

Social Media and Brand Integration Marketing in China

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ABSTRACT

Social media marketing is becoming more and more popular. These platforms are used not only for communication purposes but also for the promotion of business activities in society. China is one of the rapidly rising economies in the world that has embraced social media technology whereby business operations have embraced the technology as a way of marketing their business both locally and internationally. This article aims to describe how Chinese companies use social media to develop brands. The author evaluated how social media platforms can be used as marketing tools in China by sampling some social media sites. The results show that although the use of these platforms is very important, there are still some people who do not use these platforms can consume. Therefore, the marketing of social media platforms has certain limitations. The author found that social media is an important factor for the success of businesses through their ability to provide information and social media has established connections with a large number of customers who use these social media platforms in the market.

Keywords: Facebook, Youku Tudou, You Tube, Instagram, Baidu, Social media, Integration marketing.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, marketing through the use of the Internet has gradually been accepted by the public. People are willing to accept this marketing method because it is easier to use than any other marketing method (such as point of purchase). Usually, marketing on social media platforms requires only one account [1]. The number of users of social media sites far exceeds that of other types of sites. For instance, Facebook has 2.5 billion people of 2020 statistics provide an opportunity for a business to create a page and then from there they can be able to get followers who like their products and interact with them to make a sale. Facebook features make it easier for a company to develop their individual page with their website or phone number attached. This attribute makes it easy for clients to reach out and contact the organization directly for further engagements. So, Facebook is one of the social media websites that entrepreneurs can use to grow their businesses. Kaur argued that the importance of social media platforms is that they enable companies to communicate whatever message they want to pass to their potential clients without restrictions, such

information includes relocation notices and any promotional undertakings [2]. Moreover, if the company wants to communicate on the change of prices for their products, they can also use these social media platforms due to their ability to reach out to many people. This article will evaluate some social media sites and analyze how social media platforms as marketing tools in China. This article aims to describe how social media is being used for marketing purposes in China and emphasized the impact created by these platforms in enhancing brand development.

2. MODERN TECHNOLOGY AND MARKETING

2.1 Social Media Marketing

People with influence on social media are called bloggers. Their work is basically to promote products and they get paid through their efforts. For instance, if the company wants to promote or sell a product, they will contact well-known bloggers on Twitter, and these bloggers will post information about the product on the platform. After some time, the product

will become a popular trend on the platform, because people commented and reposted the product that the company is promoting, and it is easy to spread product information through social platforms. From the platform, the consumers will have time to express their needs, wants and values. Through these kinds of social media marketing, the company will get to know what their customers want and they will be able to alter the product and make changes that can suit the consumer's wants [3]. With the current trend of social media, a company should invest more in these platforms. If the target audience of a company is youths, then it is advisable that they should invest more in the websites that are known to the majority of the youths. Kietzmann et al. described seven functions of social media which included; identity, sharing, conversation, relationship, presence, groups, and reputations [4]. These attributes have overtaken how people relate and operate around the globe with business activities taking these initiatives as a tool of improving their brand marketing efforts in the market. As a result of an increase in technology usage, modern businesses have been forced to adapt and use the technology in marketing to be able to survive in the competitive business world [6] [7].

2.2 Types of Social Media Users and Marketing Strategies

Social media websites have got two different types of users are those who are active and dormant. Dormant users refer to people who rarely post information and comments. Their purpose of using social media is to read the information posted by others. Stakeholders should be aware that this passive social media user's behavior of learning and acquiring some knowledge in social media may improve their business performance. On the contrary, active users are very active and their comments can influence consumers in the market to purchase a brand because whenever they see any post they have to comment. In other words, active users are users who can criticize a particular product. Also, the comment could have an impact on the purchasing behavior of a dormant social media user. Generally, dormant users and active users are customer groups with marketing value.

