



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Certificate in Higher Education in Business Skills for the Workplace

Student Name: Danish Ilyas

Student Number: 2335718

Course Name: Digital Skills LCLM4002

Lecturer Name: Nishi Ramsurrun

Session: October **2024 Term**

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Task 3

Topic 2: How Social and Digital Media Can Be Used to Reach a Wider Customer Base

Introduction

Social and digital media have transformed how businesses engage with customers, offering a platform for direct interaction, marketing, and brand-building (Jeswani, 2023). Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter allow businesses to reach a global audience, foster engagement, and increase visibility. These platforms offer numerous advantages, including cost-effectiveness, targeted advertising, and real-time communication. However, challenges like negative feedback and content saturation need to be considered. This report examines the role of social and digital media in business marketing strategies and explores how businesses can use these platforms to expand their customer base effectively.

The Evolution of Social Media and Its Role in Modern Marketing

Over the past two decades, social media has transformed from a personal communication tool into a vital business asset. Initially, platforms like MySpace and Friendster focused on social interaction, allowing users to connect and share content. Nevertheless, with the rise of Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, and others, companies have started to use these tools to communicate with their target groups, market services, and products and have honest conversations with the users. All these changes have led to Social Media becoming an essential tool in any modern marketing mix. The availability of smartphones and enhanced internet connection has taken social media to the next level, for it has targeted world markets. According to Chaffey and Chadwick (2019), today, social media cannot be considered only an awareness tool for customers but also an engagement tool, a place where businesses collect data, and a direct sales channel.

Traditional vs. Modern Marketing Approaches

At its core, marketing is about promoting products or services to a specific target audience. The traditional marketing communication approach utilizes impersonal and one-way communication tools like television commercials, radio ads, print media, and

billboards. Such approaches helped reach out to the large target market, but they could have been more accurate and engaging than the digital marketing that is available in the present. However, the conventional marketing method has been costly and challenging in evaluating the results of a campaign. It became difficult for companies to monitor the effectiveness of their campaigns in real time or use real-time consumer feedback to modify their strategies (Kotler and Keller, 2012).

On the other hand, contemporary marketing uses technology in its communication methods that allows the messages being sent to be reciprocated and also enables identifying specific customers (Nuseir et al., 2023). Digital promotions include content, email, search engine, and social marketing. These methods are not only a way of posting information to the target audience but also a way of interacting with them and gaining valuable feedback. Digital marketing is, therefore, more dynamic than traditional marketing since it is easy to measure the performance of a particular marketing strategy by observing customer's behavior (Ryan, 2016). This adaptability and cost control make digital marketing one of the world's most widely used marketing strategies.

The Power of Social Media in Customer Engagement

Social media provides businesses an unprecedented opportunity to reach and engage new customers. In contrast to mass marketing, where businesses try to appeal to as many consumers as possible, social media can directly address distinct audiences. Social networks such as Facebook and Instagram provide the opportunity to relay advertisements depending on users' interests and activity, age, gender, etc. For example, Facebook allows businesses, through Ad Manager, to promote their page and target people with specific characteristics such as age, location, and interests.

Also, social media enables businesses to share informative content to their target market. Companies can use Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn to target consumers by sharing blog articles, videos, infographics, and other interesting materials. It not only pushes products but also does brand awareness and thought leadership, as well as gaining a consumer's trust.

Influencer Marketing and Its Impact

Another promising social media marketing approach is using popular influencers on platforms such as Instagram or YouTube. The audience can be made aware of specific products through endorsement by the influencers who have earned the consumers' trust. The approach is efficient for small businesses or start-ups, who may need help to afford main advertising expenses. The partnership with influencers who share the business values effectively targets a large audience with minimal resources to invest in extensive marketing campaigns (Blanche et al., 2021).

Advantages of Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing offers several key benefits. First, it attracts business audiences from other countries. As Chaffey (2019) highlighted, market targets can be expanded by directly accessing a readily available platform, such as billions of customers on platforms like Facebook and Instagram. It is also cheaper than conventional advertising and publicizing the business out there. For instance, TV or radio ads may be very costly, while the same may not be true of social media sites. Most business marketing platforms can host content for free, and even paid ads are far cheaper than conventional marketing (Kotler et al., 2012).

Besides, social media helps businesses have a direct interaction with their customers. Direct engagements, including answering questions, resolving issues or concerns, and engaging in encounter-oriented communication, reinforce relationships and result in loyalties. These interactions also offer competitive insights into what customers want to enable businesses to adjust their actual goods and their promotion techniques (Ryan, 2016).

Challenges and Disadvantages

However, like any other marketing strategy, social media marketing has disadvantages. Negative publicity is one of the most notable risks, as well as many others. Since social media is open to anyone, one nasty comment or a faulty review can spread around the internet and hurt a business. Hence, organizations must ensure that their presence on social media platforms is well-managed and that harmful comments are addressed appropriately.

Also, operating a social networking account is involved and may demand a lot of time and resources for most small enterprises. Regularly creating high-quality content and engaging with followers requires significant effort, which may be difficult for businesses without a dedicated team. Moreover, due to the significant amount of content, businesses could be more distinctive on social media; they must constantly create new content to attract consumers' attention.

Conclusion

Over time, social media has established itself as an essential tool in modern marketing and offers unprecedented opportunities to businesses in terms of customer engagement, targeted marketing, and broad reach. Despite the challenges, social media marketing is an indispensable component of contemporary business strategies, providing a cost-effective and interactive way to connect with audiences and drive sales.

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