



Exploring Shopper Insights of Social Media Use in Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

Social media inspired millions of users from all over the world. This media has made the connection more familiar to ones that are more intelligent. This new medium of communication wins the trust of consumers by connecting with them at a deeper level. Global and local companies have recognized social media marketing as a potential marketing platform and have utilized with innovations to power their advertising campaign their marketing approach through social media. One cannot afford to not having any presence on the social network channel now a day when their counterparts are having waves of products and services in the market. Despite, the spread of social media and the broad adoption of these various communication tools, there is a lack of studies in Saudi region that conceptualized the goals of objectives of the study. A convenience sample survey has been collected from 226 respondents through using the online survey via Google forms and monkey survey during 3 months from October to December 2015. The closed-ended questionnaire was used, and particular care has been taken to reduce the non-response rate and the error arising out of it. After collecting the data, it was manually edited, coded and then recorded on excel sheet. For descriptive analysis statistics (frequency distribution), Chi-square goodness of fitness test at $P = 0.05$ was applied, and result findings were interpreted accordingly in the study.

Keywords: Social Media, User Perceptions, Marketing Communication, Consumer Attitude, Consumer Behavior, Shopper Insight, Saudi Arabia

JEL Classifications: M300, M310, M370

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media refers to the use of Internet technology, and mobile communication technology has changed in interactive dialogue and exchange. Social media includes magazines, microblogs, wikis, podcasts, pictures, photos, videos and assessments such as social bookmarking in various shapes (Barlett-Bragg, 2006). Besides, social networking has become a global phenomenon, as well as a variety of age, culture, attracting numerous people from around the world, such as the level of education. Social networking sites (SNSs), once a day at least, check the files (Joinson, 2008; Lenhart, 2009).

In recent years, Facebook, WhatsApp, and other SNS such as LinkedIn become the world more visited sites. Facebook is much higher than the menu, SNSs in reality facilitate the sharing of images, video with friends sharing multimedia elements in a range that are open to others and they were able to build their communication through the internet use (McLoughlin and Lee, 2007). In the field of marketing, now, especially in the social media consumption activities of digital interaction is growing interested

(Stewart and Pavlou, 2002). The ever-changing consumer behaviors are developing online quickly, both consumer and content consumption are involved and participate in discussions to promote the share of consumer activity with other customers in various activities such as knowledge and awareness, etc. This positive consumer behavior, as they infringed the company's marketing has changed the landscape of media and marketing as indicated by Berthon et al. (2008), Mejias (2005), Ajjan and Hartshorne (2008).

According to the Arab Social Media Report (2012), it is experimental that the growth of social media in the region change the environment of social media usage. All of which has been indicated that "usage of Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter in the movements of the so-called Arab Spring" (Arab Social Media Report). Also, The Arab Social Media Report sequence is part of a larger research initiative by the governance, and innovation program focuses on the promising of social networking applications for growing partnership, information allocation, and improvement, and among government entities, society, and the private sector. Furthermore, the Arab Social Media Report series,

social media habit trends have been explored and analyzed, stated that there is an exponential growth in the number of social media users in the province, and a noticeable move away from the distinctive public and amusement use of the social media.

