

Social Media Marketing

A Strategic Approach 3e



Zahay | Roberts | Parker
Barker | Barker

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Social Media Marketing: A Strategic Approach, Third Edition
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Art Director and Cover Designer: Chris
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Cover Image Source: Shutterstock ID: 292400537

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2021949896

ISBN: 978-0-357-51618-8

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Printed in the United States of America
Print Number: 01 Print Year: 2021

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Preface



Social Media Marketing: A Strategic Approach is built upon an eight-step planning cycle that helps ensure the development of a winning SMM plan. This model incorporates the conceptual foundation and practical techniques necessary for creating a comprehensive and effective SMM plan. The model also provides a framework for developing a personal brand, a subject given chapter-by-chapter coverage in the third edition.

This planning cycle begins with observing an organization's current goals, presence and competition on the social web, followed by the establishment of SMART social media objectives and effective strategies to achieve them. The next step is to define an organization's target markets and campaign-specific audiences on the social web. This process makes it possible for a company to identify the social media platforms with the highest concentrations of its target audiences and determine how they are participating on those platforms, which enables the organization to select the optimal social media platforms for reaching its target audiences.

Interaction on the social web is guided by informal rules of engagement and general principles of appropriate behavior (social media ethics). Marketers must be aware of these precepts before attempting to participate in social media or risk alienating the very market segments they hope to connect with and influence.

With these guidelines in mind, as well as the company's social media goals, strategies, target audiences, and prime social media platforms, marketers can craft actionable platform-specific marketing tactics. The execution of these tactics allows an organization to implement its social media strategies across multiple platforms and realize the company's marketing goals. The bulk of this textbook is dedicated to learning how to create and deploy specific marketing tactics using online platforms and the mobile web.

Social media tools that make the process more efficient as well as more effective are given detailed coverage. In addition, extensive consideration is given to monitoring and measuring the progress made in reaching social media objectives and demonstrating return on investment. Feedback, both qualitative and quantitative, provides the means to continuously adjust and improve the elements of an SMM plan to maximize the chances of success. Because the organization must work toward the goals selected in a cohesive manner, an entire chapter is devoted to managing and staffing the social media organization.

The final chapter draws upon all the preceding material in the textbook to demonstrate and explain how to develop a formal SMM plan with multiple references and illustrations from a real-world sample plan (presented in its entirety in the Appendix). Hence, this textbook provides a rich and robust cumulative learning experience with deep contextual relevance that endows the reader with an enduring understanding of the process of effective SMM planning. This process provides the social media marketer with a strong foundation for dealing with the ever-changing audiences, platforms and technologies of the social web.

About the Authors



Debra Zahay

Debra Zahay is a tenured, full professor of marketing and director of the Master of Science in Digital Marketing and Analytics degree program at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas. She holds her PhD in marketing from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, an MBA from Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, a JD from Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois, and an AB from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. Dr. Zahay is also the president of Zahay, Inc., a digital marketing strategy and education consulting firm.

Dr. Zahay has been teaching Internet marketing, search and social media marketing, data management, and related topics at the university level since 1999 and has taught full-time at Aurora University in Aurora, Illinois, Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois, North Carolina State University in Raleigh, North Carolina, and DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois.

Dr. Zahay researches how firms can use customer information to increase firm performance as well as how universities can leverage best practices in digital marketing pedagogy. Some journals in which she has published include *Journal of Interactive Marketing* (Best Paper 2014), *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, *Decision Sciences*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, *Marketing Education Review*, and *Journal of Marketing Education*. She coauthored the fourth edition of the Cengage textbook *Internet Marketing: Integrating Online and Offline Strategies in a Digital Environment* with Mary Lou Roberts, solo-authored a book with Business Expert Press, *Digital Marketing Management: A Handbook for the Current (or Future) CEO, second edition*. Active in her profession, she is a long-standing member of both the American Marketing Association, the Marketing Management Association, and the Academy of Marketing Science, where she has served as track chair. She and Dr. Parker have taught workshops on teaching digital marketing worldwide. She serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Analytics*, and *Industrial Marketing Management* and is the former editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing* (2011–2017).

Mary Lou Roberts

Mary Lou Roberts was a professor emeritus of management and marketing at the University of Massachusetts Boston who passed in January of 2020. Her enduring contributions to this book as well as the profession of marketing and the disciplines of digital and social media marketing will be missed by the academic and professional community.

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Janna Parker is assistant professor of marketing at James Madison University where she teaches strategic Internet marketing, integrated marketing communications, and omnichannel marketing. She holds a DBA in marketing from Louisiana Tech University. Her previous full-time academic appointments include Cameron University and Georgia College and State University where she taught integrated marketing communications, social media, retailing, and other related topics in undergraduate and graduate courses.

Dr. Parker's research interests include retailing, advertising, and social media. Her research has been published in journals such as *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, and *Studies in Higher Education*. She serves on the Editorial Review Board for the *Journal of Marketing Education*. She has stayed active in several marketing organizations such as the Academy of Marketing Science, the Society for Marketing Advances and the Marketing Management. With Dr. Zahay, she has presented workshops on teaching digital marketing at multiple conferences and served as a digital marketing track chair for several conferences. Dr. Parker has served in many roles on the Executive Council for the Academy of Marketing Science and including Director of Social Media and Vice President of Engagement. She is the 2021 recipient of the Academy of Marketing Science Harold and Muriel Berkman Faculty Achievement and Development Award.

Melissa S. Barker

Melissa Barker, Marketing Consultant & Founder of Strategy Now LLC

Melissa is a data-driven marketing consultant, founder of Strategy Now LLC. She has been helping businesses with social media and business strategy for over a decade. Melissa has a unique ability to explain complex concepts in an easy-to-follow manner and deliver strategy into clear directives to help her clients.

Melissa's specialty is in helping technology companies drive demand, grow their brand and cultivate relationships with customers through social media. She is a trailblazer in the field of social media marketing, as the author of the first (and international, best-selling) college textbook on social media marketing. Melissa has also developed and currently teaches courses in social media marketing, educating the next generation of marketers.

She has coauthored five textbooks, including the best-selling *Internet Research Illustrated*. In 2010, she created the first accredited social media marketing certificate in Washington State. She teaches search and social media marketing, as well as other related courses at Spokane Falls Community College. Melissa holds a B.A. in public relations and advertising from Gonzaga University, and an M.B.A. from Willamette University (expected in 2016). She has held key roles in digital marketing management at Siber Systems, Own Point of Sale, Integra Telecom, Jive Software, and Oregon Public Broadcasting. Melissa has become a recognized authority on LinkedIn, and a sought-after speaker at conferences, such as InnoTech and ITEXPO. For more information, visit: www.linkedin.com/in/melissasbarker

Donald I. Barker

Donald I. Barker has authored, coauthored, and contributed to forty cutting-edge and best-selling textbooks on subjects ranging from computer operating systems and expert systems to Internet research and social media marketing. He holds an M.B.A. from Eastern Washington University. As an assistant professor of information systems at Gonzaga University, he won the Best Theoretical Paper Award at the International Business Schools Computer Users Group's Annual North American Conference. In addition, he received several Jepson Scholarship Awards for notable publications in the field of artificial intelligence. As a senior editor of *PC AI Magazine*, he wrote the popular *Secret Agent Man* column. For more information, visit: www.linkedin.com/in/donaldibarker.

Acknowledgments



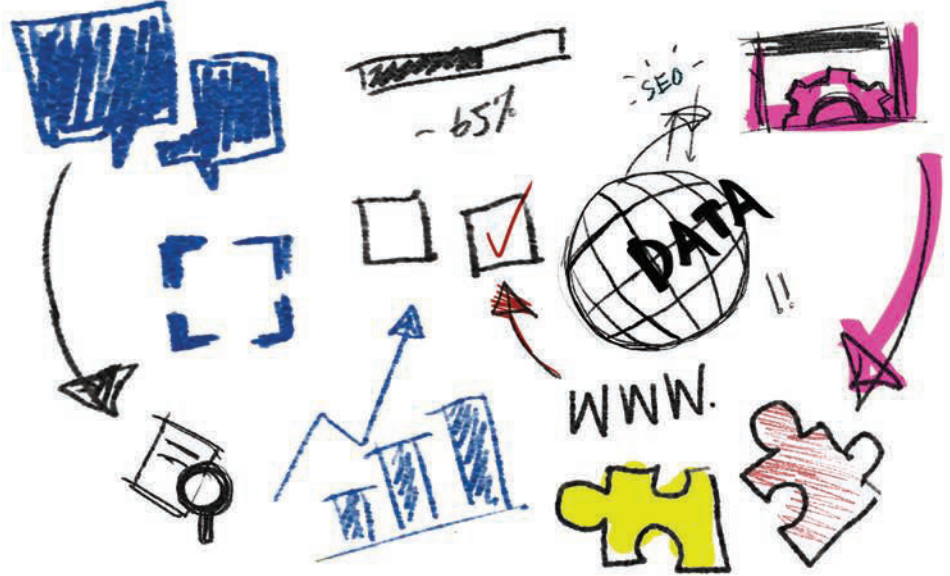
We are indebted to the instructors and students that made the third edition of *Social Media Marketing: A Strategic Approach* a success.

The authors of this text have been teaching Social Media Marketing since its early days as a marketing and communications discipline. Being in the forefront of a rapidly evolving discipline has its challenges, as well as its rewards. Our students have contributed important knowledge and insights about the working of social platforms, and the activities of social media users. Busy practitioners have given generously of their time and expertise to assist us and our students in understanding the real-world practices that make successful social media marketing a reality. For all these sources of information and inspiration, we express our profound gratitude, and our best wishes for a productive social media journey together.

Dedication



To our families for enduring the hassles of living with an author, to our students for their enthusiasm and insights, to the many practitioners who have been supportive of this effort, and to the late Dr. Mary Lou Roberts.



The Role of Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing (SMM) has emerged as a vital business force offering vibrant career options. It offers important benefits to marketers, but some aspects

are still not widely understood. SMM has experienced dramatic growth in recent years and is poised for substantial growth and change in years to come.



Social media is growing by leaps and bounds. It is estimated that by 2023 there will be around 3.43 *billion* social media users around the world. That is up from 3.08 billion in 2020, and it represents almost 70% of all Internet users.¹ Marketers are working hard to reach this huge social media audience. This book is intended to help both students and businesses understand the social media landscape and the changes that are taking place and learn how to approach it strategically.

Many businesses struggle with social media because they lack a definite plan. They start with an end in mind instead of creating a strategy and objectives. A company might start a Twitter account or a Facebook page, but it is not likely to see results unless there is a clear understanding of its marketing objectives. Like any form of marketing, a strong strategic plan for social media is required for success. This book contains chapters on establishing strategic goals and objectives and monitoring plan achievement as well as a chapter on the SMM plan itself and a sample SMM plan.

The advent of social media has also posed a challenge to traditional marketing methodologies. Marketing budgets are increasingly focused on digital, and the jobs of marketing professionals have changed as a result.

Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, students will be able to:

- Explain why social media is important to businesses around the world
- Define SMM
- Explain the seven myths of SMM
- Relate a brief history of SMM
- Explain characteristics of SMM and ways in which it differs from traditional offline marketing
- Describe typical positions that are available in SMM

(Continued)

- Discuss the characteristics of a successful social media marketer
- Identify best practices for SMM

Advertising has increasingly moved to the Internet and to the mobile web, with even long-time print magazines such as *The Atlantic* shifting to a largely digital-based revenue strategy.² For many firms, the focus is now online, which makes knowledge of SMM especially valuable for students and/or soon-to-be job seekers.

This book is organized into two core sections: the first four chapters will lay the foundation for engaging in social media, including marketing strategy and objectives, targeting specific audiences, and the background rules of social media. The remainder of the book will encompass more detailed elements of SMM and how to adapt the strategy to specific platforms and international audiences. By creating a solid marketing plan and choosing the right tools, a business can expediently and successfully navigate to its marketing goals and objectives.

What Is SMM?

There are many definitions of SMM. This one from the technology marketing site Mashable is straightforward and covers most of the important issues:

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. Hence, this form of marketing is driven by word-of-mouth, meaning it results in earned media rather than paid media.³

SMM has a number of important aspects:

1. *Creating buzz or newsworthy events, videos, tweets, or blog entries that attract attention and have the potential to become viral in nature. Buzz is what makes SMM work. It replicates a message through user to user contact, rather than the traditional method of purchasing an ad or promoting a press release. It emulates word of mouth (WOM) in the physical world and consequently can have a great deal of impact.*

A classic example, one that alerted many marketers to the power of social media, is “United Breaks Guitars.” It all started when musician Dave Carroll’s guitar was damaged on a United Airlines flight (Figure 1.1). He spent the next 9 months trying to recover the \$1,200 it cost to have the guitar repaired. As he tells the story, phoning and emailing only got him the run around. So he, with the help of musician friends, created a video at the cost of \$150. On July 6, 2009, he posted it on YouTube. Within 24 hours the video had over 150,000 views; 24 days later it had over a million views and major news organizations as well as social media users had picked it up.

United contacted him agreeing to pay the repair costs and offered \$1,200 in flight vouchers, which he declined. Two years later he estimated that his message had reached as many as 100 million people, courtesy of all the media mentions. All this created a storm of negative publicity for United.⁴

Having apparently not learned their lesson, United, in 2017, suffered another public relations nightmare when a video showing security personnel forcibly removing a passenger from an overbooked plane went viral. The passenger, who sustained injuries during the incident and later came to a financial arrangement with United, was a



AP Images/The Canadian Press/Andrew Vaughan

Figure 1.1 Dave Carroll with His Guitar

doctor trying to get back home to see patients the next day. The video of the incident has received millions of views on multiple news outlets. United's slow and unemphatic response and initial defense of the video guarantees that this incident will be used as an example of a public relations disaster for many years to come.⁵ The difference between 2009 and 2017 is the even more prevalent use of social media. The video that went viral in 2017 received 6.5 million views in less than a day.⁶

It is important to point out that no one can control, or even do a good job predicting, when a social media post will go viral. But marketers understand that they need to pay attention, perhaps even to improve their customer service.

