

Social Media and the Marketing Mix

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Social media, deemed by many to be the hottest trend in marketing of 2010, will continue to grow as one-on-one marketing increases in popularity. Gone are the days when high school kids were on edge of their keyboards waiting for their school to be admitted to Facebook. Facebook and all its social media counterparts have become ubiquitous, and new sites and new technology in 2010 have ushered in a new wave of uses for social media across the board. Brands and products are such a huge part of consumers' lives, and social media presents the perfect opportunity to talk to consumers like us to get feedback on the products we spend so much time with every day.

Before mobile apps let people update their Facebook or tweet at all hours of the day or night, marketing was more interruptive. Billboards, ads (print, television and online), flyers, and coupons were the main way marketers were reaching us as consumers. Now with sites like Facebook, Twitter, and BlogSpot, marketers have a new opportunity to reach their target consumers on a personal level, in an integrated way, at the place where they actually spend their time.

On Facebook, for example, marketers are able to communicate with consumers in a personal, less-corporate way. Imagine the power of a wall post that asks fans what they think about a new marketing campaign, a new flavor or even a new product. With a simple wall post, one the many tools Facebook provides, companies can see what you're saying about their brand, check out what is working and what isn't, and then engage with you to see why - it's like one giant free focus group with unlimited marketing research potential.

Let's not forget the power of viral campaigns. If a company is trying to increase mindshare for a brand, they might try to create the next "David After Dentist" video or commercial on YouTube. The viral spread of a really great video has enormous potential to keep a product or service in the forefront of a consumer's mind when they're thinking about making a purchase. But one thing companies should keep in mind is content - you can't CREATE a "viral" video. If you're lucky, the video you create will go viral, but it has to be interesting, engaging, funny, relevant, targeted toward the right audience, and have that secret something that makes it catch on.

Social media has become an important part of marketing, and we see it every day. Consumers are used to "liking" a brand they love on Facebook, and if a brand doesn't have a page, a die-hard fan will certainly create one. Social media bridges the gap between company and consumer by allowing companies to reach out and engage with their consumer one on one. Whether distributing a coupon on Twitter, holding a sweepstakes on Facebook, or promoting a video on YouTube, social media opens up opportunities for brands to find consumers like us in the places we spend most of our time online -- and to actually talk with us, not at us. Now that's a powerful conversation.

Which brands have done the best job with their social media campaigns? Has any brand's social media presence helped to convince you to buy?

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