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Social Media Strategy

## **Executive Summary**

This social media strategy proposal examines Tesla's current social media strategy performance and identifies two potential areas that requires further improvements: social media contents and online customer service. Based on that, three specific social media strategies are proposed for better social media presence. First, promote organic engagements with social media campaigns. Second, adjust frequency and timing of online posting. Third, implement chatbots for online customer service. Several limitations and potential risks are also introduced in the evaluation part of this social media strategy proposal.

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## **Background**

As one of the pioneers in the electronic auto industry, Tesla, found in 2003, with its mission to build a sustainable energy ecosystem, has become a first choice when people consider auto purchasing. So far, Tesla has captured a certain group of customers according to its current marketing strategies. Meanwhile, the implementation of social media strategies also made Tesla outperformed among many auto brands and is famous for its highly organic content. To make more progress, this report will first analyse its social media background and then propose some recommendations.

### **1. Social Media Audit**

#### **1.1 Client background**

There are three main and meaningful social media strategies of Tesla. The first one is the referral program which applies word of mouth marketing. This strategy allows that new customers can place orders on the official Tesla website through the exclusive referral link of existing customers. Each time a friend purchases a new Tesla using existing customer referral code, they will both get 1,000 miles of free Supercharging. And each referral also gives existing customers a chance to win a Founder's Series Model Y monthly and a Founder's series Roadster supercar quarterly (Tesla 2020).

Compared with the traditional corporate model, Tesla returned the money and rewards that should have been spent on marketing to their users. This process is authentic and transparent. Using current customers' personal networks and social relationships, such as their family and friends to tap potential customers. It has a high ROI and a very low cost, which also allows Tesla to put tight cash flow into the most critical production part (Steve 2019).

The second one is the forum section on Tesla's official website (Tesla 2020). This forum provides a platform for people who are interested in electric cars and want to learn more about them to share and learn. In addition to introducing each other's views, some controversial issues can also be discussed here.

By using this way, users communicate with each other on the forum and gain more knowledge and recognition of the brand. And they will be willing to promote Tesla due to the increase of recognition and stickiness. Furthermore, inside staff can obtain some important and meaningful insights by collecting and analysing the discussions of users.

The third one is influencer marketing. Elon Musk who is the co-founder and CEO of Tesla owns 37.2 million followers on Twitter and he builds his own personal brand to promote his companies (Twitter 2020). Musk also leverages his other companies to grow Tesla's social presence. For example, as another company led by Musk, SpaceX launched a Tesla Roadster into space. One more worth-mentioned characteristic is that he utilizes memes and cultural humour to build authentic relationships and close interaction with customers and Twitter users.

According to the data collected from BrandTotal, one of the outstanding strategies that Tesla has implemented is no paid on social media advertising (Chart 1). While under this circumstance, Tesla's social platform performed relatively high engagement numbers compared to other automobile brands (Leibovich 2019). Respecting the out performance of Tesla, the strong organic content and reach might help Tesla save the money from advertisement spending for promoting its referral programs or other marketing strategies.

Auto Brands Paid Media Mix				
	Facebook	YouTube	Instagram	Twitter
Toyota	<b>62%</b>	18%	18%	2%
BMW	46%	2%	32%	<b>20%</b>
Honda	38%	33%	27%	2%
Audi	32%	<b>54%</b>	13%	1%
Ford	55%	39%	6%	<1%
Infiniti	52%	7%	<b>40%</b>	<1%
Cadillac	34%	40%	18%	8%
Porsche	14%	47%	39%	<1%
Tesla (*No paid advertising)	0%	0%	0%	0%

[30 day analysis, 3.26.19 - 4.26.19, Source: BrandTotal]

## Chart 1 Auto Brands Paid Media Mix

In addition, Tesla prefers to use opening questions related to their products to improve the customer engagement on Twitter. For example, the tweet in the Chart 2 received 41.1k likes and 10.7 comments. This is one of the most straightforward performance indicators. Moreover, over the past six months, the followers of Tesla official Twitter account present a steady increasing trend (Chart 3). According to statistics analytics supported by SPEAKRJ, while the followers of its Instagram account has also been growing during the past month (Chart 4) and the average likes and comments are impressive, the engagement ratio is only 3.29%, which is at a lower level (Chart 5).



