Facebook:
Possibilities and Recommendations to Future Marketing Options.

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Introduction

There used to be a time where social interaction involved being in people's presence. Nowadays many people find it hard to imagine what their life would be like without social media. The single most significant example of a social media platform that dominates people's lives is Facebook. What started as the zero budget project of one Harvard drop-out, Mark Zuckerberg, quickly rose to become an icon of a network carrying with it all the ups and downs of marketing. It has since heavily influenced the worlds of business, politics and communication to name a few. We ask ourselves today, what could Facebook have done different, where would they be had they done differently and, most importantly, what needs doing in marketing to lead Facebook to where they want to be?

The origins of Facebook

The Founding of Facebook

Facebook was founded in 2004 by a former-Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg. He has also pointed out that "Facebook and its idea spread across the college campus within months from launching and at present it is the second largest social networking site, second only to my space as far as traffic is concerned" (Mashable, 2010). The founding of Facebook has raised some controversies about the ownership of the idea of Facebook. Mark Zuckerberg was accused of stealing the idea of his college roommates and fellow computer science students. It is a fact however that in early 2003 itself, the idea of creating a social network was developing in the mind of Zuckerberg. In fact he has started another social network *Buddy Zoo* in 2003 itself with the help of some of his close friends. In January 2004, Zuckerberg started writing the source code of Facebook and on February 4, he launched *TheFacebook*. In 2005, the name *TheFacebook* has been changed to *Facebook*, forever to embed itself our psyche as a possessive noun; "Do you have a Facebook?" and "I read it on my Facebook." became everyday uses of the word.

Former Harvard classmates Cameron Winklevoss and Tyler Winklevoss claim that Zuckerberg stole their idea for a social networking site whilst he was employed by them to assist with the sites development, the site in question being connectu.com. They filed a lawsuit as early as 2004 but the case was dismissed in March 2007, although it was quickly re-filed in Boston, eventually Facebook settled the case for $65m (Ryankette, 2011).

Still there are many stories spreading about the stealing of this idea by Zuckerberg. "After Facebook announced the settlement, but before the settlement was finalized, lawyers for the Winklevosses suggested that the hard drive from Mark Zuckerberg's computer at Harvard might contain evidence of Mark's fraud"(Carlson, 2010). Critics label him as a cheat. It should be noted that besides Zuckerberg, there three co-founders for Facebook; Dustin Moskovitz, Eduardo Saverin, and Chris Hughes. In short, the disputes about the ownership of the idea of Facebook created lot of negative publicity to Facebook. Had Zuckerberg cleared up the contrevery surrounding that case, Facebook's reputation in those early stages may have been better. First impressions did evidently matter.

Clearly, at the time, it was difficult to predict where Facebook was headed in the future. Although the story of the beginnings of Facebook is known to few, the development of the company might have been very tangential had the events transpired differently. The story of a young drop-out with nothing but an idea who suddenly becomes a millionaire appeals to many and echoes Steve Jobs. This begs the question if Facebook would have had the same level of success had Facebook been founded by an existing large corporation with several investors providing the funding. Chances are it would have turned into just another MySpace with no charm to it.

It is important to realise that Facebook's initial target consumers were young college students and those that wanted to stay connected with friends when they parted ways. The fact that Facebook itself was created by someone who might have similar needs, further conveys to the consumer that this service must be good as its founder probably knew what he was doing. Keeping this small company aura associated with the business where the users imagine the employees as just a bunch of college friends who get together and work on Facebook could be pretty beneficial to Facebook's image.

What made Facebook a Success Today

According to Shih (2009), "right this moment at least 150 million people are interacting with friends and talking about the brands on Facebook". After its average user, the success of Facebook primarily lies in its ability to attract business entrepreneurs towards it. The business world has quickly realised the potentials of Facebook in conducting its own marketing campaigns successfully. Facebook users normally share their ideas and opinions about the new products they might have purchased recently and this type of publicity is even better than word of mouth publicity for business people. Businesses have found that posting ads on Facebook is beneficial to them regardless of the business industry for the fact that Facebook users are more than 800 million which in turn helped Facebook to grow considerably (Iwanow 2010). Marketers can make use of targeted ads to reach specific segments of customers using Facebook with a minimal spending for advertising. Facebook ads are more effective and cheaper than other conventional ads.

Hunt (2009) has argued that "people are on social networks to connect and build relationships. Relationships and connections over time lead to trust, which is the key to form social capital" (Hunt, 2009, p.2). When it was introduced, Facebook never thought about attracting international users. However, within a short time period, it attracted users from all over the world. In other words, Facebook helped cross cultural communication immensely which is another success factor. A great number of marketers working at multinational corporations, such as automobile companies, communication companies (e.g. smart phone developers) and even the fashion industry take advantage of this capability worldwide to advertise their product and target customers Facebook could have been in well again position by initiating demographic strategies to enhance activity of advertisements.

