

Digital and Social Media Marketing

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Edited by:
Dr. Lokesh Jasrai



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Digital and Social Media Marketing

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Unit 01: Evolution of Digital Marketing

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the “Digital Consumer”
- Explain the behavioral traits of a digital consumer
- Describe “Online Consumer Communities”
- Discuss the benefits of online consumer communities to consumers
- Discuss the benefits of online consumer communities to businesses

Introduction

Over 170 million people use social media regularly and this magnitude of social media adopters and users make it obvious that every working professional is or should be familiar with the basic tenets of Digital Marketing.

In simple terms, Digital Marketing is the promotion of products over the internet or any form of electronic media. According to the Digital Marketing Institute, *“Digital Marketing is the use of digital channels to promote or market products and services to targeted consumers and businesses.”*

Digital content is being consumed by people with cheerful alacrity. It is expected that the traditional marketing platforms such as newspapers, magazines or billboards will soon be relegated to oblivion. Digital marketing presents several attractive advantages and at the same time it is pocket friendly as well, which is encouraging enough that majority of marketers have started patronizing it.

Digital Marketing helps in reaching out to a larger audience in very short time at minimal costs.

In 1993, the world’s first clickable banner went live, after which HotWired bought a couple of banner ads for advertising. This denoted the start of the shift towards digital era of advertising. Due to this shift, the year 1994 witnessed several advancements in the digital realm. Exactly the same year, Yahoo was born.

Otherwise called "Jerry's Guide to the World Wide Web" after its organizer Jerry Yang, Yahoo got nearly 1 million hits the very year. This incited phenomenal changes in the digital marketing landscape, with organizations streamlining their sites to rake in higher web search rankings. 1996 saw the birth of two or three more web indexes and apparatuses like HotBot, LookSmart, and Alexa.

1998 saw the introduction of Google. Microsoft created the MSN web index and Yahoo introduced web search. After two years, the web bubble burst and all the more modest web search tools were either abandoned or cleared out leaving more space for the goliaths in the business. Not one to be left behind, Microsoft set MSN aside and launched Live Search to contend with Google and Yahoo.

Then, at that point, Web 2.0, was launched/introduced where individuals turned out to be more dynamic members as opposed to staying latent clients. Web 2.0 permitted clients to communicate with different clients and organizations. Labels like 'super information highway' started to be applied to the web.

Soon, social networking sites started to emerge. MySpace was the first site to show up, followed by Facebook. Many organizations understood this to be the future of marketing and started making changes in their marketing strategy in this direction. With new digital assets, they required new ways to promote their brands and take advantage of social media platforms.

1.1 5 Ds of Digital Marketing

Digital Devices	laptops, desktops, smartphones, tablets, smart TVs, wearable devices, gaming devices.
Digital Platforms	social media, search engines, websites
Digital Media	online ads, social media marketing, SMS, email marketing
Digital Data	apps, contact forms, surveys
Digital Technology	artificial intelligence, virtual reality, augmented reality

1.2 Digital Consumer

A simple question that may baffle us is "Who are digital consumers"? Are they someone who are technologically superior living on a different planet? Let us understand this concept in the simplest form. In simple terms, people who use technology to buy and sell products and services are known as digital consumers. They are the same people who order a pizza on an app and may also seek some discount coupons to make such purchases. It can also be you who is accessing this reading material from our online platform.

The need for communication has existed for ages and it has only been the technology used for communicating has changed or rather evolved. In the field of digital marketing, it is important to keep a tab on the evolving technologies that are being used for communications. The behavior of consumers is continuously changing because of the advent of digital technologies, which have made the access to information quite easy and quick.

1.3 Behavioral Traits of a Digital Consumer

Extensive corpus of research that exists today in this field has unearthed the behavioral traits of a digital consumer. They are as follows:

1. **Digital-savvy consumers are well informed**

Digital consumers have learned to harness the power of internet to the full extent. As technologies evolve, these consumers learn to harness the power of digital technologies to the maximum extent and also the most efficiently. So, we can safely conclude that the marketers have to go that extra mile to reach out and impress these well-informed consumers.

2. Need relevant and quick information

Sources of information are rife and thus people have become accustomed to get right solutions and information within fractions of a second. So this could mean that if your website takes time to load, then the digital-savvy consumer will hop to the next possible option. It is that instant "WOW" that your site or app creates is the decisive factor that makes this digital consumer love you or ditch you.

3. They share a lot

The digital consumer is bestowed with unlimited options and platforms where they share their knowledge, opinions, experiences, ask for recommendations, express their frustrations, share reviews and may also leave comments. So, this user generated content (UGC) or we can also say the earned media plays a crucial role in the success or disaster of your venture.

1.4 How to Engage with a Digital Consumer

In today's tech-driven world, businesses need to catch up quick with the shifts in consumer habits and behaviors. They also need to keep a tab on the new digital consumer engagement trends to ensure they achieve the digital marketing objectives. Here are a few pointers which need to be incorporated in a digital marketing engagement strategy.

1. **Leverage the power of social media** – The power of social media is phenomenal and brands can easily forge their identities and personalities across all demographics. It is no longer a mere platform to connect with the audience, rather social media has evolved into a digital space to engage with the consumer through support channels, live chat, sharing content, sharing content and more.
2. **Behaviour – based messaging** – Stronger engagement strategies can be used with the help of technologies. Businesses can engage with consumers through live chat to build stronger engagement strategies. Live chat is no longer for real-time support. It can also be used to observe and respond to consumer behavior. Such information can be used to map the consumer's future journey. Technology can be used to understand consumer's website or mobile app behavior, which can be used to make future interactions more relevant.
3. **Personalization** – Personalization has been in vogue in marketing circles and it is very subjective and varies from business to business. For some it may just be addressing the customer with their first name, for some it can be just addressing the customers in an email with their first name. Some businesses have taken it to the extent of creating target segments and engaging with them in the most relevant manner. Personalization is all about harnessing all the data at disposal in order to determine the patterns in behavior and understand what they want to see. This allows you to direct specific, valuable content or messages towards specific customers at different stages of their journey. This can definitely improve the clicks through rate and may also help in increasing the revenue and subsequently profits.
4. **Provide customers with self-service options** – Customers have become very demanding and want a seamless experience and self-service options have come in very handy in providing that seamless, highly-integrated overall engagement experience. Providing self-service solutions for your consumer empowers them to find their own answers and resolutions and improves digital consumer experiences thus driving future brand engagement by building trust.

5. **Know what drives your customers** – It is important to collect feedback from customers. This is crucial in your engagement strategy. It helps you in understanding what triggers your customers in making purchase decisions and taking other important decisions. It also helps you in understanding what the consumers think about you, your products or services.

1.5 Catering the Digital Consumer

The digital consumer has multiple sources of information at his/her disposal. They are well informed and they need information very quickly. They are also well connected and share about their experiences a lot. Businesses have to be really on their toes to serve these digital-savvy consumers.

The following are some pointers, which probably businesses can adopt to engage with their digital consumers to keep them delighted.

1. **Customer Centricity** – It is simply to put customer at the center. All the digital experiences which are created must keep the customer at the center and must add value to the customer and enhance his/experience. Such customer focus creates a long-lasting value. Businesses need to develop the ability to assess the customers' situations, perceptions and expectations. Customer always needs to be the focal point of all business decisions related to creating and delivering products, services and experiences in order to create customer satisfaction, loyalty and advocacy.
2. **Empathy** – It is the ability of businesses to see things from the customers' perspective. As a business you must put yourself in the customers' shoes and understand what a customer experiences when they use your company's products or services. Imagine what a customer may go through when he/she has to navigate through a series of confusing tele-callers when he/she calls up to report a stolen credit card. Or may be calling a customer care number which provided little help. Such experiences really will put a customer off. As a matter of fact, we all must have gone through such experiences. Even the best training or technology cannot always avoid such circumstances, but this is where empathy comes into play. The mere fact of acknowledging that you too have experienced such things is the first step towards customer- empathy. Here are a few ways to build customer- empathy.
 - a. Make support easy to reach
 - b. Provide fast resolutions
 - c. Listen to customer feedback
 - d. Build personalized relations
 - e. Focus on human touch
 - f. Provide empathy trainings to agents
 - g. Invest in employee experience

Cultivating customer empathy within an organization at all levels ensures that the customer and their experience remains at the center of everyone's work.

3. **Customer Experience** – Customer experience (CX) is you customer's overall perception of their experience with your business or brand. CX is the result of every interaction a customer has with your business, right from navigating through the website to talking to the customer support executives. Every interaction counts. Delivering a great customer experience is hugely important for any business. The more enthralled the customers are with their

experience, the more loyalty and advocacy they will demonstrate. The benefits of a great CX include:

- a. Increased customer loyalty
 - b. Increased customer satisfaction
 - c. Better word-of-mouth marketing, positive reviews, and recommendations
4. **Phygital** – The future of a great customer experience (CX) is phygital. Phygital simply combines the two words physical and digital. During the pandemic, many companies started to move their strategies towards accomplishing the tasks digitally, which were usually accomplished in person. Several examples in this context could be navigating through the menu of your favorite restaurant on your smart phone rather than holding the menu in your hand or may be paying at the gas station for fuel by simply scanning a QR code, which avoids any kind of physical contact. All these innovations which emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic are not just adding safety to the consumers but also adding to the experience.
5. **Challenge the status quo** – The digital savvy customer is restless. They need to be “WOWed” every time. Businesses need to strive incessantly to provide better experiences, better engagement and not to forget awesome products and services. Businesses need to be a step ahead of the imagination of these digital savvy consumers in order to win their trust and garner loyalty and advocacy from them.

1.6 Online Customer Communities

Online customer communities are web-based gathering places for customers, experts, partners and others to discuss problems, post reviews, or even to brainstorm new ideas. You yourself may be a part of several such online communities starting from a family or neighborhood WhatsApp group or a Facebook or LinkedIn group around a common interest or shared value.

Definition: An online community or internet community is a group of people with a shared interest or purpose who use the internet to communicate with each other. Online communities have their own set of guidelines and needs, like online community engagement, moderation, and management.

How do Online Customer Communities Benefit the Consumer?

Online communities allow the consumers to interact with the company directly and may share their feedback, problems, reviews or may be any suggestions. Such communities make the consumer feel heard. This also gives an opportunity to the consumer to vent their grievances, at the same time maintaining their anonymity. This is also an excellent platform where the peers who share similar interests and values, share their reviews and such reviews matter a lot for the other members of the community.

How do Online Customer Communities Benefit the Businesses?

Online communities provide a great platform for businesses to provide help and information to their loyalists in real-time. All the members of the community usually are great fans or supporters of the business and that is the reason why they are a member of that community in the first place. So, these communities can be a rich source of collecting data with respect to what excites these community members and they can also get real-time feedback about their products and services. Listening can help businesses understand the overall sentiment around their business or brand.

Businesses can also use these communities as a grievance redressal platform. Businesses can also take inputs from the feedback and can use this feedback to either improve their existing products or services or maybe they can develop new products or services altogether.



Notes:

Businesses need to keep these points in mind when engaging in online communities:

- Great communities are built for engagement and empowered communal support
- Great online communities are vibrant and multi-dimensional
- Great online communities grow from shared purpose
- Great online communities are thoughtfully moderated

So, if businesses put in all it requires to build great online communities, they could reap the following benefits:

- Create real connections
- Stand out from the competition with a better customer experience
- Generate leads and acquire new members
- Improve products by gather feedback
- Decrease support cost by crowdsourcing support
- Increase revenue through in-community advertising
- Drive referrals by giving your advocates a voice in the community

1.7 Digital Marketing Landscape

This is a constantly evolving space and it includes all the tools and channels used for digital marketing. What worked in 2021 may not be relevant in the coming 2-3 years. This is the pace at which this domain is evolving. Since it is evolving at such great pace, it is very important to keep a tab on the trends in this field. Companies or businesses which are not able to catch up with these trends may be relegated to oblivion sooner or later. Some prominent trends witnessed in the digital landscape are as follows:

- a. Artificial intelligence
- b. Chatbots
- c. Social media marketing
- d. Focus on mobiles
- e. Personalized digital marketing

So, the pertinent question that may arise is “What is a digital Marketing Landscape”? A digital marketing landscape is the collective name for websites, email, social networks, mobile devices, videos etc. These tools help businesses sell their products or services.

To create a useful and profitable digital marketing landscape, businesses must have their digital strategy in place first. Digital strategy should be the starting point in order to curate the digital marketing landscape. SO prominent tools that could be a part of your Digital Strategy could be:

- a. **Social Media Marketing:** Social media is huge and it is here to stay. Each platform be it Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn, have turned out to be powerhouses. Sites such as Pinterest and Twitter can also drive your RoI. Social media channels can help you drive organic conversations, customer service, research and can also be a handy tool in activating your fans. All these could be relevant objectives of your digital marketing strategy.
- b. **Search Engine Optimization and Search Engine Marketing:** Investing in SEO can help you achieve long-term results. When you have pages which rank high on search engines, can definitely help you win trust of consumers and also can help you to appear as an authority in your field. Optimizing you pages for relevant search keywords and having high-authority backlinks can do wonders for your SEO. But everything about SEO is log-term. When you

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need instant results, you need to resort to SEM. You need to bid for low competition keywords and spend some money for the same, so that whenever any relevant search takes place, your search ads appear and you could still be in the game. Consider how digital ads on popular search engines may fit into your digital marketing strategy.

- c. **Content Marketing:** It is rocket science that word-of-mouth marketing is one of the most powerful forms of marketing and this happens organically. Despite this it is very often ignored. We need to build positive and favorable conversation, which prompts people to talk about you. Rich content can play a pivotal role. Invest in great and engaging content to drive conversation and content marketing should find an integral place in your digital marketing strategy.
- d. **Affiliate marketing:** Building a network of partners who are willing to sell your products or services for some commission can always be useful for any business. Imagine if you have an army of partners who are promoting your products and businesses in their network and bringing business for you. It always helps. So, affiliate programs with a large and motivated set of partners can be incorporated into your digital marketing strategy.

The key for successful integration of all the above-mentioned tools into your digital marketing strategy depends on how well you leverage your content, the data that is generated and the resulting analytics. This could be a decisive factor of your entire digital marketing strategy.

Summary

The field of marketing has witnessed an evolution in how brands communicate with consumers, how consumers communicate with brands, and how consumers communicate with one another. Digital technologies such as mobile phones, the internet, social media, and email contribute to what is known as the digital marketing landscape. Digital marketing offers unique ways to meet consumers where they are, engage with potential and existing consumers, capture the voice of the consumer; allow consumers to be part of a brand narrative.

Keywords

Digital marketing, Digital Landscape, SEO, SEM, Keywords, Phygital, Content Marketing, Online Communities, Affiliate Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Customer Experience, Customer Engagement,

Self Assessment

1. The field of marketing has seen an evolution in:
 - A. how brands communicate with consumers,
 - B. how consumers communicate with brands,
 - C. how consumers communicate with one another.
 - D. All the above
2. Which of the following can be considered as digital technologies?
 - A. Mobile phones
 - B. Internet
 - C. Social Media
 - D. All the above
3. Which of the following is not an advantage of digital marketing?

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- a. Offers unique ways to meet consumers
 - b. Engage with potential and existing customers
 - c. Raise cheap capital
 - d. Capture the voice of the consumer
-
4. An electronic place where consumers spend their time engaging with content as well as buying goods and services is called a/an _____.
 - A. electronic marketplace
 - B. digital landscape
 - C. digital world
 - D. digital realm
 5. Which of the following may not be considered a digital touchpoint?
 - A. online ads
 - B. a print ad
 - C. an email
 - D. social media post
 6. Which of the following does not facilitate search?
 - A. search engine
 - B. google maps
 - C. a telephone call
 - D. an ecommerce site
 7. When a customer is researching for any product or service, which of the following could not be a digital touchpoint?
 - A. on-site content
 - B. customer reviews
 - C. face-to-face conversation with friends and family
 - D. review blogs
 8. Which of the following digital touch points don't lead to conversion?
 - A. a business card
 - B. brand website
 - C. ecommerce site
 - D. mobile app
 9. People who use digital technologies to buy or know about products are called _____.
 - A. digital consumers
 - B. technical consumers
 - C. electronic consumers
 - D. vibrant consumers
 10. Sam is a digital consumer so which of the following could be his distinguishing trait/s?
 - A. Sam is well-informed
 - B. Sam wants relevant and quick information
 - C. Sam is restless
 - D. All the above are Sam's distinguishing traits
 11. Amazon has the vision of becoming the world's most customer-centric company. Which of these efforts must Amazon should be putting in to achieve its vision?
 - A. empathy
 - B. customer experience
 - C. phygital
 - D. none of these

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12. A garment store uses QR codes and a consumer can scan those codes and check the reviews and ratings of those products on e-commerce portal. This could be an example of:
- Customer centricity
 - Phygital
 - Empathy
 - Customer experience
13. Digital solutions which are designed to solve the actual problems faced by consumers because brands put themselves in the shoes of the consumer, could be a result of:
- customer experience
 - phygital
 - empathy
 - none of these
14. Consumers are benefited through online communities in which of the following ways?
- They can engage with the company in real-time
 - Online communities offer anonymity when interacting
 - Consumers get an opportunity to read peer reviews and opinions
 - All the above
15. Businesses are benefited through online communities in which of the following ways?
- Can get a sense of customer sentiment
 - It can be used as a grievance redressal platform
 - Feedback can be used for product
 - All the Above

Answers for Self Assessment

1. D 2. D 3. C 4. B 5. B
6. C 7. C 8. A 9. A 10. D
11. D 12. B 13. C 14. D 15. D

Review Questions

- Explain Digital marketing. According to you what could be the categories of digital marketing.
- What are the various aspects of your digital marketing strategy?
- Think of various ways you can increase traffic to your website and explain them.
- What is SEO and how can it help in your digital marketing strategy?
- List down some familiar digital marketing tools and also explain their utility.
- How can vibrant online communities help your business?
- How can your business leverage the power of Affiliates?
- How can content marketing help in your overall digital marketing efforts?
- Do you think Customer Empathy is important? Defend your answer with relevant examples and justification.
- How important is Customer Experience to a digital-savvy consumer?



Further Readings

Permission marketing by Seth Godin

Social Media all-in-one for Dummies by Jan Zimmerman and Doug Sahlin

Email Persuasion by Ian Brodie

Traction by Gabriel Weinberg & Justin Mares

Building a Story Brand by Donald Miller



Web Links

<https://www.ringcentral.com/digital-customer-engagement-experience.html#ring-cc>

<https://www.mobiquity.com/insights/the-future-is-phygital>

<https://www.higherlogic.com/blog/what-is-an-online-community/>

<https://bootcampdigital.com/blog/the-digital-marketing-landscape-and-ecosystem/>

Unit 02: Search Engine Marketing

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Summary

Keywords

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Answers for Self Assessment

Review Questions

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After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define PPC and understand its significance.
- Explain how paid search works.
- Use keywords in paid campaigns.
- Explain various forms of online advertising.
- Explain the importance of SEO.
- Explain the benefits of SEO.
- Get their websites on Google.
- Achieve SEO success.
- Track SEO performance.
- Explain the Google Ad auction process.

Introduction

Search Engine Marketing (SEM) is one of the most popular as well as powerful ways of marketing your products and services online. With the increasing competition and each business vying for the same set of customers, it becomes pertinently important to advertise online to stay at the top of the game and SEM appears to be a panacea to promote products and grow business.

In this chapter, we will discuss the basics of SEM and will also offer some tips and strategies for doing SEM right.

2.1 Search Engine Marketing – An Overview

SEM is a practice of advertising business or products or services using paid advertisements that appear on Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs). In this practice, advertisers bid for keywords, which they think are used by the consumers to search on search engines such as Google or Bing. This provides the advertisers with an opportunity to show their products and services as ads alongside the search results. These ads are also known as Pay-Per-Click ads. These ads appear in various formats such as simple text ads or they can be elaborate product listing ads (PLAs) which allow the customers to get the necessary information at a glance. Search engine ads offer the unique advantage of presenting the ads in front of those customers who are highly motivated and are keen in knowing or buying a product. No other forms of advertising offers this unique advantage and marketers must exploit this form of advertising to the fullest.

2.2 Pay-Per-Click (PPC) Advertising

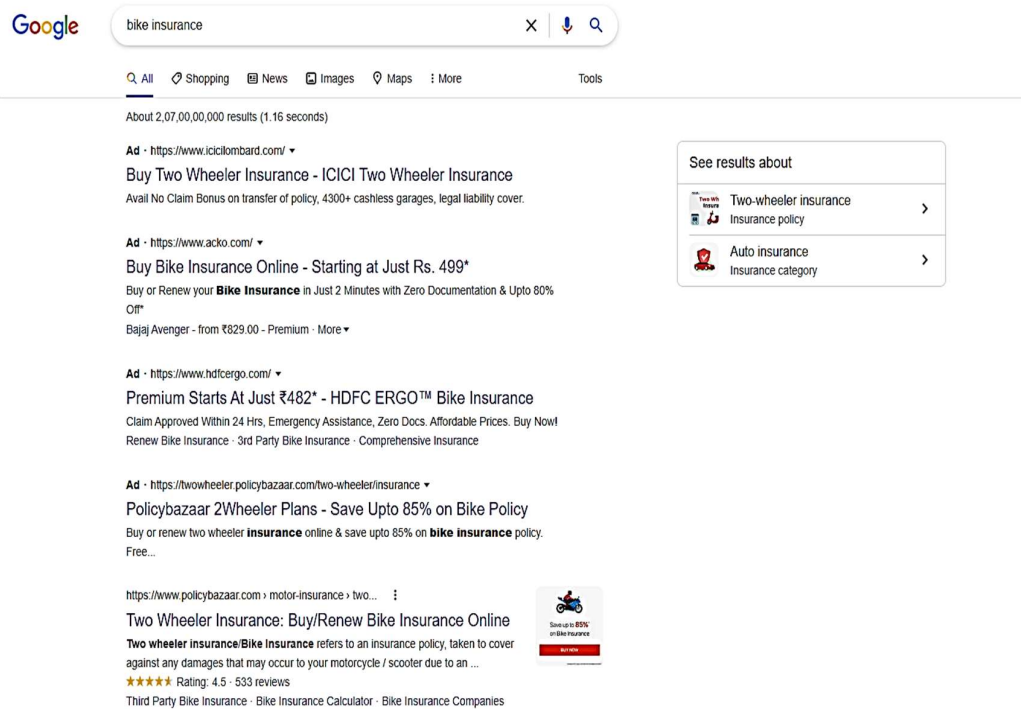
PPC is an online advertising technique where an advertiser pays every time a user clicks one of their online ads. There are several types of PPC ads, but the most common or popular one is the paid search ad, which is triggered whenever any user is making a commercial search or usually when the user's intention to buy something is detected. These searches could be anything ranging from pizza shops near you or when you are searching for Mother's Day gifting options. The search engines such as Google or Bing, serve relevant ads when similar search happens on their platforms. All these searches trigger PPC ads. In PPC advertising, the advertiser is billed only when a user clicks on the ad and thus the name PPC is given to such ads.

2.3 How Does Pay-Per-Click Advertising Work?

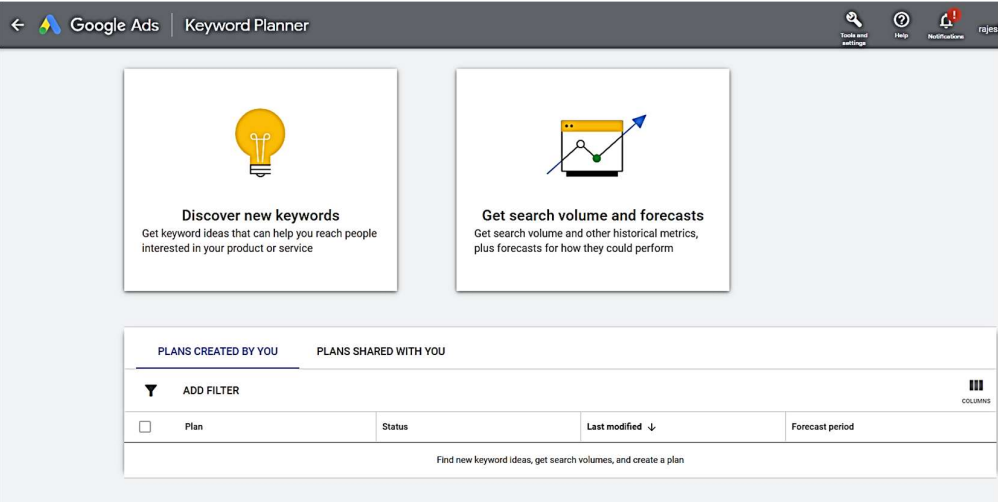
Advertisers cannot simply pay more to get their ads on Search Engine Result Pages (SERPs). A sophisticated and automated ad auction algorithm operates on popular search engines such as Google and Bing whereby ads are ranked based on their relevance and validity and are placed on the SERPs. So, if advertisers assume that by paying higher amounts places their ads above than those of their competitors, then it is a myth. Ad Auction is a bidding system, where advertisers bid for the terms that would trigger or place their ads. These terms are known as keywords.

For example, your business specializes in Auto Insurance and a biking enthusiast wants to perchance an insurance policy for his new motor bike. This biking enthusiast might enter the term "bike insurance" into Google to find retailers offering Motorcycle Insurance.

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At the moment the user submits his search query, Google runs its sophisticated Ad Auction algorithm. This algorithm decides which ads to be displayed, in which order and by which advertiser. Since businesses are billed only when the ads are clicked, it is imperative to bid for those keywords only which are relevant for the business. This ensures a healthy ROI on ad spends. A well-integrated keyword planner tool in Google Ads can help you find the right keywords.



2.4 Types of Online Advertising

Online advertising has come a long way since it first began in the form of a simple banner ad. Since then, several ad types have come into existence and this provides businesses a wide variety of ad types which could be used as per the use case. In this context we are going to discuss 7 major types of online advertising.

a. Display ads

This is the original form of online advertising. These are visual ads which appear on some third-party websites which are related to your content, product or service in some way.

Display ads have evolved and have come a long way. There are various forms of display ads prevalent today and you can sight them in any of the following forms:

- Static images
- Text
- Floating banners
- Wall paper
- Popup ads
- Flash
- Video

b. **Social Media ads**

Social media as an advertising platform is not only efficient, but also effective. It is very much similar to display ads. They can be a simple image or text to a video ad. Social media ads can be a great tool to develop your business because you get the opportunity to target your audience with precision. For instance, Facebook's targeting tools allow you to target your audience based on age, gender, region, profession and interests. The common forms of social media advertisements could be classified as organic and paid. Organic advertisements create loyalty and give you feedback from your audience. It also helps you garner word-of-mouth publicity. On the other hand, paid advertisements help you reach specific targeted groups. Based on your requirements and budget, you can choose any of these social media platforms for advertisements:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Pinterest
- Tumblr
- Reddit
- Google+

c. **Search Engine Marketing (SEM)**

SEM works on the keywords. Businesses bid for keywords, so that their website ranks higher on Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs). This is one of the most popular forms of paid online marketing and is considered the most dependable as well.

Paid ads can be in the form of Pay Per Click (PPC) or Cost Per Thousand (CPM). One of the most renowned platforms for SEM is Google Ads. Google Ads allows you to create highly targeted campaigns. Another popular platform for creating paid ads is Bing Ads by Microsoft.

d. **Native Advertising**

Native advertising is a form of sponsored ads which appear at the end of blog posts, appearing in Facebook feeds or other social media posts. These are integrated and camouflaged into the platform in which they appear. Native advertising can be promoted and posted through networks such as Adblade, Adsonar, Outbrain and Taboola. A few forms of Native Advertising are:

- In-Feed
- Search ads
- Recommendation widgets
- Promoted listings

e. **Remarketing/Retargeting**

One of the most powerful forms of online advertising is to advertise to those who already know your product or to those who have been looking for your product online. This is called remarketing or retargeting. When people visit their site, advertisers drop a cookie on them, so that as they browse across the web, the advertisers' ads will appear everywhere and keep reminding people about the products and services over and over again.

This form of advertising is both effective and inexpensive. If done right, it can be more productive than PPC. It has a higher conversion rate as people are already aware of your product or service and probably, they have been looking for it. Facebook Remarketing and Google Remarketing tools can help you set up the remarketing ads.

2.5 Importance of Search Engine Optimization

Search Engine Optimization, popularly known as SEO is an important aspect of digital marketing. Despite its importance and significance, the level of knowledge and understanding about SEO is mostly shallow. This could be majorly because of the multifaceted nature of SEO. Putting it short, SEO is the process which makes your website more visible and thus attracting more traffic, and more opportunities to convert visitors into customers. SEO is also a very important tool for brand building, building customer relations, and also to position yourself as an authority in your field.

The Crucial Elements of SEO

- a. **Keywords** - There were times when keywords were the only SEO technique but that doesn't mean that they have become redundant. What is different nowadays is that you need to research well for keywords and use them judiciously in your content in order to be effective. Now you may have the question nagging in your mind that what are keywords? Keywords are words and phrases that a prospect uses in any search engine such as Google to find online content, and brands can use to connect with prospects that are looking for their products and services. When organizations undertake the keyword research process, they need to keep a few parameters in mind, such as:
 1. The keywords must have high search rates.
 2. The keywords must have low competition.
 3. Keywords can be long-tail (such as "jogging shoes for women") and short-tail (such as "shoes").
 4. Local keywords (jogging shoes for women in Mumbai).

Apart from the primary keywords, you may also consider secondary and tertiary keywords as they will still generate value for your business. All the titles, URLs and pages can also be optimized using keywords.
- b. **Content** - Content is undoubtedly the most vital part of SEO. It is the vehicle that engages the audience with the brand. Knowing the craft to curate content that fits is essential. For instance, if you are running a preschool, you may publish a lot of content about the need for pre-schooling, the various activities to engage kids, how to improve motor or cognitive skills for kids and so on. Now when a prospect who wants to know about some activities to keep his kid engaged, your blogged popped up. This is the beginning of the relationship. So when the prospect actually wants to enroll his kid in any preschool, you would be the first preschool that comes to his mind. Currently, the content must be educational, interesting, entertaining, relevant and shareable. Content may be created in various forms:
 1. Web Page content

2. Videos
 3. Blogs
 4. Infographics
 5. Podcasts
 6. Listicles
 7. How-to-guides
 8. Whitepapers and e-books
 9. Social media posts
 10. Local listings
- c. **Off-Page SEO** - Off-Page SEO consists of those optimization techniques which happen usually away from your site rather than on it. One of the most important and prominent off-page SEO techniques is backlinking, which involves building quality backlinks to your site from external sites. This tells the search engines that your site contains valuable content and this helps in building authority. There are several techniques of doing the same, but some of the most popular ones are guest blogging, using influencer marketing and also creating infographics which are shared extensively.
- d. **Local SEO** - The importance of Local SEO is increasing continuously as more and more people are using their mobile phones for searching the web. Some research even pegs a number and concludes that up to 60% of the entire search conducted on the web is through mobile devices. Further, nearly half of those searches have a local intent. So, let's say that you own a restaurant, and then the local SEO will ensure that when people in your area or visiting your area went looking for a restaurant, they may come across your site. Along with using local keywords, other local SEO best practices include claiming directory listings, creating location-specific pages for your site, and creating pages for your site, and creating pages for your business on Google My Business local directories and Google Maps.
- e. **Search Engine Marketing** - Search Engine Marketing (SEM) refers to the paid marketing efforts, and this includes activities such as native ads, Google Ads, Social Media Ads, pay-per-click (PPC), Google shopping ads, display ads, and more. Though it cannot be clearly stated that SEM is a major component in SEO strategy, yet it has a significant place in reaching out to highly targeted audience.

2.6 Benefits of SEO

SEO is very both beautiful and useful for businesses if they wish to make their online presence felt. The interesting part of SEO is that it can be done by anyone and it is not as complex as it appears to be. Print ads or sponsored posts could be quite expensive, so learning a few SEO skills could be helpful for small businesses, which may not be able to afford professional services. Here are a few reasons which could be incentive enough for any business to adopt organic SEO.

- a. **Brings in more customers through organic search**

Customers usually search the internet for some solution. And if you provide quality solutions to the problems and appear on the top of search results, there is high chance that they will consider you when they wish to purchase a solution. Being on the top of search engine page almost doubles you chances of being clicked and thus improves your click through rate (CTR). By appearing on the top of search results, you make your brand highly visible and showcase that you are a trust-worthy resource.
- b. **Creates a trustworthy web experience for customers**

Working on SEO helps you work on various aspects of your website such as page speed, backlinks, and other authority building elements, which are very important in providing the experience to the user once they click your link. Search engines prescribe certain rules and abiding by those rules ensures that your website in top notch condition and also makes it popular among the search engines. By doing all these, your site will not just appear in the top results of the search results, but will also earn trust based on the functionality of your website.

c. Encourages you to focus on user experience

Optimizing user experience infuses a core element of SEO in your website. Search Engines such as Google have started prioritizing user experience and they will continue to do so along with the other website vitals such as page speed, quality of back links etc. When it is evident that you are rewarded by search engines to build and provide great user experience, then you are encouraged to provide exception user experience of your website.

d. Improves brand awareness

By doing everything you can, to reach the top results of search rankings, people will perceive you as a provider of solution, to the problem whose solution they are looking for. So, people will start noticing you even if they do not click on your link. Potential customers will start associating your brand with those solutions. This is quite important if you are competing on some common keywords with your competitors. You must fight in order to reach the top position, in order to reach the top-of-mind recall. In case if you have just started working on SEO, you should target the long tail version of the keywords which are popular with respect to the products, services or solutions you offer. All these efforts will help in creating an impact and helps build brand awareness.

There are several other benefits which business can derive and SEO has a direct impact on the other marketing initiatives undertaken by the business. It is also inexpensive when compared to other forms of marketing and can be done on a shoe-string budget as well. Working on SEO keeps you informed all the time as search engines keep changing their policies and algorithms. This way you are always in the lookout for better keywords, better optimization and also helps you track your competitors' moves.

2.7 Getting Website on Google

Google has become an integral part of our lives and Google comes to our rescue whenever we need any information. From learning new skills, learning about new trends or seeking any problem-solving advice. So, it can be our tendency to start thinking of Google as merely an information seeking platform, but if you are a small business owner, then you must think proactively and must start thinking of Google as a platform used by your potential customers to reach you. Moreover, it has to be borne in mind that there are sophisticated algorithms in place which determine which site appears in the top search results. The first step is getting your site in the search results of search engines such as Google, further there are several never-ending processes which needs to be undertaken to bring your site among the top search results. Here we are going to discuss some of the tools offered by Google to bring your site in the search results and then improve your result rankings. Let us discuss them step - by - step.

Submit your site to Google

By now you understand the importance of SEO and to be found on Google. Google bots which are industriously crawling all the millions of websites, there are chances that Google bots will find your site some day or the other and start crawling it, but you cannot just sit idle and do nothing waiting for the bots to crawl your site someday. You can yourself expedite the process by taking a few steps. You can simply begin by submitting your site to Google and let the search engine know about your existence. Make sure that you submit your sitemap as well to Google to speed up the indexing

process. And then in order to determine if your site is included in the Google's search index then you simply need to do a quick search for your website on Google and if your pages are produced in the search results, then **Congratulations!** Your website is indexed with Google.

Lay a link trail

Now at this stage, your efforts should be focused on making your site appear in the top search results, so that it becomes easier for users to reach your website click on the pages and may be make some purchases as well. Now what you need to do is to plant as many links to your website all around the web. The bots crawling the web have been hardwired to proceed directly to your website, when they stumble upon some **Blue Text Hyperlinks**.

One easy way to get this is to write content for other blogs and publications in your niche. This establishes you as an authority in that niche, build reputation for your brand and then add a backlink, so that the readers and even the Google bots can find you easily. The other way to achieve this is to post your URL in all your social media profiles and online directories in your industry or geographic location. Not only these links act as a convenience for your customers to reach your homepage, but also, they act as a bridge to help wandering prospects reach directly to your website.

Choose the perfect keywords

Keywords are the most frequently suggested tools to bring your site on Google. But the essential question is what are keywords and how do they help.

Great keywords are typically 3 to 5-word phrases that an individual could look to find a business, product or service which you offer. Keywords with more than 3-4 words are called long-tail keywords. These have a lower search volume, yet can be exceptionally vital to use since they are so specific. At this point when there is a perfect match between the words individuals are looking for into the search box and the specific terms you've incorporated in your site, your listing has more likelihood to show up in the search results. In other words, incorporating the right keywords increases your visibility on Google and other search engines.

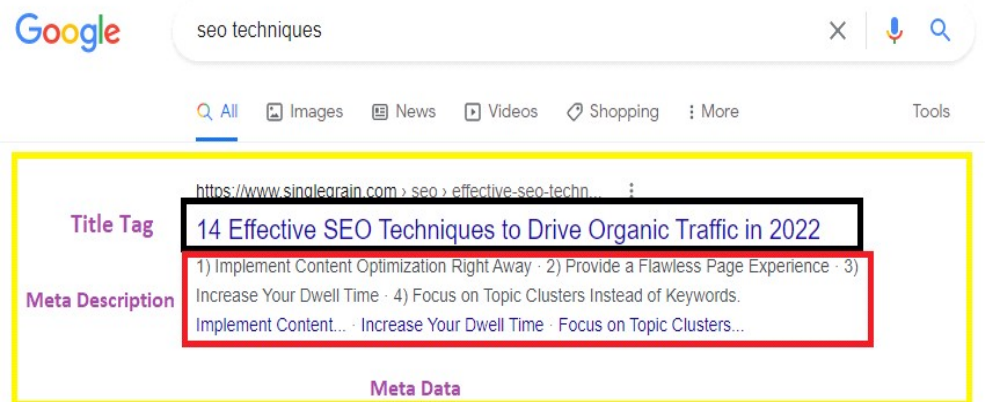


Example: Suppose, for example, that you have a site selling vegetarian food for pets. All things considered; you'll need individuals who are searching for "vegan pet food" into the search box to reach your site. By incorporating the keyword "vegan pet food" all through your website pages and blog, you enhance your chances of showing up on Google for that specific search query. This is an important on-page SEO method that, if done strategically, can get your site on Google's first page.

It is to be understood that search engines love to direct users in the right direction, so you need to ensure that you use keywords in the right way and with the intent that the user may be bearing before executing the search.

1. Manage your meta tags

Providing meta tags is another essential strategy of ranking high on Google search. Meta tags are small snippets of text which appear as a preview in Google search results, which give the users a sneak peek into the content.



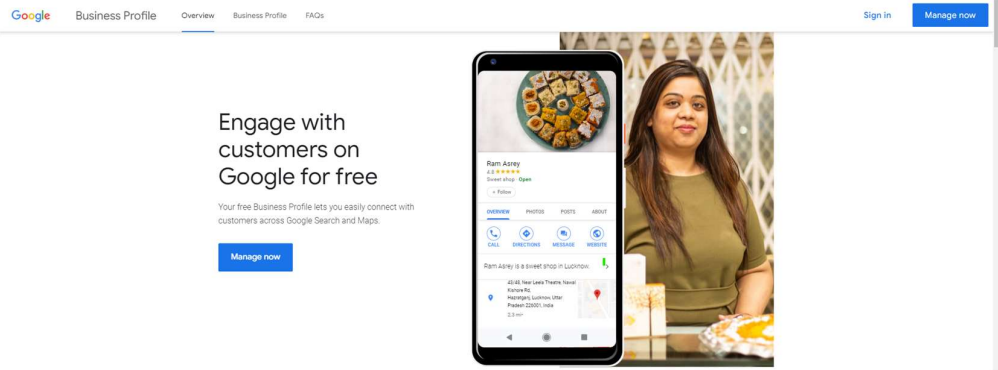
This text doesn't appear on your website, but you can customize the wording of your metadata of every page of your website. These wordings have the power to convince your user to click on the link. Just as the rest of the website, it is essential to incorporate some strategic keywords matching with the intent of the user. This helps Google as well as other search engines identify your content's relevance and bolstering your chances of getting your site on Google.

5. Optimize for mobile

Mobile devices now account for more than half of internet traffic. Google is aware of this and wants to keep its users happy and therefore those sites which are optimized for mobile devices and load well on mobile devices are given priority on Google Search. For that reason, you need to ensure that your site just not looks good on the desktop, but it needs to look awesome on the mobile as well. If you think deep, you can understand the customer psychology. Customers rarely use mobile for casual browsing kind of a situation but rather for a "I want it now" kind of situation. Google calls it "micro-moment". It is an intent super-charged moment, when a person turns to a device to act on a need or an impulse - to know, go, do, or, buy."

6. The local factor

There is a subset of SEO called "Local SEO", where Google helps location specific searchers find solutions in their geographic vicinity. Google My Business is a directory of local business listings that populates what appears on Google Maps as well as what is displayed in the Local Pack. In addition to keywords, creating a Google My Business is also very important so that Google gets to know that your business is also worthy enough to be displayed in relevant searches with local intent.



2.8 Achieve SEO Success

Now that your website is indexed in Google, you are in the race, but this doesn't ensure your success. This is where the importance of SEO becomes evident. SEO if done well increases you chances of winning. It is much easier to do SEO well when your website is set up properly for SEO success. Now let us walk through the process of achieving it.

- 1. Domain name

Do not fret over the domain name much and there is no point in trying to include keywords into your domain name as well. So while selecting the domain names, we need to have the following considerations in mind:

- Try to use the name of your business as the domain name (if feasible)
- Avoid hyphens in your domain name
- Should be short
- Should be memorable

2. TLD

TLD stands for top-level domain. It is the part of the domain name such as .com, .in, .org or .co.in. As such the TLD doesn't make much difference in SEO, but since .com is the most common one, it is easy to remember and thus will benefit the business. TLDs such as .info and .biz can be avoided as they are considered to be low-quality websites.

3. Use a good webhost

Most of us are not familiar with coding. So, this is not the end of the world. We always have an option of using some good website platforms. Website platforms are pieces of software that allows people with less or no coding skills to create a website, manage content, and take care of boring coding and other technical stuff. There are two type of website platforms; namely hosted platforms and self-hosted platforms. Hosted platforms do everything under one roof. They host your website, provide ready-made designs that you can install and edit with ease, and let you create and manage content without having to touch code. Self-hosted platforms also let you manage and create content without code. The difference is that you have to host and install them yourself.

Hosted platforms	Self-hosted Platforms
Wix	WooCommerce
Squarespace	WordPress
Shopify	Joomla
Weebly	Drupal

If you're using a hosted platform for your website, you have very little control over your hosting. But if you're using a self-hosted platform like WordPress, it's up to you to find somewhere to host it.

So how do you choose a good web host for SEO?

Most SEO experts say that dedicated hosting is better than shared hosting. That's true, but it doesn't make much difference until your website gets tons of traffic. Cheap hosting from any reputable company is fine for most people; there isn't much difference in performance between hosts when you're paying a few dollars a month.

However, there are a few things that do matter:

Security. Make sure the host gives you a free SSL/TLS certificate or supports LetsEncrypt—a nonprofit supplying free TLS certificates.

Server location. It takes time for data to travel between the server and visitor, so it's best to choose a host with servers in the same county as most of your traffic.

Support. 24/7 support is ideal. Test how good their support is by asking the questions above before you sign up.

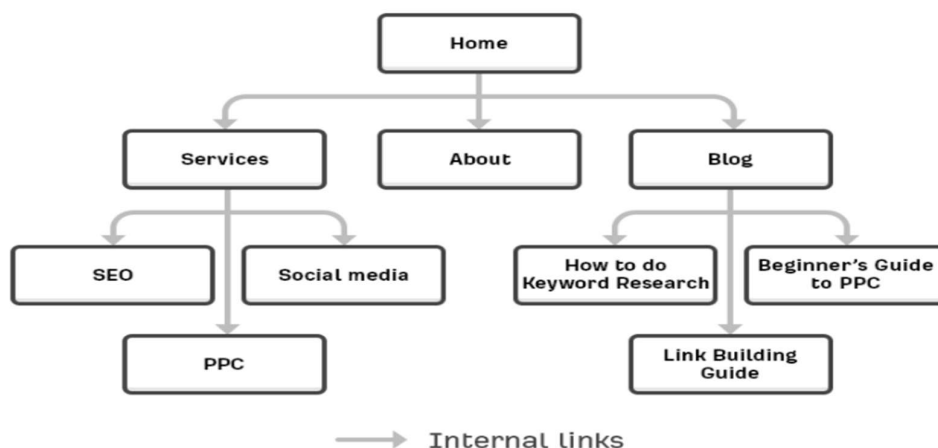
4. Create a positive user experience

As per the Google SEO guide, “You should build a website to benefit your users, and any optimization should be geared toward making the user experience better”. Here are some ways in which you can achieve it:

- Use HTTPS
- Choose an appealing design
- Make sure it is mobile-friendly
- Use a readable font size
- Avoid pop-ups and ads
- Make sure it loads fast

5. Create a logical site structure

Both visitors and search engines need to be able to navigate your site easily and that is why you must create a logical structure for your content. To achieve this you can have a mind map for the same



Each of the branches in your mind map will become internal links, which are links from one page on a website to another. Internal links are crucial for UX and SEO for a few reasons:

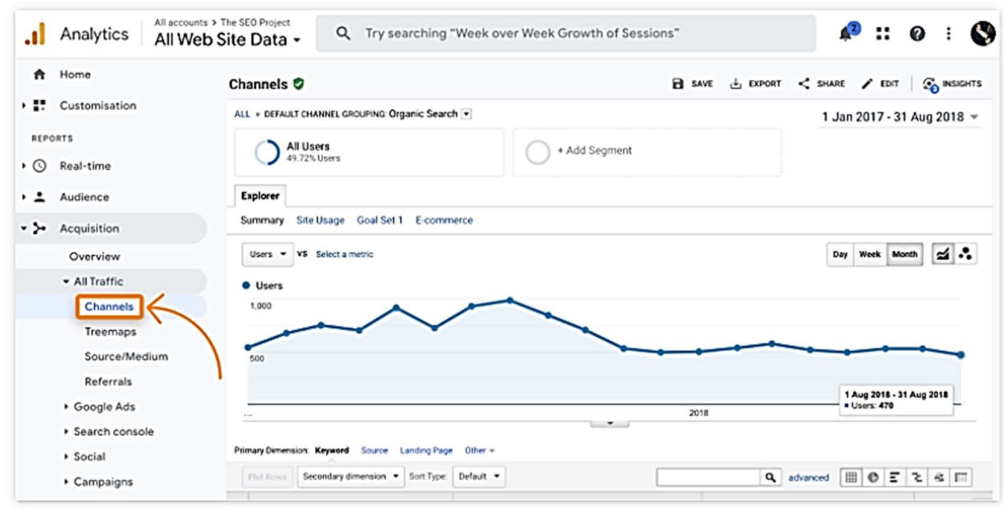
- **They help search engines find new pages.** Pages without internal links are rarely found and indexed.
- **They help pass PageRank around your site.** PageRank is the foundation of Google’s ranking algorithm that tries to determine the “value” of a page.
- **They help search engines understand what your page is about.** Google looks at link anchors and surrounding text for this.

2.9 Track SEO Performance

By now you must have attained good understanding of SEO. But how do you know if you are achieving success? The only answer to this is to track the quantum of traffic your website gets through organic search.

If you’re using Google Analytics, you can quickly view your organic traffic by going to:

Acquisition > All Traffic > Channels > Organic Search



If this number is going up, then you're probably doing it right.

Some important metrics that you can monitor are as follows:

- Share of Voice
- Conversions

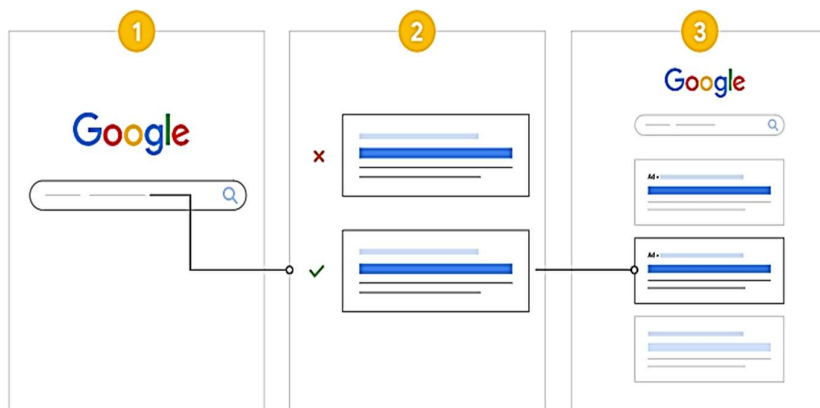
2.10 Google Ads Auction Process

Let us see what Google has got to say about the Google Ads auction process:

- The process that happens with each Google search to decide which ads will appear for that specific search and in which order those ads will show on the page (or whether or not any ads will show at all).
- Each time an ad is eligible to appear for a search, it goes through the ad auction. The auction determines whether or not the ad actually shows and in which ad position it will show on the page.

Here's how the auction works:

1. When someone searches, the Google Ads system finds all ads whose keywords match that search.
2. From those ads, the system ignores any that aren't eligible, like ads that target a different country or are disapproved based on a policy violation.
3. Of the remaining ads, only those with a sufficiently high Ad Rank may show. Ad Rank is a combination of your bid, ad quality, the Ad Rank thresholds, the context of the person's search, and the expected impact of extensions and other ad formats.



- The most important thing to remember is that even if your competition bids higher than you, you can still win a higher position -- at a lower price -- with highly relevant keywords and ads.
- Since the auction process is repeated for every search on Google, each auction can have potentially different results depending on the competition at that moment. Therefore, it's normal for you to see some fluctuation in your ad's position on the page and in whether or not your ad shows at all.

Summary

It is assumed that SEO and SEM are difficult concepts and many times small businesses ignore it. But you must understand that it is worth that effort. SEO offers long lasting results and thus it is an on-going process, whereas SEM or paid campaigns give immediate traffic and that also makes it easy to make the site popular and drive business results.

Keywords

Digital marketing, Digital Landscape, SEO, SEM, Keywords, On Page SEO, Off Page SEO, Local SEO, Google Ads, Web Hosting, Google Ad Auction, Google Analytics, Site Map, Meta Tags, Google My Business, Mobile Optimization, User Experience, User Engagement,

Self Assessment

- _____ is a model in which advertisers pay each time their ad is clicked.
 - PPC
 - CPC
 - CTR
 - None of these
- Which of the following could be the relevant factors behind successful PPC campaigns?
 - Keyword relevance
 - Landing page quality
 - Quality score
 - All of the above
- PPC advertising provides marketers with unique opportunity to _____.
 - Generate leads at high cost
 - Grow your customer base
 - Generate leads at low cost
 - Both b and c
- Which ad extension allows you to send traffic to different pages on your website?

- A. Structured snippet
 - B. Call
 - C. Sitelink
 - D. Callout
5. The most effective AdWords ad headlines _____.
- A. Include the company name or website domain name
 - B. Do not contain the most important keywords
 - C. Directly relate to keywords being searched
 - D. Are written in all capitals
6. Single-word or general keywords are _____
- A. Too broad and can lead to clicks from people who don't know what you are offering
 - B. Excellent for your return on investment
 - C. Useful in generating highly targeted traffic for your site
 - D. Good for preventing irrelevant traffic
7. Google determines an ads rank based on
- A. Your website performance in Googles natural search results
 - B. Your CPC bid
 - C. Your keywords quality score on Google and its CPC
 - D. The length of time you have been on AdWords advertiser
8. What are the steps in the buying funnel?
- A. Interest, consideration, buy, retention
 - B. Awareness, shopping, learning, buying
 - C. Awareness and interest, consideration, buy, retention
 - D. Awareness, learn, buying, shopping
9. 10 people do a web search. In response, they see links to a variety of web pages. Three of the ten people choose one particular link. That link then has a _____ click through rate
- A. Less than 30%
 - B. 30%
 - C. More than 30%
 - D. None of these
10. Which of the following free tools/websites could help you identify which city has the largest search for the keyword - "six sigma"?
- A. Yahoo Search Term Suggestion Tool
 - B. Alexa
 - C. Google Traffic Estimator
 - D. Google Trends
11. Are RSS feeds returned in Google's search history?
- A. No
 - B. Yes
12. What is the term for optimization strategies that are in an unknown area of reputability/validity?
- A. Red hat techniques
 - B. Silver hat techniques
 - C. Grey hat techniques
 - D. Shady hat techniques

13. Google gives priority to themed in-bound links.
A. True
B. False
14. What is the most likely time period required for getting a Google page rank?
A. 1 week
B. 3 weeks
C. 2 months
D. More than 3 months
15. All major search engines are case sensitive.
A. True
B. False

Answers for Self Assessment

1. A 2. D 3. D 4. C 5. C
6. A 7. C 8. C 9. B 10. D
11. A 12. C 13. A 14. D 15. B

Review Questions

1. Explain how pay per click advertising works and how can it benefit your business?
2. Explain the various type sof online advertising.
3. How can Search Engine Optimization help your business?
4. What are the crucial elements of SEO?
5. Why is local SEO important?
6. Explain the steps involved in bring your website on to Google.
7. Explain the important considerations to achieve SEO success.



