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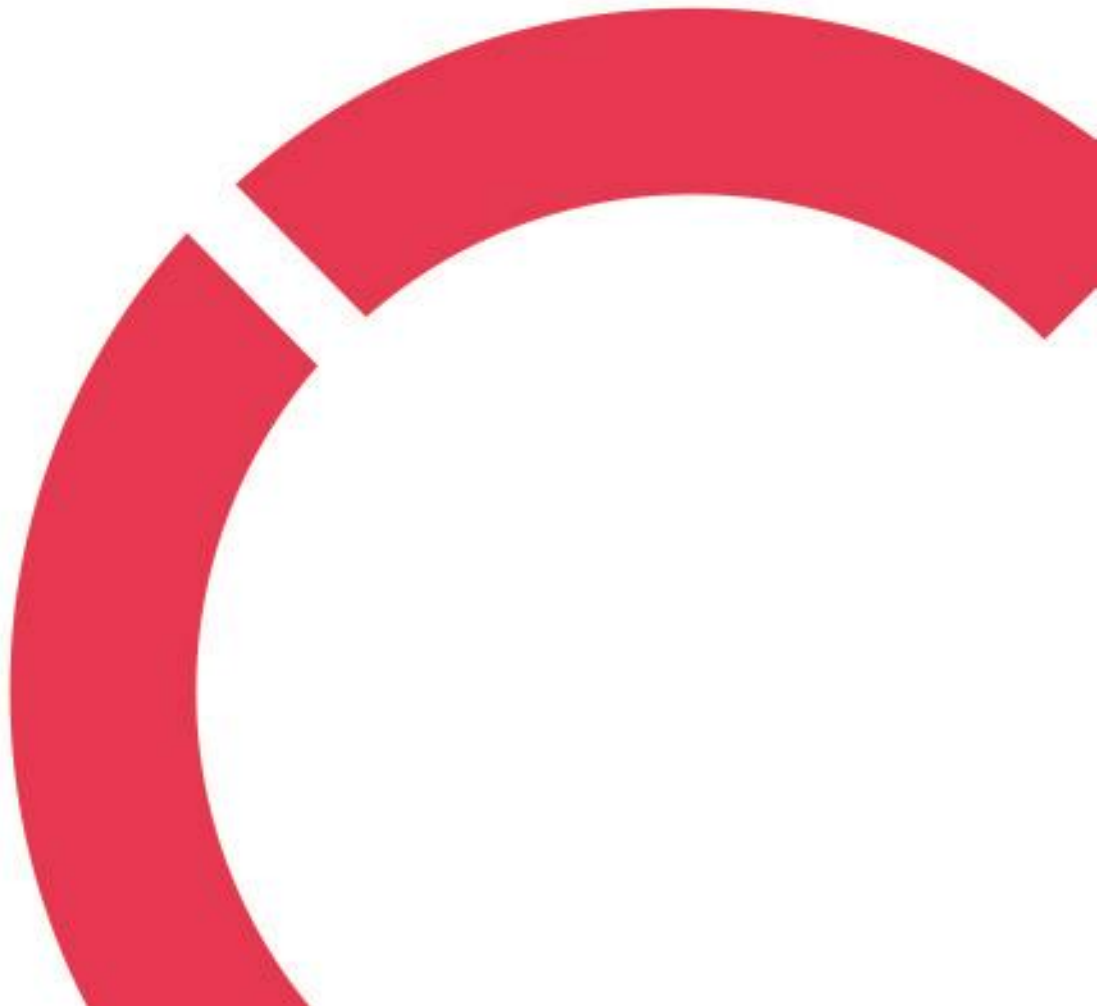
SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN EFFECTIVE MARKETING TOOL

Thesis

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ABSTRACT

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<p>This thesis investigates the field of social media marketing, aiming to provide both foundational and advanced insights into its development, significance, and strategic application in today's digital business environment. The primary objective is to examine how social media can be effectively utilized as a tool for business promotion, growth, and competitiveness. The theoretical framework is based on key concepts of digital marketing, including content strategy, brand engagement, consumer behavior, influencer marketing, and the use of analytics to track and optimize campaign performance. Methodologically, the research adopts a qualitative approach, combining an in-depth literature review with analysis of real-world case studies from various industries to understand successful social media practices.</p> <p>The results indicate that targeted content, audience segmentation, and platform-specific strategies are essential for maximizing impact. Moreover, integrating storytelling with data-driven decision-making fosters deeper customer relationships and brand loyalty. The thesis concludes that social media marketing, when aligned with business goals and supported by continuous evaluation, serves as a powerful strategic asset for achieving sustainable growth and competitive advantage in the digital marketplace.</p>		
Key words Analytics, Brand Engagement, Content Strategy, Digital Marketing, Social media		

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1 INTRODUCTION

Social media has evolved from a simple communication medium into a powerful corporate marketing tool. It has significantly transformed the way businesses interact with audiences, promote products, and cultivate customer loyalty. As a dynamic and constantly evolving platform, social media offers vast potential for enhancing marketing efforts. This thesis aims to explore the platform's potential as an effective marketing tool by presenting a comprehensive literature review tracing social media's development from its inception to the present. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for businesses seeking to strengthen their marketing strategies through digital platforms.

The initial section of the thesis investigates the history and evolution of social media. It distinguishes between marketing and social media, emphasizing how their integration has introduced new ways for businesses to engage with users across the globe. This section also analyzes the transformation of traditional marketing through the emergence of digital engagement and interactive communication. The growing importance of social media marketing in today's digital age forms the foundation of the second section. As online platforms rapidly expand, marketing strategies must evolve to remain responsive to changing user behavior and expectations. This part of the thesis explores the necessity of incorporating social media into comprehensive marketing strategies and examines successful case studies that illustrate the tangible impact of effective campaigns.

Further analysis is devoted to identifying the most influential social media platforms, their unique characteristics, and the strategies that have proven most successful. The role of user segmentation in crafting targeted marketing approaches is also explored, offering a clearer understanding of how social media contributes to business growth. In addition to examining recent advancements in the field, attention is given to how businesses can adapt to new trends and technologies to stay competitive. The thesis concludes with a practical guide tailored for emerging entrepreneurs. This guide provides a structured, actionable roadmap designed to help users unfamiliar with social media establish a strong online presence. By applying these principles, entrepreneurs can effectively harness the power of social media to support business objectives and achieve success. This thesis aims to provide both foundational and advanced knowledge in the field of social media marketing, covering its origins, relevance, and current best practices. It explores how social media can be leveraged as a strategic asset for business promotion, growth, and competitiveness in the digital marketplace.

