

PART I

FOUNDATION FOR CREATING A STRATEGIC MINDSET

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INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL MEDIA

An Art and Science

Learning Objectives

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INTRODUCTION

Social media is no longer a “fad” that might go away; it is a profession that has matured but still has room to grow. Early on, social media was limited to college students; now, it is a powerhouse medium bringing communities together, breaking down barriers, raising awareness of issues around the world, and creating movements to spark impact. With the tap of a button, we can tweet, snap, and go live with our thoughts, perspectives, and stories for a global audience. We bypass mainstream media to create our own communities and personal identities.

Events that spark on social media can change the field to be more established, diverse, and integrated. It might seem unlikely for a cookie brand to create a movement for

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you will be able to

- Define social media
- Differentiate between social media platforms
- Explain the evolution of social media over time
- Identify the main considerations for using social media strategically
- Identify the key characteristics of the science and art of social media

real-time engagement, but that's exactly what Oreo did in 2013. During the power outage at the 2013 Super Bowl, Oreo established itself as a digital legend when it tweeted, "You can still dunk in the dark." The tweet inspired other brands to interject themselves into trending events. Brands have since then tried to meet the "Oreo standard" for real time marketing, and several have come close to this, such as Aviation Gin with their famous commercial making fun of Peloton back in 2019. This catapulted the gin company (owned by actor Ryan Reynolds) into the marketing stratosphere of creative, original, and relevant brands to watch in the social and digital space.

Social media allows brands and individuals to create movements and support causes. The 2014 amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) Ice Bucket Challenge gained momentum on social media from celebrities and everyday people sharing videos of themselves dumping buckets of ice water on their heads to raise awareness for ALS (Braiker, 2014). The \$115 million raised by this campaign in 2014 helped scientists discover a new gene tied to ALS (ALS Association, n.d.; Rogers, 2016). In another example, the July 2016 "Brexit" campaign—which promoted United Kingdom citizens voting to exit the European Union—succeeded in part due to social media impact (Singh, 2016). Movements around the world have become synchronous to the power of social media. The 2020 presidential campaign integrated social media across party lines and platforms to persuade audiences to vote for their candidate.

There have been many brands that have found success with utilizing a social first perspective for their strategic communication efforts. Brands such as Aviation Gin, GoFundMe, Lyft, MAC Cosmetics, Match.com, Burger King, Steak-Umm, and Chipotle catapulted their brands into the spotlight thanks to creative partnerships and innovative strategies. Aviation Gin goes against the grain (compared to other liquor brands) by investing in humorous real-time responses to current events (e.g., their Peloton commercial response and Leap Day ad). Steak-Umm unites communities with serious social issue discussions in an entertaining and snarky tone (e.g., their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic). GoFundMe positioned their brand as one that supports issues (ex. fundraising for basic needs, etc.) and their overall purpose. Chipotle gained new audiences by partnering with new communities (e.g., Fortnite and Call of Duty), influencers (e.g., David Dobrik, Mr. Beast, and more), and more. Match.com became a trending topic on social media and catapulted their brand to viral status with their marketing campaign with Maximum Effort celebrating the "match" between 2020 and Satan. Lyft creating a strong presence on TikTok by working with Generation Z audiences to create more brand and cultural awareness for the ride sharing brand. MAC Cosmetics partnered with Whalar and TikTok to create a creator-first campaign called #MoodFlip that created a viral challenge with an original challenge. Burger King, recognizing the impact of COVID-19 on small businesses and restaurants, rented out their Instagram handle for the Christmas holidays in France to support these restaurants, basically giving them free advertisement in tough economic times. As we can see here, all of these examples show the maturation growth of the social media profession, as well as how these campaigns used strategy, innovation through research principles (science), and creative executions (art) to succeed.

Social media has built on its strong foundation to become a staple in our global society. Many schools now offer courses and majors in social media, positioning it alongside marketing, public relations, communications, and more. Social media is an evolving specialization and constant focus within society that continues to expand. Brands, businesses, and universities are realizing the power social media has and how it can be applied for personal branding.

