

T.C.
BAHCESEHIR UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

**THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON
ORGANIZATION**



MASTER'S THESIS

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ISTANBUL 2024



T.C.
BAHCESEHIR UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

MASTER THESIS APPROVAL FORM

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Name Of the Thesis:	THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON ORGANIZATIONS
Thesis Defense Date:	13th June, 2024

This thesis has been approved by the Graduate School which has fulfilled the necessary conditions as Master thesis.

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ABSTRACT

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON ORGANIZATIONS

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Master's Program in MBA

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Adnan Çorum

July 2024, 35 pages

This thesis investigates the evolving role of social media marketing in modern business operations, emphasizing its impact on brand awareness, consumer engagement, and revenue growth across various sectors. It explores both the benefits and drawbacks of social media marketing, including its ability to process real-time client feedback and manage company reputation. Overall, this paper demonstrates how businesses can effectively integrate social media strategies into their daily activities to remain competitive in an increasingly digital market landscape.

Key Words: Social Media Marketing, Business Impact, Marketing Strategies, Customer Relationship Management.

ÖZ

SOSYAL MEDYA PAZARLAMASININ KURUMLAR ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ

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MBA Yüksek Lisans Programı

Tez Danışmanı: Assoc. Prof. Adnan Çorum

Temmuz 2024, 35 Sayfa

Bu tez, sosyal medya pazarlamasının modern iş operasyonlarında gelişen rolünü araştırıyor ve bunun çeşitli sektörlerde marka bilinirliği, tüketici katılımı ve gelir artışı üzerindeki etkisini vurguluyor. Gerçek zamanlı müşteri geri bildirimlerini işleme ve şirket itibarını yönetme yeteneği de dahil olmak üzere, sosyal medya pazarlamasının hem faydalarını hem de dezavantajlarını araştırıyor. Genel olarak bu makale, işletmelerin giderek dijitalleşen pazar ortamında rekabetçi kalabilmek için sosyal medya stratejilerini günlük faaliyetlerine etkili bir şekilde nasıl entegre edebileceklerini göstermektedir.

Key Words: Sosyal Medya Pazarlama, İşletme Etkisi, Pazarlama Stratejileri,

Müşteri ilişkileri yönetimi.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my family and my fiancé for their unwavering support, encouragement, and love throughout the journey of this thesis. To my family, your constant belief in my abilities and your endless love have been the foundation upon which this work stands. To my parents, I want to say that I wouldn't be the man I am today without your endless support, love, and understanding. Your wisdom and guidance have been my guiding light. To my fiancé, your patience, help, understanding, and unwavering faith in me have been my greatest source of strength. Thank you for standing by my side through every challenge and triumph. This achievement is as much yours as it is mine.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor, Assoc. Prof. Adnan Çorum, for his support, insightful guidance, and constructive feedback throughout this process. Your time and dedication have been invaluable.



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ABBREVIATIONS

SM	Social Media
SMM	Social Media Marketing
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
MSMEs	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
WWW	World Wide Web
BBS	Bulletin Board Systems
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
ROI	Return of Investment



Chapter 1

Introduction

In the modern age of technology, social media has become a powerful agent of change, revolutionizing how businesses operate and engage with consumers. Whether it's large multinational companies or small local businesses, everyone is realizing the importance of social media platforms in their marketing, branding, and communication efforts. Social media's reach goes beyond just being present online; it deeply influences how consumers behave, how markets evolve, and even how organizations function internally. Despite the widespread utilization of social media, there remains limited understanding regarding the precise influence these tools and technologies exert on the performance of business processes (Denyer et al., 2011). This thesis aims to explore the complex effects of social media on businesses, analysing its significant consequences across different aspects of today's world.

The emergence of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok has transformed how we communicate and share information. These platforms break down geographical barriers, linking people and groups worldwide. Businesses have eagerly adopted social media as an essential tool for marketing and managing customer relationships, recognizing their incredible reach and engagement potential. Yet, social media's impact on businesses extends far beyond traditional marketing—it influences nearly every aspect of organizational functioning.

Social media significantly enhances business visibility and awareness by amplifying brand presence. By strategically creating content, employing targeted ads, and engaging with audiences, businesses can build a great online identity, increasing recognition and recall among consumers. Furthermore, social media enables instant communication between businesses and their audience, allowing for immediate feedback, inquiries, and customer support. As a result, companies can utilize social platforms to nurture valuable customer relationships, ultimately boosting brand loyalty.

This thesis proceeds to explore the evolution of social media marketing, theoretical frameworks marking its efficacy, its impact on consumer behaviour, and the success stories and challenges faced by businesses in leveraging social media platforms. Through a methodologically approach encompassing different analysis, this study sheds light on the mechanisms through which social media marketing influences brand visibility, customer engagement, and sales. Additionally, it provides insights into effective social media marketing strategies tailored to different platforms, content types, and audience preferences. Finally, the thesis explores emerging trends and future implications of social media marketing, including the role of emerging technologies and global considerations.

1.1 Background

Businesses are driven by the imperative to survive and compete, compelling them to constantly seek the most effective solutions available in the market. Prior to the advent of the World Wide Web (WWW) technology in 1978, social media first emerged through Bulletin Board Systems (BBS). These systems, developed by Ward Christensen and Randy Suess for the United States Department of Defence, facilitated the exchange of information within existing networks. The importance of understanding the influence of social media on businesses cannot be overstated. As social media usage continues to soar worldwide, businesses are increasingly recognizing the significance of leveraging these platforms to achieve their marketing and organizational objectives. Social media provides businesses with a direct channel to communicate with their audience, disseminate information, and solicit feedback in real-time. Moreover, social media platforms offer robust targeting and analytics capabilities, enabling businesses to tailor their marketing efforts to specific demographics and track the effectiveness of their campaigns.

1.1.1. Definition of social media marketing.

Social media marketing, also referred to as digital marketing or e-marketing, involves utilizing social media platforms, where users establish social connections and exchange information, to enhance a company's brand, boost sales, and generate

website traffic. Apart from offering businesses a means to interact with existing clients and attract new ones, social media marketing (SMM) incorporates specialized data analytics tools that enable marketers to monitor the effectiveness of their campaigns and discover further avenues for engagement.