Further Readings

- SEO 2022 by Adam Clarke
- SEO Workbook by Jason McDonald
- The Art of SEO – Mastering Search Engine Optimization by Eric Enge, Stephan Spencer, and Jessie C. Stricchiola
- Search Engine Optimization and Search Engine Marketing Guide Book
- Search Engine Marketing by Himanshu Srivastav and Parminder Singh



Web Links

<https://ahrefs.com/blog/seo-basics/>

<https://neilpatel.com/blog/10-most-important-seo-tips-you-need-to-know/>

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Unit 03: Social Media and Consumer Engagement

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Objectives

Introduction

- 3.1 Why do Organizations Use Social Media?
- 3.2 Why do Consumers Use Social Media?
- 3.3 Social Feedback Cycle
- 3.4 Open Access to Information
- 3.5 Social Business
- 3.6 The Connected Customer
- 3.7 Social Web and Engagement
- 3.8 The Engagement Process
- 3.9 The Engagement Process and Social Business
- 3.10 The Operations and Marketing Connection

Summary

Keywords

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Answers for Self Assessment

Review Questions

Further Readings

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know why organizations and consumers use social media
- Understand and implement the concept of social feedback cycle
- Implement social business using social cues
- Understand the role of connected customers
- Define social web engagement
- Understand the engagement process
- Leverage the linkage between engagement and social business
- Know the connection between marketing and operations
- Implement the change towards social business within your organization

Introduction

“If you have questions, go to the store. Your customers have the answers.”

Sam Walton, founder, Walmart

Given the visible impact of Web 2.0 in marketplaces around the globe—or more correctly, the marketplace of the globe—social technology is now considered a “given” in business. So many have assumed that social media and a presence on the Social Web are “must haves” that a sort of land rush to build communities and create brand outposts in places like Facebook and Twitter has resulted, too

often without fully understanding the long-term organizational impact and the business opportunity that these efforts – done in a systematic manner – actually offer.

3.1 Why do Organizations Use Social Media?

Social media is no longer optional. It is no longer a choice. Businesses need to invariably join the bandwagon of social media. It has become an essential way to reach, connect, engage and understand your customer and thus gain valuable insights about your customer and thus grow your business and brand. It is estimated that around 5 billion people are active users of social media. So, if businesses are not harnessing the power of social media, they are missing out on an opportunity to reach out to almost half of world's population which is using social media. So social media needs to be at the heart of the digital marketing strategy of any organization. Social media is fast, inexpensive and effective way of reaching out to your audience. Let us look at the multiple ways in which social media can help you connect with your audience, engage with your customer and grow your business.

a. Marketing

With such widespread usage and versatility, social media is one of the most effective free channels for marketing your business today. Here are some of the specific benefits of social media marketing:

(i) Humanize your business

Social media is not one-sided communication. Social media helps you turn your business into an active participant in your market. Your profile posts, your interactions with the users, your comments, your engagement with your users' content, shows the human side of your business. It demonstrates your approachable persona that your audience can familiarize, connect and engage with. This in turn results in trust.

(ii) Drive traffic

You can share links to your business, links of your blog posts, your videos, your product page links and what not. Thus, we can safely say that social media is a top source for driving traffic for your business website. Once traffic is generated, it will ultimately result in more business as your visitors may get converted into customers.

(iii) Generate leads and customers

Social media presents you the unique advantage of generating leads and conversions directly on these platforms. Social media platforms present some unique features such as Facebook/Instagram shops, direct messaging, call to action buttons (call now, whatsapp button, visit website, or visit store etc.) on your profile, and they also have appointment booking facilities.

(iv) Increase brand awareness

The visual nature of social media platforms allows you to create your visual identity across vast audiences and improve brand awareness. Better brand awareness will resultingly produce better results in all other campaigns as well.

(v) Build relationships

Social media platforms open up both direct and indirect lines of communication and this helps in speedy problem resolutions as well. This also provides you with a unique opportunity to interact and engage with your followers, collect feedback, hold discussions and engage with them directly.

The bigger and more engaged your audience is on social media the easier it will be to achieve your marketing goals.

b. Public communications

Social media can help public relations professionals meet their goals or it can hinder the reputation management process, depending on the situation. Some of the most common ways public relations teams use social media include:

- (i) To find influencers
- (ii) To identify brand threats
- (iii) To influence journalists' stories
- (iv) To swiftly react to negative press
- (v) To make announcements

Social media is a natural fit for public relations and one of many tools businesses can use to protect and promote their reputations. When public relations and marketing teams combine their efforts on social media, brands often enjoy immediate positive results.

c. Customer engagement

Engaging customers on social media is not an easy task. It requires the right strategy, a deep understanding of your audience, and content output that aligns with this understanding. One of the biggest challenges facing marketers today is closing what's known as the expectation gap – a void between what customers expect to experience and what's actually delivered. The void is caused when brands don't adapt traditional marketing strategies to meet modern expectations for speed and personalization across all channels. Delivering personalized content at the right moment is challenging. So is creating and delivering content at a high speed, across multiple touch-points, while still providing an exceptional experience for consumers. Let us discuss a few strategies that will help you adapt your social strategy to the modern consumer, so you can reach high levels of engagement and success across channels:

- (i) Know your social media audience
- (ii) Figure out where your audience is talking about you
- (iii) Engage with your audience swiftly and consistently
- (iv) Observe, study and analyze how your customers respond to your campaigns
- (v) Make your content more accessible
- (vi) Show the human side of your business

d. Customer problem resolution

Patrick Cuttica, director of product marketing at social media management company Sprout Social, said that when customers come to you, you need to prove you can be a helpful resource to them. Don't ignore them or leave their questions unanswered; your response (or lack of one) often determines whether the customer will return to your brand. Because so many customers already communicate through social media, businesses of all sorts should invest in building out their social customer care efforts. Social media can improve the way you address customer service issues. If you resolve customer concerns over social media quickly enough, this positive exchange can help you create a loyal customer base. To connect with customers, make sure they can reach you on their preferred platforms.

Providing customer service on social media can be done right by following these strategies:

- (i) Set up a dedicated social media handle for customer support
- (ii) Find and monitor conversations relevant for your business
- (iii) Create social media guidelines

Your brand guidelines for social customer support should cover things such as:

- Tone of voice
 - Response time for each channel
 - Answers to frequently asked questions
 - Protocol for escalations or other customer issues
 - A message approval procedure and a permission management system
- (iv) Be proactive
- (v) Manage customer expectations
- (vi) Always respond
- (vii) Take public conversations private

e. Knowing customer sentiment

Rather than let your customers' emotions go in vain, brands today can translate those feelings into actionable business data. For this, businesses use a technique called sentiment analysis. *Sentiment analysis is the process of retrieving information about a consumer's perception of a product, service or brand.* If you want to know exactly how people feel about your business, sentiment analysis can do the trick. Specifically, social media sentiment analysis takes the conversations your customers are around the social space and puts them into context. Think of sentiment analysis as a subset of social listening. While businesses should obviously monitor their mentions, sentiment analysis digs into the positive, negative and neutral emotions surrounding those mentions. Does your product give customers a sort of warm, fuzzy feeling? Are you meeting their expectations with your quality of service? Sentiment analysis can answer these questions.

How to conduct sentiment analysis yourself

- Find out where folks are talking about you
- Choose your terms for sentiment analysis
- Put your mentions into context
- Let a sentimental analysis tool do the hard work for you for you

f. Product development/improvement

Social media is so useful for new product development that one company has made a success of developing products purely on the back of social media feedback. By scouring eBay and Amazon reviews, **C&A marketing** has developed products that answer the frustrations of consumers and include the most requested features. While most companies won't go to these extremes, social data should become a useful part of the research armory. It brings qualities that can be difficult to find in other methods, with speed and scale just two of the benefits. When searching for new product development advice, there are several frameworks to help you structure the journey. From generating new ideas to releasing the product into the public domain. One of the most popular frameworks for new product development is called '**the eight stages**':

Idea generation – generate a lot of product ideas, using internal and external sources. This includes updating or amending an existing product.

Idea screening – there is no such thing as a bad idea. Until you reach this stage. Examine and eliminate non-viable ideas.

Concept development and testing – the idea or concept gets the first external feedback. Up to this point, the idea is purely internal, but bringing in customer opinion can help further develop the idea.

Marketing strategy/business analysis – establish and describe the target market, projected sales, price, and marketing budget and campaign.

Product design/development – develop prototypes or beta version to test with a panel of individuals. This will highlight the level of interest and desired product features.

Test marketing – validate the entire concept, from marketing angle and message to packaging, advertising, and distribution.

Bring it to market – the grand unveiling. Locations and seasonality may be factored into the decision.

Social data can help in various stages of this framework, providing quicker, detailed feedback at scale and on a cheaper budget than surveys and focus groups. It can help with both feedback on existing products and idea generation for new products.

3.2 Why do Consumers Use Social Media?

a. Create and publish content

Social media has democratized content creation and its publication. We have seen a phenomenal rise in the number of content creators and this has become a great and respectable career opportunity for many such creators. They may create this content for fun, or they may have a job as a professional content creator; otherwise known as an influencer. A social media content creator can post on one or several platforms. Those who are regularly paid to post content often have a visible presence on several platforms. These include:

- Instagram
- Facebook
- Tik Tok
- Snapchat
- Pinterest
- Twitter
- YouTube

A content creator for social media may create and publish text, images, video, and audio. This may be used to engage, entertain, or inform an audience.

Traits of Successful Content Creators

1. Be consistent in your writing
2. Understand your audience
3. Get your own voice
4. Personal branding
5. Share content from other creators that inspire you
6. Understand your KPI's
7. Start networking
8. Deliver value to your audience

b. To share ideas views and opinions

Sharing views and opinions on matters that affect a large section of the society is one common trait of great social media influencers. They take a stand on issues. This is why they gather followers.

While the influencers are vocal and share their views and opinions about issues, there are also a segment of social media users, who restrain themselves from sharing their opinions may be because of the following reasons:

- Why would anyone be interested in what I have to say?
- Someone else will know even more about it than I do
- I don't have time for social media.

But in order to make a mark and your presence felt as an Influencer or as a content creator, one needs to take a stand or share their views or opinions about issues of larger interest.

c. To vote on ideas opinions and also on products/services

Social media has turned out to be a great tool for exchanging and vouching and also for the propagation of political ideology. People are polarized and they want to defend their ideology and they use social media as a vehicle extensively. We have also witnessed the product polarizations on social media as well, where the fans of a particular product or brand support their brand staunchly and vilify or troll the competing brand on social media. So, social media has become a vehicle where people can extensively vote and propagate their views, thoughts, opinions, and also, they can be vociferous about the products and brands they love.

d. To recommend things to other

Social media is rife with product recommendations, reviews and unboxing related content. People love to be known for their expertise and also love to be an opinion leader for a niche. So, in order to carve out the status of being the opinion leaders, they make product review or product recommendation related content as they are several followers who look up to them for recommendations, before they actually make the purchase decision.

e. Share direct experience with brands

Google maps is one such platform, where people share their experience with a particular brand or their product or service. You must have yourself encountered many such experiences that people share on social media. Twitter has become quite notorious in this aspect. Any unwarranted experience and people just tweet it. Not just negative experiences, but even when people are delighted with some product or service, they do share their experience on social media.

f. Leverage experience of others before making a purchase decision

There is a breed of social media users who do not participate in social media directly. They do not make any posts, comments, check-ins; they contribute "just nothing". But their presence on social media is to consume the content created by others. They read the reviews, experiences and comments posted by others. They use the experience of others before they make a purchase decision. For instance, we go to watch a movie, based on the reviews we have read or seen or heard from those who have already watched the movie.

3.3 Social Feedback Cycle

For a lot of organizations – including business, nonprofits, and governmental agencies – use of social media very often begins in Marketing, public communications, or a similar office or department with a direct connection to customers and stakeholders. This makes sense given that a typical driver for getting involved with social media is a slew of negative comments, a need for "virality," or a boost to overall awareness in the marketplace and especially in the minds and hearts of those customers increasingly out of reach of interruptive (aka "traditional") media. In a word, many organizations are looking for "engagement," and they see social media as the way to get it. The advent of Web 2.0 and the Social Web is clearly a game-changer, on numerous fronts. Given the rush to implement, and the opening focus on marketing specifically versus the business more holistically, many "social media projects" end up being treated more like traditional marketing campaigns than the truly revolutionary ways in which a savvy business can now connect with and prosper through collaborative association with its customers. As a result, the very objective – engagement, redefined in a larger social context – is missed as too many "social media campaigns" run their course and then fizzle out.

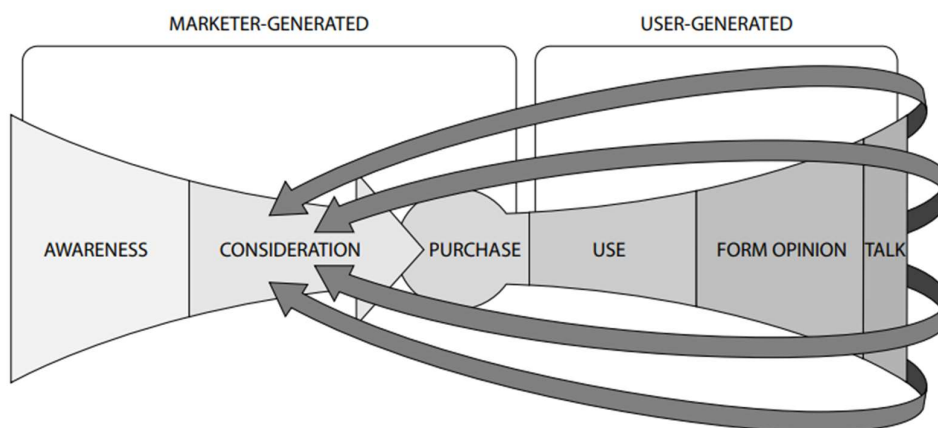
Unit 03: Social Media and Consumer Engagement

Whether that's right or wrong is another matter, and the truth is that a lot of great ideas have given rise to innovative, effective, and measurable social business programs. But these are still the exceptions, which is unfortunate as social technology is within the reach of nearly everyone. The collaborative technologies that now define contemporary marketplaces—technologies commonly called “social media,” the “Social Web,” or “Web 2.0”—offer a viable approach to driving changes in deeper business processes across a wide range of applications. There is something here for most organizations, something that extends very much beyond marketing and communications.

This unit, beginning with the Social Feedback Cycle, provides the link between the basics of social media marketing and the larger idea of social technologies applied at a “whole-business” level. As a sort of simple, early definition, you can think of this deeper, customer-driven connection between operations and marketing as “social business.”

Beginning with the emergence of Web 2.0 technologies—the set of tools that make it easy for people to create and publish content, to share ideas, to vote on them, and to recommend things to others—the well-established norms of business marketing have been undergoing a forced change. No longer satisfied with advertising and promotional information as a sole source for learning about new products and services, consumers have taken to the Social Web in an effort to share among themselves their own direct experiences with brands, products, and services to provide a more “real” view of their research experience. At the same time, consumers are leveraging the experiences of others, before they actually make a purchase themselves. The impact on marketing has been significant, to say the least.

Figure below shows the classic purchase funnel, connected to the Social Web through “digital word-of-mouth”. This loop—from expectation to trial to rating to sharing the actual experience—is now a part of almost every purchase or conversion process. Whether consumer-facing, B2B, for-profit or nonprofit, people are turning to people like themselves for the information they need to make educated choices. These new sources of information are looked to by consumers for guidance alongside traditional media; advertising and traditional communications are still very much a part of the overall marketing mix. The result is a new vetting that is impacting—sometimes positively, sometimes negatively—the efforts of businesses and organizations to grow their markets.



3.4 Open Access to Information

The Social Feedback Cycle is important to understand because it forms the basis of social business. What the social feedback loop really represents is the way in which Internet-based publishing and social technology has connected people around business or business-like activities. This new social connectivity applies between a business and its customers (B2C), between other businesses (B2B), between customers themselves, as is the case in support communities and similar social applications, and just as well between employees. As such, this more widespread sharing has exposed information more broadly. Information that previously was available to only a selected or privileged class of individuals is now open to all. Say you wanted information about a hotel or vacation rental property: Unless you were lucky enough to have a friend within your personal social circle with specific knowledge applicable to your planned vacation, you had to consult a travel agent and basically accept whatever it was that you were told. Otherwise, you faced a mountain of work doing research yourself rather than hoping blindly for a good experience in some place you'd never been before.

Today a basic google search can give you the ratings, directions, the amenities available in hotels and you can choose to book or to avoid any hotel as per your requirements. Now these rating have been aggregated through social communities only. Other than popular search engines such as Google or Bing, there are dedicated web-based platforms, which collect ratings of popular hotels or other services from social communities.



3.5 Social Business

Social business follows right on the heels of the wave of interest and activity around social media and its direct application to marketing: Social business is the logical extension of social technology throughout and across the business. Social business takes social concepts—sharing, rating, reviewing, connecting, and collaborating—to all parts of the business. From Customer Service to product design to the promotions team, social behaviors and the development of internal knowledge communities that connect people and their ideas can give rise to smoother and more efficient business processes. Social business—viewed in this way—becomes more about change management than marketing. That’s a big thought.

Take a step back: Social media marketing—properly practiced—seeks to engage customers in the online social locations where they naturally spend time. By comparison, social business picks up on what they are talking about and what they are interested in and connects this back into the business where it can be processed and used to create the next round of customer experiences and hence the next round of conversations.

It’s important to understand the role of the customer—taken here to include anyone “on the other side” of a business transaction: It might be a retail consumer, a business customer, a donor for a nonprofit organization, or a voter in an election. What’s common across all of these archetypes—and what matters in the context of social business—is that each of them has access to information, in addition to whatever information you put into the marketplace, that can support or refute the messages you’ve spent time and money creating.

But, as we say, “Wait. There’s more.” Beyond the marketing messages, think as well about suggestions for improvements or innovation that may originate with your customers: As a result of an actual experience or interaction with your brand, product, or service, your customers have specific information about your business processes and probably an idea or two on how your business might serve them better in the future.

Consider the following, all of which are typical of the kinds of “outputs” a customer or business partner may have formed after a transaction, and will quietly walk away with unless you take specific steps to collect this information and feedback:

- Ideas for product or service innovation
- Early warning of problems or opportunities
- Awareness aids (testimonials)
- Market expansions (ideas for new product applications)
- Customer service tips that flow from users to users
- Public sentiment around legislative action, or lack of action
- Competitive threats or exposed weaknesses

This list, hardly exhaustive, is typical of the kinds of information that customers have and often share amongst themselves—and would readily share with you if asked. Ironically, this information rarely makes it all the way back to the product and service policy designers where it would do some real good. Importantly, this may be information that you don’t have, information that precisely because you are so close to your business you may never see. Collecting this information and systematically applying it is in your best interest. For example, someone may find that your software product doesn’t integrate smoothly with a particular software application that this customer may also have installed. How would you know? This information—and the ensuing pleas for help expressed in online forums—is something you can collect through social analytics (tools and processes). It can then be combined with the experiences of other customers, as well as your own process and domain knowledge, to improve a particular customer experience and then offered generally as a new solution. This new solution could then be shared—through the same community and collaborative technologies—with your wider customer base, raising your firm’s relative value to your customers in the process and strengthening your relationship with the customers who initially experienced the problem. The resultant sharing of information—publishing a video, or writing a review—and its use inside the organization forms the stepping-off point from social media marketing and social analytics into social business. From a purely marketing perspective this shared consumer information can be

very helpful in encouraging others to make a similar purchase. It can enlighten a marketer as to which advertising claims are accepted and which are rejected, helping that marketer tune the message. It can also create a bridge to dialog with the customer—think about onsite product reviews or support forums—so that marketers can understand in greater detail what is helping and what is not.

Prior to actually making process changes, this listening and information gathering falls under the heading of “more information” and so drives a need for enhanced social analytics tools to help make sense of it. It’s worth pursuing. Access to customer-provided information means your product or service adapts faster. By sharing the resulting improvement and innovations while giving your customers credit, your business gains positive recognition. Although customers can provide an invaluable source of information, you should be aware of the impact anonymous—and often negative—comments can have. It is imperative to understand the role of your customer as both a recipient and publisher of the content that circulates on the Social Web. Is a specific voice within a conversation that is relevant to you coming from an evangelist, a “neutral,” or a detractor? It is important that you know. Is it coming from a competitor or disgruntled ex-employee? The same holds true: You need to know, so that you can plan your response. While the overall trend on the Social Web is away from anonymity and toward identity, it’s not a given—at least not yet—that any specific identity has been verified. This means you need to dig deeper. This persistent anonymity opens the door for “comment and rating abuse,” but social media also provides for a general raising of the bar when it comes to establishing actual identity. More and more, people write comments in the hopes that they will be recognized. With this growing interest and importance of actual identity, in addition to marketplace knowledge, social business and the analytical tools that help you sort through the identity issues are important to making sense of what is happening around you on the Social Web. “As people take control over their data while spreading their Web presence, they are not looking for privacy, but for recognition as individuals. This will eventually change the whole world of advertising.” Esther Dyson, 2008

Social Business Is Holistic

When you combine identity, ease of publishing, and the penchant to publish and to use shared information in purchase-related decision-making processes, the larger role of the Social Feedback Cycle and the practice of social business emerges: Larger than the loop that connects sales with marketing—one of the areas considered as part of traditional Customer Relationship Management (CRM)—the Social Feedback Cycle literally wraps the entire business. Consider an organization like Coca-Cola: Coke is reducing its dependence on branded microsites in favor of consumer-driven social sites like Facebook for building connections with customers. Coke is also directly tapping customer tastes through its Coca Cola Freestyle vending machines that let consumers mix their own Coke flavors. Many other firms now use Twitter as a customer-support channel. The list of examples of the direct integration of collaborative and shared publishing applications in business—beyond marketing—is growing rapidly. The simple question is, “What do all of these applications have in common?” The answer is, “Each of them has a larger footprint than marketing.” Each directly involves multiple disciplines within the organization to create an experience that is shared and talked about favorably. These are examples not of social media marketing, but of social business practices. Importantly, these are also examples of a reversed message flow: The participation and hence marketplace information is coming from the consumers and is heading toward the business. Traditionally, over mass media it’s been the other way around. In each of the previous examples of social business thinking and applications, it is the business that is listening to the customer. What is being learned as a result of this listening and participation is then tapped internally to change, sustain, or improve specific customer experiences. When subsequently tied to business objectives, the practice of social business becomes holistic indeed.

3.6 The Connected Customer

The upshot is that the customer is now in a primary role as an innovator, as a source of forward-pointing information around taste and preference, and as such is potentially the basis for competitive advantage. I say “potentially” because customers having opinions or ideas and actually getting useful information from them and then using it are two different things. Here again, social business and the related technologies step in: Where social media marketing very often stops at the listening stage, perhaps also responding to directly raised issues in the process, social business takes two added steps. First, social business practices provide formal, visible, and transparent connections that link customers and the business, and internally link employees to each other and back to customers. This

is a central aspect of social business: The “social” in “social business” refers to the development of connections between people, connections that are used to facilitate business, product design, service enhancement, market understanding, and more. Second, because employees are connected and able to collaborate—social business and Web 2.0 technology applies internally just as it does externally—the firm is able to respond to what its customers are saying through the social media channels in an efficient, credible manner. Before jumping too far, a point about fear: fear of the unknown, the unsaid, the unidentified, and even the uninformed saying bad things about your brand, product, or service that aren’t even correct! Fear not, or at least fear less. By engaging, understanding, and participating, you can actually take big steps in bringing some comfort to your team around you that is maybe more than a bit nervous about social media.

3.7 Social Web and Engagement

Engagement is redefined by consumers when acting in an open, participative social environment. This is a very different context than the “read-only” setting in which traditional media defines “engagement,” so take the time here to understand the four stages of engagement. Engagement on the Social Web means customers or stakeholders become participants rather than viewers. The difference is participation. Engagement, in a social business sense, means your customers are willing to take their time and energy and talk to you—as well as about you—in conversation and through processes that impact your business. They are willing to participate, and it is this participation that defines engagement in the context of the Social Web. The engagement process is, therefore, fundamental to successful social marketing and to the establishment of successful social business practices. Engagement in a social context implies that customers have taken a personal interest in what you are bringing to the market. In an expanded sense, this applies to any stakeholder and carries the same notion: A personal interest in your business outcome has been established. This applies to customers, to partners, to employees, to anyone and everyone who can express and share an opinion or idea somewhere along your path to market. In fact, your customers and what they think and share with each other form the foundation of your business or organization. The impact is both subtle and profound: Subtle in the sense that on the surface much of “social business” amounts to running a business the way a business ought to be run. Businesses exist—ultimately—to serve customers through whose patronage the founders, employees, shareholders, and others derive (generally) an economic benefit as they are ensured a future in running that business. At times, however, it seems the customer gets dropped from that set. The result can be seen on Twitter most any day by searching for the hashtag #FAIL. It’s also a profound change, however, in the sense that the stakes in pleasing the customer are now much higher. Customers are more knowledgeable and more vocal about they want, and they are better prepared to let others know about it in cases of over-delivery or under-delivery. On top of that, not only are customers seeing what the business and the industry are doing, they are building their own expectations for your business based on what every other business they work with is doing. If Walmart can quickly tap Bazaarvoice and put ratings and reviews on any product it sells, the expectation is that American Airlines will prominently place customer ratings on every flight it flies. Think about it: If flight attendants, by flight, were rated according to service and demeanor by past fliers and that information was used to make future flight choices in the same way as on-time performance, how would the flying experience overall change? It happens in restaurants: We all have a favorite waitperson. If this seems a stretch, consider that Southwest, Alaska Airlines, and Continental have all placed emphasis on exactly this service point, and they enjoy higher than average Net Promoter scores partly as a result. Social business, therefore, is about equipping your entire organization to listen, engage, understand, and respond directly through conversation and by extension in the design of products and services in a manner that not only satisfies customers but also encourages them to share their delight with others. If social media is the vehicle for success, social business is the interstate system on which it rides into your organization. Share their delight? What scares a lot of otherwise willing marketers is the exact opposite: sharing dismay, or worse. The fact is, negative conversations—to the extent they exist, and they do—are happening right now. Your participation doesn’t change that. What does change is that those same naysayers have company—you. You can engage, understand, correct factual errors, and apologize as you address and correct the real issues.

Social business includes product design, pricing, options, customer service, warranty, and the renewal/re-subscription process and more. All told, social business is an organization-wide look at the interactions and dependencies between customers and businesses connected by information-rich and very much discoverable conversations. So, what is it that gets talked about, and why does it matter? Simply put, anything that catches a consumer or prospective customer’s attention is fair

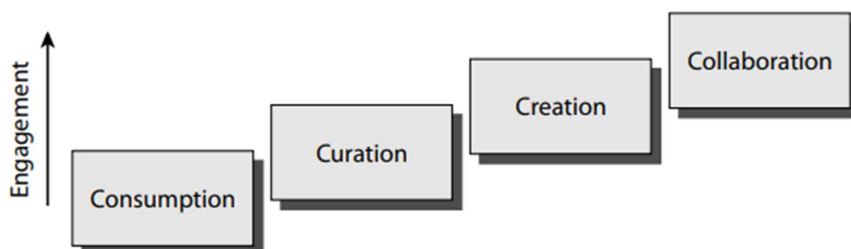
game for conversation. It may happen between three people or three million. This includes expectations exceeded as well as expectations not met, and runs the gamut from what appears to be minutiae (“My bus seems really slow today...”) to what is more obviously significant (“My laptop is literally on fire...right now!”). How do these relate to business? The bus company, monitoring Twitter, might tweet back “Which bus are you riding on right now?” and at the least let its rider know that it noticed the issue. At most, it might discover a routing problem and improve its service generally. As for the laptop on fire, if I were the brand manager and it were my product line, I’d want to know about this as soon as possible and by whatever means. That most certainly includes Twitter. News travels fast, and nowhere does it travel faster than the Social Web. What’s important in a business context is this: In both the bus schedule and laptop fire examples, the person offering the information is probably carrying a social-technology-capable, Internet-connected mobile phone. It is very likely that Twitter or a similar mobile service is also this person’s first line of communication about any particular product or service experience! The respective service and brand managers could easily track this using real-time social media analytics tools and thereby become immediate, relevant participants in these conversations. This kind of participation is both welcomed and expected to be present by customers. The great part of all of this is that by connecting, engaging, and participating, as a business manager you tap into a steady stream of useful ideas. The Social Web (aka Web 2.0) revolves around conversations, social interactions, and the formation of groups that in some way advance or act on collective knowledge. Social media analytics is focused on understanding and managing specific attributes of the conversation: sentiment, source, and polarity, for example. Social business takes it a step further and asks “How or why did this conversation arise in the first place?” For example, is the conversation rooted in a warranty process failure? The practice of social business is helpful in determining how to fix it. Is a stream of stand-out comments being driven by a specific, exceptional employee? Social-business-based processes will help your organization create more employees like that one. From the business perspective – and Marketing and Operations are both a part of this – understanding how conversations come to exist and how to tap the information they contain is key to understanding how to leverage the Social Web and to move from “So what?” to “I get it!” Social business processes and technologies share insights generated by customers, suppliers, partners, or employees through collaborative applications in ways that actually transform a conversation into useful ideas and practical business processes. Social business is built around a composite of technologies, processes, and behaviors that facilitate the spread of experiences (not just facts) and engender collaborative behavior. An easy way to think about social technology and its application to business is in its conveyance of meaning and not just attributes such as “polarity” or “source” or “sentiment,” and in what a business can do in response to this information. Social business is built around collaborative processes that link customers to the brand by engaging them as a part of the Product Development Cycle. The engagement strategy has to begin with going out onto the Web and meeting them on their terms and on their turf. In other words, it’s better to fish where the fish are, not where you wish the fish were.

Social business includes the design of an external engagement process in which participants are systematically brought into the social processes surrounding and supporting the business. This is achieved within the communities frequented by stakeholders through the implementation of the community and associated software services. These social applications include the internal business processes that link across the organization and connect consumers and employees with the business as a whole and facilitate the process of customer engagement.

3.8 The Engagement Process

Engagement is central to the effective use of social technology and the creation of social business. Unlike traditional media and the business processes of selling based on it, social technologies push toward collaboration rather than exposure and impression. In the first wave of social technology – social media and the rise of personal activities (e.g., friending) that occurred on the Social Web, collaboration between consumers took off as they recognized that by sharing experiences they could (collectively) make better purchase decisions. In the context of social business, the process of engagement is expanded to include not only the collaborative activity that occurs between customers, but also the activities that connect the business with its customers as well as those that connect the employees inside the business, where this connectivity fosters sharing and collaboration so that employees may more effectively respond to customers’ needs. The social engagement process moves customers and similar participants in brand, product, or service-related conversations beyond the act of consumption (reading an article about a product, for example) and toward the shared act of

working together (customers alongside employees) to collaborate and produce an experience that improves over time. Following a methodology practiced at 2020 Social, a firm in New Delhi, the upcoming sections present a set of fundamental “social action” building blocks (shown in Figure below) that make it easy to step through the engagement process of tapping customer conversations and turning them into useful insights. These insights give rise to a systematic process for moving customers to increasingly engaged states. These foundational blocks lead to and support a ladder-type engagement model with customer collaboration – not simply content consumption – as the end point. As such, they are useful in understanding the various ways in which technologies and strategies can be combined to drive smart tactical, business-building processes in both marketing and operations.



Consumption

The first of the foundational blocks in the process of building strong customer engagement is consumption. Consumption, as used in the context of social media, means downloading, reading, watching, or listening to digital content. Consumption is the basic starting point for nearly any online activity, and especially so for social activities. It’s essentially impossible (or at least unwise) to share, for example, without consuming first: habitually retweeting without first reading and determining applicability to your audience, for example, will generally turn out badly. More practically, if no one reads (or “consumes”) a particular piece of content, why would anyone share it? Further, because humans filter information, what we share is only a subset of what we consume. As a result, consumption far outweighs any other process on the Social Web: It’s that cliché that holds the majority of the people on the Web are taking (consuming) rather than putting back (creating). It’s often said that the Web makes everyone a publisher: I guess a lot of people are just too busy consuming to create!

You can take a tip from this reality: If you want your audience or your community members to move beyond consumption and into activities like content creation, then short of irritating them (which works, but not in the way you want it to and certainly not in the way that sand in an oyster shell produces a pearl), you’ve got to encourage them and empower them to create. It’s really important to help move participants beyond consumption and into creation: The remaining social action building blocks are keys to getting beyond the “media property/page view” model of monetization of interactive web applications, which really isn’t “social” at all.

The move beyond consumption is an important realization in the development of your social business: Content consumption without a direct consumer/audience role in creation—think TV, radio, print—is an interactive but not necessarily social approach to building a successful business. In a content-driven interactive media site, the content is the draw and the consumption of it is the primary activity.

The content still matters—no one wants to hang out in a vacuum—but the interactions and conversations that the content enables between members take center stage.

Curation

Curation is the act of sorting and filtering, rating, reviewing, commenting on, tagging, or otherwise describing content. Curation makes content more useful to others. For example, when someone creates a book review, the hope is that the review will become the basis for a subsequent purchase decision. However, the review itself is only as good as the person who wrote it, and only as useful as it is relevant to the person reading it. Reviews become truly valuable when they can be placed into the context, interests, and values of the person reading them. This is what curation enables. By seeing not only the review but also the “reviews of the reviewers” or other information about the person who created the review, the prospective buyer is in a much better position to evaluate the applicability of that review given specific personal interests or needs. Hence, the review is likely to

be more useful (even if this means a particular review is rejected) in a specific purchase situation. The result is a better-informed consumer and a better future review for whatever is ultimately purchased, an insight that follows from the fact that better informed consumers make better choices, increasing their own future satisfaction in the process. Curation also happens more broadly, at a general content level. Curation is an important social action in that it helps shape, prune, and generally increase the signal-to-noise ratio within the community. Note as well that curation happens not only with content, but also between members themselves. Consider a contributor who is rewarded for consistently excellent posts in a support forum through member-driven quality ratings. This is an essential control point for the community and one that all other things being equal is best left to the members themselves: Curation “of the members and by the members,” so to speak.

Of note, the process of curation is the first point at which a participant in the social process is actually creating something. Consumption, as defined here, is a one-directional action: You read, you download, you listen, etc. Consumption, by itself, does not drive social interaction. Curation is, therefore, a very important action to encourage. Curation teaches people to participate, to create, in small, low-risk steps that are easy to grasp. It’s a lot like learning to dance: Fear, concern of self-image, and feelings of awkwardness all act as inhibitors of what is generally considered an enjoyable form of self-expression and social interaction. Introducing your audience to curation makes it easy for them to become active members of the community and to participate in the later creative and collaborative processes that drive it over the long term. That’s how you build a community.

Creation

Beyond curation is what is more generally recognized as “content creation.” Unlike curation, a great first step that requires little more than a response to an event—you indicate your like or dislike for a photo, for example—content creation requires that community members actually offer up something that they have made themselves. This is a significantly higher hurdle, so it’s something for which you’ll want to have a very specific plan. “You can upload your photos!” by itself is generally not enough.

How do you encourage creation?

Step 1 is providing tools, support, help, templates, samples, and more. The less work your members have to do the better. Does your application require a file of a specific format, sized within a given range? You can count on a significant drop in participation because of that. When someone has taken a photo on a now-common 40- or 50-megapixel phone camera, stating “uploads are limited to 100 Kbytes is tantamount to “Sorry, we’re closed.” Instead, build an application that takes any photo and then resizes it according to your content needs and technology constraints. Hang a big “All Welcome” sign out and watch your audience create.



Example

When MTV’s Argentinean business unit sought to extend its consumer presence in the social spaces, it teamed up with Looppa, a firm in Buenos Aires, to create online communities that encouraged content creation and sharing. Using the content tools, participants created in excess of 300,000 photos and 200,000 comments. Over 30,000 videos were uploaded and shared by members within the community. It is this sort of active content creation that marks the shift from the read-only traditional brand community—come and play our games, read our announcements, and buy our product—to the socially participative Web 2.0 community.

Driving this content creation is a simple underlying theme: People like to share what they are doing, talk (post) about the things that interest them, and generally be recognized for their own contributions within the larger community. Reputation management—a key element in encouraging social interaction—is based directly on the quantity and quality of the content created and shared by individual participants. The combination of easy content publishing, curation, and visible reputation management are the cornerstones of a strong community.

Collaboration

Finally, at the top of the set of the core social-business building blocks is collaboration. Collaboration is a key inflection point in the realization of a vibrant community and the port of entry for true social business. Here's why. The collective use of ratings aside, consumption, curation, and creation can be

largely individual activities. Someone watches a few videos, rates one or two, and then uploads something. That can build traffic, can build a content library, and can drive page views, all important aspects of a media property.

But they aren't necessarily strong social actions. Collaboration is.

Collaboration occurs naturally between members of the community when given the chance. Blogging is a good example. Take a look at a typical blog that you subscribe to, and you'll find numerous examples of posts, reinterpreted by readers through comments—that flow off to new conversations between the blogger and the readers. Bloggers often adapt their "product" on-the-fly based on the inputs of the audience. Blogging and the way in which participant input shapes the actual product is a deceptively simple example of what is actually a difficult process: Taking direct input from a customer and using it in the design of your product. Many effective bloggers take direction from readers' comments and then build a new thought based on the reader's interests and thoughts. This is actually a window into what social business is all about: Directly involving your customers in the design and delivery of what you make. Consider a typical newspaper, online or off. A journalist writes an article, and the subscribers read it. The primary feedback mechanism—Letters to the Editor—may feature selected responses, but that's generally the end of the line. The original journalist may never again come back to these individual responses much less visibly build on them in future stories. Traditional media is "one way."

Now move to a blog or a blog-style online paper, something like the Huffington Post, Pluggd.in, or Mashable. With the online publications of these businesses, audience participation is actually part of the production process. The comments become part of the product and directly build on the overall value of the online media property. The product—news and related editorial and reader commentary—is created collaboratively. As news content in particular moves to increasingly capable hand-held and Internet-connected devices like the iPad, news will increasingly find its way back to

the living room where it may again be discussed socially—even if in the "online living room"—with the (also digital) social commentary continuing to become an increasingly important part of the content. In the business context, taking collaboration into the internal workings of the organization is at the heart of social business. This is equally applicable to the design of physical products, long-lived (multiyear) services, and customer relationship and maintenance cycles. By connecting customers with employees—connecting parents with packaging designers for kids' toys—your business can literally leapfrog the competition and earn favorable social press in the process.

3.9 The Engagement Process and Social Business

Taken together, the combined acts of consumption, curation, creation, and collaboration carry participants in the conversations around your business from readers to talkers to co-creators. Two fundamentally important considerations that are directly applicable to your business or organization come out of this.

First, your audience is more inclined to engage in collaborative activities—sharing thoughts, ideas, concerns—that include you. It may be a "negative" process: your audience may be including you in a conversation whose end-goal is a change in your business process that improves a particular (negative) experience they've had. Or, it may be simply "We love you...here's what else we'd like to see." The actual topics matter less than the fact that your customers are now actively sharing with you their view of the ways in which what you offer affects them. By building in social behaviors and inviting customers into these processes, your business or organization is in a much better position to identify and tap the evangelists that form around your brand, product, or service.

Second, because your customers or other stakeholders have moved from reading to creating and collaborating, they are significantly closer to the steps that follow collaboration as it leads to engagement: trial, purchase, and advocacy. The engagement process provides your customers with

the information and experiences needed to become effective advocates, and to carry your message further into their own personal networks.



As examples of the value customers and organizational participants will bring as they gather 'round and talk, consider the following:

You don't get to the really good results until you go through the necessary venting of people you've previously ignored: Opening up a dialog gives you a natural way to enable venting and healing.

The way you deal with negative issues is an exhibition of your true character: become a master and reap the rewards.

It's your job to understand what was really meant, given whatever it was that was actually said. "I hate you" isn't always as simple as it sounds: This kind of seemingly intense negativity may arise because the customer involved likes you enough to actually feel this way when things go wrong.

Ultimately, your customers want to see you do well: They want your product or service to please them.

Looking ahead at the engagement end goal—advocacy—note that the benefits of advocacy apply beyond the immediate customers involved. Advocates gather around your brand, product, or service to spread their experiences for the purpose of influencing others. For you, it's a double payoff: Not only does it make more likely the creation of advocates through collaborative social applications, but because these and other social applications exist, the advocates that emerge are actually more able to spread their stories.

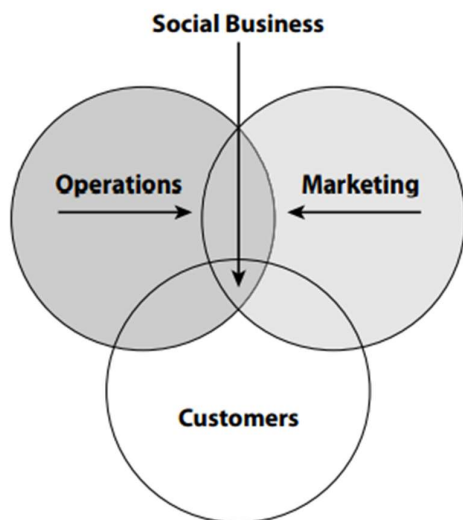
In the end, the engagement process as applied to social business is about connecting your customers and stakeholders with your brand, product, or service, and then tapping their collective knowledge and connecting into your organization to drive innovation and beneficial change. With this linkage in place, the larger social feedback loop is available to you for use in ways that can—and do—lead to long-term competitive advantage.

3.10 The Operations and Marketing Connection

So far, this unit has covered two primary topics: The importance of understanding the mechanics of the Social Web and the Social Feedback Cycle, and the collaborative inflection-point within the larger social engagement process. Engagement has been redefined for social business as a more active (participative) notion compared with the decidedly more passive definition of engagement—reading an ad or mechanically interacting with a microsite—typically applied in traditional media, where terms like “Engagement Ad” literally means “an ad you can click on to see more promo copy.”

That’s not what participants on the Social Web think of as “engaging,” as the Social Web is a distinctly participation-centric place. The final section ties the mechanical processes of the social technologies together with the acts of participation and collaboration, and establishes the foundational role of the entire business or organization in setting up for success on the Social Web. The Social Feedback Cycle—the loop that connects the published experiences of current customers or other stakeholders with potential customers or other stake-holders—is powered by the organization and what it produces. This is a very different proposition from a traditional view of marketing where the message is controlled by an agency and the experience is controlled—in isolation—by the product or services teams and others.

Figure below shows the alignment that needs to occur between what can be loosely be called “Operations” and the Marketing team in support of Customers. Included in “operations” are the functional areas that control product design and manufacturing, customer service and support policies, warranty services and similar. *In other words, if Marketing is the discipline or function within an organization that defines and shapes the customer’s expectation, then Operations is the combined functional team that shapes and delivers the actual customer experience.*



The connection between the disciplines of marketing and operations and social media—and in particular the conversations, ratings, photos, and more that circulate on the Social Web—is this: The majority of conversations that involve a brand, product, or service are those that arise out of a difference between what was expected and what was delivered or experienced. After all, we tend to talk more about what was not expected than what was expected. In this simple relationship between expectation and actual experience, the folly of trying to control conversations on the Social Web becomes clear: Conversations on the Social Web are the artifacts of the work product of someone else—a blogger, a customer, a voter, etc.—who typically doesn’t report to the organization desiring to gain control! You can’t control something that isn’t yours to control. Instead, it is by changing the product design, the service policy or similar in order to align the experience with the expectation or to ensure the replicable delivery of “delight.”



For example, as Zappos does when it upgrades shipping to “Next Day” for no other reason than to delightfully surprise a customer. At Zappos, it’s not just a story of an occasional surprise upgrade that got blown out of proportion in the blogosphere.

When bloggers – and customers – rave about Zappos, it’s for good reason: Zappos creates sufficient moments of delight that many people have experienced them and gone on to create and share content about them. It’s expensive – and Zappos isn’t always the lowest cost shoe retailer. But in the end, delight wins. Zappos set out to build a billion-dollar business in 10 years. As a team, they did it in eight. Ultimately, it is the subsequent customer experiences – built or reshaped with direct customer input – which will drive future conversations and set your business or organization on the path to success.

Connect Your Team

Social media marketing is in many ways a precursor to social business. Social media marketing is most effective when the entire business is responsible for the experiences and everyone within the organization is visibly responsible for the overall product or service. When engagement, for example, is considered from a customer’s perspective – when the measure for engagement is the number of new ideas submitted rather than the time spent reading a web page – the business operates as a holistic entity rather than a collection of insulated silos. The result is a consistent, replicable delivery experience that can be further tuned and improved over time.

When it comes to rallying the troops to support your organization-wide effort, there is no doubt that you’ll face some push back. Very likely, you’ll hear things like this:

- We don’t have the internal resources and time.
- We lack knowledge and expertise.
- Not till you show me the value and ROI.
- We don’t have guidelines or policies.
- It’s for young kids – not for our business.
- Our customers will start saying bad things.

You’ll hear all of this, and more. Of the first tasks you are likely to face when implementing a social media marketing program and then pushing it in the direction of social business is the organizational challenge of connecting the resources that you will need. The good news is that it can be done. The not-so-good news is that it has to be done.

When you’re a marketer, one of the immediate benefits of a social media program is gaining an understanding of what people are saying about your brand, product, or service (listening); analyzing what you find to extract meaning (social media analytics) that is relevant to your work; and then developing a response program (active listening). This information can be presented internally, and done so in a way that is inclusive and draws a team around you. Listening is a great way to start: As you move toward social business; it will become clear rather quickly that this is best done through an effort that reaches across departments and pulls on the strengths of the entire organization. Anything you can do to get others within your business or organization interested is a plus. As a starting point, listening is the low-hanging fruit.

Each of the above – listening, analyzing, and some aspects of responding – can be done without any direct connection to your customers or visible presence with regard to your business or organization on the Social Web: In other words, it’s very low risk. While it may not be optimal, the activities around listening and analyzing, for example, can be managed within the marketing function. With workflow-enabled analytics tools – for example, using a listening platform that automatically routes tweets about warranty issues to customer service – you can certainly make it easier to oversee all of this. Building on this approach, when you move to the next step – responding to a policy question or product feature request – you’ll be glad you pulled a larger team together and built some internal support. Otherwise, you’ll quickly discover how limited your capabilities inside the marketing department to respond directly and meaningfully to customers actually are, and this will threaten your success. How so?

For example, that you see negative reviews regarding the gas mileage of a new model car you’ve introduced, or you see those posts about an exceptional customer service person. In the former case, you can always play the defensive role – “True, but the mileage our car delivers is still an

improvement over....” Or, you can ignore the conversation in hopes that it will die out or at least not grow. In the case of the exceptional employee, you can praise that particular person but beyond the benefit of rewarding an individual – which is important, no doubt about it – what does it really do for your business? What would help you is delivering more miles per gallon, or knowing how to scale exceptional employees, or how to create more exceptional employees from the start.

Ignoring, defending, and tactically responding in a one-off manner doesn’t produce sustainable gain over the long term. Instead, the information underlying these types of events needs to get to the product teams, to Customer Support or Human Resource (HR) managers or whomever it is that is responsible for the experience that is being talked about. In the case of the mileage, someone needs to determine whether there is a design problem? Or, is it an application mismatch or simply an unrealistic customer expectation?

To address these kinds of issues, action is required, and the action has to connect the source of the experience to the actual solution. This generally means involving a team beyond marketing. Otherwise – if the root cause is not addressed, the current conversations will continue. What you are really after – and where social business practices can actually deliver – is in understanding, validating, and implementing the processes or process changes needed to move the conversation in the direction that supports your business objectives. In the case of the exceptional employee, what is this person’s history? To whom does this person report? How can your organization encourage more people to adopt the specific behaviors that drove the positive comments? These are the types of issues that a holistic approach to social business can impact. In all of these cases, the take-away is this: Faced with an issue of interest coming off of the Social Web, your next step – armed with the conversational data and some analysis – is likely going to take you outside of marketing. You’ll want to have a larger team in place, so the activity of encouraging support among colleagues and internal influencers and decisions makers must begin early.

Who is that larger team, and how do you build it? The answers may surprise you: Your best allies may be in unlikely or prior unconsidered places.

Consider, for example, the following:

Your legal team can help you draft social media and social computing policies for distribution within the organization. This is great starting point for team-building because you are asking your legal team to do what it does best: Keep everyone else out of trouble.

You can connect your customer service team through social analytics tools so that they can easily track Twitter and similar Social Web conversations, and using low-cost listening tools you can enlist your corporate training department to teach service representatives what to do.

You can outsource the development of a relevant business application for your Facebook business page or other community site to a qualified technology partner (and not your cousin or an intern who will be gone in 6 weeks).

Enlist your own customers. Most business managers are amazed at how much assistance customers will provide when asked to do so.

Your Customers Want to Help

While it may surprise you, your own customers are part of the solution. They are often the biggest source of assistance you’ve got. Flip back to the engagement process: Consumption, curation, creation, collaboration. At the point that your customers are collaborating with each other, it is very likely that they are also more than willing to provide direct inputs for the next generation of your product or service, or offer tips on what they think you can quickly implement now.

Example

Starbucks’ customers have been busy using the Salesforce.com-based “My Starbucks Idea” platform. Since implementation in 2008, about 80,000 ideas have been submitted with over 200 direct innovations as a result. Based on direct customer input, Starbucks has been averaging two innovations introduced per week. That’s impressive, and it pays off in business results.

Ideation and support are among the tools that you’ll want to look at, along with social media analytics and influencer identification tools. However, you do it, whether planning your social business

program as an extension of an in-place marketing program or as your first entry into social technology and its application to business take the time to connect your customers (engagement) to your entire team (collaboration).

Summary

This unit focused on social media and social technology applied at a deeper business level for the purpose of driving higher levels of customer engagement. In particular, this unit established the following fundamentals:

- There is a distinct social “engagement” process: Beginning with content consumption, it continues through curation, creation, and collaboration. The final stage—collaboration—can be used to form an active link between you, your colleagues, and your customers.
- Operations and Marketing teams must work together to create the experiences that drive conversations. The Social Feedback Cycle is the articulation of the relationship that connects all of the disciplines within your organization around the customer experience.
- Collaboration—used to connect customers to your business—is a powerful force in effecting change and driving innovation. Collaboration is, in this sense, one of the fundamental objectives of a social business strategy.

Now that you’ve gotten the basics of the engagement process and understand the usefulness of social applications along with the ways in which you can connect your audience, employees, and business, spend some time looking at the following real-world applications. As you do, think about how the engagement process is applied, and about how the resultant interactions leverage the larger social networks and relevant communities frequented by those who would be using these applications.