Zuckerberg's "Marketing" Scheme

Little had to be done do bring Facebook to the position it is at today. Nobody ever saw a banner ad on the streets of a TV commercial promoting Facebook. Instead Facebook relies on people: the most powerful marketing weapon of them all.

Initially, Facebook spread through campuses by word of mouth. People needed a place they can interact and share photos online. Facebook users wanted their friends to join to enhance their own experience. At some point the rate at which users invite more users reached the bend in the exponential curve and the sign up rate increased thousand-fold. The target consumer penetrated into older generations, parents, grandparent, children each subsequently inviting more people like a spreading virus. At this point Facebook had become part of modern life and would appear in the news which would further promote it all whilst the company itself never had to lift a finger.

According to Zuckerberg, innovation, giving emphasize on bold decisions, news feeds, converting social networks into social platforms among many other concepts are the major pillars of Facebook. He has also stressed the importance of encouraging best people to join his company as another one of Facebook's driving forces in an interview (Mark Zuckerberg: The Three Keys To Facebook's Success, 2009). The potentials of social networks for business purposes have been unveiled for the first time by Zuckerberg. Even though there were many other social networks established well before Facebook, none of them tasted success as did Facebook. Zuckerberg converted social network

concepts from a traditional communication channel to marketing channel. Banner ads and other marketing ads placed on every Facebook pages with utmost precision. Zuckerberg asked his engineers to monitor the conversations of the people on Facebook and realise the tastes of each and every user. He then started to place ads suitable to the tastes of each individual user in a way that none of the users found disturbing of infringing on their privacy.

As such Facebook has risen to a meta-level of marketing and promotion. Being in such little need of advertising themselves, they have become the advertisers. The one thing that still hold true however, is that any promotion Facebook undertakes benefits the company as a whole, even if it's not to promote Facebook itself. Facebook still needs to face challenges such as refining ad placement, while at the same time informing and persuading the viewer. If Facebook were to fail in this process, the company would suffer through annoying the user due to quantity and irrelevance of ads or psychological frustration through obscurity.

Likewise this power Facebook has to reach a large number of people can be exploited even further through advertising other Facebook products or services that could make users spend more time on Facebook eventually increasing turnover.

Expansion of Facebook

On August 10th, 2009, Facebook has announced the acquisition of real time news aggregator company, FriendFeed (O'Neill, 2009). FriendFeed was created by a former Google employee, Paul Buchheit. "In September 2009, Facebook has acquired Malaysian startup Octazen Solutions, which specializes in contact importing"(Cutlor, 2010). "On April 2, 2010, Facebook announced the acquisition of a photo-sharing service called Divvyshot"(Schonfeld, 2010).

Facebook has made wise move in acquiring these smaller distant competitors. The software already exists and instead of creating it from the ground up and competing with existing companies who probably already have a large user-base, it might make more sense to buy the service which in turn decreases competition and carries with it as a bonus existing users who used the service before. In other words, why try to get new users with inferior software if you could own the superior software and its users? The marketing that has already been done by that service will roll over to your company carrying with it any brands and images.

It is important to not however that some direct competitors that are attempting to start up are destined to fail. "According to Moskovitz, one of the co-founders of Facebook, Google+ failed to attract more users because of the absence of symmetry to the relationships" (Perez, 2011). When Google+ announced its entry, many people thought that it may expel Facebook from its top spot as the leading social network in the world. However, Google + failed to prosper properly because of the absence of user friendly interfaces and improper marketing campaigns. It should be noted that G+ was reluctant to provide membership to all users initially. The above reluctance created more problems to G+.

"When Facebook first arrived, there were only a handful of companies, so it was able to attract top engineers" (Perez, 2011). Thus Facebook was able to appoint some of the topmost computer engineers at the top level of the company. Even though Google had enormous resources, it failed to identify the potentials of social networks over search engine business. "As Facebook's audience grows, it is attracting more online advertising and stunting Google's financial growth. Perhaps even more troubling to Google, much of the information on Facebook's website can't be indexed by Google's search engine" (Schmidt, 2011).

Google's mistake was that it never had a proper unique selling point. It never had anything that could threaten Facebook by providing its users with something Facebook couldn't offer. This mistake is made by too many start-up companies. They fail to realise that they can never attract people with something that is already being provided by someone else better. For instance Facebook should never attempt to branch out into video hosting; it wouldn't survive the competition against the likes of YouTube and frankly would damage its reputation. The key here is to find a niche and dominate it.

