Social Media Marketing: Opportunities and Challenges

By

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Post Graduate Programme in Management in Marketing
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Abstract

Over the last few years, we have seen a rapid growth in social media space that is largely due to the fast growing number of internet users and network platforms all over the world. As more and more people start using the internet, they in time start connecting with one another via various social media platforms some of the largest being Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Social media provide potential opportunities for the marketers to connect with a large audience in real time. Here, customers and companies can communicate with each other with no time lag and without any third party intervention. Consequently, these companies can benefit from much deeper customer interactions, relationships and insights. However to benefit from social media the marketers need to overcome several challenges.

In my present research, I have tried to address some of the key issues that surround businesses and marketers today while dealing with social media marketing. For example: How to build an effective social media strategy? What are some of the frameworks and tools that can be utilized in the process? How to measure ROI on social media?

Keywords: social media, social media marketing, marketers, the internet, platforms, social networks, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Google.

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Lastly, family and friends, who have been there to support me throughout my academic journey and encouraged me to put my best foot forward in my endeavors.
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Biography

Prior to joining MIT Sloan, Gunjan completed her MBA from the Indian School of Business (ISB), Hyderabad. She has over 7 year professional experience in diverse roles sales, marketing, business development and most recently with Microsoft as an Account Manager. She has worked in different industries too, primarily in education and technology. She is now keen on exploring social media marketing owing to its ever growing presence and the impact it has begun to have on all businesses. She believes, as the number of internet users are growing social media marketing would become increasingly important function for any company to do business successfully and effectively.

On personal front, Gunjan is from India and very proud of Indian culture and values. She is passionate about women empowerment and education. At Sloan, she serves as a VP Social Media and Website for Sloan Women in Management Club (SWIM). Previously, she was an active member of Women in Business Club (WIB) at the Indian School of Business, Hyderabad. Besides, she has been actively involved in various education and social initiatives. She has worked with an NGO, Nayi Disha where she taught computer and English to underprivileged children.

Gunjan likes to read, write and travel in her free time.
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1) Introduction

The landscape of social media is changing fast. Companies are struggling to keep up with this pace and finding it increasingly difficult to respond to these continuous changes. They are struggling to find answers to questions such as how to engage with social media? How to maximize their return on investment in social media? What should these returns be? Should they use these social media platforms to increase brand awareness or for targeted marketing? Which channels to choose one versus many? Should they stick to the channels that have the largest market share like Facebook, Twitter or should they try out the new and emerging ones like Pinterest and Tumblr? Should they decide on the content first or the channels? How to gather feedback and then how to act on it?

I did extensive primary and secondary research. Under primary research, I surveyed people, who are playing important roles in deciding social media strategy for their respective companies and also representatives of the companies that are providing social media solutions to their clients. These people have shared their professional experiences, which have helped me identify the core issues. Most of the survey questions were focused on social media marketing and involved a lot of qualitative inputs to get a comprehensive understanding of the subject at hand. For secondary research, largely due to the nature of the topic, I have referred to material available on-line (blogs, articles, websites), but at the same time I have also utilized content from some of the books available on the topic to delve deeper.

My research helped me identify the main pain points the marketers face today when deciding their social media strategies. Moreover, this research also assisted me in recognizing the untapped potential of social media marketing for businesses in the present time.

This thesis is an attempt to help businesses and marketers identify some of the significant yet latent opportunities that social media marketing present today. At the same time, how to overcome challenges that come along with these potential opportunities.
2) Social Media

There is a lot of discussion going on these days how exactly to define social media is it the medium, tool or platform? Some scholars argue that all media are social while others believe that not all media are social, but only the ones that help humans to interact with one another (Fuchs, 2014). In other words, social media is a form of media that is interactive, collective and participative.

2.1 What is Social Media?

For the purpose of this thesis, I have used following characterization of social media:

“Social Media is the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Websites and applications dedicated to forums, microblogging, Social networking, social bookmarking, social curation, and wikis are among the different types of social media-Margaret Rouse (Rouse, Social Media, 2012)”

These interactive platforms and applications are built on either Web 2.0 or advanced version of Web. As older version, Web 1.0 did not allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content and was mostly considered read only web or static web. On the other hand, Web 2.0 is known as a read-write web. The social (interactive) nature of Web 2.0 provides users opportunity not only to interact with the sites but also to create content. Wikipedia, Twitter, Facebook are all examples of this new web (Rouse, Web 2.0, 2015).

In short, these social media web-based platforms and applications are interactive and participative. Hence, they enable users to generate, share or exchange data in various forms such as text, videos, audios, images. Some example of the leading social media platforms are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google + and YouTube.

After understanding what social media means, we should now try to understand what falls under the social media landscape. There are different ways the social media landscape has been explained. Some academics have defined it on the basis of usage, while others on the basis of purpose or type of content shared. Brian Solis developed the conversation prism first in 2008. This prism represents a visual map
of the social media landscape, and categorizes social media platform based on content and purpose (Solis, 2013). This prism has been evolving continuously and the one shown in figure 1 was revised and republished in 2013. On the other hand, figure 2 represents the social media landscape by Frédéric Cavazza, wherein he classified Social Media landscape according to the nature of usage, i.e. share, discuss, publish, network. He first came up with Social Media landscape 2008 and then revised it in 2014 (Cavazza, 2014).

These different types of social media landscapes help us understand the complexity and multiplicity that surround social media today and how it is getting gradually intertwined with other areas i.e. media, commerce, services and technology. As per Statista.com, the number of total social media network users today stands at 1.79B as compared to .97 B in 2010 and this number is expected to reach 2.44B by 2018(Statista, 2015).

Figure 1: Social media Landscape by Brian Solis (Solis, 2013)
After analyzing what comprises the social media landscape from different approaches i.e. content, usage, purpose, I tried to put together a simple classification based on the usage (Table 1). Some of the content of this table has been drawn from Social Media landscape 2014 by Frédéric Cavazza (Cavazza, 2014). Although, the table on the following page by no means an exhaustive list of all social media platforms and application. Nonetheless, it certainly provides insights on the changing landscape of Social Media and helps a reader better understand the extent and scale of social media presence in today’s world.

The social media landscape is undergoing continuous changes. New platforms are emerging at a rapid speed, e.g. Snapchat, Pinterest at the same time some old ones are disappearing Orkut is one such example. Moreover, the lines between platforms categories are continuously blurring. New and disruptive technologies will continue to challenge and change the way we now classify these platforms and applications. For instance, till very recently Facebook was primarily a platform that was largely
used for sharing, but now with the launch of Facebook messenger it has entered a new category i.e. discuss(*Table 1*). Hence, this classification can at best be used just as a reference point not sacrosanct.

*Table 1: Social Media Landscape Based on Usage, Sources (Cavazza, 2014), Author*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usage</th>
<th>Name of Platforms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Publish</td>
<td>WordPress, Tumblr and Wikis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share</td>
<td>Flickr, Pinterest, YouTube, Slideshare, Facebook, and now also mobile apps Instagram, Vine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss</td>
<td>Web based platforms such as Quora, Reddit, and mobile apps Facebook Messenger, BlackBerry Messenger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network</td>
<td>Examples of networking sites include LinkedIn, OKcupid and their mobile counterparts are apps such as Tinder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate</td>
<td>Platforms/applications that are used for work related collaboration such as Yammer, Slack (mostly used in formal settings).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review/Feedback</td>
<td>Platforms/applications that are used to provide feedback and reviews some examples are TripAdvisor, IMDb, and Yelp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>Platforms/applications that are offering integrated e-commerce features to let the users purchase directly on their own sites/apps rather than merely acting as an intermediary between the customer and the e-commerce sites Twitter Buy Button, Facebook Messenger In-App Payment (recently announced) are some such examples.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2 Why is Social Media Important?

After having understood what social media is, the next question that comes to our mind is why is it important for brands?

Today around 3B people is accessing internet world over. Internet user penetration has reached over 40%. Around 78% in developed countries and 38% in developing countries. These ratios account for 40% of the total world population (ITU, 2014). As per Statista.com (Statista, 2015), the number of total Social Network users today stands at 1.79B as compared to .97 B in 2010 and this number is expected to reach 2.44B by 2018. Presently, 29% of world population is at least on one of the social networks and the platform that has the highest percentage of these users is Facebook. It has 1.37B active users worldwide, resulting in 38.6% of the global online population using Facebook. With nearly 1.37B active users Facebook has world’s 20% internet using population on the platform (Figure 3).

Every second, on an average, around 6,000 tweets are posted, which corresponds to over 350,000 tweets sent per minute, 500 million tweets per day. YouTube has over 4.3 B number of video views on an average per day. Instagram has over 80 M photos shared in a day and some 79M blogs have been posted on Tumblr today (internet live stats, 2015).

Figure 3: Leading Social Networks worldwide as of January 2015, Ranked by Number of Active Users (in millions), Source (Statista, 2015)
These mind boggling statistics clearly demonstrate that the user base and the mind share social media commands is enormous. Till few years ago, businesses were uncertain about social media and deemed it more as a fad than a norm. However, the growing popularity of social media platforms is making it increasingly important for businesses due to the sheer numbers of users and interactions these platforms are drawing on a regular basis. The exponential growth of these platforms has compelled businesses to seriously relook at their marketing strategies and get the social media piece integrated correctly with their overall marketing strategies. Today, social media marketing is presenting an opportunity to companies not only to connect with consumers but also engage deeply with them. Any organization that is not leveraging these platforms is wasting a golden business opportunity.
3) Social Media Marketing

The very foundation of social media marketing is two-way communication using interactive web/mobile medium e.g. tweets, blogs, unlike traditional media marketing where communication is one-way, and is through mostly static broadcast technologies e.g. radios, television (Zarrella, 2009).