Chart 2 A tweet of Tesla

Tesla Twitter Followers

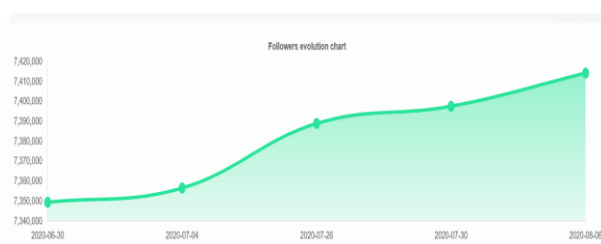
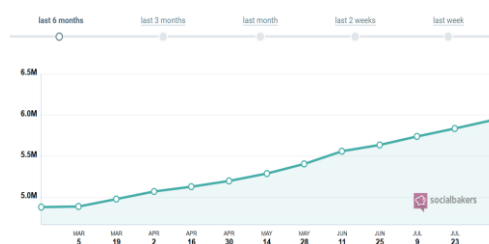


Chart 3 Tesla Twitter followers' trend      Chart 4 Tesla Instagram followers' trend

Engagement ?

3.23%

Average Likes ❤️

235,573

Average Comments 💬

3,579

Chart 5 The engagement rate of Tesla's Instagram. (engagement rate: the average of number of active likes / comments on each post)

In short, Tesla's Instagram performance has room for improvement. Tesla has 646 uploads as compared to 14,412 uploads by Mercedes Benz. The difference has led to Mercedes obtaining a higher follower gained rate. It can be said to improve organic marketing capacity of Tesla, more frequent content needs to be uploaded to increase followers gained and the customer engagements.

## 1.2 Audience analysis

**Demographics.** This part looks at the audience base of Tesla, especially from its social media audience. As a now global electric car company, Tesla has more than 5.8 million followers on Twitter and around 1.4 million followers on YouTube, which outperforms many other car companies even some Hollywood celebrities. By surveying 5000 Tesla owners, Bloomberg research reveals that almost 95% of all Tesla owners are males aged from 30 to 50 with an income above the average level and they are mostly in the tech sector (Randall et al. 2019). Another market research report also finds that most of the Tesla car owners live in urban area and can have long hours spent during their daily commutes to work (Tiwari 2019). So, demographically, it can be said that a typical Tesla audience is a middle-aged male with an above-average income who is a technician or at least a tech fan and would spend long time on his way to work.

**Psychographics.** Tesla has a mission to accelerate the world's transition to sustainable energy and is keen to present their new progress in energy efficiency with the public. For example, Tesla official website puts their recent 2019 Impact Report at the top of the rest of the covers. So, it is not hard to find that their audience can have high interests in environment related topics. For example, a report from Young finds that Tesla owners show significantly high interests in the environment and ecology (2016). Besides, a market research report reveals that Tesla audience want a high-class vehicle to make

their journey enjoyable and to provides safety and enough room for their families (Tiwari 2019).

***Social media use and habits.*** A general approach to examining Tesla’s social media audience is to look at the broad social media users. So, according to a 2019 research report from Mark Raymond, about 98.55% of social media users use at least 4 social media platforms daily and they spend much of their time on platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram, which suggests that Tesla’s social media audience can engage with the company from different social medias, especially through these three. This report also reveals that 74.38% of users like to interact with others through liking, sharing, commenting, chatting, or subscribing (Raymond 2019). More specifically for Tesla audience, they like to share their experience with their Tesla cars through social medias, which is encouraged by Tesla. For example, they post a stream of Tesla car travel around the world through different social media platforms.