Most of Facebook's other competitors, such as Twitter, Myspace, LinkedIn and so on are concentrating on other specific market segments. According to a study, Facebook user's average age is 38.4, the figure for Twitter is 39.1, and LinkedIn is 44.3, this small diversity of user's age shows that every age group find a certain social network is better than the other. (Soils, 2010)

Two of Michael Porter's five forces are "Ease of Entry" and "Core Competencies". Facebook practically started a new market industry as it had implemented an existing idea in a way that has never been done before. Ease of entry has as a result become very difficult for competitors as, due to Facebook's size, there are not many more unique selling points a competitor could possibly hold. Facebook should therefore continue to attempt to cover everything to not lose leverage against competitors.

## The Evolution of Facebook

The Change in the Target Consumer

Understanding your target customer is an essential part of market research. Knowing who is most likely to buy your product allows you to focus marketing efforts as efficiently as possible. Changing the target market of an organization is generally only possible by restructuring and by promoting different products and services. For example, a university, which has traditionally appealed to students from its own locality, will find it difficult to develop into a national institution.

Similarly Facebook didn't always target "everyone". The sole users used to be only students. The service used to be tailored for students and students alone so far that in its early days you couldn't even join Facebook if you didn't go to a university. It is important to realise that as the company grew and its target consumer evolved to incorporate more and more market segments as its competitors became redundant, the company had to evolve in parallel to its consumer in order to make sure the service itself is tailored to those who use it.

Older generations often use Facebook for completely different needs than the youth. Younger consumers may simply want to play games, chat with their friends or plan a party, while a grandmother may be looking to connect with her grandchildren living far away or to reminisce over their own children's photos as they were younger. It is essential that Facebook strives to accommodate all these needs as even the best of marketing cannot cover for a bad product.

The Effect of Spreading Through Word of Mouth

Word-of-mouth marketing, which encompasses a variety of subcategories, including buzz, blog, viral, brand advocates, cause influencers and social media marketing, as well as ambassador programs, work with consumer-generated media and more, can be highly valued by product, social media and performance marketers. Because of the personal nature of the communications between individuals, it is believed that product information communicated in this way has an added layer of credibility. Research points to individuals being more inclined to believe WOM than more formal forms of promotion methods; the receiver of word-of-mouth referrals tends to believe that the communicator is speaking honestly and is unlikely to have an ulterior motive. To promote and manage word-of-mouth communications, marketers use publicity techniques as well as viral marketing methods to achieve desired behavioural response. Companies can focus on Brand Advocates, the people who proactively recommend their favourite brands and products online and offline without being paid to do so. Influencer marketing is also increasingly used to seed WOMM by targeting key individuals that have authority and a high number of personal connections. Since Facebook's invitation system initiated just that, this viral spreading has reached a point of saturation very quickly.
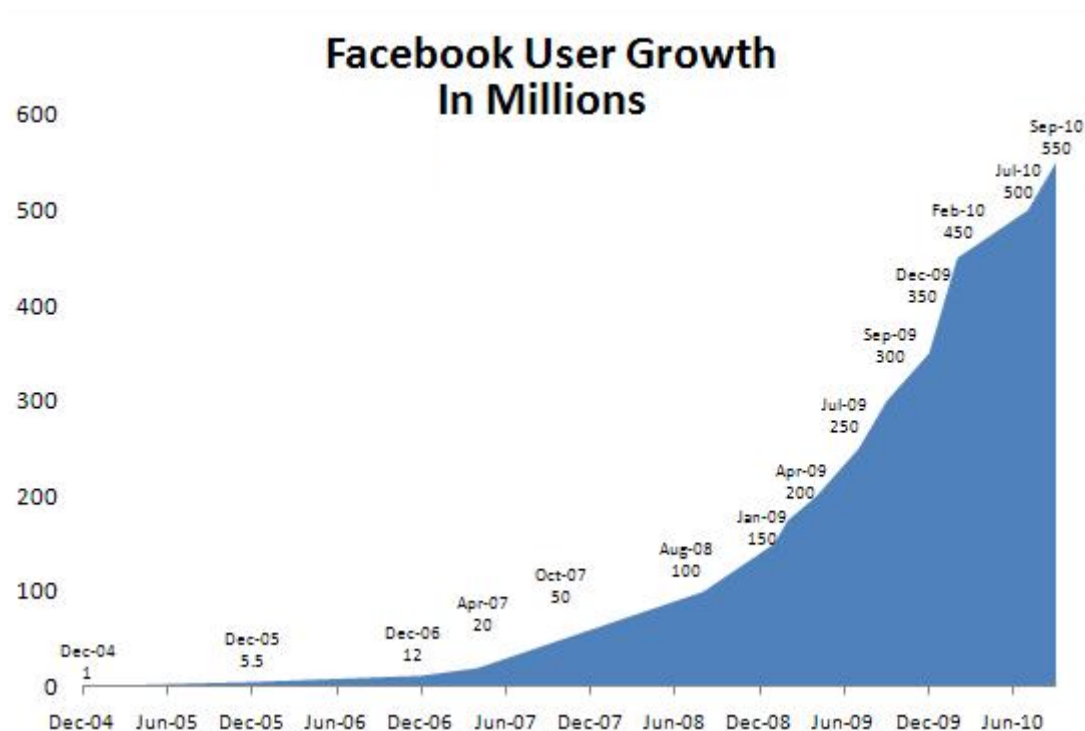
Facebook's Reputation and Association with Pop Culture