Social media marketing’s success depends on high interaction and participation. Therefore, it focuses on creating content that attracts attention from the users and also encourages these users to share this content across their social networks.

3.1 What is Social Media Marketing?

Wikipedia defines social media marketing as a process of gaining web traction or customer attention through social media sites such as Facebook (Trattner C. K., 2012)\(^1\).

The customer traction and attention are largely a result of the electronic world of mouth (EWoM) that are taking place on these social platforms, whether in the form of a like, share, view or comment. “EWoM refers to any statement based on positive, neutral, or negative experiences made by potential, actual, or former consumers about a product, service, brand, or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet (through websites, social networks, instant messages, news feeds...) - J. Kietzmann and A. Canhoto (Jan & Canhoto, 2013)”.

Social media marketing is gradually shifting the focus of marketers from word of mouth (WoM) to the electronic world of mouth (EWoM). Marketers now have to focus on creating content that is easy to share across platforms else they will end up restricting EWoM for their brands.

In short, social media marketing is a practice to take advantage of social networks to help a company increase brand awareness, customer engagement or customer conversion. How a company would want to leverage a social media broadly depends on the company’s desired marketing goals.

---

3.2 The Difference between Digital Marketing and Social Media Marketing

While the difference between digital marketing and traditional marketing is clear as one focuses on the web and the other focuses on non-digital media such as print, television, radio, direct mail, billboards, catalogue. Social media marketing and digital marketing are sometimes used interchangeably. However, social media marketing mostly remains a subset of digital marketing. As digital marketing also includes search engine optimization (SEO), email marketing, banner advertising, mobile marketing and various other forms of digital advertising – billboards, DTV (digital television) or in other words any form of marketing using digital medium/channels (Figure 4).

![Relationship between Digital Marketing and Social Media Marketing](image)

*Figure 4: Relationship between Digital Marketing and Social Media Marketing*
Social media marketing’s reach is largely limited to the boundaries of the internet. On the contrary, digital marketing sometimes goes beyond the realm of the Internet and includes other digital channels, mobile phones or digital billboards, which could reach people even in the off line world (Chris, 2013). Social media marketing involves mutual engagement between the audience and company, it entails a two way communication. On the other hand, some of digital marketing strategies are just a one-way street where the audience has very limited ability to share his or her thoughts to the brand. Some, such examples of digital marketing are unsolicited email (email marketing), text message ads, and unrequested web feeds.

**Table 2: Key Differences between Digital Marketing and Social Media Marketing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Digital Marketing</th>
<th>Social Media Marketing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition</strong></td>
<td>Digital marketing is not always social. Some digital marketing strategies include social media marketing.</td>
<td>Social media marketing is a subset of digital marketing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication medium</strong></td>
<td>Online /offline</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication flow</strong></td>
<td>Two-way/ one-way</td>
<td>Two-way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media type</strong></td>
<td>Earned, Owned &amp; Paid</td>
<td>Focus is on earned media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marketing tactics</strong></td>
<td>Push &amp; pull</td>
<td>Mostly pull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marketing style</strong></td>
<td>Organic as well as inorganic</td>
<td>Focus is on organic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Champions</strong></td>
<td>Company, third parties &amp; users</td>
<td>Mostly user driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key focus</strong></td>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feedback</strong></td>
<td>Not necessarily real time</td>
<td>Real time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4) Social Media Marketing: Opportunities

Social media symbolizes low-cost or free technological platforms or tools. These platforms and tools present abundant business opportunities for companies (DeMers, 2014). In the following pages, I have highlighted some of the key advantages for business and companies for actively engaging with social media marketing.

4.1 Higher Brand Recognition: Social media marketing helps increase brand recognition, this is largely due to the network effects. It also provides a quick way to gather fans, followers and connections. Social media marketing also gives companies opportunities to create earned media, which is seen as the most reliable and transparent media by customers and translates to higher recall value and longevity of the brand (Corcoran, 2009).

Earned media refer to brand recognition/recall earned owing to quality content, as opposed to paid media that is publicity gained through paid advertising (Yu, 2013). These earned media interactions on any social media platform results in higher recognition and recall among both non-customers and customer. In other words, the more brand mentions (positive) your brand gets from individuals on these platforms, the more trusted and influential your brand will appear to any new user (DeMers, 2014).

Figure 5: POEM: Paid, Owned, Earned Media (Flores, 2014)
4.2 Improved Brand Loyalty: There have been many researches that have proved that social media marketing leads to higher brand loyalty. A study conducted by Texas Tech University found that companies who effectively use Twitter to engage actively in conversations with their followers were most likely to gain brand loyalty from these individuals compared with companies, which have passive present on the platform. These researchers also suggest companies to take advantage of the powerful tools that social media present them to connect with their audience (Bell, 2013).

Another study conducted by researchers in Turkey to understand the impact of social media marketing on the brand loyalty concludes that advantageous campaigns (providing benefits, values, advantages to their consumers) on social media are the most important drivers of the brand loyalty. The same research also indicates the popularity of the content among friends, and visibility of the brand on different social media platforms as other top reasons for their brand loyalty (Erodogmus & Mesut Cicek, 2012).

Therefore, it is important for companies to actively engage with their audience on these platforms and be useful and valuable to the customers to enjoy higher brand loyalty and stronger network effects.

4.3 Improved Inbound Traffic/Marketing: In 2006, HubSpot coined the term Inbound Marketing (HubSpot, State of Inbound 2014, 2014). Inbound marketing as opposed to traditional outbound marketing, refers to marketing activities that bring customers to businesses, rather than businesses paying for prospects’ attention. Inbound marketing earns the attention of customers, and makes the company easy to be found by offering useful information and tools to the audience. The main tools for inbound marketing include content publishing, search engine optimization and social media (HubSpot, THE STATE OF INBOUND MARKETING, 2011).

If your brand is passive or missing on social media, this will constrain the extent of usefulness of your brand to the netizens in turn limiting your inbound traffic. Eventually, resulting in lower brand reach to potential users/customers. High quality, sharable and engaging content on social media platform can prove to be very effective to create inbound traffic and attract new customers. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, YouTube, and LinkedIn can be leveraged to increase the appeal of brand and thus leading to more inbound traffic.
Figure 6 shows the growing percentage of customer acquisition are taking place via inbound marketing (Social Media) for both B2B and B2C enterprises. However, the relative importance of each platform to a business also depends on the nature of business. For instance, for B2C Facebook is the top choice while for B2B LinkedIn has emerged as most crucial (State of Inbound Marketing, 2010). These results are very akin to our survey results in which again Facebook and LinkedIn have appeared as top two platform of choice.

![Figure 6: Percentage of Companies Using Specific Social Media Channels and/or Blogs, Who have acquired a Customer from That Channel, Source (State of Inbound Marketing, 2010)](image)

4.4 Reduced Marketing Costs: Social media marketing platforms give brands an opportunity to benefit from earned media. Unlike traditional marketing where it is almost always paid, earned media refer to word-of-mouth that, stimulated through viral and social media activities. These conversations are mainly user-driven and result in inbound marketing. Therefore, they require lower investment on the company’s part (Figure 7). A study conducted by Nielsen in 2011 suggests that Social Media has become a preferred source of information for customers in the present world and customers rely heavily on customer ratings and reviews before making any purchase decisions. Social media is playing a crucial role in how consumers discover, research, and share information about brands and products these days (Nielsen, How-Social-Media-Impacts-Brand-Marketing, 2011).

These platforms now present an opportunity to marketers to create positive word of mouth and benefit from earned media rather than continuously investing in paid media such as online advertising or search
engine marketing and reduce their marketing cost (*figure 7*). To illustrate, Dove’s campaign for Real Beauty, which began in 2004 is a good example of earned media. It reached over 7M girls by 2010, mostly riding on word of mouth i.e. earned media (Dove, 2011).

![Average Cost Per Lead Inbound Vs Outbound](image)

*Figure 7: Average Cost Per Lead Inbound Vs Outbound, Source (HubSpot, The 2012 STATE OF INBOUND MARKETING, 2012)*

### 4.5 Better Customer Insights using Social Media Analytics

Social media platforms give companies a vast amount of information about their audiences’ demographics, geographic, behavioral, and psychographic. For example: a company can easily gauge from its Facebook fan book page, what is the kind of followers its attracting whether they are young or old, global or local. They can also learn about their competitive landscape by knowing what are the other brands their fans are following and whether the customer sentiments for competitor more positive than their brand.

Social media also help in getting real time feedback helping companies’ identify what is working and what is not working for them. Companies are now using Social Media Analytics tools to get deeper customer insights. These tools promise to go beyond text analytics and use opinion mining, sentiment analysis, trend analysis, etc. (Fan & Gordon, 2014). Sentiment analysis is one of the most widely used methods today in the industry to understand the pulse of the customer.
In Kecheng Liu’s words “Social Media Analytics is concerned with developing and evaluating informatics tools and frameworks to collect, monitor, analyze, summarize, and visualize social media data to facilitate conversations and interactions to extract useful patterns and intelligence (Liu, 2014)”. Academics, Weiguo Fan and Michael D. Gordon, came up with a three stage process to develop Social Media Analytics: capture, understand, and present (Fan & Gordon, 2014) (figure 8). Using this process to develop Social Media Analytics can lead to rich insights about customers and help companies in better customer segmentation, brand messaging, marketing strategies.

