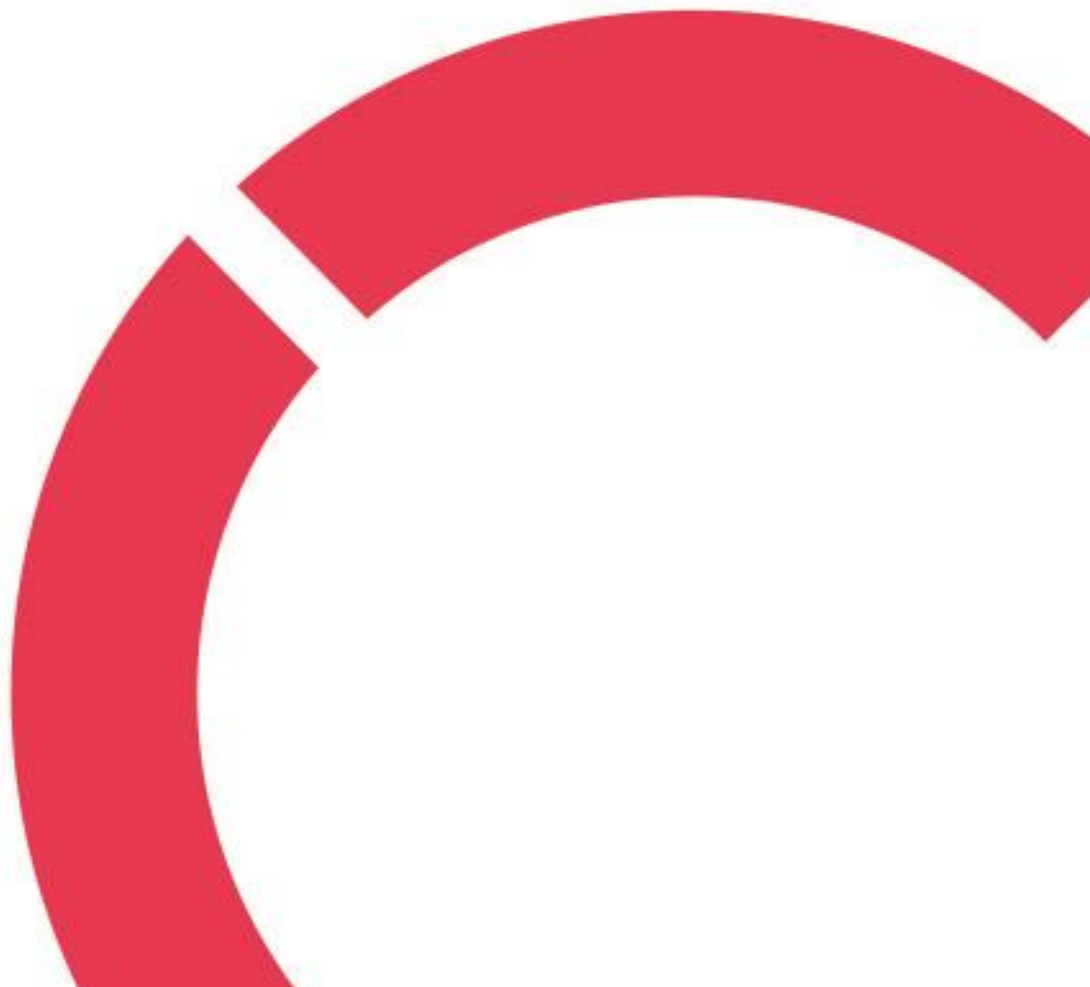**Md Jiyon Khan**

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

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As the world continues to go digital, the business sector has not been left behind in utilising the digital space. For a long time, social media has been seen as an entertainment and socialisation tool. However, significant businesses have discovered how this platform can play a role in growing them to top-notch levels.

Although social media can act as a marketing tool, the industry needs to understand the correct way to utilise it to get favourable outcomes. For this reason, this paper reflects on using social media as a marketing strategy for businesses and describes significant ways a company can benefit from social media marketing. It provides insights into social media users, including their ages and how frequently they use social platforms. In addition, it explains how they can utilize the platform, especially through two-way conversation, to maintain cohesion with the consumers. This paper also shows how businesses can use social media not only for marketing commodities but also for maintaining a cohesive relationship with customers. In addition, it has elaborated on tips that can be utilised to integrate customer engagement and run effective social media campaigns. The paper explores tips that can be used to boost social media marketing to increase audience size and sales. For these tips, the top social media platforms have been discussed and specific recommendations elaborated for each. The platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat.

Another aspect that this paper has considered is the value these platforms carry, how influential they are in the business sector, and how they can influence branding. This paper uses secondary research, including several peer-reviewed journals, books, and articles, to achieve reliable outcomes. It compares different sources discussing a common issue to note similarities or differences. Additionally, it considers some case studies that can be used as references while adopting this strategy. In general, the paper concludes that social media is an effective strategy that can be used to improve businesses and customer relations, sales, and brands, provided that the right path is followed.

CONCEPT DEFINITIONS

CSM

Consumers' Sentiment toward Marketing- It refers to the general feeling a consumer has for a given marketplace.

IAP

Innovation Adoption Process- It is the progression that helps individuals to explore the innovation-decision process. The process comprises five steps, whereby the first is conversing with the innovation

Two-way Conversation

It refers to a socialisation technique where a brand listens to and responds to consumers' messages on social media

UGC

User-Generated Content- It refers to content used to market a brand on social media sites, but official brand representatives do not do it

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1 INTRODUCTION

Social media marketing is how businesses use social media platforms to persuade consumers to purchase their products (Evans, Bratton & McKee, 2021). Today's world is increasingly embracing the use of social media sites. There are several ways in which people can socialise on social sites today due to liking, sharing, and commenting features. Further, socialization is promoted as several sites promote online communities' development. Individual entrepreneurs and brands are utilising such communities to reach their customers and grow the size of their market segment. Companies are also using social media to retain and keep in touch with customers they have already acquired. The central role of social media marketing teams is to focus on running marketing campaigns by publishing posts that show their products and services. They also have to engage with customers and analyse how the use of such advertising is performing. Therefore, it means that for businesses to adopt the social media marketing plan, they must be sure to follow particular strategies to exploit it successfully.

