

Using social media to sharpen marketing activities



By [Anton Vukic](#)

4 Jul 2013

Events, incentives and online advertising are the three most popular forms of co-marketing activities employed by partners today. However, the contemporary marketing mix is expanding, with the adoption of emerging technologies (ie social media, webinars, video, online events).

Innovative vendors and distributors are incentivising partners to blog, tweet, produce video and participate in communities.

Social media has become a game changing, anytime/anywhere phenomenon, available on computers and on a full range of mobile devices. Being 'social' now includes the user in real-time marketing, real-time customer service and real-time user analytics - all of which can produce essential information for businesses trying to better understand their customers' actual behaviour, likes and dislikes.

This is why social media is increasingly important for marketing and not only consumer-focused business. Even enterprise businesses are turning to social media as an essential part of their marketing outlook and strategy. The traditional model of blasting messages to customers and potential customers is fading, and a new model is emerging.

The same customers who are tuning out the old, formulaic advertiser messages they have been subjected to for years are tuning in to their own personal world of social media for product and marketing advice.

Emerging nations commit to emerging technologies

This is especially true in Africa and the Middle East, where reaching prospective customers has traditionally been more challenging. The reach of social media in these regions was proven by the Arab Spring movement, which was mainly organised via Twitter and other social media channels.

Not only does social media provide access to these traditionally closed markets, content can be customised to include messaging that is unique for each country.

In addition, marketers can also leverage the primary communication channel of mobile in many African countries. According to Nielsen, the time spent on mobile apps and mobile web accounts for 63% of the year-over-year growth in overall time spent using social media. Mobile can enable better content consumption across all marketing channels and markets.

Leads' interactions with one's company in social media have as much to do with their purchasing decision as their

behaviour on one's website or their interactions with one's e-mails. Therefore, whether it is by tagging each social share with a tracking code or through more advanced integrated software, more and more companies are finding ways to pull data from social media and use it effectively.

Engagement moves over for tracking metrics

In the beginning, 'engagement' was all the rage. Other channels could not quite attain the level of engagement social media could and, in the absence of any other metrics, engagement became the primary way marketers evaluated their success on social. Today, things are very different.

Technology has caught up with marketers' need for a sharper way to gauge ROI, and many companies are beginning to evolve from measuring more superficial social media metrics like clicks, retweets and Likes to tracking metrics that are tied more closely to a company's bottom line.

Many have been able to refocus their strategy on leads generated through social media. In addition, by mining conversations across multiple social channels, sentiment analysis can help create strategies and engage new customers, while revealing insight into a company's products.

Gartner predicts that by 2014, organisations that refuse to communicate with customers using social media will face the same level of wrath from customers as those that choose to ignore responding to e-mails today. The research firm also believes that responding to inquiries via social media channels will be the new minimum level of response expected by customers.

Social media has always enjoyed firm footing as a marketing and communications tool. However, more and more, sales teams are finding ways to incorporate it into their sales processes; and those that do are seeing some impressive results.

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