

The World of Social Media

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Abstract: This paper shows that in these days, most people are so occupied with their mobile devices or online games that they have, in effect, replaced face-to-face communication with electronic devices. As a result, the way that companies communicate has changed. Direct targeting, low cost, and the friendly and effective environment of social networks are the reasons which make these programs one of the best marketing tools. Those tools are going to play a great role in terms of encouraging companies to connect with their customers, ultimately adding value and driving the companies to the path to success.

Index Terms— Social Media, Marketing, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube.

Society is highly affected by social networks like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, etc. Face-to-face communication in public places has decreased since the recent rise of social media. According to the Brass Program Planning Committee, "Boyd and Ellison define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semipublic profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (qtd in Brass Program Planning Committee 127). These days, most people are so occupied with their mobile devices or online games that they have, in effect, replaced face-to-face communication with electronic devices. As a result, the way that companies communicate has changed. Direct targeting, low cost, and the friendly and effective environment of social networks are the reasons which make these programs one of the best marketing tools.

Social networks rethink the traditional one-way communications and introduce the new two-way communications as an effective marketing strategy. Before Twitter, advertising was unidirectional, often shown by the following character: ➡. In other words, communication was one-way from the company to the customers. Now, two-way communication incorporates communication from the company to the customers and back again to the company, shown by the two-way arrow ↔. More than that, feedback moves back and forth between the customers and is re-tweeted until the tweet reaches millions of customers. According to Ramsaran-Fowdar, Rooma, and Sooraj Fowdar, "this creation of relationships forms online communities where interaction and socializing are the main focus, with members sharing similar interests and learning about each other by exchanging information" (qtd in Ramsaran-Fowdar, Rooma, and Sooraj Fowdar 74). Facebook and other social networks allow companies to connect directly to more people than they would through phone calls, emails, or meetings. In the Facebook communities, marketers want consumers like that to help them create marketing strategies.

According to Ramsaran-Fowdar, Rooma, and Sooraj Fowdar, Facebook data can be compared to a crystal ball to understand customers. This information can then be

used for direct marketing purposes. Objectives that can be achieved include the following:

- 1) Facebook profile.
- 2) Facebook groups.
- 3) Business/Fan pages.
- 4) Sharing events.
- 5) Social ads.

(Ramsaran-Fowdar, Rooma, and Sooraj Fowdar 75)

Social networks are free or inexpensive marketing tools that do not need a huge team or budget. According to Victoria Bolotaeva and Teuta Cata, "MySpace (2009) charges \$25 minimum to start advertising on MySpace, plus \$0.25 per advertisement. Facebook (2009) charges \$5 minimum daily budget, plus either \$0.01 or \$0.15 cents depending on the advertising campaign purchased. LinkedIn (2009) charges a \$25 rate per thousand clicks" (Victoria Bolotaeva, and Teuta Cata 3). Alan Glazier, OD Founder of Shady Grove Eye & Vision Care and Founder of ODs on Facebook, says about the companies that use other marketing ways and leaving the social networks that "They're spending a lot of money they don't need to; there's a free way to drive business... [these services can be done] by ... younger staffers or a professional company does it" (Glazier, Alan, and Vernon Trollinger 1).

Social networks prove to be low-cost tool, which means they are helping companies reach their most important goal of increasing their revenues. According to Ramsaran-Fowdar, Rooma, and Sooraj Fowdar, "one of the main benefits of social networking for organizations is ... lower marketing costs" (qtd in Ramsaran-Fowdar, Rooma, and Sooraj Fowdar 76). When the economy of the United States of America was not doing well, companies were trying to do whatever they could to reduce spending. Social networking sites were their smart solution to market their businesses with a small budget. According to Ramsaran-Fowdar, Rooma, and Sooraj Fowdar, "costs of communication have fallen drastically with Facebook and other social networking sites, creating opportunities for organizations to communicate directly, quickly and consistently with millions of individual customers" (qtd in Ramsaran-Fowdar, Rooma, and Sooraj Fowdar 76).

