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Research Paper

Social Media Marketing: An Evolutionary Trends in E-Commerce.

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Abstract

Social Media Marketing (SMM) as an online advertising and digital marketing is a consumer base technology and an act of advertisement and marketing through which the use of web technology and email to make direct sales transactions via Electronic Commerce is being made. It offers marketers the prospects and opportunities to generate leads that would help with channels of communication which in turn leads to better visibility. These transactions can also be done using the traditional channels of communication such as radio, television, newspaper, journal, and other means.

The research will examine the impact of social media in the context of e-commerce and to ascertain the extent of influence this medium have on users purchase intents, and talk on the issue of cyber security of this interfaces and to bring the comparisons between these two traditional and social media marketing and through data collection techniques, we then test and analyze the research model and come up with its related hypotheses. Conclusively, at the end of the research, findings will suggest some implications and recommendations for researchers and practitioners.

E-Commerce has evolves through the years as an accepted mean of business transaction, and the same can be said of social media marketing in which the channel of communications has gone beyond a way to connect with family and friends, to becoming a conduits to riches and wealth.

Key Terms: *Social Media Marketing, Traditional Media Marketing, Cyber Security Risks, E-Commerce*

1.0   Introduction

Social Media marketing is an online and digitized marketing consumer base technology through the use of web technology, E-mail and Social Media Platforms to make direct sales transactions. It is one of the new trend in Electronic Commerce. It offers prospecting opportunities which generate leads that helps channels of communication for better visibility.

Social Media technology users make use of the platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc. to facilitates their social interactive engagement, information sharing, exchange of market ideas and user-controlled media to get more prospective clients and to influence their purchasing intents. The advent of these social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter is changing the way companies marketed, connected and relates with their customers and on the other hand, it making the world a global market reach with a single click on the social networking sites.

As social media continues to garner more popularity and wider acceptance, the marketers are busy searching for a firm foundation to base their strategic decisions on how to employ social media interface in engaging and influencing their customers (Hoffman and Novak, 2012).

Additionally, social media had provides a favorable and conducive environment for businessmen and marketers to market their products at ease and to make proper evaluations of the purchased products; this is called word-of-communication or directs sales transaction (Chen, Fay and Wang, 2011).

1.2   Problems Statement

There is limited knowledge and minimal research on Social Media Marketing. How to manage and integrate social media interfaces into the overall business success is still a major challenge. However, with the issue of data privacy breach and other impending cyber-crime issues, there is lack of information sharing within the platforms such as; Facebook, Twitter, Google+, YouTube, Blogging and so on. Therefore, it has become imperative to engage in this research as little to no research was focused to social media marketing and cyber security.

1.3   Research Objective

 This research was focused on the following aspects:
1. Analysis of statistical and comparative evolutionary trends of electronic commerce in the context of social media marketing.
2. Comparison analysis of the two media marketing strategy.
3. To ascertain the extent of influence and impact social media platforms has brought in the current evolutionary e-commerce trends and users purchase intents.
4. How to handle the security issues threatening the platform interfaces.

2. Literature Review

Social Media refers to coming together of multiple people from different locations spread all over the world purposely for social interaction. It is also create an enabling environment for information sharing and exchange of ideas in virtual communities and networks (Ahlqyist el al. 2008). According to Kaplan and Heinlein (2010), it is a communication process where a group of internet-based applications built based on technological foundation of web 2.0 are allowed to create and exchange user generated contents. These user-generated contents enable users who are on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms. Web users have a robust collaborative session such as; sharing, discussion session, modification of user generated content, this would broadened users appeal to new technological techniques and promote face-to-face engagement platform session (Moran el al. 2011).

The social media is generating significant revenue growth to companies, enhancing client's prospects through interactive session, increasing branding awareness, and recognition online.

