

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL MEDIA



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Introduction to Social Media

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1: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL MEDIA

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1.1: Course Objectives

1. Analyze the Evolution and Societal Impact of Social Media Platforms.
2. Examine Social Media Algorithms and Their Implications.
3. Analyze the Historical Development of Social Media.
4. Understand the Functionality and Benefits of LinkedIn.
5. Compare and Contrast Different Social Media Platforms.

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1.2: Introduction to Social Media



Alt Text: decorative introduction to social media heading/title

In recent years, social media platforms have revolutionized how we communicate, share information, and connect with one another. Social media has become integral to our daily lives and societal structures, from personal interactions to professional networking and grassroots activism to global marketing campaigns.

1.2.1 The Evolution of Social Media

Social media platforms have rapidly evolved from simple communication tools to complex ecosystems that influence nearly every aspect of modern life. Initially, platforms like MySpace and Friendster introduced the concept of online social networking. Today, giants like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok dominate the landscape, each offering unique features and user experiences. Understanding the history and development of these platforms provides essential context for their current functions and societal impacts.



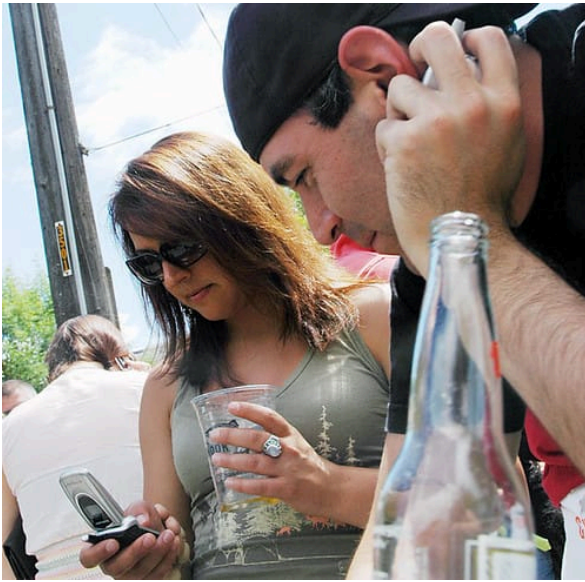
"Automotive Social Media Marketing" by [socialautomotive](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

Alt Text: Three different social media logos. One is from the beginning of the internet, while the other two are two of the most popular and current platforms.

1.2.2 The Mechanics and Algorithms of Social Media

At the core of social media platforms are sophisticated algorithms that determine what content users see. These algorithms analyze user behavior, preferences, and interactions to personalize feeds, suggest friends, and recommend content. For example, Facebook's algorithm prioritizes posts that generate engagement, while TikTok's algorithm curates a personalized stream of

videos based on past behavior. This section will explore how these algorithms work and their implications for user experience and content dissemination.



["3 people making cell phone calls simultaneously, Fremont, Seattle, Washington, USA"](#) by [Wonderlane](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

Alt Text: A man and woman on their phones.

1.2.3 Social Media's Influence on Behavior and Identity

Social media significantly influences how we present ourselves and interact with others. Platforms provide spaces for self-expression, community building, and identity exploration. However, they can also foster negative behaviors such as cyberbullying and social comparison. By examining real-world examples and studies, we will uncover the dual nature of social media's impact on individual and collective behaviors.

1.2.4 Social Media in Business and Marketing

Businesses leverage social media to engage with audiences, build brand loyalty, and drive economic growth. Effective social media marketing involves strategies such as content creation, influencer partnerships, and targeted advertising. Companies like Nike and Starbucks have successfully utilized social media to enhance their brand presence and customer engagement. This section will provide practical insights into crafting effective social media strategies for various business goals.

1.2.5 Privacy, Data Security, and Ethical Implications



"Privacy" by [g4ll4is](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

Alt Text: The word "Privacy" written over a gray background, with the "I" being a keyhole.

The widespread use of social media raises critical issues regarding privacy and data security. Users often share personal information, sometimes unknowingly, which can be exploited for various purposes. Additionally, the ethical implications of data collection and algorithmic decision-making must be considered. We will discuss regulations like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and explore best practices for protecting user data and ensuring ethical usage of social media platforms.

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1.3: Social Media- A Brief History

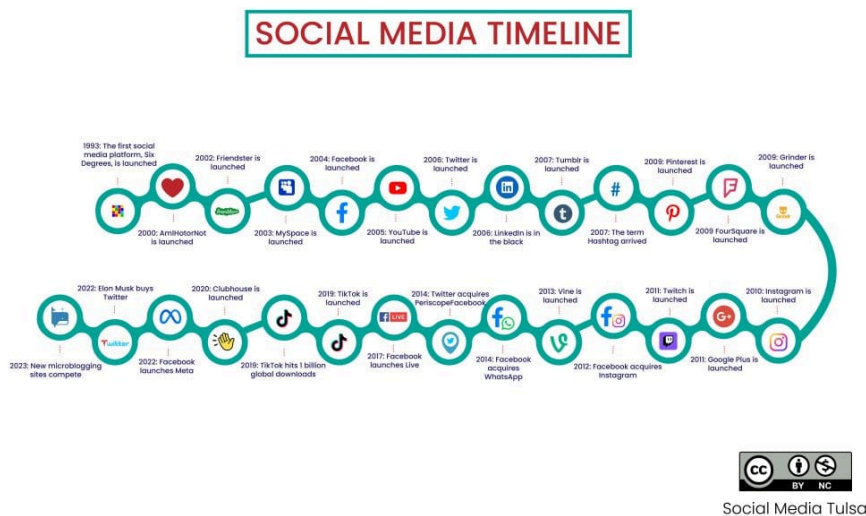
Social media is a broad term that encompasses a wide range of online platforms and tools that allow users to connect and share content with each other. The history of social media is long and complex, but it can be traced back to the early days of the internet.

One of the earliest examples of social media was Usenet, which was created in 1982. Usenet was a system of discussion forums where users could post messages and reply to each other. Another early example of social media was Six Degrees, which was launched in 1997. Six Degrees was a social networking site that allowed users to connect with friends and family members.

In the early 2000s, social media began to take off. In 2004, Facebook was launched, and it quickly became one of the most popular social media platforms in the world. In 2005, YouTube was launched, and it revolutionized the way people watch and share videos. In 2006, Twitter was launched, and it became the go-to platform for sharing short updates and news.

In the years since, social media has continued to evolve. New platforms have been launched, and existing platforms have been updated with new features. Social media has also become increasingly important in our lives. We use it to stay connected with friends and family, to learn about current events, and to share our thoughts and ideas with the world.

Social media has had a profound impact on our society. It has changed the way we communicate, the way we consume news, and the way we interact with the world around us. It is still too early to say what the future holds for social media, but it is clear that it will continue to play an important role in our lives and our businesses.



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1.4: Types of Social Media

1.4.1 LinkedIn



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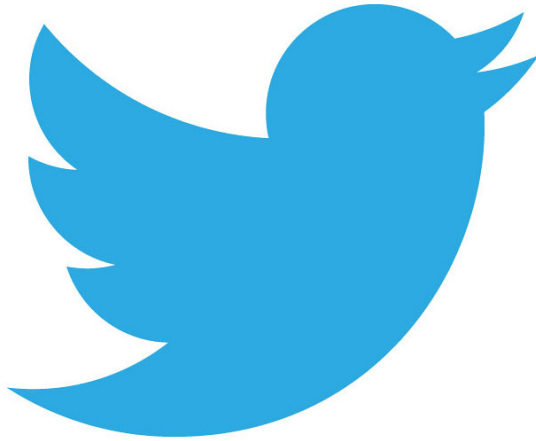
Alt Text: The word "LinkedIn" written out of small "in's" in small boxes. The first part of the word is black, while the last part of it is blue.

LinkedIn is a professional networking site designed to connect professionals across various industries. It facilitates networking, job searching, and industry news sharing. Users can build their professional networks, apply for jobs, and showcase their achievements. Companies use LinkedIn to post job openings, share updates, and engage with potential employees. The platform offers numerous benefits, including career opportunities, industry insights, and professional development. For instance, a job seeker can connect with recruiters, apply for positions, and follow industry leaders to stay informed about trends and opportunities.

1.4.2 Facebook

Facebook is a social networking site that allows users to connect with friends and family, share updates, photos, and videos, and engage in various social activities. It supports community building through groups and events, enabling users to find and participate in communities that interest them. Businesses use Facebook Pages to reach their audience, promote products, and engage with customers. Non-profit organizations leverage Facebook to create groups for supporters, share events, and raise awareness about their causes. The platform fosters connections, supports group activities, and facilitates community engagement.

1.4.3 Twitter



"Copyright free logo Twitter Virginia state parks" by [vastateparksstaff](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

Alt Text: A blue bird on a white background.

Twitter is a microblogging site that enables users to share short posts called tweets, facilitating real-time communication and interaction. It is a valuable tool for news dissemination, customer service, and public discourse. Twitter's real-time nature makes it essential during events like natural disasters, where government agencies and news outlets provide updates and emergency information to the public. The platform is widely used for sharing information, engaging in public discussions, and keeping up with current events and trends.

1.4.4 Instagram

Instagram is a photo and video sharing site that focuses on personal expression and storytelling through visual content. Users share images and videos, engage with followers, and explore content through hashtags and stories. Instagram offers a platform for creative expression, branding, and building an online presence. For example, a fashion brand can showcase new collections, engage with followers, and collaborate with influencers to expand its reach. The platform's visual nature makes it ideal for personal and brand storytelling, fostering a strong online presence.

1.4.5 Threads

Threads, an extension of Instagram, is designed to provide a more intimate and streamlined way to share text updates and engage with close friends. It allows for more private and direct communication, enhancing personal interactions among a select group of friends. Users can share daily updates, thoughts, and messages in a more focused environment, creating a more personal and connected social media experience. Threads are beneficial for those seeking a closer, more personal connection with their inner circle.

1.4.6 Pinterest



"Copyright free Pinterest logo Virginia State Parks" by [vastateparksstaff](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

Alt Text: A red circle with a white "P" written in the center.

Pinterest is a photo-sharing site that helps users discover and save ideas for various projects and interests. Users create boards to organize ideas, from recipes to home decor, and plan events or projects. Pinterest aids in idea curation and planning, making it a valuable tool for users looking for inspiration and organization. For instance, someone planning a home renovation can gather design ideas and create boards to streamline the planning process. The platform's focus on discovery and organization makes it ideal for project planning and idea curation.

1.4.7 TikTok

TikTok is a short-form video platform known for its engaging and creative content. Users create and share short videos, often set to music, fostering creativity and entertainment. The platform is popular for viral challenges and trends, engaging a broad audience. Businesses and influencers use TikTok to create engaging content that resonates with users, leading to viral trends that increase brand visibility and engagement. TikTok provides a space for entertainment, creative expression, and viral marketing, making it a powerful tool for reaching and engaging with a wide audience.

These social media sites each serve distinct purposes and offer various benefits, from professional networking and community building to real-time communication and creative expression. By understanding the unique features and applications of each platform, users can effectively utilize social media to achieve their personal and professional goals.

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1.5: Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, we have explored social media platforms that have revolutionized communication, information sharing, and global connectivity. Evolving from early platforms like MySpace and Friendster, today's giants such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have become complex ecosystems influencing various aspects of modern life. These platforms utilize sophisticated algorithms to personalize user experiences, significantly impacting behavior and identity. Additionally, social media's role in business and marketing is profound, with companies like Nike and Starbucks leveraging these platforms to engage audiences and drive growth. However, the widespread use of social media also raises critical privacy, data security, and ethical concerns, necessitating adherence to regulations like the GDPR and best practices for ethical usage.

Understanding the history, mechanics, and diverse applications of social media platforms is crucial for effectively navigating and utilizing these tools. Platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Threads, Pinterest, and TikTok each serve unique purposes, from professional networking to creative expression. As social media continues to evolve, its importance in our personal and professional lives will only grow, emphasizing the need for continuous learning and adaptation to harness its full potential.

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1.6: End of Module Summary

- **Introduction to Social Media:** Social media platforms have transformed communication, information sharing, and connectivity, impacting personal interactions, professional networking, grassroots activism, and global marketing.
- **Evolution of Social Media:** From early platforms like MySpace and Friendster to current giants like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, social media has evolved into complex ecosystems influencing modern life.
- **Social Media Algorithms:** Sophisticated algorithms personalize user feeds, suggest friends, and recommend content based on behavior and preferences, significantly impacting user experience and content dissemination.
- **Influence on Behavior and Identity:** Social media shapes self-presentation and social interactions, providing spaces for self-expression and community building while also fostering negative behaviors like cyberbullying and social comparison.
- **Business and Marketing:** Companies use social media to engage audiences, build brand loyalty, and drive economic growth through content creation, influencer partnerships, and targeted advertising, with successful examples from brands like Nike and Starbucks.
- **Privacy and Data Security:** The use of social media raises privacy and data security concerns, highlighting the importance of regulations like GDPR to protect user data and ensure ethical platform usage.
- **History of Social Media:** Social media's history includes early systems like Usenet and Six Degrees, with significant advancements in the early 2000s from platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, continuing to impact communication and content sharing.
- **LinkedIn:** A professional networking site for connecting with industry professionals, job searching, and sharing industry news, offering career opportunities and industry insights.
- **Facebook:** A social networking site for connecting with friends and family, sharing updates, and engaging in community building, widely used by businesses and non-profits for audience engagement and awareness.
- **Twitter, Instagram, Threads, Pinterest, TikTok:** Twitter facilitates real-time communication and public discourse; Instagram focuses on visual storytelling; Threads offers intimate text updates; Pinterest aids in idea curation and project planning; TikTok is known for creative short-form video content and viral trends.

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1.7: Key Terms

Algorithms: Complex mathematical formulas used by social media platforms to analyze user behavior and preferences to personalize content, suggest connections, and recommend posts.

Brand Evangelists: Loyal customers who actively promote and support a brand, often participating in online communities and spreading positive word-of-mouth.

Cyberbullying: The use of electronic communication to bully or harass individuals, typically through mean or threatening messages on social media platforms.

Cybersecurity: Practices and technologies used to protect systems, networks, and data from cyber attacks and unauthorized access.

Data Breach: An incident where sensitive, protected, or confidential data is accessed, used, or disclosed without authorization.

Facebook: A dominant social media platform launched in 2004, enabling users to connect with friends and family, share updates, photos, and videos, and engage in various social activities.

Friendster: An early social networking service launched in 2002, which helped users connect with friends and meet new people online.

Influencer Partnerships: Collaborations between brands and social media influencers to promote products or services to the influencer's audience.

Instagram: A photo and video sharing social network launched in 2010, focusing on personal expression and storytelling through visual content.

LinkedIn: A professional networking site designed to connect professionals, facilitate job searching, and share industry news and insights.

MySpace: One of the first major social networking sites, popular in the early 2000s, that allowed users to create profiles, connect with friends, and share content.

Netiquette: The set of rules for proper behavior and communication on the internet, aimed at maintaining respectful and effective online interactions.

Online Focus Group: A group of individuals engaged through online platforms to provide feedback or information, often used for market research.

Pinterest: A photo-sharing platform that helps users discover and save ideas for various projects and interests, organized into boards.

Privacy Settings: Options available on social media platforms allowing users to control who can see their information and how it is used.

Six Degrees: An early social networking site launched in 1997 that allowed users to connect with friends and family members.

Social Comparison: The act of comparing oneself to others on social media, often leading to feelings of inadequacy or jealousy.

Social Media: Platforms that facilitate online communication, sharing of information, and connection between users, encompassing personal, professional, and communal interactions.

Targeted Advertising: Marketing strategy that uses data and algorithms to deliver ads to specific groups of people based on their online behavior and preferences.

Threads: An extension of Instagram designed for more intimate and streamlined text updates and interactions with close friends.

TikTok: A short-form video platform known for its engaging and creative content, where users create and share videos often set to music, fostering viral trends and entertainment.

Twitter: A microblogging platform launched in 2006 that allows users to post and interact with short messages known as tweets, facilitating real-time communication and information sharing.

Usenet: An early internet system of discussion forums where users could post messages and reply to each other, created in 1982.

YouTube: A video-sharing platform launched in 2005 that revolutionized how people watch, share, and create video content.

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1.8: Discussion Questions

1. How has social media transformed personal interactions and professional networking in recent years?
2. What are the key differences between early social media platforms like MySpace and Friendster and current giants like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok?
3. How do social media algorithms influence the content users see and their overall experience on the platform?
4. In what ways does social media shape individual behavior and identity, both positively and negatively?
5. How can businesses effectively utilize social media to achieve their marketing goals and engage with their audience?

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2: SOCIAL MEDIA COLLABORATION AND ONLINE PLATFORMS

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2.1: Course Objectives

1. Analyze the Impact and Functionality of Online Writing Platforms.
2. Develop Effective Writing Strategies for the Web.
3. Evaluate the Evolution and Impact of Web 2.0 Technologies.
4. Understand the Different Social Media Tools for Online Platforms.
5. Analyze the Functions and Benefits of Blogging Platforms.
6. Evaluate the Functionality and Collaborative Benefits of Wikis.
7. Analyze the Evolution and Impact of Twitter as a Microblogging Platform.

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2.2: Introduction

Online writing platforms have significantly transformed how content is created, published, and consumed. These platforms, such as Medium, WordPress, and Substack, have democratized writing and publishing by providing accessible tools for writers of all levels to share their work with a global audience. The growth of online writing platforms has fostered a diverse and vibrant ecosystem where individuals can express their ideas, build personal brands, and engage with readers in meaningful ways. As a result, these platforms have become essential for personal blogging, professional content creation, and community building, reflecting the dynamic evolution of digital writing and publishing.

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2.3: Writing for the Web - What's Different?



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When writing for the web, focus on the things that the web does better than print:

Use links to direct readers to related articles, background information, and the source of your information. Why settle for including only a small quotation when you can send your readers to the entire article? Clicking a link is a lot easier than driving down to the library to find the book or article in question. You can also use internal links, which make it easier to move through a single document or connect to other pages within your website. Google Docs, for instance, has a table of contents feature that will link together all the parts of your doc. If you have a blog, you can link to earlier posts that are relevant to what you're talking about.

Writing for the web means thinking about all of the different contexts in which your stuff can be found. That's why it's important to always title your work. In addition, once people arrive at your pages, you have broken big chunks of text into smaller sections, with section headings, so they can find what they want quickly. Anything that takes longer than 10 minutes for the average person to read should be broken up into multiple posts or sections. Instead of thinking in terms of articles or essays, try to think more about paragraphs (blogs) and sentences (tweets).

Writing for the web also means that you are part of an information ecology. Other people may find your writing through a search engine or an RSS feed. They can easily search your text for keywords or zip instantly to a chapter or section.

Writing for the web also has built-in community features—it's a lot faster and easier to get feedback from your readers and have discussions about your texts when you put them online. Communities are what make writing for the web so much fun! Before, authors had to wait weeks, if not months (or even years!), to get feedback on their work. By that time it was old news. Now writers can post a blog and get comments in only a few hours or less. Interacting with your audience will help you tailor your writing style and topics to better suit them, so pay attention to what they say.

Writing for the web also means writing with media. You can include color, images, and videos with your texts. You can include animation and sound. You can write with the white space around words and play with designs to better show off your stuff. You are no longer turning in gray pages of text to a professor; you are writing to a real audience, and you need to use all the tools available to connect with that audience and show them that you share their values.

In addition, the web is no longer accessed only on desktop computers and laptops. Visitors to your site may be using a mobile phone's smaller screen, which means they will have different needs than readers using a full-size monitor. Conversely, Internet TVs are becoming more common, and before long, many people will use iPads or Android tablets as their primary device for reading the web. With such variety in screen sizes and resolution, the challenge becomes making sure your content looks good across multiple web browsers, platforms, and devices. Since you can't be sure how people will access your stuff, keep the design elements simple so that browsers can accommodate it. Flash movies, for instance, once the standard for animations on the

Internet, are not compatible with iPhones and iPads.

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Over the past few years a fundamentally different class of Internet services has attracted users, made headlines, and increasingly garnered breathtaking market valuations. Often referred to under the umbrella term “Web 2.0,” these new services are targeted at harnessing the power of the Internet to empower users to collaborate, create resources, and share information in a distinctly different way from the static Web sites and transaction-focused storefronts that characterized so many failures in the dot-com bubble. Blogs, wikis, social networks, photo and video sharing sites, and tagging systems all fall under the Web 2.0 moniker, as do a host of supporting technologies and related efforts.

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"[AUTOCOLLANT LOGO STYLO WIKI RELIES 02](#)" by [Palmolley](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

Alt Text: Wiki logo on a wooden surface

2.5.3 Social Media

An online community is a digital platform that allows users to establish personal profiles, link to other profiles, share content, and communicate with members via messaging and posts. Key features include detailed personal profiles, affiliations with groups and individuals, messaging and public discussions, and media sharing. These communities are used to discover and reinforce affiliations, identify experts, message individuals or groups, and virally share media. Popular platforms include Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest, each offering unique tools for connecting and engaging with a broader audience.

2.5.4 Microblogging

A short, asynchronous messaging system allows users to send messages to their followers. Key features include a 140-character count, the ability to respond publicly or privately, specifying tags to classify discussion topics for easy searching, building comment threads, and maintaining follower lists. These systems are used to distribute time-sensitive information, share opinions, virally spread ideas, run contests and promotions, provide customer support, and track commentary. Popular platforms include Twitter (X), Yammer, and SocialText Signals, each offering unique tools for effective communication and engagement.

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2.6: Blogs

Blogs (short for Web logs) first emerged almost a decade ago as a medium for posting online diaries. (In a perhaps apocryphal story, *Wired* magazine claimed the term “Web log” was coined by Jorn Barger, a sometimes homeless, yet profoundly prolific, Internet poster). The first ever blog post was published by Justin Hall, a freelance journalist, in 1994. Since then blogging has grown and continued to stay one of the top online platforms. Currently there are over 600 million blogs located on the internet. Within those blogs, the internet is home to about 1.9 billion websites worldwide. This number is clearly a long tail phenomenon, loaded with niche content that remains “discoverable” through search engines and blog indexes. Trackbacks (third-party links back to original blog post), and blog rolls (a list of a blogger’s favorite sites—a sort of shout-out to blogging peers) also help distinguish and reinforce the reputation of widely read blogs.

2.6.1 Blog Features



"My Blog badges from Zemanta" by [Annie Mole](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

Alt Text: 3 pins with different blog sentences

While the feature set of a particular blog depends on the underlying platform and the preferences of the blogger, several key features are common to most blogs:

- *Ease of use.* Creating a new post usually involves clicking a single button.
- *Reverse chronology.* Posts are listed in reverse order of creation, making it easy to see the most recent content.
- *Comment threads.* Readers can offer comments on posts.
- *Persistence.* Posts are maintained indefinitely at locations accessible by permanent links.
- *Searchability.* Current and archived posts are easily searchable.
- *Tags.* Posts are often classified under an organized tagging scheme.
- *Trackbacks.* Allows an author to acknowledge the source of an item in their post, which allows bloggers to follow the popularity of their posts among other bloggers.

Blogs can be hosted via third-party services (Google Blogger, WordPress, Tumblr, TypePad, Windows Live Spaces), with most offering a combination of free and premium features. Blogging features have also been incorporated into social networks such as Facebook, MySpace, and Ning, as well as corporate social media platforms such as Socialtext. Blogging software can also be run on third-party servers, allowing the developer more control in areas such as security and formatting. The most popular platform for users choosing to host their own blog server is the open source WordPress system.

Like any Web page, blogs can be public, tucked behind a corporate firewall, or password protected. Most blogs offer a two-way dialogue, allowing users to comment on posts (sort of instant “letters to the editor,” posted online and delivered directly to the author). The running dialogue can read like an electronic bulletin board, and can be an effective way to gather opinion when vetting ideas. Comments help keep a blogger honest. Just as the “wisdom of crowds” keeps Wikipedia accurate, a vigorous community of commenters will quickly expose a blogger’s errors of fact or logic.

2.6.2 Downside to Blogging



["Computer Behind My Blogs"](#) by [cottontimer](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 2.0](#).

Alt Text: Computers sitting on a wooden table, showing the behind the scenes of a blogger.

Despite this increased popularity, blogging has its downside. Blog comments can be a hothouse for spam and the disgruntled. Ham-handed corporate efforts (such as poor response to public criticism or bogus “praise posts”) have been ridiculed. Employee blogging can be difficult to control and public postings can “live” forever in the bowels of an Internet search engine or as content pasted on other Web sites. Many firms have employee blogging and broader Internet posting policies to guide online conduct that may be linked to the firm (see Section 7.9 “Get SMART: The Social Media Awareness and Response Team”). Bloggers, beware—there are dozens of examples of workers who have been fired for what employers viewed as inappropriate posts.

In the end, the value of any particular blog derives from a combination of technical and social features. The technical features make it easy for a blogger and his or her community to engage in an ongoing conversation on some topic of shared interest. But the social norms and patterns of use that emerge over time in each blog are what determine whether technology features will be harnessed for good or ill. Some blogs develop norms of fairness, accuracy, proper attribution, quality writing, and good faith argumentation, and attract readers that find these norms attractive. Others mix it up with hotly contested debate, one-sided partisanship, or deliberately provocative posts, attracting a decidedly different type of discourse.

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2.7: Wikis

A wiki is a Web site anyone can edit directly within a Web browser (provided the site grants the user edit access). Wikis derive their name from the Hawaiian word for “quick.” Ward Cunningham, the “wiki father” christened this new class of software with the moniker in honor of the wiki-wiki shuttle bus at the Honolulu airport. Wikis can indeed be one of the speediest ways to collaboratively create content online. Many popular online wikis serve as a shared knowledge repository in domains.

The largest and most popular wiki is Wikipedia, but there are hundreds of publicly accessible wikis that anyone can participate in. Each attempts to chronicle a world of knowledge within a particular domain, with examples ranging from Wine Wiki for oenophiles to Wookieepedia, the Star Wars wiki. But wikis can be used for any collaborative effort—from meeting planning to project management. And in addition to the hundreds of public wikis, there are many thousand more that are hidden away behind firewalls, used as proprietary internal tools for organizational collaboration.

Like blogs, the value of a wiki derives from both technical and social features. The *technology* makes it easy to create, edit, and refine content; learn when content has been changed, how and by whom; and to change content back to a prior state. But it is the *social motivations of individuals* (to make a contribution, to share knowledge) that allow these features to be harnessed. The larger and more active a wiki community, the more likely it is that content will be up-to-date and that errors will be quickly corrected (again, we see the influence of network effects, where products and services with larger user bases become more valuable). Several studies have shown that large community wiki entries are as or more accurate than professional publication counterparts (Lichter, 2009; Kane, et. al., 2009).

Want to add to or edit a wiki entry? On most sites you just click the “Edit” link. Wikis support what you see is what you get (WYSIWYG) editing that, while not as robust as traditional word processors, is still easy enough for most users to grasp without training or knowledge of arcane code or markup language. Users can make changes to existing content and can easily create new pages or articles and link them to other pages in the wiki. Wikis also provides a version history. Click the “History” link on Wikipedia, for example, and you can see when edits were made and by whom. This feature allows the community to roll back a wiki to a prior page, in the event that someone accidentally deletes key info, or intentionally defaces a page.

2.7.1 Wikis Features



"Wikipedia globe in a keychain!" by @bastique is licensed under [CC BY-SA 2.0](#).

Alt Text: A 3D globe made out of puzzle pieces

As with blogs, a wiki's features set varies depending on the specific wiki tool chosen, as well as administrator design, but most

wikis support the following key features:

- All changes are *attributed*, so others can see who made a given edit.
- A complete *revision history* is maintained so changes can be compared against prior versions and rolled back as needed.
- There is automatic *notification* and *monitoring* of updates; users subscribe to wiki content and can receive updates via email or RSS feed when pages have been changed or new content has been added.
- All the pages in a wiki are *searchable*.
- Specific wiki pages can be classified under an organized *tagging* scheme.

Wikis are available both as software (commercial as well as open source varieties) that firms can install on their own computers or as online services (both subscription or ad-supported) where content is hosted off-site by third parties. Since wikis can be started without the oversight or involvement of a firm's IT department, their appearance in organizations often comes from grassroots user initiative. Many wiki services offer additional tools such as blogs, message boards, or spreadsheets as part of their feature set, making most wikis really more full-featured platforms for social computing.

Jump-starting a wiki can be a challenge, and an underused wiki can be a ghost town of orphan, out-of-date, and inaccurate content. Fortunately, once users see the value of wikis, use and effectiveness often snowballs. The unstructured nature of wikis are also both a strength and weakness. Some organizations employ wiki masters to “garden” community content; “prune” excessive posts, “transplant” commentary to the best location, and “weed” as necessary. Wikipatterns.com offers a guide to the stages of wiki adoption and a collection of community-building and content-building strategies.

2.7.2 Examples of Wiki Use

Wikis can be vital tools for collecting and leveraging knowledge that would otherwise be scattered throughout an organization; reducing geographic distance; removing boundaries between functional areas; and flattening pre-existing hierarchies. Companies have used wikis in a number of ways:

- **Example:** IBM uses wikis to create a comprehensive knowledge base where employees can document and share technical solutions, best practices, and project updates. This central repository ensures that valuable information is easily accessible and not siloed within individual teams.
- **Example:** Intel employs wikis to manage and coordinate complex projects across different geographic locations. Project teams can collaborate in real-time, share progress updates, and streamline communication, effectively reducing the challenges posed by geographic distance.
- **Example:** Adobe uses wikis to foster collaboration between different functional areas such as marketing, product development, and customer support. This open platform allows employees from diverse departments to contribute ideas and insights, breaking down traditional departmental boundaries.
- **Example:** Dell has implemented wikis as part of their onboarding process for new hires. These wikis contain training materials, company policies, and helpful resources, providing new employees with a centralized location to find the information they need to get up to speed quickly.
- **Example:** Microsoft uses internal wikis to encourage a more democratic approach to information sharing, where employees at all levels can contribute and edit content. This approach helps flatten pre existing hierarchies, empowering employees to share their expertise and collaborate more effectively.

2.7.3 Don't Underestimate the Power of Wikipedia

Not only is the nonprofit Wikipedia, with its enthusiastic army of unpaid experts and editors, replacing the three-hundred-year reference reign of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Wikipedia entries can impact nearly all large-sized organizations. Wikipedia is the go-to, first-choice reference site for a generation of “netizens,” and Wikipedia entries are invariably one of the top links, often the first link, to appear in Internet search results.

This position means that anyone from top executives to political candidates to any firm large enough to warrant an entry has to contend with the very public commentary offered up in a Wikipedia entry. In the same way that firms monitor their online reputations in blog posts and Twitter tweets, they've also got to keep an eye on wikis.

One last point on using Wikipedia for research. Remember that according to its own stated policies, Wikipedia isn't an original information source; rather, it's a clearinghouse for verified information. So citing Wikipedia as a reference usually isn't considered good form. Instead, seek out original (and verifiable) sources, such as those presented via the links at the bottom of Wikipedia entries.

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2.8: Twitter and the Rise of Microblogging



"Typing Working" by [Startup Stock Photos](#) is marked with [CC0 1.0](#).