Social network programs are very effective tools that help you to keep your existing customers and to acquire new customers. The social network programs' history will

help us to have a better understanding of the effectiveness of social network programs. In 2004, Facebook started as a social networking site for Harvard University students. In 2006, Facebook was made accessible to the public. Since then, the number of its users has continued to increase to about 600 million users today. Facebook is considered the most visited online social network site. In 2006, Twitter started as a new form of social media that gives its user the ability to write text messages of up to 140 characters called "tweets." In 2011, the number of its users reached 200 million. According to a recent study, Twitter has a large share of mobile users, who consider Twitter the most effective social network program in terms of driving purchase activity.

Dasilva and other colleagues highlighted the importance that the social networks are acquiring with very revealing data. Approximately 54% of the young Spanish university students that participated in the survey declared that keeping their Facebook profile updated was more important than keeping appointments, attending parties, and even spending time with friends. In light of these data, companies have to realize that it is necessary to include social networks in their brand

strategies and communication plans (Dasilva, J. Á. Pé, et al 677). Alan Glazier, believes that "about 85 percent of people search for their healthcare providers online. If a person does not appear on the first page of the search of Google, you're leaving a ton of money on the table" (Glazier, Alan, and Vernon Trollinger 1). Social networking is not just for companies or non-profitable organization. Richter, Jason P., David B. Muhlestein, and Chrisanne E. A. Wilks examined hospital characteristics associated with social media use in the United States of America. Moreover, they found that seven in ten hospitals use social media. The benefits that hospitals get from using social media are increased revenue, employee recruitment, and increased customer satisfaction. Big companies around the world understand the importance of having social networks as a marketing tool. According to Dasilva, "the presence of companies in social networks is more than noticeable. More than 93% of the studied companies have official accounts in the two most important online social networks: Facebook and Twitter" (Dasilva, J. Á. Pé, et al 690).

TABLE 1 – Summary Description of the Facebook Pages as of February 1, 2013

Name	Ranking	Category of Brand	Date Page Launched	Most Popular Age	Australian	Global Likes	Talking	Members
Bubble O'Bill Ice Creams	9	Ice cream	July 29, 2008	18–24	1 055 065	1 281 834	5 102	0.4
Skittles	16	Confectionary	December 3, 2007	18–24	896 469	24 435 851	181 425	0.7
Domino's Pizza—Australia	24	Quick-serve restaurant	January 4, 2009	13–24	762 990	822 714	5 169	0.6
Coca-Cola Australia	25	Sugar-sweetened beverage	December 18, 2008	13–17	761 020	922 943	4 509	0.5
Coca-Cola ^b	30	Sugar-sweetened beverage	December 15, 2008	18–24	714 465	59 576 447	1 430 168	2.4
Red Bull	34	Energy drink	November 15, 2007	18–24	689 609	36 142 113	407 760	1.1
Pringles (Australia region)	40	Salty snack	July 27, 2009	13–24	664 532	22 650 276	17 761	0.1
Oreo	54	Baked snack	August 7, 2009	18–24	590 894	31 889 266	198 526	0.6
KFC Australia	65	Quick-serve restaurant	June 12, 2009	18–24	542 813	654 685	4 246	0.6
McDonald's Australia	79	Quick-serve restaurant	February 17, 2011	13–24	496 615	553 761	12 676	2.3
Subway Australia	97	Quick-serve restaurant	June 1, 2010	13–17	452 133	492 107	14 727	3.0
Slurpee	122	Sugar-sweetened beverage	June 26, 2008	18–24	416 365	4 884 844	57 839	1.2
Monster Energy	131	Energy drink	April 20, 2008	18–24	409 940	21 073 042	296 637	1.4
Ferrero Rocher	132	Chocolate	March 15, 2008	18–24	409 314	17 414 997	30 548	0.2
Subway	133	Quick-serve restaurant	December 16, 2009	18–24	401 082	20 582 657	158 980	0.8
Starburst	135	Confectionary	September 10, 2009	18–24	400 084	11 876 839	29 557	0.2
Pizza Hut Australia	148	Quick-serve restaurant	November 16, 2010	18–24	383 920	413 894	1 801	0.4
Slurpee Australia	149	Sugar-sweetened beverage	January 20, 2010	13–17	383 618	406 706	4 726	1.2
V Energy Drink Australia	155	Energy drink	September 26, 2010	18–24	377 761	499 664	11 634	2.3
Maltesers	165	Chocolate	May 29, 2012	18–24	357 736	1 625 219	14 754	0.9
Nutella	207	Spread	July 28, 2008	18–24	309 651	17 086 900	64 647	0.4
Cold Rock Ice Creamery	210	Ice cream	February 10, 2008	13–17	305 780	330 822	129	0.0
Cadbury Dairy Milk—Australia ^c	214	Chocolate	March 22, 2010	25–34	298 784	381 288	31 344	8.2
Cadbury Eyebrows	228	Chocolate	January 23, 2009	13–24	284 819	626 159	157	0.0
Vegemite	234	Spread	July 1, 2009	25–34	280 469	329 526	4 415	1.3
Hungry Jack's	244	Quick-serve restaurant	May 20, 2008	18–24	273 724	312 645	16 212	5.2
Maltesers Australia	250	Chocolate	January 15, 2012	13–17	271 389	281 480	10 491	3.7

