

Ford Cars: The Impact of Social Media Marketing to Customers

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ABSTRACT

Social Media Marketing is the insight of technological advancements that makes it convenient for people to communicate globally with the use of social mediums. Incorporating social media marketing in businesses today are no longer optional, indeed, it is a necessity. Ford, a multi-national brand for automobiles, has been using social media to reach a wider audience to promote and prove that their company is constantly producing high-quality vehicles as the demand for cars is continuously growing. One of the tactics they use to advertise their products is through the social media as it boosts brand awareness. This study applied quantitative descriptive research that aims to know the impact of social media marketing to customers towards Ford's brand. Moreover, it aims to know if there is a significant relationship between the social media marketing and the demographic profile of the respondents. The study revealed that there is no significant relationship derived in the respondents' demographic profile towards social media marketing. This study also discloses that potential car buyers and owners are influenced by social media as they become aware of the brand Ford. In addition, the most dominant factor that impacts the actual and potential customers in terms of brand awareness is the acquisition of information from social media platforms. Therefore, it means that the utilized social media marketing of Ford greatly influences and impacts the customers with regards to brand awareness.

Keywords: social media, automobiles, brand awareness, ease of access, customer engagement

INTRODUCTION

The Philippine automotive industry has been continuously thriving as the demand for cars grow. For this reason, people must choose the best and the right kind of cars. Ford has constantly been in the industry providing people with exceptional and outstanding automobiles. It is an American automotive corporation that produces various kinds of automobiles such as passenger cars, trucks and tractors as well as automobile parts and accessories. Ford has been using social media to reach a wider audience to promote and attest that their company is continuously manufacturing outstanding vehicles with the use of technological advancements. Utilizing social media in businesses today are no longer optional, indeed, it is a necessity.

Social Media Marketing is the perception of technological advancements that makes it convenient for people to communicate globally with the utilization of various social mediums and how businesses can take advantage from it. As a matter of fact, social media is extensively used by people and entities regardless of its size where social media is their means to market and to build brand reputation while establishing customer relationship. Social media is substantial that audiences can easily access and acquire information at any given moment wherever and whenever they want. Social media channels serve as a support and assistance to consumers in able to comprehend what the company wants people to know regarding their brand and at the same time they can able to be subsequent to what the public, friends, acquaintances and peers say about their experience on a certain brand. It benefits the company by assimilating knowledge from and about customers and being able to convey special assistance. Hence, social media platforms help them save money and time, acquire and access information conveniently, provides people entertainment and assistance that betokens privilege. A company that utilizes a social media marketing in their business and establishes a healthy relationship with their customer through social media platforms.

Automobile companies and manufacturers have conventionally depended on TV advertisements or billboards, newspapers and so on. However, technological innovation imparts entities a chance to reach a vast range of audience. Automotive brands need to change their tactics to seize the attention of the consumers, positioning the foundation by increasing visibility with the use of social media so that when modern car shoppers begin to look their car preference, automobile brands have reach and made a presence already in the social world as they can easily provide a great customer service. In line with these, the researchers would like to propose this study in order to establish a detailed document that describes the proposed social media marketing strategy for Ford Company with analysis of the impact of social media. Furthermore, this study will equip the researchers with innovative ideas in nurturing the business and flourishing its competitiveness. Moreover, this research focuses on how Ford's social media marketing influences and impacts the customers.

Review of literature

Social Media Marketing is defined as the usage of technological advancements specifically social media which were used as medium and system to produce, interact, communicate, provide and make business transactions that partakes value for the establishment's shareholders. Social Media is definitely an evolving trend nowadays, hence, utilizing this form of marketing can do have a major impact on the entity's promotional and marketing strategies. Meanwhile, Social Media is defined as the network mode of interaction, connection, transference, and relationship between interrelated and bilateral linkage of people and organization heightened by technological advancements and flexibility (Tuten, T. L., & Solomon, M. R., 2017).

Social media may come in different forms such as wikis, podcasts, photos, social bookmarking, videos and blogs such as web, social and micro (Kim, A. J., & Ko, E. 2012). As a matter of fact, the utilization of social media is expanding rapidly particularly for entities and constitutional administrations as a mode of communication. It is being widely used by entities for promotional and marketing purposes as it is conceivable to execute marketing strategies with low expenditure and endeavor. Furthermore, social media can have a massive effect on business. Additionally, it is extensively utilized by people and entities regardless of its size where social media is their means to market a brand and build brand reputation while establishing customer relationship (Saravanakumar, M., & SuganthaLakshmi, T., 2012).