This chapter will discuss social media as a concept, profession, and specialization in the 21st century. Over the course of this book, we will discuss social media tools and the behaviors and strategies behind these tools.

Deirdre Breakenridge, Author, Professor, and CEO of Pure Performance Communications

Introduction

I've been working in public relations and marketing for 30+ years. I started my career focused on media relations and publicity. Today, I'm a chief relationship agent (CRA) and a communications problem-solver to help business professionals tackle their relationship challenges and to build credibility and trust with the public. After a 52+ week research study beginning in 2018, my work in communications also takes a FEEL first approach with a communications model focused on facing **Fears**, having **Empathy**, living with **Ethics**, and unleashing **Love** to build genuine relationships.

How did you get your start in social media?

I wish it was some great epiphany back in 2003. However, my journey began when I experienced an embarrassing situation with a client during a presentation to launch a new tech product. I was an agency owner at the time. My team and I were sharing our PR plan for the launch of load balancer product that required a new media focus.

After we wrapped up our presentation, the CEO of the company looked at me and said, "This is good, but where are all of the new media channels?" Not a good feeling when you thought you delivered the latest strategies and tactics to reach the media and other important stakeholders. From that point forward, my new media/social media research increased tenfold. By 2007, I was working on a manuscript for Financial Times Press called PR 2.0, a book to educate PR professionals on how to bridge the gap between traditional, online, and social media. I didn't

want other pros to experience that "Uh Oh" moment with their clients or executives. The "Ah Ha" moment is always much better.

What is your favorite part of working in your area of expertise in social media?

Social media is one of the best ways to build relationships when you can't meet and collaborate in person. For anyone who says you can't build a relationship through social media, I say, "You're not using social media correctly." There is an incredible amount of intelligence you can gather through social media to help you learn more about people and build a relationship. Social media levels the playing field. It's less about titles and your position and more about like-minded thinking, sharing perspectives, and passionate causes. When you take a peer-to-peer approach (companies must be more human and transparent, too), you can become a trusted resource.

What is one thing you can't live without while working in social media?

Social media is one of the easiest ways for you to connect quickly and collaborate with your colleagues, media, influencers, clients, etc. I can't live without the instantaneous interaction and how I receive answers to important inquiries within minutes. It's that quick DM [direct message] you send to an influencer to participate in a client Facebook Live interview at an industry conference. Or, it's that Facebook message to a colleague when you have a great opportunity to partner on a client account. It's also the ability

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for my professional students on LinkedIn to message me after they've taken one of my video courses and want to share feedback. For me, social media has become an indispensable part of my PR and marketing toolkit that helps me to develop, maintain, and build even stronger relationships.

What is your favorite social media account (person/brand/etc.) to follow and why?

Although I really like Instagram and I think Snapchat and TikTok are where you can find Millennials and the bulk of Gen Z, I'm still addicted to Twitter. Approaching the 2020 presidential election, I found myself tapping into the Twitter feeds of several news outlets and political figures who report of the state of our affairs from foreign policy to education, the state of the economy, climate change, and health care. After all, we had a president who used Twitter to announce policy and his stream of consciousness. Because the media is there too, reporting on what's shared, it has become a go-to platform.

What is the most challenging part of working in social media?

The ever-changing media landscape poses a challenge in two ways. First, you always have to be 10 steps ahead of your customers. The media landscape is incredibly fragmented with new social media communities proliferating at a rapid pace. You must stay current on the platforms and understand how and where people connect. Of course, there is only so much time in a day and professionals are always challenged to learn and embrace newer channels.

What is your take on your area of expertise and the social media industry?

Public relations and social media go hand-in-hand. Traditionally, PR people are the storytellers. They are the relationship builders who create the bridges of good will between organizations and their publics. PR professionals are also the brand police who work

tirelessly to watch, listen, interpret, maintain, and protect the brand.

