

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

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ABSTRACT

Marketing is an important aspect in promoting and influencing the sale of products or services, and the role of social media, such as Facebook, has become crucial. The history of social media can be traced back to 1970's, and over the years, social media has grown rapidly to now become a major tool for marketing. In this paper, we explore the evolution of social media, study its role in marketing, discuss popular social media methods for marketing, and list some important metrics to gauge social media effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL MEDIA

Over the past decade, there has been a phenomenal rise of social media as a tool to effectively increase brand awareness, and to influence the purchasing decisions of consumers. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media is defined as “a group of Internet based applications that is build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user generated content.”

Social media has been evolving since its inception in the late 1970's. With the advent of Web 2.0 tools, the number of people using social media around the world has increased resulting in increased collaboration, interoperability and interactivity [Campbell et al, 2011]. In an effort to stay competitive, companies are increasingly using the social media for marketing, in par with the traditional marketing techniques. Marketing teams are challenged in devising the right combination of the traditional and social media marketing. Social media marketing refers to “techniques primarily focused on social media sites in an effect to create brand awareness, promote products and influence purchasing decision [Techopedia, 2016]. Traditional media refers to the broad category of marketing and advertisement such as direct medium of marketing, print medium, television and newspaper marketing.

The purpose of the study is to do a brief literature review of social media and marketing, and explore the evolution of social media. We then discuss social media's role in marketing, discuss popular social media methods for marketing, and finally list some important metrics to gauge social media effectiveness.

BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

There are few academic journal papers that have done a current comprehensive survey of the social media landscape, and the various current metrics. Most of them are very specific applications of Social Media use. Gironde [2016] for example studies the psychology of social media usage. Mahapatra [2016] studies the social media preferences of youth. Noguti [2016] studies the gender differences in motivations for using social media. Kaur [2016] discusses social media marketing or social networking as a new tool in information management. It explicates how social networking can enhance library outreach and librarian's collaboration. Agnihotri [2016] describes how buyers and sellers interact, and suggests that increased

involvement through social media may yield positive results for sales organizations if salespeople utilize it in facilitating their behaviors.

Most of the recent developments that are relevant to both business practitioners and academics, are covered in many business and technology periodicals, and magazines. This paper attempts to integrate information from many of these publications as well, so that the reader will get a comprehensive and useful view of current practices in social media marketing. Businesses can use the paper to better understand and formulate their social media marketing strategy. Academics can also transfer this knowledge to their students.

EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

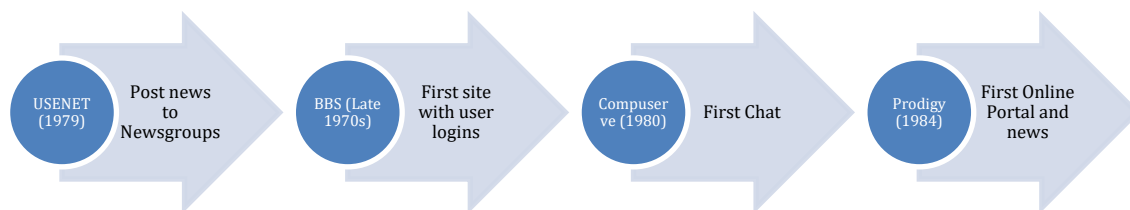
Social media has become an integral part of society. It is hard for many to imagine a single day without accessing the social media like Facebook or SnapChat. Social media has evolved over the years, and its origin can be traced back to 1970's. Social media sites provides a platform which facilitates the social networking among the users in an effort to connect with peers, gather information, , be entertained and execute purchasing decision [Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010].

In this section, we will discuss the evolution of social media, which according to social media monitoring platform [Morrison 2015], can be broadly classified into three eras: primitive era, medieval era and the golden era.

Primitive Era

As Figure 1 shows, the Primitive social media era started with **Usenet** in 1979. It was developed by a group of programmers at Duke University, and it allowed user to read the news posted and provide feedback to the news posted.