Producers and sellers of automotive in the world are using the internet because it has become a huge success for them. Carmudi PH (2016) came up with an online display place for cars to provide convenience to customers. Carmudi examined the information they have gathered from customers to know what the trend is with consideration to car buying here in the country. Carmudi worked together with car dealers to gather information and perception of the market to the trends in the country. Roesler (2015) stated that a study shows that social media greatly impacts the automotive purchasing decisions of the buyers. The Crowdtap company have executed a survey for 500 people who do have plans on purchasing cars in the future to perceive what process they do want to take and what factor impacts their decisions the most. As a result, it is shown that social media portrays a major role in the industry of cars as it always been an influence in choosing cars. They have discovered in their research that people were more likely converse on social media about cars that also attracts potential customers. With the continuous influence of digital technology, car buyers already gained a lot of information even before visiting dealerships.

Per Stephan (2015), he stated that social media is not even considered as option, thus, it is a necessity. Without considering automotive buying demographics such as millennials, Gen X or boomers, most of the current and possible customers are utilizing one or more form of digital technology nowadays. To make use of social media in every dealership to reach out audience effectively, the business needs to make a strategic tactic and competitive advantage in order to be recognized in the market. As stated by Enache (2016), Ford has been in the industry of automobile for a long period of time. They are still

innovative about their contents in connecting to current and prospect customers. This brand is doing it for over a hundred years. With unending effort of interacting with customers, Ford uses digital platform such as social media. Some people think that companies use social media to market their brand and post advertisement. However, there is a deeper meaning why Ford uses social media. They engage to customer relations and interact with them online thru various social media or digital technology.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 represents the conceptual framework of the study. The demographic profile of the respondents which were classified as age, sex, civil status, employment status and income will influence the impact of Ford's social media marketing to customers in terms of brand awareness, reliability, ease of access and updated. After which, the action recommendation plan to improve social media marketing strategies of Ford Motor Company as well as increase brand awareness and analyze respondents' perception towards Ford to provide an excellent and quality service will be derived.

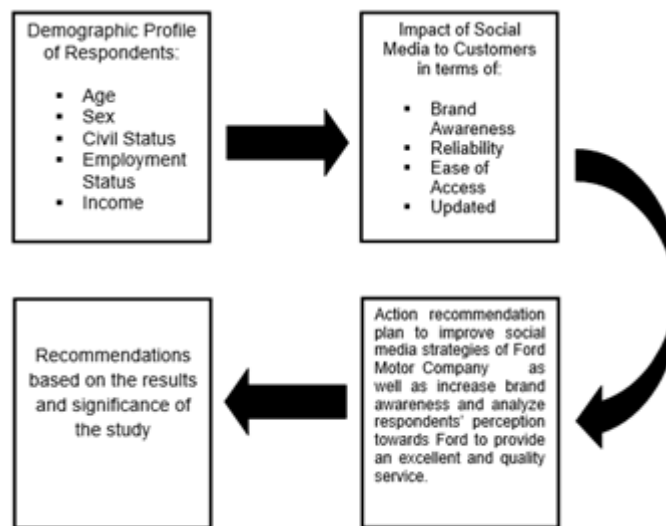


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

Objectives of the study

This study focuses on how Ford's social media marketing influences and impacts the customers. Specifically, it aimed (1) to determine the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, civil status, employment status and income; (2) to determine and analyze the impact of social media marketing to customers in terms of brand awareness towards Ford company, reliability, ease of access and updated; (3) to determine the respondents' preference towards Ford Motors' features when classified into comfort, durability, safety features and performance; (4) to determine the significant relationship of respondents' demographic profile towards social media marketing; and (5) to provide an action recommendation plan and improve social media marketing strategies of Ford Motor Company.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers used a quantitative descriptive research to determine the relationship of the variables of the study. This design is apt and best suited for this disquisition for it determines the impact of social media marketing to customers. The researchers used a self-made survey questionnaire with a

Cronbach Alpha of 0.850 which means that the questionnaire is consistent and valid for data gathering. The survey questionnaire was given to the respondents around Laguna area to know their perception and response regarding the impact of social media marketing to customers. The total number of the respondents of the study is 75, aged 21 years old and above from Laguna area who have already understood and experienced the service provided by the Ford Motors as well as the prospective and potential customers of the company to know if the utilized social media marketing influences them. The total number of respondents were determined using the G- Power and calculated using the effect size and alpha error of 0.05.