Of course, social media takes your brand to new heights of awareness and offers the ability to build a larger digital footprint. At the same time, PR has to be right there communicating effectively on behalf of an organization, while maintaining a trusted reputation, wherever the company and its employees participate. Social media and PR together can propel your brand forward. When you fuse the power of community and relationships with collaborative technology, the result is stronger bonds, customer loyalty, and brand advocacy.

What do you wish you had known when you were starting out?

Don't take anything too personally, and always remember whatever happens and whatever is said may not be about you. When you have interactions with people in your personal life or throughout your career, what they say and how they react have more to do with their own personal or professional situations and what they're going through.

To my peers and younger professionals: Remove your emotional self and be more of an observer of any situation. Because social media is an important part of our lives both personally and professionally, remember that you'll collaborate with many inspiring individuals and you'll grow from those relationships. Also, keep in mind that there will be uneasy and tense interactions that make you take pause. Try to remember to step back, remove your personal emotional self, ask a lot of questions, walk in someone else's shoes, and learn from the situation.

What are three marketable skills a social media professional needs to have to work in the industry?

The first is emotional intelligence. Professionals who show up with emotional intelligence on social media will foster deeper relationships. Because they have a better handle on their own emotions, they'll be able to manage the behaviors of others.

The second skill is adaptability. Because technology and media are changing so quickly, the professionals who are flexible, quick to learn, and include new technologies into their workflow will do well.

The last skill is hands-on experience with data and analytics. Professionals who can capture and analyze data are valuable assets to an organization. They will not only be able to prove value in a social media program, but also improve brand communication based on the data they analyze and use moving forward.

Where do you go to keep up to date with trends and continue learning about social media?

As a LinkedIn Learning Instructor, of course, I'll say LinkedIn Learning is a great platform

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that keeps me “in the know” with communications, business, and leadership video courses. I follow industry blogs and online publications including SmartBrief, Spin Sucks, PR News, PR Daily, CommPRO.biz, HubSpot, to name a few. Podcasts are also an excellent avenue for learning with a few of my go-to shows including Maximize Your Social Influence, Social Media Marketing, and Marketing Over Coffee.

If you had to choose a song to walk out to in a presentation on social media, what would it be and why?

My song would be “Have It All,” by Jason Mraz.

HOW DO WE DEFINE SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media has been defined, classified, and conceptualized in probably a million different ways. Wherever you go, there is a new term, definition, or way of looking at social media. Every discipline wants to own the term and its definition. Every industry wants to control the duties assigned to social media. Social media is a powerful yet transdisciplinary profession, requiring an understanding of all integrated perspectives, approaches, and views.

Historically and from an academic perspective, social media combines “a wide range of online, word-of-mouth forums including blogs, company sponsored discussion boards and chat rooms, consumer-to-consumer e-mail, consumer product or service rating websites and forums, Internet discussion boards and forums, [and] microblogs” (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Social media is about people (Marken, 2007), and the technology not only provides means for establishing and maintaining relationships but also allows users to create their own (user-generated) content to share with others in the online community (Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009).

Some of the content that individuals share with others in their online networks includes information regarding news events, updates on personal and professional achievements, and multimedia content. Social media has “amplified the power of consumer-to-consumer conversations in the marketplace by enabling one person to communicate with literally hundreds or thousands of other consumers quickly and with relatively little effort” (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 361). As a result, official messages are competing for consumer attention with many other sources of information.