### **The Tesla Factor**

A sense of mission unifies owners

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

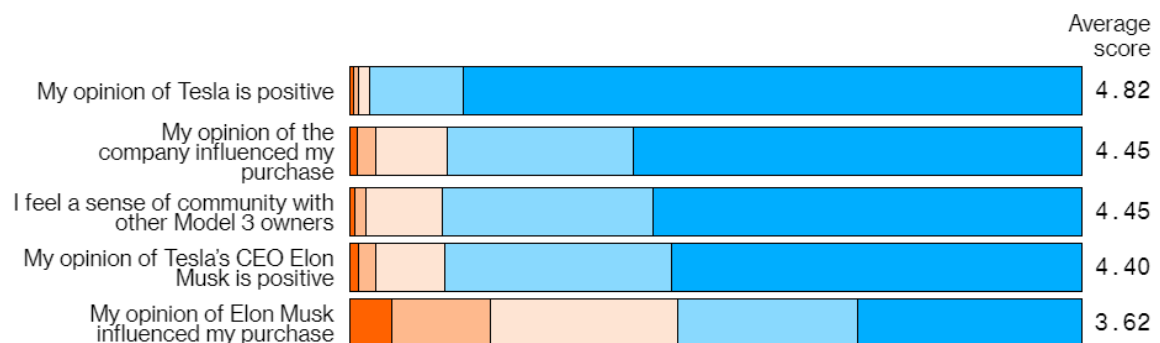


Chart 6 The Tesla Factor (Randall et al. 2019)

***Current relationship with Tesla.*** As the figure shows, almost every Tesla car owner surveyed by the Bloomberg research has a positive attitude towards the company. And accordingly, most of the car owners agree that their opinion of the company influenced their purchase, which indicates the importance of maintaining a good relationship between the company and their consumers.



Another interesting finding is that about half of respondents said that their opinion of Elon Musk influenced their purchase decisions, which suggests that the social media presence of Elon Musk can greatly affect the company sales performance.

***Expectations and motivational factors.*** The most unique motivator that drives audience to engage with the company through social media is that Tesla is eager to hear complaints and can improve itself through complaints. For example, Elon Musk once responded to a Tesla customer's tweet within 30 minutes and finally added a new feature to Tesla vehicles via a software release (Ian 2019). Audience's expectations with Tesla can be drawn from the past mistakes Tesla has made. For example, Elon Musk once claimed that Tesla's stock price has been overvalued, which led to a great loss of many investors. So, no matter the social media presence of the company of Elon Musk himself should be responsible for their social media contents, which can be related to the benefits of many stakeholders.

### 1.3 Best practices

Mercedes's best practice is to utilize a mixture of user generated content and market generated content on social media. The Mercedes-Benz approach on Twitter and Instagram is to ensure brand image is relevant and resonates with the younger audience who are savvy with social savvy. The purpose is to branch out to a new target audience who are trendy but also reinforces the prestige with a heritage brand as Mercedes-Benz.

Mercedes Benz use brand hashtags to generate organic user-generated content. Organic user-generated content (UGC) refers to content that are created and shared by fans and followers to show genuine and honest recommendations (Goh, K.Y. et al. 2013). The effectiveness of UGC is supported by Goh et al. (2013) which stated such content has informative and persuasive role through embedded information i.e. word of mouth. It was also found that community engagement on social media improves direct sales. An example of UGC twitter and Instagram campaign involves Mercedes Benz #MBPhotoPass and #mbfanphoto which was targeted at a younger and social media savvy audience to post photos of their vehicles. The community fans

and followers took to Twitter to create and post visually pleasing snapshot of Mercedes-Benz vehicles in a plethora of settings. The branded hash tag draws in fans of Mercedes-Benz narrative and drive interest and demand for their vehicles.

A key point to note is Mercedes-Benz also utilizes marketing generated content. Mercedes-Benz is quite active on twitter with averaging 6 - 8 posts per day usually in an informal tone of voice. The type of posts on twitter is sprinkled with humour through its twitter presence. In addition, also tweets using popular hash tags to improve the impact and reach of each post. Goh et al. (2013) found that relying only on UGC is suboptimal and found the ideal strategy to be a combination of both UGC and MGC. In summary, Mercedes-Benz utilizes a mixture of both methods to generate branded content to maximize reach and resonance to its audience.

