



# Les réseaux sociaux et leur influence marketing Une nécessité pour le développement des PME françaises ?

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## RESEARCH QUESTION

After realizing my internship in the social media, in the Webmarketing department of an American real estate company, it was really interesting for me to study the importance of social networks and their influence in the actual marketing strategies. The company New York Habitat I was working for is a perfect example of a successful “social media marketing” in a SME. Actually United States are really precursor in this field and nowadays it’s getting really hard for American companies to establish themselves without using the social networks. The thesis will try to answer to the question if this kind of marketing is a real development opportunity for French SME?

The objective of this study will be to identify the ways for SMEs to establish marketing and communication campaigns by using the social networks, and to examine the efficiency of these techniques compare to traditional marketing campaigns.

In recent years there has been a real growth of social networks that seem to upset the traditional marketing model. Internet users are more and more involved in the process, exchanging and sharing their opinions on goods and services offered by companies. In the precursor United States, social networks and their marketing influence are essential tools for the majority of American companies for example.

In this study the objective is to understand the interest for French Small and Medium Companies to engage in this type of social media marketing. The objective is to understand the use that SME do of social networks, the opportunities and benefits they bring. Indeed, with increasingly competition and consumer needs changing, SMEs have to find ways to better adapt themselves. This study analyzes the behavior of small businesses facing these tools, and the benefits when they are well organized and planned.

# PART 1: REVUE SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THEIR MARKETING INFLUENCE

## 1. DEFINITION

Nowadays social networks are part of our lives, professional and personal. Over the past few years with the success created by social web and social networks, a lot of professionals are using these new tools for their marketing campaign. More and more professionals focus on developing the presence of their product or services on social networks and get huge opportunities to boost their sales and improve their range. A lot of big companies have been using this new marketing policy, but more and more SMEs are taking the step too.

By marketing we heard that it is the ensemble of actions realized by a company with the goal of promoting a product, good and boost their commercial activity. The main goal is to create a network of customers and improve their loyalty. The webmarketing is based on the same rules, with similar objectives, but using internet and the communication tools. The social marketing gathers tools and business ethics to identify and analyse the conversations between them. The social networks allow people to connect themselves in a community and with main interests, so they can share their opinions and advices.

A strategically plan of social media explains how companies can realize profitable marketing strategy. However, every strategy is different and this schema is more an example for marketers to adapt themselves. The main advantage of these methods is the

## **2. PROFESSIONAL ASPECT OF SOCIAL NETWORKS IN THE COMPANY**

The first department in companies using the social networks has been the human resources department that find an excellent way to recruit their teams. This new modern way has been a complete success for the French professionals over the past few years. By using the online networks companies can communicate their offer of goods and services to the public, creating a big database and with a low cost.

The kind of data is clearly confirming attract for the cyber users about the presence of companies on social networks. There is a real potential for the companies if they do work on the social project.

According to surveys realized in 2010 we notice a real interest of consumers online to subscribe to the brand pages online. It shows also that cyber users following companies and brands on the social networks are tempted to buy more but also give advices about goods and services. Some journalists explain that we are assisting to the development of a new relational marketing focused on the customer and the value creation with them. With this tool companies are improving their ability to create a real contact with customers.

## **3. IMPLEMENT AN EFFICIENT MARKETING STRATEGY ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

Facebook the world leader of social networks in France has a huge success all over the world too. But most of all it has become one the most relevant tool for the marketing companies. On Facebook the company can easily create a profile page the

user can click easily and become a fan accessing to the whole information about the company.

The big advantage for Facebook is the gratuity for companies, Facebook is free and will always be as they said in their website. So this is a great opportunity for companies. The principle of Twitter is a bit different but this social network is able to create a real community around the brand. With twitter members included a lot of companies blog by the intermediary of short messages of less than 140 characters.

Professionally this microblogging network is a way for companies to create links with partners and potential customers. It is a real value-added by sharing relevant information like links, articles, and ideas. Companies realize the possibility to analyse precisely the needs of the community, consumers, and adapt the offer to the demand of partners.

According to the “Best Retail Brands” survey, there is a correlation between the social presence of companies and a better brand image. For example, the great results of Best Buy or even Ralph Lauren are also related to their huge presence on the social media. We could hope that this is perfectly adaptable to the French Small and Medium Companies.

