

Social Media: A Way to Customer Engagement with the Brand

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Abstract—The trend of using social media is highly increasing, and social media has had a profound impact on all aspects of life, businesses are also no exception and try to take the most advantage of that, especially in relation to Customer Relationship Management (CRM). There are also many companies/brands working to increase the level of customer engagement and contribution, which the social media can help improve customer engagement. In this article, the following three topics are discussed: social media and its categories, brief introduction on engagement and, finally, the use of traditional and social media to engage customers.

Keywords—Customer Brand Engagement, Customer Relationship Management, Marketing, Social Media

I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays the process of traditional businesses has turned into modern methods such that social media tools and technologies have caused many businesses to be downsized or closed down. CRM strategies have changed dramatically due to the advent of social media. This means that many online resources provide information for users [1], and customers have turned into contributors from mere audience [2].

Social media tools and technologies have created more methods to engage customers with companies and brands, which in the past such methods did not exist. The social media is a relatively newfound paradigm in which customers are part of the solution [3]. Findings show that engaged customers are highly valuable. The reason why customer engagement has drawn much attention is due to its relationship with brand performance indicators such as sales growth, customer contribution in product development, and customer feedback. Customers engaged with a brand feel more attachment, trust, commitment, satisfaction and loyalty towards the brand [4], [5].

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While social media is capable of providing companies with competitive advantages, many senior marketing managers feel not ready to use social media [6]. On the other hand, it is very important to prepare customers for the engagement phase for companies. For this purpose, we seek to answer the following questions:

- What is social media?
- What is the definition of customer engagement with the brand?
- Is social media enough to engage customers with the brand?

II. SOCIAL MEDIA

The social media is a major new cultural / social occurrence that has changed the way of communication and connection of millions of individuals and companies. As today we have reached from information revolution to social media revolution. The social media brings together many people around the world so that they can contribute in the market [7]. In 2014, 97% of companies used social media to market their businesses [8].

The social media era, as we face it today, commenced about twenty years earlier than that. That was the time when Bruce and Susan Abelson created Open Diary, which was a primary social networking website, and the authors came together as a community. At this time, the term weblog was coined that later changed to simply blog. In 2004, for the first time, the term Web 2.0 was used in order to indicate that all users can modify contents constantly, and it's not only a few people who publish concepts, contents, or applications. As a result, social media is a group of Internet-based software and technologies based on web 2.0 technology that enable users to create contents and also allow the exchange of these [9]. Despite the obviousness of social media power understanding quiddity and its different types is limited. Some studies have been conducted in order to eliminate the vacuity existing in knowledge which requires more endeavors [10]. In this article, we summarize the social media into eight categories, briefly summarized in TABLE I.

First category, Weblogs or blogs which are a specific type of websites and are written chronologically. Bloggers can express their positive and negative opinions on a variety of topics, including brands, companies, and products [10]. Second category, Microblogs are like Twitter in which conversations are made fast and briefly and last 24/7 [11].

Connections between individuals via this medium is easily possible as you can see this is true about politicians/authorities and citizens [12].

Third category is Social Network Sites which enable users to invite their friends and colleagues to view their profiles and send emails and instant messages to each [10]. The most popular sites are Facebook and LinkedIn. The next category is the media sharing sites that allow users to upload, organize and share their multimedia content to others, such as Instagram, Youtube, and SlideShare [13].

Collaborative Projects are the fifth category of social media that can provide simultaneous and collaborative content creation by many users. For example in Wikipedia, users can write, edit or erase data. Collaborative projects these days are the main source of information for many users [10]. The next category is online/virtual communities that enable individuals to share information and interests through the website's interactive tools. Yahoo Answers is a concrete example of online communities [13].

The virtual game world is another category of social media that the user can appear as an avatar in a 3D gaming space and interact with other people in the virtual world [10]. The virtual world is the last category of social media that provides a simulated computer environment on the website in such a way that individuals can live in this virtual world. The best example is Second Life [12].