In comparison to Tesla's media strategy, which involves capitalizing on CEO Elon Musk's influence via twitter and sharing posts of Tesla narrative and customer reviews via Instagram. On twitter, Elon Musk has 3.1 million followers as opposed to TeslaMotors 3.1 million followers. Musk's influence means Tesla does not have to hire social media influencers to promote the brand and Musk's involvement gives Tesla a face. In doing so, consumers become more comfortable and trusting to the brand. However, as Mercedes Benz, UGC is needed in the form of fans and followers as opposed to celebrity influencers to improve WOM which then translates into direct sales. In addition to Tesla's Instagram strategy to relate to a younger crowd with photos of Tesla motors in actions. However, Tesla's activity is very low in comparison to competitor which means there is a lack of marketer generated content. As Goh et al. (2013) found that best practice is to utilize a mixture of UGC and MGC shared by Mercedes-Benz, Tesla would need to improve how fans and followers procure content and increase frequency of Tesla generated posts to ensure branding remains fresh.

## **2. Social Media Strategy Design**

### **2.1 Recommendation**

**3 considerations.** Before suggesting a social media strategy, three aspects are very crucial for Tesla's social media strategy and thus should be considered first. While examining Tesla's current social media strategy performance on different social media platforms, it is found that compared to its competitor, for example, Mercedes Benz, Tesla has fewer regular social media posts on different platforms. Besides, different car companies' social media accounts create posts at different moments in a day, which makes it possible that one moment may attract more audience than another. So, the first consideration is the frequency and timing of posts on different social media. Tesla should deliver more valuable content to its audience through social media, but at the same time, Tesla should avoid annoying its audience by posting too frequently. And a good moment when the audience can have a rest and spend some time sharing the social media contents should also be found to drive more effective interactions.

The second consideration is about social media contents, which refer to the company's social media contents as well as those of its audience. Currently, most of the contents from Tesla are about the new progress of car models and about their services. Those are very ordinary posts which are not attractive enough to the larger potential audience base. So, the company can create more contents that are more interesting to their audience and initiate some sharing activities that encourage their audience to share their stories with the company through hashtags etc.

The third consideration is Tesla's reply speed on social media. Elon Musk is well known for his active engagements on social medias and this helps bridging the company with the audience. But Tesla's official company accounts should also interact with their audience more effectively while replying to their complaints or requests.

**Justifying social media strategy.** Social media engagement is a very important metric for companies to evaluate the performance of their social media strategy. Tesla can improve its social media engagement on different platforms such as Twitter and Instagram by posting daily, using better visuals for their posts, responding quickly to the clients and monitoring the public activity on different social media platforms.

More customers can be attracted by being more visible and active on social media as compared to the competitors. Interesting posts and conversations on social media platforms might encourage people to participate and know more about the company. Tesla should also provide more information in the posts about their products and explain why it sets them apart from their competitors to attract new customers.

Existing consumers are the most important asset of Tesla and it is very important for Tesla to build an even stronger relationship with their customers to keep them loyal to the company. Tesla already has a referral program to reward the existing consumers in different ways such as free supercharging for 1,500 kilometres, chance to win a model Y monthly and roadster supercar quarterly. More incentives like this must be designed to reward the existing consumers.

***Business goals and social media KPIs.*** Our business goals are driving more meaningful engagements with our audience and providing better customer service through social media. Driving more meaningful engagements is about having more interactions with their audience on social media and generating more organic contents from their audience. Several metrics can be used to measure the performance of this business goal. For example, engagement per follower, which is calculated by dividing the total number of comments under posts by the number of followers.

As mentioned before, Tesla has not realized its best capacity of attracting more audience and not efficient enough in replying to their customers' questions. So, providing better customer service should be achieved through providing more targeted content and solving consumers' problems on social media. Metrics that can be used to measure the success of this business goal include the number of likes, shares, or comments, and audience growth.

**The first social media strategy recommended for Tesla is to promote their organic engagement on social media platforms by holding campaigns.** As for Twitter, based on its short text form, we suggest that Tesla could set their referral programs as the reward and encourage followers to share their stories or experiences with the brand by attaching specified hashtags. The people who received the most likes will gain the final price. The

same measure for Instagram, but the topic might be changed into image related in terms of the platform's characteristics, such as "The most impressive picture you have ever seen with Tesla cars", or others which users can involve by sharing pictures. Through these types of campaigns, not only the organic content of Tesla's social media can be improved, but also the connection between the brand and their consumers would be enhanced.

