ENTERPRISES AND THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA
IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Ciprian PAVEL

Abstract: Social media refer to internet based applications such as: social networks, blogs, multimedia content-sharing sites and wikis. In principle, enterprises use social media for image building or for marketing purposes, for gaining insights from customers or communicating within or outside the enterprise. So it is important to distinguish the purposes for which enterprises are exploiting social media and ways to promote the enterprise on social networks.

Keywords: social media, enterprises behavior, trends.

Introduction

In recent years, social media has gone from a new idea to an absolute must for marketers. With older outbound marketing strategies, messages are sent to potential customers, and communication is one way.

On the other hand, on social media, customers and businesses can directly interact. Both parties can ask each other questions, repost each other’s content and work on forming relationships.

In recent years, there has been a shift from the static webpages of the earlier websites times towards web applications which draw on user data and relevant applications stored in the ‘cloud’1. Users have been encouraged to subscribe to these new services and platforms, post and share user-generated content and to add links to other websites. In addition, individuals and enterprises have been supported in exchanging information, experiences and opinions over internet communication platforms.

Enterprises have not only progressively embraced this new generation of highly dynamic web applications, but have also adopted new behaviours. They have integrated social media into the way they run their business, organised forms of internal communication apart from the management chain and, most importantly, communicated and interacted with customers using the new applications2. From that point of view it has been possible for customers to influence business decisions and assist companies in designing and marketing their products.

2 https://www.smartinsights.com/social-media-marketing/
The use of social media by enterprises

Enterprises attach importance to internet presence. Consequently, their websites increasingly offer functionalities such as online ordering, product catalogues and information, order tracking, product customisation and links to social media. As shown in Table 1, in 2017, some 77% of EU enterprises employing at least 10 people reported having a website. This is 4 percentage points more than in 2013 as adoption rates are slowing.

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(*) Differences between the last column and the sum of the previous two columns are due to rounding.
Source: http://ec.europa.eu/euristat/statistics-explained/images/b/b0/V1_presence_on_the_internet

Furthermore, enterprises seek to enhance their internet presence by exploiting the possibilities that social media offer. The four most widely known categories of social media are: (a) social networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Xing, and others; (b) corporate blogs or microblogs such as Twitter, Present.ley, and others; (c) multimedia content-sharing websites such as YouTube, Flickr, SlideShare, and others; and (d) wiki-based knowledge-sharing tools3.

In 2017, 47% of EU enterprises used at least one of these types of social media; compared to 2013, this is an increase of 17 percentage points.

3 http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained
Percentages do vary widely from country to country, ranging from 27% in Poland to 74% in Malta. Some 44% of all enterprises in the EU that reported having a website also reported using one or more social media (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

**Enterprises using social media, by type of social media, 2017 and 2013 (% of enterprises)**

In 2017, more than two thirds of EU enterprises employing 250 or more people (68%) had an account and used some kind of social network. By contrast, just over one out of four enterprises (43%) employing 10 to 49 people used social networks (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

**Enterprises using social media, by type of social media and size class, 2017 (% of enterprises)**

It is noticeable that 26% of enterprises in the EU used only one of the four types of social media. In fact, the use of only one type of social media is significantly correlated with the use of social networks.

It is interesting that the size of the enterprise doesn’t play a role in this process. Almost an equal number of small businesses and large enterprises are using social media.

Today, almost every modern enterprise is aware of the significance of online presence. Most of them have well-developed websites, but the truth is that social media provide a different approach, something that they cannot achieve with their own websites.
Successfully implementing social media tools in the enterprise is by no means a guarantee for successful business or productivity outcomes.

**Ways to promote the enterprise on social networks**

Getting started with social media marketing can be intimidating for some enterprises, but they can effectively promoting their business on social networks by making next steps:

- **Choose the Right Platforms**
  
  There is no shortage of social media sites on which to share the enterprise content. The number of sites is growing every day. Sharing the content on the right platforms is crucial to your business success.

  When determining which channels to use, the enterprise should consider its customers. It’s important to create accounts on the platforms its target audience uses, so they can easily connect with the enterprise. Conduct some research to determine what sites your audience probably uses, and then use them too.

  The enterprise should also consider which sites best fit its products.

