

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING: STRATEGIES & ITS IMPACT

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ABSTRACT

Today, we are in 21st century and people do not find time to come & interact with each other. Social media helps in connecting themselves with social networking sites through which now people can stay far and yet remain connected. Apart from this media like Facebook create a loyal connection between product and individual which leads to large advertising opportunities. Similarly, other social media like Blogs create a platform to post comment on any event which needs to be publicized also can be utilized as a promotional technique for customer's adoption as well as for promotions. Now users are acquiring followers & subscribers and directing them to your social networking page. These media has an competitive edge over other popular public media like Television because there is a time gap between social event occurrence and the time it is being broadcasted. This research paper emphasizes on the strategies which can take this viral marketing mode beyond the normal social media at present. As a result it can also help in building your community strong enough to make your marketing effective & initiative buying.

KEYWORDS: Social Media, Blog, Twitter, Facebook, Social Advertising.

INTRODUCTION

Social media marketing refers to the process of gaining website traffic or attention through social media sites. Social media marketing programs usually center on efforts to create content that attracts attention and encourages readers to share it with their social networks. A corporate message spreads from user to user and presumably resonates because it appears to come from a trusted, third-party source, as opposed to the brand or company itself.[citation needed] Hence, this form of marketing is driven by word-of-mouth, meaning it results in earned media rather than paid media.

Social media has become a platform that is easily accessible to anyone with internet access. Increased communication for organizations fosters brand awareness and often, improved customer service. Additionally, social media serves as a relatively inexpensive platform for organizations to implement marketing campaigns.

SOCIAL MEDIA OUTLETS/PLATFORMS

TWITTER, FACEBOOK, GOOGLE+, YOUTUBE, BLOGS

Social networking websites allow individuals to interact with one another and build relationships. When products or companies join those sites, people can interact with the product or company. That interaction feels personal to users because of their previous experiences with social networking site interactions. Social networking sites like Twitter, Facebook, Google Plus, YouTube, Pinterest and blogs allow individual followers to “retweet” or “repost” comments made by the product being promoted. By repeating the message, all of the users connections are able to see the message, therefore reaching more people. Social networking sites act as word of mouth. Because the information about the product is being put out there and is getting repeated, more traffic is brought to the product/company.

Through social networking sites, products/companies can have conversations and interactions with individual followers. This personal interaction can instill a feeling of loyalty into followers and potential customers. Also, by choosing whom to follow on these sites, products can reach a very narrow target audience.

CELL PHONES

Cell phone usage has also become a benefit for social media marketing. Today, many cell phones have social networking capabilities: individuals are notified of any happenings on social networking sites through their cell phones, in real-time. This constant connection to social networking sites means products and companies can constantly remind and update followers about their capabilities, uses, importance, etc. Because cell phones are connected to social networking sites, advertisements are always in sight. Also many companies are now putting QR codes along with products for individuals to access the companies website or online services with their smart-phones.

ENGAGEMENT

In the context of the social web, engagement means that customers and stakeholders are participants rather than viewers. Social media in business allows anyone and everyone to express and share an opinion or idea somewhere along the business’s path to market. Each participating customer becomes part of the marketing department, as other customers read their comments or reviews. The engagement process is then fundamental to successful social media marketing.

CAMPAIGNS

ADIDAS

In 2007, Adidas, and their agency Carat, created a social media experience for soccer players. Adidas pitted two different cleat types against one another and asked people to “choose your side.” The content focused on fostering an environment of friendly discussion and debate of Adidas’ two models of elite soccer cleats/boots, Predator and F50 TUNIT. Visitors to the community had the opportunity to align themselves with one product “team” and offer comments in support of their preferred model. The community included content about professional Adidas soccer players on each “team,” rotational product views, downloadable graphics, forum discussions, a link to additional product information, and a link to the adidas Mexico Fútbol profile page.

BETTY WHITE

Social networking sites can have a large impact on the outcome of events. In 2010, a Facebook campaign surfaced in the form of a petition. Users virtually signed a petition asking NBC Universal to have actress Betty White host Saturday Night Live. Once signed, users forwarded the petition to all of their followers. The petition went viral and on May 8, 2010, Betty White hosted SNL.

2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The 2008 presidential campaign had a huge presence on social networking sites. Barack Obama, a Democratic candidate for US President, used Twitter and Facebook to differentiate his campaign. His social networking site profile pages were constantly being updated and interacting with followers. The use of social networking sites gave Barack Obama’s campaign access to e-mail addresses, as posted on social networking site profile pages. This allowed the Democratic Party to launch e-mail campaigns asking for votes and campaign donations.