In practice, social media marketing encompasses various activities on social platforms, including content creation and advertising. Social media encompasses a wide range of online platforms designed for social interaction, including blogs, microblogs, social networks, and virtual reality spaces. Popular sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram are commonly utilized for marketing purposes. These platforms offer valuable user data and demographics, enabling advertisers to tailor their campaigns effectively. Understanding buyer behavior is crucial for crafting impactful ads that resonate with users. Social media basically serves as a global hub for information exchange and opinion sharing, influencing consumer decisions.

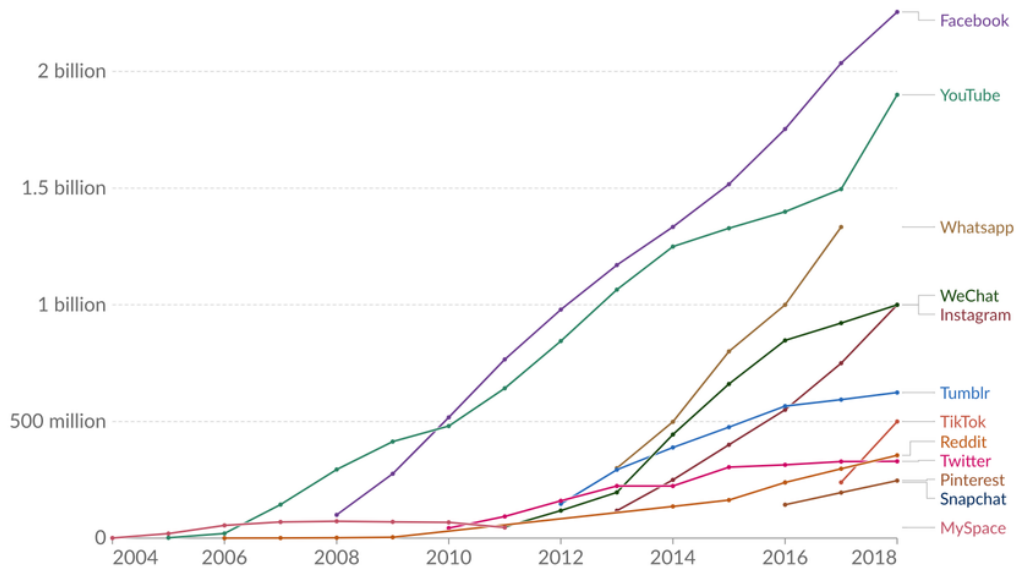
1.1.2. Growth of Social Media Platforms.

Over the span of 18 years, from 2004 (when MySpace achieved the milestone of being the first social media platform to reach one million users) to 2022, the remarkable expansion of interactive digital platforms propelled social media to levels of influence that rival even traditional mediums like television and radio. As of the beginning of 2023, there were approximately 4.76 billion social media users worldwide, constituting over 59% of the global population. *Figure 1* below shows the incredible increase of the number of people using social media from 2004 to 2018.

Number of people using social media platforms, 2004 to 2018

Estimates correspond to monthly active users (MAUs). Facebook, for example, measures MAUs as users that have logged in during the past 30 days. See source for more details.

Our World
in Data



Source: Statista and TNW (2019)

OurWorldInData.org/internet • CC BY

Figure 1. Number of people using different SM platforms from 2004-2018

(Ospina, 2019)

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The statement of the problem for this thesis revolves around the multifaceted influence of social media on businesses. In today's digitally interconnected world, social media platforms have emerged as powerful tools that can significantly impact various aspects of business operations and performance. However, despite the widespread recognition of their importance, there remains a need for a deeper understanding of how social media specifically influences businesses across different industries, sizes, and geographical locations. Key questions that arise include the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies, the extent to which social media affects brand perception and customer engagement, the challenges, and opportunities it presents for businesses, and the overall implications for organizational success and sustainability. Addressing these questions will provide valuable insights into the dynamics of social media-business interactions and inform strategic decision-making processes for businesses seeking to leverage these platforms effectively.

1.3. Purpose of the study

The aim of this study is to investigate how social media influence organizational capabilities and business performance. By examining the different aspects of social media, this study tries to point out tactics that can be affectively used by businesses in order to stay current and competitive in a market that is becoming more and more digitally connected.

1.4. Research Questions

1. How does social media impact brand awareness and recognition for businesses across different industries?
2. How do businesses effectively utilize social media platforms to enhance customer engagement and loyalty?
3. What are the challenges and opportunities associated with integrating social media strategies into traditional marketing frameworks?
4. What future trends can be anticipated in the relationship between social media and business operations?

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study is important to investigate the impact of social media on businesses, examining how these platforms influence various aspects such as marketing strategies, brand visibility, customer engagement, and overall organizational performance. Through empirical research and analysis, this study aims to explore the specific ways in which businesses utilize social media channels, the effectiveness of these strategies, and the implications for business success in the contemporary digital landscape.

1.6. Definitions

Social Media Marketing (SMM): Social Media Marketing refers to the use of social media platforms and websites to promote a product or service. It involves creating and sharing content on social media networks in order to achieve marketing

and branding goals. This includes activities like posting text and image updates, videos, and other content that drives audience engagement, as well as paid social media advertising.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO): Search Engine Optimization is the process of enhancing a website or online content to improve its visibility and ranking on search engine results pages (SERPs). The goal of SEO is to attract organic (non-paid) traffic from search engines like Google, Bing, and Yahoo by making the website more relevant and authoritative in response to specific search queries.

Influencer marketing: a type of marketing that focuses on using key leaders, or influencers, to drive a brand's message to a larger market. Rather than marketing directly to a large group of consumers, brands instead inspire, hire, or pay influencers to get out the word for them.

Bulletin Board System (BBS): a computer server or software that allows users to connect and log into the system using a terminal program. Once connected, users can perform various activities, such as reading and posting messages on public discussion boards, uploading and downloading software and data, reading news, and exchanging messages with other users via email or public message boards.

Return on Investment (ROI): a financial metric used to evaluate the efficiency or profitability of an investment. It measures the gain or loss generated relative to the amount of money invested.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM): is a technology used by businesses to manage and analyze customer interactions and data throughout the customer lifecycle. The goal is to improve business relationships with customers, streamline processes, and increase profitability. CRMs are designed to compile information on customers across different channels or points of contact between the customer and the company, which could include the company's website, telephone, live chat, direct mail, marketing materials, and social networks.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Unlike traditional advertising mediums such as television, social media introduced the concept of enabling individuals to not only receive information about products but also to express their opinions and exchange information with others. Neti et al. (2011) further elaborate on the concept, defining social media as a platform where individuals can share opinions, photos, content, and views, and engage in communication with others. The term is dissected into two components: "social," relating to interpersonal communication, and "media," referring to the channels through which information is disseminated.