Keywords

Marketing, traffic, humanizing business, lead generation, brand awareness, brand building, relationship building, public communication, customer engagement, customer sentiment, product development, product improvement, Idea generation, idea screening, concept development, concept testing, marketing strategy, business analysis, product design, product development, test marketing, content creation, publishing content, social feedback cycle, social business, the connected customer, engagement, engagement process, consumption, creation, curation, collaboration,

Self Assessment

1. Which of the following could be reasons for organizations to use social media?
 - A. Marketing
 - B. Marketing communications
 - C. Customer engagement
 - D. All the above
2. When a company uses social media interactions and engagement to understand what the audience thinks about the latest ad campaign, then what use of social media is being harnessed here?
 - A. Knowing customer sentiment
 - B. Marketing
 - C. Engagement
 - D. Communication
3. Which of the following may not be a reason for a company to use social media?

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- A. Competitor analysis
 - B. Knowing the customer sentiment
 - C. Improving products and services
 - D. None of the above
4. Why do people use social media?
- A. Create and publish content
 - B. To share ideas, views and opinions
 - C. To recommend products and services to others
 - D. All the above
5. Which of the following may not necessarily be a legitimate reason why people use social media?
- A. To interact with a brand directly
 - B. To threaten service representatives
 - C. To review products and services
 - D. Read reviews of products and services
6. Social business takes the following social concepts to all parts of the business.
- a. Sharing and rating
 - b. Reviewing and connecting
 - c. Connecting and Collaboration
- A. Only a
 - B. Only b
 - C. Only c
 - D. All a, b and c
7. Which of the following is the role of a connected customer?
- A. Innovator
 - B. Opinion leader
 - C. Influencer
 - D. All the above
8. A YouTuber who reviews the latest electronic gadgets, receives a comment asking his opinion on a latest smart phone. The YouTuber is probably playing the role of a/an _____.
- A. Innovator
 - B. Opinion leader
 - C. Influencer
 - D. Brand champion
9. What is the correct order of the engagement process?
- A. Consumption, curation, creation, collaboration
 - B. Curation, creation, consumption, collaboration

- C. Creation, consumption, collaboration, curation
 - D. Collaboration, creation, curation, consumption
10. Which of the following is the highest level of engagement?
- A. Collaboration
 - B. Consumption
 - C. Curation
 - D. Creation
11. Which of the following states in the engagement process is a key inflection point in the realization of a vibrant community?
- A. Collaboration
 - B. Consumption
 - C. Curation
 - D. Creation
12. Taking input from a customer and using it in the design of your product can be a part of which stage in your social engagement process?
- A. Collaboration
 - B. Consumption
 - C. Curation
 - D. Creation
13. Which of the following is included in operations?
- A. Product design
 - B. Manufacturing
 - C. Customer service
 - D. All the above
14. The intersection of marketing, operations and customer is called _____.
- A. Social Business
 - B. Social Buying
 - C. Social Media
 - D. None of the above
15. Which of the following is a major source of social media conversations?
- A. The consensus of expectations and delivery
 - B. The difference between expectations and delivery
 - C. Rumors around fake deliveries
 - D. None of the above

Answers for Self Assessment

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. D | 2. A | 3. D | 4. D | 5. B |
| 6. D | 7. D | 8. B | 9. A | 10. A |
| 11. A | 12. A | 13. D | 14. A | 15. B |

Review Questions

1. Define the basic properties, objectives, and outcomes of a collaborative application that connects your customers to your business and to your employees.
2. Define an internal application that connects employees and enables efficient resolution of customer-generated ideas.
3. Map out your own customer engagement process and compare it with the engagement process defined in this chapter



Further Readings

- Driving Consumer Engagement in Social Media – Influencing Electronic Word of Mouth by Anna Bianchi
- Social Media Strategy: A Practical Guide to Social Media Marketing and Customer Engagement by Julie Atherton
- Social Media Marketing: The Next Generation of Business Engagement by Dave Evans



Web Links

- <https://www.socialbakers.com/blog/engaging-customers-through-social-media>
- <https://www.wordstream.com/social-media-marketing>
- <https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-customer-service/>
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Unit 04: Customer Engagement

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Plan customer engagement strategies
- Plan affiliate marketing strategies
- Leverage strategic partnerships
- Plan content marketing strategies
- Design social media personas
- Understand the significance of personas
- Identify attributes for creating personas

Introduction

Social media engagement has become an important part of any marketing strategy as social media platforms evolve to reward genuine social interactions. Here's why we think social media engagement is so important, and how you can overcome obstacles to create a winning strategy. Social media without engagement is just media. People don't use social media to have a one-way conversation. They want to make connections with people and brands. What began as a method for people to connect with their friends on the internet has evolved into a platform for marketers to participate in meaningful dialogues with their followers and consumers. And small businesses' social media activity has a significant impact on everything from brand exposure to consumer loyalty.

4.1 What is Social Media Engagement?

People's interactions with your social media profiles and content are measured using social media engagement. Across all social networks, the phrase can refer to a wide range of activities. Engagement could, for example, consist of:

- Favorite & Likes
- DMs, Replies, and Comments
- Retweets and shares on social media
- Saves
- Clicks
- Mentions

Engagement is a wonderful method to see if the content you're providing is actually resonating with your audience, but it's also useful for other things, which leads us to our next topic.

4.2 Why is Social Media Engagement Important?

In recent years, organic reach has decreased on practically every social media network. Accounts with stronger social media involvement, on the other hand, are less affected. Indeed, Facebook considers "meaningful engagement" to be a strong indicator that a post should be prioritised. In other words, posts on social media that have more active and insightful discussions will receive more attention. According to Facebook, your customers want you to communicate with them as well, especially when it comes to offering help. People and businesses exchange more than 8 billion Facebook messages each month, making social media the most popular platform for customer service. Customers want you to respond not only swiftly but also appropriately. According to research commissioned by Twitter in 2016, 71% of their users expect brands to respond within an hour. Positive engagement between businesses and actual people are something that consumers love to watch (and share). Responding to a complaint on social media can boost customer advocacy by up to 25%. It may be nerve-wracking to reply in public, but if you provide excellent service, your consumers will appreciate it. Brands who respond to customer service requests on social media are viewed more favorably by 66 percent of those aged 18 to 54. Furthermore, every public engagement counts as additional interaction, which increases your overall reach. Finally, engagement fosters the development of relationships. We use social media to get feedback from our customers and community on how we can better serve them. Having this direct line to our target audience enables us to build relationships, develop empathy, and, ultimately, build a better product for our users.

4.3 How to Increase Social Media Engagement?

Here's how you maintain a high level of social media engagement.

Engage in genuine social interaction

You wouldn't go to a party solely to give a speech and refuse to engage in any conversation, right? You must socialize in order to be engaging, which entails interacting with the people around you. This is something we strive to do on social media all of the time, with the goal of responding to the majority of the comments and mentions we receive. **Digital-savvy consumers are well informed.** Digital consumers have learned to harness the power of internet to the full extent. As technologies evolve, these consumers learn to harness the power of digital technologies to the maximum extent and also the most efficiently. So, we can safely conclude that the marketers have to go that extra mile to reach out and impress these well-informed consumers. Not only is responding a good practice to get into, it can also impact your revenue.

Have a consistent and authentic voice

It can be intimidating to put yourself out there on social media. Will your message be well-received? Are you presenting your company in the best possible light? It's crucial to have an authentic voice on social media, but it's not as simple as it sounds. It's necessary because it humanizes your brand and motivates people to respond positively to you and talk about you. It's tough because "voice" and "tone" are highly subjective terms. In an earlier blog post, Kevan Lee explained the problem as follows:

"We don't want brands to talk to us like we're dollar signs." We're looking for genuine communication. Because the notion is different from other web optimization tactics, finding a voice for your social media marketing might be tough."

As an example of how to develop your social media voice, here's a four-part formula suggested by Stephanie Schwab, writing for Social Media Explorer. She breaks voice down into tone, character, language, and purpose.



If you have numerous employees managing your social media accounts, it's extremely vital to establish a brand voice. Keep in mind that various audiences respond to different styles. GIFs and emojis can also be used to spice up your feed. Both have become integral parts of the social media lingo. Emojis, according to Internet linguist Gretchen McCulloch, enable us to include movements and emotional nuances in our online conversation. When you publish material using GIFs and emoticons, you give your social media platforms a little more personality.

Know your algorithms

Social media engagement isn't measured the same way on every site. Familiarize yourself with the exclusive algorithms so you can increase engagement. To begin, consider the timing of engagement: does it matter when people participate, or are midnight likes treated the same as noon interactions? When people interact with your postings on LinkedIn for instance, it counts as part of your reach. The "Golden Hour" concept is discussed in our LinkedIn Strategy guide: postings that receive engagement during the first 60 minutes have a better reach. Instagram's algorithm, on the other hand, does not take engagement timing into account. Consider the time of your article as well. While there is no single "optimal" time to post for everyone, you can use audience analytics to post when your followers are most engaged. Examine how your other actions affect your odds of engaging on social media. When you utilize Instagram Stories, for example, Instagram likes it and will show your posts to normal story viewers more frequently. Posts featuring videos on Facebook garner 400% higher interaction than text-only posts. Hashtags are everything on Twitter; adding them to tweets can boost engagement by up to 1,065 percent.

Create great customer experiences

Customer experience, or CX, is your customers' overall impression of their interaction with your company or brand. CX is the sum of a customer's interactions with your company, from surfing the website to speaking with customer service to receiving the product or service they purchased. Everything you do has an impact on your customers' perceptions and their decision to return or not, therefore providing a positive customer experience is critical to your success. Delivering a positive client experience is critical for every company. The better the customer experience, the more repeat business and favorable feedback you'll get, while also lowering the friction of customer complaints and returns. The following are some of the advantages of providing excellent customer service:

- improved customer retention
- consumer satisfaction has improved
- positive recommendations, as well as superior word-of-mouth marketing

Make your brand meaningful and relatable

Here are a few ways in which you can make your brand meaningful and relatable:

- You Can Make Your Brand Relatable through Visuals.
- Use Images Familiar to Your Audience.
- Don't Use Anything too Obscure or Only has Meaning to You.
- Connect with Color.
- Don't get too 'Arty Farty'
- Just be Friendly.
- Get to Know Your Audience.
- Share Behind the Scenes and Real Life.

Use push notifications

Google recently listed Push Notifications as an important marketing trend that marketers should no longer ignore. Push notifications, which function on the idea of permission-based marketing, are an excellent alternative in the age of GDPR, when customers do not appreciate being bombarded with unwanted messages or emails.

Push notifications are described in a variety of ways: some call them actionable messages, some call them rich messages, and still others refer to them as personalized messages. Which of these, however, is the correct description? They're all there. Here's how we can deconstruct it:

- An app or website sends a notification to the user's phone or computer.
- Used to send real-time warnings and messages to the user.
- Images, GIFs, and movies are examples of rich media content.
- The notification's content can be customized to encourage the user to do the desired action.

Push notifications have the advantage of being able to time the message and even personalize it based on the occasion. A customer who has abandoned their cart, for example, will receive a reminder, whereas a customer who has not used the app for a long time will receive offers that are relevant to them. Push notifications can be used as a marketing tool as well. Push notifications, according to Invespro, can increase app engagement by 88 percent and lead to 48 percent of mobile users making an in-store purchase. However, if done incorrectly, a push notification might become obtrusive.

Focus on retention

Customer retention refers to a set of operations that a company undertakes in order to improve the number of repeat customers and the profitability of each existing customer. Customer retention techniques allow you to deliver and extract additional value from your current clientele. You want to make sure that the clients you fought so hard to attract stay with you, have a positive experience with your products, and continue to derive value from them. In other words, acquisition builds a

foundation of clients, whereas retention builds customer connections and maximizes revenue for each one.



Sharpen your Social Media Marketing

Some pointers need to be kept in mind whether launching a totally new campaign or even wish to revamp the existing social media campaigns.

- Set goals that make sense for your business
- Take time to research your target audience
- Establish your most important metrics and KPIs
- Create (and curate) engaging social content
- Make your social presence as timely as possible
- Assess what's working, what isn't and how to keep improving
- Bring other departments into the mix

Capture hearts and mind with video

The way we communicate and consume information is constantly changing as a result of social media. The most successful content marketers offer content on a regular basis across several social media platforms. With all of the content shared across different platforms, it's no surprise that visual content is more than 40 times more likely to be shared than all-text content. Video is no different. With 65 percent of SMEs and major organizations considering it the most engaging communication medium for their audiences, it is becoming an increasingly vital part of the promotional artillery.

Here are 8 reasons why you should use video in your social media.

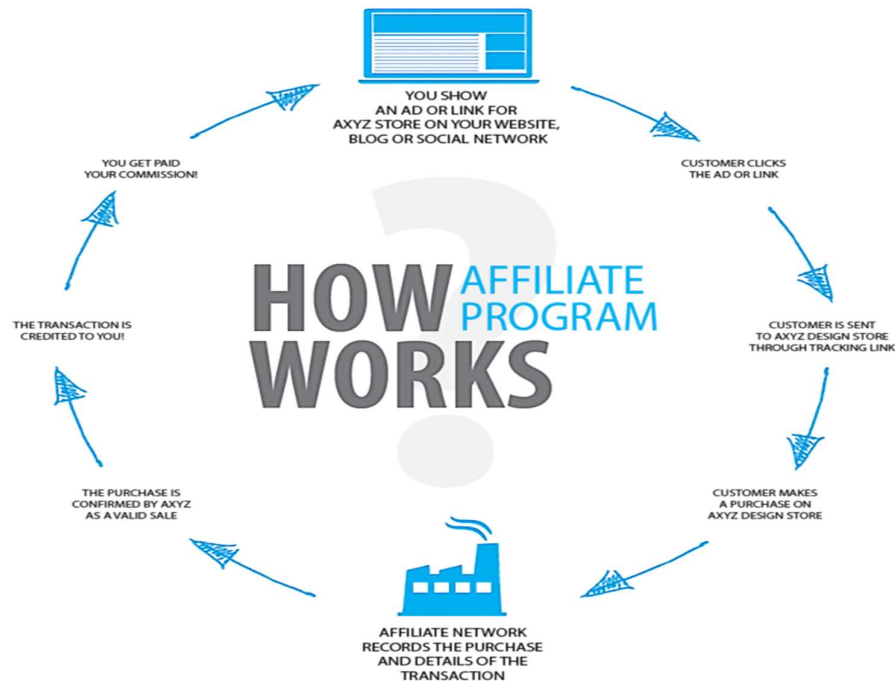
1. Grab attention
2. Search optimization
3. Drive conversions
4. Unique messaging
5. Make the most of trending topics
6. Share breaking news
7. Brand exposure
8. Personify your brand

4.4 What is Affiliate Marketing?

Affiliate marketing is the process of earning money (commissions) every time you promote a company's products or services and drive a sale. You only get paid every time you drive a sale, just

like a commission-only sales representative. Affiliate marketing is promoting other people's products in return for a small commission for each sale. You've probably seen headings marked "affiliate link" or "sponsored post" on many of the websites you visit; or maybe you've already taken the first step and signed up to an affiliate network.

Now let's cover how it works:



To begin, look for an affiliate program or network that interests you. Examine the program's overview, which includes the types of items or services available, payment options, and commissions. Sign up if it interests you and wait for confirmation of your approval. Then begin developing material by incorporating the program's custom links. When one of your users makes a purchase using those links, you'll get a modest commission. You can work for specific companies or affiliate networks, where you can register and pick and choose which programs you want to participate in. To make it easier to choose, the programs are often grouped into categories. Start promoting your affiliate links on your website, in newsletters, on social media, and wherever else you're allowed to distribute them once you've been approved. The network sends you a payment when you've reached the minimum payment level. Payment methods vary, and usually include PayPal, bank transfers, and checks.

4.5 Players in an Affiliate Model?

The merchant

The maker, the seller, the brand, the merchant, or the vendor are all terms used to describe someone who creates something. This is the entity in charge of developing the product. It might be a large vacuum cleaner manufacturer, such as Dyson. It could also be a single person, such as Mariah Coz, who sells online courses to female business owners. Anyone can be the merchant behind an affiliate marketing scheme, from solitary entrepreneurs to startups to Fortune 500 businesses. They don't even have to participate actively. All they need is a product to sell.

The affiliate marketers

Affiliates can be anyone from a single person to a whole company. A month's worth of commissions from an affiliate marketing business can range from a few hundred dollars to tens of millions of dollars. It is here that the marketing takes place. An affiliate advertises one or more affiliate items, attempting to attract and persuade potential customers of the merchant's product's worth so that they purchase it. This can be accomplished by maintaining a product review blog for the merchant. It could also be an entire site dedicated to finding cool products related to certain topic and promoting those affiliate products.

The consumer

The customer or consumer makes the affiliate system go 'round. Without sales, there aren't any commissions to hand out and no revenue to be shared. The affiliate will try to market to the consumer on whatever channel they see fit, whether that's a social network, digital billboards or through a search engine using content marketing on a blog. The consumer needs to know they are part of an affiliate marketing system. Usually a short disclaimer like "If you purchase items on this site, I may earn a small commission. Thanks for supporting our work." is fine. The consumer will not typically pay a higher price to the affiliate marketer, as the cost of the affiliate network is already included in the retail price.

The affiliate network

Only some consider the network part of the affiliate marketing equation. However, I believe that an affiliate marketing guide needs to include networks, because, in many cases, a network works as an intermediary between the affiliate and the merchant. While you could technically promote someone else's course and arrange a direct revenue share with them, letting a network such as ClickBank or Commission Junction handle the payment and product delivery puts a more serious note on your affiliate marketing. Sometimes, affiliates have to go through an affiliate network to even be able to promote the product. For example, this happens if the merchant only manages their affiliate program on that network. The affiliate network then also serves as a database of lots of products, out of which the affiliate marketer can choose which to promote. Clickbank is an example of an affiliate network. In the case of promoting consumer products, like tools, books, toys and household items, the biggest affiliate network, by far, is Amazon. Their Amazon Associates affiliate program lets you promote any item that is sold on their platform.

4.6 Strategic Partnership/Partnership Marketing

Partnership marketing involves any strategic collaboration between two businesses, or between a business and an individual with a significant personal brand, where both parties work together to accomplish mutual goals. With the help of a trusted voice outside your company, a partnership can effectively increase brand awareness, reach new audiences, improve lead generation, and grow your brand's customer base.



Benefits of partnership marketing

The most obvious advantage of partner marketing is financial gain. Businesses join forces to attract more clients and boost revenue. However, we recommend that you consider marketing

collaborations for reasons other than monetary gain. The most obvious advantage of partner marketing is financial gain. Businesses join forces to attract more clients and boost revenue. However, we recommend that you consider marketing collaborations for reasons other than monetary gain. Marketing collaborations can help well-established or fast-growing businesses gain a larger market share or improve sales performance. Partnerships also provide opportunities for smaller firms to obtain visibility in the industries in which they operate or target. Most significantly, by combining the resources and skills of different firms or individuals, partnerships can produce unique or additional customer value. This could entail developing new innovative products and solutions, delivering better and faster service, or even assisting the entire sector in its development. Many SaaS organizations, for example, place a greater emphasis on developing and growing the product than on providing the service itself. Intermediaries can often perform these services more efficiently than producers, improving the overall value of the product to the buyer.

Marketing collaborations expand a company's horizons and have an impact on product distribution and placement. Many enterprises begin on a small scale. As a result, the alliance is an excellent method for gaining new customers in new markets.

Finally, and maybe most importantly, a marketing collaboration is cost-effective. Successful collaborations bring together a diverse mix of new ideas and abilities, allowing you to save money on third-party services. In addition, most agreements, such as affiliate or influencer marketing, are based on the pay-per-performance model, which means you only pay for results.

4.7 E-mail Marketing

Email marketing is the act of sending promotional messages to people in mass quantities. It typically is to generate sales or leads and it may contain advertising. Email marketing is a powerful marketing channel that uses email to advertise your company's products or services. It is a type of direct marketing as well as digital marketing. By incorporating it into your marketing automation efforts, it can assist make your customers aware of your latest items or offers. Through various forms of marketing emails, it can also play a key part in your marketing strategy by generating leads, raising brand awareness, creating connections, and keeping customers engaged between transactions.

Advantages of e-mail marketing

Email has been a popular marketing technique for businesses in part because it requires the user to take action; an email will remain in the inbox until it is read, deleted, or archived. Email, on the other hand, is one of the most cost-effective methods accessible. In fact, according to 2015 research by the Direct Marketing Association (DMA) in the United Kingdom, email has an average return on investment (ROI) of \$38 for every \$1 invested. Email marketing may help you create a relationship with your audience while also driving traffic to your blog, social media accounts, or wherever else you want people to go. You may even segment your emails and target consumers based on their demographics, ensuring that you only send them the messages they want to see.

4.8 Content Marketing

The process of planning, developing, distributing, sharing, and publishing content via channels such as social media, blogs, websites, podcasts, applications, press releases, and print publications, among others, is known as content marketing. The goal is to enhance brand exposure, sales, engagement, and loyalty by reaching out to your target demographic.

What is the significance of content marketing?

- Inform your leads and prospects about your products and services.
- Increase the number of conversions
- Establish customer-business interactions that result in enhanced loyalty.
- Demonstrate how your products and services answer their problems.
- Create a sense of belonging for your brand.

Content Marketing Types

There are many different sorts of content marketing that you may use in your strategy; here are a few of the most popular:

1. Content Marketing on Social Media

It's simple to see why so many firms invest in social media marketing, given that there are over 3.6 billion social media users worldwide. There are various platforms to work with (for example, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Snapchat) and several ways to generate and publish content on each of them (e.g. photos, live videos, pre-recorded videos, stories).

2. Content Marketing Infographic

Infographics present facts, statistics, and information in a visually appealing way. Infographics are a wonderful approach to successfully express your material since they combine basic words, concise assertions, and clear imagery. They're great for simplifying a complex or instructional issue so that everyone in the audience can grasp it.

3. Blog Content Marketing

Blogs are an effective form of inbound content because they provide for a great deal of flexibility in terms of aim and topic. You can use a blog to link to other internal and external material and blog entries, add social share buttons, and include product information, among other things.

4. Podcast Content Marketing

According to a 2020 survey, 49 percent of 12-to-32-year-olds in the United States had listened to a podcast in the previous month, with an average of six hours of listening each week. As a result, a growing number of businesses and media entities have begun to produce and distribute their own podcasts. Podcasts offer for a great deal of creativity because they can be about anything. You also decide on other aspects of the podcast, such as the frequency of episodes, who will be on it, how you will promote it, and how long the episodes will be.

5. Video Content Marketing

69 percent of consumers prefer to learn about a brand's product or service through video, according to Wyzowl study. Video marketing may also help you increase conversions, increase ROI, and establish relationships with your audience. You can post your video material on social media sites, landing pages, or on the website of a co-marketer.

6. Paid Ad Content Marketing

Paid advertising may help you reach a large audience and position yourself in all of the places you want to be seen - they're especially useful when used in conjunction with inbound marketing. Paid adverts can be shared in a variety of venues, including social media, landing pages, banners, and sponsored content.

4.9 Social Media Persona

A social media persona is a representation of your ideal customer. It takes into accounts things like demographics, their desires, and their pain points. It pays to be as exact as possible when identifying your target demographic in this day and age, when customers expect customization from businesses online. But how can you be sure that your message is on track when you're targeting hundreds or thousands of people? Welcome the world of social media personas. Marketing personas give your consumer base a face, helping you to better define and promote to your most profitable clients. And, because of the massive quantity of data we can collect through social media, it's perhaps easier than ever to do so.

Need of social media Personas for Marketers

Let's start with an explanation of what personas are. Social media personas are made-up characters who represent your ideal customers on social media. Personas create a picture of the people you're trying to sell to by taking into consideration characteristics like demographics, desires, and pain points. To put it another way, a profile of your ideal customer. Perhaps you're attempting to reach out to the millennial generation. Perhaps you're aiming your marketing at baby boomers. Creating a persona can help you focus on a more targeted, actionable social approach in either case. What do you mean by that? Consider the following advantages of social media identities.




- Improve your content strategy

Digital and Social Media Marketing

- Run more compelling ad campaigns
- Tap into a profitable target audience


What does a social media persona look like?

Although there is no one-size-fits-all approach to creating a persona, a general rule of thumb is that the more precise your social media personas are, the better. Here are some examples of personalities from a sporting company trying to develop a social strategy that is tailored to their target audience:

 <p>Female, College-age, athlete</p>	 <p>Female, 20's-30's, active</p>	 <p>Female, 40's-50's, active</p>
<p>Target With: Instagram Stories re: college sports games</p>	<p>Target With: Instagram feed posts w/ giveaways</p>	<p>Target With: Instagram feed posts w/ influencers</p>
<p>Best Time to Post: 4-7 PM PT</p>	<p>Best Time to Post: 9-12 PM PT</p>	<p>Best Time to Post: 7-12 PM PT</p>
<p>Competitors: Nike, Lululemon</p>	<p>Competitors: Lululemon, ALO, Under Armour</p>	<p>Competitors: Target, Prana, Lululemon, Adidas</p>

Although these identities are a good place to start, they may certainly be expanded upon. Consider how many brands use their social media avatars to create tales. Such personas are similar to real flesh-and-blood individuals in that they highlight specifics such as fictional biographies, motivations, and personality features. Xtensio, for example, provides blank templates that demonstrate what a more "full" persona looks like:

User Persona Type



"A quotation that captures this user's personality."

Age: 1-100
Work: Job title
Family: Married, kids, etc.
Location: City, state
Character: Type

Trait 1
Trait 2
Trait 3
Trait 4

Goals

- A task that needs to be completed.
- A life goal to be reached.
- Or an experience to be felt.

Frustrations

- The challenges this user would like to avoid.
- An obstacle that prevents this user from achieving their goals.
- Problems with the available solutions.

Motivation

Incentive	<div style="width: 80%; background-color: #00A0C0;"></div>
Fear	<div style="width: 20%; background-color: #00A0C0;"></div>
Growth	<div style="width: 70%; background-color: #00A0C0;"></div>
Power	<div style="width: 40%; background-color: #00A0C0;"></div>
Social	<div style="width: 90%; background-color: #00A0C0;"></div>

Brands & Influencers

FAKE FAKE FAKE

Preferred Channels

Traditional Ads	<div style="width: 10%; background-color: #00A0C0;"></div>
Online & Social Media	<div style="width: 95%; background-color: #00A0C0;"></div>
Referral	<div style="width: 85%; background-color: #00A0C0;"></div>
Guerrilla Efforts & PR	<div style="width: 30%; background-color: #00A0C0;"></div>

Personality

Introvert	Extrovert
Thinking	Feeling
Sensing	Intuition
Judging	Perceiving

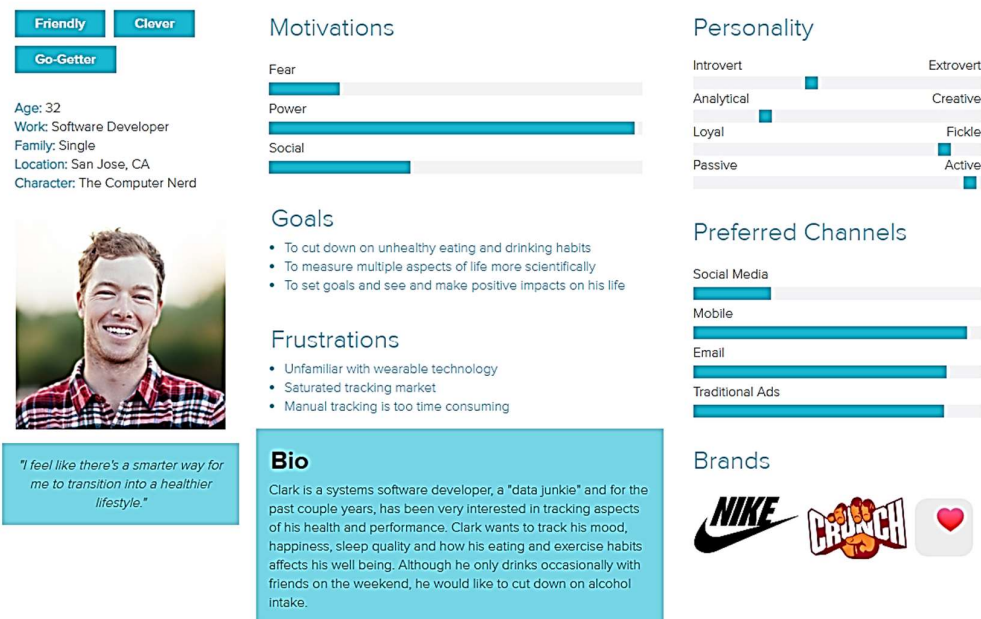
Bio

The bio should be a short paragraph to describe the user journey. It should include some of their history leading up to a current use case. It may be helpful to incorporate information listed across the template and add pertinent details that may have been left out. Highlight factors of the user's personal and of professional life that make this user an ideal customer of your product.

Remember - you may modify this template, remove any of the modules or add new ones for your own purpose.

And here's what the "finished product" of a customer persona look like:

Clark Andrews



Any specific audience is incredibly nuanced, once again. These aspects being highlighted makes it much easier to design appropriate brand messages as well as attract clients who are more inclined to convert. Creating social media personalities is also a good way to guarantee that your social approach isn't just a carbon copy of your competitors'. Regardless of how detailed you go, here are some baseline considerations to keep in mind when creating your social media personas:

- Age/Location
- Income/Spending Power by Gender
- Frustrations/pain spots
- Personality characteristics
- Goals /Objections
- Brands they support

How to define your social media personas

You may already have a concept of what your personas will look like in the big picture. That is, after all, a decent start. Defining your personas, on the other hand, necessitates a combination of data analysis and consulting with your customers.

- Dig into your social data
- Look at your non-social analytics
- Look at all available sources of social audience data
- Ask plenty of questions

4.10 Motivation for Social Media Participation

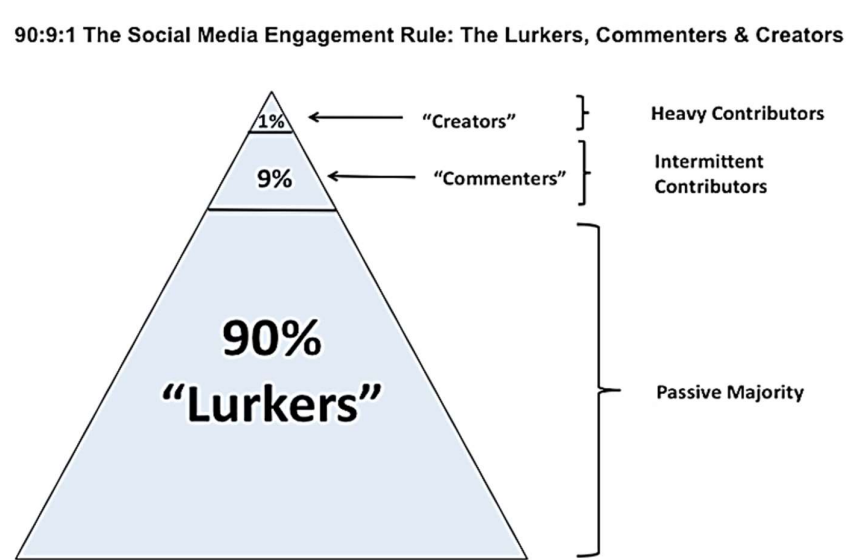
Intrinsic and *extrinsic* variables can both influence your decision to engage. Intrinsic motivation is defined as motivation that is ingrained in the activity itself (comes from within the individual), rather than motivation that is derived from external sources such as money or recognition. The satisfaction of successfully completing a task is intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, refers to motivation that comes from beyond the individual. External factors such as money or recognition are examples. For example, a person might perform a given action due of the monetary benefits that performing the action could provide. These rewards bring pleasure and satisfaction that the action/task may not provide. Whether an individual is motivated primarily by intrinsic or extrinsic forces, his or her personality plays a significant impact. A person with a very extroverted personality may be more motivated by things such as acknowledgment, reciprocity, and affinity, whereas a person with a more introverted personality may be uninterested.

Everyone visiting your social media profiles may fall into any of the following categories:

- Fans
- Information Seekers
- Discount Hunters
- Thought Leaders
- Detractors

The interactions which happen on social media can be categorized in the following categories:

- Lurkers
- Commenters
- Creators



Summary

1. People's interactions with your social media profiles and content are measured using *social media engagement*.
2. Here's how you maintain a high level of social media engagement.

- Engage in genuine social interaction
 - Have a consistent and authentic voice
 - Know your algorithms
 - Create great customer experiences
 - Make your brand meaningful and relatable
 - Use push notifications
 - Focus on retention
 - Sharpen your Social Media Marketing
 - Capture hearts and mind with video
1. *Affiliate marketing* is promoting other people's products in return for a small commission for each sale.
 2. Players in an *Affiliate Model*
 - The Merchant
 - The Affiliate Marketers
 - The Consumer
 - The Affiliate Network
 3. *Partnership marketing* involves any strategic collaboration between two businesses, or between a business and an individual with a significant personal brand, where both parties work together to accomplish mutual goals.
 4. *Email marketing* is the act of sending promotional messages to people in mass quantities. It typically is to generate sales or leads and it may contain advertising.
 5. The process of planning, developing, distributing, sharing, and publishing content via channels such as social media, blogs, websites, podcasts, applications, press releases, and print publications, among others, is known as *content marketing*.
 6. A *social media persona* is a representation of your ideal customer. It takes into accounts things like demographics, their desires, and their pain points.
 7. *Intrinsic and extrinsic* variables can both influence your decision to engage. *Intrinsic motivation* is defined as motivation that is ingrained in the activity itself (comes from within the individual), rather than motivation that is derived from external sources such as money or recognition. The satisfaction of successfully completing a task is intrinsic motivation. *Extrinsic motivation*, on the other hand, refers to motivation that comes from beyond the individual.

Keywords

Social Media Engagement, Social Interaction, Social Media Brand Voice, Push Notifications, Retention, Affiliate Marketing, Affiliate Network, Strategic Partnership, Partnership Marketing, E-mail Marketing, Content Marketing, Blog, Podcast, Social Media Persona, Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, Lurkers, Commenters, Creators

Self Assessment

1. Customer engagement should ideally make the customers feel _____ for a brand.
 - A. Positively
 - B. Negatively
 - C. Happily
 - D. All the above

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2. Which of the following can be used to increase customer engagement?
 - A. Create great customer experiences
 - B. Use push notifications
 - C. Take advantage of conversational marketing
 - D. All the above

3. _____ is the process by which an affiliate earns a commission for marketing another person's or company's products.
 - A. Affiliate marketing
 - B. Digital Marketing
 - C. Social Media Marketing
 - D. None of the above

4. Which among the following is/are players in an affiliate model?
 - A. Affiliate networks
 - B. SaaS platforms
 - C. Affiliate agencies
 - D. All the above

5. _____ involves any strategic collaboration between two businesses, or between a business and an individual with a significant personal brand, where both parties work together to accomplish mutual goals.
 - A. Partnership marketing
 - B. Affiliate marketing
 - C. Digital Marketing
 - D. None of these

6. Content can be provided by partners in the form of:
 - A. TikTok
 - B. YouTube
 - C. Blog Posts
 - D. Instagram

7. Which of the following is NOT an essential element of e-mail marketing?
 - A. Offer
 - B. An email list
 - C. An email service provider
 - D. Clearly defined goals

8. Which of the following cannot be termed as content marketing?
 - A. Direct selling
 - B. Memes
 - C. Blogs

- D. Infographics
9. Content strategy is all about:
- A. Creation
 - B. Publication
 - C. Governance
 - D. All the above
10. Which of the following cannot be a part of your content marketing strategy?
- A. Your business case
 - B. Your website design
 - C. Your audience personas
 - D. Your brand story
11. The representation of your ideal customer is called a _____
- A. Social media persona
 - B. Target market
 - C. Target segment
 - D. None of these
12. A social media persona takes into account which of the following thing/s?
- A. Demographics
 - B. Desires
 - C. Pain points
 - D. All the above
13. Which of the following is/are the advantage/s of incorporating social media personas in your social media strategy?
- A. It helps to scale your engagement efforts
 - B. It helps you to figure out the appropriate time for posting
 - C. Either a or b
 - D. Both a and b
14. Which of the following is not an attribute to develop social media personas?
- A. Motivation for social media participation
 - B. The number of colleagues one has in his/her organization
 - C. Function in the purchase process
 - D. Types of social media interactions
15. Which of the following type of social media participations could be the most useful for any organization in order to get maximum word of mouth publicity?
- A. Fans
 - B. Information seekers

- C. Discount hunters
- D. Detractors

Answers for Self Assessment

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. A | 2. D | 3. A | 4. D | 5. A |
| 6. C | 7. A | 8. A | 9. D | 10. B |
| 11. A | 12. D | 13. D | 14. B | 15. A |

Review Questions

1. What is social media engagement and why is it important?
2. What are the various strategies using which you can increase social media engagement?
3. What is affiliate marketing and who are the players involved in an affiliate model?
4. What is partnership marketing and what are the various ways in which this mutually beneficial collaboration can be achieved?
5. What is e-mail marketing and how it can benefit businesses?
6. Content marketing is gaining popularity. What is it and how it can help businesses?
7. What are social media personas and why do marketers need to create them?
8. Why do people contribute on social media? What are the factors which drive such contribution?



Further Readings

- Permission marketing by Seth Godin
- Social Media all-in-one for Dummies by Jan Zimmerman and Doug Sahlin
- Email Persuasion by Ian Brodie
- Traction by Gabriel Weinberg & Justin Mares
- Building a Story Brand by Donald Miller



Web Links

- <https://www.ringcentral.com/digital-customer-engagement-experience.html#ring-cc>
- <https://www.mobiquity.com/insights/the-future-is-phygital>
- <https://www.higherlogic.com/blog/what-is-an-online-community/>
- <https://bootcampdigital.com/blog/the-digital-marketing-landscape-and-ecosystem/>

Unit 05: Social Media Marketing Plan

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Summary

Keywords

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Create and execute a social media marketing plan
- Understand each stage of social media marketing planning cycle
- Understand the importance of social listening
- Assess social media presence
- Use metrics to evaluate brand sentiment
- Apply the SWOT framework for competitive analysis
- Set social media goals
- Choose between frameworks to set social media goals
- Develop the building blocks of strategy

Introduction


Social media is an excellent way to reach a large audience, raise brand awareness, and improve sales. Furthermore, social media may assist you in connecting with your target audience and establishing your brand's reputation. While there are numerous advantages, creating a social media strategy from scratch can appear to be a herculean undertaking.

5.1 Creating a Social Media Marketing Plan


Choose your social networks

Step 1: Choose your social networks

You don't have to be on them all—just the ones that matter to you and your audience.




Consider...




Audience

Where do your potential customers hang out? Which social network has the right demographics?



Time

How much time can you devote to a social network? Plan on at least an hour per day per social network, at least at the start.



Resources

What personnel and skills do you have to work with? Do you have the resources to create what's needed?



Source: <https://buffer.com/library/social-media-marketing-plan/>

From network to network, social media is as homogeneous as soda pop is from brand to brand. Sure, it's all social media, but Google+ and Twitter could be Mountain Dew and Pepsi, respectively. Each network has its own set of best practices, style, and target audience. You should select the social networks that best suit your approach and your social media objectives. You don't have to be on all of them—just the ones that are relevant to you and your target audience. Some things to consider that can help you choose not only which social networks to try but also how many to try.

Audience – Where do your potential customers hang out? Which social network has the right demographics?

Time – How much time can you devote to a social network? Plan on at least an hour per day per social network, at least at the start. (Once you get going, tools like Buffer can help you save a bit of time.)


Resources – What personnel and skills do you have to work with? Social networks like Facebook emphasize quality content. Visual social networks like Pinterest and Instagram require images and videos. Do you have the resources to create what's needed?

For the first part of this decision, you can reference the audience research and demographics from surveys.

Fill out your profiles completely


Step 2: Fill out your profiles completely


A completed profile shows professionalism, cohesive branding, and a signal to visitors that you're serious about engaging.




Visual

Aim for consistency and familiarity with the visuals (profile and cover photo) you use on social media

 Facebook Cover Photo
820px x 462px

 Twitter Header Photo
1500px x 500px

 LinkedIn Cover Photo
1584px x 396px



Source: <https://buffer.com/library/social-media-marketing-plan/>

One of the monthly checks you should perform is to go through each of your social media profiles and ensure that your profile images, cover photos, bios, and profile information are all current and accurate. It's an important component of your social media assessment. A completed profile demonstrates professionalism, consistent branding, and a commitment to engaging visitors. Profiles will require two parts: visuals and text.

When it comes to images, consistency and familiarity with the pictures you use on social media are important. Your Instagram profile photo should usually mirror your Facebook profile photo. Your Twitter cover photo should be comparable to your LinkedIn cover photo.

You can use a social media picture size chart to make these photographs, which will show you the correct measurements for each photo on each network. You can make things even easier by using a programme like Crello or Canva, which come with prebuilt templates that automatically determine the right sizes for you. For text, your main area to customize is the bio/info section. Creating a professional social media bio can be broken down into six simple rules.


1. Show, don't tell: "What have I done" often works better than "Who I am"
2. Tailor your keywords to your audience
3. Keep language fresh; avoid buzzwords
4. Answer the question of your potential followers: "What's in it for me?"
5. Be personal and personable
6. Revisit often

Find your voice and tone

Step 3: Find your voice and tone

Voice is the mission statement; tone is the implementation of that mission

Ask yourself...



- ? If your brand was a person, what kind of personality would it have?
- ? If your brand was a person, what's their relationship to the consumer?
- ? Describe in adjectives what your company's personality is not.
- ? Are there any companies that have a similar personality to yours?
- ? How do you want your customers to think about your company?



Source: <https://buffer.com/library/social-media-marketing-plan/>

It's tempting to jump right in and start sharing at this stage. There's one more thing to do before you do it. If you establish a voice and tone for your material right away, your excursion into social media will be more focused and on point. You might do so by creating marketing personas and discussing the finer elements of your mission statement and consumer base. All of this is fine and dandy. However, if your social media marketing strategy is just getting started, you may make things a little easier.

Start with questions like these:

1. If your brand was a person, what kind of personality would it have?

2. If your brand was a person, what's their relationship to the consumer? (a coach, friend, teacher, dad, etc)
3. Describe in adjectives what your company's personality is not.
4. Are there any companies that have a similar personality to yours? Why are they similar?
5. How do you want your customers to think about your company?

At the end of this exercise, you should end up with a handful of adjectives that describe the voice and tone of your marketing. Consider this to keep you on track:

Voice is the mission statement; tone is the implementation of that mission.


Cultivate a voice that delights your customers, then your customers will be thrilled to spread the love about you.

Pick your posting strategy

Step 4: Pick your posting strategy

What's the ideal amount to post per day? How often should you post? When should you post? What should you post?

It depends.





Source: <https://buffer.com/library/social-media-marketing-plan/>

What's the ideal amount to post per day? How often should you post? When should you post? What should you post? The answer for questions like these is:

"It depends."

So much of the social media experience is about your individual audience and niche. What works for you might not work for me, and you never know until you try. That being said, there is some pretty good data and insight about where to start. Here are a few important points to consider.

What should you be posting?

Videos are ideal for engagement.

The trend toward video content is backed up by anecdotal evidence: if you look at your Facebook News Feed or Twitter timeline, you'll notice videos everywhere. This pattern is supported by data: More people watch, share, and like videos than any other sort of content. According to BuzzSumo, which evaluated 68 million Facebook posts, video posts receive better average engagement than link or image posts. According to Twitter, videos are six times more likely than images to be retweeted, and three times more likely than GIFs to be retweeted.

How often should you be posting?

There's a lot of interesting information out there concerning how frequently to post on social media. Your industry, reach, resources, and the quality of your updates are all elements that may influence the frequency with which you share. The social media platform you're utilising will have its own set of guidelines. If your followers enjoy your updates, you can usually get away with posting more. Here are some tips based on some pretty useful studies into how often to post to social media for a given number.

- Facebook – Once or twice per day
- Instagram – Once or twice per day
- Instagram Stories – Eight to 16 Stories, twice per week
- Twitter – Three to ten times per day

- LinkedIn – Once or twice per day
- Pinterest – Five to ten times per day
- Snapchat – Five to 20 times per week

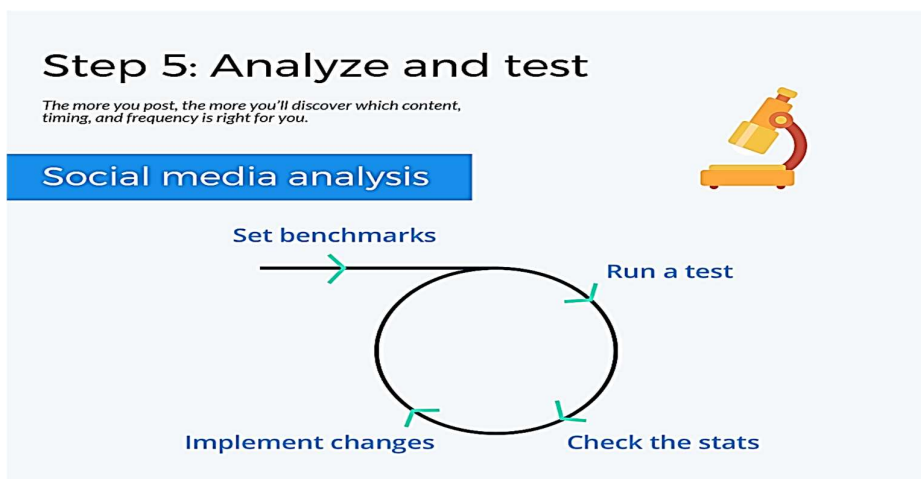
When should you be posting?

There are many neat tools to compiled timing research from sites like Visual.ly, Search Engine Watch, and Social Media Today to create its awesome visual. Here's an overview of what they found in terms of timing.

- Twitter – 1-3pm weekdays
- Facebook – 1-4pm weekdays
- LinkedIn – 7-8:30am and 5-6pm Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday
- Tumblr – 7-10pm weekdays and 4pm on Fridays
- Instagram – 5-6pm weekdays and 8pm on Mondays with a sweet spot at 6pm
- Pinterest – 2-4pm and 8-11pm weekdays with weekends being the best
- Google+ – 9-11am weekdays

Once you have been posting a while, you can use your own data and tools like Instagram Insights, and Followerwonk to find your brand's best time to post and refine your posting strategy.

Analyze and test



Source: <https://buffer.com/library/social-media-marketing-plan/>

The more you publish, the more you'll figure out what kind of content, when to post, and how often to post is best for you. How will you be able to tell? It's a good idea to invest in a social media analytics programme. Basic metrics are embedded into most major social networks; it's just a little easier to seek and locate this information from an all-encompassing dashboard. These tools may provide you with a detailed breakdown of how each post performed in terms of views, clicks, shares, Likes, and comments.

Which social media statistics are the most useful? Looking at each of these primary numbers, as well as the composite engagement statistic on a per-post basis, has given us some information. The resulting statistic gives us a good idea of how our social media material performs over time, allowing us to test and iterate from there.

Here's one way to analyze your performance.

Set a benchmark. After two weeks or a month of sharing, you can go back through your stats and find the average number of clicks, shares, likes, and comments per post. This'll be your benchmark going forward. You can come back and update this number at any time as your following and influence grow.

Test something new. You must be open to testing just about anything. Do Facebook Live videos get more views than non-live videos? Does the video length matter? We'll often hear about someone's new strategy or get a new idea and then test right away.

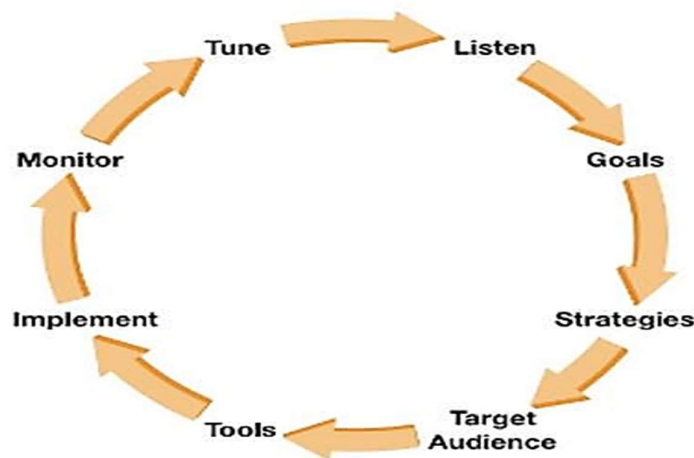
Did it work? Check the stats from your test versus the stats of your benchmark. If your test performed well, then you can implement the changes into your regular strategy. And once your test is over, test something new!

Automate, engage, and listen

The final component of a social media marketing strategy is establishing a method that you can use to remain on top of updates and engage with your audience. Automate the posting of your social media material to begin. Tools like Buffer allow you to write all of your content at once and then queue it up to be sent out according to your timetable. The secret weapon for consistently effective sharing, day after day, is automation. However, automation isn't the end of your strategy. Social media, too, necessitates participation. When people speak to you, respond. Make time during your day to respond to conversations that are taking place on social media. Conversations with potential clients, references, friends, and coworkers fall under this category. They are far too vital to be overlooked. Creating a strategy for listening and engaging is one way to stay on top of all the discussions going on around you and your company. Buffer Reply and Mention, for example, can gather all social media mentions and comments on your posts in one place, allowing you to instantly respond to your followers.

5.2 Social Media Planning Cycle

A social media marketing (SMM) plan enables a company to specify what they want to achieve via the use of social media. A SMM strategy, in addition to these broad objectives, lays forth the steps that the organisation will take to attain these objectives. A social media marketing strategy can provide a number of advantages, so make sure your company is taking use of this chance.



Source: <https://twitter.com/amysrm17/status/841899674726469632>.

It's critical to realise that, like social media itself, social media marketing strategies should grow over time. It is critical that your social media marketing plan grows with society in order to maintain a successful approach. These nine steps will assist you in developing your social media marketing strategy.

Listening

What is your brand's current social media presence?

Setting Goals

Analyze your organization using SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis. What realistic goals does your brand want to accomplish?

Defining Strategies

Use the “8 C’s of Strategy Development”. What strategies will help your brand reach its goals?

Identifying the target audience

What are the needs of your target audience?

Selecting Tools

What tools will work best for your strategies?

(hashtags, SEO, link shortening, images)

Selecting Platforms and Channels

What platforms will reach your target audience best?

Implementing

Put your plan into action!

Monitoring

Track your progress, and COLLECT DATA.

Tuning

This is a constant and continuous process.

Creating and monitoring a strong social media marketing plan will allow you to connect with various audiences in a familiar way. This connection can lead to numerous advantages for your organization.

5.3 Social Listening

The process of finding and analysing what is being said about a company, people, product, or brand on the internet is known as social listening, sometimes known as social media listening.

Massive amounts of unstructured data are generated by internet conversations. As a result, it's critical to understand what a business hopes to accomplish with a social media listening campaign. Depending on the purpose, the suitable tool could be a set of free Google Alerts or a more expensive software package with ad hoc analysis and full interaction with historical customer relationship management (CRM) applications. While both social media and one-on-one information gathering have value, social listening is increasingly becoming a vital customer intelligence tool. The following are just a few examples of how you can use social media to get insight:

- monitoring online customer support forums;
- using software tools to gather comments from social outlets, such as Facebook and Twitter; and
- encouraging customers to suggest new product features and vote on their favorites.

Text can be mined for specific keywords on social networking websites, blogs, discussion forums, and other social media using social media monitoring software. Monitoring software converts unstructured data into numerical values that can be matched to organised data in a database. That way, typical data mining techniques may be used to study the data.

Why is social listening important?

Companies can use social listening to better understand the dialogue surrounding their brand, goods, and services. It gives firms with vital customer information that they can use to assess brand recognition and improve their products and services.

Companies gain the following benefits from social listening:

- **Campaign analysis** provides feedback on how a particular marketing campaign resonates with audiences on social.
- **Competitive analysis** reveals insights into how competitors are doing based on conversations on social media.
- **Event monitoring** enables a company to see how audiences respond in real time to a specific event, such as a virtual conference.
- **Industry trends** surface when a company listens for discussions mentioning its industry, using social functions like hashtags.

