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From Undecided to Sold! Transforming Online Retail Using Social User Data Analytics

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INTRODUCTION

Shopping is inherently a social experience. Meeting up with friends in a mall, sipping coffee and window-shopping together, browsing through the wares in a busy shopping district, stumbling across cool, unexpected treasures—these are the moments that make “going out shopping” in the real world so much fun.

However, the traditional ecommerce experience rarely contains these interesting, sensorial experiences of offline retail. A typical ecommerce experience entails searching Google or Amazon for the product you want, then going through various sites to find the cheapest deal. Savvy offline retailers provide a selection of their goods (sometimes complete catalogs) on their own websites but the online experience does not feel as enjoyable as the real-world experience of shopping in those same retailers’ stores. Customers have to scroll through pages and pages of items, work through vague product descriptions, photos that don’t give a clear idea whether those items would fit their size, style and taste and poorly designed check-out processes.

When customers are forced to sacrifice the fun, social and pleasurable aspects of offline shopping, they come to expect less and less from ecommerce experiences and develop a price-oriented, “undecided-always” and deal-hungry approach to online shopping.

With the advent of social networks where people spend more and more time hanging out with friends, sharing information, giving feedback and recommendations, there are opportunities for savvy retailers to leverage this to create engrossing and personalized shopping experiences that bring the social delight of real-world shopping to online experiences.

Let’s take a deep-dive into how this can be done using Social Connect and Social User Data Analytics.

FIRST THINGS FIRST – HAVING A SOCIAL CONNECT-ENABLED WEBSITE

A Social Connect-Enabled website is one that allows site users to sign-up or sign-in to the site using their social network IDs. With Social Connect, site users won't need to create and remember another username and password in order to login. Instead, they can sign-in with the same credentials they use for their favorite social network, bypassing the long and tedious registration forms.

Enabling users to register or sign-in to your website or app using an existing identity from Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Yahoo, Google+, or other provider is one of the most powerful registration tools – this not only streamlines the registration process but also gives your business a head start by providing you with rich profile information. A holistic understanding of your customers' preferences, tastes, influences, social networks, transactional behavior, demographics, psychographics, etc. is valuable to build deeper relationships with them.

WHY IT MATTERS:

Social Connect allows website owners to do user management using social network login IDs. Research shows that:

- ✓ **88% of consumers admit to having given incorrect and incomplete profile info:** Users are more likely to have shared accurate and more complete info (email, preferences, gender, date of birth) while creating their social network profiles. With Social Connect, site owners will have access to more accurate and complete customer profile information.
- ✓ **54% may leave a website if asked to register the traditional way:** Social Connect can also be used to speed up registration as users don't have to fill up tedious registration forms.
- ✓ **77% believe social connect should be offered:** Users engage with their social networks more frequently than your site (sometimes almost on a day-to-day basis), their familiarity and comfort-level with signing-in using Social Connect is far higher than signing-in with a traditional registration form option.

BENEFITS OF SOCIAL CONNECT INTEGRATION & SOCIAL USER DATA ANALYTICS:

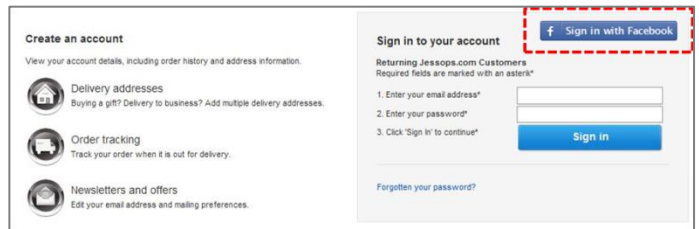
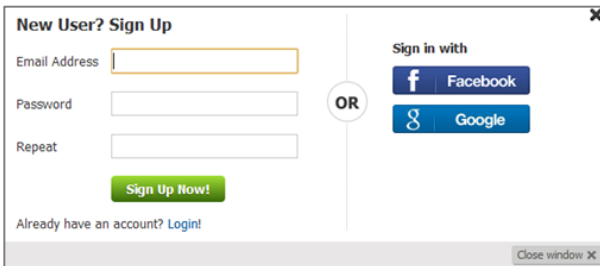
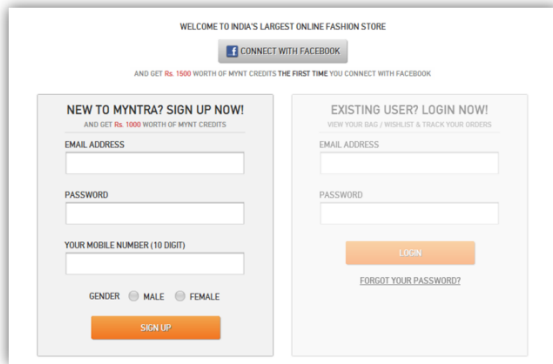
- By integrating Social Connect on a website, website owners increase the chance of getting more customers to register. Facebook, Twitter, Google, LinkedIn and the other providers are powerful brands that can help increase registration rates simply through brand recognition and affinity.
- Instead of a standard registration form, users are provided with pre-populated forms – Companies can use the social data to pre-populate as many fields as possible, such as first name, last name, and email address, to show the user that much of the work has already been done for them. This greatly simplifies the user experience, making it easy for customers to share information about themselves.
- Previously retailers only had access to transaction and shopping data. Without an insight into what drives customers to make purchase decisions, choose one brand over another, their preferences, interests, network of friends, family and other life influences, affinities, passions, demographics and psychographics, retailers are unable to create and deliver targeted, personalized experiences, to customers leaving a lot of customer value on the table. By capturing social data, retailers have access to rich, permission-based Social User Data that can be leveraged to craft strategies to reach out to customers in a more meaningful way. This level of understanding of customers is what brand owners have always craved for.
- Brand owners can build a dynamic picture of customers and market segment that is passionate about their brand, engaging with their company, or talking about their products or services in social channels.
- Additionally, by combining social user data with transactional data (such as sales data, CRM, emails and other internal sources) companies can glean a holistic understanding of customer preferences to get actionable insights to enable the following benefits:
 - Delivery of hyper-relevant content to customers
 - Targeting influential customers and brand advocates
 - Recommending content, products and services based on users' interests
 - Tailoring marketing campaigns, offers and promos to specific user segments.

HOW IT WORKS:

Step 1:

Integrate Social Connect in all instances where customer information is being captured on your site. Customers welcome this approach as they don't have to create alternative login profiles. This step improves site registration rates, and allows site owners to get rich, in-depth and accurate info about users previously not possible.

Examples of how Social Connect can be integrated on a website:



Secure Shopping Need help? Call 0845 458 7000 Help (opens a new window) Home

Register

Register using Facebook

Please take a few moments to register and create your account

Your account provides you with access to a variety of benefits, such as Order Status and Purchase History. It's easy and costs nothing.

Required fields are marked with an asterisk*

Personal Details

Title* ▼

First Name*

Last Name*

Email Address*

Step 2:

Improve user experience by pre-filling profile data once user signs in using Social Connect. Where site owners have already collected lots of customer profile data using the traditional registration form, they can provide users with incentives (such as gift coupons and points) to link their Social ID with the existing website ID allowing brand owners to get more data on user's preferences, interests not previously captured in the registration form.

Here's an example of how existing customers can link their Social ID with an existing website ID:

New Customers

To shop with us, simply complete the short form below:
Required fields are marked with an asterisk.* Optional password of six or more characters if you wish to register. Register for the benefits of multiple delivery addresses, order tracking & history.

