

Change in Social Media Marketing Trends During Covid-19

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ABSTRACT

This paper described the basic facts about social media in modern society. This paper mostly focused on the relationship between Chinese social media and the Chinese economy. The paper analyzed the past data during the covid-19 period and illustrated the effect of social media on the modern Chinese economy.

Keywords: social media; Covid-19; effect; society

1. INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of Covid-19 imposes a significant challenge to companies worldwide. Since December 31, 2019, according to WHO, when the first official case occurred in Wuhan, China, the virus has shown extremely contagious soon spread across the whole world.

To prohibit the transmission of covid-19 and make the society more stable, countries all over the world imposed a lot of policies, of which the main idea is social distancing. Meaning people have to keep enough distance from others so that the virus cannot be transmitted: students stay at home for online courses instead of going to school; people should better stay at home rather than go out. However, these policies were supposed to help people but impose challenges on commercial corporations. Because people were called on by the government to stay at home rather than go out and spend their money, a wide range of real economy business companies face a low demand from consumers. Numerous restaurants ran out of business because people choose not to eat in crowded restaurants to avoid transmission, and other businesses, such as shopping malls and tourism, were all devastated as people never go out. What's more, to avoid the virus spreading among their own workers, during covid-19, a lot of companies choose to shed a lot of jobs, and some even pause running factories to avoid workers transiting virus when

working. As a result, the companies operate at low efficiency and productivity, and some would face a shortage of products or raw materials due to the total paralysis in the supply chain. According to McKinsey & Company, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a drop of airline revenues by 60 percent in 2020.[1] In Lena Anayi's research, from 2021 recreational services had a drop in sales for about 60 percent.[2]

Finally, facing such a severe situation in Covid-19 for these companies, it turns out that companies have started to use social media as a way of marketing their business. It is primarily based on one assumption that in Covid-19 because people stay more at home than outside, they have a greater reliance on cell phones and social media than before, and companies can take advantage of this shift of attention toward social media to make advertisements. Indeed, this assumption is quite reliable. According to Nielsen's report[3], the content of media people watch has increased by about 60%. And according to Meta's article[4], because people have more time at home and they have more time engaged on social media, the time spent on Meta's platforms, including Instagram, Messenger, and Whatsapp, has increased by 70% during covid-19, and "messaging increase over 50% and time in group calling (calls with three or more participants) increase by over 1,000% during the last month."

Now companies try several ways to have social media marketing. Some would open an account on social media and advertise for their products, and others would directly buy advertising spaces to display their advertisement to

commercials. According to Stacey McLachlan, and Christina Newberry, opening a social media account can provide companies several benefits, including increasing brand awareness, increasing website traffic, and so on. [5] Some of these companies indeed payback from their investment in social media marketing, but the effectiveness of social media marketing is still questionable. For instance, Apple does not have any social media account in China, but it is still one of the most popular technology brands among Chinese people. It is partially because social media accounts lower the brands' uniqueness and high class and make the brand secular, finally decreasing the brand's value in consumers' thoughts. Christopher Tompkins indicates social media accounts only attract negative attention.[6] Facing so many unsolved debates for social media marketing, this article would discuss the strategies of the social media marketing that companies use in covid-19 and their effectiveness of them in the covid-19 context, then finally evaluate the prospect for companies to have social media marketing in the future pandemic environment.

2. CHANGE IN CURRENT TREND OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING DURING COVID-19

As mentioned before, people's reliance on social media has massively grown during the pandemic. But the question is, how significant was the change?

2.1 People's reliance comparisons before covid-19 and during covid-19.

First, we should look at people's reliance on social media before the pandemic began. According to the report—"Digital 2019: Q4 Global Digital Statshot" done by "we are social" and "Hootsuite,"[7] at the end of 2019, active social media users across the world were 3.725 billion people, and mobile social media users around the globe were 3.660 billion people. To be noticed, the overall internet users had already taken 58% of the total population around the world. After two years, according to the research done by "we are social" and "Hootsuite," at the end of 2021,[8] the active social media population grew up to 4.55 billion people and internet users increased to 4.88 billion people. Compared to when covid-19 hadn't occurred, active social media users increased by 7.25 percent, 685 million people. The daily amount of time spent on the internet grew up to 6hours and 58 minutes. Among those times, internet users daily spent 2 hours and 27 minutes on social media. Monthly, there were 2895 million active users on one of the most famous social media—Facebook. As the data showed, people's attention on social media has grown massively since the pandemic. That brings up another question, why do people frequently participate on social

media instead of on other media? One of the biggest reasons for this trend was work purposes.