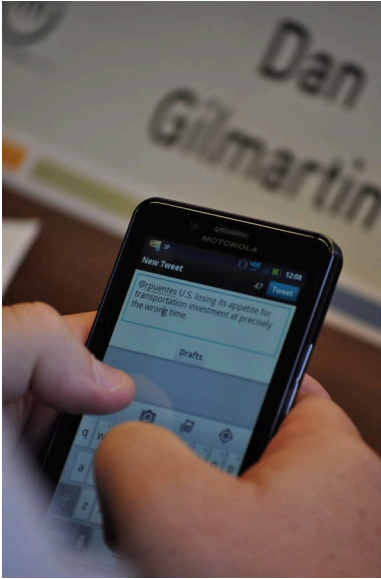
Alt Text: Girl sitting on ledge typing on her laptop.

Spawned in 2006 as a side project at the now-defunct podcasting start-up Odeo, Twitter was an effort backed by Blogger.com founder Evan Williams. Initially developed as a simple messaging platform, Twitter quickly gained popularity and transformed into a global phenomenon. The platform's user numbers skyrocketed, surpassing those of both mainstream and new media sites, including the New York Times, LinkedIn, and Digg. Reports of rebuffed buyout offers as high as \$500 million surfaced in 2009, highlighting the platform's immense value and potential. By April 2010, at its first developer conference, Twitter had grown to a staff of 175 employees and boasted over one hundred million users worldwide.

2.8.1 Twitter as a Microblogging Service

Twitter is a microblogging service that allows users to post 140-character messages, known as tweets, via the web, SMS, or various third-party desktop and smartphone applications. The term "microblogging" is somewhat misleading, as Twitter functions more like Facebook's status updates and news feeds. Unlike Facebook, where users must approve "friends" to view status updates, Twitter's default setting allows for asymmetrical following, though users can set up private accounts and block followers if desired.

2.8.2 The Nature of Twitter Content



"Dan Gilmartin Posts a Tweet During the Transit Twitter Talk Photo by Michigan Municipal League" by [Michigan Municipal League \(MML\)](#) is licensed under [CC BY-ND 2.0](#).

Alt Text: Man tweets on twitter

While Twitter is often criticized for hosting a large volume of trivial updates—such as "I'm having a sandwich" or "in line at the airport"—many users find significant value in the platform. Twitter offers a real-time glimpse into what friends, customers, thought leaders, and newsmakers are thinking. The platform has been described by its leadership as communicating "The Pulse of the Planet." For many users, Twitter serves as a discovery engine, a trend-setting tool, a vital source of market intelligence, a breaking news outlet, and an instant connection to the current zeitgeist.

2.8.3 Interactive and Collaborative Features

Twitter is also an effective tool for quickly soliciting feedback and input from friends, colleagues, or even strangers. Futurist Paul Saffo notes, "Instead of creating the group you want, you send it and the group self-assembles." Users can classify comments on specific topics using hashtags—keywords preceded by the "#" symbol—enabling others to find related tweets easily. Popular hashtags like #iranelection, #mumbai, #swineflu, and #sxsw have demonstrated the power of this feature. Any user can create a hashtag by simply typing it into their tweet, though it's advisable to search Twitter first to ensure the tag is not already in use for an unrelated topic.

2.8.4 Current Status and Trends

As of 2024, Twitter, now known as X, continues to be a dominant force in social media, evolving with features like expanded character limits, multimedia support, and advanced analytics for tracking engagement. The platform remains a critical tool for real-time communication, public discourse, and viral marketing, constantly adapting to the changing digital landscape.



@thomashawk
Thomas Hawk

testing out twitter's new photo sharing service. LOVE! pic.twitter.com/1UB3yqN



powered by  Photobucket

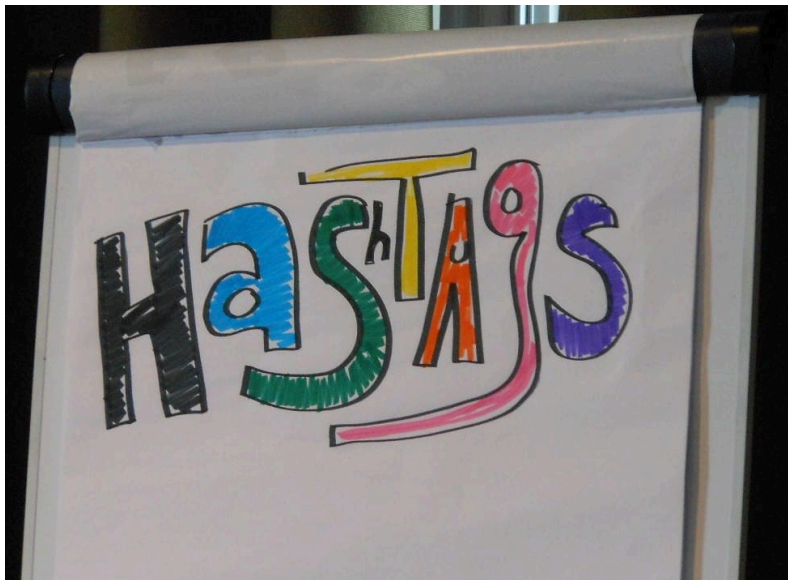
15 minutes ago via web ☆ Favorite ↻ Reply 🗑 Delete

"Testing Out Twitter's New Photo Sharing Feature" by [Thomas Hawk](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC 2.0](#).

Alt Text: A Twitter tweet testing out new features on the app

Twitter's journey from a side project to a major social media platform underscores its significance in the digital age. By facilitating real-time communication and interaction, Twitter has cemented its role as an indispensable tool for individuals, businesses, and newsmakers worldwide.

2.8.5 Importance of the # (Hashtag)



"Place for Hashtags to be Born" by [mikecogh](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 2.0](#).

Alt Text: The word "hashtags" written in block letters, colored differently from each other.

A hashtag, represented by the "#" symbol, is a powerful tool on Twitter that categorizes content and makes it easily discoverable. Introduced in 2007 by Twitter user Chris Messina, hashtags have since become integral to how users interact with the platform. By prefixing a keyword or phrase with a hashtag, users can tag their tweets, making them part of a larger conversation.

Hashtags play a crucial role in organizing content on Twitter. They enable users to classify their tweets under specific topics, making it easier for others to find and engage with related content. For example, during major events like the #Olympics or #SuperBowl hashtags allow users to follow the latest updates, news, and discussions without sifting through unrelated tweets. This organization is vital for users looking to stay informed about specific subjects.

One of the most significant features of hashtags is their ability to create and follow trending topics. Twitter tracks the most popular hashtags at any given time, highlighting them in the "Trending" section. This feature allows users to see what topics are currently capturing public interest and engage in those conversations. For instance, a hashtag like #BlackLivesMatter can bring attention to social justice issues, mobilize support, and create a sense of community among users advocating for the same cause.

2.8.6 Twitter as a business tool

Twitter is also emerging as a legitimate business tool. Hashtags are essential tools for viral campaigns and marketing efforts on Twitter. Businesses and individuals use hashtags to promote products, services, events, and ideas. By creating a unique and catchy hashtag, brands can encourage users to share their experiences and generate buzz around a campaign. For example, the hashtag #ShareACoke was used by Coca-Cola to personalize their bottles and cans, prompting users to share photos with their personalized drinks and boosting brand engagement.



"Coca Cola, 'Share a Coke'" by [JeepersMedia](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

Alt Text: Coca-Cola bottles in cases.

Consider the following commercial examples:

Increased Visibility and Reach

- **Example:** Using #TechNews, a technology company can attract followers interested in the latest industry updates, reaching users beyond their current audience.

Brand Awareness

- **Example:** Coca-Cola's #ShareACoke campaign encouraged users to share photos of personalized Coke bottles, significantly boosting brand engagement and recognition.

Campaign Promotion

- **Example:** A new product launch using #NewProduct2024 by a smartphone manufacturer can build anticipation and track user-generated content, creating buzz around the launch.

Customer Engagement

- **Example:** Nike's #JustDoIt campaign encourages users to share their workout photos and achievements, fostering a community of engaged brand advocates who share their experiences.

Event Promotion and Interaction

- **Example:** During Apple's live-streamed events, they use #AppleEvent to engage viewers, answer questions in real-time, and promote interaction, enhancing the overall event experience and visibility.

Microblogging does appear to be here to stay, and the impact of Twitter has been deep, broad, stunningly swift, and at times humbling in the power that it wields. But whether Twitter will be a durable, profit-gushing powerhouse remains to be seen. Speculation on Twitter's future hasn't prevented many firms from commercializing new microblogging services, and a host of companies have targeted these tools for internal corporate use. Salesforce.com's Chatter, Socialtext Signals, and Yammer are all services that have been billed as "Twitter for the Enterprise." Such efforts allow for Twitter-style microblogging that is restricted for participation and viewing by firm-approved accounts.

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2.9: Conclusion

Blogging, wikis, and online writing platforms are transformative tools in the digital landscape, offering versatile applications for both personal and professional use. Blogs provide a space for sharing ideas, gaining feedback, and building an audience, as seen in countless personal blogs and business content strategies. Wikis, such as those used by IBM and Microsoft, enable efficient knowledge management, foster collaboration across geographic and functional boundaries, and democratize information sharing within organizations. Online writing platforms like Medium and WordPress empower individuals and organizations to publish content easily, reaching global audiences and facilitating widespread knowledge dissemination. Understanding and utilizing these tools can enhance communication, collaboration, and information management in various contexts, underscoring their importance in the modern digital age.

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2.10: End of Module Summary

- **Transformation of Online Writing Platforms:** Platforms like Medium, WordPress, and Substack have democratized writing and publishing, providing accessible tools for writers to share their work globally and engage with readers meaningfully.
- **Personal and Professional Applications:** Online writing platforms are essential for personal blogging, professional content creation, and community building, reflecting the dynamic evolution of digital writing and publishing.
- **Effective Web Writing Techniques:** Writing for the web involves using links to related content, breaking text into smaller sections with headings, and incorporating multimedia elements to enhance readability and engagement.
- **Interactive and Searchable Content:** Web writing benefits from built-in community features, enabling faster feedback and discussion, and making content easily searchable and accessible through keywords and tags.
- **Adapting to Various Devices:** With diverse devices like mobile phones, tablets, and internet TVs, web content must be designed to look good across different screen sizes and resolutions.
- **Impact of Web 2.0:** The Web 2.0 revolution, characterized by collaborative tools like blogs, wikis, and social networks, has transformed internet usage by enabling users to create, share, and interact with content in innovative ways.
- **Blogging:** Blogs provide versatile tools for sharing ideas, obtaining feedback, connecting with audiences, and building businesses. Popular platforms like Blogger, WordPress, and Tumblr offer unique features to suit different blogging needs.
- **Wikis:** Wikis are collaborative platforms that facilitate organized content creation and modification. They are used for knowledge management, project coordination, and fostering collaboration within organizations, as demonstrated by companies like IBM and Microsoft.
- **Social Media Tools:** Platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest enable users to create personal profiles, connect with others, share content, and engage in public discussions, reinforcing affiliations and virally sharing media.
- **Microblogging:** Twitter and similar platforms allow for short, real-time communication. Hashtags play a crucial role in organizing content and fostering viral campaigns, making microblogging a powerful tool for marketing and public engagement.

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2.11: Key Terms

Blog Rolls: Lists of a blogger's favorite sites, providing recommendations to readers and creating connections within the blogging community.

Blogs: Frequently updated web pages that feature personal commentary or business content, allowing for reader interaction through comments.

Community Building: The process of creating and nurturing a group of engaged followers or readers around shared interests or goals, often facilitated by interactive features on online platforms.

Community Management: The process of building, nurturing, and managing an online community to foster engagement and loyalty among members.

Content Management System (CMS): Software that helps users create, manage, and modify digital content, such as WordPress.

Crowdsourcing: The practice of obtaining input, ideas, or services from a large group of people, typically via the internet, to solve problems or generate content.

Data Security: Measures and protocols used to protect digital information from unauthorized access, breaches, or theft.

Democratization of Publishing: The concept that online writing platforms make it easier for anyone to publish content, removing traditional barriers to entry in the publishing industry.

External Links: Hyperlinks that direct users to different websites or sources, providing additional context or information.

Hashtags: Keywords preceded by the "#" symbol used on social media to categorize content and make it easily discoverable.

Influencer Partnerships: Collaborations between brands and social media influencers to promote products or services to the influencer's audience.

Interactive Feedback: The ability for readers to comment on and engage with content, providing immediate feedback to the writer.

Internal Links: Hyperlinks that connect different parts of the same website or document, improving navigation and SEO.

Knowledge Base: A centralized repository of information, often created and maintained through collaborative platforms like wikis.

Medium: A popular online publishing platform that enables writers to share their work and engage with readers through features like highlighting and commenting.

Microblogging: A form of blogging that allows users to post short updates, often limited to a specific character count, as seen on Twitter (X).

Mobile-Responsive Design: Designing web content to ensure it looks and functions well on a variety of devices, including smartphones and tablets.

Online Writing Platforms: Digital tools like Medium, WordPress, and Substack that allow users to create, publish, and share written content with a global audience.

Personal Blogging: The practice of writing and publishing personal thoughts, experiences, and interests on a blog, allowing for self-expression and audience engagement.

Professional Content Creation: The development of content for professional purposes, including marketing, brand building, and thought leadership, often shared on corporate blogs or social media.

RSS Feed: A web feed that allows users to access updates to online content in a standardized, computer-readable format.

SEO (Search Engine Optimization): Strategies used to increase the visibility of web content in search engine results, crucial for driving traffic to online writing.

Social Networks: Online platforms that enable users to create profiles, connect with others, and share content, such as Facebook and LinkedIn.

Substack: A platform that lets writers publish newsletters and monetize their content through subscriptions.

Trackbacks: Notifications that inform a blogger when another blog links to one of their posts, facilitating connectivity and interaction between blogs.

User-Generated Content (UGC): Content created by users rather than the platform owners, often shared on social media or online communities.

Web 2.0: The second generation of the internet, characterized by greater user interactivity, collaboration, and sharing through social media and other platforms.

Wikis: Collaborative platforms where users can create, edit, and organize content, often used for knowledge management and project collaboration.

WordPress: A widely used content management system (CMS) that allows users to create websites and blogs with customizable themes and plugins.

WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) Editing: An interface that allows users to create and edit content in a way that resembles the final output, without needing to know coding or markup language.

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2.12: Discussion Questions

1. How have platforms like Medium, WordPress, and Substack democratized writing and publishing, and what are the implications for both amateur and professional writers?
2. What specific features of web writing (e.g., hyperlinks, multimedia integration, real-time feedback) make it more effective for certain types of content compared to traditional print media?
3. In what ways do built-in community features of online writing platforms, such as comment sections and social sharing, influence the writing and publishing process?
4. How have Web 2.0 tools, such as wikis and social networks, changed the landscape of online collaboration and information sharing?
5. How do you foresee the evolution of online writing platforms impacting traditional media and publishing industries in the next decade?

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3: SOCIAL MEDIA- SECURITY AND PRIVACY FEATURES

3.1: Course Objectives

3.2: Introduction

3.3: Netiquette

3.4: Privacy with Social Media and Internet

3.5: Conclusion

3.6: End of Module Summary

3.7: Key Terms

3.8: Discussion Questions

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3.1: Course Objectives

1. Understand the principles of netiquette and online safety.
2. Implement and maintain secure online practices.
3. Evaluate the impact of sharing sensitive information online.
4. Report and handle illegal online activities.
5. Apply privacy settings and controls on social media and the internet.
6. Adopt best practices for protecting online privacy.

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3.2: Introduction

In today's digital age, social media has become an integral part of our daily lives, transforming how we connect, communicate, and consume information. However, with the increasing reliance on digital platforms comes the responsibility to navigate these spaces thoughtfully and safely. The future of social media is set to be influenced by emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR), which promise to enhance user experiences and create new opportunities for interaction. As these technologies evolve, so do the challenges and risks associated with online engagement, particularly concerning privacy and data security.

Understanding and practicing proper network etiquette, or netiquette, is crucial for maintaining a safe and respectful online environment. Netiquette encompasses a set of guidelines for appropriate behavior on the internet, emphasizing the importance of online safety and respectful communication. This chapter delves into the fundamentals of netiquette, providing valuable insights and practical tips to help you navigate the digital world responsibly. From keeping your software updated to recognizing phishing attempts, the following sections will equip you with the knowledge and skills necessary to protect yourself and others in the ever-evolving landscape of social media and online communication.

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3.3: Netiquette

Network etiquette (Netiquette) is the set of rules that determines how to properly communicate and browse the web.

One important part of netiquette concerns your online safety. By following these basic rules and tips you will avoid most online threats such as phishing attempts, malware infections and more. Why is this important for us? Given the rise of cybercriminal activity in recent years, the need to stay safe on the Internet has never been more pronounced. Most people believe all they need to be secure online is to have an antivirus program and do frequent back-ups, but the truth is, cybercriminals know a lot of ways around these. What really keeps you safe is the ability to recognize online threats and how to avoid them, and this is why netiquette is so important. A study from University of Maryland University College analyzed users' knowledge on cyber-security and came up with a few interesting conclusions:

- the more you know about cybersecurity, the likelier you are to adopt online safety measures;
- cybersecurity training and education will make you more open to new online safety methods.

Netiquette is important, so here are the 10 best internet safety tips and netiquette rules you need to be aware of when online.

Keep your software/apps updated and delete the ones you don't use.

Developers and cybercriminals are almost always caught in a cat and mouse game, where cybercriminals search for exploits and developers rush to patch them before too much damage is done. Most of the times, vulnerabilities are quickly updated, but the real issue is that most users will still use an outdated version and will be vulnerable to the exploit. Keeping your software up-to-date will go a long way into keeping you safe. But an equally important step is to remove software and apps you no longer use. Many of these programs still communicate in the background with various servers, and in case of a breach, this data might fall into the wrong hands.

Be careful when dealing with emails from unknown sources

Have you received an email from an unknown source? Do you frequently receive e-mails from people you don't know? Just as in real life, an important rule to stay safe on the internet is to be suspicious of strangers. First, don't trust emails from people you never met, especially those that ask you to click a link, open an attachment or send a file to the sender. It's pretty easy to spot phishing emails. What gives most of them away is the urgency with which they ask you to do something, either because your account may be compromised or your online purchase may have encountered some issues you need to sort. To fool the potential victims, the latest trend in e-crime is to deploy spear phishing attacks, where emails appear to come from well-known individuals or banking authority. But in order for a spear phishing attack to be successful, it needs to appear as genuine and believable. So they launch an elaborate identity theft operation to target and steal your sensitive information. So when you do get a phishing email, ignore it completely and don't reply to the e-mail, don't click the (malicious) attachment, and don't click the dangerous links in the e-mail that could download malware on the system.

Don't click that link or online ad

You found a pretty cool link on the Internet and it keeps tempting you to click it. But the source of the link (website or email) seems fishy. You ask yourself: What can the bad guys do to me if I click this link? The answer is simple: a lot of things could go wrong. Just by clicking a link in an email or a pop-up window, you could turn your PC into a botnet slave, allow cybercriminals to inject malware into your device, or expose your personal information. You may think that you are safe from all these dangers because you have a good antivirus product, but nowadays traditional antivirus protection isn't enough anymore and you need additional weapons in the fight against online dangers.

Just because it's free, it doesn't mean it's safe



As a rule of thumb, paid software is almost always secure and safe. It wouldn't make sense for a cybercriminal to limit the number of victims by imposing a paywall. Double check free software using Google, especially if it's not a well-known one, such as WinRAR. This filtering process can expose bad reviews, or reveal that the free software is actually a vehicle for malware. While the free software itself might be safe and legit, the website itself may try to compromise your security through drive-by downloads. These are secret downloads carried in the background, that target software vulnerabilities and system exploits. Make sure you use a trusted, free program that automatically updates your vulnerable software applications to close security holes in your system.

Do not reveal sensitive information online



Social media is the first place criminals check to gather information on you. They will use any piece of information they can find, such as your name, birthdate, address, city, your spouse/partners name, what sort of pet you have, name of the pet. Literally, anything that you can think of. Improving your social media security settings is a good first step in preventing an identity theft or doxxing. So, be a bit skeptical about people you meet online and about their intentions. Many people exaggerate their Facebook lives, and depending on how you use it, social media may come back to haunt you.

Keep your account information for yourself



Our credentials for online accounts, user names and passwords, hold the keys to a lot of important information, and for that reason they are the most sought after targets by cybercriminals. Using the same password for more than one site is a risky move, since if a malicious hacker breaks into just one account, he can then take over the others. One of the better online safety tips is to use a different password for every website you register. The downside however is the difficulty of memorizing them. One workaround is to use password managers, these will remember the login details of every site you use and can even generate some strong password for you use.

Report illegal activities or offending content

If you notice offending language attacks, like cyber-bullying, hate speech or any form of harassment, do not hesitate to report it. Using the “Flag as offensive” or “Flag as spam” buttons is proper internet etiquette and should be sufficient to fight back against minor online threats, but other types of content, such child pornography or arms trafficking should be immediately reported to the police. Reporting cyberbullying is takes on a different importance when children are the targets. A report on cyber bullying on 2014 gives the following troublesome conclusions:

- 25% of teenagers report that they have experienced repeated bullying
- 52% off young people report being cyber bullied
- 95% of teens who witnessed bullying on social media report they have ignored the behavior
- cyber bullying affects everyone
- the most common types of cyber bullying tactics reported are mean, hurtful comments.

What you post online stays online forever



· We post photos, remarks, location updates and similar content, which we think is fine because we use an anonymous username on a small niche forum. But niche forums are also indexed by search results, and if you reuse the username, other people can start to connect the dots. This is called doxxing, where people hunt for information about an internet user until they manage to figure out who they are in real life. And you may think that your posts and comments are usually ignored or don't receive much attention, but they still remain there and you never know when they come back at you. Not to mention the fact that search engines save and classify your content on so many online servers. To keep it short, when it comes to posting personal content on forums and similar places, follow these guidelines:

- is this information too personal?
- delete/edit past posts which reveal too much about you
- could your content affect your personal or professional life in the future?

Use anti malware protection before you go online



Don't go online until you have the best anti-malware protection that money can buy. You may think that avoiding adult websites and that sort of thing will keep you safe, but did you know that hackers now hide malicious code even in legitimate websites? And sometimes not even that is enough. Some ransomware programs are so sophisticated, it is technologically impossible to decrypt them, no matter how much you try. And in this case, you really need the best tools out there.

Create back-up copies for your important stuff

Though you may have all the security protection in the world, disaster may still hit your system and your valuable files. It may be a system crash, a hard disk failure, a ransomware attack that encrypts your entire operating system or it may be a human mistake. There are so many reasons something can go wrong for you and your sensitive information, even if you followed all the netiquette rules in the book. To emphasize the importance of this point, we can tell you that a while ago we interviewed a series of security experts in the IT industry, and one recurring theme was the importance of backing up your information.

Conclusion

Common sense is vital on the internet. Most of the threats you will find online rely on human error to break into your system. Technology hasn't made us safer because safety is not a function of technology. Real security comes from people. Technology is just a security tool. In the end, knowledge and netiquette become the two sides of the same coin: Internet protection.

3.4: Privacy with Social Media and Internet



"[Information Security \(InfoSec\) - Online Privacy - With Padlock](#)" by [Cloud Income](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

Alt Text: Blue lock on a dark blue background

Privacy on social media and the internet is a critical concern in today's digital age. With the vast amount of personal information shared online, protecting privacy has become increasingly challenging. Social media platforms, websites, and online services collect and store data about users, which can be used for various purposes, including targeted advertising, data analytics, and even malicious activities.

3.4.1 Data Collection and Usage

Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn collect extensive data on their users. This includes personal details, browsing history, location data, and interaction patterns. These platforms use algorithms to analyze this data and provide personalized content and advertisements. For instance, Facebook uses user data to target ads based on interests and behaviors, enhancing ad relevance but raising privacy concerns.

- **Right to Know:** Individuals can request information about the personal data collected, sold, and disclosed by businesses.
- **Right to Delete:** Individuals can request the deletion of their personal data.
- **Right to Opt-Out:** Individuals can opt out of the sale of their personal data.
- **Non-Discrimination:** Businesses cannot discriminate against individuals who exercise their privacy rights

Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA)

PIPEDA is Canada's federal privacy law that governs how private sector organizations handle personal information in the course of commercial activities. Key elements of PIPEDA include:

- **Accountability:** Organizations must appoint a privacy officer responsible for compliance.
- **Identifying Purposes:** Organizations must identify the purposes for collecting personal information.
- **Limiting Collection:** Organizations should only collect information necessary for the identified purposes.
- **Safeguards:** Personal information must be protected by appropriate security measures.

Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)

COPPA is a U.S. federal law designed to protect the privacy of children under the age of 13. Key provisions include:

- **Parental Consent:** Websites and online services must obtain verifiable parental consent before collecting personal information from children.
- **Privacy Policy:** Websites must post a clear privacy policy detailing their information practices regarding children.
- **Access and Deletion:** Parents have the right to review and delete their children's personal information.

3.4.5 Best Practices for Protecting Privacy

Individuals can take several steps to protect their privacy online. These include using strong, unique passwords for different accounts, enabling two-factor authentication, and being cautious about the information shared online. Avoiding public Wi-Fi for sensitive transactions and regularly reviewing privacy settings on social media platforms are also recommended practices.

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3.5: Conclusion

Netiquette, or network etiquette, plays a crucial role in ensuring safe and respectful online interactions. By adhering to established guidelines, such as keeping software updated, being cautious with emails from unknown sources, and avoiding suspicious links, users can protect themselves from various online threats. The importance of these practices is underscored by the increasing sophistication of cybercriminal activities and the need for individuals to be proactive in their cybersecurity efforts. Additionally, practices like using strong, unique passwords and reporting offensive content contribute to a safer and more positive online environment.

Privacy on social media and the internet is another critical aspect that users must be vigilant about. Social media platforms collect vast amounts of personal data, which can be used for targeted advertising and other purposes. Understanding and utilizing privacy settings, being aware of the risks of data breaches, and complying with legal frameworks such as GDPR, CCPA, PIPEDA, and COPPA are essential for safeguarding personal information. By adopting best practices for online privacy, such as using strong passwords and enabling two-factor authentication, individuals can better protect their data and maintain control over their online presence.

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3.6: End of Module Summary

- **Data Collection and Usage:** Social media platforms collect vast amounts of user data, including personal details, browsing history, and interaction patterns, for targeted advertising and content personalization.
- **Risks of Data Breaches:** Data breaches can expose sensitive user information, leading to identity theft, financial loss, and reputational damage, as seen in incidents like the Cambridge Analytica scandal.
- **Privacy Settings and Controls:** Users should adjust privacy settings on social media platforms to control who can see their information and how it is used. This includes managing friend lists and limiting data sharing with third-party apps.
- **Legal and Regulatory Frameworks:** Regulations like the GDPR, CCPA, PIPEDA, and COPPA provide frameworks for protecting personal data. They grant rights such as data access, deletion, and consent for data collection.
- **GDPR:** The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requires explicit consent for data collection, provides the right to access and delete personal data, and mandates breach notifications within 72 hours.
- **CCPA:** The California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) gives California residents the right to know, delete, and opt-out of the sale of their personal data while prohibiting discrimination based on the exercise of these rights.
- **PIPEDA:** Canada's PIPEDA mandates accountability, purpose identification, limited collection, and safeguards for personal information handled by private sector organizations.
- **COPPA:** The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) requires parental consent for collecting personal information from children under 13 and mandates clear privacy policies.
- **Best Practices for Protecting Privacy:** Use strong, unique passwords, enable two-factor authentication, avoid sharing sensitive information publicly, use secure connections, and regularly review privacy settings.
- **Taking Precautionary Measures:** Regularly update privacy settings, avoid public Wi-Fi for sensitive transactions, and be vigilant about the information shared online to maintain privacy and security.

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3.7: Key Terms

Antivirus Program: Software designed to detect, prevent, and remove malicious software from computers.

Botnet: A network of compromised computers controlled by a central entity, often used for malicious purposes like DDoS attacks or spamming.

Breach Notification: A requirement for organizations to notify authorities and affected individuals within a specified timeframe after a data breach.

California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA): A state statute intended to enhance privacy rights and consumer protection for residents of California.

Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA): A U.S. federal law designed to protect the privacy of children under 13 on the internet.

Consent: Permission for something to happen or agreement to do something, particularly in the context of data collection.

Cyberbullying: The use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature.

Cybersecurity: Measures and practices designed to protect computers, networks, and data from unauthorized access, vulnerabilities, and attacks.

Data Breach: An incident where sensitive, protected, or confidential data is accessed or disclosed without authorization.

Data Portability: The ability to transfer personal data from one service provider to another.

Doxxing: The practice of publicly revealing private information about an individual, typically via the internet, without their consent.

Drive-by Downloads: The unintentional download of malicious software from a website, often without the user's knowledge.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR): A regulation in EU law on data protection and privacy for all individuals within the European Union and the European Economic Area.

Identity Theft: The fraudulent acquisition and use of someone's personal information, usually for financial gain.

Malware: Malicious software designed to harm, exploit, or otherwise compromise computer systems.

Netiquette: Network etiquette or netiquette refers to the set of rules governing proper online communication and behavior.

Online Focus Group: A group of individuals engaged through online platforms to provide feedback or information, often used for research purposes.

Password Manager: A software application that helps users generate, retrieve, and store complex passwords securely.

Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA): A Canadian law governing how private sector organizations collect, use, and disclose personal information in the course of commercial business.

Phishing: A fraudulent attempt to obtain sensitive information by disguising as a trustworthy entity in electronic communications.

Privacy Settings: Options available on social media platforms and other online services to control who can view and interact with your content.

Right to Erasure: Also known as the "right to be forgotten," it allows individuals to request the deletion of their personal data.

Software Updates: Patches and improvements released by developers to fix vulnerabilities and enhance the functionality of software.

Spear Phishing: A targeted phishing attempt aimed at a specific individual or organization, often using personalized information to appear legitimate.

Two-Factor Authentication: An additional layer of security requiring not only a password and username but also something that only the user has on them.

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3.8: Discussion Questions

1. Why is netiquette essential for online safety, and how does it help prevent threats such as phishing attempts and malware infections?
2. How does keeping software/apps updated and deleting unused ones contribute to online security?
3. What strategies can individuals use to identify and handle phishing emails from unknown sources?
4. How can adjusting privacy settings on social media platforms protect personal information from cybercriminals?
5. How do laws like GDPR, CCPA, PIPEDA, and COPPA protect individuals' online privacy, and what are their key provisions?

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4: CROWDSOURCING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND PROBLEM SOLVING

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4.1: Course Objectives

1. Understand the role of social media in communication and outreach.
2. Develop effective community management strategies.
3. Implement reputation management techniques.
4. Utilize social media for insight and research.
5. Identify opportunities and manage threats on social media.
6. Incorporate creativity and problem-solving techniques in social media strategy.

