

EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL LISTENING:

PAY HEED OR PERISH

Bhaskar Das

Adjunct Professor, SPJIMR, Mumbai, India

Surjyasikha Das

Professor, Department of Management Studies, JIS Institute of Engineering, Kolkata, India

Abstract

The research reported here sought to examine the social listening phenomenon with a formal approach, and seek to establish it as a vital component of marketing strategy. With the phenomenal growth in social media, it was predicted that marketing companies would need to leverage access to this platform to understand and reach customers. The study was based on an intensive analysis of four case studies. This data was supplemented by interviews with eight individuals to understand their perceptions about how social listening as a component of integrated marketing communication (IMC) impacts the organizational brand. The interviews and case studies all indicate that in order to perform in today's market, social listening is imperative to business. Companies that do not do social listening will perish, sooner or later. Further, the study has attempted to develop a model for social listening, based on the insights collected from the four case studies and the in-depth interviews.

1. Background

Social media represents a network of communications and information access practices that are driven by evolving technology over platforms, structured by a miscellany of players, service providers, developers, users and other stakeholders (Lodhia and Stone, 2017). The turn of the millennium saw the internet emerge as the leading marketplace for transactions of goods and services. USA's online consumer spending surpassed USD 100 billion (in 2007) and the growth rates of online demands for information goods, such as books, magazines, and software,

were between 25 per cent and 50 (Albuquerque, Pavlidis, Chatow, Chen, and Jamal, 2012).

By 2011, more than 50 per cent of social media users were known to follow brands on social media so that companies stepped up investments in social media. This was clear from the global marketing spend on social networking sites of about USD 4.3 billion (Williamson and Ghani, 2012) to build up bands of brand fans who positively impact their brands with their word of mouth influence loyalty. Recognizing the mobile as an excellent means of targeted communication, Don DeLoach, President and CEO, Info bright, (DeLoach, 2014) predicted that marketing companies would need to leverage access to this platform to understand and reach customers.

Companies had already developed considerable expertise in capturing and extrapolating increasingly voluminous data from online profiles and opinions and other sources. This is of great significance for marketing men who are constantly seeking insights into consumer minds in a bid to anticipate needs, serve and even influence consumers' current and demand and thought trends.

2. Review of Literature

An extensive literature search was carried out to examine the research developments in the area of social listening and the concepts associated with it. A selection of findings from relevant documents are summarized in this section.

2.1 Importance of IMC in the context of the current ecosystem of marketing

In 2016, The Advertising Research Foundation (ARF) announced the findings from its vast independent study on How Advertising Works (Advertising Research Foundation, 2016), based on over 5,000 campaigns, 12 years of data, and \$375B in advertising spend in 41 countries across over 100 categories.

The groundbreaking insights provided by the ARF were:

- Marketers may be starving off growth by not investing enough in advertising as they shift the mix from traditional to new platforms, missing the opportunity to generate billions in additional return.
- Spending across multiple platforms delivers greater ROI than any single platform – including for millennial consumers.
- “Silo-investing” – too much frequency via a single platform can lead to diminishing returns.
- To jumpstart growth, marketers can take advantage of the “kicker effect” of smart spending with specific combinations of traditional plus new media on the right platforms.

A unified creative strategy across platforms is the key to compound the investment of a multi-platform campaign, but unified creative executions also need to be specifically tailored to each platform to ensure optimal consumer engagement.

According to Talavera (2001), if the message doesn't align, the customer is lost forever – that is the new reality of the ultra-short attention span consumer.

2.2 Social media and its importance for consumers and marketers

In its essence, social media represents a network of communications and information access practices that are driven by evolving technology over platforms, structured by a miscellany of players, service providers, developers, users and other stakeholders (Lodhia and Stone, 2017). According to Lomborg (2015), it is important to understand the complexities of social media as it has evolved over the last three decades because technology is constantly rendering a lot of earlier ideas obsolete.

The growth of social media has created a complex world for the brand that must engage with its consumer; it is an extremely difficult world that has upturned the nature of communications from a linear to a circular structure (de Vries, Gensler, and Leeflang, 2017). Keller and Kotler (2016) consider social media as a means by which consumers can have a two-way exchange of information with companies and with each other. The marketing strategist must embrace this world, because the

social media is central to the marketing mix. It also accounts for huge investment into the media and thus demands accountability (Kim and Youm, 2017). This adds to the complexities facing the consumer brands owner, particularly those operating in international markets, who quite easily find themselves with dozens, even hundreds, of social channels to manage (Corcoran, 2009).

