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Social Media in Contemporary Marketing: YouTube Advertising for the Guerrillas

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The guerrillas of the modern day marketing arena have been eyeing the innovative strategies to promote their products. They aim to grab the maximum attention with least amount the capital spent. This is what guerrilla marketing revolves around. YouTube has evolved as one such platform. It is being used as a powerful medium by the marketing managers to advertise their products on a world-wide stage by less spending. The paper throws light on the effectiveness of YouTube as a guerrilla strategy to know what attributes in a YouTube advertisement attracts the viewers to view and like it. Content analysis of fifty advertisements on YouTube of the consumer electronics segment has been done to know how the audience response to this new form of advertising platform.

Keywords: Guerrilla marketing, customer centric approach, YouTube, content analysis, advertisement appeals, consumer electronics

New age customer centric marketing practices facilitate a two-way communication platform to its customers and are considered effective. It is important for the managers to align their activities in a manner that facilitates a mechanism which gives an indication on the likings of the consumers. Advertisement is one of the important elements in the promotion mix which allows the managers to position the product to the customers. Advertising is an essential and conventional 360-degree communication tool used for generating brand awareness (Krishnan & Sachdeva, 2011). If the advertisement strategy is designed to include a two-way stage for customers' participation, then it is supposed to be a customer centric strategy.

Once online marketing was considered a buzz but now the term seems to be a passé and social media marketing is the latest multimedia boon for the marketing industry. Today's generation uses various social media handles to interact on a worldwide platform. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. are few amongst the famous social media sites. People use them to put forward their voices, opinions, beliefs and talents across. And amidst such advancements, marketing industry cannot afford to lose the opportunity to use these social media handles to market their product on a trending scale.

YouTube has evolved as one such platform. It is being used as powerful medium by the marketing managers to advertise their products on a worldwide stage. One of the largest search engines after Google, YouTube provides loads of relevant videos without any cost and also one can upload their content to express themselves. This forms the base for effective guerrilla marketing. YouTube also helps in spreading content worldwide by its

sharing feature which allows one to share its content on different other social media platform. Hence, advertising through YouTube allows the consumers to *watch* the video and *like* it if it was attractive enough. It also allows to share their feedback or suggestions in form of *comments*. They can even go ahead to *share* them on other social media platform if they find it worth recommending to their friends or family.

Effectiveness of YouTube in context to the marketing industry has been less studied by the Indian researchers. Similarly, the growing sector of consumer electronics has remained untouched. The consumer electronics segment is a dynamic segment marked by constant innovation. Its presence on YouTube has grown with an accelerating speed in last few years. Therefore, the current paper is an attempt to fill this research gap. The paper throws light on the effectiveness of YouTube as a guerrilla strategy to know what attributes in a YouTube advertisement attracts the viewers to view and like it.

Thereby, the current paper evaluates the role of YouTube as a new age customer centric approach adopted by companies for guerrilla marketing. It throws light upon its growing popularity in the marketing arena. Consumers electronics segment has been chosen to study the same and to know the process how some of the big brands like are using it to advertise their products effectively. Thereby postulating the factors contributing to make YouTube, a major platform to promote ones' brand, keeping this segment into consideration.

YouTube and Guerrilla Marketing

Today, the new technology like social media has changed the structure of modern society and has altered the way people lived and worked (Krishan, 2015). The new technologies are capable of enhancing operations and hold the ability to be combined with different marketing-mix elements in various forms (Harris & Cohen, 2003). Marketing revolves around 4Ps: which are product, people, place and promotion and with the help of evolving social media technology, all the 4Ps can be leveraged to come up with great solutions. Solutions that may benefit not only the producers and the managers but also the consumers. Hence, both the ends of the market place, i.e., producers viz-a viz consumers shall be in a much satisfied situation. This will result in an overall development of marketing industry. Unlike the traditional communication mediums like television in which there is primarily one-way communication, now-a-day, people get an opportunity to interact with the information matching their needs and capabilities with a speed that they desire (Loosemore, 2010). Therefore, people are using social media more frequently resulting in creation of opportunity for managers to put forward their products grabbing consumers' attention. Worldwide Internet facilitates communication to more than 2.5 billion people through connecting over 9 billion network devices for entertainment, sharing their experiences, knowledge about important issues like education, geographical spread, encyclopedias, etc. (Alvi, et.al., 2015).

