How ODigMa leveraged Social CRM to drive customer satisfaction, retention and advocacy for a leading Telecom Company: A Case Study

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Introduction

With the proliferation of channels technology is creating for customers to interact, companies are concerned about the impact these technologies will have on the way business operates today. Customers are adopting web and its applications at a breath-taking pace and companies are scrambling to keep up. The web applications like social media is affecting the way customers become aware of the products and narrow their consideration set.

Companies have recognized the power of web and have leveraged it to build relationship with the customers. These relationships generate increased loyalty, higher levels of satisfaction and greater upselling opportunities. But along with enormous opportunities, web throws several disadvantages as well.

How should one of the leading telecom companies in the world engage its customers, provide support, build advocacy and provide recommendations across multiple channels, in a scalable and manageable way? The most probable answer to this would be World Wide Web, but it is the same platform where customers assassinate brands every day.

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How should the companies respond when their brand is termed pathetic, crappy, deplorable, awful, bad, poor, worst, fake, cheat, fraud, false, misleading etc., online? There have been numerous instances when brands have got a beating online and the whole world watched. Whether it was “United breaks Guitars” gathering over 12.5 million views online (Sonsofmaxwell) or the famous Nestle debacle on Facebook related to its sourcing practices (6 painful social media screwups). Brands have been criticized, loved, hated, recommended, and patronized online.

With the advent of social media, brands have found a megaphone to shout their offerings to their prospects. But, they have later discovered that the customer can shout back through the same media and sometimes in an unpleasant way. So, it is very important for the companies to manage the sentiments about their brands online.

The case depicts how OdigMa, a digital marketing company, minimized the prevailed negative sentiments on the web pertaining to one of the largest telecom brands in India. The case also attempts in exploring the key features of “Alterian”, a social media monitoring tool which played a pivotal role in this case. For the purpose of confidentiality the name of the telecom company is not revealed in the case. Also some of the screen shots added in this case pertaining to Alterian are generic in nature with sample data and not related to the figures and facts of the telecom company being discussed.

OdigMa – An Online Digital Marketing Company

ODigMa Consultancy Solutions Pvt. Ltd. was founded in 2010 and has offices in Bangalore, Mumbai and Gurgaon. ODigMa is a digital marketing agency that markets products and services on all leading social media platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube. ODigMa works on adding value to the online media initiatives of companies. It helps them reach out to a greater consumer base and helps in reviving and revamping brand image, refreshing brand recall and realizing sales through direct marketing. ODigMa has helped over 150 brands to get over 10 million Facebook fans worldwide and the company has generated over 20 million clicks online. ODigMa has a global case study from India on Facebook (ODigMa). The thrust on quantification of work is found to be very high in OdigMa's work culture. According to Mr. Advit Sahdev, the CEO of company, "If the work cannot be measured, we do not do it. We understand that quantification of creativity is very difficult, but we try to do it".

Social CRM

Paul Greenberg (2010) defines Social CRM as "A philosophy and a business strategy, supported by a technology platform, business rules, workflow, processes and social characteristics, designed to engage the customer in a collaborative conversation in order to provide mutually beneficial value in a trusted and transparent business environment. It's the company's response to the customer's ownership of the conversation."

Paul Greenberg's (2010) definition is broad and provides a holistic view of Social CRM. Generally social CRM is narrowly interpreted as CRM on social networking websites, which is a distorted perception. Social CRM also includes customer communities engaged by organizations themselves not limited only to online interactions. However the paper's focus is limited to the online customer engagement by a leading telecom company in India which was managed by ODigMa.

Accoring to Aberdeen Group's study conducted in 2009 on the best in class companies, one of the findings was that 68 percent of the top companies had a social media monitoring process. (Greenberg, 2010)

According to Hubspot (2012), Social media monitoring is a process of monitoring and responding to mentions related to a business that occur in social media (Bodnar). Ninty percent of the data in the world today has been created in the last few years and much of this data comes from social media networking websites. For example, there are over one billion facebook posts per day (thesocialskinny.com). Social media monitoring cannot be done manually because of the sheer size of this data and parameters involved. Hence the use of software and tools become inevitable. There is an explosion in number of monitoring products as well, according to SMM analyst Nathan Gilliat, 170 social media monitoring products are out there. (Greenberg, 2010)

The Problem Faced by the Telecom Company

The problem narrated in this paper is pertaining to ODigMa's client which is one of the leading telecommunication companies in India which offers many services in 22 telecom circles in the country.

