that is able to engage and provide its customers with a great experience would result in customer loyalty and better brand positioning among the brand present out there. Business has considerably changed the way they interact with the customers today (Cuillierier, 2016).

Brand engagement via social media not only helps in consumers' engagement but also capture and draws attention of other brands, resulting in brand-to-brand engagement and business. This interaction between brand and consumers help to spread the electronic word of mouth that provides a positive branding and immense financial benefits to the brands. Brand language that includes the theories and linguistics that tend to impact the social media engagement includes features like the length of posts, complexity of language, emotional connectivity, interpersonal relatability such factors help brands capturing the attention of consumers via likes, comments, reshares etc. (Deng, 2021).

Though the increase in the use of social media sites by customers provides brands with greater opportunities to engage with the customers, but the effective brand engagement still needs to be planned and executed pretty well and strategically. Marketing today has shifted from merely prompting the brand to engaging the customers and social media today has become the key tool for consumer engagement. For companies practicing consumer engagement, it directly impacts the performance of the corporate, sales, profits and the recommendation and spread of word of mouth for the brands. The role of consumers has also shifted from being the passive receivers of brand information are now the active participants in brand communication which resulted in brand and companies losing the full control on social media and brand communication and communicating as per the interest of the consumers (Mar Gómez, 2019).

To conceptualise social media, it can be said that it is a multifocal, multi-dimensional and context specific phenomena which makes engagement via social media establish a series of positive brand-relationship which leads to building brand trust along with brand loyalty and commitment (Dessart, 2017).

Interactivity with and by the customers play a significant role in determining the customer flow experience and has an indirect influence on its customer involvement and brand building. Customers who indulge in high interactivity with brands have a better brand experience than the customer who are less interactive with brands. Also, when customers are highly involved in social media and have an enjoyable experience are to develop more positive review which makes it easier for the brand to engage with customers (Fernandes, 2018).

The social presence theory has evolved over time from the use of telecommunication and outlines to today that is engaging individuals using social media. It also helps to bridge the gap between perceived brand identity and actual brand image which in a way help to hold better engagement with the customers (Osei-Frimpong, 2018).

Brands often look at social media as a less costly way to reach and target mass customers and engaging them and therefore they are intrigued to have a presence on different social media platforms. Brands are always keen to invest in options that bring in high customer engagement and thus increased profitability in long run. This also helps brand in enhancing their brand position and relation with its customers which again impacts the positive brand building of the company (Weber, 2021).

Customer Brand Engagement has been getting lot of attention over years and a support for using social media channels as a two-way interaction with the customers. Social media channels provide brands with opportunities to be more customer centric and while curating the content and pictures to convey their thoughts or messages which

the customers find engaging. Building better relation with customers help to avoid the customer's perception of uncertainty and risk. (Pedersen, 2016).

Social media time is another important aspect that positively impacts the customer engagement.

Social media language also comes into play when it comes to customer satisfaction with the content delivered by the brands for engaging the customers which enhances the customer experience. It also develops a sense of curiosity among the customers about the upcoming posts, products, by the brand. Various social media activities also capture the attention of the customers and thus help to engage them (Ninib Danho, 2020).

With the onset of digital era few authors also believe that brands may become less important while some authors still believe that with the supports the offline established brands. Based on these beliefs business choose either to migrate into online brands or create a fresh and unique brand to offer to its consumers. (Rowley, 2004).

Viral marketing is another concept that often overlaps with social media marketing as it is a form of word-of-mouth marketing which results in spread of message exponentially. It serves as a cheap mode of marketing wherein the message spreads like a virus in the digital era by allowing consumers to share the forward the marketing content. It works on a high rate of pass-along mechanism from one user to another. (Brogi, 2014).

Another concept of brand image that relates and greatly depends on information or content that others post about a brand and the way the marketplace responds to the information. Generally, users have their own experiences and they react accordingly. Internet allows brands with the freedom to portray and build their brand identity but also makes brands vulnerable to different perceptions perceived by millions of users out there (Labrecque, 2011).

Brands that take into account the emotional benefits tend to

build a better brand relation with the consumers as feeling matter and consumers affectively bonds with such brands. When the emotional content is effectively communicated it results in building a rational bond with the consumers that sustains for a long term. (Morgan-Thomas, 2013).

There are several attributes that contribute to the functional and emotional aspect of a brand. Navigation and ease of use are the two attributes that define the success of the curated content as it greatly defines whether it will reach the target audience or not. While some other factors like promised experience aligned with emotional values and functional values help brands create competence to entail the benefits of online branding (Vinhas Da Silva, 2008).

The concept of Integrated Marketing Communication has evolved over time and now considered as the go to tool for brands to synergise their marketing communications among the brand and the consumers. It helps to establish the relationship not only with the consumers and the brand but with multiple stakeholders the same point of time. It emphasizes on strategic coordination between the external and internal marketing activities adopted by brands (Gurău, 2008).