Companies can change their treatment of these topics based on the conversational data gathered through social listening. If the conversation about a particular marketing campaign is bad, for example, a corporation may adjust the present campaign to address the issue. It might potentially utilise the data to create more effective campaigns in the future. If social interactions regarding a company's competitors are positive, the company's behaviour may resemble those of the competitors. Using social media conversations to gather social intelligence is a fantastic technique to evaluate genuine audience emotion and reactions.

Social listening vs. social monitoring

What people are saying on social media is explained by social monitoring. Social listening explains why people speak the things they do. Listening focuses on long-term strategic decisions, whereas monitoring is tactical.

Examples of each are as follows:

Social monitoring. A restaurant tracks mentions of its new dish, a hamburger with cream cheese on the bun, on Twitter. The company may, but is not required to, reply to the mention once it has been noticed. The primary goal of monitoring is to collect data. There isn't always a strategy involved. The company can monitor all of the many ways its hamburger is mentioned on the internet.

Social listening. The same restaurant tracks mentions of its new hamburger on social media and aggregates the information to perform sentiment analysis on what customers are saying. The information gathered is used by the restaurant to construct a larger marketing strategy. It can figure out the following things via sentiment analysis:

- whether people like the hamburger;
- what they like about it;
- what they like to eat with it;
- how long to keep the hamburger on the menu; and
- new ideas for its next featured product.

In the case of listening, the company does not respond to every mention of the product. It makes no attempt to influence the dialogue or modify people's attitudes toward the product. Instead, it seeks to read sentiment and gather data in order to establish a strategy for improving sentiment in the future.

Listening and monitoring on social media are not mutually exclusive. A social listening approach goes beyond social monitoring to acquire a better knowledge of brand-centric social media conversations.

How does social listening work?

The purpose of social media listening is to monitor important social media conversations, identify the underlying mood or sentiment, and respond with a marketing strategy that positively influences sentiment. There are three main steps in the social listening process:

Monitoring. This comprises tracking mentions of brand names, themes, competitors, keywords, and items in social media conversations across different social media channels. This form of brand monitoring can be done manually by checking social media sites daily or more regularly, or it can be automated using a technology.

Analysis. This stage distinguishes social listening from monitoring. Companies seek for patterns and trends in the data acquired during monitoring to determine what customers appreciate and don't like

about a product or service. A number of customer sentiment analysis technologies are available, many of which rely on automated software to provide businesses with insight into the emotion behind the text they write or say.

Response. Companies may then choose to respond. This may be a small response, such as communicating with a customer online, or a big one, like repositioning the entire brand strategy.

Companies can use the information collected from social listening for other purposes, including the following:

- to identify potential customers and unhappy existing ones;
- to gauge the quality of the customer experience (CX); and
- to collect information to use for return-on-investment monitoring or to A/B test different versions of a campaign to compare how they perform.

Social listening tips

Best practices to perform social listening effectively include the following:

Understand the audience. Learn which buyer personas are attracted to a brand and its products and services. Understand how to market to the target audience on its platform of choice.

Determine what to listen for. There will be a wealth of data to draw insights from. It is important to have a clear idea of what your organization wants to learn from the data. This will help businesses ignore noise in the data set.

Use keywords to find data. Keywords are a good way to filter conversations on social media. They can relate to a company, its brands, products and services, or to a larger industry.

Use a social listening tool. Tools for collecting unstructured social data can help gather insights from the data they collect.

Develop a strategy. After analyzing social data, it's important to use the findings to develop a strategy. If a company finds the social conversation is favorable, it should find out what customers like about it. If a business finds customers are unhappy, then it should explore what's wrong and look for ways to change. This might mean changing product descriptions, prices or features. Or it could mean adopting other marketing strategies to better explain their offerings, such as optimizing data-driven content creation.

Social listening tools

The following are some of the social listening tools which you can consider using:

- Clarabridge is a CX management AI platform.
- HubSpot provides marketing, sales, customer service and CRM software.
- Lately is social AI content and social media software.
- Sprout Social is social media management software.
- Hootsuite is a social media management and marketing dashboard.

These technologies could be used as stand-alone social listening tools. They can be connected into an enterprise CRM system in some circumstances. These technologies, which are part of a CRM platform, allow a business to collect CX data from several channels and organise it in one place for analysis. Facebook, Twitter, TripAdvisor, and Booking.com are among the data sources used by the tools. Users can develop bespoke listening templates that follow specific keywords and subjects with some social tools. They may also provide dashboards for corporate intelligence. Another prevalent characteristic is the identification and tracking of industry influencers. Users may track key performance indicators and metrics regarding their key influencers, such as the number of engagements with their posts and how often they post about a particular issue.

How to get started with social media listening

Businesses should know what they want to accomplish with social listening before purchasing a tool. If a commercial enterprise software package doesn't seem necessary, there are lots of free social

listening options. TweetDeck and Google Alerts are two examples of free tools. These free tools allow users to monitor social chats for easy subjects and keywords, as well as schedule automatic postings, just like the expensive options. There are certain disadvantages to using these free tools, including the following:

- They capture a lot of noise.
- They have limited or no analysis features.
- They make data visualization difficult

In addition to sentiment analysis tools and application programme interfaces, companies can employ sentiment analysis tools and application programme interfaces to aid their social listening activities. Most free apps, such as Tweet Deck and Google Alerts, only function with one social media network. Paid products with greater data visualisation and analytics functionality should be considered by organisations looking to establish an omnichannel marketing strategy. Some companies offer social listening services tailored to specific industries.

5.4 Assessing Social Media Presence

From communicating with customers and raising brand awareness to resolving customer service issues and driving sales, every business needs a strong social media presence. For many firms, content marketing is the primary source of sales, and social media postings are an important part of any social media plan. Unfortunately, many brands are having trouble getting the outcomes they want, and they don't know how to repair it. If you want a better understanding of your social media presence, you should do an online presence self-assessment right away.

8 questions you need to answer to assess your social media presence:

1. Which social media sites are you currently on?

Businesses should be active on all prominent social media channels where their target audience might be located. Along with reaching clients, authoritative links from major social media networks will assist the company's website's search engine optimization (SEO).

2. Which social media sites are your customers using?

You can make the most of your resources by focusing on the platforms that your consumers utilise the most. Facebook may be the most popular site, but a clothes firm, for example, may find that Instagram has a larger user base.

3. How many Facebook followers does your business' page have?

While the number of followers isn't the only metric to examine, it is a useful approach to track progress. You should always be able to find an audience on Facebook if you provide value on your company' page and promote it successfully.

4. How many posts are you publishing each week?

While the number of followers isn't the only metric to examine, it is a useful approach to track progress. You should always be able to find an audience on Facebook if you provide value on your company' page and promote it successfully.

5. Are you boosting posts?

Boosting a Facebook post allows you to expand your reach and more precisely target your audience. Boosting a post is a cost-effective strategy to maximise its impact if it can bring value to your audience and drive more sales.

6. Do you have a Like campaign?

Likes indicate to viewers that a piece of material is well-liked and worth their attention. Unfortunately, many businesses struggle to gain organic social media exposure. A Like campaign can be the answer to your engagement problems.

7. What is your total reach in the past 28 days?

Monitoring your social media reach will provide you with useful information about the number of unique visitors that have viewed your material. Businesses must begin tracking entire reach in order to determine whether their initiatives are effective.

8. What is your total engagement in the past 28 days?

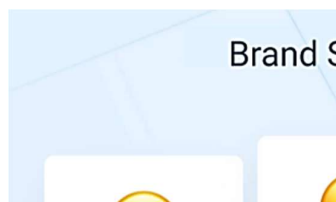
Total engagement, like reach, will demonstrate if your content is resonating with audiences. Our content writing services, for example, are frequently utilised to develop content for infographics. Customer interest in this type of information can be determined by tracking user activity for the infographic.

5.5 Assessing Brand Sentiment

It's critical to learn how to assess brand sentiment in order to determine how customers feel about your organisation, products, or services. If you have to wade through enormous volumes of data manually, determining where your firm sits - from great praise (positive) to absolute rejection (negative) - may be time-consuming and tiresome. However, thanks to advancements in AI technology, analysing brand sentiment is now as simple as passing text through algorithms that "read" for positive, negative, and neutral sentiment. Sentiment analysis technologies can utilise machine learning to automatically evaluate text data and classify user sentiment without the need for dozens of employees. You'll learn how sentiment analysis can scan through brand mentions to detect emotions like happiness, frustration, sadness, and anger and how it can benefit your business.

What is Brand Sentiment?

The underlying feeling portrayed in a mention of your brand is referred to as brand sentiment. In consumer remarks, brand sentiment can reflect favourable, negative, or neutral sentiments. Rather of focusing just on quantitative data (likes or comments), brand sentiment examines the context of the encounter in order to acquire deeper insights.



Need to Analyze Brand Sentiment

The proverb goes, "The customer is always right." On the internet, there is a lot of information about your company: news items, social media comments, blog posts, forums, reviews, and so on. At first look, an increase in online mentions may appear to be a good thing. However, it's critical to understand the data's quality - is the sentiment favourable or negative? Analyzing your brand's emotion over time will keep you in touch with your consumers' ideas and sentiments, which are directly related to your brand's image and performance. Let's look at how tracking brand sentiment over time might be beneficial:

Avoid negative PR

Real-time social media monitoring of your brand can aid in the early detection of issues.

Take, for example, United Airlines. After the company was accused of racial profiling, a passenger incident resulted in a spike in negative social media mentions. The story went viral in China, where it became the most popular trending topic on Weibo, a microblogging service with around 500 million members. And it all transpired just hours after the tragedy. In circumstances like this, sentiment analysis can alert you to potential problems right immediately, allowing you to address them before they become a bigger problem.

Respond to urgent queries first

Sentiment analysis can assist you figure out which brand references are the most important. You'll know when you need to contact customers, whether it's to thank them for their compliments or to offer assistance in resolving a problem. Imagine a social media influencer or well-known blogger praising your brand; you'll be able to join in the conversation to promote your brand's image even further. If there is a product problem or a consumer complaint, on the other hand, you can prioritise these concerns and reply within minutes.

Monitor Marketing Efforts

Analyze the reactions to your campaigns on Twitter, Facebook, and other social media platforms. On the day of a new campaign launch, you might want to tune in to a specified time to look at press mentions. You can also track the analyses' progress as it rises or falls.

Consider the case of Dove. After utilising their product, a woman transforms into a completely new race, according to the company's Facebook commercial. They received a lot of feedback from women who said the commercial made them feel furious and uneasy. Dove quickly responded to the harsh feedback, removing the ad from Facebook and issuing an apology.

Quick responses like this, aided by sentiment analysis technologies, are critical for limiting reputational harm and retaining clients.

Get Insights on Product Design

Is there a new design feature? Find out what customers have to say about your product soon after it is released. Alternatively, you can look through years of reactions you may have never seen before. You can get only the information you need by searching for certain keywords related to a new product or feature. Instagram, for example, is continually launching new features, such as its in-app video trimming tool. And they need to know what the public thinks straight away, or their bottom line will suffer. You may get exactly what you need with brand sentiment research shortly after the new feature is released. You'll also know when to make changes if they're required.

Evaluate Overall Public Perception of Your Brand

You'll know where your brand stands on a daily basis thanks to machine learning and customised sentiment analysis. You may monitor your public image as it improves (or deteriorates) over time. Because machines do not change their criteria, machine learning analysis is considerably superior to human analysis. Your results will be consistently accurate, and you'll be able to track them over time without worrying about whether or not you're making the proper choices.

5.6 Social Media Competitive Analysis

A competitive analysis is an examination of your competition to determine their strengths and weaknesses, as well as how they compare to your own. It's a method of comparing your own outcomes to those of industry heavyweights so you can spot areas for improvement and techniques that aren't doing as well as they should.

A social media competitive analysis, specifically, will help you:

- Identify who your competitors are on social media
- Know which social platforms they're on

Unit 05: Social Media Marketing Plan

- Know how they're using those platforms
- Understand how well their social strategy is working
- Benchmark your social results against the competition
- Identify social threats to your business
- Find gaps in your own social media marketing strategy
- Why do a competitor analysis on social media?

Competitor analysis on social media isn't just about learning about your competitors. It will also provide you with information about your own company and your target audience (which will most likely coincide with that of your competitors).

Here are some surprising insights a social media competitive analysis can give you:

- Performance benchmarks for your own business, such as average followers, engagement rates, and share of voice
- Ideas for the best times to post on social media (since your audience is likely online at a similar time)
- An understanding of the potential customer pain points
- New (and better) ideas for content that may resonate with your audience (or that, conversely, does NOT resonate with your audience, and which you might want to avoid)
- An understanding of how to communicate with your audience on certain platforms (i.e., casually or formally)
- Ideas for ways to differentiate your brand

Ultimately, a social media competitive analysis will give you as much as you put into it. You may choose to do a one-off social media competitor report or hire someone on your team whose sole job it is to keep track of your competitors. Most businesses do something in-between: a quarterly or monthly report.

How to do a competitive analysis on social media: a 4-step process

Step 1. Determine who your competitors are

Identify your competitive keywords

You're probably already familiar with some of the search engine keywords that your company is attempting to rank for. If you work for a Manhattan hotel, for example, you're probably focused on terms like "New York hotels" and "top places to stay in Manhattan." However, if your hotel is a boutique hotel with wine tastings in the evenings and local art, you aren't necessarily in direct competition with the Holiday Inn. Developing a clear image of who you're truly competing against online starts with a thorough understanding of your keyword inventory. The Google Adwords Keyword Planner is an excellent tool for determining the keywords that are most relevant to your business. This tool is free to use even if you don't promote with Google Adwords.

To start, use the tool to analyze your website. You'll get a list of relevant keywords, along with the average monthly searches and estimated level of competition.

<input type="checkbox"/> Keyword (by relevance) ↓	Avg. monthly searches	Competition
Keyword ideas		
<input type="checkbox"/> hotel new york	10K - 100K	Medium
<input type="checkbox"/> new york accommodation	100 - 1K	High
<input type="checkbox"/> new york new york hotel	100 - 1K	Low
<input type="checkbox"/> manhattan hotel	1K - 10K	Medium
<input type="checkbox"/> cheap hotels in nyc	1K - 10K	Medium



Source: <https://blog.hootsuite.com/competitive-analysis-on-social-media/>

Alternatively, you can use the tool to enter your known target keywords. You'll get a list of relevant keywords this time, along with information on search volume and competition. Use these related terms to help you narrow down your competitor definition so you can be sure you're researching firms that are genuinely competitors.

Check who's ranking for those keywords in Google

Select the top five or ten keywords that are most relevant to your company and enter them into Google. You'll quickly learn who your main internet competitors are.

Pay close attention to the companies in your field that are paying for Google advertisements to get their names above the organic search results, as they are putting their money where their marketing goals are. Even if their organic search rankings aren't outstanding (yet), it's important looking at how they're doing on social media.

The screenshot shows a Google search for "boutique hotel manhattan". The search bar contains the text "boutique hotel manhattan". Below the search bar, the results are as follows:

- Top 20 Cool Hotels New York | Luxury and Boutique Hotels**
 (Ad) www.boutiquehotel.me/New-York ▾
 Our manually curated list of the best **Boutique** and **Luxury Hotels** in New York 2020. **Top 20 best Boutique Hotels**. Cool and unique **hotels**. **The World's Best Boutique Hotels**. Best Available Price. Fast and Simple. No cancellation fees. No Booking Fees. Superior Selection. **Boutique Hotels New York · Small Luxury Hotels · Top Hotels in SoHo · Best places to Stay**
- Hotel On Rivington | Modern Rooms and Suites**
 (Ad) www.hotelonrivington.com/ ▾ +1 212-475-2600
 Lower East Side Hotel with Breathtaking Manhattan Views. Book Your Stay Today!
- Boutique Hotels Manhattan | Up to Half-Price on Hotels**
 (Ad) www.hotels.com/Manhattan/Boutique-Hotels ▾
 Boutique Hotels Manhattan Price Guarantee. Check Reviews & Photos. Central Locations...



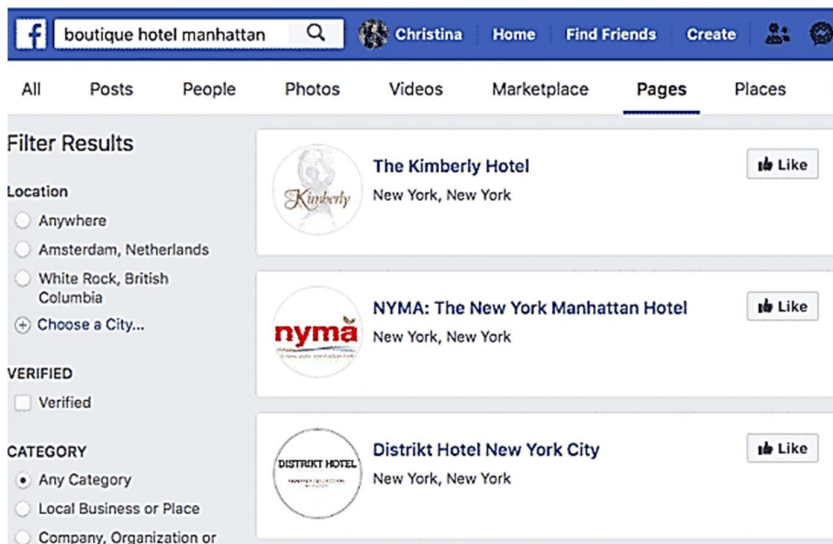
Source: <https://blog.hootsuite.com/competitive-analysis-on-social-media/>

Go to the websites of any brands that look like they could be rivals. The majority of businesses include links to their social media accounts in their website's header or footer. In your competition analysis worksheet, include links to their social profiles.

Check who appears in social searches for those keywords

The companies that rank highly in Google for your keywords aren't always the same brands that rank well on social media platforms. Because this is a social media competition analysis, you'll also want to look at who ranks first in social search results.

For example, head to Facebook and enter your keyword in the search box. Then click on Pages in the top menu.



 Source: <https://blog.hootsuite.com/competitive-analysis-on-social-media/>

Find out what similar brands your audience follows

Facebook Demographic Insights and Twitter Analytics can help you figure out which other brands your target audience is following on social media. It's important thinking about these brands as prospective competitors if they're similar to yours.

To find which brands your audience follows on Facebook:

Open Facebook Audience Insights

Add demographics for your target audience in the left column, or scroll down to Pages in the left column and enter your current Facebook Page under People Connected to.

Click Page Likes in the top menu.

Do you want to go deeper? More information on how to use Facebook Audience Insights for customer research may be found in a separate post.

(New Audience) 500K - 600K people		People on Facebook Country: United States of America	
Demographics	<u>Page Likes</u>	Location	Activity
1	Broadcasting & Media Production Company	NBC New York • FOX 5 / Fox5NY.com	
2	Tourist Information Center	NYC: The Official Guide	
3	Amusement & Theme Park	Six Flags Great Adventure	
4	Media/News Company	spoiled NYC • Time Out New York • Pero Like • Netflix	
5	TV Channel	News 12 Long Island • PIX 11 • ABC7NY • National Geographic India • Nickelodeon	

Screenshot of Facebook's Audience Insights dashboard

You may find that none of the Pages identified are relevant to your industry, but if they are, add them to your competitors list.

On Twitter, rather than checking on your whole audience, you can check to see who your top followers are connected to.

Open Twitter Analytics.

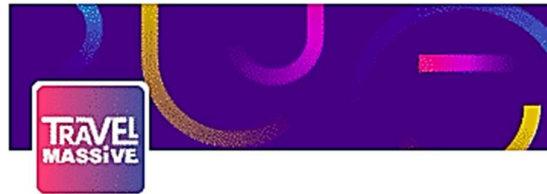
Scroll down to each of your Top Followers for the last several months

Click View profile for each Top Follower

Click Following on their profile to see the full list of accounts they're following, or click Tweets & replies to see which accounts they interact with

 **Analytics** Home Tweets Audiences Events More ▾

Top Follower followed by 40.3K people



Travel Massive

@travelmassive **FOLLOWS YOU**

#TravelMassive is a community for travel industry professionals to build connections, learn, and share their stories.

[View profile](#)

[View followers dashboard](#)



Source: <https://blog.hootsuite.com/competitive-analysis-on-social-media/>

By this point, you've compiled a massive list of possible competitors – considerably more than you could possibly cover in a comprehensive competitive study. It's time to cut your list down to the top three to five brands with whom you're most likely to compete on social media. Choose the brands that are the most closely related to your specialty.

Step 2. Gather intel

You need to study what your competitors are doing on social media now that you know who they are. Go to each of the brands you've identified as key competitors' social media pages. As previously said, these links are usually found in the header or bottom of their website. Make a note of the following in your social media competition analysis template:

- What social networks are they on?
- How large is their following and how fast is it growing?
- Who are their top followers?
- How often do they post?
- What is their engagement rate?
- What is their social share of voice?
- What hashtags do they use most often?
- How many hashtags do they use?

You can find much of this information just by clicking around your competition's social profiles.

Don't forget to track all of these things for your own social channels as well. This will help you with your analysis in the next step.

Step 3. Do a SWOT analysis

Now that you've acquired all of your data, it's time to evaluate it so you can see where you stand in relation to the competitors. You'll also search for potential ways to improve your plan as well as potential hazards to avoid as part of this examination.

A SWOT analysis is an excellent tool for thinking clearly about all of this data. In a SWOT analysis, you examine your company and its competitors to determine:

- S - Strengths
- W - Weaknesses
- O - Opportunities
- T - Threats

The important thing to know is that strengths and weaknesses involve factors internal to your brand. Basically, these are things you're doing right, and areas where you could stand to improve.

Opportunities and threats are based on external factors: things happening in your competitive environment that you need to be aware of.

SWOT	Positive	Negative
Internal	Strengths	Weakness
External	Opportunities	Threats



Source: <https://blog.hootsuite.com/competitive-analysis-on-social-media/>

Here are some items to list in each quadrant of the SWOT template.

Strengths

List metrics for which your numbers are higher than the competition.

Weaknesses

Make a list of measures where you're falling behind the competition. These are the areas where you'll want to improve your social media approach through testing and modifications. Keep in mind that each social network may have both benefits and limitations. For example, you may have more Facebook followers than your competition, but they are growing faster. Perhaps you have a smaller number of Instagram followers but a greater engagement rate. Make these distinctions as detailed as possible, as they will aid you in identifying your opportunities and risks.

Opportunities

Now that you can see at a glance where you stand compared to the competition, you can identify potential opportunities to take advantage of. These opportunities might be areas where you think you could improve compared to your competition based on information you've already gathered, or they could be based on anticipated or recent changes in the social media world.

Threats

Threats, like opportunities, originate from outside your company. Take a close look at metrics relating to growth, or anything that represents change over time, to obtain a solid feel of potential dangers. A tiny competition with a high follower growth rate, for example, may pose a greater threat than a huge competitor with stagnant growth. Another area where you should keep an eye on the larger industry for upcoming developments that may effect your position in comparison to your competitors is in this area.

Step 4. Incorporate the latest data with social media monitoring

To keep your social media competitive analysis current, you'll need to revisit it on a regular basis. Make this a part of your quarterly or annual reporting and review process. As a result, you'll require a steady stream of current information.

By implementing a robust social media monitoring plan, you'll have access to real-time data for your next research. This method is particularly beneficial for spotting prospective opportunities and hazards.

5.7 Social Media Goals

Most businesses have realised that social media marketing can be quite beneficial to their company. Businesses, unfortunately, aren't always sure what that value is. This is when social media objectives come into play. It can be intimidating to translate business talk into social marketing if your specialisation is creating interesting social media content. You'll be able to figure out what your company needs — even if your firm isn't sure what it wants — using this approach to defining social media goals.

What are social media goals?

A social media goal is a statement about what you want to achieve with your marketing activity. The goal can apply to anything from a single ad buy, or you can create social media campaign goals. A social media goal isn't the same thing as a social media strategy, although both are important. You can think of social media goals as the building blocks for your social media strategy.

The benefits of learning how to set social media goals are numerous. Well-made goals will help you:

- structure and streamline your workflow,
- manage your budget,
- demonstrate your marketing's return on investment,
- align your social media activity with your organization's wider business goals.

How to set social media goals in 6 steps

Setting social media goals is fundamental to your social media success.

The 6 steps are:

Step 1: Objective

Step 2: Audit

Step 3: OKR

Step 4: Plan

Step 5: Measure

Step 6: Repeat and Tweak

Step 1 -- Set Your Objective

Every goal has to start with a clear objective. You can't get somewhere if you don't know your destination.

- What do you want to accomplish for each social media platform?
- What do you want to achieve? Be very specific.
- Do you want to increase more traffic to your website?
- Do you want to increase sales leads? Get people into your funnel?
- Do you want to increase engagement and community awareness?

Once you've written down your goals -- make sure each one of them is S.M.A.R.T.

What is SMART?

SMART is an acronym that was coined by George Doran. The first known use of this term was over 30 years ago in November 1981. Back then, it was mostly used as a tool for management reviews in organizations.

SMART stands for:

- Specific

- measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Timely

how-to-set-social-media-goals

Make your goals SPECIFIC: Answer the 5Ws below.

- Who: Who's responsible?
- What: What do you want to accomplish?
- Where: Location
- Which: Requirements
- Why: What's your why? What's that goal's purpose?

Make your goals MEASURABLE:

A measurable goal is a goal that you can measure and track. Measuring your progress is critical for knowing whether or not you're moving towards achieving your goals or moving away from them.

Here are some common examples of measurable marketing goals. Each one of these things can be tracked with the proper formula or tool.

- Increase brand recognition and awareness by X
- Increase social media engagement by X
- Increase frequency of posting by X
- Increase brand mentions by X
- Increase comments by X
- Increase social media traffic by X
- Respond to customers on social media in X minutes or less

Make your goals ATTAINABLE:

It's important that your goals are attainable. If you set them too high -- you'll set yourself up for failure, and you'll end up frustrated. If you set them too low -- you won't be challenged. Be honest with yourself.

Make your goals RELEVANT:

Your social media goals should support your business's overall marketing goals. All your company goals should fit together like a puzzle to create the path to your overall success.

Make your goals TIMELY:

Give yourself a deadline for your goals! You can set weekly, monthly or even quarterly goals.

A goal without a deadline is just a dream. -Harvey MacKay

Step 2 -- Audit Your Performance

For step 2, it's all about understanding your current social media performance. This will let you know what your current capabilities are. That is way, you'll have a benchmark to start working with. It's important you do this audit of your performance on the front end.

Here are some tools to get you started on getting that benchmark for your current performance.

- Simply Measured
- Post Planner
- Mention
- Sprout Social

- Talkwalker
- Your Facebook Analytics
- Your Twitter Analytics
- Klout
- Followerwonk
- SocialBro
- Google Analytics

It is helpful to use a combination of these tools to begin establishing a benchmark for each social media platform.

Step 3 -- Set Your Social Media OKRs

Fun fact! The term "OKR" was invented at Intel and made popular by John Doerr at Google.

OKRs is short for objectives and key results.

Many top companies use OKRs as a way to manage their goals. Here's a few examples:

- Google
- Amazon
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Spotify
- Yahoo

Also, many more use OKRs to help them understand their performance.

What are OKRs?

Individual objectives and key results, as opposed to the goals specified in Step 1, are OKRs. Consider the first phase to be your macro objectives. Setting social media OKRs allows you to get specific about what you want to accomplish. You'll turn those big-picture objectives into numbers. It is much easier to achieve goals when they are broken down into this comprehensive fashion. It's a black-and-white situation. There are no grey regions. Each person has their own set of OKRs, which dictate how they spend the majority of their time on a daily basis.

Why do OKRs matter for your social media goals?

OKRs are critical for social media goals because they keep you focused on what you need to accomplish to reach your goals. You'll be able to check how you're doing when you update your progress each week. Everything will be in one location, and you will be able to judge your performance at a look. When you use OKRs to track your social media goals, it will motivate your staff and give them a sense of accomplishment. It's critical to go through them once a week.

Here are some examples of social media OKRs.

- Objective: Increase social media engagement by 25% for Q1, 2016
- Key results 1: Increase social media followers on Facebook and Twitter by 20%
- Key results 2: Identify and engage with 50 social media influencers
- Key results 3: Increase posting frequency to 12x daily on Twitter and 5x on Facebook.

Step 4 -- Create Your Plan of Attack

It's time to put your plan of attack together now that you've completed your OKRs. Remember that if you aren't moving in the direction of your goals, your OKRs won't reflect progress. This step is all about the strategy you'll use to achieve your objectives.

Let's look at an example of an OKR we set earlier:

Objective: Increase social media engagement by 25%

Key results 1: Increase posting frequency to 12x daily on Twitter and 5x on Facebook

How will you achieve this: Use Post Planner to find, plan and post content. Schedule your content at least one week in advance.

Step 5 -- Measure, Measure, Measure

It's critical to track your OKRs on a weekly basis. This will provide you all the information you need to figure out what's working and what isn't. After you've done that, you'll need to keep track of your progress. You don't need any special software for this; a basic Google Spreadsheet app would suffice.

Step 6 -- Repeat and Tweak

If you're finding yourself exceeding your OKRs, it's time to add more key results or establish higher goals. This will allow you to keep pushing yourself and achieve your objectives even faster. If you are falling short of your goals, you can either decrease your goals or adjust your strategy.

For example, if social media engagement is low, a change in strategy might be:

- Post more
- Post less
- Post a better variety of content
- Post fewer promotions
- Post more quotes
- Post more viral content
- Post more images

9 example social media goals

Your social media objectives should always be tailored to the needs of your company. Many objectives, on the other hand, may be applied to nearly any social media campaign. The examples below will assist you in framing your job in real, actionable terms. To make them SMART for your brand, all you have to do is make them SMART.

Build brand awareness

Building brand awareness means increasing the number of people who are aware of your brand.

This goal is best in situations like launching a new product or breaking into a new market. It never hurts to make people more aware of your brand. But brand awareness is usually the first step to bigger things.

You can measure brand awareness with specific metrics like:

- *Post reach*: how many people have seen a post since it went live.
- *Audience growth rate*: the rate at which you are gaining followers over time.
- *Potential reach*: the number of people who could, realistically, see a post during a reporting period.
- *Social share of voice*: how many people are mentioning your brand on social media compared to your competitors.

Manage brand reputation

One of the most valuable commodities you can develop with social media marketing is trust in your business. Goals for managing your brand reputation are intended to affect public perceptions of you. Brand reputation measures are similar to brand awareness metrics. On social media, keep an eye on brand mentions and related hashtags. There are various technologies available for analysing social media sentiment. These tools determine what those mentions are really saying about you. The use of social audio platforms to influence your brand's reputation can be quite powerful. Clubhouse, Twitter Spaces, and Spotify are among them. The attention and interaction of users on these platforms allow you to express your brand's identity in more depth.

Increase traffic to your website

Sometimes all you want is for people to look at your website. Any website is an important part of your social media strategy. It ties the rest of your internet presence to a click on an advertisement.

When you've established your online presence and all you need now is for people to use it, increasing website traffic is a fantastic objective to set. Measuring website traffic is a simple process. The number of unique visitors to your website can be tracked over the most relevant time period. This could be done on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis, for example. You can also track where your visitors come from to see which platforms are the most effective for you.

Improve community engagement

Any visible interaction with your brand on social media is referred to as engagement. Engagement can take several forms, including likes, comments, and shares. Improving engagement might focus on the quantity or quality of your audience's social media interactions with you. Almost any brand benefits greatly from having an engaged audience. When your organisation is getting ready to launch a new product, setting engagement targets is a good idea. They're also handy if you're just trying to keep an existing offer alive. There are several methods for determining social media involvement. Some people look at all of your social media activity. Others concentrate on specific posts or engagement kinds.

Boost conversions or sales

- A conversion occurs when a user responds to one of your social media postings or visits your website. Signing up for a newsletter, registering for a webinar, or making a purchase are all examples of this. Let's say your company has a great social media presence, but it isn't translating into a more profitable bottom line. In cases like these, conversion targets are very useful. Conversion can be measured in a variety of ways, depending on your goals.
- **Conversion rate:** the number of visitors who, after clicking on a link in your post, take action on a page divided by that page's total visitors.
- **Click-Through Rate (CTR):** how often people click on the call-to-action link in your post.
- **Social Media Conversion Rate:** the percentage of conversions from social media.
- **Bounce rate:** No, not how often you listen to Big Freedia. Bounce rate measures the percentage of users that click on one of your links, only to leave without taking any action.

Generate leads

Not every interaction with a customer will result in a purchase. You could want to create a goal to produce more social leads to stay in touch with potential clients. Any information that allows you to follow up with a social media user qualifies as a lead. Names, email addresses, jobs, employers, and any other information they share are all included. Leads are a particular type of conversion. As a result, the two objectives are useful in similar situations. They're also assessed in the same way. Lead goals, on the other hand, are more situation-specific. When your firm wants to turn a strong social media presence into sales, for example. Facebook is the best medium for generating leads. This advantage is due to its large audience and powerful analytics technologies. Be aware that many of Facebook's lead-generation advantages are derived from methods that create severe privacy issues among Facebook users. These technologies are still caught in the middle of a tug-of-war between privacy and surveillance. As a result, the data they supply may be of varying quality.

Deliver customer service

It's not just about gaining new clients when it comes to your social media presence. It's also a place where you may keep your current consumers. Customer service goals on social media can take many different shapes, including:

Establish a new customer support channel on social media

The method you use to evaluate the performance of your social customer service will be determined by how you set your target. Typically, data from client testimonials and satisfaction surveys will be used. Internal metrics such as the number of support requests processed per customer service person can be valuable as well. Conversational social media platforms are the best place to start if you want to improve your customer service. The most popular social media platforms are Twitter and Facebook.

Gain market insights with social listening

If the most pressing need you have right now is to figure out what you need to know, you should make it a mission to improve your company's social listening. A two-step approach is referred to as social listening. To begin, you must monitor social media behaviour that is relevant to your brand. Then you examine the data for insights into your sector.

The main metrics to track in social listening include:

- Brand mentions
- Relevant hashtags
- Competitor mentions
- Industry trends
- Social sentiment

Setting social listening goals can help you engage with your audience more effectively. They also help show the value of social marketing next time budgeting season rolls around.

Attract candidates for open positions

Another type of conversion is using social media to fill open positions in your firm. You're aiming for a certain type of user activity in this case: sending a résumé. You'll want to focus on quality rather than quantity when it comes to conversions. Learn how to use the LinkedIn account provided by your organisation. This will aid in attracting the most qualified individuals for your open openings.

5.8 Social Media Strategy

A social media strategy is a document outlining your social media goals, the tactics you will use to achieve them and the metrics you will track to measure your progress. Your social media marketing strategy should also list all of your existing and planned social media accounts along with goals specific to each platform you're active on. These goals should align with your business's larger digital marketing strategy. Finally, a good social media plan should define the roles and responsibilities within your team and outline your reporting cadence.

How to create a social media marketing strategy in 9 steps

Read on for detailed steps to creating a social media strategy.

Step 1. Choose social media marketing goals that align to business objectives

Set S.M.A.R.T. goals

We have discussed the same in detail in the previous segments.

Step 2. Learn everything you can about your audience

Create audience personas

Knowing who your audience is and what they want to see on social media is key. That way you can create content that they will like, comment on, and share. It's also critical if you want to turn social media followers into customers for your business. When it comes to your target customer, you should know things like:

- Age
- Location
- average income
- Typical job title or industry
- Interests
- etc.

Get to know your fans, followers, and customers as real people with real wants and needs, and you will know how to target and engage them on social media.

Gather data

Don't make assumptions. Think Facebook is a better network for reaching Baby Boomers than Millennials? Well, the numbers show that Facebook's largest age demographic is actually 30-49.

Social media analytics can also provide a ton of valuable information about who your followers are, where they live, and how they interact with your brand on social media. These insights allow you to refine your strategy and better target your audience.

Jugnoo, an Uber-like service for auto-rickshaws in India, used Facebook Analytics to learn that 90% of their users who referred other customers were between 18- and 34-years-old, and 65% of that group was using Android. They used that information to target their ads, resulting in a 40% lower cost per referral.

Step 3. Get to know your competition

Odds are your competitors are already using social media, and that means you can learn from what they're doing.

Conduct a competitive analysis. The same has been discussed in detail in the previous sections.

Step 4. Do a social media audit

If you're already using social media, take stock of your efforts so far. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What's working, and what's not?
- Who is engaging with you?
- Which networks does your target audience use?
- How does your social media presence compare to the competition?

Once you collect that information, you'll be ready to start thinking about ways to improve. Your audit should give you a clear picture of what purpose each of your social accounts serves. If the purpose of an account isn't clear, think about whether it's worth keeping.

To help you decide, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is my audience here?
- If so, how are they using this platform?
- Can I use this account to help achieve my goals?

Asking these tough questions will keep your social media strategy focused.

Look for impostor accounts

During the audit, you may discover fake accounts using your business name or the names of your products. These imposters can be harmful to your brand—never mind that they're capturing followers that should be yours. Report them. You may want to get your accounts verified too to ensure your fans know they are dealing with the real you.

Step 5. Set up accounts and improve profiles

Decide which networks to use

As you decide which social networks to use, you will also need to define your strategy for each.

Benefit Cosmetics' social media manager, Angela Purcaro, told eMarketer: "For our makeup tutorials ... we're all about Snapchat and Instagram Stories. Twitter, on the other hand, is designated for customer service."

If you can't create a solid mission statement for a particular social media channel, you may want to ask yourself if it's worth it.

Set up your profiles

Once you've decided which networks to focus on, it's time to create your profiles. Or improve existing ones so they align with your strategy. Make sure you fill out all profile fields. Include keywords people would use to search for your business. Use consistent branding (logos, images, etc.) across networks so your profiles are easily recognizable.

Pro tip: Use high-quality images that follow the recommended dimensions for each network. Check out our always-up-to-date social media image size cheat sheet for quick reference.

Step 6. Find inspiration

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While it's important that your brand be unique, you can still draw inspiration from other businesses that are great on social.

Social media success stories

You can usually find these on the business section of the social network's website. (Here's Facebook's, for example.) Case studies can offer valuable insights that you can apply to your own social media plan. You could also check out the winners of The Facebook Awards or The Shorty Awards for examples of brands that are at the top of their social media game.

Your favorite brands on social media

Who do you enjoy following on social media? What do they do that compels people to engage and share their content?

National Geographic, for example, is one of the best on Instagram, combining stunning visuals with compelling captions.

Then there's Shopify. The ecommerce brand uses Facebook to sell themselves by showcasing customer stories and case studies.

And Lush Cosmetics is a great example of superior customer service on Twitter. They use their 280 characters to answer questions and solve problems in an extremely charming and on-brand way.

Notice that each of these accounts has a consistent voice, tone, and style. That's key to letting people know what to expect from your feed. That is, why should they follow you? What's in it for them? Consistency also helps keep your content on-brand even if you have multiple people on your social media team.

Ask your followers

Consumers can also offer social media inspiration. What are your target customers talking about online? What can you learn about their wants and needs? If you have existing social channels, you could also ask your followers what they want from you. Just make sure that you follow through and deliver what they ask for.

Step 7. Create a social media content calendar

Sharing great content is essential, of course, but it's equally important to have a plan in place for when you'll share content to get the maximum impact. Your social media content calendar also needs to account for the time you spend interacting with the audience (although you need to allow for some spontaneous engagement as well).

Set your posting schedule

Your social media content calendar lists the dates and times at which you will publish types of content on each channel. It's the perfect place to plan all of your social media activities – from images, link sharing, and re-shares of user-generated content to blog posts and videos. It includes both your day-to-day posting and content for social media campaigns. Your calendar also ensures your posts are spaced out appropriately and published at the best times to post. Make sure your content strategy and calendar reflect the mission statement you've assigned to each social profile, so that everything you post is working to support your business goals.

You might decide that:

- 50% of content will drive traffic back to your website
- 25% of content will be curated from other sources
- 20% of content will support lead-generation goals (newsletter sign-ups, ebook downloads, etc.)
- 5% of content will be about your company culture

Placing these different post types in your content calendar will ensure you maintain the right mix. If you're starting from scratch and you're not sure what types of content to post, try the 80-20 rule:

- 80% of your posts should inform, educate, or entertain your audience
- 20% can directly promote your brand.

Digital and Social Media Marketing

You could also try the social media content marketing rule of thirds:

- One-third of your content promotes your business, converts readers, and generates profit.
- One-third of your content shares ideas and stories from thought leaders in your industry or like-minded businesses.
- One-third of your content is personal interactions with your audience

Don't post too much or too little

Start with these posting frequency recommendations:

- Instagram (feed): 3-7 times per week
- Facebook: 1-2 times per day
- Twitter: 1-5 times per day
- LinkedIn: 1-5 times per day

Step 8. Create compelling content

Remember those mission statements you created for each channel in Step 5? Well, it's time to go a bit deeper, a.k.a. provide some examples of the type of content you'll post to fulfill your mission on each network.

Step 9. Track performance and adjust your social media strategy accordingly

Your social media marketing strategy is a hugely important document for your business, and you can't assume you'll get it exactly right on the first try. As you start to implement your plan and track your results, you may find that some strategies don't work as well as you'd anticipated, while others are working even better than expected.

Look at performance metrics

In addition to the analytics within each social network (see Step 2), you can use UTM parameters to track social visitors as they move through your website, so you can see exactly which social posts drive the most traffic to your website.

Re-evaluate, test, and do it all again

Once this data starts coming in, use it to re-evaluate your strategy regularly. You can also use this information to test different posts, social marketing campaigns, and strategies against one another. Constant testing allows you to understand what works and what doesn't, so you can refine your social media marketing strategy in real time. You'll want to check the performance of all your channels at least once a week and get to know the basics of social media reporting so you can track your growth over time. Surveys can also be a great way to find out how well your social media strategy is working. Ask your followers, email list, and website visitors whether you're meeting their needs and expectations, and what they'd like to see more of. Then make sure to deliver on what they tell you.

Finalizing your social media strategy

Social media moves fast. New networks emerge, others go through demographic shifts. Your business will go through periods of change as well. All of this means that your social media marketing strategy should be a living document that you review and adjust as needed. Refer to it often to stay on track, but don't be afraid to make changes so that it better reflects new goals, tools, or plans. When you update your social strategy, make sure to let everyone on your team know. That way they can all work together to help your business make the most of your accounts

Summary

1. Creating a Social Media Marketing Plan:

- Choose your social networks
- Fill out your profiles completely

- Find your voice and tone
- Pick your posting strategy
- Analyze and test

2. Social Media Planning Cycle

- Listen
- Goals
- Strategies
- Target audience
- Tools
- Implement
- Monitor
- Tune

3. Social Listening: Social listening, also referred to as social media listening, is the process of identifying and assessing what is being said about a company, individual, product or brand on the internet.

4. Assessing Social Media Presence: 8 questions you need to answer to assess your social media presence:

1. Which social media sites are you currently on?
2. Which social media sites are your customers using?
3. How many Facebook followers does your business' page have?
4. How many posts are you publishing each week?
5. Are you boosting posts?
6. Do you have a Like campaign?
7. What is your total reach in the past 28 days?
8. What is your total engagement in the past 28 days?

5. Assessing Brand Sentiment

Brand sentiment refers to the underlying emotion expressed in a mention of your brand. Brand sentiment can convey positive, negative, or neutral opinions in customer's comments. Instead of focusing solely on quantitative data (likes or number of comments), brand sentiment goes one step further, analyzing the context behind the interaction to gain deeper insights.

6. Social Media Competitive Analysis

A social media competitive analysis, specifically, will help you:

- Identify who your competitors are on social media
- Know which social platforms they're on
- Know how they're using those platforms
- Understand how well their social strategy is working
- Benchmark your social results against the competition
- Identify social threats to your business
- Find gaps in your own social media marketing strategy
- Why do a competitor analysis on social media?

Digital and Social Media Marketing

7. Social Media Goals: A social media goal is a statement about what you want to achieve with your marketing activity. The goal can apply to anything from a single ad buy, or you can create social media campaign goals.

8. Social Media Strategy: A social media strategy is a document outlining your social media goals, the tactics you will use to achieve them and the metrics you will track to measure your progress. Your social media marketing strategy should also list all of your existing and planned social media accounts along with goals specific to each platform you're active on.

Keywords

Social Media Marketing Plan, Social Media Planning Cycle, Social Media Listening, Social Media Monitoring, Social Media Presence, Brand Sentiment, Social Media Competitive Analysis, Social Media Goals, Social Media Strategy

Self Assessment

- Which of the following is an/are importance of social media for business?
 - Building brand awareness
 - Increasing profits
 - Providing social proof
 - All the above
- _____ is an insightful summary of everything you plan on doing and hope to achieve on your social media profiles.
 - Social media strategy
 - Social media plan
 - Social media personas
 - None of these
- Before starting out with a social media plan, which of the following question/s need to be asked?
 - Why do you want to be on social media?
 - Who is your target audience?
 - What are you going to share?
 - All the above
- Defining your target group must be done _____.
 - Before you set your objectives
 - After you set your objectives
 - Doesn't matter. You can do it whenever you feel like
 - No need to select your target group
- Why is it important to designate the tasks in your social media plan?
 - To make someone accountable to accomplish social media objectives
 - To accomplish social media tasks and objectives in time
 - To develop specific skills in the social media team
 - All the above
- How many steps are involved in the social media planning cycle?
 - 6
 - 8
 - 7
 - 9
- Which of the following steps in your Social media planning cycle allows you to figure out the current social media presence and to see what competitors are doing around you?

- A. Monitoring
 - B. Listening
 - C. Implement
 - D. Tuning
8. Which of the following is NOT a part of 8 C's of Strategy Development?
- A. Categorise
 - B. Comprehend
 - C. Catch
 - D. Converse
9. Identifying target audience helps you in reaching _____.
- A. The most profitable customers
 - B. Most receptive customers
 - C. Most attractive customers
 - D. Most choosy customers
10. Which of the following steps involves adjusting your strategy, so that it becomes as successful as possible?
- A. Monitoring
 - B. Listening
 - C. Implement
 - D. Tuning
11. Which of the following analyses deals with determining the general consensus about the brand to know whether the consensus is positive, negative or neutral?
- A. Cohort analysis
 - B. Conjoint analysis
 - C. Sentiment analysis
 - D. None of these
12. Which of the following is a key metric to measure the social media presence?
- A. Sentiment
 - B. Reach
 - C. Average response time
 - D. All the above
13. Listening can provide _____
- A. Valuable competitive insights
 - B. Sources of rumors
 - C. Strategic advantage
 - D. None of these
14. Which of the following is an internal factor of SWOT analysis?
- A. Strengths
 - B. Opportunities
 - C. Threats
 - D. None of these
15. Which of the following is an external factor of SWOT analysis?
- A. Strengths
 - B. Weaknesses
 - C. Opportunities
 - D. None of these

Answers for Self Assessment

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. D | 2. B | 3. D | 4. A | 5. D |
| 6. B | 7. B | 8. C | 9. B | 10. D |
| 11. C | 12. D | 13. A | 14. A | 15. C |

Review Questions

1. What are the steps in social media planning cycle and what is the significance of each step?
2. What is the difference between social media listening and monitoring?
3. How does OKR framework help organizations set social media goals? Elucidate with examples.
4. What is brand sentiment and why is it important to assess it?
5. Explain the process of undertaking social media competitive analysis?

**Further Readings**

- Permission marketing by Seth Godin
- Social Media all-in-one for Dummies by Jan Zimmerman and Doug Sahlin
- Email Persuasion by Ian Brodie
- Traction by Gabriel Weinberg & Justin Mares
- Building a Story Brand by Donald Miller
- The End of Marketing: Humanizing Your Brand in the Age of Social Media and AI by Carlos Gil
- See You On The Internet: Building Your Small Business With Digital Marketing by Avery Swartz
- Brand Storytelling: Put Customers at the Heart of Your Brand Story by Miri Rodriguez

**Web Links**

- <https://blog.hootsuite.com/how-to-create-a-social-media-marketing-plan/>
- <https://blog.hootsuite.com/smart-social-media-goals/>
- <https://www.postplanner.com/blog/how-to-set-social-media-goals/>
- <https://blog.hootsuite.com/competitive-analysis-on-social-media/>

Unit 06: Social Listening

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know the best time to share content on social media
- Create social media sharing strategies
- Know the importance of deep dive analysis
- Understanding competitors and their strategies
- Identify social media influencers in your industry and to reach out to them
- Engage with influencers and leverage them to grow your business
- Understand the research process and identify the errors and biases
- Understand the process of netnography

Introduction

Social listening should be a component of your brand strategy because it is one of the finest ways to discover what people are truly saying about you in their surroundings. This is how it goes.

Social media platforms are a gold mine of information that may help you understand what people are saying about a certain topic and how you can improve the experience for your customers, staff, product, and brand.

It's critical to first listen before attempting to harness the potential of this info. That is, of course, what social listening is all about.

But what is social listening, and how may social listening tools help you gain a better understanding of your customers?

Tracking mentions and conversations about your brand on social media sites, then evaluating them for insights to find opportunities to act, is known as social listening.

It's a two-part procedure:

- Step 1: Keep an eye on social media for mentions of your brand, competitors, products, and business-related keywords.
- Step 2: Examine the data for methods to put what you've learned into practice. It could be as simple as reacting to a pleased consumer or as complex as changing your entire brand positioning.

6.1 Social Media Analytics

Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Reddit, and a slew of other websites and platforms are familiar to both practitioners and analysts.

The ability to gather and make sense of data gathered from social channels to support business choices — and monitor the performance of actions based on those decisions through social media — is known as social media analytics.

Likes, following, retweets, previews, clicks, and impressions received from particular channels are not included in social media statistics. It also differs from reporting provided by marketing campaign support platforms like LinkedIn or Google Analytics.

Social media analytics is carried out using specially created software platforms that function similarly to web search engines. Search queries or web 'crawlers' that cross channels are used to retrieve information about keywords or themes. To draw useful insights, text fragments are returned, loaded into a database, categorised, and evaluated.

The concept of social listening is included in social media analytics. Listening entails keeping an eye on social media for issues and possibilities. Listening is usually included in more thorough reporting that includes listening and performance analysis in social media analytics solutions.

Why is Social Media Analytics Important?

"News of a wonderful product may spread like wildfire," says the author, referring to the popularity of social media. And word of a terrible product — or a negative customer service experience — may travel just as quickly. Consumers are now holding businesses accountable for their brand promises and sharing their stories with their friends, coworkers, and the general public."

Companies may utilise social media analytics to address these issues and use them to:

- Observe trends in offerings and brands.
- Recognize what is being said and how it is being received in talks.
- Determine how customers feel about products and services.
- Observe how people react to social media and other forms of communication.
- Determine which elements of a product or service are most valuable.
- Find out what your competitors are saying and how effective it is.
- Analyze the impact of third-party partners and channels on performance.

These insights can be utilised to make tactical changes, such as responding to an angry tweet, but they can also be used to guide strategic decisions. Social media analytics is now "being pushed into the core debates about how firms establish their strategies," according to IBM.

These methods have an impact on a variety of company activities:

Product development - Examining a collection of Facebook posts, tweets, and Amazon product reviews might reveal customer pain spots, changing wants, and wanted features. Trends can be recognised and followed to help shape the management of existing product lines and lead the development of new ones.

Customer experience - "Organizations are shifting from product-led to experience-led businesses," according to an IBM report. Behavioral analysis may be used across social media channels to capitalise on micro-moments and boost client loyalty and lifetime value.

Branding - The world's largest focus group may be found on social media. Natural language processing and sentiment analysis may be used to maintain brand health, refine positioning, and establish new brand qualities by continuously monitoring positive and negative expectations.

Competitive Analysis - It's always important to know what your competitors are up to and how your customers are reacting. A competitor, for example, may suggest that they are avoiding a niche market, so offering an opportunity. A surge in positive comments of a new product, for example, might warn companies to market disruptors.

Operational efficiency - A deep research of social media can assist businesses in better gauging demand. Retailers and others can utilise this data to better manage inventories and suppliers, cut costs, and make better use of resources.