2 HISTORICAL INFORMATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The term "social media" refers to a collection of online tools and services that facilitate content sharing, communication, and the creation of personal networks among friends, colleagues, and organizations. Each individual utilizes their network in unique ways. Social media platforms enable people to connect with friends, exchange ideas, and stay informed about current events. Entrepreneurs also take advantage of social media to expand their reach. These platforms allow business owners and creatives to grow their fan bases and quickly promote products and services to a broad audience (Paquette 2013). Social media also offers the opportunity to test new markets and maintain a loyal following. It provides tools such as content calendars and strategic advice, helping even small marketing teams remain authentic and consistent on the platform. In a relatively short time, social media has become one of the most widely used channels for communication and information sharing in society. It offers a platform for expressing thoughts and opinions and facilitates a new form of communication. Social media keeps individuals informed about global events and brings people together from around the world, transcending national borders and fostering a truly global community (Balida, Crisostomo & Al Hosni 2022).

2.1 Evolution of social media

Humans are inherently communicative beings, continuously seeking new ways to express themselves creatively and meaningfully. Over time, communication methods have evolved from basic gestures and cave drawings to texting and emailing. Social media emerged in the late 1990s, offering new, rapid means of communication. The world has been significantly altered by the rise of social media, with these technologies being adopted rapidly and widely. They have transformed the way individuals organize to demand political change, find partners, and access news daily. The natural human desire for connection and the advancement of digital technology have both played key roles in the creation of social media. It represents a large-scale effort to create and maintain personal relationships. In less than a generation, the direct electronic flow of information has led to social media becoming a virtual community, a retail platform, and a crucial tool for 21st-century marketing.

Online communication services became widely available in the 1980s and 1990s due to the expansion of the Internet. Through email, messaging on bulletin boards, and real-time online chat, these services

introduced individuals to digital communication. The first social media networks began in 1997 with the brief existence of Six Degrees, a profile-uploading service. In 2001, Friendster took over this service, and millions of people used these early platforms, which allowed email registration and basic online networking. The social media revolution began in 2003 with platforms such as Myspace, LinkedIn, and Friendster (Balida, Crisostomo & Al Hosni 2022).

As technology advanced, newer social media sites like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram emerged. These platforms became far more than just basic communication tools, enabling individuals to create, communicate, and trade in mutually beneficial ways. Moreover, they facilitated business transactions, enabled online purchasing, and helped people connect with the right organizations and networks. These platforms revolutionized not only online networking and communication but also the patterns of connection in the digital world (Paquette 2013).

2.2 Social media today

Social media has become an essential part of daily life in today's world. It serves as a powerful tool for exchanging, creating, and distributing knowledge, as well as connecting with people locally and globally. Social networking sites are arguably the most influential social media tools. Most individuals, whether regular users or not, are familiar with platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Blogger, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Google. A significant number of people between the ages of 13 and 64 have a Facebook account. These platforms allow people from around the world to connect, creating numerous communication opportunities for organizations, educational institutions, and other groups. Social media platforms are becoming increasingly valuable for purposes beyond personal networking.

Today, social networking sites are also used for conducting interviews via Facebook or other social media tools and for researching potential candidates before making hiring decisions. Google is another platform enabling global business meetings across various regions and industries. Even when employers cannot meet in person, virtual meetings can be arranged, updates can be shared, and ideas can be collaborated on effectively. Board meetings and school projects have become less stressful and easier to schedule as a result. Social networking sites have thus become an indispensable part of daily life and interactions. Overall, these networks serve as vital sources of connectivity, collaboration, and communication in the modern world.

The news and journalism industries have been significantly impacted by social media. Traditional print media is declining as readers are increasingly turning to online publications, with the internet becoming the fastest and most convenient source for obtaining news. Social media has made it easier than ever to generate, distribute, and disseminate newsworthy articles or gossip globally. Popular news stories are often shared almost instantly across platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and other social networking sites. The power of social media has made society far more informed about news and events happening worldwide.

Furthermore, social media technologies are now considered essential tools in the marketing industry. As digital and online marketing continue to grow, businesses without a social media presence are at risk of becoming obsolete. Entrepreneurs and small business owners are increasingly turning to social media to promote their brands, as these platforms often provide the broadest reach and the greatest impact. Today, social media and internet marketing have become nearly synonymous, and in the future, social media is expected to have an even more significant influence on the marketing sector.

3 INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL MEDIA AND MARKETING

Social media is a digital space that enables individuals and companies to create, distribute, and actively engage with various types of content. Marketing strategies are designed specifically to promote goods and services to targeted markets and demographics. When utilized effectively, these strategies can greatly enhance visibility. Together, social media and marketing form a powerful combination that helps businesses connect with clients, increase brand recognition, and drive long-term growth.

3.1 What is marketing, and how are social media and marketing connected?

Marketing is one of the most crucial aspects of a business, encompassing several key processes. It involves a combination of activities aimed at communicating and educating customers or target audiences about a product or service. In a broader sense, activities such as branding and advertising help convert people into customers. Over time, many marketing methods have evolved, with many being replaced by digital marketing techniques (Balida, Crisostomo & Al Hosni, 2022, 165-179). Marketing serves as the primary means through which people become aware of a product or service in the market. Traditionally, marketing was carried out through newspapers, posters, and TV advertisements. However, the internet, social media, and digital marketing methods have emerged as the most effective approaches, becoming the next major wave in the marketing industry (Paquette 2013).

Since the rise of the internet and social media in 1997, the first social media platform emerged. Initially, marketing on social media was not a trend, but in 2006, Facebook launched and rapidly gained over 50 million users. A few months later, Facebook Ads were introduced, marking one of the earliest forms of social media marketing. This event marked the beginning of a new era in digital advertising. Social media platforms have since become more impactful, offering a variety of marketing tools and options for businesses to reach customers quickly and cost-effectively (Balida, Crisostomo & Al Hosni 2022, 165-179). These platforms became integral to marketing when popular websites like Facebook and Instagram introduced advanced audience targeting, demographics, algorithms, advertising tools, and performance tracking features. With the benefits of social engagement and real-time interaction, businesses and customers now have a communication channel that did not exist before. Sharing and commenting have become vital forms of real-time communication.