#### **4. Research Methodology**

Social media is one of the most important channels for businesses and they try to optimize it to get the most out of it. Today, social media provides brand with a platform to target and build relation with its consumers. It allows brands to position themselves in the market in a way that it brings customers brand loyalty. Social media also helps to make brand easily discoverable by the consumers.

Many a times brands don't mind spending a whopping amount of money on social media marketing as it brings in immense results in capturing market and building brand image. It wouldn't be wrong to say that today social media marketing has become the bloodline of the business when it comes to brand engagement. Not only youth, but millennials as well are very much the target audience for

brands specially after pandemic when the whole world was shifted to online mode.

##### **4.1 Objectives**

1. To study the use of social media in building brand identity.
2. To analyse the factors contributing to brand engagement on social media.

##### **4.2 Research Design**

The study analysed primary data gathered from 105 respondents using a questionnaire with Likert scale-based questions. Understanding customer philosophy, expectations, and behaviour when it comes to brand involvement via social media was the goal of the poll. The majority of the information gathered and examined is primary information that was gathered using a questionnaire. The majority of responders were in the 18–27 age range. Secondary data is utilised to establish conceptual clarity on fundamental ideas including the definition of social media, the relationship between brands and consumers, and theories relating to online branding.

105 respondents submitted the questionnaire, which was based on a Likert scale and the posed hypothesis. SPSS Statistics was used to analyse the data that had already been gathered. Inferential statistics are the statistical method used to analyse the data and determine the relationship between numerous variables and the brand engagement through online content curation and sharing.

The data collection technique is non probabilistic convenience sampling. The method offers an accurate data set that is free from every bias and partiality. Social media users completed the questionnaire.

##### **4.3 Hypothesis**

The type of content, post and presence a brand has highly impacts the level of engagement it will create among the consumers therefore knowing the customer thoughts



about what they will be engaged with, what factors affect their engagement play an important role.

The hypothesis determined in this study is as follows-

H1- Emotionality of content is positively related to brand engagement.

H2 – Visual and graphical content is positively related to brand engagement.

H3 – Brand interactivity is positively related to brand engagement.

H4- Electronic word of mouth is positively related to brand engagement

## 5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

### 5.1 Demographic Profile

Age: 51.8% of the respondents are of the age group 23-27 and the other 42.9% of the respondents are of the age group 18-22 who are the youth of the country and are the major users of social media.

Gender: 62% were female respondents and the other 37.5% of the respondents were male.

### 5.2 Correlations

#### 5.2.1 Emotionality of content is positively related to brand engagement

Table 1 analyses the relation between emotionality of the content and the brand engagement via that content. The table demonstrates the correlation between both the variables. From the output, degree of correlation that is 0.534, we can say that there exists a moderate correlation between the two variables. The higher the level of emotionality in the content, better is the brand engagement among the customers. Hence both are positively related but not perfect.

**Table 1: Correlation analysis between emotionality and brand engagement**

Emotionality		Emotionality	Brand Engagement
	Pearson correlation	1	0.534**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	105	105
Brand Engagement	Pearson correlation	0.534**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	105	105

Source: Author's calculation

#### 5.2.2 Visual and graphical content is positively related to brand engagement

Table 2, analyses the relation between use of visuals and graphics in the content and the

brand engagement. The table demonstrates the correlation between both the variables. From the output, degree of correlation that is 0.763, we can say that there exists a high correlation between the two variables. The more the usage of visuals & graphics in the content, better is the brand engagement among the customers. Hence both are positively related but not perfect.

#### 5.2.3 Brand interactivity is positively related to brand engagement

Table 3 analyses the relation between use of visuals and graphics in the content and the brand engagement. The table demonstrates the correlation between both the variables. From the output, degree of correlation that is 0.438, we can say that there exists a moderate correlation between the two variables. The higher the level of interactivity in the content, better is the brand engagement among the customers. Hence both are positively related but not perfect.

#### 5.2.4 Electronic word of mouth is positively related to brand engagement

Table 4, analyses the relation between electronic word of mouth and the brand engagement. The table demonstrates the correlation between both the variables. From the output, degree of correlation that is 0.437, we can say that there exists a moderate correlation between the two variables. The higher the level of electronic world of mouth, better is the brand engagement among the customers. Hence both are positively related but not perfect.

#### Hypothesis Findings:

H1- Emotionality of content is positively related to brand engagement - Positively correlated

H2 – Visual and graphical content is positively related to brand engagement - Positively correlated

H3 – Brand interactivity is positively related to brand engagement - Positively correlated

H4- Electronic word of mouth is positively related to brand engagement – Positively correlated

**Table 2: Correlation analysis between visuals & graphics and brand engagement**

Visuals & Graphics		Visuals & Graphics	Brand Engagement
	Pearson correlation	1	0.763**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	105	105
Brand Engagement	Pearson correlation	0.763**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	105	105

Source: Author's calculation

**Table 3: Correlation analysis between interactivity and brand engagement**

Interactivity		Interactivity	Brand Engagement
	Pearson correlation	1	0.438**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	105	105
Brand Engagement	Pearson correlation	0.438**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	105	105

Source: Author's calculation

**Table 4: Correlation analysis between EVOM and brand engagement**

EVOM		EVOM	Brand Engagement
	Pearson correlation	1	0.437**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	105	105
Brand Engagement	Pearson correlation	0.437**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	105	105

Source: Author's calculation

## 6. Findings

In recent years there has been an increase in the use of social media among the people and there has been an increase in involvement which has created a potential market for the brands to reach and engage the customers, building a positive brand image and brand identity. Social Media platforms have been a great contributor in building a brands identity or making a brand image vulnerable to negative brand image.

