Social Media as an Information Seeking Source

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ABSTRACT: Social media is a collective term for websites and applications that focus on communication, community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration.People use social media to stay in touch and interact with friends, family and various communities. Businesses use social applications to market and promote their products and track customer concerns.Business-to-consumer websites include social components, such as comment fields for users. Various tools help businesses track, measure and analyze the attention the company gets from social media, including brand perception and customer insight.Social media has enormous traction globally. Mobile applications make these platforms easily accessible. Some popular examples of general social media platforms include Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

KEYWORDS: social media, collaboration, information, source, customer, platforms

I. INTRODUCTION

In business, social media is used to market products, promote brands, connect to customers and foster new business. As a communication platform, social media promotes customer feedback and makes it easy for customers to share their experiences with a company. Businesses can respond quickly to positive and negative feedback, address customer problems and maintain or rebuild customer confidence.Social media is also used for crowdsourcing. That's the practice of using social networking to gather knowledge, goods or services. Companies use crowdsourcing to get ideas from employees, customers and the general public for improving products or developing future products or services.[1]

Examples of business to business (B2B) applications include the following:

- Social media analytics. This is the practice of gathering and analyzing data from blogs and social media websites to assist in making business decisions. The most common use of social media analytics is to do customer sentiment analysis.

- Social media marketing (SMM). This application increases a company's brand exposure and customer reach. The goal is to create compelling content that social media users will share with their social networks. A key components of SMM is social media optimization (SMO). Like search engine optimization, SMO is a strategy for drawing new visitors to a website. Social media links and share buttons are added to content and activities are promoted via status updates, tweets and blogs.[2]

- Social customer relationship marketing. Social CRM is a powerful business tool. For example, a Facebook page lets people who like a company's brand to like the business's page. This, in turn, creates ways to communicate, market and network. Social media sites give users the option to follow conversations about a product or brand to get real-time market data and feedback.

- Recruiting. Social recruiting has become a key part of employee recruitment strategies. It is a fast way to reach a lot of potential candidates, both active job seekers and people who were not thinking about a job change until they say the recruitment post.

- Enterprise social networking. Businesses also use enterprise social networking to connect people who share similar interests or activities. These applications include internal intranets and collaboration tools, such as Yammer, Slack and Microsoft Teams, that give employees access to information and communication capabilities. Externally, public social media platforms let organizations stay close to customers and make it easy to conduct market research.[3]

Social media provides several benefits, including the following:

- User visibility. Social platforms let people easily communicate and exchange ideas or content.

- Business and product marketing. These platforms enable businesses to quickly publicize their products and services to a broad audience. Businesses can also use social media to maintain a following and test new markets. In some cases, the content created on social media is the product.

- Audience building. Social media helps entrepreneurs and artists build an audience for their work. In some cases, social media has eliminated the need for a distributor, because anyone can upload their content and transact business online. For example, an amateur musician can post a song on Facebook, get instant visibility among their network of friends, who in turn share it on their networks.[4]

Challenges of social media

Social media can also pose challenges to individual users, in the following ways:

- Mental health issues. Overuse of social apps can result in burnout, social media addiction and other issues.

- Polarization. Individuals can end up in filter bubbles. They create the illusion of open discourse when the user is actually sequestered in an algorithmically generated online community.

- Disinformation. Polarized environments foster the spread of disinformation where the perpetrator's intent is to deceive others with false information.[5]

Businesses face similar and unique social media challenges.

- Offensive posts. Conversations on intranets and enterprise collaboration tools can veer off into non-work-related subjects. When that happens, there is potential for co-workers to disagree or be offended. Controlling such conversations and filtering for offensive content can be difficult.

- Security and retention. Traditional data security and retention policies may not work with the features available in collaboration tools. This can raise security risks and compliance issues that companies must deal with.

- Productivity concerns. Social interaction, whether online or in person, is distracting and can affect employees' productivity.[6]

II. DISCUSSION

Enterprise social media best practices

It is important for companies to have a social media strategy and establish social media goals. These help to build trust, educate their target audience and create brand awareness. They also enable real people to find and learn about a business.

