



PRE-READING ASSIGNMENT NO. 4 (5pages)

WEEK 2 SYLLABUS: CUSTOMER VALUE CREATION

(The Essence of Digital Transformation)

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Social media marketing is an umbrella term, just like social business, of which it is a popular part, and like content marketing, with which it is increasingly connected from an integrated and customer-oriented marketing perspective.

Social media marketing is the use of social media and social tactics in an (integrated) marketing perspective whereby several marketing goals can be fulfilled, other marketing efforts can be strengthened and the interactions, signals, opinions and voices of target audiences of social media users are taken into account to improve marketing (listening and acting).

Social media marketing can strengthen many potential marketing goals using several tactics that social media can be used for. Social media (without the marketing part) is an umbrella term as well. It stands for a range of websites, online platforms, Internet technologies and digital tools that at the very least enable people to:

- Connect with others and participate in online communities around shared interests on the Web
- Share information, content or opinions with others in a public way or in closed groups and networks
- Engage in conversations, co-create and participate online

Social Media and Marketing

Social media can be used for many business goals, including marketing but also including business functions that are closely related with marketing and are essential in having a customer-centric and connected or integrated marketing approach. These marketing-connected business functions include:



- **Customer Service**, often called the “new marketing”, especially in a social context
- **Market and Customer Research**, designed to better serve the business and customer
- **Collaboration**: internally but also with customers and partners (social collaboration)
- **CRM**: social CRM plays an essential role in having a good customer view and improving marketing
- **Sales**: CRM is one link between sales and marketing but sales people can also use social media to sell (social selling) and contribute to social media marketing

Social media can also be defined by the changes they have caused or speeded up regarding behavior, society, business and even culture. There is a technological dimension to social media as well. Most social media are based on what was once known as “Web 2.0 technologies”.

Social Media Marketing and Customer Intimacy

Social media allow people to connect with each other in a more personal way than ever before. They come in many forms such as social networks, blogs and social bookmarking services, to name a few. While the platforms that are grouped under the term social media are important, the dynamics underlying them are even more so. It is important to know how these channels work, even if you’re not a marketer. After all, your employees and customers use social media tools, too.

Given the inherent characteristics of social media, the ways people use them and the evolutions they brought, it’s clear that social media marketing plays an important role in the overall digital marketing and social business reality when taking the “**user**” and specifics into account. Before choosing a mix of the right platforms to achieve your goals, you need to define the goals, the target audience, what it needs at any given point in time to solve its’ challenges and how you will gauge success. It’s pointless just to start without knowing what you want to achieve with it. There’s no such thing as a one-size-fits-all best social media marketing mix.



The Art of Customer Engagement

Customer engagement, connection, interaction and integrated conversations driving various possible business goals are what social media marketing is about. Rather than looking at people as passive receivers and **consumers** of messages, modern marketers understand that customers should be actively involved in the production and co-creation of marketing programs. That is customer engagement in the true sense.

Marketing tactics that overlap with social media marketing, such as content marketing, also seek to engage the customer. It's all about providing the right touch points, content and social interactions, while being responsive and pro-active. Customer engagement revolves around the customer and the customer experience. The connected customer is at the center of social media and integrated marketing.

As social media allow people to connect, they also allow us to connect with prospective customers in more personal ways and build stronger and smarter relationships. It is crucial to understand that the interactions people have with a business, regardless of the stages and channels used in their journey, consist of multiple “**touch points**”. These can be direct (personal contacts with your business and interactions with your content, website, blog, social networks, sales reps, etc.) or indirect (talking with their peers, etc.). Social media marketing can play a role in improving all these touch points. To understand how, let's look at how the connected buying journey and behavior have changed.

The Drivers of Social Media Marketing

1. Media Proliferation and Multi-Channel Behavior

One of the obvious consequences of social media is that people have more channels than ever before to inform themselves, share, buy and seek support. People display a **multi-channel behavior** across their individual journey, whether it's for buying or achieving other goals. They jump from one channel to another. This also has an impact on how we reach people and how we build and maintain relationships with our “best customers”.



2. The Customer Shift From Selling To Buying

It's increasingly difficult to get a foot in the door and sell the way we once used to, just as it's increasingly difficult to gain the attention of journalists or even partners. Time and attention have become scarce and people control it. They don't want to be interrupted unless you have good reasons or strong relationships. They don't like to be sold or marketed to like before. They want to seek and discover themselves. The challenge is to capture their attention during these activities and enter them in dialogues through processes of lead generation and management.

3. The Perception of A Brand

A brand is a promise of meeting the needs and expectations of prospective customers and other stakeholders. The value of a brand is in the eye of the beholder and revolves around credibility, personality, trust, openness, transparency, relevance and the level of participation that is necessary in social media. In the end, it's a very human and emotional approach, one of the reasons why nowadays we often talk about **"people-centricity"** instead of **"customer-centricity"**. People want to buy from people and want to know who they are buying from. They want to know who will answer their questions and experience the personal approach they had in the good old local grocery shop, being able to talk to a person instead of a corporate building. They want authenticity.

4. Omnipresence, Omnichannel and Omnidevice

People use many channels but also employ many devices to interact with business on their own. The mobile Web, the **"always online"** evolution and the increase of digital and social channels all result in media consumption, buying patterns and communication behavior that is less bound to limits in time, space and scale. We increasingly live in a real-time world where the omnipresence and availability of a business, 24/24 and 7/7 becomes important. The expectations of people have changed and are now harder to manage. While it's important to take into account resources and costs, and to prioritize where we spend our time most, this demand for omnipresence is growing, while online and offline channels and experiences to meet it, are converting.



5. The Explosion of Word-Of-Mouth

People have always talked about businesses, products and customer experiences. With the arrival of social media, word-of-mouth has grown at an explosive rate and opinions can get shared in an instant. What people say and share on social media regarding products and customer experiences can have a tremendous impact. Responding to it and actively participating is a must for brands that want to be respected, credible and trusted. Not listening and simply letting things “happen” without at least being present and answering is a recipe for distrust and criticism, especially when the shared experiences or opinions are “negative”.

Furthermore, as all good sales people know, “negative” comments and even disgruntled customers can offer an excellent opportunity when properly dealt with. The best customers often have been the most dissatisfied at one point or another. In the social space, solving public discontent can turn out to be a benefit. Last but not least, the power of word-of-mouth also goes for “positive” customer experiences and opinions. The reason for this is the fact that word-of-mouth is perceived as a reliable source and thus shortens the buying cycle through endorsement. This is so powerful that **word-of-mouth marketing** is a specialism as such.

Customer Service and Customer Experience Are The New Marketing

Marketing, sales and customer service are growing towards each other, with omnichannel customer service (including social) as a key driver to keep customers but also to acquire new ones (word-of-mouth). Social experiences and interactions increasingly shape the overall customer experience as it's connected, influenced and based on more personal interactions and perceptions than before.

Along with content marketing, social media marketing is all about experiences and the customer experience is the holy grail in all forms of connected and digital marketing as it happens today and tomorrow.