YouTube, since its launch in December 2005, has been a leader in providing a major platform to all those who wants to watch, upload or share videos globally through websites, blogs, mobile phones, etc. (YouTube, 2008). YouTube was sold to another giant which is Google for \$1.65 billion (Sorkin, 2006). Since then YouTube is a multi-billion-dollar business and has been generating huge advertising revenues for Google (Tan, 2009). Hundreds of thousands of videos are uploaded every day on this popular platform (YouTube, 2008).

With YouTube, the brand gets the opportunity to customize the message which it wants to convey to the customers. The customization needs as per the preferences of its viewers. This makes the consumption experience better and as a result, high-quality service options are delivered. (Rao & Minakakis, 2003). Hence, marketers have recognized it as a

useful advertising medium. To study the nature of YouTube advertisements, a content analysis has been done for the most popular advertisement videos of consumer electronics sector on YouTube. Characteristics like message sensational value (MSV) and various appeals are studied. A coding scheme was developed after going through different literature available on MSV and appeals. Prior to this a clear understanding of the terminologies was developed. The advertisements were seen many times to do proper coding of the message characteristics. MSV is a concept which suggests as to what are the various elements or features in a message that triggers the audiences or causes a sensation in them. According to Palm green et al. (1991), "MSV is the degree to which formal and content audio-visual features of a televised message elicit sensory, affective, and arousal responses". For the current analysis, the element used for studying MSV are put into 3 categories (viz. visual, audio and content) representing a total of 12 elements items. Number of cuts, visual effects, slow motion, bold or unusual colors and intense imagery is under visual category. Similarly, the audio category comprises of sound saturation, background music, loud/fast music and sound effects. The Content category bundles acted out, unexpected format and surprise ending.

Guerrilla marketing is one such technique which has been considered successful for small and new enterprises to build strong marketing campaign and it will be a great opportunity for it to include YouTube as one of its tools to promote the product. Guerrilla marketing is a novel and an innovative weapon for achieving goals that are conventional but with unconventional methods involving less of funds and more of creativity (Kaden, 2007). Conrad Jay Levinson is known as "Father of Guerrilla Marketing" as he is the one who created this concept in his book *Guerrilla Marketing* (1984). The guerrillas have a huge opportunity to deploy YouTube for attracting the audiences to watch the videos describing the product highlights. This is a pathway for building future customer base which would be as a result of watching the videos which are creative enough to attract them. This will help them in making further purchase decisions. Hence, YouTube can be viewed as an effective guerrilla marketing tool.

Objectives

The aim of this paper is to investigate the nature of YouTube, making it one of the popular communication and customer-centric marketing platform. It also postulates the dimensions of YouTube, so that it can come handy to the guerrillas. Besides, the study analyses the factors of successful YouTube advertisements that leads to their popularity amongst the consumers with the help of content analysis.

Methodology

For contributing to the existing knowledge of YouTube advertising, various research papers, reports, magazines, scholarly articles, etc. are studied rigorously. Alongside, a content analysis has been carried out for fifty YouTube advertisements of consumer electronics segment to analyse the involvement of certain characteristics which contribute to its viewership.

Dimensions of YouTube: Hub for Marketing Communication

YouTube, being a resourceful website has many dimensions to it. It has emerged as one of the most useful weapon for a company to make its presence felt amidst the fish market of

different brands. Considering its usefulness and usage patterns by the audiences, the following dimensions are proposed. Out of these, Entertainment, Informativeness and Customization are based on Dehghani et al. (2016). Figure 1 shows the dimensions of YouTube making it a hub for marketing communication.