Title* ▼

First Name:*

Surname:*

Email Address:*

Confirm Email Address:*

Password:

Confirm Password:

Existing Customers

Existing customers please log in below:
Required fields are marked with an asterisk.*

1. Enter your email address:*

2. Enter your password:*

3. Click 'Sign In' to continue:

Sign in

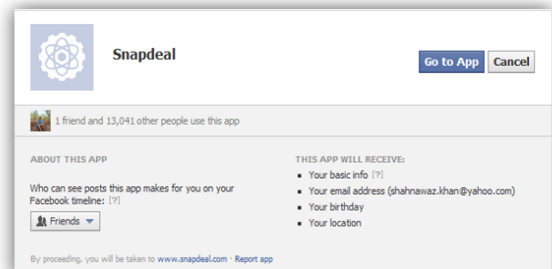
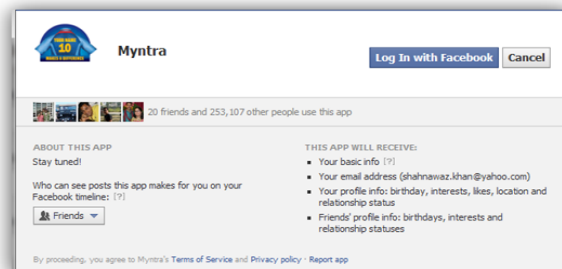
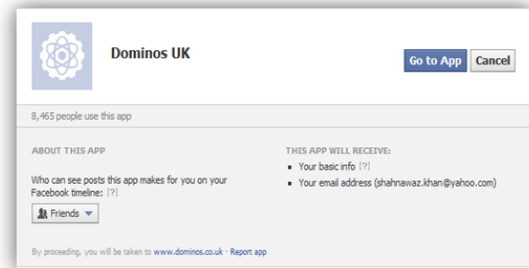
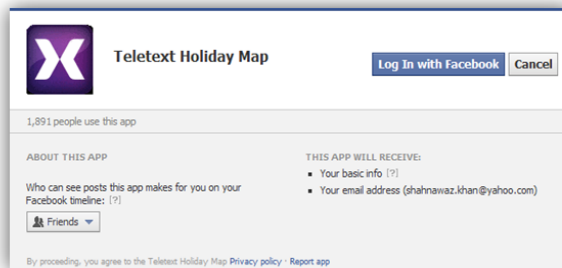
f Sign in with Facebook

[Forgot your password?](#)

Step 3:

Users' will be presented with a dialogue box seeking permission to share the different types of profile permissions with the brand website. The use of customers' personal data requires their approval, not just for legal reasons but also to avoid offending customers. Give customers the control over the kind and amount of their social profile data that is shared. In addition to basic data such as name, email, age, users can also share data about their preferences, their network of friends, etc. Companies are advised to be prudent to ask only for those data inputs which would be of most value to them.

Here are some examples of Facebook authorization screens. Note: brand owners can customize this to request for info that is most relevant and meaningful to them without offending customers' concerns on privacy:



By integrating social connect; brand owners can capture the following types of profile data. This data can be used to develop a more meaningful and holistic understanding of customers' preferences, tastes, interests and passions to drive business decisions.

This data now needs to be stored for further processing and integrating with existing user management systems, CRM systems, etc.

The table below highlights the types of profile data that can be captured from integration of Facebook Social Connect:

GROUP	POSSIBLE INFORMATION AVAILABLE
Basic Information	Name, Profile Picture, Gender, Networks, User ID, List of Friends, Other Public Information
Email	Email ID
Profile Info	Activities, Birthday, Home Town, Interests, Likes, Locations, Relationship Status, Website URL, Religion, Political View
Friend's Profile Info	Activities, Birthdays, Home Towns, Interests, Likes, Locations, Relationship Status, Website URL, Religion, Political View
Events	Events created by user, Events shared by users
Education	High School, Graduation, Post-Graduation, Certificate One, Certificate Two, etc.
Work	Current Organization Name, Current Designation, From Date, Previous Organization Name, Previous Designation, From Date [for previous org], Last Date [for previous org]
Permissions	Publish Actions, Manage Pages, Read Friend List, Read Insights, Read Friend Request, Read Inbox, Read Stream, Read Online Presence, Read Friend's Online Presence
User Activity	News Activity, Video Activity, Music Activity, App Activity, Game Activity
Others	Check-ins, Subscriptions, Notes, Questions, Photos

WHAT NEXT?