Facebook is not only popular to the young. At age 102, Ivy Bean of Bradford, England joined Facebook in 2008, making her one of the oldest people ever on Facebook. An inspiration to other residents of the care home in which she lived. Facebook has affected the social life and activity of people in a myriad of ways. Especially with its availability on many mobile devices, Facebook allows users to continuously stay in touch with friends, relatives and other acquaintances wherever they are in the world, as long as there is access to the Internet. It can also unite people with common interests and/or beliefs through groups and other pages, and has been known to reunite lost family members and friends. As a result, Facebook as a brand is associated with modern times and trends that encompass more than just the youth.

On February 22, 2011, an Egyptian baby was named "Facebook" to commemorate the vital role Facebook and other social media played in Egypt's revolution. Also On May 16, 2011, an Israeli couple named their daughter after the Facebook "like" feature. They explained that it wasn't to advertise for Facebook, but because they fancied the meaning behind the word. People now promote Facebook more through using the brand name in their own self-interest. This is exactly the image Facebook needs to maintain.

The social network (2010) is a movie the founding of the Facebook. The film received widespread acclaim. Some people, including Zuckerberg himself, criticized the film for its many inaccuracies. The Social Network appeared on 78 critics' top 10 list for 2010; of those critics 22 had the film in their number one spot. It is not the only time media has targeted Facebook, "You Have 0 Friends", an April 2010 episode of the American animated comedy series, South Park, mocked Facebook.

It is occurrences like these that should be handled with caution. All of Facebook's policies and history should be 100% transparent so that no misconceptions can arise out of the media. As such, Facebook can take all of these as a joke instead of antagonising the audience of said media.

The Macro Environment

"The recent political developments in Arab world are believed to be stimulated by Facebook. In fact the current Arab revolution is referred as Facebook revolution. "The dictator of Tunisia was overthrown in less than one month after being in power for 23 years. There is no question about how opponents of his regime were able to topple it. Two words describe it: Facebook, Twitter" (North, 2011)."

An organization's macro environment consists of nonspecific aspects in the organization's surroundings that have the potential to affect the organization's strategies. When compared to a firm's task environment, the impact of macro environmental variables is less direct and the organization has a more limited impact on these elements of the environment. Macro environmental variables of face book include sociocultural, technological, political-legal, economic, and international variables. For example, in 25 January revolution in Egypt, the government blocked the Facebook website. Another example is competitors, for example twitter.

A federal agency has declared Facebook posts are legally protected speech, even for employees who write negative things about their employers. A full 91% of students who use social networking daily to get news and information agree, "People should be allowed to express unpopular opinions." However, only 77% of those who never use social networks to get news agree that unpopular opinions should be allowed.

As protests swept across Egypt on January 25, an administrator from the Facebook page that was helping to drive the uprisings emailed a top official of the social network, asking for help. The popular page had sounded the call for the protests 10 days earlier. It then became an online staging ground for the budding movement, beaming a constant barrage of news and updates to the walls of its 400,000-plus fans, along with impassioned pleas for people to join.

Last month, analysts who monitor China's huge sovereign wealth fund detected signs that a deal were in the works to buy a huge stake in Facebook. Never mind that access to Facebook has been blocked in China since 2009. China is seeking a stake in Facebook large enough "to matter," according to Business Insider. Citibank, incidentally, is undertaking a major expansion in China. The logic behind such a deal from China's perspective is clear. Politics aside, Facebook is one of the most sought after share offerings in history. The economics just make sense. But many believe China has more than profits in mind. As a factor hastening the revolutions raging across the Middle East, Facebook and other social networks represent a real threat to the Chinese Communist Party's monopoly on political power.

Facebook is an international cooperation. It nearly operates in every country in the world. It deals with social factors. For example, this is why the website has many languages to deal with this problem. The advertisements available in a user profile are based on interests and region of the user. Economic forces as income can affect the type of user on Facebook. The technological availability in a country affects number of Facebook users in a country. The regulations and legal policies in a country affect Facebook. For example, in some universities and work areas Facebook site in banned because it is considered as a distraction.