What is the Best Time to Share on Social Media?

“Was it worth the time and work you put into making your post if no one saw it?”

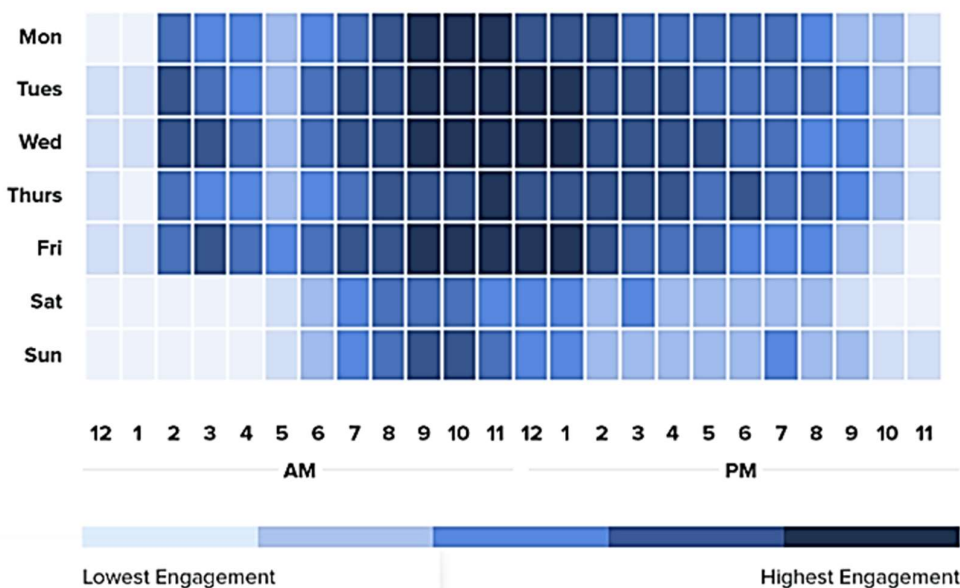
Some social media users don't mind posting at odd hours since they're just having fun. If you're utilising social media to market yourself or your business, though, the right timing is crucial. The truth is that most of your target audience will never see your social media posts. This is due in part to the sheer number of posts and in part to the social media platform's algorithms.

Algorithms curate a user's news feeds to make them appear fascinating enough for them to spend more time on them. The source and engagement are used by these algorithms to determine which posts are relevant to which users. Immediate engagements aid in determining the relevance of your postings.

“By posting at an inconvenient and ineffective time, you risk your social media updates going unnoticed.”

When considering "the optimal time to post on social media," a number of factors come into play. Your target audience's demographics and activity patterns are extremely important. Your brand's service or product, as well as the industry in which you work, have a significant impact. Because social media is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, the time zones of your target audience are becoming increasingly important. Although there is no such thing as a "perfect" time to post, there is always a "optimal" time. Your sector and the audience you want to reach will determine the optimal time to publish on social media.

What are the best times to post on Facebook?



Digital and Social Media Marketing



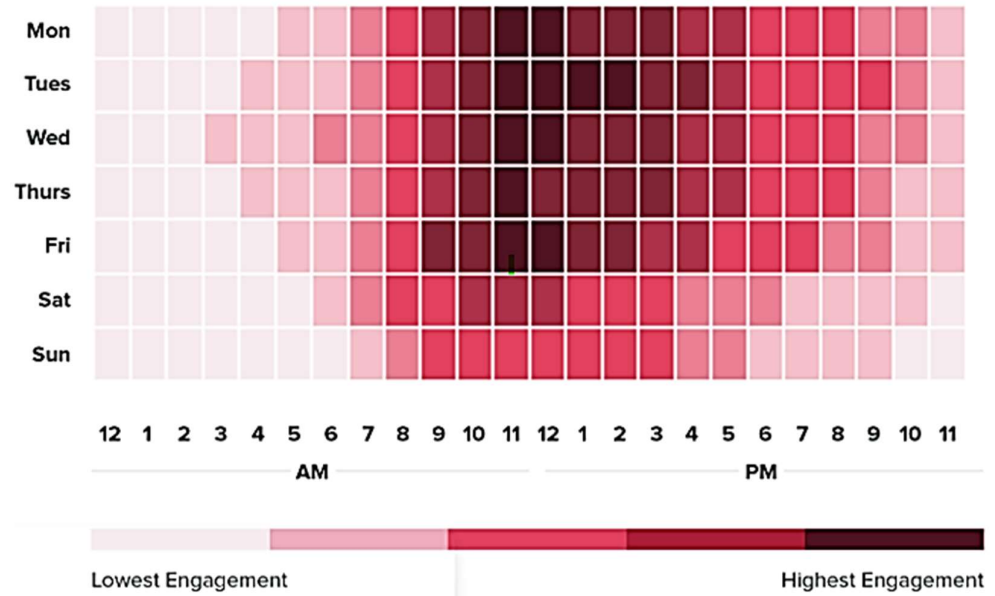
Source: <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/best-times-to-post-on-social-media/>

Best times: Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Best days: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday

Worst day: Saturday

What are the best times to post on Instagram?



Source: <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/best-times-to-post-on-social-media/>

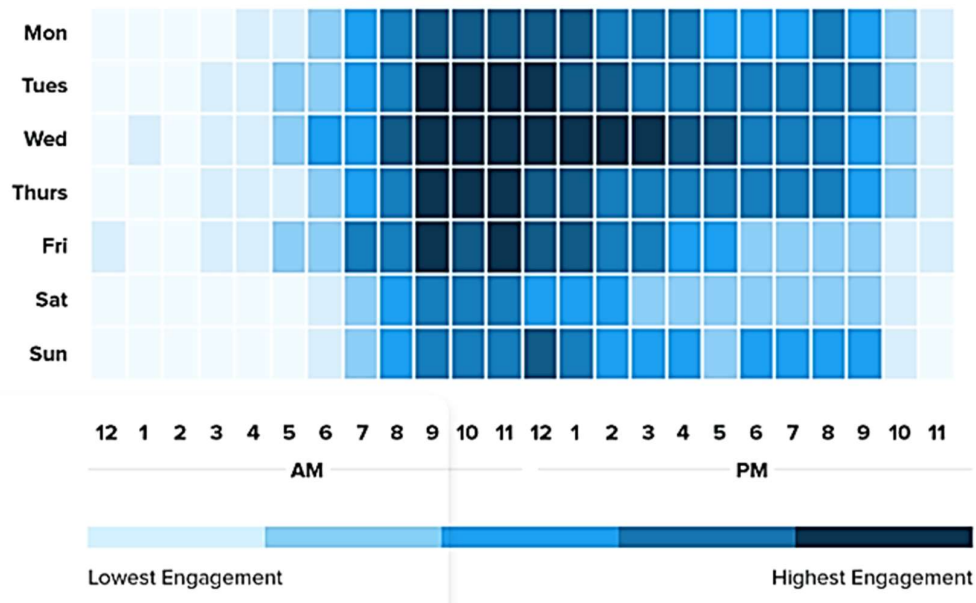
Best times: Tuesday 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Monday through Friday 11 a.m.

Best day: Tuesday

Worst day: Sunday

What are the best times to post on Twitter?

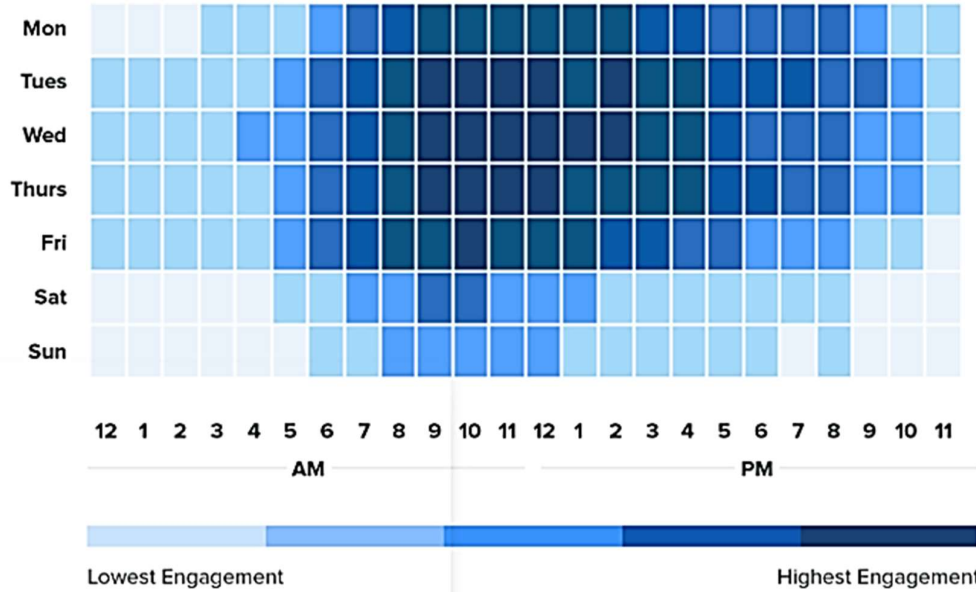
Unit 06: Social Listening



Source: <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/best-times-to-post-on-social-media/>

Best times: Wednesday 9 a.m.- 3 p.m., Tuesday and Thursday 9-11 a.m.
 Best day: Wednesday
 Worst day: Saturday

What are the best times to post on LinkedIn?



Source: <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/best-times-to-post-on-social-media/>

Best times: Tuesday and Thursday 9 a.m.-noon, Wednesday 9 a.m.-2 p.m.
 Best days: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
 Worst day: Sunday

6.2 Deep Dive Analysis

Any numerical set of data used to define the performance of a digital marketing campaign is referred to as digital marketing metrics. Prior to launching a marketing campaign, every digital marketer must set numerical objectives. There is no way to attribute sales and revenue growth to digital marketing initiatives without goals and data. If you're in charge of digital marketing at your firm, statistics can help you figure out how to spend your marketing money most effectively. Data informs us about what works and what doesn't.

A KPI is a key performance indicator. These metrics tell marketers how their tactics are performing. Because every tactic is different, they each have their own KPIs.

Content Marketing KPIs

The number of leads generated from a blog divided by the number of views a blog receives is known as the **blog conversion rate**.

- If your blog's conversion rate is low, you should: Consider why people are viewing your site but aren't converting. Are there any noticeable conversion points in the article? Are you writing about topics that your readers care about? Is your offer in line with the content of the article?

Pageviews are the number of times a blog article has been viewed.

- If your blog's pageviews are low, you should: Promote your blog on social media and through email marketing, and make sure it's search engine friendly.

Bounce Rate - the percentage of visitors who arrived at your blog post via an external website (such as Google or social media) and then left without visiting any other pages.

- If your bounce rate is high, include internal links to other related website pages and blogs to encourage people to stay longer.

Subscribers to the blog - the number of persons who have signed up to be notified when new blog entries are published via email.

- If your blog has a low number of subscribers: To reach a wider audience, make sure every blog post has a visible form for people to subscribe, that the content you're providing speaks to your current subscribers so they don't unsubscribe, and that you advertise your blog subscription link using email marketing and social media.

Average Time on Page - the amount of time users spent on a blog post on average.

- If average time on page is low: Review the content from your reader's point of view and determine if it needs to be updated or reformatted to better engage them.

Website Performance KPIs

Leads are the number of persons who fill out a form on a website to make their contact information known.

- If you're having trouble getting leads, make sure your website is appropriately optimised for conversion and includes powerful call-to-action buttons on every page.

The number of visitors to a website is measured in sessions.

- If the number of sessions is low: To increase visitors to your website, use SEO, social media, and/or email marketing initiatives.

The percentage of visitors who converted into known leads on your website (measured by dividing the number of leads by the number of website sessions) is known as the **conversion rate**.

- If your conversion rate is low, make sure every page includes a powerful call to action (CTA) with language and imagery that speaks to the pain areas of your target audience.

Bounce Rate - the percentage of visitors that came to your site from an outside source (such as Google or social media) and then left without visiting any additional pages.

- If your bounce rate is high, you should: Examine the bounce rate for each of your website pages to see if there are any outliers that are lowering the site's metrics. Include internal links to other related website pages and blogs to encourage readers to engage further.

Sessions by Channel - A breakdown of the many ways via which website visitors arrive. Organic, direct, referral, social media, email, sponsored search, and other channels are the most common.

This metric will change and evolve depending on your major marketing techniques.

Email Marketing KPIs

The number of persons who opened an email divided by the number of people who received the email is known as the **open rate**.

- If your open rate is poor, change the subject line to persuade more people to open the email. Use a service like isnotspam.com or mail-tester.com to make sure your emails don't end up in spam folders.

The percentage of people who clicked through on your email is computed by dividing the number of individuals who clicked by the total number of persons who got the email.

Whether your email's **click rate** is poor, check the open rate to see if people aren't opening it or if they are opening it but not clicking.

- If they aren't opening, follow the steps outlined above to improve your open rate.
- If they aren't clicking, follow the tips below to improve your click-through rate.

The percentage of people who opened your email who clicked through, which is calculated by dividing the number of people who clicked by the number of people who opened an email, is known as the **click-through rate (CTR)**.

- If your email's click-through rate is low, check to see if it includes a strong call-to-action (CTA) that speaks to the recipient's problems and requirements.

The percentage of emails that were delivered to their intended recipients (measured by dividing the number of emails delivered by the number of emails sent) is known as the **deliverability rate**.

- If your deliverability rate is low, you should: Examine your email list to make sure that all of the addresses are current and originated from a reliable source.

Google Ads KPIs

The price an advertiser pays each time their ad is clicked is known as the **cost-per-click (CPC)**.

To assist manage your CPC, avoid using competitive keywords and switch your bidding from automatic to manual.

Impressions - depending on the ad type, the number of times your ad is displayed on a search engine results page or via the Google Network.

- If your impressions are low, examine the quality of your ads to see if any changes can be made to boost visibility or if the targeting needs to be revisited.

Clicks - The number of times an ad has been clicked on.

- If your clicks are low, check impressions to see if people are seeing the ad but not clicking or if they aren't seeing the ad as all.
- If folks are seeing the ad but not clicking on it, try a different ad copy.
- If people aren't seeing your ad, use the steps outlined above to increase impressions.

The number of people that clicked on an ad based on the number of people who saw it (measured by dividing clicks by impressions) is known as the **click-through rate (CTR)**.

- If your CTR is poor, you should: Determine whether it's the number of clicks or impressions that's causing the problem, and use the steps outlined above to enhance those metrics.

Conversions are the total number of persons who have taken the intended action (such as requesting a quote) after seeing an advertisement.

- If your conversions are low, you should: Examine the messaging, design, and functionality of your landing page to see why people are viewing it but not converting.

Cost-Per-Conversion (CPC) - the cost of a single conversion based on your total ad expenditure, determined by dividing the number of conversions a campaign generated by the campaign's total cost.

- If your conversion cost is high, you should: Examine your keyword list and reduce it to those that result in conversions rather than merely clicks.

SEO KPIs

Keyword Rankings - the position your internet page ranks for a particular keyword on Google. The first ten positions on Google's first page often produce the greatest website traffic.

- If your keyword ranks are low, take the following steps: Optimize the content on your website and blog for the keywords you want to target.

Organic Sessions are the number of visitors to a website that come from a search engine.

- If you have a low number of organic sessions: To figure out what's causing your poor performance, look at your on-site, off-site, and technical SEO scores.

Domain Authority - Depending on the method or technique you choose to calculate it, this metric may differ. This is a number out of 100 that evaluates how many high-authority websites are connecting back to your website. It's also known as domain rating. Websites having a high domain authority are naturally ranked higher than those with a low domain authority.

- If you have a low domain authority, you should: Reach out to industry media and ask for links or offer to guest blog to get backlinks from high-authority websites.

Technical Health Score - Depending on the method or formula you choose to calculate it, this measure may differ. To determine a site's technical health, we employ the SEMrush site audit tool at SyncShow. This number, expressed as a percentage out of 100, indicates how many back-end errors a site has, which has a direct impact on SEO performance.

- If your technical health score is low, work with your web development team to resolve back-end issues.

Site Speed - This is a numerical number that indicates how quickly or slowly your website loads. Site speed is a direct ranking element, and unlike many SEO KPIs that rely on guesswork and uncertainty, Google makes this KPI available to marketers through its PageSpeed Insights tool. It's worth noting that site speed varies per device.

- If your site speed is low: Work with your website development team to fix the issues causing the site to slow down.

6.3 Understanding Competitors and Their Strategies

A social media competitive analysis is the process of reviewing the social media activity of your competitors to determine their strengths and shortcomings, as well as how you compare. You may learn a lot about your target audience and figure out what they enjoy – and don't like – by investigating and evaluating your competitors' social media efforts.

A competitive examination of social media will also assist you in determining:

- Who are your social media competitors?

- Which social media sites do they use and how do they create content for them?
- What percentage of people connect with their content
- How do your social media marketing efforts stack up against those of your rivals?
- Your social media marketing strategy's flaws
- On social media, there are some potential hazards to your brand.

Need for Competitor Analysis on Social Media

As previously said, a social media competitive analysis can provide you with a wealth of information about your audience (which is likely to overlap with your competitors' audiences). These findings can aid in the development of your social media marketing plan. They are as follows:

- Ideas for the optimum times to distribute material on social media (since your viewers are likely to be online at the same moment).
- For your competitors' consumers, social media marketing methods that work (and those that don't)
- Content and tone of voice are both unique. ideas about what might appeal to your target audience
- Market issues and trends are changing.
- Your target audience's pain points
- Other brands in your sector aren't taking advantage of niches or possibilities that you are.

Overall, snooping on your competitors' social media activity can help you better grasp the market and set the correct social media goals for your company.

However, in order to get the most out of it, you must put in the effort. You can either compile a single social media competition report (for example, if you're just getting started on social media) or employ someone to monitor your competitors' social media activity on a regular basis.

A monthly or quarterly study is the sweet spot for many businesses. However, regardless of the cadence you choose, the insights you'll gain will be invaluable.

6.4 Influencer Marketing and Influencer Marketing Strategy

Only superstars and a few committed bloggers could be considered influencers a decade ago. Now, it appears that social media influencers have risen to prominence, saturated the market, and even become victims of fraud.

What is influencer marketing?

Influencer marketing, at its most basic level, is a sort of social media marketing that relies on endorsements and product mentions from influencers—people who have a large social following and are regarded as experts in their field. Influencer marketing works because social influencers have a high level of trust with their followers, and their recommendations act as a sort of social proof to your brand's potential customers.

How to create influencer marketing strategy?

a. How to find influencers and what to pay them?

The first stage, like with any strategy, is to conduct research. Select the platform on which you want to concentrate your efforts first. You can always branch out to other platforms later, but if you're just getting started, stay with one for now. In an ideal world, your company would already have a presence on this network or be striving to do so. If you're not sure where to start, social listening can help you figure out where people are talking about your business and brand—and which platforms have the most prominent voices in your market. When it comes to implementing an influencer marketing strategy, the industry you're in is also important. On Instagram and YouTube, beauty and fashion firms shine. Twitch is dominated by the video game industry. Look into the types of influencers you're interested in during your research step. Are you targeting celebrities with large fan bases? Or those with less than 2000 followers, known as micro-influencers? Perhaps something

in the 5–10k follower area would be more your style. Your budget will be determined by what you select to focus on. Compensation varies greatly, so look into average rates for those influencer types. Micro-influencers are usually narrowly focused on a few themes and are willing to accept items. Some micro-influencers are self-employed, while others are represented by a company or network. Larger clients and celebrities, on the other hand, may require pay and may even go through a talent agency.

b. Set a budget and management strategy

You need to set your budget now that you have a rough concept of how much to pay influencers. Consider how much time you'll need to develop, execute, and evaluate your influencer programme. Running a successful influencer marketing campaign isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. It will necessitate close monitoring and follow-up.

Because influencers are human and frequently juggling several collaborations, some may fall behind on their promises to publish on time or make errors in your specified tags or calls to action, as opposed to a more automated ad campaign. To build these relationships, you'll need the time to be more hands-on with them, and you'll need to adapt your approach over time as you learn what works and what doesn't in your area. Consider establishing a formal ambassador programme if you have the time and resources. Fujifilm uses its ambassadors to promote new products and enrich its content. The company can diversify their feed to highlight what their equipment can achieve because they have a variety of photographers and videographers at their disposal.

Hiring an influencer marketing agency to conduct the research and coordination for you is a fantastic bet for brands that need a larger pool of influencers.

c. Decide on goals and message

Influencer marketing is used for two main reasons: to raise brand recognition and to improve sales. Instead of putting these broad objectives as your two objectives, it will be more productive to begin your approach by focusing on what your brand requires. Maybe you'd like to expand your customer base to include a younger audience. Or you want to introduce a new product to a new user group. Alternatively, you may prefer to avoid trends and instead use influencers to promote your brand's beliefs.

Influencers have the ability to communicate with highly particular groups of people. Instead of depending on thousands of followers, influencers will assist you ensure that your message reaches a very specific demographic that is likely to be interested in your offering.

Influencer posts with a conversational tone and personal narrative stand out from the type of features- or sales-driven posts a business may create for the same product on their own page.

The importance of your communication is equal to that of your aim. You don't want to inhibit an influencer's originality or individuality, but you also don't want them to post about something irrelevant to your brand. Determine how you want your influencer marketing strategy and message to be structured so you can keep to it later.

d. Influencer outreach: How to contact influencers

Back to the first step: research. We return to investigating how to really locate the ideal influencers to work with once we have a plan in place based on your network, goals, and the types of influencers you want to target.

Keep the following in mind when you conduct your research:

- Is the influencer already talking about topics that are related to your service? If you're a restaurant, for example, and want to promote a new menu, seek for influencers who consistently post about dining out and the cuisine they eat.

- Are they the real deal? This entails scrolling through their news feed and clicking on posts. A low engagement ratio compared to the number of followers and spam-like comments are indicators of a bogus account.
- Have they already worked with similar brands? A seasoned influencer will be able to present you a press kit that includes a portfolio of their work, depending on the type of influencer you're looking for. The more money you invest in an influencer, the more you'll want to be sure they're trustworthy.

Twitter analytics tools can also be used to find prospective influencers for your campaigns.

Next, decide how you'll communicate with them. You might reach out to micro-influencers directly in a private message on the same platform. Click around their profile for more established ones, and they may give contact details for business enquiries in their bio. They may also include a link to a website that indicates brand affiliations.

e. Review and refine your strategy

Even if your influencer marketing campaign is still running, you should set goals for yourself and track your progress. The next section of this course will cover how to keep track of your progress. Although not all campaigns are successful, you should learn something from each one you make.

6.5 Social Media Research

Using tools and data extraction techniques, social media research is the process of analysing social media data to perform quantitative (and at times qualitative) research in order to understand how audiences interact to subjects. Researchers may now gather data from social media, the web, forums, news, and blogs relating to certain events, subjects, or within a specific audience group thanks to sophisticated social listening and audience intelligence tools and platforms. Researchers are continually inventing new strategies and techniques to better understand how audiences utilise social media platforms, as well as their behaviours and interactions on such channels. As social media expands in both size and relevance, becoming a fundamental part of daily life, it is an important new field to apply research methodologies to begin to comprehend this new debate platform.

By watching the content and information produced online and finding trends and insights that arise from this data, social media research can take the shape of social listening and audience intelligence. In a nutshell, social media research is a type of research that uses social media as opposed to a qualitative or quantitative research approach. Quantitative researchers would typically collect user thoughts and opinions through surveys or focus groups, but social media research themes give us access to their unprompted feelings and ideas. This makes a massive amount of data available for academics to evaluate, in the form of people's own words. This study necessitates specialist knowledge of online behaviour, but it follows the same framework as qualitative research on the results of a survey or focus group. Understanding how machine learning and AI can speed up data collection is one emerging topic of social media study. Currently, analysing the information available in particular areas would need large research resources, but by utilising the power of machine learning and AI, it is possible to train algorithms to organise data and make this analysis faster.

How can social media research help your business?

Understanding and improving the perception of your brand online; understanding the market for new products; comparing your presence to that of a competitor; or attracting new audiences by understanding the trends and discussions within your category are all examples of how social media research can benefit your business.

A few areas include:

Marketing effectiveness - As millions of people post information about their views, opinions, desires, habits, and experiences every day, truly understanding social media is an essential component of marketing today, and it's also a key resource for collecting insights for both the design and execution of your campaigns. Marketing that is objective and independent Social media research

provides an objective picture of your marketing, revealing areas where you may expand your reach and engagement. Continuous measurement can assist you in quantifying the success of your campaign and gaining a return on investment.

Product development - Great campaigns are founded on universal truths. You can delve into your customer's world while building a new product or service by performing social media research. Analyze social media audience behavioural indications to see where your brand or product offer fits in. After you've created a new product, you can utilise social media research to learn about your target audience's attitudes, behaviours, and affinities so you can design marketing communications, graphics, and experiences that resonate.

Attracting new customers - You may also utilise social media research to gain audience intelligence, which will help you learn more about your clients than just their demographics. To genuinely understand what kind of people they are and speak with them in their own language, learn about their ideas, lifestyles, habits, and even interests. You can attract new customers who may not have heard of your business or who you had never considered by knowing audiences. Keep an eye on the conversation to spot fresh chances in your area. You can constantly watch the conversation in your sector and identify new ways to communicate with your target audiences by using social media research.

Improving customer service - Much customer service has recently moved into the open domains of social media, making it a quick and easy go-to for those who have queries or complaints about your brand. Understanding how people communicate about and about your brand online allows you to anticipate interactions and even reach out to customers who may have talked about your brand but not directly to you, which may go a long way toward improving customer experience when done correctly.

Identifying micro-influencers - Influencer marketing is a relatively new strategy, but it has already gained a lot of traction. Obtaining expensive macro-influencers for campaigns is a well-traveled path, but social media research may help you identify your brand's largest followers as well as category-specific micro-influencers that can promote your product or service. You may create a relationship with relevant micro-influencers that are considerably more impactful inside their group than larger influencers without as much of a specialisation by researching and building influencer panels.

Competitor intelligence and benchmarking - Monitoring your brand's internet presence is a never-ending chore, let alone looking into what's going on with your competitors. Social media research can help you get a high-level view of how competitors in your industry or category approach certain topics and themes that are either a source of pain or pride for your company, and determine if there is a better way to reach the audience you're trying to reach, or how to stay ahead of the pack.

Brand reputation and crisis management - While brand monitoring is a wonderful method to keep tabs on your company's social media presence, in-depth social media research may help you learn more about the people who follow and comment about your company, as well as how your present online reputation came to be. This might serve as a springboard for creating a new communication strategy or tweaking an existing one to better suit your target audience. You may establish crisis management strategies by understanding your audiences through social media research, both for recognising a brewing problem to act on as fast as possible and for preparing a response if the worst comes. You can be better prepared by researching the effects of social media crises.

Social media has evolved at a rapid speed, and it's critical to analyse and comprehend how humans use it to communicate, not only for brands to engage with their customers, but also for understanding communication and behaviour patterns in general. Academic research is beginning to explore and utilise social media, but this is still a young discipline. Business use cases for social media research are also emerging. Brands and agencies are realising that generic analysis will not solve industry-specific business difficulties. As a result, specialised analytics models based on our audience intelligence have been created for a variety of industries, including film and television, media, education, gaming, sports, non-profit, health, fashion, and more.

Reasons to use social media for qualitative research

Qualitative research has been more accessible than ever before thanks to social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. According to Social Media Today, about 42% of the global population spends 2:22 hours every day on social media. The prospective sample pool is worth the time and resources it takes to switch to digital-only research in the first place. Let's move on to the practical reasons and benefits of using social networking.

For networking, socialisation, and content sharing, the modern world is essentially dependant on social media platforms, which also provide a digital footprint for post-modern individualisation. Despite the fact that user-generated material is publicly available on social media platforms, a certain level of anonymity should be maintained. Users or the site itself should be asked for explicit consent depending on the sort of research and its goal. Putting ethics and morality aside, this is also vital for the institution or brand you represent from a legal standpoint.

i. Pilot future-proof research

The biggest advantage of adopting social media for qualitative research is that these platforms will be around for a long time. An average person has eight social media accounts, according to DataReportal, and 14 new users join social media every second. Given the ubiquitous usage of portable devices, the opportunity for scientific research into user behaviour is endless, and it can help your academic institution or corporation in the long run.

ii. Affordable and scalable outreach channels

Another facet of qualitative research based on social media is the cost of admission to such channels. To provide actual outcomes, social media platforms will not necessitate exorbitant quantities of resources from your study team. You can manually parse and analyse data and use it in conjunction with your existing research software.

iii. Worldwide candidate pool

The idea behind social media platforms is that they are designed to be multinational. With the click of a button, you may access a wealth of demographics and audience profiles from the comfort of your laboratory or home office. For possible surveys or audience polls, using a lingua franca like English might expand your qualitative research to incorporate direct user engagement. Because you have access to billions of consumers, you may scale the study up or down depending on project milestones.

iv. Potential of digital anonymity bias

Unfortunately, there are some disadvantages to using digital communication platforms. Bullying, obscene language, and frauds might force users to withdraw from social media. Experts believe that uncivil and manipulative behaviour on the internet will only become worse with time, according to Pew Research Center. However, in our instance, it also allows for more unbiased and objective qualitative study. Digital anonymity allows individuals to speak out on current events, trends, and social standards without being judged by others.

v. Quickly reevaluate and redeploy research

It's simple to replicate qualitative research using social media. New content is continuously being created on social media sites, and users all over the world are continually interacting with them. You can repeat your research at regular intervals using the same or different parameters as you did the first time. As a result, depending on your goals, social media outlets are a fantastic alternative for both entry level and professional academic research.

6.6 Netnography

The use of netnography to create buyer personas has proven to be a significantly faster, more efficient, and accurate method. Online research organisations that use location-based social media data (geotagged) to study client social interactions and preferences based on a defined area are one example. Users can drag a radius around any location they like and "scrape" all types of data from people within that radius using these services.

Netnography is a branch of ethnography (the scientific study of individual people's and cultures' customs) that studies people's free online behaviour and applies online marketing research tools to deliver relevant insights.

Individuals' free social conduct on the Internet is collected and analysed via Netnography. The point is that this information is gathered when customers are acting naturally, as opposed to research surveys, in which customers may react to avoid humiliation or to please the surveyor. Buyer persona research reports are made up of completely objective data that reflect real lifestyle, product, and brand preferences. The reports are compiled by research analysts, who subsequently develop a profile of buyer persona segments for your product or service. Because the data can be compiled rapidly and correctly, it's a fantastic tool for marketers. Companies benefit from Netnography since their profiles may be created instantly rather than waiting weeks or months for the study to be completed. This is in stark contrast to traditional research, which might take months to compile and analyse. Your buyer personas are likely to have shifted a little by the time you acquire that kind of information. Or even a great deal. So you know who your most profitable clients are right now, what they're interested in, and how and why they're communicating with their peers in real time.

Persona research provides crucial information about your most profitable clients, such as household income, ethnicity, pain areas, ambitions, influencers, activities/hobbies, and more. These reports may also reveal which websites or businesses each persona is most likely to interact with, as well as the top five keywords to target them with.

Summary

1. Social Media Analytics - The ability to gather and make sense of data gathered from social channels to support business choices – and monitor the performance of actions based on those decisions through social media – is known as social media analytics.
2. Why is Social Media Analytics Important?

- Observe trends in offerings and brands.
- Recognize what is being said and how it is being received in talks.
- Determine how customers feel about products and services.
- Observe how people react to social media and other forms of communication.
- Determine which elements of a product or service are most valuable.
- Find out what your competitors are saying and how effective it is.
- Analyze the impact of third-party partners and channels on performance.

3. What is the Best Time to Share on Social Media?

Facebook: Best times: Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 9 a.m.–1 p.m.
 Best days: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday
 Worst day: Saturday

Instagram: Best times: Tuesday 11 a.m.–2 p.m., Monday through Friday 11 a.m.
 Best day: Tuesday
 Worst day: Sunday

Twitter: Best times: Wednesday 9 a.m.– 3 p.m., Tuesday and Thursday 9–11 a.m.
 Best day: Wednesday
 Worst day: Saturday

LinkedIn: Best times: Tuesday and Thursday 9 a.m.–noon, Wednesday 9 a.m.–2 p.m.
 Best days: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
 Worst day: Sunday

4. Deep Dive Analysis

Any numerical set of data used to define the performance of a digital marketing campaign is referred to as digital marketing metrics. Prior to launching a marketing campaign, every digital marketer must set numerical objectives. There is no way to attribute sales and revenue growth to digital marketing initiatives without goals and data. If you're in charge of digital marketing at your firm, statistics can help you figure out how to spend your marketing money most effectively. Data informs us about what works and what doesn't.

5. Understanding Competitors and Their Strategies

A competitive examination of social media will also assist you in determining:

- Who are your social media competitors?
- Which social media sites do they use and how do they create content for them?
- What percentage of people connect with their content
- How do your social media marketing efforts stack up against those of your rivals?
- Your social media marketing strategy's flaws
- On social media, there are some potential hazards to your brand.

6. Influencer Marketing and Influencer Marketing Strategy

Influencer marketing, at its most basic level, is a sort of social media marketing that relies on endorsements and product mentions from influencers—people who have a large social following and are regarded as experts in their field. Influencer marketing works because social influencers have a high level of trust with their followers, and their recommendations act as a sort of social proof to your brand's potential customers.

7. Social Media Research

Social media research is the process of analysing social media data to perform quantitative (and at times qualitative) research in order to understand how audiences interact to subjects. Researchers may now gather data from social media, the web, forums, news, and blogs relating to certain events, subjects, or within a specific audience group thanks to sophisticated social listening and audience intelligence tools and platforms.

8. Netnography

Netnography is a branch of ethnography (the scientific study of individual people's and cultures' customs) that studies people's free online behaviour and applies online marketing research tools to deliver relevant insights.

Keywords

Social Media Analytics, Product Development, Customer Experience, Branding, Competitive Analysis, Operational Efficiency, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, KPI, Content Marketing, Blog conversion rate, Page Views, Bounce Rate, Subscribers, Leads, Sessions by channel, Open rate, Click-Through Rate, Impressions, Clicks, Conversions, CPC, Keyword ranking, Organic Sessions, Domain Authority, Influencer marketing, Qualitative Research, Quantitative Research, Netnography, Micro-influencers

Self Assessment

1. Social media helps in....
 - A. Tracking the leads
 - B. Converting the leads
 - C. Knowing your audience
 - D. All the above
2. Which of the following cannot be achieved through social media analytics?
 - A. Tracking leads
 - B. Direct sales
 - C. Converting leads
 - D. Knowing your audience
3. Posting at the right time can give you which of the following advantages:
 - A. Engagement
 - B. Traffic
 - C. Leads
 - D. All the above
4. Which of the following can be an advantage of performing deep dive analysis?
 - A. Take effective and actionable steps
 - B. Helps in procuring better hardware
 - C. Helps in hiring staff with right skill sets
 - D. All the above

-
5. Which of the following is not a social media metric?
 - A. Earning per share
 - B. Impressions
 - C. Engagement
 - D. Shares

 6. Which of the following is a Social Media metric?
 - A. Earnings per share
 - B. Employee turnover ratio
 - C. Comments per post
 - D. Customer satisfaction

 7. Which of the following goes hand in hand with Social Media?
 - A. Content Marketing
 - B. Social media marketing
 - C. Email marketing
 - D. Affiliate marketing

 8. Who is a social media influencer?
 - A. A social media influencer is someone who influences others through their social platforms.
 - B. A social influencer is someone who sells products online
 - C. A social influencer is one who writes articles on social platforms
 - D. A social influencer is one who has large social media following

 9. Which of the following ways, influencer marketing can benefit your business?
 - A. Build large brand following
 - B. Increase your company's credibility
 - C. Bring in more sales
 - D. All the above

 10. Which of the following is NOT a tool to research about Influencers?
 - A. Google Analytics
 - B. Buzzsumo
 - C. Followerwonk
 - D. Hootsuite

 11. Who among the following can be a social media influencer?
 - A. A youtuber with million subscribers
 - B. An Instagram celebrity with 1.5 million followers
 - C. A food blogger with millions of followers
 - D. All the above

 12. A popular food blogger Nisha Madhulika has a very successful YouTube channel. Which of the following businesses can use her as an influencer for their business?
 - A. Restaurants
 - B. Television channels with focus on food and cuisine
 - C. Hotels
 - D. All the above

 13. Which of the following research techniques could be useful for social listening?

- A. Observation
- B. Ethnography
- C. Netnography
- D. Sample surveys

14. Which of the following can be a type of Quantitative Research?

- A. Monitoring and tracking
- B. Sentiment analysis
- C. Content analysis
- D. All the above

15. Which of the following is helpful in developing social media strategy?

- A. Social monitoring
- B. Social Listening
- C. Social audit
- D. None of the above

Answers for Self Assessment

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. D | 2. B | 3. D | 4. A | 5. A |
| 6. C | 7. A | 8. A | 9. D | 10. A |
| 11. D | 12. D | 13. A | 14. D | 15. B |

Review Questions

1. How does social media analytics help businesses?
2. Is timing important to share content on Social Media? If yes, then justify your answer with suitable justification.
3. Explain the various KPIs used for content marketing.
4. Explain the various KPIs used in SEO.
5. How does understanding competitors and their social media strategies help your business?
6. What is influencer marketing and explain the steps involved in creating an influencer marketing strategy?
7. How can Social Media research help your business?



Further Readings

- Social Media all-in-one for Dummies by Jan Zimmerman and Doug Sahlin
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Unit 07: Mobile Marketing

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7.4 Mobile Marketing Best Practices

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand what mobile marketing is and what mobile marketing strategies are
- Understand and implement the best practices of mobile marketing
- Understand the essence to integrated digital and social media marketing
- Design Social media integration strategies for your website and email marketing campaigns
- Create and implement effective social media plans
- Identify the challenges of social media marketers
- Achieve social media goals

Introduction

Mobile marketing is a complicated sort of advertising that involves a number of aspects. Providing SMS texts to promote your products/services or sending push alerts through apps are examples of this. Ads on mobile apps or even scanning QR codes for offers or services are examples. There's also proximity mobile marketing, which alerts mobile users to the presence of a service provider depending on their location. Knowing that mobile advertising does not target demographics as much as it does consumer behaviour is crucial to understanding how mobile marketing works. While demographics play a factor, mobile advertising is driven by user behaviour. Snacking, which may be characterised as small bursts of time when mobile users are on their smartphones to check media or messaging, is another factor in mobile marketing. To gain points from users, mobile marketers frequently offer content that is simple to consume and rewarding. In mobile marketing, even a factor like the device's screen size matters. Marketing targeting tablet users, for example, is more interactive and includes rich media, but marketing to smartphone users is more instructive and contains less fluff.

7.1 What is Mobile Marketing

To begin, let's define mobile marketing: it's the art of selling your products to mobile device consumers. When done correctly, mobile marketing gives customised, time- and location-sensitive

information to consumers or potential customers via smartphones, allowing them to obtain exactly what they need, when they need it, even if they're on the go. Mobile marketing is the way of the future, but the era of mobile has already come. You're already falling behind if you don't have a mobile marketing strategy in place.

Advertisements that show on mobile cellphones, tablets, or other mobile devices are known as mobile marketing. Because numerous social media platforms, websites, and mobile apps offer their own unique and personalised mobile ad alternatives, mobile marketing ad formats, customisation, and styles might vary.

Why is a Mobile Marketing Strategy Required?

Your company requires a mobile marketing plan for the same reason that it requires a computer and access to the internet – this is the age we live in! You'll see a lot of people with their faces riveted to their smartphone screens if you walk around any major city. According to recent studies, mobile devices account for 40% of consumers' online time, therefore ignoring the rise of mobile is no longer an option.

7.2 Types of Mobile Marketing Strategies

There are a plethora of mobile marketing tactics to choose from. The type that is most effective for your company will be determined by your industry, target audience, and budget.

App-based marketing: This is a type of mobile advertising that uses mobile apps. While apps account for 80% of mobile time spent, you don't have to create one to participate. Advertisers can use services like Google AdMob to produce mobile advertising that show within third-party mobile apps. Advertisers can now develop ads that are embedded within the Facebook mobile app. Users don't aware they're looking at ads since Facebook's mobile Promoted Post ads blend in so well with the news feed.

In-game mobile marketing: Mobile adverts that show within mobile games, such as in the image below, are referred to as in-game mobile marketing. Banner pop-ups, full-page image ads, and even video ads that show between loading screens are all examples of in-game advertisements.

QR Codes: Users scan QR codes to be sent to a certain webpage that the QR code is associated with. QR codes are frequently associated with mobile gamification and have a sense of mystery about them, as consumers scanning them aren't necessarily sure which rabbit hole they're entering.

Location-based marketing: Mobile advertising that appear depending on a user's location relative to a specific area or company are known as location-based mobile ads. Some marketers, for example, may only want their mobile advertising to appear when consumers are within a 1-mile radius of their location.

Mobile search ads: These are standard Google search advertising optimised for mobile, with optional extras such as click-to-call or maps.

Mobile image ads: Ads that are image-based and intended to appear on mobile devices.

SMS: Capturing a user's phone number and sending them text offers is what SMS marketing is all about. This is considered a bit of a throwback.

7.3 Google Mobile Ad Extensions

When you create mobile search advertisements with Google, you can also take advantage of the company's useful mobile ad extensions, which include things like:

Mobile Site Links: Mobile site links allow mobile users to quickly navigate to certain pages on your site without having to navigate around. Site links are particularly useful in mobile marketing because they are significantly more convenient for mobile consumers.

Click – to – Call Mobile Ad Extensions: The click-to-call extension adds a "call" button at the bottom of an advertisement. The phone number of a business is automatically generated on a user's mobile device when they click the button.

While this useful ad extension makes it simple for searchers to contact your company and drives users through the conversion funnel, it's important to only have the click-to-call mobile ad extension appear when your company is open and ready to take calls.

Google Offers for Mobile: Advertisers can use the Google Offers mobile ad extension to place a discount offer or voucher beneath their ad. Users who might normally dismiss an ad may be drawn in by these exceptional offers.

Click – to – Downloads Ad Extension: The click-to-download ad extension works similarly to the click-to-call ad extension, however instead of generating a phone number, viewers are directed to the download page of the advertiser's pre-selected app when they click the "download" button.

Local Ad Extensions: Given that 1 in 3 mobile searches has a local purpose, local ad extensions are likely the most essential extensions for mobile. Given the high percentage of mobile searches that are inquiries seeking a local answer, local mobile marketing should be a fundamental component of your mobile strategy. A phone number or a link to Google Maps are frequently used in local mobile marketing extensions.

7.4 Mobile Marketing Best Practices

Here are a few brief mobile marketing suggestions to help you get the most of your mobile marketing efforts.

Be Clear and Concise: Because mobile devices have small screens, it's best to utilise words carefully. Ads that are cluttered and crowded will cause consumers to scroll past them. It's important to keep things simple when it comes to mobile.

Optimize for Local: Keep in mind that 1 out of every 3 mobile searches has a local aim. Mobile devices are frequently used to supplement users' immediate worldly contacts – where is the closest gas station? Is there a wi-fi-enabled coffee shop nearby? Make sure you're optimising for local mobile marketing to make sure you're answering users' questions.

Consider your audience: The type of mobile ads you utilise should be influenced by the type of audience you're seeking to reach. Are they video game players? Then take advantage of in-game advertisements. Are they tech-savvy and young? Mobile Facebook Promoted Posts may have a better chance of catching their attention.

Experiment with different strategies: When it comes to mobile marketing, there's a lot of potential for experimenting. Don't be scared to try out some ad extensions with your Google Ads Enhanced Campaigns – check how the Google Offers ad extension and the click-to-call extension work for you.

Benchmark your results: Experimenting is fantastic, but it's useless if you're not keeping note of your outcomes to determine what works and what doesn't. To see how your mobile PPC advertising are doing, use the AdWords Grader.

Benefits of Using Social Media for Mobile Marketing

- Access to a large audience
- Ability to connect with your audience on a personal level
- More engagement
- Effective user targeting
- Increase in sales
- The possibility of going viral
- User-generated content
- Easy to track results

What is Integrated Digital Marketing?

Integrated digital marketing refers to the idea of developing a distinct mode of expression that is easily identifiable across all of your customer's platforms. It's the equivalent of speaking in a single

language in many contexts. That is, it is a strategy that incorporates all of your marketing strategies. Then, each campaign and technique builds on the previous one, establishing a unified image in the users' minds and outlining a path for them to follow. You may make yourself unforgettable to your audience by being consistent. However, having a well-structured and well-defined marketing plan is also part of integrated digital marketing. This includes maintaining an online presence through the use of various digital channels.

7.5 Social Media Integration

Your audience will have more opportunities to participate and interact with your brand if you integrate social media. You're giving them more chances to spread your material and advertise your products/services on your behalf. The best aspect is that it is simple to implement. In fact, you can combine social media with your website, email, and other channels right now using the correct technologies (which we'll teach you).

Why is Social Media Integration Important?

To begin, here's a simple definition: The act of leveraging social media accounts as an extension of your marketing plan is known as social media integration. This is usually performed in one of two ways:

- Getting your social media followers to visit your website
- Allowing easy access to your social media accounts from your website

Consider the social networking buttons that can be seen on blog posts and online sites. It makes it simple to share fascinating stuff without having to copy and paste the URL. That's an excellent illustration of how social media integration can be put to use.

Integrating social media helps you achieve a number key objectives, including expanding your brand's reach and exposure. It also encourages visitors to interact with your website and aids in the growth of your social media following.

It's more crucial than ever for businesses and brands to provide more avenues for their customers to interact with them. COVID-19 has transformed the way individuals connect with businesses. Because of the global pandemic, more individuals are using social media than ever before.

You'll need to incorporate social media into your communication channels to assist maintain your brand awareness afloat (or possibly grow it).

Social Media Integration Strategies for Your Website

Your website and social media should be able to communicate with one another without difficulty. This boosts traffic to your social media accounts while also promoting your brand.

Here are three strategies for incorporating social media into your website to assist you.

a. Add social sharing links to your blog posts

Social share buttons can be commonly seen at the bottom of most blog posts. They help to raise exposure of your content while also providing a smooth manner for your viewers to share it. Your website will benefit from the better user experience. The best piece of advice for adding social share buttons is to keep it basic. You don't have to include everything. Instead, concentrate on a small number of platforms that are important to your brand. Also, don't use them to spam your website. Just keep them focused on the stuff that can be shared, such as your blog entries and videos. They should be placed at the top, bottom, or side of your page, according to best practices.

b. Add social posts to your website

Including a feed of social media postings on your pages is a terrific way to freshen up your website while incorporating social media. Typically, these are real-time feeds of your social media posts. You can, however, use a branded hashtag to display a stream of posts from your fans and followers.

c. Create a social login option

Have you ever visited a website where you could log in using your Google, Facebook, or Twitter account? Those are some fantastic social login examples! This is not only a terrific method to include

social media into your website, but it's also how the majority of users like to log in. In fact, according to a survey conducted by LoginRadius, 73 percent of consumers prefer to log in using their social network accounts. That's logical. After all, it's more easier to log in with a social network account than it is to create a new profile, choose a password, and confirm it via email—only to have to log in again when you're finished. Instead, you'll only need a few clicks to get started.

Social Media Integration Strategies for Email Marketing

Here are some ideas for incorporating social media into your emails. This will make it simple for your viewers to find and follow your social media accounts.

a. Add social sharing links to your footer

Adding social sharing links to your emails is a great idea. They can go to the top or bottom of your email, just like they can on your website. The social sharing buttons, on the other hand, are usually included at the footer of emails. Any excellent customer relationship management system, such as Mailchimp or Constant Contact, will allow you to add social media sharing links to the bottom of your emails.

b. Remind subscribers of your social community

Sending out email blasts highlighting your social media profiles is an excellent way to integrate social media. This is a fantastic approach to entice your subscribers to connect socially by offering them incentives to do so.

c. Bolster social media campaigns with email blasts

Do you have a social media contest or giveaway? Maybe you're conducting an audience poll and want to hear what others have to say? Perhaps you're attempting to gather user-generated content for a blog post? Email blasts are a terrific method to get the word out about them. When you send a single email to your entire list, you're asking them to do a certain action.

Summary

1. What is Mobile Marketing?

It's the art of selling your products to mobile device consumers.

2. Why a mobile marketing strategy is required?

Your company requires a mobile marketing plan for the same reason that it requires a computer and access to the internet - this is the age we live in! You'll see a lot of people with their faces riveted to their smartphone screens if you walk around any major city. According to recent studies, mobile devices account for 40% of consumers' online time, therefore ignoring the rise of mobile is no longer an option.

3. Type of Mobile Marketing Strategies

- App-based marketing
- In-game mobile marketing
- QR Codes
- Location-based marketing
- Mobile search ads
- Mobile image ads
- SMS

4. Google Mobile Ad Extensions

- Mobile site links
- Call-to-call mobile ad extensions
- Google offers for mobile
- Click - to - downloads ad extension

- Local ad extensions

5. Mobile marketing best practices

- Be clear and concise
- Optimize for local
- Consider your audience
- Experiment with different strategies
- Benchmark your results

6. Benefits of using Social Media for Mobile Marketing

- Access to a large audience
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Integrated digital marketing refers to the idea of developing a distinct mode of expression that is easily identifiable across all of your customer's platforms.

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Your audience will have more opportunities to participate and interact with your brand if you integrate social media. You're giving them more chances to spread your material and advertise your products/services on your behalf.

Keywords

Mobile Marketing, Mobile Marketing Strategies, In-game mobile marketing, App-based marketing, QR Codes, Location-based marketing, Mobile search ads, Mobile image ads, SMS, Google Mobile Ad Extensions, Mobile site links, Click-to-call mobile ad extensions, Google offers for mobile, Click-to-download ad extensions, Local ad extensions, Integrated digital marketing, Social media integration, Social login, Social sharing, social community, Email blasts

Self Assessment

1. Which of the following could be provided to customers through mobile marketing?
 - A. personalized content
 - B. time-and-location sensitive information
 - C. customers get what they need and when they need it
 - D. All the above

2. Through mobile marketing, ads can be served on:
 - A. television
 - B. mobile devices
 - C. billboards
 - D. radio

3. Which of the following is not a type of mobile marketing strategy?
- A. App-based mobile marketing
 - B. Display ads
 - C. QR codes
 - D. Whatsapp marketing
4. Which of the following is not a Google Mobile Ad Extension?
- A. Book a visit
 - B. Mobile site links
 - C. Google offers for mobile
 - D. Local ad extensions
5. Which of the following is/are mobile marketing best practices?
- A. Be clear and concise
 - B. Optimize for local
 - C. Consider your audience
 - D. All the above
6. Which of the following offers opportunity to marketers to showcase their creativity through mobile marketing?
- A. Multiple ad formats
 - B. Potential to reach large audience
 - C. Ability to serve content on the go
 - D. None of these
7. Mobile devices include....
- A. Mobile Phone
 - B. Tablets
 - C. Laptops
 - D. All the above
8. Which of the following is/are a type of mobile marketing strategy?
- A. Location-based marketing
 - B. Mobile search ads
 - C. Mobile image ads
 - D. All the above
9. The focus of integrated digital marketing is to:
- A. Reach the largest number of target audience
 - B. Streamlining your message across all channels
 - C. Making the most sense to your target audience

D. All the above

10. How can social media integration be achieved?

- A. By directing the social media visitors to your website
- B. By allowing the website visitors to easily browse through your social media pages
- C. Both a and b
- D. Neither a nor b

11. Which of the following is/are social media integration strategy for your website?

- A. By adding social sharing links to your blog posts
- B. By adding social posts to your website
- C. By creating social login option
- D. All the above

12. Which of the following is/are social media integration strategies for email marketing?

- A. By adding social sharing links to your email footer
- B. By reminding subscribers of your social community
- C. By strengthening social media campaigns with email blasts
- D. All the above

13. Which of the following is the correcting sequence of creating your social media plan?

- A. Listen, plan, strategy and tools
- B. Plan, strategy, listen, tools
- C. Strategy, listen, plan, tools
- D. Tools, plan, listen, strategy

14. Which of the following is not a challenge for Social Marketers?

- A. Measuring ROI
- B. Publishing content
- C. Monitoring competition
- D. Reaching large audience

15. Which of the following is/are social media goal(s)?

- A. Increased brand awareness
- B. Driving traffic to your website
- C. Generating new leads
- D. All the above

Answers for Self Assessment

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. D | 2. B | 3. B | 4. A | 5. D |
| 6. A | 7. D | 8. D | 9. D | 10. C |
| 11. D | 12. D | 13. A | 14. D | 15. D |

Review Questions

1. What is mobile marketing and why does any business require a mobile marketing strategy?
2. What are the various types of mobile marketing strategies and how can they impact any business?
3. What are the various tools offered by Google to bolster your mobile marketing strategy?
4. List out a few best practices of mobile marketing.
5. What are the benefits of integrating social media in mobile marketing?
6. What is the importance of integrating social media?
7. What are the various social media integration strategies for your website?
8. What are the various social media integration strategies for email marketing?



