

Facebook Promotion And Customer Engagement In Digital Photography Industry In Sri Lanka

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Abstract: Traditionally, Small and Medium Enterprises focused only on strategies for their business operations and profit such as differentiation, diversification, high turnover, concentration and globalization. Today's competitive market environment has created online business and online promotions if firms cannot adopt and move to this they cannot survive in the market in the long run. Therefore, it can be used in almost every business in Sri Lanka especially in the digital photography industry. The main objective of the study was to study the impact of Facebook promotion on increasing customers and sales. Common social networking strategies, use of Facebook to engage customers and challenges of using Facebook are the other objectives. For this ten digital photography industry in western province were carefully studied as single case. This study mainly depends on both primary and secondary data. Data collected from, Facebook pages, semi-structured, open-ended questionnaires. Also the data gathered from participants' social media profiles enabled the researcher to get a basic idea and to check the accuracy of the responses. Results obtained from the data collection stage are analyzed with the use of SPSS 21 and interpreted. This study has found a number of related facts on use of Facebook to engage the customers.

Keywords: customer engagement, Facebook, promotion, photography.

1. Background of the study

There are a large number of fields where SMEs are engaging in their business activities. The digital photography sector is one of them, which is an emerging sector in all around the world. A new report issued by the BBC research states that the digital photography industry has an annual growth rate of 3.8% and it will reach an estimated value of US\$ 82.5 billion in the global market (Zhang, 2012). According to Transparency Market Research, increasing usage of photography as a hobby and making continuous improvements of photo sharing in networking sites are identified as some of the factors leading to the growth in the sector. The visual content to be posted in a place where most of the targeted customer interactions occur. It is like finding a particular kind of species in a large forest. But at the end of the day everyone will come to a place to interact with each other and to fulfill their requirements. As the animals go to a lake in the evening to fulfill their thirst, people visit their Facebook profiles to meet their friends and satisfy their needs. Therefore, Facebook enters into the picture as one the most suitable places to engage with customers. According to the Statistics Portal, Facebook is in the lead of the SNS with 1,590 million users. There are 5,689,800 internet users as at December 31, 2014 and 3,400,000 Facebook subscribers on November 15, 2015 in Sri Lanka (Internet world stats, 2016). Facebook has become the most popular way of engaging with customers due to the less cost, wide coverage and fast communication. SME owners are also highly attracted to Facebook as a way of customer engagement due to the ease of adoption and usage. Therefore, Facebook has become the largest virtual place where the majority of the Sri Lankans spends their time. Customer engagement should be done in an effective manner in order to achieve its desired objectives. According to Maziol (2016), customer engagement goes along with the cross channel marketing. The engagement occurs at variety of touch points where the customer's need, mindset and stages of the decision making process is different. Therefore, the engaging strategy should be different and correctly timed.

2. Problem of the study

Based on the significance of SMEs to Sri Lankan economy, it is necessary to identify ways and means which can be used to develop their businesses and make a success. Every business owner is competing with each other to attract and retain customers. Facebook is the center of attraction for most SME owners. It is becoming a fashion to start a Facebook fan page by most of the digital photographers once they commence their business. But the question arises that, do they really obtain at least a considerable return? To their effort. Are they successful in customer engagement? Even though Facebook seems to be a cost free customer engagement tool, it is not completely free. There are costs to be incurred when using special features which will direct a post to a specific audience and to promote the posts so as to show them at the top of their target audiences' news feed. On the contrary, SME owners have to spend their valuable time to engage in Facebook activities. Therefore, the time and money invested in Facebook activities will be in vain if the adoption and usage of Facebook are not done in accordance with selected strategies. Concern about well-established customer engagement strategies will enable them to get a higher output for their effort. The study's overarching research problem is **"how could digital photography industry In Sri Lanka improve their customer engagement via Facebook?"**

3. Objective of the study

The following objectives can be developed in this research.

1. To examine the customer engagement strategies used in digital photography industry.
2. To investigate the adoption and usage of Facebook in digital photography industry for customer engagement.
3. To identify the barriers faced by digital photography industry in adopting social networking strategies for customer engagement.