In a recent study on the activities and user-generated content among the consumer and social media examine the motives of whether the user wants to use or practicing social means (e.g., Park et al., 2009; Baker and White, 2010; Shao, 2009). It has been anticipated that consumers are either active as posters or contributors or passive as lurkers or consumers of content (Schlosser, 2005; Shang et al., 2006; Shao, 2009). However, from the information gathered and reviewed it can be concluded that there is a need for research related to the user impact and insight on social media. Therefore, this study is focusing on the different levels of activities consumers engage in on social media and the motives that drive these social media activities in the region. This study contributes to research and practice in consumer marketing in general and in social media and online communities in particular by describing different user activities associated with user-generated media.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- I. To know the preferences in using social network types among the respondents
- II. To identify preferable social network sites among the respondents
- III. To find out topics to be involved on social media among the respondents
- IV. To investigate the preferred time to be involved on social network sites among those interviewed
- V. To reveal about the brands following on social media among the respondents
- VI. Identify the types of communication tools respondents interested in social media.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Classification of social media currently listed under the generalized term to the more specific categories like blogs, communities, content, SNSs, virtual worlds and virtual worlds and social games (Kaplan and Heinlein, 2010). Also, the platforms and social media including blogs, microblogging, e-mail and SNSs (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). This method is an important way to deliver marketing messages and create a dialogue with consumers. A variety of platforms, which are composed and exchange of information by individuals on the internet (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). In current years, one can notice a significant impact on the business on the internet. Moreover, SNSs provide an opening for companies to participate and intermingle with potential consumers, and to promote greater convergence with customers and establish significant associations with potential consumers feeling (Mersey et al., 2010; Frank, 2009). Social media offers many advantages for consumers and marketers. Also, social media allows for proper targeting of the primary users of the brand, which enabled the integrated marketing communications to be possible with the time with very much less effort than traditional media (Kim and Ko,

2012). The fast development in the practice of social interacting in all countries indicates that companies can use to develop the product or service of interest to consumers. Similarly, the sellers are using today various social media platforms to improve their image and branding companies (Mathur et al., 2012).

In one study, social media positively contributes to the performance of the brand, retail performance, loyalty and individual consumers (Adam et al., 2013). According to the Association of American marketing in 2014, the furthestmost common social network sites; Facebook has more than 1.15 billion users, and marketers are often dealing with consumers to provide great depth of information in a Facebook “fan” pages of a brand or a company (Weinberg and Pehlivan, 2011). Associated with traditional media, direct marketing/ social media marketing, can be vendors and media make strategic changes in front of these observations. Also, it revealed that sellers could practice social media tools to convey info about the products, brand image; consumers can review products and questions that may relate to the product (Obal et al., 2011). In organizational terms, social networks are extremely helpful in forming and maintaining relationships with consumers, and it should integrate into the marketing mix. The community is pretentious increasingly by the social media and social change in the control of media consumption; brand managers understand how to use social media effectively in dialogue with consumers. Moreover, social media is an essential element of the marketing mix, which affects the relationship between consumers and brands (Gensler et al., 2013). Social networks play progressively significant sources of information for explorers. Analysis of results showed that the social media is a big part of the search results, pointing out that the search engines are likely directly to social media sites. This study confirms the growing importance of social media in the field of tourism on the Internet. It also provides evidence of the challenges that the traditional travel-related information faced by providers. Besides, discusses the implications for marketers of travel regarding online marketing strategies (Ulrike and Xiang, 2010). Socialization has become a natural to consumers through communication through social media and the use of social media in marketing growing popularity of these days. Consumer socialize through online with peers networking, it also affects the purchasing decisions in two ways: Straight (by peers) and indirectly by enhancing the participation of the product. Also, the consumer need for the uniqueness of his moderating influence on product selection attitudes communication between peer effects (Xia et al., 2012). De Vries et al. (2012), in his research showed that social media platforms allow consumers to hit the mark and other online consumers through brand communities, and to increase the exchange of information. It is essential that the brand remain transparent in its communication to build trust with consumers and brand loyalty.

These days, customers are the tangle in a diversity of deeds ranging from content consumption to participate in discussions, exchange knowledge with other consumers, and add activities of other users. Considerable interest in SNSs like YouTube, Facebook, Wikipedia, and users contribute actively in content marketing (Kristina, 2011). A SNS provides a platform for social networking on the Internet to build social or social relations among people (for example, interest or activity that has appeared). The rapid growth of online shopping, some retailers that sell goods and services online and

it became the primary channel to expand the market locally and internationally (Alam and Elaasi, 2016).