The researchers have collected data from survey questionnaires. To inaugurate the study, the researchers addressed an approval letter to a certain entity in able to conduct a research study about the chosen company. Afterwards, the researchers distributed survey questionnaires and disseminated google forms. Subsequently after collecting the needed data and information through research and surveys, the responses were tallied to come up with the results. The answers gathered from respondents were tabulated, analyzed and interpreted to come up with the conclusion and recommendation. The researchers conducted the survey and study after following ethical procedures and methods of information gathering. An approval letter was given to the Ford Motor Company to formally inform them that they are selected by the researchers to be the core of the research study. Moreover, the survey questionnaire has provided consent, stated to respect the respondents' decision in answering the questions within their knowledge and free will. It is given to the respondents as evidence of confidentiality between them and the researchers for them to be informed that the responses and information gathered is for academic purpose and strictly for the study.

To measure the data and information from the respondents, the researchers utilized the statistical instruments to deal with the data gathered through the questionnaires and derive numerical values that will provide answers to the study. The gathered data were calculated using different statistical procedures and summarized using tables. The data were tabulated and analyzed using reliability test or Cronbach's Alpha, frequency distribution and percentage, weighted mean, p-value and chi-square.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the gathered data, 38 respondents are aged 21 to 25 years old; 15 of the respondents are aged 26 to 30 years old; 6 respondents are aged 31 to 35 and 16 of the respondents are aged 36 and above. The data shows that most of the actual and potential car buyers are aged 21 to 25 years old which are 50.7% of the total respondents. There is a total of 41 male and 34 female respondents with regards to sex which constitutes the percentage of 54.7% of the male population and female respondents which makes 45.3% of the population wherein it represents that there are more male than female car owners and buyers.

In the civil status aspect, 27 respondents or 36% of the population were married. The rest were 48 which belongs to single respondents which makes 64% of the population. It only shows that there are more single respondents in terms of car buying and ownership. With regards to respondent's employment status, it shows that there are 57 employed respondents which comprise of 76% of the population, 17 respondents were self-employed which totaled to 22.7% of the population, while one of the respondents are unemployed. This only shows that majority of the car buyers and owners are employed.

Looking upon the respondents' monthly income, there are 13 respondents have the income of 12,000 and below, 27 of the respondents have the monthly income of 13,000 to 20,000, while 12 respondents have the income of 21,000 to 30,000, and 23 of the respondents do have the monthly income of 31,000 and above.

The impact of social media marketing to brand awareness is shown in Table 1. The dominant factor that impacts the customers in terms of brand awareness is the acquisition of the information from social media platforms with the weighted mean of 3.55. Having these results clearly states that various social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter depicts abundant opportunities and chances to entities for data distribution, public engagement, monitoring discussion and conversations (Ali A, Iffat & Yousaf, Zahid., 2017).

Table 1. Impact of social media marketing to Ford Cars’ brand awareness

	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
I got the information about Ford through social media platforms. (YouTube, Facebook, TV, Instagram, Twitter, etc.)	3.55	Strongly Agree
I am familiar with Ford Motors’ product and services.	3.53	Strongly Agree
Fords commercial are informative which enhance my knowledge about their company.	3.35	Agree
Composite Mean	3.48	Agree

Legend: 1.00-1.49 – Strongly Disagree; 1.50-2.49 – Disagree; 2.50-3.49 – Agree; 3.50-4.00 – Strongly Agree

The respondents trust the advertisements from social media platform which is rated the highest with a mean score of 3.37. With these results, it clearly shows that a company that establishes trust with their customers can present beneficial opportunities that make the consumer depend and rely on social media advertisements made by the entity.

