

Role of social media in creating avenues for startups

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ABSTRACT:

Social media platforms are an indispensable part of entrepreneurship practices. They offer entrepreneurs a platform for business growth and brand development. However, little is known about the effect of social media use on identifying entrepreneurial opportunities. Utilizing social cognition theory, this research focuses on how certain factors—prior knowledge, alertness, and social media—may impact two aspects of opportunity: the discovery and the creation of entrepreneurial opportunity. This study focuses on the investigation of the moderating role of social media use on entrepreneurial opportunities. The findings have important practical and academic implications for how social media impacts entrepreneurship and can be used to increase the ability of entrepreneurs to find new opportunities.

Keywords: Social Media; Marketing; Media Marketing.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurial opportunities are important for entrepreneurs looking to start a business because business creation is a process of identifying and exploiting potential opportunities. Thus, identifying and capturing opportunities is fundamental to the entrepreneurship process. However,

this process is often challenging for entrepreneurs as they try to create their own businesses and increase financial performance. Many researchers have explored when and how entrepreneurs recognize and exploit opportunity using available resources. The ability to succeed has been explained in various different ways, ranging from individual differences to sustainable entrepreneurship. In recent studies on entrepreneurial opportunities, social activities and social networks have attracted the attention of researchers seeking to identify ways entrepreneurs obtain entrepreneurial opportunities. Strong social capital and networks facilitate finding business opportunities and encourage individuals to become entrepreneurs. Social media platforms and applications are often considered as useful tools for entrepreneurship. They enable entrepreneurs to easily identify changes and opportunities in business creation through interactions and communications with peers on the networks. Social media offers opportunities to reach target customers and generate new ideas for starting a business. Similarly, small-scale entrepreneurs take advantages of social media in marketing and operations by having a close and profitable relationship with peers, partners, and customers. Since building a strong relationship is important for success, entrepreneurs tend to use social media to share information and find better opportunities. Entrepreneurs also try to expand their social networks and online communications to find new ideas. However, others are not taking advantage of social media for the same purposes of identifying opportunities or recruiting employees. It means that practitioners' perception of social media varies, from embracing potential benefits to being reluctant

OBJECTIVES OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN STARTUP COMPANIES:

- Generating more revenue.
- Improving the customer experience.

- Positioning the company as a thought leader.
- To identify the various types of business using social media for marketing.
- To study the impact of social media on business performance.
- To study the impact of various online promotional activities on the brand visibility.

THEORETICAL MODEL

Based on the literature we have created a theoretical model and the continuation of this paper will be focused around this framework. The model provides linkages for the use of social Media as a marketing tool for start-up companies.



The model above shows the relationship between social media, marketing and start-up.

Social media is a powerful marketing tool provided to start-up looking to increase their reach and interaction with customers.

The concept of social media has brought the tools and underlying technology, which provide start-ups with the interface to continuously converse about their products and services. Using the social media tools and technology such as Facebook, twitter, and YouTube for social sharing of content, videos, and images, start-ups can market at a lower cost. Social media is a great platform for two-way communication. it allows consumers to discuss ideas, post comments, ask questions and share links. This facilitates open communication, leading to enhanced information discovery and delivery. The start-ups expect their marketing effort to be cost effective, interactive, engaging and scalable to a large audience. This is because they would need better and faster reach to create awareness and visibility to offering and to build long lasting relationships with customers. In the subsequent paragraph the effects of social media as a marketing tool for various start-ups is examined.

Social media comes in many forms, but for our purpose, the focus is on the most popular: Blogs, micro blogs (twitter), social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn) and media-sharing sites (YouTube).