Social media marketing involves the triple channel strategy (owned media, earned media, and social media (Corcoran, 2009; Xie and Lee, 2015). Marketers often distinguish between the three media channels – paid (e.g., advertising), earned (e.g., word of mouth, news story or online social media) and owned media (company websites, company blog or other content owned by the company) (Lovett and Staelin, 2016). Owned media not only use media at their command but also have paid media that are financially rewarded for getting content into the social media and traditional sponsorships, advertising (O'Neil and Eisenmann, 2017). Companies are deriving greatest value from the successful integration across genres and channels. The integration of paid, earned and owned content, judiciously using sponsored advertising, working closely with media partners to reach the target audience, is one of the key elements of marketing effectiveness (Basney, 2014).

Jucaitytė and Mašpinskieno (2014) emphasize that with growing social media, the consumer is getting empowered, as the locus of control is inexorably moving away from the brand owners to the consumers. The technology-driven interactivity has added new dimensions to the company-customer engagement phenomenon in what is an enhanced experience and a transformational one for marketers who have hitherto been accustomed to linear communications (Nelmapius and Boshoff, 2016). Using the social media begins with the fundamental realization that the internet was made for people, not for companies and brands. Therefore it is people who provide insights if marketers can economically and regularly peep inside people's lives (Fournier, Quelch and Rietveld, 2016). Kavada (2015), provides further insights on conversations. The social media obviates the possibility of disregarding how people create and remake the world collaboratively and in interaction. Social media are designed for conversations and they draw their power

from them. Both brands and customers feel that regular engagement and customer servicing on social media are the best ways to promote engagement and conversion (Ahuja and Medury, 2010).

Millennials force businesses to have better practices, internally and externally (Iyer, Eastman, and Monteiro, 2016). Parment and Brorström (2016) propose that by listening to what millennials want, you can actually become a better company and, in the long run, attract loyal customers that act both as consumers and brand ambassadors because the millennials are the most important customers.

The viewers' focus is found to be shifting, from television to social media. In the US, even the Super Bowl, which generally breaks viewership records, showed a decreased viewership (Abrahamson, 2017). According to Killian and McManus (2015), this presents a new opportunity for brands. Instead of considering television schedules and audience demographics for television programming, brands can now share personalized messages with consumers at any time and place, through social channels. Moreover, big data will offer big rewards if used correctly (Smit and Neijens, 2011).

2.3 The Indian scene

Ernst & Young's Report on Social Media Marketing Trends in India (Ernst & Young, 2016) shows that "44% of brands surveyed run 360° integrated campaigns, while 16% of brands state that they adopt a complete omni-channel approach to their marketing initiatives. This shows that digital and social media marketing is being integrated with traditional marketing strategies to engage with customers through multiple touch points". In India, companies still depend heavily on their website, which is often considered the most effective means to engage with customers (Ahmad, Rahman, and Khan, 2016). Mobile use is growing and it is an important channel for the brands as well as consumers (Sarkar, 2015).

2.4 Integrating social media into an IMC campaign

According to Terpening et al. (2015), social media is no longer a novelty but is a widely adopted means of customer engagement. Today's social strategist faces various challenges of harnessing social media and also achieving new levels of employee engagement and advocacy. Payne, Storbacka, and Frow (2008) recommend mapping of strategy to the lifestyle of the customer. The marketing message must be aligned across all the touch points accessed by the typical consumer.

Automation has been one of the most significant trends in social media, in the recent past (Brătășanu, 2017). Speed, efficiency and client-oriented strategies and redefining client experience form face to face to on-line automated interactions. Social media channels will constantly evolve, more so as they compete with each other to help enhance the brand experience in the digital sphere (Ahmed, Vveinhardt and Streimikiene, 2017).

2.5 Social Media Listening

Companies using the social media platform can engage in what is being called 'social listening', which is the science and art of monitoring digital conversations to get a first-hand understanding of customer perceptions and positions about a brand, a company, an industry or a service online (Stewart, Atilano, and Arnold 2012). Curious and creative learning organizations need to listen to their customers, more than what they talk. Conversations are often more about listening than talking (Fuimano, 2004).

The presence of "noise", which is anything that distorts or disrupts this process is a hindrance to clear communications. (Stevens, Loudon, Clow and Baack, 2014). Solutions are being worked upon; identifying fake news for instance is a welcome phenomenon (Chen, Conroy, and Rubin, 2015). Some other challenges in terms of understanding social media may be possible to overcome while others will continue to dog us, and new ones will appear, but understanding will improve as new

insights are gained about a wide variety of important cases and contexts (Parks, 2017).

2.6 Converting Conversations into Actionable insights

The combination of mobile devices, email and social media, can benefit companies, provided they creatively develop strategies to capture critical insights into the consumer, the brand and the category (Paul, Peretti, and Datta, 2017). Fournier, Quelch and Rietveld (2016) emphasize that social listening competency is emerging as a premium facet for competitive advantage. Analysis reveals that listening accounts for approximately one-third of the characteristics perceivers use to evaluate communication competence among employees and their communication with clients and customers.