3.2 What social media and marketing work

Social media marketing involves platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, which are widely popular, among others. Other platforms serve different purposes, such as LinkedIn and WhatsApp. Social media platforms serve as connecting points between businesses and customers. Businesses use social media as a tool to reach their audience. There are numerous ways businesses can promote their products and services on social media (Balida, Crisostomo & Al Hosni 2022, 165-179). By identifying their target audience, selecting the appropriate platform and tools, businesses can advertise or engage with customers meaningfully. In essence, social media platforms provide businesses with advertising options, in-platform services, and organic opportunities to showcase products and services.

4 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING METHODS

Social media marketing methods vary based on business goals, target audiences, customer behaviors, industry types, and available resources. Selecting the right method is essential, as some approaches can be costly if not executed properly and strategically. Numerous social media marketing methods exist: some are paid, while others are free, each with its advantages and disadvantages. Choosing the right marketing method can not only be effective but also open doors for businesses in various ways. The next paragraph discusses some of the most commonly and widely used marketing methods.

Organic marketing is a method of marketing that does not require monetary investment. It is the default, universal approach for most businesses today. There are many ways businesses can implement organic marketing effectively and consistently. Organic marketing on social media typically focuses on organic content and audience interaction. For example, maintaining an active business profile on a social media platform is a key aspect of this approach. Organic social media marketing has several advantages, including being cost-effective, easy to implement, increasing engagement, and helping build industry authority (Paquette 2013). As part of organic marketing, businesses keep their social media profiles active with general content to inform or update customers. However, the main disadvantage of organic marketing is its limited reach, as it cannot target audiences beyond existing followers.

Paid social media marketing contrasts with organic marketing. It involves paying for advertisements on social media platforms, where businesses invest in displaying ads to targeted audiences to achieve better results. Paid ads are a more intent-driven form of marketing and an effective way to reach specific, niche audiences, based on factors like geography, location, behavior, age, gender, or interests. Paid advertisements offer businesses the opportunity for a wider reach, increased brand visibility, and enhanced recognition (Bashar, Ahmad & Wasiq 2012, 88-99).

It is important to understand what an influencer is before delving deeper into the topic. A social media influencer is a person with credibility or influence in a specific industry or niche. In social media marketing, influencer marketing plays a vital and growing role. Influencers promote products or services to their followers in exchange for payment from businesses or brands. Influencer marketing has gained popularity since 2009, with platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat becoming major players in recent years. This form of marketing is highly effective for targeting specific niches

(Bashar, Ahmad & Wasiq 2012, 88-99). Costs are typically fixed or commission-based, depending on the agreement. Influencers may also create custom content for promotions, charging accordingly. For example, footballer Cristiano Ronaldo, with approximately 647 million Instagram followers, charges brands like Nike and Binance around \$2.6 million per sponsored post (Balida, Crisostomo & Al Hosni 2022, 165-179).

Giveaways and contests are impactful social media marketing strategies. They directly or indirectly boost a business's reach and engagement, ultimately driving sales and increasing brand awareness. When brands run giveaways, they often offer free products or services to participants, encouraging audience interaction and strengthening customer relationships. Today, brands collaborate with influencers to host contests for their followers, offering exclusive coupons or valuable gifts.

User-generated content refers to content produced by consumers of a brand or product. It is created and published on social media by loyal customers or followers. This method of marketing is unconventional but highly effective for brands and companies. User-generated content serves as a foundation for industries, with companies leveraging the reach of content created by their audience. Marketing occurs when loyal consumers create content around the products, leading to increased reach and visibility, which in turn builds credibility for brands. For example, DJI, a Chinese tech manufacturer specializing in aerial vehicles and aerial photography and videography, is widely known for user-generated content. DJI's official Instagram account, which has around 4.8 million followers, features content primarily created by users, with much of it showcasing footage shot using DJI devices (Bashar, Ahmad & Wasiq 2012, 88-99).

Cross-promotion and partnerships on social media refer to collaborations between brands and businesses to promote each other on their social media profiles. Both parties benefit by sharing content that includes mentions of the other brand or business. This approach provides exposure to different audiences and is often considered a form of paid advertising. Cross-promotional partnerships create new opportunities to expand businesses and enhance credibility with the audiences of the involved brands.

Interactive content refers to content types such as photos and videos that encourage audience engagement on a brand's social media profiles. Various forms of interaction can be implemented, including polls, quizzes, questions, Q&As, and open chats. The primary goal of this marketing method is to increase audience interaction with social media activities, ultimately boosting the brand's

presence. Interactive content has the potential to improve conversion rates and increase the number of people subscribing to the brand's marketing objectives.

5 IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN MARKETING

The advent of social media has forever changed the way businesses connect with their customers. It has become a key tool for bridging the gap between companies and their audiences, as social media is now an integral part of people's daily lives. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram have become saturated with business clients, capitalizing on the time people spend on these platforms. This has provided businesses with the opportunity to influence customers and drive sales.

Social media offers several advantages to businesses, including data and performance metrics that give an overview of marketing results (Inversini & Sykes 2014, 131-144). It also serves as an excellent tool for competitor analysis. By analyzing the social media profiles of competitors, businesses can identify gaps in their strategies and find opportunities for improvement. This data-driven analysis can help businesses refine their social media marketing strategy and enhance their offerings (Balida, Crisostomo & Al Hosni 2022, 165-179). While social media platforms primarily serve as a showcase for products and services, the ultimate goal is to generate revenue. Statistics show that 39% of consumers use Facebook for purchasing decisions, and one-third of consumers expect to make more purchases through social media networks by 2025 (Bashar, Ahmad & Wasiq 2012, 88-99). Therefore, using social media marketing is an effective way to boost revenue generation.

Social media platforms were created to build communities, and businesses can leverage this to create their loyal customer base and enhance brand value. Being connected to a community allows businesses to form more personal and authentic relationships with their audience, which can drive growth and loyalty. With over 5.56 billion internet users worldwide as of February 2025 and 5.24 billion active social media users, the massive potential of social media as a marketing tool is evident. The constant growth of social media platforms and the vast number of users make it an essential tool for businesses. People discover brands on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, becoming part of their regular journey (Ferguson 2008, 178–182.)

Surveys show the impact of social media marketing, with 83% of marketers worldwide citing increased exposure as the primary benefit, followed by 73% mentioning increased traffic, and 65% reporting generated leads. These statistics highlight why social media remains the best marketing tool for businesses today. Statistics given below highlight the growing impact of social media on marketing and consumer behavior in recent years. Social media ads are currently the leading source of brand

awareness among internet users aged 16 to 34, highlighting their effectiveness in reaching younger audiences. Additionally, a 2024 survey among marketers worldwide revealed that approximately 86% of them use Facebook for marketing purposes, underscoring its continued relevance and dominance in digital marketing strategies. Instagram has also emerged as a key platform for product discovery, with 61% of users relying on it to find their next purchase (Inversini & Sykes 2014, 131-144). These statistics emphasize the growing significance of social media in marketing and suggest that its impact will only continue to increase in the coming years (Bashar, Ahmad & Wasiq 2012, 88-99).