Despite social media being widely used as an entertainment source, marketing has also become one of its primary uses. In recent years, social media has been widely used as a tool for marketing, and the pace at which the activity is taking place looks like it will not stop any time soon (Atherton 2019). Meta platforms such as Facebook and Instagram are among the leading platforms that have gained popularity in marketing (Arora & Sanni 2019, 497). Snapchat, Twitter, TikTok, and Pinterest have also emerged as influential social media marketing platforms (Atherton 2019). This paper aims to determine how and why social media has become significant in the marketing sector for individuals and corporates. It also aims at identifying the essential elements of social media sites that brands should consider while selecting good social media marketing platforms. Therefore, the areas covered include the involvement of social media in marketing activities and the influence it has created as a marketing tool and in building brands. In examining the aspects mentioned earlier, this discussion will discuss why social media has become widely used for marketing today and why individual and corporate entrepreneurs are increasingly embracing it. Another explored aspect involves strategies an enterprise can follow to develop an integrated and solid social media marketing campaign. Additionally, this report will show how social media influences business and marketing, the best ways to identify suitable marketing social sites, and myths that entrepreneurs must avoid while adopting social media marketing. Further, whether social media marketing is essential in boosting an enterprise's brand position and general market entry will be determined.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review focuses on three main concepts. The first involves understanding social media, the second elaborates on the rise of social media marketing, and the third dwells on user-generated content marketing.

2.1 Understanding Social Media

Retailers require conversing with every social media aspect to consider it a marketing tool (Arora & Sanni 2019, 498). Therefore, it is critical to understand the meaning of Web 2.0 since social media cannot be understood without defining it. Web 2.0 represents a new way World Wide Web end users utilise it (Cheung et al. 2021, 118). The World Wide Web is considered a place where information is recurrently altered by all the operators using it collaboratively and sharing (Arora & Sanni 2019, 497). The Web 2.0 concept has been linked with people adding value to websites they visit as long as they allow them to do so (Cheung et al. 2021, 119). Therefore, it shows that a more significant concern is not only about technology but also what people do with it. The aspect allows people to retrieve, create, and consume information (Ioanas 2020, 1).

Social media has been defined as a collection of internet-based applications that build the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Cheung et al. 2021, 120). Some scholars have also defined social media as a broad term to describe software tools that create sharable user-created content (Arora & Sanni 2019, 477). However, for a site to become a social network, it has to contain certain features that allow the user to connect with others (Ioanas, 2020, 1). They include user profiles, content, and the ability to interact with other people's content through comments, likes, and shares (Johnson 2020). Another requirement is to enable the users to join various virtual groups based on common interests. Some people use the phrase social networking sites to refer to social media. However, the two are different since social media allows users to unite by generating profiles with personal information (Cheung et al. 2021, 122). Users can then invite friends to access their profiles. Therefore, social networking is the environment where social networking is done.

There might be different consumer perceptions of social media marketing. Therefore, researchers have explored Consumers' Sentiment toward Marketing (CSM) to examine such perceptions (Al-Deen & Hendricks, 2013). CMS concept refers to the general feeling a consumer has for a given marketplace. Individuals' perceptions of the market are a significant determinant of whether or not they will be motivated to engage in consumption activities (Atherton 2019). Therefore, making customers open to technology is essential for successful social media marketing (Al-Deen & Hendricks, 2013). It means that consumers must be ready to embrace technology by having the propensity to use it to achieve goals in different environments. Retailers must consider consumer technology readiness when marketing social media (Atherton 2019). When their target customers are not familiar with social media or perceive it negatively, using this type of marketing will not bear positive outcomes. Therefore, entrepreneurs must first analyse the technology readiness among their target audiences to predetermine the method's success.

The Innovation Adoption Process (IAP) can also determine customers' acceptance of new technology (Atherton 2019). The IAP instrument is a progression that helps individuals to explore the innovation-decision process. The process comprises five steps, whereby the first is conversing with the innovation (Al-Deen &Hendricks, 2013). The second involves developing an attitude of innovation (Arora & Sanni 2019, 477). After the two steps, a business then decides whether it is correct to adopt the creation or not (Arora & Sanni 2019, 477). If the company chooses to use the innovation, it implements it for the next step and then confirms the decision. Conversing with the IAP process is essential to marketers since it will boost the chances of getting a satisfying social media marketing campaign (Johnson 2020).

Today, social media no longer provides a platform for socializing with friends and families only (Al-Deen & Hendricks, 2013). It has grown into a platform where consumers can learn more about their favourite products and the families that produce them (Al-Deen & Hendricks, 2013). Additionally, they can gather enough information that helps them in determining the progress of the companies. The platform also allows marketers and retailers to connect with their customers. Due to the business-customer connection on social media, marketers have an excellent chance of reaching new audiences and increasing their sales (Cheung et al. 2021, 122). Similarly, customers can explore different products, allowing them to discover new products and companies. Touchpoints for reaching customers have also been significantly boosted due to the rise of powerful search engines and mobile devices (Arora &

Sanni 2019, 479). Advanced interfaces, online social networks, and peer-to-peer communication vehicles have also helped marketers and retailers keep in touch with customers through touch points (Johnson 2020).

The shopper marketing concept has emerged as the new boost in developing new customer touch points that promote the interaction between customers and businesses (Hechavarria 2020). The idea of planning and executing all marketing activities that are influential to a shopper during the entire purchasing path, from when shopping motivation occurs to consumption, repurchase, and recommendation (Hechavarria 2020). Marketers and businesses should consider perceived fit an essential factor in shopper marketing (Arora & Sanni, 2019, 480). It involves the similarity between an extension product category and existing products affiliated with the brand. When many customers perceive shopping services on social media sites, they will be more likely to use social media for shopping.

Social media sites contain a diverse customer audience, making it easier to promote business growth among retailers. Social media has a robust number of people which means a broader target market (Atherton, 2019). The vastness of the social media market provides an excellent ground for businesses to promote their brands by reaching new customers and interacting with potential customers. One exciting feature of shopper marketing is that companies can combine efforts with their customers to reach other customers (Atherton, 2019). They can jointly engage in improving products, creating clear messages, identifying promoters, and serving a connection to in-store activities (Arora & Sanni, 2019, 492). Therefore, it displays the significance of social media in retailers' and marketers' marketing plans.