Any firm would feel calamitous if they search their brand on search-engines like Google and find a lot of negativity associated with it. This is what happened to the telecom company in discussion here. The telecom giant became aware of Indian customers who had expressed their frustration on the web often unhappy with the service or delay in resolutions. The increased adaption of social media in recent times had further fuelled the grievances regarding the telecom company expressed on the web. The online complaints on various forums were largely unattended. Some of the forums used for registering complaints and communicating with other consumers include www.complaints-india.com, www.consumercomplaints.in, www.consumercourt.in, www.grahakseva.com.

The online complaints have twofold effects. It affects current customers and future prospects. Loyalty can be built with the current customers only if the complaints are addressed in a quick and efficient manner. Also, current customers will generate positive sentiments for the brand through word-of-mouth if their interaction is pleasant with the brand. In this process of delighting current customers, the future prospects also get exposed to the level of service being offered to the current customers and chances of they being converted to customers is high. The telecom company wanted to achieve all of this for its brand, but the task was not easy because of several dimensions involved in the problem.

As the number of complaints was very high and negative sentiments were rampant on the web, the telecom company engaged OdigMa to handle the problem considering OdigMa's competence and experience related to similar tasks.

The Challenges Faced by ODigMa in Addressing the Problem

1. Huge number of existing complaints

There were close to 200 websites where traffic pertaining to the brand was significant , these websites were identified as hot zones. All of these websites had huge amount of negative complaints which needed to be tackled effectively. Describing the challenges, the CEO of OdigMa, Mr. Advit (2012) mentioned " The house was not clean when we came in; there was no advantage of gradual increase in complaints. It was a mess out there and we had to go all guns from day one."

2. Designing an approach involving customers, various departments and management of the client

A multi-stakeholder engagement process had to be designed involving the end user to various departments of the management across 12 circles nationwide. The telecom company has millions of consumers in these 12 circles and various departments are in charge for this enormous number of customers. Integrating all and making sure that all these departments and ODigMa were in synchronization was a daunting task.

3. Listening and monitoring online conversations constantly

ODigMa had to monitor hundreds of conversation and measure the level of negative sentiment around the brand. One important aspect of monitoring was prioritizing the complaints. ODigMa identified keywords like "sue", "court", "consumer rights" and identified customers using these keywords as high priority customers and tried to resolve their issues as soon as possible to prevent legal complications for the company.

4. Mobile Number Portability lead to higher expectations

With the Mobile Number Portability (MNP) facility now being available in India, time becomes a deciding factor in resolving a complaint pertaining to telecom services. Unlike in the past where the customer had several hassles to shift to a different service provider, now the subscribers of particular service provider can shift to a different one seamlessly in a very short time. Hence the telecom customers today expect to be pampered. Retaining customers was one of the toughest challenges that were faced by the telecom company.

5. Predicting and managing issues proactively

Analysing the patterns of discussion and deducing the trends was vital in preparing a scalable and efficient response system. Human Resource was one of the key challenges related to scalability of the response system. Responding to the question "You have a limited number of people working on a SCRM project. What do you do if the brand faces a crises and negative sentiments increase exponentially?", Mr. Advit Sahdev (2012), the CEO of ODigMa, replied "To counter this we give SCRM training to teams of other departments as well, so that the company can put in concentrated efforts to handle the crisis"

The Solution devised by ODigMa

ODigMa designed a multi-stakeholder SCRM process in place engaging online communities, customer care executives and the management of the telecom company. To ensure that the negative sentiments were minimised, the key driver used in the solution was Social Media Monitoring. The other element which helped the telecom company to plan, monitor and evaluate the process was the periodic reports sent by ODigMa apprising them on the developments in SCRM and also on the performance of their in- house team in clearing up issues forwarded by ODigMa. Figure 1 demonstrates the step-by-step approach used by OdigMa to handle negative sentiments.