Whatever the case, Facebook must diplomatically handle censoring in a way that the least number of people are offended yet at the same time as many people as possible are reached. It's about finding a balance, the golden mean if you will, instead of going for one or the other extreme.

Facebook as substitute for mass media/communication

Facebook has a huge number of users and can be used for mass communication and cheap marketing. Facebook also launched a new portal for marketers and creative agencies to help them develop brand promotions on Facebook.

Due to its large user-base Facebook can facilitate boycotts for example; a high-profile Facebook protest has scored a victory for consumers in Israel: Their threats of a boycott have forced dairy manufacturers to lower the price of cottage cheese by some 25%.

The two-week campaign drew more than 105,000 people to join a Facebook group vowing to boycott the Israeli staple until prices dropped. The campaign has touched a nerve among Israelis concerned about rising prices and eroding salaries.

Political communication changed significantly during the 20th century. Important transformations for political parties and candidates were the decline in voter partisanship accompanied by the increasing dependence on media (Facebook included) in communication of campaign messages to the audience. Facebook can wield this power to its advantage. Although Facebook has no need for advertising, PR and publicity is still a major issue. Nothing speaks against Facebook using its extended reach in connectivity with the users for the good of the company.

The Growth of Facebook

Facebook's main goal is to connect its users through any means such as applications, the like button, Facebook connect among many others with people and products from all over the world. Facebook is a social networking website where its users not only share their daily chit-chat or updates about their personal lives but it has also brought wider benefits to the communities overall. Facebook application programming interface (API) is one the branches of this gigantic tree that has not only provided a great deal of success to the established companies but to the individuals or to the entrepreneurs. Facebook has allowed the applications' developers to connect their products and websites to their one big sea of information. This interconnection of information has made it easier for the sellers to take their products to the door-steps of their consumers. It has also made it simpler for the big and complex companies and service providers to take the direct advice or complaints from their customers. Facebook applications have a great contribution in Facebook's success and this should not be ignored. Improving the usability and flexibility of the developer API can only yield economic advantages. It has already been demonstrated with the iPhone that the abundance of third party apps only improves sales; why not go the same route with Facebook?

Facebook is incredibly a vibrant platform which is open to all human beings of any back ground, colour, cast and nationality for free and it is one of the reasons of its success. There are interconnections between Facebook and other giant competitors such as Twitter, Google and YouTube where as there are More than 7 million applications and websites are integrated with Facebook according to the official Facebook statistics. The way it has emerged is that people or the organisations are dependent on it, but not the other way around. Nowadays we see Facebook's logo everywhere.

Other major competitors are trying very hard to get a place in the social networking alongside Facebook and attempting to attract Facebook's users. But because of the success of Facebook most of these competitors' products of social media has failed to achieve their targets even though they use Facebook to promote their own products themselves. These major competitors have become dependent on Facebook's products through integrating Facebook plug-ins into their websites and products. Some competitors are also trying to copy the layout and structure of Facebook in order to attract users but without new ideas it is very difficult for them to attract those existing Facebook users to their social networks.

Facebook connect is one of the services Facebook provides that can connect different third party web applications and websites with Facebook. It connects the business entities with the potential users. Any update that has the potential to bring the new costumers in and keep the old customers' loyalty is published on its relative pages of the Facebook while it is occurring in the business or in its strategy or products.

