

THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN BUSINESS MARKETING

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***Abstract:** The growing importance of social media marketing among businesses is very clear. So the question is no longer if you must use the social media tool in your marketing activities, but how to do it better. Business owners should pay attention to which social platforms help them reach their goals with relevant audiences, whether that's generating sales or greater visibility.*

***Keywords:** social media, benefits of social media marketing, increased exposure, increased traffic*

Introduction

Where is almost everyone today? Probably online! Thinking about it, we can say that social media marketing is one of the most important types of online marketing where not only big businesses are marketing their products/services and brands on social media websites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.

The growing importance of social media marketing among businesses is very clear¹.

Social media marketing has become an essential part of online marketing strategy among small businesses because of its cost-effectiveness, ability to reach targeted audiences quickly and generate more leads/sales.

Growing importance of social media

According to the study EY Romania, "Social media and business environment," companies operating in our country use social media for brand communication - 87%, and for sales, 85%.

¹ www.mediabistro.com

Many companies have accounts on social networks are used by these online platforms for recruiting new employees, for networking or to perform a market analysis. Over 85% of the companies in our country use social networks to promote the company and more than 50% use marketing on social networks at least 3 years.

Of these companies, 50% post almost daily data on social networks and their usefulness for the company believes will increase significantly in the near future. According to market research², the most commonly used networks are Facebook with 93% utilization rate, YouTube channel 43% and LinkedIn 43%.

Social media in Romania

Social network	User accounts	Unique visitors
Facebook	7.400.000	NA
LinkedIn	1.551.901	NA
You Tube	772.518	5.340.000

Source: Accumulating data from different sources, such as ZeList Gemius, Thinkdigma

“The study took into account the responses received from several hundred representatives of romanian companies operating in different areas and target the way they approach marketing through social networks. Around 80% of respondents are representatives of companies with annual revenues exceeding 10 million euro”³.

According to research results, to promote social media, 39% of Romanian companies that took part in the study were already in their structure a special office for communication through social media.

Those involved in 83% appreciate that social networks are an effective way to present new products and services to customers.

More and more companies using social networks to promote activities which indicates that many managers are beginning to realize the potential of these channels. Research shows that social networking site Facebook is used by 9.3 out of 10 and the platform Twitter has a utilization rate of only 26%. LinkedIn in Romania already has a utilization rate of 41% among company representatives who took part in this study.

2 www.creativision.ro/articole-social-media-marketing/cele-mai-accesate-retele-sociale-din-romania

3 www.themarkers.ro

Advantages using social media

- Social media is effective and inexpensive

Social media marketing is very important for businesses because of its inexpensiveness and ability to reach large number of targeted audiences within less time and very little efforts. According to Forbes, 94% of corporates are using social media and 85% said that it has given their business more exposure⁴.

- Branding can be done effectively on social media

Social media marketing is the best tool for small businesses for branding. According to Socialmediatoday, 83% of customers prefer to connect to the brand on Facebook⁵.

Many online users count on social media while making purchase decision and 50% of shoppers made purchases based on the recommendations on social media websites.

- Customer acquisition is easy on social media

With more than half of the world's population registered with different social media platforms, the chances of acquiring customers are fairly high on social media websites. There are approximately 1.74 billion social media users according to eMarketer and social media websites play a crucial role in acquiring customers to the businesses. In 2013, 36% of marketers acquired customers via Twitter, 52% via Facebook and 43% via LinkedIn⁶.

- Social media enables direct customer interaction

Through social media, businesses can interact with customers directly. Businesses can attract customers by engaging them with some interactive methods like Question and Answers, Polls, etc. According to Socialmediatoday, 53% of marketers are using social media as a two-way conversation and engagement tool⁷.

- Social media marketing can generate more leads/sales

Social media marketing plays an important role in generating leads and thus increasing sales to the businesses. A survey by Socialmediatoday revealed that 71% of social media users are more likely to purchase products from brands that they are connected on

4 www.forbes.com

5 www.socialmediatoday.com

6 www.emarketer.com

7 www.socialmediatoday.com

social media websites. Social media produces almost double the marketing leads than any other marketing method⁸.

After understanding the benefits of social media marketing, many small businesses have increased the time and investment spent on social media marketing. Businesses that are active on social media and share useful content have seen improvement in their business.

The top two benefits of social media marketing are *increasing exposure* and *increasing traffic*. A significant 92% of all marketers indicated that their social media efforts have generated more exposure for their businesses. Increasing traffic was the second major benefit, with 80% reporting positive results⁹.

Conclusions

Social media networks were a novelty 5 years ago, but today their importance is no longer debated. Businesses have definitely realized the power of social media and accepted that social media marketing has to be part of their marketing and PR mix.

In Social Media Examiner's 2013 End of Year Report, marketers now place very high value on social media marketing¹⁰:

- 86% of marketers stated that social media is important for their business
- 89% of marketers stated that increased exposure was the number one benefit of social media marketing.

Among the definitive benefits of social media marketing we found: increased exposure, increased traffic, developed loyal fans, generated leads, improved search ranking, grew business partnerships, reduced marketing expenses, improved sales, provided marketplace insight.

Business owners should pay attention to which social platforms help them reach their goals with relevant audiences, whether that's generating sales or greater visibility.

Of course, social media is not an end unto itself. It must be integrated and work hand-in-hand with all your other marketing and PR initiatives which should be continued to reach all your marketing touch points and your ultimate success.

8 Idem

9 www.socialmediaexaminer.com/SocialMediaMarketingIndustryReport2014

10 www.socialmediaexaminer.com/SocialMediaMarketingIndustryReport2013

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