

BENEFITS AND BARRIERS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING (SMM)

ABSTRACT

Online social networking, information distribution, and communication have all come to rely heavily on the rise of social media in the past few years. Online marketing and other types of company make great use of social media because of its dependable, consistent, and rapid capabilities. We refer to SMM as promotional activities conducted through social networking websites. With the help of SMM, businesses can quickly, efficiently, and successfully communicate with their ideal customers. In addition, SMM faces its own unique set of difficulties. Adopting social media as integral parts of business, entertainment, and education is one of the most groundbreaking innovations of the 21st century. Few articles discussed the pros and cons of using social media for marketing in the modern era. The chapter aims to identify and discuss the benefits and barriers of SMM so as to awake managers to take opportunities and find a way of avoiding negative issues.

Keywords: Social media, marketing, Online, Benefits, Barriers

I. INTRODUCTION

For many years, businesses, universities relied on the World Wide Web as a means of communication; this was true even before the web's technological capabilities allowed it to be commercialized (Comer, 2018). The rapid growth of social media over the past decade can be attributed to both technological progress and the pervasiveness of the Internet. The advent of social media has accelerated the spread of knowledge and information among online communities. The term "social media" is used to describe a wide variety of online resources, from Facebook and Instagram to (now call X) and YouTube, which enable users to create and share information, communicate with others, and form virtual communities. According to DataReport (2023), more than 4.7 billion individuals worldwide use social media, or nearly 60% of the total population. Due to the dynamic nature of the marketing landscape, the rising adoption of SMM by organizational leaders has presented difficulties (Ogbuji & Papazafeiropoulou, 2016). Successful use of social media as a low-cost marketing tool can help businesses determine their missions and priorities (Ogbuji & Papazafeiropoulou, 2016). One person can now reach hundreds, if not thousands, of people all over the world without ever having to log onto a social media site. The popularity of online communities built around content

creation, sharing, bookmarking, and networking via "social media" has skyrocketed in recent years. All forms of social media allow companies to introduce themselves and their wares to active communities and potential customers.

Nowadays, all consumers need to do to get what they want is sit in front of a computer and browse the internet. Although there are many positive effects of social media advertising, there are also some bad ones. Its lack of oversight and control, along with the relative ease with which information can be obtained, makes it ripe for every manner of cybercrime. We will go into greater depth regarding the pros and cons of social media advertising in the following chapters. When the Internet is at the center of business and marketing, as the first and most prominent statement suggests, it is more than just a new medium for advertising and marketing products and services to consumers (De Mooij, 2019). These factors brought about a tipping point, a radical change to a more contemporary corporate model, and the subsequent possibility. A marketing-focused, top-down, centralized approach is being replaced by a customer-focused, bottom-up, complementary mechanism (Joung, Jung, Ko, & Kim, 2019), and this new economy is here to stay due to the proliferation of communication technologies. The chapter aims to identify and discuss the benefits and barriers of SMM so as to awake managers to take opportunities and find a way of avoiding negative issues.

II. LITERATURE

Social Media

Social media marketing is the use of social media platforms and websites to promote a product, service, or brand. It involves creating and sharing content, engaging with users, and running paid advertisements to reach a wider audience, build brand awareness, drive website traffic, and generate leads or sales. It can be stated that SMM studies tends to be more comprehensive than business studies considering incorporating continuing individual and change in social behavior is more multifaceted, and thus the concept of social marketing adapts a corporate approach but in the case of different outcomes. In order to rebrand their company and attract new clients, many entrepreneurs are turning to SMM (Muralidharan, La Ferle, & Sung, 2015). Blogs, emails, social media sites, vlogs, forums, customer ratings, and a plethora of other immediate posting platforms are all part of SMM (Zwick & Bradshaw, 2016). Facebook is one example of a social media site that marketers utilize to get consumers talking about their products online (Galati, Tinervia, Crescimanno, & Spezia, 2017).

Some entrepreneurs lack the resources and knowledge to adopt successful SMM tactics (Galati et al., 2017), despite the fact that these techniques are useful instruments for reaching prospective clients, increasing sales, and growing revenue.

III. BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN MARKETING

Research studies recommend that businesses use SNS to do things like enhance visitor numbers to their websites, connect with customers directly, find novel business possibilities, form communities, share content, get feedback from consumers, and promote their brand in general (eMarketer, 2010). In fact, SNS are well-suited for gathering information/feedback from customers, starting dialogues with customers, and building connections with consumers via interaction and participation because they are not procedural in nature (Fuan, 2013). For our website to thrive in terms of expanding our audience and generating backlinks, the online engagement of our content is crucial. In line with software optimization strategies, firms place a greater emphasis on backlinks to improve search engine ranking.