Figure 1: Primitive Era (Source: Morrison 2015)



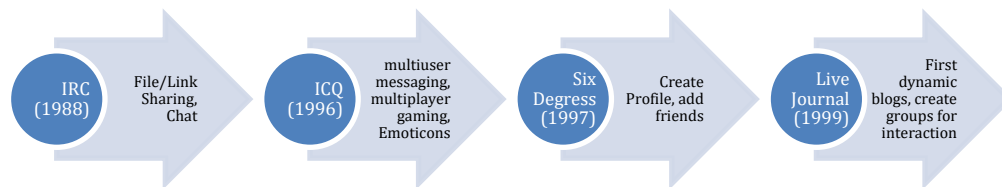
It provided news articles in multiple segments/categories (Emerson 1983). **Bulletin Board System**- Bulletin Board System (BBS) found in the late 1970's was the first site to allow users to log in using their user ID. Over the years, BBS developed tremendously and it allowed users to perform variety of activities such as exchanging messages, capability to upload and download software, reading mails, involve in public message boards. Later BBS also provided chat rooms for the users and the ability to play online games. This era ended with **CompuServe**, which was the first predominant provider that offered commercial online services. It was a pioneer in providing email services, which allowed exchanging outgoing and incoming messages. By the early 1990's, CompuServe extensively provided services to over tens of thousands of users. It

provided moderated forums where users can express or participate in discussion and also allowed users to perform file transfers.

Medieval Era

As Figure 2 depicts, the Medieval era of social media started with **Internet Relay Chat (IRC)**, which is an application system in which users can initiate or join a chat. Chat servers were used to transmit messages between users. Started in late 80's it was mainly used for transferring files and for communication.

Figure 2: The Medieval Era of Social Media (Morrison 2015)



Next was **I seek you (ICU)**, the pioneers in enabling multi user messaging and gaming. They were first of its kind in introducing standalone instant messenger. The technology was first distributed free of charge and it provided framework for users connecting through non unix platform. They were also the first to introduce emoticons and popularize abbreviations such OBG and LOL. Later in 1997, **Six Degrees** was formed, and is perhaps the mother of all current generation social networking sites allowing users, to create profiles and log in and invite other friends to stay connected. It was started in mid 90's when internet was still a luxury. Due to limitations of number of users and the internet connectivity, Six degrees ultimately failed. However, it laid a strong foundation for many of the current day social networking sites. This era finally ended with another site called **Live Journal** in 1999, which pioneered the concept of dynamic blog content, and also the creation of groups to interact with.

Golden Era

The final era of Social media, coined as the Golden Era started in 2000 with as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Golden Era of Social Media (Morrison 2015)

Wikipedia, which started in the year 2001, offers free access to all the internet users covering broad range of subjects such as history, arts, geography, mathematics, biographies, technology, person etc. Derived from the word encyclopedia, it is an aggregation of various topics actively contributed by its users. Though the content in the Wikipedia cannot be used for academic purpose, it is the primary source of millions of people all over the world to get acquainted with the topics of their interest. The content which was once non-moderated is currently moderated, thus avoiding non creditable information from being posted.

Next, in 2002, came **Friendster**, which is currently a non-functioning online gaming site was once a most famous social networking site. Similar to other social networking tool, it also allowed users to contact other users, exchange files and videos. Unable to withstand tough competition from networks like Facebook and MySpace , it was finally shut down after being repositioned as gaming site.

LinkedIn, which was launched in 2003, is a professional social networking site allowing users to establish and maintain professional contacts. Unlike sites like Facebook, which is concentrated on personal and leisure activities, LinkedIn specializes in business networking. It is now used by both job seekers and job providers for searching job opportunities and posting potential new position in their organization. LinkedIn has been acquired by Microsoft in 2016. **YouTube** came along in 2005, and became a wildly popular platform to share and stream videos. It became part of Google (now Alphabet, Inc.).