Table 1: Noticeable Examples of Social Media Applications and their Uses

Types of social media platforms and their functionalities	
Name of Applications	**Functionality**
Facebook and Myspace	*Social Networking*
Twitter	*Micro blogging*
YouTube	*Video sharing*
Flickr	*Photo sharing*
Blog TV, U stream	*Live casting*
World of Warcraft	*Online Gaming*
Digg and Reddit	*News aggregation*
Upcoming	*Events*
Del.icio.us	*Bookmarking*
Wikipedia	*Reference*

2.1 How SMM evolves and influences customers purchase intents

Statistical media analysts had forecasted billions of people accessing social media networking sites with over 700 million users accessing Facebook from devices. About 500 million users have access to twitter, and 130 million used Instagram in 2013. Currently, social media consume much time of world population. However, analysis indicated that 23% of Facebook users check their account more times every day. There are also a total of 1,000 comments per second in Twitter platform media, while having over 5 million pictures and videos being shared in 24 hours over Instagram platform (Noor, et al., 2016).

Some other facts on social media platforms are: 3 out of 4 people use social networks regularly, and social media has overtaken email as the no. 1 activity on the net. This indicted that about 17% of all web users, and more than 200 million blogs are available on the entire web, this corresponds to about (900,000 blogs posts every day). There are also about 34% post opinions about companies, brands and products, while 93% of social media users believe companies should have a presence in social media (Turban et al., 2012). Hence, the increased popularity of these mediums has opened opportunities for new business models for electronic commerce also called social commerce.
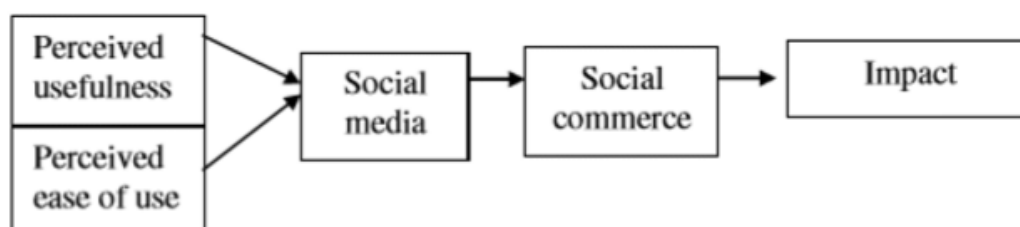

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: GEOGRAFIA Online

Figure 1 attempted to explain the factors affecting the usage of e-commerce through social media, and the impacts afterward.

According to study made by ENGAGEMENT dB (2010).; it said: "most valuable brands in the world are experiencing a direct correlation between top financial performance and deep social media engagement. Findings of the study show that enterprises that aggressively embrace social media as part of their strategy are more financially successful."

SMM as a new approach that influences users purchase decisions through engaging third party who already have the users trust through commenting and tweeting on their platforms and blogs (Graham and Freiberg, 2010).

2.1.1 Facebook
Facebook is the most successful online social media platform with a total active users of 1.59 billion monthly as of fourth quarter of 2015, founded in US in 2004 by Harvard alumni Mark Zuckerberg and his roommates during their university days.
2.1.2 Twitter
Enable users to send and receive 140-character messages. Founded by four group members Noah Glass, Biz Stone, Evan Williams and Jack Dorsey, in 2006, in the US. With an active users of 332 million as of January 2016. It is a microblogging internet service site.
2.1.3 LinkedIn
It is mainly professional and for business oriented purpose selling access to their user's information. Founded by group of team members headed by Reid Hoffman in December 2002 and launched in 2003 in the US. With a total acquired users of over 400 Million, a 24 multilingual interface and a major player in lead generation game.

