

# 1 Social Media as an Effective Tool to Promote Business-An 2 Empirical Study

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## 6 **Abstract**

7 In a rapidly changing era, entrepreneurs, as well as marketers, need to be up to date with the  
8 change in the business environment or they may have to face the risk of being obsolete. Days  
9 are long past when a conventional business model used to grow fast and get success. In the era  
10 of Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram, social marketing has evolved as an integral  
11 part of marketing strategy. It is all most impossible to think of a marketing strategy without  
12 taking into account the importance of social media. Adopting some form of online promotion  
13 through social media has become essential for all business houses. In an industry where trends  
14 are changing in faster than light, adoption of social network marketing is very vital for  
15 companies to survive in that race. In this paper, the researcher has tried to find out the  
16 importance and effectiveness of social media as a marketing and promotional tool. An attempt  
17 has been made to analyze the extent of influence of social media as a buying decision maker.  
18 The paper also tries to find out the role of gender biases. The gap between the customer's  
19 expectation and social media performance is also attempted to find out.

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21 **Index terms**— brand loyalty; promotional tool; marketing strategy; social media marketing (SMM); social  
22 networking site; social media; online branding.

## 23 **1 Introduction**

24 After the liberalization in Indian Economy Policy, in 1991, we, as customers experienced a radical change in our  
25 daily life, as well as in market place. The introduction of MNCs, along with their world-class products, with  
26 a very competitive price; the living standard of common Indian has raised a lot. The introduction of modern  
27 computers, laptop, tablet, internet, e-commerce, and m-commerce has had a tremendous impact on how business  
28 operates and promotes.

29 As more and more new technologies are available, businesses houses willing to adopt them will gain big leverage  
30 over its competitor. Companies like, Microsoft, eBay, Amazon, Facebook, Google are ruling the world because  
31 they have adopted the changes in technology keeping in view of customer's expectations and conveniences.

32 Along with the evolution of IT-based companies, social media has become one of the most booming sectors  
33 where youth are the major users and followers of such media. Social Media Marketing (SMM) has become the  
34 hottest medium of promotion for most of the companies irrespective of the private sector or public sector. Most  
35 of the entrepreneurs micro or small, medium or big, are using social media for promotion as well as for lead  
36 generation. Entrepreneurs have realized the power of social media and its role in building brand image and  
37 customer relationship.

38 Human, by birth, is social in nature and collection & sharing of information is a part of his life style. Technology  
39 has removed the physical distance barrier and made it very quick and easy to connect with people living different  
40 part of the nation or even in the world. With the help of social network sites, it is easy to stay in touch with old  
41 friends and relatives, living in a distanced place.

42 Social media marketers have understood this fact and are focusing on this business strategy to reap profit by  
43 exploiting this new platform.

## 4 A) VIRTUAL BRAND COMMUNITY (VBC)

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44 With time, the lives of people are becoming more and more dependent on technologies even for their basic  
45 communication. Now a day social networking sites are affecting our daily life considerably, and are commanding  
46 major portion of time in our daily life. Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, are influencing our thinking  
47 process, socialization, and leisure time. What is more shocking and astonishing is that the youth of today are  
48 spending even more than ten hours on social networking sites. They prefer to watch advertising and product  
49 promotion on different social network sites on their Smartphone rather than on conventional television.

50 Customers, these days are more informationsavvy about a product or service, before they make a purchase  
51 decision. Features like users review, expert opinion, peer review, critic's opinion in network sites are becoming  
52 more influencing factors in decision making rather than conventional advertising and sales promotion. Now a  
53 day, the customer has the power to talk about a brand and post his opinion about the product and service on  
54 the company's web page and social media also. Therefore companies have no choice but to accept the influence  
55 of social marketing and handle them with special care and respect. now days needs to leverage proper social  
56 media channel in the best possible ways. By giving your business brand a social media touch, you not only  
57 generate more profit but also connect with new customers better and serve them on a higher level. It makes  
58 digital marketing easier.

59 The tremendous growth rate of social media and galloping increase in users on social media on a mobile device  
60 is encouraging companies to use Facebook, twitter, instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Google+ for advertising  
61 and promoting their products and services.