With the help of literature, the study posits that social listening is a significant component of integrated marketing communication. The literature search has brought forth a very large body of published work addressing the issues relating to social listening in the current, highly competitive marketing scenario. However, there is very little evidence of rigorous research on the issues concerned. Thus, the present research sought to examine the social listening phenomenon in depth, focusing on its dynamic and valuable role in marketing.

3. Methodology

This study is qualitative and based on case studies. As the amount of work done in the area of social listening is rudimentary and at a nascent stage, it is important to conduct in-depth analysis of situations where social listening has been practised and how it impacted the companies' integrated marketing strategies and hence, overall revenues. The study has carried out an intensive analysis of social listening in selected situations, to arrive at conclusions about the importance and efficacy of social listening in advertising, and to identify the parameters relating to social listening that contribute to its optimum use. The case study method was selected as it would allow for a wide and deep perspective on the situations to be studied.

An in-depth analysis of four case studies has been done. The cases were selected on the basis of the special characteristics of each case that helped to display some seminal issues relating to social listening in integrated marketing communications. The researcher, being well immersed in the field of media and marketing communications, had come across numerous live situations and cases where social listening was involved, and had shown certain outcomes that needed to be recorded, analyzed and shared.

Out of the repertoire of cases encountered by the researcher in his professional life, the four cases selected relate to the following:

- A dairy whitener
- A breakfast cereal
- A telecom service provider – case related to gender bias
- Another telecom provider – case relating to an error in translation of a message

All these cases were selected carefully keeping in mind the possibility of extending the inferences to similar companies providing similar services or organizations that share a similar customer base.

Data and information have been gathered from the relevant social media. The data is in the form of messages in digital form, as seen on Facebook and other social media. Further, a few in-depth interviews were conducted to get some clarity on the way social media listening is gaining popularity in India and how Indian consumers and organizations are getting ready to embrace the challenge.

In addition, a sample of eight individuals was selected for in-depth interviews to understand their perceptions about how social listening as a component of integrated marketing communication (IMC) impacts the organizational brand and bottom-line. The eight individuals include a social activist, a post graduate student, an IT project management consultant, a high court lawyer, a marketing manager in an international FMCG company, a professor from a leading business school, a 14-year-old girl in the digital era who is also very tech-savvy, and a lady who is a mother and also a brand manager in a reputed toy store.

4. Inputs from in-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted to get some clarity on the way social media listening is gaining popularity in India and how Indian consumers and organizations are getting ready to embrace the challenge. The following conclusions appeared from the interviews:

1. Earlier, customer service in India was poor. Now it is different. According to one interviewee, “If there is a problem in the product – just post it on FB – even if the company takes no care, let the whole world know about it. On several occasions, I have noticed such posts have the potential of going viral.”
2. Social listening is an integral part of customer service. It can easily help a company to gain an edge over its competitors in terms of improvement in products, delivery of services, customer relationship and aftersales services. Many a times, listening to customers may also help companies to modify their services and also product properties to provide greater customer delight.
3. Comprehensive knowledge about customers’ requirements can create new demand that can generate additional sales. There are several examples of brands reaching out to their customers through social media and solving their problems, to ensure lifetime engagement.
4. Social marketing is a unique platform where social listening can be effectively used to convert intrusive marketing to permission marketing. While intrusive marketing is often based on push sales, permission marketing can meet the needs of customers in a customized manner catering to needs based on predictive modeling. A respondent said, “Customers are now getting used to receiving advertisements that are customized and need-based. Thanks to Google, Facebook and Amazon! This is a unique way to connect to customers in a customized manner. This is a kind of conversation with the customer, you can say.” This is permission marketing.
5. Another respondent stated, “Thanks to social media – marketing expenses are less than what they used to be in the good old days. OYO rooms are a good example. Without OYO or Trivago or Booking, most of the hotels that have sprawling businesses would have not existed today. With cheap marketing they

have reached their customers, no matter how far they are. Similarly, if there are adverse reviews about a hotel, it is practically impossible to regain confidence. So, it is a double-edged sword.”

6. The interaction with actual users is very crucial for products that require guidance. One respondent's family bought a new sophisticated washing machine, but had a problem in operating it. They went to the washing machine website. The respondent reported that “There was a customer executive open to chat with me. I started chatting with him and simultaneously explained to my mother how to get it started. Believe me, the whole episode gave me immense confidence and raised my belief system.”
7. There are various organizations that use expert help in identifying social influencers. Many a times, such social influencers can create content and publish about the brand. As one respondent put it, “I came across a social marketing influencer who was promoting our brand, simply because it was good. He did not have any vested interest, neither was he connected with us. Approaching such people could be often sensitive – one never knows how they will react. Also, if they are promoting one of your products, that does not necessarily mean that they will promote your other products. In such cases, after getting in touch with such social influencers, it is good to provide the entire information about the product so that they have complete knowledge while they promote the product.”
8. Dissatisfied customers are more dangerous than satisfied customers. Effective social media listening solves the problems that the customer faces and simultaneously puts the company on a better pedestal.
9. Social media conversations must be analysed with great care. For example, a frustrated international traveler sarcastically messaged an airline, “Thank you for safely reaching me to Amsterdam and my luggage to Paris. You are simply awesome.” The automated software used picked up the words – “Thank you”, “safely”, “reach”, etc. The response was, “We thank you for your feedback. We sincerely hope that you select our airlines for your next travel.” This was a disaster and the brand equity of the airlines was adversely impacted when people started talking about it.

