Role of Social Media on Public Relation, Brand Involvement and Brand Commitment

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Abstract
The study is focused on finding out the role of social media in public relation, brand involvement and brand commitment. The study is descriptive in nature and data is collected from 300 respondents. Results indicated a significant role of social media on public relation, brand involvement and brand commitment.

Keywords: Role ; Social Media ; Public Relation; Brand Involvement ; Brand Commitment

1. Introduction
There is a strong impact of Social Media on a purchasing process of a consumer. The traditional buying process of a consumer includes search detail information of a brand/ product, then after getting detail information they consider many brands and then from those brands they evaluate few brands and in the end final decisions are taken according to his/her needs.

Nowadays, due to advancement of technology, social media is considered as a right way to get right information at the right time by the consumer. Social media give consumers high control as it enables the buyers to gather much more information, watch reviews, and can make comparison of different products by sitting at home.

The trend of marketing in Pakistan is also changing as the typical advertisements are not getting the desired results. Therefore, the technique of digital marketing is effectively used in Pakistan. These techniques have proved to be quite cost-effective and have attracted many customers. In Pakistan internet is considered as the best way to spread the messages. Therefore many companies have gained a lot from digital marketing and fans through social networking. Social Networking Websites including Facebook and Twitter which are now being used by various multinational companies in Pakistan in order to convey their message to the customers. Social Media has become a major factor in influencing various aspects of consumer behavior which leads to brand commitment.

Therefore this paper aims to study the Impact of social media on consumer buying behavior and brand commitment. The overall relationship of the Impact of social media on consumer buying behavior and brand commitment has been empirically analyzed and resulted.

1.1 Objective of the study
The objectives of this research are
- To investigate the effect of Social Media on the buying behavior of a consumer.
- To find out the relationship between brand image and consumer purchasing behavior and their commitment with the brand.
- To determine the factors behind the brand loyalty in the context of Pakistan.

2. Literature review
According to Sampad Swain (2009), nowadays due to the increase use of social media websites by the consumers, it provides a platform for brands and also helps people to make purchase decisions. Consumers rely on various types of social media websites for product and brand information. As a result, companies that utilize social media engage directly with consumers and thus they have a great opportunity to reach more customers and also increase their likelihood of making a purchase.

According to MehmoodRehmani (2011), Social media has melted away the barriers to the flow of information among people. Internet has made it easier than before for marketers to communicate directly with consumers and target audiences. Therefore, Social Media is being considered playing an
important role in customer buying decisions. This occurs because people can take complete information of a particular product and can also make comparison amount different products of different brands. As a result they buy product of their own choice and this leads to brand commitment. Dan Shaver (2007) in his research established that customers are being influenced by social media. In order to attract customers positively towards a product, a company needs to build a strong social media presence. Building a strong social media presence requires consistency. It requires actually engaging with the target demographic, building relationships that help brands to build their trust and their business. If a company has established a good public relation then customer will become loyal to the brand. It requires having actual goals and strategy for the social media campaign.

According to Nardi, B.A., Schiano, D.J. and Gumbrecht, M. (2004), social media outreach by brands and companies, especially if this outreach is done by a personal online representative, can be much more influential on consumer behavior than ads or other promotional devices. According to him 2/3rds of consumers are likely to pass the information they receive from the representatives on to others and over half are likely to take action on this information.

The study of Paine, K. D. (2007, April) established that customers depend upon many types of social media websites in order to get brand information. Therefore, companies utilize social media and involve directly with the customers, thus they have a great opportunity of not only reach to the greater number of customers but also make them satisfy in every aspect about their product and as a result increase customer’s likelihood of making purchase.

According to Preetam (2011), Building Brand Loyalty/Brand Commitment can be done by integrating the use of Social Media by the companies. There are many web analytical packages (both free and paid) are available with the help of which companies can track online marketing initiatives and also customer response. Social media helps to improve brand visibility and engage with existing and potential customers.

According to Patrick (2009) the invention of internet and rise of digital media has an intense effect on the society that it can be seen not just as technological revolution but a cultural one also. Social Media can be useful for brands that want to create strong relationship with the customers. If brands have created a strong relationship with the customer then this will lead to brand loyalty and over time increase sales.

According to Jones et al. (2008), organizations that use social media tools help organizations appear more reputable and more innovative than their competitors. Many brand owners have even invested in creating branded communities where consumers come together for a common purpose, interest or event. Some of these communities have even moved to the Internet. Experiences, shared emotions and a sense of community with the brand will strengthen the position that the brand occupies in a consumer’s life.