2. Building ways that enable fans of a brand or company to promote a message themselves in multiple online social media venues. Corporations or brands can create pages on major social platforms where they can offer followers information and promotions like coupons. They can reach huge audiences on these platforms as will be shown in the next section of this chapter. As we will discuss in Chapter 3, these huge audiences can be segmented using profile data and behavioral data from the platform to reach targeted audiences or to attract paid advertising.

3. It is based around online conversations. SMM is not controlled by the organization. Instead it encourages user participation and dialog. A badly designed SMM campaign can potentially backfire on the organization that created it. To be successful SMM campaigns must fully engage and respect the users. Each type of platform, as discussed in Chapter 5, has its own way of engaging followers. How to conduct SMM in ways that bring positive response instead of public backlash is the subject of Chapter 4.

4. Social media is part of a larger media ecosystem of owned, paid, and earned media, which represents a way for marketers to leverage their own brand efforts. These media are defined in Figure 1.2.

As you can see, paid media describes the traditional print and broadcast media, which are now joined by paid advertising on social media platforms and blogs. Paid advertising on social platforms is not a major focus of this book, although it will be discussed briefly in Chapter 6.

The Internet gives brands the opportunity to own their own media outlets ranging from their websites to their Facebook and LinkedIn pages. It has made each brand its own publisher, responsible for content of many kinds and for its

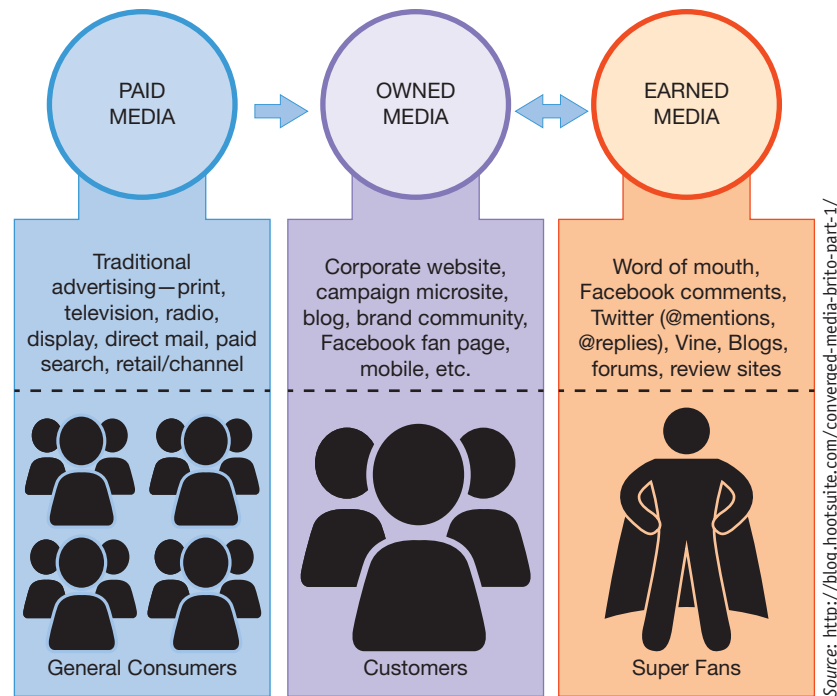


Figure 1.2 Paid, Owned, and Earned Media

dissemination. Much of the focus of this book is on creating content and marketing campaigns on different types of social platforms. Only the marketer's owned platforms are within her direct control.

The most valuable media of all in this ecosystem is earned media. When people begin talking about a brand and its content, they spread the word with no additional effort on the part of the marketer. Even more important, this digital WOM confers much credibility on the brand, especially if recognized experts or influencers are talking on Twitter, Facebook, their blogs, and other channels. Like traditional public relations, the brand cannot control the nature of this conversation but positive WOM in earned media can give the brand a significant boost.⁷

The combined impact of these aspects of SMM makes it quite different from traditional marketing in the offline media. As a result, a number of myths have grown up around SMM, which help to explain both misconceptions and challenges of the discipline.

The Seven Myths of SMM

SMM is one of the best ways that businesses can drive sales, build relationships, and satisfy their customers. Although social media has increased in popularity over the years as a marketing tool, there remain some common misconceptions about SMM. The following are seven of the most common myths that business professionals have regarding SMM.

Social Media Myth #1: Social Media Is Just a Fad

WRONG Social media continues to grow by virtually any measure you use. Figure 1.3 shows the number of active accounts for the world's 10 largest social media networks as of January 2020. The chart shows Facebook in the lead with almost two and a half billion active users. It also shows huge user bases for a number of messaging apps that

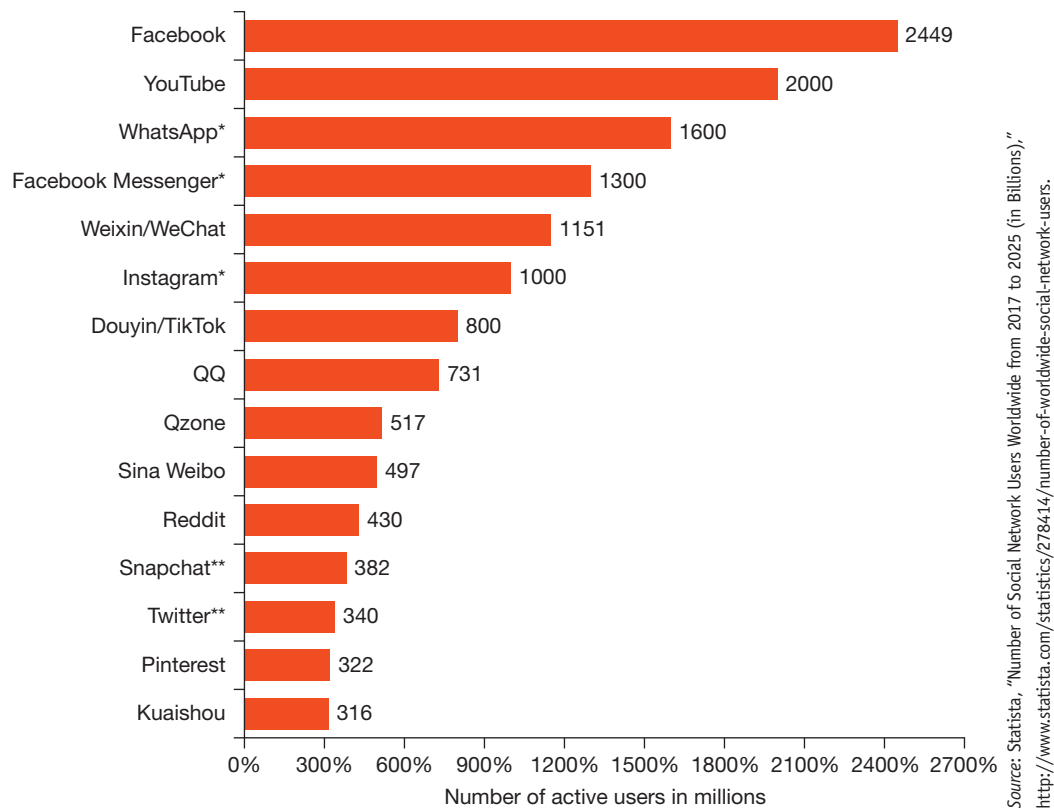


Figure 1.3 Most Popular Social Networks Worldwide as of April 2020
(ranked by number of active users)

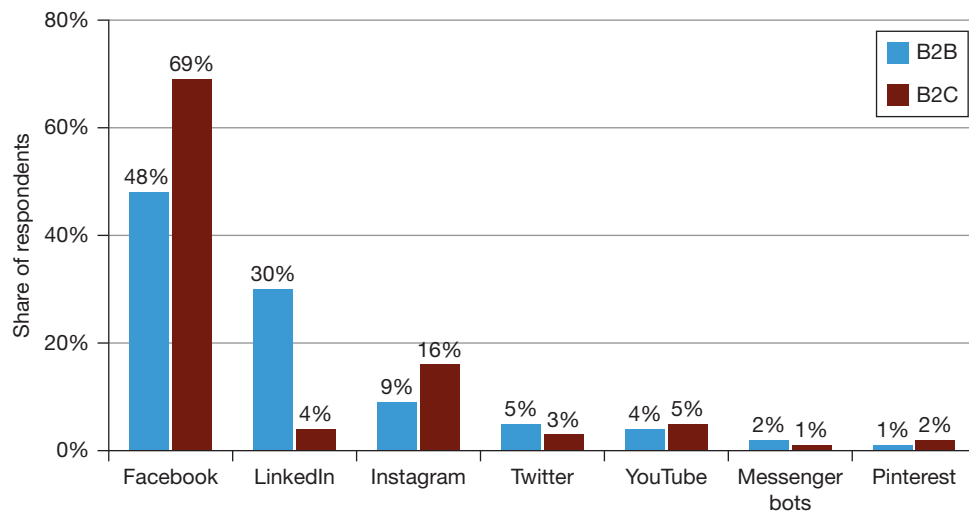
are not widely used in the United States like the Chinese platforms Tencent QQ and Sina Weibo, WhatsApp, Instagram, WeChat, and Google (YouTube) all made the top 10. Most surprising is TikTok in seventh place. It has 800 million active users, which is not bad for a platform that was not released to the United States until 2018!⁸

Businesses want to invest their time and energy in marketing tools that will be useful in the long term, versus wasting limited resources on a flash-in-the-pan technology or a fad. Some business professionals question whether social media will remain a powerful marketing and communications tool or if it will eventually fall by the wayside. To resolve this issue, it is helpful to look at the foundations of social media, which are built on age-old concepts of community, socialization, and WOM marketing.

The “social” component of social media has been part of human interactions since the dawn of time. People are inherently social creatures to some extent. What has changed is the media by which people are able to express social impulses. As technology has advanced, so have the media available for social behavior. Initially, social interactions were limited to in-person meetings, then mail and letters, then telephones, then email, and now social media, or web-based social interactions.

The underlying premise of social media—that people are social and want to connect with other people—has been stable over time. The difference is that people are now able to connect with each other in a more efficient and scalable way. Facebook allows users to see what friends from high school are up to without ever speaking to them. Photos of friends and family from across the world can be viewed on photo-sharing sites. In these and many other ways, social media allows people to keep up to speed with many connections in quick and efficient ways.

Like the Internet, social media is not a flash in the pan because of the human desire to socialize and because the media of the Internet continue to evolve at a rapid rate, providing new and attractive means for people to interact. Although social media



Sources: Survey conducted January 8 to February 7, 2019 by Pew Research Center; and Statista, "Most Important Social Media Platforms for B2B and B2C Marketers Worldwide as of January 2020," <https://www.statista.com/statistics/259404/most-important-social-media-platforms-for-b2b-and-b2c-marketers-worldwide>.

Figure 1.4 Social Media Platforms Used by B2C and B2B Marketers

will only expand in the foreseeable future, specific social media platforms (technologies or platforms such as Facebook and Twitter) change considerably over time and other platforms rise and fall in popularity. The social media marketer must be alert to ongoing changes in the social media environment.

In the face of all this change, marketers will focus on the platforms most used by their target audiences. Figure 1.4 shows an interesting contrast between the platforms used by B2C marketers. While Facebook is in the lead for both groups, among B2B marketers, LinkedIn holds a strong second place, whereas Instagram is second for B2C marketers. This reflects the different audiences for B2C and B2B marketing. Notice, however, that Instagram is also in the top three platforms for B2B marketing.⁹ For B2C marketing, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube round out the top three.