## 62 2 II.

### 63 3 Literature Review

64 Kalpana and Haenlein, (2010), defined social media, as a group of internet based applications that build on  
65 ideological and technological foundation of web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of user generation  
66 content.

67 O. Reilly, (2005) defined social media as; "social media is a broad term which describes software tools to create  
68 user-generated content that can be shared." How well consumers perceived the effectiveness of social media can  
69 be measured by a feature known as Customers' Sentiment towards Marketing (CSM). CSM is a concept that  
70 refers to the general feeling of customers towards marketing and market place (Lawson et al. 2001 as cited by  
71 Mady, 2011).

72 Basher et al. ??2012) in their empirical research, based on Delhi and NCR, concluded that social marketing  
73 as a promotional tool, will be effective only if it will provide concrete and timely information wanted by the  
74 customers with an aim to bridge the gap between expectation and reality. Mady (2011) discussed the importance  
75 of customer's perception on overall marketing activities regardless of their active participation in consumption. He  
76 also explained the process of adoption towards innovation; according to him; it is a tool that provides information  
77 about customer's readiness towards acceptance of new technology.

78 Perceive fit is another factor that marketers can consider for social media shopping. It is the degree of similarity  
79 between an existing product with it's extended new version, affiliated to a recognized brand, (Del Vecchio & Smith  
80 as cited by Cha, 2009). Now a day's social media is not a mere platform to stay connected with friends, peers,  
81 and family but it has become a strong medium of promotion for companies. In this platform consumers learn  
82 more about their preferred companies; their products and services.

83 Marketers and retailers should utilize these sites more effectively, and professionally as a media to reach their  
84 customers and provide a new experience of shopping.

85 The technology related development like the introduction of powerful search engine, Smartphone, different  
86 user-friendly apps, availability of high-speed internet with reasonable or very low price, social network medium  
87 has extended marketers ability to reach shoppers through new touch points, (Shankar et al. 2011).

88 Word of Mouth (WOM) marketing is another term used by the marketer to promote a product. It is an  
89 un-paid form of publicity where users of the product are the campaigner of the company. Castronovo and Huang  
90 (2012) in their study on alternative marketing communication discussed the importance of social media and word  
91 of mouth communication as an integral part of integrated marketing communication.

92 Perceive fit is another factor that marketers can consider for social media shopping. It is the amount of  
93 similarity between an existing product and an extended product category affiliated with a brand (Del Vecchio  
94 & Smith as cited by Cha, 2009).

95 Aaker & Keller (1990), stated that perceived fit is, the extend of consumers perception towards a new version  
96 of an existing product and its consistency with the old one.

## 97 4 a) Virtual Brand Community (VBC)

98 A brand community is a specialized nongeographical community based on a structured set of social relationships  
99 among admirers of a brand, (Royo-Vella, Casamassima, 2011).

100 Muniz and O, Guinn, cited by Georgi and Mink, 2012, described VBC as an aggregation of consumers that  
101 occurs on the internet as because of their interest in some brand or product.

102 According to Gasol, Favian, and Guinaliu, 2008; a brand community is a group of people who share the same  
103 interest in a particular brand or product.

104 Muniz & Jensen, (2007) described VBC as a site of complex brand meaning, creation and consumption efforts.  
105 Gasol, Favian, and Guinaliu (2008) founded that members of VBC who are very active in this group and have  
106 a positive experience are more loyal toward a brand as compared to others.  
107 Cha, (2009), concluded that security is a major reasons concerned by customers to express their opinion  
108 towards social network sites, therefore, impacting trust in such media.

## 109 **5 b) Consumers Attitude/ Motives**

110 These days, it is most vital for entrepreneurs and distributors to focus on the factors that build customers attitude;  
111 as on social media, customers are actively creating contents about a brand, something previously controlled solely  
112 by the company, (Heinonen, 2011).

113 Chu, (2011), examined the link between Facebook brand related group participation, responses towards  
114 advertising, psychological factors of selfdisclosure and attitude amongst members and nonmembers of different  
115 social media groups. He concluded that those who are active members to a particulars group have a more  
116 favorable attitude towards social media and advertisements on this media.