By 2007, **MySpace** and **Hi5** became the world largest social networking site. MySpace not only allowed users to share photos, videos, and connect with friends, but also allowed users to share blogs in their respective pages. Hi5 was a typical social networking tool. Over the years, these two social networking sites have lost their dominance to newer competitors, and are now close to becoming extinct.

Facebook was founded in the year 2004, as a college networking tool, and later became available to the public in 2006. It revolutionized the social networking media, and is now the most popular social media site with nearly a billion and a half users across the globe. After going public in 2012, it has grown into a formidable, large social media platform that is also a destination for a large market share of mobile advertisements.

Twitter was simultaneously founded in 2006, is the second largest social networking site behind Facebook and allows users to express their views, belief, feeling, thoughts or anything, but restricted it to 140 characters. Similar to Facebook, it is also used by many brands to market their products and services. **WhatsApp**, started in 2009 and became a very popular internationally in countries like India as it allowed for free communication via an exploding user base of Smartphones. It has been acquired by Facebook now to increase its global social media market share.

SnapChat, which launched in 2012, is a very popular social media site among teenagers and young adults. It is used to post messages and photos, but these posts “disappear,” so not creating a digital trail. **Pheed**, which was launched in November of 2012 combined text, video, images and audio, and included a live broadcast option. It is closed now, but the live video feature is now available in Facebook.

The list above is by no means exhaustive, as there are many other specialized social media sites like Pinterest, Instagram, Tumblr and so forth. What is certain is that social media is not a fad anymore, and is an important type of human interaction.

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING, METRICS, AND EFFECTIVENESS

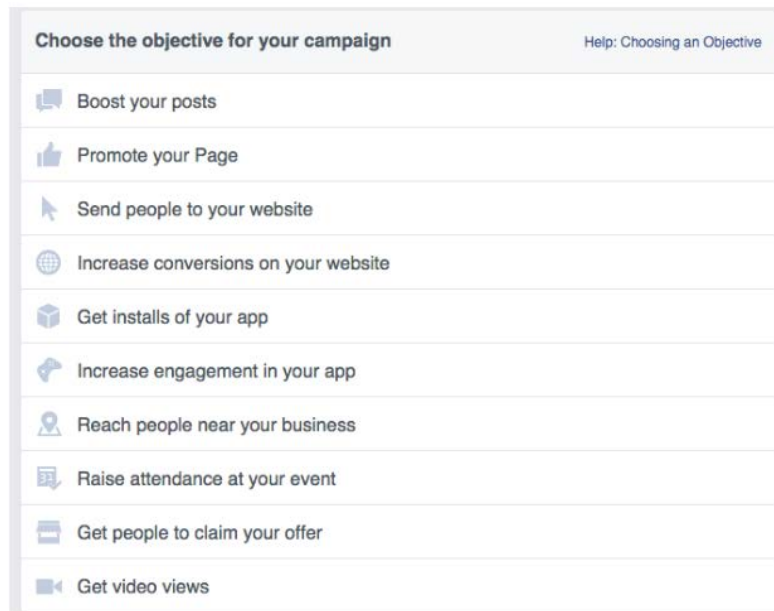
With the explosively growing popularity of social media, it was only natural that social media started getting attention from businesses – primarily for increasing brand awareness, marketing and generating sales. Airlines, for examples, are increasing using Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as marketing tools by keeping their customers informed about company news, promoting their services and destinations, and sending out special offers [Glab 2016]. They are also using these services to keep track what people are saying about them online. A few airlines are also testing optional links between a passenger’s reservation and social media profile, so people on the same flight can decide whom they would like sit next to [Glab 2016].

Frank Cespedes in his book “Aligning Strategy and Sales” [Cespedes 2014] states that of all the companies using social media to market their products and services, only 7% of the organizations comprehend the “true value at stake from digital marketing.” He also quotes from the Gallup survey that of the people who use social media, 38% of the people stated that social media has influenced their purchasing decision and just 5% of them agreed that social media had great influence in their purchasing decision. We will next discuss some popular techniques to market via social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter.