Figure 2: Facebook Founder
Source: Mark Zuckerberg Personal Facebook Profile

Figure 2 shows the trending of some selected social media interface conducted by a credible research centers, Pew Research Center in the year 2015.
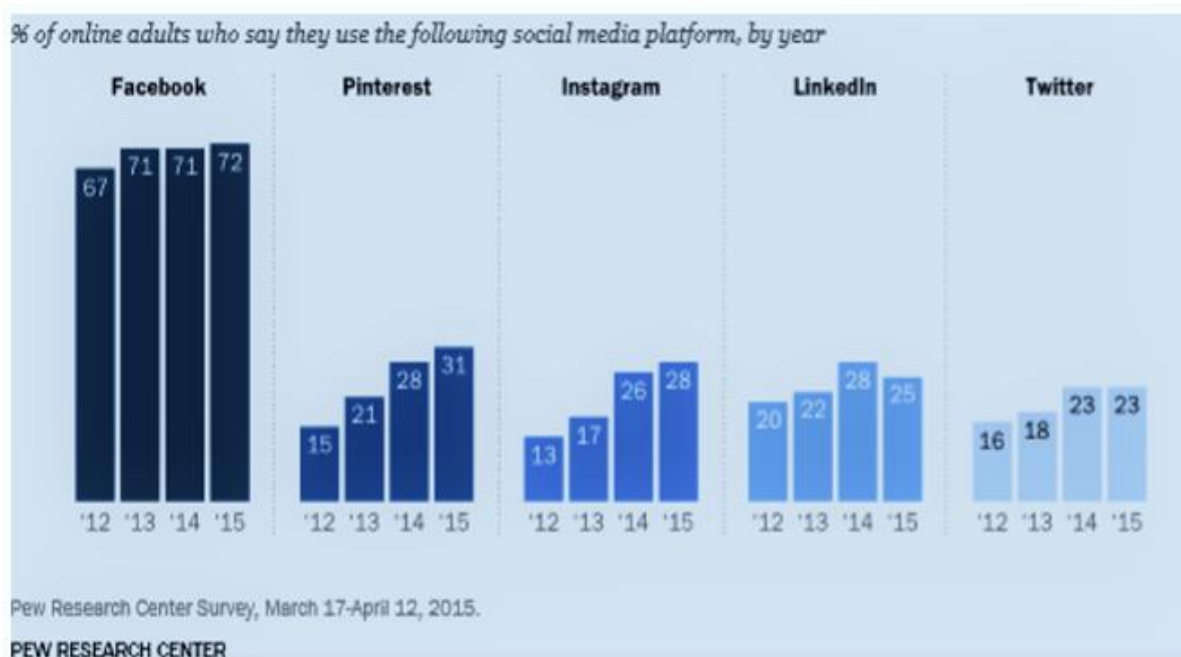

Figure 3: Social media trend
Source: Pew Research Center (2015)

Table 2: Comparisons between Social Media Marketing and Traditional Marketing

Basic Elements	Social media marketing	Traditional Media Marketing
Basic meaning	*A process of reaching customers through direct social interaction and conversation on the net*	*process of performing market research, sales and advertisements*
Platforms interface	*Blogs, Online communities, Social Networking and sharing sites etc.*	*Offline channels; TV, Radio, Newspaper, Banner, Magazine, fliers, Outdoor ads etc.*
Communication channel & style	*Many-to-many, Conversational, Multi directional*	*One-to many, company to consumers*
Marketing Mix elements	*People, Platform, Participation and Promotion*	*Product, Price, Place and Promotion*
Required budget	*Less cost effective*	*Incur high cost*
Feedback	*Real time feedback*	*Not real time*
Customer Relations	*Inclusive and Participatory*	*Intrusive*

2.3 Security Threat Issue

Because of the paramount importance of how to acquire the techniques of securing the infrastructural facilities, and to address the cyber security risks that accompany the technology. Risks, security and privacy concerns are not to be left uncheck. Although user generated contents via social media could be faked by some intruders with the intention of malicious infiltrations, this might negatively affect their enterprise security. Thus, enterprises must be cautious since there have been a negative impacts liability for libels, privacy violations and damage to brand recognition. There is the need to initiates a new security policy method that would bring a solution through which social media users privacy are being protected through acceptable online behavior and etiquettes and the used of new features and customized information security system applications.

