Use of Social Media Apps in Stand – Up Comedy with Special Focus on Instagram

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the popular and ever increasing use of stand – up comedy as a genre of entertainment is chosen as the context of study, data obtained from performing artists is analyzed and comparisons drawn to obtain insights into the use of social media by these niche entertainment artists. Data obtained from 30 artists was analyzed to find that though Facebook is the primary social media channel used by the artists for promoting of their art, connecting to the audience, exposure to fans, getting work. Instagram has become an increasingly important choice for the artists as a social media channel. IGTV of Instagram has joined the platforms which can be explored by the researchers for study. It is a general belief that IGTV may leave YouTube behind.

Keywords: Social media, Instagram, Influence, Consumer opinion.

INTRODUCTION:

Marketing has transformed from a one-way provider – consumer communication to dyadic, network based interaction. Consumers want to be the partners in the firm's production and marketing of content as much as the promoters. Consumers feel empowered when their expressed opinions and views for the company's products and services are taken into consideration. As per the study, "Consumers Aren't Looking to Buy from Brands That Are "Cool" on Social" (Sprout social, 2017), consumers want to purchase the products from responsive brands, who care to respond to their opinions and views. Human beings are social creatures and want to be a part of both offline and online communities. This has led to the rise of social networking portals like Facebook, Instagram, Snap chat etc.

Social media has become mainstream communication channel from one-to-many to one-one. As per the 2017 report (Statista, 2017), 71% of internet users are social media users. Earlier the marketers used social media as one of the advertising channels. With channels like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram having more than 3 billion users, Social Media is becoming a mainstream customer engagement channel. While marketing scholars have studied the use of social media channels in group and in isolation, few have studied the relation between one social media channel and a form of niche entertainment, 'Stand-up' comedy.

Standup Comedy depends purely on audience interaction hence the comedian needs to keep his audience engaged through different mediums. Dave Chapelle says, "Comedy is like magic. You say something, and a whole room full of people laughs together. The fact that people come to see that and participate in that, it is just like magic". Detailed Observation suggests use of all social media channels for creation, maintaining and revival of the comedienne brand. "One of the greatest opportunities of a digitally connected world is the ability to have immediate conversations, wherever and whenever entertainer wants. Social media not only enables organizations to amplify its brand, but also build trust, credibility and human relationships at scale. Scaling up and sustaining of brands is now as much the responsibility of the top executive as the social media manager" (Penny Wilson, CMO, Hootsuite)

As such, this research addresses the following questions: (a)Why does a comedian use social media? And (b)

What are the most used channels? This research obtained data from 30 comics and the same was analyzed to seek answers to the above mentioned questions.

This study builds on the previous social media related research and makes three primary contributions. First, it improves our understanding of social media influence on entertainment arenas. Secondly, it throws light on the increasing popularity of standup comedy. Third, it provides specific understanding of Instagram influence on standup comedy. The rest of the paper proceeds as follows: Literature review on social media and stand-up comedy is followed by data collection and analysis. The article ends with the discussion of results.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

There is extensive academic research on social media, Instagram and standup comedy. To focus our research, we review relevant studies on standup comedy, social media and Instagram.

Social Media

Social media is pervasive and consists of applications like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram etc. Each serves and targets a spectrum of audiences. Hence each media requires attention and focus on the part of the business. In the earlier days' social media was used as a medium of interacting, but now consumers across industries used it as a medium of creating and spreading opinions. (Huang & Chen, 2006). People's opinions or decisions are influenced by the online recommendations and interactions. (Senecal and Nantel, 2004).

 "With social media networks and other tools on the internet, all of these 500 million people have a way to say what they are thinking and have their voices be heard" (Mark Zuckerberg). Over the last decade many authors have acknowledged that the traditional demarcation between producers and consumers has become blurred and distorted as consumers assume increasingly active roles in the marketing process (Bloom, J. (2006)). Till recently only TV and Radio were used as the traditional channels of advertising. IT- Broadcasting services came up quickly confusing the marketers about the use of the social media channels. According to the hub spot statistics report, 92% of all marketers indicated that their social media efforts have generated more traffic for their businesses. 74% of marketers who spent 40+ hours on social media earned new business avenues. Social media also helps to gain marketplace intelligence as used by 71% of marketers. Successfully making contact with consumers via social media is predicted to show great returns for marketers in the coming years (Okazaki et al., 2007). This research focuses on usage of Instagram for promotion of businesses.