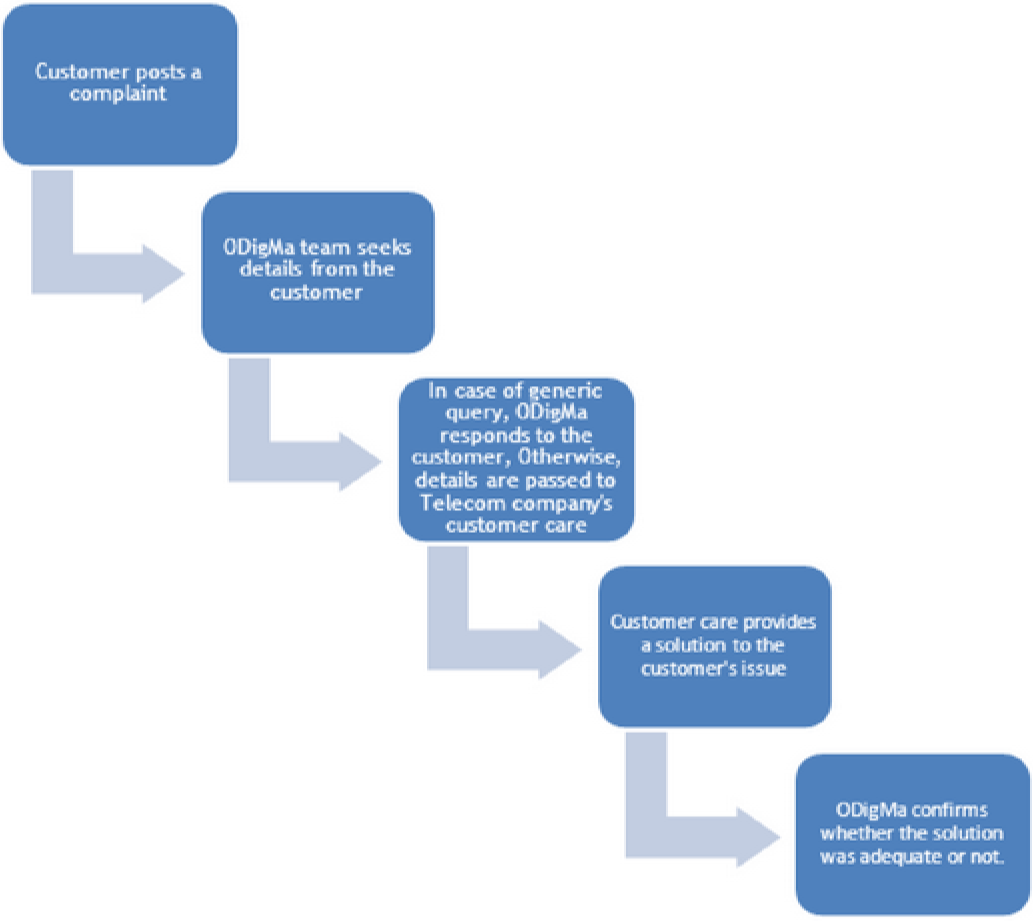

Customer posts a complaint
ODigMa team seeks details from the customer
In case of generic query, ODigMa responds to the customer, Otherwise, details are passed to Telecom company's customer care
Customer care provides a solution to the customer's issue
ODigMa confirms whether the solution was adequate or not.

Figure 1

Considering the difficulty involved in handling the large volume of customer interactions on the web, a state-of-the-art social media monitoring tool “Alterian” was deployed to monitor and listen to the conversation on the web. Decision on the social media monitoring software was made after analysing a wide range of criteria; its ability to scan not just number of blogs/forums but those relevant to the brand was considered. The easy work flow process and tracking of the issue along with analytic capability were considered. The comparison of popular social media monitoring tools is presented in Annexure 1. Figure 2 depicts a sample dashboard provided by Alterian.

