

12.2: Social Media

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the different social media zones.
2. Understand how social media can generate publicity.
3. Explain how social media keeps changing.

Social media uses 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 vehicles are added frequently.

With over half of 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. Not only is social media popular for keeping in touch with friends, but companies use social media 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 more 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 is complex and rapidly changing. While there is some overlap between personal and business, 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 what information you choose to post.

Social publishing helps distribute information to different audiences and includes channels such as blogs (Web sites with content that is updated regularly) and media sharing sites with searchable content featuring videos (YouTube), photos (Flickr), and music (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. Many companies are also posting their own commercials and other content on YouTube.

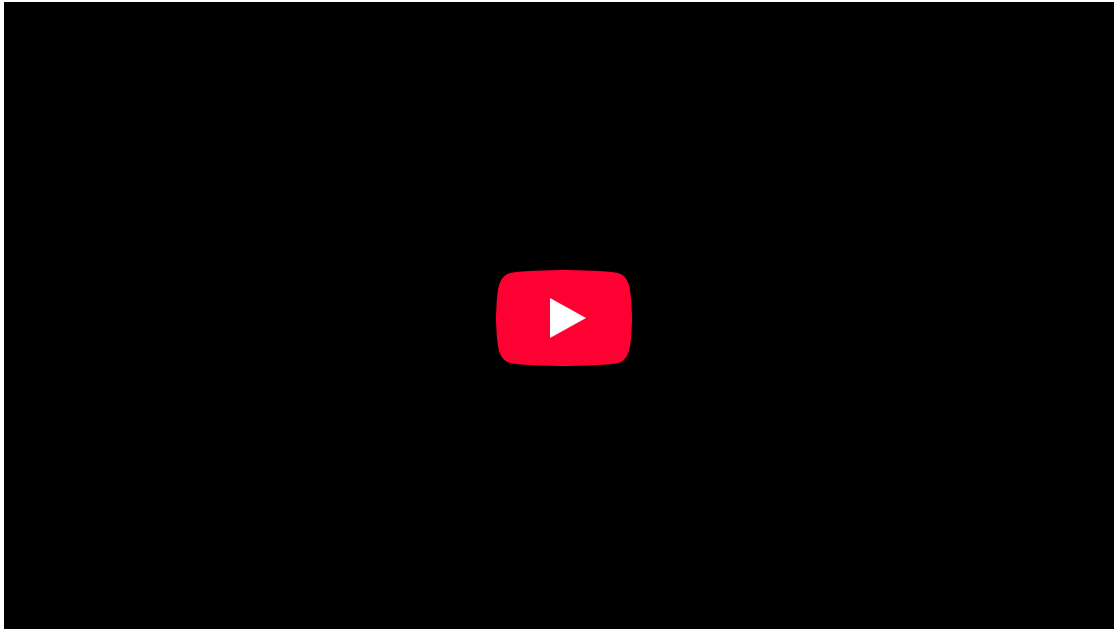
Opportunities for games and entertainment are part of the social entertainment zone. Social games like FarmVille, entertainment networks, action games, puzzle games, and reality games have increased revenues in the social gaming industry. Social gaming appears to be growing in popularity.

Do you remember talking about e-commerce? Well, the social commerce zone is part of e-commerce where people buy and sell products on the Internet. Social commerce provides a means for interactive shopping, including reviews, ratings, and social shopping Web sites 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.

While organizations are allocating more of their promotion budgets to social media, they are also generating a lot of buzz or talk without a lot of expense. To see the impact social media has, consider the buzz created by Old Milwaukee's commercial shown during Super Bowl XLVI, which only aired locally in North Platte, Nebraska. North Platte is the second smallest television market in the country with only 15,000 homes but it is hometown to New England Patriots Danny Woodhead. While the thirty-second spot only targeted a small audience at a cost of \$700–\$1500 in the local market (compared to \$3.5 million for national thirty-second spot), the commercial created more buzz than many of the nationally broadcast commercials (Gillette, 2012). The YouTube version shown in the following video has been viewed over a million times, much more than the always popular Budweiser commercials. The commercial became so popular that Old Milwaukee put a link to the commercial on their Web site. Talk about the impact of social media and bragging rights!

Video Clip

Old Milwaukee and Will Ferrell in the Super Bowl



Old Milwaukee and their strategy to play during the Super Bowl.

Key Takeaway

Social media uses technology and mobility to provide an interactive means of communication among people, organizations, and communities who are interconnected and interdependent. Social media zones include social communities, social publishing, social entertainment, and social commerce. More companies are using social media to promote their products as well as for recruiting.

Review Questions

1. What is social commerce and how do you as a customer use it?
2. Why do you think Facebook is the most popular social media networking site?
3. How would you define social media?

References

Gillette, F., “Did Will Ferrell Win the Super Bowl?” *BusinessWeek*, February 19, 2012, 27–28.

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