Social media sites are also getting new advancements as time passes. The improvements include developing new features that promote the interactive abilities of the sites (Hechavarria 2020). The promotions are significant boosters of the interaction of brands and customers in understanding different products. Virtual technology has promoted virtual brand communities to create computer-generated space for businesses and customers to interact through marketing (Johnson, 2020). Since the advancements increase the interactive capabilities of social media sites, they ease the process of new product discovery. Resultantly, businesses can get more consumers to know and purchase their products (Arora & Sanni, 2019, 495). Additionally, when consumers perceive social media shopping as easy, the chances of getting influenced by them to make purchases increase.

2.2 The Rise of Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is the connection between brands and customers while offering a personal channel and currency for user-centred networking and social interaction (Cheung et al. 2021, 126). Since today's world is technology-driven, social networking has become an avenue for marketing campaign extension by retailers to reach a broader range of customers (Johnson, 2020). The emergence of social media has dramatically transformed how businesses communicate with customers. Since social media has been one of the ways companies can gain a competitive advantage, several organizations have strived to deploy this strategy to gain popularity (Ioanas, 2020, 1).

Social media marketing has become popular mainly in the last two decades (Atherton 2019). However, it has gained more popularity and embracement globally as we advance. Additionally, more social media platforms are becoming popular (Atherton 2019). Any platforms that get popular in terms of the number of people using them have been quickly utilized as marketing platforms by retailers and other business organizations. Facebook was among the social media that came into existence early. It was invented in 2004 by Marc Zuckerberg, Chris Hughes, Eduardo Saverin, and Dustin Moskovitz, who were Harvard University students (Al-Deen & Hendricks, 2013). Facebook gained much influence worldwide and attracted billions of users. It is estimated that by 2021, Facebook had achieved about three billion users, of which half were using it daily.

Facebook allows users to join it for free, which has played a role in attracting a vast number of users (Cheung et al. 2021, 125). New users are allowed to create their accounts, start new groups and join pre-existing groups. Therefore, this platform gives an excellent chance for people to socialize globally. Having a vast number of users began to make Facebook a fertile ground for marketing (Ioanas 2020, 1). Today, Facebook gains the most significant percentage of its revenues from business advertisements. The advertisements are displayed through various platform features, such as Facebook stories, news feed, and popup ads (Cheung et al. 2021, 128). Since Facebook has an expansive room for socialization, it also allows different entrepreneurs to share ideas and information, which might be helpful in their marketing activities (Cheung et al. 2021, 128). Also, Facebook has been an excellent tool for peer-to-peer socialization, bottom-up connectivity, and customer connectivity to products from businesses.

In 2010 Instagram was launched for iOS and dramatically gained popularity, with one million registered users within the first two months. It was developed as a video and photo-sharing social networking service (Cheung et al. 2021, 130). However, as it continued to command more popularity worldwide, it started to attract business activities as a marketing tool. The social network gained about ten million users in a year. By 2018, it had already won an enormous number of people's hearts worldwide, having approximately one billion registered users (Arora & Sanni 2019, 478). Its android version was launched in 2012, and later a desktop interface and a Windows 10 app. In 2014, Instagram became a favorite for businesses, especially following the wave of sponsored posts (Cheung et al. 2021, 128). The sponsored posts are personalized according to user demographics, minimizing the chances of a user scrolling past them. The sponsored ads feature attracted more entrepreneurs as it introduced the tools to view the insights such as impressions, reach and frequency related to the ad campaign (Cheung et al. 2021, 131).

In 2011, another influential social platform was founded by Evan Spiegel, Reggie Brown, and Bobby Murphy (Arora & Sanni 2019, 499). The app was named Snapchat, and its central idea was the ability to post pictures and videos that could disappear after some time from the site. Some studies assert that by 2014, 40 per cent of 18-year-olds were already using it in the U.S. daily (Johnson 2020). Additionally, it gained 30 million users and over sixty million downloads (Johnson 2020). By 2020, it had achieved over 300 million users (Johnson 2020). Once again, the high number of users attracted businesses to use it as a vessel to persuade customers to buy their products and services. The network has also gained much revenue from advertisements.

One of the most recent social networks to be introduced is TikTok. It was launched in 2016 and rapidly became popular across the globe (Arora & Sanni 2019, 499). Only four years after its launch, TikTok surpassed 2 billion mobile downloads globally, making it the third fastest growing brand in 2020 (Johnson 2020). Since businesses are looking for platforms that offer large audiences that could become potential customers, they have seen it as an alternative online sharing version (Evans et al. 2021). It has become one of the places where businesses are directing ads that entertain and boost their campaigns for various connections. TikTok's emergence as one of the fastest-growing brands has attracted large and small companies and agencies who aim to gain significant results in their entrepreneurship activities (Johnson 2020).

Some studies have looked into the dynamics related to the issue of social media and the internet (Arora & Sanni 2019, 476). The studies have considered how businesses operate and consumers make product

choices. Some problems that have emerged are that consumers' tastes and preferences constantly change over the years (Arora & Sanni 2019, 499). Therefore, businesses are evolving in terms of what they offer and how they offer it. It is because they must be flexible according to the changes in the consumers' preferences. For instance, ten years ago, consumers' tastes and preferences significantly differed from what they are today. Similarly, they will dramatically change within the coming ten years. The studies on this issue are essential since they can help businesses understand customer behavior (Evans et al. 2021). When they know the customers' behaviors, it will be easier for them to develop strategies that can effectively influence them. One of the changing consumer behaviors is in social media marketing and shopping practices.

Transparency is one of the issues that have prevailed as a solid behavior that changes for the customers (Evans et al. 2021). In recent years, customers have increasingly demanded transparency from the businesses where they transact their purchases (Evans et al. 2021). For this reason, it has been found that several customers prefer to boycott and dismiss companies undertaking questionable practices. They also dislike companies with chief executive officers affiliated with political parties and ideologies they do not like (Arora & Sanni 2019, 499). On the other hand, they are more likely to promote companies whose activities match their beliefs and values. Some customers also use social media platforms to research businesses they want to transact with (Evans et al. 2021). One issue that has risen in recent years is the global warming issue. Several consumers are more concerned with environmental conservation and keeping the world clean and green. They find the necessary information on different companies' social media platforms and prefer associating with environmentally friendly companies (Johnson 2020). Therefore, companies must be transparent when giving their practices and histories to customers to promote the consumers' trust. Consequently, social media has become one of the most effective tools to encourage company transparency.