Totals	13 191 041	277 548 679	3 015 940	1.1
Average	488 557	10 279 581	111 701	1.5
Median	13 191 041	922 943	14 754	0.8

Note. Duplication in the fan base across pages is likely, but we were unable to quantify this.

aRank is within Top 250 Facebook Pages in Australia as of February 1, 2013.

bUnable to open timeline photo album.

cAt the time of data collection, this was a stand-alone Facebook page. It is now part of the Cadbury Dairy Milk page, but the same page timeline content appears in the Australia region filter.

(Freeman, Becky 59).

In 2011, a study done by the American Marketing Association at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business shows those companies are increasing their budgets in marketing for social media each year. They increased their social media marketing budget from 6% in 2011 to 10% in 2012. In 2010, social media marketing budget was 18% of their marketing budget, suggesting that these companies noticed the great impact of social networks as an effective marketing tool.

The friendly environment of social network programs is a great factor that helps companies to reach their consumers. Using social media, these companies are able to recommend products almost as if they were friends with their consumers. According to Ramsaran-Fowdar, Rooma, and Sooraj Fowdar, "the main reason that Facebook marketing will work is because the organization will enter a community and engage as a friend to customers and that Facebook itself is based around the premise of friendship implying trust" (79). After they build a strong relation, the organization will send and post a lot of information about its products and services, which shifts the focus from creating personal relationships to reaching customers. Moreover, a recent study shows that consumers are trusting online sources more than ever. In 2010, Nielsen conducted a study called the Value of Social Media Ad Impressions, suggesting that 27% of Spanish internet users visit social networks to get advice and recommendations from their friends before buying a product, which increases sales 8% when a consumer speaks about a product on a social networks, and involves a 16% to 30% increases in brand recall when a consumer recommends a product and mentions it in his or her feed.

Moreover, social networks play an important role in marketing especially in term of creating a friendly and effective environment that helps companies to have great communication with their current and future customers. According to Sisira Neti "

- 1) Social media can be used to provide an identity about the companies and the products or services that they offer.
- 2) Social media helps in creating relationships with people who might not otherwise know about the products or services or what the companies represent.
- 3) Social media makes companies "real" to consumers." (Sisira Neti 9)

Social network programs—especially Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, Instagram, and etc.—are the ways that people communicate, and this, in turn, has changed the way organizations communicate. Direct targeting, low costs, and the friendly and effective environment of social network programs play a huge role in making social network programs one of the best if not the best marketing tool. After using social networks to purchase a product, consumers' role does not end in purchase operations. They share their thoughts, feelings, and opinions about their purchase to expose other consumers to the products. Now, the recommendation function is not just for magazines, television, or experts. According to Ramsaran-Fowdar, Rooma, and Sooraj Fowdar, "Organizations are hiring community managers and social media analysts, and they are forming their own departments, separate from those of the traditional marketing and advertising sectors." (73) Although it can be challenging to understand these new tools, companies are examining, experimenting, and using them to their advantage. Social networks are very effective marketing tools and are going to play a great role in terms of encouraging companies to connect with their customers, ultimately adding value and driving the companies to the path to success.

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