

How Social and Digital Media Can Be Used to Reach a Wider Customer Base



Student Name: Mohd. Abdus Salam

Student ID: 2331141

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Lecturer Name: Hoang Dang Nguyen

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1. Introduction

Just as the social media platforms have revolutionised our personal connections, finding long lost friends, keeping in touch with relatives thousands of miles away, it has equally impacted the business work. Particularly how businesses reach to their customers to boost their revenue and profitability. Reaching the customers is no longer limited to a fixed billboard, a quick 30 second TV advertisement or a newspaper advertisement. The era of digital revolution has made social media an integral part of our daily life and created careers like influencers and social media experts. Using all of these businesses are building customer connections and impacting decisions and behaviours. In this report, I will aim to demonstrate how the power of social media is being used to reach a wider customer base. Highlight the advantages and disadvantages of this and make suggestions on how to overcome potential challenges.

2. Spread of Social Media Over Time

Things started to really change with touch screen phones, from a device to merely call and text people, the touch screen phone brought the work at our fingertips without having to sit in front of a computer. Widespread availability of wi-fi allowed us to remain connected at all times. With this came the applications like Facebook , Myspace, Instagram, LinkedIn and more recently TikTok. They all came with their unique ways of engaging with us and connecting and sharing our ideas and knowledge. That certainly have also impacted our decision making and choices.

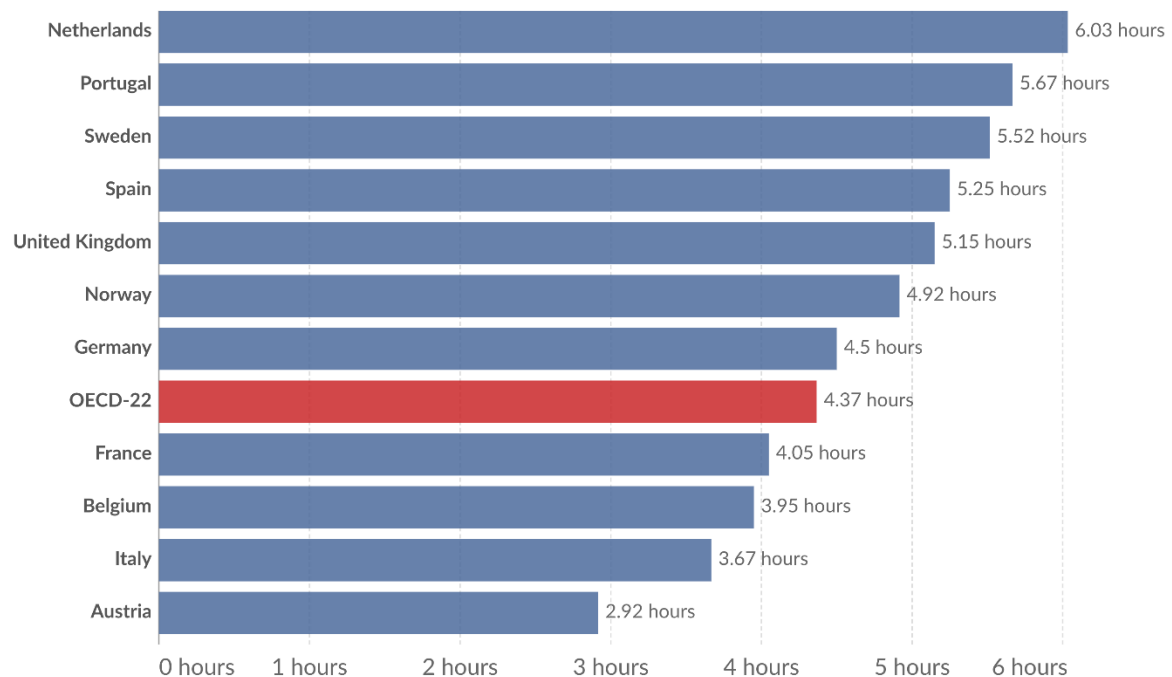
Looking at some of the key trends, “The percentage of US adults who use social media increased from 5% in 2005 to 79% in 2019.” (Our World in Data, 2019).

This clearly demonstrates the speed at which it has reached the general population.

In the next graph we can show how much time we spend in social media.

Daily time spent on the Internet by young people, 2016

Hours per day spent on the Internet by people aged 14-24



Source: OECD Society at a Glance (2019)

OurWorldInData.org/internet • CC BY

Over time they have also changed a great deal. Starting with Facebook being the first major platform. This allowed us to connect with our friends, create groups with shared interest. Now that over time has evolved into sharing videos, news, knowledge, buy and sell (marketplace). The establishment of Instagram just focused on photos and short videos. This allowed to express individuals more creatively. Spreading ideas or share feelings through images and short videos. Promote goods and services. LinkedIn differentiated itself as a professional platform to help people network for business and opportunities. TikTok is the latest platform that is purely focuses on short videos. They can be on anything from showing how to garden, to cooking to how to build a house as well as entertainment.

These platforms have captured our imagination and allowed us to engage based on our interest and needs. Just as we have become engaged in them they also have presented themselves as a tool for businesses to entice, engage and influence us to buy products and services.

3. Different Marketing Methods

Marketing has always been about targeting potential customers and influencing their choice by informing them. This was sometimes done through a good product, sometimes through celebrity endorsement etc. However, different demographic requires different methods of marketing. To reach a younger audience who are more accustomed to making purchases online. Companies had to often ditch the traditional marketing methods and opt for digital marketing strategies. Opting for platforms that is used more by their target audience.

While traditional marketing like a newspaper advert would have no control over who it reaches out to. The digital marketing methods are more relevant by being more targeted by age, gender, demographic information. So, it is likely to be more effective. The costs are also substantially cheaper. Influences would often promote at a fraction of the cost in comparison to how expensive a TV advert would be in the past.

4. Application Of Social Media As A Marketing Tool

Paid Promotions

This is when payment is made to promote product or services.

Partnerships

Platforms like facebook would often work with the business to promote products and services. In this method, the platform is paid and fee and the digital content such as images, website links or videos are promoted to a targeted group.

Fan Based Promotions / Reviews

In this channel, individual users/fans of the products doing their own product reviews, doing how to use videos or talking about pros or cons. That reaches other people who are interested in those products to understand and make a purchase decision. You would often find phone, car to household appliances reviews.

Big data and analytics

These digital channels have made it much easier to analyse the user behaviours. Who are watching these videos, how they are interacting, time spent on watching or even if they are clicking on the links provided. This allows businesses to tailor their marketing strategy.

The Harmful and Positive Side of Social Media

Sadly not everything about social media is not positive. It has got people addicted to screens, make us less focused and sociable.

Too much content with everyone now aspiring to become an influencer make the market saturated and created a cycle of mindless consumerism.

Privacy and the lack of as well of breach of this from the social media platform is another concern. To market, the apps collect lots of data.

But on the bright side, it has become cost effective and targeted marketing has become more relevant. It also has the ability to reach globally at a fraction of the cost of traditional marketing channels. Biggest advantage is ability to connect real time feedback from marketing campaigns from users. Targeted audience also means it is relevant like LinkedIn for recruitment.

Application for Businesses

Businesses need to adopt with changes, new platforms will come and new ways of marketing will need to be adopted to that. Using big data analytics they can gather insights and take action. Most importantly use these methods responsibly.

References

1. Our World in Data (2019) *The rise of social media*. Available at: <https://ourworldindata.org/rise-of-social-media> (Accessed 18 December 2024).