117 Cox, (2010) has found the correlation between attitude and age. Based on his finding he concluded that people  
118 fall in the age bracket of 18-24, are more attracted and active in blogs, videos on social media like YouTube,  
119 Facebook, Snap deal, Instagram; as they find it most eye-catching.

120 With ever increasing development of social media and the subsequent advantages that come with it such as  
121 vast reach, low cost, and high communication efficiency, companies of all size have been hiring marketers who  
122 are very eager to learn about, create, and facilitate virtual brand communities. LaRoche, Habibi, Richard, and  
123 Sankarnarayanan, (2012) listed several other reasons behind such interest in virtual brand communities: the rapid  
124 dissemination of information, influencing customers evaluation, learning customers perception of new products  
125 and most importantly gaining a holy grail of loyal customer.

## 126 **6 c) User-generated Content**

127 Consumers now a day play an increasingly active and important role in the marketing cycle. Photo editing apps  
128 such as camera +, and VSCO, enable everyday people to produce and post high-quality images to the internet.  
129 User-generated content, also known as UGC, is a rich resource waiting to be tapped into by the business.

130 According to Gonzalez, (2010) social media provides never-ending avenue for communication; it is the  
131 individual who serves as the influencer, not the technology. According to Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, UGC  
132 describes the sum of all ways in which people make use of social media, and usually applied to describe the  
133 various forms of media content that are publically available and created by end users.

## 134 **7 d) Viral Advertising**

135 Viral advertising or viral marketing is a more popular business strategy that uses the social network to promote  
136 their products. According to Poter and Allen, cited by Chu, 2011, viral advertising is an unpaid peer to peer  
137 communication about a product using the internet to influence the targeted customers.

138 Just like a virus spreads from one person to another, viral marketing is circulated by companies through social  
139 networking sites as a medium, and in most of the cases, sponsored by the companies. Bampo et al, (2008), in  
140 their finding confirmed that social network marketing plays a critical role in spreading a viral message.

141 Bajpai and Pandey (2012) examined how viral marketing put its mark as a new concept of product promotion  
142 and concluded that it is in the stage of infancy and marketers still have to learn a lot to make it more effective.

## 143 **8 e) Objectives of the Study**

144 1. To examine whether there exists any role of gender in attitude building, perception creation, and purchase  
145 decision making based on social media advertising. 2. To study the gap between consumer's perception about  
146 social media and its performance to meet the expectation. 3. To suggest strategies to fill the gap between  
147 customers expectation, and the performance of social media.

## 148 **9 f) Formulation of Hypothesis**

149 Keeping in view the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses were formulated: H 0 1: There is a significant  
150 difference in attitude between male and female towards social media advertisement.

151 H A 1: There is no significant difference in attitude between male and female towards social media  
152 advertisement.

153 H 0 2: There is a significant difference in perception of advertisement utility in social media between male and  
154 female.

155 H A 2: There is no significant difference in perception of advertisement utility in social media between male  
156 and female.

157 H 0 3: There is a significant difference between social media performance and the expectation of consumers,  
158 in promotion of brand of consumer's durable and luxury products.

159 H A 3: There is no significant difference between social media performance and the expectation of consumers  
160 in promotion of brand of consumer's durable and luxury products.

161 Ho4: There is a significant difference between male and female in decision making related to their purchase  
162 either FMCG, Consumers' durable, apparel, and luxury products through social media.

163 H A 4: There is no significant difference between male and female in decision making related to their purchase  
164 either FMCG, Consumers' durable, apparel, and luxury products through social media.

## 165 **10 Research Methodology**

166 A descriptive research methodology technique was applied to collect the data. A questionnaire was designed  
167 to collect the view of the respondents about the influence of social media in consumer's buying decision. The  
168 questionnaire was divided into two parts, Part-I, and Part-II. Part-I contains questions related to respondents  
169 demographic information and its usages pattern, whereas Part-II have a series of close-ended questions based on  
170 the impact of social media in the purchase decision and their expectation from such media.