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Unit 08: Social Media Monitoring

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define social media monitoring
- Explain the process of tracking social media
- Define social media measurement
- Differentiate between qualitative and quantitative metrics
- Define, explain and calculate NPS
- Calculate ROI
- Define evaluation and identify the associated challenges
- Know the reasons for rise in social media monitoring and know some tools for social media monitoring

Introduction

The easiest method to find out what people are saying about your brand is to use social media monitoring tools. Also, what they're saying about your product, competition, industry, IPL advertising, pandemic response, customer service wait-times, and your new mascot—basically, anything your audience might have an opinion on. To put it another way, social media monitoring software collects and presents audience and competitor insights for brands who wish to pay attention. In this unit, we'll look at some of the greatest tools on the market and walk you through setup and best practices so you can join the conversation right away.

8.1 What is Social Media Monitoring?

In order to stay updated about your audience and industry, social media monitoring entails watching hashtags, phrases, and mentions relevant to your business. You're conducting both quantitative (metrics and analytics) and qualitative research by monitoring this data (inspiration for posts and strategies). You'll gain access to data that can assist you in determining things like:

Social share of voice (i.e. what percentage of the conversation is about you, as opposed to being about your competitors)

Social sentiment (i.e., how is the dialogue going)?

Social Return on Investment (i.e., how much your dollar investment in social is paying off)

Relevant hashtags and keywords (i.e., which Instagram hashtags or YouTube keywords you might want to use in the future to expand your reach)

Trends (i.e., what is your audience talking about, what new ideas, aesthetics or memes are popping up, are the platforms offering new tools and services, etc.)

Social monitoring is an important component of being a good social citizen and successful on social in general for brands. You wouldn't start a high-pressure sales pitch (or an educational lecture, or even a stand-up act) with a new customer who just stepped in the door, for example. You'd start by listening and figuring out what they're looking for or why they've come to your office. Similarly, paying attention to what others are saying on social media is vital to be current, engaging, and avoid making off-key blunders.

8.2 Reasons for Rise in Social Media Monitoring

It's no longer enough to just respond to your brand's @mentions on social media. If that's all you're looking for, you're probably losing out on a slew of communications that just reference your business by a variant of your name or promote a product. On top of that, switching between so many different apps to stay on top of everything can be time consuming. You need a social media monitoring strategy if you find yourself spending more time hopping between social platforms and doing intricate manual searches for mentions than interacting with brand mentions. A good social media monitoring plan will consolidate all of your brand's mentions and search parameters in one place, allowing you to spend more time responding to key messages and establishing a strategy based on your findings. Starting with a list of everything you want to keep watch of and how you'll respond to those notifications, you should develop a monitoring strategy. Any social customer service approach must include social monitoring. It can lead to quicker response times, the prevention of public relations crises, and the identification of brand evangelists. Responding to customers has been found to increase customer loyalty to a brand. Although an extensive monitoring scheme aids in the development of a sound social media marketing plan, many firms overlook the need of collecting useful user-generated data. This could be a bad option because user data can assist identify target groups and preferences, as well as provide information on multipliers and influencers.

With the help of social media monitoring, companies can:

- a. Identify target groups
- b. Keep an eye on competition
- c. Identify conflicts early on
- d. Provide real-time support
- e. Manage and maintain reputation
- f. Recognize trends

8.3 Social Media Tracking

A social media tracker is a tool that allows you to track the performance of your social media businesses. You can use social reports to find ways to improve your marketing campaigns.

The technique of monitoring a brand's online dialogues is known as social media tracking. Social analytics tools allow you to listen to what people are saying about businesses on various social media platforms. These tools monitor social media, news, blogs, and other forms of media. Share of Voice on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and other social media platforms can be tracked with social tracking applications. You may use Social Media Tracker to keep track of your closest competitors' social media accounts and compare their development and engagement levels to your own. The reports make it simple to locate the most popular content in your industry, allowing you to keep on top of your target audience's social media habits.

- Tracking on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram (Business accounts), YouTube, Pinterest and LinkedIn
- Report on a competitor's audience, activity, engagement, and hashtags on multiple platforms
- Easy to identify trends and audience growth between competing brands

Challenges Faced by Marketers While Tracking

Social media tracking is the process of finding and following content on the social web. Given the size and continued growth of the social web, finding specific content on it can be a daunting task. Moreover, marketers are frequently unsure what to search for. However, by following a sustainable and actionable tracking plan, marketers can significantly increase the odds of success.

One of the biggest challenges marketers face in setting up a tracking plan is to identify the keywords that will retrieve relevant data. Ill-defined search terms not only waste time and resources, but can produce misleading results that can do more harm than good.

8.4 5 Step Tracking Process

To efficiently and effectively find relevant content on the social web, use the five-step approach below:

Choose Focus Areas	By defining what is being sought in detail, marketers can, for example, determine whether the organization's brand is the sole focus of the search, or if the search extends to competitor's brands. Marketers will likely want to track both to access how well the company's brand is doing compared with the competition.
Select Target-rich Platforms	By choosing the specific social media platforms where the target audience most heavily participates, marketers will not be buried in irrelevant returns or overwhelmed with spurious data when searching these platforms.
Identify the Appropriate Keywords and Phrases	By studying how people actually describe brands or other topics, it is possible to construct search queries using common language that will return the most pertinent results. The Google Adwords Keywords Tool provides a good way to find frequently used search terms.
Restrict or Widen Search	By using Boolean operators, such as AND, OR, and NOT; marketers can build search queries that either narrow or broaden a search.
Adjust Searches	By realizing that searches often do not produce the desired results, marketers can refine their search. For example, a start-up or relatively small company, with little presence on the social web, may not return results for a general brand search. If this is the case, marketers can still find valuable information by searching for the brands of competitors or look for potential customers based on target market information, such as interests, behavior, tastes and demographics. It is also worth noting that mentions of companies that specialize in B2B sales will likely not be found on Facebook or Twitter where consumers hang out, but they might be found on LinkedIn where companies network.

Once key sources of information are found on the social web, marketers will want to follow these sources on a regular basis. Google Alerts, RSS, and more sophisticated tracking tools provide the means to receive automated updates from specified sources.

1. Measuring

The reliability of social media measurement is a topic of debate, with some pundits questioning its precision and accuracy. The notion that some marketing initiative cannot be accurately accounted for is a longstanding one.

Social media measurement is the determination of the volume of content and sentiment toward a brand or topic on the social web. The volume of content is a quantitative measurement, while judging sentiment is a qualitative measurement. The number of posts, comments, tweets, retweets, likes, and follows are instances of quantitative metrics, while mentions, comments, conversations, and feedback about a brand are examples of qualitative metrics.

2. How to Measure Social Media

Qualitative and quantitative metrics are called Key Performance Indicators. A key performance indicator (KPI) is a social media metric that indicates the progress of strategies in achieving goals. Quantitative KPIs measure return on investment from social media marketing effort. Qualitative KPIs assess the impact of social media marketing activities on “soft” goals, such as brand awareness, influence, and engagement.

Choosing the right social media KPIs is reliant upon having a good understanding of which social media goals are important to an organization. Understanding what an organization wants to accomplish defines what social media metrics it should collect. In other words, an organization’s desired outcomes determine the most appropriate measurements.

Hence the first step to measurement is defining an organization’s qualitative and quantitative social media goals. In order to be measurable, the goal or objective of your strategy or campaign must include not just the desired outcome but also a date, by which it should happen, and ideally, a budget and the audience it is designed to influence.

Once measurable goals have been established, the second step is to choose a mixture of quantitative and qualitative KPIs that will accurately measure progress in achieving those goals. There are literally hundreds of KPIs to choose from, and therefore, the key is to find the ones that closely correlate with the company’s social media goals. In addition, it can be useful to combine KPIs by converting them into ratios. For example, “comments per blog post, retweets per follower, help you measure audience activity and engagement.”

It is worth noting that, companies are shifting away from measuring social media marketing efforts using financial KPIs, such as sales revenue, sales per customers, and profits per customer, towards behavioral measurements, such as the number of page visits and followers, buzz, text analysis, online ratings, and abandoned shopping carts. However, it is still important to include at least a few KPIs that indicate if a company is turning a profit; otherwise, the KPIs can be reached, while the company actually loses money on the social media marketing initiative.

The third step is to set a baseline or benchmarks, which will act as standards against which all social media KPIs are measured. Benchmarks provide a starting point, enabling marketers to determine the progress of social media strategies toward achieving goals. To create this baseline, find and record the current values of the chosen KPIs. Once these values are established, it is important to measure the rate of change of these metrics. In addition, it is valuable to benchmark an organization’s social media metrics against the competition to provide context. As an example, discovering that a company has 5000 followers on Twitter is far more meaningful when compared with a competitor’s 3000 followers.

The fourth and final step is to compare an organization’s social media KPIs to its benchmarks over a period of time to assess the pace and degree of progress. It is important to record measurements on a regular basis so that marketers can instantly take advantage of massive shifts while remaining aware of general trends over time. By identifying seismic events and general trends in social media measurements, marketers can more precisely assess what social media strategies have been successful. It is worth noting that the relevancy of this data should also be taken into account in these evaluations. For example, identifying how many Facebook followers are potential customers is crucial information for accurately measuring the success of an organization’s social media marketing efforts.

The question is sometimes raised about the possibility of global or general social media measurements standards across organizations. This possibility would indeed be the social media

marketer's silver bullet. Unfortunately, such universal social media measurement standards currently do not exist.

3. Quantitative Social Media Measuring

Quantitative social media measuring is a methodology that focuses on counting the volume of specific types of content on the social web. According to some previous studies, the most popular social media quantitative measurements among marketers are those that directly measure the number of interactions. The vast majority of marketers count the number of visitors/page views, while a significant number of marketers also measure the number of fans/followers. To make quantitative social media metrics useful, these metrics must be tied to specific marketing goals. The primary challenge of connecting quantitative KPIs to marketing goals is to make the goals specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely (SMART).

In addition, goals and related KPIs must be established for each type of social media platform in order to maximize the results. The following are examples of SMART goals and relevant quantitative KPIs for five popular social media platforms, a corporate blog, a microblog (Twitter), a social network (Facebook) and a social news site (Digg).

Corporate Blog

- 30% increase in total number of unique visitors within 6 months
- 40% growth in total number of views within 6 months
- 20% increase in the ratio of visitors' comments to posts (comments/posts) within 6 months
- 10% growth of RSS subscribers within 6 months
- 5% growth of RSS feed requests within 6 months

Twitter

- 20% growth in the number of followers within 30 days
- 30% growth in the number of retweets within 30 days
- 10% increase in click-through rate of the links posted in tweets within 30 days
- 15% increase in visits to website from tweet links within 30 days
- 10% growth and time on website from tweet links within 30 days
- 5% increase in website conversions from tweet links within 30 days

Facebook

- 20% growth in the number of fans within 5 months
- 30% growth in the number of comments within 5 months
- 20% increase in the number of comments and likes on admin post within 6 months
- 5% growth in the number of wall response time within 6 months
- 40% increase in the number of Facebook place check-ins within
- 30% increase in the visits to company website from Facebook ads within 3 months

YouTube

- 30% growth in the number of videos viewed within four months
- 20% growth in the number of unique visitors within 4 months
- 10% increase in the number of subscribers to the company channel within 4 months
- 30% increase in the ratio of comments on videos to the number of videos uploaded within four months
- 15% growth in the number of embedded links to videos within four months
- 30% increase in average rankings of images or videos by viewers within 4 months

Digg

- 20% increase in the number of Diggings within 3 months

- 30% growth in comments on the Diggs site within 4 months
- 10% increase in traffic driven to the company website from Digg within 5 months
- 2% growth within 5 months in newsletter subscriptions from people visiting the company's landing page from Digg
- Getting an article about the company on the front page within one year

4. Qualitative Social Media Measuring

Qualitative social media measuring is the process of accessing the opinions and beliefs about a brand according to the report Social Media Usage, Attitudes and Measurability are the most popular social media qualitative metrics among marketers are those that assess the impact of social media activities on customer relationships. For example, 84% of marketers measure dialogue with prospects and customers, while 68% measure the strength of existing customer relationships. 57% measure customer retention rates, while 40% of marketers calculate the ratio of negative to positive relationships with customers. In addition, 68% of marketers track corporate/brand reputation.

With definitive quantitative measurements available, why perform these more “touchy-feely” qualitative measurements in social media? Simply put, quantitative data seldom reveals the whole story. This reality becomes increasingly the case as a brand grows in popularity when knowing how aware consumers are of the brand and their perceptions of it help shape social media marketing initiatives. In addition, qualitative metrics play a key role in identifying customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with a brand. For example, if a sizable number of people tweet, “iPhones suck” or alternately “iPhones rock” quantitative metrics will simply count the number of tweets, not the sentiment contained within them. And sentiments and beliefs can reveal much about brand perceptions.”

It is important to note that quantitative and qualitative measurements are not mutually exclusive. In fact, combining the two types of social media metrics provides a more realistic and accurate picture of an organization’s progress in achieving its desired marketing goals. Indeed, social media measurement is unique in bringing both types of insights together to characterize performance and the value derived from social media efforts.

5. The Net Promoter Score

One of the most popular and simplest qualitative measurements is the Net Promoter Score (NPS), which is a measurement used to gauge the loyalty of a company’s customer relationships. It was developed by Fred Reichheld, Bain and Company and Stametrix and has been used as a replacement for customer satisfaction measurements.

The NPS assumes that every company’s customer can be divided into three classes: Promoters, Passives, and Detractors. The score is obtained by asking customers to answer a single question using a 0 – to – 10 rating scale. The question is “How likely is it that you would recommend [company X] to a friend or colleague?” Customers are categorized as follows:

- Those with a 9 – to – 10 score are Promoters, loyal enthusiasts who will continue to buy and refer other consumer and fuel further growth.
- Those with a 7 – to – 8 score are passives, satisfied but unenthusiastic customers, vulnerable to competitive offerings
- Those with a 6 – to – 0 score are Detractors, unhappy customers likely to damage the brand and hinder growth through damaging word of mouth.

The NPS is calculated by taking the percentage of customers who are Promoters and subtracting the percentage who are detractors. However NPS itself is not a percentage but rather uses a plus “+” or minus “-” to indicate the product. An NPS that is above zero (i.e., has a plus sign) indicates a good customer relations rating with a +5= considered indication of excellent customer relations.

8.5 Return on Investment

Return on Investment (ROI) is a ratio arrived by subtracting expenses from sales and then dividing the result by the expenses.

$$\text{ROI} = \frac{\text{Sales} - \text{Expenses}}{\text{Expenses}}$$

Although calculating ROI for situations is fairly straightforward, other marketing initiatives, such as advertising and PR campaigns, lack a direct link between sales and expenses. As an example, it is difficult, if not impossible, to directly link sales increases with money spent on a mass media ad campaign. In such cases it is necessary to develop new measurements of return to justify investments.

For instance, advertising professionals came up with reach and frequency as ways to measure progress. Reach is the percentage of people in a target market who are exposed to an advertising schedule at least once, while frequency is the number of times an individual views a commercial in a particular advertising schedule. Together, these metrics provide mass media advertisers with a way to access what they are getting for the ad dollars.

However, measuring qualitative ROI is a different story. For example, hiring a social media marketing specialist to increase Facebook fans for a company's page involves a specific cost, but the return in terms of increased sales from the company's growing popularity on Facebook is difficult, if not impossible, to determine. Such obstacles may well explain why only about 40% of companies measure social media marketing ROI, and just 8% of marketers express satisfaction with the ROI of their social marketing campaigns.

In terms of qualitative social media marketing efforts, the argument is made that impact should be the primary goal of social media marketing, not ROI, at least in the short term. In other words, the organization's investment in social media marketing should be treated as an investment, creating additional value for the company until the time comes when it can be directly linked to business transactions, which result in measurable ROI.

The mere fact that measuring qualitative ROI is challenging at the moment should not be taken to mean that qualitative social media marketing initiatives do not contribute to an organization's bottom line. Building brand awareness, perception and loyalty, as well as improving customer relationships through customer engagement, certainly have a long-term effect in attracting customers and retaining them, which eventually translate into additional sales and hence increased ROI.

Nonetheless, the pressing demand to demonstrate a fiscal return for social media expenditures, as well as the need to assess progress and tune social media endeavors, is spawning the development and use of a plethora of new qualitative social media metrics. It is important to remember that when choosing new qualitative metrics, begin by setting clear marketing goals and benchmarks, and then select the qualitative Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that are most likely to reveal progress toward achieving those goals based on established benchmarks.

Finally, the following questions can be used to judge how far along an organization is in reaching its qualitative goals:

- Is the organization reaching new social media audiences?
- Is the company viewed in a more positive than negative light by social media users?
- Is the organization engaged in meaningful conversations on the social web?"

8.6 Evaluation

Evaluation is the process of interpreting data once it has been measured with the intention to derive insights and understanding from it. Just measuring the impact of social media activity is insufficient—measurement only gains meaning through analysis. Such analysis enables management to determine whether social media strategies are achieving an organization's goals.

However, evaluation is where many organizations come up short, failing to connect the dots between social media metrics, strategies, and business goals. The reasons for this failure are threefold. First, sound analysis of social media measurements relies on collection of the relevant data in the first place. If the data gathered does not accurately measure the performance of social media strategies in attaining goals, then any analysis generated from it will be not only unreliable but misleading. Second, it takes a significant commitment of time and resources by an organization to evaluate social media measurements, and that commitment demands a financial investment that some organizations are unwilling or unable to make. Third, social media measurement is still in the experimental stage, meaning that sometimes marketers lack the necessary methodologies and tools to identify "the connections between social media activity metrics and business outcomes."

Digital and Social Media Marketing

Only by establishing the relationship between social media metrics and business goals can marketers properly evaluate the impact and value (including but not limited to ROI) of social media marketing initiatives. The aim of an appropriately focused evaluation, therefore, is to produce a thorough description of the progress of social media marketing activities over time in order to reveal where strategies have succeeded or nose-dived, along with how things went right or wrong and why. Accordingly, "(such analysis] allows the program team to see where it must focus its efforts and resources next. It identifies success and failure, opportunities and risks, potential improvements, and new courses of action."

Summary

Without doubt the rapid pace of advances in social media monitoring techniques, metrics, and tools will continue into the foreseeable future. Increasingly useful and sophisticated metrics will reveal additional information about the performance of social media strategies in attaining marketing goals.

Beyond these obvious forthcoming developments, the evolution of the Internet into a social web has some interesting implications. As connections between people, posts, comments, discussions, articles, and reviews expand exponentially, these linkages capture untold information, which can be mined for valuable marketing insights. Data mining is the process of automatically sifting through large amounts of data to reveal trends, patterns, and relationships in order to detect useful information." Data mining the vast interconnections and content on the social web can uncover unique and valuable patterns about brands." As Ashley Friedlei, CEO of eConsultancy, puts it, "[d]ata is the new oil-let's work on refining it."

Lastly, improvements in natural language processing and the "Semantic Web" promise to deliver even more powerful ways to monitor the social web. The Semantic Web is a common framework that facilitates machine interpretation of the meaning of language. Social media monitoring tools stand to gain much from incorporating advances in the Semantic Web to enhance analytics for brands."

Keywords

Social Media Monitoring, Social Share of Voice, Social Sentiment, Hashtags, Keywords, Trends, Social Media Tracking, Google Ad Words, Boolean Operators, Measuring, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), Quantitative Metrics, Qualitative Metrics, The Net Promoter Score (NPS), Return on Investment (RoI), Evaluation

Self Assessment

1. What is the purpose of social media listening?
 - A. To spot new members for your social media team
 - B. To add more members in your marketing team
 - C. To find out the overall sentiment about your business or brand
 - D. To discover new social media platforms, you must be present on
2. The earliest adopters of social media monitoring were_____
 - A. news agencies
 - B. PR and Ad Agencies
 - C. Insurance agencies
 - D. HR agencies
3. Which of the following is a challenge in manual monitoring of social media?
 - A. It is Time consuming
 - B. It is Boring
 - C. It requires a very big team

- D. It is not possible
4. Tracking is the process of _____ content on social media.
- A. ignoring
 - B. flagging
 - C. finding and following
 - D. None of the above
5. Which of the following is not a step in finding the right keywords?
- A. Choose focus area
 - B. Select target-rich platforms
 - C. Identify the appropriate keywords and phrases
 - D. Choose as many keywords as possible
6. Which of the following Boolean Operator constricts a search?
- A. +
 - B. -
 - C. OR
 - D. None of these
7. Which of the following measures ROI from social media marketing efforts?
- A. Social media monitoring
 - B. Social media tracking
 - C. Social Media measurement
 - D. Quantitative KPIs
8. Which of the following measures the impact of social media marketing activities on “soft goals”?
- A. Qualitative KPIs
 - B. Quantitative KPIs
 - C. ROI
 - D. Social Media metrics
9. Which of the following is a quantitative metric?
- A. Mentions
 - B. Comments
 - C. Number of likes
 - D. Feedback
10. Which of the following is a qualitative metric?
- A. Number of posts
 - B. Comments

- C. Number of Tweets
D. Number of shares
11. Assessing the sentiment around the comment “iPhone sucks”, is an example of _____.
- A. Qualitative social media measuring
B. Quantitative social media measuring
C. Social media analytics
D. None of the above
12. Net Promoter Score is calculated on a scale of:
- A. 0-5
B. 0-7
C. 0-10
D. 1-10
13. Which of the following is not gauged by NPS?
- A. Loyalty
B. Advocacy
C. Satisfaction
D. Enthusiasm
14. NPS is an indicator for a/an _____.
- A. healthy brand
B. healthy/unhealthy relationship with customers
C. increasing profits
D. increasing market share
15. NPS =
- A. % of promoters - % of detractors
B. % of promoters - % of passives
C. % of passives - % of detractors
D. % of detractors - % of promoters

Answers for Self Assessment

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. C | 2. B | 3. A | 4. C | 5. D |
| 6. A | 7. D | 8. A | 9. C | 10. B |
| 11. A | 12. C | 13. B | 14. B | 15. A |

Review Questions

1. What is social media monitoring and how does it help your business?
2. Social media monitoring is on the rise and is constantly evolving. According to you what could be the reasons fuelling its rise?
3. What is social media tracking and how is it different from social media monitoring?
4. What are the challenges faced by marketers while tracking content on social media?
5. Explain the steps involved in the social media tracking process and explain the importance of each step.
6. What is the process involved in social media measurement. Explain by giving examples of a few metrics.
7. Explain the significance of both qualitative and quantitative social media measuring.
8. What is the Net Promotor Score and explain why it is called a qualitative measuring metric?



Further Readings

- How to use social media monitoring tools by Jamie Turner
- Social Media Monitoring A Complete Guide by Gerardus Blokdyk
- Social Media Listening and Monitoring for Business Applications by N. Raghavendra Rao



Web Links

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Unit 09: Mobile Computing and Location Marketing

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define mobile computing and identify mobile computing devices
- Explain how social networks go mobile
- Identify how social media marketers can take advantage of mobile computing
- Describe how branded mobile social networks work

Introduction

The ever-increasing number of mobile computing devices, combined with the ever-expanding social web, are combining to produce a mobile social lifestyle in which individuals are constantly on the move, interacting with social media and seamlessly tying those interactions to physical locations. Marketers have a lot of options with this mobile social lifestyle.

9.1 What is Mobile Computing?

The use of portable wireless devices to connect to the Internet is known as mobile computing. It allows consumers to access data and social media while on the go as long as they are within range of a cellular or WiFi (Wireless Fidelity) network. Cell phones, PDAs, smart phones, tablet PCs, and netbooks are all examples of mobile computing devices. Wireless voice communications and short message service (SMS) for sending and receiving text messages are provided by cell phones. PDAs (portable digital assistants) are handheld computers that commonly incorporate pen-based input to serve as personal organisers, allowing users to synchronise files across several computers.

Smartphones combine the functionality of cell phones and PDAs; they can receive and store text messages and emails, act as web browsers, run mobile applications to perform a growing number of tasks, and take pictures with increasingly high-quality miniaturised digital cameras using mini-keyboards for either mechanical or touchscreen input. Tablet PCs are comparable to laptop computers, but instead of cumbersome keys, they use touchscreens to provide a more compact form factor with the largest possible screen size. Netbooks are laptop computers that are smaller, lighter,

and about the size of a hardcover book. They are mostly used for web browsing and email, with limited support for productivity apps like as word processing and electronic spreadsheets.

9.2 Social Networks Go Mobile

One of the key implications of the growth of smartphones is that social networks are increasingly being accessed through mobile devices. Rather than accessing Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter from a computer, many consumers are accessing these sites directly from their smartphones and Internet-connected phones.

The majority of people have their mobile device within arm's reach and thus are connected with their social networks 24/7. This really means that participants in the social networks are always on and always connected. As a result, people tend to post and share content on social media more often. According to Facebook, people who use Facebook on their mobile devices are twice as active on Facebook than nonmobile users. Twitter shows similar statistics, with reports that 95% of Twitter users own a mobile phone, and half of the Twitter users access Twitter through their mobile devices.

The other implication of social networks on mobile devices is the ease of sharing and posting content, especially multimedia content. In only a few seconds, one can take a picture on a smartphone and with the click of a button post it to Twitter, Facebook or Instagram. One can Tweet or update social network statuses directly from a mobile device without the need of connecting and uploading to a computer. Google's social network, Google+ launched with a highly integrated mobile application that allows multimedia to flow seamlessly from mobile devices to social network.

From a marketer's perspective, the ability to access and interact with social networks quickly and easily from a mobile device can be used as a powerful strategy for staying in touch with consumers on social networks. For example, businesses can inform consumers about new product features or a special sales event, or they can instantly address customer complaints to prevent problems from going viral.

Marketing with Mobile Computing

Mobile computing provides a plethora of marketing opportunities, such as text messaging, mobile applications, and mobile advertising. There are two key opportunities for marketers to leverage mobile as a part of their social media marketing strategy: branded social networks delivered through applications and location-based social networks and applications. Mobile devices are key enablers of social lives, so it makes no sense that they play a big role in social media marketing as well.

9.3 Branded Mobile Social Networks

A number of branded social networks are emerging to leverage mobile devices. A branded social network is a social network created by and for a specific brand. Branded social networks are usually delivered through an application on a mobile device, and they typically allow users to connect with each other in some way that links back to the brand that created the application.

Branded social networks can be difficult to create and must have a strong value incentive for the users to create yet another social media account. Before creating a branded social network, a company should first investigate the pros and cons of using existing social networks such as Facebook or LinkedIn, versus creating a branded social network. Many companies have used the strategy of creating a popular Facebook page first and then directing Facebook followers to the company's branded social network.

A growing number of pharmaceutical companies are using branded social networks such as Children with Diabetes, an online community for kids, families, and adults with diabetes, which offers an online newsletter, FAQs, private chat rooms, and discussion forums for specific topics. These branded social networks allow patients to connect with other people with same type of disease in order to form support groups so that they can share experiences. Through the monitoring of conversations among patients, the company can provide better customer service by addressing the issues facing these patients as well as being able to track information related to the disease and collecting valuable statistics regarding their medication. With the addition of medical application to the branded social network, patients will have easy and instant access to information, and companies can provide real-time support to customers.

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Branded mobile social networks are typically delivered through applications. The key challenge for brands is that in addition to creating the application for their social network, there is a significant discovery problem. In order for consumers to join a branded social network, they have to discover the application for doing so. According to a data from Nielsen, branded smartphone applications must rely on advertising and paid marketing to build an audience for the application. Creating a new social network can be expensive and time consuming, but it can have great results when it is based on the right strategy and has a significant value proposition for the customer.

9.4 Location-Based Social Networks

A location-based social network, also known as mobile-social network, refer to a social network where people can share their location with friends. The main location-based social networks include Foursquare, Gowalla, and Facebook Places. While each of these services has slightly different functionality, they generally work in a similar way.

According to Wikipedia, Foursquare is a location-based social networking website based based on hardware for mobile devices. The service is available to users with GPS-enabled mobile devices such as smartphones. Users' "check-in" at venues using a mobile website, text messaging or a device-specific application by running the application and selecting from a list of venues that the application locates nearby.

Location-based social networks answer the key question "Where are you?" and allows users to "check-in" to inform friends of their current location. For example, a user might be checked in on Foursquare to a café in the neighborhood, and the individual's friends on Foursquare can see the location and have the option of meeting them there if they so choose. Essentially, social networks like Foursquare or Facebook allow you to share where you are and what you are doing with your friends. Users of location-based social networks share their activities and loyalty with their social network.

In addition to the location-based network Foursquare, other companies provide competing services and should be considered when determining the best mix of tactics to implement the overall strategies for reaching social media goals. The following list de scribes some of the other popular social location-based networks and mobile apps.

Gowalla - currently the main rival of Foursquare. Gowalla has partnered with the Travel Channel, National Geographic, and The Washington Post to offer users the ability to check in at locations as part of a "Trip" game, where upon completion of a "Trip," users can earn rewards. These partnerships also provide Gowalla users with rich sources of content. In addition, Gowalla's social location app has a unique interface, featuring stylish caricatures of people hanging out at a coffee shop and looking trendy-immediately revealing the target market this service is aiming for.

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Google Hotpot-Google's Hotspot social location works in conjunction with Google Places to let users rank review and recommend local businesses. Given Google's dominant search engine, its social location service Hotspot has the potential to create a synergy between location marketing and search engine optimization (SEO), which will be a compelling reason for marketers to use this service.

Yelp-a user review and search service that drives upon its thousands of regular reviewers (called Yelpers) to place reviews about venues using the site's mobile social location service, Hosting 20 million reviewers in July 2011. Yelp continues to grow at a brisk pace. One of the most powerful marketing features of the Yelp's mobile app is the Monocle option, which activates the camera in a mobile device to capture a photo of what the viewer sees, then overlays it with the names, star rating, and number of reviews of the various venues that are within a set radius of the user and are in the directions the mobile device is pointing As a consequence, the decision to purchase can be directly affected by this incredibly rich collection of information, this can significantly increase foot traffic to a venue, making the use of Yelp's social location service and app an attractive marketing tactic.

Others-many other social location sharing services and apps exist, such as My Town, SCNVGR, Loopt and Brightkite. With any social location service, app, or tool, marketers should carefully consider what tactical advantages they bring to the execution of the social media marketing plan.

9.5 Location-Based Social Networks and Gaming

In addition to allowing users to post their current location, some location-based social networks like Foursquare have additional features based on game mechanics in order to increase user engagement. First, each location may have a mayor, who checks into the location most frequently. In reality, being the mayor of a location doesn't mean much beyond bragging rights, however, Foursquare users compete for mayorship over locations.

The second part of the gaming mechanics built into Foursquare is the concept of badges. Users can earn badges by engaging in certain behaviors. For example, a user may earn the Don't Stop Believing badge for checking into three karaoke bars in a month. There are a variety of badges created by Foursquare, but brands can also create custom badges that users can earn. For instance, a shopping magazine has created a badge that can be earned by checking into stores featured in the magazine.

The third aspect of social gaming built into Foursquare is the leader board. Feature awards points for different things-checking out, adding a new venue, multiple check-ins and checking in at a new place-and compile leader boards to track points within a user's network. Again, the points are not really worth anything however, it is another fun way that Foursquare engages users and keeps them active. Thus, users of Foursquare check in at locations to gain points, with badges and mayorships being fun of showing their friends where they spend their time. While gaming through Foursquare increases both consumer and marketing opportunities. Several studies show that gaming is not among the top reasons that consumers claim they use location-based applications, studies show that most US. users of location-based apps employ them to get informed (64.6%), followed by meeting up with friends (43.2%) and meeting new people (14.8%), with gaming being a reason for only 8.6%.

1. The Growth of Location-based Social Networks

Location-based applications where users check in are becoming increasingly popular for smartphone users, and they represent a large opportunity for marketers, as illustrated in Table 13.3. According to a 2011 comScore study, nearly one in five smartphone owners access location-based social networks via their mobile device with almost 70% of mobile users checking in from an Android or Apple iPhone. While mobile location-based check-in services are still in their infancy, they have impressive adoption among smartphone users. As smartphone adoption continues to increase, it is expected that location-based social networks will grow significantly as well. Marketing with Location-based Social Networks will grow significantly as well.

2. Marketing with Location-Based Social Networks

There are many different ways for marketers to connect with consumers on location-based social networks. The opportunities are most obvious for businesses with a physical presence, but location-based marketing also works for events and brands. One of the most popular opportunities for marketers to connect with consumers on location-based social networks is by offering deals and discounts. Most of the major location-based marketing platforms offer merchants the opportunity to create a deal or discount. In a study by JiWire, users of location-based applications were asked why they check in. Twenty-nine percent said they check in for deals and discounts, 17% to share their location, 14% to be associated with cool places, and only 7% checked in to receive points. These percentages show that consumers are interested in receiving deals and discounts through location-based social networks.

Coupons, deals, and discounts are the most popular form of marketing on location-based social networks. The opportunities differ between each particular site and are still emerging. However, there are some consistent trends in how deals can be offered. The most basic form of a location-based deal is to offer a discount coupon when an individual checks in to a location. For example, a restaurant may run a deal that says "Check in to get a half-price appetizer with the purchase of a meal." Upon checking in, the customer would show the coupon to the server to receive the discount. In addition to basic coupons, many location-based social networks have created unique coupon offerings to reward customers. Foursquare offers a mayor deal in which the mayor of an establishment receives a special offer. This offer is intended to reward loyalty and encourage customers to fight for mayorship with their check-ins. In 2010 Starbucks launched a deal on

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Foursquare in which the mayor received \$1 off a Frappuccino. This offer was an innovative way for Starbucks to reward its loyal customers and to encourage check-ins at their stores.

Both Foursquare and Facebook offer other loyalty coupons, which reward customers after a certain number of check-ins. The offer may be a free coffee on your fifth check-in, or, similar to a punch card, it may be a free drink after purchasing ten cups of coffee. Deals can also be offered only on the first check-in to reward a new customer or to encourage an individual to try a new product. Both of these deal offerings persuade customers to check in and share their location with their friends while being rewarded for loyalty.

Deals can also be created to encourage customers to bring their friends. Many location-based social networks offer customers rewards when they check in with a certain number of friends. This deal encourages people to ask their friends to check in, therefore increasing the social spread of a location.

The idea behind location-based coupons is to reward for checking in and sharing locations with their friends. These mass check-ins offer a number of benefits for merchants. First, they build awareness for a business as the sharing of the whereabouts via check-ins on the location-based social networks. Second, they have the opportunity to reward loyalty and keep the most valuable customers coming back.

Location-based deals can also drive new customers into a business. For example, when a user checks in to a downtown location on Foursquare, the individual will see an icon that says "special offers nearby." This icon shows a list of places in the area that are offering a reward for checking in. This knowledge can increase awareness of your business and also drive someone who is in the area into your establishment.

By encouraging customers to check in, businesses are increasing the social spread of their brand. If an individual constantly sees his or her friends checking in to a particular place, that person is more likely to be interested in visiting the place. In addition, upon checking in, the user can leave comments or reviews about the business, which will be broadcasted to the individual's social networks. If a positive comment is posted after checking in, it can be a very powerful way to promote Business. On the other hand, a negative experience shared by a customer on the location based social network would have a devastating effect on the business.

3. The Future of Mobile Computing and Location Marketing

As the number and functionality of mobile computing devices continues to expand exponentially, it is hard to imagine what is coming next. It is likely that mobile computing may become so ubiquitous that the term itself becomes passé. Indeed, Jake Oraanstad, a software developer and Android team manager at Myriad Devices, writes "It will not need to be called 'mobile' computing anymore because everything will be mobile"

Another trend is "context-aware mobile computing, which basically involves a smartphone tracking a person's daily routine. Context awareness enables marketers to target people based on their activities, online behavior, and location, making it possible to display advertisements tailored to a specific individual's lifestyle. The more stitched in your mobile is to your everyday life patterns, the more it will know about you without you having to explicitly tell it, just like your housemate, partner, family or friends might know your routine, so will your phone, according to Cath Wilcox of Overlay Media.

The future of location marketing is just as difficult to predict. However, Chris Brogan, president of Human Business Works, believes that for location-based apps to reach their full potential, they must become smarter, informing users not only about the location of nearby restaurants, but making restaurant recommendations based on the person's food preferences." Taking this a step further, marketers can offer "location-based advertising," using a combination of smartphone GPS tracking and opt-in services, to let users sign up for advertising alerts that match their culinary preferences, which are automatically triggered when users cross "geo-fences (ie, virtual fields that detect mobile devices when users enter or exit specific areas)."

Such avant-garde examples of mobile computing and location marketing merely touch upon the potential of these rapidly evolving social media technologies. How will marketers take advantage of highly portable and powerful mobile computing devices that provide easy access to the social web from almost any location? What new mobile apps will be developed to leverage these gadgets? What new social media platforms will emerge to cater to the users of these advanced devices? The answers

to these questions will likely shape the future of social media marketing well into this decade and beyond.

Summary

1. What is mobile computing?

The use of portable wireless devices to connect to the Internet is known as mobile computing. It allows consumers to access data and social media while on the go as long as they are within range of a cellular or WiFi (Wireless Fidelity) network.

2. Social Networks go mobile

One of the key implications of the growth of smartphones is that social networks are increasingly being accessed through mobile devices. Rather than accessing Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter from a computer, many consumers are accessing these sites directly from their smartphones and Internet-connected phones.

3. Marketing with mobile computing

Mobile computing provides a plethora of marketing opportunities, such as text messaging, mobile applications, and mobile advertising. There are two key opportunities for marketers to leverage mobile as a part of their social media marketing strategy: branded social networks delivered through applications and location-based social networks and applications. Mobile devices are key enablers of social lives, so it makes no sense that they play a big role in social media marketing as well.

4. Branded mobile social networks

A branded social network is a social network created by and for a specific brand. Branded social networks are usually delivered through an application on a mobile device, and they typically allow users to connect with each other in some way that links back to the brand that created the application.

5. Location-based social networks

A location-based social network, also known as mobile-social network, refer to a social network where people can share their location with friends.

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In addition to allowing users to post their current location, some location-based social networks like Foursquare have additional features based on game mechanics in order to increase user engagement. First, each location may have a mayor, who checks into the location most frequently.

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Keywords

Mobile Computing, WiFi, Branded Mobile Social Networks, Location-Based Social Networks, Mobile Gaming, Location-Based Marketing

Self-Assessment

1. _____ is use of portable wireless devices to connect to the Internet.
 - A. Mobile Marketing
 - B. Mobile Computing

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- C. Mobile Social Networking
- D. Mobile Computer

2. Which of the following is not a mobile computing device?

- A. Desk Top
- B. Smart Phones
- C. Tablet Computers
- D. PDAs

3. Which of the following is the correct expansion for GPS?

- A. Global Positioning System
- B. Geological Positioning System
- C. Geographic Positioning System
- D. Global Proxy System

4. Which of the following is/are marketing opportunit(y/ies) provided by mobile computing?

- A. Text messaging
- B. Mobile applications
- C. Push notifications
- D. All the above

5. Which of the following is created by and for a specific brand?

- A. Mobile Social Network
- B. Branded Social Network
- C. Location-based Network
- D. None of these

6. Which of the following is not a challenge for creating a branded social network?

- A. Targets its niche segment only
- B. Difficult to create
- C. Must provide strong value incentive
- D. Discovery

7. Which of the following technologies allows people to share their location with their friends?

- A. Location-based social network
- B. Mobile Computing
- C. Branded Social network
- D. None of these

8. Which of the following is/are utility provided by location-based social networks to users?

- A. To check-in
- B. To rate, rank and review
- C. To share pictures and experiences
- D. All the above

9. Which of the following is/are utility provided by location-based social networks to marketers?
- A. To develop campaigns around check-in locations
 - B. To build awareness
 - C. Grow and engage their fan base
 - D. All the above
10. Which of the following is a difference between social network games and online games?
- A. Conducted online with multiplayer
 - B. Use of social networks to recruit team members or allies
 - C. Asynchronous communications
 - D. All the above
11. Which of the following is/are notable features of social games?
- A. Players recruit allies
 - B. Pose challenge in network
 - C. Virtual currencies
 - D. All the above
12. Which of the following is not a feature of Social Gaming?
- A. Activity feeds
 - B. In game chats
 - C. Online banking transactions
 - D. Guilds
13. Which of the following social features helps in driving strong growth?
- A. Strong sense of community
 - B. Easy access
 - C. Mobile access
 - D. High acquisition rate
14. How is social gaming providing opportunities to marketers?
- A. Branded virtual goods can be placed in social games
 - B. Offers and ads can be embedded into games
 - C. Can be integrated directly with social networks
 - D. All the above
15. Pairing social media strategies with location-based marketing tactics helps in:
- A. Targeting a specific location-based audience
 - B. Building your social media following
 - C. Expanding the reach of your content
 - D. All the above

Answers for Self-Assessment

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. B | 2. A | 3. A | 4. D | 5. B |
| 6. A | 7. A | 8. D | 9. D | 10. B |
| 11. D | 12. C | 13. A | 14. D | 15. D |

Review Questions

1. What is mobile computing and how is it providing opportunities to marketers?
2. What are location-based social networks and how have they transformed marketing?
3. What are the opportunities available to marketers through:
 - a. Location-based social networks
 - b. Social gaming
 - c. Branded social networks
4. How is social gaming different from online gaming?
5. According to you what is the future of mobile computing and location-based marketing?

**Further Readings**

- Mobile Computing and Location Marketing by Renee Cheung
- Mobile Computing & Location Marketing by Sean Mc Eleney
- Mobile Computing by Ashish N Jani
- Mobile Computing – ARS Publications

**Web Links**

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9.2 Social Networks Go Mobile

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define mobile computing and identify mobile computing devices
- Explain how social networks go mobile
- Identify how social media marketers can take advantage of mobile computing
- Describe how branded mobile social networks work

Introduction

The ever-increasing number of mobile computing devices, combined with the ever-expanding social web, are combining to produce a mobile social lifestyle in which individuals are constantly on the move, interacting with social media and seamlessly tying those interactions to physical locations. Marketers have a lot of options with this mobile social lifestyle.

9.1 What is Mobile Computing?

The use of portable wireless devices to connect to the Internet is known as mobile computing. It allows consumers to access data and social media while on the go as long as they are within range of a cellular or WiFi (Wireless Fidelity) network. Cell phones, PDAs, smart phones, tablet PCs, and netbooks are all examples of mobile computing devices. Wireless voice communications and short message service (SMS) for sending and receiving text messages are provided by cell phones. PDAs (portable digital assistants) are handheld computers that commonly incorporate pen-based input to serve as personal organisers, allowing users to synchronise files across several computers.

Smartphones combine the functionality of cell phones and PDAs; they can receive and store text messages and emails, act as web browsers, run mobile applications to perform a growing number of tasks, and take pictures with increasingly high-quality miniaturised digital cameras using mini-keyboards for either mechanical or touchscreen input. Tablet PCs are comparable to laptop computers, but instead of cumbersome keys, they use touchscreens to provide a more compact form factor with the largest possible screen size. Netbooks are laptop computers that are smaller, lighter,

and about the size of a hardcover book. They are mostly used for web browsing and email, with limited support for productivity apps like as word processing and electronic spreadsheets.

9.2 Social Networks Go Mobile

One of the key implications of the growth of smartphones is that social networks are increasingly being accessed through mobile devices. Rather than accessing Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter from a computer, many consumers are accessing these sites directly from their smartphones and Internet-connected phones.

The majority of people have their mobile device within arm's reach and thus are connected with their social networks 24/7. This really means that participants in the social networks are always on and always connected. As a result, people tend to post and share content on social media more often. According to Facebook, people who use Facebook on their mobile devices are twice as active on Facebook than nonmobile users. Twitter shows similar statistics, with reports that 95% of Twitter users own a mobile phone, and half of the Twitter users access Twitter through their mobile devices.

The other implication of social networks on mobile devices is the ease of sharing and posting content, especially multimedia content. In only a few seconds, one can take a picture on a smartphone and with the click of a button post it to Twitter, Facebook or Instagram. One can Tweet or update social network statuses directly from a mobile device without the need of connecting and uploading to a computer. Google's social network, Google+ launched with a highly integrated mobile application that allows multimedia to flow seamlessly from mobile devices to social network.

From a marketer's perspective, the ability to access and interact with social networks quickly and easily from a mobile device can be used as a powerful strategy for staying in touch with consumers on social networks. For example, businesses can inform consumers about new product features or a special sales event, or they can instantly address customer complaints to prevent problems from going viral.

Marketing with Mobile Computing

Mobile computing provides a plethora of marketing opportunities, such as text messaging, mobile applications, and mobile advertising. There are two key opportunities for marketers to leverage mobile as a part of their social media marketing strategy: branded social networks delivered through applications and location-based social networks and applications. Mobile devices are key enablers of social lives, so it makes no sense that they play a big role in social media marketing as well.

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2. Marketing with Location-Based Social Networks

There are many different ways for marketers to connect with consumers on location-based social networks. The opportunities are most obvious for businesses with a physical presence, but location-based marketing also works for events and brands. One of the most popular opportunities for marketers to connect with consumers on location-based social networks is by offering deals and discounts. Most of the major location-based marketing platforms offer merchants the opportunity to create a deal or discount. In a study by JiWire, users of location-based applications were asked why they check in. Twenty-nine percent said they check in for deals and discounts, 17% to share their location, 14% to be associated with cool places, and only 7% checked in to receive points. These percentages show that consumers are interested in receiving deals and discounts through location-based social networks.

Coupons, deals, and discounts are the most popular form of marketing on location-based social networks. The opportunities differ between each particular site and are still emerging. However, there are some consistent trends in how deals can be offered. The most basic form of a location-based deal is to offer a discount coupon when an individual checks in to a location. For example, a restaurant may run a deal that says "Check in to get a half-price appetizer with the purchase of a meal." Upon checking in, the customer would show the coupon to the server to receive the discount. In addition to basic coupons, many location-based social networks have created unique coupon offerings to reward customers. Foursquare offers a mayor deal in which the mayor of an establishment receives a special offer. This offer is intended to reward loyalty and encourage customers to fight for mayorship with their check-ins. In 2010 Starbucks launched a deal on

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Foursquare in which the mayor received \$1 off a Frappuccino. This offer was an innovative way for Starbucks to reward its loyal customers and to encourage check-ins at their stores.

Both Foursquare and Facebook offer other loyalty coupons, which reward customers after a certain number of check-ins. The offer may be a free coffee on your fifth check-in, or, similar to a punch card, it may be a free drink after purchasing ten cups of coffee, Deals can also be offered only on the first check-in to reward a new customer or to encourage an individual to try a new product. Both of these deal offerings persuade customers to check in and share their location with their friends while being rewarded for loyalty.

Deals can also be created to encourage customers to bring their friends. Many location-based social networks offer customers rewards when they check in with a certain number of friends. This deal encourages people to ask their friends to check in, therefore increasing the social spread of a location.

The idea behind location-based coupons is to reward for checking in and sharing locations with their friends. These mass check-ins offer a number of benefits for merchants First, they build awareness for a business as the sharing of the whereabouts via check-ins on the location-based social networks Second, they have the opportunity to reward loyalty and keep the most valuable customers coming back.

Location-based deals can also drive new customers into a business. For example, when a user checks in to a downtown location on Foursquare, the individual will see an icon that says "special offers nearby." This icon shows a list of places in the area that are offering a reward for checking in. This knowledge can increase awareness of your business and also drive someone who is in the area into your establishment.

By encouraging customers to check in, businesses are increasing the social spread of their brand. If an individual constantly sees his or her friends checking in to a particular place, that person is more likely to be interested in visiting the place. In addition, upon checking in, the user can leave comments or reviews about the business. which will be broadcasted to the individual's social networks. If a positive comment is posted after checking in, it can be a very powerful way to promote Business. On the other hand, a negative experience shared by a customer on the location based social network would have a devastating effect on the business.

3. The Future of Mobile Computing and Location Marketing

As the number and functionality of mobile computing devices continues to expand exponentially, it is hard to imagine what is coming next. It is likely that mobile commuting may become so ubiquitous that the term itself becomes passé. Indeed, Jake Oraanstad, a software developer and Android team manager at Myriad Devices, writes "It will not need to be called 'mobile' computing anymore because everything will be mobile"

Another trend is "context-aware mobile computing, which basically involves a smartphone tracking a person's daily routine. Context awareness enables marketers to target people based on their activities, online behavior, and location, making it possible to display advertisements tailored to a specific individual's lifestyle. The more stitched in your mobile is to your everyday life patterns, the more it will know about you without you having to explicitly tell it, just like your housemate, partner, family or friends might know your routine, so will your phone, according to Cath Wilcox of Overlay Media.

The future of location marketing is just as difficult to predict. However, Chris Brogan, president of Human Business Works, believes that for location-based apps to reach their full potential, they must become smarter, informing users not only about the location of nearby restaurants, but making restaurant recommendations based on the person's food preferences." Taking this a step further, marketers can offer "location-based advertising," using a combination of smartphone GPS tracking and opt-in services, to let users sign up for advertising alerts that match their culinary preferences, which are automatically triggered when users cross "geo-fences (ie, virtual fields that detect mobile devices when users enter or exit specific areas)."

Such avant-garde examples of mobile computing and location marketing merely touch upon the potential of these rapidly evolving social media technologies. How will marketers take advantage of highly portable and powerful mobile computing devices that provide easy access to the social web from almost any location? What new mobile apps will be developed to leverage these gadgets? What new social media platforms will emerge to cater to the users of these advanced devices? The answers

to these questions will likely shape the future of social media marketing well into this decade and beyond.

Summary

1. What is mobile computing?

The use of portable wireless devices to connect to the Internet is known as mobile computing. It allows consumers to access data and social media while on the go as long as they are within range of a cellular or WiFi (Wireless Fidelity) network.

2. Social Networks go mobile

One of the key implications of the growth of smartphones is that social networks are increasingly being accessed through mobile devices. Rather than accessing Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter from a computer, many consumers are accessing these sites directly from their smartphones and Internet-connected phones.

3. Marketing with mobile computing

Mobile computing provides a plethora of marketing opportunities, such as text messaging, mobile applications, and mobile advertising. There are two key opportunities for marketers to leverage mobile as a part of their social media marketing strategy: branded social networks delivered through applications and location-based social networks and applications. Mobile devices are key enablers of social lives, so it makes no sense that they play a big role in social media marketing as well.

4. Branded mobile social networks

A branded social network is a social network created by and for a specific brand. Branded social networks are usually delivered through an application on a mobile device, and they typically allow users to connect with each other in some way that links back to the brand that created the application.

5. Location-based social networks

A location-based social network, also known as mobile-social network, refer to a social network where people can share their location with friends.

6. Location-based social networks and gaming

In addition to allowing users to post their current location, some location-based social networks like Foursquare have additional features based on game mechanics in order to increase user engagement. First, each location may have a mayor, who checks into the location most frequently.

7. Marketing with location-based social networks

There are many different ways for marketers to connect with consumers on location based social networks. The opportunities are most obvious for businesses with a physical presence, but location-based marketing also works for events and brands. One of the most popular opportunities for marketers to connect with consumers on location-based social networks is by offering deals and discounts.