6 SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM ANALYSIS

The analysis of social media involves collecting data from various platforms and interpreting it to gain insights into factors such as the number of viewers, online reach, engagement with liked content by users, and the targeting of the right audience. This analysis plays a crucial role in decision-making and the development of marketing strategies, as it helps tailor the audience, create effective content, and consistently track competitors. The first social media site, Six Degrees, was launched in 1997. It was a platform where users could create profiles, maintain a list of friends as contacts, exchange daily messages privately, and connect with others (Divya & Regi 2014, 163-168). However, users at the time could not fully comprehend the platform's potential, and it only lasted until 2000. Despite this, the rise of social media began in the 21st century (Di Pietro & Pantano 2012, 18–29). Friendster and MySpace, launched between 2002 and 2003, saw rapid growth in popularity among online users, teenagers, and artists around the world. These platforms also helped friends connect to mutual contacts. MySpace was unique in offering customizable profiles, enabling users to upload pictures, videos, and music. While MySpace was a creative space for users, it ultimately could not withstand the competition from platforms like Facebook (Ferguson 2008, 178–182.)

By including a visual representation of the marketing funnel, the concept becomes simpler and easier for marketers and decision-makers to understand. It provides valuable information to track the impact of advertisements or content, as well as performance in comparison to competitors and industry benchmarks. Depending on the goals of the campaign, businesses may analyze a variety of key performance indicators (KPIs), including reach and viewership, return on investment for ads, and the number of clicks and conversions. When social media engagement shows low reach and low engagement, more attention should be given to the types of hashtags used to reach the audience, improvement of SEO (search engine optimization), and focusing on creating attractive captions. If there is high reach but low engagement, a review of captions is necessary. If organic content is receiving a lot of views but minimal engagement, using features like questions and answer stickers, quizzes, and polls can help boost interaction (Gilmore, Gallagher & Henry 2007, 234–245). These interactive tools are available on most social media platforms and can enhance user engagement, providing valuable data for future content planning.

Low reach with high engagement may indicate that some investment in promoting productive posts could be an effective solution. If social media analysis shows that content generates adequate

engagement but has relatively low reach, promoting these posts with a small budget can help (Divya & Regi 2014, 163-168). Additionally, establishing a consistent posting schedule is beneficial. This strategy is generally affordable but can lead to significant improvements in reach and exposure. In the case of high reach and high engagement, the current approach is proving successful. This is an ideal time to invest in paid social media advertising to reach an even larger audience and increase visibility. It is important to remember that social media is constantly evolving, so strategies that are successful today may require updates and adjustments shortly.

Social media platform analysis is essential for optimizing digital marketing efforts and ensuring long-term success. By understanding the relationship between reach and engagement, businesses can refine their strategies to increase audience interaction and improve overall brand exposure. Regular monitoring and timely adjustments are critical to maintaining effectiveness in the dynamic and competitive digital environment (Gilmore, Gallagher & Henry 2007, 234–245).

6.1 Facebook

Mark Zuckerberg, along with his co-founders Dustin Moskovitz, Chris Hughes, and others, created Facebook in 2004 with the primary goal of providing a platform for Harvard students to connect, share personal information, and photos. The concept quickly spread to other educational institutions, businesses, and users globally. Today, Facebook has 3.07 billion monthly active users (MAUs) worldwide, representing 59.38% of all social media users. Initially designed to connect college students, Facebook rapidly expanded its user base. In 2006, the introduction of the News Feed revolutionized how users consumed content. In 2007, Facebook launched its mobile platform, allowing users to access the site on the go, highlighting the growing importance of smartphones. In 2009, the iconic "like" button was introduced, offering users a simple way to interact with and express appreciation for content.

By 2012, Facebook reached 1 billion users globally, a major milestone. This year also saw the introduction of highlighted posts, giving users more control over their News Feed by allowing them to prioritize content from specific friends or pages. In the same year, Facebook acquired Instagram, a rapidly growing photo-sharing platform (Cheong & Morrison 2008, 38–49). Facebook's expansion continued in 2014 with the acquisition of WhatsApp, a popular messaging app with a broad international user base.

In 2016, Facebook introduced reactions, expanding the range of emotions users could express beyond the "like" button. In 2021, Facebook rebranded as Meta, signaling its shift towards the metaverse and a focus on immersive experiences. By 2023, Meta had made substantial investments in generative artificial intelligence, launching tools and systems to create diverse user experiences and content. To compete with Twitter, Meta launched Threads in July 2023, a new microblogging site.

In January 2024, Meta announced its work on Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), a revolutionary technology aimed at creating human-level cognitive capabilities to transform future digital interactions. The timeline of Facebook's evolution highlights how it has grown from a simple social media platform to a powerful, diversified technological ecosystem, with increasing focus on artificial intelligence, immersive experiences, and the metaverse (Divya & Regi 2014, 163-168).

6.2 Instagram

Instagram was founded by Mike Krieger and Kevin Systrom, officially launching in October 2010 after Systrom uploaded a test photo of a dog with the caption "test." Combining Systrom's passion for photography and Krieger's ambition in mobile applications, the platform quickly gained traction (Kumar 2015, p. 94.) Within just three months, Instagram surpassed one million active users, doubling to two million six weeks later. Recognizing its potential, Facebook acquired Instagram for approximately one billion dollars in 2012. This acquisition marked a significant shift in the online social networking landscape, as Instagram continued its growth by leveraging Facebook's resources (Cheong & Morrison 2008, 38-49).

Initially, Instagram was iOS-only and allowed users to take photos, apply filters, and share them with followers. This move helped the platform establish its presence. The real turning point came in April 2012 when Instagram became available for Android, opening up a new user base and reaching 50 million users by the end of the month. In June 2013, Instagram introduced video-sharing features, and in December 2013, it launched Instagram Direct (private messaging), commonly known as DMs (Harb et al 2019, 28-44).

Instagram made a major shift in 2016 when it switched to an algorithmic feed, prioritizing content based on user preferences rather than chronological order. The following year, Instagram introduced "Stories," allowing users to post temporary photos and videos that disappeared after 24 hours. The

feature quickly became one of the most used on the platform. Later in 2017, Instagram introduced Instagram Live, enabling users to stream events in real-time to their followers.