Brand owners can get rich, actionable insights from Facebook and other popular online/social communities using Social User Data Analytics to help them:

- ✓ Segment, profile and analyse guests based on age group, interest, activities, likes and preferences
- ✓ Target guests (with personalized offers, deals and services) based on their social behaviour and interests
- ✓ Identify the “super influencers and power guests” of the brand to target them directly
- ✓ Integrate the Social User Data with membership/transaction data (such as loyalty/rewards program data): reward fans with special invites, exclusive previews, cash-back offers, etc.

SOME SAMPLE DASHBOARDS TO HELP BRAND OWNERS GET A HOLISTIC VIEW OF CUSTOMERS

The following sample dashboards are used to help brand owners get a holistic view of customers, their preferences, demographics, psychographics as well as brand health across geographies.

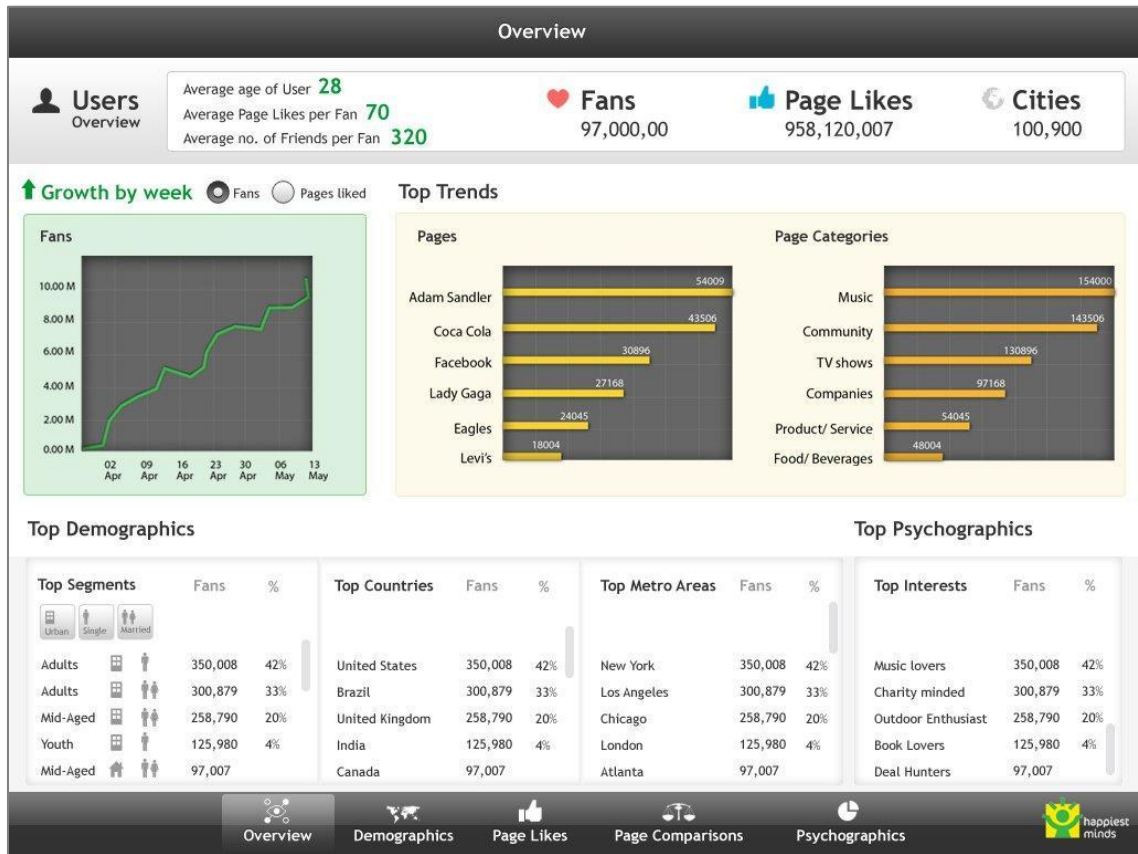


Figure 1: Overview Dashboard

The Overview Dashboard provides useful information such as a particular brand has about a million fans connecting via Social Connect; collectively these fans have liked the brand’s page 958 million times; the fan base is situated in over a 100 thousand cities; they demonstrate great interest in Adam Sandler and Coca Cola brand; they also prefer Music over TV shows etc.