The objective of every company is to share its ideas, valorise their product and make people know their brand to the maximum of people and potential customers. In that spirit, they have to be maximise their presence on the social media but also to be active, dynamic and interesting.

#### **4. IMPLEMENT AN EFFICIENT MARKETING STRATEGY ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

Companies have an excellent advantage with their presence on the social networks to make participate their clients in their process. The relation is more direct and there is more communication between them unlike the traditional methods. Customers are engaging in the marketing policy of companies, they are more implicated and more able to appropriate the brand products. This way it's easier to establish new surveys, exchanges opinions and point of views about a new logo, a new product and so on. By using this type of marketing the brand is not only working on the customer but also and most of all with him. There is a real modification of relationships between the company and the customer. This is the example of the automotive company Fiat and the promotion of its Fiat 500 pink sold online only in 2010.

As we can see this new modern marketing policy seems to be a perfect example of success on the social media online. But companies have to be careful, because it can also be very dangerous with a wrong use, and the use can even be bad for the company as well. All these new ways of generate marketing prove that the power of customers is getting bigger and bigger, they are not passive anymore and their influence is much more important with the marketing based on the technologies of Internet.

#### **5. PARTICIPATIVE MARKETING ON SOCIAL NETWORKS**

Implementing their company in social media has a great advantage also to make participate the clients. The relationship is much more direct and favour the communication unlike traditional medias. When the company has developed its community, it is easier for her to develop surveys, exchange of opinions for a logo, a slogan of a proposed new product. On Internet, we express more easily his views; users play the game of creative competition, promoting products and Services of the company.



## 6. VIRAL MARKETING

Viral marketing is a form of interactive advertising or consumer helps to spread the brand message through the Internet. The brand benefits from a higher credit among its target audience. "According to a survey conducted two years ago, the French claimed a willingness to develop their power of speech and opinion on Internet. Over 56% of Internet users surveyed and claimed to speak on social networks and consider the other members of the community.

The great question is to understand if this new policy of online marketing and especially on social media is adapted to Small and Medium French companies. Moreover, even if there is a real increase in political social media marketing within French SMEs, entrepreneurs still seem full of questions and even suspicions against this tool 2.0. It is legitimate to ask whether they really benefit from engaging in this type of campaign to improve their reputation?

Franck LAPINTA expressed to him when the strengths of the SMEs to pursue policies of social media marketing. It seeks above all to prove that SMEs need to realize that social marketing is not reserved for large companies, and they have widely assets to engage in this kind of campaign. He even goes further and says that "SMEs by their organization, their relations with their ecosystem can be more responsive to social media than some big companies. "Thus, SMEs who used to work in a more human scale would be more attentive to their customers and very conducive to dialogue. In addition they have a "shorter Circuit decision" which would be favourable to react quickly to communicate information that their customers through social networks. Another example is based on the analysis offered by the Portal Business Intelligence on the future of social networks for SMEs. This research centre has established a mind map summarizing the seven main areas in which an SME can benefit from the use of social networks.

It includes as well the topics that we discussed earlier, namely "increased visibility, better customer retention, a watch and economic intelligence, and marketing opportunities, but also business recruitment.



"Moreover, the author also stresses the importance of innovation that will allow SMEs to differentiate itself from the use of Web 2.0 and social networks and new technologies and methods. Finally "collaboration, knowledge sharing and best practices" generated by social networks would be extremely beneficial to small and medium sized French companies.

I'll start with qualitative research that will enable me to analyse data and descriptive "observatory to observe the behaviour of people." The major advantage of this form of study is based on its ability to raise results based on the observation of a social phenomenon in its environment. I wanted to first get advice from professionals to better understand the phenomenon. I found it very interesting to share experiences, opinions and advice in order to confront them with all the theoretical contributions that I had previously treated.

To obtain quantitative data, several methods can be used, there are different methods but the most used and most relevant in the context of my study is the survey. The questionnaire is a tool for capturing, collecting and collating data that can reveal the form of open questions and / or closed. My goal was to bring together a number "somewhat" important to respondents to the survey and its results are particularly relevant to the issue of my study.