171 A pilot survey was conducted taking five respondents from each age group, and the shortfalls of the  
172 questionnaire were met. Then the questionnaire was put over Google docs and a link was shared with the  
173 users of social media through mail for the purpose of data collection. The link was also posted on various social  
174 network sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn etc. The respondents and the users of social network sites  
175 were also requested to share the link from their own profile. The researcher has used a nonprobability convenience  
176 sampling. For visual representation of findings and results; bar charts, pie chart, and table has been used as a  
177 descriptive analysis tool. To prove the hypothesis, SPSS 20 software was used and the independent T-test has  
178 been performed. From table-1.1, we can observe that out of 150 respondents, 85 respondents are male, and 65  
179 respondents are female.

## 180 **11 a) Descriptive Statistics**

181 As per Govt. of India age categorization, the researcher has considered the respondents having age in between  
182 18-30 years will be in the youth category.

183 Seventy respondents out of one hundred and fifty, i.e., 46.7 percent respondents as per the tabular data, fall  
184 in this category of youth. Fifty respondents are in between the age of 31-50 years and are of the middle age  
185 group people. Rest thirty respondents are within the age bracket of old people. Motivational factor for social  
186 media users joining or following a brand in social network platforms varies from user to user. From table-1.3, we  
187 can see that the main reason for fans to join a brand page or brand is based on the brand name of the product.  
188 Advertising and friends invitation do also play an important role in selection of a brand or a product. Personal  
189 search is another important factor of public preference towards a brand page.

190 Thus we can interpret that easy availability of the brand name in a search engine is crucial consideration for  
191 companies to be kept in mind. Brand loyal consumers purchase a product again and again; market the brand  
192 directly or indirectly by talking positive words amongst their friends and peers. It is known as Word of Mouth  
193 (WoM) communication about a brand or a product, and is considered to be the most effective tool for a purchase  
194 decision making, especially for a technical and costly product.

195 Social networking sites are the new customer relationship management (CRM) medium where consumers have  
196 a feeling of exclusiveness. The attachment towards a particular company or brand is the key motivators to  
197 advocate about it. In these days, social networking has become an important aspect of lifestyle. People are  
198 spending more than five to six hours browsing on the net or social networks. From table-1.4, we can see the  
199 importance of social network marketing as an effective tool for promotional strategy, as more than 2/3 of the  
200 respondents are spending more and more hours in a day on different social network sites. Social media has  
201 become the most effective communication tool through which people can connect with their long lost friends of  
202 childhood or college life. This is evident, as most of the respondents, near about 100 out of 150, are using such  
203 platform to connect with their friends through network building and chatting. While 'professional use' has rated  
204 second as a purpose of using the social network, and others apart from just playing games, watching videos,  
205 listening to music, are the next important purposes of using this medium.

## 206 **12 b) Time Dedicated for Socializations**

## 207 **13 Global Journal of Management and Business Research**

208 Marketers have plenty of opportunities to communicate with their target customers and offer them the products  
209 and services, and persuade them to transact and become a loyal customer for the company. Undoubtedly the  
210 social media is a rapidly growing platform for a brand building and is used by almost all the sectors. It is not  
211 only an effective tool for product promotion and brand building but very cost effective compare to any other form  
212 of promotion. Most of the users consider social media networks as a decision-making tool during their process of  
213 purchasing. Especially in electronics and fashion related products, travel destinations, and hotels booking etc.,  
214 review and suggestions of social network friends play the decisive role.

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## 215 14 d) Considering Social Media in Buying Decision

216 Thus it is an immense importance for marketers to put more and more information on social media so as to  
217 become visible with target customers and if succeeded to pursue them, positive word of mouth communication  
218 will automatically get started and eventually gives rise to multiple impacts. From fig. ??3, it is pretty evident  
219 that the social media is not an effective grievance handling platform. It seems that consumers are not getting the  
220 proper services, especially the after sales services as perceived by them. During the survey, it has been pointed  
221 out by the respondents that they are not getting any response of their queries and questions they used to post  
222 on the companies social media pages. To make SNM more effective, it is expected from the marketers that they  
223 will put more importance on this aspect of customer's satisfaction. Providing effective after sales service and  
224 redressal of grievances through customer's complaint page, social marketing will be more effective in years to  
225 come, as it is well said by a Chinese proverb, "a stitch in time, save nine." e) Hypotheses Testing H 0 1: There  
226 is a significant difference in attitude between male and female towards social media advertising.

