

28.24.3: Reading- Introduction to Social Media Marketing

Introduction to Social Media Marketing

The internet has completely transformed the role of media in everyday life.

In the past, dominant media channels were television, radio, magazines and newspapers. All were well-suited to broadcasting out one-way communications from a central source. Media outlets *distributed* information and messages. People *received* information and messages.

Today, the internet and mobile technologies have made it simple for virtually anyone to not only receive but also publish and distribute information (also known as “content”). Access is simple and typically free. Social media channels have evolved to capitalize on this new, interactive relationship with information. The realm of social media is about collaborating, generating content, sharing, and most of all, connecting.

Social media use technology and mobility to provide an interactive means of communication among people, organizations, and communities who are interconnected and interdependent. Many channels and vehicles are available for social media just as there are many different television shows and magazines. With changing technology, new social media tools are continually available. The parade of popular and influential sites includes Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Flickr, Google+ and Vine, among many others.

Media Designed for Sharing

What’s different about social media? Most simply put, social media are media (including written, visual, audio, multimedia, and everything in between) that are designed to be shared. Sharing typically means that it is easy to create, publish, interact with, send and comment on these media creations, and there are no high costs associated with viewing the media. Because of the connected nature of the internet, it means that sharing, commenting, and viewing can all be tracked and measured.

Table 28.24.3.1 The Differences between Traditional and Social Media

Traditional Media	Social Media
Fixed, unchangable	Instantly updatable
Commentary limited and not real time	Unlimited real-time commentary
Limited, time-delayed bestseller list	Instant popularity gauge
Archive poorly accessible	Archives accessible
Limited media mix	All media can be mixed
Committee publishers	Individual publishers
Finite	Infinite
Sharing not encouraged	Sharing and participation encouraged
Control	Freedom

With more than half of all Americans participating in social networks, people and organizations who don’t participate may be at a disadvantage with some groups in society. Not only does the majority of the population in the United States have a profile on a social network, but at least one-third of those people access the sites multiple times a day. Social media are popular for keeping in touch with friends,. Not surprisingly, companies tap into these same networks to promote their brands and as a tool for recruiting and hiring. People follow companies and brands on social media, especially on Facebook, whereas LinkedIn generates millions of job referrals. Just as companies are allocating more of their promotion budget to social media, they are also increasing their expenditures on social recruiting.

Social Media Zones

Social media are complex and rapidly changing. While there is some overlap between uses of social media for personal and business purposes, one way to improve the understanding of social media is to think about social media zones. Social media zones include social communities, social publishing, social entertainment, and social commerce. Think about the different ways you use social media and which zones you utilize. You probably use all of the zones.

Social communities are channels that focus on activities and relationships and include social networking sites (online hosts such as Facebook and LinkedIn), forums, wikis, and message boards, channels where you may already participate. Think about your profile. Whatever you type becomes a digital version of you. In social communities, you communicate and socialize with others. While you may share information with others, you must be careful how much and which information you choose to post.

Social publishing helps distribute information to different audiences and includes channels such as blogs (web log sites with content that is updated regularly) and media sharing sites with searchable content featuring videos (YouTube), photos (Flickr), and music and podcasts (iTunes). Think about videos you may have posted. When companies pay to have product reviews posted or to promote contests or their brands, they may use social publishers to write blogs and generate word of mouth buzz. Many companies post their own commercials and other content on YouTube.

Opportunities for games and entertainment are part of the **social entertainment** zone. Social games like FarmVille, entertainment networks, action games, puzzle games, and reality games have increased revenues in the social gaming industry. Social gaming appears to be growing in popularity.

Social commerce is e-commerce territory where people buy and sell products on the Internet. Social commerce provides a means for interactive shopping, including reviews, ratings, and social shopping websites where you can chat with merchant personnel or with friends while you are shopping. Think about the questions you may ask a customer service person in a chat room versus what you may ask at a store in a mall.

Using Social Media for Marketing

As more and more people around the planet become more and more connected through social media, the influence of these channels continues to grow. In response, organizations are allocating more of their promotion budgets to social media. This makes sense when social media strategies align with broader marketing strategy in support of corporate objectives.

What are the advantages of social media in marketing? When used effectively, they can generate a lot of buzz without a lot of expense. There are still costs associated with content creation, but the proliferation of online content creators and hungry media outlets means that on social media, content tends to be cheap.

The 24×7 cycle of global social media requires eyes, brains and analytical tools to stay on top of everything happening, but never before has it been so easy to tap into, listen and learn from individuals and communities interacting with your product or brand. It is undoubtedly exciting for your brand to become a trending topic among these networks, but it is important to remember social media attention can easily veer into positive or negative territory. Absolute control of the message is virtually impossible with social media. Managing consumer perceptions in a fickle 24×7 media cycle requires attention and perseverance.

Because many people share immense amounts of information about themselves through social media, increasingly marketers can use this information to deliver highly targeted messages and offers. Navigational click-stream data from social media and other websites is another source of valuable information about consumer behavior, what makes them tick, and how they do or don't choose to engage with your brand. At the same time, firms must be prepared to address increasingly complex challenges associated with cybersecurity and data privacy.

Reflection Questions

- How do you use social media for personal purposes, and how do you use it for business and professional purposes?
- How would social media allow you to target particular types of consumers for marketing or recruiting purposes?

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