

IS SOCIAL MEDIA AN EFFECTIVE STRATAGEM FOR INDIAN LAW FIRMS

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Abstract

After evincing the importance and impact of social media over various sectors, this paper attempts to explore the relationship between social media usage by the Indian law firms. In addition it examines the various factors that are instrumental in influencing the Indian law firms to increase their business development. The paper envisages on the need and ways through which law firms can use the social media to enhance their clientele base. Indian lawyers can have a broadened view on the usage of social media and the related benefit thereof through this study. The application of attribution modeling is also initiated in this study and a framework is suggested for the law firm to enhance the firm's performance.

Recently, social media monopoly has gained importance that lead to a need to analyze whether it plays a vital role in Indian law firms too or not. This study ensures if the social media has any business development impact on Indian law firms. The sample size was 75 numbers of Indian law firms. Those attributes that contributes towards social media usage were measured using attribute mapping model. The relationship between the type of social media, its reach and outcome in terms of leads were explored in this study. The assessment of the social media usage by Indian law was done through online-questionnaires and telephonic interview schedules. The methodology for analyzing included rotation matrix of the attributes identified chi square analysis, attribution and engagement mapping in social marketing. The main objective of the study ensured of the below:

- *Assessing social media's best practices that are benchmarked at a global level and compared with that of the findings of the study.*
- *To scale the initiative of social sharing of law firm content and the relevant benefit of sharing.*
- *To measure the internal employee engagement through social media and related aspects namely – morale, team work, collaboration.*
- *To evince the impact of attribution mapping and social media engagement relationships over the business development.*
- *Finally whether Indian law firms can use social media as a stratagem and elaborated on how effectively it can be utilized to enhance the business development.*

Keywords:

Social media, Indian law firms, Social media, Business development

1. INTRODUCTION

There were days when internet was not accessible in rural areas, but now there is hardly anyplace untouched by internet with the advent of technological advances. The web version 2.0 termed as the 'social media' is a platform where the user is able to interact with, communicate and collaborate with web host and each other. Users also can share pictures, videos, articles or any other user generated contents on the web. Social media includes blog sites, micro blog sites, social networking sites which may be www.orkut.com, www.linkedin.com, www.twitter.com, www.facebook.com, www.facebook.com, www.buzz.google.com,

etc. Off late, these social media networks have become the necessity too in the current era, but realizing its necessity may vary from one person to another as their needs do from one to another. These social networking sites have been impacting service sectors and this study was conducted to identify if law firms use social media to develop their clientele base or for promoting its legal services. Today's era witnesses a paradigm shift (in 1977) from prohibition to advertise the services of legal firms using Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn, etc. Legal firms in general involve themselves in dispensing legal advises, discussing client matters, claiming to be an expert and selling their services, post blogs and links and other relevant articles. There are enormous statistics that has recorded the usage of social networking sites by the lawyers worldwide, but the usage by Indian law firms is attempted to analyze by the researcher in this study.

2. NEED AND OBJECTIVE

The main focus of the study was to list out the services that comes under the purview of law firms and how can social media help the lawyers in developing their services. The study was conducted to ensure if there are high risks when law firms choose the social media to develop their services or not. The study also showcases how global law firms were able to use social media appropriately to develop their businesses. However, the number of illegal activities eventually out rates the benefits of the usage of social media but it is necessary to highlight to the law firms that social media can also be used while they deliver their services to their clientele base.