Rosie Braude (2009) in his research established that with the invention of the Internet and the advancement of technology, organizations moved their branding, commerce and customer relations online. This shift required great research and expertise into Web site design, new online consumer behavior and the effects of consumers’ perceptions of online organizations. The Internet allows for much more consumer interactivity and participation.

According to Tom Smith (2009), Social Media is a completely different approach to interact with consumers and customers. Companies advertise in a social media environment, but the return on investment comes from developing communities, creating content to be shared, and talking and listening directly with consumers. To build community, distribute content, or get people actively involved in an application takes time.

Rajeev Kumar (2008) in his research established that Social media has enabled consumers to form stronger opinions and express them more broadly about a specific product or a brand. Social Media has provided a richer base of knowledge for the consumers before going through a purchasing process. Consumers who tap into these blogs know more about the. With the help of Social Media consumers are more informed about the product and articulate its benefits in a more digestible
manner. This is one way of creating happier customers who’ll then do the marketing for the brand instead of the other way round.

Ahearne, M., & Bhattacharya (2005), in their recent research has shown that most of the users access the Internet for social networking. It helps to build new relationships and networks, strengthen existing relationships, meet likeminded people with the similar interests, create brand awareness, inform customers about new products and services, get feedback from clients to improve the business and customer relations, increase customer loyalty, and target them more effectively, win new clients, generate direct sales and establish a reputation as a forward thinking company.

According to Barnes, N. G., & Mattson (2008) social media takes less time to reach out to customers and has endless possibilities. It helps to grab attention of a customer by writing a blog or leaving a comment on someone else’s blog. One can reach out to potential clients in a cost effective manner by advertising on social websites, especially if one is a small business owner who doesn’t have the budget for television and advertising campaigns. Marketer can also receive and send relevant information, connect and network with groups and individuals through social media sites like LinkedIn, Twitter, Bebo, Facebook, MySpace and YouTube.

Outing, S. (2007) established in the research that medium and small business owners can enjoy a higher level playing field with large companies through social media marketing. Accessing social network sites and social media tools enable you to connect directly to your customers and get a clear idea as to what they want, where they are and what makes them tick. And that is the key to success – Know Your Customer. Once you know them, it becomes easier to reach out to them and create brand awareness by increasing your visibility.

According to SCOTT David (2007), Social media for brand awareness includes different activities from planning and design to frequent updates and maintenance. As social networks are free, the time one spends on social media to build brand awareness is very valuable and company can better target and focus their activities in social media towards a well-defined strategy that really helps to develop brand awareness and improves search engine results.

**Theoretical Framework**

![Theoretical Framework Diagram]

3. **Research Methodology**

3.1 **Design**

The study is descriptive in nature and conducted in non-contrived environment. It is a cross sectional study in nature.
3.2 Sample
The sample size was considered to be all the users who use social media who are present in twin cities i.e. Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The respondents were chosen randomly and requested to fill close ended questionnaires.

300 questionnaires were distributed among respondents out of which 220 were filled.

3.2 Questionnaire
A questionnaire was developed on the basis of literature review and theoretical framework. The reliability test of the questionnaire was carried out on SPSS16 and result of Cronbach's alpha was found $\alpha = 0.985$, which allows the researcher to carry out the further data collection.

3.4 Data collection
- SPSS16 was used for questionnaire reliability test and Cronbach’s alpha was found $\alpha = 0.985$.
- Descriptive statistical analysis of the questionnaire variables i.e. Social Media, Public Relation, Brand Involvement, Buying Behavior and Brand commitment are taken for pareto analysis.
- The main research objective of this study depends upon primary data collected from randomly chosen respondents from twin cities of Pakistan i.e. Rawalpindi and Islamabad.
- The questionnaire is well structured and the nature of the questions will be such that it will avoid ambiguous responses from the respondents and it will help in quick analysis of the data collected.
- Descriptive research design is adopted in order to understand the problem and carry out the research in a lucid manner. Data which was used to conduct this study were primary as well as secondary.

3.5 Analysis Tool
- SPSS16 was used for questionnaire reliability test
- MS Excel
- Data analysis
- Descriptive analysis
- MS-EXCEL was used to measure emerging trends in Pakistan and we will find answers to the research questions which we formulated to know whether there exists a relationship between them or not. This will be done in order to avoid any kind of manipulation in data and in order to get the most accurate results.