SOCIAL MEDIA WEBSITES:

1. Social networking sites- Facebook, Google plus, cafe mom, gather, fit sugar.
2. Interact by adding friends, commenting on profiles, joining groups and having discussions.
3. micro-blogging sites- twitter, posters.
4. Publishing tools- word press, blogger, square space.
5. Collaboration tools- Wikipedia, wikitravel, workbooks.
6. rating/review sites- amazon ratings.
7. Photo sharing sites- flickr, Instagram, pinterest.
8. Video sharing sites- YouTube, vimeo, viddler.
9. Personal broadcasting tools- blog talk radio, upstream, live stream.
10. Virtual worlds- second life, world of war craft, Farmville.
11. Location based services- check-ins, Facebook places, foursquare, yelp
12. widgets- profile badges, like buttons
13. Social bookmarking and news aggregation- digg, delicious
14. Interact by voting for articles and commenting on them. Interact by tagging websites and
15. Searching through websites bookmarked by other people.
16. Group buying- group on, living social, crowd savings.

POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS AND PLATFORMS:

Blogs: A platform for casual dialogue and discussions on a specific topic or opinion.

Facebook: The world's largest social network, users create a personal profile, add other users as friends, and exchange messages, including status updates. brands create pages and facebook users can "like" brands' pages.

Twitter: A social networking/micro-blogging platform that allows groups and individuals to stay connected through the exchange of short status messages (140 character limit).

YouTube & vimeo: Video hosting and watching websites.

Flickr: An image and video hosting website and online community. photos can be shared on Facebook and twitter and other social networking sites.

Instagram: A free photo and video sharing app that allows users to apply digital filters, frames and special effects to their photos and then share them on a variety of social networking sites.

LinkedIn groups: A place where groups of professionals with similar areas of interest can share and participate in a conversations happening in their fields.

Pinterest: It is a social curation website for sharing and categorizing images found online. Pinterest requires brief descriptions but the main focus of the site is visual. Clicking on an image will take you to the original source, so, for example, if you click on a picture of a pair of shoes, you might be taken to a site where you can purchase them. An image of blueberry pancakes might take you to the recipe; a picture of a whimsical birdhouse might take you to the instructions.

ESSENTIAL SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS FOR STARTUPS:

Create your social media strategy before creating social media profiles:

Even before you start choosing the right channels, think of your business goals and

objectives, and how social media can help achieve those. Also think of your target audience, and what kind of company you want to be on social media. Will your brand go for a practical, no-nonsense approach to social messaging, or do you prefer a more easygoing presence? make your social media presence congruent with your company culture. It doesn't mean you can't have a playful tweet every once in a while—but do strive for consistency across your feeds. compare tinder and drop box, both voted top startups in 2013 by Forbes—each brand has a different purpose and a different target audience, with drop box creating an appeal for business collaboration, and tinder going for the playful vibe of a speed-dating event. This difference in purpose is reflected in their social media presence: while both companies maintain professional feeds with consistent tones, each tailors their messaging to their audience.

Choose the right social networks for your business:

Facebook may have over a billion users, but if your potential customers don't make up a big part of that user base, it's not the right social network for you. While not every industry has a clear preference for social media channels, there are important determinants that can help you find the right social network for you: the target age group of your audience, the location of your business, and the nature of your services. For example, if your startup offers b2b advice, it helps to seek out business leaders on LinkedIn, and make accounts on the same social media channels used by the brands you want to help. But if your business revolves around marketing, Facebook ads or promoted tweet should be your first choice.

Save money on customer service by using social media:

In the early days of your business, having an open line of communication with your clients is crucial—your ability to respond and incorporate their comments and suggestions on your

services or products can make or break your startup's budding reputation. It's also a very cost efficient solution, as your customer support representative can double as your social media manager, and social media profiles don't cost a dime to set up.

Using social media for customer service is as easy as making social listening a mandatory task in your daily social media routine. Use a social media management tool, such as hoot suite, to set up search streams for your brand name, and track all mentions in real time. Sentiment analysis tools like social mention, or native analytics tools in hoot suite, can help you isolate negative or neutral mentions of your business, and then address as many of them as possible, based on the urgency of the issue. If the comment is negative without an obvious cause, you can consult our handy guide for responding on twitter.