![Figure 8: Social Media Analytics Process, Source (Fan & Gordon, 2014)](image)

### 4.6 Higher Leads to Sales Conversion:
Every interaction with customers on a social media platform is an opportunity to prompt customers towards conversion. For instance: A video link shared on Facebook company page can lead to watching a video on YouTube and this in turn can result in a site visit and eventually a conversion.

A joint research by MIT and Tsinghua conducted a field experiment with a global media company to understand if tweeting can help them in increasing the viewership i.e. higher business sales. These researchers found a positive correlation between tweeting and sales (Shiyang Gong, 2014). These studies show that social media platforms are highly interactive and interconnected with one another,
providing an opportunity for companies to enjoy more touch points with their potential customer, leading to higher sales conversion. Another study conducted by HubSpot in 2012 shows (figure 9) the growing percentage of lead conversion via Social Media. Social media activities have a 100% higher lead-to-close rate compared to outbound marketing activities (HubSpot, State of Inbound Marketing 2012, 2012).

![Figure 9: Lead to Customer Close % by Channel, Source (HubSpot, State of Inbound Marketing 2012, 2012)](image)

4.7 Improved Search Engines Rankings: Social media is also playing an increasing role in improving search engines ranking. Search engine such as Google, Bing are now gradually more relying on these social signals for their respective search rankings (Cisneros, 2014). Google focuses is on providing the best possible search results for its users Google essentially gathers the pages through the crawl process and then creates an index, so users can easily find things they are looking for (Google, n.d.). The pages that are most relevant and have quality content for user search query come at the top. Google is now increasingly turning to Social Media results to provide the best results and avoid keyword stuffing, invisible text and fake back links (Cisneros, 2014).

A recent study, SEO Ranking Factors and Rank Correlations 2014, conducted by Searchmetrics indicates that content still is the king and rules SEO (Figure 10) but social signaling is also becoming an increasingly important factor and Google’s top ranked positions usually have a large number of social signals such as shares, likes, comments, tweets +1s etc. (Tober, Henning, & Furch, 2014).
Therefore, we can assume that Google +1, Facebook Likes, Facebook comments, Tweets Facebook Share are becoming more and more important for google page rank and a company can improve its search engine ranking using social media by creating high quality content that attracts a great number of likes, views, shares and comments (Redsicker, 2014).

![Figure 10: Correlation Social Signals 2014 (Tober, Henning, & Furch, 2014)](image)

A report published by Social Media Examiner, based on input from over 2800 marketers validates many of the benefits discussed above (STELZNER, 2014). This report is also very consistent with the results, we obtained through our primary research. Some of the key insights that this report provides are as follows:

- 92% of marketers indicate that social media is important for their business.
- Facebook and LinkedIn emerge as the two most important social networks for marketers, which is consistent with our survey also. When asked in our survey to select the platforms in which their
companies is most heavily investing 100% participant picked Facebook, followed by LinkedIn with 44.44%.

- An increased focus on blogging, 68% marketers plan to increase their usage of blogs in the near future.
- Over 58% marketer, who have been using Social Media over 1 year reported improved search ranking.
- 84% participants found higher internet traffic (inbound) with investment as little as 6 hours per week in social media channels.
- 57% SMEs and 40% large enterprises conveyed reduction in marketing expenses.
- The top two benefits of social media marketing were reported as increased exposure (brand awareness) and increased traffic (inbound).

To conclude, the benefits of social media today go way beyond qualitative gains such as brand reach, brand loyalty, deeper consumer interactions. Social media today presents tangible benefits to the marketers such as reduced marketing costs and higher lead to sales conversion ratio. Therefore, it is imperative for the marketers to have a clear and effective strategy to use social media marketing to their advantage.
5) Social Media Marketing: Challenges

Although there are numerous opportunities that social media marketing presents to the marketers and businesses today, but there are few key challenges that marketers need to overcome to take advantage of these opportunities. Our research indicates that the first big challenge is how to build an integrated social media strategy. Companies need some tools and frameworks to answer critical questions such as: How to tie their marketing goals with Social Media? Who is the target audience? Why do they share? Whom to do they share with and also when? Which platforms to choose? How to go about choosing one over the other? Should they choose channels first or content? How to decide what content to go with? How to create this content? Should it be text, GIF, pictures, videos or mixed? How to gather feedback and then how to incorporate this feedback?

The second biggest challenge companies face today is to measure Return on Investment (ROI) on these social media marketing efforts. Companies want to understand whether the money and time they are investing is paying off and how it is paying off. Since social media marketing deals with a lot of qualitative data, and interpreting that data to recognize its impact on business can prove to be very challenging.

Another big issue that concerns a lot of marketers is how to handle any negative sentiments on these platforms. There is a very little control one has on the choice of audience and the type of content that gets shared on these public platforms. What should be some of the preemptive actions marketers take to minimize these uncalled for situations and what should be the response mechanism once these incidents have taken place?

As per a recent research, 88% marketers want to understand how to measure return on investment on social media marketing (STELZNER, 2014). This finding is similar to ours and further validate the outcomes of our survey.

To address these questions, I have come up with few frameworks and tools. These could serve as a foundation for marketers to look for the answers to some of these questions. These are by no means exhaustive, but certainly useful to build a systemic approach to resolve the issues at hand.
5.1 How to Build an Effective Social Media Strategy

Now, when we have established that social media marketing is gaining importance in today’s world and companies can benefit from it, the next question it leads to is how to build an effective social media strategy for the company. There are various scholarly articles that have talked about several methods and frameworks for social media strategies, but one of the best frameworks that I have come across was given by Professor Ben Shield at MIT Sloan School (Shields, Social Media Management: Persuasion in Networked Culture, 2015) as shown in Figure 11, 12, 13. These framework are simple without being too simplistic and provide an essential foundation to build an effective social media management strategy.

The framework focuses primarily on five key variables i.e. goal, audience, content, channel, feedback. The framework suggests to formulate social media management strategy by first deciding on marketing goals. It then recommends to move to other critical components such as audience, content, channel and feedback. Finally, depending on customer feedback (whether the strategy worked or not) iterate each variable as necessary. However, the order of the framework may vary in tandem with marketing goals. For instance, sometimes content and channel positions could be interchanged as some companies can decide on the content before channel. If a company has to reach out to people via videos and images only then the content would get decided first and channels later because some channels might not support the content in that format.

![Social Media Management Framework Diagram](image)

Figure 11: Social Media Management Framework, Stage 1 - Gather Feedback: What was the audience response? Did you achieve your goal?

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5.1.1 Determine Key Goals

It is essential for the marketers to understand what their key marketing objectives are. Are they company trying to reach a new audience or an existing audience? Are they trying to strengthen brand image or change brand image? Are they going to use social media for short term e.g. for a product launch or for longer term e.g. as a brand communication tool? Are they looking at customer engagement or customer conversion?
Answers to these questions will help marketers identify the key goals they desire to achieve through social media marketing. There is no one strategy that can help the marketers achieve all the goals. Having clarity on the key marketing goals will also help them come up with right metrics to measure their success of their marketing strategy (Eckerling, 2014). For instance: If a company’s goal is to increase its reach, then number of views could be a good metric to look at. However, if the goal is deeper customer engagement then, it should focus more on metrics such as share, comment, retweet etc. as these metrics show higher active customer engagement vis-à-vis mere page views.

A report published by HubSpot (figure 14) highlights some of the top marketing priorities for both leaders and practitioners. The top three priorities are increasing number of contacts, converting leads, and contacting relevant customers (HubSpot, State of Inbound 2014, 2014). Marketers should focus on identifying early what is most important social media marketing goal is. Once the goal is defined, subsequently it will become easier to define the audience, content, and channel.

![Figure 14: Top Marketing Priorities by the Role, Source (HubSpot, State of Inbound 2014, 2014)](image-url)
5.1.2 Identify Target Audience

When deciding about the audience for social media companies needs to ask two fundamental questions 1) Who is their primary audience? 2) Which other audience is likely to receive their message? One of the unique characteristics of social media marketing is that one cannot control its reach, once the content is available on social media platforms, it is available for public. Hence, it can very well reach way beyond your targeted or intended audience. This is what marketers need to be cognizant while creating any content.

Identifying the target audience early will help them come up with a more targeted strategy to address the requirements of this customer segment. (Shields, Audience Analysis: Understanding Viral Phenomena, 2015). The next big task for marketers is to understand why and how their audience share. Social media campaign’s success or failure primarily depends on the fact whether people want to share (network effect) or talk about the content related to your brand or not. The higher the shareability quotient the higher chances of success. Hence, it is imperative for marketers to look beyond demographics and understand the underlying motivation for their target audience to share any content with their network.

Jonah Berger has provided a framework “STEPPS” to help us understand why things become contagious or in other words, characteristics of content with high shareability quotient (Berger, 2013).

Table 3: Berger’s STEPPS. Sources (Berger, 2013). (Shields, Audience Analysis: Understanding Viral Phenomena, 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drivers</th>
<th>Reason for sharing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Currency</td>
<td>People care about their image and share things that makes them look good or enhance their image (smart, cool, thoughtful, insiders). Companies should create content with high social currency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triggers</td>
<td>Some content acts as stimuli, prompting people to think about related things. Companies should identify these</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotions</strong></td>
<td>When we care, we share that is why emotional content has a higher probability of going viral. Companies should focus on creating content that touches their audience’s emotions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public</strong></td>
<td>The more public something is, the more people are likely to share it. It acts like a social proof; If other people are sharing it, it must be worth sharing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practical Value</strong></td>
<td>People want and share practical, useful information. So companies can focus on creating content that is informative and has some practical use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stories</strong></td>
<td>Companies should focus on creating narratives or stories that people want to tell or share with others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social Media Marketers must apply one or more of these principles to make the content more sharable for the audience. To illustrate, a research conducted by students of University of Koblenz-Landau concludes that a tweet is likely to be retweeted when it is about a general, public topic instead of a narrow, personal topic (make users feel like insiders) and this relates back to one of the six pillars of shareability (Alhadi, 2011).