Facebook is a real friend in moments when someone is alone and away from friends and family at a particular moment. Facebook provides its users a comfort in a sense that it keeps you connected with your friends and relatives miles away from your home. This feeling of comfort is a powerful tool if invoked in the user at will. Ad placement built on Facebook's software that invokes that very feeling in the person that sees it could potentially have a very high return. It is important to understand how the user feels while using the service in order to further harness those feelings for company growth.
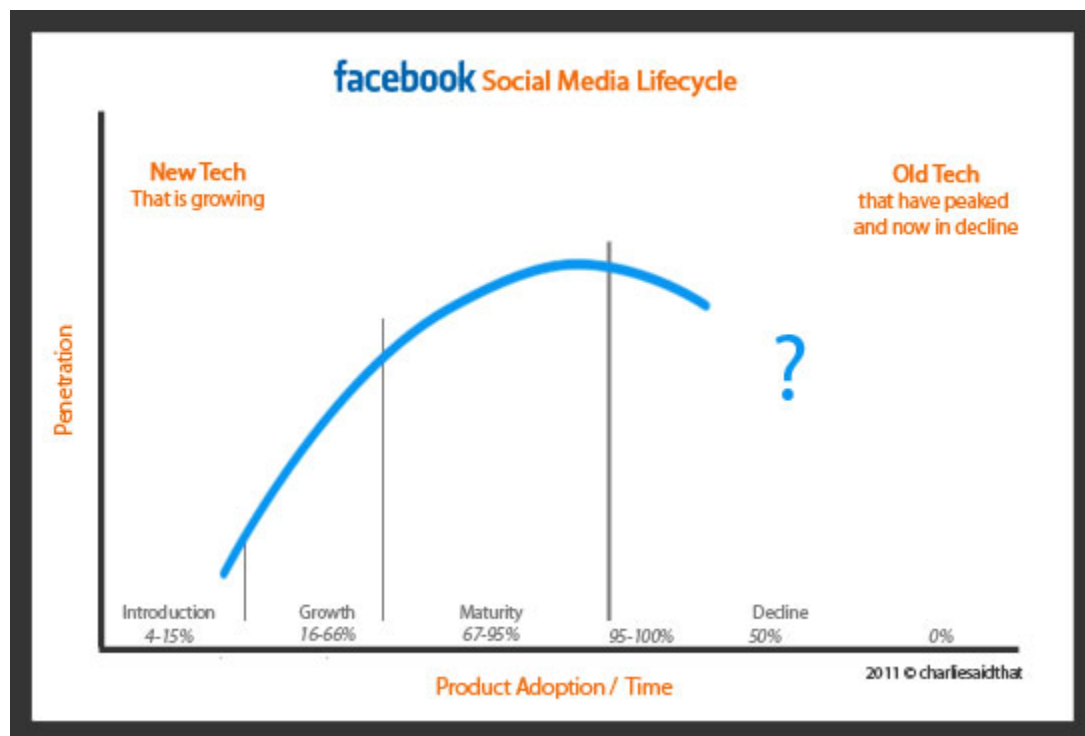
Facebook "like" button is normally encrypted on the websites' pages of individuals and the businesses. If the user likes anything on those particular pages of those website(s) is then automatically published on the users' profile pages on Facebook.

Facebook is very independent website or business entity. It does not get advertisement support from any internal or external source which would help it in its daily activities or advertisement. Probably it is the only website that does not need to spend its revenue to advertise itself, but people advertise themselves with referencing of Facebook. It is a common notion nowadays that many products or services or businesses put a line on their adverts "find us on Facebook", which means Facebook is being advertise by those small and big businesses or individuals for free. As such Facebook needs to reinforce focus on providing tools for businesses. If a business no longer needs their own website as they can do everything on Facebook, more and more people will have to go to Facebook to find that business's information. The ability to create an online store within Facebook, for instance, could be most rewarding. Facebook needs to stay user-friendly as well as maintain a professional appeal.

Facebook has earned a perception of being user friendly and easy to use. However the third-party applications have made it complex for the ordinary people who are not technologically adept. Facebook has earned a position of inspiration for the young people especially for students. One of the great things Facebook has done is that it has brought people and communities together from all over the world and provided them with one platform. Facebook can be described as heart beat for its users in regards to their daily activities, because they want to connect themselves with it all the time and everywhere. Facebook has become a place of sharing view and thoughts and has become a cause of some great changes in the different communities around the world. A lesson that can be learnt from the Facebook popularity is that to achieve great things in life you have to think differently, work hard and patience is that key to its success.

Facebook has played a very big role in the connecting different businesses together. Some of these businesses merged together for the sake of more profitability and expending the business opportunities. Facebook has contributed a lot to bring the businesses and individuals of all countries closer and into one platform where they share the same opportunities to achieve their goals and must continue to develop in this area for the reasons mentioned earlier.

Facebook often changes its layout much to the annoyance of its users. Generally, the usability is not improved by much and people find it hard to adjust. In this case it is best to follow the motto: "Don't fix it if it isn't broken."

One of the biggest issues for the internet users is the privacy issue and certainly the first impression of Facebook or its founder regarding privacy is not very good, as he supposedly stole the data from the educational institution, after which he cheated his friends and stole their ideas of creating a social network. Internet users have mailing accounts with different websites, for example, Google, Hotmail and Yahoo and they are using their services because they have never misused their private data. It is this trust which makes the internet users loyal to their respective mailing account holders. No one would trust the mailing websites if they start misusing their users' private data and turn this data into cash or some form of benefits.

In today's era Facebook is an enormously important tool for the small, medium and large businesses or in short it is a part of any business. Facebook, particularly in advertisement, plays a vital role to promote new businesses and give starting point to the entrepreneurs. People, who used to be pizza delivery men, have now started their own business (for example Design Molve) with the affordable advertisement available at Facebook. Facebook recreated an idea of how social network should look like. Facebook's doors are open for their applications' developers, which not only help the developers but the Facebook itself to generate revenue. Facebook has become one of the quickest ways to share your thoughts, news, useful information, etc.