The objective of the study ensures in –

- Highlighting the best practices of social media that are benchmarked at a global level & compare with that of the finding
- Showcasing the benefits of sharing the legal based contents by the law firms and how they are beneficial to the society in general
- Assessing attribution mapping w.r.t. Social media engagement relationships and its impact of business development by the law firms in India.
- Measuring the awareness level of the social media among the lawyers
- Suggesting the means through which social media enriches the presence of law firms.
- Recommending if Indian law firms can use social media as a stratagem or not.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- While elaborating about lawyers, Lackey, M and Minta, J. (2012) indicates that storage of any litigation by the lawyers

on social media is regarded as storing information in third party's computer. Here it is indicative that the social media is perceived as an unsecured platform by the lawyers. The researcher has taken this perspective on social media and included a question in the tool. The implication of sharing information or legal advises to their clientele through social media websites are regarded or perceived as violations of the duty of the confidentiality. The paper also has attempted in testing the sharing statistics of lawyers and how far their presence in social media existing is gauged too. In addition, Lackey's paper discusses on how law firms try fitting in their marketing models with the use of social media on one hand and how it might cause hindrances on the other hand. By these deliberations, it is understood that the pros and cons are necessary to be previewed for this study.

- There are cases where lawyer-specific social networks succeed as compared to general platform which is indicative in a web article contributed by Carolyn Elefant (2014). The article highlights the challenges and struggle faced by those website companies as compared to that of a restaurant that runs on a loss in every single town. The hindering role played by the 'cost' considered by the users of social media, hence the cost effective aspect is included in the tool in this study. The article evidenced that when the prices come down for membership in social platform there were increase in the number of members who were a part of it. The article in addition remarks as *'Lawyers may be latecomers to the social media party, but those who are using it for networking, branding and business development say the benefits trump the potential dangers'*.
- The lawyers stay active among the lawyer community as compared to other professionals or groups as surveyed by the networks of counsel (2008). The predictions also indicate that the age group of lawyers lies between 25 to 35 years who have quick access to the social network. The conclusion of the survey has been made keeping in mind proximity between the knowledge among lawyers to use the social media with the usage of it effectively. Therefore the researcher has taken into consideration the age factor and know-how level of lawyers about the social media platform.
- Sir, Okuduwa (2013) in his paper on social media: the good, bad and the ugly side have given insights on the varied forms, types, positive and negative effects of social media. He has included the business promotion effect of social media for any individual or firm by developing websites has indicated it to be a creative way of expanding the business. The paper has also given examples of almost fifty four website addresses of social media.
- Content turns out to be vital factor as indicated by Kevin Lewer (2013) in his article has especially in exploiting social media especially in legal sector. The article discusses about two surveys which have shed light on what is required to use social media as successful business development tool in legal sector. In the first survey how lawyers though there are not active interacting in social media can be benefitted by executing hiring decisions by going through the CVs or appropriate lawyer's candidature. It also has evidenced that the lawyers are using social media network as a part of their 'thought leadership'. Second survey highlighted about the finding that how the lawyers are not the appropriate content

to attract potential service users or for business development. It is also compared that the accountancy firms use the social media appropriately with the relevant content than the lawyer firms.

- An article on social media for lawyers in the website – techshu has suggested the advantage of choosing social media as a channel for the lawyers' law firms. It is mentioned that Facebook shall help in brand recall of the lawyer firms, Twitter can enhance the relationship with their target group and LinkedIn shall help in projecting themselves as knowledgeable in the legal field. Finally, the article concludes that social media helps to generate business exposure, qualified leads, rise in search engines rankings, increase website traffic and finally resulting in brand recall generation for the business which ultimately result in helping the firm on a long-run basis.
- In the website lawisgreek, the relationship between lawyers and interns on the social media platform is emphasized. The perception about lawyers which seem to be invisible or rather less visible as compared to other professionals is also discussed. Moreover, the law is termed to be a system that works against the ordinary people is also noted in the article. With over a million lawyers and 80000 law graduates annually the usage of social media network by them are found to be very less and if they identify the benefit then that would pave them the way for effective connectivity among lawyers, interns and law students as well. Finally it would end up in connecting with all walks of life and initiate dialogue and boost social interaction with them. Social media is also viewed as a source to regain trust, build credibility to prospective client through social media platforms such as facebook, twitter and stumble upon.
- An article in in-house lawyer website wherein lawyer Amarchand Mangaldas notes that social media has enthused the psyche of Indians and encouraged them to become a part of virtual community. The rising issues in social media handling also are warned to the readers. The participation by the government agencies in departments of traffic, municipal corporation, Indian post administration, ministry of external affairs etc in the social media to reach out the citizens are also discussed.
- An Amazon website article that is titled as 'social media for lawyer-twitter edition' questions the lawyers if they have started to use the micro-blogging site as a means of collaboration and business development or not. It has taken into account the big law firms in the world that utilizes the site for making contacts, sharing professional information and experiences, acquiring new clients, communicating with clients and for publicizing their expertise.
- The weblink on lawyerpundits suggests training programme for the lawyers on how to enhance their business opportunities using social media as a means. It has suggestive website for lawyers, how to monitor lawyer website traffic, how legal directories shall contribute in generating business leads for law firms, increasing the publication on legal aspects, the pay per click advertising available for lawyers, blogs and adwords for promoting law firms and other postings such as online videos and articles or news which may act as a tool of advertising for lawyers.