Besides, the study suggests that the last electronic word-of-mouth products that focus on the health insurance system are a unique phenomenon with important social implications (Shu-Chuan and Yoojung, 2011). This media can bring social benefits of the “identification of customers and the commitment” to drive business performance. On the other hand, the management of social relationships with clients can provide insight, which will help to pay for real innovation and customer-centric. Finally, the knowledge gained in customer behavior and attitudes help on the benefits of unity across the value chain. Affecting providers (such as demand forecasting) and brokers (for example, the formation of promotions in the shop (Woodcock et al., 2011). In addition to ads on social networks, significantly affect consumer behavior, ad clicks act turn positively affect their shopping online (Mir, 2012).

Social networks have developed a profound change in the communications background (Edwards, 2011), and most prominently, the mindset of consumers have changed (Mir and Zaheer, 2012). Communication through social media has a radical influence on the condition of human behavior (Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011; Marzouki et al., 2012). Due to the severe impact of this media it has become hotbeds of marketing and communications in the upper part of the decision-makers in the field of today business agenda. That permits companies to interact directly with their customers promptly and at a lower cost (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). The role of the media as a common platform for people all over the world interact with each other information and experiences, exchange and related products, events and issues (Edwards, 2011; Heinrichs et al., 2011). It differs from traditional media as created by users who have greater control over the use and content generation (Dickey and Lewis, 2011). Experimental evidence has supported in the context of online advertising and social networks on the internet. A result found that the marketers should focus on maintaining a social presence through social channels with new and frequent content to attract the participation of consumers; the study highlights the importance of frequent changes and incentives for participants (Christy and Tracy, 2014).

Since 2011, more than half of consumers follow brands on Facebook (De Vries et al., 2012). Brand communities on the way to satisfy consumers’ desire to create a sense of acceptance and social identity through brands with they interact (Fournier and Avery, 2011). Brand loyalty leads to a firm intention to buy, and lovers of the brand facilitate consumers’ brand relationship (Gensler et al., 2013). Similarly, he found that Twitter and Facebook were the ideal channels for brands information with customers. They suggest that companies should provide compelling content relevant and exciting to users and respond to the content presented to consumers. It was also found that consumers feel more committed to organizations when they can send comments, and provide a means for these observations (Mangold and Faulds, 2009).

Now, customers are engaged in a variety of activities ranging from content consumption to participate in discussions and exchange knowledge with other consumers and contribute to the activities

of other users. A keen interest in SNSs like YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, and Wikipedia, it is assumed that consumers were actively marketing content (Kristina, 2011). Moreover, with the increasing prevalence of integrated marketing communications and the use of social networks as the primary channel of communication, research revealed that media and messaging software has a significant influence and participation of consumers (De Vries et al., 2012). Social networks increase consumer involvement with the brand of open source and collaboration with the brand and other consumers to create and share content described. Additionally, consumers can find the social media house and build relationships with the brand and looks like the people who also love that name (Fournier and Avery, 2011).

Through the studies, we found that customer satisfaction and customer insight are the important factors to achieve business objectives. Marketers, in recent time, are trying to develop a new and efficient strategy to meet the needs of the consumers through the use of technology. Although, much research has been undertaken to determine the success and strength of consumers’ perception and its evolving factors to measure the customer insight these days. Despite the implementation of many of research inside the region, as well as around the world towards the consumer use perception of social media there is still a call for to identify and measure the attitudes of the consumers and its success factors to achieve the goals of business because of consumer behavior for the area always changeable. In fact, there is always a need for research on attitudes’ analysis of users, their preferences and using habits of SNSs in the literature, as it does not cover in depth. Therefore, the current study is an attempt in this direction. Furthermore, this paper focuses on customer insight and their using pattern to the social media and its related issues.

4. HYPOTHESIS

The following hypothesis null (H_0) had been assumed for the analysis.