4. Analysis and Findings
In this research there are 5 main variables i.e. Social Media, Public Relation, Brand Involvement, Buying Behavior and Brand commitment. These variables have further sub-variables which are as follows:

4.1 Social Methodology

Increase brand awareness
Results have shown that about 82 percent participants agreed that organizations attempt to increase brand awareness through social media websites. This shows that most of the companies use social media websites to make their products aware to the customers.

Promotional offers
According to the questionnaire filled by the customers it is found that 71% agreed that there are some promotional offers such as coupons, discounts etc. are given on social media. These promotional offers are given in order to attract more and more customers.
Advertise their products/services

It is found that about 84% of the respondents agreed that Organizations advertise/promote their products/services through the social media. Most of the organizations advertise through social media because of advancement of technology and it is also an easy and a cheaper way to advise their products and services and internet is considered as the best way to spread the messages.

Complaints

About 53% of the respondents posted their complaints of a particular products and services on social media websites. This shows that half of the respondents post their complaints on website because some people think that their complaints on social media website will not take as seriously. They prefer to complaint directly to the office of the particular brand/organization.

Respond through Social Media

From the results it is clear that about 71% of the respondents responded through twitter, Facebook, YouTube, MySpace or any other social networking website. Most of the people respond through social media websites because nowadays all these websites are very popular and they consider it to be an easy way to come to know about a product/brand. Most of the people respond through social media because it give consumers high control as it enables the buyers to gather much more information of a product by sitting at home.

Organizations that use social media

Results have shown that about 71% of the respondents have come across organizations that use social media marketing on social media websites. This shows that most of the organizations do marketing of their products and services through social media websites.

4.2. Public relation

Communication of Organization

About 73% of the respondents agreed that the emergence of social media (including blogs) has changed the way organizations communicate. As this is considered as an easy and a quicker way to build relation with the customers and communicate them about their products and services.

Handle external communications

Results have shown that about 74% of the respondents agreed that social media (including blogs) has changed the way organizations handle external communications. As this is a new way i.e. social media websites are used by the organization to communicate with the customers. They communicate with customers by giving their new schemes, discount vouchers, give detail of their new products, etc.

Practice of public relations (Social media)

From the results it is clear that about 76% of the respondents agreed that Social media have enhanced the practice of public relations. This has occurred because through these websites organizations are directly connected to the customers and can get the feedback of their product or service easily on those websites.

Practice of public relations (Blogs)

About 77% respondents respond that blogs have enhanced the practice of public relations. This is because by knowing the comments and complaints of the customers (by the organizations), the relationship between customers and brand/organization has increased.

Trusted information source

About 49% of the respondents agreed that social media and blogs are a more trusted information source than traditional mainstream media. This shows that more than half of the respondents don’t consider social media and blogs as a trusted information source than traditional mainstream media.
This occur because respondent think that some of the brands/organization post wrong features of their products and services and they cannot trust the product by only seeing it on the website.

**Low-cost**

Results have shown that about 73% of the respondents agreed that social media offers organizations a low-cost way to develop relationships with members of various strategic publics. This occurs because with less amount of money an organization can convey its message and brand their product to millions of people in more effective manner.

**Corporate and Organizational Transparency**

56% of the respondents think that Social media and blogs are impacting corporate and organizational transparency. More than half of the agreed with this because by using social media both the transparency and confidentiality of the organization are interfered indirectly.

**Ethical for employees**

It is found that 44% of the respondents agreed that it is ethical for employees to write and post on a weblog negative statements about the organizations they work for. This shows the more than half of the respondents consider it to be unethical that employees write something negative about the organization for they work for.

**Ethical for an organization**

About 75% of the respondents believe that it is ethical for an organization to discipline an employee who writes negative statements about the organization on a worldwide weblog. This shows that respondents consider it to be right that organization should be strict enough so that employees cannot write anything negative about that organization because this can negatively affect the organization and customers will be reluctant to buy product of that brand/organization.

**Research about or monitor information**

From the results it is clear that about 74% of the respondent consider that it is ethical for an organization to conduct research about or monitor information that their employees are communicating via blogs and other social media. This helps organization to improve their products and services by monitoring on daily basis and this will allow employees to write progressive and positive things of the product and services. As a result this will attract more customers.

4.3. **Brand involvement**

**Choice of a particular brand**

According to the questionnaire filled by the respondents it is found that about 75% of the respondents believe that the choice of a particular brand expresses one’s personality. This is because a particular brand used will tell a lot about the person.