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4.2: Introduction

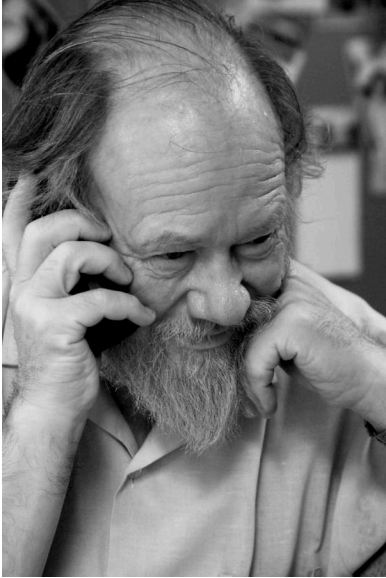
In today's fast-paced digital world, social media has become an indispensable tool for businesses, governments, and organizations to communicate effectively with their audiences. The bi-directional communication capabilities of social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook allow entities to broadcast timely messages and engage in real-time interactions with their followers. This dynamic interaction is particularly vital during newsworthy events, such as elections, disasters, and major sports events, where timely updates and instant communication are crucial. Social media serves not only as a broadcasting tool but also as a platform for managing communities and reputations, gathering insights, and conducting research, making it a comprehensive tool for public communication and outreach.

Effective community management is essential for building and maintaining a supportive network around an organization. By actively participating in and guiding conversations, businesses can foster a loyal community of brand evangelists. Additionally, social media is a powerful tool for reputation management, providing a platform for crisis communication and monitoring public sentiment. Organizations can use social media to address issues promptly, share their side of the story, and engage with their audience to mitigate crises. Moreover, social media offers valuable insights into consumer behavior and preferences, enabling organizations to refine their strategies and make informed decisions. As we delve into the intricacies of communication and outreach in the digital age, it's clear that social media's role is multifaceted and ever-evolving.

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4.3: Communication and Outreach



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Alt Text: Man talking on phone

Social media offers brands an effective two-way communication and real-time broadcast channels. This bi-directional communication is what makes social communities so exciting (and challenging). Just as consumers can communicate with each other, and send messages to businesses and brands, businesses and brands can use this medium to communicate with and reach out to the public. Social media is a highly effective public communications tool.

Businesses, governments, and other organizations use Twitter and Facebook to broadcast timely messages, allowing interested parties to keep informed in real time. This has become a vital aspect of newsworthy and breaking news events such as elections, disasters, and global sports. Many organizations also use social media tools to broadcast service updates.

4.3.1 Community management

Social media platforms are built around communities, and are sometimes virtual representations of real-world networks and communities. This feature of social media can be used to build and maintain a supportive community around your organization.

Community manager' is a role that has risen to prominence as more organizations start using social media, but it has always been an important role in any community, from groups that thrive on forums, to communities run on Facebook.

Creating, building and nurturing a community means that organizations don't just participate in conversations that are happening around and about them, but also actively lead and guide those conversations. These communities are generally made up of the organization's biggest fans, often called brand evangelists, who feel as if they have a big stake in that organization. This creates an environment where those fans can interact directly with the organization, and where the organization can send messages directly to those fans and solicit their feedback.



Figure 4.3.2: Example of good community management: Chipotle providing awareness of their product and then responding to customers in a brand appropriate tone and encouraging engagement and sharing of the post *Adapted From Digiday, 2015*

Building and maintaining a community is a long-term project. It starts with determining what the best platform is for that community; something that already exists (such as Facebook), or developing a customized new community platform created for the specific brand's purpose (either from scratch or using a service such as Ning – www.ning.com).

4.3.2 Reputation management

Social media is a very effective tool for crisis communication and management. In certain instances, it is the place where some crises start. This can be due to offensive content, an employee saying something stupid or inappropriate, or even just angry customers sharing their complaints and getting reactions. It is important that you do not delete angry posts, but acknowledge them.

Social media is also a great tool for monitoring what is being said about your brand, and to spot a potential crisis long before it becomes one. Such a 'heads up' allows your brand to mediate the crisis by being proactive and ameliorating the crisis before it takes hold. And when a crisis does hit, social media is a great space for managing your communication as it enables you to get your side of the story out.

4.3.3 Insight and research



"Handwritten notes in academic research" by [Raul P](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#).

Alt Text: Desk with computer and research papers

Social media can be a very powerful insight and research asset, but the information needs to be judged in its proper context. When you are planning a campaign, social media can provide a rich source of data, both demographic and preference based. You can use the information users share freely to understand more about your market, brand or product. ORM tools help you to track mentions and sentiment, giving you insight into how you are perceived by consumers.

Using social network ad planners, such as Facebook's Ads manager or Google Display Planner (Google discontinued Ad Planner in November 2016), can give you rich information about the size of your market, and things that consumers like. You can measure sentiment and the changing number of mentions to help you understand the impact of other campaigns. These can be offline or online campaigns.

Building your online community also gives you a group you can reach out to for information and feedback, creating an always-on online focus group. However, bear in mind that these users are inherently biased just by the fact that they would join your social community.

Social data can be very valuable, but must be treated correctly. It is qualitative and quantitative information, and is in many ways secondary research. For research purposes, it can and should be used to help form research questions for further evaluation.

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4.4: Dealing with opportunities and threats



"Cyber Security at the Ministry of Defence" by [Defence Images](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC 2.0](#).

Alt Text: Cyber security website link

The use of social media has equipped consumers with a voice and a platform, and the ability to amplify their views and truly inform their decision making. The connected nature of the Internet makes these views easy to share, and the accessibility of social media tools makes it easy for other consumers to find these views, and respond and build on them. All of this contributes to the perception of the brand.

The best way to show that you are listening to customer comments, complaints and questions online is the same as with a normal conversation. Comment when it's appropriate, listen with interest, be polite, be respectful, and add value wherever possible. Brands should become active participants in the conversation.

Brands that are successful in communicating with their audiences are constantly on the lookout for opportunities to propel their brand forward, and are keeping their eyes peeled for risks that may threaten their reputation. In both situations, the power sits in how the brand responds. This response can range from a direct engagement to a full new marketing campaign. Ultimately it depends on how powerful the opportunity or risk is.

An extreme example of successfully grabbing a social media opportunity, is Morton's, an American steak restaurant chain. One weary business traveler jokingly tweeted Morton's asking them to deliver him a porterhouse steak at the airport when he landed. The Morton's social media team were listening and responded by ensuring that the customer was met at the airport with a steak. This social media stunt garnered enormous media attention, a very loyal brand advocate, and a hefty increase in sales for the following weeks (Herrman, 2016).



Figure 4.4.1: Morton's restaurant responding to a customer tweet and earning themselves great media publicity *Adapted From Gizmodo, 2011*

4.4.1 Step by step guide recovering from online brand attack

These rules to recovery provide a practical approach for brands facing an online threat.

Step 1. Be prepared

No brand is immune from an online brand attack. The best brands have strategies in place to identify a reputation crisis immediately and respond to it quickly enough to stop the negative word of mouth from spreading.

Keep your brand in front of consumers by engaging in the conversation. This can be done by making use of blogs, communicating with customers, and being as open and honest as possible. Engaging in, and leading, the conversation allows you to build an authentic voice. If a crisis hits, you will be well placed to respond in a way that is authentic.

Step 2. Act immediately!

The easiest way to solve most brand attacks is to respond quickly. A brand that shows it is listening and does indeed care will go far when it comes to ensuring a solid online reputation. Acknowledge what has been said and react accordingly.

Step 3. If what they're saying is false

If the attack on your brand is factually incorrect, send the person evidence that they are wrong, and in a friendly tone, ask them to remove or retract the entry, and offer to keep them informed of future news. If the person doesn't react or respond, add a comment to the post that it has been addressed.

Step 4. If what they're saying is true...

If the mention is negative but true, send your side of the story and try as hard as you can to take the conversation offline. If appropriate, apologize quickly and sincerely, and offer to make amends.

Step 5. Keep the negative pages out of the search engines

Keeping more users from reading negative things about your brand is imperative. Knock them off the first page of the results with basic SEO and some social media pages, such as Facebook, Twitter or blog posts. Keep adding pages and links until you've forced the offending pages out of sight.

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4.5: Social media strategy risks and challenges

Any social media strategy should account for the risks and challenges of interacting in this environment, and should incorporate a protocol for dealing with these risks. Mistakes on the web can take a long time to recover from.

Some of the common risks and challenges are listed below.

No one cares. Especially when building a community from scratch, it can be difficult in the beginning to get the traction you want. This is why understanding the landscape in the context of your organization's market is so important. Make sure you are interacting in the spaces where your customers are, and where they are happy to hear from you.



"customer services shoot" by [Phil Dowsing Creative](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#).

Alt Text: Woman at front desk talking to customer

The social media space is used by unhappy customers (who are free to post derogatory comments). Even if the only feedback you are getting is negative, this is good feedback! Now you have an opportunity to do something about it.

It requires ongoing attention and monitoring. Social media channels may be free, but there is still a time and resource investment required to make your strategy a success. Understand what your objectives are for using social media, and budget the time required to meet those.

It can be difficult to measure the impact of the campaign. Social media can be difficult to measure, but that does not mean your campaigns are not successful. Don't expect to find a solution (or success) overnight. Start with measuring things that can be measured easily, and watch for case studies in this space that will help you to turn your social media investment into revenue for your organization.

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4.6: Creative Problem-Solving Process

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the five steps in the creative problem-solving process
- Identify and describe common creative problem-solving tools

Creativity can be an important trait of an entrepreneur. In that discussion, we learned about creativity's role in *innovation*. Here, we will look in more depth at creativity's role in *problem-solving*. Let's first formally define **creativity** as the development of original ideas to solve an issue. The intent of being an entrepreneur is to break away from practical norms and use imagination to embrace quick and effective solutions to an existing problem, usually outside the corporate environment.

The Steps of the Creative Problem-Solving Process

Training oneself to think like an entrepreneur means learning the steps to evaluating a challenge: clarify, ideate, develop, implement, and evaluate (Figure 3.3.1).



Figure 4.6.1: The process of creativity is not random; it is a specific and logical process that includes evaluation. The entrepreneur repeats the creative process until reaching a successful solution. (CC BY 4.0; Rice University & OpenStax)

Step 1: Clarify

To **clarify** is the critical step of recognizing the existence of a gap between the current state and a desired state. This can also be thought of as having **need awareness**, which occurs when the entrepreneur notes a gap between societal or customer needs and actual circumstances. Clarifying the problem by speaking with clients and developing a detailed description of the problem brings the specifics of a problem to light. Failure to identify the specifics of a problem leaves the entrepreneur with the impossible task of solving a ghost problem, a problem that is fully unknown or unseen. To establish and maintain credibility, an entrepreneur must clarify the problem by focusing on solving the problem itself, rather than solving a symptom of the problem.

For example, a farm could have polluted water, but it would not be enough to solve the problem only on that farm. Clarifying would involve identifying the source of the pollution to adequately tackle the problem. After gaining an understanding of a problem, the entrepreneur should begin to formulate plans for eliminating the gap. A fishbone diagram, as shown in Figure 3.3.2, is a tool that can be used to identify the causes of such a problem.

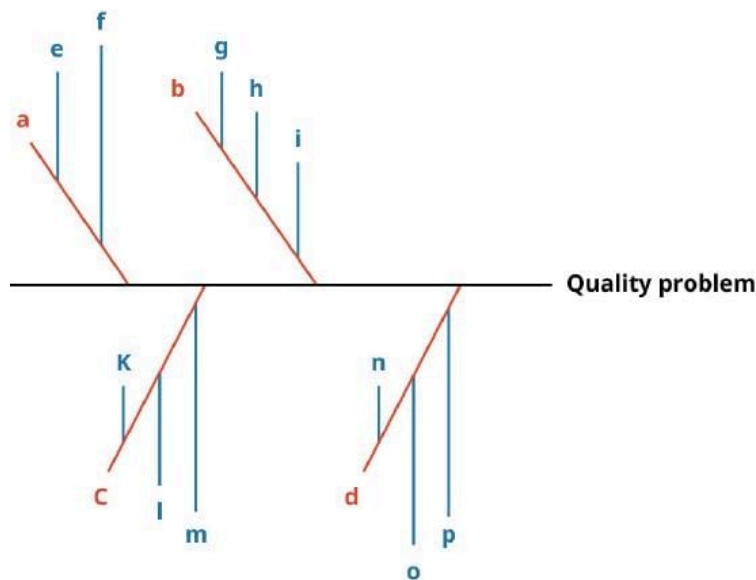


Figure 4.6.2: A quality problem has main causes—here designated as a, b, c, and d. Within these main causes, there are several causes that might need to be addressed to solve the quality problem. The goal of a fishbone diagram is to find the root causes of the quality problem. (CC BY 4.0; Rice University & OpenStax)

In the case of our water pollution example, a fishbone diagram exploring the issue might reveal the items shown in Figure 3.3.3.

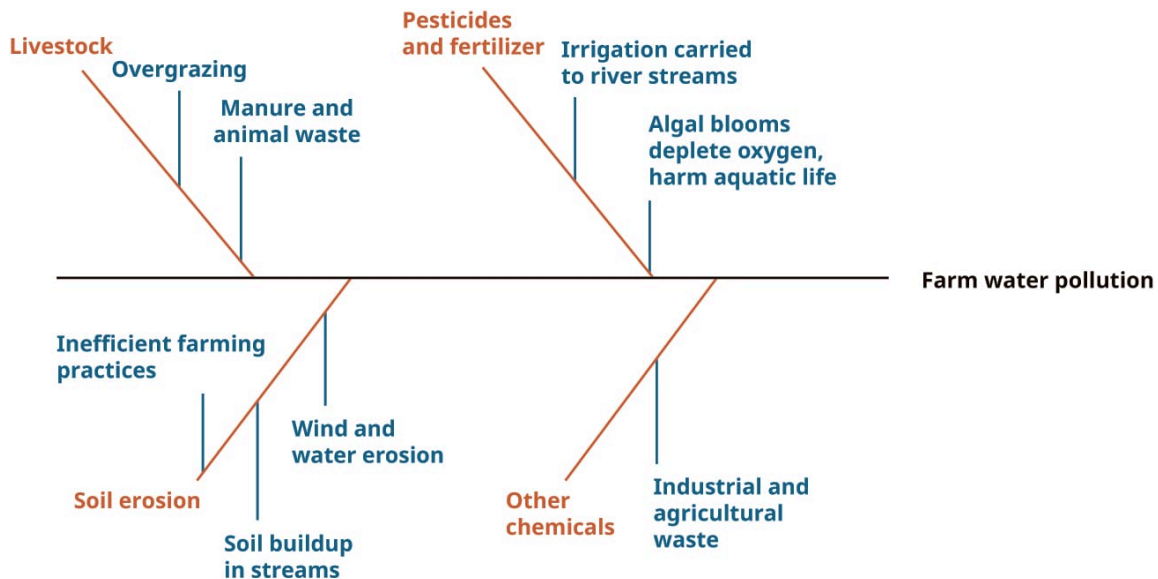


Figure 4.6.3: Farm water pollution could have four main causes, such as livestock, pesticide and fertilizer, soil erosion, and other chemicals. For each of those, there are other related causes. (CC BY 4.0; Rice University & OpenStax)

Step 2: Ideate

To **ideate** is the step of the creative problem-solving process that involves generating and detailing ideas by the entrepreneur. After collecting all information relevant to the problem, the entrepreneur lists as many causes of the problem as possible. This is the step in which the largest variety of ideas are put forth. Each idea must be evaluated for feasibility and cost as a solution to the problem. If a farm does not have clean water, for example, the entrepreneur must list causes of toxic water and eliminate as many of those causes as possible. The entrepreneur must then move forward investigating solutions to bring the water back to a safe state. If, say, nearby livestock are polluting the water, the livestock should be isolated from the water source.

Step 3: Develop

To **develop** is the step in which the entrepreneur takes the list of ideas generated and tests each solution for feasibility. The entrepreneur must consider the cost of each idea and the obstacles to implementation. In the preceding example, adding a chemical to the water may not be a feasible solution to the farmer. Not every farmer wants additional chloride or fluoride added to the water due to the effect on both humans and livestock. These tradeoffs should be addressed in the feasibility assessment. The farmer might prefer a filtration system, but the cost of that solution might not be practicable. The entrepreneur should identify and assess alternative solutions to find one that is most cost-effective and feasible to the customer.

Step 4: Implement

To **implement** is the step in which the solution to the problem is tested and evaluated. The entrepreneur walks through the planned implementation with the client and tests each part of the solution, if a service, or thoroughly tests a developed good. The entrepreneur implements the solution and goes through a structured system of follow-up to ensure the solution remains effective and viable. In the water example, the solution would be reducing runoff from toxic insecticides by adding prairie strips, buffers of grass, and vegetation along banks of streams.

Step 5: Evaluate

To **evaluate** is the step in which the final solution is assessed. This is a very important step that entrepreneurs often overlook. Any fallacy in the implementation of the product or service is reassessed, and new solutions are implemented. A continual testing process may be needed to find the final solution. The prairie strips, buffers of grass, and vegetation along banks of streams chosen in the farming water example should then be analyzed and tested to ensure the chosen solution changed the content of the water.

ARE YOU READY?

Implementing Creative Problem Solving

Removing waste is a problem, and it can also present an entrepreneurial opportunity. Try to examine ways in which waste products that you usually pay to have hauled away can now generate revenue. Whether it's recycling aluminum cans or cardboard, or garbage that could be used to feed animals, your task is to come up with solutions to this entrepreneurial-oriented problem.

- Try following the first step of the creative problem-solving process and clearly identify the problem.
- Next, gather data and formulate the challenge.
- Then, explore ideas and come up with solutions.
- Develop a plan of action.
- Finally, note how you would evaluate the effectiveness of your solution.

Using Creativity to Solve Problems

Entrepreneurs are faced with solving many problems as they develop their ideas for filling gaps, whether those opportunities involve establishing a new company or starting a new enterprise within an existing company. Some of these problems include staffing, hiring and managing employees, handling legal compliance, funding, marketing, and paying taxes. Beyond the mundane activities listed, the entrepreneur, or the team that the entrepreneur puts in place, is indispensable in maintaining the ongoing creativity behind the product line or service offered. Innovation and creativity in the business are necessary to expand the product line or develop a groundbreaking service.

It is not necessary for the entrepreneur to feel isolated when it comes to finding creative solutions to a problem. There are societies, tools, and new methods available to spur the creativity of the entrepreneur that will further support the success and expansion of a new enterprise.¹⁴ Learning and using entrepreneurial methods to solve problems alleviates the stress many startup owners feel. The entrepreneur's creativity will increase using collaborative methodologies. Some entrepreneurial collaborative methodologies include crowdsourcing, brainstorming, storyboarding, conducting quick online surveys to test ideas and concepts, and team creativity activities.

Crowdsourcing

Professor Daren Brabham at the University of Southern California has written books on crowdsourcing and touts its potential in for-profit and not-for-profit business sectors. He defines it simply as “an online, distributed problem-solving and production model.”¹⁵ **Crowdsourcing** involves teams of amateurs and nonexperts working together to form a solution to a problem.¹⁶ The idea, as cbsnews.com’s Jennifer Alsever has put it, is to “tap into the collective intelligence of the public at large to complete business-related tasks that a company would normally either perform itself or outsource to a third-party provider. Yet free labor is only a narrow part of crowdsourcing’s appeal. More importantly, it enables managers to expand the size of their talent pool while also gaining deeper insight into what customers really want. The challenge is to take a cautionary approach to the ‘wisdom of the crowd,’ which can lead to a ‘herd’ mentality.”¹⁷

LINK TO LEARNING

Read this [article that discusses what crowdsourcing is, how to use it, and its benefits](#) for more information.

This new business prototype, similar to outsourcing, features an enterprise posting a problem online and asking for volunteers to consider the problem and propose solutions. Volunteers earn a reward, such as prize money, promotional materials like a T-shirt, royalties on creative outlets like photos or designs, and in some cases, compensation for their labor. Before proposing the solution, volunteers learn that the solutions become the intellectual property of the startup posting the problem. The solution is then mass-produced for profit by the startup that posted the problem.¹⁸ The process evolves into the crowdsourcing process after the enterprise mass produces and profits from the labor of the volunteers and the team. Entrepreneurs should consider that untapped masses have solutions for many issues for which agendas do not yet exist. Crowdsourcing can exploit those agendas and add to the tools used to stimulate personal creativity. This type of innovation is planned and strategically implemented for profit.

For example, Bombardier held a crowdsourced innovation contest to solicit input on the future of train interiors, including seat design and coach class interior. A corporate jury judged the submissions, with the top ten receiving computers or cash prizes. Companies are often constrained, however, by internal rules limiting open source or external idea sourcing, as they could be accused of “stealing” an idea. While crowdsourcing outside of software can be problematic, some products such as MakerBot’s 3D printers, 3DR’s drones, and Jibo’s Social Robot have used developer kits and “makers” to help build a community and stimulate innovation from the outside.

WORK IT OUT

A Crowdsourced Potato Chip

In an effort to increase sales among millennials, PepsiCo turned to crowdsourcing to get new flavor ideas for their Lay’s potato chips (called Walker’s in the UK). Their 2012 campaign, “Do Us a Flavor,” was so successful that they received over 14 million submissions. The winner was Cheesy Garlic Bread, which increased their potato chip sales by 8 percent during the first three months after the launch.

- What are some other products that would work well for a crowdsourced campaign contest?
- What items wouldn’t work well?

Amazon’s Mechanical Turk is an online crowdsourcing platform that allows individuals to post tasks for workers to complete. In many instances, these tasks are compensated, but the payment can be less than one dollar per item completed. Mechanical Turk is one of the largest and most well-known crowdsourcing platforms, but there are a number of other more niche ones as well that would apply to smaller markets. In the case of innovation contests and outsourced tasks from corporations, those tasks may be hosted internally by the corporation.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is the generation of ideas in an environment free of judgment or dissension with the goal of creating solutions. Brainstorming is meant to stimulate participants into thinking about problem-solving in a new way. Using a multifunctional group,

meaning participants come from different departments and with different skill sets, gives entrepreneurs and support teams a genuine chance to suggest and actualize ideas. The group works together to refine and prototype potential solutions to a problem.

LINK TO LEARNING

Brainstorming is a highly researched and often practiced technique for the development of innovative solutions. One of the more successful proponents of brainstorming is the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). UNICEF faces unique problems of solving resource problems for mothers and children in underdeveloped nations. See how [UNICEF practices brainstorming to solve problems](#) including child survival, gender inclusion, refugee crises, education, and others.

The setting for a brainstorming session should remain as informal and relaxed as possible. The group needs to avoid standard solutions. All ideas are welcome and listed and considered with no censorship and with no regard to administrative restrictions. All team members have an equal voice. The focus of brainstorming is on quantity of ideas rather than on the ideal solution provided in every suggestion. A classic entrepreneurial brainstorming activity, as popularized by business software developer Strategyzer, is known as the “silly cow” exercise. Teams come up with ideas for new business models pertaining to a cow, with the results often outrageous, ranging from sponsored cows to stroking cows for therapeutic release. Participants are asked to identify some aspect of a cow and develop three business models around that concept in a short time period, typically two minutes or fewer. The activity is designed to get creative juices flowing.

LINK TO LEARNING

Watch this video from ABC's Nightline that shows how IDEO designed a new shopping cart for an example of a design process that involves brainstorming.

Storyboarding

Storyboarding is the process of presenting an idea in a step-by-step graphic format, as Figure 3.3.4 shows. This tool is useful when the entrepreneur is attempting to visualize a solution to a problem. The steps to the solution of a problem are sketched and hung in graphic format. Once the original graphic is placed, images of steps working toward a solution are added, subtracted, and rearranged on a continual basis, until the ultimate solution emerges in the ultimate graphic format. For many years, entrepreneurs have used this process to create a pre-visual for various media sequences.



Figure 4.6.4: Storyboarding helps entrepreneurs and team members to visually represent steps in product creation and problem-solving. (credit: “Clue storyboarding” by Adam Wiggins/Flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Team Creativity

Team creativity is the process whereby an entrepreneur works with a team to create an unexpected solution for an issue or challenge. Teams progress through the same creative problem-solving process described already: clarify, ideate, develop, implement, and evaluate. The main advantage of team creativity is the collaboration and support members receive from one another. Great teams trust in other team members, have diverse members with diverse points of view, are cohesive, and have chemistry.

Team members should work in a stress-free and relaxing environment. Reinforcement and expansion of ideas in the team environment motivates the team to continually expand horizons toward problem solution. A small idea in a team may spark the imagination of a team member to an original idea. Mark Zuckerberg, co-founder of Facebook, once said, “The most important thing for you as an entrepreneur trying to build something is, you need to build a really good team. And that’s what I spend all my time on.”¹⁹

ENTREPRENEUR IN ACTION

Taaluma Totes²⁰

Young entrepreneurs Jack DuFour and Alley Heffern began to notice the beautiful fabrics that came from the different countries they visited. The entrepreneurs thought about what could be done with the fabrics to create employment opportunities both in the country from which the fabric originated and in their home base of Virginia. They decided to test producing totes from the fabrics they found and formed Taaluma Totes (Figure 3.3.5). DuFour and Heffern also wanted to promote the production of these fabrics and help underserved populations in countries where the fabric originated maintain a living or follow a dream.



Figure 4.6.5: This photograph was taken by a traveler, Kelsey Friedman, who studied abroad in Rwanda through Virginia Tech’s International Business in Lugano: Combining Theory and Practice program. (credit: photo provided by Taaluma Totes)

The team continued to test the process and gathered original fabrics, which they sent to Virginia to create totes. They trained individuals with disabilities in Virginia to manufacture the totes, thus serving populations in the United States. The entrepreneurs then decided to take 20 percent of their profits and make microloans to farmers and small business owners in the countries where the fabric originated to create jobs there. Microloans are small loans, below \$50,000, which certain lenders offer to enterprising startups. These startups, for various reasons (they are in poor nations, at the poverty level), can’t afford a traditional loan from a major bank. The lenders offer business support to the borrower, which in turn helps the borrower repay the microloan. The microloans from Taaluma are repaid when the borrower is able. Repayments are used to buy more fabric, completing Taaluma’s desire to serve dual populations. If the process proved unsuccessful, the co-owners would revise the process to meet the plan’s requirements.

DuFour and Heffern now have fabrics from dozens of countries from Thailand to Ecuador. The totes are specialized with features to meet individual needs. The product line is innovated regularly and Taaluma Totes serves a dual purpose of employing persons with disabilities in Virginia and creating employment for underserved populations in other countries.

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4.7: Crowdsourcing

Crowdsourcing is a method of obtaining input, ideas, or services by soliciting contributions from a large group of people, typically via the internet. This approach leverages the collective intelligence and expertise of the crowd to solve problems, generate content, or complete tasks. Crowdsourcing has become increasingly popular in digital media due to its ability to harness diverse perspectives and skills from a global audience.

4.7.1 Types of Crowdsourcing

There are several types of crowdsourcing, each serving different purposes:

- **Crowd Creativity:** Leveraging the creative abilities of the crowd to generate ideas, designs, or content. For example, platforms like 99designs allow businesses to host design contests where multiple designers submit logo concepts.
- **Crowd Voting:** Collecting opinions or feedback from the crowd to make decisions or rank options. A common example is the use of online polls or surveys to gather public opinion on various topics.
- **Crowdfunding:** Raising capital by collecting small amounts of money from a large number of people, typically through platforms like Kickstarter or GoFundMe.
- **Crowd Labor:** Outsourcing tasks to a distributed workforce. Platforms like Amazon Mechanical Turk enable businesses to assign small, repetitive tasks to a large pool of workers.
- **Crowd Wisdom:** Utilizing the knowledge and expertise of the crowd to solve complex problems or answer questions. Wikipedia, a collaborative online encyclopedia, is a prime example of crowd wisdom in action.

4.7.2 Benefits of Crowdsourcing

Crowdsourcing offers numerous benefits for businesses and individuals:

- **Cost-Effective Solutions:** By tapping into the crowd, organizations can reduce costs associated with hiring full-time employees or consultants. For example, a startup might use crowdsourcing to develop a marketing campaign without the expense of a traditional agency.
- **Diverse Perspectives:** Crowdsourcing brings together people from different backgrounds, leading to more innovative and creative solutions. A global company might crowdsource ideas for a new product, benefiting from insights and suggestions from diverse cultural perspectives.
- **Speed and Efficiency:** Crowdsourcing can expedite processes that would take much longer if handled internally. For example, a company needing a quick turnaround on data entry tasks might use a crowdsourcing platform to distribute the work among many individuals, completing it faster.
- **Enhanced Engagement:** Engaging customers and fans through crowdsourcing can build a sense of community and loyalty. For instance, a brand might crowdsource user-generated content for a marketing campaign, fostering a deeper connection with its audience.

4.7.3 Real-World Examples

Several notable companies and projects have successfully utilized crowdsourcing:

- **Lego Ideas:** Lego invites fans to submit and vote on new set ideas. Winning submissions are turned into official Lego products, with the original creators receiving a share of the profits.
- **Waze:** The navigation app relies on user-generated data to provide real-time traffic updates and route information, improving accuracy and user experience.
- **Threadless:** This online apparel store crowdsources T-shirt designs from artists around the world, allowing the community to vote on which designs should be produced and sold.
- **Wikipedia:** An open-source platform where volunteers contribute and edit articles, creating a comprehensive and constantly updated encyclopedia.
- **Kickstarter:** A crowdfunding platform where creators can pitch projects to the public, seeking financial support to bring their ideas to life. Successful campaigns have funded everything from tech gadgets to creative arts projects.

4.7.4 Challenges of Crowdsourcing

Despite its advantages, crowdsourcing also presents challenges:

- **Quality Control:** Ensuring the quality and reliability of contributions can be difficult. Implementing robust review processes and guidelines is essential.
- **Intellectual Property:** Managing ownership and rights to crowd-generated content can be complex. Clear terms and agreements are necessary to protect all parties involved.
- **Coordination and Management:** Effectively coordinating large groups of contributors requires strong organizational skills and effective communication tools.
- **Ethical Considerations:** Ensuring fair compensation and ethical treatment of crowd workers is crucial to maintaining a positive and sustainable crowdsourcing model.

4.7.5 Best Practices for Crowdsourcing

To maximize the benefits and mitigate the challenges of crowdsourcing, consider the following best practices:

- **Define Clear Goals:** Clearly outline the objectives and desired outcomes of the crowdsourcing effort.
- **Establish Guidelines:** Provide contributors with clear instructions, standards, and expectations to ensure quality and consistency.
- **Engage the Community:** Foster a sense of community by regularly interacting with contributors, acknowledging their efforts, and providing feedback.
- **Ensure Transparency:** Be transparent about how contributions will be used, how contributors will be credited, and any potential compensation.
- **Implement Quality Control:** Use multiple layers of review and feedback to maintain high standards and filter out low-quality contributions.

Crowdsourcing is a powerful tool in digital media, offering cost-effective, diverse, and efficient solutions to various challenges. By leveraging the collective intelligence and skills of the crowd, businesses and individuals can achieve innovative outcomes and engage with their audiences in meaningful ways. Understanding the benefits, challenges, and best practices of crowdsourcing is essential for effectively utilizing this approach in the digital age.

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4.8: Conclusion

Social media has fundamentally transformed how organizations communicate and engage with their audiences. Platforms like Twitter and Facebook facilitate real-time, two-way communication, enabling businesses, governments, and other entities to broadcast timely messages and interact with their communities. This capacity for immediate, interactive communication is particularly valuable during significant events such as elections, disasters, and global sports, where rapid information dissemination is crucial.