The message that emerges clearly from the interviews is – either listen and respond to customers or perish. Moreover the listening must be done with careful analysis and timely action must be taken.

5. Case Studies

5.1: Nidos: Promotion of dairy whitener product

Nidos is a Global Fortune 500 company in the food and beverages segment of FMCG. It connects with consumers via Facebook (210 million fans over about 850 brand pages); and shares some 1500 pieces of unique content per day. It is a social media savvy operation, across the globe. The case examined in depth relates to Nidos' product D-White, which is a dairy whitener, and substitute for fresh milk.

Earlier, in March 2017, Greenpeace had released a report on the company's use of palm oil in its food products. When Nidos noticed it, they reacted right away asking to take it off, but by then the damage was already done, thousands of protestors went on Facebook and Twitter. After a month or so the company reported on social media, "We do care and will continue to pressure our suppliers to eliminate any sources of palm oil which are related to rainforest destruction." Subsequently the company set up a Digital Acceleration Team (DAT) to guide its social listening to provide leadership to its community management initiatives. It makes extensive use of real-time listening and data visualisation to tap online conversations and interactions as soon as they happen. There are various lessons learned from this experience. First, in order to be successful, large brands need to ensure that their marketing teams listen to customers in a more sensitive manner. Further, it is important to consider these complaints with sensitivity as they can potentially jeopardize the brand once and for all. Hence, if there is any element of truth in what customers or rivals say, it is important to apologize and take immediate action. It is equally important to update customers and rivals about the steps taken so that people cannot assume that things are unnecessarily getting delayed. Also, real time

data visualization can go a long way to make sense of digital conversations to help brands to take the right measures at the right times.

Going on to the case study, dairy whitener is a milk substitute but has the perception of not being natural or fresh in comparison to milk. The Nidos product is called - D-White. The purpose of the case study was to understand the barriers to consuming D-White while making tea and coffee among consumers in milk flourished markets. The second objective was to identify opportunities to change the consumer perception about the use of dairy whitener in tea and coffee by trials, which would result in an increase in usage over a period of time.

In order to increase the sales and market share, they wanted to leverage social listening practice for this research exercise for three reasons – speed of execution, relevant audience profile (progressive homemakers) availability, and most importantly, unaided insights.

During the research, it was found that there were certain barriers to consumption of dairy whitener, and their key causes were identified. It was found that there was a lack of certainty with regard to the amount of dairy whitener to be used in tea/coffee, and that most of the attempts on the same led to unsatisfactory results among the consumers. Hence, it was proposed to highlight the right mix of the product to make one perfect cup of tea/coffee in areas of public interaction (like advertisements).

Further, the study reiterated the fact that milk powder is used as an alternative to liquid milk and out of convenience in hotels/offices/hostels/trains/flights/etc. They required education/information on why they should be consuming D-White at home, as well.

Consequently the company released a new TV Commercial (TVC). It showed the recipe to prepare a perfectly balanced cup of tea. The brand also moved on from highlighting the negatives of milk in their communication, i.e. taste and expense, as

discovered from the social media, to focus on the benefits/positives of using D-White. The awareness for use of D-White was established and hence, the use of it for preparing tea or coffee gradually spread across the country.

Further, through social listening, they noticed high mentions of dairy whitener in situations of natural calamities, due to its ease of transportation and longer life. This could be a brilliant avenue to boost the sales of D-White. This can also be considered as a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative during disaster management situations, as well and can largely boost the brand equity and awareness among users across all spectra of the population.

5.2: Nidos: Promotion of oats as a breakfast food

Consumption of oats for breakfast is relatively low in India. Consumers prefer Indian foods like poha, upma, etc. There is a love-hate relationship that was noticed among customers. 40 percent of the respondents preferred oats, while the rest 60 percent hated it. Also, in India, 'love for oats' is significantly being pushed by news articles highlighting the health benefits of oats. Similarly, blogs have been pushing oats recipes as good in taste for consumption. While customers were not so vibrant when responses were taken in favor of oats, there were customers who were vocal that they did not like the texture of oats, while some found them tasteless/bland in pure form. Hence, they consume it by mixing with add-ons like nuts, honey, fruits. Oats provide very high health benefits, e.g. reducing cholesterol hence, beneficial to the heart; fighting against fatty tissues, hence, reducing weight; helping the skin glow. It also has pregnancy benefits and can fight against thyroid problems.