LOCAL BUSINESSES

Small businesses also use social networking sites as a promotional technique. Businesses can follow individuals social networking site uses in the local area and advertise specials and deals. These can be exclusive and in the form of “get a free drink with a copy of this tweet”. This type of message encourages other locals to follow the business on the sites in order to obtain the promotional deal. In the process, the business is getting seen and promoting itself.

TACTICS

TWITTER

Twitter allows companies to promote products on an individual level. The use of a product can be explained in short messages that followers are more likely to read. These messages appear on followers’ home pages. Messages can link to the product’s website, Facebook profile, photos, videos, etc. This link provides followers the opportunity to spend more time interacting with the

product online. This interaction can create a loyal connection between product and individual and can also lead to larger advertising opportunities. Twitter promotes a product in real-time and brings customers in.

FACEBOOK

Facebook profiles are more detailed than Twitter. They allow a product to provide videos, photos, and longer descriptions. Videos can show when a product can be used as well as how to use it. These also can include testimonials as other followers can comment on the product pages for others to see. Facebook can link back to the product's Twitter page as well as send out event reminders. Facebook promotes a product in real-time and brings customers in.

As marketers see more value in social media marketing, advertisers continue to increase sequential ad spend in social by 25%. Strategies to extend the reach with Sponsored Stories and acquire new fans with Facebook ads continue to an uptick in spend across the site. The study attributes 84% of "engagement" or clicks to Likes that link back to Facebook advertising. Today, brands increase fan counts on average of 9% monthly, increasing their fan base by two-times the amount annually.

BLOGS

Blogs allow a product or company to provide longer descriptions of products or services. The longer description can include reasoning and uses. It can include testimonials and can link to and from Facebook, Twitter and many social network and blog pages. Blogs can be updated frequently and are promotional techniques for keeping customers. Other promotional uses are acquiring followers and subscribers and direct them to your social network pages.

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TOOLS

Besides research tools, there are many companies providing specialized platforms/tools for social media marketing, such as tools for:

- Social Media Monitoring
- Social Aggregation
- Social Book Marking and Tagging
- Social Analytics and Reporting
- Automation
- Social Media
- Blog Marketing
- Validation

IMPLICATION ON TRADITIONAL ADVERTISING

MINIMIZING USE

Traditional advertising techniques include print and television advertising. The Internet had already overtaken television as the largest advertising market. Websites often include banner or pop-up ads. Social networking sites don't always have ads. In exchange, products have entire pages and are able to interact with users. Television commercials often end with a spokesperson asking viewers to check out the product website for more information. Print ads are also starting to include barcodes on them. These barcodes can be scanned by cell phones and computers, sending viewers to the product website. Advertising is beginning to move viewers from the traditional outlets to the electronic ones.

LEAKS

Internet and social networking leaks are one of the issues facing traditional advertising. Video and print ads are often leaked to the world via the Internet earlier than they are scheduled to premiere. Social networking sites allow those leaks to go viral, and be seen by many users more quickly. Time difference is also a problem facing traditional advertisers. When social events occur and are broadcast on television, there is often a time delay between airings on the east coast and west coast of the United States. Social networking sites have become a hub of comment and interaction concerning the event. This allows individuals watching the event on the west coast (time-delayed) to know the outcome before it airs. The 2011 Grammy Awards highlighted this problem. Viewers on the west coast learned who won different awards based on comments made on social networking sites by individuals watching live on the east coast. Since viewers knew who won already, many tuned out and ratings were lower. All the advertisement and promotion put into the event was lost because viewers didn't have a reason to watch.

5 ADVANCED SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

The definition of an advanced social strategy is a technique that goes beyond the normal social media presence. It introduces or reinforces a marketing message while pushing a user to another profile or business site. Before moving forward with an advanced strategy, it's important that your business understands social marketing, has experience engaging consumers, and that you possess a basic understanding of online marketing.