## 227 15 Independence sample test

228 From the above test table, we can see that the significant value, i.e., p-value for T-test is .022, less than our  
229 chosen significant value i.e.,  $p? = 0.05$ . Therefore we reject the null hypothesis and interpret that there is  
230 no significant difference in attitude between male and female towards social media advertisement. The finding  
231 indicates that gender difference is not a considerable factor for social media advertising, contrary to the findings  
232 of Vollman, Abraham & Morn, 2010 and Junco, Merson, Salter, 2010; where women found more active in social  
233 media.

## 234 16 Not even once 57%

235 Twice 20%  
236 Once 10%  
237 Often 13%  
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## 239 17 Mean difference

240 Std. error difference H 0 2: There is a significance difference in perception towards advertisement utility in social  
241 media between male and female respondents.

242 From the above table we can see that the significant value i.e., p-value for T-test is .000, which is less than  
243 our chosen significant value, i.e.  $p? = 0.05$ . Therefore we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is  
244 no significant difference in perception towards advertisement utility in social media between male and female.

245 H 0 3: There is a significant difference between social media performance and expectation of consumers in  
246 promotion of brand of consumer's durable and luxury products. From the above table we can see that the  
247 significant value i.e., p-value for one sample t-test is 0.416, which is much higher than our chosen significant value  
248 i.e.,  $p? = 0.05$ . Therefore we accept the null hypothesis and interpret that there is a significant difference  
249 between social media performance and expectation of consumers in promotion of brand of consumer's durable  
250 and luxury products.

## 251 18 Std. error difference

252 H04: There is a significant difference between male and female in decision making related to their purchase either  
253 FMCG, Consumers' durable, apparel, and luxury products through social media. From the above table we can  
254 see that the significant value i.e., p-value for T-test is .512, which is much higher than our chosen significant  
255 value,  $p? = 0.05$ . Therefore we accept the null hypothesis and can interpret that there is a significant difference  
256 between male and female in decision making related to their purchase either in FMCG or consumers' durable;  
257 apparel, and luxury products through social media.

## 258 19 Group statistics

259 IV.

## 260 20 Findings

261 There is no variability in attitude towards social media usage between male and female i.e. gender biases has  
262 no impact on the usage pattern of social media. It is young people who have been adopting social media as  
263 a platform of up gradation about what is happening in the world of marketing and to enrich their knowledge  
264 domain in other areas.

265 Both male and female have the same outlook related to the effectiveness of social media for market promotion.  
266 The effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool is only possible when organizations will provide effective  
267 and timely information about their products and services in social media and also on their media pages, which  
268 is supported by the finding of Bashar et al. 2012. Daily updating of company's social media page is a must to  
269 create a positive impression on consumers mind.

270 During the course of data analysis it has been realized by the researcher that somehow a gap exists between  
271 customer's expectation and company's promises over social media advertising. Customers also, do not agree with  
272 the fact that social media in general, and companies' page in particular, is a good platform for their grievances  
273 to be solved. At the same time, they feel lack of personal touch that is a major shortcoming of social media  
274 and is not as effective as single stand retail store. One of the interesting findings of this research is, that women  
275 usually prefer to purchase product that they can touch, feel, and bargain with.