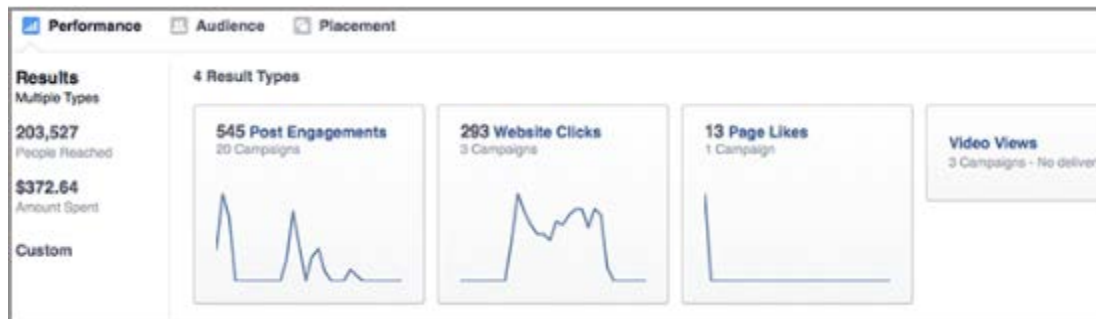
Facebook

Advertising in **Facebook** is another effective strategy to use social media networks to target relevant audience for marketing and conducting business. Facebook offers powerful and unique ways to show specific ads to the people most likely to care about a business. For example, the Ads can reach people based on location, age, gender, and interests, and then use tools and reports to understand how they’re performing and make them even better. Facebook tools indicate how many people saw an ad and also how many engaged with your ad. Further, to make ads even better based on how people respond, Facebook provides key details on ad performance and tools to make edits even after the ads are published [Facebook 2016a].

The first step to use Facebook for marketing is to create a Facebook Business page. The next step is to determine the objective of the ads. The purpose of the ad may be to get more people to visit the business website, or to get people to download the company App, or reach out to the people who live in the vicinity of the business and so forth. Figure 4 shows the many options that Facebook offers as an objective [Torr 2015].

Figure 4: Facebook Ad Objectives [Torr 2015]