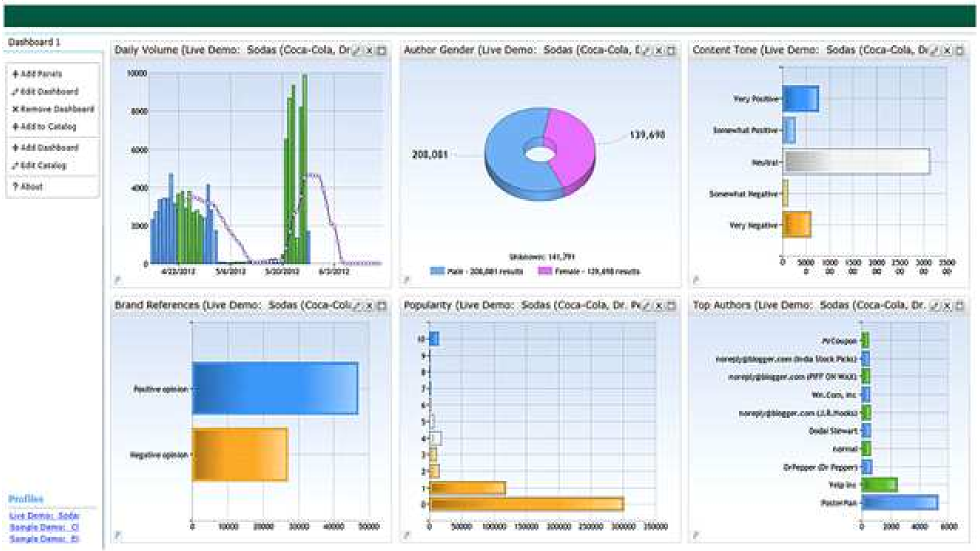

Dashboard 1
+ Add Panels
Edit Dashboard
× Remove Dashboard
+ Add to Catalog
+ Add Dashboard
Edit Catalog
? About
Profiles
Live Demo: Soda
Sample Demo: Cl
Sample Demo: El
Daily Volume (Live Demo: Sodas (Coca-Cola, Dr
10000
8000
6000
4000
2000
0
4/22/2012
5/6/2012
5/20/2012
6/3/2012
Author Gender (Live Demo: Sodas (Coca-Cola, D
208,081
139,698
Unknown: 141,791
Male - 208,081 results
Female - 139,698 results
Content Tone (Live Demo: Sodas (Coca-Cola, Dr
Very Positive
Somewhat Positive
Neutral
Somewhat Negative
Very Negative
0
5000
10000
15000
20000
25000
30000
35000
Brand References (Live Demo: Sodas (Coca-Col
Positive opinion
Negative opinion
0
10000
20000
30000
40000
50000
Popularity (Live Demo: Sodas (Coca-Cola, Dr. Pe
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
0
50000
100000
150000
200000
250000
300000
350000
Top Authors (Live Demo: Sodas (Coca-Cola, Dr.
PVCoupon
noreply@blogger.com (India Stock Picks)
noreply@blogger.com (PFF ON WAX)
Wn.Com, Inc
noreply@blogger.com (J.R.Hooks)
Dodai Stewart
normal
DrPepper (Dr Pepper)
Yelp Inc
PostonPan
0
2000
4000
6000

Figure 2

The other task taken up by ODigMa to solve the problem was to create user maps of communities engaging in conversations related to the brand and tracking active users who could be influencers. Responses to these complaints were given on a high priority so that the negative vibes could be minimized. Influencers are very powerful; an apparel brand had to go to an extent to recruit an angry influencer to a customer advisory council to turn her opinion around (Greenberg, 2010). A sample of user profiling by Alterian is given in the figure 3. Figure 4 shows one influencer being won related to the present case because of good engagement.

