

**Social Media Marketing (SMM) is a form of internet marketing that involves creating and sharing content on social media networks in order to achieve marketing and branding goals. What are the most effective strategies for a business willing to use social media as an advertising platform?**

Social media is based upon premiant technologies that extant technologies are derived from. Social media comes in various forms and platforms for different media to accomplish tasks involving the collaboration of content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Roma & Aloini, 2019; Yadav & Rahman, 2018). Knowing this, to be successful in contemporary marketing, firms must align their practices to social media and marketing objectives (Keegan & Rowley, 2017; Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018; Wang & Kim, 2017). To facilitate the alignment of objectives business must be able to analyse its existing demographic with their preferable platform (Keegan & Rowley, 2017; Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018; Yadav & Rahman, 2018). Moreover, in contemporary technologies firms must be able to interact with consumers which can be daunting and lead to uncertainty (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). There are extant strategies that work, but as social media marketing is still being researched and under constant change, individual businesses must decide what is best for consumers. These strategies relate to the general aspects of planning, development and evaluation of a business adopting and using social media.

Social media platforms are differentiated in their function to fulfil a purpose, for instance blogs are utilised for time/date stamped entries (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Roma & Aloini, 2019). Social networking such as Facebook is for connecting to other users, content communities like YouTube is for media sharing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Roma & Aloini, 2019; Yadav & Rahman, 2018; Beig & Khan 2018). Collaborative projects like Wikipediae and virtual worlds including second life, are other forms of social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Roma & Aloini, 2019; Beig & Khan 2018). As firms have objectives, consumers also have objectives in which the platforms chosen must satisfy requirements (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Fraidaki & Pramatarı & Doukidis, 2014; Roma & Aloini, 2019). The firm must keep this in mind when selecting a platform as each serves a unique purpose for the targeted audience and not just for advertising (Yadav & Rahman, 2018). Marketing activities such as posting varying media or encouraging sales growth will govern the decision basis of the underlying message structure for information dissemination and the chosen platform (Chang & Lu & Yu, 2014;

Felix & Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2017; Yadav & Rahman, 2018). Inherently this will align with the targeted demographic, firm marketing objectives and customer expectations.

Dependency on social media as a traditional marketing tool is unsustainable as social media is not just a marketing tool and is tailored to extant marketing strategies (Keegan & Rowley, 2017; Wang & Kim, 2017). Social media is uncontrollable, public and facilitates User Generated content (UGC), despite this some firms prosper while others fail (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This may be in part due to the structure of the firm and the way firms interact with consumers or fail to understand the implications of using social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). A firm must realise that traditional marketing methods in social media will not work effectively compared to an open and engaging experience (Parsons, Lepkowska-White, 2018; Wang & Kim, 2017; Vinerean 2017; Beig & Khan 2018). Because of this social media is considered as a multi-directional communication tool because of UGC, firms must be pro-active (Keegan & Rowley, 2017; Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018; Chang & Lu & Yu, 2014; Roma & Aloini, 2019; Felix & Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2017). As consumers use social media for varying situations, a majority will involve a firm in one way or another (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Yadav & Rahman, 2018). Consumers participate in a firms marketing strategy because of the need to find or contribute to information on a firm and the products or services they offer (Fraidaki & Pramataris & Doukidis, 2014; Yadav & Rahman, 2018; Wang & Kim, 2017; Vinerean 2017). With or without a firm, information relating to it or about it will continue regardless of its involvement.

Consumers use content communities, social networking and collaborative projects to find information on a firm that can be posted to the public (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Keegan & Rowley, 2017).

Therefore, it is critical to engage with consumers in a multichannel format to increase the potential for UGC, but appropriately respond to consumers as to not just defend itself from negative UGC (Keegan & Rowley, 2017; Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018; Chang & Lu & Yu, 2014; Roma & Aloini, 2019; Felix & Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2017). Consumers can be hesitant towards advertisements, instead UGC is a more effective marketing method in promoting a firm and brand as consumers are more likely to search for user-based reviews on preferences than cooperate generated content (Roma & Aloini, 2019; Chang & Lu & Yu, 2014). UGC is advantageous in the social media landscape as by definition, UGC is definitively inverse of cooperate generated content and is a method for consumers

to collaborate with a firm and each other (Wang & Kim, 2017; Vinerean 2017). UGC is content generated by consumers concerning a firm's social media activities and brand (Keegan & Rowley, 2017; Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018; Chang & Lu & Yu, 2014; Roma & Aloini, 2019; Felix & Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2017; Vinerean 2017). Not only can UGC influence purchasing decisions, it reflects a firm's image (Roma & Aloini, 2019; Vinerean 2017). Consumer interaction has increased exponentially irrespective of geographical location through mobile technology and as a direct result UGC has become prominent in marketing.