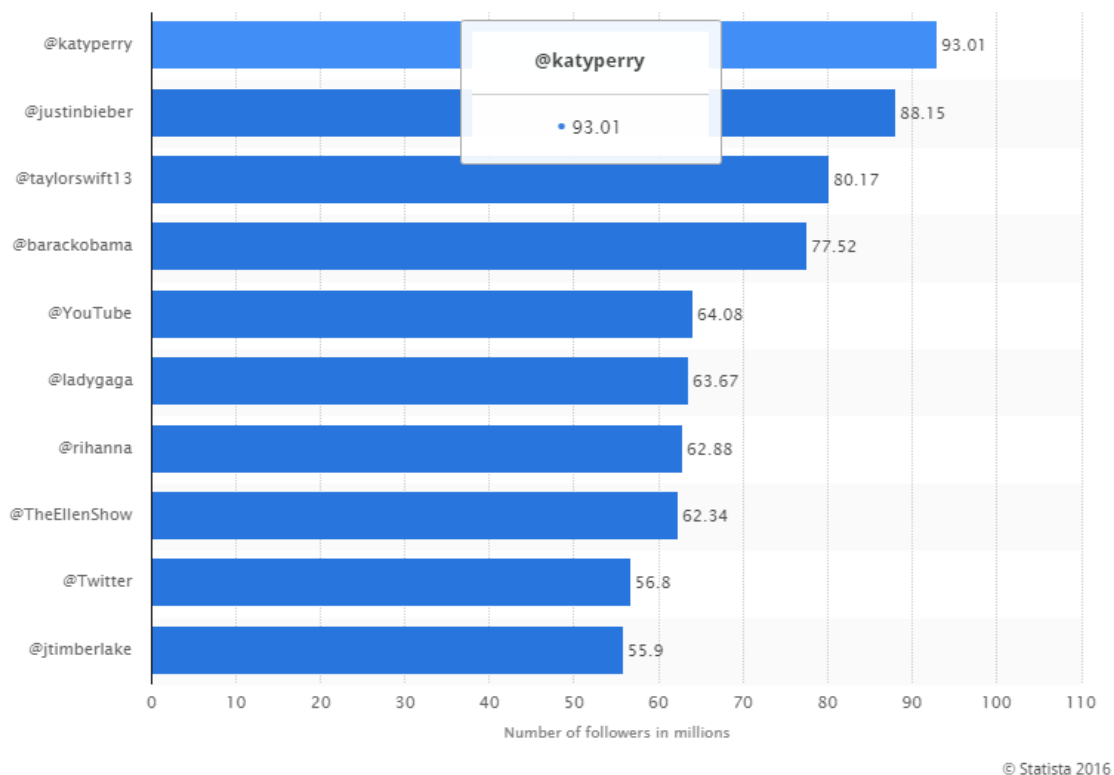
After that, the audience for the ad must be selected carefully, and can be based on location, age, gender, specific interests, etc. The next step is to select an advertisement budget, which could be specified as a certain amount per day, or a lifetime maximum (fixed, total budget). When choosing a budget, one can also fine tune when to pay for, and for what. One can choose for clicks, or for just impressions. It is also possible to choose the times to run the ads so that the target audience will be awake and likely on Facebook at those times. As a final step, the advertiser has to choose the images to be displayed, and the headline/text of the ad. Up to 5 images can be chosen [Torr 2015] so that they can be rotated, thus keeping the audience less bored and more engaged. The Facebook Ad Manager generates online reports, which can be used to effectively manage Facebook ads after it has been running for a while. These reports can be customized with filters (such as “how many clicks”, “how many audiences reached,” “How many *Likes*”, etc.) to focus on what is deemed most important to advertisers. Figure 5 below shows a sample of these filters.

Figure 5: Sample of Facebook Ad Report Filters [Facebook 2016b]

Twitter

Twitter provides a different approach to social media marketing than sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube. **Tweets** are posts made using the Twitter platform, and it includes short messages, personal thoughts, marketing slogan or anything that fits in the space designated. Tweets posted by celebrities from movie, music industry, sports and political leaders are widely followed. The more the followers, the more reach these tweets have. Figure 6 shows the top 10 Twitter accounts with the most followers in 2016, as compiled by Staista.com [Statista 2016b]. Singer Kate Perry, for instance had 93.01 million followers in June 2016.

Figure 6: Top 10 Twitter accounts with the most followers (millions) in June 2016



To increase the number of Twitter followers, one can do a Promoted Account campaign. Once a Twitter account has accumulated many followers, then it can also use the Tweets to conduct a Website Clicks or Conversion campaign, which is used to drive traffic to your website, and generate conversions such as specific page views, email signups or product orders [Felmingham 2016].

Tweets can also be retweeted by followers, so it has the potential to become viral, and increase in number rapidly. Hence the number of tweets that a product gets directly or indirectly can vastly affect its popularity. Brands also have twitter accounts and post their product information for creating awareness and promoting sales.

Caution should, however, be exercised when analyzing some of the measures discussed above. Taking the “*number of tweets*” for example, if a product or a service gets a million tweets, can it be considered as a prominent sales generator? Unfortunately (or fortunately, depending on one’s perspective), it is now possible to “buy” 10,000 Twitter followers for just \$99 (as advertised by buyrealmarketing.com in Oct 2016; <https://www.buyrealmarketing.com/buy-twitter-followers>). Similarly, it is possible to simply buy 10,000 Facebook “likes” for just \$99 as advertised in Arabicfollowers.net.

Metrics and Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing Campaigns

To add to the reliability of social media metrics, we next discuss some additional social media metrics that may be used in conjunction with the number of “likes” or “tweets,” which as we saw above, could be misleading.