3. Research Design and Methodology

Looking into fundamental marketing principles, the researcher tried to discover the theories and relationship between social media and business philosophy with the long concept of marketing. This review paper has studied different materials ranging from

journals, articles and blogs. Many websites articles, authors reviews, and published books, articles were checked and reviewed. The data collections has been categorically based on quantitative research method, and the statistical analysis through google doc. form online automated survey questionnaires, a sample was conducted, which consists of nine questions, two of the questions were simple demographic questions and the rest were directly related to the study. Students and staffs of FTMS College are the target for conveniences, therefore a continent sampling method was utilised. The online survey yielded 21 full and usable respondents that were used for this study.

4.   Results and Discussion

Accordingly, the survey have discovered that Facebook have the most daily users of 38.1% of the respondents, browsing the platform at least once a day, and 30% are visiting the platform several times a day. Facebook and Instagram are the most popular sites among the respondents. However, other social media platforms have visitors too from the respondents. For example, there is significant number of daily users on Twitter, Pinterest and LinkedIn. The survey findings also discovered that 14.2% of Instagram users are on the platform daily, while 13% visit several times a day.

Similarly, Pinterest users who visit the platform daily is 9.5%, and women constituted the larger proportion of the daily users, this might be due to Pinterest feminine appeal on fashions. LinkedIn is also 9.5% users and Twitter proportion of daily usage is 14.3%. The survey findings also discovered that 71.4% of respondents purchasing intents and decisions were being influenced by online social channels marketing Advertising (ads) through their various branding awareness recognition, while 28.6% of the respondents confirmed that their big influencer is through the traditional media marketing.

On the security outlook, 57.1% of respondents agreed that social media platforms had a security privacy threat and they have even experienced the cyber security crime at least once, while the remaining 42.9% answered NO, Meaning that Social Media Marketing is safe and secured.
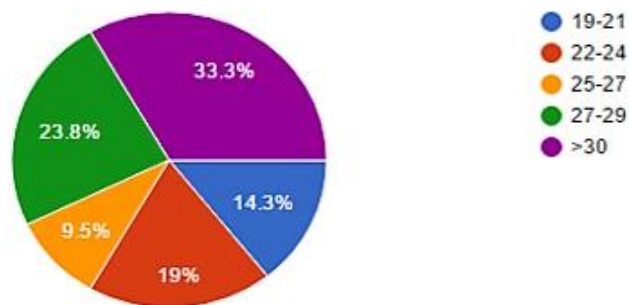
Figure 4: Age of Respondent

Regardless of the time and financial constraints, the survey produced results and analysis, based on the demographic questions about the background of the survey respondents, and it's restricted. While 14.3% of the respondents are students between the ages of Nineteen (19) years to twenty One (21) years, and they are mostly diploma students , 19% of the respondents are between the ages of twenty two (22) to twenty four (24) years, and mostly UG students pursuing various courses of learning in the college, and 9.5% are in between twenty five (25) years to twenty seven (27) years, and 23.8% are in the categories of twenty seven (27) years up to twenty nine years of age, while the remaining 33.3% of the respondents are from thirty (30) years of age and above, and they are mostly PG students and the staffs of the college.
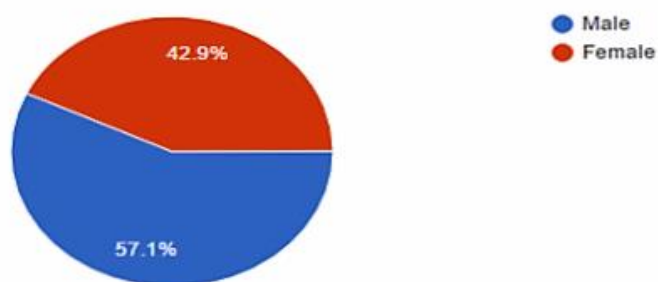