Community management and reputation management are vital aspects of leveraging social media effectively. Building and nurturing online communities helps organizations create loyal brand advocates who can be engaged for feedback and support. Similarly, social media offers tools for monitoring brand sentiment and managing crises, allowing organizations to address issues proactively. Insights gained from social media data can inform marketing strategies and enhance customer understanding. By recognizing the opportunities and challenges inherent in social media, organizations can use these platforms to their advantage, fostering engagement, trust, and growth in an increasingly connected world.

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4.9: End of Module Summary

- **Bi-directional Communication:** Social media enables real-time, two-way communication between brands and consumers, making it a highly effective tool for public communication. Organizations use platforms like Twitter and Facebook to broadcast timely messages and updates, crucial during events such as elections, disasters, and global sports.
- **Community Management:** Social media platforms are built around communities that reflect real-world networks. Effective community management involves creating, building, and nurturing these communities to foster engagement and loyalty. Community managers play a crucial role in guiding conversations and interacting with brand evangelists.
- **Reputation Management:** Social media is vital for crisis communication and management. It allows brands to monitor what is being said about them and respond proactively to potential crises. When a crisis occurs, social media provides a platform for the brand to communicate its side of the story and manage the situation effectively.
- **Insight and Research:** Social media is a rich source of demographic and preference-based data. Organizations can use social media tools to track mentions and sentiment, providing valuable insights into consumer perceptions. This data helps in planning campaigns and understanding the impact of other marketing efforts.
- **Dealing with Opportunities and Threats:** Social media empowers consumers to share their views, influencing brand perception. Brands must engage actively in conversations, respond to comments, and be on the lookout for opportunities to enhance their reputation. Successful examples include Morton's Steakhouse responding to a customer's tweet, gaining significant media attention and sales.
- **Recovery from Online Brand Attacks:** Brands must be prepared for online attacks and have strategies in place to respond quickly. Steps include acknowledging the issue, providing evidence if claims are false, offering apologies if claims are true, and using SEO and social media to manage negative content.
- **Social Media Strategy Risks and Challenges:** Developing a social media strategy involves understanding the risks and challenges, such as lack of initial traction, negative feedback, the need for ongoing monitoring, and difficulty in measuring impact. Brands should interact where their customers are and budget time and resources to meet their objectives.
- **Using Creativity to Solve Problems:** Entrepreneurs use various methods to solve problems creatively, such as crowdsourcing, brainstorming, and storyboarding. These techniques help generate innovative solutions and maintain ongoing creativity in business operations.
- **Crowdsourcing:** Crowdsourcing leverages the collective intelligence of the public to solve problems and generate content. It involves various forms, including crowd creativity, crowd voting, crowdfunding, crowd labor, and crowd wisdom. Successful examples include Lego Ideas, Waze, and Kickstarter.
- **Best Practices for Crowdsourcing:** To effectively utilize crowdsourcing, it is essential to define clear goals, establish guidelines, engage the community, ensure transparency, and implement quality control. These practices help maximize the benefits and mitigate the challenges associated with crowdsourcing.

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4.10: Key Terms

Brainstorming: Generating ideas in a judgment-free environment to stimulate creative problem-solving.

Brand Evangelists: Highly engaged and loyal fans who actively promote and support a brand within its community.

Community Management: The process of building, nurturing, and managing an online community to engage with an organization's audience, often involving roles such as community managers.

Cost-Effective Solutions: Reducing costs by leveraging crowdsourcing to perform tasks that would otherwise require hiring full-time employees or consultants.

Creativity in Problem Solving: Entrepreneurs using innovative methods such as crowdsourcing, brainstorming, storyboarding, and team creativity to solve business challenges.

Crisis Communication: Strategies and actions taken to communicate effectively during and after a crisis to mitigate damage to a brand's reputation.

Crowd Creativity: Leveraging the collective creativity of the public to generate new ideas and designs, often through platforms like 99designs.

Crowd Labor: Outsourcing tasks to a distributed workforce, often through platforms like Amazon Mechanical Turk.

Crowd Voting: Collecting opinions or feedback from a large group to make decisions or rank options, often through online polls or surveys.

Crowd Wisdom: Utilizing the collective knowledge and expertise of a large group to solve complex problems or answer questions, exemplified by platforms like Wikipedia.

Crowdfunding: Raising small amounts of capital from a large number of people, typically via platforms like Kickstarter or GoFundMe.

Crowdsourcing: Obtaining input, ideas, or services from a large group of people, typically via the internet, to solve problems or generate content.

Demographic Data: Information about the characteristics of a population, such as age, gender, and location, often used in social media campaigns to target specific audiences.

Diverse Perspectives: Gaining innovative solutions by bringing together people from different backgrounds through crowdsourcing.

Enhanced Engagement: Building a sense of community and loyalty by engaging customers and fans through crowdsourcing activities.

Ethical Considerations: Ensuring fair compensation and ethical treatment of crowd workers to maintain a positive and sustainable crowdsourcing model.

Examples of Crowdsourcing in Action: Real-world applications of crowdsourcing, such as Lego Ideas, Waze, Threadless, Wikipedia, and Kickstarter, showcasing its benefits and effectiveness.

Intellectual Property Management: Managing the ownership and rights to content generated by the crowd, requiring clear terms and agreements.

Online Brand Attack: Negative feedback or crises that arise on social media, potentially harming a brand's reputation if not managed properly.

Online Reputation Management (ORM) Tools: Software and tools used to track mentions, sentiment, and feedback about a

brand on social media, helping to manage and improve its online reputation.

Preference-Based Data: Data reflecting users' likes, dislikes, interests, and behaviors, utilized to tailor marketing strategies and content.

Quality Control: Ensuring the quality and reliability of crowdsourced contributions through robust review processes and guidelines.

Real-Time Broadcast Channels: Platforms like Twitter and Facebook that enable immediate dissemination and reception of messages, crucial for timely updates on news events, elections, and service changes.

Reputation Management: Monitoring and addressing public perception and feedback about a brand on social media, crucial for crisis communication and maintaining a positive image.

Sentiment Analysis: The process of analyzing text to determine the emotional tone behind words, used to gauge public sentiment towards a brand or topic on social media.

Social Media Insights: Data and information gathered from social media interactions, providing valuable insights into consumer behavior, preferences, and market trends.

Social Network Ad Planners: Tools like Facebook Ads Manager that provide detailed insights into audience demographics and preferences, aiding in the planning and execution of targeted ad campaigns.

Speed and Efficiency: Expediting processes by distributing work among a large number of individuals, allowing for faster completion.

Step-by-Step Crisis Management: Practical approach for brands to recover from online threats by being prepared, acting immediately, correcting false information, and managing search engine visibility of negative content.

Storyboarding: Visualizing ideas and solutions in a step-by-step graphic format to facilitate planning and problem-solving.

Team Creativity: Collaborative efforts within a team to develop unexpected solutions, leveraging diverse perspectives and ideas.

Two-Way Communication: Interaction that allows both businesses and consumers to communicate and exchange information in real time via social media platforms.

User-Generated Content (UGC): Content created by users rather than brands, which can be leveraged for marketing campaigns to foster authenticity and engagement.

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4.11: Discussion Questions

1. How do businesses and governments effectively use social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook for real-time communication and outreach during significant events such as elections, disasters, and global sports?
2. What strategies can community managers employ to build and nurture supportive communities around their organizations on social media platforms?
3. In what ways can social media be used for effective reputation management and crisis communication by businesses?
4. How can organizations leverage social media for market research and gaining insights into consumer behavior and preferences?
5. How should brands respond to opportunities and threats on social media to enhance their reputation and mitigate risks?

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5: SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS AND IMPACTS ON SOCIETY

5.1: Course Objectives

5.2: Introduction

5.3: The Dark Side of Social Media

5.4: The Dark Side of Social Media

5.5: New Media, the Self, and Relationships

5.6: Conclusion

5.7: End of Module Summary

5.8: Key Terms

5.9: Discussion Questions

5.1: Course Objectives

1. Understand the role of social media in communication and outreach.
2. Develop effective community management strategies.
3. Implement reputation management techniques.
4. Utilize social media for insight and research.
5. Identify opportunities and manage threats on social media.
6. Incorporate creativity and problem-solving techniques in social media strategy.

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5.2: Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of our daily lives, influencing how we communicate, build relationships, and perceive the world around us. Since the late 1990s, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat have transformed the landscape of interpersonal communication, offering unprecedented connectivity and engagement. However, alongside the many benefits, such as increased social involvement, entertainment, and information access, social media has also introduced significant risks and challenges. This chapter delves into the darker aspects of social media, examining its impact on mental health, the prevalence of cyberbullying and cyberstalking, the issues of sexting and disinformation, and the complexities of hyperpersonal communication.

Despite the promise of enhanced connectivity, the pervasive use of social media can lead to psychological isolation, exposure to harmful content, and substantial time loss. The average person now spends nearly 145 minutes a day on social media, a shift that has redefined daily routines and priorities. The links between social media use and mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts are well-documented, highlighting the need for responsible and mindful engagement. Additionally, the anonymity and reach of social media platforms have facilitated cyberbullying and cyberstalking, exacerbating the emotional and psychological distress for many users. The dark side of social media underscores the importance of setting healthy boundaries, fostering positive communication, and being vigilant about the potential risks associated with these digital interactions.

Attributions

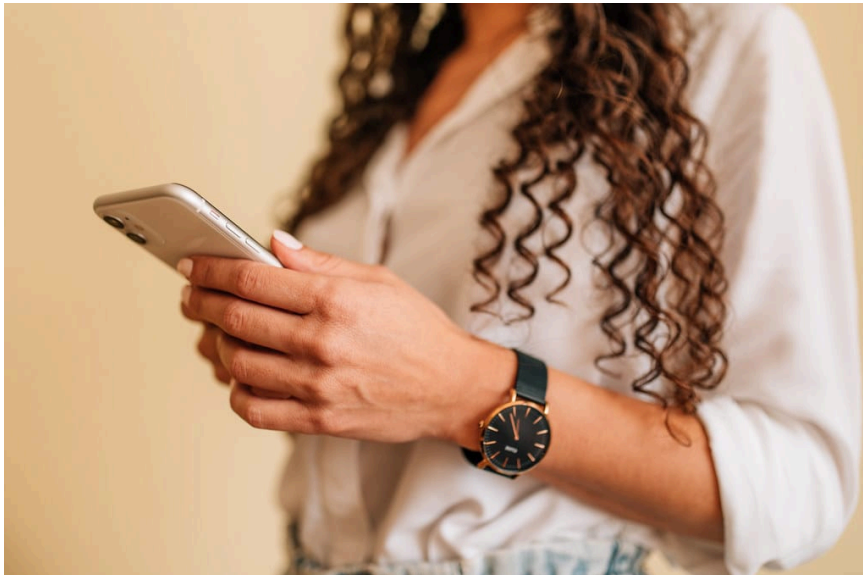
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5.3: The Dark Side of Social Media

Do you belong to a social network? Do you recall the first social media site you joined? Or do you choose to not participate in social media? If anything is clear, since the introduction of the first social media sites in the late 1990s, social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat have integrated themselves into all forms of life, in particular, interpersonal relationships. Interestingly, approximately 70% of adults report using social media sites daily, yet most of the same people report holding negative beliefs about the effects of social media (McKinnon & Dougherty, 2019). In this section, we first explore some of social media's benefits, then examine social media from the dark side of communication by revealing how social media is linked to mental health concerns, cyberbullying, stalking and sexting, hyperpersonal communication, and the spread of disinformation.

Some of the earliest social networking sites, like Classmates, were well received because they allowed people to connect with long-lost friends and family members. Since that time, several benefits of social media sites have been identified, including increased social connectivity, social involvement, entertainment, and information attainment (Khan, et al., 2014). Through increased social connectivity we can reach out to family and friends (Instagram, Facebook). We can also use social media for networking purposes (LinkedIn), and even to connect through online dating (Match.com, Bumble, and Tinder). Due to targeted platforms, we are witnessing increased social involvement, in particular people using social media to connect over common interests, whether it be to commiserate over gaming (Twitch), find the best local restaurants (Yelp), or join an online hiking club. One of the most influential aspects of social media sites is that they have increased our access to information. The Pew Research Center has found that over 40% of 18–29 year olds get their news from social media sites (Shearer, 2021). Not only that, but largely due to our access to digital media, students were able to continue with their education despite restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, social media sites provide a great source of entertainment. During the COVID-19 pandemic, at least one author of this chapter found herself addicted to YouTube, subscribing to a variety of different channels, including Yoga by Adrienne and Hoopla Doodle (a site that teaches you how to draw cartoon animals). Through subscribing to these sites for entertainment, we join communities of like-minded individuals.

Although social media has fulfilled many of its earliest promises for increased opportunities for connection, these opportunities have been met with many risks, such as psychological isolation, exposure to harmful materials, social risk, and loss of time (Linville, 2019). As parents, both authors of this chapter have often grappled with setting appropriate boundaries while trying to teach our children responsible social media use. However, as anyone with a cell phone and social media account can tell you, the temptation to look at social media accounts can be a bit overwhelming, and the access is not without risks.



["Woman with curly hair wearing black wrist watch using her phone"](#) by [Ivan Radic](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

Alt Text : A women using her phone

5.3.1 Time Risk

Social media provides a variety of entertaining and possibly addictive activities that can suck up the time of users. For example, research by Common Sense Media (2019) shows that the average person checks their cell phone more than 100 times a day (whether they receive a notification or not) and that approximately two-thirds of teens report accessing on-screen media up to 4 hours a day. Recent research indicates that the average person spends 145 minutes a day monitoring and posting in their social media accounts (Statista, 2021). This represents a major shift in how we use our time in a day.

5.3.2 Mental Health Concerns

In the fall of 2021, a former Facebook employee turned whistleblower revealed company documents showing that the social media giant was aware that Instagram can harm the mental health of children and teens (Romo, 2021). Although the revelation shocked many, research has identified a link between our mental health and the use of social media. First, researchers have found that over the past decade and a half, face-to-face interactions have declined as social media and electronic communication have increased (Twenge & Uhls, 2017). During the same period, researchers have found that self-reported rates of depression, anxiety, isolation, and suicidal thoughts have increased, leading many scholars to suggest that there may be a relationship to social media use (Twenge, et al., 2019; Vannucci, et al., 2017; Primack, et al., 2017; De Choudhury, et al., 2013). However, research is mixed, showing that modest amounts of digital communication and social media use can be linked to well-being and happiness (Davis, 2012). The mixed results of the research may indicate it is not social media per se, but how people use social media that impacts mental health. The increase in cyberbullying is just one way that social media may negatively impact mental health.



"bad-cyberbully" by J_O_I_D is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

Alt text: a girl getting cyberbullying through online getting mean comments

5.3.3 Cyberbullying

The world of social media has provided new opportunities for bullying, or cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that takes place through cell phones, tablets, and computers. It can occur through social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and TikTok, but it also occurs through text messages, online gaming communities, and message boards such as Reddit. This form of bullying "includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else" (StopBullying.gov, 2021). A 2021 Pew Research survey found that 4 in 10 adults in the United States who use social media report being victimized by at least one type of bullying behavior online (Vogels, 2021). Online harassment is more common for younger adults (48% of adults aged 29 and younger), significantly more common for LGBTQIA+ adults than their straight peers (51% report being targeted), and as compared to other groups, Black and Hispanic adults are more likely to report being harassed for their race. In addition, 20% of adults report being harassed because of their religion. Typical forms of online bullying include

offensive name-calling, spreading false rumors, receiving explicit messages, physical threats, stalking behaviors (such as constant monitoring of location and company by someone other than a guardian), and personal explicit sharing without permission (i.e., revenge porn). One area that has witnessed disturbing growth is the proliferation of racial hostility.

Social media has created a space where messages of hate and prejudice have flourished. It is likely, if you are regularly on social media, that you have encountered racist and or sexist messages. Often racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice are presented using covert tactics to mask the underlying hostility in the message, such as using memes, emojis, and GIFs as weapons (Matamoros-Fernandez, 2018; Jackson, 2017; Lamerichs, et al. 2018). For example, in November 2021, US Congressman Paul Gosar of Arizona posted an edited anime video of himself killing Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and attacking President Joe Biden, leading to a rare censure in Congress and removing him from his committee posts. After receiving widespread criticism for the posting, he tried to defend himself by saying "Relax, it is a cartoon." Most people who post messages of hate are not famous, like Gosar, giving them a false sense of protection. Adding to the challenge, people often create fake identities to post racist messages, leaving victims with little recourse (Farkas et al., 2018).

5.3.4 Sexting and Cyberstalking

The popular Netflix series *You* tells the tale of a charming serial killer who uses social media to feed his toxic obsessions and stalk his victims. Just as the show illustrates, social media platforms have provided new avenues for outlier communication behaviors, such as sexting and cyberstalking (Linville, 2019). Sexting is the practice of sending and/or exchanging sexually themed images, videos, or messages on cell phones and through social media applications such as Snapchat. In some cases, the exchanges are mutual and welcome, but in many cases, sexting takes on a form of sexual harassment, such as when an abuser sends unwanted images to someone, or when someone has access to images that they then threaten to make public. One study of high school students found that 28% of high school sophomores and juniors had shared naked pictures of themselves through text or email, and 31% had requested naked pictures (Rosin, 2014). Social media sites have also contributed to a growth in cyberstalking, since these websites enable surveillance and voyeurism of often unwitting victims who provide a treasure-trove of personal information online. In the cases of both sexting and cyberstalking, laws have been slow to keep up with changes in technology, providing little protection for victims.



"Embrace the Darkside" by [Neil Moralee](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#).

Alt Text : a dark picture of people walking

5.3.5 Responding to the Dark Side of Social Media

As we can see, like other forms of communication, social media has both a light and a dark side. Because the dark side of social media is so prevalent in our lives, it is important to set healthy boundaries for yourself and to develop a response plan that is based on competent communication.

1. Set time limits for yourself in terms of how much of your day you are willing to spend on social media.
2. Set limits on who you add to your social media accounts. You do not need to add everyone.
3. Be thoughtful and respectful in your communication exchanges, committing to positive exchanges.
4. Check your outgoing messages and ask yourself, “Would I want my employer, mother, future self, or future child, to see this message?” If not, do not post or share.
5. Commit to refraining from posting, sharing, or liking racist, sexist, ageist, or other discriminatory messages.
6. If necessary, use your voice to be an advocate to stop the spread of hurtful messages.
7. If you experience bullying or other problems, reach out to someone you trust for help.
8. Block offensive content and the people who send offensive messages. Consider reporting abuse to the platform, such as Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram.

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5.4: The Dark Side of Social Media

The Risks of Social Media and Social Networking



Figure 5.4.1: Hand on MacBook by Nenad

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since these websites enable surveillance and voyeurism of often unwitting victims who provide a treasure-trove of personal information online. In the cases of both sexting and cyberstalking, laws have been slow to keep up with changes in technology, providing little protection for victims.

Relationships, Self-Disclosure, and Social Media

As discussed in Chapter 10, self-disclosure is an important aspect of developing and maintaining our interpersonal relationships. Social media use can influence the trajectory of self-disclosure that occurs in a relationship, which can veer into the dark side. Have you ever found yourself writing a text, sending a Snap, or communicating on a Discord channel something that you have regretted because it was TMI (too much information) and you didn't want to put it out there? It's likely that at that moment (because you were behind a keyboard), it seemed easier and not that risky to reveal all that information. In contrast to the type of self-disclosure risks we might engage in while face to face, in a mediated context, via social media, we may engage in more hyperpersonal communication (Walther, 1997). With **hyperpersonal communication**, in online interactions, self-disclosure can go from surface-level to intimate and in-depth very quickly without the benefit of mutual reciprocity or establishing of trust. Lack of nonverbal cues as well as the desire to promote self-presentation and receive online validation results in hyperpersonal communication (Walther, 2007). For some, this can be very emotionally satisfying; but for others, it can result in misperceptions and misunderstandings leading to increased relational conflict and a decrease in trust and intimacy between relational partners.

Also impacting relationships and levels of self-disclosure in a relationship is the concept of **disinhibition**, which occurs via social media in online interactions. **Disinhibition** refers to the freedom (without discretion) or lack of restraint one might show when communicating online (Joinson, 2007). Joinson found that self-disclosure levels were much higher when communicating online versus in face-to-face interactions, and that there was an increase in the more intimate levels of self-disclosure in these online contexts. Have you heard about “keyboard warriors”? These are persons online who make abusive or aggressive posts on social media platforms often while concealing their real identities. Frequently, these keyboard warriors will post comments they would never say in a face-to-face situation. The anonymity of online interactions and lack of accountability creates enough disinhibition that toxic communicative behavior becomes normalized.

Consider This: The Evolution of Modern Catfishing



Figure 5.4.2: Virus Criminal from Max Pixel

CC0

Before the 2010 documentary *Catfish*, we only understood “catfish” to mean a hearty freshwater fish with long feelers that look like cat whiskers. Since Nev Schulman’s documentary aired, we’ve discovered a whole new meaning of *catfish* that has nothing to do with fish. Schulman has turned his documentary into a popular reality TV series on MTV. According to UrbanDictionary.com, a **catfish** (*Urban Dictionary: Catfish*, 2017) is someone who makes a fake account on social media to lure people into a deceptive relationship. This modern definition has taken on quite a sinister connotation.

Since *Catfish: The TV Show* premiered on MTV in 2012, almost 200 episodes have been produced and aired. In each episode, the hosts try to unveil the identities of people involved in these mysterious online relationships. According to Social Catfish (a website that helps to identify and verify people), there are five basic reasons that people catfish others (Santiago, 2018).

1. **Revenge:** Someone you know fakes an identity to lure you into a relationship only to reveal their identity, once they've gained your trust, for the purpose of hurting you.
2. **Catch a cheater:** If someone suspects their significant other of cheating, they might set up a fake identity to try and prove unfaithfulness.
3. **Money:** Scammers set up fake profiles with sob stories to try and defraud vulnerable people of money.
4. **Boredom:** Some people are bored and catfish to entertain themselves.
5. **Insecure about themselves:** Lots of catfishers lack the confidence to meet people and develop relationships in person, so they idealize themselves and hide behind a computer to pursue romanticized relationships.

So, how common is “catfishing?” Here are some interesting yet disturbing statistics:

- According to the FBI's Internet Crime Report (Internet Crime Complaint Center, 2020), IC3 logged 23,751 cases of confidence fraud/romance scams in 2020. This resulted in the second largest financial loss due to internet crimes in 2020 at a cost of \$600,249,821 to the victims. These numbers do not reflect the numerous catfishing scams that are unreported because victims are too ashamed to report the crime.
- By Facebook's own reporting on its Transparency Center (Facebook - Meld je aan of registreer je, 2021), they took down 1.8 *billion* fake accounts in the 3rd quarter of 2021 alone (July–September). Clearly, setting up a fake account to prey on others is quite simple to accomplish on social media and dating sites.
- Women and people over the age of 60 are more likely to be victims of confidence fraud/romance scams (Better Business Bureau, 2020).
- Ryan Anderson (2016) cited a study completed by OpinionMatters, a global research agency. The study found 53% of online daters in the United States and the United Kingdom admitted to lying on their dating profiles. Over 20% of women misrepresented themselves by posting younger photos. This study revealed that men tended to lie about their financial situation, and women were more likely to lie about their age or appearance.

If you've ever watched *Catfish: The TV Show* you would take note of patterns of glaring red flags that signal someone is being catfished:

- The relationship moves very quickly. They refer to their victim as “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” and talk about “love” and their future together. This is all an effort to build and gain trust quickly to manipulate victims for what they want.
- Catfishers avoid showing their faces. There's always a convenient excuse why they cannot FaceTime or video chat (camera is broken, bad internet connection, not a good time...)
- Their story is too good to be true. Two of the most common professions catfishers use on the TV show indicate they are models or rappers. They have internet stalked people and “borrowed” their photos to help enhance their lies. One episode of *Catfish* even had the victim convinced he was in a relationship with Katy Perry (Season 5, Episode 15, 2016).
- They ask for money. You barely know this person, they won't meet you in person, they are a good-looking model or a successful rapper, but they need money.

These four signs stood out as the most obvious from a survey of the TV show. If you do an internet search on “Signs you're being catfished,” lots of websites have written about this. Bottom line, trust your gut instincts. If something doesn't seem right, ask questions, and do some research. There are several resources out there to help, including *Catfish: The TV Show*.

Responding to the Dark Side of Social Media

As we can see, like other forms of communication, social media has both a light and a dark side. Because the dark side of social media is so prevalent in our lives, it is important to set healthy boundaries for yourself and to develop a response plan that is based on competent communication.

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5. Commit to refraining from posting, sharing, or liking racist, sexist, agist, or other discriminatory messages.
6. If necessary, use your voice to be an advocate to stop the spread of hurtful messages.
7. If you experience bullying or other problems, reach out to someone you trust for help.
8. Block offensive content and the people who send offensive messages. Consider reporting abuse to the platform, such as Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram.

5.5: New Media, the Self, and Relationships

Think about some ways that new media have changed the way you think about yourself and the way you think about and interact in your relationships. Have you ever given your Facebook page a “once-over” before you send or accept a friend request just to make sure that the content displayed is giving off the desired impression? The technological changes of the past twenty years have affected you and your relationships whether you are a heavy user or not. Even people who don’t engage with technology as much as others are still affected by it, since the people they interact with use and are affected by new media to varying degrees.

5.5.1 New Media and the Self

The explicit way we become conscious of self-presentation when using new media, social networking sites (SNSs) in particular, may lead to an increase in self-consciousness. You’ll recall that in the chapter titled “Introduction to Communication Studies” we talked about the role that communication plays in helping us meet our identity needs and, in the chapter titled “Communication and Perception” on Facebook, the pictures we are tagged in, and the news stories or jokes that we share on our timeline all come together to create a database of information that new and old friends can access to form and reform impressions of us. Because we know that others are making impressions based on this database of information and because we have control over most of what appears in this database, people may become overly focused on crafting their online presence to the point that they neglect their offline relationships. This extra level of self-consciousness has also manifested in an increase in self-image and self-esteem issues for some users. For example, some cosmetic surgeons have noted an uptick in patients coming in to have facial surgeries or procedures specifically because they don’t like the way their chin looks on the webcam while chatting on Skype or because they feel self-conscious about the way they look in the numerous digital pictures that are now passed around and stored on new media. Since new media are being increasingly used in professional capacities, some people are also seeking cosmetic surgery or procedures as a way of investing in their personal brand or as a way of giving them an edge in a tight job market.[1]

The personal and social nature of new media also creates an openness that isn’t necessarily part of our offline social reality. Although some people try to address this problem by creating more than one Facebook account, according to the terms of use we all agreed to, we are not allowed to create more than one personal profile. People may also have difficulty managing their different commitments, especially if they develop a dependence on or even addiction to new media devices and/or platforms. New media blur the lines between personal and professional in many ways, which can be positive and negative. For example, the constant connection offered by laptops and smartphones increases the expectation that people will continue working from home or while on vacation. At the same time, however, people may use new media for non-work-related purposes while at work, which may help even out the work/life balance. Cyberslacking, which is the non-work-related use of new media while on the job, is seen as a problem in many organizations and workplaces. However, some research shows that occasional use of new media for personal reasons while at work can have positive effects, as it may relieve boredom, help reduce stress, or lead to greater job satisfaction.[2]



AI Text: Four girls sitting down watching something on a tablet

Personal media devices bring with them a sense of constant connectivity that makes us “reachable” nearly all the time and can be comforting or anxiety inducing. Devices such as smartphones and computers, and platforms such as e-mail, Facebook, and the web, are within an arm’s reach of many people. While this can be convenient and make things more efficient in some cases, it can also create a dependence that we might not be aware of until those connections are broken or become unreliable. You don’t have to look too far to see people buried in their smartphones, tablets, or laptops all around. While some people have learned to rely on peripheral vision in order to text and walk at the same time, others aren’t so graceful. In fact, London saw the creation of a “text safe” street with padding on street signs and lamp poles to help prevent injuries when people inevitably bump into them while engrossed in their gadgets’ screens. Follow this link to read a story in Time magazine and see a picture of the street[3]. Additionally, a survey conducted in the United Kingdom found that being away from social networks causes more anxiety than being a user of them. Another study found that 73 percent of people would panic if they lost their smartphone.[4].

Of course, social media can also increase self-esteem or have other social benefits. A recent survey of fifteen thousand women found that 48 percent of the respondents felt that social media helped them stay in touch with others while also adding a little stress in terms of overstimulation. Forty-two percent didn’t mention the stress of overstimulation and focused more on the positive effects of being in touch with others and the world in general. When asked about how social media affects their social lives, 30 percent of the women felt that increased use of social media helped them be more social offline as well.[5] Other research supports this finding for both genders, finding that Facebook can help people with social anxiety feel more confident and socially connected.[6]

5.5.2 New Media and Interpersonal Relationships

How does new media affect our interpersonal relationships, if at all? This is a question that has been addressed by scholars, commentators, and people in general. To provide some perspective, similar questions and concerns have been raised along with each major change in communication technology. New media, however, have been the primary communication change of the past few generations, which likely accounts for the attention they receive. Some scholars in sociology have decried the negative effects of new technology on society and relationships in particular, saying that the quality of relationships is deteriorating and the strength of connections is weakening.[7]

Facebook greatly influenced our use of the word friend, although people’s conceptions of the word may not have changed as much. When someone “friends you” on Facebook, it doesn’t automatically mean that you now have the closeness and intimacy that you have with some offline friends. And research shows that people don’t regularly accept friend requests from or send them to people they haven’t met, preferring instead to have met a person at least once.[8] Some users, though, especially adolescents, engage in what is called “friend-collecting behavior,” which entails users friending people they don’t know personally or that they wouldn’t talk to in person in order to increase the size of their online network.[9] As we will discuss later, this could be an impression management strategy, as the user may assume that a large number of Facebook friends will make him or her appear more popular to others.

Although many have critiqued the watering down of the term friend when applied to SNSs, specifically Facebook, some scholars have explored how the creation of these networks affects our interpersonal relationships and may even restructure how we think about our relationships. Even though a person may have hundreds of Facebook friends that he or she doesn’t regularly interact with on- or offline, just knowing that the network exists in a somewhat tangible form (cataloged on Facebook) can be comforting. Even the people who are distant acquaintances but are “friends” on Facebook can serve important functions. Rather than Facebook users seeing these connections as pointless, frivolous, or stressful, they are often comforting background presences. A dormant network is a network of people with whom users may not feel obligated to explicitly interact but may find comfort in knowing the connections exist. Such networks can be beneficial, because when needed, a person may be able to more easily tap into that dormant network than they would an offline extended network. It’s almost like being friends on Facebook keeps the communication line open, because both people can view the other’s profile and keep up with their lives even without directly communicating. This can help sustain tenuous friendships or past friendships and prevent them from fading away, which as we learned in the chapter titled “Communication in Relationships” is a common occurrence as we go through various life changes.