In 2019, the Coronavirus disease pandemic changed the world of businesses significantly. The lockdowns imposed by governments forced people to stay in their homes. However, they still needed to make some purchases to sustain their lives. Therefore, businesses had to find ways to link to their customers (Cheung et al. 2021, 128). The best way to help enterprises reach customers where they are is through online marketing and sales. Therefore, social media increased its vibrancy in the business sector. Several businesses and customers preferred to stick to online transactions even when several pandemic restrictions were lifted (Evans et al. 2021). Therefore, it became necessary for companies to develop intuitive e-commerce sites to offer a satisfying consumer experience.

Some studies show that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the imposed lockdowns also played a vital role in promoting the use of social media platforms (Dubbelink, Herrando & Constantinides 2021). Therefore, the increased use of these sites increased the interactions between businesses and consumers. During lockdowns, several people spent most of their time browsing different social media platforms. Some studies also assert that the youth, especially generation Z, could use five screens on another social platform (Dubbelink et al. 2021). They also suggest that the youths could spend more than eight hours on social platforms daily. Therefore, social media marketing had an advantage since the advertisements reached a robust audience, thus increasing the chances of getting new customers (Dubbelink et al. 2021). Several businesses have adopted an online marketing technique whereby they advertise different goods and services on each platform instead of advertising the same goods or products across all social media sites. Therefore, people who use multiple social media sites will acquire extensive knowledge about the business and its products (Evans et al. 2021).

2.3 User-Generated Content

Researchers suggest that despite social media providing never-ending communication avenues, the key player in influencing is the individual rather than technology (Hechavarria 2020). User-generated content creates a social currency for marketers since it is a booster in the brand definition. It describes the combination of all ways people utilize social media, usually applied to elaborate on the diverse forms of content available to the public and developed by end-user (Cartwright, Liu & Raddats 2021, 21). Therefore, user-generated content acting as a social currency impacts brands and relates to social capital (Hechavarria 2020). The social capital concept is molded at a personal level, but its occurrence manifests during a relationship among several individuals.

The amount of someone's social capital depends on the size of the connections network they can influence (Evans et al. 2021). If an individual has a great network of connections, he can successfully use social networking significantly to aid a brand into an essential part of customers' social interactions. In today's world, social interaction is drastically increasing on the internet. Therefore, social currency can be seen as a tool to boost a brand's social media presence (Cartwright et al. 2021, 21). It can grow through the interaction of consumers, and in most circumstances, the brands cannot control it. There-

fore, most brands do not depend on social currency to promote brand loyalty among customers. However, when brands become integrated into people's daily lives, the chances of growth are higher since they are part of people's lives (Evans et al. 2021).

User-generated content has emerged as a solid boost to social media marketing. It includes content in videos, text, and images. It also reviews those individuals sharing the content rather than brands they talk about (Hechavarria 2020). Therefore, it is a way of marketing to consumers and influencing other consumers regarding certain brands. Consequently, the individuals creating a post about the brands are not official representatives of the brands (Cartwright et al. 2021, 22). Not being official brand representatives boosts the chances of attracting more potential customers since they believe the person sharing the information is free of bias (Cartwright et al. 2021, 25).

In most cases, when the brand or official marketers advertise content, consumers do not have complete trust in them (Cartwright et al. 2021, 26). They believe that the brand is sharing only the best light of the products and omitting some negative features that may negatively affect the customers' purchasing decisions. Brand marketers are sometimes overly exaggerating the goodness of their products. For example, they use smoke and mirrors to make fast food look more appetizing and more significant in quantity (Johnson 2020). Likewise, with perfect photo shooting with lights, angles, and Photoshop, any hotel can be turned into a resort in advertisement photos (Cartwright et al. 2021, 21). Such an activity is not expected from a person who is not an official brand representative. Resultantly businesses are being advised to utilize this aspect to boost their reach to the consumers. Ninety per cent of consumers agree that they decide to make purchases after getting influenced by user-generated content (Johnson 2020).

In 2013 a survey conducted in the U.S. found that 76 per cent of customers believe that online advertisements are 'very exaggerated' or 'somewhat exaggerated.' (Cheung et al. 2021, 130). One in five respondents even explained that they refused to decide about purchasing a product based on what they saw in the ads. Another survey was conducted in 2015 to explore customers' perceptions of the advertisement industry (Cheung et al. 2021, 131). The results showed that the people have less than five per cent trust in financial institutions, lawyers, and U.S. Congress advertisements. The respondents also suggested that media personalities lie to sell more efficiently (Cheung et al. 2021, 133). The outcomes of those surveys show how consumer-generated content can play a significant role in promoting consumers' trust.

Consumer-generated advertising is closely related to consumer-generated content. It refers to particular instances where customers deliberately create a brand by developing a clear message to inform, persuade and remind the public about the brand (Park et al. 2020, 2). In other instances, this technique is referred to as vigilante marketing, which serves as an unpaid advertisement and marketing effort including different relationships of people (Cheung et al. 2021, 133). The relationship may be one to one, one to many, or many to many; those loyal customers of certain brands typically pass the communication.

3 SOCIAL MEDIA AND MARKETING

Social media technologies are in a continuous process of development. The developments include the innovation of new social network sites and the introduction of new features to the existing sites (Park, Williams, & Son 2020, 2). Therefore, the advancements are adding complexity to the pactices that public relations professionals have to undertake. Technology advancement allows animating, building, translating, and repairing expressions. It also adds dimension via distinctive and material capabilities to embed, transform, and provide access to content such as stories (Park et al. 2020, 2). Therefore, PR personnel needs to understand he process of content consumption. One of the most critical pieces of knowledge is social media-related technologies. Understanding social media technologies can help businesses have an adequate information flow while enhancing the consumers' lives.