Figure 5: Gender of Respondent

The results here have shown that demographically men have constituted 57.1% of the respondents, while the remaining 42.9% are women.
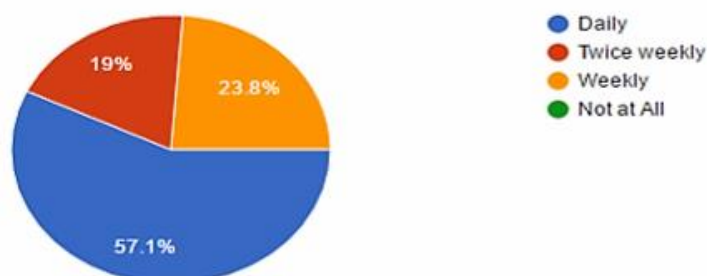

Figure 6: Number of time you browse the internet?

Figure 6 result shows that majority of the respondents constitutes 57.1% who are with the habit of browsing the internet almost on daily basis for one reason or the other,19% said they browse the net for at least twice a week, while 23.8% of the respondents said they are on the net at least once a week.
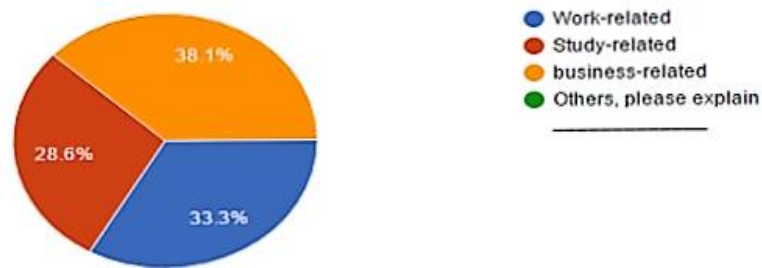
Figure 7: What is your main reason of using internet?

However, findings show the reason why the 33.3% of the respondents are online browsing the net. This is purposely because of their office work related activities, while 38.1% is because of the smooth operation of their various business activities, and 28.6% is because of their study-related and research purposes and this category are mostly students.
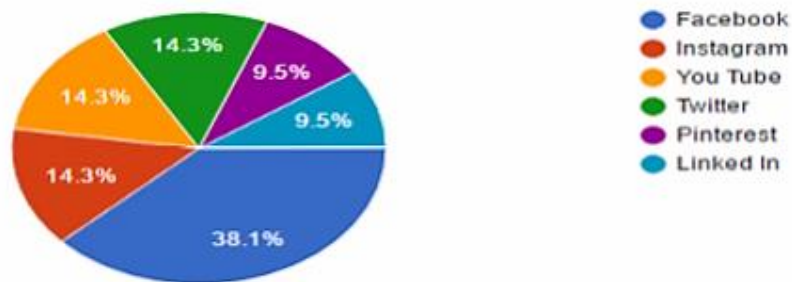

Figure 8: Which social media platform you frequently visits?

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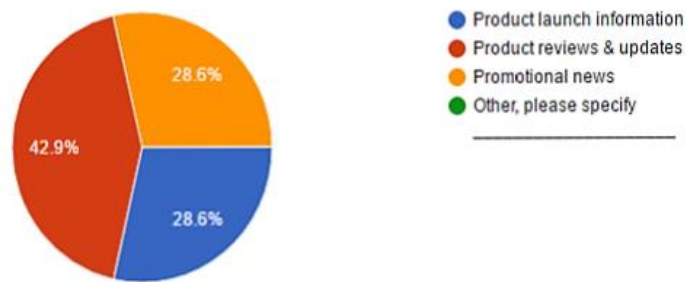
Figure 8: What type of information do you receive from the brands social media platforms or blogs?