**5.1.3 Choose Content**

Now when Berger’s STEPPS have helped us understand why people share, we also need to know the ways and means to create this highly shareable content. There are three building blocks that we can focus on to create shareable social content (Shields, Social Content and Messaging: Visual Communication, Creativity, and Storytelling, 2015).
Today’s marketers also face a big challenge while deciding what kind of content to create for their target audience? Should it be text, images, video or audio? Which of these has higher shareability? How to go about creating such content, which is high on both quality as well as shareability? Should they focus more on quality, shareability or both?

To understand what kind of content to create, we should refer back to social media management framework (figure 11, 12, 13). In view of that, we first need to know what our marketing objective is and then who our audience is before deciding on what kind of content to create. For instance, if a company is selling products that are highly visual in nature e.g. clothes, shoes in this case, choosing videos and images (visual) would be rather appropriate over text (non-visual). On the other hand, if a company is offering services such as consulting services, then choosing text content would be more advisable as the customers would be more interested in knowing details of their work rather than just seeing images alone. However, in most of the scenarios companies are likely to go ahead with a mixed approach and publish/create content of more than one kind e.g. text, and image, video and text, depending on their marketing goal requirements.
As discussed in previous pages that although it is advisable to decide on content before choosing channels, sometimes it becomes imperative that channel and content get decided at the same time or channel gets decided before content. Since, there are few platforms that require content in a very specific format and a generic content cannot be put on these platforms. For instance: Vine only allows 6 seconds videos so if a company first develops contents i.e. open-ended long videos suitable to share on platforms such as YouTube or Facebook and later decides to use it for Vine, it would not work. Some iteration at this stage between content and channels is required in most of the cases. The framework would not proceed as chronological as shown in figure 15.

Once marketers have decided what kind of content to create the next thing they need to figure out is how to create this highly sharable content or who should create this content? There are three key approaches that can be taken to create/develop effective content on these social media platforms (Shields, Social Content and Messaging: Visual Communication, Creativity, and Storytelling, 2015):
Table 5: Three Key Approaches to Create Content, Sources (Shields, Social Content and Messaging: Visual Communication, Creativity, and Storytelling, 2015), Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership of the content</th>
<th>Method of Creating Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creation (Owned)</td>
<td>Some companies choose to create content by themselves and use social media primarily to share with the audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-creation (Jointly owned by the company and customers)</td>
<td>Some companies encourage their audience to create content along with them. For instance: Dove encourages its followers to post their pictures and experiences on its Facebook page on a regular basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curation (No ownership)</td>
<td>Here companies only act as curator and select, surface and frame content of others and don’t create any original content by themselves.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Companies while deciding how to create content also keep in mind their nature of business, goals and audience. For instance, if a company is in B2C space and focusing on deeper customer-engagement, co-creating content with audience could prove to be a good strategy as co-creation leads to higher engagement with customers. Some, such successful companies are: Nike, Dove, these brands time and again encourage people to use hashtags, post pictures, experiences etc. on their social media platforms. On the other hand, if a company is in B2B space such as an enterprise software solution, then it would most likely choose to create their own content as the content is rather thoughtful in nature and requires more control over messaging and quality of content.

Nonetheless, Most of the companies these days are opting for a hybrid approach. They practice both tactics creation as well as co-creation, and sometimes curation too. Very few firms rely on curation alone, but one such example is Upworthy, this firm doesn’t own much of its contents and mostly select and collect useful and informative content from various publicly available sources.
5.1.4 Select Channels

There are so many social media platforms to choose from today and this poses a huge challenge to the marketers. They want to understand which channels to focus on for its social media strategy to maximize their return on investments? Should they go for platforms such as Facebook with a much larger audience (1.3B) but now facing plateau in user growth or should they choose small but fast growing platform such as Snapchat with an audience of just over 100M (Statista, 2015)?

We recommend marketers to do the platform evaluation test shown below (Table 6) before deciding on any channel (Shields, Social Distribution: Strategic Channel Choice, 2015):

Table 6: Platform evaluation test, Sources (Shields, Social Distribution: Strategic Channel Choice, 2015), Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Test Measurement Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Objective</td>
<td>What is my key marketing objective? Is it brand awareness, brand image or customer engagement? Is this optimal platform for me to achieve my marketing objectives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Who is my target audience? Is this the best platform to reach my target audience? Will I be able to reach and engage as I desire with my target audience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>What kind of content I want to use? Is the platform suitable/compatible with content strategy or do I have to tailor my content for the platform?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platform Engagement Behavior</td>
<td>Why do people use this platform? How do people use this platform? How to engage the audience on the platform?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trends</td>
<td>Is the platform growing? Is it saturated or is it in decline stage?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Marketers can assign qualitative or quantities score against each of the platforms in their consideration set and choose the channels/platforms that get overall higher scores. By analyzing a
channel on above mentioned parameters a marketer can quickly identify the pros and cons of choosing a network and analyze its suitability. For instance: when we compare Facebook with Vine on these 4 parameters, we can quickly identify that Vine would be a better channel if the product is targeted towards teens and is more artistic (visual) in nature compared with Facebook, which is catering to a larger demography and gives us options to choose content in various forms text, pictures, links and videos.

*Figure 16: Platform Evaluation Test, Facebook versus Vine, Source (Shields, Social Distribution: Strategic Channel Choice, 2015), Author*

5.1.5 Gather Feedback

Unlike traditional marketing, social media marketing is real time, where you are constantly getting feedback, both positive and negative in terms of likes, comments, views, retweets. In social media world feedback is instant, unavoidable, difficult to control as well as essential to succeed or improvise. Therefore, it becomes important that marketers capitalize on this real time feedback and make these platforms eyes and ears of the company. Senses which are quick enough to pick up any negative sentiments and fix those in a timely manner and at the same time are able to analyze positive sentiments and subsequently build on them.
There are a variety of ways companies can utilize real-time social media feedback to their advantage. Table 6 illustrates five dimensions of Real Time Feedback and their implications for the organizations (Shields, The Real-Time Feedback Loop: Listening, Engaging, Iterating, 2015):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Five dimension of Real Time Feedback</th>
<th>Implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Monitoring feedback about your brand to measure against KPIs/Metrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderating</td>
<td>Managing feedback to address excessive or extreme behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iterating</td>
<td>Using feedback to enhance social media initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Building</td>
<td>Engaging by way of feedback to build better relationships with customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovating</td>
<td>Leveraging feedback to aid innovation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following paragraphs, I would discuss these dimensions and implication in greater details:

**Listening:** Social listening helps you answers questions about your audience such as who is talking about your brand? Are these sentiments positive, negative or neutral? How and how many people are responding to these sentiments? And these inputs in turn help you measure success against your KPIs/metrics such as brand awareness, brand engagement, earned media and improved customer satisfaction.

**Moderating:** Most of the companies have to do some moderating activities to manage excessive or extreme behavior. However, if the content is excessively moderated it runs the risk of being seen as inauthentic and biased. This is can result in discouraging the audience from engaging with companies on their social media platforms. So companies need to exercise caution while moderating and be ready to take some of the criticism that comes along because of being present on these platforms.
**Iterating:** Since the feedback is real time it is important that it gets acted upon fast, failing to do this would be a lost opportunity for a marketer to improvise social media initiatives. Iteration should take place on a continuous basis to avoid any time lag between suggestions and implementations. If the gap between suggestion and implementation is too long then they are likely to turn outdated or irrelevant, rendering iteration process meaningless.

**Relationship Building:** Some companies invite customers to engage in feedback to build better relationships with customers. JetBlue uses Twitter to receive customer feedback in real time. Customers can tweet their query and concerns on this public platform and JetBlue tries to address issues as quickly as possible (JetBlue/with_replies, 2015). These social interactions help companies build stronger relationship with customers by giving them an opportunity to connect with brands without restrictions or third party intervention. However, to use social media for relationship building purpose a company needs to have adequate resources and motivation else it can very well fail.

**Innovating:** Many companies these days invite customers to increase innovation, which is a relatively new and underutilized dimension of feedback. Some companies such as Starbucks, Pepsi have been successful in leveraging this (My-starbucks-idea, 2015).

The level of customer engagement increases with each dimension of feedback, from listening to innovating. Listening requires much lower customer engagement in which companies are merely analyzing what is shared by the audience compared with innovation stage where companies and customers are deeply involved. At innovation stage, customers are so loyal that they come up with ideas to help companies innovate and are ready to invest time and effort to help these brands.

Understanding customer feedback is very critical for any company to thrive in social media landscape. Failing to act on feedback can lead to persistent negative sentiments for a company and once formed these sentiments are very difficult to win over. Thus, marketers should pay heed to what is their customers trying to convey through their feedback and take corrective actions for all the acknowledged issues.
5.2 Case Study: Successful Integration of Social Media by Dove for its Real Beauty Campaign

In this chapter, I would like to discuss a case study on Dove’s Real beauty Campaign. This serves as a good example of how social media can be successfully leveraged for a brand or a campaign.