2.3 The Difference Between the Use of Local and Foreign Social Media Sites in China

According to China Internet Networking Information Center statistics as of Dec 2013, Chinese Internet users were close to 620 Million as of the end

of 2013. The information further stated that 83% of business operations used the Internet to conduct business activities with an average of 24% of these businesses using the platform for online sales services through extensive marketing and promotion activities [8]. De Zuani argued that these platforms have created an avenue through which marketing of brands has been undertaken by companies across the country an attribute that has led to the growth of trade operations [5]. Therefore, both foreign and domestic social platforms can promote the development of marketing to a certain extent.

Modern platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are used extensively for marketing purposes in China and other global countries. Internet boom services in China started being used with instant messaging boom services that were launched in 1999. Over the years, the country has embraced modern technology an attribute that has led to the country to adopt both internationally used social media platforms in conjunction with the country's designed platforms such as Youku Tudou, Baidu, TikTok and WeChat. There are also some differences between international social media platforms and Chinese Internet platforms Chinese Internet platforms have a large customer base due to the nature of Chinese business culture that is involved in promoting their products. International social media platforms have a reasonable number of users whom also a business can target and market its brand to them. Chinese Internet platforms are often cheaper to advertise on them as they aim to promote business within the country. But foreign pricing is relatively expensive due to their global coverage an attribute that makes their maintenance costs to be high thus the need to charge more. Besides, Chinese Internet platforms provide a platform for the marketer and the targeted consumers to use the same language for understanding purposes. International social media platforms often use the English language hence making them less preferred for marketing purposes due to incidences of language Tiebarier among consumers. De Zuani argued that these platforms have created an avenue through which marketing of brands has been undertaken by companies across the country an attribute that has led to the growth of trade operations [5]. Therefore, both foreign and domestic social platforms can promote the development of marketing to a certain extent.

3. COMPARISON BETWEEN LOCAL AND FOREIGN SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING PLATFORMS

3.1 Analysis of the marketing advantages and limitations of the Facebook platform

Facebook is one of the platforms that has attracted a lot of people who use the program for communication, socializing and promoting their businesses to the market. The ability of this platform to be accessed across the world has provided an opportunity for business people to use it as a tool of promoting their goods and services as they can target the users of the program as their target customers. Therefore, the platform can be used for making and also sending any important information regarding the product and services to the customers in the market. The business owners or marketers can use the program for marketing by providing the business information: the nature of goods and services provided by the business, the location of the business and any auxiliary service. For example, merchants will upload exquisite pictures and short videos of products, and customers' online ordering and delivery process to attract customers to buy products and services provided by the company.

Dhaoui claimed that luxury brands in China have embraced the use of Facebook for marketing purposes whereby they have an opportunity to reach out to a large collection of customers through the creation of marketing pages and the use of Facebook influencers who have a large number of followers [10]. The followers can be used as target customers for these online trade companies an attribute that has resulted in to increase in the customer base of an organization.

The company can create a Facebook page that can be accessed by many people using the platform. The company's Facebook page contains more information, such as the company's business projects. The description of the page may also tell the customer the location of the company and the products they produce. Facebook also enables the company to do adverts in form of a video and post it on their page for the company customers to view and promote the business. The adverts show that how best the products are and it is one form of convincing the customers to buy the product. The followers are also given a section where they can give their views on what has been posted by that particular company. Some of the importance of advertising on the Facebook platform is that it enables the business to

reach out to a large customer base without spending a lot of money, unlike other marketing programs that require a lot of money to advertise. Also, the platform also provides the customers with an ability to have a direct conversation with the business an attribute that provides both the consumer and the business with an ability to discuss and determine various product and service attributes that the business should improve on to attract more demand. However, some of the limitation of this program when it comes to marketing is the fact that they only reach out to consumers who use Facebook digital platform hence making it ineffective to those people who do not use the platform such as the elderly or those who do not have access to smart phone and internet connection [9].