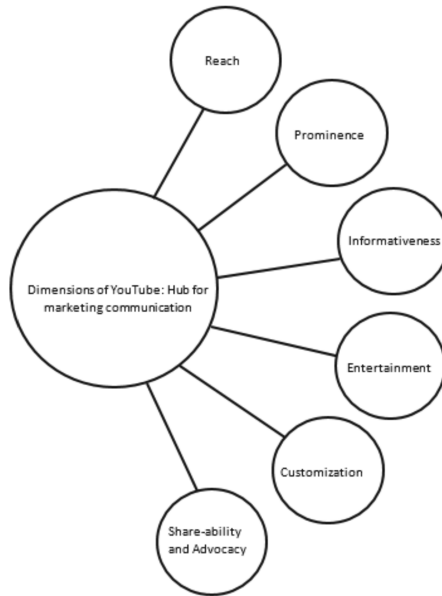


Figure 1. Dimensions of YouTube: Hub for marketing communication (Authors' compilation)

Reach: YouTube being freely available, has a great reach. Although there are videos which may charge some amount for its content but most of it is available free of cost. Not only from ones' desktop, YouTube is accessible from various other devices too like mobile phones, tablets, etc. Pixability (2013) has that 25 per cent of views, globally, comes from mobile devices. The availability on mobile phones make it more reachable. Moreover, having videos on numerous topics from different corners of world makes it available in many languages, hence adding to the increasing reach. With its huge reachability, advertising becomes more fruitful.

Informativeness: YouTube provides with abundance of information which is useful. Having known all the alternatives available in the market, it really becomes easy to make choices. YouTube not only presents alternatives but also provides necessary information regarding each to facilitate decision. According to Ducoffe (1995), "informativeness is consensus exists with regard to the ability of advertising to inform consumers of product alternatives". The two-way communication makes it more versatile. It becomes more helpful when one can actually interact and put forward their query regarding something. No longer is the time when advertisements were just representation of ideas. With such a website, creativity has no limits.

Entertainment: Eighmey and McCord (1998) studied audience experience associated with websites and the design efficiency in the development of the website which may attract repeat visits. According to this, the entertainment added with the information provided in the website is an important element to attract audiences' attention. This in turn increases the popularity of the website. YouTube does this task with perfection. It is the plethora of information presented in the most creative manner to make it a source of entertainment simultaneously.

Prominence: According to a report, YouTube is the second largest search engine after Google and therefore, it is much evident that people use YouTube frequently for seeking information or for entertainment purposes (Pixability, 2013). The same report has that 56 countries post content on YouTube in 61 languages which means it has made its presence felt across the world. The kind of prominence which the website has, creates opportunity for the brands to use it for their advertisement.

Customization: It is of utmost important that a marketer should be aware of the consumption pattern of its customers. The lifestyle and need of customers may vary from one segment to another and by tracking usage patterns; it becomes easy to provide them with personalized content and information. This eventually lessens the confusion, improves the consumption experience, and delivers premium quality service options (Rao & Minakakis, 2003). YouTube too offers customization according to the preferences of its viewers. Hence, marketers have recognized it as a useful advertising medium.

Share-ability and Advocacy: YouTube allows the viewers to not only gain information and interact but also to appreciate the videos by liking, sharing, commenting on and subscribing it. This feature helps any kind of promotional video to go viral amongst the consumer. Soon, in many cases, it becomes the talk of the town. Therefore, YouTube can be considered as an effective tool in a marketing strategy.

The above mentioned features of YouTube enable the guerrillas to utilize this platform to create content which will attract a large viewership at minimum cost involved and hence it can be opted as an important tool for Guerrilla Marketing.

