

# Digital Skills

LCLM4002

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**“A report about how social and digital media can reach a wider customer base.”**

## **Introduction**

This report examines how organisations can use social and digital media to reach more customers, including its advantages and disadvantages (Lee, Hosanagar, and Nair, 2018). It will use Unilever as a case study to demonstrate how social media technologies improve brand visibility, consumer involvement, and market research.

## Overview of Social and Digital Media in Business

Social and digital media are vital to modern business strategy because they allow for dynamic client engagement. These platforms allow businesses to promote products, services, and brand values in real time through direct consumer connections. Targeted advertising strategies on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn reach specific audiences with specialised content. Websites, blogs, and email marketing complement social media by providing extra customer engagement and content distribution channels (Kaplan, 2015). Analytics capabilities in these platforms let organisations track engagement, consumer behaviour, and marketing plans based on data. Due to its speed and public nature, social and digital media may disseminate negative criticism quickly and require ongoing content management to maintain a positive company image. Unilever company can be a perfect example of using social media tools to reach a wider customer base.

### Overview of Unilever Plc.

Unilever Plc. is a multinational consumer goods firm with food, beverages, cleaning, and personal care brands. Since 1929, Unilever has operated in over 190 countries. The organisation values sustainability, social responsibility, and innovation. Unilever's Dove, Lipton, and Magnum brands are known globally, making it a leading consumer products company (Luttrell and Wallace, 2024).



Figure 1: Unilever uses social media (Mwololo, 2018).

## **Advantages of Using Social and Digital Media**

### **Enhanced Reach and Targeting**

Social and digital media channels let firms reach more people than traditional marketing. Facebook Ads and Google AdWords let businesses target populations by age, geography, interests, and behaviour. Unilever tailors social media content to certain groups to reach its varied consumer base and ensure that messages resonate. This customised strategy boosts engagement and optimises marketing budgets by targeting suitable potential clients.

### **Cost-Effectiveness**

According to Shek (2019), Social and digital media are cheaper for advertising than TV, print, and radio. Businesses can increase spending as campaigns succeed by starting with low expenditures. Unilever's social media marketing reaches millions at a fraction of the expense of worldwide broadcast commercials. This cost-effectiveness lets small enterprises compete with giant corporations to reach vast audiences.

### **Real-Time Engagement and Feedback**

Businesses can immediately reply to client enquiries, comments, and criticism on social media. Instant communication strengthens consumer ties and brand community. Unilever uses Twitter and Instagram to resolve customer issues, promote new goods, and build brand loyalty (Rana *et al.*, 2019). Real-time engagement gives firms immediate input on products and services, enabling quick revisions.

### **Data-Driven Insights**

Digital media platforms offer powerful analytics capabilities that help organisations understand consumer behaviour, preferences, and trends. These insights improve marketing strategy and customer experiences (Heinze *et al.*, 2016). Data analytics allows Unilever to evaluate its social media activities and improve future marketing. Real-time data analysis helps organisations stay ahead of trends and boost client engagement.

## **Brand Building and Awareness**

Social and digital media boost brand exposure and identification. Businesses may shape their public image through persistent and deliberate content generation. Unilever promotes its sustainability efforts on social media, harmonising with its target audience's ideals. This boosts brand image and distinguishes the company from the competition (Charlesworth, 2014).

## **Disadvantages and Challenges of Using Social and Digital Media**

### **Risk of Negative Publicity**

One of the most significant issues of social and digital media is that negative publicity spreads quickly. Viral negative remarks, reviews, or customer complaints can damage a brand's reputation. Unilever has been criticised on social media for its environmental impact. Such difficulties might snowball into a public relations crisis if not addressed immediately (Butow *et al.*, 2020). Negative information spreads quickly, so firms must constantly monitor and control their internet profile.

### **High Demand for Content Creation**

Social media engagement requires constant content generation, which can be resource-intensive. Quality content that engages the target audience takes time, imagination, and a dedicated team. To keep its products fresh and enticing, Unilever invests heavily in diversified content (Mutuku, 2018). Continuous content development can strain resources, especially for smaller organisations with limited marketing budgets.

### **Privacy and Data Security Concerns**

Customer data acquisition and management on digital media platforms pose privacy and security concerns. Data breaches might result in customer trust and legal issues. Like many worldwide organisations, Unilever must comply with data privacy laws, such as the GDPR in Europe, when using digital marketing. Customer data breaches can result in significant fines and brand damage.

## **Managing Diverse Platforms**

Maintaining a consistent brand presence is complex, with many social and digital media platforms. Each platform has different features, audiences, and content needs, requiring specific methods. With its many brands, Unilever must balance consistency with platform demands like Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Complexity can lead to inconsistent messages and brand identity loss if not managed well (Assaad, 2019).

## **The Role of Social Media Tools in Business**

### **Brand Visibility and Awareness**

Social media platforms boost brand exposure and visibility. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter allow businesses to access a global audience and showcase products and services to potential clients who traditional marketing tactics may not reach (Tuten, 2023). Unilever utilises Instagram to promote Dove and Ben & Jerry's, improving brand awareness and engagement. Instagram's visual nature permits creative product presentation, boosting company awareness.

### **Customer Engagement and Interaction**

Direct customer connection on social media builds brand loyalty and community. Businesses may instantly reply to client enquiries, feedback, and concerns on Twitter and Facebook. Unilever uses Twitter to answer customer sustainability enquiries and promote its efforts. This participation deepens consumer relationships and boosts brand loyalty.



Figure 2: Unilever Use Customer Engagement (Krasniak, Zimmerman and Ng, 2021).

### **Market Research and Consumer Insights**

Social media tools reveal customer preferences, trends, and behaviour. Businesses may track campaign performance, interaction indicators, and customer preferences with Facebook Insights and Twitter Analytics. These tools help Unilever optimise its marketing strategy and ensure content resonates with target audiences (Srivastava, 2019).

## **Conclusion**

This report aimed to identify how social and digital media could be used to acquire new customers. It highlighted the opportunities, such as the ability to reach more customers and interact with them directly, while presenting the opportunities' drawbacks, such as handling undesirable promotions and customers' personal data security threats. This report used Unilever as an example of a company that practises sustainable business development.

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