In 2018, Instagram launched IGTV, a platform for long-form videos, and in 2020, it debuted "Reels," a feature for short, 15-to 30-second videos set to music. This shift towards short-form content solidified Instagram as an essential platform for business advertising, especially with the introduction of the "Shop" feature, allowing users to shop directly through the app, though this feature has since been discontinued. Instagram's evolution into a powerful business tool and its continued expansion solidified its place in daily social media usage (Icha 2015). Meanwhile, Twitter, initially launched in March 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Biz Stone, Noah Glass, and Evan Williams, began as a basic microblogging platform with a 140-character limit, inspired by SMS text messaging. The platform rapidly gained popularity, especially after the introduction of hashtags in 2007 to organize tweets, which became a vital tool for spreading information during events like the San Diego wildfires (Harb et al. 2019, 28-44).

By 2009, Twitter had gained millions of users and introduced the "Retweet" feature, allowing users to share posts across the network. In 2012, Twitter reached 200 million active users, rebranded its logo with a bird, and acquired Vine. The platform continued to serve as a space for storytelling and justice, notably giving a voice to women in the #MeToo movement. In 2017, Twitter increased its character limit to 280, further enhancing user expression (Icha 2015). In 2021, Elon Musk began buying shares of Twitter, eventually acquiring the company in 2022 for \$44 billion. Under Musk's leadership, significant changes occurred, including the introduction of Twitter Blue and several policy alterations. In 2023, Musk initiated a radical redesign, replacing the iconic bird logo with a stark "X," signaling a new direction for the platform (Kumar 2015, 94).

6.3 TikTok

Zhang Yiming, the founder of TikTok, first launched a mobile application called A.me through his company, ByteDance, in 2016. This app allowed users to create and post short video clips. Within three months, the company rebranded the app as Douyin for the Chinese market. A year later, ByteDance launched the app internationally under the name TikTok. In 2017, ByteDance made a strategic move by acquiring Musical.ly, a popular lip-syncing video app that allowed users to create videos with various effects and speed options ranging from 15 to 60 seconds. Musical.ly had already

established a significant user base in the United States, which ByteDance saw as an opportunity to expand TikTok's reach. The merger was officially completed on August 2, 2018, with TikTok as the retained brand name. All user accounts, followers, and features from Musical.ly were seamlessly integrated into TikTok (Kumar 2015, 94).

As TikTok's user base rapidly grew, concerns regarding data privacy and censorship arose. To address these issues, TikTok focused on adjusting to market restrictions, increasing transparency, and continuously revising its privacy policies. One of TikTok's standout features is the "For You" page, which provides users with a tailored algorithm-driven feed based on their interests. Unlike other social media platforms, TikTok allows users to discover content they enjoy without needing to follow specific creators (Icha 2015).

The COVID-19 pandemic played a significant role in TikTok's rise, as people confined at home turned to the app for entertainment and a sense of community. From comedy skits to viral dance challenges, TikTok became a creative outlet for users of all ages. The platform's inclusivity is another key factor in its popularity, as TikTok creators come from diverse backgrounds, ages, and skill sets. The platform fosters a sense of acceptance and creativity, allowing users to express themselves freely.

6.4 LinkedIn

One of the most significant social networks for the business community is LinkedIn. It was founded by Reid Hoffman in 2002 as a platform for professionals to build and maintain industry connections, stay in touch with colleagues, exchange business ideas, and explore career opportunities (Kumar 2015, 94.) Over time, LinkedIn evolved into a powerful tool not only for individuals but also for companies looking to recruit talent and promote their brand identity. Users create professional, résumé-style profiles that highlight work experience, education, certifications, and areas of expertise. These profiles serve as digital portfolios that provide a quick overview of an individual's career journey. Users can then grow their network by sending connection invitations, resulting in an organically expanding community of professionals (Strickland, Williams, Laing & Frost 2016, 74-92).

A basic LinkedIn membership is free but comes with limited functionality. Users cannot perform advanced searches, are limited to 100 search results, and can only message people within their network (Khan & Kulshreshtha 2020, 1-6). Information on profile views is also restricted to the last five users.

LinkedIn Premium provides additional features, including the ability to save more than three searches, access more than 100 search results, and message any user, regardless of connection status.

In 2016, Microsoft acquired LinkedIn for \$26 billion. Today, LinkedIn operates in over 200 countries, with more than one billion active users. Employers across 230 countries use LinkedIn Talent Solutions to find and hire candidates, and around 65 million job seekers use the platform each week.

6.5 YouTube

On February 14, 2005, YouTube was registered by Steve Chen, Chad Hurley, and Jawed Karim, three former employees of the American e-commerce company PayPal. Jawed Karim, one of the co-founders, posted the first video to the platform—an 18-second clip titled "Me at the Zoo," filmed at the San Diego Zoo. Since its upload on April 24, 2005, the video has garnered over 240 million views (Hazira et al., 2022). YouTube offered fewer restrictions than earlier platforms, allowing users to upload, watch, comment on, like, and share videos with ease. Unlike its predecessors, YouTube rapidly gained global recognition as the leading video-sharing website (Kumar 2015, 94.)

YouTube's main features include the ability for users to upload and share videos up to twelve hours long or 256 gigabytes in size. The platform supports a range of formats and video qualities, including HD and 4K, and can be accessed across various devices. YouTube Premium, a subscription service, offers features such as ad-free viewing, background play, offline access, and exclusive content. For younger audiences, YouTube Kids provides a safer viewing environment with parental controls (Cha 2009, 77–93.) The platform also enables users to stream live events in high resolution, allowing for real-time global broadcasting. Its Content ID system helps copyright holders manage their intellectual property by detecting and addressing unauthorized use in uploaded videos.

6.6 Social Media Segmentation

Segmentation, or the process of breaking down an audience using different social media platforms, is known as social media segmentation. Businesses and brands use this strategy to categorize their users, enabling more effective content delivery and communication with specific groups (Balida, Crisostomo & Al Hosni 2022, 165-179). A successful social media marketing strategy depends on understanding

the target audience. Since each brand offers unique products or services, it is crucial to target the right audience on the appropriate platform.

Social media segmentation serves as an effective tool for locating and interacting with relevant audiences. Communicating with the right target group maximizes the impact of marketing campaigns. More than just dividing users, segmentation is an analytical tool that helps brands identify their ideal audience, allowing them to deliver messages to appropriate groups. It breaks down broader markets into more manageable and homogenous segments. This segmentation can be based on age, gender, income, interests, behavior, or other demographic characteristics.