Here are some social media social media best practices for companies to follow:

- Establish social media policies that set expectations for appropriate employee social behavior. These policies should also ensure social media posts do not expose the company to legal problems or public embarrassment. Guidelines should include directives for when an employee must identify them self as a company representative and rules for what type of information can be shared.[7]

- Focus on platforms geared to B2B marketing, such as Twitter and LinkedIn.

- Put in place an engaging, customer-centric strategy in social media campaigns. An example would be to use Twitter to field questions from customers.

- Include rich media, such as pictures and video, in content to make it more compelling and appealing to users.

- Use social media analytics tools to measure user engagement with content and to keep on top of trends.

- Use a conversational voice in posts that comes across as professional but not rigid.

- Shorten long form content to make it social friendly. Lists and audio and video snippets are examples.

- Embrace employees and customers talking positively about the organization and repost that content.

- Check in on analytics and management tools frequently, if not on a daily basis, as well as the social media accounts.[8]

Different types of social media

The four main categories of social platforms are these:

1. Social networks. People use these networks to connect with one another and share information, thoughts and ideas. The focus of these networks is usually on the user. User profiles help participants identify other users with common interests or concerns. Facebook and LinkedIn are good examples.

2. Media-sharing networks. These networks focus is on content. For example, on YouTube, interaction is around videos that users create. Other media-sharing networks are TikTok and Instagram. Streaming platforms like Twitch are considered a subset of this category.[9]

3. Community-based networks. The focus of this type of social network is in-depth discussion, much like a blog forum. Users leave prompts for discussion that spiral into detailed comment threads. Communities often form around select topics. Reddit is an example of a community-based network.

4. Review board networks. With these networks, the focus is on a review, usually of a product or service. For example, on Yelp, users can write reviews on restaurants and endorse each other's reviews to boost visibility.[10]

Examples of social media

Here are some examples of popular web-based social media platforms:

- Facebook is a free social networking website where registered users create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues.

- LinkedIn is a social networking site designed for the business community. Registered members can create networks of people they know and trust professionally.

- Pinterest is a social curation website for sharing and categorizing images found online. The main focus of Pinterest is visual, though it does call for brief descriptions of images. Clicking on an image will take a user to

the original source. For example, clicking on a picture of a pair of shoes might redirect a user to a purchasing site; an image of blueberry pancakes might redirect to the recipe.[11]

- Reddit is a social news website and forum where site members curate and promote stories. The site is composed of hundreds of sub-communities called subreddits. Each subreddit has a specific topic, such as technology, politics or music. Reddit site members, also known as "redditors," submit content that members vote on. The goal is to elevate well-regarded stories to the top of the site's main thread page.

- Twitter is a free microblogging service for registered members to broadcast short posts called tweets. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other active users' tweets using several platforms and devices.[12]

- Wikipedia is a free, open content encyclopedia created through a collaborative community. Anyone registered on Wikipedia can create an article for publication; registration is not required to edit articles.

The takeaway

Social media is everywhere. Individuals and businesses of all sizes and types use it. It's a critical resource for engaging with customers, getting customer feedback and expanding company visibility.An effective social strategy can enhance an organization's reputation and build trust and awareness among a growing network of connections. [13]

III. RESULTS

Social media allows you to do at least four important things:

- Discover new ideas and trends.
- Connect with existing and new audiences in deeper ways
- Bring attention and traffic to your work.
- Build, craft and enhance your brand.

The fact is that it's impossible to separate the personal use of social from the professional, and everything you say online can and will be used against you. There are ways in which you can try to safeguard your privacy and control who sees particular content, but the onus is on you to be vigilant. So, the more seriously you can take your social media activities, the better.[14]

Social media changes all the time, so it's important to keep up with the evolution of the platforms and to keep looking for ways to optimize your use of the available the tools. LinkedIn, with its 500 million members, is the quintessential professional network and one that's not used as optimally as it could be. When I teach classes on social media, I ask "Who's on LinkedIn?" and almost all the hands go up. But then I ask, "Who knows what they are doing on LinkedIn?" and most of the hands fall.

Most people just take it for granted and start using it in a panic when they have to change jobs. It's often too late at that point. You are better off learning to use it when you don't need it. LinkedIn works best when you use it as a career management tool and not just for job hunting.[15]

Expanding Your Network and Influence

LinkedIn offers a variety of ways to expand your network by finding and connecting with relevant professionals in your industry. The key is to find, approach and connect with folks you already know, folks you'd like to know and folks you should know. You should also post your own content, showing off your expertise on a regular basis.