I will not elaborate here in detail my study and I will present the results of this study and conclusions. SMEs are therefore well aware of the rise of social networks and their impact on marketing. However, they are very likely to be sceptical about the true benefits and especially the return on investment made. Most often, these small businesses are struggling to realize the effectiveness of social networks and the importance to be attached to this new form of web marketing. This is a long-term strategy that requires a thoughtful and considered to be capable of transmitting an image and values of society and thus create an effective community effect.

There is a trend noted previously that there has been observed since then, the rise of social networks and power marketing is so foreign to Small and Medium Enterprises. They are aware of the opportunities available to them only in recent years but many remain susceptible. However, they are still far from using e-marketing that have made U.S. companies, regardless of size, of Big Companies to local SMEs. The Community Managers responsible for web marketing and SME clearly state the importance of today to engage in social networks and Web 2.0 in general.

## CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to better understand the issues and the future of social networks in marketing actions of French Small and Medium Enterprises. The literature review based on different sources but also the study on the ground among professionals led both to the objective to answer the following question: Social networks and their influence, a need for the development of French SMEs?

We have seen, the number of users is growing on social networks, a majority of French Internet users connect several times a day. Therefore every day is an opportunity for meetings between the user and the company should not be missed. These media are becoming more and offer more tools and more efficient and interactive professionals. Small and medium enterprises would be wrong to deprive such a powerful marketing tool because of its interactivity and speed of exchange.

Throughout this study, the elements overlap to confirm real opportunities to develop practical for businesses. SMEs as well as major groups of some interest to engage in this form of "social marketing." Social networks and provide a tremendous platform to reach more customers and better understand the needs of their clients. In fact, businesses will interact with customers, boost their website or their blog, develop

new products or services based on the advice of their community or make the day before competition.

As we have seen, social networks are becoming more numerous but also increasingly complex, and their use becomes a full working. Unfortunately this complexity scares many companies and especially SMEs that are struggling to understand where to start and how to be successful on its development strategy on social media.

Nowadays, it is not enough to be present on the web, a website, or even a Facebook page. It is necessary for companies to be active and reactive on the web to send a positive and dynamic brand with consumers. This is actually how consumers feel invested in your business, and they pass from a passive to an active role where they are part of a community itself attached to a brand. Social networks are tools to facilitate the communication between the company and its customers. But why it is essential to develop a strategy to make these social networks a real asset to the company.

Beyond the effectiveness of this tool, companies must be informed and prepared to address potential limitations, including communication actions that could be time consuming, or could play against them. A poorly worded response, inappropriate tone can then lead to a negative buzz and undermine the e-business reputation. They must be fully responsible for the content they publish on their interfaces. More importantly, the big downside of social media rests on confidentiality and data erasure especially for enterprise customers.

Although the benefits are undeniable for businesses, they are not alone in this scheme of communal social networks, because consumers are also faced with many opportunities. But beware, another phenomenon enters largely into account is that of confidentiality including business recommendations. Indeed, all data stored by Facebook users are particularly exploitable by the parent company that will sell to advertisers in particular. And businesses will realize their advertising networks, and choosing their targets based on demographic, sociological, and professional. And

unfortunately the problem of violation of privacy is inevitable in these system recommendations.

The results and the answers obtained during this study are provided questionable and inevitably involve limits on the reliability of particular results. Indeed, it was difficult to gather a larger number of qualitative results given the lack of time, but especially difficult to contact only professional web marketing and community management in contact with SMEs. It is the same also for the quantitative study, which give only a slight tendency since it is based on a relatively small number of people.

Another limitation is the difficulty of making this phenomenon a general trend, since it is found throughout the study, a strategy on social networks effectively is primarily adapted to the needs and capabilities of enterprises.

I think it would be very interesting to continue and improve this study by bringing other perspectives, particularly with other qualitative investigations. And also by increasing the number of people who answer the survey would result in a more general trend. Finally, a confrontation between the views of consumers and SME on this subject would have been the means to compare two points of view but time and limit the number of pages did not push too far the study.

Opportunities on the Internet are a little more each day, and social marketing is playing an ever present in business life. Once the customs of this strategy will be back in morals, surely the companies will put digital at the heart of their new marketing policies, not to mention the emergence of new tools that we predict 3.0 specialists for years to future.

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