Figure 2: Demographics dashboard

The Demographics dashboard is used for segmenting users on the basis of age, gender, relationship status and education. Additionally, geographic profiling is possible on the basis of ratio of urban vs rural, cities, country and language profile of users.



Figure 3: Demographics Dashboard (with filtering capabilities)

The Demographics dashboard has powerful filtering Capabilities for fine grained segmentation based on gender, age, relationship status, education, location.



Figure 4: Demographics Dashboard (Map View)

The Demographics Dashboard also has an intuitive- Map View interface that allows brand owners to see fan base in different geographies using a heat-map design theme.



Figure 5: Psychographics dashboard

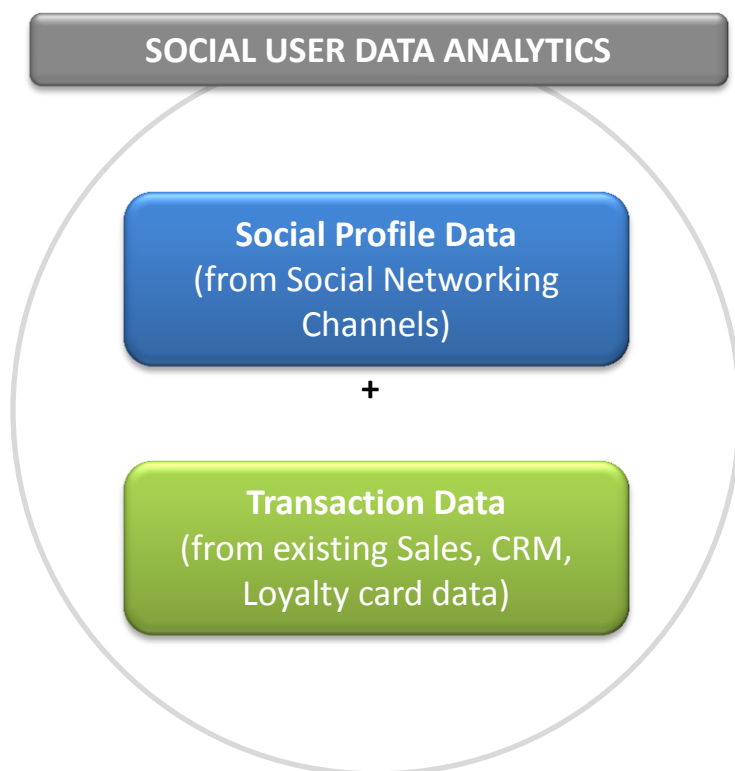
The Psychographics dashboard is used for segmenting users on the basis of interest. Brand owners can analyze customer profiles to see if they are Music lovers, TV fans, outdoor enthusiasts. It is also possible to identify users by their favorite activities – For example, Shopping Lovers comprise of 40% of the base of users, 66% of this group is married or engaged, 65% are urban residents, etc.



Figure 6: Affinity and Popularity dashboard

This dashboard is used for understanding user’s preferences and affinities towards other brands. This dashboard provides valuable insights for identifying ideal co-branding or cross-selling opportunities.

SOME SAMPLE USE CASES OF SOCIAL USER DATA ANALYTICS:



By integrating users likes, interest, preferences in social media (**social data**) with their purchasing history, transactions data and existing data from Sales data, CRM (**transaction data**), site owners can:

- **Personalize welcome message and home page:** The home page is the most important page of a website. It is the one page that all your visitors will view. A poor home page can destroy any chance of achieving your website objectives within a few seconds. A good home page is the blueprint for every successful website. Your homepage should set-up the key elements necessary to close a sale, or generate an enquiry (depending on what your

primary and secondary objectives are). Instead of presenting customers with a “standard-across-the-board” home page, use Social User Data Analytics to create a custom welcome message for customers with a product selection that would immediately appeal to them. For example, if a retailer knows that the person accessing the ecommerce website is a male, in his early 30s, living in San Francisco, with an interest in adventure travel, they can use all of the precious home page real-estate to feature products and offers that would appeal to his core tastes and preferences. They can also feature offline store listings nearest to his current location.