4. Research questions

The research questions derived through the above research problem include the following:

1. What are the common social networking strategies adopted by digital photography for customer engagement?
2. How does digital photography industry adopt and use Facebook for customer engagement?
3. What are the barriers faced by digital photography industry in adopting social networking strategies for customer engagement?

5. Literature review

SMEs are extremely important to Sri Lankan economy. According to Jayasekara and Thilakarathna (2013) SMEs' contribution to the total Gross Domestic Product of Sri Lanka has increased in 12% from 2010 to 2011. SMEs are entitled to 80% to 90% of the total number of enterprises and 35% of the total work force in Sri Lanka (SME Finance forum, 2014). Weerakkody (2013) identifies SMEs as the backbone of the economy due to its significant role in generating employment, enhancing quality of human resources, enhancing entrepreneurial culture, supporting large scale industries and creating new business opportunities. There is a direct impact of digital media towards the digital photography. Digital media have made the digital photography upside down with the use of SNS, photo sharing sites and blogging sites which resulted in creating a large business in the digital photography market (Transparency Market Research). This research also describes the internet as a necessary evil which affects the daily lives of consumers. Internet is called evil due to its negative impacts, such as less physical interaction with people. With the development of digital media people tend to spend more time in SNS such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc. "Visual content—both images and videos—get the highest organic reach on Facebook and is set to be even bigger in 2016" (Smith, 2016, p. 1). Further, Smith (2016) mentions that eight billion video views and two billion photos are shared per day via SNS. According to Mazereeuw (2015), people will remember only 10% of what they hear and 65% of what they see at the end of three days' time period. Many SME owners fail to balance customer effort and customer engagement (Browne, 2016). In order to attract customers their journey should be quick and easy. Emotions are directly linked with customer engagement. Therefore, customers are needed to be given a memorable experience. This can be achieved by improving affordance which will reduce the effort of the customers. Simplicity is one way to increase affordance. Facebook has become the most visited Social Networking Site (SNS) in Sri Lanka with 91.57% of usage on April, 2017 (Stat counter Global Stats, 2017). Therefore, the concern of Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) owners towards Facebook came to the fore as a way of engaging the customer. This study compares customer engagement strategies adopted by ten SMEs in the digital photography industry in Sri Lanka.

6. Methodology

6.1 Conceptual Framework:



Source: Modified frame work of Prof. Sandeep Bhanot SIES College of Management Studies

6.2 Sampling Techniques

Sample selection is conceptually driven and done according to the purposeful sampling criteria. Where all ten companies fall under the SME sector in Sri Lanka, according to the definition given by the ministry of Industry and Commerce in Sri Lanka. Ten digital photography industry operating in the Western Province were selected among 29.

6.3 Data Collection

This study mainly depends on both primary and secondary data. Data collected from, Facebook pages, semi-structured, open-ended questionnaires. Secondary data collected from already published sources.

6.4 Data Analysis and Findings

This study used both primary and secondary data. The data collected from the online survey questionnaire as well as Facebook pages.

6.4.1 Summary of the usage of all Social Networks

Table 01:

Name	fotocreation	studio	studio video	studio iroshan pvt	studio ocean	asipiya studio	studio N style	Shazra Ibrahim	Ray creation	Ranjan studio
Website	Currently uses and Active	Currently uses and Active	Currently uses	Currently uses	Currently uses	Currently uses	Currently uses	Currently uses	Currently uses	Currently uses
Facebook	Yes, Active	Yes, Active	Yes, Active	Yes, Active	Yes, Active	Yes, Active	Yes, Active	Yes, Active	Yes, Active	Yes, Active
Twitter	Yes, Active	Yes, Active	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Instagram	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes active	No	No
YouTube	Yes, active	Yes, active	Yes, active	Yes, active	Yes, active	Yes, active	Yes, active	Yes, active	Yes, active	Yes, active
Viber	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
WhatsApp	Yes, active	Yes, active	Yes, active	Yes, active	Yes, active	Yes, active	Yes, active	Yes	Yes, active	Yes, active