Keywords

Mobile Computing, WiFi, Branded Mobile Social Networks, Location-Based Social Networks, Mobile Gaming, Location-Based Marketing

Self-Assessment

1. _____ is use of portable wireless devices to connect to the Internet.
 - A. Mobile Marketing
 - B. Mobile Computing

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- C. Mobile Social Networking
 - D. Mobile Computer
2. Which of the following is not a mobile computing device?
- A. Desk Top
 - B. Smart Phones
 - C. Tablet Computers
 - D. PDAs
3. Which of the following is the correct expansion for GPS?
- A. Global Positioning System
 - B. Geological Positioning System
 - C. Geographic Positioning System
 - D. Global Proxy System
4. Which of the following is/are marketing opportunit(y/ies) provided by mobile computing?
- A. Text messaging
 - B. Mobile applications
 - C. Push notifications
 - D. All the above
5. Which of the following is created by and for a specific brand?
- A. Mobile Social Network
 - B. Branded Social Network
 - C. Location-based Network
 - D. None of these
6. Which of the following is not a challenge for creating a branded social network?
- A. Targets its niche segment only
 - B. Difficult to create
 - C. Must provide strong value incentive
 - D. Discovery
7. Which of the following technologies allows people to share their location with their friends?
- A. Location-based social network
 - B. Mobile Computing
 - C. Branded Social network
 - D. None of these
8. Which of the following is/are utility provided by location-based social networks to users?
- A. To check-in
 - B. To rate, rank and review
 - C. To share pictures and experiences
 - D. All the above

9. Which of the following is/are utility provided by location-based social networks to marketers?
- A. To develop campaigns around check-in locations
 - B. To build awareness
 - C. Grow and engage their fan base
 - D. All the above
10. Which of the following is a difference between social network games and online games?
- A. Conducted online with multiplayer
 - B. Use of social networks to recruit team members or allies
 - C. Asynchronous communications
 - D. All the above
11. Which of the following is/are notable features of social games?
- A. Players recruit allies
 - B. Pose challenge in network
 - C. Virtual currencies
 - D. All the above
12. Which of the following is not a feature of Social Gaming?
- A. Activity feeds
 - B. In game chats
 - C. Online banking transactions
 - D. Guilds
13. Which of the following social features helps in driving strong growth?
- A. Strong sense of community
 - B. Easy access
 - C. Mobile access
 - D. High acquisition rate
14. How is social gaming providing opportunities to marketers?
- A. Branded virtual goods can be placed in social games
 - B. Offers and ads can be embedded into games
 - C. Can be integrated directly with social networks
 - D. All the above
15. Pairing social media strategies with location-based marketing tactics helps in:
- A. Targeting a specific location-based audience
 - B. Building your social media following
 - C. Expanding the reach of your content
 - D. All the above

Answers for Self-Assessment

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. B | 2. A | 3. A | 4. D | 5. B |
| 6. A | 7. A | 8. D | 9. D | 10. B |
| 11. D | 12. C | 13. A | 14. D | 15. D |

Review Questions

1. What is mobile computing and how is it providing opportunities to marketers?
2. What are location-based social networks and how have they transformed marketing?
3. What are the opportunities available to marketers through:
 - a. Location-based social networks
 - b. Social gaming
 - c. Branded social networks
4. How is social gaming different from online gaming?
5. According to you what is the future of mobile computing and location-based marketing?

**Further Readings**

- Mobile Computing and Location Marketing by Renee Cheung
- Mobile Computing & Location Marketing by Sean Mc Eleney
- Mobile Computing by Ashish N Jani
- Mobile Computing – ARS Publications

**Web Links**

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Unit 11: Marketing with Social Networks

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Summary

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define social networking
- Describe a brief history of social networks
- Explain the global perspective of social networking
- Identify the benefits of marketing with social networks
- Define a white label social networking
- Explain the pros and cons of creating a white label social network
- Summarizing some predictions about the future of social networks

Introduction

A social network site is an online service on which members can establish relationships based on friendship, kinship, shared interests, business advantage, or other reasons. A social network site facilitates these interactions by letting members build a public or private profile, specify who can connect with them, and share their connections with others. Social network services simplify the process of sharing information, such as interests, events, status, and pictures, within individual networks.

Social network sites are the latest development of a prior Internet phenomenon, discussion boards. Instead of just sharing thoughts and information, users began to develop communal relationships. A virtual community, a term first coined by Howard Rheingold in his 1993 book by the same name, focuses on building relationships using discussion boards to converse about topics of shared interest. Technology's ability to aggregate personal characteristics makes it easier than ever to connect to others with similar background or interests."

Online communities are the forerunners of social networks. While other virtual communities are driven by thoughts and ideas, social networks are primarily organized around people, not interests. People join to connect with existing contacts and to keep in touch with old friends, not primarily to engage in discussion. Understanding the background and general expectations that members have of social networks is essential when developing a marketing presence on these platforms.

11.1 A Brief History of Social Networks

One of the first social network sites was SixDegrees.com, launched in 1997 by Andrew Weinreich, a well-known entrepreneur and Internet executive. Weinreich drew his inspiration for the site from the "six degrees of separation theory, which claims that anyone on the planet can be connected to any other person on the planet through a chain of acquaintances that has no more than five intermediaries. SixDegrees.com let users build profiles, display a list of their Friends, and transverse these lists. Although each of these functions had already been implemented by dating services and virtual communities, SixDegrees.com was the first to combine them. Despite attracting millions of users, the site could not attract sufficient funding or advertising to sustain its business model and closed in 2000. Nonetheless, "it paved the way for the likes of Facebook, LinkedIn and many more."

In 2001 Ryze.com was launched by Adrian Scott to help people make connections and grow their personal networks." Scott introduced Ryze.com to his close friends in San Francisco, many of whom went on to become the entrepreneurs and investors behind such social network sites as Friendster, Tribe.net, and LinkedIn. This tight-knit group believed that its respective social networks could coexist without competition."

However, Ryze.com never achieved critical mass, while Friendster enjoyed a meteoric rise and suffered an equally precipitous fall, with Inc. magazine calling it "one of the biggest disappointments in Internet history." At the heart of Friendster's catastrophic failure was the alienation of its early adopters, which came about because of continued intermittent service problems and the routine practice of deleting user accounts that appeared suspicious. On the upside, Tribe.net eventually carved out a loyal niche audience, while LinkedIn grew to become the second-most popular social network.

In August 2003 MySpace was launched by a group of eUniverse employees with Friendster accounts who were inspired by its potential, and decided to mimic the social network's more popular features. The founders of MySpace "wanted to attract [the] estranged Friendster users," according to cofounder Tom Anderson." However, it was the 2004 mass influx of teenagers into MySpace that accounted for its swift rise in popularity. By May 2005 MySpace had become the fifth-ranked web domain in terms of page views, according to ComScore's Media Metrix. The notoriety of MySpace attracted the attention of News Corporation, which purchased the social network site for \$580 million in July 2005. On August 9, 2006, MySpace reached its 100 millionth account." By 2007 MySpace was considered the leading social networking site in the U.S., valued at \$12 billion.

On February 2004, Zuckerberg, undergraduate at Harvard University, launched "Thefacebook," originally located thefacebook.com." Unlike previous social network membership limited people with harvard.edu address, restriction created perception intimate, exclusive community. Within twenty-four launch, 1,200 students month later, half had created profile. spread to other Boston-area universities, other Ivy League universities, and gradually of colleges and universities in the U.S."

The name of Zuckerberg's network officially changed Facebook.com August 2005, after the domain name was purchased for \$200,000. On September 2, 2005, U.S. high school students were allowed to join Facebook, substantially increasing its market. Then, the social network spread to other universities in other countries, beginning with schools the U.K.

In September 2006 Facebook expanded its registration policy to anyone older than thirteen with a valid email address. This expanded access foreshadowed a boom in Facebook's popularity. On April 19, 2008, Facebook overtook MySpace in traffic. MySpace continued to experience a steady decline in membership, attributed to such factors as "the failure execute product development," failure to innovate, sticking with a "portal strategy, and too many ads. However, membership in Facebook skyrocketed, reaching 100 million by August 2008, 350 million by December 2009, 500 million by July 2010, 750 million active monthly users in June of 2011.

11.2 A Global Perspective

With a plethora of social networks launching, most of the attention has gone to the U.S. superstars, such as Facebook and LinkedIn. However, in other countries, different social network sites have risen to prominence, even ones built by major corporations. As an example, Google launched Orkut on January 22, 2004, and although the social network never gained significant U.S. market share, it became popular in both India and Brazil. Despite recent trends showing Facebook making strong inroads in India and Brazil, Orkut remains a well-known brand in these countries. Renren is the leading social network in China, with more than 117 million users," Vkontakte dominates in Russia, with over 100 million members." And Bebo, according to the BBC, has 22 million users in the United Kingdom." As a consequence, marketers who want to reach a global audience should take into consideration these other social networks.

11.3 Benefits of Marketing with Social Networks

One consequence of online social networks has been to blur the line between business and personal life. With contacts overlapping between business, family, school, and so on, keeping private life out of the public eye is increasingly difficult. While previously only celebrities and politicians could expect public scrutiny of their actions, much personal information (especially contributed by young people) can now be found on the Internet. While some are concerned about the implications of widespread information sharing, it can also be argued that this "transparency is in sum a good thing for individuals and society." In any case, online sharing of popular interests is highly valuable to a social media marketer.

Marketing with social networks has several advantages for firms, allowing them to "find talent, build brand awareness, find new customers, and help conduct brand intelligence and market research. Job search portals and professional networking platforms (such as LinkedIn) have become a popular way to match job seekers with employers. Further, with the large population segment participating on social networks, such networks have become an excellent way to seek out clients or customers. The term brand intelligence refers to information that businesses can collect about their customers, from basic demographics to topics of discussion to detailed feedback. Instead of costly market research, monitoring social networks can gather general sentiments, opinions, and customer needs with great efficiency.

Due to their information-sharing capacity, social networks can also be used as a new distribution channel for marketing messages. Marketers must be aware that people participate on social networks primarily to connect with friends, not to search out new products. However, an advantage of networks such as Facebook is that they encourage users to have many conversations with different people or brands, all occurring at once. If marketing messages are engaging and valuable to social network users, they may be welcomed by users. Social networks allow a brand to engage its target audience in ongoing conversation which can both draw in new business and increase customer loyalty.

Some business executives worry that participating on social networks might make their company appear unprofessional or invite negative commentary. To some extent these fears are justified; if there is negative sentiment about a company, some of it will show up in comments on the firm's social networking profiles. Negative comments, however, are not the disaster that many predict them to be. Instead of searching the Internet for negative reviews, false information, or bad press to refute, a social network profile can become the lightning rod for criticism, concentrating it in one location for easy response. Instead of controlling what people say, build their trust with earnest communications. As a space to respond to criticism and receive feedback, participating on social network has many benefits to a firm.

11.4 Marketing with Social Networks

Many businesses are motivated to interact on social networks, but large numbers of these companies do not have much payoff from their efforts. On a social network, it is especially important to enter with a strong understanding of the strategies and objectives. The first step is to decide on goals and objectives that should be achieved. Otherwise, due to its informal nature, for firms social networking can easily become a distraction rather than an aid. To avoid this problem, develop a solid plan before marketing on a social network.

The next decision involves the target market. Different social networks attract extremely different clientele, so knowing who the audience is and where to find them is essential. For online marketing, most campaigns will fall into one of two categories: business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B) marketing. Facebook and LinkedIn are two networks frequently used for these respective purposes. These two will be used as instructional examples for B2C and B2B marketing, but similar tactics may likely apply on other social networks with equal results.

11.5 Business - to - Consumer Marketing

For businesses specializing in consumer products or services, social networks can be a great way to locate and market to potential customers. Most social networks make it easy for members to like, share, or become fans of a brand. Therefore, the emphasis needs to be on content, more specifically, creating content that is "share-worthy" in the eyes of the consumer. The end goal is to share content that makes the audience want to discuss it further with friends. This can function as word-of-mouth advertising as consumers share their likes with each other." Social networks can also advance a brand's position in relation to competitors by making a company seem more memorable or personable. However, accomplishing these lofty goals demands "persistence, consistency, and genuine intentions."

To have maximal reach to consumers, focus on the places where most consumers are spending time. At the present time, Facebook is the giant of casual social networking, so establishing a presence there is crucial for B2C marketing." While Facebook is the "most marketer-friendly" of the major social networks, it still requires finesse in order to market on its social network effectively." There are a huge number of professionals and brands operating on Facebook, so the competition can be fierce.

To begin marketing a brand on Facebook, start an account. Do not create a profile; those are intended for private users and are not as helpful for marketing. Instead, create a page that will represent the business." Pages allow users to follow or become fans of a company without giving access to their personal information as would occur from friending a profile. This feature makes pages more functional and engaging for marketing to consumers." A page is Facebook's recommended approach for creating an officially branded business presence. Customize the page to reflect the company's style and values, but provide some content distinct from the firm's primary website.

Once a page has been created, it must be updated frequently with new content. How often! Too-frequent updating can overwhelm a fan's newsfeed and become an annoyance. Do not update more than three times per day. Quality is much more important than quantity because boring or repetitive content can be easily hidden on Facebook. Focus on content that is relevant and engaging for Facebook users. Generally, Facebook content should be light, funny, and informative, or it should give a special deal or value. Give useful tips, or ask open-ended questions that will interest the audience." Not every content item must be original: sharing links to interesting items can also be valuable.

One avenue for Facebook content to go viral is through "likes." When a Facebook user likes a page, comment, or other material, it is displayed to her or his friends, who have an opportunity to like the item as well. In this way an appealing post or idea can spread rapidly through Facebook friend networks. However, users are often picky about which items they will like. To get an idea of what sort of content to post, look at others' Facebook pages-particularly those of businesses offering a product or service similar to the one being marketed-and see which statuses or comments are being liked the most. This survey will give some insight into what potential fans want to see. Often, less serious posts will be liked more, so keep content funny, personable, and entertaining.

To gain viewers for a page, put links on other websites and email signatures, business cards, and outgoing communications. To make the URL for the Facebook page easy to write and remember, it is important to "secure shorter 'vanity' URLs." A customized URL makes the page more memorable, increasing the chance Facebook users will visit and become fans. Running contests or offering discounts to Facebook members are also good ways to convince people to follow a Facebook profile. Contests should be tailored to the product being offered. The risk is that if a contest goes poorly, it can be an embarrassment for the brand." To avoid this, do not ask too much from members: pictures or stories are faster to submit than fully edited videos. More entries will be made if there are few or no barriers to joining the contest.

Groups are a classic and useful way to spread information about a product. However, on Facebook the groups' functionality presents some problems for marketing purposes." Groups are very loosely organized and have many redundancies, overlaps, and competing groups on the same topics.

Further, in groups beyond a certain size, mass messaging is blocked by Facebook, making communication with all the members difficult or impossible. While groups are a potential avenue for viral marketing, they are much more challenging to employ than a Facebook page.

While few brands have successfully marketed with groups, a great number have used Facebook Places to expand their social presence. Aimed toward small- to medium sized local businesses, Places is a location-based service that allows users to check in online before or after they visit. Companies have found that integrating their physical and online locations has increased traffic to both. Offering special deals when visitors check in online is a reliable way to draw more attention. It is also possible to create local market events, or host a charity drive to bring visitors to a Places page." With some creativity, integrating a business into Facebook Places is a strong social media marketing tool.

Facebook derives much of its revenue from advertising. It offers an advertising program that is designed to be approachable by small businesses as well as global corporations. Ad costs can be set very low (well under \$100 per month) depending on the budget. There are multiple purposes for ads. They can direct more viewers to like a page or send them to an external website. Ads can display a picture as well as text; choose these carefully to attract more clicks. While Facebook ads can be useful to market a product, they also provide valuable information about users. The Facebook ad tool can be specified for demographics, including race, gender, interests, and location, and the "Estimated Reach" section can give an idea of how many users fit the target market." This insight can be gained at minimal cost by employing the Facebook ads interface, and it can help to fine-tune other aspects of a marketing campaign even beyond Facebook and social networking.

While Facebook offers many technical tools to assist a social media marketer, do not lose sight of the service's social nature. Keep in mind that while people may have hundreds of page likes or friends, the trend on Facebook is that most of its millions and millions of members communicate with relatively few people." Having a large number of likes or fans is a good step but no guarantee of actual results if nobody pays attention or responds to page updates. To avoid this problem, focus on relationships. Facebook is about personal connections, so let some personality through in updates." Giving a human voice to a brand is one of the most powerful advantages of this social networking platform. Engage with users to create an emotional connection; this tactic will build brand loyalty. Used correctly, Facebook is an excellent tool for B2C marketing.

11.6 Business-to-Business Marketing

While most people might associate social media marketing exclusively with the consumer side, business-to-business firms have also made a huge impression with social networking. The most dominant platform for B2B marketing is the professional networking site LinkedIn: "according to a study by B-to-B Magazine and the Association of National Advertisers, 81% of business-to-business marketers use LinkedIn." While there are obviously other platforms available for B2B, the current dominance of LinkedIn earns it the focus of this section.

LinkedIn is designed to facilitate interactions between business professionals. Users fill out profiles including their past education, job experience, skills, and so on. Like any social network site, people can connect with friends or colleagues, but the professional focus of LinkedIn causes many to take connections more seriously. As people are less prone to connecting with strangers or casual acquaintances, someone's connections can provide much more information about them. It is this "information about millions of people including their connections, makes LinkedIn such a powerful tool."

Before attempting to market on LinkedIn, complete the member profile in as much detail as possible. Unlike Facebook, putting more professional information on a profile can increase its chance of building connections." Completing the profile signals seriousness and determination to use LinkedIn correctly.

Although some will screen their contacts, LinkedIn is still an enormously valuable networking or broadcasting tool to reach a huge audience. LinkedIn displays a broader network than just immediate contacts, including other people in the extended network. This degrees-of-separation principle amplifies the value of contacts. A person who has only 100 direct contacts, for example, may have indirect access to over a million others. LinkedIn recently implemented a status and newsfeed feature, which allows sharing of news topics or possibly marketing messages. Be aware, however, that LinkedIn is not as marketer friendly as some other social networks, and overt broadcasting is not generally rewarded by the user base.

To facilitate connections, LinkedIn has several useful features for an aspiring net worker. InMail, the internal messaging service for the site, can be used to contact others. LinkedIn offers several premium, paid account options that include more usage of InMail and better messaging functionality. These options can be useful if LinkedIn is a substantial part of the social media strategy. However, the same function of the premium accounts—contacting others outside one's immediate network—can be accomplished in more subtle and less expensive ways as well. The introductions feature on LinkedIn allows users to mention others and to suggest potential contacts. Some people require potential contacts to know their email address before inviting them to connect; getting an introduction can avoid this problem if there is a valuable contact whose email is unknown. Use introductions to expand a network and broaden the base of connections available from which to draw.

To reach a broader B2B audience, some of the most useful LinkedIn features are groups and Answers. Groups can be set up as private or open allowing anyone to join. Nearly every profession or industry specialization has some form of associated group. Joining these can be a quick way to build contacts, as membership in a common group can be an excuse to connect with future business partners. Groups also have associated discussion boards for conveying information on relevant topics. These boards can be the best way to meet people in the group. Before posting a new topic or question, spend some time reading and responding to others' posts. While general rules of online etiquette apply, the expectations on LinkedIn are especially high. Show courtesy and respect for other users' time by posting only relevant, well-considered, and valuable thoughts to group discussion boards.

To find an even more targeted audience, participate on LinkedIn Answers. Members can pose questions for others to answer. Contributing valuable, well-considered answers can draw in business leads by highlighting personal expertise. Reading and responding to others' answers can also build a larger network; compliment someone on his or her good response, explain why it was useful, then ask that person to join as a contact. After asking a question, be sure to choose a best answer, and then follow up with that individual to give her or him a personal thanks (through a private message). This is an effective way to build professional contacts with other experts in a field. Done well, networking through answers can generate revenue for a business.

LinkedIn is targeted toward individuals, so interact under a personal account rather than a company or brand name. Instead of profiles, companies can set up pages, which LinkedIn members can follow in order to receive updates. These updates may include job openings, new positions, or similar information. However, developing a large company following will raise awareness of a brand because more people will see that company as a suggestion based on their contacts' interests.

To channel more people toward following a company or being aware of a product, some firms are creating their own groups from the group up. This is a highly involved process and should not be taken lightly. If this path is chosen, first create a group name, which should address a common issue or problem or otherwise make clear why someone would be influenced to join. Next, start formulating content, which should follow the group's theme but not be overly promotional. Ask contacts, past customers, industry analysts, and employees to join the group and/or follow the brand. The result can be a beneficial co-branding opportunity for all parties. This co-branding is especially useful if coworkers or clients write recommendations for each other.

Having many contacts or followers for a company can build an image of being LinkedIn savvy, but on its own it will not generate new business leads. Even a high response rate can be misleading: many contacts may come from other marketers, consultants, or job seekers hoping for work. While these contacts are not directly useful, they help to expand the extended network and open up more business options in the future. Be aware that the "most successful business users of LinkedIn focus on providing professional services." While other industries or products can also successfully use this networking service, for some it may be an uphill battle. While LinkedIn is an excellent professional networking tool, as a way to market products, it requires more sophistication.

Much more can, and has been, said about marketing on LinkedIn. Other features of the platform, such as recommendations, LinkedIn advertising, and applications, are important, but their usage is so specific that no general treatment could do them full justice. A social media marketer who intends to specialize in LinkedIn as a career path should examine some of the many more-detailed trade books on the subject. However, for most purposes that matter, the lessons of other social networks will hold true here, albeit with minor modifications. Keep in mind that the primary purpose for LinkedIn is to find, and be found by, other professionals. The standards for conduct and conversation are high due to the background of most LinkedIn members. By building goodwill, responding thoughtfully, and keeping the audience in mind, a social media marketer can employ LinkedIn or other B2B networks to achieve great results.

What is a White Label Social Network?

A white label social network is an online service that shares many, if not most, of the characteristics of a public social network like Facebook, with the key difference being the white label is privately run by a corporation or nonprofit organization. Hence white label social network is sometimes referred to as a corporate, private, or internal social network. A number of software vendors make platforms for organizations to use in constructing a white label social network. Some large corporations choose to build their own private social networks from scratch. However it is built, the chief purpose of a white label social network is to promote the goals of the organization that owns it.

White label social networks took off in popularity in the late-2000s. By 2007 there were dozens of services offering white label networking services to companies." In 2008 ABI Research forecast that white label social networks would be a \$1.3 billion industry within five years." This forecast presaged a boom in white label social network companies until there were over 100 offering community management solutions. This profusion of services contracted somewhat, as companies were sold and acquired, leaving fewer white label social network providers." After the industry settled, the outcome left some services, such as Ning, RealityDigital, and Salesforce's Chatter, established as market leaders with large corporate clients. However, there remain many competitive, low-cost white label social network solutions available.

11.7 Pros and Cons of Creating White Label Social Network

There are several readily apparent advantages for business purposes to using white label social network as opposed to a mass audience social network. The first and most obvious is the ability to customize features to suit the user base. White label social networks are typically integrated directly into the company's home website and can be tweaked easily. Some aspects of other social networking sites, such as real-time chat, status updates, or birthday reminders, may be more or less useful to a particular company's social media campaign. Being able to pick and choose which will be implemented can be very helpful. Turning off nonessential social features can encourage employees who are less enthusiastic about networking by making the service appear more professional." It can also bring more focus to the desired aspects of the platform, improving the quality of results. Customized features can aid in member retention by taking in feedback and implementing suggestions that can continue to improve the service.

Another advantage to white label social networks is that they provide much more detailed information to the administrators. The companies that provide white label social networks keep detailed statistics on each of them and their usage to provide more value to their corporate clients. This extremely useful data is collected and organized by the hosting company, reducing the amount of time and effort needed to gather it by hand.

Keeping members engaged after they follow the brand is a serious issue faced by other social network campaigns. The reduced clutter imposed on members, as well as the specialized social atmosphere, tends to increase user loyalty on white label social networks. Employees or customers who already have a relationship with the company and people within it are less likely to leave the platform or become inactive. While white label social networks can be useful for generating sales leads or metrics on the target audience, their core value is still in building relationships." Providing a custom platform for members to interact can be a boon to many social media marketing campaigns.

The many advantages to creating a white label social network are balanced by some substantial costs. The most obvious are measured in time and money; establishing and maintaining a whole social network is very time consuming, and requires a significant capital investment (by comparison to the other free social networking options). Pricing for white label social networking services can vary, but these direct costs are only the beginning. Integrating the network into an existing corporate site may incur web development costs. Most white label social networks also require a full-time administrator or community manager to maintain the service. Until a community becomes self-sustaining, company staff may have to do much of the work stimulating conversation and providing content."

There is also the substantial risk that a social network never does become self-sustaining. Drawing in new members can be difficult unless a brand already has large public recognition. Even if it is sponsored by a popular brand, a network must demonstrate some purpose for participating, or it may resemble a ghost town. There are already so many platforms available for people to stay in touch with friends that any new service must provide some unique value to draw in users. Before starting

a white label social network, be sure that there is sufficient draw for it to gain an audience or it may become simply an echo chamber of internal company discussions with little outside input.

While some organizations can obviously benefit from white label social networks, it is a tool not suited to every occasion. White label networks can be useful for reaching groups that might otherwise not participate, guiding which content members will view, and tracking the results easily. Whether these benefits are worth the costs will depend on the organization and the other aspects of its social media marketing strategy. Creating an in-house social network demands a huge commitment from the organization, but only if that is met with engagement by consumers is the project likely to be a wise investment.

11.8 The Future of Social Networks

Interest in social networks has grown at a constantly increasing pace since 2005, with no indication of tapering off. Although Facebook dominates the landscape today, Google entered the fray in early June 2011 with its network, Google+, which has grown at a rapid pace, reaching an estimated 50 million members by October 2011. Eric Schmidt, CEO of Google, believes that there is room for multiple social networks and for more cooperation among them. This belief is evidenced by the many niche social networks that have survived and even thrived by catering to specific interests. One such example is Ravelry, which targets people with a passion for knitting, or My Own Car Show, which caters to hot-rod and antique car enthusiasts. These and other targeted social networks illustrate the power of specificity in audience selection.

However, Google+ and Facebook want to capture the masses, not small target markets. Schmidt is on record saying that Facebook with its 750 million users may well have too many entrenched users to face serious competition, but Google+ seems well positioned to give Facebook a run for its money. Even though large networking sites are not always the best place to invest a marketing budget, they set social media trends and thus are worth developing a presence on.

Summary

A social media marketing strategy is critical for any business looking to get the most out of its online presence. The best way to create a successful social media strategy is to focus on the following factors:

- target audience
- content
- engagement
- social channels

Many companies are trying to reach their target demographic through social media. This is a way to build a brand, increase customer loyalty and generate word-of-mouth marketing.

There is no one right strategy for everyone. The first step is to find out where your target audience is hanging out on social media and what they are interested in. The next step is to figure out the best times of day or week for you to post on these platforms if you want maximum visibility and engagement with your content.

Finally, make sure you are consistent with your posts and don't stop posting just because it feels like you aren't getting any likes or comments, it will come!

Additionally, you should:

- Set goals and work toward them.
- Understand your audience and their individual wants and needs.
- Decide reach metrics to track. These will depend on your aims. For example, if you're looking for engagement, track impressions.
- Create content that gets clicks. That means sharing inspiring content, news stories, answering questions, and posting at the optimum times.
- Assess and update your strategy as needed.

Keywords

Digital marketing, Social Networks, B2B Marketing, B2C Marketing, White Label Social Networks

Self Assessment

1. Which of the following decisions need to be taken while starting to market with social networks?

- A. Decide on objectives
- B. Define goals clearly
- C. Identify the target market
- D. All the above

2. Which of the following need not be done when using social networks for B2C marketing?

- A. Create a strong business page on LinkedIn
- B. Locate and market to potential customers
- C. Like, share and become fans of a brand
- D. Advance brand's position vis-a-vis competition

3. While using social networks for B2B marketing, one must:

- A. Facilitate interaction
- B. Build serious connections
- C. Use the group feature
- D. All the above

4. Which of the following may not be a benefit of marketing with social networks?

- A. Increased brand awareness
- B. Increased marketing costs
- C. Increased website traffic
- D. Higher conversion rates

5. Which of the following is a synonym for white label social network?

- A. Corporate Networks
- B. Members only Network
- C. Private social network
- D. All the above are synonymous

6. Which of the following doesn't reflect a need for white label social networks?

- A. Increasing number of followers on traditional social media
- B. Niche audience is easily available on traditional social media
- C. It is increasingly becoming difficult for businesses to find target audience on traditional networks

D. It is becoming increasingly difficult for businesses to communicate directly with their target audience on traditional social media

7. Which of the following is a benefit of white label network?

- A. Native features and customization
- B. Monetization
- C. Native mobile app experience
- D. All the above

8. Which of the following is not an example of White Label Social Network?

- A. Outer Work
- B. Verbal to Visual
- C. LinkedIn
- D. The Guild

9. Which of the following is not a feature of social networks?

- A. Growing role of mobile devices
- B. More visual features embedded in social networks
- C. Intruding privacy
- D. Social recruiting

10. Which of the following is a visible trend in social networks?

- A. Decentralized platforms
- B. Investing in brands and influencers
- C. Chatbots and AI
- D. All the above

11. Which of the following is not an upcoming trend in social networks?

- A. Diminishing roles of influencers
- B. Generating sales through social media
- C. Increased importance of groups
- D. None of these

12. Which of the following technologies is immersive in nature?

- A. Artificial intelligence
- B. Machine Learning
- C. Augment Reality
- D. None of these

13. Which of the following social network feature can be used for direct marketing?

- A. Inmail

- B. Email
- C. Social media tagging
- D. Location sharing

14. B2c marketing requires which of the following:

- A. High quality content on social media
- B. Interaction with audience
- C. More number of followers
- D. All the above

15. B2B Marketing requires which of the following:

- A. Interaction with audience
- B. More number of followers
- C. More user generated content
- D. Becoming considered an expert in their niche

Answers for Self Assessment

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. D | 2. A | 3. D | 4. B | 5. D |
| 6. B | 7. D | 8. C | 9. C | 10. D |
| 11. A | 12. C | 13. A | 14. D | 15. D |

Review Questions

1. How can businesses benefit from social media marketing? Give some specific examples to support your answer.
2. How is marketing with social networks different in case of b2c and b2b scenarios? Give examples and explain.
3. What are white label social networks and how can businesses use them?
4. What are the pros and cons of using white label social networks?
5. According to you what would be the future of social networks and how the social network marketing could evolve in the coming years.



Further Readings

- The art of Social Media by Guy Kawasaki
- The Social Media Marketing Work Book by Jason McDonald
- Likeable Social Media by Dave Kerpen
- One Million Followers by Brendan Kane



Web Links

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Unit 12: Publishing Blogs

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Summary

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define a blog
- Explain how to set up a blog
- Describe why everyone is a publisher on the social web
- Identify why content clutter is a problem
- Explain the marketing benefits of a blog
- Detail how to create a social media content strategy
- Identify tips for successful blogging
- Explain the benefits of monitoring a blog

Introduction

The history of blogs has been a relatively short one. Justin Hall, student at Swarthmore College, was one of the first bloggers when he started writing about video games and consoles around 1994. The term "blog" had not yet been coined; in December 1997 the word "weblog" (combination of "web" and "log") was created and was then eventually shortened to blog.

Blogging really took off after 1999 when LiveJournal and Blogger were launched. These sites allowed users with little or no technical ability to start their own blogs. At the end of 2008, 346 million people were reading blogs, and 184 million had begun writing their own blogs. These numbers continue to grow; according to Technorati, the number of blogs has doubled about every six months. Every day, more than 100,000 new blogs are created and 1.3 million new posts are added to existing blogs." This large number represents a potentially huge audience that can be reached through blogging.

12.1 What is a Blog?

Most people who are active online have heard of blogs, but a concise definition is helpful. According to Wikipedia, "blog (a blend of the term web log) is a type of website or part of a website. Blogs are usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse chronological order. Blog can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog."

Most importantly, a blog is a website that has regular updates (or blog posts) where the most recent updates are displayed first. Blogs often allow readers to leave comments and respond to the blog posts. A blogger is then a person who administrates, writes, and updates a blog.

What distinguishes a blog from other types of social media? In their oft-cited book, *Naked Conversations*, authors Robert Scoble and Shel Israel present Blogging's Six Pillars, which make blogs different from other communication methods. To paraphrase, these pillars are:

1. **Publishable:** It is cheap and easy for anyone to set up a blog. Posting is free and can be seen worldwide.

2. **Findable:** People can find blogs with search engines. Typically, the more posts a blog has, the easier it will be to find.

3. **Social:** Conversations about mutual interests can occur on blogs, either through direct comments or by linking to others with related content. These practices allow people to form connections with others regardless of their location.

4. **Viral:** Blogs can often spread information faster than a news service. The more interesting people find a topic, the more rapidly they will spread it to others.

5. **Syndicable:** Viewers can easily subscribe to a blog using RSS and be notified about its updates in real-time. This ability saves time in searching and makes content easily findable.

6. **Linkable:** As blogs can link to each other, each blogger has access to a potentially huge audience.

Successful blogs take advantage of these six pillars to distinguish themselves and build influence on the social web. Blogs can be created for both personal and professional reasons, and they vary widely in topics and reader base. An individual may blog in order to develop his or her own position in relation to others in the field or a company blog might help position a firm as an expert in its industry. In any case sticking close to the core pillars of blogging is necessary for success.

12.2 Setting Up a Blog

Creating a blog is almost always the easiest part of blogging. A starter blog can be created on WordPress, Blogger, or other free sites. These are examples of hosted blogs, which are run on some other company's website and server. Such blogs will typically have a suffix at the end of the URL address, indicating which service is hosting the blog. Businesses that want to invest more in blogging can self-host a blog on their website, usually for relatively little cost. Self-hosted blogs have the advantage of being taken more seriously because they require a larger time investment to create and maintain.

Deciding how to set up the blog will depend on the circumstances; more information about hosted vs. self-hosting can easily be researched online. The difficult parts of blogging are creating a compelling and relevant subject area for the blog, writing effectively, and improving the content over time based on reader feedback.

12.3 Everyone is a Publisher

"Publisher" used to be a term restricted to those who produced magazines, newspapers, and books. However, with the tools available on the web, anyone can become a publisher at minimal cost. This radical change poses both challenges and opportunities for the marketing professional.

Early in the Internet's development, creating a website required either strong HTML coding knowledge or the hiring of a programmer and designer to do the work. Website development was time consuming and costly. Only the experts or the well-funded could create and publish content.

Today, a website can be created in under an hour with no expert coding knowledge using Google Sites, Edit Spot, or other web-development tools." Editing websites has also become much easier. Even many large corporate websites are built on some Content Management System (CMS) that allows users with no programming knowledge to easily edit the site's content.

The online space has changed from a read web, where people would go to the Internet primarily to consume content and information, to a read-write web, where it is possible to create in addition to consuming content. Rather than passively taking in information, users can create and interact with the content they see.

12.4 Content Clutter

With publishing tools so accessible, anyone can be a publisher, and as a result there are millions of blogs, websites, and podcasts published. There is such a proliferation of content online that even the highest - quality material has difficulty standing out and building an audience.

In addition to leveraging social media to find an audience, consider ways to connect with current customers, direct mail subscribers, email newsletter readers, and so on with whom to blog content. An existing client base will generally be more interested in viewing the related blog, so finding ways to draw them into reading blog content is a valuable way to build readership.

Marketing Benefits of Blogging

As one of the oldest and best-known social media outlets, blogging has several unique advantages. The potentially large audience and strong focus on content produces several benefits for blogging being part of an active social media marketing campaign.

Communicating With (Potential) Customers

More so than the audience of most other social media platforms, that of blogs rewards thoughtful posts and fully developed ideas. As Brian Solis explains. "blog posts inherently boast the ability to share expanded content, text, video, audio, images, tags, links, to more effectively and deeply express, explain, and support the ideas and context related to any given topic. This attribute makes blogs valuable in a broad variety of industries (as the case studies in this chapter demonstrate). Every business entails some form of expertise that can potentially be shared with and interest online viewers. In this context blogging can help to both position a company's brand as well as bring in new leads

Word-Of-Mouth Marketing

Some recent studies have found that word of mouth may be more than twice as effective as traditional marketing; it results in more new customer acquisitions and has longer lasting results." While many social media platforms can be valuable in creating buzz about a product or service, blogs are especially important. Blogging facilitates word-of mouth marketing in several ways. First, they make messages portable and easy for others to link to or share. Second, they create new topics, much like mini-press releases, that spur public discussion, Third, a blog provides a center for conversation via comments or replies. And finally, blogging builds credibility with other bloggers, making it more likely that others will pass the word along." As an inexpensive way to tap into the power ful marketing method of word of mouth, blogs are an invaluable tool for a social media marketer.

Receiving Feedback

Due to its comments feature, a blog makes it easy for viewers to respond to the topic at hand. On a company blog, posting recent news or questions to the community can bring valuable insights about the public mood on relevant issues. Both positive and negative responses are useful; supportive comments may influence other viewers to feel similarly, while criticisms may offer suggestions about potential changes. Some companies are able to develop new product ideas based on blog comments or to make improvements to existing goods. As an accessible and informal way for customers to provide feedback, a blog can save time and money a company would otherwise have to spend seeking out that same information. Communicating with customers, word-of-mouth marketing, and

getting feedback are just a few potential benefits from a blog. As a social media campaign develops, more creative uses can certainly be found.

12.5 Linking a Blog to Marketing Objectives

While there are many blogs on the Internet, a much smaller fraction of them generate tangible returns for the blog's creator(s). Many blogs are personal and function like an online journal; their authors do not generally expect an outside return. However, there are also many professional or corporate blogs that do not accomplish their object are unclear even on what objectives should be accomplished! The difficulty of blog successfully is why over 50% of blogs are abandoned within the first ninety days.

When deciding on whether to start a blog and what the goals of blogging should be it is important to consider the overall marketing goals and objectives. Such considerations will help to determine the right type of content to create based on the audience being reached. It will also make following up on and maintaining a blog more achievable. Indeed, "the single biggest risk in business blogging is setting the wrong strategy, resulting in discouragement and abandonment" of the blog." A half-hearted blogging attempt may be worse than nothing at all, so it is crucial to set a long-term strategy before creating a blog for social media marketing.

One of the advantages of publishing content as a part of a social media marketing strategy is that it can achieve a wide variety of marketing goals and objectives. Defining those goals clearly will help to develop a content plan that will reach the target audience and deliver the most relevant results.

12.6 Creating a Content Strategy

The key to successfully publishing content online have a clear and meaningful content strategy. A strong social media strategy starts with a clear understanding of how the marketing objectives relate to the target audience or buyer personas. To create content that will engage with the audience be interested in?

Chances are that your audience is not really interested in your brand your product. They are interested in a problem and a solution to that problem. Ask yourself. "What subjects related to my brand is my audience passionate about?"

One additional key consideration in developing a publishing strategy is to overcome the fear of being too specific. Many companies don't want to pigeonhole themselves into a small and specific niche of content that they will cover. With the proliferation of content, the best strategy to building an audience is to be as niche and specific as possible.

In his book *The Long Tail*, Chris Anderson discusses how the web has created large opportunities for Long Tail content. The Long Tail is small niche content that not smaller, highly specific audiences as contrasted with a generic best seller. For example, the New York Times, which produces generic news content with broad mass appeal. would not be in the Long Tail, whereas a small, locally focused newspaper or a newspaper focused on industry-specific news and updates might be. The evolution of the web has shown that there are consumers looking for that very specific Long Tail content. Combined with the low cost of online publishing, this highly specialized content can be developed.

The future of publishing and content creation lies in serving niche markets effectively on a large scale. The lesson for bloggers is to keep in mind what specialized interests they might be able to market toward and to develop content that will appeal to such interests. Generalized content is commonly found elsewhere, and consequently, in order to build a blog's viewership and influence, the blogger must focus on specialized content that is easily replicated.

12.7 Tips for Successful Blogging

While no "secret formula" exists for becoming a popular blogger, the following tips provide advice for maximizing the chances of success. Keep in mind that these are only guidelines and success in blogging can be attained in many ways.

Use Catchy Titles

A great title attracts attention and gives people a reason to read the post, while a mediocre title either goes unnoticed or actually discourages people from reading the post. Although there are no hard and fast rules for writing great titles, there are useful guidelines. First, use the tale for communicate benefit." In other words, people search rings that provide information about topics of interest (eg. 10 Ways to Write Great Ng Tales) Second, ask a question in the tale Readers love to be challenged. This is one of the most effective ways of drawing readers into the past and also helps elicit comments, especially if the question is personalized (eg. "How Should You Ask for Rase!)"Finally, be sure to include keywords in the title so that search engines will pick them up, hence, improving the search engine ranking of the post so people can find it."

Update Frequently

The most common advice for successful blogging is that a corporate blog should be up dated at least twice a week; some blogs even update daily Online audiences can quickly lose interest if content is spaced too far apart Before creating a blog, you should be sure that you will have enough interesting posts for the blog, perhaps even writing some up in advance to be posted later. If updates occur less than once a week, expect to be perceived as disengaged and expect the possibility of losing blog viewers.

Keep Posts Focused

People will often find a blog while browsing or researching other topics. Generally, net surfers do not want to sift through a rambling post to find the bits of information they are interested in Blog updates should be long enough to cover one topic with sufficient depth but should avoid using filler or trying to combine several topics into one post. If one blog post covers two topics, a person who is looking for information on just one of the topics will find half of the material superfluous. Concise, focused posts are easy to read and will keep readers coming back for more.

Invite Comments

Perhaps the best way to encourage interaction on a blog is to end each post with a question that asks for help or is provocative. For example. "What other tips have I missed?" or "Is the social media about to bust?" Be sure to reply to comments in order to make readers feel they are part of the blog and help shape its direction. Interaction is often essential in creating an avid and involved readership. "

Promote The Blog

With so many blogs out there, it takes effort to be seen in the crowd. Begin by signing up with popular blog listing services, such as Technorati. Look around at other blogs, check to see what blog communities they are involved in, and join ones that look reputable. These initial actions will make it easier for search engine users to find the blog. However, this step is only the beginning developing a blog presence takes time, so never overlook an opportunity to subtly self-promote (in a tactful fashion, of course).

Engage With Others

Make thoughtful comments on other relevant blogs, and respond to comments that others make. Developing an online personality is important for a blog to be successful, and that requires a high degree of interaction with others. Take advantage of the two-way nature of online communication by engaging those with related interests or with companies having products complementary to yours. Offering to provide a link or a review to someone else in exchange for their doing the same is a tried-and-true method for building blog connections, and it remains a useful strategy. However, the most valuable engagement will often come from unplanned interactions, so be open to those possibilities.

Avoid Negativity

Do not make insulting or aggressive statements toward other people, brands, or companies. It may be true that conflict draws a crowd, but that group is unlikely to become a productive part of the

target market Negative comments also invite others to respond, potentially harming both sides' reputations. Even worse, it could result in being taken on seriously. Criticism can be given without being offensive, but you should be sure that any controversial comments are heavily researched, well-founded in fact, and presented in an even tone that is not accusatory or aggressive in general. Sticking to positive and constructive comments is both safer and more effective for building a standing.

Stand By the Content

Not every blog post will be well received. Sometimes, one may generate controversy, negative attention that happens, deleting the affected blog post is not a solution. Once content is published online, it will be viewable through syndication services even if the original post is taken down. Trying to hide the evidence, so to speak, may draw attention to the original controversy and make dissatisfied viewers even more determined to spread the word. Instead, stand by what was written (which should not be too difficult if the original post was well conceived). If it is necessary to make a correction, consider testing with a strike-through mark and an explanation of why the revision. Controversies can either blow over quickly, or they can linger indefinitely in the public consciousness. Whenever possible, avoid compounding the situation by going back on what was said because it will make the mistake memorable and generate more negativity.

Cross Promote

Use other social media channels to get word out about the blog. When a new post is made, provide links to it on other platforms. Keep in mind that not every member of the target audience will be on every platform, so provide as many opportunities as possible for them to stumble over the content. Blogs offer the best opportunity for sharing thoughts and information, so use other, less content-heavy platforms to promote the deeper ideas found in blog posts.

12.8 Monitoring the Blogosphere

One of the primary benefits from blogging is to learn about the "tone" of the online community with regard to certain subjects, but the problem is that relevant comments are likely to be dispersed through a huge number of different blogs. While staying current on important blogs in the industry and looking at reader comments is a good start, you must mount a monitoring effort that goes considerably farther in order to see a broad segment of opinions, especially if a blog is still in its infancy and has few active commentators.

One crude form of public sentiment is a look at how many views that posts on different topics generate (number of blog views or visits is typically easily available on hosted blogs). In theory the more that people enjoyed a certain post, the more likely they are to pass along or recommend it to others, boosting the number of views. However, view counts alone give no insight on whether overall sentiment is positive or negative or if any of these people will ever become potential leads.

The difficulty of determining what people think about a brand has driven an enormous growth in social media monitoring software, much of which is directed toward blogs. While many paid software suites exist for this purpose, they can cost hundreds of dollars a month in order to license and run. The World Bank has developed a program, Bars Monitor that is based on open-source software and is freely available to the public. It allows an organization to segment blog chatter into different categories that are based on topic matter as well as perhaps more importantly, the authority of the person or group commenting. While the interface is less user friendly and the software requires a dedicated server in order to operate, Bars Monitor is one example of free software with powerful monitoring applications. As time goes on, it is likely that more such tools will begin to appear.

How many resources you should dedicate toward monitoring blog chatter will depend on your industry, your marketing budget, and the size of your existing blog following as well as how widely dispersed online opinion is on the relevant topics to some just a few factors. However, time and money spent in monitoring general opinion is almost always well spent, it is impossible to finely tune a blogging strategy without some feedback on what needs to be changed or which content people find most attractive. Developing knowledge about public sentiment and response on other blogs makes social media marketing efforts through blogging much more fruitful.

Summary

1. What is a blog?

A blog is a website that has regular updates (or blog posts) where the most recent updates are displayed first.

Blog is:

- Publishable
- Findable
- Social
- Viral
- Syndicable
- Linkable

2. Setting up a blog

Creating a blog is almost always the easiest part of blogging. A starter blog can be created on WordPress, Blogger, or other free sites.

3. Marketing benefits of blogging

- Communicating with potential customers
- Word-of-Mouth Marketing
- Receiving feedback

4. Linking a blog to marketing objectives

When deciding on whether to start a blog and what the goals of blogging should be it is important to consider the overall marketing goals and objectives. Such considerations will help to determine the right type of content to create based on the audience being reached. It will also make following up on and maintaining a blog more achievable. Indeed, "the single biggest risk in business blogging is setting the wrong strategy, resulting in discouragement and abandonment" of the blog. "A half-hearted blogging attempt may be worse than nothing at all, so it is crucial to set a long-term strategy before creating a blog for social media marketing.

5. Tips for successful blogging

- Use catchy titles
- Update frequently
- Keep posts focused
- Invite comments
- Promote the blog
- Engage with others
- Avoid negativity
- Stand by the content
- Cross promote

Keywords

Blogsphere, content, negativity, promote, Blogging, creating, strategy, publisher, communicating, clutter, Blog.

Self Assessment

1. Which of the following is the world's most popular blogging platform?
A. Blogger

- B. Blogspot
 - C. Wordpress
 - D. Wix
2. Blogs usually display content in a reverse chronological order.
- A. True
 - B. False
3. Blogs can help you in all the following except:
- A. SEO
 - B. Content Marketing
 - C. Direct Marketing
 - D. Generating leads
4. Which of the following may not be the purpose of blogs?
- A. SEO
 - B. To enhance visibility
 - C. To connect with audience
 - D. To pacify a grumpy customer
5. Which of the following is/are purpose of blogs?
- A. To rank high on search engines
 - B. To enhance visibility
 - C. To make you searchable and competitive
 - D. All the above
6. Blogs help you showcase your niche. Which of the following advantages could be derived out of this?
- A. Target relevant audience
 - B. Increase conversion rates
 - C. Increased RoI
 - D. All the above
7. Which of the following is not a difference between a website and a blog?
- A. Content on a blog is regularly updated whereas it is static on a website
 - B. Website is official, whereas a blog is not
 - C. Content on a blog is organized in a reverse chronological order, whereas the content on a website is organized on pages
 - D. A blog usually allows for a two-way communication, whereas communication on a website is usually one way.
8. Which of the following is not a difference between a blog and a wiki?
- A. Blogs are usually written by a single author whereas Wikis can have several contributors
 - B. Blogs demonstrate a personal voice, whereas wikis have a collective voice
 - C. Blogs are free whereas Wikis are paid
 - D. Blogs usually do not have modifications once posted, whereas Wikis get constantly updated

9. Which of the following is not a reason for the popularity of blogging?
- A. It has become the mainstream source of information
 - B. Companies can keep customers and clients updated with information
 - C. Blogging is a good source of revenue
 - D. Customers and clients need to pay to read blogs
10. Which of the following is not a reason for the rise in the number of publishers?
- A. No coding knowledge is required to start a blog
 - B. No or less cost
 - C. Several CMS platforms are available
 - D. Monopoly of big companies such as Google
11. Which of the following is not a blogging platform?
- A. Wordpress
 - B. Wix
 - C. Blogger
 - D. GitHub
12. Which of the following strategies can help a publisher cut through the content clutter?
- A. Having a robust content strategy in place
 - B. High-quality engaging content
 - C. Building dedicated and niche audience
 - D. All the above
13. Which of the following is not a benefit of blogging for businesses?
- A. Helps in driving traffic to website
 - B. Blogs can help to convert traffic into leads
 - C. It drives long term results
 - D. It can bring in instant results
14. Which of the following is/are marketing benefit(s) of blogging?
- A. It helps in building network
 - B. It helps in enhancing customer relations
 - C. It increases product and service visibility
 - D. All the above
15. What general benefits could be achieved through blogging for your business?
- A. Helps in educating prospects
 - B. Answers most of the commonly asked questions
 - C. Can help in testing marketing campaigns
 - D. All the above

Answers for Self Assessment

1. C 2. A 3. C 4. D 5. D

6. D 7. B 8. C 9. D 10. D
11. D 12. D 13. D 14. D 15. D

Review Questions

1. What is a blog and how is it different from a website?
2. What are the benefits that a business can have through a blog?
3. What are the six pillars that differentiate a blog from any other social media site? Explain them.
4. Explain the process of setting up a blog.
5. How has blogging democratized publishing business and what factors gave rise to the content clutter?
6. What are the marketing benefits of blogging?
7. How can a blog work in sync with the marketing objectives?
8. What are some best practices of successful blogging?



Further Readings

- Everybody writes by Ann Handley
- The badass blog planner by Sarah Morgan
- On writing well by William Zensser
- Content that converts by Laura Hanly



Web Links

<https://medium.com/tom-thoughts/bloggers-who-blog-about-blogging-33a376b4a8e8>

<https://firstsiteguide.com/what-is-blog/>

<https://www.theminimalists.com/blog/>

<https://www.hostinger.in/tutorials/what-is-a-blog>

<https://www.quicksprout.com/blogging/>

Unit 13 : Publishing Podcasts and Webinars

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define a podcast
- Describe briefly the history of podcasting
- Explain how to create and share podcasts.
- Describe how to choose a podcast format
- Explain how to create podcast content
- Identify some of the key ways to produce and deliver a podcast

Introduction

The word "podcast" was "Oxford American Dictionary's Word of the Year in 2004" but not everyone knows its precise definition. Speaking generally, podcasts are media files distributed via subscription on the Internet According to Wikipedia.

[a] podcast (or non-streamed webcast) is a series of digital media files (either audio or video) that are released episodically and often downloaded through web syndication.... The mode of delivery differentiates podcasting from other means of accessing media files over the Internet, such as direct download, or streamed webcasting. A list of all the audio or video files currently associated with a given series is maintained centrally on the distributor's server as a web feed.