Cheung et al. (2021) suggest that social media is increasingly utilized by social networkers, government organizations, and business firms for communication purposes. Nugroho et al. (2022) further emphasize in their study that promotional activities, particularly through social media, necessitate the involvement of influencers as endorsers as part of marketing strategies. Tafesse and Wien (2018) illustrate that social media marketing can be executed with reduced cost and effort, facilitating seamless interactions and communication among consumers, partners, events, media, digital services, and retailers through social media.

Bala and Verma (2018) assert that marketing is increasingly transitioning into the digital realm, presenting marketers with new challenges and opportunities due to ongoing technological advancements. These include mobile marketing, the Internet of Things, analytics, big data, 3D printing, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and consumer neuroscience. Hafez (2022) discovered that the increasing interaction on social media platforms can amplify the value and brand experience for consumers. Additionally, he suggests that social media serves as an interactive and cost-effective medium for disseminating brand-related information to followers, enabling marketers to enhance brand value and equity efficiently.

Table 1. below conducted by Febrian, Nani, Lina, L, and Husna, (2022), involved an online questionnaire survey with 146 participants who had purchased items from Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) utilizing platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. Most respondents (62%) had purchased fashion items, followed by cosmetics (16.5%), electronics (16%), and food and beverages (5.5%). The data indicated that Instagram was the most utilized social media platform by MSMEs, accounting for 89% of usage.

Characteristic	Total	Percentage	Characteristic	Total	Percentage
Gender			Age		
Male	59	40.7%	18-20	71	49.0%
Female	86	59.3%	21-25	61	42.0%
Social Media			26-30	8	5.5%
Instagram	129	89.0%	31-35	5	3.5%
Facebook	13	9.0%	Product		
Youtube	3	2.0%	Fashion	90	62.0%
Shopping experience through social media			Cosmetic	24	16.5%
< 3 months	17	12.0%	Food	8	5.5%
4 -12 months	25	17.0%	Electronic	23	16.0%
> 1 months	103	71.0%			

Table 1. Sample of social media usage for online purchasing (Febrian, Nani, Lina, L, and Husna, 2022)

Based on the findings from the paper by Jones, Borgman, and Ulusoy (2015), the role and economic impact of internet technologies, specifically websites and social media, on small businesses in underserved regions, such as the western mountain region of Maine, were explored. The study revealed that small businesses benefit significantly from these technologies, experiencing increased brand awareness, customer engagement, and global reach. Additionally, the ability to co-promote with local businesses was highlighted as a key advantage. Despite these benefits, the study also identified barriers such as a lack of technological knowledge and resources among small business owners, suggesting a need for training and consulting to maximize the potential of internet technologies (Jones, Borgman, & Ulusoy, 2015).

The study by Al-Mohammadi and Gazzaz (2020) investigates the effectiveness of social media marketing in increasing sales, brand awareness, and customer loyalty, as well as the challenges companies face in these efforts. Using a survey distributed to social media users in Saudi Arabia, the study finds significant support for the impact

of social media on building brand awareness and fostering customer loyalty through continuous engagement and responsiveness to consumer inquiries. Key factors influencing credibility include user-generated comments, particularly negative ones, highlighting the importance of electronic word-of-mouth. Additionally, special offers and discounts were found to effectively boost sales. From a business perspective, social media presents a cost-effective marketing tool that facilitates direct communication with consumers, aids in competitor analysis, and enhances overall marketing efficiency. The study concludes that, when used optimally, social media marketing can achieve significant marketing objectives, though future research is needed to explore its broader economic impacts and the role of various organizational departments in social media strategy (Al-Mohammadi & Gazzaz, 2020).

Nadaraja and Yazdanifard (2013) discuss the multifaceted nature of social media marketing, outlining both its benefits and challenges. They highlight that social media marketing provides significant advantages, such as cost-efficiency, enhanced reach, and the ability to gather and analyze customer data for better-targeted marketing efforts. Social media platforms facilitate direct interaction with consumers, enabling companies to customize their messages and build strong customer relationships. However, the paper also addresses several drawbacks, including the time-intensive nature of managing social media accounts, trademark and copyright issues, and the risks related to trust, privacy, and security. Negative feedback from users and the management of user-generated content are additional challenges that companies must navigate to maintain a positive online presence. The authors emphasize that for successful social media marketing, companies must integrate their core corporate values into their online strategies and adapt their communication to fit specific audiences and channels (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard, 2013).

Moreover, the results of the study by Assaad and Gómez (2011) highlight both the opportunities and risks associated with social network marketing. The paper identifies that social networks facilitate enhanced communication between companies and customers, enabling better customer relationship management and targeted marketing efforts. Social networks offer cost-effective marketing solutions and allow businesses to gather valuable customer feedback, thereby aiding in the development

of more tailored marketing strategies. However, the study also notes significant risks, including the potential for negative feedback to spread rapidly, privacy and security concerns, and the challenge of managing user-generated content. The authors emphasize the need for businesses to carefully navigate these risks by understanding the dynamics of social media and implementing robust management strategies to leverage social networks effectively (Assaad & Gómez, 2011).

Yang and Kankanhalli (2014) investigated the impact of social media marketing on the performance of online small businesses, focusing on message strategies employed on platforms like Sina Weibo. Their study aimed to understand how different types of message content (e.g., business branding, calls for purchase, and reposts of buyer reviews) and formats (e.g., text, text with images, video) influence customer engagement, brand awareness, and ultimately, sales performance. They employed media richness theory and uses and gratifications theory to develop a research model, which was then validated using data from Sina Weibo and Taobao. The findings suggested that richer media formats and content tailored to user needs significantly enhance customer engagement and brand awareness, leading to improved sales performance. This study contributes to both academic literature and practical marketing strategies by highlighting the importance of message design in social media marketing for small businesses (Yang & Kankanhalli, 2014).

The study by Khanom (2023) explores the role of social media marketing in the digital era, comparing its necessity against other marketing forms. Through a qualitative and descriptive approach, the research reviews literature to highlight the benefits and challenges of social media marketing. Key findings indicate that while social media marketing offers cost-effective customer engagement and brand building, it also poses challenges such as difficulty in measuring ROI and significant resource requirements. The paper concludes that productive utilization of social media, balanced with other marketing strategies, is crucial for businesses to maximize benefits and mitigate potential downsides (Khanom, 2023).

