Strategic Thinking on Social Media Marketing in the Internet Era

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Abstract. The rise of social media in the Internet Era has subverted the way people communicate and live and created new opportunities and challenges for enterprise marketing. By elaborating the concept of social media and social media marketing, this paper analyzes the advantages of social media marketing over traditional marketing as well as misunderstandings to this regard, and puts forwards relevant countermeasures on how to use social media to carry out marketing in the network era for reference.

Introduction

In today's world, the Internet has been integrated into all aspects of human production and life. With the development of Internet and mobile technology, social media emerges as the times require, and becomes an important means of information communication. More and more people begin to use social media, and spend more time on social media. As a new way of interpersonal communication, people can use various social media to transmit more reliable information, freely express their views, and communicate ideas and culture. The rapid rise of social media has greatly changed people's way of life, and become an integral part of modern life. Many companies see the business opportunities, and begin to use social media to carry out marketing activities. Social media marketing has become a new direction of the development of enterprise marketing.

Social Media and Social Media Marketing in the Internet Era

Social Media refers to a series of network applications based on the technology and ideology of Web2.0, allowing users to create and communicate their own content (i.e. UGC)[1]. It is a tool and a platform for people to share their opinions, experiences and ideas with each other, including social networking sites, micro-blog, WeChat, blogs, forums, podcasts, and so on. At present, major domestic social media in China include Tencent QQ, micro-blog, WeChat, sina QQ, renren.com, knowing, watercress, Youku and potatoes etc. and major foreign ones include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram etc.

With the rapid development of social media, social media marketing is rising. Social media marketing is a way of using social networking, online communities, blogs, Wiki or other Internet collaboration platform and media for marketing, public relations and customer service maintenance and development. General social media marketing tools such as forums, micro-blog, WeChat, blogs, SNS communities, pictures and videos use the self media platform or organizational media platform for information dissemination. In recent years, the number of Internet users in China continues to rise. According to the fortieth Statistics Report on Chinese Internet Development issued by China Internet Information Center (CNNIC), as of June 2017, there were nearly 751 million Internet users in China, and the Internet penetration rate was 54.3%[2]. In the Internet era, the rise of social media has accelerated the formation of social networks and the sharing and rapid transmission of information, affecting people's behaviors and decision-making process. Damon Centola’s experimental research on Internet confirms this[3]. The use of social media and the interactive communication help enterprises understand the real needs of potential customers, stimulate the active customer feedback and sharing of information, and more effectively promote their products and brands and avoid risks, so as to maximize their corporate value.
Advantages and Misunderstandings of Social Media Marketing

Advantages

Social media marketing has become an important part of enterprise marketing strategy because of the great promoting effect of social media in enterprise marketing. As a new marketing mode, social media marketing has obvious advantages over traditional marketing:

**Fast Propagation.** With the help of social media, enterprises can publish relevant product and service information on micro-blog, WeChat, blog, SNS community and other social media networks with a large number of registered users, and greatly increase the exposure of enterprise products and services information on the social network by using fan effect and social effects on social media networks. In addition, facilitating the rapid spreading of enterprise-related information through the comments and discussions on and the sharing and repost of information of the enterprises and their products makes the dissemination more humane and creditable, increases the spreading speed and widens the coverage.

**Strong Interactivity.** In the past, enterprises usually launched products and brand information in traditional media for marketing and no matter what kind of media (such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television) they used to publish information, basically it was a single and forcible way to disseminate information, regardless of whether the audience liked it or not, they could only passively accept. Therefore, in the traditional media advertising, almost no user communication and feedback were involved. The interactivity and selectivity of social media enable consumers to choose and pay attention to the content information they are interested in, and also provide a platform for extensive communication between enterprises and potential customers. Through this platform, enterprises can initiate real-time interaction with potential users, and stimulate their interest in enterprise products and services. The strong interactive function of social media is conducive to the establishment and dissemination of products and brand image.

**Low Marketing Cost.** The openness of social media networks makes it possible for any individual and enterprise to register on and use social media platforms. Most social media can be free to join, and participants release and share information and make comments and feedbacks on an open platform. Because social media has a large number of users and huge market value, enterprises can carry out low-cost promotion through social media. Enterprises can also obtain a large volume of real consumer data through a variety of social media platforms, carry out market research and analysis at low cost and conduct marketing activities effectively. Therefore, compared with the traditional media, social media marketing, as a new way of network marketing, has a relatively low marketing cost, which no enterprise should ignore.

Misunderstandings

The rise of social media has brought about tremendous changes in people's lives. Many enterprises think they should make full use of the advantages of social networking platforms for marketing and rush to invest in it. While some enterprises have witnessed a very good marketing effect, more and more enterprises have failed to live up to their expectation. The reason behind this is that there are some big misunderstandings among them.

**Over Optimism.** Social media is a new thing emerged in recent years. The media often report the successful cases of individual enterprises using social media to create marketing miracles, which attract a lot of attention and widespread concern. Due to the powerful interactivity, strong adhesion and high-speed transmission, some enterprises wrongfully thought that social media has a huge user base, and as long as they can join them and spend time on it, they will certainly achieve good marketing results. Therefore, many enterprises open accounts on social networking sites (such as Corporate official WeChat or micro-blog) in haste, and choose to either assign designated personnel to maintain the accounts or hire a professional to carry out systematic marketing planning and promotion. However, most of the time, the results are not satisfactory. After all, social media is just a tool for users to communicate, and social media marketing doesn't just succeed at one go.