The application of these priorities available to the lawyers is validated by the researcher in the tool used in the study.

- Howard Greenstein's article in vocus website initiates the use of devising an attribution modeling of social media. In case the law firms choose social media as a tool as a stratagem, they may land up in interacting with the potential clients and be in a position to convert the leads effectively & profitably.
- The legal marketing website also has made its contribution to law firms as to how can law firms increase their profitability by following the tips suggested by Peter Drucker. It is also indicated that the Rain today law firm has proven to be successful in the legal profession by adopting the five tips for increasing profitability.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on both the primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected with a help of a structured questionnaire. A sample of 75 lawyers from Indian law firms had responded to the questionnaire which was emailed to them with the use of Google forms. It was targeted for 500 respondents but 75 proper responses were considered for this study which amounts to 15 percentage of response rate. Therefore the response rate was fifteen percentages and convenient sampling method has been used for this study. The secondary data was collected from the literature published in various journals, magazines, newspaper articles published in internet, etc. The major limitation of the study is that the sample size was considerably less than the expected size of the researcher, but the response rate indicates that the lawyers or the lawyers who represented the law firms are still not open to the social media platform. Ultimately the study is all about the openness of the lawyers in the social media platform is existent or not which is found to be evident in this study.

5. RESPONDENTS

The respondents drawn were one representative from each law firm. The lawyer – respondent or representative respondent were either the partners of the firm/proprietor or who were working in the capability of associate(s) for the firm(s). Keeping the basis of the literary review, the tool was developed suiting the need and objective of the study. Therefore there were totally 75 number of lawyer respondent who represented each of their law firm(s) respectively.

6. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The objectives of the study were fulfilled with the help of various statistical tools such as chi-square tests, percentage analysis and to find out the relationship between the variables rotated component matrix were also used in this study. Moreover, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) has been applied to determine the significance of difference among the sample mean values across the region-wise lawyers on account of different variables.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The statistical analysis evinces that the lawyers holding an account in social media website is 29 percentage. Wherein the

literature suggests that for example: when a lawyer invites another user for connection through LinkedIn, it becomes an advertisement subject to regulation as it leads to sharing the lawyer's information. Therefore the lawyers can ensure careful choice of users through sites like LinkedIn so that there are chances for them to avail services either for self or recommend for others.

The study findings have found to be revealing how legal firms have less access to the social media in developing their business.

- Participant: Those respondents who were in New Delhi and Mumbai were the highest in numbers with 27 and 26 % respectively. It is notable that the law firms situated in Delhi and Mumbai were more responsive than the other places based respondents. Below is the table that illustrates the percentage distribution of the place-wise respondents.

