

Social Media as a Platform for Start

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ABSTRACT

The basic need in the study to understand the social media platforms by which a start-ups company may benefit since its inception. This study will give an understanding on how social media can benefit the start-ups company and entrepreneurs who can face the tough living concept in the business world. Every year there are thousands of new start-ups companies emerges and hope to be the next great success; there are some who are experiencing a great success within limited time. Social computing involves the use of online social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn to reach consumers in innovative ways. Businesses of all types are getting involved in social media in an attempt to reach to a new audience and reinforce their ties with existing customers. As one is starting a new business, the major concern is with creating a product or service offering, finding first customers, building partnerships to help grow more quickly and ensuring one has enough money to sustain the company. The purpose of this study is to investigate how marketing efforts in social media can be successful in attracting customers for start-up companies. It also tries to understand the importance of social media for start ups.

Keyword: Social Media, Start-ups, Customers, content marketing, importance of social media

INTRODUCTION

Social computing is not a fad, nor is it something that will pass us by. It has revolutionized the way we interact with the world around us. It has developed an appetite for new ways to communicate and to the increasingly flexible ways that we can go online. This has led to global changes, huge shifts in ideologies and a transformation in how we absorb and process information. Nowadays young people are facing the problem of unemployment all around Europe, therefore the government and the EU have been making attempts at motivating them to start running their own businesses. Facing the lack of privileges for young entrepreneurs and high expenditure of running their own businesses, many people abandon the idea of doing so, on account of the risk of failure. The truth is that 50% of the companies disappear in the first year of activity, and the other 50% disappear the following year. Those that survive more than three years may become successful. Meanwhile, easy access to the Internet and low cost of using social media for marketing activities cause ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) to become an effective communication tool, used to build relations between enterprises and customers. They also allow to create the image of start-ups and their brands. It seems that the role of social and content media to promote the company and branding [Kaplan, Haenlein 2010, pp. 59–68] is significant, particularly now, in a turbulent economy, where the creation of real customer value is so important.

DATA COLLECTION:

Secondary data collection

OBJECTIVES

- To analyze social media characteristics and their role for start ups.
- To analyze content marketing as a strategy for start ups.
- To study the key things to consider when choosing social media platforms for your start-ups.
- To analyse the importance of social media for start ups.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing is a crucial activity for the survival and success of a business. Businesses today have more marketing opportunities than ever (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010).

In the last several years social networking has received a great deal of attention and has gained acceptance across numerous economic, demographic and geographic segments. Social networks have become invasive as they touch us in our homes, while we travel and even in our workplaces (Perlstein, 2010).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) describe social media as a group of internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Web 2.0 technologies on the social web permit two-way conversations with consumers enabling brands to listen to consumers and respond (Fournier & Avery, 2011). Consumers and organizations alike are increasingly using the web to discuss, share, and collaborate (Jones, 2010).

Social media is best understood as a group of new kinds of online media which share most or all of the following characteristics such as participation which encourages contributions and feedback from the audience, an openness that allows voting, comments and sharing of information, conversation that is seen as one to one, communities which can be formed quickly to share common interest and connectedness that makes use of links to other sites, resources and people (Mayfield, 2008).

Social media enables firms to engage consumers in a constant and direct manner at relatively low cost and higher level of efficiency than with more traditional communication tools. Businesses want their message to reach as many people as possible. To maximize this reach, a business must have a presence where customers are hanging out. Increasingly, they are hanging out on social networking sites (Halligan, Shah, & Scott, 2009). This makes social media not only appropriate for large organizations, but for start-ups as well (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Social media has caused a significant change in the strategies and tools companies use for communicating with customers. Mangold and Faulds (2009) argue that "social media combines characteristics of traditional integrated marketing (IMC) tools (companies talking to customers) with a highly magnified form of word-of-mouth (customers talking to one another) whereby marketing managers cannot control the content and frequency of such information."

Companies must be able to monitor and respond to conversation, both positive and negative, surrounding the brand. There are ways however, that companies can influence discussions in a way that is consistent with the organization's mission (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Social media marketing enables companies to achieve a better understanding of customer needs in order to build effective relationships.

According to Walsh and Lipinski (2009), marketing in start-ups and SMEs is not as well developed or influential as it is in large firms. Large organizations have a marketing department that allows them for the delineation of functions and activities. This difference can be attributed to certain limitations that start-

ups face including limited resources in terms of finance, time, and marketing knowledge (Gilmore et al., 2001; Reijonen, 2010).

SOCIAL MEDIA CHARACTERISTICS AND THEIR ROLE FOR START-UPS

The Internet and social media require a new approach to communication, as it is the first medium that allows to send and receive messages instantly with any number of people. This has allowed people to create their own personal infosphere. This community is dynamic and can interact with each other and share parts of their lives. These characteristics empowered people to become more involved and therefore more interested in a company and its products or services. Communication of the Internet users in real time, allows to build relations, even between people from different parts of the world. The process feels natural and therefore is more engaging for those who are involved. People who are involved start to trust each other and identify themselves with a presented company. As research indicates, the contact is closer and the belief stronger.

There are many different characteristics of social media, the same as different kinds of divisions. One of the most accurate was made by Kaplan and Haenlein.

- Blogs e.g. Twitter,
- Social Networking Sites e.g. Facebook, Google+,
- Content Communities e.g. YouTube,
- Collaborative Projects e.g. Wikipedia,

Facebook is an ideal tool to communicate the brand. The portal allows to lessen the distance between a company and its potential customer, affects customer's opinion to gain product reviews, which have a beneficial effect on decisions about choosing a particular company. The best way to make B2B communication on Facebook more effective is selection of suitable content and strategy.

