

## **Social Media –A Communication Tool in Marketing**

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### **Abstract**

Today social media is recognized as most popular tool of communication in marketing. Consumers continue to spend more time on social networks than on any other category of sites. Through social networking sites, companies can interact with individual followers. Many brands are now heavily using this mobile app to boost their visual marketing strategy. This personal interaction can instill a feeling of loyalty into followers and potential customers. The companies using social media are moving ahead to those who are not using it.

### **Introduction**

Social media is the social interaction where people create content, share it, bookmark it and network at a phenomenal rate. Gone are the days when a pure-bricks business model will thrive well in current market scenario. It is practically impossible to design a marketing strategy without considering social networks. Social media had become really important gradient in today's marketing mix in general and in promotion mix in particular.

Social media provides an environment where users and PR professionals can converse, and where PR professionals can promote their brand and improve their company's image by listening and responding to what the public is saying about their product. They have provided an open arena where people are free to exchange ideas on companies, brands, and products. When companies join the social channels, consumers can interact with them and they can communicate with consumers directly. That interaction feels more personal to users than traditional methods of strictly outbound marketing & advertising.

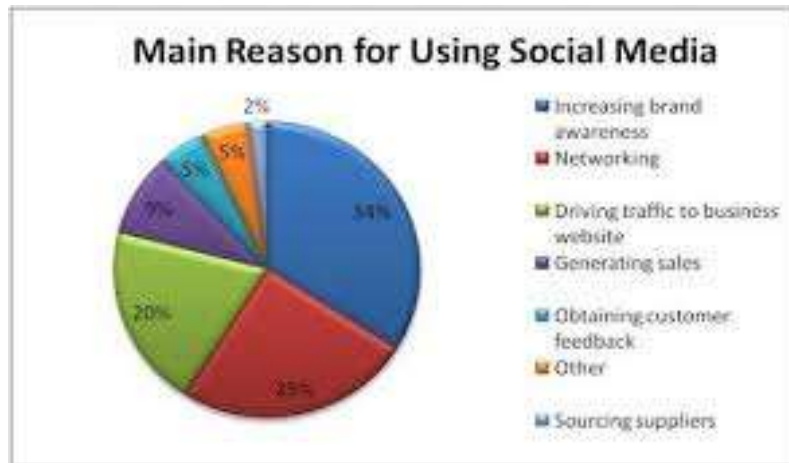
### **Purposes of Social Media in Marketing**

One of the main purposes in employing Social Media in marketing is as a communications tool that makes the companies accessible to those interested in their product and makes them visible to those who have no knowledge of their products. These companies use social media to create buzz, learn from and target customers. It's the only form of marketing that can finger consumers at each and every stage of the consumer decision journey.

People obtain information, education, news, and other data from electronic and print media. Social media are distinct from industrial or traditional media such as newspapers, television, and film as they are comparatively inexpensive and accessible. They enable anyone (even private individuals) to publish or access information. Industrial media generally require significant resources to publish information as in most cases the articles goes through many revisions before being published.

One characteristic shared by both social and industrial media is the capability to reach small or large audiences; for example, either a blog post or a television show may reach no people or millions of people. Some of the properties that help describe the differences between social and industrial media are

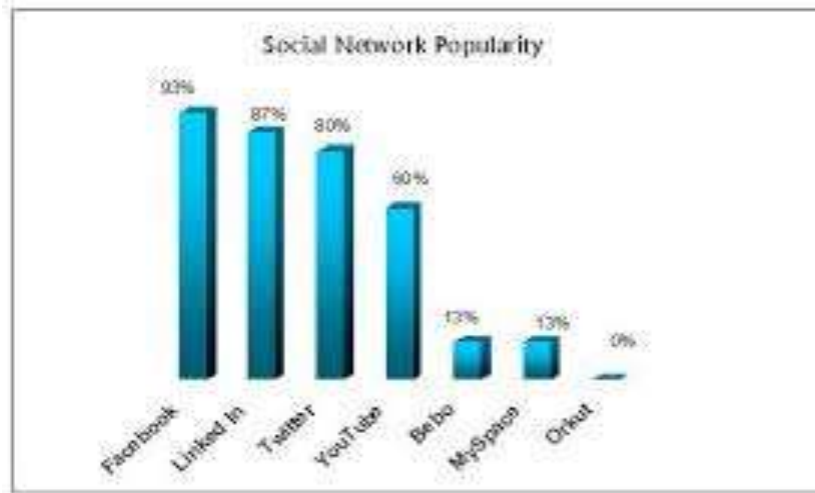
1. **Quality:** In industrial (traditional) publishing mediated by a publisher the typical range of quality is substantially narrower than in niche, unmediated markets. The main challenge posed by content in social media sites is the fact that the distribution of quality has high variance: from very high-quality items to low-quality, sometimes abusive content
2. **Reach:** Both industrial and social media technologies provide scale and are capable of reaching a global audience. Industrial media, however, typically use a centralized framework for organization, production, and dissemination, whereas social media are by their very nature more decentralized, less hierarchical, and distinguished by multiple points of production and utility.
3. **Frequency:** The number of times an advertisement is displayed on social media platforms.
4. **Accessibility:** The means of production for industrial media are typically government and/or corporate (privately owned); social media tools are generally available to the public at little or no cost.
5. **Usability:** Industrial media production typically requires specialized skills and training. Conversely, most social media production requires only modest reinterpretation of existing skills; in theory, anyone with access can operate the means of social media production.