**Background information:** Dove is a personal care brand and it has always associated itself with propagating message of real beauty by building up self-esteem and confidence among women of all races, color and age. In 2004, The Real Truth about Beauty: a global report discovered that merely 2% of women around the world would describe themselves as beautiful (Etcoff, Orbach, Scott, & D’Agostino, 2004). The “Campaign for Real Beauty”, was launched in response to the outcomes of this major global study. Through this campaign, Dove tried to challenge the stereotype of beauty and endeavored to broaden the definition to make it inclusive (irrespective of race, color, age or size).

The campaign was launched in 2004 and has undergone significant changes since then in terms of choice of media (Tag, 2012). Initially, campaign was run on traditional media i.e. television, newspaper and billboards, but later integrated social media platforms successfully to widen its reach and impact. By 2010, the campaign reached over 7 Million girls (Dove, 2011). The campaign has grown even bigger since 2010 and has had far bigger reach and viewership than previously anticipated.

It has now become one of the most successful Social Media ad campaigns of all time. For instance: In 2013, Dove launched Real Beauty Sketches, a three-minute YouTube film. This video had over 163 million views globally and over 4.6 billion media impressions across a variety of platforms YouTube, Facebook, google plus (thinkwithGoogle, 2013). It went on to become one of the most viewed online video advertisements of all time.

This campaign serves as a testimony how social media can be successfully leveraged for marketing a brand or a campaign. I have analyzed this campaign using the same social media management framework that was discussed in the last few pages. This is to give readers understanding how these principles can be applied to construct or evaluate any social media strategy for any brand or campaign.
5.2.1 Marketing Goals: The key objectives for Dove to run this campaign were as follows (thinkwithGoogle, 2013):

- Increase global brand positioning
- Increase brand loyalty
- Increase brand reach
- Gain new customers

5.2.2 Audience Analysis: Women of all races, ages, shapes and sizes. (Dove, 2011). This target audience, women, will primarily share for following reasons (Bahadur, 2014):

Social Currency: The campaign had a social message to it as it attempted to widen the definition of beauty that challenged the existing norms. As a result, the content was such that sharing this would make people look good (figure 17).

Triggers: Since the campaign was targeted for ordinary women and featured normal women and shared their misconceptions and their underestimation of their own beauty quotient it struck the right chord with the audience. These triggers acted as stimuli resulting women to share in large numbers (figure 17).

![Image of Elderly Woman with Text: \( \square \) withered? \( \square \) wonderful?

campaignforrealbeauty.ca 🦚 | Dove

Figure 17: One of the Images Used for Real Beauty Campaign, Sources (Bahadur, 2014)
**Emotions:** The videos and content used for the campaign were highly emotional, compelling women audience to share the content. For instance: One of the video series, Daughters’, ran interviews with mothers and daughters and was asked to talk about one another.

**Public:** The above mentioned attributes resulted in the content being shared by a large number of people from the beginning. This led to network effect, Dove’s Real Beauty Sketches, a three-minute YouTube film, had over 163 million views globally, it is the most viewed online video ad of all time (thinkwithGoogle, 2013).

5.2.3 **Content Strategy:** Dove has created a series of videos and content under this campaign since 2004 but all the content has been tied to the core message “Real Beauty”. It endeavored to deliver a social message with thoughtful and emotional content. The content used for Real Beauty campaign had all three blocks of sharable content (Skene, 2011):

**Voice:** The voice of the brand was ordinary women. Throughout the campaign dove has used voices and faces of ordinary women to deliver the message. The voice was also consistent with the brand image of Dove, a personal care brand.

**Story:** The main storyline was consistent and it constantly revolved around women undermining their beauty. In the visuals they used ordinary women, who underestimated beauty due to the prevalent norms of beauty and featured no famous personalities. This gave more legitimacy to the story line.

**Share Proposition:** As mentioned in the previous paragraphs that the content was high on emotions, triggers and social currency. Consequently, it had a very high share proposition and became viral.

The type of content was primarily open ended videos, images and texts. Dove took two key approaches to create this content:

**Creation:** Most of its videos are created by Dove itself, but they featured ordinary women from all walks of life.
**Co-creation:** Dove encouraged its fans to create content, use hashtags, share pictures, texts on Facebook and Twitter Pages.

The content strategy was very well aligned with marketing goals and audience. As content is highly sharable and effective, it meets marketing goals such as brand loyalty, brand awareness and brand positioning.

**5.2.4 Distribution Strategy (Channels)** – Dove primarily used following social media platforms for the campaign (Cassinelli, 2013):

- YouTube
- Facebook Page
- Twitter
- Google Plus
- Tumblr

The choice of channels was very appropriate as the content was highly visual and was mainly in the form of videos and pictures for that reason Facebook and YouTube were ideal platform choices. Twitter was used primarily to increase the reach and propagate the message further by using campaign specific hashtags. On the other hand, Google+ was deployed to make the whole setting more interactive with features such as hangouts. The choice of social media made the content easy to share across platforms for the audience.

**5.2.5 Feedback:** In terms of viewership it has been a hugely successful campaign. However, time and again, it has run into criticism and audience is polarized on whether the campaign actually stands for real beauty or a mere marketing gimmick to sell more products (Chumsky, 2015).

There has been a certain section of the audience, who criticized Dove to have an ulterior motive of selling more products and gaining commercial success in the pretext of this powerful social message. To address some of these issues, Dove has set up the Self-Esteem Fund as well as a dedicated webpage to raise awareness among young girls. Dove has also partnered with organizations like the Girl Scouts, Boys & Girls Clubs of America and Girls Inc. to organize activities including
discussions about bullying and photography projects apprehending how girls see the beauty in the world around them (Bahadur, 2014).

**Conclusion:** Dove has been hugely successful in keeping the campaign alive and kicking year after year. Although, it has experimented a little with platforms, but it has remained steadfast by and large to the core message, which was to challenge stereotypes of beauty and broaden the definition to make it inclusive for all.

Recently it launched another campaign “Choose Beautiful” in its Real Beauty campaign series. Once more it leveraged longstanding platforms such as YouTube and emerging platforms like Tumblr to enhance the reach and participation. The landing page of Tumblr blog asks woman to categorize themselves as beautiful or average and provides real time statistics of how many women have chosen themselves as beautiful and by now has over 345K votes\(^2\). This campaign was also launched on YouTube on April 7, 2015 and already has over 6 M views, and these are very early numbers\(^3\).

To conclude, it will be interesting to see how Dove adopts to the fast changing landscape of social media and continues to keep this campaign, which is deemed as the best 21\(^{st}\) century campaign by Ad Age in spite of the fact that it has run into criticism time and again (Chumsky, 2015), relevant, engaging and shareable to the audience.

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\(^3\) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7DdM-4siaQw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7DdM-4siaQw)
5.3 How to Measure ROI on Social Media Marketing

Once marketers are successful in designing social media marketing strategy, they also need to learn how to measure return on investment (ROI) or in other words how to know whether the strategy was successful. Companies today face hosts of questions. Is having millions of followers on Facebook Page a good return on investment? Are likes indicator of brand loyalty? Is pinning a product on Pinterest a sign of potential customer conversion? Or for that matter, if a customer is retweeting what does that mean to their brand? A recent research conducted by Social Media Examiner (STELZNER, 2014) reports that the majority of participants, 63%, was not confident about their ability to measure ROI on social media investments (figure 18). These results are very consistent with our surveys wherein over 50% participants mentioned calculating ROI as one of their key challenges (page 68).

In this chapter, I have come up with some measurements that marketers can utilize to estimate return on investment (ROI) on their social media marketing efforts. The first thing marketers need to do to estimate ROI better is to determine their goals, and this will help them come up with metrics to measure their success (Eckerling, 2014). For instance: if the goal was to increase brand reach then the number of followers on Facebook page could be a good metric. However, if the goal was to increase sales leads that would not be the right metric to look at as not all followers are potential customers.
Based on our survey and also by analyzing other secondary research reports (HubSpot, State of Inbound 2014, 2014) (OrigamiLogic, 2014). I have identified top four goals and these are brand reach, brand loyalty/relationship building, sales conversion and purchase.

To measure these marketing goals, we need to come up with measurements i.e. metrics and KPIs, which are many times used interchangeably. The distinction between metrics and KPIs is a metric is a unit of measurement while a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) helps us understand the performance of that metric. For example: number of page views, number of likes are example of metrics whereas the percentage of repeat page views or the percentage of visitors converting to leads on a given day are examples of KPIs. In short all KPIs are Metrics, but not all Metrics are KPIs (Pedar, 2015).

Some of these measurements can be quantitative while some can be qualitative. Quantitative measurements help us understand the pure statistics, for instance the number of page views or the number of likes. On the other hand, qualitative measurement is equally important as it helps us analyze the non-numerical aspects such as level of engagement, sentiment analysis. In Laurent Flores words, “Quantities refers to quantity and thus to the capacity to measure, or take into account “mass effects“, while qualitative metrics are for measuring, in more qualitative manner, the direct and indirect effects of exposure to a message” (Flores, 2014).

Drawing from Laurent Flores’s book “How to measure digital marketing (Flores, 2014)”, there are 5 key principles I recommend using while selecting these metrics and KPIs:

1. These must be aligned with the objective of the social media strategy, which should itself consistent with the brand/business strategy. For instance: If the brand strategy is to create brand awareness and social media strategy is via Facebook then the number of likes could be a reasonable metric in this scenario.