Expand by recruiting new team members on social media:

A startup's online audience isn't limited to potential customers and investors. If your company is looking for passionate, talented individual to join your cause, they may be among your social media followers. Once you have an open position, make sure to spread the news on your social media channels—especially if you're looking for someone savvy with social media. Use social networks like instagram to highlight company culture and share company milestones. Sharing these moments allow you to easily sell how fun it can be to work at a startup.

Build an online community of brand ambassadors:

Behind every successful marketing strategy is a genuine human connection. Show your social media audience the people behind the product or service you offer: why you love what you do, and what served as an inspiration for your startup. You can use this opportunity to look for social media influencers, and turn them into brand ambassadors. These ambassadors provide startups with the exposure they need to grow into a global brand.

Evaluate your social media strategy regularly:

Startup companies can get overwhelmed by the fast pace and growth. Once you have set up your accounts and developed a social media management routine, schedule regular temperature checks for all your channels to maintain a steady presence. Tools like socialbro and hoot suite's grade your social evaluate your twitter presence with one click; you can receive reports on your engagement, reach and profile strength. If you find that your customers don't engage as well on one of your startup's social channels, check to make sure you haven't been neglecting that channel. And last, but not least:

Don't be afraid to experiment:

While it helps to be aware of strategies that work traditionally, we encourage you to think outside the box. After all, the essence of startup spirit is to problem-solve in an innovative, efficient way. Just think about it: there must have been someone who had the "crazy" idea to reply to a tweet using only gifs or emoji, or include a vine video to illustrate a Facebook message in a way a photo couldn't.

IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR STARTUPS:

1. Marketing on a limited budget

As start-up, there is naturally a limited budget. Social media has made it possible for small start-up businesses to reach millions of consumers with the click of a button.

2. Easy access to your customers

With social media, you can choose your target audience and choose who can see your ads. Social media has made it so easy to listen closely to your customer's comments and also provides an opportunity to reply to them. Social media helps you to know the real opinion of your customers as bill gates said, "You're most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning".

3. Choose your social media platforms

Social media is important but you need to know how to use it and which platform you need. do you know your business and where your target audiences are? Facebook, twitter, instagram? If your target audience is on facebook, by all means, focus your presence on that channel, but don't neglect the other platforms.

4. Increase market share

As social media becomes even more of an essential marketing tool, a good marketing strategy that will help increase your market share in your industry.

5. Easy to share information

Sharing information and updates about your business is simpler and quicker on social media.

6. Have insights about your competitors

Social media tools give you a detailed overview and analyze competitor's strategy which helps you to improve your business and learn from their mistakes. All in all a great social media strategy is key in ensuring that you execute your marketing plan effectively!

CONCLUSION:

As a startup company or small business, it is no longer an option to ignore social media as a means of communication, promotion and possibly even recruitment or revenue there is no escaping social media these days, either for individuals or for businesses. Today, it is impossible to separate social media from the online world. The social media conversation is no longer considered a web 2.0 fad -- it is taking place in homes, small businesses and corporate boardrooms, and extending its reach into the nonprofit, education and health sectors. From feeling excitement, novelty, bewilderment, and

overwhelmed, a growing number of people now speak of social media as simply another channel or tactic. Blogging can have a very positive effect on your company's branding & growth. As per the Hub spot report, customers with blogs gathered 68% more leads than customers without blogs. It is imperative to understand that today, social media have exponential potential. They are part of an ever-growing online network of people who discuss, comment, participate, share and create. Whether you are an individual, a startup, small business or a large corporation, an online presence and an ongoing conversation with your constituents is a baseline requirement -- and will take time and expertise. Companies are diverting resources and rethinking their traditional outreach strategies. And as the social media wave dissipates into the vast ocean of connected experiences, the term itself will become an entry in dictionaries and encyclopedias and we will embark on a new era of knowledge, accessibility and experiences unbound by distance, time or physical walls. It is high time that every business adopts social media and takes it seriously!

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