By increasing the relevance and efficiency of outreach efforts, segmentation helps brands better connect with their target audience (Reichstein, Bruschi & Ummeln 2021). It also allows for adjustments in content and marketing strategies to suit different customer groups. Since not all customers share the same needs or preferences, segmentation is key to understanding these differences and improving communication. Brands that effectively implement segmentation tend to produce more impactful content and establish stronger relationships with consumers (Cha 2009, 77–93.)

There are numerous benefits to using segmentation in social media marketing. It allows brands to focus more precisely on specific user groups, which can significantly improve return on investment (ROI). While it may either reduce or increase marketing expenditures, its main value lies in delivering a higher ROI (Bashar, Ahmad & Wasiq 2012, 88-99). Additionally, segmentation helps organizations create more targeted and persuasive content, directly or indirectly engaging their audience and strengthening brand-consumer relationships. Brands that understand their audience and tailor their marketing accordingly are more likely to build loyalty and achieve business growth (Cheong & Morrison 2008, 38–49).

One of the simplest and most commonly used techniques is demographic segmentation. This approach targets consumers based on characteristics such as age, gender, education, income, or other demographic factors. By understanding these attributes, brands can craft messages that resonate with specific target audiences (Harb et al. 2019, 28-44). Geographic segmentation is another important method used by brands. It involves tailoring marketing messages to specific regions or locations. This ensures that the content is relevant to consumers in a particular area, helping them relate more closely to the product or service being offered. This technique focuses on consumers' personality traits, lifestyle choices, interests, and values. Industries such as fashion and footwear frequently apply

psychographic segmentation to align their messaging and product offerings with the attitudes and preferences of their target market (Adamopoulos & Todri 2015, 1641-1650).

By analyzing consumers' past behavior, such as previous purchases or interactions, brands can create more personalized marketing messages. Behaviour-based segmentation enables businesses to deliver relevant offers, promotions, or product recommendations, improving customer engagement and conversion rates (Cheong & Morrison 2008, 38–49). Lifecycle segmentation categorizes audiences based on their stage in the customer journey. This includes first-time buyers, loyal customers, and potential prospects. By identifying where a customer stands in the lifecycle, businesses can create more effective and appealing marketing messages tailored to each group's specific needs and expectations (Chi 2011, 44–61.)

6.7 Social media marketing trends

Social media marketing has become one of the most powerful tools in today's digital landscape. With over 63.9% of the global population using social media, businesses and industries are increasingly motivated to utilize these platforms for promoting their products and services (Bashar, Ahmad & Wasiq 2012, 88-99). Unlike digital marketing, which involves tools such as Google Ads or Google Analytics, social media marketing focuses specifically on social platforms to reach audiences. As technology continues to evolve, new trends like AI-driven insights and immersive digital experiences are offering brands unique ways to connect with their customers in a fast-paced digital environment (Cox 2010.)

One of the leading trends in social media marketing is the rise of shoppable posts and social commerce. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok have transformed casual scrolling into an interactive shopping journey (Balida, Crisostomo & Al Hosni 2022, 165-179). These shoppable features are helping brands reduce the friction between product discovery and purchase, significantly enhancing the overall customer experience. Augmented Reality (AR) ads are also gaining popularity, allowing users to engage with products in a more immersive way. For example, a customer can use AR to visualize how a couch would look in their living room. This real-time interaction helps consumers make more confident purchasing decisions and enhances the online shopping experience.

Video content remains a powerful trend, providing a quick and engaging way to communicate with audiences. Short-form videos on platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter are particularly effective, with storytelling, user testimonials, and product showcases leading to high engagement. Studies suggest that concise videos, especially around 26 seconds, on Instagram tend to generate the most user interaction (Cox 2010). Influencer marketing continues to be a valuable approach. Nano and micro-influencers, despite having smaller follower bases, often create more authentic and trustworthy content. Brands working with influencers who connect with niche audiences tend to experience higher return on investment and deeper emotional engagement with their customers (Inversini & Sykes 2014, 131-144). User-generated content (UGC) has also proven to be a powerful tool in social media marketing. It offers social proof, increases authenticity, and helps create a sense of community. By showcasing customer stories and product experiences, brands can foster larger conversations and stronger relationships with their audiences (Chu 2011, 30–43.)

AI-driven personalization has brought a new dimension to marketing. Brands are now able to analyze user behavior and create tailored advertising campaigns that feel intuitive and personal. This targeted approach has significantly improved engagement and user satisfaction. In addition to content and targeting strategies, customer service remains a key focus for brands. Responding promptly and effectively to user inquiries is crucial. Chatbots and automated customer service tools offer quick, personalized support around the clock, enhancing customer satisfaction and building brand loyalty—even outside of regular business hours (Curran, Graham & Temple 2011, 26–33). Finally, agility has become essential for success in social media marketing. With continuous changes in platform algorithms, content formats, and engagement tools, brands must adapt quickly to stay relevant. Those that embrace flexibility and innovation are more likely to outperform their competitors and thrive in the evolving digital space.

7 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING - A GUIDE FOR ENTREPRENEURS

An entrepreneur is someone who starts or owns a business, either by building it from scratch or by acquiring an existing one. The journey of entrepreneurship includes several important phases, and marketing is undoubtedly one of the most critical. In today's digital age, social media has become an essential part of that journey (Harb et al. 2019, 28-44). This section serves as a practical guide for entrepreneurs on leveraging social media marketing effectively. It provides insights from basic to advanced techniques that entrepreneurs can follow as a roadmap. In the modern business landscape, social media marketing is no longer just about creating a presence on platforms—it's about establishing a strong and consistent brand identity. Successfully maintaining that presence requires strategy, consistency, and adaptability (Curran, Graham & Temple 2011, 26–33). When used effectively, social media platforms can significantly boost business visibility and profitability. However, if marketing strategies are poorly implemented, it can lead to missed opportunities and even costly mistakes. For entrepreneurs, understanding and navigating this space thoughtfully is key to long-term business success.

7.1 Understanding and choosing the right platform

The first and most crucial step in starting a social media marketing journey is selecting the right platform based on where a business's target audience is most active. Without thoughtful consideration, businesses risk missing their marketing objectives by focusing on platforms that do not align with their customer base. Several factors and steps can guide this decision effectively. Identifying the right audience is the foundation of this process. Entrepreneurs must clearly define their potential customers and understand what motivates them to use specific social media platforms (Curtis 2010, 90–92.) Key questions to consider include: Who are the potential customers? What are their needs and interests? What is their geographic location? What platforms are popular among people of particular age groups, genders, and regions? The answers to these questions play a vital role in selecting the most suitable platforms for reaching and engaging the right audience (Di Pietro & Pantano 2012, 18–29).