Table.1. Percentage distribution of place-wise respondents

Place	No.	%
Bangalore	6	7
Chennai	8	12
Mumbai	26	36
New delhi	27	40
Kochi	1	3
Others (Gurgaon, Noida, Kolkatta and Pune)	7	3
Total	75	100

- Technology and social media awareness: The study findings on awareness about technology indicates that there is a distributed responses between neither agree and disagree to strongly disagree with 29%, 25% and 25% respectively. Similarly, social media awareness is also distributed like the responses of technology awareness too.
- Client's technology awareness: The study indicates that the lawyers do not know what technology the client's use. The knowledge about the client's technology is of high importance to develop the lawyer's business, hence there is a gap between the client's technology and lawyer firm's technology.
- Legal services through social media: There seems to be a relationship between client's technology awareness with that of the intention pertaining to legal services through social media. The study indicates that 40% of the respondents feel that they are against provision of legal services through social network platform which is also a prime hindrance to develop legal firm business.
- Confidential issues through social media: The respondents feel that there would be confidential issues when law firms deal their clients via social network as 35% of the respondents have strongly disagreed that there is no confidential issues through social media.
- Unauthorized individual's access: Most of the respondents (45%) feel that unauthorized individuals also have access to social media and hence lawyers hesitate to be active through social media.

- Cost impact through social media: About 39% of the respondents feel that social media does not have high cost impact. If the lawyers feel that there is not much of cost impact then they must not be hesitant using the social media for their business development.
- Accessibility ease through social media: Among all the respondents, 39% of them have felt that there is no accessibility and ease through social media ensured. Through this study it is found that the lawyers have not realized the ease of social media.
- Encryption: The respondents (40%) have expressed that encryption is necessary while sharing the information online. This enables us to draw a finding that lawyers are more concerned about the security of information and if the security of information is ensured then they there are chances for them to develop their business via social network.
- Backup of information: Almost 37% of the lawyers have agreed to necessity of having backup information that is shared via social media.
- Social media to attract clients: 36% of the respondents have expressed their disagreeableness for attracting clients using social media. This finding is explicit indication that lawyers have still not used social media effectively to attract and increase their clientele base.
- Social media for recruitment: The responses for this question are spread over strongly disagreeableness to agreeableness among respondents which indicates that few lawyers are using social media for recruitment.
- Social media for professional network: Only 20% of the respondents have expressed that they use social network for professional networking. In case the lawyers are active in social media for professional network, they would find it congenial to use the social media if not for business development but even for sharing information and accolades in the legal field.
- Relationship between variables: The rotated component matrix was used in this study and the components were extracted into eight in numbers from twenty one numbers. The findings indicate that not all the variables are used by the lawyers as the commonalities do not indicate as 1.00 as shown in the Table 2.

Table.2. Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
technology awareness	.821	.051	-.102	-.204	-.164	-.063	.113	.111
social media awareness	.815	-.163	.037	.118	-.069	.053	-.097	-.090
holding accounts in social media	.847	-.036	.006	-.011	.112	.119	-.090	.043
frequent use of sm	.153	-.354	.109	.120	.317	.556	-.033	-.349
technological update	.193	.361	.212	.082	-.171	.321	-.521	.235
clients tech know how	.138	-.133	.130	.044	-.752	.075	-.065	.039
legal advice thru sm	-.108	.827	.083	.124	.002	.073	.078	-.149
no confidential issues thru sm	-.103	.690	-.051	-.192	.089	-.142	-.045	-.039
accessibility to unauthorized individuals	-.119	-.028	.010	-.049	.235	-.747	.130	-.105
cost and sm impact	-.069	.215	.274	.712	.205	.065	.167	-.158
accessibility and ease of use thru sm	.052	-.064	.399	.358	-.370	-.486	-.298	-.098
encription	.118	.116	.438	-.014	.031	-.165	.510	.322
backup of info via sm	-.093	.216	.234	-.781	.169	-.020	.036	-.113
sm and paperless office	-.046	.040	.110	.093	.025	.017	.833	-.076
sm to attract client	.012	-.290	.686	-.179	-.030	.058	.209	-.034
sm to recruit	.261	-.142	.430	.115	.497	-.116	.054	-.031
sm for professional network	.560	-.141	.030	.386	.181	.179	-.014	.250
protection from virus	.489	-.314	.230	.245	-.199	.399	.018	-.131
sm to deliver service	-.079	.239	.650	.096	-.043	.041	-.034	-.021
online discussion participation	.135	-.154	.095	.144	.323	-.058	-.191	.691
layer conference, forums	-.014	-.071	-.110	-.094	-.289	.093	.055	.691
Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. a. Rotation converged in 10 iterations								If all were used, these commonalities would all be 1.00.