Facebook pages are believed to be the cheapest advertisement, and repeatedly used for promoting a business without any further cost, available on the World Wide Web for any internet user. If you create a page for your business and invest money on its advertisement once via Facebook, Facebook users like your page and they are connected with you for the rest of your life without any more investments in it.

Downtime and outages

 In recent years, Facebook had a number of outages and downtime large enough to draw some media attention. For example, I In October 2009, an unspecified number of Facebook users were unable to access their accounts for over three weeks because a sudden failure that happened to their server. On September 23, 2010, nobody within the UK, US, and Latin America could log in to Facebook. Facebook quoted a DNS failure. Such events cannot happen. They portray an image of instability and lack of professionalism and are detrimental to Facebook's reputation.

The Future Potential of Facebook

Gathering of Statistics

In addition to the aforementioned, Facebook has another untapped resource in their arsenal. As mentioned earlier, there are over 800 million active users on Facebook, of which at least 50% log on at any given day, each with an average of 130 friends. Of those millions, at least 350 million access Facebook on a mobile device as stated in the official Facebook statistics.[1] These numbers often mean very little to us but having such a myriad of people affected by a single company is truly a powerful asset.
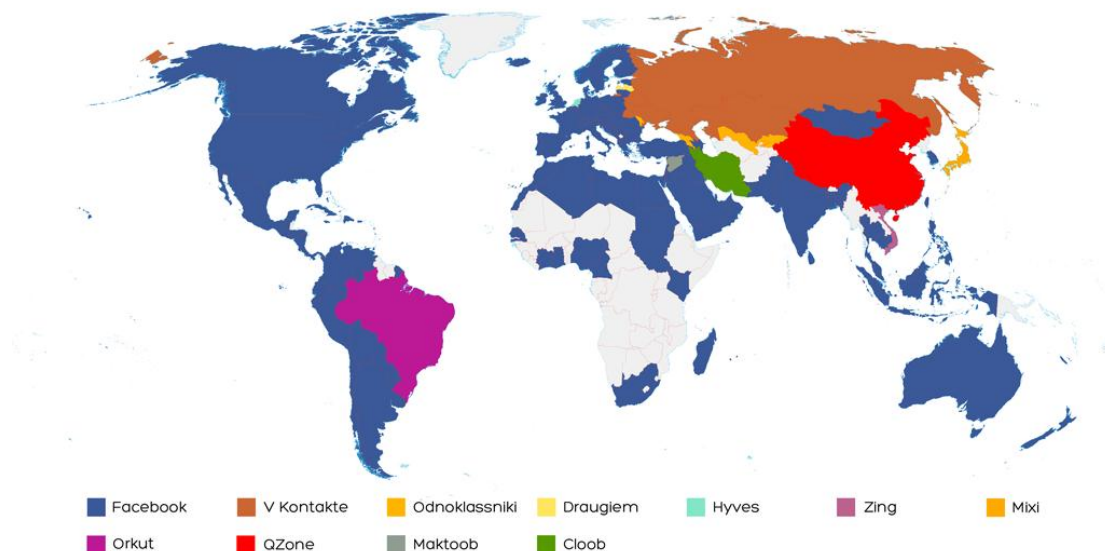
Not only can Facebook gather extremely accurate user statistics at the click of a mouse and use that information to their advantage without intruding on the users' privacy, for instance through market research on what apps are in highest demand, but the same process can be reversed. Facebook has the power to communicate information to millions of people instantly and the economic implications, let alone the previously discussed political and social implications, are profound indeed. The only difference here is that unlike communication from user to user, the communication from Facebook itself to the user can push the company even further forward.

Say for example Facebook chose to promote a new product or software through the ads on their website, only a few hundred would have to see it before some of them chose to share it with any number of their 130 friends; after only very few iterations would everyone know about it, like a spreading virus. This can be used for fiscal gain or charitable motives. Either way it's a tool that strongly outweighs the conventional methods of informing consumers of new products through TV ads and the like; Facebook has absolutely no need for TV ads.

Privacy vs. Trust

This however, raises the issues of privacy and trust, both substantial elements in public relations. Facebook is no stranger to controversy regarding privacy. They have been accused of data mining (Jones, Soltren (2005))[2] and cooperation with government search requests[3]. Should Facebook be allowed to step in in cases of cyberbullying, or would that be invading a user's privacy? While the morality of Facebook's actions is subject to debate, the decrease of trust is evident. Alone the fact that Facebook's software is proficient enough to recognise people's faces in photos (Milian (2011))[4], won't let you delete your account and often sets privacy to minimum by default forcing the user to find out how to change it only afterwards, have left users uneasy.

