

16.1: Introduction

Social media is such an ever-present part of our lives, that it is nearly impossible to engage in online activity without coming into contact with it at one point or another. It is also becoming difficult to avoid social media in offline channels as well - consider hashtags and snapcodes on posters, or television shows and ads sending viewers to their social media accounts.

The Internet has changed how we see and engage with media. We can now collaborate, publish, share content and ideas much more easily than ever before, in real time and with people all over the world. All this online sharing and collaboration is facilitated by social media.

In social media's early days, chat rooms and social networks enabled individuals to 'meet-up' online to discuss topics, interact with one another and share their views and ideas. Today social media is so much more, as it plays a key role in the hyperconnected, Internet-dependent world we find ourselves in. It offers immediate content that is relevant to the user, when and where they need it. With social, the longer you take to post about an event or trend the less relevant that content becomes.

This inter-connectedness and real-time nature of social enables marketers to connect with their audience in ways they never could have dreamed of. Social media also provides new ways to address business challenges, such as awareness and conversion, and enables small and large businesses alike to grow their business and customer base.

To succeed in social media, you need to understand the basics, such as the various platforms available to you, which objectives social media can help you to achieve, and how to create a strategy using social media to achieve these objectives. This chapter will walk you through some of the larger platforms, and the following chapter on Social media strategy will demonstrate how to use social media strategically to achieve your marketing objectives.

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