You should give recommendations only to people whose work you are willing to vouch for. I've heard of employers who take recommendations on LinkedIn almost as seriously as ones received in more traditional ways. So if anything gives you pause, you should find a gentle way to turn down a request for a recommendation.[16]

Building and Expanding a Business

On LinkedIn, you can create a company page and build an online community around it, getting customers and potential customers to follow you.

Job Hunting

Finding jobs is the most important part of LinkedIn for individuals, and you can use the network to track specific companies, people and job openings. Spend time getting to know, in detail, the search features that let you drill down into networks of people, companies and job postings.

When you're looking for a new job, numbers matter, so take time to build your network. But be sure to do it in a smart way: Blasting invitations at complete strangers in the hopes of connecting with either them or people they are connected with is not a good strategy. Instead, look for legitimate connections you have with people — your alma mater, for example — and reach out with an invitation to connect that includes a personal note.[16]

Keep in Mind

LinkedIn's free account works well, but you may want to experiment with the premium version. It comes in many price points, starting at $29.99 a month. That's serious money, but if you're job hunting, it's worth paying for the features that include the ability to email people you don't know yet through the site, and connect in new ways with recruiters.

Twitter, with its 328 million users, has recently changed its most famous and infamous feature, the 140-character limit. By doubling the limit to 280 characters, it offers more room to express your thoughts and ideas. But keep in mind that brevity, along with strategic use of photos and videos, will continue to help you stand out; there's no need to use all 280 characters in every post. [17]

Twitter can be more conversational than other platforms, but be sure to understand the difference between your retweets, replies and your DMs (direct messages). Retweets (RTs) are ways for you to share, and optionally comment on, others' posts. Choosing "quote tweet" means you add a comment above someone's post; just hitting "retweet" means it gets sent to your followers without any commentary from you. You should quote tweet whenever you can, so people understand why you are sharing something.

Replies are a public way to respond to posts by others and carry on a conversation that others see, while direct messages are a way for you to connect privately with someone. In order to be able to DM someone, they have to follow you; or they have opted for the setting that allows anyone to DM them. Group DMs are an effective way to have more focused conversations among a larger group. Twitter allows you to have a private account ("protected" in their parlance) — but if you are using Twitter for business, having an open account makes more sense. [18]

Expanding Your Network and Influence

The instantaneous nature of Twitter means you are able to:

- Know in real-time about developments in your areas of interest.
- Share, comment and be part of a global conversation that extends beyond people you are friends with.

Building and Expanding a Business

Participating in popular hashtags when they are relevant to you works well. As does occasionally using hashtags around your products or services. The key: Keep hashtags simple, clear and unique, so that your hashtags aren't hijacked by some other brand with something similar. [19]

Job Hunting

When someone in your industry asks a question or requests assistance, you can participate and show how relevant and useful you can be. There are numerous instances of Twitter conversations turning into face-to-face meetings.

Keep in Mind

Following good grammar, spelling and punctuation rules will help you stand out and create a good impression. Also helpful: A clear bio that explains who you are, along with a recent, recognizable, headshot.

Facebook, with more than two billion users worldwide, is the most powerful and influential of the social networks. It is a great way to connect with family, friends and friends of friends. Facebook Live, which allows you to broadcast instantly around the world, can be a useful tool. In addition to journalists, businesses have been using Live to share behind-the-scenes content, do employee Q&As and other events. [20]

Settings include content that can be seen by everyone online or by just your friends, or by customized groups you create (coworkers, for instance, family or your high school teammates). Most people don't pay attention to these settings and are sometimes surprised by, say, who saw photos that weren't meant for their eyes.

Expanding Your Network and Influence

Facebook can be used to:

- Connect with influencers in your field.
- Share articles and other items that show the world your interests.
- Help shape what others think of you. [21]

Of course, just because you post something doesn't mean everyone will see it. Facebook's algorithm determines what content is shown to particular folks and depends on your own settings, plus an evolving array of factors. These can include how relevant the content is to your audience, predictions on whether people will comment or share it and judging it against the other content that is available to show at a particular time.