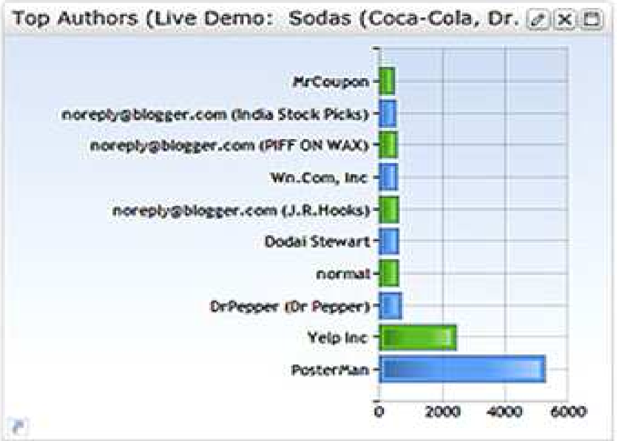
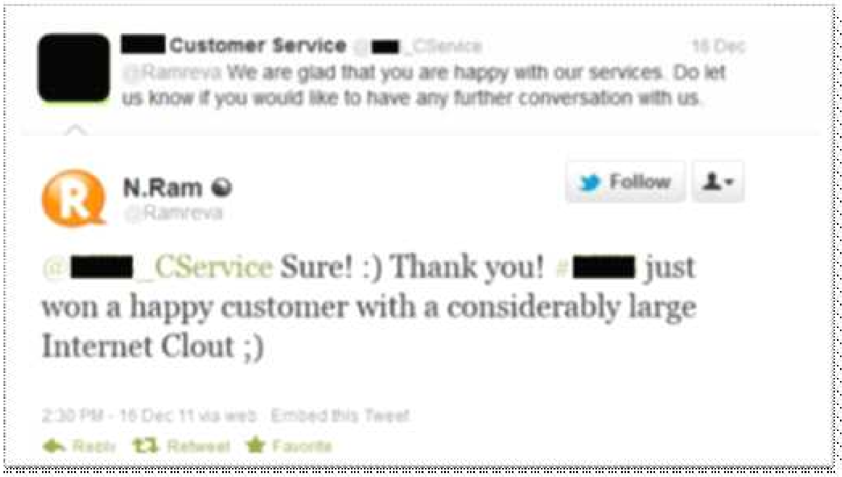


Figure 3


[redacted] [redacted] Customer Service @[redacted]_CService 16 Dec
@Ramreva We are glad that you are happy with our services. Do let us know if you would like to have any further conversation with us.

N.Ram
@Ramreva

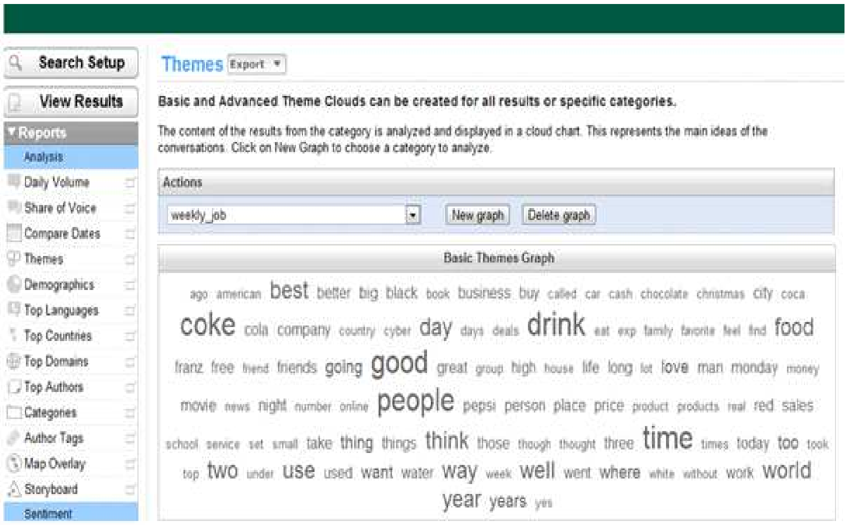
@[redacted]_CService Sure! :) Thank you! #[redacted] just won a happy customer with a considerably large Internet Clout ;)