A key part of interpersonal communication is impression management, and some forms of new media allow us more tools for presenting ourselves than others. Social networking sites (SNSs) in many ways are platforms for self-presentation. Even more than blogs, web pages, and smartphones, the environment on an SNS like Facebook or Twitter facilitates self-disclosure in a directed way and allows others who have access to our profile to see our other “friends.” This convergence of different groups

of people (close friends, family, acquaintances, friends of friends, colleagues, and strangers) can present challenges for self-presentation. Although Facebook is often thought of as a social media outlet for teens and young adults, research shows half of all US adults have a profile on Facebook or another SNS.[10]. The fact that Facebook is expanding to different generations of users has coined a new phrase—"the graying of Facebook." This is due to a large increase in users over the age of fifty-five. In fact, it has been stated the fastest-growing Facebook user group is women fifty-five and older, which is up more than 175 percent since fall 2008.[11] So now we likely have people from personal, professional, and academic contexts in our Facebook network, and those people are now more likely than ever to be from multiple generations. The growing diversity of our social media networks creates new challenges as we try to engage in impression management.

We should be aware that people form impressions of us based not just on what we post on our profiles but also on our friends and the content that they post on our profiles. In short, as in our offline lives, we are judged online by the company we keep.[12] The difference is, though, that via Facebook a person (unless blocked or limited by privacy settings) can see our entire online social network and friends, which doesn't happen offline. The information on our Facebook profiles is also archived, meaning there is a record the likes of which doesn't exist in offline interactions. Recent research found that a person's perception of a profile owner's attractiveness is influenced by the attractiveness of the friends shown on the profile. In short, a profile owner is judged more physically attractive when his or her friends are judged as physically attractive, and vice versa. The profile owner is also judged as more socially attractive (likable, friendly) when his or her friends are judged as physically attractive. The study also found that complimentary and friendly statements made about profile owners on their wall or on profile comments increased perceptions of the profile owner's social attractiveness and credibility. An interesting, but not surprising, gender double standard also emerged. When statements containing sexual remarks or references to the profile owner's excessive drinking were posted on the profile, perceptions of attractiveness increased if the profile owner was male and decreased if female.[13]

Self-disclosure is a fundamental building block of interpersonal relationships, and new media make self-disclosures easier for many people because of the lack of immediacy, meaning the fact that a message is sent through electronic means arouses less anxiety or inhibition than would a face-to-face exchange. SNSs provide opportunities for social support. Research has found that Facebook communication behaviors such as "friending" someone or responding to a request posted on someone's wall lead people to feel a sense of attachment and perceive that others are reliable and helpful.[14]. Much of the research on Facebook, though, has focused on the less intimate alliances that we maintain through social media. Since most people maintain offline contact with their close friends and family, Facebook is more of a supplement to interpersonal communication. Since most people's Facebook "friend" networks are composed primarily of people with whom they have less face-to-face contact in their daily lives, Facebook provides an alternative space for interaction that can more easily fit into a person's busy schedule or interest area. For example, to stay connected, both people don't have to look at each other's profiles simultaneously. I often catch up on a friend by scrolling through a couple weeks of timeline posts rather than checking in daily.

The space provided by SNSs can also help reduce some of the stress we feel in regards to relational maintenance or staying in touch by allowing for more convenient contact. The expectations for regular contact with our Facebook friends who are in our extended network are minimal. An occasional comment on a photo or status update or an even easier click on the "like" button can help maintain those relationships. However, when we post something asking for information, help, social support, or advice, those in the extended network may play a more important role and allow us to access resources and viewpoints beyond those in our closer circles. And research shows that many people ask for informational help through their status updates.[15].

These extended networks serve important purposes, one of which is to provide access to new information and different perspectives than those we may get from close friends and family. For example, since we tend to have significant others that are more similar to than different from us, the people that we are closest to are likely to share many or most of our beliefs, attitudes, and values. Extended contacts, however, may expose us to different political views or new sources of information, which can help broaden our perspectives. The content in this section hopefully captures what I'm sure you have already experienced in your own engagement with new media—that new media have important implications for our interpersonal relationships. Given that, we will end this chapter with a "Getting Competent" feature box that discusses some tips on how to competently use social media.

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5.6: Conclusion

The exploration of social media's dark side reveals significant challenges that accompany its many benefits. As social networking sites have evolved to become integral to daily life, they have facilitated increased social connectivity and information access. However, these platforms also pose risks such as psychological isolation, mental health concerns, cyberbullying, and the proliferation of harmful content. The convenience and entertainment provided by social media come with potential time risks and adverse impacts on mental health, especially among children and teens. Cyberbullying and sexting have emerged as new forms of harassment, further complicating the online social landscape.

Understanding these risks highlights the importance of developing healthy boundaries and responsible usage practices. Social media's impact on interpersonal relationships underscores the need for thoughtful self-disclosure and impression management. The phenomenon of hyperpersonal communication and disinhibition online can lead to miscommunications and relational conflicts. Moreover, the evolving nature of online interactions, such as catfishing, presents new challenges for users to navigate. As we continue to integrate social media into our lives, it is crucial to adopt strategies that promote positive exchanges and safeguard against the darker aspects of digital communication.

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5.7: End of Module Summary

- **Bi-directional Communication:** Social media enables real-time, two-way communication between brands and consumers, making it a highly effective tool for public communication. Organizations use platforms like Twitter and Facebook to broadcast timely messages and updates, crucial during events such as elections, disasters, and global sports.
- **Community Management:** Social media platforms are built around communities that reflect real-world networks. Effective community management involves creating, building, and nurturing these communities to foster engagement and loyalty. Community managers play a crucial role in guiding conversations and interacting with brand evangelists.
- **Reputation Management:** Social media is vital for crisis communication and management. It allows brands to monitor what is being said about them and respond proactively to potential crises. When a crisis occurs, social media provides a platform for the brand to communicate its side of the story and manage the situation effectively.
- **Insight and Research:** Social media is a rich source of demographic and preference-based data. Organizations can use social media tools to track mentions and sentiment, providing valuable insights into consumer perceptions. This data helps in planning campaigns and understanding the impact of other marketing efforts.
- **Dealing with Opportunities and Threats:** Social media empowers consumers to share their views, influencing brand perception. Brands must engage actively in conversations, respond to comments, and be on the lookout for opportunities to enhance their reputation. Successful examples include Morton's Steakhouse responding to a customer's tweet, gaining significant media attention and sales.
- **Recovery from Online Brand Attacks:** Brands must be prepared for online attacks and have strategies in place to respond quickly. Steps include acknowledging the issue, providing evidence if claims are false, offering apologies if claims are true, and using SEO and social media to manage negative content.
- **Social Media Strategy Risks and Challenges:** Developing a social media strategy involves understanding the risks and challenges, such as lack of initial traction, negative feedback, the need for ongoing monitoring, and difficulty in measuring impact. Brands should interact where their customers are and budget time and resources to meet their objectives.
- **Using Creativity to Solve Problems:** Entrepreneurs use various methods to solve problems creatively, such as crowdsourcing, brainstorming, and storyboarding. These techniques help generate innovative solutions and maintain ongoing creativity in business operations.
- **Crowdsourcing:** Crowdsourcing leverages the collective intelligence of the public to solve problems and generate content. It involves various forms, including crowd creativity, crowd voting, crowdfunding, crowd labor, and crowd wisdom. Successful examples include Lego Ideas, Waze, and Kickstarter.
- **Best Practices for Crowdsourcing:** To effectively utilize crowdsourcing, it is essential to define clear goals, establish guidelines, engage the community, ensure transparency, and implement quality control. These practices help maximize the benefits and mitigate the challenges associated with crowdsourcing.

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5.8: Key Terms

Brainstorming: Generating ideas in a judgment-free environment to stimulate creative problem-solving.

Brand Evangelists: Highly engaged and loyal fans who actively promote and support a brand within its community.

Community Management: The process of building, nurturing, and managing an online community to engage with an organization's audience, often involving roles such as community managers.

Cost-Effective Solutions: Reducing costs by leveraging crowdsourcing to perform tasks that would otherwise require hiring full-time employees or consultants.

Creativity in Problem Solving: Entrepreneurs using innovative methods such as crowdsourcing, brainstorming, storyboarding, and team creativity to solve business challenges.

Crisis Communication: Strategies and actions taken to communicate effectively during and after a crisis to mitigate damage to a brand's reputation.

Crowd Creativity: Leveraging the collective creativity of the public to generate new ideas and designs, often through platforms like 99designs.

Crowd Labor: Outsourcing tasks to a distributed workforce, often through platforms like Amazon Mechanical Turk.

Crowd Voting: Collecting opinions or feedback from a large group to make decisions or rank options, often through online polls or surveys.

Crowd Wisdom: Utilizing the collective knowledge and expertise of a large group to solve complex problems or answer questions, exemplified by platforms like Wikipedia.

Crowdfunding: Raising small amounts of capital from a large number of people, typically via platforms like Kickstarter or GoFundMe.

Crowdsourcing: Obtaining input, ideas, or services from a large group of people, typically via the internet, to solve problems or generate content.

Demographic Data: Information about the characteristics of a population, such as age, gender, and location, often used in social media campaigns to target specific audiences.

Diverse Perspectives: Gaining innovative solutions by bringing together people from different backgrounds through crowdsourcing.

Enhanced Engagement: Building a sense of community and loyalty by engaging customers and fans through crowdsourcing activities.

Ethical Considerations: Ensuring fair compensation and ethical treatment of crowd workers to maintain a positive and sustainable crowdsourcing model.

Examples of Crowdsourcing in Action: Real-world applications of crowdsourcing, such as Lego Ideas, Waze, Threadless, Wikipedia, and Kickstarter, showcasing its benefits and effectiveness.

Intellectual Property Management: Managing the ownership and rights to content generated by the crowd, requiring clear terms and agreements.

Online Brand Attack: Negative feedback or crises that arise on social media, potentially harming a brand's reputation if not managed properly.

Online Reputation Management (ORM) Tools: Software and tools used to track mentions, sentiment, and feedback about a

brand on social media, helping to manage and improve its online reputation.

Preference-Based Data: Data reflecting users' likes, dislikes, interests, and behaviors, utilized to tailor marketing strategies and content.

Quality Control: Ensuring the quality and reliability of crowdsourced contributions through robust review processes and guidelines.

Real-Time Broadcast Channels: Platforms like Twitter and Facebook that enable immediate dissemination and reception of messages, crucial for timely updates on news events, elections, and service changes.

Reputation Management: Monitoring and addressing public perception and feedback about a brand on social media, crucial for crisis communication and maintaining a positive image.

Sentiment Analysis: The process of analyzing text to determine the emotional tone behind words, used to gauge public sentiment towards a brand or topic on social media.

Social Media Insights: Data and information gathered from social media interactions, providing valuable insights into consumer behavior, preferences, and market trends.

Social Network Ad Planners: Tools like Facebook Ads Manager that provide detailed insights into audience demographics and preferences, aiding in the planning and execution of targeted ad campaigns.

Speed and Efficiency: Expediting processes by distributing work among a large number of individuals, allowing for faster completion.

Step-by-Step Crisis Management: Practical approach for brands to recover from online threats by being prepared, acting immediately, correcting false information, and managing search engine visibility of negative content.

Storyboarding: Visualizing ideas and solutions in a step-by-step graphic format to facilitate planning and problem-solving.

Team Creativity: Collaborative efforts within a team to develop unexpected solutions, leveraging diverse perspectives and ideas.

Two-Way Communication: Interaction that allows both businesses and consumers to communicate and exchange information in real time via social media platforms.

User-Generated Content (UGC): Content created by users rather than brands, which can be leveraged for marketing campaigns to foster authenticity and engagement.

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5.9: Discussion Questions

1. How do businesses and governments effectively use social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook for real-time communication and outreach during significant events such as elections, disasters, and global sports?
2. What strategies can community managers employ to build and nurture supportive communities around their organizations on social media platforms?
3. In what ways can social media be used for effective reputation management and crisis communication by businesses?
4. How can organizations leverage social media for market research and gaining insights into consumer behavior and preferences?
5. How should brands respond to opportunities and threats on social media to enhance their reputation and mitigate risks?

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6: SOCIAL MEDIA AND MOBILE MARKETING

- 6.1: Course Objectives
- 6.2: Introduction
- 6.3: Digital Age Marketing
- 6.4: Advantages of Online Direct Marketing
- 6.5: Careers in Digital Marketing
- 6.6: Social Media Marketing
- 6.7: Mobile Marketing- Definition and Strategies
- 6.8: Benefits from Social Media Marketing
- 6.9: Conclusion
- 6.10: End of Module Summary
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- 6.12: Discussion Questions

6.1: Course Objectives

1. Analyze the Risks of Social Media and Social Networking.
2. Understand the Time Risk Associated with Social Media Use.
3. Investigate the Relationship Between Social Media and Mental Health.
4. Explore the Phenomenon of Cyberbullying.
5. Examine the Dynamics of Sexting and Cyberstalking.
6. Develop Strategies for Responding to the Dark Side of Social Media.

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6.2: Introduction

The digital age has revolutionized the way marketers engage with customers and build relationships. While traditional channels like print, television, and radio continue to offer advantages, digital technologies have opened up new avenues for personalized and interactive marketing. Marketers now have the ability to connect with consumers through various online platforms, providing tailored experiences that enhance customer engagement and brand loyalty. This chapter explores the evolution of digital marketing, its various forms, and the opportunities and challenges it presents.

One significant shift in marketing strategies has been the integration of digital and direct marketing. The rise of the internet and smartphone usage has led to the growth of online direct marketing, where businesses can reach consumers directly through their devices. Website marketing, email marketing, content marketing, and online video marketing are key components of this approach, each offering unique benefits for attracting and retaining customers. Additionally, social media marketing has emerged as a powerful tool, enabling brands to connect with audiences in real-time and build communities around their products and services. The digital landscape also presents challenges, such as maintaining consumer trust and managing resources effectively. However, with the right strategies and tools, businesses can leverage the opportunities of digital marketing to drive growth and success.

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6.3: Digital Age Marketing

The digital age has changed the way marketers engage with customers and build relationships. While the traditional channels of print, television, and radio certainly present advantages, the digital age has created opportunities for marketers to engage with consumers in a highly personalized and interactive way.



"[Mobile Device Evolution](#)" by [AdamSelwood](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

AI Text : five different type of phones

6.3.1 Direct Meets Digital: The Evolution of Direct Marketing with Technology

The explosion in internet usage and online shopping coupled with the evolution of digital technologies has resulted in the emergence of online direct marketing. While traditional forms of direct marketing remain important for engaging with consumers, the channel has evolved as technology has evolved. With 3.5 billion smartphone users worldwide, marketers recognize the value in engaging with consumers through mobile devices. In the United States alone, 65.6 percent of Americans report that they check smartphones 160 times a day.⁷

In response to the explosion in smartphones and internet usage, online direct marketing is getting a larger share of advertising spend. In 2020, advertisers spent \$139.8 billion on digital marketing, and that number is expected to grow to \$200 billion by 2025.⁸

6.3.2 Forms of Online Direct Marketing

There are several online direct marketing tools that can be used (see Figure 16.5). Let's take a look at each tool in the following section.



Figure 16.5 Online Direct Marketing Tools (CC BY 4.0; Rice University & OpenStax)

Website Marketing

Website marketing is the promotion of a website that results in driving traffic or visitors to the site to learn more about the product or company or to make a purchase. The purpose of website marketing is to attract online shoppers who may be interested in a company's product or service offering.

Developing a website is one of the most important steps a company can take to establish a digital presence online. Websites serve a variety of purposes. Some are designed to nurture consumers and guide them toward making a purchase while others are designed to facilitate transactions. For example, car manufacturers like Toyota and Honda use their websites to deliver details and options related to their product lines. Consumers can use interactive tools to change out features and colors based on their preferences; however, consumers would likely visit a dealership to make the actual purchase.

Amazon.com is designed to allow third-party sellers to share product details, reviews, and product comparisons. Its purpose is to facilitate a purchase transaction in which the consumer buys something directly from the site. Shopify has recently emerged as the “anti-Amazon” by offering sellers more than a dozen services ranging from e-commerce websites to inventory management and payment processing.

There are still other websites whose purpose is not transactional but that are designed to build community and engagement among customers. Bleacher Report's website offers sports articles, game scores, and live sports streaming. Fans are invited to comment and engage with one another regarding the latest sports news. The website also offers the option of signing up for its newsletter delivered to consumers' email inboxes. Whether it's to communicate information, facilitate a transaction, or build a community, websites should be designed with a positive user experience (UX) in mind.



"Email Marketing for Atlanta Web Entrepreneurs" by [MikeSchinkel](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

AI text : people in a meeting

Email Marketing

Email marketing is a type of direct marketing that is highly personal and designed to build relationships with consumers. Marketers use email to communicate promotions about products and share relevant content. It offers the advantage of connecting companies with highly targeted consumers at a much lower cost than other channels. Email usage statistics are also impressive, making this channel attractive as an online direct marketing tool.

Email boasts over 4 billion daily users; 99 percent of people report checking their email on a daily basis.⁹ Given the low cost and high usage rate, email marketing can be a profitable way to connect with customers. Marketers generally send two types of emails: transactional emails and marketing emails. A transactional email is a type of email that is sent to customers following a commercial transaction, such as a purchase or a return. When online shoppers purchase athletic apparel from Dick's Sporting Goods, they receive an email confirmation confirming the order.

Marketing emails are promotional in nature and typically involve a marketing offer. Old Navy sends marketing emails during major sales events. They feature relevant product categories based on past purchases and often include a coupon code or free-shipping promotion.

Buzzfeed provides another great example of a company that optimizes email marketing to reach subscribers. According to Campaign Monitor, it has created a collection of diverse and audience-catered newsletters that are tailored to the preferences of BuzzFeed's subscribers.¹⁰ Emails feature relevant articles and funny GIFs that prompt subscribers to visit the site to read more. On average, subscribers who visit the site via email spend more time on the site than those website visitors who have come from other channels.

Regardless of their email marketing strategy, companies utilize email marketing platforms like Mailchimp to reach target audiences. Mailchimp is built for growing businesses, and in 2022 it launched a Super Bowl advertising campaign to promote its services.¹¹ As a martech (marketing technology) company, it offers small businesses tools for guiding consumers through a customer journey to a purchase. Mailchimp's automation tool, specifically, allows businesses to send email campaigns based on a consumer's interaction with an email message. The result is a highly personalized email conversation between the small business and the customer.

Link to Learning: Mailchimp

Learn how Mailchimp's CEO and cofounder, Ben Chestnut, built and grew the Mailchimp email platform in this podcast: [NPR's How I Built This with Guy Raz](#).

Check out the 2022 Super Bowl commercial with DJ Khaled [here](#).

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

[View this Embedded Content online](#)



Email marketing is also known as permission-based marketing. Permission-based marketing requires that marketers get consent to send email and text messages to consumers prior to contacting them with a promotional message. Once a consumer opts in to receive an email or text message, they are given the option to opt out by clicking on an unsubscribe link or by reply texting a company to opt out of messages.

Consumers typically opt in to receiving emails when they place an online order so that they may receive order confirmation and shipping updates. In addition, consumers are also opting in to receive other value-added content, such as exclusive discounts, access to a webinar, a free trial, or some other type of value exchange.

Content Marketing

Websites, email, and other forms of online marketing are only as good as the content they carry. Content marketing involves creating and distributing content that is valuable and relevant to a company's target customers. New York-based Dotdash Meredith is a good example of this. The company's digital brands include Verywell, The Spruce, Byrdie, and others. Dotdash Meredith is a unit of Barry Diller's IAC. Company policy: no pop-up ads!

As with other forms of direct marketing, content is about driving customers to take some desired action. Consumers would much rather consume a funny video clip, a highlight reel of their favorite athlete, and an inspiring quote or comment than see banner ads and pop-up ads. In order for content marketing to work, it must be useful, relevant, high quality, and engaging to the targeted audience.

When content is delivered through social media, blogs, and email, consumers have the opportunity to directly engage with the company and other content consumers. They can like, share, retweet, and mark as a favorite—all examples of actions taken in response to the content. Marketers can use the data created by these actions to perform sentiment analysis and generate other metrics. The challenge with content marketing is that it is constantly changing. Companies are tasked with constantly updating their content and continuing to tell stories that their audience wants to hear and engage with.



"Joe Pulizzi - Godfather of Content Marketing" by [TopRankMarketing](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

AI text : A man giving a presentation of content marketing

Online Video Marketing

Online video marketing involves creating videos that tell a story about a product, company, or brand that is designed to drive consumer engagement through activities such as liking, sharing, and retweeting. Video marketing is becoming increasingly popular as a marketing tool because the cost of creating video campaigns has dropped significantly in the last decade due to technological advancements. Biteable, for example, offers marketers a cost-effective way to create brand videos that are quick, simple, and customizable.

Along with the drop in cost to produce online videos, consumer demand for videos has increased. Because of this demand, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter have pivoted to video-first platforms. Wyzowl's annual State of Video Marketing Survey revealed in 2021 that online video watching has doubled since 2018 and that online marketers "feel positive about the return on investment offered by video more than ever as it continues to strongly influence traffic, leads, sales, and audience understanding."¹²

Link to Learning: Wyzowl's Survey Found on HubSpot

Read more about the key data points learned by Wyzowl in its 2022 survey. You might be interested to learn that 86 percent of businesses use video as a marketing tool, 94 percent of companies believe videos help customers better understand their product, and 99 percent of video marketers said they will continue using video. [You can find the full report here](#). There's a ton of interesting information!

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Blogs and Online Forums

A blog is an online journal of interests, beliefs, or other topics published by a person, a group of people, or an organization. In its early stages, a blog was a personal journal that someone posted to the web. It's since evolved into an online marketing tool that is typically a website or a webpage and serves a variety of purposes.

First, a blog's purpose can be to share valuable and relevant information with targeted audiences. Ultimately, the goal is to attract

visitors to the page or site and convert them to customers. In addition, marketers create blog content on sometimes a weekly or even daily basis so that consumers continue to visit the site or the page to access the new content. When the blog content is good, visitors will continue to engage with the articles produced by the company. Ultimately, this helps a company's organic ranking on Google. In Google, your page or website will rank higher on the Google search results page as it grows in popularity and consumers click on it.

Blogs are also a great way to create and nurture online communities, or groups of people with similar interests connecting to one another online.

Customer relationship management company HubSpot is excellent at creating high-quality blog content for marketing and business professionals. It covers an array of professional topics, from marketing to human resources management to communicating effectively in the workplace. Its content ultimately drives visitors to its website, where they'll find a suite of programs designed for marketing, sales, customer service, and operations.

Blogging can be an integral part of a content strategy as long as marketers dedicate time and resources to continue updating the content. Visitors appreciate fresh and relevant information, and delaying the delivery of high-quality content may mean a loss of visitor interest.

Link to Learning: Content Marketing Tools

Learn more about the types of content marketing tools marketers have to work with [by reading this HubSpot article](#). Included are the types you're probably more familiar with, like blogs and videos, but also discussed are the ones you may not have as much experience with like, white papers and case studies.

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6.4: Advantages of Online Direct Marketing

There are several key advantages that make online direct marketing an attractive tool for marketers. First, online direct marketing is not restricted by geographical boundaries. The internet is readily available to most consumers globally, making it practical to market around the globe.

Second, online direct marketing is much less expensive than other forms of marketing when considering its global reach. Imagine how expensive it would be to send direct-mail catalogs to customers all over the world. Establishing an online presence by developing a website and creating video and blog content is relatively inexpensive compared to other forms of promotion.

Third, online direct marketing is easy to measure in terms of campaign performance. With advertising tools targeted to mass audiences, it's difficult to attribute a sale to a particular television or radio commercial. With online direct advertising, marketers can track the performance of their campaigns based on consumers' interaction with digital tools such as email, online videos, and a company's website. For example, when Nike creates online video content that is posted on YouTube and its website, Nike marketers can track consumers' engagement with that content, in addition to the consumer's online journey. Online direct marketing reveals real-time insights into the effectiveness of campaigns compared to more traditional forms of promotion.

Fourth, online direct marketing is highly targeted. Marketers can carefully focus promotion efforts on very specific groups of consumers based on their geography, their social media channel preferences, and other variables. Online direct marketing also allows for retargeting, which occurs when consumers visit different websites but are shown similar ads based on their online consumer behavior.

Finally, online direct marketing allows for real-time interaction between brands and consumers. Consumers may start with a Google search and end with the completion of an online purchase. Throughout the online consumer buying process, marketers have the opportunity to engage with the consumer in real time.

Traditional direct marketing and online direct marketing offer a variety of benefits in connecting marketers to targeted consumers.

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6.5: Careers in Digital Marketing

Digital marketing careers have surged in popularity and importance as businesses increasingly rely on online channels to reach and engage their audiences. The field offers diverse opportunities, allowing professionals to specialize in various aspects of digital marketing. Here are the top five digital marketing careers that are in high demand:

- **SEO Specialist:** Focuses on optimizing websites to improve search engine rankings, driving organic traffic and enhancing online visibility.
- **Content Marketing Manager:** Develops and manages content strategies to attract, engage, and retain customers through valuable and relevant content.
- **Social Media Manager:** Oversees a company's social media presence, creating and curating content, engaging with followers, and analyzing performance metrics.
- **PPC Specialist:** Manages pay-per-click advertising campaigns on platforms like Google Ads and social media, optimizing ad spend to achieve the best return on investment.
- **Email Marketing Specialist:** Designs and executes email marketing campaigns to nurture leads, engage customers, and drive conversions.

These careers offer dynamic and rewarding opportunities, leveraging creativity, analytical skills, and strategic thinking to achieve business goals in the digital landscape.

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6.6: Social Media Marketing



Figure 16.6 Social media marketing has created an opportunity for marketers to reach consumers in real time through campaigns run on digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and others. (credit: "Social Media Word Cloud" by cloudincome.com/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

As discussed in the previous section, internet and digital technology usage have surged across the globe, creating opportunities for marketers to engage with consumers in real time. Social media marketing has emerged as a powerful online marketing tool as consumer time spent on these platforms (see Figure 16.6) has grown substantially over the last decade. A growing share of Americans report that they use YouTube and Facebook more than any other social media platform. In segments under the age of 30, the most popular platforms are Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok.

6.6.1 Social Media Marketing Defined

Social media marketing is defined as using social media platforms to deliver content that drives engagement with your brand. Companies from PepsiCo to Home Depot to the pizza restaurant located in town use social media to connect with users, share content, and, ultimately, generate sales. Marketers can create brand profiles and sponsored content that they pay for.

Warby Parker uses Instagram to create high-quality content and showcase different styles of eyeglasses based on face shape. Users may click on the post, read and reply to comments, like it, mark it as a favorite, or share it on their own feed. If they are in the market for new eyewear, the social media post may drive them to the company's website, where they can virtually try on different styles of eyeglasses and ultimately make a purchase.

Social media marketing offers some advantages and disadvantages. The advantages include that it is highly targeted, it allows for engagement with and among users, it is a great tool for driving visitors to a company's website, and it is easily measured.

6.6.2 Uses of Social Media Marketing

Marketers recognize that social media presents an exciting opportunity to connect with consumers across a variety of platforms. Unlike some other forms of promotion, social media marketing allows marketers to precisely target audiences. Marketers can create social media campaigns that target demographic attributes such as gender, age, and location in addition to psychographic attributes such as interests and viewing behavior.

For example, Facebook allows marketers to upload a list of customers that includes the demographic and psychographic attributes of the company's target audience. Facebook then creates what's called a "lookalike audience" that matches those customer attributes to the attributes of Facebook users so that the company's ads will show up in the feeds of the lookalike

audience.

Social media marketing also creates the opportunity for users to engage with one another and company content. It's an excellent vehicle for marketers to distribute their online video and blog content in addition to communicating promotional offers. Marketers can monitor engagement and participate in ongoing conversations with users who comment, like, and share content.

Harvard Business Review (HBR) provides a great example of how to use social media marketing effectively. HBR, a business management magazine published by the Harvard Business Publishing subsidiary of Harvard University, offers paid subscribers the latest research and articles on all things related to management.

During the pandemic, HBR gave people free access to all HBR content. The campaign ran on social media and resulted in increased traffic at the HBR website. This brings us to another important advantage of social media marketing. It can create traffic or visitors that link from the social media platform directly to the company's website.

Finally, social media marketing is highly measurable. Online marketers can evaluate key engagement metrics such as clicks, likes, and shares and optimize their social media campaigns so that they achieve the goals they set. For example, posting at 1:00 p.m. EST on Facebook results in getting the most shares while posting content at 3:00 p.m. EST results in getting the most clicks.

A major disadvantage of social media marketing is that brands don't have complete control over the message. Consumers can freely write comments that are harmful to a brand's reputation. Amazon's Jeff Bezos famously wished everyone a "Happy Earth Day" in a tweet that showed him dogsledding above the Arctic Circle in Norway. He received serious backlash from Twitter users who pointed out at the time that Amazon employees were underpaid and overworked.¹³

In addition to losing control over the message, social media marketing requires a great deal of resources, including time and money. Content is key to creating engagement, and continuous creation of new and engaging content requires resources. Social media pages and posts also need to be monitored for engagement. For example, companies that are active on social media have a plan for reviewing and replying to sometimes hundreds of comments. Fortunately, there are great online tools to help automate replies to comments.

Facebook

Facebook, whose parent company was rebranded as Meta in 2021, is the largest social media platform, with over 2.9 billion monthly active users and \$117.92 billion in revenue.¹⁴ These numbers make this platform attractive for reaching a diverse, global audience. Facebook is facing the challenge that a growing percentage of its users are baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) while teens are using other platforms, like TikTok and YouTube, more frequently.

In addition, Facebook has been scrutinized because of how the company uses personal data. Six in ten social media users report that they've observed and temporarily believed something they've read on Facebook that turned out to be false information.¹⁵

In addition, there's a growing concern about the role that social media has played in dividing people. Fifty percent of users who are millennials say that Facebook fosters division, compared to only 38 percent of baby boomers.¹⁶

Facebook is still clearly the behemoth of social media platforms, and so long as it holds that position, marketers will continue to use it as a channel to deliver content and drive engagement with targeted customers.

Instagram

As a social media platform, Instagram's growth has exploded over the last decade. While not as large as Facebook in terms of users, it still boasts 1 billion active users every month. Instagram attracts a younger demographic, mostly people under the age of 30, which makes it attractive for brands targeting this audience.¹⁷

The company previously known as Facebook purchased Instagram in 2012. The union of Facebook and Instagram under one corporate entity has provided synergistic benefits to users, companies included. First, social media allows users to cross-post on the two platforms. And second, this has the advantage of increasing reach and repetition of messages more efficiently.

From a social media advertising perspective, the integration of Facebook and Instagram allows companies to manage and monitor campaigns across the two platforms easily. Furthermore, companies that have leveraged these integrative features have enjoyed stronger campaign performances in terms of clicks, views, and website conversions.

Spotify uses Instagram Stories brilliantly during its #yearwrapped campaign that drops every December. Instagram Stories lets users post photos and videos that disappear after 24 hours. It's become a very powerful sharing tool with more than 500 million users posting stories every day.

Spotify created a special webpage that presents visitors with their most listened to artists, songs, and other interesting insights related to their music habits over the year. Spotify gives visitors the option of sharing these highlights on other social platforms. This campaign has proved to be highly engaging, with more than 60 million Spotify users engaging with Spotify's Instagram Story and 3 billion #yearwrapped playlists streamed as a result of the campaign.

