



# Starbucks' Social Media Strategy: Success, Engagement, and Future Recommendations

Kaijie Xu

University of Sydney, Camperdown, NSW, 2050, Australia

E-mail: [kaxu0451@uni.sydney.edu.au](mailto:kaxu0451@uni.sydney.edu.au)

**Abstract.** Starbucks effectively utilizes social media platforms like YouTube and Instagram for digital marketing. This study delves into Starbucks' strategies on these platforms, highlighting their interactive content, user engagement, and successful campaigns like "Take out your garden." The brand's approach fosters online interaction, driving both brand visibility and transactions. Recommendations include enhancing user-generated content, collaborating with key influencers, and exploring innovative marketing methods.

**Keywords:** Starbucks, Social media

## 1 Introduction

This report is going to discuss Starbucks, who is the largest coffee chain brand in the world. Starbucks was founded in 1971. Currently, Starbucks has 180,000 employees and nearly 20,000 stores in more than 60 countries and regions around the world. Starbucks has approximately 182,000 employees in more than 19,767 corporate jobs and authorized stores in 62 countries. As of December 31, 2021, Starbucks' total revenue was \$29.061 billion. Since its establishment, Starbucks has subverted the American coffee market, and then gradually swept the world to become a household name. For half a century, it has been firmly occupying the leading position in the specialty coffee industry and serving as a benchmark for chain catering companies around the world.

## 2 Analysis of Social media Initiatives for Starbucks

In the development of social media, more and more brand companies have begun to establish official corporate accounts on social media to display the company's brand image, attract fans' attention, and use the displayed products, works, and activities to make consumers generate Brand identity promotes consumer buying behavior [1] (Nurhizam et al., 2019). Make good use of social media to attract fans and operate fan communities, so that customers can better understand the brand, guide customers to express their opinions and suggestions, and use online activities to guide customers to

independent websites for shopping, and enhance consumers' desire to consume. Stimulate consumers' willingness to actively share and identify with the company's brand. By leveraging the rapid development and continuous penetration of social media in the world, Starbucks promotes digital marketing, leverages objective economic benefits at a lower cost, and quickly accumulates a large number of fans with high-quality content and a good experience for users. The number of fans of the special platform account reached the highest level in the same category within one year, effectively driving offline sales [2] (Raviadaran, 2019).

Starbucks got into social media back in 2008 and has dominated the field ever since. Popular on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, it sees coffee as something to share with friends and family. For example, Starbucks regularly announces one-to-one promotions on its social media, which in turn generate superior social media engagement rates through shares, likes, mentions, and comments. Starbucks' social media is an extension of its stores. The overall tone is warm, inclusive, communal, interactive and non-intrusive. You can get patient responses to customer inquiries on Starbucks' Facebook page and see fan photos adorned with Starbucks drinks, events and stores on the Instagram account. For many users, social media is part of their daily life. More than 70 percent of Facebook users - and about one in six Instagram users - log on to these sites at least once a day. According to the chart, Facebook and Instagram have the stickiest users and the largest proportion of the population using it every day.

## 2.1 Facebook

- 34.9million followers, 36.1million Facebook likes

Starbucks opened an official Facebook account in November 2008, inviting fans who had previously operated an unofficial account to participate in the business community. The account mainly pushes information on products, services and promotions, and does not sell any products. Currently, Starbucks has 36 million likes on Facebook. In advertising and marketing, this number is an important target. Facebook, as a responsive medium, creates a unique and ready-made forum for consumer interaction and satisfaction. Compared to other coffee shops and chains, Starbucks has a large number of followers on Facebook (34 million). According to Facebook data, the majority of Starbucks posts are photos at 65.3%, followed by videos (24.8%), links (6.9%) and statuses (3%).

The concept of customer experience as the core has also been brought to social media platforms. High-quality content and good experience have enabled Starbucks to quickly accumulate a large number of fans, effectively driving offline sales. A dedicated social media team ensures that most tweets, including complaints, are responded to promptly so customers feel valued. The team even managed to get a customer dissatisfied with Starbucks purchases to speak directly to the Starbucks Ethical Sourcing Manager, thereby changing his impression of the brand [3] (Ma'arif, et al., 2018).

They attract buyers by identifying a brand that generates a flood of responses when the brand posts on Facebook. So when a brand releases a pumpkin spice latte, fans of that coffee are fully engaged [4] (Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2015). For example, the

company posted about 84 updated photos, garnering nearly 4.2 million likes and 547 shares. As usual, the posts are bright, pretty, and look appealing.