- **Create a Calendar**
  
  Scrambling to create posts at the last minute can lead to low-quality content. A lack of organization can lead to repeated posts or a lull in the enterprise presence on one of its channels. Creating social media content calendars can help avoid those mistakes and lead to more effective posts. Content calendars also help the enterprise create goals and strategies for meeting them, and track the progress toward them.

  To make a content calendar, use a regular calendar for each social media channel and plan out the posts in advance, complete with hashtags, links, images and other content.

- **Encourage Engagement**
  
  Social media should, of course, be social. That doesn’t only apply to those who use the sites for fun. Businesses need to be interactive, too. In order to take advantage of social capability, the enterprise need to encourage interaction. Post content that people want to read, ask questions and like, repost and comment on other users’ posts. Doing research on the enterprise audience can help figure out what they might like.

- **Don’t Over-Promote**
  
  One trap that businesses often fall into is treating social media too much like regular advertising. The enterprise don’t want to blatantly promote itself in...

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4 https://marketinginsidergroup.com/social-media/

5 Negruț C. V., Giulvezan C.- Managerial decision modeling and simulation using spreadsheet programs, Lucrari Științifice, Seria I, VOL.XV (1), Lucrări Științifice Management Agricol, Pag. 367, 2013
every post. The enterprise need to create content that people will actually enjoy and want to see.

Promoting itself is okay every once in a while. Some marketers go by the one-in-seven rule, which says that for every one directly promotional post, six others should be content-based. In these other six posts, the enterprise could share articles, comment on current events or ask a question. The enterprise don’t have to entirely avoid mentioning its own brand in these posts; just be careful not to sell too hard.

- **Share Video**

Visual content works well on social media. Video content, especially, is ideal for grabbing people’s attention as well as conveying enterprise’s personality and passion to the customers.

Visual content stands out as people scroll through their social feeds, so they’re more likely to view it and engage with it. It also allows the enterprise to say more than it could in a typical post without taking up much room. Create interesting, narrative-driven video in order to get the best reaction.

- **Address Problems Quickly**

Hopefully the enterprise receive mostly positive feedback on social media. Occasionally it may encounter someone who is upset, argumentative or has something negative to say about the company.

The enterprise should carefully monitor mentions of its brand on social channels, so you can catch issues before they escalate. If spot a problem, engage with the person by publicly apologizing if necessary and offering to solve the problem over a direct message exchange.

This way, people who see the post know the enterprise is responsive but don’t have to see all the specifics of the issue.

- **Build a Community**

Instead of trying to get as many followers as possible, focus on finding customers who are interested, loyal and engaged. These people are more likely to repost the enterprise content, like its posts and become customers.

When it’s build a community around enterprise’s brand, the people within that community will engage with each other and help to promote enterprise’s content. The enterprise could even try reaching out to exceptionally influential social media users and asking them to help you by reviewing a product or mentioning you in a post.

- **Provide Value**

Perhaps the most important thing the enterprise can do on social media is provide value to its followers. Create something that its audience will find useful. It could be something that tells them something they didn’t know before, makes them laugh, entertains them or anything else that’s beneficial in some way.
This aspect of social media is what attracts the right customers to the enterprise, makes people want to follow the enterprise on social sites and helps content to spread. Master this, and the enterprise will be a big step closer to a successful social media marketing campaign.

With nearly 3 billion active users, social media is a potential goldmine of new customers and current patrons who could become repeat customers. Create a good social campaign, and the enterprise will be able to connect with some of those people and grow its customer base.

Conclusions

This article presents recent statistics on the use of social media by enterprises in the European Union (EU) as part of their strategy for integrating information and communication technologies (ICT) in their business.

The use of social media shows that businesses raise their internet profile by using social media more and more as part of their marketing strategy. Statistics show that:

- Some 47% of EU enterprises used at least one type of social media (e.g. social networks, blogs, content-sharing sites and wikis) in 2017, with more than eight out of ten of these businesses (84%) using such applications to build their image and to market products.
- The second important reason for using social media was to obtain customers opinions or reviews or answer to their questions. This was reported by more than half of EU enterprises that used social media, especially enterprises in the accommodation sector.
- Social networks were the most used form of social media; compared to 2013 their use strongly increased.
- Among the enterprises that used social media, the size of the enterprise was not so important in determining whether the firm used social media to attract customers: 83% of small enterprises used them for image building or for marketing products, compared with 85% of large enterprises.

References


7. https://www.kbmanage.com
8. https://www.marketinginsidergroup.com

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