Table.3. Correlations between the respondent’s views on social media interaction and service delivery

			online discussion participation	lawyer conference, forums	sm to deliver service
Spearman’s rho	online discussion participation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.072	-.047
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.542	.690
		N	75	75	75
	lawyer conference, forums	Correlation Coefficient	.072	1.000	-.046
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.542	.	.696
		N	75	75	75
	sm to deliver service	Correlation Coefficient	-.047	-.046	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.690	.696	.
		N	75	75	75
There is not much relationship between social media to deliver services with online discussion participation.					

Table.4. Relationship between cost & social media impact and legal advice through social media

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
cost and sm impact	75	2.2667	1.15470	0.13333
legal advice thru sm	75	2.0000	0.95860	0.11069
There is a relationship between social media’s cost impact and legal advice through social media				

- The spearman rho’s correlation coefficient used in this study highlights that there is not much of relationship found between online discussion, participation in forums with that of the social media usage to deliver legal services as shown below.

The comparison of means of social media cost impact with that of legal advice through social network was performed to check their relationship with one another. It was found that there is a relationship between them both as shown in Table 4.

With the above findings the researcher has few recommendations for the law firms which may be as follows:

- This study evinces that the law firm uses social network only for cases where the recruitment is to be made through social platforms such as www.naukri.com or through linkedin, etc. Their usage of social media can extend to relevant human resources activities such that attracting interns, pooling recruitment agencies and so on and so forth.
- The lawyers need to understand the necessity of the low cost impact through social network and hence they can ensure that the security of information is maintained and use it to identify their potential users of legal services.

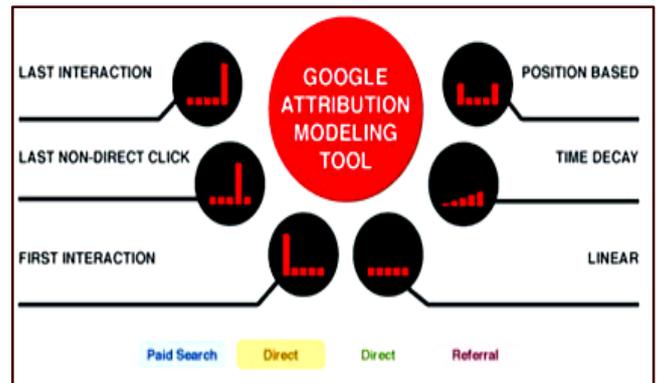


Fig.1. Google Attribution Model
Source: <http://www.tecmak.co.uk/attribution-modelling/>

- Similarly social media maturity model framework can also be kept as the basis in devising a suitable model for law firms. The law firms can identify which quadrant they fit into and choose the appropriate design for promoting their legal services.

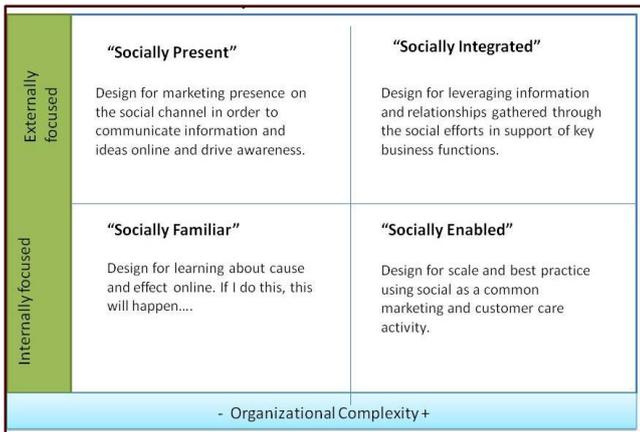


Fig.2. Social media maturity model

Source: <http://www.leadernetworks.com/2011/04/social-media-insecurity-try-our.html>