2. It must be actionable i.e. “Number of shares” to determine brand reach is a good example of an actionable measurement.

3. Restricted in number, if there are too many KPIs and metrics to follow it would lead to more confusion and prove difficult to execute. Therefore, it’s a good idea to restrict the number.
4. They must be standardized after once defined and approved, this would make them easy for all stakeholders to understand and follow.

5. They should be simple without being simplistic, KPIs and metrics should be simple enough to communicate and follow, but not too simplistic to lose out on essence of data or important piece of information that these were meant to capture.

Below is a reference table (table: 7) This table can serve as a reference to choose KPIs and Metrics to assess the effectiveness of a company’s social media marketing strategy, however the elements used in this table by no means exhaustive. All KPIs are Metrics, but not all Metrics are KPIs (Pedar, 2015).

For the purpose of this table, I have focused mainly on identifying metrics to calculate ROI as once metrics are identified, it is relatively easy to come up with KPIs against them.

These metrics are assigned to each marketing goal, keeping in mind their relevance and significance to the goal. In other words their effectiveness to predict success of the given marketing goals. For instance: Liking something on Facebook requires minimum time and efforts from customers, while comments ensues higher involvement as users need to select their words and devote some time in writing them. On the other hand, sharing shows highest commitment as users make that content part of their own social media page. Not only users themselves like it, but they also wish their network to appreciate it (Calero, 2013). Hence, if the marketing goal through Facebook is reach we can look at all metrics, i.e. number of likes, shares and comments. However, if it is loyalty or deeper engagement, then we would have to focus on metrics such as number of comments and share and can exclude the number of likes as this metric doesn’t demonstrate high customer loyalty or deeper engagement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marketing Goal</th>
<th>Metrics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reach/Attention</td>
<td>Number of comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of shares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of likes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of retweets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Metrics to Measure Success of Social Media Marketing Strategy, Source: Author
| Deeper customer engagement/Relationship building | Number of favorites, |
| Number of hashtags used |
| Number of replies |
| Number of +1s, |
| Number of revines |
| Number of followers |
| Number of subscribers |
| Number of notes |
| Number of hearts |
| Number of repins |
| Number of share pins |
| Number of follow boards |
| Number of votes |
| Number of mentions in blogs |
| Number of positive reviews on social media platforms |
| Number of active users |
| Number of shares |
| Number of comments |
| Number of retweets |
| Number of times your hangtags was used |
| Number of revines |
| Number of reblogs |
| Number of share pins |
| Number of follow boards |

| Sales leads | Inbound traffic from a certain social media platform |
| Number of leads generated by a particular social media platform |

| Purchase | Social media leads to purchase but it rarely acts as a purchase platform. Commerce via social media sites is still at a nascent stage. Using Twitter Hashtags to make purchase is one of the recent move |
in this direction⁴. Facebook has also recently announced Messenger In-App Payment⁵.

**Formula to calculate ROI on Social Media:** Return on investment (ROI) is a measurement of efficiency. Social media ROI is defined measure of the efficiency of a social media marketing campaign”. The simplest formula to calculate ROI on Social Media is as follows (Holmboe, 2011):

\[
\text{Return on Investment (ROI)} = \frac{\text{Return from Social Media} - \text{Investment on Social Media}}{\text{Investment on Social Media}} \times 100
\]

However, the difficulty with the above formula is that it is too simplistic and difficult to apply in most of the scenarios because the units of measuring return and investment are not same in most of the cases. To illustrate, if we are looking at returns on Facebook we are looking at metrics such as number of likes, comments and shares (Trattner C., 2013) while investment will be in terms of money and time. As a result, we cannot apply this formula in this case. The other shortcoming of this formula is that it does not capture qualitative aspects and it works on pure numbers. When we are dealing with returns on investment in social media marketing, we are dealing with data that is more qualitative rather than quantitative.

The below mentioned formula to estimate ROI takes into account relevant metrics for a given marketing goal and calculates returns accordingly. Twitter and Facebook used these formulas to calculate their engagement rate initially. These formulas take into account the all relevant metrics i.e., number of likes, comments, shares, tweets and retweets against the marketing goal of Engagement Rate (Reach) (socialbakers, 2012).

---

⁵ http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2478413,00.asp , accessed on May 6, 2015
Post Engagement Rate (Facebook) = \frac{\text{# of Likes} + \text{Comments} + \text{Shares on a given day}}{\text{Total # of Fans on a given day}} \times 100

Engagement Rate (Twitter) = \frac{\text{# of Replies} + \text{Retweets} + \text{Comments} + \text{Hashtags}}{\text{# of Followers on a given day}} \times 100

However, the main limitation of this formula to apply it to other marketing goals is that it gives the number of likes, shares and comments equal weightage. Hence, if the goal is anything but reach it cannot be applied because same metrics will not hold for the other goals. Moreover, not all of these metrics would carry equal importance for that goal.

I suggest an alternate method of using these formulas to the marketers. The marketers should first identify their goals and then identify relevant metrics for these goals. Once goals and metrics are determined they can assign weightage to each of these metrics against the goal. To illustrate, if marketers have to calculate return on investment on Facebook and their marketing goal is reach they can use the same formula to calculate as mentioned above for daily engagement rate as each factor likes, comments and shares all translate to reach hence can be given equal weightage. On the other hand, if the marketing goal is not reach, but something else then only metrics that are relevant to the marketing goal needs to be taken into account. Subsequently, each metric should also be assigned a certain weightage to have a rather accurate picture on return on investment. Since not all metrics carry the same amount of importance for a given goal.

Deeper Customer Engagement (Facebook) = \frac{\text{# Comments (w1)} + \text{Shares on a given day (w2)}}{\text{Total # of Fans on a given day}} \times 100

Deeper Engagement (Twitter) = \frac{\text{# of Retweets (w1)} + \text{Comments (w2)} + \text{Times hashtag used (w3)}}{\text{Total # of Followers on a given day}} \times 100
Deeper Customer Engagement (LinkedIn) = \# Comments (w1) + \# Shares on a given day (w2) \times 100 \\
\text{Total \# of Fans on a given day}

Wherein w1, w2 and w3 are weightage need to be assigned by the marketers keeping in mind their marketing goals and significance of that metric towards achieving that goal.
5.4 How to Handle Negative Sentiments in Social Media

In today’s world where there are over 1.79B users (Statista, 2015) spread-across social media platforms, it is almost impossible for a brand to be not subjected to public opinions regardless of the extent of their presence on social media. However, not all these opinions are favorable, there are times when brands begin to experience negative perceptions, which can potentially be damaging to brand image, reputation as well as sales. This has been one of the key challenges for the marketers today. They want to understand that how should a brand respond when it is experiencing negative sentiments? Should they try to remove any such content from public platforms or should they leave it for public interpretation? Should they stay discreet or should it address the issue in the public space?

The answer to the previous questions depends on a number of factors such as reason, occurrence, extent and kind of content being written and discussed. So as a first step, it is important for a brand to recognize and differentiate between two most likely scenarios of negative sentiments (Brandt, 2013):

1. Occasional Negative Sentiment
2. Persistent Negative Sentiment

**Occasional Negative Sentiments**

These are usually short term in nature and are often a result of some sudden event either in on line or off line world that did not go down well with the audience or a certain section of the audience. For instance: Starbucks recent campaign #RaceTogether was booed by the audience as people believed it was inconsistent with Starbucks as a company (Kleinberg, 2015). However, Starbucks has had many successful social media campaigns in the past and has a very successful social media marketing strategy in place.

Social media analytics demonstrate these occasional negative sentiments as the events that lead to a large and immediate spike, but a spike that lasts for only a short duration of time (hours, days or weeks). Occasional negative sentiments are becoming more commonplace and if not handled timely and well can result in severe losses in terms of revenue, reputation or can even translate into persistent negative sentiments.
Persistent Negative Sentiment

There could also be cases where companies face persistent negative sentiments from the audience. Such a situation would entail a company to do much more than just fixing its social media strategy. These persistent negative sentiments can be attributed to an adverse public image of the company, brand or product.

Drawing from an article (Brandt, 2013), Monsanto has received a lot of backlash on social media because of promoting genetically modified organisms (GMOs). To overcome this negative persistent problem, Monsanto needs to dig deeper. It needs to identify and address core issues before coming up with a social media strategy to handle these negative sentiments as it appears to have low credibility among the audience and the success of a social media marketing also largely depends on how trustworthy a company is perceived by the netizens.

5.4.1 Steps to Manage Negative Sentiments

Understand Why, Who, and Where of these Sentiments: Identify why (reason), who (audience) and where (channel) of these sentiments. Understanding who (audience) is important because each person doesn’t have the same extent of influence in social networks. If people, who are influential and talking negatively about your brand this could have far damaging effect compared to someone with lower network influence. As shown in figure 19, word of mouth grows faster if the person shares stronger ties compared to weak ties. Similarly, the size of network will also affect the speed of word of mouth. For instance, If someone with over 2M followers on Twitter is disseminating negative sentiments about your brand that is far more likely to go viral as compared to someone, who has some 50 followers. In the first case, you would like to address the grievance of that individual as early as possible before it goes out of hand due to network effect. By the same token, in the second case you can choose to wait and let the sentiments settle down on its own.
Understanding why (reason) is important because it would help you identify the core issue. If the case is genuine and serious then as a company you would have more to lose than a concern, which is not grave or untrue in nature. Lastly, whereabouts (channel) of these interactions would give you the idea of platforms where you have to address this issue first.