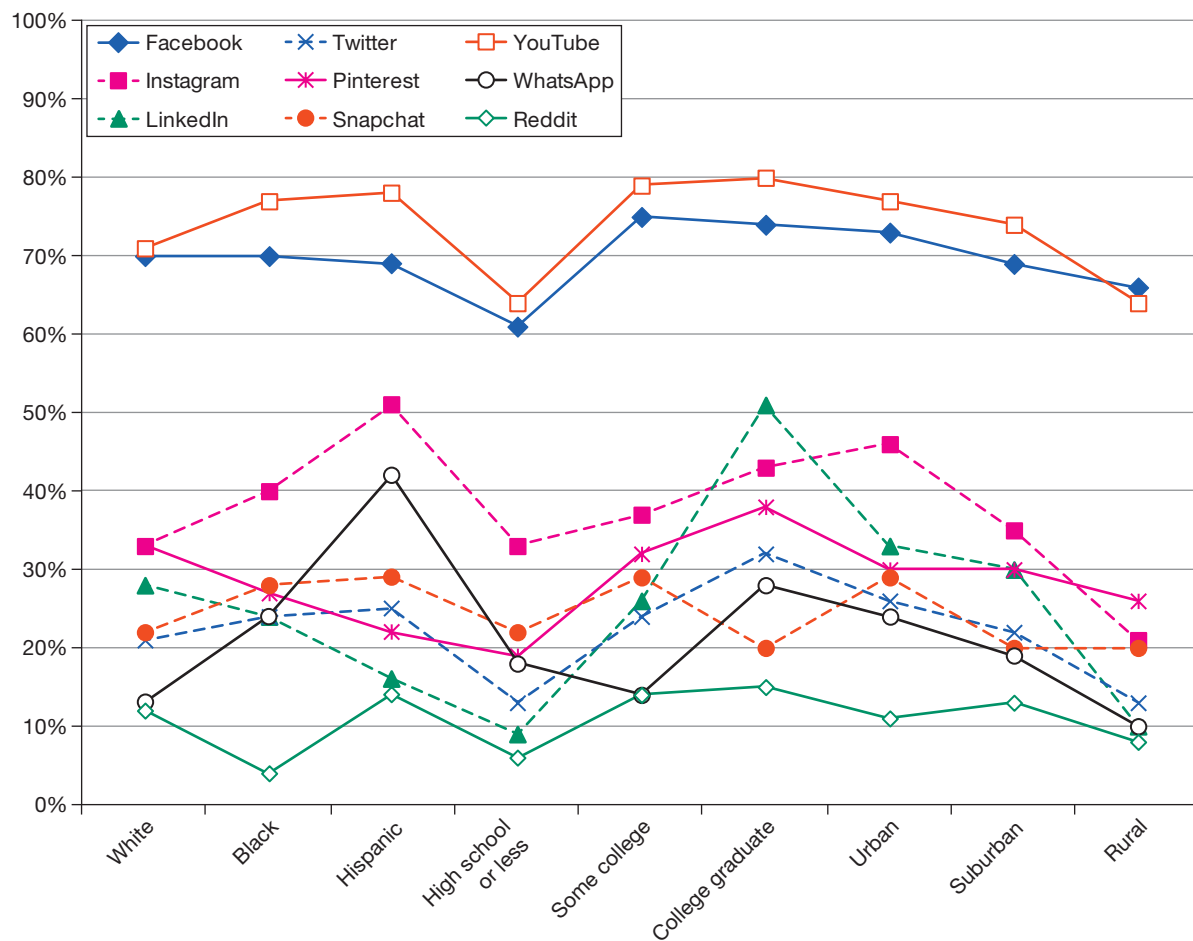
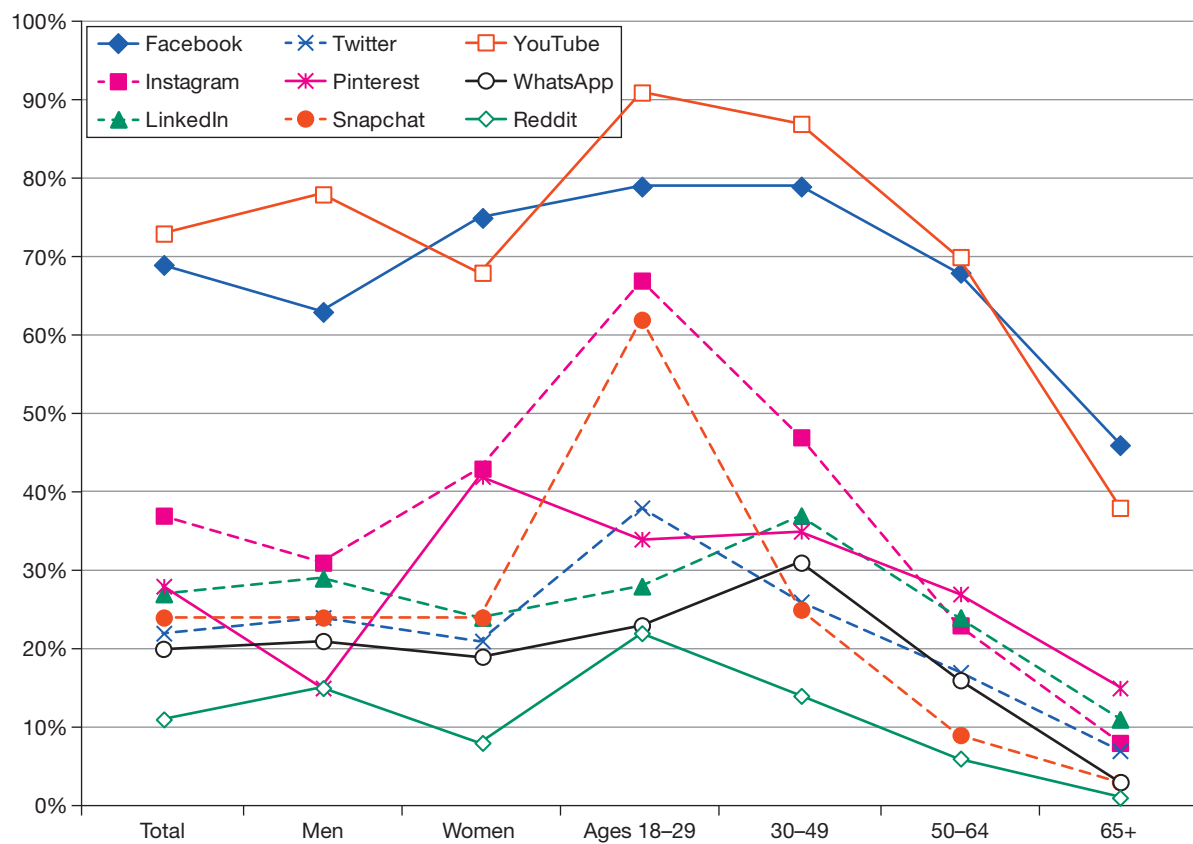
Social Media Myth #2: Social Media Is Just for the Young

WRONG Many social media skeptics still think that social media is a tool primarily for the young: kids, teenagers, and college students. The reality is that older users are among the fastest-growing demographics on most social media sites. Pew reports that in 2019, 81% of all mobile phones were smartphones, which greatly facilitate Internet and social media usage. While only 13% of adults age 65 and older owned a smartphone in 2014, that figure had grown to 53% in 2019.¹⁰

However, the age disparity in social media use continues to exist as shown in Figure 1.5. Young adults are still the most likely to be social media users (90%), especially with newer platforms such as Instagram. Yet, social media use among older adults, especially those in the 50–64 age group, has grown rapidly in recent years, with 68% of that age group using Facebook and 70% using YouTube. In fact, almost 80% of that age group reports having a smartphone and almost 70% report being on social media to some extent.¹¹

The growth in social media usage rates among older adults carries over into the mobile sphere according to comScore. The young are still the heaviest users of mobile social media as well as the fastest growing group of users. However, among tablet mobile social media users, adults aged 55 and over represent the fastest growing group.¹²

Social networks are increasingly being adopted by older populations and are becoming incredibly diverse, with users spanning all age and income brackets. This diversity means that most businesses, if they are willing to look, can find their target consumers on social media sites. It also means that they should not simply try to appeal to a large, heterogeneous audience. They need to hone targeting skills for their own messaging and for paid advertising.



Source: Pew Research Center, "Social Media Fact Sheet," June 12, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/social-media>.

Figure 1.5 Social Media Usage by Age, Demographics

Social Media Myth #3: There Is No Return on SMM

WRONG But that's not to say that measuring the return on SMM is easy. It requires careful planning, careful execution, consistent monitoring, and the discipline to analyze and gain business insights from monitoring data. This textbook has a chapter dedicated to planning and one to social media monitoring that shows how the two marketing elements work together to make it possible to measure social media return on investment (ROI).

Although ROI is a specific monetary value determined by an established method, social media return is measured in a variety of different ways and is not always as clear-cut as financial ROI. Figure 1.6 indicates that 80% of marketers surveyed in 2016 by Econsultancy agreed to some extent that social media marketing contributes to ROI.¹³ In addition, *Social Media Examiner* reported in 2019 that nearly 70% of marketers who have been using social media for a year or longer agreed or strongly agreed that SMM helps them improve sales. Those who have been using SMM the longest are most likely to support the statement with agreement becoming stronger the longer they have been social media marketers.¹⁴ Sales are the ultimate measure of marketing achievement, so this data makes a powerful case for SMM. That being said, there are many ways of measuring success that stop short of return on monetary investment.

There are a lot of lists of “best” or “favorite” social media campaigns. The following is a selection from *CIO* magazine, which published its own list of the 12 best campaigns of 2014. These three examples from the list show the many ways in which social media marketers measure success. Selected examples are:

- At or near the top of everyone's list of the best of 2014 is the Ice Bucket Challenge. The challenge was started by a single victim of ALS, simply to raise awareness of this devastating disease. Celebrities took it up and the ice bucket videos quickly went viral. The ALS Association took it up as an official fund-raising activity and reported that \$220 million was raised. Most of that money went to research and a year later researchers were identifying gains already made.¹⁵ Another measure of success is that the challenge was repeated in the summer of 2015. Sequels are rarely as successful as originals, but the renewal of the challenge was itself newsworthy.

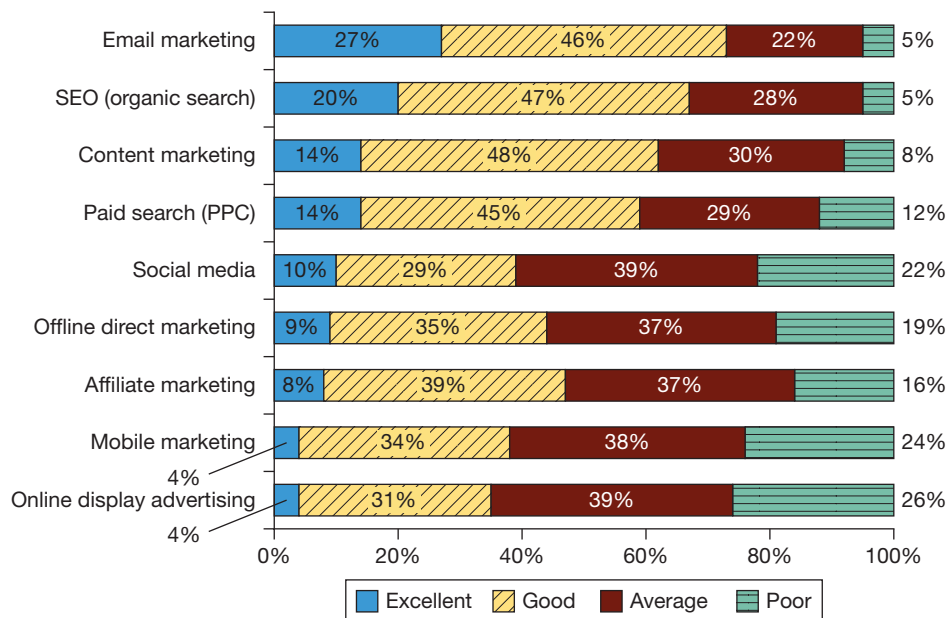


Figure 1.6 Marketers Who Agree or Strongly Agree That SMM Helped Them Improve Sales

Sources: Stelzner, Michael A. (May 7, 2019). "2019 Social Media Marketing Industry Report," *Social Media Examiner*, p. 19, <https://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/social-media-marketing-industry-report-2019/>; and Ben Davis, "Three Key Charts from Our 2016 Email Marketing Census," Econsultancy, April 11, 2016, <https://econsultancy.com/three-key-charts-from-our-2016-email-marketing-census>.

- Coke's Share, a Coke campaign, was started in Australia and had expanded to over 50 countries by the time it went viral in the United States in the summer of 2014. Names replaced the Coke logo on soda cans and consumers were invited to visit Shareacoke.com, personalize virtual Coke bottles, and share them with their friends on social media. The campaign reported over 125,000 posts on various social media platforms with 96% of the consumer sentiment either positive or neutral.
- Taco Bell began its campaign for a Taco emoji during the winter of 2014. It petitioned the Unicode Consortium, which regulates emojis. A petition on Change.org gathered over 30,000 signatures. "This campaign was an attention grabber because it pulled cleverly from two culturally relevant tech trends: emojis and community activism," says Wire Stone's [senior strategist Lily] Croll. The campaign kept the chain's core *product in the social media conversation* and received mainstream press attention.¹⁶ In June 2015, the consortium released code for a taco emoji, seemingly guaranteeing it a spot on the emoji keyboard.¹⁷

Since these iconic campaigns, there have been several other notable social media campaigns that have had a great impact.¹⁸ Hootsuite released a list of the top seven brand campaigns. Four of these campaigns are:

- In 2018, the International House of Pancakes flipped the "p" to a "b" in its logo and became International House of Burgers (IHOB) instead of IHOP on Twitter. Announced as a name change but really a bit of fun to focus attention on food sales other than pancakes, the campaign was quite successful. Not only were there 15,000 retweets and 30,000 guesses as to what IHOB might mean, but burger sales also quadrupled. The company received an increase in WOM marketing, which, as we will learn, is not paid but earned media and most difficult to achieve.
- In 2017, Starbucks rolled out the Unicorn Frappuccino campaign on Instagram. The drink was available for only one week and tapped in to the Millennial fear of missing out (although scarcity itself is a long-standing marketing persuasive technique). With 155,000 Instagram shares and an increase in store sales of 3% over the previous quarter in the Americas, the campaign was clearly successful.
- In 2019, a YouTube and Twitter campaign by Gillette focused on the firm's values in the light of the #metoo campaign against sexual harassment. A video challenged men to be the best they could be with the hashtag #TheBestMenCanBe, and the firm announced it would donate three million dollars to organizations that assist men in helping younger children and themselves learn about diversity and empathic responses, as well as help them recover from illnesses like depression. While controversial, the campaign generated 1.5 million social media mentions and focused on consumers' preference to do business with brands that affirm their own values.
- Perhaps Gillette is seeking the same success as a men's consumer brand that Dove has achieved in its successful marketing campaign to women. As noted by HubSpot, Dove's longstanding #realbeauty campaign, conducted for over 15 years on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, has had long-term positive consequences. Not only is the campaign consistently named as one of the best social media campaigns of all time, but in 2020, the Dove brand was listed in the top 10 of best brands for customer experience in 2020 by Brandwatch.¹⁹ These types of results indicate that social media campaigns are not just short term, but that they also have a long-standing impact on consumer brand perceptions.