Marketers targeting brand engagement via social media need to have a clear idea of customers' expectations and liking from a brand to strategies and base their content around the interest of the consumers in order to engage the customers. The content and its representation play a vital role in the number of people getting attracted to a brand and actually getting engaged. A brand should focus on building its content by using more of graphic and visual content which helps to engage the customers at a higher rate as it catches the attention of consumers on the social media. Also, deciding a color scheme also helps to attract the consumers while they are surfing on the internet.

- Majority of the respondents belong to age group from 18-27 that constitutes the young generation out of 62% of the responses were female, responses by these people help to know the thought process and their thinking towards the brands that have social media presence or are going to build their social media presence.
- Among the three social media channels Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook the most used channel is Facebook as majority of the users voted for Facebook as their daily using social media but on contrary the number of hours spent on Facebook is not the highest.
- It has been observed that Instagram is the most preferred channel by 85% respondents and enjoys the maximum number of hours spent by the users that is around 2-4 hours which makes it a potential source of brand engagement with youth.
- With 0.534 degree of correlation there exists a positive correlation between the emotionality of the content and brand engagement as it helps to build the content with the consumers.
- Visual and graphics in a post or content make it more appealing and thus there exists a strong positive correlation between visuals and brand engagement with 0.734 degree of correlation.

- Brand activeness and interactivity positively relates with each other as more the brand is active on social media better will be the brand engagement with the consumers.
- There exists a positive correlation between electronic word of mouth and brand engagement with 0.437 degree of correlation which implies more the content is shared and reposted better will be the brand engagement.

## 7. Conclusion

The paper details on the growth of social media over the years and how brands can leverage this opportunity to establish and build their brand identity. Today, social media is not just a social platform to interact with different people but it also brings in business for the brands and impacts its image and identity. It allows the brands to present themselves in front of masses and connect with them to portray the message to the audience or target consumers.

It also acts as a great platform to make customers aware about the brand and the new products or happening at the brand. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn are quite popular but Instagram is the one that comes out to be the most potential platform with high numbers of users spending a good number of hours on the platform daily. This gives brands opportunity to interact with its consumers with greater probability of brand visibility and brand remembrance building a brand identity and brand image that helps the brand to stand out among its competitors in the market.

## 8. Contribution of the study

Customer engagement plays a key role in building and maintaining brand identity via social media platform. It allows to bloom quickly in the market and create a place of their own but at the same time they are vulnerable to a lot of trolling and negative publicity as well for which brands



need to be highly careful about their presence and the content that is being posted by them. Brands also need to be highly sensitive towards the language they are using while connecting with the consumers and how they are receiving the customers' response. Another important aspect that needs to be taken care is maintain the consistency while interacting and engaging customers not only about what is good for the brand but also meets the interest and the needs of the customers. Various catchy videos, photos are often used by brands to convey or promote their content providing consumers with the holistic view of the brand and building its identity.

**Recommendations:**

- Emotionality or the emotional connect is an important aspect to give attention to by the marketers as it directly impacts the level of engagement of the consumers. Consumers tend to engage more with the content with which they could connect emotional leading to a better and strong brand relation and a positive brand building for the company.
- Electronic word of mouth is as important as offline word of mouth which makes a very strong and loyal brand image. When customers are engaged with a brand and are loyal to it, they tend to refer the brand to other people electronically via social media and sites by commenting or resharing it with their group of audience and connections making a positive and strong brand following and brand engagement for the brands present out there.
- Social media provides brands with a two-way interaction with the consumers which gives them the

opportunity to establish a better relation via interactive and creative ways like polls, story games etc. which results in interactive and better customer engagement for a brand leading to building a brand's identity among the consumers. Therefore, brands should focus on creating their brand presence and engage the consumers to retain them for a longer run.

**9. Limitations of the study**

The results of our findings cannot be generalized for the entire population as the sample size is too low. The study cannot be generalized for all the brands and online stores. The sample is based on random sample from only few areas of Delhi NCR region. Some of the respondents were not co-operative. As the sample size was limited to 150, it is not a true representative of the entire population. There were also a few non respondents who filled incomplete questionnaire or had difficulty in understanding the questions.

**10. Scope for further study**

The field of online brand engagement has a wide range of potential research topics, including social media marketing, user experience (UX) design, content marketing, customer relationship management (CRM), augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), gamification, social listening, online consumer behaviour, mobile marketing, emerging technologies, cross-cultural considerations, and ethics/privacy issues. To improve brand-consumer interactions and promote company success in the digital environment, researchers can look into these themes.

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