- **Content from search results can be fine-tuned to suit customer preferences:** Search functionality can be made more intelligent and intuitive using Social User Data Analytics to deliver “customer wow”. For example, armed with knowledge that the customer is a female, in her 20s, living in Boston, with a passion for skiing and searching for “adventure sport” can be served with product recommendations (such

as top-selling ski gear) that honor her interests and passions rather than a random list of adventure sport gear.

- **Widgets can display personalized offerings:** Social User Data Analytics can be effectively used to craft tailored offers by combining social user data and transaction data. For example, if you know that your customer has a strong active network of friends on Facebook, you can create coupons and other discount schemes that encourage users to “Share With Friends” or “Promote The Offer To Friends” to get more rewards, cash-back and such discount offers.
- **Marketing campaigns (emails, calls, SMS) can be much targeted:** With Social Connect-enabled, website brand owners can get a keener understanding of customer preferences – this valuable information can be used to create tailored marketing campaigns. For example, with the knowledge that certain subset of customers are celebrating birthdays in the month of November, you can send out a personalized e-mailer, instead of a generic email campaign, inviting them to shop to earn a free gift that month.
- **Effective cross promotion & co-branded campaign themes can be identified:** For example, armed with an insight that majority of your brand’s users display an affinity for country music, you can partner with country music labels/artistes for co-branded campaigns and promotional events. This kind of an insight is rarely possible by analyzing only transaction data of customers.
- **Determine brand advocates and influencers:** Website brand owners can identify brand advocates and influencers by leveraging Social User Data Analytics – this is not possible by analyzing transaction patterns alone. For example, knowing that Amy has spent \$500 and has about 150 friends on Facebook and Rachel who may have spent only \$100 but has a very active community of 1500+ friends who look up to her for fashion advice. Armed with this knowledge, the brand website owner can reach out to Rachel separately and create a special “Influencer Marketing” program (special deals, offers, programs) incentivizing Rachel to influence her friends in favor of the brand.

USING SOCIAL USER DATA ANALYTICS TO ENABLE DISCOVERY AND RELEVANCY IN ONLINE RETAIL

Traditional retail therapy encourages the process of discovery like no other. People find products that get them excited, provoke reactions and conversations with friends. In a typical offline retail environment, shoppers browse through products, hold them up against themselves, ask their shopping companions for feedback or advice, receive “thumbs-ups”, “go-aheads”, “green-signals”, “go-for-its”, critique each other’s choices and occasionally engage in heated discussions about the merits of one product over another.

Retailers have tried to bring in some aspects of discovery and sharing into online ecommerce experiences through Facebook likes, “Want” buttons, “Wishlists” however, the key is to enable people to emote the same way they do during the physical shopping experience with features that encourage “sharing” and “receiving” reactions, recommendations and reviews with others quickly and easily.

Using Social User Data Analytics, retailers can track which products are getting the maximum social interactions and engagements and ensure these products are readily available to shoppers. Also, using social user data, retailers can identify the right products based on people’s interests and past transaction histories and give those products a prominent place in the shopping experience to boost discovery and sales.

SHOWCASE WHAT’S HOT: Shoppers don’t like to plough through tons of products to identify the best, top-selling, most trendy etc. In a typical store scenario, shoppers can see the “hottest selling” products up-front to drive impulse purchases.

With Social User Data Analytics, ecommerce retailers can keep a pulse on “top trends” and “most talked about brands in the social universe” and similarly feature these “hot” items more prominently on the site, driving impulse purchases and giving products a wide exposure to new potential customers and even casual site visitors.