Consumer Electronics and YouTube

Internet is a widely used platform all over the world and its functions are not limited only to communication of data, in fact it has grown manifolds since its inception to sharing video, audio, pictures, over all knowledge and other time-based information (Garrison, 2001). The social media platforms are designed in such a way that sharing has become easier than before and due to this the percentage of viral videos is higher (Chong, Jin & Prasad, 2014). As a result of such metamorphosis, YouTube came into the picture. YouTube is a free online video streaming site that allows one to upload, view and share videos by its users, thereby making it one of the most successful application for internet video sharing applications (Tan, 2009). Now it has become a boon to many industries. Advertising being one of them has substantially gained from its presence. It has been observed that nearly all of the top 100 global brands have built a strong presence for themselves on YouTube, making it a critical element of a digital marketer's strategy (Pixability, 2013).

Consumer electronics is a huge and developing industry which is undergoing huge changes every day and is characterized by rapid innovation (Pixability, 2014). According to the same report, the consumers are keeping their essential brand decisions away from brick-and-mortar stores and are using YouTube search for gaining the knowledge about a particular product. They use YouTube search for knowing the product reviews, watching product comparative videos and for other related informative content. However, it is not used for immediate transaction-related information such as discounts or deals. The consumer electronics vertical of YouTube is humongous, it is increasing its growth rapidly and the top brands of the industry revolve around it (Pixability, 2014). Figure 2 shows the monthly YouTube views of videos about consumer electronics by its category.