Instagram:

Instagram was developed as an application (app) to make photos look 'fast, simple and beautiful'. It was later acquired by Facebook in 2012, when Instagram was at the verge of closing due to no revenues. However, with the launch of sponsored posts in 2013, Instagram's popularity was reverted. Facebook Business Manager System was used to create sponsored apps but after a few updates Instagram itself in-app features and external apps to continue developing the programs against the competitors. The app started in 2010 has more than 150 million users across the world. The app grew its popularity among the celebrities due to its ability to add retro chic effects to the digital photos distorting colors and creating a poloroid effect. It was launched as an app to solve the photo quality, photo sharing and photo uploading related problems of the photo lovers. The inspiration of the development of the app came from the old poloroid photos explained, Kevin Systrom. Kevin Systrom wanted to replace digital camera effects with Instagram, by allowing consumers instant access to their photos than waiting for days. The app was designed to give ability to consumers to share a photo within seconds. Instagram gained its followers and fans as soon as it launched, 10000 people downloaded in a few hours. In less than a week the Instagram community had over a million members. Instagram has strengthened its market yet again with the launch of IGTV, which will be competing with the close dominance of YouTube. Instagram has evolved over the years, launched in 2010 as a simple photo sharing app moving quickly into video in 2013, when it started uploading short video clips of less than a minute. It has intensified its efforts through IGTV, which will feature vertical videos up to an hour long. The vertical format of IGTV will give the content creators an option against the monopoly of YouTube.

Researchers have studied the effects of using Instagram as a promotional and communication tool (Ting, Ming and Run, 2015) and its use as a supporting platform for the upcoming and established business.(Sook Huey Lim, 2014) This study will focus on the use of Instagram in promoting entertainment (music, dance, movies etc.) with specific focus on comics.

HYPOTHESIS:

This research study attempts to establish the relation between the entertainment form, stand – up comedy and social media. It also studies the impact of Instagram on the evolving forms of entertainment. Accordingly, we have established the hypothesis as follows: -

Use of social media

Comic use social media to test material and build their profile with potential audiences. In doing so, they accept the collateral effect that their jokes will quickly enter the community owned resource of comic content that circulates orally and electronically. (Paul Sturges, 2015). In India comedy was essentially performed in theaters or music halls, as a part of a play, story act or music/dance. The art of stand-up comedy has seen its existence in the last ten years, with the art starting to being performed as an exclusive entertainment form. The substance of humor remains fairly consistent in content and style of delivery but social media is giving rise to tribalism among like-minded comedy fans, which has an impact on audience composition and the content of comedy. (Krefting & Baruc, 2015)

In addition to use of small venues for testing of new jokes, comics also use social media to test the premises of the jokes. The consumer engagement triggered through every single post adds to the humanistic feel to the premise being tested. This also helps the artist to understand the target audience, which they are already targeting and can target in future. Hence

H1: Stand-up comedy has dependence on social media.

With the target audience defined and mostly falling into the modern cohorts, who prefer to follow celebrities, brands and the products on social networking sites, marketers utilize the visual connection of Instagram with the consumers. It is analyzed that Instagram reaches the younger generations, and attracts diverse societies more effectively than other social networking sites. (Abbott et al., 2013; Salomon, 2013). Hence,

H2: Instagram, a social media vehicle is expected to have a positive effect on Stand-up comedy.

METHODOLOGY:

This research explores the use of social media by stand-up comics. A sample of 30 comics are chosen based on a number of parameters including number of followers, content sharing and number of subscribers. This study compares the usage of social media by top 30 comics of India. Social media behavior of 30 comics were analyzed and data on their behavior was collected. They have been chosen on the basis of their social media influence (Number of subscribers/ Number of followers, Content sharing by the followers and fans) through content analysis, which is a systematic way of comparing content. (Kolbe and Burnett 1991) This has been used by many researchers over the years for evaluation of communication across advertisements, media stories and websites. (Kassarjian 1977; Roznowski 2003; Yun, Park, and Ha 2008) Content analysis was appropriate to get the correct sample statistic as per the scope of this study. As mentioned, dimensions were both from the prior literature and from an inductive analysis of social media usage through sampling.