Unlike traditional media, the new media allow a two-way information flow (Park et al. 2020, 2). Therefore, business organisations need to engage in extensive interaction with their customers. It means that the P.R. professionals of an organisation must develop solid strategic approaches to enhance message delivery activities. Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Tik-Tok have gained popularity and adoption (Cheung et al. 2021, 133). However, each site provides different features in terms of information sharing, networking, news posting, and site ranking. Additionally, since they are all simultaneously available, they offer stiff competition to each other (Cheung et al. 2021, 134).

Businesses need to determine the sites that could perfectly work for them keenly. Communities are a compelling aspect that helps understand social media audiences (Johnson 2020). There are different groups in the social networks whereby people form communities around the topics of interest. Therefore, exploring the issues of interest of other communities can help determine the relevance of particular groups of people. P.R. professionals have the task of effectively spreading messages to the right audience to influence their behaviour successfully (Serbetcioglu &Göçer 2020, 2024).

Traditionally, organisations could spread information based on generalising the audience. However, in today's media, such generalising can lead to adverse repercussions (Park et al. 2020, 2). Social media requires the marketers to be dialogic and interactive, but not just spreading messages since it does not work as a messaging function. An organisation can also develop a strategy to create its community by building loyalist groups and controlling them (Johnson 2020). Since different social media sites have

various features, they also provide other usability and interactivity. Therefore, when deciding which sites to use, it is vital to examine the two components to ensure that they suit the needs of the business. It means that P.R. professionals have to develop new skills in technology that could enable them to use the sites effectively (Cheung et al. 2021, 133). Computer technology-based skills are significant since they can help P.R. professionals execute most of the required activities in their field (Park et al. 2020, 2).

Today's technological advancements have made things easier since social platforms are readily accessible through internet-enabled devices such as mobile phones, including those that are not smartphones; however, many people today own smartphones (Serbetcioglu &Göçer 2020, 2023). Therefore, the connectivity of people across the world has dramatically increased. Additionally, today there is digital empowerment which has enabled individuals to be heard and counted. Such extended connectivity is an aid to P.R. professionals since they can collect data and use it for market targeting (Cheung et al. 2021, 128). For instance, the data may include individuals' data regarding education, health, economics, and user needs and use the statistics to prepare sophisticated targeted P.R. campaigns.

3.1 Customer Engagement and Marketing Strategies

As mentioned earlier, understanding strategies that should be followed in social media marketing is the key to its success. One is utilising a two-way community engagement program (Park et al. 2020, 2). In this program, the business is made to be part of the conversation. Instead of becoming the only dominant character and failing to acknowledge followers and visitors, this program allows an exchange whereby the brand speaks and listens to the consumers (Park et al. 2020, 2). This technique is effective since it will enable the brand to respond directly to the customers' needs. Therefore, this strategy is mutually beneficial as customers feel more valued and acknowledged. On the other hand, the brand can get first-hand information about the consumers' tastes and preferences. Understanding such needs elevates the brand's chances of satisfying customers' needs and retaining them.

Two-way community engagement allows the business to connect with customers on a human level. When posting on social media, the primary goal of posting should be to build and add value to the brand. Therefore, 80 per cent of the post that the business creates must be aligned to that goal. The company can use the remaining 20 per cent as a self-service tool (Johnson 2020). It includes endorsing

products, especially new ones, and promoting upcoming events. A brand should also consider sharing news and ideas. They can help the customers get educated, informed, and delighted. Resultantly, they will feel that the brand's site is interactive and beneficial in diverse ways. A two-way conversation also helps customers understand that the business is not coldly disconnected from them but is ready to listen, understand, and treat the customers on a human level (Johnson 2020). Social media two-way conversation is also helpful in defining a brand personality (Kelly 2016). A business can achieve this by highlighting its culture and expertise. The brand can also add a little humor to the highlights to keep it more engaging. Photos are one of the most effective ways a brand can make its customers realise its personality. In most cases, images help customers get information faster than words (Kelly 2016). Additionally, sometimes an image can be used to communicate a simple message that could otherwise require a comprehensive word explanation. Thus, it saves time and resources. Further, when a brand posts several images showing how they undertake its activities, customers can quickly identify the services they offer and the products they sell.

Two-way conversation is also significant in helping a business gain valuable candid insight (Johnson 2020). When a company engages in a two-way conversation with its customers, it is essential to take time and monitor the conversations (Kelly 2016). People will say what they feel on social media platforms during such discussions. Sometimes they could react directly to the companies or other customers' posts. However, since they are free to post anything, monitoring what they post will help an organisation understand them better. It is because their posts include both negative and positive insights. Customers will post about what they love about the organisation and what they hate about it (Kelly 2016). Therefore, after noticing what they cite as the frustrations, the company can quickly take remedies to the problems. Similarly, it can continue to improve the excellent services that the customers mention.

Research from CX Social reported that 67 per cent of companies believe that social customer service is the most pressing short-term priority for customer contact centers (Serbetcioglu &Göçer 2020, 2022). They also think companies that extensively upgrade their social media customer experience will likely see 30 to 50 per cent improvement in their key activities (Hechavarria 2020). It includes getting improved repeat purchases and upsells. Furthermore, the customers increasingly recommend their products to others. Therefore, two-way conversation is a significant activity for business growth on social media.

3.2 How to Develop a Solid Two-Way Conversation

One of the effective ways to form a solid two-way conversation is by being part of an existing conversation. Consumers make comments daily, like sharing and complaining on the organisation's social media platforms (Hechavarria 2020). Therefore, it is up to the company to ensure that it is making all these activities become conversations. It means that they must pay close attention to every reaction produced by the consumers to provide that the consumers do not feel ignored. Paying close attention is not only to the positive but also to the hostile engagements from the customers (Arora & Sanni 2019, 498). Showing concerns about aggressive arrangements is a vital step in rectifying the relationship of the business with the complaining customers.

Considering the ongoing conversation on social media platforms about the brand is essential. After that, the organisation should prioritise responding to comments, answering questions such as inquiries, and addressing complaints (Serbetcioglu &Göçer 2020, 2022). The best way to keep the conversations going is by making sure there is a business-customer engagement frequently. Therefore, the organization should consider engaging with the consumers every week. Today's world is full of different activities that people are engaging in. Consequently, it is easy for the consumers to focus on other activities and forget about the business (Kelly 2016). For this reason, a brand is the one that must act responsibly to create a long-lasting relationship with its customers and prospects (Arora & Sanni 2019, 499). During such engagements, a brand should also remember to engage with the customers and other brands. It is essential to a business since it will help a brand engage with the industry thought leaders and big companies.