As for the brand perspective, we recommend that the content of its posts on social media could be tailored contents related to their main segmentations. Based on the customer demographic analysis in previous years, we found that the main features of Tesla's consumers are middle aged and owned families. Then the brand can generate customized topics related to environment and ecology, which are the psychographic traits defined in this report before. We encouraged Tesla to post specific stories like driving to shopping, loading groceries, driving families for picnic, and taking kids outdoors, which all involve Tesla products. These tailored posts would touch the target audiences more because the themes come from Tesla's customer segments analytics, also make the brand much closer to the life of the users. Therefore, these might attract more potential consumers.

**The second social media strategy is to adjust the frequency and timing of posting from Tesla official social media accounts:** learn from competitors and do some research to find out the best time for people to view such contents

**Twitter.** Tesla's twitter activity is comparatively low compared to competitors who have a higher number of tweets as Chart 7 shows. Research supports the optimal frequency and timing of tweets to be once per day around 1.2. pm – 1 p.m. (Tien, S. and Aynsley, M 2019). Tien et al. (2019) found tweets to have a lifespan of 18 minutes and 46% of American users visit the platform once per day. Tesla has promising statistics with average likes and average retweets. The optimal twitter strategy would be to post every day, text content and short videos to introduce products.

Company	Tweets	Followers	Avg_Retweets	Avg_Likes
BMW	33,858	2,108,166	229	1,598
Lexus	23,927	957,097	77	511
MercedesBenzUSA	21,168	778,623	54	261
Tesla	7,605	5,902,582	1,726	11,677
Porsche	4,407	1,863,220	201	995

Chart 7 A comparison of competitors on Twitter

**Instagram.** Tesla's activity on Instagram lags those of top 5 competitors with infrequent and irregular posts evident in Chart 8. Tien et al. (2019) found Instagram's algorithm prioritizes new posts that are fresh and most like to be engaged by followers. The evidence showed the best time to post would be between 12 p.m. – 1 p.m. between Monday to Friday. The key is to ensure newer posts appear in followers list so frequency should be frequency through working week (Tien et al. 2019). Tesla demonstrates promising engagement from their fan base. The optimal strategy to capitalize on engagement would be to post everyday with picture and short form videos.

Company	Uploads	Followers	Engagement_Rate	Avg_Likes	Avg_Comments
Mercedes-Benz	14,437	28,188,298	0.44%	122,531.00	423.24
BMW	7,150	27855013	0.68%	188,973.00	516.44
Porsche	2,024	21,979,896	1.13%	247,138.00	726.96
Lexus	1,966	3,677,732	0.70%	25,725.30	128.28
Tesla	646	7,402,525	3.36%	245,042.00	4,019.28

Chart 8 A comparison of competitors on Instagram

**YouTube.** Tesla has the least uploads of content on YouTube compared to top competitors who post frequently and have higher total views shown in Chart 9. YouTube reach can be improved by posting on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sundays based on schedule in Chart 7. Studies have shown that generally views on YouTube spike in winter as compared to summer (Tube Filter 2019 & Chart 9). When comparing tesla against competitors, the number of uploads with respect to subscribers/total views show a promising potential for growth. As a result, Tesla should be posting 2 – 3 times a week with short of long form videos to maximize reach.

Company	Uploads	Subscribers	Total_Views	Avg_Sub_Gain_Yearly
Porsche	2,086	912,000	297,383,381	72,000
Mercedes-Benz	1,838	1,290,000	250,950,247	240,000
Lexus	531	159,000	9,337,460	48,000
BMW	338	1,070,000	144,325,446	120,000
Tesla	231	1,390,000	110,630,438	360,000

Chart 9 A comparison of competitors in YouTube

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
2 - 4 p.m.	2 - 4 p.m.	2 - 4 p.m.	12 - 3 p.m.	12 - 3 p.m.	9 - 11 a.m.	9 - 11 p.m.