Therefore, understanding why, who and where of these negative sentiments will help you come up with the best strategy to address these issues. One of the effective sites that can help you track social sentiments is www.socialmention.com, this site also lets you do competition benchmarking for a given period (Brandt, 2013).

**Understand the nature of the content before responding to these sentiments:** After analyzing audience, the next step should be to understand the nature of the content. If the content is giving you constructive criticism or modest criticism, but not affecting your brand image drastically then there is little merit in removing it outright. Rather acknowledging and addressing these concerns in the public space would reflect positively on your brand. Your brand would come across as open and welcoming.
to suggestions. Refraining from criticism altogether or being entirely non-responsive will also cause lower engagement with the audience. Customers use these platforms to share both positive as well as negative sentiments and they want companies to pay heed to all of their feelings not just positive ones. Nevertheless, if you are dealing with content which is vicious or baseless, a marketer can choose to remove it as un-attending such content can create an adverse brand image in the audiences’ mind and result in undesirable consequences (Kristen Sussman, 2011).

Create a corporate strategy for negative feedback – Companies need to be cognizant of the fact that such instances are inevitable, so rather than having a reactive approach they should have a proactive approach (James, 2011). As a first step, they can first identify what sort of departmental structure they want to maintain for their social marketing strategy (Shields, Social Media Management :Persuasion in Networked Culture, 2015).

Defining structure would help bring the clarity and accountability in the event of such instances. As a next step, companies should also appoint a team of people and define their responsibilities. These people are accountable to lead in these situations. Failing to have both department and team structures would lead to more chaos, delayed and ineffective responses during such crisis, which usually entail swift action.

Table 9: Types of Social Media Team’s structure in an organization, Source: (Shields, Social Media Management :Persuasion in Networked Culture, 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of structure</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centralized</td>
<td>Central social media department through which all strategy and execution happens.</td>
<td>Consistent messaging.</td>
<td>Delay in response, higher stakes, more restricted in terms of choice of content, channel and objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hub-and-spoke</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decentralized</td>
<td>Corporate provides strategy, best practices, and resources, but the execution is decentralized and owned by individual stores.</td>
<td>Access to best practices, yet more freedom to decide on the content, channel and objective.</td>
<td>Slower response than Decentralized structure and also, somewhat restrictive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering individual units with little corporate inference.</td>
<td>Freedom to decide content, channel and objective at unit level, Quick response time</td>
<td>Inconsistent messaging, losing out on best practices.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Create brand advocates:** Companies must engage with customers on a regular basis and create brand advocates, who can rally their support on such occasions. It would be far more effective when other customers come out in support of a brand and deflect any criticism by sharing their positive experiences than brand themselves. Companies should identify these customers timely, engage with them directly to express their appreciation, learn what they like about your company and how you might continue to delight these loyal customers. These loyal customers will not only help you defend your brand but also create positive word of mouth in general (James, 2011). Some of the advantages to have these advocates are they talk about your brands, influence others’ opinion in your favor, and are prolific information creators for the other netizens. According to a report by Social Media Examiner, these advocates are twice as likely to share information as a mere web user (Mershon, 2011).

**Respond in a Timely Fashion:** The conversation that takes place in social media is real time, so it is important for a company to have a well-timed response. These timely reactions will not only pacify these irate customers, but also will help in curbing negative sentiments. It is imperative to set internal deadlines for such occurrences to avoid unnecessary delays (Kristen Sussman, 2011).

**Be Proactive Instead of Reactive:** Companies need to keep their eyes and ears open to prevent these scenarios. They need to regularly and actively engaging with their customers to keep their sentiments in check. If such events arise, companies should use these outbursts as an opportunity to reconnect
with their customers rather than shunning them away. Connecting with these irate customers would make your company appear open and approachable, while shunning them away might act as a catalyst and cause persistent negative sentiments (Kristen Sussman, 2011).

5.4.2 Recommendations on implementation strategies

All though it is very difficult to provide a one size fits all solution to these social media crisis situations. Following are some of the best practices that can be referred to while implementing these strategies (Shields, Crisis Communications, 2015).

Choose a response style: William Benoit introduced image restoration theory in 1995, which outlines strategies on how to alleviate damage to the image (Benoit, 1995). This theory can be applied to organizational crisis situations and then can be further extrapolated to identify the possible responses in the event of a social media crisis. As per this theory, there are 5 ways an organization can choose to respond after any event that is potentially reputation damaging:

1. Denial
2. Apologizing and Mortification
3. Evasion of responsibility
4. Reduce the offensiveness of the event
5. Corrective action

While choosing any of these options, marketers must consider the pros and the cons of each of these options and its alignment with their companies’ image and communication strategy.

Identify who would deliver the intended message: The more severe a crisis, the more senior leadership should be involved. The other thing to look is how that executive is aligned to the crisis. For instance: If the ongoing social media crisis is around hiring policy, it would be inappropriate to choose somebody from Sales or Marketing department to be your company’s spokesperson.
Ascertain what message to convey: It is recommended that you are able to identify the key message you want to convey to the audience and then stay consistent with the message. In general, provide information, express empathy, and offer corrective action rather than denying outright or showing no accountability or empathy.

Choose a tone for message: A positive, human, and transparent tone resonates well in social media because you are interacting with common people instead of professionals. Corporate tone sounds impersonal and will not resonate so well with the masses.

Select in what form to deliver message: A video can convey sentiments much better than text as they are more visual. In either case, there is a likelihood of your message to be taken out of context. Thus, stay prepared and incorporate changes as necessary.

Decide on key channels to deliver message: Identify the key channel or channels where the conversation is happening, prioritize based on the kind and the frequency of conversations on these platforms. First, address the ones that require immediate attention rather than attempting to respond to all.

Timing of response: Taking an early action is usually the best policy, but be cautious not to be too fast. By acting too fast companies run the risk of aggravating such situations because in many cases, these sentiments settle down on their own when they fail to gather a certain threshold of engagement or evoke strong and fast reactions within the user community. Hence, companies should decide on the timing of the response based on how quickly these sentiments are growing and how strong and detrimental these sentiments are.

Constant monitoring and reporting: Constant monitoring and reporting is needed to understand the audience response to your strategy. This will help you identify what is working and what is not and thus come up with corrective actions.

A mechanism for iteration: There should be provision for iterations as it is very difficult to get the strategy right in the very first attempt. Continuous monitoring and reporting activities will help you
understand areas that require your attention. You can then come up with a revised and improved strategy.

In addition to these recommendations, an organization also needs to have appropriate staffing and resources, who can take charge and execute social media response strategies under such circumstances.
6) Survey

I conducted a qualitative survey for this thesis. This was largely due to the fact that my aim was to identify issues that marketers and businesses are facing today while deciding about their social media strategies. Hence, the topic required me to collect more qualitative data than quantitative. My user group was spread across geography as different countries are at different stages when it comes to the internet users’ maturity and social media usages. Surveying people from different countries helped me understand whether the challenges and opportunities vary or similar geographically.

The total number of questions in the survey was 10 and all of them were mandatory. First two questions were to obtain demographic information of the respondents, i.e. name, organization name, job title and role in deciding social media. These questions were to mainly understand if the role in the organization and the size of the organization affected the general responses to the survey. However, no such correlation could be established. The inputs on these two questions have not been shared to de-identify respondents. Detailed responses to the rest of the questions can be found in the subsequent paragraphs.

Q3. Which Social Media Platform your organization/clients invests more heavily in?

![Survey Results Graph]

Facebook unanimously was the platform of choice, with 100% companies investing in it. LinkedIn emerged second only to Facebook. Twitter and YouTube occupied third and fourth positions respectively. Surprisingly, no one voted for Google +.
Q4. Do you find the pace of technology adoption for digital marketing/social media marketing rapid or steady over the next few years?

![Pie chart showing 77.78% (7) of respondents believe the pace of adoption would be rapid and 22.22% (2) believe it would be steady.]

A majority of respondents believe that the pace of adoption would be rapid and not steady. However, the same respondents when asked whether you see the dominance of the leading platforms challenged anytime soon seemed less certain and only 22% said yes.

Q5. Do you see the dominance of Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube being challenged anytime soon?

![Pie chart showing 44.44% (4) of respondents believe the leading platforms will continue to dominate, 33.33% (3) are unsure, and 22.22% (2) believe they will be challenged.]

Merely 22% respondents believe that leading platforms of today will be challenged in the near future. Over 44% respondents believe that these platforms will continue to dominant in the coming time too. While, one third of respondents were unsure.
Q6. Do you anticipate any disruptive trend/tool in the near future?

Although over 44% people believed that they don’t see any new platforms dominating in the near future, an overwhelming majority almost 78% respondents anticipate disruptive trends and tools. There is an equal percentage (11%) of respondents who said no, or maybe to any disruptive trend and tool.

People anticipated machine learning, big data analytics as some of the disruptive trends. Furthermore, some respondents also believe that new and fast emerging platform Snapchat could also be prove to disruptive for existing players.

Q7. Do you think that the business heads are aware of social media trends i.e. why it is importance and how this can be leveraged for businesses?

Most of the respondents reported the awareness and understanding among business folks is much lower than desired level. The business heads still struggle to understand the impact social media marketing can have on businesses and still find it hard to comprehend expected or actual return on
investment (ROI). This low awareness and understanding makes it harder to pursue these business decision makers for investment in social media.

However, some respondents have mentioned that the awareness levels are getting better and these business decision makers are now more open to listen and discuss how social media can be better leveraged and integrated with their businesses.