STRATEGY 1: MULTIMEDIA USAGE

The term "A picture is worth a thousand words" has never been truer. Consumers are now using the web to look for product pictures and videos; they want more information and want to see what they're considering buying. The good news is that it's easy for a company to create and publish videos and pictures. In addition to taking photos of products, you can also take pictures at office events as a way to highlight company culture. This not only helps convince others to work with you or to buy from you (consumers see that you are down to earth and one of them,

instead of a stuffy company), it also helps your HR department recruit new employees. Who doesn't want to work for a company that celebrates birthdays and has a good time? Videos are useful for explaining complex how-tos or concepts. Showing step by step directions can have a greater impact than even the most well written article. Businesses don't have to invest huge sums of money to create good videos, either. I highly recommend the relatively cheap Flip camcorder, which takes great videos and is easy for even a non-technical marketer to use. Multimedia can break down the faceless business-to-consumer sales flow and make your company appear friendlier. Use videos and images to show that your business is fun, you care about your employees, and most importantly, that you care about your customers.

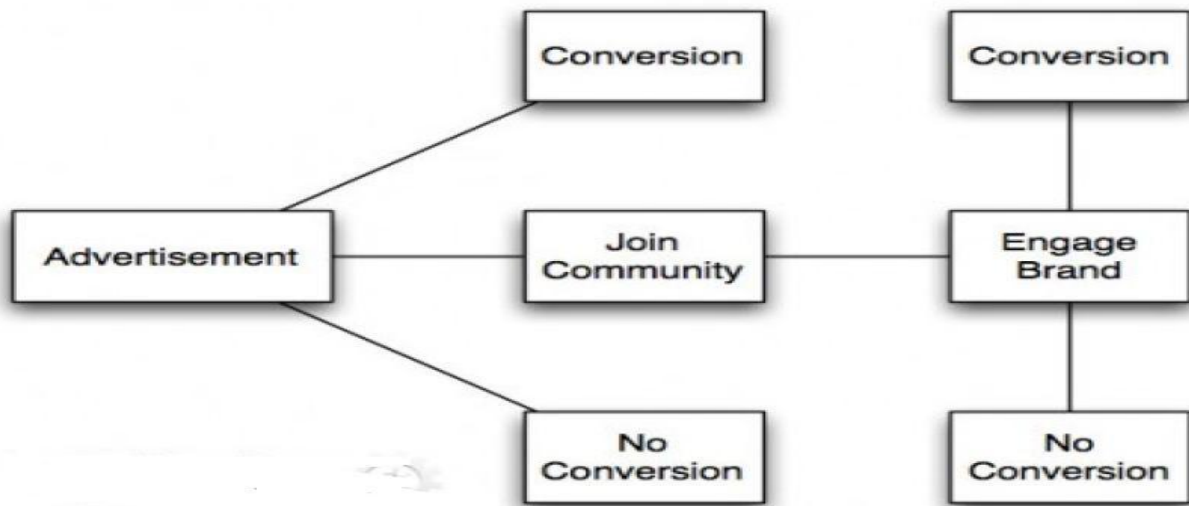
EXAMPLE: WORLD MUSIC SUPPL.COM

WorldMusicSupply.com, an online retailer of musical instruments and accessories, has used YouTube to build a strong online community. Their channel has built over 7,000 subscribers and has over 260,000 views.

The screenshot displays the YouTube channel for WorldMusicSupply. On the left, there is a channel profile section with a 'Subscribe' button. The profile includes the channel name, a 'DIRECTOR' badge, and contact information: phone number 1-800-867-4611, website http://www.worldmusicsupply.com, and location in Muscle, United States. The main content area features a video player showing a person playing an acoustic guitar. Below the video, the title 'TC Electronic Voice Live Vocal Effects FX Processor' is visible, along with statistics: 'From: WorldMusicSupply', 'Views: 203,550', and 'Comments: 220'. The YouTube interface includes navigation links like 'Videos | Shows | Channels | Community | Upload' and a search bar.