For example, building an "opinion wall" on Facebook to collect consumers' favorite coffee product ideas; inviting netizens to go to Starbucks online on World AIDS Day, and the company will donate \$0.50 per cup of coffee to the World Fund; Email or Facebook to send customized Starbucks digital gift cards to friends and more. Through this social network, Starbucks has completely changed the brand's communication model, and gradually expanded the social network of "drinking coffee together", a social network for consumers to interact with friends, from offline to online.

## 2.2 Twitter

- 11 million followers, 250,000 tweets.

Twitter has become one of the most effective ways to handle customer service and engagement. Starbucks has 11 million followers on Twitter, with 250,000 tweets and a 99% response rate. Each Starbucks account has a different style of content creation to avoid cross-posting. Here, Starbucks shares their experiences and actively communicates and interacts with fans online. Through interaction, Starbucks can further understand the needs of consumers and take action.

For Starbucks only, the purpose of tweeting is not only to generate engagement, but also to spread the cultural context. In recent years, there has been a trend of "graffiti on cups". This is actually a competition "White Cup Contest" held by Starbucks from April to May 2014. It lasted for 21 days and encouraged netizens to play on Starbucks paper cups creative inspiration. Starbucks has established a gathering place for related activities on Twitter, where netizens can publish their own works, and Starbucks will eventually select the winners [5] (Wong, et al., 2019).

In addition, in 2013, Starbucks used gift certificates on Twitter to help consumers communicate and obtain user information. In just two months, more than 27,000 people used Twitter to redeem coffee coupons, and more than 30% of them bought more than one coupon, which translates to \$180,000 for Starbucks. More importantly, Starbucks gained access to the Twitter accounts, mobile IDs and customer information of more than 50,000 customers [6] (Sam and Cai, 2015).

Starbucks' communication on Twitter is dominated by text, pictures and videos, and hyperlinks. In the era of fragmentation, the time for users to accept and understand information is gradually shortened, and they tend to choose information that requires less attention. Therefore, short prompt text with strong visual impact pictures can attract consumers' attention. Stimulate consumers' interest in reading. In the content that combines text and video, the content time of video category is short video within 30s. Users can automatically play short videos [7] (Edirisinghe, 2020).

On the Twitter platform, Starbucks has also simultaneously deployed a social media content marketing strategy to actively demonstrate the contributions made by its employees during the epidemic. Brand image can be planned and packaged. The ultimate goal of a company to build a brand image is to establish a differentiated presence in the

market, strengthen the connection with consumers, and thereby increase customer loyalty. Therefore, the content of tweets with humanistic concern and in line with the hot spots of public opinion can guide consumers' differentiated cognition of brands. Starbucks actively publishes epidemic prevention content related to the grassroots personnel of the enterprise on Twitter, actively participates in the construction of the #COVID19 topic, and communicates the content through a combination of pictures and texts [7] (Edirisinghe, 2020).

### **2.3 Youtube**

- 355,000 YouTube subscribers

Internet marketing is interactive, which is also inherited by video marketing. The interaction between Starbucks and its fans on Youtube is a good example of this: users can create new replies to the publisher by using text videos, and the viewers' replies also build momentum for the show, and shows with a high rate of controversy are clicked Rates also tend to soar on a high profile. At the same time, netizens will repost the programs they think are interesting on their own blogs or other forums, so that the video advertisements can be actively "viral" and the promotional videos can be spread widely without any promotion costs for the company and energy. This advantage is not available in TV commercials.

Starbucks, which has 355,000 subscribers on YouTube, uses a variety of videos and narratives to ensure customer cooperation. To create third-party scenarios, Starbucks uploaded more than 595 videos for product details, Starbucks life, and animated visuals. The top videos with 131.1 million views were mercenary spouses and other veterans. The company also develops videos based on diversity and how they feel about themselves [8] (Gallaughar and Ransbotham, 2010). It works with writers and animation creators like The Simpsons to create animations that have more than 390,000 views on YouTube.

### **2.4 Instagram**

- 17.8m Followers, 2464 Posts

Currently, Starbucks has 17.8m Followers and 2464 Posts on Instagram. For Starbucks, Instagram has a very good marketing effect, because the platform has a large number of target groups and young people. According to the 2019 Instagram demographics, Instagram has the largest percentage of users aged 18-34 (64%), followed by users aged 35-54 (25%), then 13-17 Among users (6%), only 5% are adults over the age of 65.