- I. There is no significant difference in preferences using social network types among the respondents
- II. There is no significant difference in most preferred social network types among the respondents
- III. There is no significant difference in the topics to be involved on social media among the respondents
- IV. There is no significance difference in opinion in the timing of involvement in social media among the respondents
- V. There is no significance difference in opinion about the brands following on social media among the respondents.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose at the back of this research was to know the interviewees’ thoughts, preferences, perception, and insight of Saudi customers’ towards SNSs. A convenience sample survey has been gathered from 226 respondents through using the online survey via Google forms and monkey survey during 3 months from October to December 2015. To ensure that the perceptions of social media are based on a diverse population of users, this

study employed a national consumer panel with online access for its web-based survey. As internet connection is a necessary condition for the use of social media, an online survey is an appropriate data collection method. With the popularity of the internet, online surveys have been adopted to collect data in social sciences for years (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006). The close-ended questions were used, and distinctive care has been taken to reduce the non-response rate and the error arising out of it. After collecting the data, it was manually edited, coded and then recorded on excel sheet. For descriptive analysis statistics (frequency distribution), Chi-square goodness of fitness test at 95% of a certain level ($P = 0.05$) was applied, and result findings were drawn accordingly.

6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' classification on the basis demographic factors such as gender, age, city, educational level, job status and their monthly income can be seen in Table 1. The majority of respondents of the study belongs to male 151 (67%) and female 75 (33%). Most of the respondents reported they belong to in the range of 20-39 (75%) age group and the rest of them were followed by <29 (12%), 40-49 (7%) and above 40 (6%) of the sample of the study. Moreover, from the table it can also be seen that most of the participants belong to the different 22 cities of KSA (51%), capital city Riyadh (26%) and the rest were from Jeddah industrial city that is 23% of the sample surveyed. Each of the city, compared with other cities in the region, have a good representation on the business side.

Educational level of respondents was most of them graduate 31% followed by undergraduate 27%, the high school passed 21%, above graduate 16% and very few had below high school qualification that was only 5%. Regarding the job status of the interviewees it can also be seen in the table that majority 40% were student followed by private/self-employed 23%, the government employed 20%, and the rest were unemployed 17% of the respondents. Furthermore, the table shows that the income levels of the participants; more than 60% of the participants belongs to the monthly family income range of <14,000/- SR group. Less than 40% of the respondents belong to the monthly SAR 14,000 or more of their monthly family income. This result indicates that the majority of the population belongs to the middle-income class of the society.

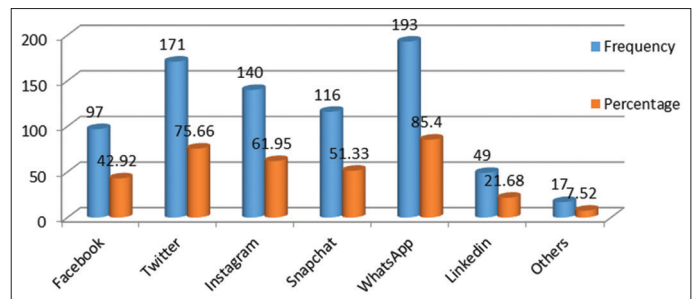
Figure 1 provides the information regarding the preferences in using social media types. It reveals that majority of respondents preferring to use WhatsApp (85%) as social media for communication followed by Twitter (75%), Instagram (61.95%), snapshot (51%), Facebook (42%), LinkedIn (21%) and others (7.52%). Among the respondents, it is resolved that WhatsApp are easy to use and there are not any interferences in our private life.

It was believed in H_1 that there is no significant difference in preferences in using social media types among the respondents, the Chi-square goodness of fit calculated value is 42.798. The $P < 0.001$ at 95% confident level (Table 2). Therefore, the