**Blind placement.** In order to reach more potential consumers, many enterprises will choose to register an account in some of the most popular social network media, stay and take root there, and
expect to attract as many fans and users as possible. However, this wide-range net casting makes it difficult for enterprises to have enough energy to take care of the daily maintenance of every social media account. Therefore, although there are many social media companies, it is difficult to make strong impression, and naturally it will be impossible to attract a large number of fans and potential users. Instead of making blind movement, it's better to understand your target audience first, choose a suitable social networking platform to communicate with them and wait until you have developed a certain brand awareness and influence before expanding to other social media.

**Lack of updates.** Many enterprises have become aware of the importance of social media, and have opened accounts in many social networking platforms, but they failed to manage it with care. One of the most common mistakes is that they do not update and post frequently enough. Imaging an enterprise updates texts or pictures on a social media platform for once a month, how can it arouse the interest and attention of fans? Social network media is a platform which enhances interpersonal relationship mainly through interactive participation and communication, and it needs to constant participation and interaction. How much time do you spend on each social media every day? Enterprises need to spend a certain amount of time updating contents every day, and make timely response. Even if the number is limited, it is still a good way to show the visitors that the enterprise is actively participate and it takes the social media seriously.

**Self-centered attitude.** Enterprises release information regarding their products and services through social networking media, which is understandable, but if almost all of your posts are full of advertising information, trying to sell products to your fans, it is bound to generate some resentment and repulsion. After all, social media is primarily a platform for people to connect with people, not a counter that sells your products. Excessive marketing is just counterproductive, which makes the audiences think that you just want them to buy your product, and you do not really care about their opinions and needs. The enterprise cannot talk blindly, it needs to listen to its audience, understand their real needs, create interesting topics for the audiences, attract fans’ attention and participation, display your unique personality to better blend in with your fans.

**Suggestions for Social Media Marketing**

**Define the Target Audience and Choose the Social Media Correctly**

For businesses, when they make social media marketing strategies, they have to consider where their target audience is and what social media can help them achieve their goals. First, make sure you want to get close to the consumer population, and then choose the right social network to communicate with them. Different social media have their own unique features and user groups. For example, FMCG has a large population base and the ability to effectively communicate with the target audience on micro-blog and SNS platforms. Micro-blog has strong interactivity, and it is suitable for the products and brands of consumer products [4]. Abroad, the top three most widely used social media are Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Some social media play an important role in the process of user's purchase decision, but their importance is often ignored by enterprises. AOL and its Affiliated Companies, Convertro, studied and analyzed 500 million hits, 15 million conversations and 3 billion impressions made on social media platforms in the first half of 2014 and they found that YouTube, compared with other social media, has a incomparable advantage in the introduction of new products and the opening of dialogues. Although Facebook and Google+ ranked second and third respectively, they were still doing better than Twitter and Instagram. Therefore, enterprises should learn the characteristics of different social media and select the right one according to their target customers and their own needs.

**Arouse the Attention and Interest Through Content Innovation**

In the era of big information explosion, facing the overwhelming majority of the social media and homogenization of enterprise marketing propaganda, the audiences inevitably have aesthetic fatigue. The plagiarism, imitation and lack of innovation and inventive content information make it difficult to attract attention or arouse people's attention and interest. The success of the information
dissemination depends on the quality of the contents. Many enterprises use social media only for content dissemination, and fail to form a true resonance and interaction with the audience. How to stand out? The key is to create innovative contents. In order to create compelling contents, the enterprises should understand the target audience’s preferences, follow hot social topics, and make original, high-quality, novel and interesting contents to attract people’s attention, interest and fondness. Enterprises can also use specific words or topics in social media to attract audiences to participate in the discussion on purpose, which leads to discussion heat. These attracted audiences tend to publish feelings and forward and share posts on the social media. In this way, the word-of-mouth communication is realized and the marketing effect expanded.

Focus on Interactive Communication and Create Good Experience

The most valuable social media is interactive. Positive interaction can help enterprises to establish brand image, enhance brand value. Enterprises should design and carry out marketing activities according to the needs of the audience, create contents which can attract audience's interest, and interact with the audience in their preferred way and share useful information. Through chat, video, games, awards (such as WeChat red packets), free experience and other interactions, enterprises can spread relevant information of their products and brands, arouse the attention and interest of the audience, actively participate in interactive sharing, enhance brand identity, and improve customer loyalty with the help of social media. However, due to the limitations of form and technology, enterprises want to achieve good marketing results, can not only rely on online content dissemination, good user experience is essential. Because only the customer's good experience of product and brand and the public praise and the spontaneous spread of these word of mouth, can really continue to promote product sales. In order to do this, enterprises can take the O2O mode, carry out online interactive communication and offline experience optimization, integrate online and offline activities and perform integrated marketing communication to enhance brand image.

Use Data Mining to Realize Precision Marketing

The biggest value of social media lies in its rich, authentic, and user generated massive data. But if these data can not be used, there is no value. In the era of big data, the data is of great value thanks to the integration of data fragments. Different data sources can be linked to create data sets based on their unique codes, enabling more data mining and analysis. Through interaction with social media users and various discussions on the network platform, enterprises can understand the different users' interests, preferences, evaluation of products, and even consumption concepts and habits closely related to consumption. The analysis of these data helps the enterprise to find the target customers, understand each actual and potential customer as accurately as possible, conduct regular data analysis and monitoring, and establish a more comprehensive marketing information database. Based on different user needs and preferences, precisely push different information, carry out personalized marketing activities, and apply the data to marketing strategy, brand communication and product development, and improve the precision of marketing so as to achieve precision marketing.

Conclusions

To sum up, the rapid development of information technology has spawned social media. The emergence and prosperity of social media not only changes people's way of life, but also promotes the effective communication between enterprises and users. Social media marketing has become the trend of the times. In the Internet era, enterprises only make full use of social media and integrate into the wave of social media, with the advantage of social media to carry out marketing activities, and avoid weaknesses, in order to win the survival and development in the fierce competition in the market.
References