Utilizing paid ads is also significant in boosting a business's customer engagement. Sometimes, reaching the targeted amount of customers is a challenging task. Therefore, a company must develop a strategy to achieve the intended customers successfully. In 2016, Facebook modified its algorithm by prioritizing posts from families and friends at the top of the feeds (Johnson 2020). Later in the same year, it changed the algorithm again to make the posts on the feeds personalized. Therefore, it prioritized the posts by predicting what someone thinks is informative to them. The predictions rely on the kinds of posts someone frequently likes, shares, searches, and the sites they often visit (Serbetcioglu & Göçer 2020, 2024).

Making the algorithm changes began to pose a significant challenge to how businesses reached customers. Many consumers could now see only their interest on their Facebook feeds, minimizing their

chances of knowing about a particular brand. The challenge introduced by the algorithm changes can be combated by boosting posts by paying for them to reach the consumers (Kelly 2016). However, it is essential to consider the posts that require boosting. A company should only consider boosting posts that are not getting the expected reach on their own. Boosting them will help them get more engagement in post reach, likes, and comments. Resultantly, the engagement that the posts get by the boosting makes the posts naturally gain popularity (Serbetcioglu &Göçer 2020, 2024). Therefore, they begin to gain prioritization, appear on several people's newsfeeds, and increase the posts' engagement by encouraging more conversations.

Regarding social media communities, Facebook groups effectively encourage two-way conversations (Arora & Sanni 2019, 450). An invite-only group will be more effective, whereby the brand invites the most engaged customers to join the group. Such groups will help the brand communicate relevant messages to the right people, unlike traditional groups where messages could be spread to unspecified people (Kelly 2016). There are significant differences between newsfeed posts and Facebook group feeds. When one posts in a Facebook group, every group member will get notified of the post. Therefore, the group members will not miss any messages sent to the group. Also, interacting with group members is not an automatable activity. The group owner has to open the group and interact with its members. Posts to the regular newsfeed will not serve as a group message (Serbetcioglu & Göçer 2020, 2024). However, it is advisable not to use Facebook groups to promote products and offers actively. Instead, the groups should be used as a community of like-minded people. A proper way to make effective community interactions is by asking questions, leaving comments, and igniting relevant discussions.

Humor is an effective manner to make a social media marketing strategy work. Humor is an excellent factor that can help social media engagements and act as a great ice breaker (Kelly 2016). Lough is always appreciated, but it is also important to note that humor should not be forced. Sometimes a particular piece statement might appear to be a joke to one person but seem to be a plain statement to another (Serbetcioglu &Göçer 2020, 2024). No one wants to be a comedian that would crack a joke in an auditorium only to get a response of deep silence. Likewise, in business and marketing, a brand must be keen not to force a joke that will receive an adverse reaction from the customers. A well-thought piece of humor can be a great ice breaker to start a conversation and keep people conversing about a particular brand. Old Spice, Taco Bell, Totino's, and Bissell are among brands that are known for frequently using humor in their social media conversations (Serbetcioglu &Göçer 2020, 2024). Charmin is known for deploying humor throughout its social media marketing campaigns. For instance, it creates opinion polls for customers to vote, but the answer choices are based on comedy. It also creates

potty-puns to create jokes using funny animal characters. Making your social media customers laugh allows you to build solid connections that help the brand develop a sense of community with the audience.

Social media marketing is effective for both organizations and individuals in business. Therefore, to promote customer interaction, the brand owners must show their faces (Dubbelink et al. 2021). One effective way to show the face is by the use of videos. Creating videos to conduct business owners allows the customers to understand who is behind the company. Also, unlike screen texts that can fall flat, videos create an illusion of a more solid connection between the business and its customers since it appears to be more authentic (Serbetcioglu & Göçer 2020, 2023). Today's social media platforms are excellent in executing this concept (Dubbelink et al. 2021). Facebook and Instagram are perfect for creating live videos. During such live posts, the company can engage customers by asking questions (Dubbelink et al. 2021). It creates an intriguing experience since the customers can respond in real-time. Similarly, the customers can ask live questions to the business, and the business will react in real-time. Another advantage of the live posts is that one can ask the customers questions that will help them come up with the topics for discussion (Dubbelink et al. 2021). Several brands such as Starbucks, ASPCA, Birchbox, and Mashable are on the frontline in utilising these live posts (Serbetcioglu &Göçer 2020, 2025).

Consistency is another aspect that should be keenly considered when engaging in social media marketing. It is not enough just to have social media profiles (Kelly 2016). Several people have profiles on multiple social sites, but lacking consistency in creating posts and engaging with their audiences has made them less influential to the audiences. Therefore, having limited but active social media platforms is even better. Creating at least one daily post on every social media platform is essential (Kelly 2016). Creating posts at regular intervals helps keep the platforms alive and increases the conversations.

In some cases, the social media managers may feel too busy to create the posts consistently (Dubbelink et al. 2021). However, they have to remember that failing to be consistent will kill the conversations. Therefore, they can consider seeking help from others to stick to their posting routines. Creating and sticking to a posting routine effectively lets followers know when to expect new posts (Serbetcioglu & Göçer 2020, 2026). It will make them habitually check the business' social platform for recent posts. Such habits among the followers will increase the chances of having significant and influential conversations.

3.3 Choosing the Proper Channels for Marketing

The presence of a brand on the right social media channels is a factor that requires proper attention. Being present on the appropriate channel can promote a company's social media marketing. Several social platforms offer effective marketing (Dubbelink et al. 2021). However, one of them may favour some businesses more than others. Therefore, a company should consider choosing the proper channels that will best match the type of business it engages in. Also, nowadays, new social sites are popping up almost every month. It becomes tempting for brands to be present on all the sites. Therefore, it is crucial to explore the social media strategy to help determine the best channel for a business.