While there are many ways to measure marketing achievement and various metrics may be appropriate based on the objectives of a given campaign, in the end sales represent the definitive accomplishment for marketers.

Social Media Myth #4: SMM Isn't Right for This Business

WRONG Figure 1.4 has already shown that both B2C and B2B marketers use social media. The same is true of businesses in all economic sectors, although there are issues in sectors like financial services where both disclosure and security issues affect the ways in which social media can be used. Likewise, businesses both large and small use social media. Since most social media platforms are free, SMM has a special attraction for small businesses, including local retailers and services businesses.

Figure 1.7 shows that for all marketers the top benefits of SMM are increasing exposure, increasing traffic, generating leads, improving sales, developing loyal fans, providing insight to the marketplace, and increasing thought leadership. The opportunity to grow business partnerships is another added benefit. Each of those benefits applies equally to B2C and B2B. The third leading benefit, generating sales leads, tends to be a more formal process in B2B, but B2C marketers are also interested in identifying potential purchasers. Likewise, *thought leadership* is a term more commonly used in B2B, but all marketers want to be known for their product quality and expertise. Improved search rankings and strong business partnerships are important to all marketers. Notice that, important as they clearly are, thought leadership and growing business partnerships rank at the bottom of this list of benefits of SMM.²⁰ The greatest benefits tend to occur early in the sales cycle in terms of going more traffic, exposure and leads, not at the point where strategy is made.

Given the power that social media endows consumers with, it is little wonder that users are increasingly screening out traditional advertising media and focusing their attention toward social media where they control the content. Many businesses have based their success on marketing through television, radio, newspapers, yellow pages, or direct mail. However, these methods are losing their power in the marketplace. People are watching less traditional TV and are instead viewing videos and television online. Radio is being replaced by online streaming music on sites such as Pandora and Spotify. Newspapers are in dramatic decline, while blogs such as the *Huffington Post* are growing in popularity. The printed Yellow Pages are more likely to be used to hold up a computer monitor than to locate a business, with the abundance of online white page and yellow page directories. Direct mail coupons end up in the garbage because the same coupons

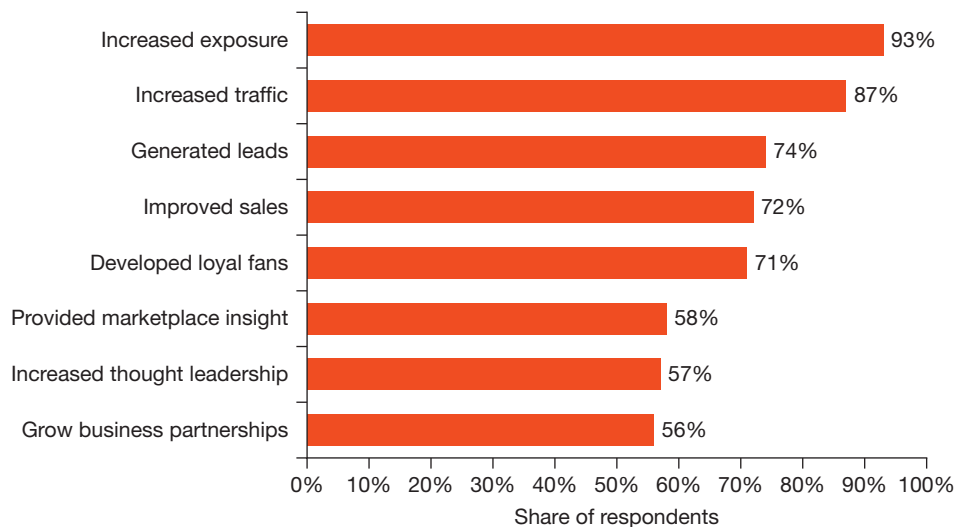


Figure 1.7 Benefits of SMM

Source: Statista, "Leading Benefits of Using Social Media for Marketing Purposes Worldwide as of January 2020," <https://www.statista.com/statistics/188447/influence-of-global-social-media-marketing-usage-on-businesses>.

can be found online and on mobile sites. To keep up with their changing audiences, marketers find it necessary to join the social media tsunami.

In some instances, social media can have a powerful impact in an industry or in a situation where it seems unlikely to be useful or both. In addition, it will probably take time for the full impact of SMM to be felt. Such was the case with JetBlue Airlines that operates in an industry known for being near the bottom in customer satisfaction rankings. In February 2007, JetBlue's corporate image was dealt a serious blow when weather and "...a shoestring communications system that left pilots and flight attendants in the dark, and an undersized reservation system," caused about 1,000 flight cancellations within 5 days, stranding thousands of passengers on Valentine's Day.²¹

In an effort to reach out to customers, CEO Neeleman appeared in an unscripted YouTube video, apologizing for the airline's mistakes and announcing a "Customer Bill of Rights," which outlined steps the airline would take in response to service interruptions. The airline's apology was disseminated on traditional offline media as well as on social media, with the whole incident receiving considerable attention in the news media. The admission of complete responsibility for the incident and an acknowledgement of the pain it caused passengers, coupled with a credible promise to fix it, amounted "to the perfect business apology—in fact, it is likely to become a generally accepted standard for how business errors should be handled."²² As a consequence, the video apology received a significant number of comments, most of which were positive because it felt authentic and genuine.²³ Recognizing the power of social media to connect with the traveling public, JetBlue set out to develop a full-fledged SMM strategy.

The centerpiece of that social media strategy has become JetBlue's Twitter account, which grew from a mere 700 followers, as of March 7, 2008, to approximately 1.1 million followers by August of 2009 and 1.9 million in the late summer of 2020.²⁴ This kind of growth is nothing short of phenomenal and can be directly attributed to the company's social media strategy of first using Twitter to see what people were saying about them, then responding to questions, and finally engaging in full blown conversations with their customer base.²⁵

More important than sheer number of Twitter followers is the impact on the airline's corporate image. J.D. Powers 2019 study of airline customer satisfaction found that JetBlue Airways ranked highest (tied with Southwest) in the low-cost carrier segment, and its score increased for the seventh consecutive year.²⁶ In addition, the 2015 Temkin Customer Experience Survey announced that "JetBlue took the top spot [in the airline industry] with a rating of 75%, placing it 52nd overall out of 293 companies across 20 industries." The airline industry itself ranked twelfth of the 20 industries covered in the survey.²⁷

The HubSpot blog explained that there are three teams who tweet from the @JetBlue account—the marketing team, the corporate communications team, and Laurie Meacham's customer commitment team. According to her, "employees don't feel pressured to hit a response goal by sending quick responses to every single tweet that comes in. We want our employees to engage *smartly*, and for the conversations to be organic and natural. We look for opportunities to add value and connect with our customers, not just respond to every single mention that comes our way." With some 2,500 mentions on Twitter each day, it behooves JetBlue to use its social media resources wisely in pursuit of their corporate goals.²⁸ The company continues to be a social media standout, including raising the bar with its high level of customer service.²⁹

Social Media Myth #5: SMM Is New

THE TECHNOLOGY IS NEW BUT THE PRINCIPLE IS NOT SMM is not really new. Most of the marketing principles, based on social, behavioral, and economic concepts, have been around for many years, but new technology and media are changing the role those concepts play in modern marketing efforts. For example, brands are very excited about the potential to harness online conversations on blogs, Twitter, and social networks. The behavior—talking about brands and businesses—isn't new and is more generally

called WOM (word of mouth) marketing. The difference is that these conversations are now public, online, and viewable for the indefinite future.

The newest aspect of social media is the technology that enables open and transparent online conversations. Some companies don't want to "get on" social media because they are afraid of what consumers might say about them. The reality is that consumers are already on social sites, talking about businesses on their Facebook pages, blogs, and Twitter accounts, whether a business acknowledges this or not.

Social Media Myth #6: Social Media Is Too Time-Consuming

SOCIAL MEDIA DOES REQUIRE A CONSISTENT TIME COMMITMENT One of the biggest business concerns about using SMM is the amount of time and resources it will take. The time and the human and technology resources required to manage SMM depends on the size of the business. Large companies that have thousands of online mentions a day will have to dedicate more resources to social media than a small business. However, large businesses can devote more technology to social media efficiency, like the Cisco listening center described in Chapter 2. The time commitment required to manage social media will also depend on the specific social media strategy and approach used.

Most of the concern about time and resources comes from small- and medium-sized businesses. After the initial setup and strategy, these businesses should be able to manage their social media programs effectively with only a few hours per week. Social media doesn't have to be time consuming when done right. The problem is that many people log on to Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn and become addicted to checking out what friends are up to, exchanging messages, or generally spending far more time than necessary for business promotion.

There are three key ways to limit the time investment in SMM. The first is to look for underutilized employees who can spend some of their time on SMM. For example, a receptionist may not be busy the entire day, and many retail stores and restaurants have downtimes during which human resources are not fully utilized.

The second opportunity is to leverage efficiency tools. There are a number of sites, such as Hootsuite, TweetDeck, and Sprout Social, which make managing social media easier. By using these tools, social media efforts can be streamlined. We will discuss these tools in detail in Chapter 12.

Finally, using mobile devices is a key way to boost efficiency in SMM. This is especially helpful for publishing multimedia content. Smartphones (iPhone or Android phone) can take a picture or video and instantly post it onto Facebook, Twitter, or a blog in only a minute. This speed makes managing SMM even easier and less time consuming. The importance of mobile in SMM will be discussed in Chapter 11.

Social Media Myth #7: Social Media Is Free

WRONG Many businesses are excited about social media because the media itself is free. Nevertheless, while most sites do not have a fee for usage, social media isn't really free. First, there is the cost in terms of personnel time and technology resources, as well as the fee of using consultants or agencies involved in building and executing the social media strategy. Social media takes time, as indicated in the previous section, and that alone means it is not free.

Second, similar to other media and advertising, in addition to costs from posting content, there are also costs to producing and creating content. Imagine if it were free to run TV commercials. Companies would run lots of commercials, including more bad ones that drive fewer sales. Free access means no barrier to entry and greater competition for consumer attention. Good commercials would still have costs for creativity and production in order to produce a sequence memorable enough to be recognized and remembered. In a similar way, strong social media strategies may entail costs for top-quality creative or development efforts, depending on their scale.

Finally, many businesses engaging in social media invest in a guide or consultant to help them through the process. Consultants can help businesses get off to a quicker start and avoid common pitfalls, as well as save time and money.

Regardless of whether or not there are actual out-of-pocket expenses associated with social media, the resource and time costs should not be forgotten. As time spent on social media is not free, it must be allocated wisely in order to generate maximum results. Hopefully, this text will provide the tools necessary to get the most impact out of time spent on SMM.

The History of SMM

Currently, social media is said to have reached critical mass with 79% of adults in the United States having a profile on a social network.³⁰ In fact, 90% of those in the 18–29 age group report using at least one social media site.³¹ Still, this trend emerged from humble beginnings, as illustrated by the social media timeline in Figure 1.8. Using a loose interpretation, one could say that the first social media existed as soon as the first postal service was created, which allowed people to communicate across great distances instead of just face to face. However, SMM in the most relevant sense for this book became viable with the development of the Internet in the late 1960s. The early Internet was created for the use of professors and researchers working for the Department of Defense. Those researchers began using the ARPANET (the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network, a core of what would become the Internet) resources for nonwork purposes, and usage quickly began to grow. Early online marketing efforts would soon follow; the first *spam* email message was sent in 1978![†]

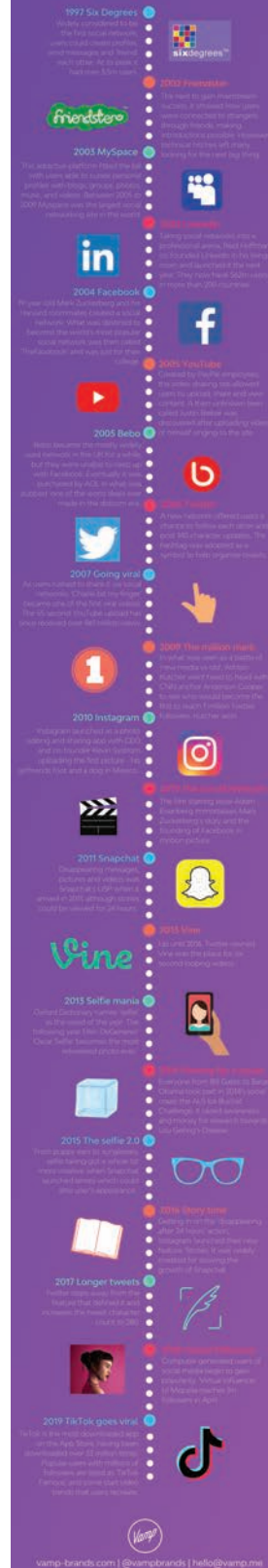
The earliest ancestor of today's diverse social media platforms is most likely USENET, developed by Duke University graduate students Jim Ellis and Tom Truscott in 1979. Users can post articles, which are organized into *newsgroups* depending on the topic. Other users can subscribe to newsgroups they find interesting; often some post responses to an article they read, forming a *thread*. Unlike bulletin boards or online forums that have an administrator or central hub, USENET is a conglomeration of separate servers run by different organizations or Internet service providers (ISPs), which exchange articles and threads with each other. In this way, articles posted by one user can reach many others eventually, and people can comment and have their voices heard. These are the core principles of social media.