Sources: Survey Data

According to this chart all the studios use different social media but they actively use a very few, those are the Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp. The researcher identified that reason for this was that if they maintain a web page, a professional web developer will be needed and it'll be costlier. But even the owner can upload a picture on FB in a short period of time. Specialized or qualified personnel is not needed to access or handle FB. Also more contacts are arising through FB though they end up with WhatsApp conversations. Even though they use YouTube actively, a YouTube viewer has high expenses for the data quota they use while browsing and also people rarely subscribe YouTube Videos. Therefore,

the way for studios like SME's to go to the public is rare unless in a Wedding Videos or pre shoots which becomes popular with high ratings where the studio which created it is highlighted and skilled.

6.4.2 Established year and the year of FB page created

The graph shows that when photographers have set up their businesses and started using Facebook to promote their business. This chart shows that many businesses are using Facebook to attract customers for their advertising and they overpower their competitors. According to the information, the researcher has found that they have increased their business activities and made profits after they started using Facebook. According to the graph, many businesses created their Facebook page only after a few years after their studio begin. The well-known Iroshan Pvt Ltd has just created its Facebook page and the campaign on the same year. The Ranjan studio was established in 1990s but even after 20 years later they have started using Facebook for their business, which gives a much more exemplary role for a small business which uses Facebook for their promotion activities

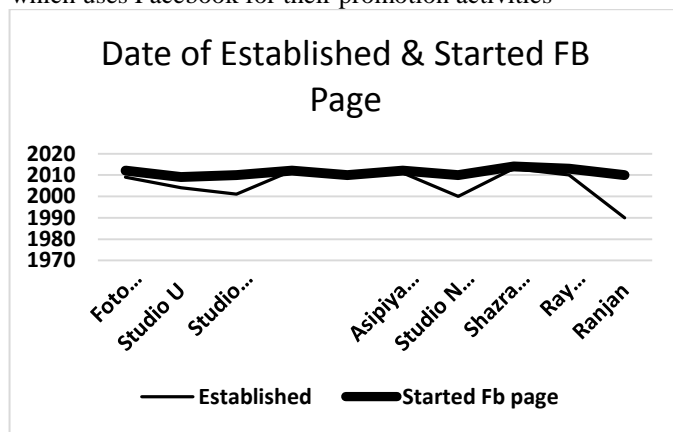


Figure 02:

6.4.3 How often on average do you check your Facebook?

Table 02:

Name of the studio	How often on average do you check your Facebook					
	Every few minutes	Every hour	Several times a day	Every day	Every few days	Once a week
Studio Ranjan	0	0	0	0	0	1
Studio U	1	0	0	0	0	0
Video7 studio	0	0	1	0	0	0
Ray creation studio	0	0	0	0	1	0
Studio N style	0	0	0	1	0	0
Foto creation	1	0	0	0	0	0
Ocean studio	0	0	1	0	0	0
Shazra ibrahim photography	0	0	1	0	0	0
Studio Iroshan (pvt) Ltd	1	0	0	0	0	0
Asipiya Studio	0	1	0	0	0	0
Total	3	1	1	1	1	1

Sources: survey data

According to this table, Ranjan Studio visits the Facebook page once a week. Studio U, Foto Creation, inspects their page every few minutes. By being up to date with their page and performance, they can get a better understanding about their customers' views, allegations, and their interests.

6.4.4 Likes and Followers

This graph and chart shows that those who likes the business and those who follow the Facebook page. Studio U and the Foto creation has 129,250 and 133,157 followers respectively. Further this diagram indicates that Ranjan and Ray creation have gained 745 and 4302 followers respectively. When assessing the questionnaires, the reasons for the rise of followers, among the Facebook pages of Studio U and Foto Creations were found to be,

1. Browsing through their Facebook page more frequently
2. Frequent latest updates in the Facebook page
3. High response rate for the consumers

Table 03: Likes and Followers

Studio Name	Foto Creation	Studio U	Studio Video 7	Studio Iroshan pvt	Studio Ocean	Asipiya Studio	Studio N Style	Shazra Ibrahim	Ray Creation	Ranjan Studio
No. of likes	129,384	113,324	25,455	7,420	6,804	5,842	5,644	5,585	4,309	748
No. of followers	129,250	133,157	25,489	7,420	6,809	5,845	5,649	5,614	4,332	745