In addition to allowing a company to constantly highlight its products and services in the active market, SMM also helps generate massive awareness of the company itself. SMM also aids in creating a social atmosphere for both the business and its potential customers by means of a robust social networking forum. According to Alharbie (2015), a company's marketing efforts are more likely to be successful if they target a sizable and actively engaged audience on multiple social media platforms. Businesses may learn a lot from their customers' evaluations and ratings on social media, as this gives them insight into where they excel and where they need some improvement. SMM's fundamental idea is to facilitate consumers' ability to narrow in on relevant details about various companies and the goods and services they offer.

By streamlining processes, SMM helps cut costs and boosts profits for businesses. The short-term impact of a reduction in operating expenses on revenue may be less noticeable than the long-term impact of an increase in sales revenue. Customers can now more clearly identify their wants because of the Internet's low (or zero) search cost to them. Ultimately, a company's bottom line will benefit from its use of SMM since it allows it to expand into previously untapped niche markets and sell a wider variety of items than ever before (Steel et al., 2011). Marketers may now specifically target audiences and consumers based on their likes and the likes of their friends on social media sites. In addition, word-of-mouth promotion through social networking sites is more

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effective than traditional forms of marketing such as advertising (Hill, Provost, & Volinsky, 2006). Users are able to create and grow their own online communities on social media sites and exchange ideas and opinions in this way (Dollarhide, 2021). Billion of people throughout the world have joined at least one social media network because of these features. Users of social media sites can get up-to-the-minute news, make new friends, and join specialized online communities. Many people's ability to interact with others online over shared interests has helped them feel less alone and more a part of a global community. However, social media may easily propagate false information, lead to increased polarization, and even have negative psychological consequences. One of the biggest advantages that businesses see with the usage of IT is an increase in customer service. Any modern electronic device, be it a smartphone, laptop, notebook, e-reader, tablet, or even a television, can be used to access the Internet and engage in information gathering and dissemination. Customers may research, compare, and make a purchase on their own time because of the accessibility afforded them by technological platforms. When conducting business, customers have come to anticipate uniformly high-quality service from all companies (Fuan, 2013).

Since the advent of SMM, clients can receive timely updates seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day (Jones, Moeeni, & Ruby, ; Joung, Jung, Ko, & Kim, 2018). It seemed obvious that online shopping would be more convenient than traditional methods because it eliminates the need to travel to several stores and perform the time-consuming task of price comparison. Customers will be able to shop more efficiently from the convenience of their own homes. To put it plainly, SMM is a significant cost- and time-saver. Pew Research Center found in their 2019 poll that social media use is associated with a larger friend network and more diversity of friends in emerging markets (Pew Research Center, 2019). According to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2022 among 13- to 17-year-olds in the United States, 80% of respondents reported feeling more connected to their classmates because to social media (Pew Research Center, 2022). Overall, 31% of people feel primarily favorable about the impact of social media in their lives, while 59% feel neither positive nor negative. Firms may learn more about social media page's followers, the types of material they enjoy, and how they prefer to interact with brand by using the analytics and reporting tools provided by each social media platform (LaFleur, 2023) through careful use of these tools.

In addition to reaching out to customers, businesses are utilizing SMM to cultivate a devoted following and establish an identity for their brands. More than 200 million small companies utilize Facebook for advertising per month,

the company claims (Facebook, 2020). According to Statista's 2022 survey of marketers, 90% report using Facebook for advertising. Approximately 55% of all ad spending worldwide in 2022 came from social media and search advertising. It's also the sector of advertising that's expected to develop the quickest by 2023 (Zenith, 2023). With SMM, firms can reach more people. A company's brand and public perception can benefit from increased customer service provided by SMM or any other information system. Good corporate branding and image can expand even further through the use of electronic platforms. Customers who are satisfied with their purchases can simply tell hundreds or thousands of others about their positive experience by using internet word of mouth. By utilizing the digital platform, businesses will be able to improve their company's branding and image for a low investment. Without the need for human intervention, businesses may give clients with an infinite amount of data. Because so much more information can be conveyed than in any other type of contact, this is a distinct benefit. What's more, and this is crucial, the data can be presented in a format that is simple to absorb. For instance, personalized airline reservation and scheduling systems are notoriously challenging to develop and keep up-to-date. More than 3.6 billion people utilize at least one form of social (Pew Research Center, 2019). The reach of a brand can grow enormously with just one shared post. Companies use social media not just for advertising, but also for two-way communication with their customers. According to LaFleur (2023), this can lead to better service for customers and the development of meaningful connections with them. SMM's major benefits are expanded exposure and less overhead. When compared to traditional kinds of advertising, such as direct mail or telemarketing, the cost of a social media platform is often far lower. In addition, businesses can expand their consumer base to include those who are out of reach owing to the location and availability of traditional distribution channels by using SMM. There are ways in which customers can benefit from social media platforms, which together expand their reach and lower their costs (Sheth & Sharma, 2005). When planned and carried out properly, administering a social media program can have minimal financial impact. Once the necessary understanding, team, and program strategy has been established, marketing teams find it simple to implement with minimal effort. A brand's website can benefit greatly from social media posts. Click-throughs and user engagement can be increased by advertising relevant blog posts, landing page offers, and other resources (LaFleur, 2023). Because the costs associated with setting up a SMM campaign are significantly lower than they would be in the real world, small businesses are now able to compete successfully with their larger counterparts in this space. With the use of SMM, businesses can communicate with their customers directly, eliminating the need for intermediaries and saving money in the

process while also receiving direct, honest feedback from their clients (Regan, Jesse, & TalatKhwaja, 2018).