Following USENET, there was an explosion of different web-based services designed for people with common interests to share information. The WELL (Whole Earth 'Electronic Link) was created in 1985, starting out as a dial-up bulletin board system (BBS). This quickly developed into a dial-up ISP in the early 1990s, dramatically expanding its user base. Its online forums are still hosting discussions today. Other dial-up BBS systems like CompuServe and Prodigy were fulfilling a similar function by hosting user-driven discussions about various topics.

The growth of social media paralleled the increasing development of computing and Internet transfer technology. While in the 1990s most Internet users were on dial-up connections with speeds under 56 kilobytes per second, within 10 years broadband technology such as DSL and cable Internet became available, increasing transfer speeds

[†]The first mass email message was sent to 393 people out of the 2,600 ARPANET users at the time in order to advertise a new computer model created by Digital Equipment Corporation. It was sent by Gary Turk. For more information, see: NPR News (May 3, 2008), "At 30, Spam Going Nowhere Soon," hosted by Andrea Seabrook (transcript online, retrieved September 8, 2011, from <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=90160617>); and Tom Abate (May 3, 2008), "A Very Unhappy Birthday to Spam, Age 30," *San Francisco Chronicle*. Retrieved September 8, 2011, from http://articles.sfgate.com/2008-05-03/business/17155925_1_spam-e-mail-world-wide-web.

The Evolution of Social Media



Source: "The Evolution of Social Media," Vamp, <https://vamp-brands.com/blog/2020/02/28/evolution-of-social-media>.

Figure 1.8 A Social Media Timeline

by thousands of times. As more data was transferred quickly, social media networks became more advanced and included elements other than just plain text. In 1999, Napster was developed, allowing users to quickly share media files such as music and video with each other. *Wikipedia* was established in 2001 and continues to be a leading source of relevant user-contributed information.

Figure 1.8 chronicles the development of major social media platforms. The years 2003 and 2004 were highly significant for social media with the creation of Myspace, Delicious, Second Life, and Facebook. The photo-sharing site Flickr was created in 2004 and YouTube for sharing videos in 2005. Twitter came along in 2006. Some of the original platforms have gone into serious decline during this brief period and do not even show in Figure 1.8. The age of the enhanced selfie in 2016 raised the awareness of social media marketing. Virtual Influencers took hold in 2018, and 2019 saw the rise of Twitter and the continued importance of Instagram. New platforms continue to arise, each seeking to draw in more online participants and develop its own market share. As a result, the history of social media platforms is still being written.

The groundbreaking texts for social media as a serious academic and marketing field were also being written during that same time period. The possibilities for brand-related online social interaction and community were being explored. Since the mid-2000s, a slew of instructional books have been published, focused on specific areas of SMM, search engine optimization, and other web-based marketing tactics. Some experts have made their careers out of this developing field; Guy Kawasaki, Mark Schaeffer, and David Meerman Scott, to name just a few, have become household names in SMM. Joe Pulizzi's name recognition has also risen with the importance of content marketing within social media marketing. Obviously, this is a rapidly evolving field and it has corresponding job opportunities to be discussed in the final sections of this chapter.

Why SMM Is Different

A common misconception is that SMM just means using new online social media sites to do traditional marketing, but this is often not the case. The traditional marketing approach, emphasizing the four Ps (product, price, place, and promotion), has become second nature to many professionals. While the traditional marketing perspective still has important lessons for future marketers, in the new terrain of social media, it has to be adapted or in some areas changed completely.

Several aspects distinguish SMM from so-called traditional marketing. The first is control versus contributions. Traditional marketing seeks to control the content seen by the audience. Old school marketers attempt to dominate the territory and try to exclude their competitors' messages. On the Internet, and in social media especially, control over content consumed is in the hands of consumers, and marketers ignore that truth to their detriment.

SMM emphasizes audience contribution and relinquishes control over large parts of the content. Effective social media marketers can sometimes influence what participants say and think about their brand, but rarely can they control the conversation entirely. Indeed, the very nature of social media can make controlling the conversation seem rude and domineering. Avoiding this pitfall makes knowledge of social media important even for persons engaged in traditional marketing.

The second important distinction between traditional and SMM is trust building. Firms cannot fully control the content that users will create, so to build their image, companies must develop trusting relationships with their audience. Unlike traditional advertisements in which consumers expect some exaggeration or spin to be applied to the product's image, on social media it is important to be earnest and down-to-earth. All communication must be authentic, in tone and in context.



Figure 1.9 Richard Sherman Tweets to Order a Domino's Pizza

The importance of trust emerges from how social media messages are consumed. In traditional marketing, the signal is one-way: from the firm to potential customers. However, social media involves many-to-many communication with brands being only one participant. The audience's attention cannot be taken for granted; deliver boring, inaccurate, or irrelevant information and they will look elsewhere. Unlike an advertising campaign with a set beginning and end, social media is an ongoing conversation. Companies that bend the truth will be eventually held accountable and have to explain their actions. This pattern appears in numerous case studies throughout the book. On social media, trust is slow to earn but very easy to lose. Successful social media marketers consider building trust with the audience to be of paramount importance.

SMM is a unique combination of marketing creativity and technology. We see examples of the creative use of marketing technology on an almost-daily basis. The TV commercial pictured in Figure 1.9 is only one example. In just 30 short seconds, the TV spot shows celebrities ordering Domino's pizza using a variety of technologies.³² Richard Sherman Tweets, Eva Longoria uses her TV remote, Sarah Hyland shows how she uses a pizza emoji to text her order, and Clark Gregg orders his with a tap on his smartwatch. Domino's calls it "AnyWare."³³ These various online technologies are being featured in a commercial on traditional TV. That is another key theme of this book. SMM does not exist in a vacuum; it is part of digital marketing, which, in turn, is part of the overall marketing effort.

The Domino's pizza ordering system is only one innovative use of technology from one brand. There are new and different SMM efforts visible on an almost-daily basis. The pervasive and ever-evolving nature of social media means that SMM offers an interesting set of career options.

Careers in SMM

Throughout this chapter, we have documented the phenomenal growth of social media and the accompanying growth of SMM. From virtually nothing in 2003, social media has grown to be measured in billions—from billions of users to billions of dollars in sales influenced by social media. Clearly that growth has not occurred without growth in the number of jobs in the field. Numbers are hard to come by because many social media marketers have transitioned from other jobs in their company and because many marketers work only part time on social media, but one has only to look at the online job boards to verify that a talent hunt is ongoing.

Developing Your Personal Brand Online

“We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You.”¹ So says famed strategy consultant Tom Peters, author of a book entitled *The Brand Called You*. In this book, published in 1997, he makes a powerful argument for personal branding and marketing. Peters continues to update his views on personal branding on his personal website. The website links to his blog, which has a category Brand You.²

Any person taking this course probably already has some kind of an online presence. How widespread that presence is, how positive it is, and how helpful it will be to your ongoing career development are all important questions. We will explore the topic of personal branding in topic boxes in almost all the chapters in this book. Each will focus on the role of the chapter’s content in your own personal branding process. We will emphasize creating a personal **professional** brand as opposed to being known for something related to a hobby or interest.

We will use the basic model popularized by Dan Schawbel in his books, website, and blogs and in his writing for *Forbes* and other business publications. By the age of 30, Dan had made himself a successful consulting business using the personal branding techniques he espouses.

His model has four stages:

Step #1 Discover. In the first step, you will learn about yourself and the distinctive characteristics that will make your brand unique. This is a journey of personal discovery and self-assessment, and it should be an honest evaluation of your strengths and weaknesses and the career-related skills you possess or need to develop. As you go through this process, you may want to develop a personal value statement that succinctly describes who you are and what you have to offer.

Step #2 Create. In the second step, you will create a personal marketing portfolio to support your brand. The portfolio should include your resume in both offline and online formats. It also includes supporting documentation like cover letters and recommendations. The portfolio must have a home, preferably one that can easily be found by hiring managers. Creating a personal website is an excellent approach. Both Wix³ and Weebly⁴ are free and easy to use and allow you to develop a site that will be a good home for the content you create in this and other classes. You may also want to create a blog or use another Internet platform to create and disseminate content that reinforces your brand image.

¹ Martinuzzi, Bruna (July 9, 2014). “How to Build an Unforgettable Personal Brand,” American Express. Retrieved March 27, 2015, from <https://www.americanexpress.com/us/small-business/openforum/articles/how-to-build-an-unforgettable-personal-brand>; and Northeastern University (January 14, 2019). “10 TIPS FOR BUILDING A PERSONAL BRAND THAT CAN BOOST YOUR CAREER.” Retrieved from <https://www.northeastern.edu/graduate/blog/tips-for-building-your-personal-brand>.

² (n.d.). tompeters!. <http://tompeters.com>.

³ <http://www.wix.com>.

⁴ <http://www.weebly.com>.

Step #3 Communicate. By the time you reach the third step, you have developed your personal characteristics and skills and you possess a portfolio of content that supports your brand. You have identified the audience(s) you need to reach with your brand message and where and how they consume content. Now you are ready to distribute and promote this content to the important stakeholders in your career space.

Step #4. Maintain. In the final step, you will continue to create and disseminate content that supports your brand. You will put tools in place and develop a routine for using them to monitor the development of your brand and to ensure its security on the web and in whatever offline environments it resides.

Each of these stages will be discussed from various perspectives as we move through the book.

It is important to remember that social media is not the only foundation on which your personal brand rests. This model is from *Me 2.0*. You can see that it encompasses offline tools like public relations and networking as well as online tools like search engine optimization in addition to social media.

Dan Schawbel's Octopus Model of Relevancy



Source: Schawbel, Dan (n.d.). *Me 2.0* Revised and Updated Edition, Kindle Edition, Loc 715.

There are numerous writers who deal with the topic of developing and taking advantage of a personal brand. We will reference many of them as the personal branding discussion continues. One who concentrates on personal branding and related subjects is Professor Denny McCorkle. His website is Digital Self Marketing Advantage,⁵ and you might want to follow him on one of the channels listed on the site. Another is Professor Theresa Clarke who publishes The Marketing Career Info Weekly on content curation site Paper.li.⁶

⁵ <http://digitalselfmarketingadvantage.com>.

⁶ <https://paper.li/TheresaBClarke/mktg-career-info#>.

The largest job sites give considerable reassurance that SMM is a fertile discipline for job seekers. There are many types of social media jobs, whether at the entry level³⁴ or more advanced positions.³⁵ There are many jobs available at any given time on a wide variety of general job sites like Monster.com and specialized sites like MarketingHire.com. In addition, many marketing news sites accept job postings. Early in your job search, register with one or more of the recruiting sites so you can follow the types of jobs that are being listed, where they are located, and what skills they require. Make this part of your required reading list.

In this book, we place emphasis on developing your own personal brand. Most chapters have a box like the one in this chapter that give specific advice and resources for developing your personal brand. You should consider this an essential step for obtaining a position in SMM. For one thing, developing a personal brand online requires many of the skills companies are looking for when they hire people for social media positions.

There are many types of positions available in SMM. A few job titles are:

- Blogger
- Community Manager
- Content Marketing Manager
- Digital Media Manager
- Director, Social Media Marketing
- Engagement Manager
- Interactive Media Associate
- Social Media Account Executive³⁶

Each of these positions requires certain specific skills, but there are some general characteristics that can foster success as a social media marketer.³⁷ Social media roles also lend themselves to remote work, which may be important to some individuals or if it becomes necessary to work at home, like during the coronavirus pandemic of 2020.

What Are the Characteristics of a Successful Social Media Marketer?

Being a successful social media marketer requires a combination of personal and technical characteristics. The personal are arguably the most important and focus on good communications skills—everything from being able to engage successfully with diverse groups of people to being a good listener. Good writing skills are necessary for most social media jobs. The technical skills required center around a working knowledge of computers and the Internet. Programming is not a requirement for most social media positions. However, some knowledge of search marketing is desirable. It probably goes without saying that proficiency on at least the three leading social platforms—Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn—is essential.

British website WeRSM (We are Social Media) has a set of suggestions that would benefit all job seekers.

- **Stay on top of social media trends.** Subscribing to a few leading newsletters in the field will help you keep up to date.
- **Be prepared to think and act quickly.** Social media marketers must react swiftly and well to events that impact their brand. Unfortunately, this often includes nights and weekends.
- **Be comfortable with analytics.** The monitoring chapter in this book establishes a knowledge base in social media analytics that all social media marketers need.
- **Learn to write for social media.** Basic writing skills come first, but then the social media marketer must learn to engage others in 280 characters or less (Twitter), to communicate in short videos (TikTok), and even to deliver brand messages in ephemeral media (Snapchat).
- **Establish and maintain your social media presence**—a portfolio or even better, a full-fledged personal brand.
- **In all you do, show yourself to be an effective user of social media.** Post relevant and engaging content and be consistent in the way you deal with social media. Avoid anything that will reflect negatively on you. Interact regularly and positively on all your social media platforms.^{38,39}

This is not only good advice for people who wish to work in SMM but also for those who wish to work in some other aspect of marketing. That could be anything from search engine marketing in a digital agency to product management for a consumer products company to sales representative in a B2B services enterprise. The importance of a personal brand applies whether the field is digital or traditional, B2B or B2C, product or services. The importance of skills like good communications does not vary, nor does the desirability of at least a moderate level of technological proficiency.

All this advice may sound like common sense, and it probably is. However, many people make damaging mistakes on social media and those mistakes can come back to haunt them for a long time.

The characteristics for success as a social media marketer may not sound very rare or difficult to develop. Arguably, large parts of the population have the skills to do social media; indeed, as shown by the enormous growth of sites like Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, much of the population already is “doing” social media! Platform proficiency is essential, but being an effective social media marketer requires more. *It requires being able to translate business or marketing goals and objectives into the execution of social*

media strategy. Developing the skills and knowledge emphasized in this book will help a person compete against others in the growing field of SMM and to rise to the top in this dynamic area.