Marketing through social media has other benefits as well. Of the top factors that correlate with a strong Google organic search, seven are social media dependent. This means that if brands are less or non active on social media, they tend to show up less on Google searches. While platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Google+ have a larger amount of monthly users, The visual media sharing based mobile platforms however, garner a higher interaction rate in comparison and have registered the fastest growth and have changed the ways in which consumers engage with brand content. Instagram has an interaction rate of 1.46% with an average of 130 million users monthly as opposed to Twitter which has a .03% interaction rate with an average of 210 million monthly users.

Unlike traditional media that are often cost-prohibitive to many companies, a social media strategy does not require astronomical budgeting. To this end, companies make use of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram in order to reach audiences much wider than through the use of traditional print/TV/radio advertisements alone at a fraction of the cost, as most social networking sites can be used at no cost. This has changed the ways that companies approach interact with customers, as a substantial percentage of consumer interactions are now being carried out over online platforms with much higher visibility. Customers can now post reviews of products and services, rate customer service and ask questions or voice concerns directly to companies through social media platforms. Thus social media marketing is also used by businesses in order to build relationships of trust with consumers. To this aim, companies may also hire personnel to specifically handle these social media interactions, who usually report under the title of online community managers. Handling these interactions in a satisfactory manner can result in an increase of consumer trust. To both this aim and to fix the public's

perception of a company, 3 steps are taken in order to address consumer concerns, identifying the extent of the social chatter, engaging the influencers to help, and developing a proportional response.



Top brands receive high leverage from social media marketing and internet companies are getting highly interested on how they pull it off. By social media marketing, a brand or business is able to build its popularity by increasing its website presence and growing the number of its followers using the social media. There are many marketing tricks employed by many businesses in order to increase their website traffic and ranking by using the social media influence. Here's how top brands are able to use social media for impressive marketing and profitable leverage.

### 1. Red Bull Social Media Campaign

Social media is responsible for the profit earned by Red Bull in 2012, selling about 5.2 billion cans of its energy drinks. It launched a marketing campaign that leverages on its buyer persona. On its website, thrill seeking athletes were featured, including race car drivers. Its social media campaign kicked off by launching on its Facebook page the upcoming thrilling events of playing addicting games and featuring on its Twitter page a photo of the week contest that gets the viewers talking, sharing and engaging with the Red Bull brand. It also featured the experience and adventures of heroes on an adrenaline pumping action on the Red Bull TV that is optimized by an app to accommodate more viewers and followers.

What makes this top brand fare well in its social media marketing campaign knows their target audience to be likely engaged with their brand and will be interested in using their products. The social media campaign is not all about the Red Bull drink, but leveraging on the interest of their audience that is relevant to the product they are selling.

## **2. The ADT social media campaigns**

ADT is a security company that became quite popular in the social media channel as more than a brand that provides security technology. It leverages in using different social media channels in order to spread the word about their company, products and services. Now, ADT is not merely a security company, but a brand that is known in giving protection not only in homes, buildings and offices, but also for your loved ones, properties and lifestyle. It also added humor in its marketing campaign in order to generate more interests from its followers, making them more engaged in its brand.

Its Pinterest account shows crime stats and cleaning and moving tips that entertain its viewers. The brand also leverages on highlighting their customers' experiences on how their products are able to provide them protection through featured testimonials on their Facebook page. Its YouTube videos also showcase the homes of high profile individuals like professional athletes using their ADT Pulse products and services.

## **3. CableTV.com social media campaigns**

As an online source of cable television, the company uses social media in order to keep their viewers engaged on its latest television shows. Its social media marketing campaign involves using hash tags to promote a particular television show. It also uses Google + in order to draw attention to their followers and take them directly to its CableTV.com blog. It also keeps the viewers enticed and engaged by featuring teasing headlines on its Facebook page with the inclusion of interviews with its television series stars. Their Facebook page also allows comments from their viewers, which gives Cable TV.com a good source of information about understanding their followers' concerns, preferences and likes from a television show.

## **4. Oreo**

Oreo uses a 30-minute video clip in order to reach to its target audience from various fields, but maintaining a similar theme that promotes its product. It featured artists in the hip hop and country music industry and a child spending quality time with her dad with the captivating effects of eating the Oreo cookies that enticed people in sharing the video clip on various social media channels. The brand also used YouTube for its marketing campaign by featuring a Snack Hacks short video clip that demonstrates the different fun ways of eating their product

## **5. Starbucks presses social media onward**

One of the most successful brands using social media, Starbucks wins more than a popularity contest with its vast numbers of online fans. The sites have become an important way to advertise daily and, occasionally, drive huge numbers of customers into stores.