SAMPLING:

Our unit of analysis was the usage of social media apps, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube by the practicing comics. As our first research question intends to analyze the usage of social media app, usage of four major social media apps was sampled.

The second research question concerned the most used channels with special focus on Instagram, we used units who have increased their usage of Instagram to understand the reasons for the same. A comparison has been drawn between the comics practicing the profession for more than three years and the ones who have entered the industry recently. This will throw light on the evolution of a comic in using social media apps through his journey in the Industry.

RESULTS:

Following content analysis, data analysis gives some interesting revelations regarding the moving of career path of a Stand-up comedian along with the usage of social media platforms.

Table 1: Use of social media

Use of social media apps to promote shows	Yes: 96.88% No: 3. 13%
Access to retain and grow audience	Yes: 65.63% No: 34.37%
Social media provided with additional scope of work, brand work	Yes: 71.88% No: 28.13%

The results aggregated by the research reflects that the social media has played a significant role in the progression of a stand up comedian's career. Social media here includes Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter essentially. Artists use social media to get different scope of work in addition to using it as a medium to reach greater audience. Comedy as an art requires audience to be kept engaged so that lesser time is spent on recall. Artists can acquire newer audience base also through mutual connections.

Table 2: Role of Instagram in Stand-Up comedy

Apps used most	Facebook: 40% Instagram: 33.33% YouTube: 16.67% Others: 10%
Frequency of posts	Facebook/ Twitter: Once a day Instagram: 50% (Once a day) 50% (Alternate days)
PAID Brand work	Facebook: 72% Instagram: 4% Others: 24%
Apps used most to engage with audience	Facebook: 66.67% Instagram: 23.33% YouTube: 10%
Apps giving better access to audience	Instagram: 84.38% Facebook: 15.63%

Of all the media being falling in the social media app category, more than 80% show evidence of using Facebook as the most important medium. These results showed that Facebook is used as the prime medium irrespective of the objective. However, respondents have recognized Instagram as the growing medium to engage with the most pertinent audience. Comics increased the use of Instagram in 2015, when it allowed advertisements of 30 secs and ads going global. The followers of stand-up comics have increased adding to their loyal fan base and target audience.

The importance of social media has been recognized in promoting both the stand-up comedian (the artist) and stand-up comedy. Facebook has been traditionally used as the medium to interact with audience but with the introduction of IGTV (Instagram TV) by Instagram, the dynamics are expected to change. IGTV will provide the services, which were traditionally limited to YouTube only. Stand-up comics acknowledge the better access to audience but this study does not measure the impact of change.

DISCUSSION:

Our findings show that while the impact or contribution tends to differ as per the facets of content. Facebook is extensively used by the artists. Having said that the artists feel that the Instagram stories or ports give them better access to their target audience. With the launch of Instagram TV (IGTV), Instagram has more to offer to its users, which will shift the share of social media use to Instagram.

The contribution of social media marketing towards the perception of a brand can be discussed as follows: -

Table 3

Product	Marketing	Result
Mediocre	Good	Excellent Product
Good	No	Zero awareness of the product

Product	Marketing	Result
Bad	Good	Everyone knows about the product
Good	Good	Unmatched Popularity
Mediocre	Mediocre	Sustainability

Based on the findings from this study, we would expect some patterns of results (e.g., usage, access) to be useful. Nevertheless, this study raises a useful set of implications for the users to understand the usability of these apps in the new evolving entertainment Industry, Stand-up comedy and hence provides a number of possibilities for future research.

This study offers three contributions. First, it provides conceptual insights into how different social media sites foster stand- up comedy. Second, it develops some preliminary ideas on how different social media contribute to stand-up comedy. Third, it offers a preliminary set of dimensions for comparing Instagram with other media in relation to their contribution.

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