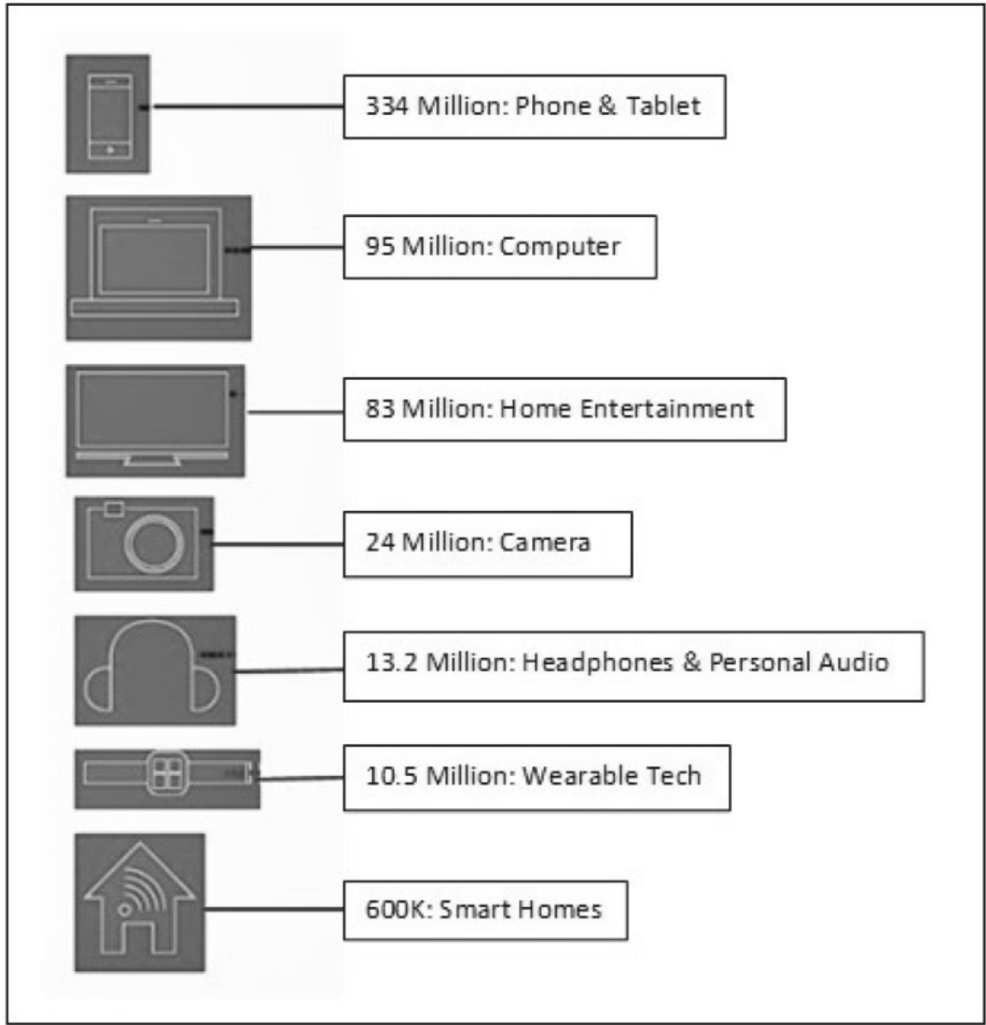


Figure 2. Monthly YouTube views of videos about consumer electronics
(Source: Pixability, 2014)

Consumer Electronics and YouTube which made an analytical study of the large world of consumer electronic brands and videos on YouTube by Pixability (2014), has provided the following facts in its report of the year 2014:

- There are 9,02,615 total consumer electronics videos on YouTube.
- There are 18.9 billion total CE views on YouTube, of which 23 per cent (4.5 billion views) are owned by the top 25 brands.
- Electronics brands are more successful at reaching a large audience on YouTube than brands in other industries.
- Consumer electronics content on YouTube has increased from 100 million views per month in 2008 to 483 million views per month in 2013.

- The industry's top 25 consumer electronic brands (selected according to 2012 annual revenue) now operate YouTube channels for a number as huge as 280 in a total of over 48 different countries.
- Videos about mobile devices (smartphones, tablets) are the most prevalent and receive over 334 million views per month.

Study of YouTube Advertisements

A content analysis of fifty YouTube advertisements of consumer electronics sector is done to analyze the involvement to certain characteristics which contribute to its viewership. These fifty advertisements were chosen from various lists of most viewed videos on YouTube available in the report *Consumer Electronics and YouTube* by Pixability is a marketing and advertising software company certified by YouTube that collaborates with e-commerce firms, agencies, brands and content providers to drive business and awareness with online video content and YouTube (Pixability, 2013). The different characteristics studied through the content analysis are:

Message Sensational Value or MSV: Suspenseful endings or intense music, unusual lighting and camera angles, zooms, or close-ups, multiple cuts and edits summed into three broad categories viz. Visual, Audio and Content category

Appeals: Youth, rational, social, statistics, humor, scarcity and celebrity appeal

Response: Through the number of views and likes of the viewers.

Based on the presence/absence of these characteristics in the advertisements, the study attempts to find out those attributes that contributes towards viewership and likes.

A coding scheme was developed after going through different literature available on MSV and Appeals and after understanding the meaning of the jargons clearly. All the fifty advertisements were watched several times in order to code the message characteristics under the study correctly.

Single coder completed the entire coding procedure. Use of a single coder for the content analysis has been supported by various authors. Like, according to Liebrecht (2016), "Depending on the complexity of the task and the materials, an analysis with only one coder can be acceptable as well". Moreover, according to the article Coding for Content Analysis (2016), "use the minimum number of people to do the coding. The consistency is greatest if one person does it all. Next best is to have two people, working in the same room".

Analysis and Managerial Implications

Content analysis of ads on YouTube from consumer electronic segment indicated on the patterns of usage of different message characteristics. It revealed as to which appeals are more prominently used to attract views and consequently result in likes. Therefore, relationship between the characteristics and the audience engagement is found.

Looking into the characteristics employed it can be seen that in visual category, 46 per cent of advertisements had high number of cuts and 40 per cent of them had moderate number of cuts. Usage of more cuts let many ideas to come together within a small ad.

