

The Importance of Social Media for Brands



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In today's day and age, social media serves as more than just a medium for pushing products and services. It allows consumers to connect with their friends, family, strangers, and — most importantly for marketers — brands. Long gone are the days in which marketers could throw something at the wall after meeting with select focus groups and wait to see if it sticks. The age of looking for the needle in the haystack has transitioned to one where consumers can interact not just when the brand says but on their own terms.

Social media has totally shifted control from brand to consumer. With anyone able to tweet or find out what their friends are doing on Facebook, it has become an epicenter for communities of consumers to rally around their interests and create amplified subcultures. With this, social media has also become a source for not only providing content but also a tool for targeting the right content to the right people at the right time. This makes social media invaluable, and brands need to ensure they capitalize effectively. Social media is a key opportunity for brands to reach crucial audiences and ensure their ad spend is used effectively and strategically.

So why not just take what you're already doing on traditional media and push it on social? The reason is because one size does not fit all. Each platform requires specific strategies working in tandem with one another in order to effectively reach users where they are. According to an article by eMarketer, there are more than 150 million people in the U.S. using mobile phones to access social networks, with 58.6% of them accessing social networks at least once a month. This means that the dynamic of how consumers are choosing to engage with the world around them has drastically shifted — especially when it comes to interacting with the brands. Even with Facebook being the most trusted source for branded content, consumers still get to choose what they engage with. That means that marketers have to know exactly what type of content goes where. Using the same content from traditional media where consumers are force-fed ads on a platform where users get to choose what to engage with will result in poor results. Instead, media strategies should work in tandem to ensure a healthy mix of exposure and

proper targeting with which brands can ensure true success.

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Do not mistake this for the fact that people are not tuning into traditional media sources such as television shows and movies. However, according to a Deloitte survey, 92% of U.S. consumers are multitasking while they are watching television. That means that they are tuning out during commercial breaks and missing brand messaging. While this may sound detrimental to a brand, this is a key opportunity where brands can not only just reach consumers on their televisions but also on their mobile devices that connect them with the world around them.

Despite all of this, there are those who feel as if social media is solely for younger generations, choosing to stick with their traditional marketing methods instead. This is a vital misstep as 58% of U.S. consumers check social media daily, and millennials aged 19-32 stated that recommendations from their social media circles have surpassed the influence of television advertising (Belson, Westcott, & Lippstreu, 2016). Now imagine if we ignored millennials. Brands that are not tapping into this market are missing out on a generation that is projected to spend \$200 billion annually starting in 2017 and \$10 trillion over the course of their lives (Nelson, 2012). Though that is just an overall snapshot and educated estimate, one thing cannot be ignored — that social media is crucial for the success of brands in today's day and age.

Sources:

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Matt Augustin is the first social media strategist at the McCann Network's Fitzgerald & Company, where he develops the social strategy for brands. With a heart for service, Matt spearheads the social media strategy for the Marcus Graham Project, a program that aims to serve as an avenue for minorities to truly change the face behind the lens in the advertising industry. Matt also serves on the local executive board for MAFA, a Chicago-based networking group that coordinates events and opportunities for diverse men and women to connect with powerful professionals in the advertising, marketing and PR communities.