7.2 Setting up and optimising social media profiles

Setting up and optimizing a social media profile is another fundamental step in the social media marketing journey. Every business begins its presence on social platforms by establishing and refining its profile. The question then arises: What does the optimization process involve? Social media optimization helps a brand stand out by creating a consistent and recognizable identity across platforms. This phase allows a business to establish a unique presence that enhances credibility and trust. One of the most important steps is uploading a high-quality profile photo—typically the brand’s logo—which instantly communicates professionalism (Sanders 2024). Following that, it’s essential to complete all relevant profile information, including business hours, website links, physical location, and contact details. Additionally, linking various social media profiles to each other helps strengthen the brand’s online network. A key point to remember is to use the same profile image and consistent descriptions across all platforms to reinforce brand identity and make it easily recognizable to users, regardless of where they interact with the brand (Ferguson 2008, 178–182.)

7.3 Developing a marketing strategy

As a business progresses in social media marketing, it is essential to develop a marketing strategy aligned with its goals and objectives. A consistent strategy not only helps maintain direction toward reaching target customers but also supports long-term lead generation and brand growth. Content is the fuel that powers social media marketing. Effective content planning and execution are crucial for achieving marketing goals. The content shared should be relevant to both the business and its audience (Bruque & Moyano 2007, 241–253). This involves posting regularly, maintaining a consistent schedule, responding to customer comments, and actively engaging with the audience. Using content scheduling tools can help streamline this process and ensure posts are shared at optimal times. For entrepreneurs, determining what works best for their business can be a learning curve. Testing different types of content, analyzing performance, and collecting feedback from the audience are key to refining the content strategy.

Every social media platform provides its analytics tools, and there are also third-party platforms that offer detailed metrics. These tools help entrepreneurs monitor their social media performance, identify areas for improvement, and better understand audience behavior. Tracking metrics such as impressions, likes, comments, reach, views, and clicks enables entrepreneurs to measure success and make informed decisions to enhance their marketing efforts (Ferguson 2008, 178–182.) Increasing audience engagement is one of the most effective ways to succeed in social media marketing. An

engaged and loyal audience plays a significant role in a brand's growth. Although building such an audience can be time-consuming and challenging, it yields great benefits in the long term. Sharing valuable, entertaining, educational, and meaningful content consistently helps attract and retain followers (Barber 2009, 48–50). Listening to audience feedback and responding respectfully also contributes to building a strong community. For entrepreneurs, focusing on delivering value from the outset is a smart investment in long-term success (Georgi & Mink 2012, 63–71).

Paid advertising, when used strategically, can drive significant business growth. With the right approach, paid ads can generate leads and help businesses reach a broader audience. While various advertising methods exist, the key lies in understanding them well and applying them effectively. Entrepreneurs can take advantage of advanced targeting options to reach the ideal audience. It is important to experiment with different strategies and focus on those that deliver the highest return on investment.

7.4 Advanced techniques of marketing

Marketing methods are specific strategies businesses use to connect with their target audience and promote their products and services. The goal is to create an impact on your audience and carve out a unique identity in an increasingly competitive market. Each approach plays a crucial role in engaging potential customers and driving conversions. By understanding and effectively implementing these strategies, businesses can meet their development objectives and achieve their sales goals. One essential marketing method is Search Engine Optimization (SEO). SEO is the process of organizing, structuring, and optimizing a website to make it easily readable by both search engines and users (Georgi & Mink 2012, 63–71). The key lies in using the right keywords and phrases that customers are likely to search for. For example, targeting the phrase “Eco-friendly home cleaning services in Vantaa” is more effective than the broader term “home cleaning service” because it is more specific and relevant to what users may be searching for (Barber 2009, 48–50.)

Understanding your customers is vital. Think about the questions or problems they are trying to solve and incorporate these into your keyword strategy. Additionally, it's important to analyze what your competitors are doing. Tools like SEMrush allow you to see the keywords your competitors rank for, offering ideas for your keyword strategy (Golan & Zaidner 2008, 959–972). There are both free and paid tools available that can help with keyword research. Google Keyword Planner, SEMrush, and

Ahrefs are excellent resources for discovering keyword search volumes, trends, and competition levels. A well-structured website is essential for SEO success. Google needs to easily navigate and understand the website to rank it highly. Here are a few tips to optimize your website:

1. Ensure clear and simple navigation so visitors can easily find what they're looking for.
2. Use H1 headers for primary keywords and H2/H3 headers to describe content sections.
3. Optimize URLs, page titles, and meta descriptions with relevant keywords for each page.

These steps help Google recognize the website as a reliable source. To enhance your ranking further:

1. Obtain backlinks from reputable sources within your industry—these are links from other websites that connect to yours.
2. Create and optimize a Google Business Profile that includes links to your website, reviews, and images.
3. Stay active online through collaborations, podcasts, and blog contributions to increase your visibility.
4. Continuously update your website with fresh and relevant content to keep it engaging and informative for visitors.

7.5 Content automation

Automated content creation refers to the process of using technology to generate written, visual, or audio content with minimal to no human involvement. This is achieved through algorithms and artificial intelligence (AI), which are capable of producing content efficiently (Gonzalez 2010). Blogs, in particular, serve as a powerful platform for sharing insights and updates with a target audience. Automating blog posts ensures that a consistent publishing schedule is maintained without the need for manual article writing and publication. Scheduling posts is another crucial aspect of social media marketing (Nekatibeb 2012). It allows for the planning of content in advance and ensures that posts are automatically published at specified dates and times. Social media scheduling tools help create a queue of posts and set publication frequencies, ensuring active engagement with followers without the need for constant monitoring (Harris & Dennis 2011, 338–346). Newsletters are an effective way to keep an audience informed about recent offers, updates, and industry news. Automating the creation and distribution of newsletters helps businesses adhere to a regular schedule, ensuring subscribers receive relevant information consistently. This strategy not only saves time but also enhances audience engagement by delivering timely content.

7.6 Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is another easy technique to reach millions of followers and make them aware of your brand just by collaborating with famous or known influencers with thousands or millions of followers. This process may involve a budget to spend depending on the demand of the influencer since they have built a community over time for themselves, and their audience trusts the following person. The method helps in brand awareness rapidly, sharing quicker results to your selected niche. There are commonly 4 types of influencers: mega or celebrity influencers, macro-influencers, micro-influencers, and nano-influencers, categorized based on the number of followers.