While firms may still advertise it has proven effective to have an interactive and engaging relationship with consumers as they can actively contribute to the success of the firm through UGC. Consumers are appreciative of clarification regarding the firm and social media activities and are likely to favourably respond to personalised content over content projection (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018). Consumers are receptive to firm activities to build an interactive relationship with a firm and can contribute to its success through collaboration (Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018). As a result, consumers have the potential to ambassador the brand and create value through UGC because social media and marketing is relationship based (Roma & Aloini, 2019; Vinerean 2017; Beig & Khan 2018). Therefore, it is not only in a firm's best interest but consumers to build strong relationships through social media (Wang & Kim, 2017; Vinerean 2017). Individuals and firms share information on numerous social media platforms, but content is effectively context specific to the application and objectives (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Platforms are better suited to content more than others that are used by the target demographic and a firm must select the correct one (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This outlines the fact that social media is public and indicates the importance of structure and governance required to appropriately communicate with consumers through the medium to build strong relationships thereby avoiding negative consequences.

Information dissemination is crucial in brand exposure, company image and objectives and a corresponding platform is chosen with the target audience. The need for social media operational governance is imperative, Felix, Rauschnabel and Hinsch (2017) propose a framework to structure a firm's social media activities and underpinning issues. The platform chosen and the company structure, predisposes the firm's governance of social media (Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018; Felix & Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2017). Furthermore, this determines how a firm operates in the social

media space. Firms generally fall into two categories, defenders who are inclined to mass advertise which is more reflective of traditional marketing (Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018; Felix & Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2017). Insubstantial communication results, which impairs the potential for social media and is a consequence of the defender approach. The other category is the explorer, which is aligned to a modern methodology in marketing that perceives advantages to consumer engagement and collaboration (Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018; Felix & Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2017). As defenders have a more conservative approach, explorers are more open to risks and have a more modern alignment. Another aspect of social media governance is the way firms will operate in the marketing space and can be classified into two groups. Modernism and conservatism which are related to the culture of the firm and approach to social media (Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018; Felix & Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2017). Conservative firms are less likely to take risks and may use defender tactics to advertise to consumers (Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018; Felix & Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2017). In contrast modernism is more receptive to risks and promote a more engaging marketing strategy which is open to consumer opinion and control (Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018; Felix & Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2017). Furthermore, the culture of the firm predetermines the structure of the firm as a network or hierarchical typology with the associated risks. A firm adopting social media, will also structure the responsibilities and control to either certain groups or to the entire company. Hierarchical structure is a social media practice where only particular groups are entitled to operate (Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018; Felix & Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2017). Conversely, networks are a free-form structure that allows the shared responsibility in the firm (Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018; Felix & Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2017). This has an implication to the policies of social media as each user must be trained in its use. This leads to the policies and rules of operating in social media that must be adhered to when autocratic governance is applied. In contrast, anarchy is where there are no rules and employees are free to express themselves which may not be ideal (Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018; Felix & Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2017). Analysing consumer responses from firm activities through regular reviewing, gives insight whether the firm is interacting appropriately.

Reviewing social media activities is imperative as it indicates whether the firm is meeting consumer expectations from interaction to its services. Consumers look for information about products, services and the overall company through reviews from UGC (Yadav & Rahman, 2018). To make effective decisions firms must constantly review its operations for improvement through its consumers and the social media landscape (Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018). Social media governance determines a firm's response to consumer feedback including how it will respond (Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018). Moreover, firms must strive to build relationships with consumers as they can contribute to a business through valuable feedback (Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018; Wang & Kim, 2017). For the contributions to be effective, the firm must act on the feedback when necessary and must constantly evaluate its social media activities in-light of new information. Evaluating social media and its role within a business is imperative in order to gauge tangible evidence that a firm is satisfying customer expectations (Keegan & Rowley, 2017). Return of investment (ROI) and Key performance indicators (KPI) are the leading social media-based metrics to indicate the value of a firm although it is difficult to integrate (Keegan & Rowley, 2017; Nelson-Field & Klose 2010). A firm must then act on the information generated from statistical analysis from commonly used tools to measure social media activity and consumer satisfaction with the brand and firm (Keegan & Rowley, 2017; Wang & Kim, 2017).

The most effective strategies and tactics a business must employ in social media to use for advertising are in planning, development and evaluation processes. These are interchangeable as they relate in a continual improvement implementation. As businesses shift their marketing strategies towards social media, selecting a platform aligned to the industry, structure and culture of the firm is critical. A firm must consider the demographical groups of their industry and the message to be conveyed (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Vinerean 2017). Effectively, messages will elicit unique behaviours based on the demographic (Chang & Lu & Yu, 2014). The associated demographics use specific platforms to fulfil a purpose, which is to share and consume information (Yadav & Rahman, 2018; Fraidaki & Pramataris & Doukidis, 2014; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Firms creating a brand image by inciting consumer engagement must analyse their messages and correlate between the demographic, objectives and the social media platform to meet consumer expectations (Parsons, Lepkowska-White, 2018; Vinerean 2017). Regular review of consumer reviews and adhering to the firm's objectives and structure will ensure its success.

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