2.2 Reasons why people participate frequently on social media instead of other media.

During the pandemic, to keep the company running, most directors of firms choose to move part of the business online. Therefore, applications such as zoom Tencent meeting are used frequently. Since firms' operations mainly rely on those applications, social media has grown dramatically. In April 2020, at the height of the global epidemic, about 300 million video conferences were held on ZOOM every day.[9] To be surprised was that, in December 2019, there were only about 10 million ZOOM meetings every day. This vast data traffic growth indicated that people had generated a firm reliance on social media. On the other hand, entertainment is one of the reasons that causes increasing dependence on social media. But, What makes people love to watch Youtube and Tik-Tok? According to the book "Twitter and Tear Gas—The power and fragility of networked protest" written by Zeynep Tufekci, in chapter five, "Technology and people," he wrote that "Technologies can also have different efficiencies and potencies which co-exist with their affordances on multiple spectra." Also, he noted that "With information technology, the question of affordances becomes even more important because the hardware provides only the base on which the digitally shaped affordances are built." Social media like Tik-Tok and Youtube are primarily based on mobile phone applications compared to other media types. The differences in hardware affordances take an essential role in the analysis. A mobile phone is always connected and easy to carry around and thus creates opportunities for activists than desktop computers or TVs, which must be located in physical buildings. Besides the imparities between hardware, social media has much larger affordances compared to other types of media. For example, since the news program on TV only has limited time, the news report is biased. On the other hand, social media like Tik-Tok don't have time limitations. Social media could provide complete information or videos at any time of the day. The affordances of social media are not confined by time or space. When people see information on Tik-Tok, they could make their comments below the news or videos and have discussions about it. And make their videos to illustrate their opinion and send on the platform to let other users watch. This new business style makes the gap between users and producers disappear. Give the rights to become producers to every user. Therefore, the affordances of social media are unlimited. As the colossal data flow occurs on social media every day, companies see great potential for commercial uses.

2.3 Success of companies that make advertisements on social media.

Companies started to collaborate with social media firms and make advertisements for their products on social media platforms. For example, Yili's milk advertisements on Tik-Tok bring about 62.5 million RMB revenue every day, which, if times 365, hypothetically brings up approximately a quarter of the whole year, 225 million RMB.[10] We could see that social media marketing has already taken up a considerable penetration in firms' current revenue through the vast amount of income. We could say that social media marketing has a significant role in modern society.

3. COMPANIES STRATEGIES CHANGE IN COVID-19

3.1 Analysis of the examples of strategies in covid-19(Big data, algorithms)

As mentioned before, firms have overseen a great potential in the social media market. But, in order to achieve more profit, advertising alone is not enough. Therefore, firms need to collaborate deeper with the social media platform. The companies required social media platforms' help. Firms want the platforms to send their advertisements to specific users who are interested in purchasing their products or have a potential tendency to purchase. Firms demand the platform's effectiveness, which means the rate of people who watch and pay for the products in the advertisement. According to some famous social media platforms such as Tik-Tok, their effective conversion rates are around 5% to 10%, depending on different types of products. What's behind the highly effective conversion rates are the fundamental algorithms that run the application—"Big data."

3.2 Changes on strategies to locate potential consumers (frequencies, co-existing products)

To target advertisements to be targeted to potential consumers, "Big data" must fully understand users' preferences. The algorithm will first analyze the users' view records. Due to the massive daily data flow, algorithms could calculate the total amount of consumers who purchase the products after viewing the advertisements. According to various video types, the algorithm will then compare the possibility for the same kind of users to buy the products to the specific user it is analyzing. If the rate is positive, then the algorithm will assume that this particular user is one of the potential consumers for the products. Once the consumer is determined as a potential target, the system will then analyze what kind of video he or she views the most, how often do he or she watch video on social media, and how frequently he or she will share the video with others. If

the user has a habit of sharing videos with his or her friends, the system will therefore examine the rate of conversion of their friends. By analyzing users in multiple areas, "big data" could fully understand you and your friends' personal habits. Then, the platform will automatically send you products advertisements. This process of analyzing personal data isn't entirely new for the platform. All the social media companies did was just applying their base algorithms to push advertisement notifications for companies collaborating with them. On the other hand, people who spend time on social media don't only watch random videos. They will view specific people's videos or live streams. On TV, or big screen in the shopping mall, you could often see models or famous people making advertisements for products.

4. COMPANIES' ADVERTISEMENTS CHANGE

Therefore, people who have a massive number of followers on Tik-Tok or youtube were invited or signed a contract with the company to be demanded to make advertisements during their videos or live streams. As time went by, a new type of advertisement—"hosts with goods" was created. This new advertisement became super popular since people weren't allowed to go out anymore. On the other hand, to achieve further profits, the old types of advertisements have to be changed to fit in social media. The companies also had made changes to their advertisements.

Advertisements could be divided into two types: graphic and virtual. In order to attract more customers, companies have been innovated the content of the ads that allow them to fit the social media platforms.

4.1 Analysis of the examples of strategies in covid-19(Big data, algorithms)

To graphic advertisements, because of the "echo effect" on social media, people do not likely to spend much time looking carefully into every picture or video. So, firms made their graphic advertisements much more straightforward than before. The advertisements now are short and clear that the users could simply just see the product's name and the picture of the product. After analyzing the social media market data, firms realized that the main reasons that cause the customers to buy products on graphical advertisements mainly depend on their own preferences. Therefore, the beauty of graphic advertisements does have little impact on the demand for the products. Because there is too much information flowing through the users' screens, they do not have attention to specific graphic advertisements and look into them. That's why firms do not need fancy explicit pictures with lots of details of the product on social media. They only need a sharp and clear picture and give a guide for users that would like to buy their stuff.

4.2 Virtual advertisements

For video advertisements, as same as the graphical advertisements, the promotions shouldn't be too long which will cause the users to lose interest in watching it. Besides, it couldn't be too short as well, which won't trigger users' interest. The video has to contain the primary purposes of the product and some advantages of the product. According to the theory of the working-memory model, people could remember seven objects maximum in their short-term memory. Therefore, the mean number of meaningful content in virtual advertisements is around 4-6.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper briefly talked about the impact of covid-19 on social media and its market. The results of the market success turn out that the social media platforms have the unlimited possibility. Perhaps the offline market and shopping malls will be shut down in the future. The massive data flow on social media marketing has already taken a considerable portion of firms' income. Therefore, the social media market will undoubtedly become a much bigger economic market, and more and more types of advertisements will occur in the future. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

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