In their study, Parveen (2023) investigates the impact of social media usage on organizations, focusing on its role as a marketing platform and its influence on

organizational communication and customer engagement. The study utilizes a mixed-method approach, combining website analysis, in-depth interviews, and survey data to assess the factors driving social media usage and its subsequent benefits to organizations. Findings indicate that while social media significantly enhances customer interaction and brand visibility, challenges such as measuring ROI and resource allocation persist. The research underscores the necessity for organizations to adopt a balanced approach, integrating social media with other marketing strategies to maximize effectiveness and mitigate potential drawbacks.

The study by Husain and Sharma (2023) investigates the role of social media marketing (SMM) and social networks in enhancing business performance. It highlights that social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Instagram have significantly transformed the landscape of business marketing by enabling broader audience engagement and facilitating consumer decision-making processes. The research underscores the increasing importance of SMM strategies in driving consumer involvement and purchase intentions, indicating that social media not only serves as a communication tool but also as a powerful marketing platform. The findings reveal that social media helps businesses build vibrant communities, manage effective marketing campaigns, and launch initiatives that boost brand visibility and customer loyalty. However, the study also notes the challenges in quantifying the return on investment (ROI) and the resources required to maintain an active social media presence. Despite these challenges, the benefits of social media in terms of cost-effectiveness, real-time customer engagement, and enhanced targeting capabilities are emphasized. The authors call for future research to explore the productive utilization of social media, suggesting that while it offers substantial opportunities for business improvement, responsible and strategic use is essential to maximize its positive impact (Husain & Sharma, 2023).

When it comes to social media marketing, we should all discuss the effect of short-form videos in marketing, which is becoming an essential component of social media marketing due to its ability to catch attention quickly and convey messages effectively. According to Smith (2022), short-form videos are more likely to be shared and can significantly boost viewer engagement and retention rates. *Figure 2* below

shows how short-form video has the highest return of in investment (ROI) compared to other marketing trends.

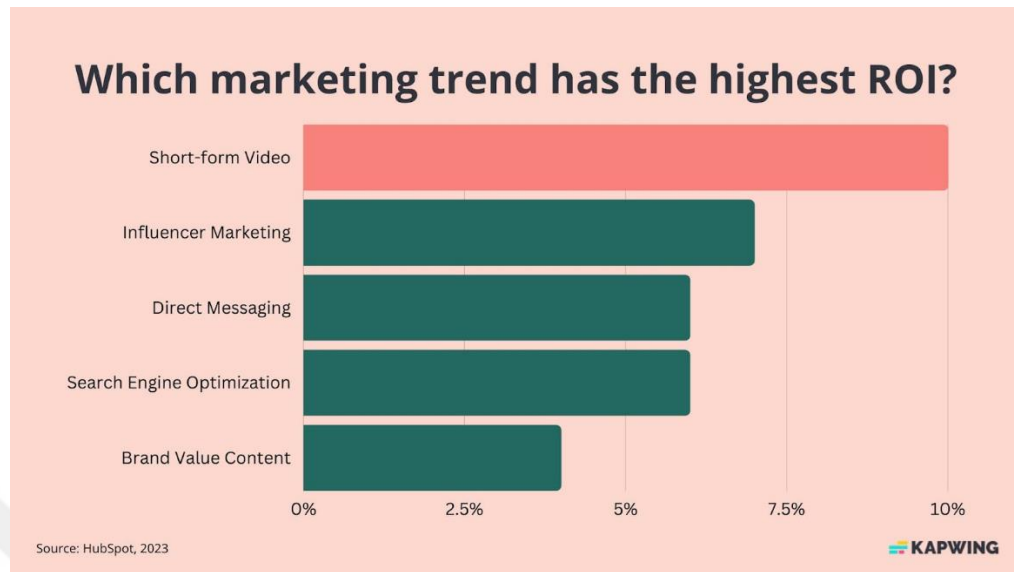


Figure 2. Marketing Trend in terms of ROI (HubSpot, 2023)

The study conducted by Akbarov (2020) explores the impact of social media marketing (SMM) on consumer behavior, specifically examining value consciousness, brand consciousness, and brand loyalty, with a focus on the moderating effects of gender and income. The findings indicate that SMM significantly influences brand loyalty, value consciousness, and brand consciousness among males and lower-income individuals, while it does not have the same effect on higher-income individuals regarding brand loyalty. Notably, brand consciousness positively affects brand loyalty across all groups, whereas the relationship between value consciousness and brand loyalty varies, showing a positive impact for higher-income groups but no significant effect for lower-income groups. Additionally, gender does not significantly moderate these relationships, although income does, but only in specific paths. These results underscore the complexity of consumer behavior in response to SMM and highlight the need for tailored marketing strategies based on demographic segments (Akbarov, 2020).

The study conducted by Bagaturia (2014) investigates the influence of social media marketing (SMM) on consumer behavior, particularly focusing on brand

loyalty, brand consciousness, and value consciousness, with considerations for gender and income as moderating factors. The results indicate that SMM significantly affects brand consciousness and brand loyalty across all demographic groups, but its impact on value consciousness is mixed. Specifically, SMM positively influences brand consciousness and brand loyalty among males and lower-income consumers, whereas its effect on value consciousness is significant only for the higher-income group. For females, SMM does not significantly impact brand or value consciousness, but it still positively affects brand loyalty. The study highlights that brand consciousness consistently leads to brand loyalty regardless of demographic differences. Interestingly, value consciousness does not always negatively affect brand loyalty; in some cases, it even shows a positive relationship, contrary to previous research. The findings suggest that companies should tailor their SMM strategies according to the targeted demographic segments to enhance brand loyalty effectively (Bagaturia, 2014).

Whiting and Deshpande's paper, "Social Media Marketing: A Myth or a Necessity," examines the controversial role of social media marketing (SMM) in modern business strategies. The authors discuss the polarized views on SMM's effectiveness: while critics argue it fails to attract new customers and risks alienating existing ones with overt advertising tactics, proponents highlight the benefits of relationship building and brand enhancement. The study emphasizes that although SMM has its pitfalls, such as security and privacy concerns, and the need for supplementary marketing tools, it can be a valuable asset when used judiciously. The paper underscores that successful SMM requires careful planning and execution, suggesting that it has evolved from a mere novelty to a crucial component for many businesses today (Whiting & Deshpande, 2014).