Table 2. Impact of social media marketing to Ford Cars’ reliability

	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
I trust the advertisements through different social media platforms of Ford Motor Company	3.37	Agree
I trust the information about cars that is present in social media.	3.31	Agree
I trust bloggers and influencers reviews about Fords’ automobiles.	3.15	Agree
Composite Mean	3.48	Agree

Legend: 1.00-1.49 – Strongly Disagree; 1.50-2.49 – Disagree; 2.50-3.49 – Agree; 3.50-4.00 – Strongly Agree

Table 3 displays the respondents perceived impact of social media marketing to the ease of access of the Ford Cars. Results revealed that the dominant factor that affects actual and potential car buyers is the convenience or ease of access to look for car information with the weighted mean of 3.60. As per the result, convenient and immediate communication are now in demand as similar to the findings of Moreau

(2018). People are connected online wherever and whenever they are. They do not have to depend on landlines or answering machines. They can simply access devices like phones or laptops and instantly start communicating on social media platforms or messaging apps. Therefore, convenience or ease of access are in demand nowadays. impact of updated information obtained from social media.

Table 3. Impact of social media marketing to Ford Cars’ ease of access

	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
I find it easy to look for information about Fords’ automobiles in various social media platforms.	3.60	Strongly Agree
I find it easy to gather information in different social media platforms.	3.57	Strongly Agree
I can easily compare automobiles through reviews and comments social media	3.55	Strongly Agree
Composite Mean	3.57	Strongly Agree

Legend: 1.00-1.49 – Strongly Disagree; 1.50-2.49 – Disagree; 2.50-3.49 – Agree; 3.50-4.00 – Strongly Agree

With regards to the impact of social media in terms of updated, the utilized graphic design in social media is rated the highest with a mean score of 3.63. It may be concluded that updated information online and good content strategy with the use of excellent graphic design can delight and influence a customer as an entity provides an up-to-date info and follows the trend nowadays as similar to the findings of Nizhegorodova (2018).

Hence, they have found out that graphic design is a significant part of a content strategy. Even though the text and connotation are great, it will not be noticed unless it has an eye-catching visual to get people’s attention when they scroll down on social media. That is why cool and stylish graphic design are often used in advertisements for it has a huge impact to customers which is also depicted on Table 3.

Table 4. Impact of social media marketing to Ford Cars’ update

	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Graphic design used for social media marketing are up to date.	3.63	Strongly Agree
Information online about Ford Motors are updated.	3.60	Strongly Agree
Ford’s advertisement follows the trend.	3.44	Agree
Composite Mean	3.56	Strongly Agree

Legend: 1.00-1.49 – Strongly Disagree; 1.50-2.49 – Disagree; 2.50-3.49 – Agree; 3.50-4.00 – Strongly Agree

The preference of respondents towards Ford Motors features in terms of comfort is driving a car with comfortable space is rated the highest in with the mean score of 3.91. The results clearly show that the consumers do have higher expectations on cars and made them demand for an improved comfort when riding a vehicle as they prefer spacious and comfortable ones.

A car that is durable and intact is rated the highest in the durability category with the mean score of 3.89. With the results clearly shown, the researchers conclude that vehicle owners want cars that will not cost them millions in terms of repair and maintenance as the highest rated variable is durable and intact.

With regards to safety features, reliable and safe car is rated the highest in with the mean score of 3.92. With the result shown, the highest rated variable with a mean score of 3.92 which is the reliable and safe car, it clearly depicts that consumers definitely want a reliable and safe automobile.

In the performance category, a car that is fuel efficient and a car that has excellent handling speed do have an equal and same mean score of 3.89. Fuel efficiency is one of the most important factors to consider when buying a car according to the research of Auto Smart (2014). The results have shown that vigilant drivers look at the gas consumption of their cars based on the travel distance and speed of the car. Moreover, the researchers therefore conclude that other people prefer good handling like sports car do particularly if people want to avoid an accident, the handling of car comes in handy which is also depicted on Table 5.

Table 5. Respondents' preference towards Ford motors' features in terms of comfort, durability, safety features, and performance

	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Comfort		
I like to drive a car with comfortable space and ambiance.	3.91	Strongly Agree
I like to drive a car with convenience and stability.	3.88	Strongly Agree
Composite Mean	3.89	Strongly Agree
Durability		
I like to have a car that is durable and intact.	3.89	Strongly Agree
I like to have a car that is heavy duty and withstand tough condition.	3.87	Strongly Agree
Composite Mean	3.88	Strongly Agree
Safety Features		
I like a reliable and safe car.	3.92	
I like a car that has excellent braking system.	3.89	
Composite Mean	3.91	
Performance		
I like a car that is fuel efficient.	3.89	
I like a car that has excellent handling and speed.	3.89	
Composite Mean	3.89	