Organizations use certain additional metrics to gauge the level of customer engagement on the social media platform, and also the impressions they have of their products and services. We next briefly discuss some of these metrics and measures.

Reviews provide positive, negative and personal experience of using the products and services. When people want to buy same product or service, they refer to the reviews posted by the prior buyers of the product and services. TripAdvisor, for example, has recently added flight reviews to its services so that travelers get independent opinions from fellow travelers about an airline’s quality, customer service, and so forth [Glab 2016]. Reviews are often used by many other non-social media e-Commerce sites such as Amazon, eBay and Walmart.com as well.

Click-Through-Rates (CTR) is another prominent metric in e-Commerce marketing is now currently used in social media as well. It is aimed at directing the users to the intended website in an attempt to increase the traffic and sales. It is the ratio of users who click on the advertisement placed on the social media site to the total number of users visiting the page. Although not a direct indicator of sales and engagement, the number of **Fans/Followers** on social media accounts is the total number of users following a brand, organization, or a person – a measure of awareness and popularity. But as stated before, these numbers should be viewed with caution. Another interesting fact is that 85% of the CTR actually comes from 8% of the users and 30% of the company sponsored social media users result in 85 % of the social media updates.

Monthly Active Users (MAU) is predominantly used by Facebook to track the unique number of users visiting the web page. In order to be tracked, the users must be logged into the Facebook application. In order to be counted as an active user, the user might have to carry out some activity in the application such as accepting friends request, accessing the profile tab, posting update or playing video [Knoop, 2009]. As of June 2016, Facebook had over 1.71 Billion MAUs, which means that it cannot be ignored by marketers.

While the metrics described above are popular indicators of social media marketing potential, there are other metrics which are being tested as well. To effectively calculate the return on investments, marketers should be provided with metrics other than measures such as Facebook likes, shares and tweets. While it is difficult to precisely ascertain whether a marketing campaign over social media influenced a purchase, the following metrics that could be used by the marketing team to better measure the marketing campaign effectiveness [Agius, 2016]

Brand search volume is another important metric that could be used to measure marketing effectiveness. A recent study from stated that people who are familiarized with a specific brand through social media are 180% more likely to search for the brand. Tools like Google Insights and Google Trends can be used by the marketers to measure the search volume and compare it with its competitor [Agius, 2016]

Programs such as Marketo and Convertro helps the marketers to measure the social activity, interaction, web page visits and number of times the promotional mail is opened in social media before a user becomes a customer, also known as **Lead Growth**. Weightage is provided for the different actions of the users, which will also help the marketers to measure the relative success of each marketing activity and streamline the activities accordingly [Agius, 2016]

A brand or a product does not always attract constructive or positive reviews. Many times, there will be negative brand mentions, which the publicity team should duly respond to, in order to satisfy and compensate the unhappy customers. Social Mention and Meltwater are tools, which helps to measure **Brand sentiment**, the flavors of the conversations surrounding the brand in the social media and websites.

Finally, we can use the **Klout score**, which is a measure provided to persons or brands using the information collected from 8 different social media networks [Agius, 2016]. The score is based on the person's ability to influence. Depending on the influence, the person or brand gets a higher Klout score. For example, if a specific brand tweet is retweeted 1 time out of 100 tweets, it will get a lower Klout score than 10 retweets out of 100 tweets. The Klout score is another metric that can be used by the marketers to measure its marketing campaign effectiveness.

Other factors Affecting Effectiveness of Ads in Social Media

A study from Forrester states that for every post made by the top brands in Facebook and Twitter, it reaches only 2% of their followers, and of which only .07% of them actually interacts with the posts [Cespedes,2016]. Questions also arise on the validity and accuracy of traditional opinion surveys to gauge the effectiveness of the ads placed in social media sites – whether these results accurately predict and track sales with respect to number of clicks, product/service reviews, search counts, number of followers and likes.