Firstly, it is essential to ask whether the business needs social media marketing. If it does well without it, it may be acceptable to continue marketing without the social site (Dubbelink et al. 2021). However, if there is a need to increase the business' exposure to reach new audiences, it should be considered to engage in at least one of the social media sites. Research shows that most brands are creating social media platforms to collect consumer data in various ways (Dubbelink et al. 2021). However, on the consumers' end, the customers join social media to be closer to the brand to make inquiries, share feedback, and ask questions. Thirty-one per cent of the customers assert that they are on social sites to share feedback, while 33 per cent say they are there for customer service issues and inquiries (Cheung et al. 2021, 120). Despite the customers' reasons, 88 per cent of marketers assert that using social media positively impacts their businesses. Ninety per cent of the marketers also agree that social media helped them stay ahead of their competitors (Cheung et al. 2021, 120).

The business goals must be considered in determining the right social media channel (Mohammadi &Zarei 2020, 99). Different sites carry different marketing advantages. However, a few platforms stand out when most businesses set their goals. The common purposes for several enterprises are increasing brand awareness, sales, lead generation, community engagement, growing brand audience, and increasing the traffic around the business' web. According to research, 70 per cent of companies aim to increase brand awareness (Cheung et al. 2021, 125). Fifty-nine per cent of them aim at generating leads, while 48 per cent's goal is to increase community engagement. After listing the brand goals, marketers should reference them while considering the best channel choice (Cheung et al. 2021, 127). Another factor to consider when choosing the proper social media channels is the resources available for the marketers (Mohammadi &Zarei 2020, 99). It is important to note that managing social media require a lot of dedication in terms of time and effort. There are also strategies that marketers should consider while scheduling posts. Therefore, a brand must ask whether they have a social media team

(Mohammadi &Zarei 2020, 100). A social media team is crucial in maintaining a good flow of social media posts and exploring followers' feedback. If there is no social media team, it becomes necessary to determine who will make part of it and handle the social media responsibilities (Mohammadi &Zarei 2020, 100). Also, if there is a team, it is essential to predetermine whether it has enough people to manage the entire site that the brand wants to engage. Another question that the marketers can ask themselves is whether they can dedicate enough time to each selected channel. For a new channel, it would be wise to go through the process using a learning curve. Additionally, marketers should know who will be responsible for creating your social media content and who will manage it. While preparing the resources, it is also essential to include software that will be used to post and analyse the posts' performance.

It is also necessary to consider the type of content the marketer has. Some companies already have strong media libraries (Cheung et al. 2021, 128). Therefore, when they engage in social media, they can consider the information they already have on the other media. For instance, they might have blog posts that they can reuse on the necessary social media sites that may be appropriate (Evans et al. 2021). It is also essential to consider creating more information. When considering the type of content available, marketers can consider who will create and manage different kinds of information, such as photographs and video coverage, and who will be their manager. It is also necessary to identify whether the channel contents will be outsourced. The main types of social media content are videos, images, text, stories, and live videos (Evans et al. 2021). If a brand can make several videos, those supporting videos are the best sites to jump into. They include Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube (Mohammadi &Zarei 2020, 101). If the brand cannot make videos necessary for TikTok, it should avoid this site. It is essential to select the type of sites that a brand has enough content to create and manage effectively (Mohammadi &Zarei 2020, 101).

Marketers should also consider the location where their audience is currently based. Customers to a particular business will always be on social media even if the business is not (Dolan 2017). Therefore, before engaging in social media, the company should first research which platforms carry many potential customers (Mohammadi &Zarei 2020, 104). After deciding on the sites with more customers, they should be prioritized since the brand will have an audience that will consume their marketing messages. The step is helpful since it will prevent the company from wasting time and resources on creating a site that does not have potential audiences (Mohammadi & Zarei 2020, 104).

In addition to determining where the potential customers are, the other group that is worth noting where they are is the competitors' group (Dolan 2017). Marketers should keenly research the competitors' social media presence. They should consider their social media profiles and posts, and which works for them (Nichifor et al. 2021, 2319). They should also view the information that is contained in their posts. After exploring their post, it is also necessary to consider the reactions they get from their customers by examining their comments. Researchers assert that social media is an excellent tool for navigating competitor analysis (Mohammadi & Zarei 2020, 104). Social media helps analyse the weaknesses and strengths of customers' loyalty to the brands. When a particular brand performs well on a given platform, it indicates that if one has a similar brand, they should join that site.

4 VALUE AND INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has been proven to have great value in the marketing sector. Today the world is widely using the internet as a vessel to connect. Social media platforms are forming a significant percentage of the internet today (Nichifor et al. 2021, 2320). Therefore, social media marketing is gaining momentum as an essential digital marketing tool since it can connect millions of people globally (Mohammadi & Zarei 2020, 104). One influence social media marketing brings to businesses is improving their brand awareness. Social media achieves this feature since it is a stress-free and profitable marketing platform, especially considering its use does not need several formalities (Nichifor et al. 2021, 2321). The ability of social media to reach millions of people increases a business' visibility worldwide (Dolan 2017). Applying social media strategy plays a role in increasing brand recognition. Ninety-one per cent of marketers agree that spending several hours weekly on social media platforms has dramatically improved their brand visibility (Dolan 2017). They also agree that the sites have aided them in enhancing the user experience for their customers, thus helping them create customer retention plans successfully.

The ability of social media to create engagement between brands and their customer makes them heavily influential and valuable to brands (Lal et al. 2020, 4). Social media is the most notable way brands can interact with millions of customers. The more communication between a brand and its customers, the more conversation chances are created. The two-way conversation has been termed an effective way of keeping the relationships between businesses and their customers alive (Lal et al. 2020, 6). Additionally, communication and engagement are valuable ways of attracting customers' attention. Attention is crucial since its presence increases the chances of customers getting brand information from their favourite company (Shawky et al. 2019). Therefore, the reach of the brand audience continues to grow, and the marketers can easily access their target customers.