Legend: 1.00-1.49 – Strongly Disagree; 1.50-2.49 – Disagree; 2.50-3.49 – Agree; 3.50-4.00 – Strongly Agree

Table 6 shows the frequency of social media platforms usage. The highest ranked social media platforms were Facebook and YouTube with the same percentage of 34%, followed by the Instagram with a total of 17%, Google+ subsequently with 9% and Twitter which have the least result of 7%. The results show similar findings to the creative agency “We are social” and social media management platform “Hootsuite” that states that in the past 3 years, Philippines are on top as Filipinos spend most time on social media. Filipinos spend an average of 4 hours on social media. In fact, Facebook is constantly dominating the web as the number one social media platform used in the Philippines followed by YouTube.

Table 6. Respondents' frequency of social media usage

Social Media	Frequency	Percent
Youtube	54	34
Twitter	11	7
Google+	15	9
Facebook	54	34
Instagram	27	17
Total	161	100

P-Value and Chi-Square were used to determine the significant relationship between two variables. The results have shown that there is no significant relationship between the respondent's demographic profile in terms of age, sex, civil status, employment status and monthly income to social media marketing as all the values presented under the P-Value were greater than 0.05. The column Chi-Square shows a very low relationship between the P-Value which resulted to a non-significant relationship.

There is no significant relationship found between the dependent variable which is social media and independent variable such as age as almost everyone is using it regardless of their age, that is why it clearly states that demographic profile, age, does not reflect any significant relationship in terms of exposure to social media. These findings were supported by other researchers such as Hargittai (2007) and Treadaway and Smith (2010).

In terms of independent variable---sex, these findings which are similar to Ahmed, Rizwan & Hanif, Mehmood & Meenai, Yaseen (2015), gender, through which the researcher determine, which sex dominates internet such as accessing social media sites. The results clearly depict that both genders can fully relate to social media posts, and having these results show that there is no significant relationship found between the dependent variable which is social media and independent variable such as sex. This clearly states that gender does not reflect any relationship on social media usage for downloading, social networking, chatting and purchasing.

With regards to civil status, the researchers therefore conclude that regardless of their civil status, whether they are single or married, they can freely use social media whenever and wherever they want. As per employment status, with the results shown, the researchers conclude that even a person is busy at work or at his/her business, they can still manage to use social media. In fact, social media is being utilized as a tool to connect with other people. Moreover, in terms of monthly income, as similar to the findings of Ahmed, Rizwan & Hanif, Mehmood & Meenai, Yaseen (2015), it clearly states that income also has no significant relationship on social media because it is not that luxurious that exceeds the affordability of consumers in terms of information gathering, purchasing and so on and so forth. Indeed, income is unnecessary when you want to access social media sites and even a minimum wage earner can freely use it.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This research has shown that most of the car owners and buyers were composed of males. Most of them belong to the age bracket of 21-25 years old and are single. Majority of their customers were employed and with a monthly income of 13,000 - 20,000 pesos. The findings have exhibited that car buyers and owners are influenced by social media as they become aware of the brand through the acquisition of information from social media platforms. Therefore, it means that the utilized social media marketing of Ford greatly influences and impacts the customers with regards to brand awareness, reliability, ease of access and updated. Moreover, the findings revealed that there is no significant relationship derived in the demographic profile of the respondents towards social media marketing. Therefore, social media is not dependent on any of the studied demographic factors including age, sex, civil status, employment status and monthly income.

The researchers have come up with some recommendations for further improvements based on the findings of this research. The management may use influencers and celebrities to increase credibility with current customers as well as attract new audiences. The researchers would also recommend the management to collaborate with famous personalities to endorse the brand by means of uploading posts on social media. The entity may also publish a blog post, and regularly post photos or videos on social media to expose the brand, products and services of the company across all the relevant social media channels. Moreover, the organization may consider creating a forum on different social media platforms for reviews and comparison of cars. Furthermore, this will give significant information about the brand and the product. They should also prioritize most popular sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube to highlight vehicle features, upload videos and photos that will showcase the service, products and events. The researchers would highly recommend that Ford Motor Philippines would implement the proposed strategies for their improvement. Future researchers may add a diverse method of gathering data to improve and develop the result of the study. They may also undertake similar research and add more variables that is not included in this study to come up with efficient and rationalized information.

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