Karimi and Naghibi (2015) describe social media marketing as a method that allows anyone to promote their blogs, products, or services online, reaching a broader audience than traditional channels allow. Simply put, social media marketing involves businesses using social media platforms to drive traffic to their official websites. Beyond this, companies can use social media to keep potential clients informed about company activities, introduce new concepts or products, and share news.

Kyriakopoulou and Kitsios (2017) link social media marketing to relationship marketing, suggesting a shift from a 'sell' approach to one focused on 'building ties' with customers. This theory emphasizes the importance of building relationships with potential customers to encourage repeat transactions and enhance brand loyalty. Social networking is a modern method companies use to foster good public relations with consumers through wireless servers (He et al., 2017). Managing public relations via social media has become easier, as many potential customers are active on virtual networks, making social networking readily accessible. Today's customers are more empowered, often referred to as 'king,' and businesses should maintain a presence on all social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and forums (Wigmo & Wikström, 2010). Social media communication channels offer vital opportunities for organizations. Social support develops through interactions on social media, which, in turn, builds trust (N. Hajli, 2015). Positive reviews, feedback, and ratings further enhance trust (Utz et al., 2009). The relationships consumers develop through social media significantly impact their trust (Chahal & Rani, 2017). Previous studies have shown that the consistency and volume of customer reviews influence consumer purchasing decisions by increasing trust (Lien et al., 2015).

2.1 Evolution of Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing has undergone a remarkable evolution since its inception. Initially, social media platforms served primarily as channels for personal communication and networking. However, as their user bases expanded exponentially, businesses quickly recognized the potential for reaching and engaging with audiences on these platforms. Early approaches to social media marketing often involved simply establishing a presence and sharing promotional content.

Over time, as platforms developed sophisticated advertising tools and analytics capabilities, marketers began to adopt more strategic and targeted approaches, coming to the emergence of influencer marketing, which further transformed the landscape. Influencer marketing takes advantage of the intimate relationship and credibility that influencers created with their followers, allowing brands to target specific demographics more authentically. Influencers showcase products, brands, or share

links through sponsored content, reviews, or recommendations, effortlessly working in messages about the product in their online content. The implementation of social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, influencer marketing has become particularly popular and dominant across sectors, providing companies with a valuable asset. Influencer marketing can increase brand visibility, attract more visitors, and generate conversions. However, businesses should be diligent about their selection of influencers, selecting only those who share the same principles and openly disclose sponsored affiliations to maintain authenticity and trust. Today, social media marketing encompasses a wide range of tactics, from organic content creation and community engagement to paid advertising campaigns and data-driven optimization strategies. As technology continues to advance and consumer behaviors evolve, social media marketing will undoubtedly continue to evolve, presenting new opportunities and challenges for businesses seeking to connect with their audiences in the digital age.

Prenaj (2016) discusses the utility of Social Media Marketing (SMM) as a cost-effective strategy for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Unlike traditional marketing approaches, SMM minimizes advertising expenses and time investments while maximizing business outreach (Prenaj, 2016). By identifying and engaging with target audiences on social media platforms, companies can initiate SMM with cheaper investments and substantial returns (Prenaj, 2016). Notably, platforms like Facebook offer inexpensive yet highly targeted marketing options, making SMM particularly advantageous for SMEs with limited financial resources.

Chapter 3

Future Trends

Social media marketing (SMM) is undergoing a rapid transformation, integrating advanced technologies to cater to the evolving needs of consumers and the digital environment. Two major trends set to revolutionize SMM are Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Virtual Reality (VR). These technologies have the potential to drastically change brand-audience interactions, offering more personalized, immersive, and efficient marketing experiences.

AI allows brands to tailor their messages to individual users by analyzing vast amounts of user data to identify patterns and preferences. This leads to a high level of personalization, significantly boosting user engagement. For instance, AI-driven recommendation engines, similar to those used by Netflix and Amazon, can be integrated into social media platforms to suggest products, services, or content based on a user's past behavior and preferences (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016). AI's predictive analytics capabilities enable marketers to anticipate future trends and consumer behaviors. Machine learning algorithms analyze data to forecast what products or services will be in demand, which content will go viral, and the optimal times for posting. AI tools like predictive lead scoring can determine which leads are most likely to convert, allowing marketers to focus their efforts on high-potential customers (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). AI-powered chatbots are revolutionizing customer service on social media by providing instant responses to customer inquiries, enhancing customer satisfaction, and freeing up human agents for more complex tasks. Brands like H&M use AI chatbots to assist customers with finding products and answering questions, improving the shopping experience (Pavlou & Stewart, 2015).

On the other hand, Virtual Reality in Social Media Marketing VR offers unique opportunities for creating immersive brand experiences, hosting virtual events, and engaging users through social VR platforms. VR allows brands to create immersive experiences that transport users to virtual worlds, offering a level of engagement that traditional media cannot match. These experiences can range from virtual store tours

to interactive product demonstrations, providing consumers with a unique and memorable way to interact with brands. For example, IKEA uses VR to allow customers to visualize how furniture will look in their homes, enhancing the shopping experience and reducing purchase hesitations (Wedel & Kannan, 2016). As physical events become more challenging, especially in a post-pandemic world, VR provides an alternative through virtual events and showrooms. Brands can host virtual product launches, trade shows, and conferences, reaching a global audience without geographical limitations. Companies like HTC have hosted virtual reality product launches, allowing participants to experience new products in a fully immersive environment (Hudson et al., 2015). These platforms can host virtual hangouts, live events, and branded experiences, fostering deeper connections between brands and consumers. Platforms like Facebook Horizon allow users to explore virtual worlds, attend virtual events, and interact with branded content in an engaging way (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The integration of AI and VR can create a powerful synergy in social media marketing. AI can personalize and optimize VR experiences based on user data, ensuring that each interaction is tailored to the individual's preferences and behavior. A VR shopping experience, for example, could use AI to recommend products based on the user's browsing history and preferences, creating a seamless and personalized shopping journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Moreover, AI can analyze user interactions within VR environments to gain insights into consumer behavior and preferences. This data can inform future VR content creation, ensuring that brands continually improve and refine their VR offerings to meet user expectations. Brands can use AI analytics to determine which aspects of a VR experience are most engaging and adjust their strategies accordingly (De Vries et al., 2012).

The future of social media marketing lies in the innovative use of AI and VR. These technologies offer unprecedented opportunities for personalization, engagement, and immersive experiences, allowing brands to connect with their audiences in new and meaningful ways. As AI and VR continue to advance, their integration into SMM strategies will become essential for brands looking to stay ahead in a competitive digital landscape. Embracing these technologies will not only enhance marketing effectiveness but also pave the way for a more interactive and engaging future in social media marketing.