Table 1: Demographic status of respondents

Demographic factors	Variables	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	151 (67)
	Female	75 (33)
	Total	226 (100)
Age (Years)	<19	27 (12)
	20-29	118 (52)
	30-39	51 (23)
	40-49	16 (7)
	50 above	14 (6)
	Total	226 (100)
City	Jeddah	51 (23)
	Riyadh	59 (26)
	Others	116 (51)
	Total	226 (100)
Educational level	Below high school	11 (5)
	High school	48 (21)
	Undergraduate	61 (27)
	Graduate	70 (31)
	Above graduate	36 (16)
	Total	226 (100)
Job status	Student	91 (40)
	Government employed	46 (20)
	Private/self employed	51 (23)
	Unemployed	38 (17)
	Total	226 (100)
Family income (monthly in SR)	<5000	30 (13.24)
	6000-8000	49 (21.68)
	9000-11,000	53 (23.46)
	12,000-14,000	40 (17.70)
	15,000-17,000	27 (11.96)
	18,000-20,000	15 (6.64)
	>20,000	12 (5.32)
	Total	226 (100)

Figure 1: Preferences in using social media types



result is significant at $p \leq 0.05$, and it can be inferred that there is a great difference in preferences in the use of SNSs among the respondents, so the null hypothesis is rejected.

From the Figure 2 it can be seen that the majority of the persons (47.79%) do agree on that WhatsApp is the most preferred among the given media site followed by Twitter (17.7%), Facebook (14%), Snapshot (7.52%) and LinkedIn (5.75%) respectively. This result also proves the previous result that WhatsApp was the highest excellent media site among the respondents of Saudi Arabia. H_2 was assumed that there is no significant difference in most preferred social network types among the respondents, the Chi-square goodness of fit calculated value is 141.095 (Table 3). The $P < 0.001$ at 95% confident level. The $P < 0.001$. The result is significant at $P \leq 0.05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 2: Preferences in using social media types

Social media	Observed	Expected	Difference	Difference square	Difference square/exponential fraction
Facebook	97	143.4	-46.40	2152.96	15.01
Twitter	171	143.4	27.60	761.76	5.31
Instagram	140	143.4	-3.40	11.56	0.08
Snapchat	116	143.4	-27.40	750.76	5.24
WhatsApp	193	143.4	49.60	2460.16	17.16

The Chi-square value=42.798

Table 3: Most preferable social media sites

Social media	Observed	Expected	Difference	Difference square	Difference square/exponential fraction
Facebook	32	42	-10.00	100.00	2.38
Twitter	40	42	-2.00	4.00	0.10
Instagram	17	42	-25.00	625.00	14.88
Snapchat	108	42	66.00	4356.00	14.88
WhatsApp	13	42	-29.00	841.00	20.02

The Chi-square value=141.095

After the test result, it can be stated that there is a significant difference in most preferred SNSs among the respondents.

Figure 3 provides the information regarding the preference of topic on which respondents like to be involved on social media. It was revealed the majority of the respondents like the social media for the news updates (149) followed by educational purpose (130), health-related information (113), foods and beverages (77), arts and cultural (56) and music (47) respectively. From the result, it can be concluded that news provider having a great age and impact on social media as well as the educational institute and others can utilize social network sites for the promotion of their organization that is cheaper than another alternative medium of the communicant. For H_{33} , there is no significance difference in opinion in the timing of involvement in social media among the respondents, calculated value of the Chi-square goodness of fit test is 55.333, and the $P < 0.001$ (Table 4). Therefore, the result is significant at $P \leq 0.05$, and hence null hypothesis is rejected, and alternative hypothesis will be accepted.

When respondents were asked regarding the specific timing to be involved on social media. The majority of them agreed afternoon (28.35%) are the preferable for them, evening time (25.37%), not specified or fixed (27%), before sleeping (13.5%) (Figure 4). Moreover, an insignificant percent of respondents stated that they prefer morning (4.78%) that is very insignificant among the other timing slot of using social media. This result is evident that Saudi Arabia is having the rest time afternoon for hours and then company reopen again and close until less or more midnight time. Therefore, it can be proposed that the marketer promotes their product or services afternoon timing to the midnight time and that will have more chances to reach the consumer properly. H_{43} calculated value of the Chi-square goodness of fit test is 47.850, and the $P < 0.001$ (Table 5). Therefore, the result is significant at $P \leq 0.05$. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis; there is the impact of inconsistency in the scheduling of involvement in social media among the respondents will be accepted.