2:30 PM - 16 Dec 11 via web · Embed this Tweet

Figure 4

In their endeavour to aggressively engage unhappy customers, the team at ODigMa had created a brand language, tone and a way of answering in a standardized method. A script was prepared with the consensus of the telecom company for this purpose and was finalised after several iterations. However, the team as suggested by various studies like that of CDA. CDA(2012) was directed to engage consumers the human way and not to give answers mechanically. This was well appreciated by the customers and they even made

Based on monitoring insights, these forums were segregated as per the dominant discussion topics and an extensive database was created to tackle queries and complaints. Figure 7 shows a sample keywords cloud based on the main theme of the conversations. The font size of the word determines the volume of conversations associated with the keywords.


Search Setup
View Results
Reports
Analysis
Daily Volume
Share of Voice
Compare Dates
Themes
Demographics
Top Languages
Top Countries
Top Domains
Top Authors
Categories
Author Tags
Map Overlay
Storyboard
Sentiment
Themes
Export
Actions
New graph
Delete graph
Basic Themes Graph
ago american best better big black book business buy called car cash chocolate christmas city coca
coke cola company country cyber day days deals drink eat exp family favorite feel find food
franz free friend friends going good great group high house life long lot love man monday money
movie news night number online people pepsi person place price product products real red sales
school service set small take thing things think those though thought three time times today too took
top two under use used want water way week well went where white without work world
year years yes

Basic and Advanced Theme Clouds can be created for all results or specific categories.

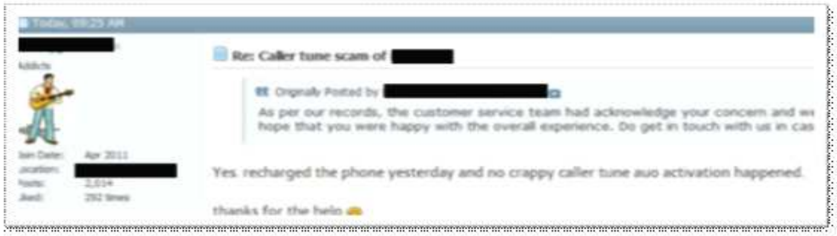
The content of the results from the category is analyzed and displayed in a cloud chart. This represents the main ideas of the conversations. Click on New Graph to choose a category to analyze.

weekly_job

Figure 7

The Result

First response from users who have never been engaged by the brand was varied: some were surprised, others abusive and defiant, but most appreciated their concern. Majority of the conversations ended with a 'Thank you' and a smiley. Figure 8 depicts one such reply from a happy customer and figure 9 shows how a customer was shocked when he received a useful reply on twitter.


Today, 09:25 AM

[redacted]

Join Date: Apr 2011

Location: [redacted]

Re: Caller tune scam of [redacted]

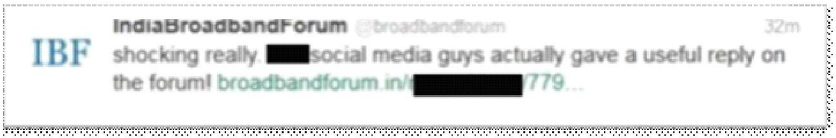
Originally Posted by [redacted]

As per our records, the customer service team had acknowledge your concern and we hope that you were happy with the overall experience. Do get in touch with us in cas

Yes. recharged the phone yesterday and no crappy caller tune auo activation happened.