276 V.

## 277 21 Discussion

278 There is a paradigm shift of business from transactional to long-lasting relationship marketing. A new area  
279 of relationship building and management i.e. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has evolved as a  
280 marketing strategic tool. It is now more critical than ever that successful companies are using engagement  
281 marketing principle to engage their prospects and consumers before, during and after their purchase cycle.  
282 Information which is demanded by target market should be provided in such a manner that you are viewed in a  
283 positive light, create a positive brand and product reputation, and are selected with a priority as their brand of  
284 choice. With the growth of social media, a new term of marketing i.e. permission marketing has been coined in  
285 1999 and the features like -friend request, page like, page follow, page share etc. are helping companies to reach  
286 their customer with more confidence. Though the concept of SNM is growing at a very fast rate, still it is in a  
287 nascent stage in India. Therefore the companies have to think seriously about the use of this recent development  
288 in the field communication, make effective strategies, and execute them in a professional manner so as to win a  
289 large share of market and evolve as an innovative firm in years to come.

## 290 22 Std. Error difference

291 For a business to get success in a world of reached social media influence; companies now have to transform  
292 their business strategies from product-oriented to customer-oriented where the customer will play a decisive role.  
293 According to Nielson & Roper reports, more than 90 percent of consumers take their purchase decision especially  
294 in consumer's durable products, based on word of mouth recommendations.

295 In the era of Mark Zuckerberg generation, it is not difficult to understand why people, especially the youth  
296 generation, are so obsessed about social media. Not only the common people but big political parties of different  
297 countries are highly depending on social media marketing.

298 Every company, big or small, young or established, need to have an active presence on such social media. It  
299 is now inexcusable for any business that wants to thrive too, not be tweeting!

300 Here some suggestions for companies to improve their promotional activities and brand visibility in social  
301 network sites:

302 1. Develop a proper content of your message. 2. Create an attractive presentation of it. 3. Make your target  
303 consumers engage with your message. 4. Add audio; sometimes people prefer listening rather than reading. 5.  
304 Encourage consumer feedback. More and more feedback you received, more will be the chance to improve your  
305 product/service. 6. Feel the customer's experience. There is a very nice saying, "you can't really understand  
306 another person's experience, until you have walked a mile in his shoes." 7. Deal with customer service. If they  
307 are satisfied, they will pull business for you. 8. Improve word of mouth communication. 9. Keep learning always.  
308 Now a day, social media is one of the most powerful, profitable, and effective platforms for companies to increase  
309 its visibility amongst its target customers. By spending few hours on social media and on companies' page, firms  
310 are reported a huge increase in queries and business turnover as well. At the same time companies should keep  
311 in mind that social media is a double-edged sword, if not used with care it may have the power to create havoc  
of market reputation within no time. <sup>1 2 3</sup>

## 11

Variable	Classification	Total number	Percentage
Gender	Male	85	56.7
	Female	65	43.3
Age	18-30	70	46.7
	31-50	50	33.3
	51-70	30	20

312 Figure 1: Table 1 . 1 :

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Global Journal of Management and Business Research Frequency Percent Valid percent 63 41.7 42.0 26 17.2 17.3 20 Cumulative percent  
13.2 13.3 34 22.5 22.7 7 4.6 4.7 150 99.3 100.0 1 .7 151 100.0  
From the above table-1.2, we can interpret that Valid Facebook linkedin instagram snapchat twitter Total Missing System Total 42.0  
Facebook is the leading social media network site, as supported 59.3  
by the finding of Jati and Mohanty (2012) and Bhagwant and 72.7  
Goutam, (2013). Snapchat and LinkedIn are also at the top of 95.3  
the list with 22.5 percent and 17.2 percent preference share. 100.0

Figure 2: Table 1 . 2 :

**13**

Variable	Total N
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Figure 3: Table 1 . 3 :

**14**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
less than 1 hr	50	33.1	33.3	33.3
1-2 hrs	39	25.8	26.0	59.3
valid	2-3 hrs	45	29.8	89.3
3 hrs and above		16	10.6	100.0
	Total	150	99.3	100.0
missing	System	1	.7	
total		151	100.0	

Figure 4: Table 1 . 4 :

Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means								
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	Lower	Upper
<b>Equal variances assumed in</b>										
Role	assumed									
purchasd	.632		.203	-.657	148.512		-	.07846	-.20664	.10347
decision	Equal	variances	-.654	135.162	.514		.05158			
mak-	not assumed						-	.07886	-.20755	.10438
ing							.05158			

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Figure 5:

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