LinkedIn

For business professionals seeking networking, partnership, and employment opportunities, LinkedIn proves to be an excellent social media platform (see Figure 16.7). LinkedIn boasts 722 million users, who are known as members. Among social media platforms, LinkedIn is considered the most trusted, with 73 percent of members agreeing that LinkedIn protects members' privacy.¹⁸



Figure 16.7 LinkedIn is a business professional platform that is used by marketers to reach consumers. (credit: "LinkedIn Pen" by Sheila Scarborough/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

LinkedIn Live is the platform's live streaming feature, which allows companies to engage directly with community members. Vimeo leveraged the feature when it held a "Working Lunch" series. Using a seminar format, it brought together experts across the business, communication, and technology industries and interested members. The goal was to engage with the audience, provide relevant information, and drive use and engagement of the platform.

While not the largest social platform, LinkedIn most certainly serves as an important tool for connecting with business professionals in the B2B space.

Pinterest

With 478 million monthly users, Pinterest is a social platform that allows users to visually explore an endless array of ideas from recipes to home decor to crafts to personal style.¹⁹ Users can use the platform's search bar to look for topics or people that interest them, which produces results related to search keywords.

For businesses, Pinterest offers a host of benefits as a social marketing tool. First, 97 percent of searches are unbranded.²⁰ Simply put, consumers aren't looking for brand-specific content when browsing the platform. This is music to the ears of companies that can place their ads in Pinterest feeds near relevant content. For example, a user may search for "image of vintage running shoes" on Pinterest, which would result in a host of profiles featuring content related to the search terms. A well-placed New Balance advertisement featuring its vintage 720 sneaker would be a strategic marketing move in this situation (see Figure 16.8).



Figure 16.8 A marketer could place a New Balance sneaker advertisement on Pinterest near unbranded searches. (credit: “New Balance Limited Edition Pink Ribbon 3190 Running Shoes” by slgckgc/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Twitter

As a social platform, Twitter is a microblogging news and networking site where users typically post shorter messages known as tweets. After receiving complaints that 140 characters weren't enough room to express ideas, Twitter expanded its character limit from 140 to 270 in 2017. It has approximately 238 million daily active users, with about 14.5 million living in the United States. It has seen steady growth in international appeal.²¹

Similar to LinkedIn, Twitter is a popular B2B digital marketing tool, with 67 percent of all B2B businesses using the platform to reach business customers.²² Twitter users have a high expectation that a company will respond to a tweet; therefore, marketers who choose this platform should be prepared to engage with users directly. Twitter's ownership and policy changes in 2022 led many people and companies to reconsider their relationship with the platform, but it will likely remain a major force in marketing and business for years to come.

Podcasts

Podcasts are often free, on-demand, downloadable audio recordings that cover a variety of topics and are typically made available on a weekly or monthly basis. Podcasts are distributed through applications such as Apple's Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify, and Audible, but they can also be published on a company's website. Podcasting has been growing at a “hockey stick” rate—200 percent year-on-year growth.²³ Recognizing a huge opportunity, Spotify acquired podcasting company Megaphone in 2020.²⁴ The acquisition positions Spotify as the “go-to” platform for premium podcast content, which offers new opportunities for advertisers. In a world where people question information they are given, podcast hosts stand out because 52 percent of listeners trust advertising when endorsed by the host.²⁵ The hosts can offer brand endorsements and approvals in addition to stories that they bring to life via audio. Listeners take in what the host says and then build it out in their own minds. Podcast creators leverage social media platforms to drive traffic to applications and sites where the podcasts can be played or downloaded.

Podcasts can be an effective digital marketing tool when marketers want to hyper target a niche audience with relevant topics. They are typically created to share educational information and often result in a good return on investment because of the value they create for loyal listeners.

eLearning company Harappa Education produces the *Habits Matter* podcast, which focuses on topics about learning and personal growth. Listeners are attracted to the series because they want to learn something new without the noise of a marketing message. Podcasts are effective at creating value, building relationships, and engaging target audiences in a subtle way.

Link to Learning: Social Media Strategy

Social media marketing can be complex because of the variety of platforms and new features being added all the time. Check out this guide from HubSpot on how to [develop a social media strategy](#).

Also, check out the *Habits Matter* podcast. Hosted by Shreyasi Singh, the *Habits Matter* podcast explores humanity at work. Check it out [here at Apple](#) or [here at Spotify](#).

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6.6.3 Social Media Marketing: Opportunities and Challenges

When marketers are considering social media as a digital marketing tool, they need to weigh its opportunities and its challenges in order to determine if it's the right-fit channel for reaching targeted customers.

The major opportunities of social media marketing include reaching global customers, increasing brand awareness, engaging with targeted customers, and increasing website traffic. First, social media connects companies to billions of users across the globe. Because of this reach, companies can connect with new and existing customers in profitable ways.

In addition, because of the billions of active users on social media, brands can increase awareness of their existence with targeted consumers. For example, a five-year-old swimsuit and beachwear company, Cupshe, had little to no brand recognition among US consumers until it launched campaigns on Facebook and Instagram. In 2020, the company boasted \$150 million in sales without a single storefront.²⁶ Consumers were exposed to the brand via social media ads, which then drove them to the company's website to browse styles and make purchases.

In addition to increasing brand awareness, social platforms help brands engage directly with consumers. Mass forms of promotion such as advertising only offer one-way communication from the company to the customer. Social media platforms allow for multidirectional communication between the company and users and brand communities.

Finally, social media drives traffic to company websites. Users see a sponsored advertisement in their news feed that is highly relevant to their interests and click on the content to learn more, browse inventory, and, ultimately, make a purchase.

The major challenge facing marketers who use social media to reach target audiences is that there is a growing distrust of social media platforms in terms of what they do with our private information. In addition, social media marketing requires dedicated campaign managers who can post fresh content frequently, monitor engagement, and respond to comments. The third disadvantage is that while multidirectional dialogue between consumers and the company is an advantage, the comments cannot be controlled. Users can tarnish the company's brand name if they share negative experiences or opinions about the brand.

Link to Learning: What Goes Viral?

Why do some things go viral and others don't? Learn from BuzzFeed's publisher Dao Nguyen and her TED Talk on the tactics her team uses to make things go viral.

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

[View this Embedded Content online](#)



Why do some things go viral and others don't? Learn from BuzzFeed's publisher Dao Nguyen and her TED Talk on the tactics her team uses to make things go viral.

6.6.4 Integrated Social Media Marketing

Integrated social media marketing involves creating a clear, consistent, and synergistic message across all social media platforms. When consumers are presented with coordinated messages across social media platforms, brand awareness and purchase intention increase.

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6.7: Mobile Marketing- Definition and Strategies

Mobile marketing is defined as the use of multiple digital marketing channels that are designed to reach consumers on their smartphones and tablets. Given the variety of digital tools that marketers use to engage with consumers, it's important to discuss how mobile device use impacts digital marketing strategies. Usage of mobile devices to access the internet and applications has steadily increased over the last ten years.²⁷ As mobile device technology and digital technology has improved, people are doing everything from refinancing their homes to buying cars online. Mobile device usage will continue to grow, and as consumers spend more time on mobile devices, marketers must adapt their strategies to meet consumers where they are.

There are currently 6.4 billion smartphone users worldwide, and usage is expected to continue to grow over the next decade.²⁸ In 2022, US mobile advertising spend is expected to reach \$137.13 billion, where it was \$100 billion in 2021.²⁹ Given these compelling statistics, companies must be prepared with an effective mobile marketing strategy. Marketing for mobile devices is not the same as marketing for desktops. Consumers expect a more personalized experience when they engage with brands on their smartphones.

Elements of a successful mobile marketing strategy should include responsive design, mobile-friendly emails, app development, and memorable URLs.

Link to Learning: US Mobile Advertising

To learn more about the predicted growth of mobile advertising in the United States, [read this article from Oberlo](#). It states that US spend is expected to grow 14 percent to \$156 billion in 2023 and up to \$174 billion in 2024.

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6.7.1 Responsive Web Design

Responsive web design means that when people visit your website via their mobile device, the menus and content display in a way that is easy to read and engage with. Users don't need to pinch, expand, or scroll the screen to view content. Responsive web design became the standard in 2015 when Google announced that mobile-friendly websites would be prioritized over non-mobile-friendly designs in search results. Responsive web design is critical to ensuring that visitors have a good experience while navigating your website.

6.7.2 Mobile-Friendly Emails

Mobile-friendly emails are emails whose images, text, and links display in a user-friendly way when accessed via a mobile device. With 68 percent of emails being opened on mobile devices, responsive design is necessary to create a good user experience.³⁰ Similar to responsive web design, email content needs to display on mobile devices in a way that is simple for the user to consume.

One way that email marketers can meet mobile-friendly standards is to ensure that subject lines are between 41 and 50 characters. Subject lines should capture attention and paint a benefit for the subscriber. In addition, mobile-friendly emails often contain a pre-header, which is the first line of text in your email. It provides context for what the email contains. Finally, emails should be concise with a clear and easy-to-find call to action. Many emails contain buttons that link email viewers directly to the company's website. The button is typically rectangular and includes actionable language like "Get Started" or "Shop the Sale."

6.7.3 Developing an App

For some companies, developing a mobile app is an important element in their mobile strategy. Because a shocking 90 percent of people's mobile usage is on smartphone apps, marketers must consider the value in creating one.³¹

One benefit of developing a mobile app is that apps provide direct communication and engagement opportunities with customers at the touch of a button. Amazon's app, for example, makes it easy to search for and purchase products from mobile devices. The alternative is for users to open their browser on their phone, type in the Amazon URL, and search directly from the mobile site. Apps make it convenient for consumers.

6.7.4 Short/Memorable URLs

An internet site's address on the web is technically known as a uniform resource locator (URL). In the digital world, you could have a great website with great content and a strong social media presence, but visitors cannot reach your website without a well-constructed URL.

Having a shorter, memorable URL is an important marketing tactic for the following reasons. First, it's easy for people to remember. Second, shorter URLs are easier to share, whether it's through email, text, or social media. Finally, optimizing the length of a URL makes it much easier for Google to find and display in search results.

There are a number of applications, such as TinyURL and Bitly, that are capable of turning long URLs into shorter ones; however, the jury is still out on whether search engines perceive these URLs as trustworthy.

6.7.5 Mobile Marketing: Opportunities and Challenges

Mobile marketing presents clear opportunities for digital marketers. First, mobile device usage continues to grow as consumers stratify their time across various devices at once. In addition, mobile devices allow people to experience almost constant connectivity that ignores the boundaries that traditional marketing channels must observe, such as time and place. For example, Nothing Bundt Cakes' store hours of operation might be 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. However, accessing its website to place an order can happen at any time of day from any location.

The shift in mobile usage behavior provides a number of opportunities for marketers to connect with consumers in a place where they are spending more and more time. Additionally, consumers are using mobile devices to conduct product research, view customer reviews, and interact with brands on social media platforms.

In addition to mobile marketing opportunities, this channel also presents challenges to digital marketers. The first challenge is finding the right mix of mobile channels to reach your target audience. For some companies, SMS texting makes sense because customers are open to receiving promotional messages via text. If the company has a mobile application, it may consider sending push notifications that alert users to important information when they aren't engaging with the app. Understanding your target audience is key to determining which mobile tools make the most sense.

A second challenge with mobile marketing is measuring results. While companies can easily measure things like in-app purchases and emails opened and clicked, it's more difficult for marketers to see whether someone has seen a push notification or in-app message.

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6.8: Benefits from Social Media Marketing

6.8.1 Increased Brand Awareness

One of the primary benefits of social media marketing is increased brand awareness. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have vast user bases, providing businesses with the opportunity to reach a large audience. By consistently posting engaging content, businesses can increase their visibility and attract new followers. For example, a small local bakery might use Instagram to showcase its daily specials, post behind-the-scenes content, and engage with customers, thereby increasing its local presence and attracting more customers to its store.

6.8.2 Improved Customer Engagement

Social media allows businesses to engage directly with their customers, fostering a sense of community and loyalty. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter enable businesses to respond to customer inquiries, comments, and reviews in real-time. This direct interaction can enhance customer satisfaction and build stronger relationships. For instance, a tech company might use Twitter to provide customer support, answer questions about their products, and gather feedback, leading to improved customer trust and loyalty.

6.8.3 Cost-Effective Marketing

Compared to traditional marketing methods, social media marketing is highly cost-effective. Creating an account on most social media platforms is free, and businesses can reach a large audience with a relatively small budget. Paid advertising options, such as Facebook Ads or Instagram Sponsored Posts, allow businesses to target specific demographics and measure their return on investment (ROI) accurately. A startup fashion brand might use targeted Facebook ads to reach potential customers based on their interests and behaviors, driving traffic to their website at a fraction of the cost of traditional advertising.

6.8.4 Enhanced Brand Loyalty

Social media marketing helps build brand loyalty by creating a personal connection between the brand and its customers. By regularly posting valuable content, responding to customer interactions, and showcasing the brand's personality, businesses can foster a loyal following. For example, a fitness brand might use Instagram to share workout tips, healthy recipes, and motivational posts, creating a community of followers who feel connected to the brand and more likely to purchase its products.

6.8.5 Better Insights and Analytics

Social media platforms provide valuable insights and analytics that can help businesses understand their audience and refine their marketing strategies. Tools like Facebook Insights, Twitter Analytics, and Instagram Insights offer data on engagement rates, audience demographics, and content performance. This data enables businesses to make informed decisions and optimize their social media campaigns. For instance, an e-commerce store might use Instagram Insights to identify which types of posts generate the most engagement and adjust their content strategy accordingly to boost sales.

6.8.6 Increased Website Traffic

Social media marketing can drive significant traffic to a business's website. By sharing links to blog posts, product pages, and other website content, businesses can attract visitors from social media platforms. This increased traffic can lead to higher conversions and sales. For example, a travel agency might use Pinterest to create boards showcasing beautiful travel destinations, each pin linking back to detailed itineraries on their website, resulting in increased website traffic and potential bookings.

6.8.7 Competitive Advantage

Effective use of social media marketing can give businesses a competitive advantage. By staying active on social media and keeping up with trends, businesses can stay ahead of their competitors and remain relevant in their industry. For instance, a restaurant might use TikTok to create engaging videos of their chefs preparing dishes, participating in viral challenges, and showcasing customer experiences, differentiating themselves from other local dining options and attracting more patrons.

6.8.8 Improved Customer Insights

Social media platforms are valuable sources of customer insights, helping businesses understand their audience's preferences, behaviors, and needs. By analyzing social media interactions and feedback, businesses can gain a deeper understanding of what their customers want and tailor their offerings accordingly. For example, a beauty brand might use customer comments and reviews on social media to identify popular products and ingredients, guiding their product development and marketing strategies.

6.8.9 Effective Targeting and Personalization

Social media platforms offer advanced targeting options that allow businesses to reach specific audiences based on demographics, interests, and behaviors. This targeted approach ensures that marketing efforts are directed towards those most likely to be interested in the products or services. For example, a luxury watch brand might use Facebook's targeting options to reach affluent users interested in high-end fashion and accessories, increasing the likelihood of conversions.

6.8.10 Boosted Sales and Revenue

Ultimately, social media marketing can lead to increased sales and revenue. By reaching a larger audience, engaging with customers, and building brand loyalty, businesses can drive more sales. For example, an online clothing store might use a combination of Instagram posts, stories, and influencer collaborations to showcase their products, leading to higher traffic to their website and increased sales.

Social media marketing offers numerous benefits for businesses, from increased brand awareness and customer engagement to cost-effective marketing and better insights. By leveraging the unique features of each platform, businesses can effectively reach their target audience, build stronger relationships, and drive growth.

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6.9: Conclusion

In the digital age, marketing has undergone a significant transformation, integrating new technologies and strategies to engage with consumers more effectively. Traditional channels like print, television, and radio continue to hold value, but digital marketing offers a personalized, interactive approach that resonates with today's tech-savvy audience. The evolution of direct marketing through online platforms, website marketing, email marketing, content marketing, and online video marketing illustrates the diverse methods businesses employ to connect with their target markets. Each method provides unique advantages, such as cost-effectiveness, precise targeting, and real-time interaction, which traditional marketing channels struggle to match.

Social media marketing has emerged as a powerful tool, leveraging platforms like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Twitter to reach and engage consumers. The ability to create and distribute high-quality content, combined with advanced targeting and analytical capabilities, allows businesses to build brand awareness, enhance customer loyalty, and drive website traffic. The rise of mobile marketing further emphasizes the need for responsive design and mobile-friendly strategies to meet consumers where they spend most of their time. Despite challenges like privacy concerns and resource requirements, the opportunities presented by social media and mobile marketing are vast. By understanding these digital tools and their potential, businesses can navigate the complexities of the digital landscape, achieve their marketing goals, and stay competitive in an increasingly connected world.

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6.10: End of Module Summary

- **Impact of Digital Technologies on Marketing:** Digital technologies have transformed direct marketing, allowing for more personalized and interactive engagements with consumers through platforms like smartphones and the internet.
- **Website Marketing:** Websites are crucial for establishing a digital presence, serving multiple purposes from nurturing consumer relationships to facilitating transactions. Examples include Toyota for product details and Amazon for direct purchases.
- **Email Marketing:** Email marketing is a cost-effective and highly personalized way to build relationships with consumers. Types of emails include transactional emails (order confirmations) and marketing emails (promotions and discounts).
- **Content Marketing:** Content marketing involves creating valuable and relevant content to attract and engage target customers. Effective content is useful, high-quality, and engaging, as seen in examples like Dotdash Meredith's various digital brands.
- **Online Video Marketing:** Video marketing is growing in popularity due to technological advancements and increased consumer demand for videos. Platforms like Instagram and Facebook have become video-first, and tools like Biteable make video creation accessible and cost-effective.
- **Blogs and Online Forums:** Blogs serve as online journals that attract and engage audiences with relevant content. They help improve organic search rankings and nurture online communities, as demonstrated by HubSpot's high-quality blog content.
- **Advantages of Online Direct Marketing:** Online direct marketing offers global reach, cost-effectiveness, easy performance measurement, targeted promotion, and real-time brand-consumer interaction.
- **Social Media Marketing:** Social media marketing allows for highly targeted campaigns, real-time engagement, and measurable results. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Twitter provide unique opportunities for reaching and engaging with consumers.
- **Mobile Marketing:** Mobile marketing leverages digital channels to reach consumers on their smartphones and tablets. Key strategies include responsive web design, mobile-friendly emails, app development, and memorable URLs.
- **Careers in Digital Marketing:** Digital marketing careers are in high demand, including roles such as SEO specialists, content marketing managers, social media managers, PPC specialists, and email marketing specialists, all offering dynamic opportunities in the digital landscape.

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6.11: Key Terms

Advantages of Online Direct Marketing: Benefits include global reach, cost-effectiveness, easy performance measurement, targeted promotion, and real-time interaction with consumers.

Better Insights and Analytics: Utilizing social media analytics tools to understand audience behavior and optimize marketing strategies.

Blogs and Online Forums: Platforms for sharing interests, information, and fostering community engagement. Blogs also help improve search engine rankings through regular content updates.

Boosted Sales and Revenue: Leveraging social media to drive sales and increase revenue through targeted, engaging campaigns.

Competitive Advantage: Staying ahead of competitors by actively engaging with consumers and leveraging social media trends.

Content Marketing: Creating and distributing valuable, relevant content to attract and engage a target audience. Examples include blogs, videos, and social media posts.

Cost-Effective Marketing: Utilizing social media platforms for affordable marketing campaigns with targeted reach and measurable ROI.

Developing an App: Creating mobile applications to provide direct communication and engagement opportunities with consumers.

Digital Age Marketing: Marketing strategies that leverage digital channels such as websites, social media, and email to engage with consumers in a personalized and interactive way.

Digital Marketing Careers: High-demand careers such as SEO Specialist, Content Marketing Manager, Social Media Manager, PPC Specialist, and Email Marketing Specialist.

Direct Meets Digital: The integration of traditional direct marketing techniques with digital technologies, enhancing engagement with consumers through online channels.

Effective Targeting and Personalization: Using advanced targeting options on social media to reach specific audiences based on demographics and interests.

Email Marketing: Direct marketing using emails to communicate promotions, content, and offers to targeted consumers. Includes transactional and marketing emails.

Enhanced Brand Loyalty: Building personal connections with customers through regular, valuable social media interactions.

Improved Customer Engagement: Direct interaction with customers on social media to foster loyalty and satisfaction.

Improved Customer Insights: Gaining deeper understanding of customer preferences and behaviors through social media interactions and feedback.

Increased Brand Awareness: Using social media to increase visibility and attract new followers through consistent, engaging content.

Increased Website Traffic: Driving traffic to websites through social media content and links, leading to higher conversions and sales.

Integrated Social Media Marketing: Coordinating consistent messaging across all social media platforms to enhance brand awareness and purchase intention.

Mobile Marketing Opportunities: Advantages include constant connectivity, reaching consumers where they spend time, and

leveraging mobile behavior for marketing strategies.

Mobile Marketing: Using digital marketing channels to reach consumers on mobile devices, including responsive web design, mobile-friendly emails, app development, and memorable URLs.

Mobile-Friendly Emails: Designing emails that are easy to read and interact with on mobile devices, with clear subject lines and concise content.

Online Video Marketing: Creating videos to tell a brand's story and drive consumer engagement through likes, shares, and comments. Utilized by platforms like Instagram and YouTube.

Responsive Web Design: Ensuring that websites display properly on mobile devices without the need for pinching or scrolling.

Short/Memorable URLs: Using shorter, easy-to-remember URLs for better user experience and search engine optimization.

Social Media Marketing Opportunities: Benefits such as reaching a global audience, increasing brand awareness, improving customer engagement, and driving website traffic.

Social Media Marketing: Using social media platforms to deliver content that engages users and promotes brand awareness, driving traffic to websites and generating sales.

Uses of Social Media Marketing: Targeting specific demographics, facilitating engagement, distributing content, and driving website traffic. Examples include campaigns on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

Website Marketing: Promotion of a website to drive traffic, inform consumers, and facilitate transactions. Examples include Amazon for e-commerce and Toyota for product information.

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6.12: Discussion Questions

1. How has the rise of digital technologies transformed traditional direct marketing methods, and what advantages does online direct marketing offer over traditional methods?
2. Given the widespread use of smartphones, what are the key elements of an effective mobile marketing strategy, and how can businesses ensure their marketing efforts are mobile-friendly?
3. What role does content marketing play in building relationships with consumers, and how can companies create content that is both engaging and valuable?
4. How can businesses leverage social media platforms to increase brand awareness and engage with their target audience effectively?
5. What metrics and analytics are crucial for evaluating the success of digital marketing campaigns, and how can businesses use this data to refine their strategies?

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7: SOCIAL MEDIA IN BUSINESS

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- 7.3: Why Is Social Media Important to a Business?
- 7.4: Maintaining Audience Engagement
- 7.5: Social Media Analytics
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- 7.7: Advantages and challenges
- 7.8: Conclusion
- 7.9: End of Module Summary
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7.1: Course Objectives

1. Analyze the Importance of Social Media in Business Marketing.
2. Evaluate the Role of Content Management in Social Media.
3. Understand Strategies for Building and Engaging a Social Media Presence.
4. Examine the Role of Social Media in Audience Engagement and Customer Relationships.
5. Implement Effective Social Media Marketing Plans.
6. Explore Social Media Analytics and Advertising.

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7.2: Introduction

You are probably familiar with at least one social media platform. Businesses have come to see the value in promoting their organization via social media platforms because of the cost-effectiveness and reach of social media across nearly all demographics. For many businesses, building a social media presence is just as important as building a website. But building a brand on social media is challenging because so many different media platforms are available.

Social media is an integral part of content management in an organization. To manage content effectively, organizations need to have a consistent message across platforms. However, the organization can use the various platforms in different ways to get the same message across. For example, a post from a Happy Tails WC social media account might just show a picture of a pet and a short description. But the post itself would direct viewers to the Happy Tails WC website, where they could get more information about adopting that pet. Conversely, some content is better suited for social media than for a regular website—for example, events, which are more easily shared and publicized on social media. Generally, people spend less time on any particular post on social media than they do engaging with a website. Therefore, it is critical to create content that will catch the user's eye as they scroll through their social media feeds. Also, by sharing particular items, such as events or announcements, you can measure the reach of the posts through the social media metrics generated.

For example, when you post a fundraising event for Happy Tails, you can get an idea of how many people will attend the event, expected donations from the event, and even how far individuals will travel to attend the event based on their location in their social media profiles. Engagement with users on social media is often a bit more personalized, and you can create richer connections with your audience that you cannot with those who simply visit a website. Social media gives you more of a relationship-building process than you have with website interactions. These are just a few examples of how the same content can reach users differently across different platforms. Research suggests that brands need to be savvy about their social media presence. They should create engaging content that inspires sharing with followers, manage and create content for different social media platforms, and strategically navigate the social landscape.

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7.3: Why Is Social Media Important to a Business?

Using social media is an essential component of any business marketing strategy. By providing access to customers' feedback and interactions, social media platforms help businesses stay in tune with customers, increase brand awareness, and boost their potential leads. Customers can use social media channels to ask questions about products and services. By listening to customer feedback and analyzing the data provided by social media, companies can improve their customer service and increase revenue.

There are several popular social media platforms, and it is expected that more will be developed in the future. You may be active on one or more social media platforms. You might also engage with a business or organization through these platforms, whether by simply following a company's social media page, by liking and/or interacting with posts from the company, or by sharing information from the company on your personal page. These are all ways that businesses want their target audience to interact. The more interaction with the target group, the more brand recognition and loyalty can be built, contributing to an increase in business for the company.

Not all social media apps are created equal. Some platforms are better suited for sharing photos, while others are better for networking with potential employers. For example, Facebook and SnapChat are more visual, whereas X (Twitter) and LinkedIn are more text based. Each, however, can play a role in your company's overall strategy. Figure 8.30 lists a few of the major social media platforms and their uses. More research will be needed by your organization if they choose to use one of the platforms.

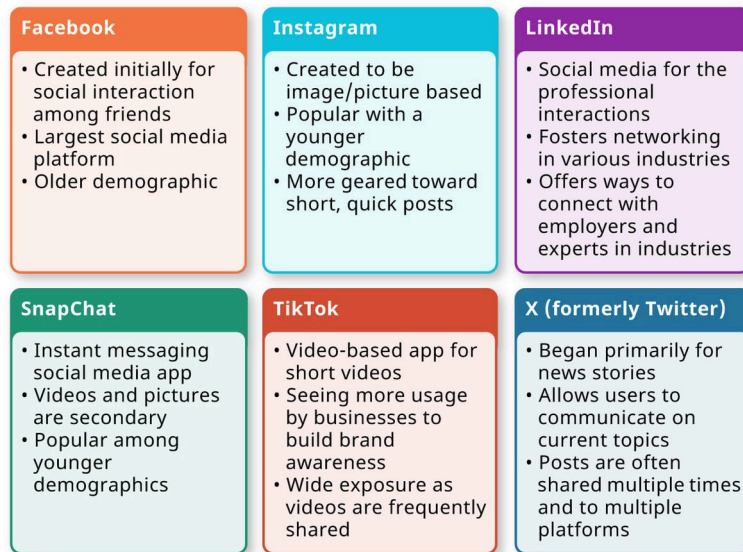


Figure 8.30: You should consider your target audience when selecting the appropriate social media platform.

A social media plan can be part of a business growth strategy, which should include a planned-out content calendar, an arsenal of automation tools to schedule posts across platforms, tools for tracking performance metrics, and more. Each post a company shares should be designed in advance to maximize the company's success on social media. Using the tools and strategies discussed previously, a robust social media marketing plan that fits into the overall strategic goals of the company can be enormously beneficial to a business.

But as with any content management, integrating social media into your business plan can be challenging and requires proper planning. The popular phrase “build it and they will come” is true only when strategies are in place. You might get initial visits to your online content, but if the content is not engaging and meeting customer needs, the visitors probably will not return. Therefore, before you implement the different strategies described here, you should think about the key factor that will keep visitors returning: great content and customer service. To ensure content is fresh and trending, listen to what your audience wants and needs. To drive traffic to your site, you need to know your customers—their demographics, their habits, their likes/dislikes. You should also be sure to have a presence on the social media sites where your target audience spends time.

Growing an audience can be a difficult task for a new business starting with zero customers. This will be particularly important for Happy Tails WC managers to ensure as they are a new nonprofit. They will need to build awareness so that they can secure

the volunteers and donations needed to run the organization. They will also need to market to get the pets adopted promptly. Understanding who your target audience is will help you generate a better return on investment (ROI). Your target audience is the group of people who would be most interested in your product or service. For Happy Tails, the target market can be large. They are looking for individuals with a passion for animals. But they also need individuals who are good at fundraising and are skilled in event planning. Members of this target audience will have a number of things in common, and you can use this information to create content that resonates with them. Once you build a connection, it will be easier to turn them into loyal customers.

One way to understand your business's target audience is to figure out what kinds of things they like, and make connections across those things. One way to do this is to partner with other businesses to tap into a wider audience and spread your brand to other markets. For example, in 2013, Pottery Barn, a furniture company, and Sherwin-Williams, a paint company, partnered to allow customers to select paint colors that would coordinate well with furniture. This led customers to want to purchase Sherwin-Williams paint colors because they were custom-selected to match perfectly with Pottery Barn furniture. Pottery Barn developed a landing page that contained blog posts on ideas and tips for how to paint and decorate.

Another common strategy is to allow users to find and tag relevant information with hashtags. A hashtag is a keyword tag that starts with “#” and can be used on a wide variety of social media sites. For example, you may have seen the hashtag #ootd which stands for “outfit of the day.” Happy Tails WC could use hashtags to promote their page such as #potw (pet of the week) or #adoptnotshop to promote the idea of adopting a pet rather than going through a pet store. Hashtags are searchable by users. As a business, you can use hashtags to promote your brand or cause. You can look at competitors' hashtags and use similar ones for your posts. Hashtags can be part of a broader social media campaign to drive traffic to your page and create content for posts to be shared.

Many social media platforms also enable users to promote their posts to specific demographics or geographic locations for a fee. This goes back to really understanding your target audience. Because of the data collected via social media on individual users, there is a good deal of data available to help push posts to specific audiences. In some instances, you can even promote specific posts based on purchasing habits or websites visited. For example, Happy Tails WC can develop a post and pay to have the post promoted to individuals in the communities around the adoption agency or to those who already have pets based on their social media profiles. Each platform will have its own fee structure for promoting posts. For example, with Facebook, you set your budget. You put in how much you are able to spend for promoting a post or an event and Facebook will use that amount to promote the post. The minimum is \$1 per day, which could reach up to almost 80 people based on your target audience and location. With \$20 per day, that figure could rise to over 1,000 people. It is beyond the scope of this text to go into detail about promoting posts on various social media sites, but you should be aware that this option exists. By searching the “Help” function for an individual social media platform, you should be able to find specific information on paying for promoting posts.