Nidos has learned to take advantage of the situation and the poor presence in media. Taking inputs from customers and their varied comments on the internet, Facebook, Twitter and other social websites where they interact, Nidos oats has changed the way it is marketed and sold across the world. As Indians do not like the taste of oats, despite its health benefits, there was a requirement for a major revamp of the product, to take care of taste and also include ingredients in oats that can make it more tasteful, crunchier and attractive. The brand has started making

snacks from oats. These are delicious to eat and also compete with the competitor's product of masala oats. Nidos has subsequently launched oats upma, porridge and noodles. The principal focus of all marketing and advertisement campaigns that revolves around oats is its health benefits. Without reinstating that, encouraging people to take oats is impossible. This is a major learning from social listening.

Nidos quickly learned that the only way is to focus on two things – one, constantly communicate the health benefits and simultaneously sell oats as a more acceptable form that is tasty and cheerful. Nidos would have had a major drop in sales in the oats market, had it not listened to the inputs provided by its customers.

5.3: Telexcel: Error in translation of advertisement

Telexcel (Name changed to protect anonymity) is amongst India's top telecommunications brands with a towering global presence and operations in 17 countries across Asia and Africa. The telecom sector is amongst the top five employment opportunity generators in the country and is expected to generate four million direct and indirect jobs over the next five years. The challenge for Telexcel is to design a strategy that will enable it to remain at the commanding heights in the telecom space, by deepening the inroads it has made into people's homes and in the industrial and employment landscape of India.

Consumers, especially the millennials and the post millennials, hooked on to constant connection, demand failsafe service and expect service excellence as a given. It is also a world where consumers express themselves and can turn popular sentiments against brands and companies. Professional social listening, capturing sentiments and opinions about brands and rivals, analyses them across a range of categories — from complaints to praises; from new developments to new offerings; from geographies of cluster complaints to those with satisfied customers.

In order to create better connectivity with its customers, it has been a user of social listening to drive its growth. However, Telexcel's recent advertisement where there was a very lucrative offer of transferring unused data to the next month's plan, turned out to be a complete debacle. After the advertisement appeared in a local

leading newspaper, there was huge protest as the quality of language used was atrocious, including grammatical errors. Due to faulty usage of Bengali words, the meaning and also the tone of the advertisement was wrong. The error in the Bengali advertisement resulted in strong backlash from the native language speakers. The advertisement, as Bengalis perceived, was a distorted translation from Hindi. It was considered to be insensitive and a misrepresentation of facts and the language, even a blatant insult to the language and community. Around 30 percent of the readers strongly felt that Telexcel should apologize for such a blunder. There was a small number of readers who also felt that the company considered Bengal as an outcast. This was a case where social media had taken up the situation extremely seriously and protests were pouring in. Immediate redressal to the problem was the key to survival.

Understanding the gravity of the situation, Telexcel unconditionally apologized for the oversight. They admitted that their translators got it wrong and they took the entire responsibility, without providing any excuse. The company mentioned in the apology note that it had the deepest respect for the Bengali language and culture and had taken necessary steps to avoid such mistakes in the future. Readers immediately reciprocated. They thanked Telexcel for the acknowledgement and assurances. The unconditional apology helped to revive the brand equity. Timely action prevented this situation from going out of control and shielded the brand from any more negativity. Within a span of just three days the negative emotions dropped by 89 percent, in terms of mentions.

This is a case showing how social listening and responding to social media can save a brand from destruction. Had Telexcel been arrogant and turned a deaf ear to the protests and the innumerable mentions on social media, the outrage would have spread and been uncontrollable. Instead, the company realized the gravity of the situation and immediately apologized and successfully saved the brand.

5.4: Telexcel: TV campaign backlash

Telexcel also carried out a TV campaign (TVC) where they asked children what features they would like to see in a smartphone. Among all these expectations, there was one TVC that portrayed a little girl asking for help to protect her from bad elements in the society. This was linked to a safety feature offered by the telecom network. This led to strong backlash from social media communities. They took offence to how the brand was reinforcing gender stereotypes in these advertisements by portraying a little girl asking for help. A famous celebrity also took to Twitter and voiced his concern about it. Following his tweet, the issue exploded and negative sentiment for the brand increased sharply. Viewers not only protested against using children for advertisements, but, also reported that children are too innocent to be cast in a TVC. News outlets also jumped on the bandwagon and started to share the celebrity's tweet and thus created more negative content for the brand that was being freely shared on social media. The average negative mentions per day increased by 50 percent due to the advertisement.