Also, brand following on social media majority (63.7%) acknowledged that they do follow the brand on social media networking sites and 36% respondents agreed on that they do

Figure 2: Most preferable social media sites

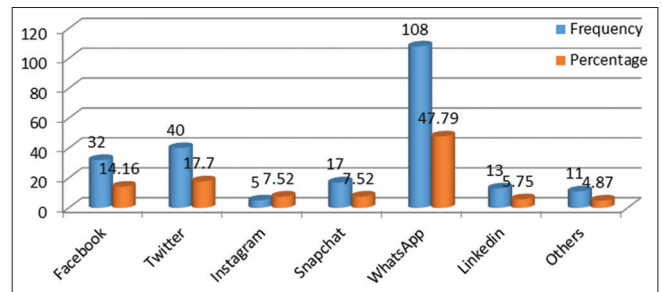


Figure 3: The topic on which respondents like to be involved in social media

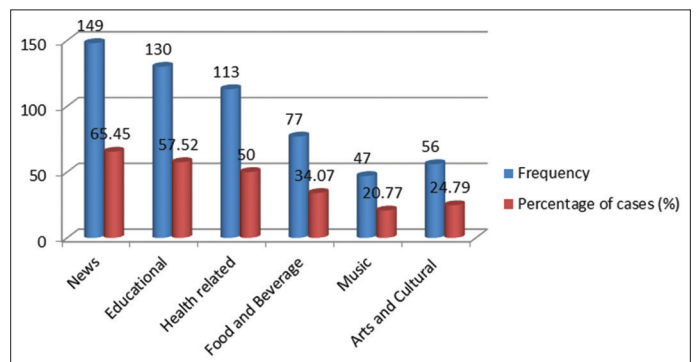
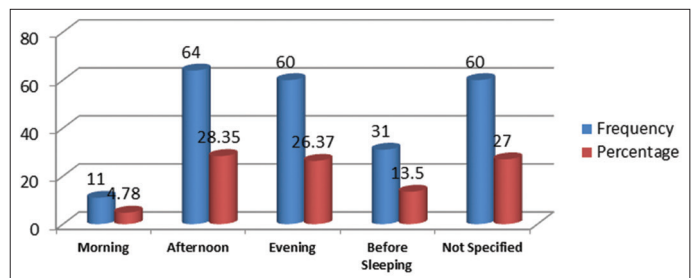


Figure 4: Preferred time to be involved in social media



not follow any brand in the networking sites (Figure 5). From the result, it can recommend that company owner can approach to the customer through the SNSs that can give the lead among the competitors to them who prefer to use this medium along with the

Table 4: Topics on which respondents like to be involved in social media

Topics	Observed	Expected	Difference	Difference square	Difference square/exponential fraction
News	149	105	44.00	1936.00	18.44
Educational	130	105	25.00	625.00	5.95
Food and beverages	113	105	8.00	64.00	0.61
Music	77	105	-28.00	784.00	7.47
Arts and culture	56	105	-49.00	2401.00	22.87

The Chi-square value=55.333

Table 5: Preferred time to be involved in social media

Preferred time	Observed	Expected	Difference	Difference square	Difference square/exponential fraction
Morning	11	45.2	-34.20	1169.64	25.88
Afternoon	64	45.2	18.80	353.44	7.82
Evening	60	45.2	14.80	219.04	4.85
Before sleep	31	45.2	-14.20	201.64	4.46
Not specified	60	45.2	14.80	219.04	4.85