thanks for the help

Figure 8



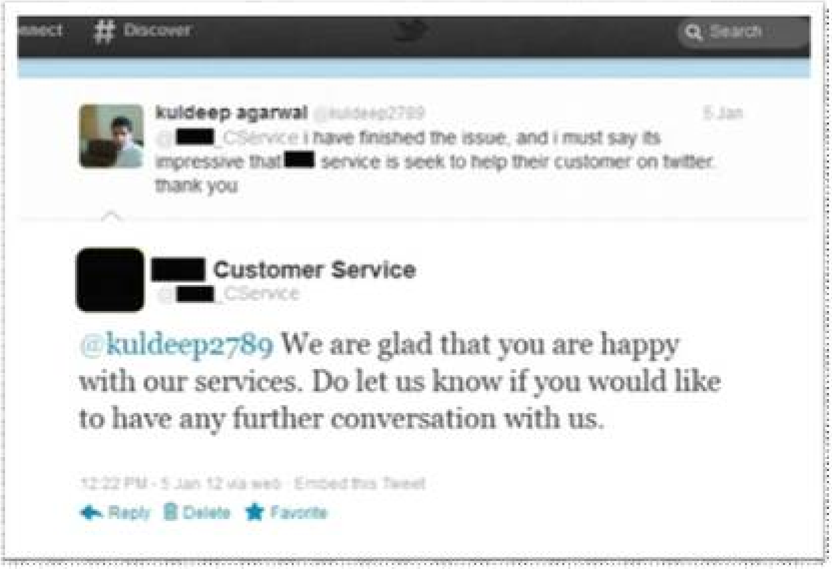
IndiaBroadbandForum @broadbandforum 32m

shocking really. [redacted]social media guys actually gave a useful reply on the forum! broadbandforum.in/[redacted]/779...

Figure 9

Abusive comments were handled with patience and respect. The team was instructed to embrace the brand and appreciate the equity they had in the marketplace. The idea infused was 'if a customer is being abusive, he is abusing the service and not the individual on the desk.' By following this, ODigMa ensured that there was not a single incident of employee outrage against the customers.

Users were kept engaged with status information about their complaint. Consumers do not want to remain in the dark. Customers get frustrated with uncertainty more than anything else. The team at ODigMa ensured that they put quantitative figures in front of customers and give a definite answer wherever possible. Some users were simply impressed that the brand was reaching out to consumers, figure 10 is an example of the same.



kuldeep agarwal @kuldeep2789 5 Jan

@[redacted]_CService i have finished the issue, and i must say its impressive that[redacted] service is seek to help their customer on twitter thank you

[redacted]

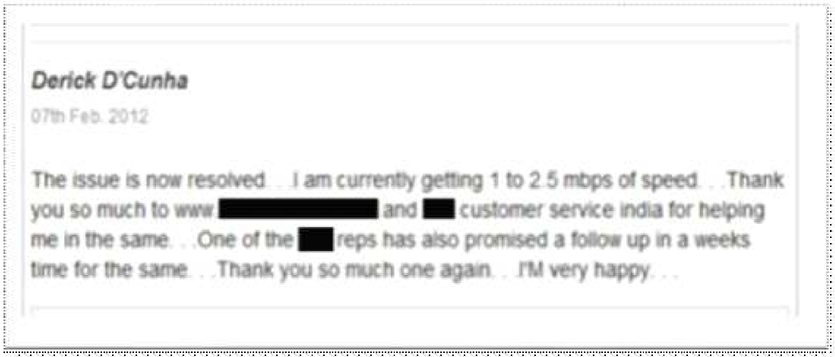
[redacted] Customer Service
@[redacted]_CService

@kuldeep2789 We are glad that you are happy with our services. Do let us know if you would like to have any further conversation with us.

12:22 PM - 5 Jan 12 via web · Embed this Tweet

Figure 10

Multiple follow ups were done and finally at resolution their satisfaction was gauged. Figure 11 is an example of a complaint being resolved and followed up.