Facebook is a good platform when a new entrepreneur needs:

to present content that is highly visual,
to use the community effect to gain trust by sharing information via friends' network,
to invest money to sponsor posts and ads, otherwise it is really difficult to find fans organically, because of Facebook algorithms change.

Twitter is a good platform when a new entrepreneur wants:

to broadcast their message,
to join the on-going conversations,
to connect with opinion leaders and people that matter,
to build a position for themselves.

LinkedIn is proper for those who represent B2B company and want to make a relation with professional audiences and establish opinion leadership within a group of homogeneously targeted audience.

There are also Google+ and Pinterest. Pinterest is used for those businesses whose primary target audience is women and it is essential to share a highly visual content.

Every start-up needs both activity on the social platforms and consistency. But all company owners have to remember that the opposite activities (too many updates every day) are also inadvisable and make followers on e.g. LinkedIn company page irritated. The social media fulfill those needs as they allow

personalized communication with different stakeholders. However, social media are only a tool and require a new approach to communication and marketing management.

CONTENT MARKETING AS A STRATEGY FOR START-UPS

Content marketing is a great power of social media. It produces valuable contents that answer the customers' needs. Content marketing can help every start-up in valuable content distribution, attraction of customer's attention and gaining involvement. In social media, monitoring, listening to the community, keeping up a dialogue with customers and then making conclusions and matching the communication to the target's needs play a significant role. Lots of people make a mistake thinking that content and content marketing are the same. The marketing conception is based on a production of the contents that are important for customer, then the elected aims of content marketing strategy, and finally on measurement indicators of these activities.

Often people do not want to implement content marketing because of many myths such as:

- The company's target does not use social media and does not read online – Google research shows that almost everybody looks for useful information about the product or service before shopping or purchasing. Doremus Research and Financial Times show, 60% of senior managers read blogs, watch YouTube and participate in media such as LinkedIn.
- Lack of time and money to create contents – many people, even those who have business experience cannot imagine the contents which are not a description of product or service can give a ROI. They may think that creating the contents that have no advertising nature is unprofitable.
- Content marketing is an advertising campaign, blogging and education – definitely content is a process, a philosophy, it needs time to bloom. A blog, meanwhile, provides a foundation for many content marketing activities and it can be one of the tools used by content marketing. When it comes to education, we must say that many activities of content marketing are orientated on branding and positioning as a leader in the Internet. Education is a small part of the whole process.
- Using content marketing will cause a reveal of company secrets – BCG, Microsoft, IBM, Unilever write contents and they are not afraid of their knowhow sharing or public communication with customers.
- A lack of will to share a company's knowledge for free – creation of the contents, every company can gain the customers' interests, their involvement and priceless trust. The contents let them gain the customers' attention without advertising which might be irritating.

The next reason of failure is forgetting that every platform has different content needs. Some newcomers think that pushing the same content everywhere saves working time. Another issue is to adjust content to the target (different content for young people, different content for CEOs) and to make sure that marketing tone matches the new company culture.

Another thing to keep an eye on is the type of content that is shared. Too much of self-promotion is a big turn-off. The rule is the customers prefer purchasing products or service from founders to the company. Summarizing every start-up should include personal branding to its founder in a social media strategy.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE BEST SOCIAL NETWORKS FOR START-UP:

Choosing the best social platforms for your startup can be tricky. There are so many choices and it can feel overwhelming.

You want to be selective about the social media channels you use since your target audience is not going

to be active on all of them.

KEY THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS FOR YOUR STARTUP:

- Who are you targeting?
- What social media platforms do your ideal customers use the most?
- What kind of content and information do you need to create and share on the platform to attract your target market?
- Are there tools available to manage the social media account easier?
- Which social media platforms will give you the best return on your business investment? (i.e. leads, engagement, new customers)
- How will you use the social media network to foster relationships with new followers?

IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR STARTUPS

Stimulate Your Audience with Your Brand

Social media enables you to not only introduce your new brand to the public but if it's carefully packaged it is supposed to get your audience excited about your company and products. It's a powerful and effective way to create a unique experience that will get the audience engaged and share your products or services with the rest of the world.

Zoom in on the Needs of Your Target Audience

Marketing tools help you get a better understanding of what impacts your audience and what they actually need. It's not just about forcing your brand onto the audience and advertising your product or service. Social media actually enables you to understand what your audience needs. It's about providing them with the right information and solution to their problems. And by carefully monitoring analytics you're able to exactly define what they might need from your brand.

Easily Find New Customers

Different social media channels give you an opportunity to spread your message just about anywhere in the world. In the process of marketing your brand, you'll join tons of Twitter chats, communicate via various Facebook groups and share significant images on Instagram that will reach customers you didn't know existed via just using relevant hashtags.

CONCLUSION

From the paper we can conclude that it is essential for start-ups to understand social media tools and the strategies behind using social media for growing their business. Social media enables companies to show what they offer and to see what consumer's value. Companies need to find out which ways of connecting are most effective for their business, what information they are looking to share, and how to keep customers engaged. Facebook users are more likely to share information with friends, like company pages, and comment on posts made by companies.

FUTURE SCOPE

This paper studies the effects of social media in reaching consumers by start-ups through various sources. The next step would be obtaining more primary data through face to face interviews of start-ups. This would help to get a more detailed information on how the owner/manager uses social media and could be

analyzed to see more complete picture of the results of social media marketing research should also be conducted to get a more tangible results of social media marketing. This could be done by, for example, calculating return on investment or in other ways try to measure what the effects of social media marketing have on sales in start-up companies.

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