**Someone uses a particular brand**

From the results it is clear that about 76% of the respondents agreed that someone uses a particular brand tells a lot about that person because choice of a particular brand expresses one’s personality.

**Beneficial particular product**

About 71% of the respondents believe that most of the people search blogs or social media in order to find how beneficial a particular product would be. This can be done by search detail information of a brand/product, then after getting detail information they can watch reviews of that product and after that they can decide whether to buy that product or not.

4.4. **Buying behavior**

**Mind changed**

Results have shown that about 61% of the respondents agreed that one change his/her already prepared mind for purchase once he/she visited a site of social media. This means that if a person has decided to buy a particular product and if that person comes across to some negative thing of that
product on social media website then there is a possibility that, that person may change his/her minds for buying that product.

Visit the social media websites or blogs

From the questionnaire filled by the respondents it is found that about 46% of the respondents approximately 3-5 times a week visit social media websites or blogs from where they gathered information about the particular product during the whole buying process. About 33% of the respondent approximately 5-7 times a week visit social media websites or blogs and about 21% of the respondent approximately more than 7 times a week visit social media websites or blogs.

Approval/ reviews

According to 75% of the respondent it is found that people seek approval/reviews through blogs and social media before buying a product. This shows that most of the people search for a product before buying it so that the can buy a good product.

High priced

From the results it is clear that about 43% of the respondents agree that when a person buys a high priced product, it is not a big deal if one buys the wrong brand by mistake. This shows that for most of the respondents it is a big deal if a person buys the high prices product of wrong brand by mistake.

Low priced product

Results have shown that about 50% of the respondents agree that when a person buys a low priced product, it is not a big deal if you buy the wrong brand by mistake. This shows that half of the respondents agree that if they buy a low priced product, it is not a big deal if you buy the wrong brand by mistake whereas other half of the respondents don’t agree with this.

4.5. Brand commitment

Committed to buy product

It is found that about 82% of the respondents are very committed to buying the product of their favorite brand. This shows that most of the respondents are committed to the products they use and they are brand loyal.

Alternative product

About 61% of the respondents believe that they can choose an alternative product in case the product of their favorite brand is out of stock.

4.6 Conclusion

In this paper the Impact of social media on consumer buying behavior and brand commitment has been studied. This study was done through questionnaire which include different variables like Social Media, Public Relation, Brand Involvement, Buying Behavior and Brand commitment were taken. It is found that social media has a strong impact on Public Relation, Brand Involvement, Buying Behavior and Brand commitment.

4.7 Limitation

- One of the main restrictions of the research is time limitation. The less time was provided by the university authorities to complete our research study. So it was not possible to objectively analyze the various factors within the period of 3-4 months.
- There is lack of availability of data. Besides my best efforts the people were not that responsive therefore the data provided was limited.
- It was also found difficulty to interact with people because they were not willing to fill questionnaires.
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Annexure

Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GENDER</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49.09%</td>
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Table 1.2 Overall Analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Social Methodology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase brand awareness</td>
<td>82 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotional offers</td>
<td>71 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertise their products/services</td>
<td>84 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>complaints</td>
<td>53 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respond through Social Media</td>
<td>71 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizations that use social media</td>
<td>71 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Public relation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication of Organization</td>
<td>73 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Handle external communications</td>
<td>74 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practice of public relations (Social media)</td>
<td>76 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practice of public relations (Blogs)</td>
<td>77 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trusted information source</td>
<td>49 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low cost</td>
<td>73 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corporate and Organizational Transparency</td>
<td>56 %</td>
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<td>Ethical for employees</td>
<td>75 %</td>
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<td>Ethical for an organization</td>
<td>75 %</td>
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<td>Research about or monitor information</td>
<td>74 %</td>
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<td>3. Brand involvement</td>
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<td>Choice of a particular brand</td>
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<td>Someone uses a particular brand</td>
<td>76 %</td>
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<td>Beneficial particular product</td>
<td>71 %</td>
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<td>4. Buying behavior</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mind changed</td>
<td>61 %</td>
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<td>Visit the social media websites or blogs</td>
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<td>Approval/ reviews</td>
<td>21 %</td>
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<td>Product Type</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
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<tr>
<td>High priced</td>
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<td>Low priced product</td>
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<td>5. Brand commitment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Committed to buy product</td>
<td>82%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alternative product</td>
<td>61%</td>
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