Telexcel has always been a company that has been sensitive to social media and listening. Listening data clearly showcased that the increase in negativity was fueled by the celebrity's tweets and the news outlets' coverage. It was recommended that the brand immediately pull the TVC off the air. It was also recommended that the company talks to social media comments and answers queries. Everybody agreed that an apology should help, as the damage was unintentional. The advertisement was also taken away from social media channels and the posts on social media were also taken away from all channels. The offending TVC was immediately pulled down and GRPs were reduced to the tune of 10% following this observation. Negativity immediately dropped the next day to average levels and any further exacerbation of the brand's online reputation was avoided.

The above case studies all indicate that in order to perform in today's market, social listening is imperative to business. Companies that do not do social listening will perish, sooner or later.

6. The Process of Listening: An Empirical Model for Application

In this study, we attempted to develop a model for social listening, based on the insights collected from the four case studies and the in-depth interviews.

The first step towards developing a robust social listening model for application is to setup a center for data collection. The objective of this center will be to monitor conversations across different forms of media. From the overall data collected, the department's job will be to filter relevant conversations and information for analysis. While this activity is largely software-driven, often it is complex and not straightforward. In such cases, human intervention is required.

After the preliminary analysis is over and the data is ready in usable format, individual keyword-based reports are generated on the tool. These reports are run at set times, at regular intervals. Following a random process, some of these automated analyses are checked for accuracy, sentiment analysis and accuracy. Statistical quality control mechanisms are used to ensure that the deviations of the analyses are within the control limits. This phase is called conversation analysis.

The next stage is related to business intelligence. The objective of this step is to use analytics to find insights from data. Social media analytics is an integral part of data analysis and monitoring. This involve analyzing – who is saying what, what is the context, the general topics of discussion, the element of sarcasm, sentiments, comparative analyses, suggestions for change/modify or improvement, etc. Such business intelligence helps in decision-making in terms of changing features of existing product, how to target customers better, how to address grievances, after-sales services, and many more.