Social media also holds a significant command in broadening brand authority (Nichifor et al. 2021, 2321). Brand loyalty and customer satisfaction are essential factors in strengthening a brand. The two aspects cannot prevail without effective communication channels. Social media platforms effectively maintain proper communication between brands and customers (Shawky et al. 2019). When customers realise that a brand is concerned about their well-being, they have a higher chance of returning to them. They can gauge the levels at which brands value them by considering how they respond to their queries on social platforms (Shawky et al. 2019). They can also consider how long the brand takes to

respond. Therefore, they can identify whether a brand treats them as a priority. When a company constantly satisfies customers' needs on social platforms, it will gain more loyal customers. Customers will also recommend it to others, which will help the brand gain more authority. Also, social media has been identified as a platform where customers freely air their views about brands (Nichifor et al. 2021, 2321). Therefore, it allows marketers to explore the satisfaction levels their brands offer customers. Brands can use it as a source of information to enhance their marketing strategies.

5 BRANDING

Social media has also been an effective tool for branding and is increasingly getting more potent in brand promotion (Ihejirika, Goulding & Calvert 2021, 58). Successful brand promotion is essential for generating leads, upselling, and making a brand stand out (Nichifor et al. 2021, 2321). A correct social media branding strategy is significant for optimal connection with target customers. Creating an identity is one of the key features one can utilise to improve social media branding (Ihejirika et al. 2021, 58). Creating identity involves a company understanding the nature of the business that it transacts. Understanding how the business differs from others (Jacobson, 2020) is also essential. After understanding such aspects, it is necessary to set the brand's core values and culture. A brand should also determine the brand tone with which it wants to enter the market (Dolan 2017). Finding the correct answers to those questions will help marketers to create a solid social media branding strategy.

Understanding also forms a significant part of social media branding (Dolan 2017). Marketers must ensure that they clearly understand the target audience. Understanding them will help the marketers to have an informed marketing strategy (Ihejirika et al. 2021, 61). It identifies why one has to get into the consumers' shoes to fully understand what they consider the most significant problems, needs, and wants. Such understanding will promote the chances of satisfying the customers' demands (Jacobson 2020). Customers will form a stronger bond with the company if they feel it meets their needs. Therefore, this will significantly boost the company's branding (Shawky et al. 2019).

Content management also matters in social media branding activities. The information a brand shares on the internet significantly influences how consumers perceive the brand (Dolan 2017). Every branded content that a company posts on its social media sites affect its influence on its followers. Some statistics suggest that capturing a potential buyer's attention takes only two seconds (Ihejirika et al. 2021, 59). It shows that a company should focus on creating solid videos and images that quickly attract customers' attention. Also, strong content will make customers and potential customers spend more time on the company's social media platforms to discover more products (Jacobson 2020). If the customers spend more time on the site, there are higher chances of spotting the products that are relevant to them

The designs utilised in creating posts are also influential to the branding of a business (Lal et al. 2020, 8). Marketers should consider deploying attractive visual elements on their posts, such as colour palettes, brand colours, and cover photos (Jacobson 2020). Product looks are influential on how the customers will perceive the brand. Therefore, enhancing their faces during marketing determines the brand's growth (Jacobson 2020). It is vital to align the brand design with an online marketing strategy. Scientists assert that the human brain processes visual contents 60 000 times faster than any other type of content (Ihejirika et al. 2021, 59). They also claim that 70 per cent of human sensory acceptors are in the eyes, and 50 per cent of the brain is always active in visual content processing (Ihejirika et al. 2021, 59). Therefore, positioning the brand marketing on videos and images is an effective strategy.

However, marketers must note and avoid some myths associated with social media branding. One of the prevention myths is that social media can build a brand overnight (Jacobson, 2020). Sometimes, social media marketers may spend a lot of time creating marketing posts. Additionally, they may dedicate much time to creating excellent content (Lal et al. 2020, 3). Such efforts may make them feel that the posts should get high engagement, such as likes, shares, and comments. However, it does not matter how excellent the content is (Lal et al. 2020, 3). The marketers must understand that when a social media site has been newly created, no one knows about it. Therefore, they require much patience and give the sites time to grow and spread to the targeted consumers.

Another myth marketers should avoid is that being on every social media platform is crucial (Shawky et al. 2019). Focus is essential in finding the correct way to brand a product. Therefore, the necessary step is not to engage in all social media sites but in the right ones. Choosing the right platforms is the most crucial aspect rather than all the sites (Cartwright et al. 2021, 26). Also, the brand should be keen on what information they share. They should ensure the correct data is communicated on the right social platform (Lal et al. 2020, 5). It is essential to consider the accurate information on the right site because different social media platforms have different additional features. Brands should also eliminate the myth that one needs hundreds of thousands of followers to successfully get strong brands on social media (Cartwright et al. 2021, 26). As opposed to that, a solid social media platform depends on the relationship between the brand and its customers.

6 CONCLUSION

Social media marketing uses online platforms to persuade consumers to go shopping for goods or services. The technique is effective both for individuals and corporates. However, marketers must understand several strategies they can deploy to achieve positive outcomes from this type of marketing. Some include choosing the right social media platforms to communicate the correct information. Also, several preparations are required, such as creating a social media team to manage the posts and ensure they are published consistently.

Retailers must keep a healthy relationship with their customers through conversing. Web 2.0 has emerged as a practical aspect of the business-customer conversation. The Web adds value to the discussions by allowing people to alter the information on social sites. Resultantly, communication is always getting more and more valuable. Additionally, it will enable people to create and retrieve data. Therefore, businesses and customers get to know each other better since they can effectively find the necessary information, they require about each other.

When venturing into social media marketing, marketers should consider two-way conversations. It will allow them to communicate mutually with the customers. Therefore, they will have a chance to better understand the customers and needs and know what they like and do not like. It will help them to develop strategies to curb problems that the customers point out. To maintain a healthy two-way conversation, marketers should lay down strict schedules to visit each social site to check what customers say. They should match each customer's message to understand all customers' needs. They must also be sure to reply to the customers to assure them that they are valued.

UGC has been widely accepted as an effective way to convince customers since customers are likelier to believe what other consumers say about a product. Since social media is gaining more popularity, it can connect millions of customers to brands. Today a higher percentage of people are using social media, especially youth. Also, most people use social media as the primary source of information about particular brands. Therefore, they have been termed effective in marketing and promoting brands. However, marketers must be keen to avoid being misled by various social media marketing and branding myths. Additionally, when venturing into the social media marketing strategy, marketers should examine which platforms best suit their businesses.

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