Instagram is seen as a fashion resource, ideal for learning about new trends and discovering new artists and following their favorite celebrities, coupled with the nature of photo sharing, Instagram dominates fashion, beauty, interior design, architecture, photography and celebrity news, etc., and industries that emphasize visual arts, fit well with Starbucks' products and designs [9] (Taecharungroj, 2016).

In July 2016, Starbucks launched the "Take out your garden" campaign. As long as consumers buy take-out coffee at Starbucks, they will give away a bag of plant seeds and soil mixed with coffee grounds. The QR code on the seed bag comes with a planting tutorial, including simple DIY planting methods. This no-holds-barred and highly interesting way of participating quickly swept across 51 countries, with a total of 970.05 million users participating and sharing their planting pictures on Instagram. From this anti-pollution-themed event, Starbucks has gained the attention and goodwill of global consumers towards the brand [3] (Ma'arif et al., 2018).

### **3 Social Media campaign a success or failure? Why?**

Through the analysis of the above social media marketing cases, Starbucks' Social Media campaign is successful. Starbucks' promotional programs on social media platforms include cyber safety, increased engagement, customer respectful referrals, online ethics and trade culture. Starbucks utilizes unique content, centered on visual content, and properly prepared to communicate with customers [5] (Wong, et al., 2019). The findings show brand support and common sense data for Starbucks, which has attempted to drive swarms through social media with cautious but persuasive promotional tactics. Starbucks' social media campaigns are low-cost, impactful, and convincing at people's gatherings. By leveraging social media, Starbucks will reach target audiences, target existing and potential customers, increase brand reliability, increase website activity and drive transactions.

### **4 Recommendations**

Focus on account operation to increase fan stickiness.

The effective operation of the social platform is a very important step for Starbucks on the road of development. To continuously increase the number of user visits and the number of loyal users, Starbucks can start from the following directions:

First, precise powder addition. The number of fans is the basis of the influence of social platforms, and it is also the main direction of Starbucks. However, attracting fans is not an indiscriminate win. Starbucks should pay more attention to those loyal fans who can really contribute to the promotion of the company. Starbucks can complete various measures such as market research, product marketing, consultation and communication, achievement display, and talent inclusion through social platforms. However, this is only a part of what is known, there are more hidden powers of fans waiting for us to unearth.

Second, enhance the loyalty of old customers. Old customers often have a high degree of mutual trust with enterprises, which is accumulated through years of continuous cooperation. They have a very high understanding of Starbucks and are an important force for Starbucks' external promotion. Keeping an old customer is often better than finding a new one. It is easier for customers to come, and enough old customers can ensure the stability of the company's operation, and old customers are often more likely to become loyal fans of the company. As loyal fans of Starbucks, they will definitely

promote the company's product business on social platforms. The promotion of Starbucks, sharing their own experience, enhancing personal influence and attracting new potential users for Starbucks

#### Key Opinion Leader collaboration

In addition to accurately targeting effective consumer groups, it is also critical to select the right key opinion leaders to bring more attention to the brand, especially for Starbucks' digital marketing. Well known, famous star and blogger platform. Gathering a large number of loyal fans on different social media to analyze whether the fan structure and interest composition match the brand is what commercial real estate brands need to do before choosing the right key opinion leader. At the same time, it is also necessary to consider whether the personal image of the celebrity or key opinion leader is consistent with the brand image to ensure that the brand will not be damaged by the overexposure of the celebrity or blogger, resulting in a decline in publicity. In addition to helping brand messages reach more potential consumers, KOLs also have value in enhancing the reputation of the Starbucks brand.

#### Cross-border marketing

"Creativity" is the key word that distinguishes social marketing from traditional marketing, and it is also the focus of attracting consumers' attention. "Cross-border marketing" is the fusion of two or more originally unrelated things, so as to collide with more creative sparks. The key to the success of cross-border marketing is that things in different fields have the same target group. Starbucks' main target consumer groups are young people and business people, so it is first necessary to find these groups in different sectors. Starbucks needs to respond to the online behavior of young users, try to use new marketing technologies, and speed up the integration with short videos, live broadcasts, The integration and development of game and two-dimensional fields. Starbucks can conduct cross-border marketing on social media platforms with brands from different industries, and launch co-branded products.