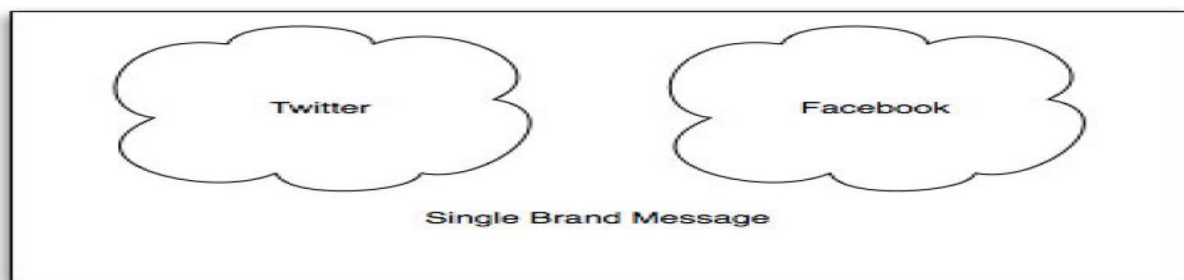
STRATEGY 2: INTEGRATE OFFLINE AND ONLINE ADVERTISING

Many small businesses do some sort of offline advertising, whether it be radio, print, or cable. Social marketing allows a business to extend their offline sales pitch. Including your Facebook Page or blog URL in offline ads act as social proof, inviting potential consumers to see your community and increase trust in your business. Not only can integrating online and offline advertising help the conversion process, but it can also help build your community. Introducing potential consumers to your social profiles means they may join your community now and buy later.

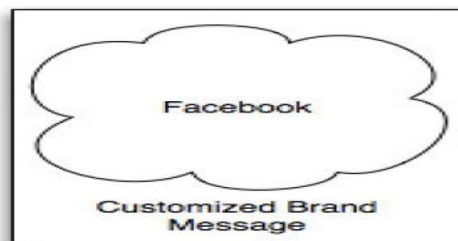
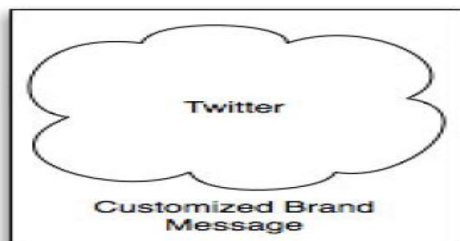


STRATEGY 3: MESSAGE ADAPTATION

As businesses start to become more sophisticated with social media they are starting to leverage more online platforms. However, most deliver the same message over multiple platforms instead of tailoring communications for each individual site. Social platforms each have an ecosystem of their own. What might be acceptable on Tumblr might be considered spam on Facebook. A specific style of writing might spread on Twitter but fail on FriendFeed. Understanding that each site is different and then customizing your message ensures they do well on each respective site. Not only does customizing messages across sites help the message spread but it keeps users from receiving multiple identical communications. Be sure to maximize your potential by sending a user that follows the business on Twitter and Facebook two different messages, instead of the same thing.