Respondents were asked what type of information do they value much and receives from the various social media platforms and blogs? 42.9% of respondents acknowledged that they got product launch information, while 28.6% respondents got their product reviews, updates and promotional news from the various social media outlets respectively.
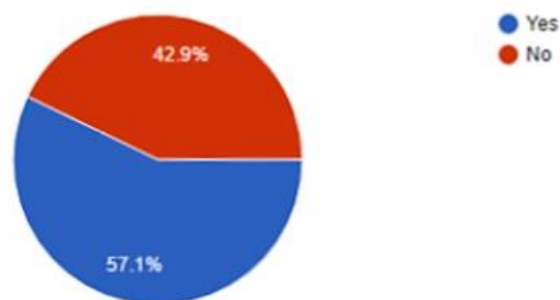

Figure 9: Do you know Social Media has a Security Problem?

On the security outlook, 57.1% of respondents have agreed that social media platforms had a security privacy threat. They have experienced the cyber security crime at least once, while the remaining 42.9% answered NO, meaning that social media marketing is safe and secured.
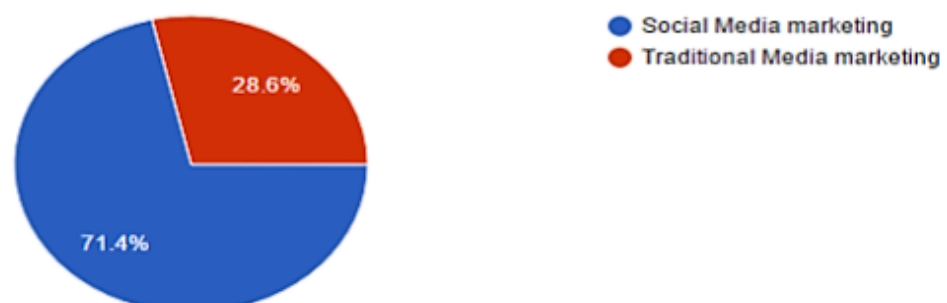

Figure 10: Which type of media marketing has influenced your purchasing decisions?

The survey findings also discovered that 71.4% of respondents purchasing intents and decisions were being influenced by online social channels marketing ads through their

various branding awareness recognition, while 28.6% of the respondents confirmed that their big influencer is through the traditional media marketing.
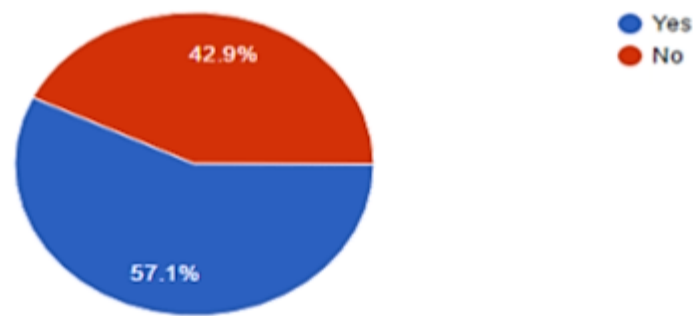

Figure 11: Have you experienced any problem using social media platforms?

From the survey we conducted, we were able to comprehend that while 57.1% of the respondents have experienced one problem or the other. This ranges from cloning and impersonating of personal social media account by internet scammers, sometimes experiencing low internet strength and so on. The remaining 42.9% answered NO, meaning that social media platforms are safe, secured and hitch-free.

5.   Conclusion

This paper presented the analysis and discussion, the roles and effectiveness of Social Media communication channels and marketing strategies which has continue to evolve and advance rapidly in the information and communication technology (ICT) spheres. Businessmen and marketers are using social media to influences consumers purchase intents through the use of recommendations and product suggestions.

To build on the study, there is a need for further research on Social media interface platforms, for a greater effective optimization and future plan expansions. Therefore, all stakeholders need to collaborate to ensure the security and boost the confidence of consumers on the usage of social media. Government and the private sectors need to also come together, for the provisions of the internet facilities to the growing world population especially those in remote areas; e.g. the Facebook founder and some IT experts, lead this global drive for internet for all.

There is also the need for orientations and public awareness programs and training to educate public on social media marketing, usage and security measure to be taken. However, all these can only be achieved with an availability of tools and equipment at all time through some government social intervention policies at an affordable price.

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