Visual effects were present in 54 per cent of ads whereas none of these popular advertisements used intense imagery in them. Sixty per cent of the advertisements employ slow motion to put across the ideas. Slow motion helps the message to sink better in the minds of the viewers. In audio category, background music and sound effects were prominently found in many advertisements amounting to 94 per cent and 54 per cent respectively. Only 20 per cent of them had fast and loud music and 40 per cent had sound saturation in them. Content category had 80 per cent of the advertisements which were acted out which means it can be said that instead of just talking about the product it is better to act out the message. 34 per cent of them had a format different from the usual consumer product ad whereas none of them accounted for a surprise ending.

Amongst the appeals employed by the advertisements, rational appeal is most widely used appeal amongst them which is used in 74 per cent of the advertisements under the study. Therefore, it can be said that the viewers like to get more inclined towards messages which are more rational or are based on facts rather than just the tall claims. Next appeal which is famous amongst these advertisements is the celebrity appeal which is present in 46 per cent of the advertisements under the study. Social and youth appeal is also found present in 34 per cent of the advertisements. None of these used fear appeal to convey the message. Most of the videos were not too long as 46 per cent of these were of 30-59 second length.

The advertisements chosen for the study are amongst most viewed videos and by knowing about their nomenclature, one can get an idea of the elements which attract viewers towards the ad of a brand. Getting a huge number of views is a step towards the successful communication of benefits of a product. In marketing, communication holds a lot of importance. It is only after the right communication that a likeability for the product. So, it is essential to do it in the most effective manner. YouTube serves this purpose well. It gives a platform to put across multi-dimensional ideas to a wide reach.

The paper bridges the gap that exists in the field of YouTube advertising and therefore, has managerial implications in the real time. It indicates a managerial point of view, where the content analysis throws insight into the usage patterns of appeals and the MSV in advertisement of consumer electronics on YouTube which facilitates an understanding about the factors which catches audience attention towards an advertisement and creates engagement for them. Similarly, getting to know about the uses of its various dimensions will help current and future marketing and sales managers to frame their promotional mix.

Conclusion

The most recent development in the digital age is the era of social media where the social networking sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Myspace, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, etc. have increasingly become a platform for networking and sharing content amongst people from different walks of life (Asem, 2013). YouTube, which is a free video streaming website available online offers services that allows anyone to view and share videos uploaded by its users, making it an application which is one of the most successful internet video sharing platform (Tan, 2009). The website is no longer regarded as the text or written word, but it is used as a combination of all forms of media and can also function as the source of entertaining, informative media such as television or cinema by uploading the media

and sharing it via the internet video sharing application (Tan, 2009). With the kind of reach that YouTube has achieved, it would not be wrong to say that for marketers, it is nearly impossible to neglect the increasing popularity of YouTube or the quantifiable benefits and effectiveness that the brands can achieve by producing and sharing video content on YouTube (Pixability, 2013).

From the content analysis, we come to know that features like greater number of cuts, background music and slow motion attribute to more views. And appeals such as rational appeal and celebrity appeal amounts to huge customer attraction. Similarly, content which is acted out is more eye catching than the ones which are just spoken. Hence, knowing about the attributes that influence viewership has great real time implications as employing these attributes help in audience engagement.

The dimensions proposed in the paper reflecting the popularity of YouTube include *Reach*, *Prominence* and *Share-ability and Advocacy*. These dimensions help in making it a hub for marketing communication. Reach becomes an important issue as YouTube can be accessed from not only ones' desktop but also from other devices like mobile phones and tablets, its reach is huge and with the availability of diversity in videos from all over the world, it becomes a user-friendly website. Prominence is another crucial thing and YouTube has made its presence felt across the world. According to a report, it is the second largest search engine which means advertising with YouTube can be a profitable affair. Share-ability and Advocacy emerge as an in-thing because the videos on YouTube can be shared on different other platforms as well which helps in making a video viral. With its features of liking, sharing, commenting and subscribing, people can put forward their views; which makes this website a popular hub for communication of any form which means the marketers too have the scope to put forward their voice and ideas.

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