The Chi-square value=47.850

Figure 5: Brand follow preferences on social media among the respondents

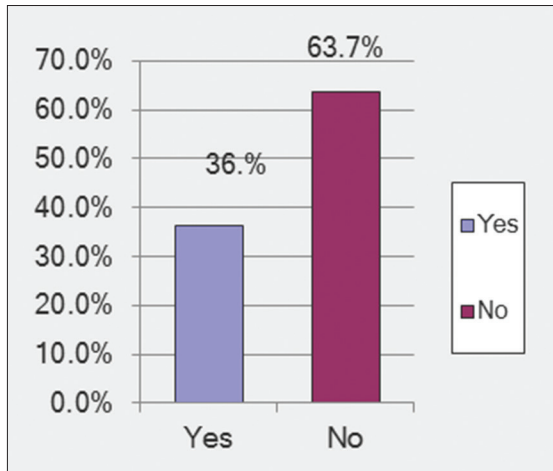
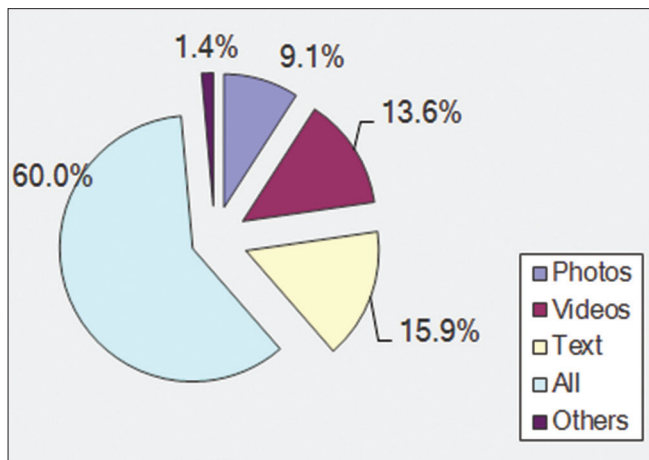


Figure 6: The types of communication tools respondents interested in social media



other promotional tools as the majority are involved in following the brands on networking sites. The Chi-square goodness of fit test is 18.124 for H_5 . The $P < 0.001$. Consequently, the result is significant at $P \leq 0.05$, and this hypothesis is discarded, and null hypothesis may accept (Table 6). On the other hand, while

respondents were asked what the types of communication tools they interested in social media are. The answer was in this order; all media were the most important medium followed by, text, videos, and others respectively 60%, 15.9%, 13.6, 9.1% and 1.45. Therefore, from the result it is suggested that marketers must utilize all types of medium of communication to approach consumers especially text messages, videos and photo will be the highly acceptable among the medium of communication (Figure 6).

7. CONCLUSION

A rigorous analysis of the data mentioned above brings the knowledge of the reality that social media has indeed done a commendable job of bridging the communication gap among people. The different social media tools help the people to interact with one another within the shortest possible time. WhatsApp networking sites are the top excellent networking site followed by Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. These media having a high image in the consumer mind and utilizing of these three locations by the marketer will give them a strong image in the market. As per the result the networking company having different pictures in the minds of the consumer so the marketer should provide careful analysis when selecting any networking sites for the campaign. Moreover, it can be concluded that information related to news, educational, health, foods and beverages, is the most preferable to see through the social media. It is advised to the company like news provider, education institute owner, health care institute and foods and related services provider can take advantage of these very acceptable channels of communication to promote their product and services in the region. The excellent time to approach customer are afternoon, evening and before sleeping time means it is better to the marketer that they should give and send their message and any commercial of the company starting from afternoon up to sleeping hours. Choosing the proper time for business communication will reduce the chance of cluttering for their ads and messages. Besides, it is suggested that marketer can utilize to be in consumer mind from side to side putting their brand advertisement in the dominated network

Table 6: Brand follow preferences on social media among the respondents

Items	Observed	Expected	Difference	Difference square
Yes	81	113	-32.00	1024.00
No	145	113	32.00	1024.00

The Chi-square value=18.124

sites as mentioned above will lead to achieving their marketing goals as well as organizational goals. Moreover, respondents answered regarding communication tools types; all media is the most important medium have been selected, followed by, text, videos, and others respectively, therefore, it is suggested that marketers must utilize all types of communication encoding mediums like text messaging, video, photo, etc. Marketers are recommended to integrate these all the types of encoding platform to be successful a leader among their counterparts’.

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