Given that nearly half of all Internet users belong to at least one social network, reaching firm's intended audience via this medium is preferable to using any other online or offline method. Given the shortening attention span of consumers generally — and especially the younger generations — this is crucial. Analytics are available on every major social network today, including Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest. These indicators are freely available to users and can be used to better understand customer behavior and the strategies of competitors (Lim, 2020). By tailoring information for each individual consumer, a SMM company can facilitate the creation of interactions that lead to the development of products and services that fit the needs of the target market. The Internet can be used for things like online check-in and seat assignment. Marketers can now reach more potential buyers and suppliers than ever before, and customers can shop 24/7 without having to worry about making the time or effort to physically visit a store. As a result, the company's efficiency and customer service have improved because to the improved flow of information. As a result of the simplification and automation afforded by computers, operating and transaction costs for businesses have decreased because of SMM (Stockdale & Standing, 2004). The Internet may travel through the market and the operating competency of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), therefore the introduction of beneficial online-marketing isn't just about empowering new business; it also has an impact, particularly on small firms. In other words, (Clement, 2020). The internet has leveled the playing field for small businesses by reorganizing marketing strategies to compete with those of larger corporations (Armstrong, Kotler, Harker, & Brennan, 2018). Finally, successful companies like Dell and amazon.com have shown that social media platforms can facilitate transactions between customers and enterprises that would normally require human contact (Sheth & Sharma, 2005).

IV. BARRIERS OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN MARKETING

Interaction is key on social media; nevertheless, genuine two-way conversations demand time and effort. In social networks, marketing takes on a different form, with more emphasis focused on building lasting connections that may one day lead to increased revenue. Someone needs to be in charge of keeping an eye on each platform, responding to comments and queries, and sharing any product info customers find useful (Jones et al., 2020). Companies that do not have a social media management solution fall behind the competition. One of the first

and most crucial things to keep in mind is how much time firms and customers need to devote to SMM in order to be successful (Barefoot & Szabo, 2010). It's unrealistic to expect massive success from social media with only a minimal investment of time and effort. To determine whether or not the time investment is reasonable for its operations, a business must first become aware of it (Barefoot & Szabo, 2010). Both internal and external obstacles have been previously identified in the literature as impediments to the widespread adoption of new technology within businesses. Indeed, many businesses have been sluggish to adopt new technologies due to perceived impediments such as a lack of resources (money, time, and training), a lack of confidence in the technology's value, and a lack of familiarity with it. Organizational attitudes toward a given innovation's accompanying technology are the driving force behind its eventual rate of adoption. Marketers also worry about the time and money it will take to set up and maintain their SMM campaigns. As firms are all aware, the rapidly evolving nature of information technology necessitates periodic investments on the part of businesses (Khatibi et al., 2003). Customers' perceptions and expectations of e-commerce also provide a challenge. When it comes to high-priced items, many shoppers still want to examine an item in person before committing to a purchase (Khatibi et al., 2003). SMM also has the potential drawback of being time-consuming, as it may take some time for consumers to recognize the value of sharing or trading evaluations (Kelly et al., 2015). Because of this, businesses need to set aside sufficient time and funds to maintain a steady stream of artistic posts and exchanges, and they must also consider the system's potential impact on their operations and business before committing to a digital marketing strategy. The marketing campaign or advertisement was turned down, and the company received harsh criticism for using a soldier's name in a commercial context. Even if the objectives are beneficial for the community, SMM should not harm the in-depth and valued sentiments or feelings of potential consumers.