Chart 10 Optimal times to upload on YouTube

**The third social media strategy for Tesla is to provide more services on users' questions and do more iterations with users on social platforms.**

For Twitter and Instagram, we recommend that Tesla should set up a chatbot on official accounts that can automatically respond to those high-frequency customer's questions with answers. For example, when there is a problem about the after-sales service, Tesla can automatically reply through the keywords of the customer's private message to help customers find the nearest stores or provide their contact information. It also helps customers solve the difficulties when they are using the car, such as telling them the nearest charging pile based on the customer's position or description. Tesla can also give detailed instructions and explanations based on keywords for operational difficulties or confusions occurred during driving. The automated chatbot reduces the workload of manual responses, which will greatly improve



response efficiency and thus increase Tesla's engagement and customer satisfaction.

At the same time, Tesla can increase interaction with customers on social media platforms. For example, if customers share and mention Tesla on Twitter, Instagram, or YouTube, Tesla can give comments or like the sharing, post, or video of users as much as possible. And the process of replying may also solve similar problems in chatbot to customers. In addition, this positive interaction with users can increase the speed at which customers reach Tesla. And this will improve Tesla's brand image and customer satisfaction. Meanwhile, it enhances the stickiness and loyalty of customers, then gives customers reasons and chances to recommend Tesla to their friends or family to expand Tesla's customer base.

## 2.2 Evaluate the strategies

***2 potential areas that client should pay attention to.*** There are some potential risks that we need to consider. Firstly, chatbot has security risks as it is difficult to eliminate all network danger while implementing them. The chatbots set by Tesla will not actively send harmful messages, but this does not mean that it will not receive dangerous messages. Because it is impossible to ensure that people who use chatbots to talk with Tesla's official accounts are not dangerous. Among them, there may be competitor hackers or other people who will break network security deliberately sending harmful links or plug-ins to Tesla's chatbots. This may disable the chatbots or steal users' information. On the other hand, the design flaws of chatbots may also lead to negative results. For example, coding bugs and lack of maintenance during use periods will make the chatbots vulnerable or disable and even make them face the risk of external attacks (Paul 2019).

The second potential risk comes from influencers' self-presence, which means inappropriate behavior of influencers cooperating with Tesla will have a negative impact on Tesla. Celebrity marketing will greatly help the promotion of brand awareness, but when it has greater influence, it will also bring significant risks to the brand. Although no matter how thorough investigations and preparations are made in the early stage, an influencer may be involved in a scandal later. For example, posting political position on

social media platforms which is contrary to the mainstream opinion of the target market area or publishing remarks with discrimination and bias. Brands will also be largely implicated.

**2 metrics to measure engagement.** The average engagement rate is effective in measuring the impact that posting efforts have on social media platforms. Engagement rate is a measure that compares the number of engagement actions such as, shares and comments against the number of followers a user has (Hootsuite 2019). If the engagement rate is high, it indicates that posts significantly resonate with the audience base. In relation to Tesla, it can be applied to hashtag branded campaigns on twitter and Instagram. The measure of engagement was used similarly by Madwa et al. (2017) for American Journal of neurology. The average engagement rate was shown to extract insights on reach other than academics, presence of images increased engagement, and engagement increased during hash tagged conferences. Social engagement insights support Tesla to ensure that posts have the maximum impact and guide social media decision making.

$$\frac{\text{Total Likes, Comments \& Followers}}{\text{Total Followers}} * 100 = \text{Average Engagement Rate Per}$$

Average Engagement Rate

The amplification rate measures how likely followers are to associate with a brand and act as advocates. The amplification rate is measured by taking the total shares per post divided by the overall number of followers (Hootsuite. 2019). The amplification rate portrays how followers take on contents then share to their network of followers. Tesla can utilise the amplification rate to improve social media engagement from followers and reach of posts. The primary justification on maximising amplification is to improve engagement signals so as to cut through noise of competitors. Research found that 50% of randomly selected posts were shared less than eight on social media, 75% of randomly selected posts were shared 39 times (Wordstream 2020). The key insight is without high levels of amplification, the message does not effectively

reach each follower due to crowding out from competitor posts negating social marketing efforts.

#### Amplification Rate

$$\frac{\text{Total Post shares}}{\text{Total Followers}} * 100 = \text{Amplification Rate Percentage}$$

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