- The researcher intends to suggest a model for lawyers in this study, in case the law firm has suspicions on its suitability then the stage of business may be taken into consideration and the model can be made applicable respectively.
- The suitability of the business strategy can vary from one law firm to another hence the model can be attuned accordingly and made applicable to their respective firms as suggested by the researcher. Hence, the business strategy perspective is also given due consideration by the researcher.
- The researcher has kept in mind the above models as the basis and converted the Peter Drucker model into a profitability model to suit the law firms.

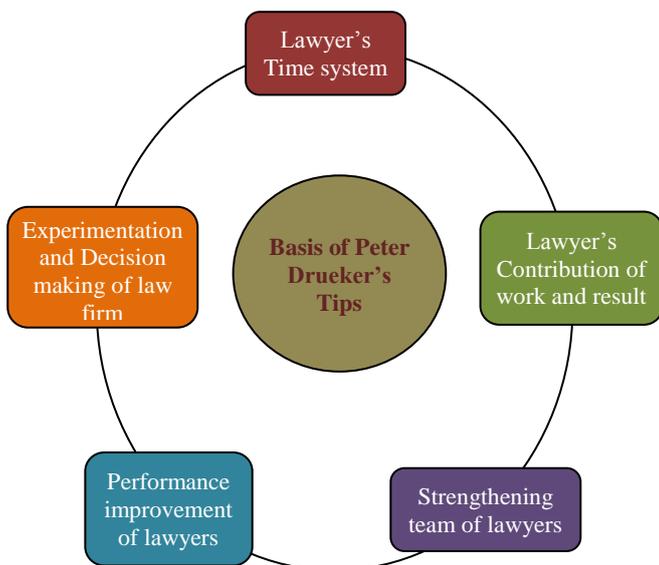


Fig.3. Converted Peter Drucker's Model

Source: <http://businessoflawblog.com/2014/06/drucker-law-firm-profitability/>

Wherein the law firms has to take into consideration the lawyer's time spent in a firm and formulate a system wherein

they are utilizing their time in a productive manner through sharing knowledge, accolades, providing legal advises, researching on law related aspects , etc. After formulating a time system, the lawyers contribution needs to be scaled to the result in terms of their contribution (work) done. Followed by identification of each lawyer's strength in the firm and strengthening team of lawyers should be ensured. In order to have a consistent monitoring, there may be initiated performance improvement programmes or training based at social network. Finally, the varied resource available through online services can be utilized through experimentation and lawyers in the law firms can take effective decision that improves the business.

8. CONCLUSION

With the explosive growth of social media it has equally been advantageous and disadvantageous as well. The rise of usage of the web version 2.0 which is the social network platform technically known to be, has paved way to many ease of accessibility of information on one hand. Similarly on the other hand, high profile acts of misconduct also have been recorded by legal firms. At this juncture, when we take the law firms into consideration – they are far behind these advances and are hesitant to use the same for business development purposes. With the careful choice of social network users, the lawyers can initiate their interaction with social network sites especially professional sites like LinkedIn and twitter. There are more than a five hundred law firms in India and the competitors are spread across the country and beyond the boundary as well. This would be the appropriate time to adapt to the environment and use social network to enhance the business standards of law firms.

The social network attribution and profitability model suggested by the researcher shall not only ensure of enhanced return on investment but also an augmented brand image of the firm. The legal firms are the source of identity and source of service rendering authority, the perception among the public civilians are to be changed and social media shall ensure of that change in perception. It is never late for the law firms to make their choice of social media to be an effective strategem.

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