The doors of public shame and negative news might be wide open on SMM. Customers' venting frustrations on social media can lead to a flood of negative reviews. Anything a business does or says on these platforms will be seen by the public and met with responses. To reduce the likelihood of negative outcomes, brands need to act quickly (LaFleur, 2023). The majority of businesses struggle to comply with the many e-commerce regulations that exist. One key obstacle for e-commerce is the absence of defined rules and regulations to protect both the supplier and the buyer. Some new rules and regulations for e-commerce may exist, but the public is unaware of their presence since they are not widely disseminated (Regan et al., 2018). Social media strategies can take a significant amount of time to perfect. Both fresh content and customer service

requests require ongoing attention from marketing teams. Because of this, small marketing teams may struggle to take advantage of SMM's full potential (LaFleur, 2023). Managing a SMM strategy requires a dedicated individual or group of people. Inexperienced workers are useless for SMM campaigns. Instead, successful SMM relies on seasoned professionals. Investing in SMM is for the long haul. In the long run, social media platforms pay out handsomely, although not right away (LaFleur, 2023) in the form of visible outcomes. Several pieces of content published over extended periods of time are what really make or break a SMM strategy. Because social media posts are visible to the public, competitors can easily spy on users every move.

Promoting a business' brand, products, or services on social media might raise trust, privacy, and data security concerns. Companies should be alert to these concerns and take precautions to limit their legal liability in connection with the acquisition, processing, and storage of personally identifiable information. Social media marketers rely heavily on client loyalty, therefore trust is essential, especially when it comes to the special considerations of transactional security and privacy. One of the main reasons consumers have not made more extensive use of internet shopping is the fear of credit card fraud. In addition, some major SMM campaigns have had a public relations debacle due to privacy issues, which has resulted to a significant decrease in brand image (Advertising Age, 2000). There have always been concerns about security and privacy in the online marketplace, and many consumers still aren't ready to trust websites with sensitive information like credit card numbers. Since there are less hurdles to entry in the e-commerce sector, marketers are at a larger disadvantage than they were under the traditional market structure (Majeed, 2023). Companies like Facebook and Twitter have their own privacy policies that detail how they will use user information and how outside parties may interact with that information while using the service. It is the responsibility of any marketer using a third-party social media outlet to ensure that their marketing campaigns do not in any way encourage consumers or any other parties to engage in practices that would violate the privacy policy of the social media company. Companies that run their own blogs or other kinds of social media should also have detailed rules in place detailing their data collection, usage, and storage procedures, as well as the duties of any outside parties in terms of privacy and security. The feeling of safety and reliability is crucial to the success of any online business. A firm won't be able to taste, smell, or handle the product. Firms must avoid making eye contact with the vendor at all costs (Steinman & Hawkins, 2010). Therefore, the Internet does not permit the use of these trust-building strategies. When consumers have faith in a brand, they feel more secure in their purchasing decisions, and they are more likely to stick with that brand over time. It follows

that trust in brands and customer loyalty might mitigate some of the negative aspects of doing business online, such as the common belief that the Internet is an unsafe, dishonest, and unreliable place to shop. Some would-be buyers continue to be deterred by these misconceptions about online transactions. A "third party approval" can be used as a trust building mechanism.

V. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The chapter aims to identify and discuss the benefits and barriers of SMM so as to awake managers to take opportunities and find a way of avoiding negative issues. More than 4.7 billion people across the world now use social media, and this number continues to grow rapidly every day. While a firm may not find a deep personal connection with every platform, they all provide a means for people and brands to reach out to one another across demographics and sectors. The perceived advantages of SMM are actually similar to the perceived advantages of numerous IT Solutions, as proven by the majority of studies showing identical output of research regardless of the country in which the research was conducted. New technologies improve business operations because they are more efficient than older methods. Faster and more precise information flow is possible as well. Companies can save money by implementing SMM since it streamlines processes, requires fewer employees, and cuts overhead and costs related to inventory. Through SMM, businesses can boost client satisfaction, loyalty, and retention. From a marketing viewpoint, it's crucial since it allows businesses to reach a large demographic, zero in on potential buyers, and encourage those people to make a purchase. Since social media influences all facets of the Internet and transforms the role Internet plays in people's lives, it should be considered by marketers, advertisers, and online content creators as a fundamental part of their communications wherever they may be located (Universal McCann, 2008). As a result of social media, customers now play an integral part in the market. Consumers are evolving from passive recipients to active participants and content creators. Blogs, microblogging apps (such as Twitter), social networking sites (like Facebook), podcasts, and video/photo sharing sites (such as YouTube and Flickr) are examples of social media applications or tools that can help with this. Companies, and especially marketers, can benefit from using social media into marketing and marketing strategies in light of this reality. This research has looked into the pros and cons of Internet technological advancements in the field of social media advertising. Marketers today use every available channel to spread their messages to potential customers, and social media is a key part of that strategy. Many businesses still have trouble determining the most effective use of the medium, despite its widespread use. The risks and difficulties

involved are beyond the comprehension of the typical business owner or marketer. It is challenging to assess the competence of social media "experts" offering their services on the internet because the subject is so new. That's why it's crucial for businesses to study SMM extensively before diving in headfirst. In order to succeed in SMM, a company must first learn the fundamentals of using social media as a tool. Engaging customers, safeguarding the company's reputation, providing high-quality products and services, and meeting the needs of those customers should always be a company's top priorities.

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