Chapter 4

Methodology

For this study, a quantitative method, was employed to gather comprehensive data for analysis. The methodology involved the distribution of questionnaires to businesses and individuals across various industries to obtain quantitative insights into their social media usage, strategies, and perceived impacts. This questionnaire was designed to gather structured responses regarding factors such as the frequency of social media engagement, types of platforms utilized, and perceived benefits or challenges experienced. Additionally, secondary research data from academic journals, industry reports, and case studies were collected and analysed to supplement the primary data and provide a broader understanding of the topic. Overall, the combination of questionnaires and secondary data collection facilitated a comprehensive analysis of the influence of social media on businesses.

4.1 Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection was completed via an online survey link. The survey was created through an online survey tool, google forms to be particular, and the link was distributed across social media platforms and online communities in which the target participants often engage. For the analysis of the data, quantitative data analysis techniques were employed. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were used to summarize participants' demographic characteristics and responses to survey items.

The survey generally gathered responses from participants across various age groups, genders, occupations (students, salespeople, medical staff, engineers...), and industry sectors. This diverse demographic pool provides a comprehensive perspective on the impact of social media marketing on businesses across different segments of the population. The findings, as shown in Figure 3 below, indicate that the surveyed population exhibited a diverse range of ages, spanning from 15 to 45 years old. This broad spectrum suggests a detailed understanding of social media marketing's impact

across different age groups. Such diversity ensures that insights gathered from this study will capture a varied perspective, reflecting the ways in which social media influences businesses across different generations.

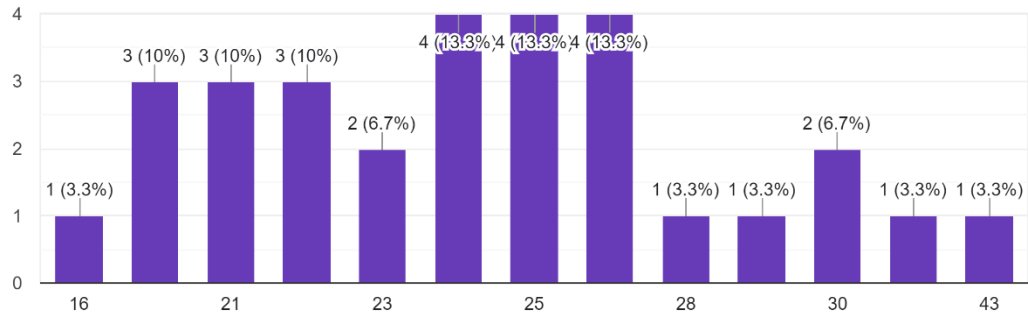


Figure 3. Surveyed population range of ages

Chapter 5

Findings

The majority of the participants reported active usage of multiple social media platforms for personal or professional purposes, with Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn being the most commonly used. Interestingly, a significant portion of respondents indicated spending more than 2 hours per day on social media, highlighting the strong influence of social media in today's society. Figure 4 below shows the most used social media platforms for personal or professional purposes. From the figure, it is evident that platforms focusing on short videos like Instagram Reels are more frequently used by the respondents, reflecting the ongoing trend of short video content.

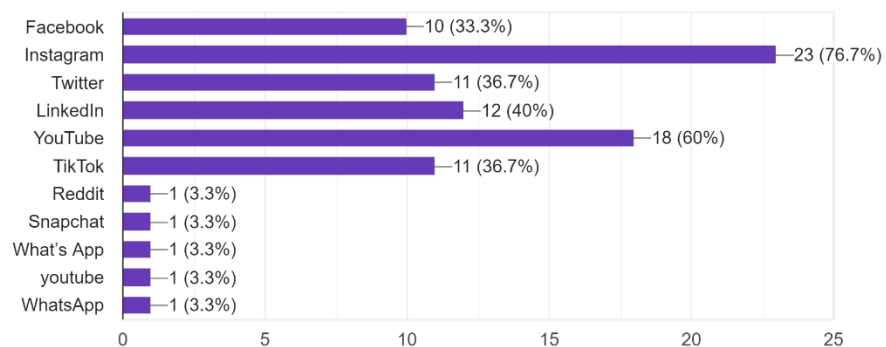


Figure 4. Most used Social Media Platforms

A notable proportion of businesses reported utilizing social media marketing strategies, with YouTube and Instagram emerging as the primary platforms for marketing purposes. Participants generally perceived their current social media marketing efforts at their workplace or private businesses, as effective in terms of brand awareness, consumer engagement, and revenue growth. *Figure 5* below shows how the population perceived the effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool in terms of brand awareness, consumer engagement, and revenue growth. Significantly, the most respondents think that social media marketing is a powerful tool for an organization's revenue growth. This clearly shows the powerful impact of social media

marketing on the growth and development of organization that utilizes this marketing tool.