Additionally, Social User Data can help retailers customize promotions, marketing, offers and deals based on users’ social activity-level and influence.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER WHILE IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL CONNECT

In order to successfully implement Social Connect on a website, the following best practices and pointers must be considered:

- ✓ When asking permission from customers to share their Facebook data (see examples on page 7-8), only ask for those data points that are most important and relevant – and that would help you in the process of understanding your customers better. Customers get wary of sites that ask for too much social profile data without knowing why it is being asked.
- ✓ Customers expect and will appreciate transparency when they share personal/social profile data with you. Respect their privacy and data protection concerns by clarifying why they need to share particular profile data points and how you would use this to enhance their experience.
- ✓ Existing website user management will require changes to accommodate new fields for storing user profile data extracted from Facebook. For example – if the existing user management system does not have mechanisms to capture information fields such as “FB profile ID” or “Profile picture”, then it would have to be created by the script and filled with the appropriate data.
- ✓ Social Connect is a more powerful alternative to the traditional website registration form. However, until it becomes a de facto standard, Social Connect will need to aesthetically integrate with the current web registration form system. Web designers will have to consider how to integrate it seamlessly without making Social Connect look force-fitted or like an add-on.
- ✓ Technology changes will be required to store and process this social profile information. For sites that already collect user data, a new system would be devised to create records for new users with the appropriate data points. Additionally, it would be imperative to link existing website user profiles with their social network profiles. For example, website brand owners can think of innovative ways to incentivize site users (using offers, reward points, additional discounts) to link their site IDs with their Facebook IDs.
- ✓ Just collecting social profile data is not enough. The true value of this information is when it is integrated with existing CRM systems, loyalty programs, and campaign management platforms for email marketing, content recommendations and much more. Savvy brand owners use this information to learn more about customers’ preferences, and use the insights derived to promote relevant products, content and offers that are intended to give customers a more fulfilling experience.

CONCLUSION: WHY INVESTING IN SOCIAL CONNECT AND SOCIAL USER DATA ANALYTICS MAKES BUSINESS SENSE

“Know Thy Customer” is one of the first and most important rules of business. Every minute, millions of customers share personal details of their lives on online social networks – things such as where they are, who they’re with, what they’re doing, and why. They express their likes and dislikes, everything from their political leanings and spiritual beliefs to their brand loyalties and tastes in movies and music. It’s a gold mine of unstructured data that could be analyzed by brand owners for valuable insight into things like online buying habits, mobile app usage, travel patterns and much more. This sort of customer understanding is rarely possible by analyzing only transaction data.

Marketers are no longer merely interested in mass-marketing or blanketing large audiences with the right demographics in the hopes of influencing them. More than ever, the new goal for marketers is to reach the individual with a targeted message that reflects and respects her specific preferences, passions and interests based on information that is known about them through their social profiles.

With Social User Data Analytics, brand owners and marketers can get a better understanding of their customers and prospects and embrace a new way of engaging with them – this in turn, can help them design and deliver meaningful experiences to ensure long-term customer loyalty and affinity.

About Happiest Minds Technologies

Happiest Minds, the Mindful IT Company, applies agile methodologies to enable **digital transformation** for enterprises and technology providers by delivering seamless customer experience, business efficiency and actionable insights. We leverage a spectrum of disruptive technologies such as: **Big Data Analytics**, AI & Cognitive Computing, Internet of Things, Cloud, Security, SDN-NFV, RPA, Blockchain, etc. Positioned as “Born Digital . Born Agile”, our capabilities spans across product engineering, digital business solutions, infrastructure management and security services. We deliver these services across industry sectors such as **retail**, consumer packaged goods, edutech, e-commerce, banking, insurance, hi-tech, engineering R&D, manufacturing, automotive and travel/transportation/hospitality.

Headquartered in Bangalore, India; Happiest Minds has operations in USA, UK, The Netherlands, Australia and Middle East.

To know more about our offerings. Please write to us at business@happiestminds.com