The solution to this is simple and has already been implemented in part. Primarily, by default, all users should reserve the right to be completely anonymous. Nowadays, many people chose not to, going as far as letting everyone know the most intimate details of their lives, but the option should be there as the primary user base is in capitalistic countries and having a choice will always give Facebook a better image. One has to embed and uphold these values, while at the same time being transparent, in order to gain the user's trust.

Additionally, the interface for changing privacy settings should be completely simplistic and intuitive. I remember the first time I wanted to change the visibility of a photo; I spent half an hour trying to find out how. Inducing this kind of frustration in a user is simply detrimental to the company.

At the same time there have been many reported cases of identity theft (Strutter, Carroll (2009))[5], cyberbullying (Toder (2010))[6] and political bias (Munro (2011))[7] in censoring. Would it be smarter for Facebook to step in in these cases alone for the fact that they have a reputation to uphold? Would these actions be damaging to the image of the product Facebook is trying to sell? Obviously it depends, but usually the answer should be no. If we compare Facebook to the popular million-user platform 4chan, where all users are anonymous, we can see the true dark side that anonymity brings to the internet whereas simultaneously, the same anonymity is what gave it its success (Poole (2010))[8]. Facebook similarly promote itself as a platform on which you can freely express your opinions from anywhere; the result of which you take full responsibility for, yet not through the hand of Facebook. Seeing Facebook as a vehicle of freedom is extremely valuable towards its success.

Further Migration to Mobile Devices

Moreover, marketing Facebook with a strong emphasis on accessibility is the key to rising out of the potential decline on the product life cycle. Harnessing the power of globalisation to reap the maximum profit can only be done through adapting to the technology of today. All around us we see a host of mobile phones and tablets emerge around us in immeasurable numbers. This is the future. People should no longer have to bear the constraints of location to tell their friend about how awesome the coffee that they're drinking tastes. The most downloaded app on the iPhone is the free Facebook app (Siegler (2011))[9] as reported by techcrunch.com. Pay particular attention to the line the line "You'll notice one glaring absence: Facebook. If the social network had a native iPad app, it would undoubtedly be the top app of all time on the platform. Instead, they've gone months without one now, letting other paid apps like Friendly Plus (in the Top 30 all time) take their thunder." Although that article was written January 2011, Facebook's growth can be heavily accelerated if mistakes like that are avoided. Trends should be noticed and analysed carefully, yet the analysis should not cause the company to stall or hesitate to make decisions.

Potential Threats by Competitors and Dealing with Them

Competitors can also still be threats. Facebook's target consumer is practically the whole world, in all stages of the Wells and Gubar life cycle, and it's hard to please everyone. Would taking on that endeavour really outweigh the advantages of segmentation and focused marketing? Take China for instance; they've blocked Facebook on political reasons and as a result China, world's biggest country population-wise, is dominated by social networking sites such as renren and QQ (MacManus (2010))[10]. Clearly competing in China would be very profitable, yet in this case the disadvantages would outweigh the advantages. Entry into China is nearly impossible now that the market niche has already been filled and Facebook would not be able to handle the amount of censorship the Chinese government would impose. In this scenario, geographic segmentation plays in Facebook's favour.

Further Expansion Worldwide and Pleasing Everyone

On a similar note, many people might think that Facebook is as successful as it can possibly be. The truth is however that there is always possibility for expansion. Facebook obviously depends on hardware and network infrastructure too much to be accessible from anywhere. Imagine, if you will, if Facebook invested in hardware and stable internet in developing nations. They could monopolise the budding of the worldwide communication phase for said countries while at the same time boosting their image with practically no effort towards marketing. It would be a win-win situation.

Facebook is also big enough to compete with the big players. Facebook has proven to be the preferred method of searching for people, leaving Google in the dust (Idugboe (2011))[11]. Why not enter the content publishing and video making branch? People use Facebook a lot already, integrating a YouTube clone into its system might prove to be an intelligent move. You would no longer need to switch between accounts, but could instead have a similar commenting system on Facebook videos, making amateur videos public using the same business model YouTube has. The earlier Facebook aggressively expands, the more leverage it can get in the long run. Facebook might show no signs off a cease in growth, however it can still grow faster.

Conclusion

Based on the points discussed above one can conclude that Facebook is far from its potential peak. On one hand it has had a lot of marketing success even with all issues in the past and on the other Facebook still has a lot of room for growth to previously unseen heights.

It is important to realise however, that whether or not the implementation of suggestions made in this essay are applicable, the problems raised are definitely present and should be handled accordingly.

Nonetheless, it is safe to bet that Facebook will dominate social media for many years to come and proliferate through to all market segments; it will continue to cement its presence in the business world and to have a deep-reaching influence on world politics. One can only hope the relationship between Facebook and its users remains solid.

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End.