Understanding best practices for the various aspects of SMM will assist you on your journey. Each chapter has its own set of subject-specific best practices. Here are some general SMM best practices to get you started.

Best Practices for SMM

1. Begin with a strategy backed by a SMM plan. Random or inconsistent use of social media will not produce any benefits.
2. Be honest and transparent in all your social media efforts. Attempts to misinform or deceive will soon be “outed” to the detriment of the brand and the marketer. Building trust will be amply repaid in the long run.
3. Identify your target audience and understand its media behavior before you begin. There are many ways to engage on social media and different audience will respond to different kinds of communications.
4. Welcome participation and feedback from your audience. Remember, the audience controls the communications, not the marketer.
5. Remember that what you know today may not be valid tomorrow. SMM changes with the evolution of technologies and of audiences and the social media marketer must be vigilant and nimble to keep up with the changes.⁴⁰

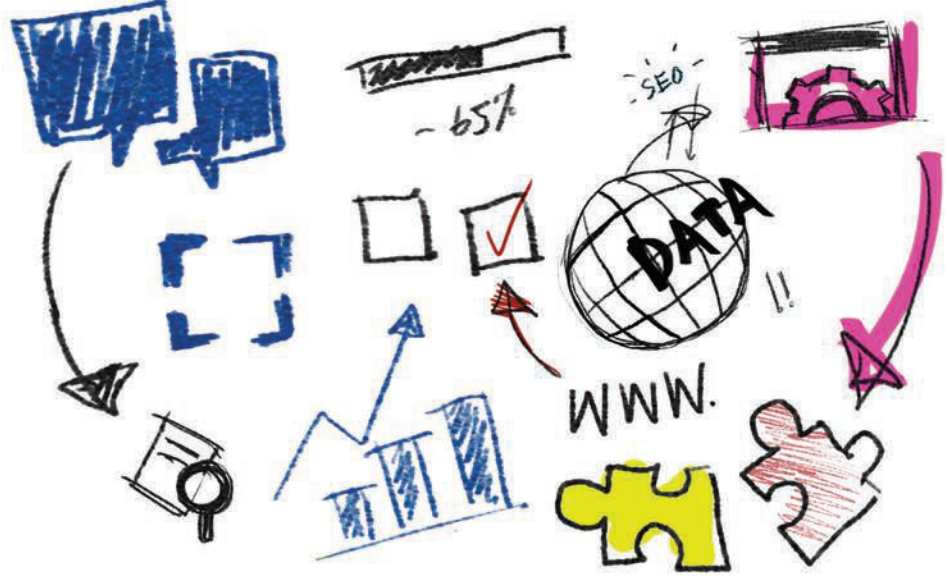
This book has knowledge and resources that will help you begin the exciting journey as a social media marketer or as a professional in a related field. Welcome to the journey and best wishes!

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Goals and Strategies

The single most important action a social media marketer can take to increase SMM success is to create a well-thought out SMM plan with carefully crafted

objectives. A major reason for the failure of SMM programs is lack of a good plan.



Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, students will be able to:

- Define a social media plan
- Explain the SMM planning cycle
- Describe each step in the SMM planning cycle
- Identify ways to listen and observe the social web
- Describe the Valid Metrics Framework and its role in setting SMM objectives
- Explain how to create social media strategies

(Continued)

Beginning with this chapter, the remainder of the book will focus on the steps necessary to create an effective SMM plan. Two of the most important steps in this planning process are goal setting and strategy determination. Before moving forward with SMM activities, an organization should first determine what it wants to accomplish and then how best to do it. Without goals, it will be unclear in which direction to go or how to ultimately measure success. With a well-defined destination in mind, appropriate strategies can be designed to achieve these goals. As such, the process of setting goals and determining strategies is crucial for success in the field of SMM.

What Is a SMM Plan?

A SMM plan details an organization's social media goals and the actions necessary to achieve them. Key among these actions is the understanding of corporate and marketing strategies and the creation of promotional strategies. Without integrated strategies and solid SMM plans, there is little chance of successfully executing SMM.

- Detail how to link social media goals to actions
- Explain the importance of word of mouth as advocacy in SMM
- Identify best practices in developing social media strategies

SMM Planning Cycle

Creating a social media plan is a continuous process, as illustrated by the SMM Planning Cycle in Figure 2.1. Skilled social media marketers constantly monitor the progress of the plan's action elements, modify them to improve results, and test alternative approaches.¹ It is important to methodically carry out all of the steps in Figure 2.1 when constructing a social media plan (Chapter 14 will demonstrate how to use these steps to build a SMM plan).

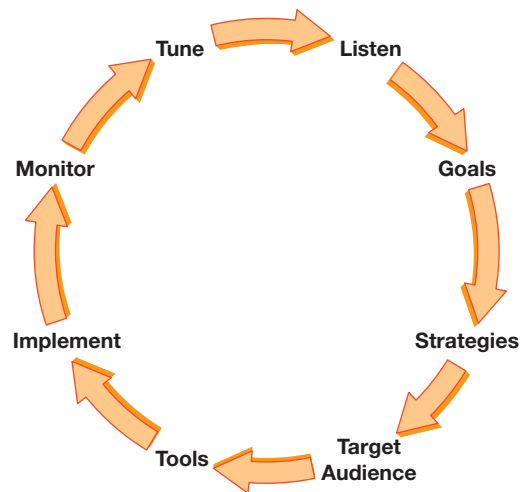


Figure 2.1 Social Media Planning Cycle

The SMM Planning Cycle

- **Listening** to what people are saying about a company or brand enables the organization to determine its current social media presence, which, in turn, guides the setting of social media goals and strategies to achieve them. Another important reason to listen to the social web is for competitive intelligence (i.e., information about what people are saying about competitors and what the competitors are saying about themselves). Listening also reveals the way in which people talk about products and brands, including specific words that are used. It is critical to find out what people are already talking about before becoming part of the conversation.
- **Setting goals** involves conducting an analysis to determine an organization's strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and threats in the competitive environment (SWOT). Often a competitive analysis is performed of the strengths and weaknesses of key competitors. By performing these appraisals, marketers

can then choose the social media goals that satisfy unmet needs of consumers, capitalize on the strengths of the company and seize opportunities, while minimizing organizational weaknesses and external threats. Threats come not only from competitors but also from advances in technology, industry trends, and general economic conditions.

- **Defining strategies** must be done on a case-by-case basis, using all available pertinent information. The “8 Cs of Strategy Development” (covered later in this chapter) provide guidelines to help an organization reach its marketing goals. These suggestions are intended as broad guidance for marketers and must be adjusted to each organization’s unique strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- **Identifying the target audience (market)** is done by pinpointing the location, behavior, tastes, and needs of the target audience. Choosing the appropriate target audience requires an understanding of the market segments served. In most cases, the SMM plan will target one or more of the available segments, not all. Careful choice of target audience for a SMM campaign enables a company to organize its marketing strategies to efficiently reach those most receptive and likely to become customers and even brand advocates.
- **Selecting tools** from the plethora of tools available to assist with virtually every other activity in the planning cycle. There are tools to schedule posts on various social networks, tools to track brand mentions or hashtag usage, tools to help prepare images for posting, tools to assist with search engine optimization (SEO), tools to shorten links—and so on. Some are single-purpose tools—shortening links, for example. Others incorporate multiple activities as when a tool to shorten links is incorporated into a tool for posting on multiple networks. Tools have become essential to navigate the complex world of SMM and Chapter 12 is devoted to a discussion of tools and their uses.
- **Selecting platforms and channels** identifies the paths on the web by which content will be transmitted to the target audience. Social media platforms are generally understood to be the websites on which social media communications take place. Social networks like Facebook and Twitter and blog publishing sites like Blogger and WordPress are only a few of the many examples. Channels are broader entities, composed of multiple platforms and other technologies. For example, mobile is generally considered to be a channel made up of various elements like mobile websites, apps, and telecommunications services.
- **Implementing** is the process whereby the goals, strategies, target market, and platforms are taken into consideration in creating actionable social media platform-specific marketing tactics. Executing well-defined tactics makes it possible for an organization to implement its general social media strategies across multiple social media platforms and realize the company’s marketing goals.
- **Monitoring** is the process of tracking, measuring, and evaluating an organization’s SMM initiatives. Monitoring the enormous number of communications—daily, hourly, and minute-by-minute—is a formidable task. Monitoring and its tools are the subject of Chapter 12.
- **Tuning** is the constant and continuous process of adjusting and improving the elements of the plan and its implementation to maximize the chances of success.

The book is structured around this social media planning model. Listening, setting goals, and defining strategies are explained in detail later in this chapter. Chapter 3 covers identifying the target audience. Chapters 5 through 11 discuss platforms and implementation, providing guidance regarding the execution of strategies and social media platform-specific marketing tactics. However, it is first necessary to lay a foundation for

learning how to successfully execute these platform-specific marketing tactics, which is why Chapter 4 presents the Rules of Engagement for participating on the social web. Chapter 12 discusses the importance of social media tools and the process of monitoring the progress of SMM. Chapter 13 provides examples of how to best structure the organization to manage this process. Chapter 14 puts it all together, by presenting an outline of a social media marketing plan, with special emphasis on the constant and continuous need to tune, adjust, and improve the plan and its implementation. Finally, the Appendix includes an example of a SMM plan for students to use in creating their own plans.

Listen and Observe: Five Stages

Before jumping into SMM, it is important to observe the surroundings and consider the target audience, as well as the social landscape in general. During the listening and observing stage, marketers should follow conversations about a particular brand and company, its competitors, and the relevant industry on as many social media platforms as possible. This procedure will not only gauge the overall tone of the communities, but more important, it will identify where the organization's target audience hangs out and what they are doing there.

Stage #1: Listen to Conversations about a Brand or Company

The first stage is listening to and observing conversations about a particular company. As advised by Brian Solis in a post for the Harvard Business Review blog, “[l]isten to the conversations that are already taking place” and “[p]ay attention to the nuances of these conversations.”² What are people saying about this brand? What good and bad comments have been made? How do people feel about the company? Listen to the conversations taking place on blogs, Twitter, discussion forums, websites, LinkedIn, Facebook, and so on, to understand how the company is perceived. Both positive and negative remarks can show where opportunities may lie. In addition, knowing what consumers are already saying will help in preparing responses for common questions or problems. Anticipating areas to address, and understanding the way consumers talk about them, will provide an advantage when entering into SMM.

Stage #2: Listen to What People Say about the Competitors

Next, listen to what people say about a company's competitors and what those competitors are saying about themselves. How do people perceive the pros and cons of the competitors in the social space? How do these comments influence business opportunities? In addition to listening to how people feel about competitors, it is helpful to identify the most competitive areas of the social media landscape. What are the competitors doing on social media? Who are they targeting? What seems to work? Assessing the competitive landscape on social media sites will show how buyers are meeting sellers on social media and may provide insights that can be leveraged when later building a strategy. Learning from others' social media approaches will help build a powerful strategy quickly while refining it to suit different needs.

Stage #3: Listen to What People Say about the Industry or Category

After observing the competition, begin listening on a broader scale: the overall industry. What are consumers (or potential consumers or members of the target audience) saying about the industry? Are the sentiments strongly positive or negative surrounding certain

issues? What conversations occur between firms in the industry? Does this create opportunities? Understanding the conversations taking place around a certain industry will help gauge what people are interested in and frequently talk about. We will discuss content in Chapters 7 through 9, but it is important to remember that social media content must connect with consumers on an issue they are passionate about (which typically is not a particular brand). Listening at the category or industry level will help one understand what the consumers in that industry are really interested in talking about.

Blake Chandlee, former Vice President of Global Partnerships at Facebook and now Vice President of Global Solutions at ByteDance/TikTok calls this “chatter data” to distinguish it from quantitative data. In an interview with the Sloan Management Review, he says, “Chatter data is what people are talking about when they’re watching television or when they’re watching a sporting event,” he continued. “What kind of reaction are they having? Are brand mentions included? How are brands representing themselves in that kind of chatter? What kind of, say, hair color? That might affect a hair care company.” The data can be used to help brands like Procter & Gamble and Unilever better understand their hair care customers. However, he warns that “privacy will always be the primary underlying consideration, which everybody has to consider because the consumer backlash if they find you using their data inappropriately is significant and quick.”³

Stage #4: Listen for the Tone of the Community

The next stage is to observe the tone of the community. Essentially, this means observing how your consumers naturally interact with each other on social sites. What technical jargon, acronyms, or slang do they use? How do they interact with each other? What words are most often used to describe specific brands, competitors, or industries? How are brands participating, and who is getting the most attention? What are the unwritten rules of participation? How do they talk, and what are they interested in? When engaging in social media, it is good to fit in and sound like other consumers. To accomplish this, it is essential to first know how relevant social media users communicate with each other and the etiquette of communicating on different social sites. This knowledge will facilitate integration and participation in the community.

Stage #5: Listen to Different Social Media platforms and Channels

Finally, when listening to social media, be sure to access multiple social media channels to identify where target audiences hang out and what they do there. The participants on Facebook may be dramatically different from those on Twitter, LinkedIn, or blogs. Each social media channel has a distinctive audience (target market) with unique interests, behaviors, and characteristics (Chapter 3 explores this topic in depth). For example, according to the Pew Foundation in 2014, more than half of all online users 65 and over used Facebook while half of young adult Internet users (18–29) used Instagram. Pinterest was dominated by women and half of all users of LinkedIn had college educations.⁴ Since the users on each site and the social networking structure are different, it is important to listen to conversations across a variety of social media channels.