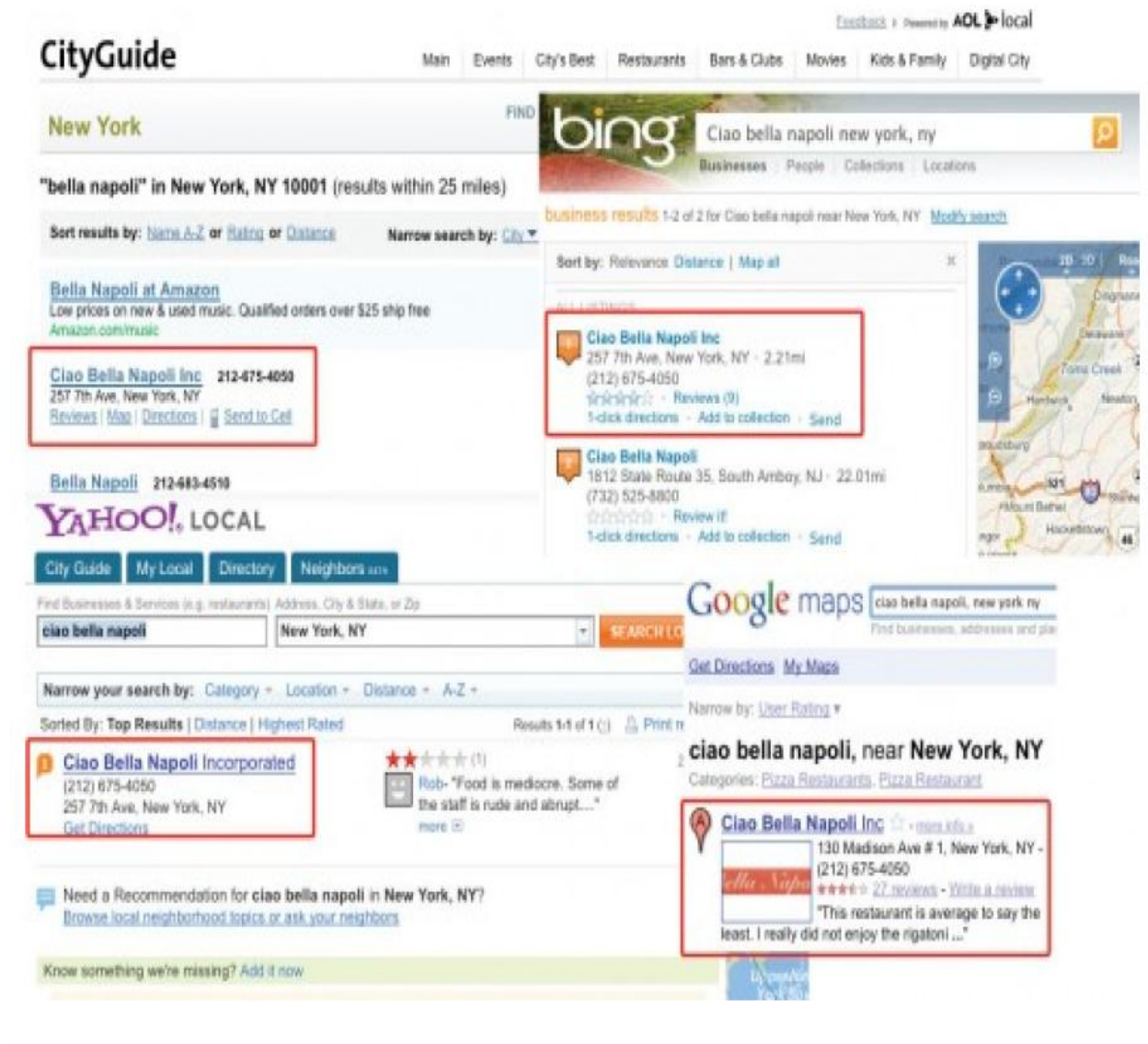
Versus



STRATEGY 4: LOCAL SOCIAL NETWORKS, BEYOND YELP

For a small business, local search can be a big win. Being visible to consumers looking for a business in their area is extremely important. Make sure your site is included in local business directories in order to help ensure that consumers find you when they need you. Sometimes finding that many sites can be difficult, however. First, make sure you check your competitors. Where are they listed? Check their inbound links to check for business directories you can add yourself to. Also, make sure your business has been added to Google Maps, using the Local Business Center. Take the time to include all the information you can and update any old news. For many consumers, this will be their first interaction with the business.

Example: Bella Napoli in New York Bella Napoli is a small pizzeria in New York that has done a great job of making sure they appear in as many local searches as possible.



STRATEGY 5: CONTESTS AND DISCOUNTS

Building a community is only the first part of social marketing. Using that community to drive sales, propagate marketing, or crowdsource operations is the true power of social media. One way to excite the community is to collectively do something to create a contest or offer an exclusive discount (i.e., the contest can create competition between users). Not only does a contest build buzz organically but if contestants need to, for example, publish an article that gets the most comments in order to win, the contest itself becomes viral. A good social media contest should include some sort of sharing or virality as a requirement for winning. Discounts are also a great way to connect with your community. By giving exclusive coupons to your social community, you're rewarding and reminding them that you are not only a brand to engage with, but also to buy from.

EXAMPLE: NETFIRMS.COM

NetFirms.com decided to make it easier to register a domain by allowing people to do it via Twitter. Those who participated or spread the word by tweeting, were also entered into a prize drawing.

The image shows the NetFirms.com website interface. At the top, there is a search bar for domain names, navigation links for Home, Web Hosting, Domain Names, E-Commerce, and Enterprise, and a prominent red 'Signup Now' button. Below the navigation is a banner for a 'Twitter Domain Contest by Netfirms'. The banner features the text 'register your domain via twitter Industry first' and a 'Click here to enter and WIN! TWEET' button. It also includes a video player for a 'Guided Tour', images of a laptop, smartphone, and tablet displaying the NetFirms website, and a red banner that says 'Register a domain to WIN'. Another red banner says 'Win a MacBook'. The contest dates are listed as 'September 9th to October 7th 2009'.

CONCLUSION

Social platforms each have an ecosystem of their own. Creating a basic social media presence is easy enough, getting your community to actually do something is more difficult. Make sure your site is included in local business directories in order to help ensure that consumers find you when they need you. Customizing messages across sites help the message spread but it keeps users from receiving multiple identical communications. By giving exclusive coupons to your social community, you're rewarding and reminding them that you are not only a brand to engage with, but also to buy from. Taking advantage of these strategies can help you build your community, make your marketing more effective, and incentivize buying.

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