To distill the core aspects of podcasting, this definition from the Journal of Information Technology & Politics is also helpful: "A podcast is a digital audio or video file that is episodic, downloadable, and program driven, mainly with a host and/or theme; and convenient, usually via an automated feed with computer software." The client software used to check web feeds and download new podcasts is occasionally referred to as a podcatcher.

A podcast may contain only audio or audio and video recording together. Podcasts that have both audio and video recording are sometimes called a vodcast. Podcasts can be consumed one of three ways: (1) played directly off the website on a computer (clicking the play button), (2) downloaded to a computer and listened to offline, and (3) downloaded to portable MP3 players for listening offline. Note that podcasts are usually streaming content; they are recorded and then published on the Internet for later access by listeners.

13.1 A Brief History of Podcasting

From the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, key pieces of technology were being developed to improve the encoding, delivery, and reception of audio and video files via the Internet. One of the key breakthroughs came in the form of a technology called an RSS (Really Simple Syndication), which enabled users to subscribe to content for automatic delivery.

Although RSS was initially developed by the Netscape Communication Corporation in 1999, it wasn't until around 2000 that innovator Dave Winer extended the protocol to handle audio files, creating the forerunner to podcasting, the audio blog. These audio blogs were recorded on MP3 files. By the mid-2000s entrepreneur Adam Curry became heavily involved in developing podcasting technology. [He is] credited with coming up with the idea to automate the updating and delivery of audio blogs. Curry's idea is the manifestation of the podcast. Working together, Curry suggested to Winer that he rethink the RSS feed so that when a new MP3 file was posted it would automatically be updated via the RSS feed. Winer added a 'file enclosure,' which told a computer where to download a new audio file that had been posted. With that innovation, the modern podcast was born.

In February 2004 Ben Hammersley, writing an article for *The Guardian*, coined the term "podcasting" in reference to audio blogging. The word "podcasting" was a combination of "pod" (from "broadcasting") and "casting." Numerous companies struggled to establish a variety of different names for audio and video downloads, such as Audio Blog, Blog casts, Nano Casts, vlogs, and Net Casts. It wasn't until Apple put audio and video together in their iTunes's podcast directory that the term "podcast" became the standard for both formats.

13.2 Creating and Sharing Podcasts

Podcast production is inexpensive. Creators using podcast equipment "costing less than \$100 have produced podcast content viewed by thousands." The low cost makes podcast a boon to start-up companies and marketing departments that are on a tight budget. It's no wonder that podcasts are being utilized more in social media marketing, given the low cost of entry and the opportunity to reach thousands of viewers or listeners.

Due to the growth in the industry, sites have popped up to make creating audio podcasts easier than ever. Podcasts can now be created with just a phone: call a number, enter a personal identification number, and record. Creating a podcast can be as simple as leaving a voice mail. The more challenging aspect is choosing a podcast's format and its content and then persuading listeners to subscribe.

Choose a Format

Typically, podcasts are one of three lengths: ten minutes, thirty minutes, or sixty minutes. The length of the presentation will influence how much can be said in each segment. However, regardless of the length, and whether the goal is to create an audio or video podcast, there are three primary formats to choose from:

1. **Presentation** - Record a live monologue or give a simple talk on a subject. If a recording is made of a live presentation in hopes of turning it into a podcast, keep in mind that audio editing will be necessary to avoid having dead time or static in the final product.
2. **Q&A:** A question-and-answer session can be set up with one or more individuals in order to give the listener or viewer more information.
3. **Co-hosted:** When a podcast is co-hosted, it essentially becomes an on-demand talk radio show. Conversation should be kept organic and as unscripted as possible, but it is recommended

that the speakers choreograph their format and approach so they don't step on each other's words or create awkward pauses"

Certain formats may lend themselves to different lengths more easily. For example, a Q&A session on a complex subject may seem rushed or overly simplified if it is crammed into ten minutes. Or a co-hosted show on a simple topic might become repetitive or forced if the podcast aims to fill a full hour. Of course, the specifics will depend on the content being produced. Before starting to podcast as part of a social media marketing campaign, create a mental estimate of which format will be the most common so that the podcast can ideally be kept at a consistent length of time for each segment.

Podcast Content

In deciding the content focus for a podcast, there are three different possibilities in structural, informative, or entertainment. While these three can be combined to some extent, it is best to stay with a common theme that connects the entire series of podcasts. While some podcasters choose to rotate between the different themes, such rotation may lose listeners if done incorrectly. A particular target audience is more likely to be drawn by a unique and distinctive theme, so regularity in content can help to draw more subscribers.

Recall the advice on content from Chapter 5 about blogging specificity is valuable. This advice holds true for podcast content as well. Do not attempt to create a one-size-fits-all content: focus instead on the interests of a specific target audience. The benefit of podcasts from a listener's point of view is the enormous variety and minimal cost of subscribing. In a medium with so few entry barriers, the content being offered must have tangible appeal to some subset of the online audience, or it will be ignored in favor of more exciting presentations.

13.3 Producing Podcasts

While a podcast can theoretically be recorded in minutes, producing polished content that will draw an audience takes more time and effort. Many factors can contribute to a podcast's success or failure. Especially for a business using podcast to demonstrate thought leadership or expertise an amateurish-sounding podcast can be embarrassing. When creating podcasts, it is important to keep in mind the following –

Choose an articulate moderator: Recorded audio often amplifies people's speaking quirks. When creating audio podcasts, it is especially important to a moderator who has minimal verbal static (such as "um, ah, or like") and who has a strong vocal presence.

Create talking points, not scripts: It is a difficult balance to strike but an important one. Having a full script can make the audio recording sound wooden or overly rehearsed, while having no outline can cause the speaker to lose focus. Ideally, the podcast should be presented in a relaxed and conversational manner.

Brevity: When creating a podcast, determine the content first and the length second. Avoid the temptation to stretch out content to make keep people listening. Listeners value their time, so do not take up any more than necessary to cover the topic.

Avoid overediting: Verbal static like "um" can be removed. However, if significant editing would be required to remove bad phrasing, consider rerecording instead. Too much editing can make the podcast sound choppy and forced, and consequently, the less audio editing, the better.

Include Music: Introducing the podcast with a brief clip of music lends a professional air to the production and keeps the audience engaged. It also makes the podcast more memorable. To avoid infringing on copyrights, look for music that has a Creative Commons-type license or is podcast-safe licensed.

Of course, following all of these tips is still no guarantee of attracting a large audience. Gaining subscribers will depend on a combination of engaging content, a charismatic presentation, and consistent updates. For a podcast to be successful, new content must be posted with some regularity (ie. daily, weekly, or biweekly), similar to a radio show. Mainstream news channels (such as CBS, CNN, and MSNBC) have jumped on board with this format and are regularly releasing podcasts to disseminate information. Competition from professional news outlets has raised the bar for small-

time podcasters and has increased podcast audiences' expectation of frequent updates with interesting content.

13.4 Delivering Podcasts to Consumers

The advantage of podcasts is that they exploit the ways in which public media-viewing habits have changed in recent years. People desire information and entertainment to be available on demand, commercial free, and anywhere Podcasts are a perfect fit in that they allow the listener to download the audio file and listen at her or his convenience. With the ease of finding and downloading podcasts, they cost almost nothing for consumers to access Podcasts can be shared at no cost on iTunes, Zune, Sony, and Phillips. to name just a few.

Delivering podcasts to listeners is the easiest part. The more difficult aspect of distributing podcast content is ensuring that it is found by the target audience. There are a host of directories available for listing podcasts, among the best are Podcast Alley (owned by PodShow Network), Podcasting News, Podcast.net, and iPodder.org. In addition to directories, there are separate search engines to finding podcasts. Since podcasts are more difficult to index than text-based websites and media special red search engines became a necessity. Two podcast search engines are Podscope and GetAPodcast

To assist a search engine in finding podcasts. It is important to fill in the ID3 is a file data tagging format that is recognized by most media playing with ware t includes the title, author's name, description, and running time of the media file. Music devices, which are often used to listen to podcasts, can show this information to the listener. Since editing software does not require that these fields be filled in, it is important to remember to enter this information manually. Search engines read and index the information provided in ID3 tags, making it more likely that an online viewer will see the podcast in search results."

13.5 Marketing with Podcasting

While many possible goals can be accomplished by podcasting, choosing which to focus on will depend on the larger marketing objectives being pursued. Podcasts have the advantage of both sharing information and putting a human voice or face on a brand. As such, podcasts can complement a broad variety of other social media efforts as part of a social media marketing campaign.

A podcast can be a strategic component of the marketing plan, but it requires a strong commitment to creating content that is tailored to the marketing objectives. This commitment will not only provide focus when developing content, but it helps ensure some payoff from the effort. As an example, suppose one is promoting a catering business, and the objective is to gain new clients from the podcast. The focus could be to demonstrate expertise, by creating a vodcast of the owner assembling delicious hors d'oeuvres. Additionally, it could teach the audience about the ingredients being used without giving away the exact recipe, building up demand for the service and product.

In addition to indirect marketing, podcasts can bring in independent revenue. There are two very different methods to monetize podcasts. The first option is to recruit paid sponsors to advertise on the podcast, much like with any radio or television station. This model of advertising is well established but has potential negative side effects on subscribership, Advertisements that interrupt content will annoy people and may cause them to stop listening. The second method to monetize podcasts is to offer fee-based content. Taking this approach requires the creator to produce top-notch content that viewers will find worth paying for. With so many free podcasts floating around, it may be difficult to convince consumers to pay for one unless it is truly unique and superior While monetizing is a fine ultimate goal in a podcast-based strategy, it should not be pursued from the start, or there may never be enough subscribers to accomplish anything at all!

Perhaps more important than direct revenue are advantages a brand can gain from regular podcasting. Speaking persuasively about a field demonstrates confidence and expertise, helping to distinguish a company as a thought leader in the industry. While setting up a website and blog is relatively easy, podcasting well requires both more determination and talent. Still, while it requires a significant commitment of time and energy, podcasting can be a valuable tool in a social media marketing campaign.

13.6 Hosting Webinars

While podcasts can be analogized to an online radio show, webinars more resemble conference or seminar. A webinar, or teleseminar, is a seminar that is conducted over the web and (unlike a podcast) is designed to be interactive. The term was coined from the phrase "web-based seminar" To attend a webinar, the listener calls a phone number (much like a conference call) or listens live on a computer's speakers by accessing the webinar through the Internet. The specifics depend on how the webinar is set up by the host.

Webinars sometimes contain a visual aspect such as a slide show presentation or live-stream video. They require scheduling in advance so that people can make time to participate. Since it is a live experience, it is important to post and promote the date and time that the webinar will be held. On average the duration of a webinar is one to two hours. Many webinars are free, but some companies charge a fee to attend the webinars.

Webinars are still relatively new as a social media marketing tool. Up until fairly recently, webinar software was expensive and not very reliable with large numbers of participants. Now, many companies offer webinar services: Adobe Connect Pro, WebEx, Go To Webinar, and iLinc, to name just a few." Webinar technology has evolved over the past few years, making the medium an effective, low-cost marketing solution.

13.7 How to set up a webinar

Webinar services vary in their abilities, but their webinars are relatively easy to set up and run. There are a number of free to low-cost webinar sites available, and so the first step is selecting the right webinar service. When selecting where to host the webinar, one should consider the following factors: the number of attendees, the visual content, and the frequency with which the webinar is held. Because some webinar hosting sites have a cap on the number of attendees, it is important to get an estimate beforehand. If there will be visual content, it will be necessary to have a website host the webinar rather than using a conference call system. Lastly, establishing the frequency with which the webinar will be held will determine if it is better to pay a monthly subscription fee or a one-time webinar fee will be most economical.

There may be some other technical details to decide on after a webinar service has been chosen. Webinar hosting sites often allow the creation of multiple-choice questions (polls) for attendees to answer during the webinar, the results will be displayed. The poll can provide information about the attendees' general sentiments, as well as giving the webinar participants a feeling of interaction. Through the survey, the webinar can also mimic a focus group and provide valuable information to the webinar's creator and participants.

The next step is creating the webinar outline, which contains a list of the main points to be covered during the webinar. These points should be kept brief to avoid any temptation of reading directly off the outline. Having a clear schedule for the talk will help avoid going off on unnecessary tangents and will ensure that the relevant material gets covered.

After an outline has been created for the webinar, the event must be scheduled. Most services have a simple user interface that allows a webinar to be scheduled in under ten minutes. Webinar sites like the ones listed above require the host name, email, company, webinar title and description, date and time, recurrence information, and category.

Once the webinar is scheduled and listed online, it is time to start promoting it on other social media channels. As webinars are not usually available after they are presented, promoting the webinar to ensure a sufficient number of attendees is essential.

13.8 Preparing For and Executing the Webinar

While webinars can be a valuable component in a social media marketing campaign, they also carry some risks and dangers. One downside is that when hosting a webinar, there is no way to gauge the audience's reaction. Without faces or expressions to read, feedback may be hard to immediately assess. Another potential problem is that webinars are live with no chance to rerecord if the speaker is stumped or misspeaks. Because of these risks, time spent preparing for the webinar will be very well spent indeed.

Some webinar hosting sites have a moderator monitoring the webinar. If that is the case or if there are several speakers planned, coordination will be needed regarding introductions, which person will begin the call, and so forth. A few minutes of planning can avoid an awkward start to a webinar.

Webinars need to remain focused on the core content while still providing openings for listener participation and questions. Decide in advance if questions will be answered as they arise or held until the very end. Either approach can work, but it should be determined beforehand in order to avoid wasted time. Also, take steps to prevent interruptions. Be sure the speaker's surroundings will be quiet with little background noise. Simple measures like closing the door, turning off phones and alarms, and a "Do Not Disturb" sign are important matters to consider in advance. Finally, keep any relevant materials to be used during the webinar within easy reach so that there will be no unnecessary distractions.

Once preparations have ended and the webinar's scheduled beginning has arrived, be sure to start on time! As it is a live event, starting late leaves the audience waiting. Being inconvenienced makes it less likely that attendees will sign up for another webinar by the host.

When taking questions, answer them concisely and avoid rambling. It is difficult to anticipate the number of questions that will be asked, so leave enough time to cover them by giving brief but informative responses whenever possible. At the end, it is possible to readdress an earlier question, but if whose questions were not addressed will be frustrated.

Even if the ultimate goal of the webinar is to get business leads, avoid selling a service or product overtly during the webinar. People attend webinars to learn, and it is to meet that expectation of the audience may go elsewhere. If the content provided is valuable enough, then the presenter's expertise will signal with high probability of working the audience to seek that person's services (see the exercise case study example).

At the conclusion of the webinar, always invite the attendees to make contact with further questions or to connect on networking platforms after the webinar is completed. This is the time when business leads can be generated. Take advantage of the expert that conducting a webinar conveys to accomplish other marketing goals.

13.9 Marketing with Webinars and/or Podcasts

One of the biggest advantages to using webinars is the ability to gather evidence (in some cases over 500 people) in a seminar-type format without anyone having to travel. This characteristic of the webinar makes it an ideal format for training sessions or information sharing. Yet another benefit to webinars is that the audience can ask questions and get immediate answers. Unlike prerecorded podcasts, the audience can engage directly with the speaker, making webinars an ideal way to establish expertise and impress customers.

Clever social media marketers have also used webinars to gather information about potential clients. Webinars typically require participants to provide an email address in order to participate. This email list can later be used to send targeted messages based on the person's interest in the webinar. To gather further insight on the audience, a number of lead qualification questions can be asked prior to webinar registration. Especially if the webinar is popular, it can accumulate a large amount of data to better reach the audience.

How does one decide between podcasts and webinars as components in a social media marketing strategy? While clearly not mutually exclusive, many campaigns choose to focus their efforts on either one or the other or to emphasize one medium more than the other. This choice may reflect available technology and resources (podcasts are typically less expensive to produce than webinars) or, more likely, a difference in the content product being marketed.

With their interactive focus, webinars are highly valuable as a tool for learning or collaboration. The primary disadvantage of webinars is that they require planning and coordination beforehand because the event is live and must be attended at the time of its presentation. Podcasts, on the other hand, are less interactive because the viewer downloads and then listens to the file at leisure. While this may restrict the use of podcasts as a teaching tool, the advantage is broader access by viewers and less effort on coordinating because a podcast can still be accessed months after it has been recorded. This continuing accessibility makes podcasts a natural fit for opinion, information, or entertainment products and services.

Depending on the industry, some organizations use both webinars and podcasts in their social media marketing campaign; others use just one or the other. Both of valuable opportunities to engage consumers on a more personal level than text-based communication. Marketing strategies that leverage that deeper connection can be high successful in using webinars and/or podcasts.

Summary

1. Creating and sharing a podcast:

- Choose a format
- Plan the content

2. Producing Podcasts

- Choose an articulate moderator
- Create talking points not scripts
- Be brief
- Avoid over-editing
- Include music

3. Delivering Podcasts to consumers

The advantage of podcasts is that they exploit the ways in which public media-viewing habits have changed in recent years. People desire information and entertainment to be available on demand, commercial free, and anywhere Podcasts are a perfect fit in that they allow the listener to download the audio file and listen at her or his convenience. With the ease of finding and downloading podcasts, they cost almost nothing for consumers to access Podcasts can be shared at no cost on iTunes, Zune, Sony, and Phillips. to name just a few.

Delivering podcasts to listeners is the easiest part. The more difficult aspect of distributing podcast content is ensuring that it is found by the target audience. There are a host of directories available for listing podcasts, among the best are Podcast Alley (owned by PodShow Network), Podcasting News, Podcast.net, and iPodder.org.

4. Marketing with Podcasts

While many possible goals can be accomplished by podcasting, choosing which to focus on will depend on the larger marketing objectives being pursued. Podcasts have the advantage of both sharing information and putting a human voice or face on a brand. As such, podcasts can complement a broad variety of other social media efforts as part of a social media marketing campaign.

5. Hosting Webinars

A webinar, or teleseminar, is a seminar that is conducted over the web and (unlike a podcast) is designed to be interactive. The term was coined from the phrase "web-based seminar" To attend a webinar, the listener dials a call phone number (much like a conference call) or listen live on a computer's speakers by accessing the webinar through the Internet. The specifics depend on how the webinar is set up by the host.

Keywords

Podcast, Webcast, RSS, Audio-Blogging, Webinars, Seminar

Self Assessment

1. Which of the following is not an attraction for using podcasts?

- A. Very expensive
- B. Low entry costs

- C. Opportunity to reach large audience
 - D. Can be easily accessed through mobile devices
2. Which of the following question/s need to be answered before deciding on a podcast topic?
- A. What are you passionate about?
 - B. What do you know about?
 - C. What value do you intend to provide to listeners?
 - D. All the above
3. Which of the following is not a basic requirement for podcasting?
- A. A computer
 - B. A microphone
 - C. Artwork for podcast
 - D. A sophisticated studio
4. Podcast name should be:
- A. Short
 - B. Relevant
 - C. Unique
 - D. All the above
5. Which of the following is not a way to find guests for your shows.
- A. Inviting celebrities on payment basis
 - B. You can invite guests from your own network
 - C. You can invite YouTubers from your own niche
 - D. Other bloggers
6. Which of the following may not be a tip to enhance the audio quality of your podcast?
- A. Record in a quiet room
 - B. Keep the microphone 3-5 inches from your mouth
 - C. Avoid touching and tapping surfaces where the microphone is mounted
 - D. Have a common microphone for all the speakers
7. Which of the following is a way to monetize your podcast?
- A. Selling your products/services
 - B. Advertising
 - C. Sponsorships
 - D. All the above
8. In which of the following ways podcasts can be used for marketing?

- A. Contributes to SEO
 - B. Helps in brand positioning
 - C. Helps in identifying the target audience
 - D. None of these
9. In which of the following ways podcasts help businesses?
- A. To increase reach
 - B. To increase engagement
 - C. Helps in creating high-interest niche
 - D. All the above
10. Podcasts are a great way to build community. How does community affect your business?
- A. Loyal audience
 - B. Encourages Dialogue
 - C. Tap into niche group
 - D. All the above
11. Which of the following is not a benefit of Podcast marketing?
- A. Increased brand reach and awareness
 - B. Improved connection
 - C. Reduced loyalty
 - D. More traffic
12. How can podcasting grow your business?
- A. Through content marketing
 - B. By generating more traffic
 - C. Through building a loyal community
 - D. All the above
13. Which of the following may not be a suitable podcast marketing strategy?
- A. Re-uploading your most engaging episodes
 - B. Being erratic with your uploads
 - C. By joining some podcast network
 - D. Promoting your podcasts using Google Ads
14. Which of the following is not a step, in webinar creation process?
- A. Hiring an anchor for the webinar
 - B. Choosing a relevant webinar topic
 - C. Choosing the date and time for your webinar
 - D. Building the webinar content

15. Which of the following is not a benefit of hosting a webinar?

- A. Reach and qualify more prospects more often
- B. Present to more people in less time
- C. Is the best to have one to one interaction where you want to assess the body language of your audience
- D. Expand reach with reusable content

Answers for Self Assessment

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. A | 2. D | 3. D | 4. D | 5. A |
| 6. D | 7. D | 8. A | 9. D | 10. D |
| 11. C | 12. D | 13. B | 14. A | 15. C |

Review Questions

1. Explain in detail the entire process of creating and sharing a podcast.
2. According to you what could be the crucial decisions to be taken while producing podcasts.
3. What is the mechanism of delivering podcasts to your audience?
4. How can marketers integrate podcasts in their overall marketing strategy and what benefits can be derived by doing so?
5. What are the crucial concerns to be borne in mind while hosting webinars?
6. What kind of preparation is required hosting and executing a webinar?
7. How can podcasts and webinars be used for marketing purposes? Use specific examples to support your answer.



Further Readings

- Benefits Of Having a Podcast | Book Publishing
- Genealogy Webinars & Podcasts
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Unit 14 : Sharing Videos, Photos, and Images

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define Video Sharing, Photo Sharing.
- Describe a Brief History of Video Sharing and Photo Sharing
- Explain Benefits of Marketing with Online Videos, Online Photos and Other Images
- Detail How to Create Appealing Video Content
- Details How to Market on Photo Sharing Sites
- Describe How to Share Online Videos
- Explain How to Generate Video Content
- Identify How to Monetize Online Videos
- Describe the Future of Photo Sharing

Introduction

Video sharing site allows users to upload video clips to a website that can later be viewed publicly or privately. These sites generally let registered users comment on the videos and tag them with keywords in order to group common topics together, thus making it easier to locate similar videos. Many sites let users rank videos, with the most popular ones featured on the front page. Getting a video on the front page of a high-traffic video sharing site such as YouTube can turn a video creator into an overnight sensation. In addition, organizations and individuals sometimes use video sharing sites to promote products and provide training in specific skills.

A photo sharing site lets users upload photos and other images for public or private consumption, allowing them to comment, rate, and tag the pictures. These sites provide permanent and centralized access to a user's images (and in some cases video clips, too). Most photo sharing sites create albums or galleries, where visitors can view all the works of individual authors on the site. Many provide desktop-like photo management applications for organizing and presenting images. Photo sharing sites typically permit registered users to comment on the images and tag them with descriptive keywords, which the site uses to group the images by topic, making it easier to locate similar graphics.

According to Wikipedia, photo sharing sites fall into two primary categories:

- (1) Sites that offer photo sharing for free and
- (2) sites that charge consumers directly to host and share photos.

Of the sites that offer free photo sharing, most can be broken up into advertising-supported media plays and online photo finishing sites, where photo sharing is a vehicle to sell prints or other merchandise. Paid sites typically offer subscription-based services directly to consumers and dispense with advertisements and sometimes the sale of other goods.

The copyright protection afforded to users varies among photo sharing sites. In general, copyright holders of photos, artwork, and other images can grant users the right to use their creations without fees or royalties and still retain their copyrights. It is critical to check the copyright policy of a photo sharing site before posting images to it or using images from it for commercial or personal purposes.

14.1 A Brief History of Video Sharing

Since the first video was uploaded in April 2005, YouTube has been a leader in online video sharing. After its founding and subsequent purchase by Google in October 2006, YouTube has grown rapidly. Clearly, the attraction of online video sharing is a phenomenon that here is here to stay.

Part of YouTube's wide popularity lies in its easy integration with other social media platforms. Early in its history YouTube was primarily used as a resource by other social media sites. That has changed: "In October 2005, 52% of the traffic to YouTube came from social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook. Within just one month, method by which users arrived at the YouTube site began to shift dramatically and YouTube began to develop its very own online community. Around half of all videos have user-created comments, and over 5 million people have subscribed to at least one friend on YouTube.

Social media interactions are vital to the success of video sharing websites because they are typically supported through ad revenue. Depending on the site, guidelines for posting ads may vary. YouTube is among the most vigilant over which sorts of products are advertised on its site: "All advertisements must follow YouTube's Community Guidelines and advertising content policies." Advertisers are willing to accept these limitations because of the extremely high viewership and targeted nature of YouTube advertisements.

Advertising revenue depends on appealing content, so video sites provide incentive to upload quality material. YouTube has a Content Partners program that rewards the makers of popular videos by splitting some of the ad revenue that is generated. According to the manager of that program, this relies on "a performance-based model. In other words...if you upload a video and it gets one million views, for instance, we put an ad on every single view. And so that ad revenue starts to accrue, and, in many cases, can become significant for a lot of the Content Partners we have." This feature makes high viewership on YouTube a valuable commodity, creating hot competition for top-ranked front-page video placement.

14.2 Benefits of Marketing with Online Videos

Three of the main advantages of marketing with online videos include the ability to engage viewers, reach large audiences, and showcase products. Each of these benefits explained in detail below.

a. Engaging Viewers

Video is a very popular medium because it can create a stronger connection with consumers. For many people video stimuli are more appealing than dry text or listening to a podcast. Also, "the more senses that are involved in gathering information, the more engaging the process becomes." Viewers

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become more vested in the content when a human face is attached to it. Further, communication studies estimate that between 50% to 80% of meaning is conveyed through body language. Thus, video deepens the communication experience, making the message (hopefully) more persuasive.

b. Large Audiences

Most online or print ads have a serious disadvantage they require the viewer to read them, and reading in general has become less popular over time. For example, "a 2007 study by the National Endowment for the Arts reports that 'on average, Americans aged 15 to 24 spend almost two hours a day watching TV, and only seven minutes of their daily leisure time on reading And... web video is only further fueling this difference in time spent watching versus reading across all age groups'" More people choose to consume their information visually, and online video marketing taps into this growing trend.

c. Showcasing the Product

Demonstrating how to use a product has several benefits as a video marketing strategy Viewers with no experience with the product may watch the video, be impressed with its quality or other appealing features, and consider making a purchase. In this respect an online video can function much like an old-fashioned infomercial. However, instructional videos also have the advantage of assisting those who have already bought the product. By providing value to the existing customer base, it may cause them to write positive reviews or otherwise participate in the social media campaign. Even if the viewership is limited, this factor makes videos demonstrating a products utility potentially highly profitable.

14.3 How to Create Appealing Video Content

Creating a video to share online is fairly easy, but making the right video that will be widely viewed and will accomplish marketing objectives is much more difficult. The challenge may vary depending on the industry or sector being promoted. Some organizations lend themselves especially well to video marketing "For example, many churches routinely shoot video of weekly services and offer it online for anybody to watch.... Many amateur and professional sports teams, musicians, and theater groups also use video as a marketing and PR tool." For other products that are more technical and perhaps less immediately engaging, more creative approaches may be necessary. A variety of authors have offered recommendations for developing online video content to be posted on You Tube and other video sharing sites Perhaps the most authoritative advice comes from conversations with accomplished online video creators, which author Paul Gillin used to develop the AEIOU rule video content should be authentic entertaining, intimate, offbeat, and unusual."

Authentic

Use real people in actual locations, as illustrated in the exercise case study: Home Depot Shows You How. Online viewers often see high production values as a sign of professional marketing and may be more skeptical of the content. Plenty of viral videos are recorded using just a webcam. Viewers will not only forgive, but they will also frequently reward a "homemade" feel in online video because the content appears more believable.

Entertaining

Put simply, people enjoy fun content. At times it can be valuable to focus less on company branding and more on entertainment value. If a video is viewed millions of times because it is funny, the brand will be carried along for the ride even if it is mentioned very briefly. Entertaining videos can also spawn imitations and spinoffs, which further expand the brand's influence.

Intimate

It is part of human nature to follow stories or personal drama experienced by peers. A video that tells a story, perhaps focusing around one person and showing how others react, is more appealing because it creates a connection with the viewer. A prime example is Burger King's Whopper Freakout campaign in which customers' reactions were secretly filmed when they were told that BK had

discontinued the Whopper. Run as bot TV ad and a longer web video, this highly personal (some would say voyeuristic) campaign created a huge response for the company.

Offbeat and Unusual

Offbeat and unusual tend to work together, as underscored by the case study. The Old Spice Guy' Viral Videos. A video needs to be distinct and memorable to stand out among the millions uploaded regularly. Videos that challenge a taboo or that otherwise strange and unlikely can be highly popular. Most viral videos have these qualities. Bland content is easily skipped or ignored, so video marketing team needs to constantly innovate and find new ideas. An unusual image or clip may be further edited by other content creators, an action that amounts to free advertising the company.

Beyond the AEIOU rule, keep in mind that brevity is important. Online video audiences typically have very short attention spans. Often, people will skim past content that does not immediately capture their interest. This reaction is supported by research. "...it is reported by the video distribution service TubeMogul:

- Within the first ten seconds of a video, 10.39% of viewers are gone.
- Within the first thirty seconds of a video, 33.84% of viewers are gone.
- By the one-minute mark of a video, 53.56% of viewers are gone.
- By the two-minute mark of a video, 76.29% of viewers are gone."

A successful video will get to the point quickly, or otherwise convince the viewer to watching. Keeping important material for the end may be stylistically appealing large number of people will end up skipping the climactic finish if the video takes too long to watch good marketing videos should be as short as possible while still conveying the message.

After developing a concept, try to keep continuity of theme between videos individual or organization can maintain a channel on YouTube that others can subscribe to. Having a common theme or element that runs through seven more likely to convince a viewer to watch previous entries or to subscribe to the channel to receive future updates. The most successful video marketing campaigns have recurrent appearances centered on a common, easily understood theme. This strategy for video creation has generally been more effective at holding viewer interest.

Finally, do not focus solely on creating a viral video. Many videos go viral punchy by accident, so attempting to imitate that feat can be a path to frustration Predicting the wing patterns of online audiences is difficult, so the risk of attempting to create viral videos is having a series of flops and no meaningful content. Sometimes it is more important to deliver valuable content to a core audience, and posting video can be helpful even if it does not go viral; other benefits include higher conversion rates and greater interest in the product.

14.4 Sharing Online Videos

Creating strong video content is challenging, but that is only the beginning. In order to have influence, videos must be found online and watched. While some content is so creative, funny, or engaging that it spreads organically, not all online video producers are so fortunate. Especially when the topic is a more serious company, brand, or organization. finding the best way to share an online video so that it reaches the target audience can be a significant obstacle to marketing success.

In order to overcome this barrier and successful distribute an online video, there are several different levels of sharing that must occur. First, the primary sharing occurs when the video creator posts it online; then, the secondary sharing happens as insiders or friends of the creator share the video; and finally, tertiary sharing occurs when on line viewers begin sharing the video of their own accord. To be widely disseminated, an online video must pass through all three stages, so each will be discussed in turn.

A. Primary Sharing

Primary sharing is perhaps the simplest step, as it can be done by just one person. A video must be posted online, often on several different video sharing sites, so that more people will have the opportunity to find and watch it. The poster can also use other social networking, link sharing, or

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microblogging websites to distribute links to the video. Even if the video is posted at multiple locations, consider funneling all link traffic through the most popular portal (YouTube) or wherever the target audience is concentrated so that the video will be ranked higher by search engines. Posting a blog entry to refer to the video is also helpful because the post may be picked up and further distributed by syndication services.

B. Secondary Sharing

Secondary sharing occurs when fans, friends, customers, or early viewers begin spreading the video within their own social circles. Ideally, the video creator will already have some following on one or more platforms. If those people enjoy the video, they will pass it along to their other contacts. This stage is perhaps the most crucial in establishing a video's audience, because the majority of online videos that fail to spread within the first forty-eight hours never become popular." Encouraging immediate contacts to spread video content is crucial in reaching the broader Internet audience.

The groundwork for secondary sharing can be laid much earlier by participating in the online video community. It is important to interact with other content creators. Like other online networks, there are YouTube opinion leaders, whose content has more influence than that of the average user. It is possible to "identify opinion leaders by their behavior" because they are more likely to have rated an online video or posted comments regarding an online video. These are the people who are likely to lead general opinion, influence others toward specific content, and perhaps determine the success of a video marketing campaign. In order to encourage fans to spread their video content, some companies are using contests or featuring user-submitted videos on the corporate website or blog. For example, Doritos ran a contest in which people submitted commercials to be run during Superbowl 2009. Even less dramatic incentives can allow a company to leverage user-generated

videos. Offering to share content created by outsiders makes those people more likely to reciprocate by sharing the company's content, or telling others about the contest. Even small informal fan competitions have proved a successful way to facilitate secondary sharing.

C. Tertiary Sharing

Lastly, tertiary sharing is when content is spread on the Internet by people who likely do not know or have connections with the original video's creator. It is in this stage that more viral videos are found. Of course, viral videos are just the examples when primary and secondary sharing was highly successful, making the final stage of distribution huge and often global. To reach anything close to that scale, however, a video's creator likely spent considerable effort on the earlier stages.

Keep in mind that sharing of online information, particularly videos, happens on more than just social networks. Share This has compiled data about how people share content (see Figure 8.1). Email is still the most popular way to share information, with 46% of all content sharing. The next most popular is Facebook, with 33%, followed by other social networks at 14% and then Twitter at only 6%. The lesson is that video content should be sharable on as many platforms as possible but especially optimized for email. It is hard to anticipate how any single individual may decide to share content, but knowing the overall trends can help focus video sharing efforts where they will be most fruitful.

In order to make tertiary sharing easier, be sure that each video has a descriptive and memorable title. Those words may be all that someone has for reference when she or he sees a link or recommendation from a friend, especially if it comes through email. Also consider having different titles, tags, or keywords associated with the video on each online video sharing website. The more ways there are to find and share a particular video, the more likely it will be that it will be widely viewed and influence the target audience.

14.5 Encourage User Generated Content

Some of the best online product marketing videos are not even created by the company in question but by admirers or fans. Encouraging others to share content related to the brand is a powerful social media marketing strategy that can be especially effective with video. This is often referred to as user generated content (UGC), and it is highly useful in a social media campaign.

Contributions from nonaffiliated individuals are often taken more seriously by on line audiences because they assume the content is independent of the company being promoted. Video UGC is particularly valuable to a company because, unlike other online media platforms, a user video is considerably harder to fake than written text. This quality of video adds to the authenticity and appeal of the message.

Encouraging UGC can be as simple as highlighting customers who share their content or by running a contest (as discussed above). Just providing links and recognition to user contributions may be enough to spur more content submissions. When some fans start sharing, others may also. The result can be a series of testimonials, how-to tutorials, or other indirect promotions that cost nothing for a social media campaign but that achieve substantial results.

14.6 How to Monetize Online Video Sharing

While many people post online videos for fun and amusement, a much smaller number are able to make money or even a comfortable living by creating online videos. The YouTube partners program is one way for talented video creators to see their efforts rewarded. Other similar video sharing sites also have methods to make money from high-quality online videos (although this is not universal: Vimeo, for example, does not have a monetized option at the time of this writing)." In any case, the following are some of the best practices for aspiring video producers to make money from their online contributions:

- **Focus on Content First:** It hardly needs saying, but without solid content, there is no chance to make money from videos. YouTube, for example, will not consider people for their partner program unless they have a substantial number of views and frequently posted content. Build up the video content first, and then (with luck), the website the videos are posted to will seek to monetize them without being prompted. If the content is lacking, the chance of success close to zero.
- **Promote the Channel:** There are a variety of ways to build awareness for a available to get more YouTube (or other video sharing site) channel, including blog posts, merchandise, other social networks, and more." Use every eyes on the video content because successful monetization requires high traffic.
- **Update Frequently:** Some video sharing sites (such as YouTube) make this an explicit requirement in order to join their partners program, but even if not required, it is still good advice." Obviously, more videos available means more clicks and potential advertising revenue, which can be directed back toward the video's creator(s). Also, having a steady stream of content demonstrates commitment to the project and keeps viewers coming back for more, and is therefore highly valuable to advertisers.
- **Keep Up with Analytics:** Video sharing sites will often give their partners information about how many people are viewing particular video content as well as their demographics." With this knowledge it is possible to better craft content for advertisers to spread their message or to craft material that viewers will watch on rental. Good content depends on reaching the correct audience, so use every tool available to refine the material being produced.

14.7 A Brief History of Photo Sharing

Launched in September 1995, Webshots was one of the first photo sharing sites. Webshots began life as a sports-oriented screen saver sold at retail for PCs, but in 1999 it morphed into a social network, which by April 2000 became the most popular photo sharing destination online. A number of similar sites were founded in the late 1990s although the two photo sharing sites that would come to dominate the field, Photobucket and Flickr, didn't come into existence until the early 2000s.

Photobucket was founded on June 1, 2003, by Alex Welch and Darren Crystal photo sharing site is well known for personal photo albums and (more recently) as to store and share videos, as depicted in Figure 9.1. Since the acquisition of Photobud by News Corp. in 2007, the site has gained a more social networking feel similar to M pace (formerly a News Corp. property). Although News Corp, divested its majority stake in both Photobucket (December 2009) and MySpace (June 2011), Photobuckets image storage facilities continue to serve as a place for MySpace members to store photos." Users may keep their photo albums private, permit password-protected guest access, or open them to the public."

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By June 2006 Photobucket had become the most popular photo sharing site, capturing 44% of the market." However, starting in 2007, complaints began surfacing about not enough free storage, photo editing tools, and options in pro accounts, as compared with Flickr." In August 2009 Photobucket reduced free storage space from 1GB to 500GB, further angering users, who were unable to upload more images to their accounts unless they were willing pay the upgrade fee." Eventually these missteps were corrected, including the removal of storage limits for free accounts."

Flickr was founded in February 2004 by Stewart Butterfield and Caterina Fake." The Vancouver-based parent company, Ludicorp, was originally launched to develop a social network-based massively multiplayer online game. As the funding began to run low, the only portion of the game fully developed was the user interface. So Ludicorp opted to use the game's user interface as the basis for a photo sharing service dubbed Flickr.

The game's user-interface provided a chat room on Flickr. Fake recalls that "George Oates (a Flickr employee) and I would spend 24 hours, seven days a week, [in the chat room] greeting every single person who came to the site. We introduced them to people, we chatted with them. This is a social product. People are putting things they love-photographs of their whole lives-into it. All of these people are your potential evangelists. You need to show those people love."

Over time the chat room was dropped, as new versions of the site did away with the original gaming codebase and as the focus shifted to file uploading and sharing. The site's growing popularity attracted the elite of Silicon Valley, including Google and Yahoo, as potential buyers of the fledgling company. In March 2005 Yahoo! acquired Ludicorp and Flickr for a reported \$35 million. In a move to take advantage of Photobucket's storage restrictions, Flickr lifted the previous size upload limits for free accounts on April 9, 2008.

In spite of their success, the founders of Flickr, husband-and-wife team Butterfield and Fake, were experiencing a growing frustration in working for a large enterprise like Yahoo! According to Butterfield, "Yahoo failed to provide some resources needed during the first couple of years [after the acquisition]. Decision-making slowed because of bureaucracy In June 2008 both founders resigned from the company. In fact, "Stewart Butterfield and Caterina Fake had already distanced themselves from Flickr, with Fake working in another Yahoo! division and Butterfield on an extended paternity leave.""

Despite the departure of the founders, the photo sharing site continued to gain popularity, fostering an environment where professional photographers felt comfortable posting and discussing their work." In May 2009 White House official photographer Pete Souza began using Flickr as a conduit for releasing White House photos. In September 2010 Flickr announced its 5 billionth photo upload." By July 2011, Flickr had an estimated 90 million unique monthly visitors," and just a month later, the site announced its 6 billionth photo upload."

14.8 Benefits of Marketing with Online Photos and Other Images

Photo sharing sites function much like other social networks. Users must be active in the community in order to produce results. Indeed, the social communities surrounding image sharing sites are the most important factor because they will circulate and share the content." On Flickr, for example, the most influential users not only share photos but interact with others, making thoughtful comments on many pictures. Staying connected will draw people back to connect or to look at other targeted content.

From a marketing standpoint, there are several advantages to photo sharing Photos can be used to showcase a product, document offers, and influence buyer mood." Most directly, images of the product can generate interest and online buzz, leading to sales. Showcasing a product is most effective when the presentation is highly detailed. Some companies shy away from distributing product images and specifications, fearing that their trade secrets will be uncovered. While this is a legitimate worry, the potential risk is often outweighed by the sales benefits of sharing product information. Giving detailed specifications and technical details in photo form can draw press attention and build confidence with potential customers.

Company pictures can be highly persuasive for potential buyers even when they are not directly about the product. A company's values and social presence can affect customers either positively or negatively; in an age of online transparency, some consumers expect to know the faces behind the final product. Posting photos can give strong sense of culture and provide a human face to the

company. The old saying picture is worth a thousand words remains true in an online world. Pictures demonstrate an institution's values and beliefs far more vividly than written description.

While image sharing can help draw traditional press attention, it is perhaps even more effective at driving web traffic toward a product website. Photo sharing websites are treated kindly by search engines such as Google." Photo results often show up a first page of results, bringing many to view that content. This reality makes photo sharing a natural complement to other tools in a social media marketing campaign.

Finally, the cost, in both money and effort, is low when pursuing an image sharing strategy. While there are initial setup costs, such as purchasing equipment and possibly online storage space, that small investment can be sufficient to propel a photo marketing campaign forward. Taking pictures at company events is quick and easy. This makes the time commitment for maintaining a photo sharing presence less demanding a social networking site, such as Facebook or LinkedIn." Compared to the benefits of spotlighting a business and its products for online viewers, photo sharing is indeed very inexpensive. The low cost of executing an image sharing campaign makes it attractive to many companies.

14.9 Marketing with Photo Sharing Sites

The first step in marketing on photo sharing sites is to determine the target market for the images because different photo sharing sites cater to different clientele. Identifying the demographics and behavioral characteristics of the target market enables the marketer to select an optimal series of photo sharing sites on which to upload images. Check out the sites to determine whether they are primarily trafficked by, for example, college-age viewers, women, or professional photographers and artists.

In addition, consider the nature of the images to be offered. If many pictures are humorous, instructional, or quality in nature, then place them on photo sharing sites that have similar offerings. Selecting a single photo sharing site necessarily limits a company target market. By using multiple photo sharing sites for uploading images, markets expand their reach to different audiences.

Selecting the photos to upload is both the most basic and most crucial aspect of image sharing. The content of photos intended for sharing will likely be different from those used in websites or as part of product content. While professional photography or stock photos (produced by picture agencies or photo libraries) may be useful for ad campaigns, these staged images are less helpful for photo sharing. The most popular shared images tend to be unplanned or spontaneous in appearance. Further, detailed up-close photographs draw more interest than landscapes. Still, while landscape photos can be interchangeable, "there is infinite variety in detail. Take advantage of this variety when creating photo content.

Photos can also be used to demonstrate knowledge about a business or industry. For example, a person selling cars might post pictures from the most recent car show he or she attended." As direct advertising is banned on Flickr and many other image-sharing sites, doing indirect promotion can be the most effective way to market a product. Talk about the product in image descriptions but avoid overt sales talk." A link back to the company blog or website is subtle, but it is enough to draw interested viewers to the product.

Posting photos, in itself, is no guarantee that the images will be seen. A significant component of sharing images is to market the content being posted. While some shared images will go viral and be spread widely with little effort by their creators, this experience is not the most common. Even popular, catchy images may take time to disseminate if they are not publicized well early on. To avoid such delay, employ social networking tools, both on the image sharing website and on external social networks. Networks such as Facebook and Google+ also offer photo sharing capabilities and can be a natural extension of an image sharing strategy." Integrate with these platforms to help spread images to more viewers.

Another set of tools that search engines use on photo sharing sites. Photo search engines direct users to images that interest them based on keywords. Most search engines rely on tags or descriptions to decide which photos to show when a person searches. To help more people find a photograph include highly detailed tags that facilitate photo searching. Mentally ask whether a customer would be able to easily find each image if he or she were looking for information. What search terms might the individual employ? With this in mind, choose tags that are memorable, descriptive, and commonly used. The format of tags may vary depending on the photo sharing site. Flickr tags are space

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separated so that "salt lake city, for example might become saltiaticity or sic." When starting on a new platform, see what format an style popular offerings have chosen, and use that as a starting point for creating tags and descriptions.

Not every photo post must be original content, Creating adaptations, parodies, or tributes to other artistic creations is common and even encouraged among many online audiences. However, when sharing repurposed images, it is important to keep legal issues in mind and to avoid taking material without permission or attributions Some photo content is governed by extremely strict license agreements that limit third-party sharing. Seek out photos that use Creative Commons licensing (which is used by Flickr and several other large photo sharing websites). These licenses allow photo creators to retain rights to their images, even if the images are used commercially or otherwise shared. The details will depend on which photo sharing portal the images have been posted to, so do the research in advance to avoid legal problems later on.

In addition to legal permissions, image sharing requires personal permission as well, especially if casual or unplanned photos are taken. Not everyone is comfortable seeing him- or herself posted online, especially if the person is caught in an awkward moment. Acquire permission from people in photos (especially customers or employees) before uploading or tagging them in images. This permission is especially needed if the picture could cause harm or hurt feelings later on-for example a picture of someone drinking or appearing overly familiar with someone other than a significant other Online, the context of a picture is not always clear, so always check with the people featured in photos so that later they will not be unhappy or embarrassed.

14.10 The Future of Photo Sharing

Although photo sharing sites remain full of opportunities for marketers and remain the mainstay for professional photographers and other artists, Facebook has become the platform of choice for smart-phone users, with a 100 million photos uploaded every day. Initially, the size and resolution of the pictures hosted on Facebook fell far short of the quality of images posted on photo sharing sites like Flickr.

However, Facebook has made great strides in not only increasing the convenience of sharing photos with friends and offering free unlimited storage, it also continues to boost photographic services by letting users share larger high-resolution images, add tags or add keywords to photos in bulk, and use photo viewer to better showcase images.

While there is no doubt that Flickr is well known and widely used, its appeal is primarily to a target audience of photographers who post, admire, and comment on high-quality artistic images. Flickr, however, has a weaker connection with people who want to store and share everyday snapshots. With this far larger group, Face book continues to widen "its lead as the popular destination for sharing party, vacation and family snapshots." Other competing social networks, such as Google, have also moved into picture sharing and may threaten the market share of image-based websites.

Matthew Rothenberg, who now heads up Flickr, claims he is not concerned about Facebook's gains. For him it is not a numbers game but rather all about providing superior quality and the best possible user experience when, "Flickr users are engaged and happy-more and more of them will sign up. Photobucket is also making strategic moves to stay relevant in the shifting social media terrain by striking a deal to provide photo hosting for Twitter's native photo sharing service. Photobucket's new-found focus on mobile includes the release its own photo-filtering app called Snapbucket, which has been downloaded 350,000 times in its first month of availability]: And Photobucket also offers a photo backup app under its own brand that is especially useful on Android because it automatically sends any picture taken to the user's Photobucket account".

Despite the inroads made by Facebook and other social networking platforms, photo sharing sites remain not only relevant but important for marketers as a means of reaching otherwise elusive target markets. Using this tool effectively in the future will depend on exploiting the unique advantages brought by photo sharing sites and on continuing to innovate with better image content. While the challenges are substantial, the rewards from integrating image sharing into a social media marketing campaign remain highly attractive.

Summary

1. Benefits of marketing with online videos

Digital and Social Media Marketing

- a. engaging viewers
 - b. large audiences
 - c. showcasing the product
2. How to create appealing video content
- a. authentic
 - b. entertaining
 - c. intimate
 - d. offbeat and unusual
3. Sharing online videos
- a. primary sharing
 - b. secondary sharing
 - c. tertiary sharing
4. How to monetize online video sharing
- a. focus on content first
 - b. promote the channel
 - c. update frequently
 - d. keep up with analytics

Keywords

YouTube, Online videos, Authentic, Entertaining, Intimate, Offbeat, Unusual, AEIOU, Primary Sharing, Secondary Sharing, Tertiary Sharing, UGC, User Generated Content, Photo sharing

Self Assessment

1. Which of the following is/are characteristic/s of visual culture?
- A. massive increase in photo creation
 - B. The rise of image-centric social networks
 - C. Images are becoming interactive
 - D. All the above
2. Why are images important for social media engagement?
- A. more views
 - B. More leads
 - C. More sales
 - D. All the above
3. How can images be used as a marketing collateral?
- A. It can be used in multiple platforms
 - B. Images give satisfaction
 - C. Images help in developing a website
 - D. Images give a sense of autonomy

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4. In order to get more clicks on your images need to:
- A. be well labeled
 - B. have alt tags
 - C. have proper description
 - D. All the above
5. Why do businesses scrimp on images?
- A. Lack of time
 - B. Lack of Money
 - C. Both A and B
 - D. None of the above
6. Which of the following is not an ideal image property for websites?
- A. 72 dpi
 - B. 80% quality
 - C. 4K quality
 - D. No more than 2000px wide
7. Which of the following type of image you could use to infuse humor in your campaigns?
- A. Product photography
 - B. Memes
 - C. Lifestyle images
 - D. Infographics
8. Which of the following types of images can be used in order to showcase your product to be aspirational?
- A. Product photography
 - B. Memes
 - C. Lifestyle images
 - D. Infographics
9. Which of the following image type can be used to explain a step-by-step process?
- A. Product photography
 - B. Memes
 - C. Lifestyle images
 - D. Infographics
10. Video and image marketing is a type of:
- A. Digital Marketing
 - B. They are partly content marketing

Digital and Social Media Marketing

- C. Both A and B
- D. Neither A nor B

11. Which of the following is not a need to market with videos?

- A. Everyone watches TV
- B. Video is the future of marketing
- C. Increasing access to smart devices and internet
- D. Videos have becoming easier to make

12. Which of the following is not a video sharing platform?

- A. YouTube
- B. Gmail
- C. Vimeo
- D. Facebook Watch

13. Which of the following is not a step in starting with video marketing?

- A. setting video marketing goals and targets
- B. Define your audience
- C. Planning your approach
- D. None of these

14. Which of the following is not a part of building a video marketing strategy?

- A. Define your goal
- B. Select a format
- C. Record
- D. Execute

15. Which of the following may not get more eyes on your videos?

- A. Good description
- B. 4k resolution
- C. Proper distribution channels
- D. Good SEO strategy

Answers for Self Assessment

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. D | 2. D | 3. A | 4. D | 5. C |
| 6. C | 7. B | 8. C | 9. D | 10. C |
| 11. A | 12. B | 13. D | 14. C | 15. B |

Review Questions

1. Discuss the various categories for photo sharing sites with examples.
2. Explain the various benefits of using videos for marketing purposes.
3. Explain the techniques for creating appealing video content.
4. Discuss the various levels of sharing online videos.
5. How can user generated content help in marketing?
6. Discuss the various ways to monetize online video sharing?



Further Readings

- Content Rules: How to Create Killer Blogs, Podcasts, Videos
- Video Marketing Strategy by Jon Mowat
- YouTube and Video Marketing by Greg Jarboe
- Video Marketing by Dummies by Kevin Daum



Web Links

<https://www.lemonlight.com/video-marketing-strategy-the-ultimate-guide/>

<https://sproutsocial.com/insights/video-marketing-strategy/>

<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/video-marketing>

<https://www.campaignmonitor.com/resources/knowledge-base/what-is-the-best-video-marketing-strategy-for-social-media/>

<https://biteable.com/blog/video-marketing/>

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