Some excerpts from the survey:

**Getting better, still isn't where it needs to be.**
2/19/2015 6:30 AM  View respondent's answers

Among the companies I've worked with, I think folks still struggle to understand where to invest their efforts, and what they are getting out of these efforts. Further, this issue is complicated by the fact that they don't know much about the synergies across platforms. As a research, these topics are exciting, but admittedly much more knowledge is needed in terms of understanding social media trends.

2/17/2015 6:07 AM  View respondent's answers

**Senior management is aware of the importance of social media but is not fluent with the tactics.**
2/16/2015 8:57 AM  View respondent's answers

No. Pockets of awareness only.
2/15/2015 10:57 PM  View respondent's answers

Yes. But there is still a lot to be learned as the domestic audience is behavioral behaviorally very different from the rest of the world.
2/15/2015 7:09 AM  View respondent's answers

For many companies we recognize major trend that corporate brand team and management start understanding importance of social media Especially for manufacturing companies it's important to utilize social media channel to understand customer needs and behavior because historically these companies haven't had direct communication because of existing retailchallengs Because of digitalization now manufacturing companies now have capability to talk and listen to the consumers This is going to be like a war of big data very soon and we see disruptive trend across manufacturer, retailer and online e-commerce companies (Amazon, Raluten and Alibaba)
2/15/2015 12:00 AM  View respondent's answers

No. There is a lot left to be desired in terms of knowledge sharing and social media generalization from organizations & agencies
2/14/2015 11:28 PM  View respondent's answers

yes
2/10/2015 9:12 AM  View respondent's answers

I speak of digital marketing and performance marketing and I definitely see a lack of knowhow among traditional marketing heads. Having said that, things are changing now and people are getting a lot more savvy.
2/9/2015 1:13 PM  View respondent's answers
Q8. What are some of the typical challenges you face while pursuing your clients/your organization for Social Media Marketing campaigns?

The majority of respondents reported that calculating return on Investment (ROI) is still the biggest challenge while convincing their clients or organization for implementing social media marketing. This is mainly due to the fact that social media results in a lot of qualitative returns, which are not only difficult to measure but also very difficult to always attribute to a single or original source largely due to the platforms being interconnectivity, resulting in the network effect. The second key challenge these marketers face is how to come up with an integrated social media strategy. Manage negative sentiments is the other concern, which was found common among respondents.

Some excerpts from the survey:

Community management is a well established discipline and generally takes care of that.
2/19/2015 6:30 AM View respondent's answers

I think "top dog" brands are disproportionately more vulnerable to negative sentiments/comments. I think allowing open response to campaigns is generally the right approach at this time.
2/17/2015 6:07 PM View respondent's answers

Defining/measuring ROI for social media investment is a big challenge. Establishing connect with target segment, monitoring feedbacks and relevant posts on clinical conditions. Increase in no of likes and comments are defending mech.
2/16/2015 8:57 AM View respondent's answers

- using social for B2B is always a challenge - measuring ROI & impact of campaigns on sales is tricky -
LinkedIn & Facebook are inordinately expensive, as compared to Display advertising - the benefit of targeting for B2B never translated into higher sales for me
2/15/2015 10:57 PM View respondent's answers

Changing policies, inflated client expectations. ORM is done to prevent negative sentiments.
2/15/2015 12:00 AM View respondent's answers

For Japanese companies challenges are people, organization and skills Some companies implemented social analytics including Radian 6 and others Also we have some challenges in variety of languages in Apac region Some solution companies doesn't support Asian languages eg. Nielsen stopped social analytics services in Japan
2/15/2015 12:00 AM View respondent's answers

Challenges: Dealing with negative sentiments, tracking ROI. Rely on Social Media agencies to manage accounts.
2/14/2015 11:28 PM View respondent's answers

still dont have that much confidence in these tools- over conventional marketing tools.
2/10/2015 9:12 AM View respondent's answers

Again: Digital marketing /performance marketing standpoint. Convincing people that an increase in spend does not mean the Roi will hold. Convincing them of the need of spending on high -reach channels(assuming you have the money), as it helps people through the purchase funnel. Convincing people that SEO is not an immediate game and they must be willing to give time to SEO initiatives.
2/9/2015 1:13 PM View respondent's answers
Q9. Typically, what do you use social media marketing for? How do you go about deciding which channels to go for?

Most of the marketers are using social media for creating brand awareness and launch campaigns. Many of them also mentioned deeper customer engagement and lead generations as their other marketing goals. These results are also consistent with the report published by HubSpot mentioned on page 34 (HubSpot, State of Inbound 2014, 2014).

Some excerpts from the survey:

Interactions/engagement as well as launches.
2/19/2015 6:30 AM View respondent's answers

The company I've worked with are sustaining interest among current customers and fans; less is known about whether they are successfully eating away at the market share of their competitors.
2/17/2015 6:07 PM View respondent's answers

General awareness. Ease of targeting relevant customer segment, in house expertise, channel's professional image, familiarity and past experience
2/16/2015 8:57 AM View respondent's answers

All of them. - Eyeballs on social. - Lead generation using display ads on LinkedIn is a key use-case. - Content marketing on LinkedIn & Slideshare - A lot of good Q&A resulting in good PR & best organic results on Quora. Very difficult to select a framework for this.
2/15/2015 10:57 PM View respondent's answers

Mostly used for awareness, brand building and interactions.
2/15/2015 7:09 AM View respondent's answers

We usually do holistic customer journey analysis, key online KPI analysis and then decide marketing strategy and approach. Also content strategy is more important than channel selection. You can find open source case study as Red Bull and Dove real beauty for contents marketing. Also if you buy external online behavior from DMP players you can do quantitative analysis to decide how to allocate marketing investment by channel and contents.
2/15/2015 12:00 AM View respondent's answers

To amplify launches/ events and continued awareness drives. Choosing a channel depends on audience skew.
2/14/2015 11:28 PM View respondent's answers

Channel followed by content
2/10/2015 9:12 AM View respondent's answers

As a performance marketeer, I typically do not look at social media for performance campaigns. Regarding deciding channels, it is usually a function of ROI. Here is a short post that I had written on how I typically stack rank channels from ROI. Note: If your budget is larger, many of these channels behave differently.

Note: It is important to keep track of multi channel attribution numbers as well. Purely last click ROI is likely to cause some poor decisions.
2/9/2015 1:13 PM View respondent's answers
Q10. What are some of the yardsticks you use to understand impact of Social Media Marketing campaigns? Do you use any specific tools to track impact/ROI?

The most prevalent metrics used to measure effectiveness or success of any social media marketing campaigns are number of likes, followers. Marketers are also gradually more relying on sentiment analysis to understand the impact. The most common tools that marketers are using to evaluate their performance is Google analytics, but the other emerging ones are HootSuite and HubSpot ROI tool kits. Most of the respondents used KPIs and metrics interchangeably and usually had one or the other identified for their organizations. Only one respondent tied the metric back to the marketing goal, all other respondents thought about KPIs/metrics independently to marketing goals. Not tying metrics to marketing goals later makes it difficult for companies understand ROI.

Some excerpts from the survey:

* Depends on the campaign.
* Beyond the typical measures, I’ve encouraged folks to use multiple survey measures capturing attitudes and behavioral intentions. I also find that content analysis of participants responses, either on social media or in surveys, to be highly informative.
* Traffic Sources (search, website, email, banner etc) to 'where to buy' Likes and visits Bounce rate Time spent on pages
* Page visits. Leads. Sales. If you cannot map things back to increase in sales, none of all this is justified.
* The analytics angle is taken care of via Facebook Insights and other tools like Google Analytics or Hootsuite. ROI is measured through lead generation and successful business transactions.
* We use basic KPIs like Number of followers, number of like, number of loyalty users and some of sentiment analysis result (positive and negative comments) but important thing is to design and conduct holistic survey across the multiple touch point to understand correlation between social media initiatives and customer satisfaction and brand loyalty.
* No. Depend on Social Channel reporting as provided by the publisher/ agency.
* If it is a social media campaign that is drive brand metrics. Then reach is typically a good metric.
7) Conclusion

As the number of internet users continue to rise one can certainly expect social media marketing to continue to play an increasing important role for businesses. However, one can also most likely expect disruptive trends such as the Internet of Things (IOT) and Virtual Reality to be game changer for the existing Social Media Landscape. In the future, things may look very different from what they appear now. Today’s leading platforms such as Facebook might start facing platform fatigue and be forced to reinvent themselves. On the contrary, new technologies and platforms can emerge and change the existing norms.

Moreover, as the number of mobile users is growing the consumption of internet as well as social media is moving away from laptop/desktop to mobile devices and this is transforming the way marketers are now looking at channels, content and audience for their social media marketing strategies. Even for dominant platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn, mobile has become the primary access point. These platforms are now transforming themselves in more mobile friendly platforms. The fast growing number of smart phone users has also led to the emergence of new mobile based social platforms such as WhatsApp and Snapchat and they are now becoming attractive points to engage with customers for companies. To sum up, as the number of smart phone users will keep growing the popularity of micro-communities such as YikYak, Line, WeChat will also continue to rise.

This thesis was an attempt to find answers to some of the most prevalent questions that surround the marketers today while planning and executing any social media marketing strategy. Most of the Frameworks and techniques discussed in the previous pages are universal in nature. Though, each organization has to customize its social media marketing strategy based on its marketing goal, audience, content, channel, etc. and there is no one size fits all solution to cater to challenges that organizations face today while coming up with their strategies. Hence, these frameworks and tool can be further tailored to meet the specific requirements of an organization and will definitely prove to be helpful.
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