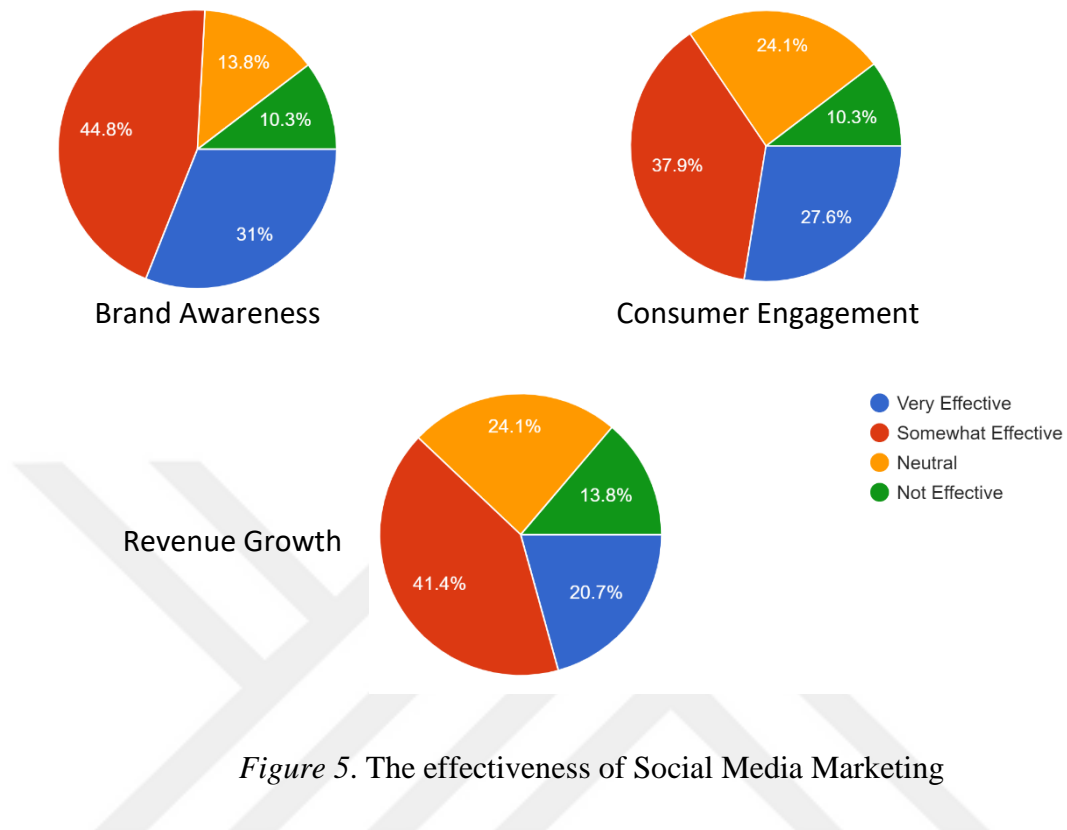


Figure 5. The effectiveness of Social Media Marketing

The survey revealed that respondents identified several primary advantages of social media marketing for businesses. These include increased brand awareness, improved customer engagement, cost-effective advertising, targeted audience reach, and valuable insights into customer preferences and behavior. Participants highlighted that social media marketing is an excellent way to connect with the audience and build a strong online presence. By leveraging these benefits, businesses can enhance their visibility, foster better relationships with customers, and make more informed decisions based on consumer data.

The findings from the survey indicate that respondents perceive several main disadvantages and challenges associated with social media marketing for businesses. Key concerns that were addressed by the respondents included lack of stability, difficulty in measuring ROI, negative feedback spread rapidly, keeping up with algorithm changes, and the high competition.

To gather more comprehensive feedback, an open-ended question was added at the end of the questionnaire, asking, "What strategies do you believe are crucial for businesses to smoothly incorporate social media tactics into their daily operations?" And as a respond, respondents emphasized the importance of improving internal systems for following up with leads obtained from social media, highlighting the use of CRM programs to manage leads and close deals effectively. They also stressed the need to study target segments precisely to improve targeting and deliver suitable content, echoing the marketer's adage that "content is king." Establishing clear goals and metrics, regularly analyzing and adjusting strategies, and training staff on social media best practices were also identified as essential practices. Additionally, integrating CRM systems with social media was mentioned as a way to generate leads and convert customers into the business funnel. Understanding the online market and using the most effective platforms to reach intended consumers were further noted as critical components for successful social media integration. These insights collectively underscore a multifaceted approach to leveraging social media for business growth and efficiency.

In conclusion, the survey findings highlight the extensive use and significant impact of social media platforms in both personal and professional contexts. The preference for short video content is shaping the landscape of social media marketing, driving businesses to adapt their strategies to meet the evolving preferences of their audience. While social media offers numerous benefits, including increased brand visibility, enhanced customer engagement, and cost-effective marketing, it also presents challenges that businesses must navigate carefully. By adopting a comprehensive approach that includes precise targeting, effective lead management, continuous analysis, and staff training, businesses can harness the full potential of social media to drive growth and achieve their marketing objectives.

5.1. Interesting Findings

The survey conducted for this thesis revealed that a significant number of respondents prefer using platforms that offer short content. This preference indicates a broader trend in social media consumption where users are moving towards brief,

yet impactful content. This trend is significantly impacting how businesses utilize social media for their marketing strategies. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts are rapidly gaining popularity due to their ability to deliver quick, engaging content that aligns with the short attention spans of modern audiences.

According to the findings, short content can significantly enhance brand visibility. Quick, visually appealing videos or posts are more likely to be shared, increasing the reach of the brand. Recent studies indicate that videos under a minute long have the highest completion rates, making them ideal for brand messages that need to be conveyed quickly and effectively. Moreover, platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels are designed to foster engagement. The interactive nature of these platforms, along with their algorithm-driven content discovery systems, ensures that engaging content reaches a broader audience. Businesses that effectively utilize these platforms can see a marked increase in user interaction and engagement. Creating short-form content is generally less expensive compared to traditional advertising methods. This makes it a cost-effective way for businesses to reach their target audience. Additionally, as discussed earlier in chapter 2, the high engagement rates associated with short content can lead to better returns on investment (ROI) for social media marketing campaigns. The lower production costs and the potential for high organic reach make short-form content an attractive option for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as well as larger corporations looking to optimize their marketing budgets. Furthermore, the flexibility and adaptability of short-form content allow businesses to experiment with different types of messaging and creative approaches. Brands can quickly produce and test various content styles, such as tutorials, behind-the-scenes looks, product showcases, and user-generated content, to see what resonates best with their audience. This iterative approach to content creation enables businesses to stay agile and responsive to changing consumer preferences and trends.

The rise of influencer marketing also ties into the popularity of short-form content. Influencers on platforms like TikTok and Instagram often produce brief, engaging videos that their followers eagerly consume and share. By partnering with influencers, brands can tap into their established audiences and benefit from their

authentic, relatable content. Influencer collaborations can amplify brand messages and drive higher engagement and conversion rates.

In addition to enhancing brand visibility and engagement, short-form content also plays a crucial role in storytelling and building brand identity. Brands can use concise, impactful videos to convey their values, mission, and personality in a way that resonates with their audience. This emotional connection can foster brand loyalty and encourage repeat interactions with the brand. Moreover, the analytics and insights provided by these social media platforms allow businesses to track the performance of their short-form content in real-time. Metrics such as views, likes, shares, comments, and click-through rates provide valuable data that can inform future content strategies and help businesses refine their approach for maximum impact.

Another interesting finding was the variation in results across different nationalities within the surveyed population. This diversity highlighted how distinct cultural backgrounds influence the choice of apps and the perception of social media. Specifically, the study revealed notable differences in how various nationalities use social media platforms for brand awareness, consumer engagement, and revenue growth. Moreover, the study found that social media's impact on brand awareness varied considerably. Western users often perceive social media as a primary tool for discovering new brands and engaging with them, while users from some other regions might view social media more as a means of connecting with established brands and accessing customer service. In terms of consumer engagement, Western respondents generally emphasized the interactive features of social media, such as live chats, stories, and polls, which foster a sense of community and immediate interaction. On the other hand, some nationalities showed a preference for content that blends entertainment with information, often valuing influencer recommendations and reviews more highly.