3.2 Analysis of the Marketing Advantages and Limitations of the Youku Tudou Platform

Youtube can synchronize advertisements based on the user's location and the most relevant information, which allows the company to promote products and establish contact with a large number of customer groups in the company's area [11] [12]. However, despite the popularity in the usage of You Tube across the globe, China has banned the use of You Tube in the country. The emergence of Youku Tudou replaced YouTube's position in the Chinese market. Youku Tudou and YouTube have similar functions. Youku Tudou can host videos and promote commercial advertisements, and Youku Tudou also has operations around the world. In 2020, the Youku Tudou had more than a 500 million subscribers. These subscribers include video promoters, content creators, business people as well as general viewers. Therefore, the increase in the number of Chinese users on the platform provides opportunities for merchants to connect with marketers on the platform. These marketers can upload promotional videos on the platform to promote the marketing of related brands [17].

3.3 Analysis of the Marketing Advantages and Limitations of the Instagram Platform

Instagram is the most preferred social media platform in terms of marketing due to its ability to promote graphic images and video clips which are attractive for marketing purposes. It enables users and companies to send their adverts to many targeted consumers at once. Instagram has helped companies to reach their target audiences through brand shaping

appearances which become more appealing to the users who end up getting attracted to the company. Instagram provides users with a good communication platform. Blogs can directly communicate with followers publicly on the platform, so high-quality video ads can attract consumers well [13].

If someone has a smartphone, they can easily access the app as it is also hosted by the Apple store and google play store system, and the app requires the Internet for it to function well. This makes many companies and marketers regard Instagram as an ideal marketing platform to develop their business, especially those companies whose target group of customers are young people. It should also be noted that the platform enables one-to-one dialogues between companies and customers in the market, which can improve customers' awareness of the company or brand. Through this marketing model, not only the company's reputation has been improved, but the sales volume of products is also rising. In recent years, more and more companies have chosen to use Instagram as a platform for business development. Instagram also has more than 4 million users in China, which provides a target group for Chinese companies to use the platform to promote their brands. The paid promotions help the brand also to reach a huge target audience because Instagram has the details of their users both in the country and outside the region [14]. Instagram can be used for marketing in China due to its ability to allow users to create attractive pictures and videos and then post them online. Through the creation of slides, the user can design their marketing advert on Instagram by incorporating attractive pictures and videos an attribute that can enable them to reach out to many customers who will follow the business page and be updated on the company products and services offered.

3.4 Analysis of Baidu Tieba's Marketing Methods and Characteristics

Baidu Tieba is one of the social media website platforms that is used in China for marketing purposes by celebrities particularly musicians. This platform provides users with fan clubs based on their interests. The fans in these platforms are grouped according to their interest such as the public relations team. Under this platform, pre-order sales are made by selling idol group albums. Also, they enable fans to get other benefits when they order fashionable products that are promoted by idol group albums. The Baidu Tieba platform is used by celebrities who promote various products to their followers in the

market [15]. In order to promote sales on the platform, merchants provide customers with products such as free samples and deep discounts to influence their continued purchase from the platform. When musicians want to promote their album, they use this platform to access their followers whereby they provide them with free products such as pajamas, make-up brushes, and eye shadow palettes to those customers who purchase albums in bulk. Due to a large number of people who use the platform to follow their celebrity lifestyle and order directly their albums from these music celebrities, Baidu Tieba provide therefore an opportunity for celebrities to directly promote their works and reach out to many customers in the market by influencing them to order in bulk for them to get presents and other opportunities such as huge discounts.

4. CONCLUSION

Online marketing is becoming one of the best marketing methods. Social platforms are not limited to communication and social interaction. Many people and companies use social media platforms to promote business operations. More and more small and medium-sized companies are able to use social media platforms for marketing in China. Through this online marketing model, these companies have successfully attracted many customers. Although these social platforms provide effective ways for the marketing of company products and services, they still have some shortcomings. For example, only groups who use social media platforms can receive relevant information. Therefore, in order to increase the company's marketing scope, the company still needs to deploy social media and other traditional marketing programs at the same time, such as the use of billboards, television and radio marketing, to expand the coverage.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Yaning Shan.

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