Listening and observing is the key first step in the social media planning stage. Time spent observing will pay off when planning the rest of the social media strategy and will help avoid an embarrassing faux pas along the way. Like all the rest of SMM, listening has become a complex task, and an organizational entity called either a listening center or a command post is often used to manage the complexity.

Listening as Part of Personal Branding Strategy

Personal branding experts agree that, just as listening is the first step in developing a corporate brand, it is equally important as you go about developing your personal brand. It is especially important to listen to relevant conversations, to understand the tone of the community, and to understand which social media platforms and channels are being used.

This comparison, though, begs an important question. How do you know what is relevant, how do you identify the appropriate community? Therefore, the most important aspect of personal branding is first to distill the quality that makes you and your work unique. Make a list of what makes you unique and distinguishes you from your peers. Everyone has something to contribute to the world of work and to society at large.

Thus the answer to how to listen to conversations about you is that your brand is YOU! It is up to you to decide how you want to be perceived as your career develops. Put another way, you have to define the outcome before you create the process of getting there. That outcome is your personal branding statement.¹

Consultant Megan Marrs shows the way to develop what she calls an outcome statement to guide personal branding efforts.

Lesson #1. Be honest about the nature of your appeal to others. How does your personality impact the experience others have with you? What sort of emotional reactions do you arouse in others?

Lesson #2. You must condense your offering into a sentence or a phrase that captures its essence. That is hard to do; even harder to do well. You may be surprised at these personal mission statements published by Fast Company:

- Denise Morrison, CEO of Campbell Soup Company
“To serve as a leader, live a balanced life, and apply ethical principles to make a significant difference.”
- Sir Richard Branson, founder of The Virgin Group
“To have fun in [my] journey through life and learn from [my] mistakes.”
- Oprah Winfrey, founder of OWN, the Oprah Winfrey Network
“To be a teacher. And to be known for inspiring my students to be more than they thought they could be.”²

Lesson #3. Be clear about your personal goals in the industry or in your chosen profession. Do you intend to be a social media content creator? Do you aspire to be a recognized expert in SMM who publishes on several respected publishing channels? What is it that you really want to be or do?

Lesson #4. Make this all come together into a personal mantra. Oprah Winfrey might say, for example, “to inspire people to be more than they thought they could be.”

Lesson #5. Your personal brand cannot describe some mythical creature. It must be authentically you. It must be capable of inspiring trust and credibility. If your personal brand is not authentic, nothing else you do matters.

¹Schawbel, Dan (September 23, 2014). “Why You Need to Start With the End in Mind.” Retrieved May 9, 2021, from <http://danschawbel.com/blog/why-you-need-to-start-with-the-end-in-mind/>.

²(February 25, 2014). “Why You Should Write a Personal Mission Statement and 5 CEOs Who Did.” Retrieved May 9, 2021, from <http://www.fastcompany.com/3026791/dialed/personal-mission-statements-of-5-famous-ceos-and-why-you-should-write-one-too#1>.

However you develop it, your personal branding statement tells you where to begin listening. What subjects would you identify as keywords for the “inspiring others” example? If you want to become a social media content creator, what keywords would you pick? In either case, how would you identify a few people to follow, say on Twitter? In fact, how would you determine the best social platforms on which to follow your role models? How would you understand the tone of the conversations you are following?

In personal branding, as in all other aspects of SMM, thoughtful listening is the first step! Some free tools such as Google Alerts and Social Mention can help you see how others see you on social platforms. Just Googling your name can provide insights as to whether your personal brand is reflected in search results. Don’t forget that filling out the major social media platform profiles completely can help with your search rankings.

Listen and Observe: Listening Centers

Facebook and Twitter are generally one and two on the list of social media networks most used by marketers. In early 2020, Facebook had 2.6 billion active accounts.⁵ In any given Internet minute, there are 1 million users logging in, 87,500 people tweeting, 347,222 scrolling Instagram, and people viewing 4.5 million videos.⁶ Users also spend about 1 billion dollars a minute and send 41.6 million Facebook messenger messages. The communications per minute, hour, day, and so on simply boggles the mind.

Social media accounts for much of the activity on the Internet, and social listening has become more important in recent years as part of the “call out” culture.⁷ In this culture, customers feel that they have a right to express their feelings and frustrations with a brand. In fact, according to Sprout Social, 46% of customers in the United States have exercised the right to call out brands for poor service. The co-author of this text has done exactly that, especially when phone calls and other means of complaining behavior have not worked. Consumers have a voice, and they are exercising it. Companies must address this culture because of the potential negative impact on their brand. Again, Sprout Social has conducted research that says 555 of people who call out brands on social media expect an answer and 35% would not buy the product or service again if their inquiry is ignored.

So does a marketer even find the relevant messages, much less identify the important ones and respond if necessary? Many tools have been developed just to aid in the gargantuan task of listening and responding. The tools themselves are the subject of Chapter 12. While we are on the subject of strategic listening, however, we should introduce the concept of listening centers. Dell established one of the first permanent social media command posts in 2010. Since then many other corporations have done the same. Social media listening centers have also become an important part of major events.

The National Football League Listens to Super Bowl Conversations

The National Football League (NFL) established an early social media listening center for Super Bowl XLVI in 2012. The contenders in that game were the New York Giants with 1.5 million Facebook fans and the New England Patriots with almost 3 million. That insured a high volume of social media activity, which was monitored by a team of over 20 “strategists, analysts and techies,” according to Mashable. The team began monitoring fan conversations on the Monday before the game and served the 150,000 attendees by tweeting everything from parking directions to information about Indianapolis’ attractions (where the game was being held).⁸ Host committee

communications manager Taulbee Jackson declared the activity an “enormous success.” He says, “It had a direct reach of about 49,000 people in the Indianapolis area over Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare, and YouTube. Overall, the command center delivered some 1.8 million online impressions each day for the Indianapolis host committee.”^{9,10}

Fast forward to February 2015 and a bigger-than-ever social media presence for Super Bowl XLIX. The NFL again had a social media command center and many brands had their own. In fact, Budweiser, a perennial Super Bowl ad favorite, had four listening centers spread across the country. Nissan, who was returning after a long Super Bowl hiatus, had two.¹¹ The listening centers must have been busy, because it was the most social Super Bowl thus far and the traffic was huge.¹²

Super Bowl XLIX was the most-watched game ever with 114.4 million viewers. As many as 1.3 million viewers were streaming the game during crucial moments. It was also the most-tweeted game ever, with 28.4 million game-related tweets sent during the telecast.¹³

In fact, one blog declared mobile the big winner in the game. That verdict was partly based on the fact that the three game apps that bought TV ads experienced a huge increase in download activity after their ads were broadcast. It also reflects the traditional skepticism of digital marketers, who have measures of engagement, about traditional broadcast advertising. Traditional advertising finds it hard to demonstrate advertising return on investment (ROI) or even the type of audience engagement documented in Figure 2.2. Traditional advertising also lacks a mechanism for listening.

Facebook offered advertisers a targeted Super Bowl audience based on listening data. According to Ad Age, “People who post something Super Bowl-related will be added to an audience pool—and the aggregated data will be anonymized—alongside the more than 50 million people who interacted with Super Bowl-related content on Facebook last year. Advertisers will be able to buy ads against Facebook’s Super Bowl audience leading up to and during the Super Bowl.” The targeting data was expected to be updated in almost real time during the game.¹⁴

The performance of the targeted ads was not disclosed. However, Facebook reported that over 65 million worldwide “joined the conversation,” posting, commenting, and

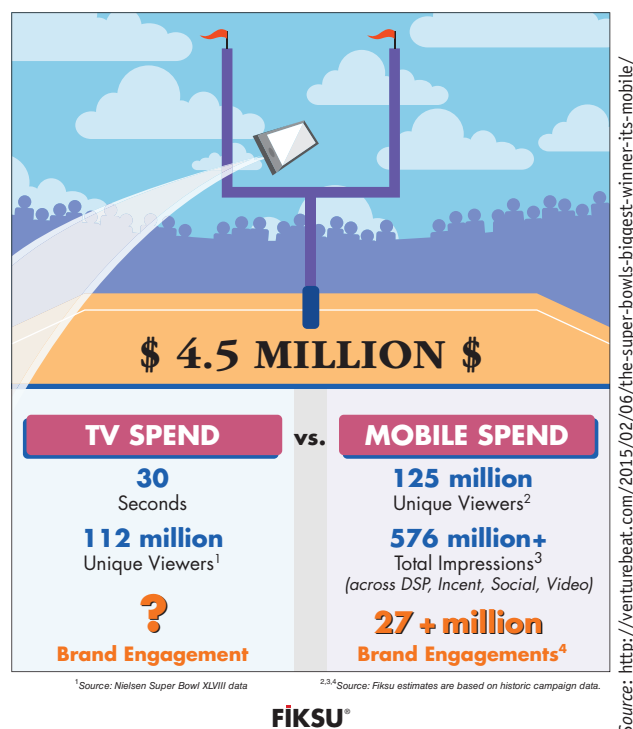


Figure 2.2 Traditional versus Social Media in the 2015 Super Bowl

liking game-related content while it was going on. They posted an animated timeline that showed activity by state at some key moments and revealed that the top three audience categories for game-related content were all women!¹⁵

The Super Bowl continues to be a highly followed event. Social media listening is even more important in recent times, as even sporting events are taking on a political undertone. For example, in 2019 there was a call to boycott the Super Bowl LII, both in support of and against Colin Kaepernick's activism. Kaepernick famously took a knee during the playing of the National Anthem at a 2016 NFL game. In spite of the opportunities that the United States had offered him professionally, as an individual, he felt compelled to take a stand against a country he believed oppressed people of color. Certainly, this was a matter of conscience to him and many others supported his views. Many at the time, however, also thought the game of football should not be politicized, and Kaepernick has not been signed to a team since he became a free agent that year. The controversy continued into 2019 with many taking a stand on social media to boycott the Super Bowl in support of Kaepernick.¹⁶ There were other reasons to call for a Super Bowl boycott social media that year in the minds of fans, including what was perceived as a bad call that kept the New Orleans Saints out of the game. In light of further protests against racial injustice in the United States and a change in the hearts and minds of many of its citizens, the NFL has admitted that it was wrong in not allowing a peaceful protest to occur.¹⁷

Social listening is more important than ever to the NFL's future, as ratings fell for four years in a row after the controversy, only recovering slightly in 2020.¹⁸ Although the game continues to command high advertising rates and a notable number of viewers, the NFL will undoubtedly continue listening and responding to its fans on social media. In fact, in 2019 due to the calls to boycott the game, total sentiment toward the game on social media was negative.¹⁹ Keeping in touch with consumers and the brands they follow will be critical to the success of the NFL and the Super Bowl in years ahead. Being sensitive to political issues will also be important in wooing the Millennial audience, which tends to pay attention to the social and political views of the brands with which it engages. In fact, social media has been an important way for the NFL to keep in touch with fans during the disruption caused by the recent global pandemic.

Cisco Demonstrates the Importance of Social Media Listening in B2B Marketing

Corporate listening centers are permanent installations that can have an important impact on the corporate brand or brands. The center introduced by B2B marketer Cisco in 2012 was described as state of the art and used Cisco's own technology plus an outside supplier for analytics services. The heart of the center is 6 touch screens as shown in Figure 2.3. According to the Cisco Digital and Social Blog, they are listening to:

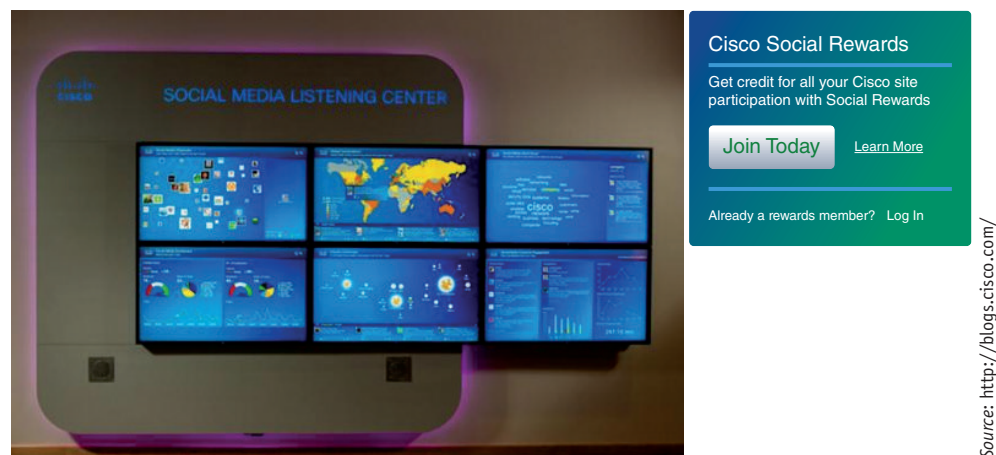


Figure 2.3 Touch Screens in Cisco Listening Center and the Social Rewards Invitation

- “Social Media Customer Engagement. Highlighting CiscoLive conversations and engagement
- Twitter-based global heat map. Where? Real-time global tweets are displayed
- Social Media Influencers. Who? What influencers are tweeting about Cisco
- Product Family Landscape. What conversations are happening around both Collaboration and the Data Center and Virtualization architectures
- Social Media Word Cloud Highlighting current trending topics”²⁰

Blogs are an important part of the conversation for many marketers. An examination of the Cisco site in 2011 showed over 450 blogs and one million members of the Cisco community. The U.S. blogs feature the Cisco Social Rewards box shown in Figure 2.3. Viewers are invited to become guest bloggers in areas of their expertise and earn a variety of badges for their participation. It takes a lot of content to keep all those blogs vibrant, and Cisco customers and partners are important content creators for them. And clearly, Cisco listens to what the bloggers say.