Another factor considered by companies when deciding on the ad platforms, is opportunity cost. As companies have to work with the allocated and budgeted funds to spend on its marketing expenditures, the allocation mix between social media sites, other online methods (like banner ads), and traditional media like paper and TV needs to be determined. According to a McKinsey study [Cespedes, 2016], since 2008 companies have allocated more money and time to social media and almost 20% lower for email marketing. E-mail, however, was deemed about 40 times more effective in gaining new customers than Facebook and Twitter combined. This result may not be surprising as it turns out that 90% of the consumers use e-mail on a daily basis. Additionally, e-mail daily average sales were 17% higher than compared to social media.

Another factor that affects online marketing trends is the breakneck pace of technological advances, new platforms, and the quick demise of existing social media sites – resulting in abrupt changes customer loyalty. Therefore marketers who happen to concentrate their ads on rapidly fading social media sites, such as MySpace, Friendster, and Orkut in the past, lose a lot of their investment. Extensive use of social tools by companies and lack of uniqueness might also result

in saturation and loss of customer interest in clicking on the banner ads placed on the social media sites. Many companies also invest and spent large amount of money in less effective ad tools due to tax credits, pre planned marketing and advertisement budget, which could sometimes be on the basis of “use it or lose it” concept.

So, how then can a current social media sensation such as Facebook or Snapchat stay attractive to ad customers? They would likely have to embrace many new technology tools to provide high value to their ad customers. One possibility is the use of “big data” analytics to improve their target audience. Facebook could, for example, provide effective ways to reach the right audience, and provide extremely useful tools to their customers so that they can easily track and fine tune the effectiveness of their ads. Another possibility is for social media sites to introduce new ways to create brand awareness and marketing over different platforms. For example, social media sites can experiment with streaming live videos, virtual and augmented reality, and artificial intelligence techniques to stay relevant to marketers.

Social media sites such as Facebook and Snapchat also use psychology and human nature to increasingly engage their audience and encourage frequent interaction. Snapchat’s Snapstreak feature displays how many days in a row two friends have snapped each other and rewards their loyalty with an emoji, Research shared with shows that Snapstreak is driving some teenagers nuts—to the point that before going on vacation, they give friends their log-in information and beg them to snap in their stead [Bosker 2016]. B J Fogg’s (an experimental psychologist) principles of behavior design is the designing of software that nudges users toward the habits a company seeks to instill. For instance, rewarding someone with an instantaneous “like” after they post a photo can reinforce the action, and potentially shift it from an occasional to a daily activity [Bosker 2016].

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Social media networks have made remarkably rapid strides, and firmly implanted themselves in modern human society. From the start of Usenet in 1979, we have evolved quickly into the likes of Facebook, Twitter, and Snapchat. There are now about 3.4 billion internet users globally. Roughly 500 million tweets are sent each day, and almost seven hours of footage is uploaded to YouTube each second, in several languages. With 1.7 billion active accounts, Facebook is the largest virtual “country” in the world. According to Pew, clear majorities of American Twitter and Facebook users now get their news from these platforms. Fifty-nine percent of American Twitter users rely on the service to follow news events as they happen in real time [Emerson 2016]. Nearly half of the world’s adult population is still not online, so there is still plenty of future growth available to social media companies.

Marketers have noticed the rapid, global adoption of social media in the last decade, and have begun to develop several strategies to use the new media format to build brands, create consumer needs, and encourage consumption of more goods and services. We have discussed the many ways in which social media marketing managers measure the effectiveness of their campaigns - such as Click-Through-Rates, Monthly Active Users, Klout score, and the number of “likes” or “followers.”

There is a lot of potential for future research in the social media marketing field. Studies can be designed to see the correlation between the amount of social media use and the willingness of users to transact based on ads on social media sites. Social media usage patterns can also be used to get personalized profiles of each customer, and better target potential customers, in more effective ways. For example, if a social media user “likes” many posts involving wage inequality, will they be more influenced by certain ad formats or certain ad campaigns than others? Our next step is in doing pilot studies in these directions.

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