

AS3: Source Evaluation and Reflection Report

Module: Digital Marketing & Business Strategy

Topic: The Use of Social Media to Promote Business

Word Count: ~1,250 words

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1. Introduction & Source Selection Overview

Using social media for business promotion isn't just about posting regularly anymore; it has become a central part of how companies try to get new customers and keep existing ones. But when you look into whether these social media tactics actually bring a good return on investment (ROI), you get very different answers depending on where you look.

For this assignment, I picked three very different types of sources to evaluate how businesses use social media:

- **Academic Article:** A peer-reviewed paper that looks at lead generation from a theoretical and statistical angle.
- **Industry Report:** A broad market study from HubSpot that shows real-time benchmarks and budget trends.
- **Practitioner Blog:** An article from a popular marketing website that gives quick, hands-on advice for small businesses.

2. Critical Evaluation Matrix

I used the **CRAAP framework** (Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, Purpose) to break down each source and see where it excels and where it falls short.

CRAAP Criteria	Source 1: Academic Article	Source 2: Industry Report	Source 3: Practitioner Blog
Citation	<i>Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing</i> (2024). "Quantifying B2B Lead Generation Across Social Platforms."	HubSpot (2026). "The State of Inbound & Social Media Marketing Strategies."	<i>Social Media Examiner</i> (2026). "10 Short-Form Video Tactics to Double Your Small Business Reach."
Currency	Moderate: Published two years ago. The general human behavior trends are still relevant, but it misses the newest platform updates from 2025/2026.	High: Very recent (2026). It covers what is happening right now with platform features and current ad costs.	Very High: Written recently in 2026. Focuses heavily on current short-form video trends like TikTok and Reels algorithms.
Relevance	High (Strategic): Gives solid proof on how organic posts correlate with conversions over a longer period.	High (Operational): Extremely useful for practical decisions like choosing ad budgets or setting KPIs.	High (Tactical): Good for quick execution, but mostly focused on short-term views rather than overall strategy.
Authority	Very High: Written by university researchers and vetted through a double-blind peer review process.	Moderate-High: Published by a major CRM and marketing software company with internal data analysts.	Moderate: Written by a freelance social media consultant. It went through a

CRAAP Criteria	Source 1: Academic Article	Source 2: Industry Report	Source 3: Practitioner Blog
			blog editor, but lacks academic review.
Accuracy	High: Based on a sample of 450 companies using clear statistical testing ($p < 0.05$).	Moderate: Big sample size (3,000+ responses), but since it's self-reported survey data, people might exaggerate their success.	Low-Moderate: Mostly relies on personal client stories and examples without control groups or raw data.
Purpose	Objective: Wants to contribute to academic research without trying to sell a specific product.	Commercial: Helpful data, but part of its goal is to show why you need marketing software like HubSpot.	Lead Generation: Wants to generate web traffic, build an email list, and push affiliate links.

3. Explicit Source Reliability Breakdown

To rigorously answer whether each source is reliable and justify why, the following analysis evaluates their methodologies and potential biases:

1. Source 1 (Academic Journal) — Verdict: Highly Reliable

Justification: Authored by university marketing scholars and vetted through double-blind peer review in the *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*. The methodology uses an empirical sample of 450 firms with formal hypothesis testing ($p < 0.05$). Because it lacks commercial backing, the objectivity is extremely high, making its findings on long-term lead generation robust and dependable.

2. Source 2 (Industry Benchmark Report) — Verdict: Moderately to Highly Reliable

Justification: Published by *HubSpot*, this report aggregates data from over 3,000 marketing professionals. It provides highly reliable, real-time benchmark statistics for current ad budgets and platform adoption. However, reliability is slightly tempered by self-reporting bias (respondents estimating success) and underlying commercial intent (promoting inbound marketing software).

3. Source 3 (Practitioner Blog) — Verdict: Low to Moderately Reliable

Justification: Published on *Social Media Examiner*, this article provides useful tactical ideas for short-form video. However, its reliability as formal evidence is low to moderate because it relies on individual client anecdotes rather than controlled datasets, lacks independent peer review, and primarily serves lead-generation and marketing purposes.

4. Comparative Synthesis & Application to Business Strategy

When you compare these three sources side by side, you quickly notice that you can't just rely on one single type of information when building a social media plan.

- **Academic vs. Industry Data:** The **journal article (Source 1)** was great for proving that social media ROI doesn't happen overnight; it works through long-term touchpoints. But academic papers take a long time to get published, so they fall behind on day-to-day platform changes. That's where the **HubSpot report (Source 2)** helped fill the gap. It gave me real-time 2026 numbers on where companies are actually spending their budgets this year.
- **The Role of Practitioner Advice:** The **blog post (Source 3)** was the most practical of the three when it comes to visual content ideas, but I had to take its claims with a grain of salt. Saying a tactic will "double your reach" sounds great, but without actual data backing it up, it's more of an experiment than a guaranteed strategy.

***My Strategic Takeaway:** If I were running a social media campaign, I would use **academic sources** to set the core strategy and understand customer behavior, **industry reports** to benchmark budgets against competitors, and **blogs** purely for quick creative inspiration on the fly.*

5. Personal Research Reflection

Description of My Search Process

When I first started looking for sources on social media promotion, I went straight to Google and typed in broad phrases like "best social media marketing strategies for business." That was a mistake. I ended up with pages of promotional blogs, agency ads, and sponsored posts that kept repeating the same basic advice without offering any real proof or metrics.

Challenges I Faced

It was honestly a bit overwhelming to filter out what was real research and what was just content marketing designed to sell a tool or a service. I spent too much time reading articles that looked helpful at first glance, only to realize they didn't cite any sources for their claims. I realized my search method was way too passive.

What I Changed & Learned

I decided to change my approach and logged into our university library portal to search through **Business Source Complete** and **JSTOR**.

- **What worked:** Filtering for peer-reviewed articles from the last three years made a huge difference. I got straight to rigorous research without having to dodge ad-heavy websites.
- **What surprised me:** At first, I was going to ignore the *HubSpot* report because it came from a private company. But going through the CRAAP test made me realize that while it does have a commercial goal, it also provides fresh, large-scale survey data that peer-reviewed journals simply can't publish fast enough.

Future Action Plan

This assignment definitely changed how I evaluate information. I realized that no single source type gives you the full story. Next time I have a research project, I won't start with a general Google search. I'll go directly to academic databases first to build my theoretical background, and then use vetted industry whitepapers to get up-to-date market numbers.

6. References

- HubSpot. (2026). *The state of inbound & social media marketing strategies 2026*. HubSpot Research.
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- Social Media Examiner. (2026, January 14). *10 short-form video tactics to double your small business reach this year*. Social Media Examiner.