The fifth-largest brand on Facebook, with 34 million fans, Starbucks trails only Coca-Cola, Disney, Red Bull and Converse. Starbucks executives figure that through Facebook fans and their friends alone, they have access to nearly 1 billion people - a seventh of the world's population. On Twitter, its 3.6 million followers rank it fourth, behind Samsung Mobile, iTunes Music and NASA.

There are even "Starbucks Partners" pages for the chain's employees, more than half of whom in the United States are 25 years old or younger. A recent Starbucks Partners photo on Instagram and Facebook touted a California store where three workers made 40 drinks in 10 minutes — for a nearby zombie movie shoot, naturally.

Although having followers is important, the real test is interaction and sales, and Starbucks has been winning there as well.

Starbucks' first big social-media promotion came in 2009, about a year after it launched on Facebook and Twitter. It offered a free pastry with drink purchase before 10:30 a.m.

A million people showed up, proving "the channels are not just about engaging and telling a story and connecting, but they can have a material impact on the business," said Alexandra Wheeler, who's in charge of Starbucks' global digital marketing.

### **Benefits of using Social Media as marketing tool**

#### **1. Stand ahead of the crowd**

Much of the marketing landscape is very crowded. Your emails compete in the inbox with hundreds of other messages, many sent by your competitors. It's difficult to get your booth noticed at major trade shows, and it's starting to feel impossible to get anyone to actually read your print ads or direct mail pieces. In many sectors, the same is true for social media. But industrial marketers still have the opportunity to jump into a landscape that isn't full of noise.

So, while you may be jockeying for attention on the trade show floor, you are likely to be the only one in your competitive set who is discussing the show's themes on Twitter or distributing a show wrapup blog post. The fact that your industry is behind the curve gives you a golden opportunity to leap ahead. Now is the time to be an innovator and claim some mindshare.

## **2. Connect with influencers**

Getting your share of press from trade media can be a challenge. You're not the only one who has product announcements and perspectives you'd love to see covered by the media outlets in your market. Social media offers an excellent opportunity to amplify your trade media relations program, since journalists are typically active users. Additionally, you're likely to see industry analysts, consultants and other industry thought-leaders spending time on Twitter and LinkedIn. Developing a robust presence in these channels will help you build a dialogue with these influencers -- a key step to getting your company and your content noticed.

## **3. Build relationships**

Industrial sales and marketing operations are heavily focused on relationships -- between manufacturers' sales executives and distributors, between distributors and end-users, etc. This makes social media a natural fit for the sector. When used properly, social platforms can amplify existing relationships and pave the way to new ones. Smart sales professionals are using social media to begin and extend dialogues, as well as to gather valuable information about what's important to their audience. You can learn a great deal about a prospect or customer based on their social media activities -- useful details like when they change jobs, what trade shows they're attending, what industry issues matter to them, etc.

## **4. Connect with a new generation**

While social media use has lagged somewhat in the industrial sphere, this trend is sure to change as the younger generation moves in. And as they do, you'll reap the rewards of a forward-thinking social media presence that overshadows your competition. The benefits won't just accrue to your sales and marketing function. One of the great challenges for industrial organizations is recruiting young engineers. If you want to hire the thought leaders of tomorrow, an innovative image supported by an industry-leading social media presence will be a significant asset.

## **5. Moving forward**

Many industrial marketers choose to ignore social media, writing it off as unimportant in their sector. But it's wise to see the relatively uncluttered industrial social media landscape as an opportunity. Social media does require an investment in resources, but with an effective strategy and implementation, it does not need to be a burden.

## **6. Minimizing use**

Traditional advertising techniques include print and television advertising. The Internet has already overtaken television as the largest advertising market. Websites often include banner or pop-up ads. Social networking sites don't always have ads. In exchange, products have entire pages and are able to interact with users. Television commercials often end with a spokesperson asking viewers to check out the product website for more information. Print ads are also starting to include QR codes on them. These QR codes can be scanned by cell phones and computers, sending viewers to the product website. Advertising is beginning to move viewers from the traditional outlets to the electronic ones.

## **Criticism of Social media**

Social media marketing provides organizations with a way to connect with their customers. However, organizations must protect their information as well as closely watch comments and concerns on the social media they use. A flash poll done on 1225 IT executives from 33 countries revealed that social media mishaps caused organizations a combined \$4.3 million in damages in 2010. The top three social media incidents an organization faced during the previous year included employees sharing too much information in public forums, loss or exposure of confidential information, and increased exposure to litigation. Due to the viral nature of the internet, a mistake by a single employee has in some cases shown to result in devastating consequences for organizations.

Due to the increase in social media websites, there seems to be a positive correlation between the usage of such media with cyber-bullying, online sexual predators, and the decrease in face-to-face interactions. Social media may expose children to images of alcohol, tobacco, and sexual behaviors<sup>4</sup>



## Conclusion

Social Media Marketing is about understanding how technology is making it easier for people to connect socially with their social networks. The increasing dependence on technology for basic communication highlights the importance of analyzing how these networking sites are affecting daily processes. Social media channels have a remarkable ability to attract customers with very brief statements. But it has some negative impacts also. Some information is captured without the user's knowledge or consent, such as through electronic tracking and third party application on social networks.

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