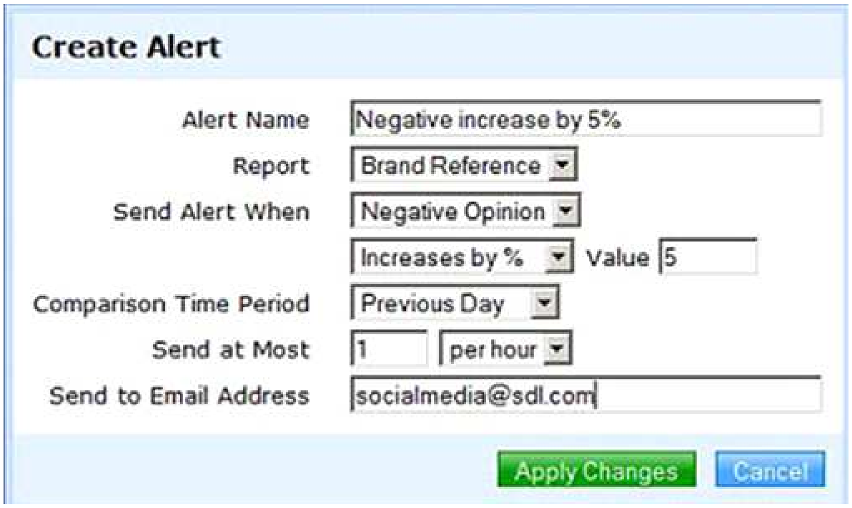
Derick D'Cunha

07th Feb. 2012

The issue is now resolved . . I am currently getting 1 to 2.5 mbps of speed . . Thank you so much to www [redacted] and [redacted] customer service india for helping me in the same . . One of the [redacted] reps has also promised a follow up in a weeks time for the same . . Thank you so much one again . . I'M very happy . . .

Figure 11

A Spike in negative sentiment was captured on Feb 1, 2012, when the news of Supreme Court's judgment on 2G allocation broke out panicking the existing customers and other stakeholders. The spike was captured by an in-built function in Alterian which notifies the user if the negative sentiment increases beyond a certain percent. Figure 12 illustrates settings involved in configuring these alerts.



Create Alert

Alert Name	Negative increase by 5%
Report	Brand Reference
Send Alert When	Negative Opinion
	Increases by % Value 5
Comparison Time Period	Previous Day
Send at Most	1 per hour
Send to Email Address	socialmedia@sdl.com

Figure 12

Many customers were worried about the possibility of involvement of the telecom company in the scandal. Identifying the source of information and influential users who were spearheading the conversations, the OdigMa 's team engaged them by sharing the required information and answering their questions in the best possible manner. As a result the negative sentiment was substantially contained within first 5 days.

The solution devised by ODigMa brought negative brand sentiment of the telecom brand down by 13.6% in three months. The solution also facilitated generation of huge amount of Business Intelligence which would aid in improving their internal operations and develop new services based on the feedback and needs expressed by their customers. The solution offered by OdigMa besides generating huge amount of brand equity by becoming a brand that cares for users also created a band of brand evangelists who will engage in 'Word of Mouth' marketing for the brand.

Conclusion

Managing customer relationships is considered to be imperative for the success of any business and its importance has further gained momentum because of the technological developments like social media. The web has created a social structure where individuals across geographies are tied up more cohesively. The web applications like social media is affecting the way customers perceive the image of companies. The web is being used to patronize as well as criticise brands. Therefore the need of the hour is that companies should proactively engage customers and manage their sentiments efficiently. It was evident from this study that the negative sentiments that were prevailing on the web could be reduced because of the concentrated efforts from OdigMa in reaching and engaging with the customers of the telecom company in an efficient manner. Though software tools like Alterian play a pivotal role in the damage control, in the light of the study it is apparent that the human element, the patience and perseverance is equally important in building relationship with the customers.

Annexure 1 : *Comparison of popular Social Media Monitoring Tools. . (dragonsearchmarketing.com)*

	Sysomos MAP	Brand Watch	Social Radar	Alterian SM2	Meltwater Buzz
White Labeling	Yes reports	Yes	Yes	Yes reports	yes
Exportable reporting?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Identifies influencers	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Respond within tools	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Assign tasks with notes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Blog and news integration	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Author Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Competitve reporting	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Search Query Priority Ranking	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Measure of Engagement/ Reach	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Measure of Buzz	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Search terms allowed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Meausre Sentiment (+ or -)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Audience Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes-pre-designated clusters
Customizable Dashboard	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Campaign Tracking	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Multiple Languages	Yes	20 Languages	14 Languages	20 Languages	27 Languages + translate

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Sonsofmaxwell. (n.d.). *United Breaks Guitars*. Retrieved October 16, 2012, from YouTube.com: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YGc4zOqozo