Source: social media outlook-2018/08/04

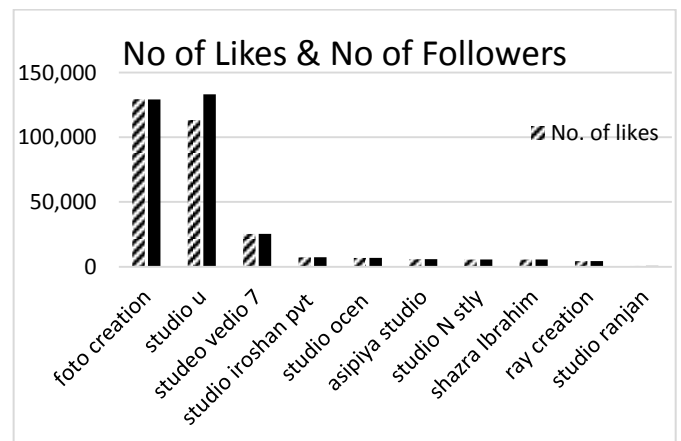


Figure 02:

6.4.5 Reviews of Facebook Pages

A Page's star rating is the average of all public star ratings that the page has received. Only Pages that allow reviews will show a star rating. Keep in mind that when someone posts a rating, they can select an audience to share it with. Star ratings encourage more people to rate a business, making it eligible to appear in the news feed. This helps readers discover new businesses, while businesses create greater brand awareness.

Table 04: Reviews of face book pages

Studio Name	Foto Creation	Studio U	Studio Video 7	Studio Iroshan pvt	Studio Oceana	Asipiya Studio	Studio N Style	Shazra Ibrahim	Ray Creation	Ranjana Studio
No. of Reviews	74	204	25	721	18	75	20	13	21	-
5 Stars	70	185	12	604	14	68	20	5	17	-
4 stars	3	9	5	55	1	1	0	2	1	-
3 stars	1	4	3	26	2	3	0	3	1	-
2 stars	0	3	1	7	1	1	0	3	-	-
1 stars	0	3	4	29	0	3	0	1	2	-

Source: Facebook outlook

6.4.6 Challenges of adopting social networking strategies

As people receive free booklets with newspapers, challenges also come with the Facebook adoption. If you are adopting Facebook he should take the whole package which includes pros, cons and challenges, etc. According to the responses received by the researcher the challenges were identified into four sub themes;

- lack of knowledge of social media,
- lack of usage of tools,
- techniques and methods,
- Privacy issues and winning the competitions.

7. Conclusion and recommendations

This study began with the fundamental question of how SME owners improve their customer engagement via social networking sites. The Results of this study revealed that SMEs use different strategies to improve their customer engagement via Facebook. Contribution to the theory was made by three examples of the intersection between SMEs and Facebook strategy. From the beginning the participants knew the importance of the Facebook and try to use it in a better manner. But the lack of strategy restricts them from gaining the maximum out of Facebook use. This study illustrates few people making decisions with their experience gained from personal Facebook profile and from other professional institutions to improve their customer engagement via Facebook page. Majority of SME's are using FB for their promotion campaigns. Because FB is much cost effective and able to be handled easily. Furthermore, the researcher recommends that other photographers will be able to use their FB to reduce their expenses and gain more users. And also can be recommending to the other SME owners that they can get more profits and more customer engagement through using FB.

8. Limitations of the study

- There are a large number of industries in Sri Lanka, this study is limited to digital photography industry, which is becoming an industry with greater focus all around the world.

- There are many SNS used in customer engagement, but this only focuses on Facebook which is in the lead of the SNS.
- Due to the selection of case study method limiting to only ten cases may result in less generalizable finding.

9. Future Directions

Future researchers may perform similar studies in a different industry by using both female and male SME owners. Future researchers may also consider the usage of cross posting and cross-promoting in social media. Another research area can be identified as business use of social media through live streaming.

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