

(2010), 'internet pure-plays account for almost 60% of ecommerce revenue opposed to multi-channels (2009, Com-Score)'.

c. 3. Social Media marketing

Today two billion people are connected to the internet and social media-related sites represent the fastest-growing attraction on the web. According to Nielsen, social networks or blog sites are visited by three-quarters of global consumers who go online and some of the world's most popular brands online are social media-related (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Wikipedia). Facebook is now used by more than 1.3 billion people, 70% of whom are outside the US and Twitter has 645 million registered users. The consensus among marketers is that social media has turned into a powerful marketing platform, which companies small or large cannot afford to overlook. Its business potential is huge and since social media is a direct channel to hordes of potential consumers, it provides fast and accurate feed-back about new products and innovative ideas (Ankeny, 2009) and is a solid step to brand-building. According to Gil-Or, 'in a recent survey, 88% of marketers said that they are using social media as part of their marketing mix' (Gil-Or, 2010).

However, on the social media platform, Return on Investment (ROI) remains an approximate science as solid ROI figures have proved rather difficult to track. Only 18% of companies polled say they saw meaningful ROI from their social media activities in 2009, the rest (72%) report modest or insignificant returns. Nevertheless, conventional wisdom among marketers indicates that ROI will be worth the effort on this platform and according to Pew surveys, 94% of companies in the US say they plan to increase their investment in social media (Lichtenberg, 2009).

On the downside, the free services provided by companies like Facebook and Twitter come with a cost. Facebook, for example, is increasingly cluttered with self-promoters and marketing entrepreneurs. This might mean limited visibility for companies trying to showcase their products or services. Also, with online privacy boundaries dissolved, users might feel even more invaded by enterprises trying to market their products.

Digital Word-of-Mouth

Digital Word-of-Mouth marketing or viral marketing is now recognised as a powerful form of social media marketing. Word-of-mouth used in the digital sphere equates an amplified and accelerated reach for a new product with the focus on a form of 'one-to-many' communication. Some avant-garde companies have recognised the potential of this aspect of digital marketing. Paperpost is a company that pays bloggers to review books, products and services and to write postings for advertisers. MobiTech (a US mobile company) collaborated with Buzzablog (a blog website) in an experimental marketing campaign, relying on selected bloggers' word-of-mouth to promote their latest mobile product. The active bloggers targeted (considered as opinion leaders) were given a MobiTech mobile in order to test the product, with no obligation to write about it in their blogs. In this instance, the blogger becomes both a target and a marketer. By integrating bloggers in their marketing campaign, MobiTech tried to project the fact that, since bloggers tend to be more faithful to their blogger community than to the company, their