TABLE I
SOCIAL MEDIA CLASSIFICATION

	Social Media	Example
1	Blogs	
2	MicroBlogs	Twitter
3	Social Network Sites	Facebook LinkedIn
4	Media Sharing Sites	Instagram Youtube SlideShare
5	Collaborative Projects	Wikipedia
6	Online/Virtual Communities	Yahoo Answers
7	Virtual Game	World of Warcraft
8	Virtual World	Second Life

III. CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

Although engagement is not a new term in business communications, showing interest in this concept last a little more than a decade. Several articles point out that customer engagement improves performance. That is because engaged customers play a key role in developing, introducing and offering products, services or brands. Almost before 2005, academic marketing literature had very few articles on customer engagement, which has grown every year since then. Engagement is a process in which experiences occur between the subject (e.g customer) and the object (such as brand, product, and organization) [5]. Engaged customers turn into partners that work with vendors and thus meet their needs and other needs of customers [14].

The term customer engagement (CE) is derived from

commitment or employee engagement within the literature of organizational behavior [15]. Customers engage with them by interacting with objects and gaining experience. The engagement can be relative to the brand, which is called customer brand engagement. The three-dimensional cognitive, emotional, and behavioral point of view seems to be the most complete viewpoint, and the definition of customer engagement is based on the same dimensions [5]. According to the mentioned three-dimensional view, the cognitive dimension indicates the focus and customer interest in the brand. Emotional activity may be represented by a customer's level of brand-related inspiration or pride. Further, customers' 'behavioral' brand-related activity may be expressed through a customer's level of energy exerted in interacting with a focal brand. Customer Engagement Behavior involves a wide range of behaviors such as word of mouth, offers, helping other clients, blogging, writing reviews and local activities [16].

IV. SOCIAL MEDIA AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

It can be said that in addition to the popularity and growth of social media among people, they use it for brand familiarity, attracting customers, engagement and loyalty to the brand. Social media is the best way to speak with [12]. In other words, one of the functions of social media is engagement [17].

Due to the fact that the Internet is different from other media, digital media affect a kind of engagement, called social-interactive engagement, and most of the experience of engaging in social discussions with others through the site. Traditional media also have an impact on personal engagement, which is very similar to customer engagement with newspapers and magazines [18].

Despite the importance of both social and traditional media approaches and their impact on customer engagement, conducting research on appropriate combination of social media and traditional media is essential to improve customer engagement. For instance, it is necessary to determine how various social media components such as YouTube, Twitter and Facebook can be combined with traditional methods such as TV advertising, banner ads, personal sales and more so that the commitment, support and customer engagement are reinforced [14]. One way to engage social media with integrated communication marketing strategies is to use both traditional and online promotion tools to create a sense of ownership and contribution in users. To give an example, companies use polls in TV shows in addition to social media tools in order to enhance their sense of [1].

V. CONCLUSION

Social media programs have constantly developed over the past two decades. On the other hand, development of personal devices such as smartphones and tablets has added to the speed of using social media [19]. Considering the fact that the process of using social media is totally increasing and new and diverse CRM approaches have been developed, many

companies like to keep their products in the center of the society's attention. In order for that, they create blogs and online communities [20] and try to lay the groundwork for customers to upload and share the content themselves [21].

Studies on customer engagement also show that complex, dynamic and multidimensional nature has created many perspectives that require more research and investigation to improve customer engagement level [22]. Considering that ignoring issues such as customer engagement leads to inappropriate allocation of resources and the opportunities loss such as word of mouth and contribution in the development of new products [23], paying attention to the factors forming and strengthening of customer engagement is of particular importance.

Customers are engaged with brands and they either consider or omit brands in the process of accurate and long-lasting evaluation phases. After the purchase, they also communicate with the brand, sharing their experiences through social media. However, social media is not the only marketing tool, and it needs to be combined with other marketing efforts [24]. This means that social media can not be a flawless alternative to traditional marketing.

Lack of knowledge and skills for the proper use of social and traditional media tools among companies is obvious. Considering the fact that customer engagement is the highest of customer position for companies and brands, further studies on combining traditional and social media and its impact on customer engagement seem to be useful.

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