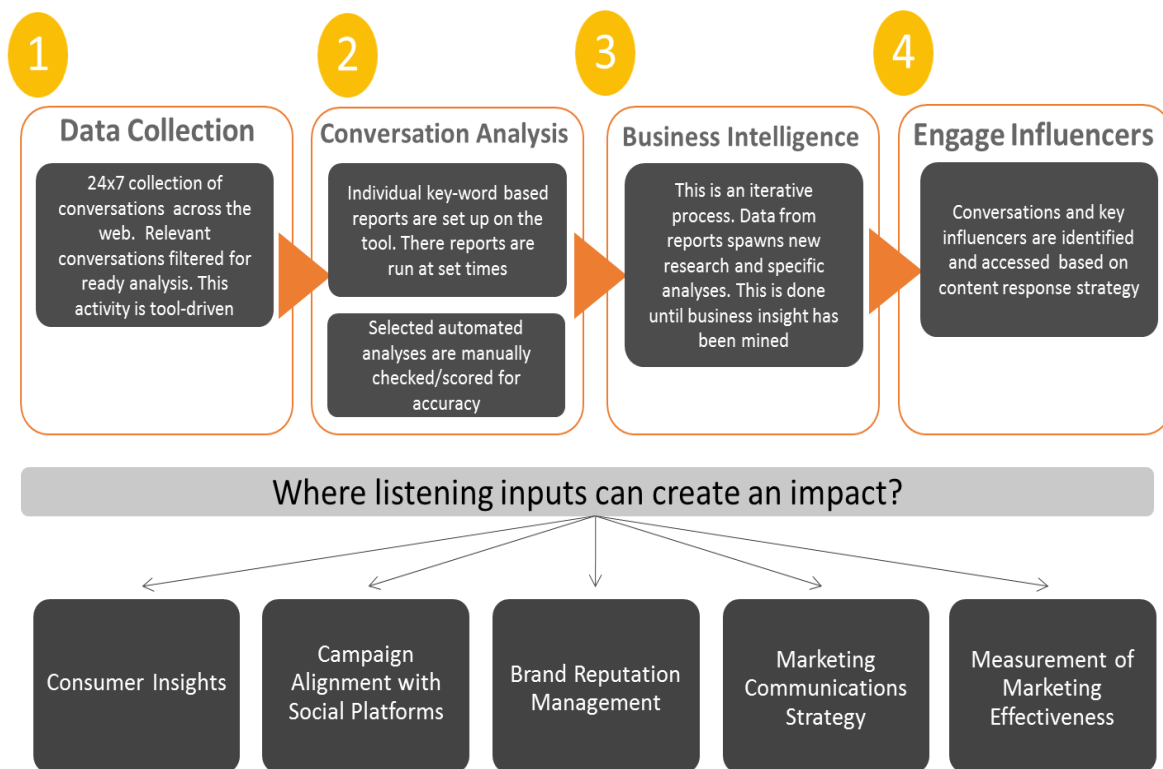


Fig. 1: Social Listening Model

The final stage of the process entails engaging customers. It is important the organization engages into conversation with the customers and key influencers are identified and assessed based on content response strategy. While it is important to identify the right social audiences with whom the organization would like to associate, it is equally important to identify effective influencers. Often such social influencers are experts or specialists in the area who can engage the customers well, they can also be in the form of brand ambassadors, or users of the product with a clout and fan following. This is the most crucial stage of social listening as the issue raised by the customer is systematically and strategically addressed thereby closing the loop with respect to a specific issue. Unless this stage is effectively handled there is always a possibility of resentment or disappointment for keeping an issue unresolved.

There are several channels where social listening skills can create an impact. We have already discussed about consumer insights. With the use of social media

analytics relevant consumer insights are to be extracted, that can facilitate a tailored approach to differentiated markets.

Campaign alignment is another platform where social listening inputs can create impact. Today's brands are in a more advantageous position than the past. Social campaigning is all about how brands and marketers use it to connect to their target audience, turn consumer insights to impactful content and campaigns that will help increase revenues, improve brand equity and create a sustainable organization.

Effective management of social listening, generation of consumer insights in a dynamic manner and engaging in campaign alignment with potential customers and target audience help in brand reputation building and management. Every satisfied customer eventually becomes a brand ambassador that helps the organization. So, it is all about the right and effective marketing communication strategy that the organization and the product would like to adopt to ensure the best impact in the market. Marketing communication strategy is the larger umbrella of the organization that strategizes social listening strategy, effectively utilizing consumer insights, campaign alignment, use of the apt social platforms, and brand management strategy. Last, but not the least, unless there is a proper tool to evaluate and measure all these methods of enriching marketing effectiveness, the whole exercise remains unaccounted for. Hence, evaluation of marketing effectiveness from social listening is crucial to its evolution.

7. Conclusion

On the basis of the findings of the study, complemented by insights from the professional literature, it is concluded that organizations should use data analytics and predictive modeling as complementary to social media and the information that is collected from customer inputs. A learning organization, where customer inputs and feedback through social listening becomes one of the principal sources of research and development and product development, is the future of organizations.

This is something completely contrary to the earlier Indian way of thinking about customer service. Till very recently, companies hardly cared to listen to customers

and their feedback. A lot of products which are of suboptimal quality would sell without any protest or objection. The times have changed. Today the customer is the king, queen and also the prime minister. They can make or break the brand.

The silver lining is visible. Most reputed companies have woken up to the cause. There is no way out, other than paying heed to social listening, it is – listen or perish.

References:

Abrahamson, Kurt. (2017) *Social Media Is the New Television. Opinion: Viewership is moving away from linear television to go further online.* Retrieved from <http://www.adweek.com/digital/kurt-abrahamson-sharethis-guest-post-social-media-is-the-new-television/>

Advertising Research Foundation. (2016). *How Advertising Works.* Retrieved from <https://thearf.org/category/tag/how-advertising-works/>

Ahmad, A., Rahman, O., & Khan, M. N. (2016). Consumer's Perception of Website Service Quality: An Empirical Study. *Journal of Internet Commerce*, 15(2), 125-141.

Ahmed, R. R., Vveinhardt, J., & Streimikiene, D. (2017). Interactive digital media and impact of customer attitude and technology on brand awareness: evidence from the South Asian countries. *Journal of Business Economics and Management*, 18(6), 1115-1134.

Ahuja, V., & Medury, Y. (2010). Corporate blogs as e-CRM tools—Building consumer engagement through content management. *Journal of Database Marketing & Customer Strategy Management*, 17(2), 91-105.

Albuquerque, P., Pavlidis, P., Chatow, U., Chen, K., & Jamal, Z. (2012). Evaluating Promotional Activities in an Online Two-Sided Market of User-Generated Content. *Marketing Science*, 31, (3), 406-432

Basney, B. (2014). Brands as publishers: Using content and paid media to fuel a brand transformation. *Journal of Brand Strategy*, 3(2), 101-110.

Brătășanu, V. (2017). Digital innovation the new paradigm for financial services industry. *Theoretical & Applied Economics*, 24, 83-94.

Chen, Y., Conroy, N. J., & Rubin, V. L. (2015). News in an online world: The need for an “automatic crap detector”. *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 52(1), 1-4.

Clay, K. (2012). Amazon has best holiday season ever, selling 306 items per second. *Forbes Web site*, December 27, 2012; accessed January 19, 2013 Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kellyclay/2012/12/27/amazon-has-best-holiday-season-ever-selling-306-items-per-second>.