Charlie Treadwell, former Social and Digital Marketing Manager at Cisco says, “The foundation of a strong social media strategy starts with listening. Social listening with Radian6 [a supplier of analytics services] has allowed us to get closer to our customers and focus on how we monitor, respond, and triage conversations as they happen across our organization.” Cisco stated that it had achieved a 281% return on its investment in social media listening in four key business areas: more creative use of services to achieve industry thought leadership, increased productivity for employees who are able to access relevant content wherever they are, reduced expenditure on marketing research, and increased profit by uncovering sales opportunities that might have otherwise been missed.²¹

But Cisco has not stopped there. The company is continuing to improve its social listening capabilities. In 2019, the company launched a new social care tool that includes an artificial intelligence (AI) model to identify more customer engagement and sales opportunities. This tool is used in conjunction with the Social Bridge team, a network of experts launched in 2017, who uses a unique process to answer customer concerns. The team uses technology to listen to over 8 million conversations a month, identifying those that need to be addressed directly and resolved. Cisco claims to have increased net positive sentiment by 5.3% overall as a result of these efforts. More importantly, instead of primarily focusing on brand amplification, the company is focusing on true interaction and engagement with customers on social media.²²

Setting Goals and Objectives

The Cisco example shows that listening to a wide range of social media sites and observing the location, behavior, tastes, and needs of the target audience is key to successful SMM. It helps marketers set optimal goals and determine the most suitable strategies to achieve them.

It is important to keep in mind that goals must be flexible in the light of new developments while engaging in social media. Sometimes, unintended benefits from social media engagement are discovered. For example, after Vistaprint, an online printing company, got started on social media, they noticed that many people were seeking customer support through Twitter. In reaction, the company engaged its customer service department, connecting that department to questions from Twitter so that service professionals could respond directly to the tweets. This recognition of customer needs allowed faster service for customers needing assistance and resulted in cost savings to the firm through reduced phone time spent on customer support.

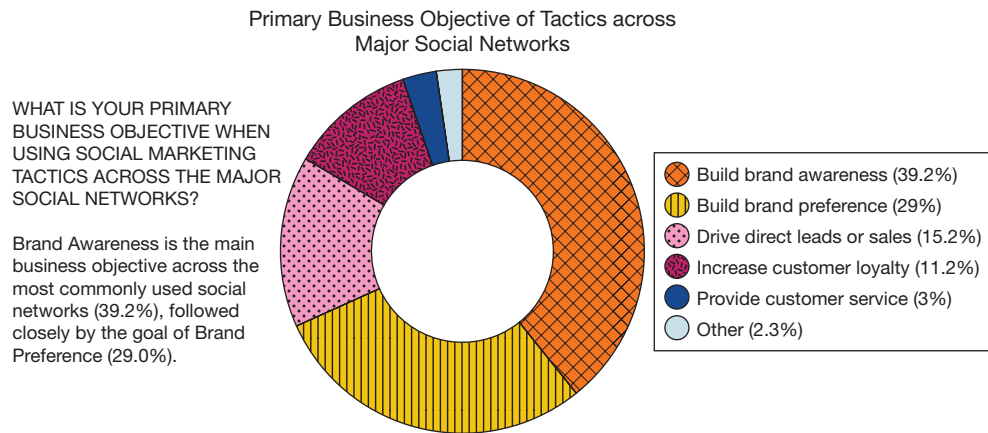


Figure 2.4 Why Marketers Use Social Media Marketing

Customer service is one of a handful of key objectives that marketers often adopt. According to a Forrester survey, the most popular business objectives for social media include building brand awareness, building brand preference, driving new customer leads or sales, using loyalty programs to retain current customers, and providing customer service (Figure 2.4).²³ Social Media Examiner's 2014 industry survey adds that marketers find that their social media activities also increased traffic and exposure, generated leads, developed loyalty, improved sales, provided market insight, and grew business partnerships.²⁴

Accomplishments like increasing market insight, improving business partnerships, and even developing loyal fans may seem to be reasonable outcomes of SMM. You may, however, question why search ranking is not on that list and wonder if there are other potential benefits that are not listed.

Search ranking has changed significantly since the early days of the Internet. Gone are the days when a few well-chosen keywords and a large number of inbound links would guarantee a high ranking on search engine results pages (SERPs). What has caused the change? Social media!

The myriad details of SEO (search engine optimization) are beyond the scope of this discussion, but the oft-repeated slogan that “content is king” sums it up. Relevant and authentic content from blog posts or fresh website content that can be disseminated on social media as well as a consistent presence on social media can improve search rankings.²⁵

In addition to the primary SMM objectives shown in Figure 2.4, there are other objectives that can be secondary in SMM campaigns. Some that are frequently alluded to include:

- Achieving a desired brand positioning
- Producing new product ideas
- Being prepared to handle reputation management in a crisis
- Supporting public relations and advertising campaigns

This discussion suggests that there are more “benefits” from SMM than just the primary objectives would suggest. If there are many objectives that are possible in SMM campaigns, how does the marketer go about choosing a relatively small set for a specific SMM campaign? The answer, of course, is to think about what the business needs to accomplish. While true, that still does not provide specific guidance for developing campaign objectives.

Where Do Actual Objectives Come From?

Setting Social Media Marketing Objectives. There is beginning to be some agreement about the types of objectives that are appropriate for SMM, although many marketers still have their own favorite variant of the ones shown in Figure 2.5. The Valid Metrics Framework was developed by AMEC, an international communications association, after a review of the many conceptual frameworks currently found in SMM.²⁶ It represents a strong framework for understanding SMM objectives and the metrics associated with them, which will be discussed in Chapter 12.

Some of the generic terms are familiar in advertising or other communications disciplines. Some have gained prominence as we attempt to understand the workings of SMM. The generic concepts are:

- Exposure is the opportunity to see and/or hear a piece of content in any channel. This is the broad definition of exposure. It does not mean that a viewer has paid any attention to or has comprehended any part of the content. It simply means he had the opportunity to do so. Exposure is a term long used in advertising.
- Engagement is a term popularized by social media marketers and its exact definition is hotly debated. It is most often measured as some variant of time spent on the piece of content. However, definitions vary widely so you are advised to look for the definition any time you use an engagement statistic.
- Influence is a reasonably intuitive term that describes the ability to affect attitudes and behavior. The topic influence in social media is so important that for a while special tools such as Klout developed to measure it. However, social media influence is hard to measure in one tool because influence is so nuanced. These days, it is far better to develop and measure influence on a particular social media tool.
- Impact is also used in a reasonably common manner: how does a SMM activity affect business results? Specifically, how does it affect the attainment of goals? The impact marketers would most likely to measure is the Return on Promotional Investment (ROPI). That is difficult to do, as we will discuss in Chapter 12.
- Advocacy is a term long used in traditional promotion, especially in attempting to understand the effect of word of mouth (WOM). Communications studies have long demonstrated that various topics have identifiable opinion leaders and that these opinion leaders do have an influence on followers. The topic of advocacy has become especially important in SMM where marketers can make specific attempts to locate or create advocates and can measure the extent of their success.

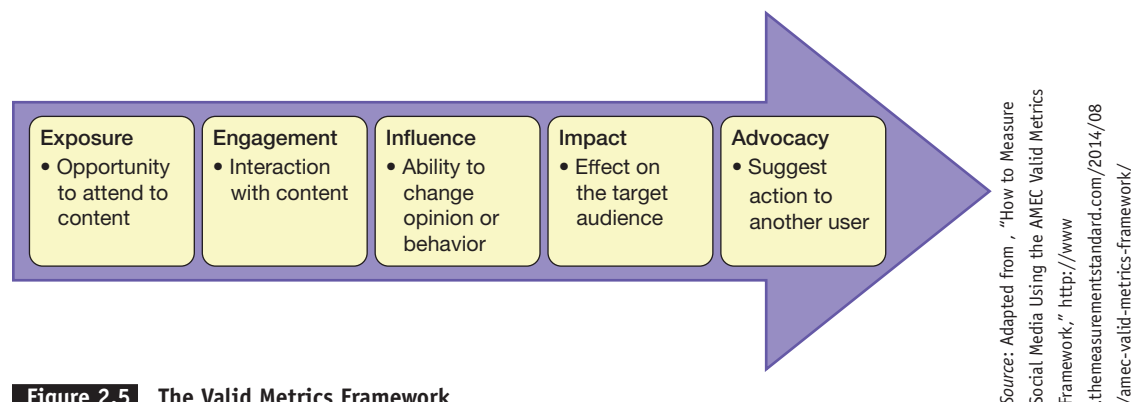


Figure 2.5 The Valid Metrics Framework

This is a progression that may parallel the purchase journey itself. A person must first be exposed to a communication before she can become in any way involved with it or be affected by it. If the communication has an effect, it may result in a behavior. If a person engages in a behavior and the results are satisfactory, the person may choose to share it with others. That describes the chain of events that social media marketers are trying to stimulate.

The terms that make up the Valid Metrics Framework, however, are not necessarily used in the objectives themselves. The framework represents a useful way of thinking about the type of objectives that are appropriate for a given stage in SMM efforts, but marketers must dig deeper to come up with the specific objectives for a campaign.

Understanding Campaign-Specific and Platform-Specific Social Media Marketing Objectives. It helps to understand objectives as a cascade (Figure 2.6). Overall business goals are the basis for objective setting at any level of the organization. Corporate business goals, however, are broad—driven by the vision and mission of the business. After the vision and mission statements have been created, actual objectives are generally financial in nature. They cover at least a year; in some instances, longer time frames are used. Corporate goals allow all business functions, including marketing, to understand what they need to accomplish in order to fulfill their role in achieving the business objectives.

In a similar fashion, marketing objectives are usually stated in terms of sales or market share, and they point the way for all marketing functions—including SMM. Marketing objectives are generally part of an annual marketing plan and consequently have a time frame of 1 year.

Social media marketing objectives can be stated as goals to be achieved over a similar planning period of perhaps a year. Often, however, they are stated for a specific campaign, for example, one to introduce a new loyalty program or another to increase sharing of content on one of the business' platforms. Within a campaign, more than one platform is often used and there should be specific communications objectives for each platform. For example, a campaign to increase sharing of blog posts might want to encourage sharing posts via Twitter and have an objective of increasing retweets of blog material by 25%.

Notice that none of the objectives have any information about how they are to be accomplished. They are goals only. The “how to” is the topic of the Action Plan section, which follows in the formal marketing plan.

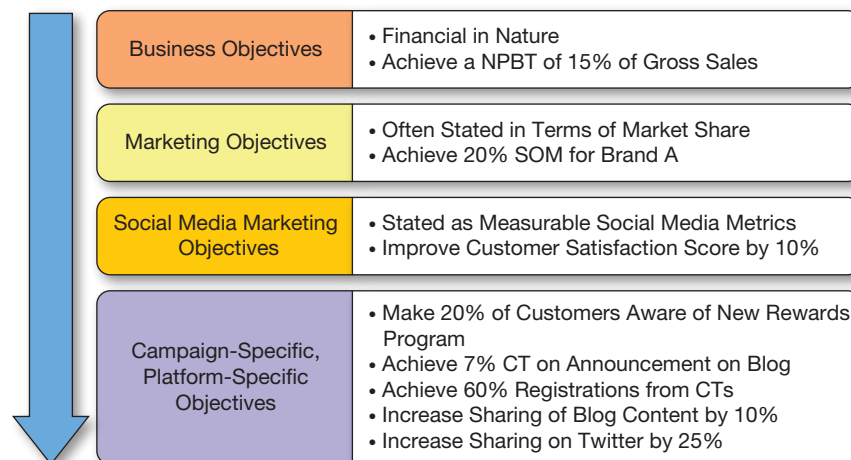


Figure 2.6 The Objectives Cascade for Social Media Marketing Objectives

There is something missing, however—the issue of time frame that should be explicitly stated as part of the objective. A brand may choose to run a new customer acquisition program during one time frame or on a particular platform and a customer loyalty and retention campaign during another time frame or on another platform. The two campaigns need to be planned and evaluated separately. That is one reason why it is wise to choose a limited number of goals for a single campaign. For example, it is hard to see how customer acquisition and customer loyalty goals could receive equal attention in a single campaign. Regardless of how many objectives are chosen for a specific campaign, having a clear idea of the goal is critical to the success of a social media campaign.

There is a standard for judging the quality of goals and objectives at any level. It is the SMART acronym, popular in many aspects of the quality management discipline. All objectives should be judged by the following criteria:

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Realistic
Time delimited

Social media marketing campaigns vary in duration, so it is especially important to specify the time frame for each objective.

This discussion shows that SMM has very specific objectives that are part of the marketing, and hence of the business, goals of the organization. The implication is that strategy is a vague term when used in the context of promotion, including SMM. It does not imply the creation of economic value like it does when discussing corporate strategy. Marketing campaigns, however, can be said to have strategies that give them direction.

Determining Strategies

There are some key considerations when setting SMM strategies.

What Are the Overall Goals?

Look at the mission and general marketing goals of the organization when creating SMM strategies. Social media marketing should not be an isolated part of the marketing strategy; rather, it should link into a broader marketing plan. The building of SMM strategies that support the overall strategic goals of a company will also make it easier for the strategies to win support within the company.

What Was Learned from Listening?

The listening stage should have unearthed information about the company, its target audience, competitors, and the industry as a whole. Marketers should be able to answer the following questions:

- How do people feel about a company, product, service, person, or issue?
- How are competitors using social media platforms?
- Which media platforms appear to be the most viable in order to achieve SMM goals?
- Where does a company's target audience hang out, and what do they do there?
- How can this information be used to identify strategic opportunities?