A backlink, also referred to as an inbound or incoming link, is a hyperlink in a web page that takes you to another website or another location on your site. Google's ranking process will rank websites that have backlinks higher than those that do not. When your site includes hyperlinks to other websites, it is viewed as more trustworthy. This is similar to writing a research paper for a class. You will probably be required to cite previous research in your paper to support your ideas and conclusions. Web pages work the same way. Backing up your information with sources (i.e., other websites) can increase your credibility. To be effective, the backlink should be a trusted website itself and relevant to your website.

As a final consideration, you may want to think more deeply about the keywords you choose. In your initial search for a website, you may use very general terms. For example, if you are interested in adopting a pet, you might start with a search for the term “pet adoption.” But after further investigation, you may determine that you really want to adopt a certain breed of pet, of a certain sex and a certain age. Your search terms then become more detailed, such as “an adult female dachshund.” This is the concept of a long-tail keyword—a more descriptive set of keywords that are specific to your business. Long-tail keywords are often used by individuals who are closer to actually making a purchase or who want a more in-depth interaction with the company. For Happy Tails WC, this might be the point at which an individual submits an application for a specific pet or reaches out to discuss some options with the organization's personnel. You may not generate as many visits to the page with long-tail keywords, but the visits that are made will be higher quality and more likely to generate customers.

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7.4: Maintaining Audience Engagement

Creating original content for social media is called content creation. In the content management lifecycle covered earlier in this chapter, content creation is part of both the organization and creation stages. In the organization stage, you should determine which content will be on which platforms (e.g., website versus X (Twitter)). Then, in the creation stage, you will create the content specific to that platform, with the understanding that not all content is equally appropriate for all platforms. For example, the way adoptable pets are highlighted on the Happy Tails WC website can differ from how the pets are showcased on Instagram. To create engaging content, you will need to understand your topic and listen to your audience. If the content is valuable to your audience, they will be more likely to reshare it.

When creating content, think about the “four Es:” (see Figure 8.31). Content should *entertain*, *educate*, *encourage*, and *engage* through a call to action. Also think about the way your content is structured. Through the use of headings, you can avoid posting long paragraphs and instead break the content down into bite-sized pieces for your audience.

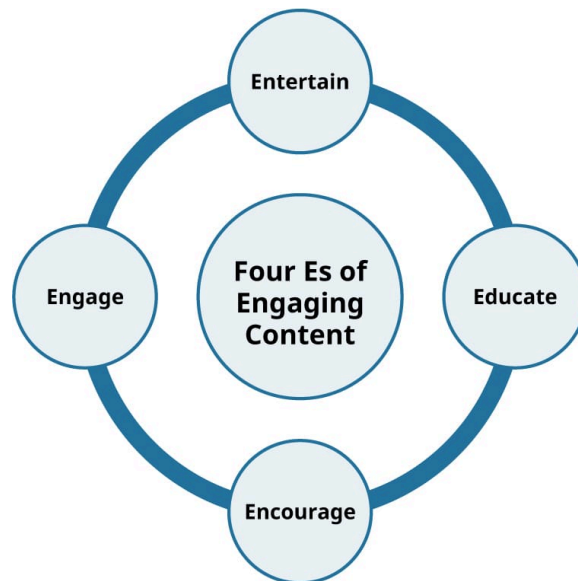


Figure 8.31: Creating engaging content increases the likelihood that your social media posts will be shared with others and thus increase their reach.

Another key to original content creation is writing for your audience. You want to develop an understanding of your target market, and identify their demographic characteristics and pain points (recurring problems with products or services that inconvenience or annoy customers). Use this information when you write content for your business. Because social media platforms are primarily visual, your content should include visuals and infographics as well as text. Tools like Canva (an online design and publishing tool that allows customers to design anything and publish it online) can be used to style your content into posts that fit the specifications of different social media. You can also use some of the tools in Google Slides and Microsoft PowerPoint to design engaging visuals. There are many other tools you can use to create various types of content—for example, YouTube for video, SurveyMonkey for short surveys, Anchor for podcasting, and Spotify for playlists.

Collecting information on a relevant topic and sharing with added value is called content curation. When the content is shared on social media, credit is given to its original owners. Curating content allows you to add value to your site by collecting information and organizing it to appeal to your audience. This is similar in concept to backlinks: The goal is to locate thought-provoking or engaging content to build upon original content and enhance your credibility. As a content manager, you will be a researcher who sorts data online and identifies relevant and purposeful content. Essentially, you will manage and oversee the content for the organization. For example, HubSpot is a company that focuses on creating software solutions for marketing and customer service management. The site creates content regularly to demonstrate to its audience how to use social media for marketing in the form of blog posts. They pull a variety of content from case studies, social media tools, resources, etc. to provide resources on best practices in marketing that are relevant to their target market.

7.4.1 Strategies for Repeat Visitors

Repeat visitors to a website, social media, or blog are good for businesses that want to develop brand loyalty or build an online community. There are a few strategies that will assist in increasing the traffic to your business (see Figure 8.32).



Figure 8.32: To drive traffic to your social media sites, you can use various methods that have been found to attract and retain customers.

Start with a “call to action.” This is a way of encouraging your site visitors to do something. Encourage your visitors to leave a comment, share an image, or enter a contest. Some businesses center their relationship with their customers around product sharing. For example, customers might take an image of themselves with the product and use a special hashtag to be identified and posted. You can also build a loyalty program, encouraging visitors to return by having them subscribe or join a membership rewards program. This will give visitors something to look forward to in your business.

An example of this strategy is having users download an app and earn rewards toward a free purchase. Starbucks, Chick-Fil-A, and Chipotle all have these types of rewards built into their apps. Offer incentives for reposting and sharing your organization’s posts on their own personal social media pages. You can create even more engagement by asking them to tag their friends in the repost. Finally, one of the best ways to have repeat visitors is to create a consistent experience with excellent customer service. This is an essential part of making visitors want to stay involved in the process of buying from your business.

7.4.2 Engagement Management

Any interaction between two parties on social media platforms, such as sharing, linking, or commenting, is called engagement. Organizations use engagement management (EM) as a tool that allows them to engage with members or clients anywhere or anytime. It involves a team of client relations (sales and support), project management, delivery, and quality management to satisfy clients. EM operates across multiple projects and ongoing relationships. For example, [Hootsuite](#) is a social media management platform that integrates social media networks and helps clients focus on engagement. Companies can curate content, schedule posts across different social media platforms, and manage team members. Hootsuite offers integration for X (Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube, making it easy for clients to measure ROI. There are other similar software programs available to help your organization manage multiple social media platforms.

A key advantage of using one of these programs is that you can schedule your social media posts and incorporate the social media calendar discussed previously. For example, when a post is made on one social media platform, such as X (Twitter), the same post can be made to Facebook automatically. This can facilitate your social media marketing plan to ensure consistency. It can also help keep your posts organized and can save you time if you have limited resources to dedicate to social media.

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7.5: Social Media Analytics

Businesses should ensure that their marketing efforts are producing measurable results that align with the company's goals and strategies. Businesses can use social media analytics to collect data from different social channels—including information on demographics, behaviors, favorites, and the like—and measure performance and drive business decisions.

For example, a social media management company may monitor your social platforms to see how many people are following and engaging with your accounts. They will view how many times people interacted with your account to share, like, or comment on posts. This data allows you to identify patterns for your customer, which will help with ROI. Some top social media analytic platforms are BuzzSumo, HubSpot, Sprout Social, and TapInfluence. However, within each social media platform, you can find analytics about your posts, as seen in Figure 8.33. You will get summary data showing the reach of your posts, the number of times each post was shared and reshared, how many people liked the post, and other related information.

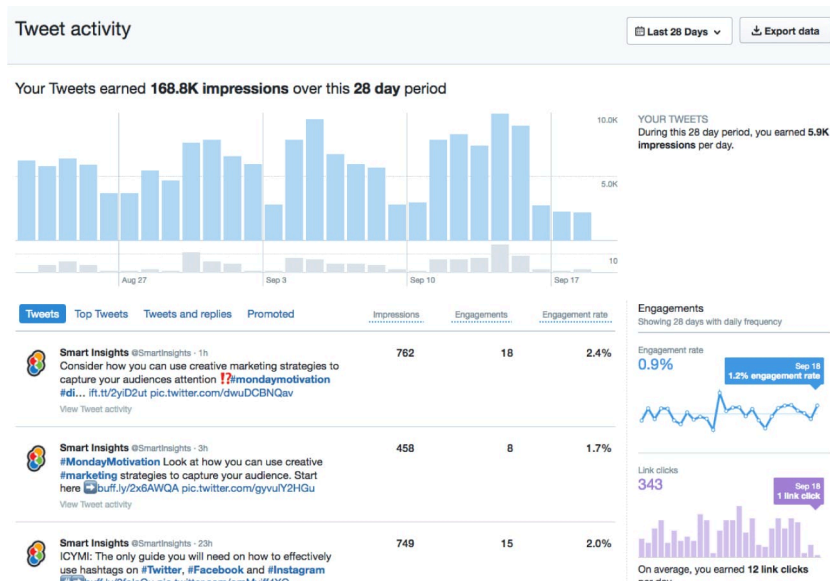


Figure 8.33: By tracking engagement of posts, you can determine which posts resonate more with your audience.

7.5.1 Social Media Calendar

Using a social media calendar allows you to plan your content ahead of time and update as necessary. Social media editorial calendars are spreadsheets or apps used to schedule social posts in advance. They are also used to plan which content will be shared and when, to manage campaigns, and to track deadlines. Your calendar can be a simple one using spreadsheets or a pen and notebook, or it can make use of special software (see Figure 8.34). You could start off by setting up a spreadsheet of your posts across various platforms. You will learn the skills to do this in the chapter on Working with Spreadsheets.

Figure 8.34: Social media calendars can help you keep track of posts and schedule them for publication. (Google Sheets is a trademark of Google LLC.)

Whichever route you take to developing social media content, you should have the following main topics: type of social media platform, date and time, topic/theme of posts, links, and tags connected to posts. A more complicated calendar could also include several platforms and details, such as if the post will be linked to an event or if you will pay to promote the post to a greater audience.

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7.6: Social Advertising Platforms

One of the core principles to keep in mind when choosing a social media platform on which to advertise is that you need to go where your audience is. Be sure to choose a platform that fits your needs as a business as well. Let's take a look at a few of the most popular platforms to see what they can offer and why you might want to focus your attention on them. Note that the demographic statistics given are for the US. As you read, keep in mind that for most networks, the number of older users is increasing which can lead to changes in the behavior of younger users on the platform or even drive them off entirely.

Learn more about the popular platforms in the [Social media platforms](#) chapter.

7.6.1 Facebook

What they offer: Facebook offers a wide array of targeting options and the biggest social media audience in the world, with 1.79 billion users as of the third quarter of 2016 (Statista, 2016). Ad formats are based on desired objectives (which we will discuss in the next section). Their pricing can vary significantly based on a number of factors, but their ad platform is fairly intuitive, and Facebook Analytics gives you a lot of information you can use to optimize ad performance.

You will have access to Facebook Ads Manager, which allows you to manage campaigns, ad sets, and individual ads. This is also available as an app.

Who uses it: 83% of female-identified and 75% of male-identified Internet users use Facebook. The demographics are skewed toward the youth market, with 88% of 18 to 29-year-olds, 84% of 30 to 49-year-olds, and 62% of online users aged 65 and up using the platform 82% of users have some form of higher education (Sprout Social, 2017).

Best suited to: Every business should have a Facebook page, as it is the bare minimum of what users expect. Your business should be on Facebook even if it is just listed with an address, website, and other basic details. Whether a business should use paid advertising to promote posts depends on what it wants to achieve, but if you plan to use social media advertising at all, you should consider starting on Facebook.

7.6.2 Instagram

What they offer: Instagram offers photo, video and carousel ads in a number of formats. Because it is owned by Facebook, it has many of the same features, including analytics (through Facebook Ads Manager), good targeting options, and various objectives to drive campaigns. Instagram stories is also a powerful feature, which is mentioned in the [Social media platforms](#) chapter. Finally, Instagram is potentially the best platform at the moment to work with influencers. It has a very tight community culture with a focus on quality, unique content and creativity.

Who uses it: More women use Instagram than men, and more people in urban areas use it than in rural areas. Income is split fairly evenly among various income brackets, with 38% of users earning more than US \$75 000 annually active on the platform. The important thing to note for Instagram is age, 59% of users between 18 and 29 use Instagram, compared to only 8% above 65 (Sprout Social, 2017).

Best suited to: In theory, any business can use Instagram. The key attraction for Instagram is visually attractive pictures and videos, so businesses that lend themselves to visuals like this, such as food, decoration, or travel-related brands, will have an advantage, but any business that wants to capture that all-important 18–24 year-old demographic should be active here.

7.6.3 Twitter

What they offer: Twitter offers ad campaigns based on objectives, much like Facebook and Instagram, and the kind of targeting you would expect from a major social media platform. Many marketers point out that advertising on Twitter is a problem because the ads are expensive, the targeting is not as good as Facebook's, and user growth has stalled, but pay-per-click (PPC) on Twitter can be cheaper than other options.

Read more about payment models such as PPC in the [Online advertising](#) and [Search advertising](#) chapters.

Followers earned from a Twitter campaign tend to be fairly qualified prospects. They will have been chosen to see your tweets based on how well they fit your targeting profile, and they then choose to follow you based on how well your tweet speaks to their needs.

Who uses it: Twitter's users are also skewed towards the youth market, 36% of adults aged 18 to 29, but only 10% of adults over 65, use it. And there is an equal percentage of men and women active on the platform. For location, 77% of Twitter accounts are from outside the US, with a fairly even distribution across urban, suburban and rural areas. Like Facebook, college graduates make up the largest audience for Twitter, 54% have some tertiary education or have graduated college. The income demographics are very similar to Instagram, with 30% of adults who earn more than US \$75 000 a year using Twitter (Sprout Social, 2017).

Best suited to: Any business that wants to reach an audience like the one described. Twitter audiences are used to instant gratification, Twitter feuds (check out the hashtag #cuteanimaltweetoff for a good example of this), and snappy comebacks. Twitter is a highly politicized space, so any slip-ups or faux pas on the part of your brand will be quickly picked up.

7.6.4 LinkedIn

What they offer: Most social media sites offer good targeting options, but in keeping with its position as a social network for business professionals, LinkedIn's targeting options involve someone's professional abilities. It also tends to convert well on gated content that requires users to enter an email address or other information to download something.

Who uses it: Until 2017, LinkedIn was one of the few social networks that didn't skew toward 18–29 year olds, however this shifted in 2017.

LinkedIn is used by:

- 34% of adults 18–29
- 33% of adults 30–49
- 24% of adults 50–64
- 21% of adults over 65.

More men than women use LinkedIn, 31% to 27%. On the LinkedIn press page, you can see a map of all their users.

LinkedIn is even more focused on users with some tertiary experience, 50% of adult college graduates and 27% of adults with some college experience use it. Higher levels of users are high earners, with 45% of adults making over US \$75 000 using the platform (Sprout Social, 2017).

Best suited to: B2B marketers who want to target business professionals should start with LinkedIn, and companies that hire a lot of people.

7.6.5 Pinterest

What they offer: Pinterest doesn't offer as many targeting options as some other social media platforms, but it still has basic location, device, gender, and language targeting. Users often visit Pinterest specifically to gather information about and plan potential purchases, and those who view ads on Pinterest tend to have greater awareness and purchase intent than those who do not.

Who uses it: Pinterest is a great platform for targeting women. 45% of women use it, while only 17% of men do. It is again skewed toward the younger market, with 36% of adults 18–29 using it, dropping steadily as age increases. Only 16% of adults aged 65+ use the platform. Pinterest is most popular in suburban areas, 34% of people living in suburban areas use it, while 30% of urban users are active. Like many social media platforms, its users tend to have at least some tertiary education (Sprout Social, 2017).

Best suited to: Retailers tend to make the most use of this platform, though other businesses can create successful accounts as well. The key is to create beautiful, useful boards that people want to look at, and use advertising to capitalize on that.

7.6.6 Snapchat

What they offer: Snapchat is one of the newer major social networks, but it has come a long way since its origin as a niche platform mostly used by teenagers. It still has a lot of pull with young demographics, and it encourages real-time content creation and consumption, with users paying more attention to content. Most video snaps are watched with audio on, which differs greatly from Facebook, and Snapchat has an engagement rate five times higher than the average clickthrough rate for other platforms (Wallaroo Media, 2017). Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp have been fairly blatant about stealing Snapchat's features, including Stories and Filters, which could mean a drop-off in users over time. However, Snapchat is fighting back with new offerings such as Lenses.

Who uses it: Snapchat is dominated by younger users, with 60% of users under 25. About 23% of users haven't yet graduated from high school. Only about 12% of users are aged 35 to 54, with a mere 2% of users aged 65+. However, this is changing, more than half of new users signing up to Snapchat are over 25. Snapchat doesn't publish gender information for its users, but in 2013, about 70% of users were women, and a survey from 2015 showed that more women than men use the platform (Hootsuite, 2016b). The highest penetration rate for Snapchat is in Ireland, then Saudi Arabia and Sweden. College students are more likely to have Snapchat accounts than other demographic groups.

Best suited to: Snapchat has fewer options for small businesses than most other social media platforms simply because their options are expensive. Prices have come down, however, with the cheapest option, the Sponsored Local Geofilters ad, coming in at as little as US \$5. This means that, while the bigger options are still only available to big businesses, other options are available to almost anyone. This means that Snapchat is suited to any business that wants to find a particularly young audience.

7.6.7 Yelp

What they offer: Yelp is a review site that helps users select a business that suits their needs. There are many sites similar to Yelp, so keep in mind that you may want to choose a different option that is more active in your area. Tracking leads generated by Yelp can be difficult, but it does provide some metrics like page views and ad clicks. With users relying more and more on reviews and review sites when choosing where to buy, platforms like Yelp are increasingly attractive.

Who uses it: Men use Yelp more than women, and women are 50% less likely to leave a review if they use the site regularly. People in urban areas are twice as likely as those in rural or suburban areas to use Yelp to choose a business. Yelp users are active on mobile, with 71% of searches on the platform originating from mobile devices worldwide. The largest age demographic for Yelp users is 18–34, which accounts for almost 42% of Yelp users. Most users, 60%, have at least some college education, and 38% of users have an annual household income of at least US \$100 000 (Gaille, 2015).

Best suited to: Yelp works best for location-based businesses. That said, many advertisers argue that advertising on Yelp may not be worth the money compared to a free profile so weigh your options carefully.

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7.7: Advantages and challenges

Some of the difficulties of advertising on social media are the same as the difficulties of being on social media in general. They include:

- Promoted posts all need to work hard to make an authentic connection with the audience.
- You need to consistently promote good content.
- There is always the chance that your audience will respond negatively to a post, which can escalate quickly.
- Choosing the right platform to advertise on can be a challenge.
- Tying ad spend on social media to revenue increases can be difficult, since the benefits of advertising on these platforms are often indirect. Take a look at Sprout Social's Ultimate Guide to Measuring Social Media ROI for some tips: sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-roi-guide.

It is important to clarify with whomever you are reporting to that ROI on social media is not an exact science. Far more data is available than on traditional media, but it has its limits. So rather than drawing a clear line from social media advertising to sales, look at encouraging behaviors that lead to sales, such as convincing users to sign up for a test drive rather than attempting to sell a car. You can easily calculate ROI if you know how many signups for test drives you get from Facebook, and how many test drives result in sales.

Despite its challenges, advertising on social media cannot be avoided. If you want to reach the maximum possible number of users with granular targeting that ensures you're reaching exactly the right users at the right time, social media advertising is the way to go. It is also the only way to ensure that a significant portion of your audience per platform will see your posts.

Like social media in general, advertising on this channel can:

- Increase brand recognition
- Improve brand loyalty.

It is:

- Fairly low cost
- Easy to share, and
- Allows for real-time analysis of your campaigns and audience.

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7.8: Conclusion

Social media has become a crucial part of modern business marketing strategies, allowing for direct communication with customers, increased brand awareness, and potential lead generation. Different platforms like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter offer unique strengths and require tailored approaches to content and audience engagement. By utilizing tools for content scheduling and performance tracking, businesses can create effective social media plans that resonate with their target audiences. Engaging content that entertains, educates, encourages, and includes calls to action is key to maintaining audience interest and driving traffic.

Maintaining audience engagement and measuring marketing efforts are essential components of a successful social media strategy. Tools like Hootsuite streamline social media management, while analytics platforms like BuzzSumo and HubSpot provide valuable insights into audience behavior. Using a social media calendar helps ensure consistency and timely updates. Despite the challenges, advertising on social media offers significant advantages, such as increased brand recognition and loyalty, at relatively low costs. By integrating social media into their overall marketing strategy, businesses can effectively connect with their audience, build strong relationships, and drive growth.

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7.9: End of Module Summary

- **Significance of Social Media Presence:** Social media platforms offer cost-effective and wide-reaching promotional opportunities for businesses. Building a social media presence is as crucial as establishing a website for modern businesses.
- **Content Management Across Platforms:** Consistent messaging across various social media platforms is essential for effective content management. Different platforms serve different purposes; for instance, events are better publicized on social media, whereas detailed information is suited for websites.
- **Engagement and Relationship Building:** Social media allows businesses to create personalized connections with their audience, enhancing relationship-building beyond what is possible on a website.
- **Importance of Customer Feedback:** Social media provides businesses with direct access to customer feedback and interactions, helping improve customer service and increase revenue. Analyzing data from social media can help businesses stay in tune with customer preferences and behaviors.
- **Strategic Social Media Planning:** A well-planned social media strategy, including a content calendar and performance tracking tools, is critical for business growth. Consistently engaging and meeting customer needs with fresh content and good customer service is key to retaining visitors.
- **Understanding Target Audience:** Identifying and understanding the target audience is vital for creating relevant content and marketing strategies. Partnering with other businesses and using hashtags can help tap into a wider audience and enhance brand visibility.
- **Paid Promotions and Targeting:** Social media platforms offer paid promotion options that allow businesses to target specific demographics and geographic locations. Promoting posts can significantly increase reach and engagement based on user data.
- **Use of Backlinks and Keywords:** Including backlinks to trusted and relevant websites can enhance a site's credibility and ranking. Utilizing long-tail keywords can attract higher-quality visits from users closer to making a purchase decision.
- **Content Creation and Curation:** Creating original, engaging content that entertains, educates, encourages, and engages users is essential. Content curation involves collecting and sharing relevant information, adding value, and enhancing credibility.
- **Social Media Analytics and Management:** Social media analytics tools help businesses measure performance and align marketing efforts with goals. Using social media management platforms can streamline content scheduling, maintain consistency, and save time.

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7.10: Key Terms

Audience Engagement: The level of interaction and involvement from users with a brand's social media content. High engagement indicates strong connections and interest.

Backlink: A hyperlink on a webpage that directs users to another site. Backlinks can improve a website's credibility and search engine ranking.

Call to Action (CTA): A prompt that encourages users to take a specific action, such as liking a post, leaving a comment, or making a purchase.

Content Creation: The process of generating original content for social media. This includes text, images, videos, and other forms of media tailored to specific platforms.

Content Curation: The act of collecting, organizing, and sharing relevant content from various sources. This adds value by providing additional information and context to the audience.

Content Management: The process of creating, publishing, and managing digital content. For businesses, this involves maintaining a consistent message across different platforms.

Content Strategy: A plan for creating and distributing content that aligns with business goals and engages the target audience. This includes choosing the right platforms and types of content.

Engagement Management (EM): A strategy for managing interactions between a business and its audience on social media. This involves responding to comments, managing posts, and using tools like Hootsuite.

Engagement Metrics: Data that shows how users interact with social media content. This includes likes, shares, comments, and clicks.

Hashtag: A keyword or phrase preceded by the "#" symbol, used to categorize and find posts on social media. Hashtags help increase visibility and engagement with content.

Influencers: Individuals with a large following on social media who can influence their audience's opinions and behaviors. Brands often collaborate with influencers for marketing campaigns.

Long-Tail Keywords: Specific, descriptive keywords that target niche markets. These keywords help attract more qualified leads who are closer to making a purchase.

Mobile-Friendly Design: Designing content and websites to be easily viewable and navigable on mobile devices. This is critical as more users access content through smartphones.

Promoted Posts: Social media posts that are boosted with paid advertising to reach a larger audience. These posts target specific demographics or interests.

Responsive Web Design: An approach to web design that ensures websites adapt to different screen sizes and devices, providing a seamless user experience.

Return on Investment (ROI): A measure of the profitability of an investment. For social media, this means evaluating the effectiveness of campaigns in generating desired outcomes, like sales or brand awareness.

Social Advertising Platforms: Social media sites that offer advertising options to businesses. Examples include Facebook Ads, Instagram Ads, and Twitter Ads.

Social Media Analytics: Tools and techniques for measuring the performance of social media campaigns. This includes tracking engagement, reach, and other metrics to inform strategy.

Social Media Calendar: A schedule that outlines when and what content will be posted on social media. This helps plan and

organize content to ensure consistency and timely delivery.

Social Media Integration: The practice of ensuring consistency and connectivity between different social media platforms and other marketing channels.

Social Media Marketing Plan: A strategic plan that outlines how a business will use social media to achieve its marketing goals. This includes a content calendar, automation tools, and performance tracking.

Social Media Platforms: Digital tools where users can create, share, and interact with content and other users. Examples include Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Snapchat.

Social Media Presence: The representation and activity of a business or individual on social media platforms. This includes profiles, posts, interactions, and overall engagement.

Target Audience: A specific group of people a business aims to reach with its marketing efforts. This group shares common characteristics, such as demographics, interests, or behaviors.

Visual Content: Content that includes images, videos, infographics, and other visual elements. This type of content is essential for engaging users on social media platforms.

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7.11: Discussion Questions

1. How should a business determine which social media platforms to utilize for its marketing strategy, considering the various strengths and demographics of each platform?
2. Why is it important for businesses to maintain consistent messaging across different social media platforms, and how can they tailor their content to fit the unique characteristics of each platform?
3. What are the key elements of creating engaging content for social media, and how can businesses ensure that their posts capture the attention of their target audience?
4. What metrics and analytics should businesses focus on to measure the success of their social media marketing efforts, and how can these insights drive future marketing strategies?
5. How can businesses leverage social media to build and maintain brand loyalty, and what strategies can they employ to foster a sense of community among their followers?

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8: FUTURE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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8.1: Course Objectives

1. Examine the Emerging Trends in Social Media.
2. Evaluate the Integration of AI in Social Media Marketing.
3. Analyze the Growth of Social Commerce and Its Implications.
4. Investigate the Future Focus on Privacy and Data Security.
5. Understand the Rise of Niche Social Media Platforms and the Creator Economy.
6. Assess the Future Prospects and Opportunities in Social Media.

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8.2: Introduction

The future of social media is brimming with potential as technological advancements reshape how we connect, communicate, and consume content. This chapter delves into emerging trends that are set to revolutionize the social media landscape. Key developments such as the integration of augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), and the expansion of social commerce are driving these changes. Additionally, a growing focus on privacy and data security, the emergence of niche platforms, and the use of blockchain technology promise to redefine user experiences. As social media continues to evolve, these innovations will offer new opportunities for users and businesses alike, fostering more personalized, secure, and engaging online interactions.

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8.3: Future of Social Media

The future of social media is set to be shaped by several emerging trends that promise to revolutionize the way we connect, communicate, and consume content. Advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning will drive personalized user experiences, while augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) will create immersive, interactive environments. The rise of social commerce will continue to blur the lines between social media and online shopping, making it easier for users to purchase products directly from their feeds. Privacy and data protection will remain critical, prompting platforms to enhance security measures and give users more control over their personal information. Additionally, the growth of niche social networks and decentralized platforms will cater to specific interests and offer alternatives to traditional social media giants. These trends indicate a dynamic evolution of social media, driven by technological innovation and changing user expectations.

8.3.1 Enhanced Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) Integration

The future of social media is expected to see significant advancements in augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR). These technologies will provide more immersive and interactive experiences for users. Businesses can leverage AR and VR for virtual try-ons, product demonstrations, and enhanced storytelling. For example, a furniture company might use AR to allow customers to visualize how a piece of furniture would look in their home, enhancing the shopping experience and reducing return rates.

8.3.2 Increased Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence (AI) will play a larger role in social media, enabling more personalized user experiences and efficient marketing strategies. AI can analyze user behavior, preferences, and interactions to provide tailored content and recommendations. Chatbots powered by AI will improve customer service by providing instant responses to inquiries. For instance, an e-commerce platform might use AI to recommend products based on a user's browsing history and past purchases, increasing the likelihood of sales.

8.3.3 Expansion of Social Commerce

Social commerce, the integration of e-commerce features directly into social media platforms, will continue to grow. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are already incorporating shopping features, allowing users to discover and purchase products without leaving the app. This trend will provide businesses with more opportunities to reach customers and drive sales. For example, a fashion brand might use Instagram's shopping features to tag products in their posts and stories, making it easy for users to shop directly from their feed.

8.3.4 Greater Focus on Privacy and Data Security

As concerns about privacy and data security increase, social media platforms will need to implement stricter measures to protect user information. Enhanced security features, transparency about data usage, and compliance with regulations will be essential. Businesses will need to prioritize data protection and build trust with their customers. For example, social media platforms might offer more robust privacy settings and clearer consent options, ensuring users have control over their data.

8.3.5 Rise of Niche Social Media Platforms

The future will see the emergence of more niche social media platforms catering to specific interests and communities. These platforms will offer tailored experiences and foster stronger connections among users with similar passions. Businesses can tap into these niche markets to reach highly targeted audiences. For instance, a platform dedicated to fitness enthusiasts could provide a space for brands to connect with users interested in health and wellness products.

8.3.6 Integration of Blockchain Technology

Blockchain technology will likely become more integrated into social media, offering enhanced security, transparency, and decentralization. This can help address issues related to data privacy, fake news, and content ownership. For businesses, blockchain can provide more secure and transparent transactions. For example, a content creator on a blockchain-powered social media platform might receive direct and transparent payments for their work, ensuring fair compensation and reducing reliance on intermediaries.

8.3.7 Growth of Ephemeral Content

Ephemeral content, such as stories that disappear after a set period, will continue to grow in popularity. Platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook have already seen success with this format. Ephemeral content creates a sense of urgency and exclusivity, encouraging users to engage more frequently. Businesses can use ephemeral content for time-sensitive promotions, behind-the-scenes looks, and interactive polls. For instance, a restaurant might use Instagram Stories to share daily specials and limited-time offers, driving immediate customer engagement.

8.3.8 Advanced Analytics and Data Insights

Future advancements in analytics will provide businesses with deeper insights into user behavior, engagement, and campaign effectiveness. Enhanced analytics tools will help marketers make more informed decisions and optimize their strategies. For example, a marketing team might use advanced analytics to track the performance of social media campaigns in real-time, adjusting their approach based on data-driven insights to maximize ROI.

8.3.9 Enhanced Connectivity with 5G

The rollout of 5G technology will significantly enhance social media experiences by providing faster and more reliable connectivity. This will enable smoother streaming of high-quality videos, quicker uploads, and real-time interactions. Businesses can leverage 5G to offer more engaging and interactive content. For example, a live event streamed on a 5G network can provide viewers with a seamless and high-quality experience, increasing engagement and participation.