Corcoran, S. (2009). Defining earned, owned and paid media. *Forrester Blogs*. Retrieved from https://go.forrester.com/blogs/09-12-16-defining_earned_owned_and_paid_media/

DeLoach, D. (2014). *The Evolution of Advertising in an Internet of Things World*. Retrieved October 25, 2017 from <http://data-informed.com/evolution-advertising-internet-things-world/>.

de Vries, L., Gensler, S., & Leeflang, P. S. (2017). Effects of traditional advertising and social messages on brand-building metrics and customer acquisition. *Journal of Marketing*, 81(5), 1-15.

Ernst & Young. (2016). *Social Media Marketing India Trends Study*. 3rd.ed. Retrieved from <https://www.ey.com/in/en/services/advisory/ey-social-media-marketing-india-trends-study-2016>

- Fournier, S., Quelch, J., & Rietveld, R. (2016). To get more out of social media, think like an anthropologist. *Harvard Business Review*, August 17, 2016. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2016/08/to-get-more-out-of-social-media-think-like-an-anthropologist>
- Fuimano, J. (2004). Sharp listening skills point staff in the right direction. *Nursing management*, 35(5), 12.
- Iyer, R., Eastman, J. K., & Monteiro, H. (2016). Perceptions of millennials' media attitudes and use: A comparison of US and Indian millennials. *Marketing Management Journal*, 26(2), 69-85
- Jucaitytė, I., & Maščinskienė, J. (2014). Peculiarities of social media integration into marketing communication. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 156, 490-495.
- Kavada, A. (2015). Creating the collective: social media, the Occupy Movement and its constitution as a collective actor. *Information, Communication & Society*, 18(8), 872-886.
- Keller, K. L., & Kotler, P. (2016). *Marketing management*. Pearson.
- Killian, G., & McManus, K. (2015). A marketing communications approach for the digital era: Managerial guidelines for social media integration. *Business Horizons*, 58(5), 539-549.
- Kim, E. H., & Youm, Y. (2017). How Do Social Media Affect Analyst Stock Recommendations? Evidence from S&P 500 Electric Power Companies' Twitter Accounts. *Strategic Management Journal*, 38(13), 2599–2622.
- Lodhia, S., & Stone, G. (2017). Integrated Reporting in an Internet and Social Media Communication Environment: Conceptual Insights. *Australian Accounting Review*, 27(1), 17-33.
- Lomborg, S. (2015). "Meaning" in Social Media. *Social Media+ Society*, 1(1), 2056305115578673.

- Lovett, M. J., &Staelin, R. (2016). The role of paid, earned, and owned media in building entertainment brands: Reminding, informing, and enhancing enjoyment. *Marketing Science*, 35(1), 142-157.
- Nelmapius, A., & Boshoff, C. (2016). A motivational perspective on the user acceptance of social media. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 47(4), 1-13.
- O'Neil, J., & Eisenmann, M. (2017). An examination of how source classification impacts credibility and consumer behavior. *Public Relations Review*, 43(2), 278-292.
- Parks, M. R. (2017). Embracing the challenges and opportunities of mixed-media relationships. *Human Communication Research*, 43(4), 505-517.
- Parment, A., &Brorström, S. (2016). Branding Various-Sized Destinations: A Study of Millennial Attitudes. In Bayraktar, A. &Uslay, C. (Eds.)*Global Place Branding Campaigns across Cities, Regions, and Nations*, p. 199-228.
- Paul, S., Peretti, P., & Datta, S. K. (2017). Change of Attitude, Technology and Practice: Identifying the Change for Increased Value Creation with Customer Co-creation. *Transnational Marketing Journal*, 5(1), 70-82.
- Payne, A. F., Storbacka, K., &Frow, P. (2008). Managing the co-creation of value. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36(1), 83-96.
- Sarkar, S. (2015). Analyzing the Indian Subscriber Behavior Towards Mobile Social Media-A Data Monetization & Customer Engagement Perspective. *Telecom Business Review*, 8(1), 48.
- Smit, E. G., &Neijens, P. C. (2011). The march to reliable metrics. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 51(150th Anniversary Supplement), 124-135.

Stevens, R. E., Loudon, D. L., Clow, K. E., & Baack, D. (2014). *Concise encyclopedia of advertising*. Routledge.

Stewart, M. C., Atilano, M., & Arnold, C. L. (2017). Improving customer relations with social listening: A case study of an American academic library *International Journal of Customer Relationship Marketing and Management*, 8(1), 49-63

Talavera, K. (2001). Permission granted. *Marketing News*, 35, 22-24.

Williamson, O., & Ghani, T. (2012). Transaction cost economics and its uses in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 40(1), 74-85.

Xie, K., & Lee, Y. J. (2015). Social media and brand purchase: Quantifying the effects of exposures to earned and owned social media activities in a two-stage decision making model. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 32(2), 204-238.