Revenue growth patterns also differed significantly. In markets where mobile payments and integrated shopping features are more prevalent, social media platforms directly contribute to sales. For instance, users in regions with high WeChat

penetration reported a seamless transition from social media interaction to purchase, demonstrating a direct link between engagement and revenue.

These findings underscore the importance of tailoring social media strategies to specific national markets, recognizing the unique preferences and behaviors of different cultural groups. By doing so, brands can more effectively leverage social media to enhance brand awareness, engage consumers, and drive revenue growth in a culturally resonant manner.

In conclusion, the preference for short content among social media users is driving a significant shift in how businesses approach their marketing strategies. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts offer unique opportunities for brands to create quick, engaging content that enhances visibility, fosters engagement, and delivers a strong ROI. By embracing short-form content and leveraging its benefits, businesses can effectively reach and connect with their target audiences in the dynamic landscape of social media marketing.

Chapter 6

Discussions and Conclusions

In conclusion, this thesis has explored the profound influence of social media on modern businesses, highlighting its significant role in shaping brand awareness, consumer engagement, and overall business performance. The research has demonstrated that effective social media strategies are not just beneficial but essential for businesses to stay competitive in today's digital landscape. By leveraging platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn, companies can enhance their visibility, foster stronger customer relationships, and ultimately drive revenue growth. These platforms have revolutionized how businesses communicate with their customers, providing a direct and often personal channel that can be used to convey messages, build brand identity, and engage with audiences on a much deeper level.

The findings from the survey conducted as part of this study underscore the importance of several key strategies for integrating social media into daily business operations. Respondents emphasized the need for improving internal systems for lead follow-up, establishing clear goals and metrics, regularly analyzing and adjusting strategies, and training staff on social media best practices. These strategies are crucial for maintaining a consistent and effective social media presence. Improving internal systems for lead follow-up ensures that potential customers are engaged promptly and efficiently, thereby increasing the chances of converting leads into sales. Establishing clear goals and metrics allows businesses to measure their success accurately and make data-driven decisions to refine their strategies. Regularly analyzing and adjusting strategies ensures that businesses remain agile and responsive to changes in the social media landscape. Training staff on social media best practices is essential for maintaining a cohesive and professional presence across all platforms.

Moreover, the integration of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems with social media platforms was identified as a critical component for generating leads and converting them into business opportunities. This integration allows businesses to track and analyze customer interactions across multiple channels,

providing a more comprehensive understanding of customer behavior and preferences. By leveraging this information, businesses can tailor their marketing efforts to meet the specific needs and interests of their customers, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of their campaigns.

Additionally, it was found that short-form video content is incredibly effective at capturing and retaining audience attention due to its brief and engaging format. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels have popularized this format, offering businesses a powerful tool for reaching a wide audience quickly. Short-form videos are particularly effective because they cater to the decreasing attention spans of modern consumers, delivering content that is both entertaining and informative in a concise package.

Understanding the online market and using the right platforms to target intended consumers were highlighted as crucial steps for businesses. Different social media platforms cater to different demographics and user behaviors, so it is important for businesses to select the platforms that best align with their target audience. For example, LinkedIn is ideal for B2B marketing and professional networking, while Instagram and TikTok are more suited for B2C marketing and engaging younger audiences. By choosing the right platforms, businesses can ensure that their marketing efforts are directed towards the most relevant and receptive audience.

These insights align with the trends observed in the literature, where social media's role in enhancing business visibility, providing real-time feedback, and managing customer relationships is increasingly recognized. Social media provides businesses with a unique opportunity to receive immediate feedback from their customers, allowing them to make quick adjustments and improvements to their products, services, and marketing strategies. This real-time interaction fosters a sense of community and loyalty among customers, as they feel that their opinions and experiences are valued by the brand.

As businesses continue to navigate the complexities of social media marketing, this thesis provides valuable guidance on effective strategies and practices. The

evolving nature of social media, coupled with emerging technologies and changing consumer behaviors, will continue to present both challenges and opportunities for businesses. Therefore, staying aware of these trends and continuously adapting social media strategies and keeping up with the continuous development of the technological aspect of social media will be imperative for sustained success in the digital age.

According to CEO World Magazine (2022), AI and automation are transforming social media marketing by enhancing efficiency and personalization. AI can analyze vast amounts of data to identify patterns and trends, allowing businesses to create highly targeted and personalized marketing campaigns. Automation tools can handle repetitive tasks, such as scheduling posts and responding to common customer queries, freeing up valuable time for marketers to focus on more strategic activities. This can be considered a very promising future trend that organizations can utilize in their marketing strategies. Moreover, by embracing augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) and focusing on short-form video content, brands can enhance their marketing efforts. AR and VR offer immersive experiences that can engage customers in new and exciting ways, while short-form videos continue to captivate audiences with their quick and dynamic format.

Additionally, prioritizing personalization, engaging with influencers, committing to sustainability, and ensuring data privacy will be crucial for building trust and loyalty with consumers. Personalization involves tailoring marketing messages and offers to individual customers based on their preferences and behavior, which can significantly enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. Engaging with influencers allows brands to tap into the influencers' established audiences and credibility, expanding their reach and impact. Committing to sustainability involves adopting environmentally friendly practices and communicating these efforts to customers, who are increasingly concerned about the environmental impact of their purchases. Ensuring data privacy involves protecting customer data and being transparent about how it is used, which is essential for maintaining trust in an age where data breaches are common.

Staying ahead of these trends will enable businesses to create more effective and impactful social media marketing strategies. The social media landscape is constantly evolving, and businesses that can adapt to these changes will be better positioned to succeed. By continuously monitoring trends and incorporating new technologies and practices into their strategies, businesses can stay relevant and maintain a competitive edge.

In summary, the integration of social media into business operations is not just a marketing necessity but a strategic imperative. By adopting a comprehensive approach to social media marketing, businesses can achieve greater engagement, stronger customer loyalty, and enhanced overall performance. The insights gained from this study offer a roadmap for businesses aiming to harness the full potential of social media in their quest for growth and innovation. Embracing social media as a core component of business strategy will not only drive immediate benefits but also lay the foundation for long-term success in the digital age.

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