#### Encourage consumers to actively share their consumption experience

Social media has become an indispensable tool in people's daily life. If Starbucks wants to enhance its brand influence among consumers, it needs to be closely connected with the social media favored by the group and encourage consumers to actively share their experiences through user-generated content. Sharing fission propagation enables more potential consumer groups to understand the real information of the company's products from the perspective of actual consumers. There are two factors that trigger users to share behavior: the first is interest, and the second is interest.

First of all, fun means that the content that Starbucks disseminates on social media is lively and interesting, which can attract consumers' attention and make consumers think it is worth sharing. For example, on Instagram, Starbucks can add the nutrients, calories and benefits of different coffees, and add vivid pictures, so that consumers can share the positive experience of eating products, in order to let more people know about the company's healthy brand image.

Secondly, benefit means that consumers can obtain economic benefits such as coupons, discounts, and gifts through sharing. The sharing of consumer experience can be taken from the perspective of interests, so that both online and offline consumers can generate sharing behaviors. For example, Starbucks can hold forwarding and sharing,

and get buy one get one free activities. Offline consumers can directly enjoy the second half-price discount by sharing their in-store consumption experience; online consumers can get cash discounts by sharing their eating experience coupons, etc., thereby prompting consumers to share behaviors, in order to bring about a virtuous marketing cycle through positive consumer sharing behaviors.

## 5 Conclusion

Starbucks' strategic deployment of digital marketing tactics, particularly through social media, underscores the brand's sophisticated grasp of emergent consumer dynamics in the digital era. This proficiency in harnessing digital platforms facilitates the cultivation of authentic brand-consumer interactions, fostering loyalty amidst an increasingly fragmented market landscape. By leveraging innovative content curation and harnessing real-time consumer feedback, Starbucks reaffirms its commitment to not just product excellence but also to a nuanced understanding of the contemporary digital milieu. Significantly, Starbucks' endeavors in the digital space reflect not mere marketing initiatives but a confluence of brand ethos, strategic foresight, and consumer-centric adaptability. Such holistic integration of digital strategies not only confers Starbucks a distinct competitive advantage but also buttresses its preeminence in the global coffee industry amidst myriad challenges.

## References

1. Nurhizam Safie Mohd Satar, Omkar Dastane and Muhamad Yusnorizam Ma'arif, "Customer Value Proposition for E-Commerce: A Case Study Approach" *International Journal of Advanced Computer Science and Applications(IJACSA)*, 10(2), 2019. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14569/IJACSA.2019.0100259>
2. Raviadaran, Hema and Dastane, Omkar and Ma'arif, Muhamad Yusnorizam and Mohd Satar, Nurhizam Safie, Impact of Service Quality Dimensions on Internet Banking Adoption, Satisfaction and Patronage (October 31, 2019). Malaysia, *International Journal of Management, Accounting and Economics*, Vol. 6, No. 10, October, 2019, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3503393>
3. Ma'arif, Muhamad Yusnorizam and Hafifi Yusof, Mohd Fikri and Mohd Satar, Nurhizam Safie, The Challenges of Implementing Agile Scrum in Information System's Project (August 10, 2018). *Jour of Adv Research in Dynamical & Control Systems*, Vol. 10, 09-Special Issue, 2018, <https://www.jardcs.org/backissues/abstract.php?archiveid=5261>
4. Schivinski, B. and Dabrowski, D. (2015), "The impact of brand communication on brand equity through Facebook", *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 31-53. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIM-02-2014-0007>
5. Wong, S. W., Dastane, O., Safie, N., Ma'arif, M.Y. (2019). What Wechat can learn from Whatsapp? Customer Value Proposition Development for Mobile Social Networking (MSN) Apps: A Case Study Approach. *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Information Technology*, 97(4).
6. Sam, C.-Y & Cai, Y.-Y. (2015). *A study on the use of social media to understand consumer preference: The case of starbucks*. 5. 207-214.

7. Edirisinghe, S. (2020). *Effectiveness of twitter as a social media platform used by starbucks*
8. Gallagher, J & Ransbotham, S. (2010). *Social Media and Customer Dialog Management at Starbucks*. MIS Quarterly Executive. 9.
9. Taecharungroj, Viriya. (2016). Starbucks' marketing communications strategy on Twitter. *Journal of Marketing Communications*. 23. 1-19. 10.1080/13527266.2016.1138139.

**Open Access** This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