8.3.10 Evolution of Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing will continue to evolve, with more emphasis on authenticity and long-term partnerships. Brands will seek influencers who align with their values and can genuinely connect with their audience. Micro-influencers, who have smaller but highly engaged followings, will become more valuable. For example, a skincare brand might partner with micro-influencers who specialize in beauty and wellness, creating authentic content that resonates with their followers.

The future of social media is set to be shaped by technological advancements and evolving user expectations. Enhanced AR and VR integration, increased use of AI, expansion of social commerce, greater focus on privacy, and the rise of niche platforms are just a few trends that will redefine the social media landscape. By staying ahead of these trends, businesses can effectively leverage social media to connect with their audience, drive engagement, and achieve their marketing goals.

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8.4: AI in Social Media

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significantly transformed social media platforms, enhancing user experience and improving content delivery. AI algorithms analyze user behavior and preferences to personalize feeds, suggest friends, and recommend content. For instance, Facebook uses AI to filter news feeds and identify fake news, while Instagram leverages AI to show users posts they are likely to engage with based on their past interactions. These algorithms help platforms maintain user engagement by providing relevant content tailored to individual preferences.

AI-powered chatbots have also become prevalent on social media, offering real-time customer service and support. These chatbots can answer frequently asked questions, assist with troubleshooting, and even facilitate transactions, improving customer satisfaction and reducing the workload on human customer service agents. Additionally, AI tools can analyze vast amounts of social media data to provide insights into user sentiment, trending topics, and public opinion, which can be valuable for businesses, researchers, and policymakers.

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8.5: AI with Social Media Marketing

AI is transforming social media marketing by enabling more personalized and efficient campaigns. AI tools analyze user data to understand preferences and behaviors, allowing marketers to create targeted content and ads. Predictive analytics can forecast trends and user responses, helping businesses plan more effective strategies. For instance, AI can identify the best times to post content for maximum engagement or suggest topics that are likely to resonate with the audience. AI-driven sentiment analysis helps brands gauge public opinion about their products or campaigns in real-time. For example, a fashion retailer might use AI to analyze customer feedback on social media, adjusting their marketing strategy based on positive or negative sentiments.

8.5.1 Enhanced Personalization

AI is set to revolutionize social selling by providing unprecedented levels of personalization. AI algorithms analyze user data to understand individual preferences, purchasing behavior, and interaction patterns. This information enables businesses to tailor their marketing messages and product recommendations to each user, increasing the likelihood of conversion. For example, an online clothing retailer might use AI to recommend specific items to customers based on their past purchases and browsing history, creating a highly personalized shopping experience.

8.5.2 Predictive Analytics

Predictive analytics, powered by AI, will play a crucial role in the future of social selling. By analyzing historical data and identifying patterns, AI can forecast future buying behaviors and trends. This allows businesses to anticipate customer needs and adjust their strategies accordingly. For instance, a tech company might use predictive analytics to identify when a user is likely to upgrade their device, enabling them to target that user with relevant offers and promotions at the optimal time.

8.5.3 Improved Customer Engagement

AI will enhance customer engagement in social selling by enabling more interactive and responsive communication. AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants can handle customer inquiries, provide product information, and assist with purchases in real-time. These tools can engage with customers 24/7, providing immediate assistance and improving overall customer satisfaction. For example, a beauty brand might use a chatbot on their social media pages to answer questions about product ingredients, provide personalized skincare advice, and help customers complete their purchases.

8.5.4 Enhanced Targeting and Advertising

AI will significantly improve the targeting and effectiveness of social media advertising. By analyzing vast amounts of user data, AI can identify specific audience segments that are most likely to be interested in a product or service. This enables businesses to create highly targeted ad campaigns that reach the right people at the right time. For example, an e-commerce platform might use AI to target ads for baby products to new parents, based on their recent social media activity and life events.

8.5.5 Seamless Shopping Experiences

The integration of AI into social selling will create more seamless and integrated shopping experiences on social media platforms. Features like shoppable posts, augmented reality try-ons, and instant checkout options will become more prevalent, making it easier for users to discover and purchase products without leaving their favorite social media apps. For instance, a home decor brand might use augmented reality to allow users to visualize how furniture would look in their home directly from a social media post, streamlining the decision-making and purchasing process.

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8.6: Rise of the Creator Economy

The creator economy, driven by individual content creators, influencers, and digital entrepreneurs, is reshaping the social media landscape. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Patreon have enabled creators to monetize their content, build personal brands, and engage directly with their audiences. This shift empowers individuals to earn income from their passions, whether through sponsored content, merchandise sales, or subscription services. For instance, a fitness influencer on Instagram might offer workout programs, partner with health brands for sponsored posts, and sell branded fitness apparel. The rise of the creator economy also benefits businesses, providing authentic and relatable marketing opportunities. Brands collaborate with creators to reach targeted audiences in more personal and engaging ways.

8.6.1 AI in Social Media and the Creator Economy

AI plays a significant role in supporting the creator economy by offering tools for content optimization and audience engagement. AI-driven analytics provide creators with insights into their audience demographics, engagement patterns, and content performance. This data helps creators tailor their content to better meet the needs and interests of their followers. Additionally, AI can assist in automating routine tasks such as scheduling posts, managing interactions, and analyzing feedback. For example, a YouTube creator might use AI tools to identify the best keywords for their videos, schedule uploads for optimal viewing times, and analyze viewer comments to improve future content.

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8.7: Conclusion

The future of social media is poised for significant transformation driven by technological advancements and evolving user expectations. Key trends include the integration of augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) to create immersive experiences, and the increased use of artificial intelligence (AI) for personalized content delivery and enhanced customer service. Social commerce will continue to grow, blurring the lines between social media and online shopping, while concerns about privacy and data security will lead to stricter measures and greater transparency. Additionally, niche social media platforms will emerge to cater to specific interests, and blockchain technology will offer improved security and decentralization.

AI will play a pivotal role in the evolution of social media, enhancing everything from personalized user experiences to predictive analytics and improved customer engagement. AI-driven tools will help businesses create targeted marketing campaigns and provide real-time customer service through chatbots. The rise of the creator economy, fueled by platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, will empower individual content creators to monetize their work and engage directly with their audiences. This shift offers businesses new opportunities for authentic marketing collaborations. As AI and the creator economy continue to develop, they will drive more personalized, efficient, and engaging social media experiences for users and marketers alike.

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8.8: End of Module Summary

- **Enhanced AR and VR Integration:** Advancements in AR and VR will create more immersive and interactive social media experiences. Businesses can leverage these technologies for virtual try-ons, product demonstrations, and enhanced storytelling.
- **Increased Use of AI:** AI will enable more personalized user experiences and efficient marketing strategies by analyzing user behavior and preferences. AI-powered chatbots will improve customer service with instant responses.
- **Expansion of Social Commerce:** Social commerce will continue to grow, integrating e-commerce features directly into social media platforms. Users will be able to purchase products directly from social media feeds, enhancing convenience for both consumers and businesses.
- **Greater Focus on Privacy and Data Security:** Social media platforms will implement stricter measures to protect user information due to increasing privacy concerns. Enhanced security features and greater transparency about data usage will become essential.
- **Rise of Niche Social Media Platforms:** The emergence of niche platforms will cater to specific interests and communities, offering tailored experiences. Businesses can reach highly targeted audiences through these specialized platforms.
- **Integration of Blockchain Technology:** Blockchain technology will enhance security, transparency, and decentralization in social media. This integration will help address issues related to data privacy, fake news, and content ownership.
- **Growth of Ephemeral Content:** Ephemeral content, such as stories that disappear after a set period, will continue to gain popularity. Businesses can use this format for time-sensitive promotions and interactive engagement with users.
- **Advanced Analytics and Data Insights:** Future advancements in analytics will provide deeper insights into user behavior and campaign effectiveness. Enhanced analytics tools will help marketers make more informed decisions and optimize their strategies.
- **Enhanced Connectivity with 5G:** The rollout of 5G technology will provide faster and more reliable connectivity for social media experiences. Businesses can offer more engaging and interactive content with improved connectivity.
- **Evolution of Influencer Marketing:** Influencer marketing will focus more on authenticity and long-term partnerships. Micro-influencers with smaller but highly engaged followings will become more valuable for brands.

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8.9: Key Terms

Advanced Analytics and Data Insights: The use of sophisticated tools to analyze user behavior, engagement, and campaign effectiveness, providing deeper insights for marketers.

AI in Content Optimization: The application of AI to improve content performance by analyzing engagement patterns and providing recommendations for better audience targeting.

AI-Driven Sentiment Analysis: The use of AI to gauge public opinion and sentiment about products or campaigns in real-time.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): The simulation of human intelligence in machines designed to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and language translation.

Augmented Reality (AR): An enhanced version of the real physical world achieved through the use of digital visual elements, sounds, or other sensory stimuli delivered via technology.

Blockchain Technology: A decentralized digital ledger that records transactions across many computers so that the record cannot be altered retroactively.

Creator Economy: The ecosystem where individual content creators, influencers, and digital entrepreneurs monetize their content and engage directly with their audiences.

Enhanced Connectivity with 5G: The impact of faster, more reliable 5G networks on improving social media experiences, such as real-time interactions and high-quality video streaming.

Enhanced Personalization: The use of AI to tailor marketing messages and product recommendations to individual users based on their preferences and behaviors.

Enhanced Targeting and Advertising: The use of AI to identify and target specific audience segments with highly relevant ad campaigns.

Ephemeral Content: Content that disappears after a set period, such as Instagram Stories or Snapchat posts, creating a sense of urgency and exclusivity.

Ephemeral Content: Short-lived content that disappears after a set period, encouraging frequent engagement and creating a sense of urgency.

Evolution of Influencer Marketing: The shift towards more authentic, long-term partnerships with influencers who align with brand values and have engaged followings.

Improved Customer Engagement: The use of AI-powered tools like chatbots and virtual assistants to interact with customers in real-time, providing personalized support and information.

Micro-Influencers: Influencers with smaller but highly engaged followings, often seen as more authentic and relatable compared to celebrities or macro-influencers.

Niche Social Media Platforms: Social media sites that cater to specific interests or communities, providing tailored experiences and fostering stronger connections among users with similar passions.

Predictive Analytics: Techniques that use statistical algorithms and machine learning to identify the likelihood of future outcomes based on historical data.

Privacy and Data Security: Measures taken to protect personal information and ensure that data is handled securely and confidentially, often involving compliance with regulations.

Seamless Shopping Experiences: The integration of AI and social commerce features to create smooth, integrated shopping experiences within social media platforms.

Social Advertising Platforms: Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Snapchat, and Yelp that offer businesses opportunities to advertise and reach specific audiences.

Social Commerce: The use of social networks in the context of e-commerce transactions, where social media platforms integrate shopping features to enable direct purchases.

Social Media Analytics: The collection and analysis of data from social media platforms to measure performance and drive business decisions.

Social Media Calendar: A tool for planning and scheduling social media content in advance to ensure consistent and strategic posting.

User-Generated Content (UGC): Content created by users, such as reviews, testimonials, and social media posts, which can enhance authenticity and engagement for brands.

Virtual Reality (VR): A simulated experience that can be similar to or completely different from the real world, often used for entertainment, education, and training purposes.

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8.10: Discussion Questions

1. How can businesses leverage augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) to enhance their social media presence and improve customer engagement?
2. In what ways can artificial intelligence (AI) be used to create more personalized and efficient social media marketing campaigns?
3. How is the integration of e-commerce features into social media platforms changing the landscape of online shopping?
4. What measures should social media platforms take to address increasing concerns about privacy and data security?
5. How can businesses effectively utilize niche social media platforms to reach highly targeted audiences?

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GLOSSARY

A

Advanced Analytics and Data Insights | The use of sophisticated tools to analyze user behavior, engagement, and campaign effectiveness, providing deeper insights for marketers.

Advantages of Online Direct Marketing | Benefits include global reach, cost-effectiveness, easy performance measurement, targeted promotion, and real-time interaction with consumers.

AI in Content Optimization | : The application of AI to improve content performance by analyzing engagement patterns and providing recommendations for better audience targeting.

AI-Driven Sentiment Analysis | The use of AI to gauge public opinion and sentiment about products or campaigns in real-time.

Algorithms | Complex mathematical formulas used by social media platforms to analyze user behavior and preferences to personalize content, suggest connections, and recommend posts.

Antivirus Program | Software designed to detect, prevent, and remove malicious software from computers.

Artificial Intelligence | The simulation of human intelligence in machines designed to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and language translation.

Audience Engagement | The level of interaction and involvement from users with a brand's social media content. High engagement indicates strong connections and interest.

Augmented Reality | An enhanced version of the real physical world achieved through the use of digital visual elements, sounds, or other sensory stimuli delivered via technology.

B

Backlink | A hyperlink on a webpage that directs users to another site. Backlinks can improve a website's credibility and search engine ranking.

Better Insights and Analytics | Utilizing social media analytics tools to understand audience behavior and optimize marketing strategies.

Blockchain Technology | A decentralized digital ledger that records transactions across many computers so that the record cannot be altered retroactively.

Blog Rolls | Lists of a blogger's favorite sites, providing recommendations to readers and creating connections within the blogging community.

Blogs | Frequently updated web pages that feature personal commentary or business content, allowing for reader interaction through comments.

Blogs and Online Forums | Platforms for sharing interests, information, and fostering community engagement. Blogs also help improve search engine rankings through regular content updates.

Boosted Sales and Revenue | Leveraging social media to drive sales and increase revenue through targeted, engaging campaigns.

Botnet | A network of compromised computers controlled by a central entity, often used for malicious purposes like DDoS attacks or spamming.

Brainstorming | Generating ideas in a judgment-free environment to stimulate creative problem-solving.

Brand Evangelists | Loyal customers who actively promote and support a brand, often participating in online communities and spreading positive word-of-mouth.

Breach Notification | A requirement for organizations to notify authorities and affected individuals within a specified timeframe after a data breach.

C

California Consumer Privacy Act | A state statute intended to enhance privacy rights and consumer protection for residents of California.

Call to Action | A prompt that encourages users to take a specific action, such as liking a post, leaving a comment, or making a purchase.

Children's Online Privacy Protection Act | A U.S. federal law designed to protect the privacy of children under 13 on the internet.

Community Building | The process of creating and nurturing a group of engaged followers or readers around shared interests or goals, often facilitated by interactive features on online platforms.

Community Management | The process of building, nurturing, and managing an online community to engage with an organization's audience, often involving roles such as community managers.

Competitive Advantage | Staying ahead of competitors by actively engaging with consumers and leveraging social media trends.

Consent | Permission for something to happen or agreement to do something, particularly in the context of data collection.

Content Creation | The process of generating original content for social media. This includes text, images, videos, and other forms of media tailored to specific platforms.

Content Management | The process of creating, publishing, and managing digital content. For businesses, this involves maintaining a consistent message across different platforms.

Content Management System | Software that helps users create, manage, and modify digital content, such as WordPress.

Content Marketing | Creating and distributing valuable, relevant content to attract and engage a target audience. Examples include blogs, videos, and social media posts.

Cost-Effective Solutions | Reducing costs by leveraging crowdsourcing to perform tasks that would otherwise require hiring full-time employees or consultants.

Creativity in Problem Solving | Entrepreneurs using innovative methods such as crowdsourcing, brainstorming, storyboarding, and team creativity to solve business challenges.

Creator Economy | The ecosystem where individual content creators, influencers, and digital entrepreneurs monetize their content and engage directly with their audiences.

Crisis Communication | Strategies and actions taken to communicate effectively during and after a crisis to mitigate damage to a brand's reputation.

Crowd Creativity | Leveraging the collective creativity of the public to generate new ideas and designs, often through platforms like 99designs.

Crowd Labor | Outsourcing tasks to a distributed workforce, often through platforms like Amazon Mechanical Turk.

Crowd Voting | Collecting opinions or feedback from a large group to make decisions or rank options, often through online polls or surveys.

Crowd Wisdom | Utilizing the collective knowledge and expertise of a large group to solve complex problems or answer questions, exemplified by platforms like Wikipedia.

Crowdfunding | Raising small amounts of capital from a large number of people, typically via platforms like Kickstarter or GoFundMe.

Crowdsourcing | Obtaining input, ideas, or services from a large group of people, typically via the internet, to solve problems or generate content.

Cyberbullying | The use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature.

Cybersecurity | Practices and technologies used to protect systems, networks, and data from cyber attacks and unauthorized access.

D

Data Breach | An incident where sensitive, protected, or confidential data is accessed or disclosed without authorization.

Data Portability | The ability to transfer personal data from one service provider to another.

Data Security | Measures and protocols used to protect digital information from unauthorized access, breaches, or theft.

Democratization of Publishing | The concept that online writing platforms make it easier for anyone to publish content, removing traditional barriers to entry in the publishing industry.

Demographic Data | Information about the characteristics of a population, such as age, gender, and location, often used in social media campaigns to target specific audiences.

Developing an App | Creating mobile applications to provide direct communication and engagement opportunities with consumers.

Digital Age Marketing | Marketing strategies that leverage digital channels such as websites, social media, and email to engage with consumers in a personalized and interactive way.

Digital Marketing Careers | High-demand careers such as SEO Specialist, Content Marketing Manager, Social Media Manager, PPC Specialist, and Email Marketing Specialist.

Direct Meets Digital | The integration of traditional direct marketing techniques with digital technologies, enhancing engagement with consumers through online channels.

Diverse Perspectives | Gaining innovative solutions by bringing together people from different backgrounds through crowdsourcing.

Diverse Perspectives | Gaining innovative solutions by bringing together people from different backgrounds through crowdsourcing.

Doxxing | The practice of publicly revealing private information about an individual, typically via the internet, without their consent.

Drive-by Downloads | The unintentional download of malicious software from a website, often without the user's knowledge.

E

Effective Targeting and Personalization | Using advanced targeting options on social media to reach specific audiences based on demographics and interests.

Email Marketing | Direct marketing using emails to communicate promotions, content, and offers to targeted consumers. Includes transactional

and marketing emails.

Engagement Management (EM) | A strategy for managing interactions between a business and its audience on social media. This involves responding to comments, managing posts, and using tools like Hootsuite.

Engagement Metrics | Data that shows how users interact with social media content. This includes likes, shares, comments, and clicks.

Enhanced Brand Loyalty | Building personal connections with customers through regular, valuable social media interactions.

Enhanced Connectivity with 5G | The impact of faster, more reliable 5G networks on improving social media experiences, such as real-time interactions and high-quality video streaming.

Enhanced Engagement | Building a sense of community and loyalty by engaging customers and fans through crowdsourcing activities.

Enhanced Personalization | The use of AI to tailor marketing messages and product recommendations to individual users based on their preferences and behaviors.

Enhanced Targeting and Advertising | The use of AI to identify and target specific audience segments with highly relevant ad campaigns.

Ephemeral Content | Short-lived content that disappears after a set period, encouraging frequent engagement and creating a sense of urgency.

Ethical Considerations | Ensuring fair compensation and ethical treatment of crowd workers to maintain a positive and sustainable crowdsourcing model.

Evolution of Influencer Marketing | The shift towards more authentic, long-term partnerships with influencers who align with brand values and have engaged followings.

Examples of Crowdsourcing in Action | Real-world applications of crowdsourcing, such as Lego Ideas, Waze, Threadless, Wikipedia, and Kickstarter, showcasing its benefits and effectiveness.

External Links | Hyperlinks that direct users to different websites or sources, providing additional context or information.

F

Facebook | A dominant social media platform launched in 2004, enabling users to connect with friends and family, share updates, photos, and videos, and engage in various social activities.

Friendster | An early social networking service launched in 2002, which helped users connect with friends and meet new people online.

G

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) | A regulation in EU law on data protection and privacy for all individuals within the European Union and the European Economic Area.

H

Hashtag | A keyword or phrase preceded by the "#" symbol, used to categorize and find posts on social media. Hashtags help increase visibility and engagement with content.

I

Identity Theft | The fraudulent acquisition and use of someone's personal information, usually for financial gain.

Improved Customer Engagement | Direct interaction with customers on social media to foster loyalty and satisfaction.

Improved Customer Insights | Gaining deeper understanding of customer preferences and behaviors through social media interactions and feedback.

Increased Brand Awareness | Using social media to increase visibility and attract new followers through consistent, engaging content.

Increased Website Traffic | Driving traffic to websites through social media content and links, leading to higher conversions and sales.

Influencer Partnerships | Collaborations between brands and social media influencers to promote products or services to the influencer's audience.

Influencers | Individuals with a large following on social media who can influence their audience's opinions and behaviors. Brands often collaborate with influencers for marketing campaigns.

Instagram | A photo and video sharing social network launched in 2010, focusing on personal expression and storytelling through visual content.

Integrated Social Media Marketing | Coordinating consistent messaging across all social media platforms to enhance brand awareness and purchase intention.

Intellectual Property Management | Managing the ownership and rights to content generated by the crowd, requiring clear terms and agreements.

Interactive Feedback | The ability for readers to comment on and engage with content, providing immediate feedback to the writer.

Internal Links | Hyperlinks that connect different parts of the same website or document, improving navigation and SEO.

K

Knowledge Base | A centralized repository of information, often created and maintained through collaborative platforms like wikis.

L

LinkedIn | A professional networking site designed to connect professionals, facilitate job searching, and share industry news and insights.

Long-Tail Keywords | Specific, descriptive keywords that target niche markets. These keywords help attract more qualified leads who are closer to making a purchase.

M

Malware | Malicious software designed to harm, exploit, or otherwise compromise computer systems.

Medium | A popular online publishing platform that enables writers to share their work and engage with readers through features like highlighting and commenting.

Micro-Influencers | Influencers with smaller but highly engaged followings, often seen as more authentic and relatable compared to celebrities or macro-influencers.

Microblogging | A form of blogging that allows users to post short updates, often limited to a specific character count, as seen on Twitter (X).

Mobile Marketing | Using digital marketing channels to reach consumers on mobile devices, including responsive web design, mobile-friendly emails, app development, and memorable URLs.

Mobile Marketing Opportunities | Advantages include constant connectivity, reaching consumers where they spend time, and leveraging mobile behavior for marketing strategies.

Mobile-Friendly Design | Designing content and websites to be easily viewable and navigable on mobile devices. This is critical as more users access content through smartphones.

Mobile-Friendly Emails | Designing emails that are easy to read and interact with on mobile devices, with clear subject lines and concise content.

Mobile-Responsive Design | Designing web content to ensure it looks and functions well on a variety of devices, including smartphones and tablets.

MySpace | One of the first major social networking sites, popular in the early 2000s, that allowed users to create profiles, connect with friends, and share content.

N

Netiquette | The set of rules for proper behavior and communication on the internet, aimed at maintaining respectful and effective online interactions.

Niche Social Media Platforms | Social media sites that cater to specific interests or communities, providing tailored experiences and fostering stronger connections among users with similar passions.

O

Online Brand Attack | Negative feedback or crises that arise on social media, potentially harming a brand's reputation if not managed properly.

Online Focus Group | A group of individuals engaged through online platforms to provide feedback or information, often used for market research.

Online Reputation Management (ORM) Tools | Software and tools used to track mentions, sentiment, and feedback about a brand on social media, helping to manage and improve its online reputation.

Online Reputation Management (ORM) Tools | Software and tools used to track mentions, sentiment, and feedback about a brand on social media, helping to manage and improve its online reputation.

Online Video Marketing | Creating videos to tell a brand's story and drive consumer engagement through likes, shares, and comments. Utilized by platforms like Instagram and YouTube.

Online Writing Platforms | Digital tools like Medium, WordPress, and Substack that allow users to create, publish, and share written content with a global audience.

P

Password Manager | A software application that helps users generate, retrieve, and store complex passwords securely.

Personal Blogging | The practice of writing and publishing personal thoughts, experiences, and interests on a blog, allowing for self-expression and audience engagement.

Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) | A Canadian law governing how private sector organizations collect, use, and disclose personal information in the course of commercial business.

Phishing | A fraudulent attempt to obtain sensitive information by disguising as a trustworthy entity in electronic communications.

Pinterest | A photo-sharing platform that helps users discover and save ideas for various projects and interests, organized into boards.

Predictive Analytics | Techniques that use statistical algorithms and machine learning to identify the likelihood of future outcomes based on historical data.

Preference-Based Data | Data reflecting users' likes, dislikes, interests, and behaviors, utilized to tailor marketing strategies and content.

Privacy and Data Security | Measures taken to protect personal information and ensure that data is handled securely and confidentially, often involving compliance with regulations.

Privacy Settings | Options available on social media platforms allowing users to control who can see their information and how it is used.

Professional Content Creation | The development of content for professional purposes, including marketing, brand building, and thought leadership, often shared on corporate blogs or social media.

Promoted Posts | Social media posts that are boosted with paid advertising to reach a larger audience. These posts target specific demographics or interests.

Q

Quality Control | Ensuring the quality and reliability of crowdsourced contributions through robust review processes and guidelines.

R

Real-Time Broadcast Channels | Platforms like Twitter and Facebook that enable immediate dissemination and reception of messages, crucial for timely updates on news events, elections, and service changes.

Reputation Management | Monitoring and addressing public perception and feedback about a brand on social media, crucial for crisis communication and maintaining a positive image.

Responsive Web Design | An approach to web design that ensures websites adapt to different screen sizes and devices, providing a seamless user experience.

Return on Investment | A measure of the profitability of an investment. For social media, this means evaluating the effectiveness of campaigns in generating desired outcomes, like sales or brand awareness.

Right to Erasure | Also known as the "right to be forgotten," it allows individuals to request the deletion of their personal data.

RSS Feed | A web feed that allows users to access updates to online content in a standardized, computer-readable format.

S

Seamless Shopping Experiences | The integration of AI and social commerce features to create smooth, integrated shopping experiences within social media platforms.

Search Engine Optimization | Strategies used to increase the visibility of web content in search engine results, crucial for driving traffic to online writing.

Sentiment Analysis | The process of analyzing text to determine the emotional tone behind words, used to gauge public sentiment towards a brand or topic on social media.

Sentiment Analysis | The process of analyzing text to determine the emotional tone behind words, used to gauge public sentiment towards a brand or topic on social media.

Short/Memorable URLs | Using shorter, easy-to-remember URLs for better user experience and search engine optimization.

Six Degrees | An early social networking site launched in 1997 that allowed users to connect with friends and family members.

Social Advertising Platforms | Social media sites that offer advertising options to businesses. Examples include Facebook Ads, Instagram Ads, and Twitter Ads.

Social Advertising Platforms | Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Snapchat, and Yelp that offer businesses opportunities to advertise and reach specific audiences.

Social Commerce | The use of social networks in the context of e-commerce transactions, where social media platforms integrate shopping features to enable direct purchases.

Social Comparison | The act of comparing oneself to others on social media, often leading to feelings of inadequacy or jealousy.

Social Media | Platforms that facilitate online communication, sharing of information, and connection between users, encompassing personal, professional, and communal interactions.

Social Media Analytics | Tools and techniques for measuring the performance of social media campaigns. This includes tracking engagement, reach, and other metrics to inform strategy.

Social Media Calendar | A tool for planning and scheduling social media content in advance to ensure consistent and strategic posting.

Social Media Insights | Data and information gathered from social media interactions, providing valuable insights into consumer behavior, preferences, and market trends.

Social Media Integration | The practice of ensuring consistency and connectivity between different social media platforms and other marketing channels.

Social Media Marketing Opportunities | Benefits such as reaching a global audience, increasing brand awareness, improving customer engagement, and driving website traffic.

Social Media Marketing Plan | A strategic plan that outlines how a business will use social media to achieve its marketing goals. This includes a content calendar, automation tools, and performance tracking.

Social Media Platforms | Digital tools where users can create, share, and interact with content and other users. Examples include Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Snapchat.

Social Media Presence | The representation and activity of a business or individual on social media platforms. This includes profiles, posts, interactions, and overall engagement.

Social Network Ad Planners | Tools like Facebook Ads Manager that provide detailed insights into audience demographics and preferences, aiding in the planning and execution of targeted ad campaigns.

Social Network Ad Planners | Tools like Facebook Ads Manager that provide detailed insights into audience demographics and preferences, aiding in the planning and execution of targeted ad campaigns.

Social Networks | Online platforms that enable users to create profiles, connect with others, and share content, such as Facebook and LinkedIn.

Software Updates | Patches and improvements released by developers to fix vulnerabilities and enhance the functionality of software.

Spear Phishing | A targeted phishing attempt aimed at a specific individual or organization, often using personalized information to appear legitimate.

Speed and Efficiency | Expediting processes by distributing work among a large number of individuals, allowing for faster completion.

Step-by-Step Crisis Management | Practical approach for brands to recover from online threats by being prepared, acting immediately, correcting false information, and managing search engine visibility of negative content.

Storyboarding | Visualizing ideas and solutions in a step-by-step graphic format to facilitate planning and problem-solving.

Substack | A platform that lets writers publish newsletters and monetize their content through subscriptions.

T

Target Audience | A specific group of people a business aims to reach with its marketing efforts. This group shares common characteristics, such as demographics, interests, or behaviors.

Targeted Advertising | Marketing strategy that uses data and algorithms to deliver ads to specific groups of people based on their online behavior and preferences.

Team Creativity | Collaborative efforts within a team to develop unexpected solutions, leveraging diverse perspectives and ideas.

Threads | An extension of Instagram designed for more intimate and streamlined text updates and interactions with close friends.

TikTok | A short-form video platform known for its engaging and creative content, where users create and share videos often set to music, fostering viral trends and entertainment.

Trackbacks | Notifications that inform a blogger when another blog links to one of their posts, facilitating connectivity and interaction between blogs.

Twitter | A microblogging platform launched in 2006 that allows users to post and interact with short messages known as tweets, facilitating real-time communication and information sharing.

Two-Factor Authentication | An additional layer of security requiring not only a password and username but also something that only the user has on them.

Two-Way Communication | Interaction that allows both businesses and consumers to communicate and exchange information in real time via social media platforms.

U

Usenet | An early internet system of discussion forums where users could post messages and reply to each other, created in 1982.

User-Generated Content | Content created by users, such as reviews, testimonials, and social media posts, which can enhance authenticity and engagement for brands.

Uses of Social Media Marketing | Targeting specific demographics, facilitating engagement, distributing content, and driving website traffic. Examples include campaigns on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

V

Virtual Reality (VR) | A simulated experience that can be similar to or completely different from the real world, often used for entertainment, education, and training purposes.

Visual Content | Content that includes images, videos, infographics, and other visual elements. This type of content is essential for engaging users on social media platforms.

W

Web 2.0 | The second generation of the internet, characterized by greater user interactivity, collaboration, and sharing through social media and other platforms.

Website Marketing | Promotion of a website to drive traffic, inform consumers, and facilitate transactions. Examples include Amazon for e-commerce and Toyota for product information.

Wikis | Collaborative platforms where users can create, edit, and organize content, often used for knowledge management and project collaboration.

WordPress | A widely used content management system (CMS) that allows users to create websites and blogs with customizable themes and plugins.

WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) Editing | An interface that allows users to create and edit content in a way that resembles the final output, without needing to know coding or markup language.

Y

YouTube | A video-sharing platform launched in 2005 that revolutionized how people watch, share, and create video content.

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