1. Picture an influencer hosting an online party where fans can enter to win awesome merchandise from a company. People are usually required to keep up with the influencer and brand, or tag other people in the comments to join in the fun. Brands generally take this action since it is an excellent method to increase their visibility, encourage conversation, likes, and shares, and even gain more followers (Gilmore, Gallagher & Henry 2007, 234–245). This occurs when a brand extends an invitation to an influencer to attend one of their big events, such as the opening of a store or the introduction of a new product. Subsequently, the influencer uses images, videos, and narratives to convey to their followers what it's like to be there. In addition to making the brand appear nice, the goal is to reach the influencer's potentially interested fans and generate some buzz and enthusiasm (Harris & Dennis 2011, 338–346).

Influencers and brands frequently work together to produce videos for websites like YouTube and TikTok that may feature product demos or brand storylines. This strategy aims to help businesses showcase their products in a visually appealing way, engage audiences using narrative tactics, enhance viewing, drive traffic to their online store, or boost sales (Mohammadian & Mohammadreza 2012, 58–66). Brands occasionally give influencers free merchandise in the hopes that they will recommend it to their followers. The influencer doesn't need to post about the products, though. The influencer can decide to spread the product if they truly come to value it (Gummesson 2002). Brands can establish productive relationships with influencers through this method, get real feedback, and potentially even user-generated content if the influencer decides to promote them.

In order to manage the complex aspects of social media marketing, you must be prepared to plan ahead and adjust your strategy as necessary. In order to achieve the desired outcomes, it is important to

identify possible issues, figure out how to address them or mitigate their consequences, and constantly strive to make your work better (Hempel 2013).

Maintaining a positive online reputation and promoting communication with the audience are facilitated by addressing negative criticism and establishing trust and transparency. Identifying the causes of the user's discontent with the service or product is the first stage, and then the particular issue is addressed with a kind and beneficial response (Levinson & Gibson 2010). It is crucial to refrain from removing such remarks since doing so can intensify users' unfavorable responses. Creating a series of response templates helps expedite the response process. Each response must, however, be tailored to the specific commenter, direct, considerate of their sentiments, and constantly free of abusive or impolite language (Jaskuła & Corvera 2012).

Since social media algorithms change how posts are ranked and shown, they could be quite upsetting for new business owners. It could be challenging for new businesses to gain recognition without investing in advertising since fewer people will naturally see your postings. As a result of having to contend with larger, established companies, this usually leads to more competition. Even with the unavoidable algorithmic changes, innovators continue to thrive provided they are using the right strategy (Kendall et al. 2001, 223–242).

Engaging with your audience in genuine, meaningful discussions is the foundation of social media engagement. It all comes down to forming relationships and building a community. Keeping up with algorithm changes and maintaining curiosity are essential for social media marketing. Keeping an eye on these changes will help you better understand them (Jaskuła & Corvera 2012). Big social media companies like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok frequently disclose information about changes to their algorithms.

To determine when your posts receive the most likes, comments, and shares, you have to analyze your data. The last post that succeeded might not be effective now, and you may need to try other times and days while paying close attention to how algorithm changes impact things. Paid advertising may be an excellent option if algorithm changes are restricting your reach. If the algorithm isn't displaying the content to your target audience organically, it helps you get it in front of them (Kırtı & Karahan 2011, 260–268).

7.7 Organic vs paid post strategies

Showcasing the individuality and genuineness of a brand is an effective approach. Stronger connections with the audience can be built by sharing user-generated material, posting behind-the-scenes photos, and displaying company culture. Content can reach a large number of people without any cost. One of the key advantages of using social media without purchasing advertisements is the minimal financial investment required.

Provides precise measuring tools to monitor the effectiveness of campaigns, aiding in the improvement of performance. It allows for targeting specific interests, actions, and demographics. With this targeting, the right individuals can be reached, expanding the content's reach. Paid advertising enables the promotion of content to those who have not yet engaged with the brand on social media, increasing visibility and attracting potential customers quickly (Kırtı & Karahan 2011, 260–268).

8 CONCLUSION

In the rapidly evolving world of digital technology, social media has become one of the most powerful forces shaping modern marketing. This thesis demonstrates that social media has evolved far beyond being just a communication platform; it is now an essential tool that enables businesses to engage with, connect to, and expand their audiences in ways traditional marketing methods could never achieve. The historical development of social media has fundamentally transformed how businesses, consumers, and communities interact, fostering real-time communication, deeper engagement, and global visibility. This research explored various social media marketing strategies, ranging from organic growth tactics to paid advertising methods. It revealed that businesses today have access to an array of innovative techniques, including influencer collaborations, interactive content creation, segmentation strategies, and AI-driven personalized advertising. These tools offer businesses unparalleled opportunities to craft compelling marketing campaigns tailored to their audiences.

An analysis of major platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, Twitter/X, and YouTube showed that each serves unique audience segments and marketing purposes. Selecting the right platform based on the target market's behavior and preferences is essential for maximizing marketing impact. A central finding of this study is the importance of adaptability. In a landscape where trends, algorithms, and consumer behaviors are constantly changing, businesses that remain agile, creative, and customer-focused are most likely to succeed. Entrepreneurs must recognize that social media marketing is not a one-time effort—it requires ongoing innovation, strategy, and responsiveness.

The focus on customer segmentation also revealed a key advantage: understanding specific audience groups' needs, behaviors, and interests enables businesses to create more effective and meaningful marketing efforts. Moreover, the rise of user-generated content and community-focused strategies highlights today's consumer demand for authenticity and personal connection. While challenges such as negative feedback, changing algorithms, and shifting customer expectations are inevitable, businesses can navigate these obstacles with proactive strategies, consistent engagement, and genuine communication, building strong, resilient online brands.

Ultimately, social media is no longer a supplementary marketing tool—it is the backbone of modern marketing strategy. It bridges businesses and consumers, builds trust, drives brand loyalty, and accelerates growth. For both new entrepreneurs and established businesses, understanding the full

power of social media marketing is crucial for long-term success. This thesis provides a practical and comprehensive guide to navigating the social media marketing landscape. Armed with historical knowledge, modern strategies, and insights into future trends, readers are now better equipped to leverage social media effectively, helping them grow their businesses, strengthen their brands, and thrive in an increasingly competitive digital world.

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