Building and Expanding a Business

In addition to a personal profile, creating a business page lets you connect with people who want to know more about your work. You can share updates, progress reports and ideas with a wide range of folks who may not visit your website on a regular basis.

For a business to succeed on Facebook, it's about connecting with a community that engages with your content. Just like in the offline world, if your product, service or idea is something people like and want to connect with, they will want to do the same on Facebook[22]

Job Hunting

Use Facebook to follow companies you are interested in and to get ideas about openings and opportunities. Put your personal network to work to help you identify client or employee leads. Your friends and family can be helpful if they know what you are looking for.

Keep in Mind

It allows someone that you designate to handle your account when you pass away, without giving them access to your account while you are still alive.

Instagram, built around photos, videos and captions, has grown to 800 million users and is increasingly part of the business world. If you and your work are visually driven, Instagram should be part of your business toolkit. [23]

Expanding Your Network and Influence

Instagram's obsessive audience loves great visuals, and you can use your content to build an audience here.

Patience and experimentation is key as you find the right formula that works for you. For example, spend time looking through popular hashtags to see if your post is a fit; so that more people can discover you. Same thing goes for tagging other relevant accounts with an @ sign.

Building and Expanding a Business

These stories last for 24 hours, which means time frame should be something you have to factor into your decision to make them. Most of the time, you are better off creating visuals and graphics you can use on multiple platforms that will also have a longer shelf life.

Job Hunting

As with many other platforms, job hunting on Instagram is about listening and interacting with relevant companies and individuals. You can use Instagram to learn about particular companies and their culture, as well as find out what's influencing decision-makers in different fields.

Keep in Mind

A lot of what you see on Instagram is heavily produced with professional help, and your ability to replicate their scale and success is unlikely if you are working on your own.

Once the hottest of the networks — thanks to its 250 million users and a big I.P.O. in March 2017 — Snapchat has cooled off lately as Instagram has emulated some of its biggest ideas and a major redesign was announced. [24]

Depending on your industry and who you're trying to reach (especially millennials and younger), Snapchat may make sense for you. Otherwise, you may want to wait and see how the "Insta vs Snap" war shakes out.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Users usually access social media services through web-based apps on desktops or download services that offer social media functionality to their mobile devices (e.g., smartphones and tablets). As users engage with these electronic services, they create highly interactive platforms in which individuals, communities, and organizations

can share, co-create, discuss, participate, and modify user-generated or self-curated content posted online. Additionally, social media are used to document memories, learn about and explore things, advertise oneself, and form friendships along with the growth of ideas from the creation of blogs, podcasts, videos, and gaming sites. This changing relationship between humans and technology is the focus of the emerging field of technological self-studies.[10] Some of the most popular social media websites, with more than 100 million registered users, include Facebook (and its associated Messenger), TikTok, WeChat, ShareChat, Instagram, QZone, Weibo, Twitter, Tumblr, Baidu Tieba, and LinkedIn. Depending on interpretation, other popular platforms that are sometimes referred to as social media services
include YouTube, QQ, Quora, Telegram, WhatsApp, Signal, LINE, Snapchat, Pinterest, Viber, Reddit, Discord, VK, M icrosoft Teams, and more. Wikis are examples of collaborative content creation.[24]

Social media outlets differ from traditional media (e.g., print magazines and newspapers, TV, and radio broadcasting) in many ways, including quality,reach, frequency, usability, relevancy, and permanence. Additionally, social media outlets operate in a dialogic transmission system (i.e., many sources to many receivers) while traditional media outlets operate under a monologic transmission model (i.e., one source to many receivers). For instance, a newspaper is delivered to many subscribers, and a radio station broadcasts the same programs to an entire city.

Since the dramatic expansion of the Internet, digital media or digital rhetoric can be used to represent or identify a culture. Studying the rhetoric that exists in the digital environment has become a crucial new process for many scholars.

Observers have noted a wide range of positive and negative impacts when it comes to the use of social media. Social media can help to improve an individual's sense of connectedness with real or online communities and can be an effective communication (or marketing) tool for corporations, entrepreneurs, non-profit organizations, advocacy groups, political parties, and governments. Observers have also seen that there has been a rise in social movements using social media as a tool for communicating and organizing in times of political unrest.[25]

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