Some professionals classify it as a group of social networks that allow conversations and relationships to emerge. Others focus on the community aspect in which people are able to converse together in a centralized location to collaborate and initiate dialogue. All of these are key characteristics of social media, but in any case, keep in mind that this definition will need to be fluid and adaptive to the growing list of tools, features, and changes we are seeing in this particular space. For the purposes of this textbook, one way to define **social media** is that it can

provide a personalized, online networked hub of information, dialogue, and relationship management. These new communication technology tools allow individual users and organizations to engage with, reach, persuade, and target key audiences more effectively across multiple platforms. Industry professionals, scholars, and social media users have contributed a number of different definitions and conceptualizations of the concept of social media. Some emphasize the role of social media as a toolkit that allows users to create and share content. Others focus on how social media extend Web 2.0 technologies to bring communities together. (Freberg, 2016, p. 773)

The overall functions of social media are not limited to communicating messages designed by professionals for audiences, in parallel to message construction in traditional media. In addition, social media allows users to participate to an extent not seen previously in traditional media. Increased empowerment of the individual stakeholder leads to greater feelings of control over a situation and a willingness to help others in the community, which could potentially be used by brands and corporations to engage with audiences, formulate message strategies, and evaluate their own reputation in the eyes of their online audience members.

With these new shifts in power and breakdown in barriers, brands are expected to listen and respond to stakeholder concerns in new ways. Recognizing the influence of social media provides professionals with the opportunity to use social media strategically to discover potential issues relevant to their stakeholders, to prepare for different scenarios and situations, to implement online communication strategically, and to evaluate results of communications in real time.

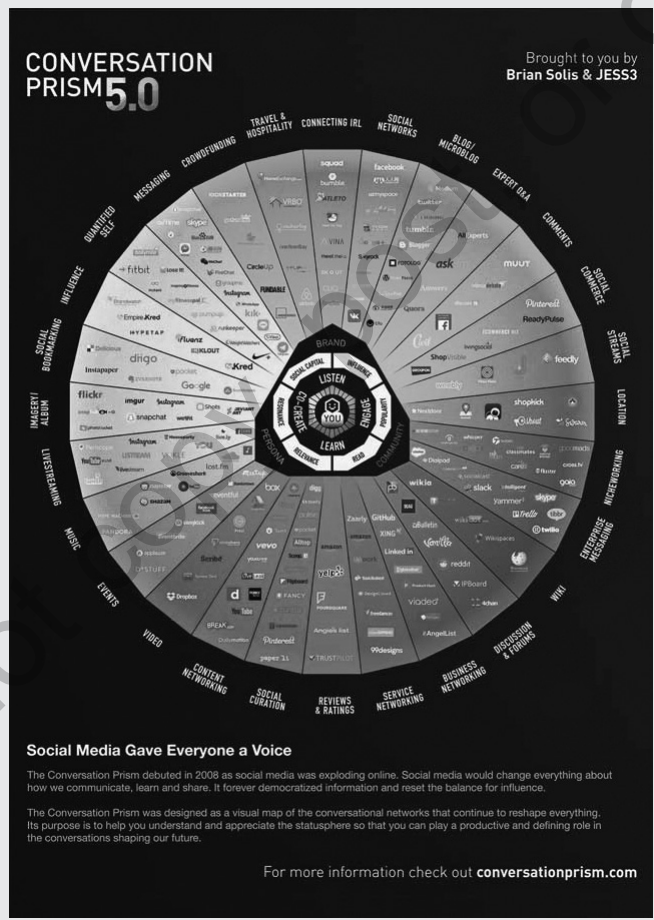
In addition, social media platforms serve as gateways where content and conversations are created and ignited between individuals, brands, organizations, and nations. Essentially, social media platforms provide first-impression management tools for corporations and individuals to showcase their own brands and reputations. Although individual social media platforms may be somewhat separated at times from others, they are all part of the same ecosystem. Each platform has its own features, dynamic characteristics, and community attributes, but they are integrated with the organization, brand, or individual's persona online. In addition, they are also one part of the overall communication mix of media channels that can be utilized to share information, establish communities, and formulate relationships for a brand. Earned, paid, shared, and owned media have converged to formulate this new ecosystem of communities and networks. Social media is more than just a set of tools to use; it is also a larger network of communities tied together through virtual and offline connections.

All of the various platforms that make up this social media ecosystem can be quite daunting to visualize. As shown in Figure 1.1, JESS3 and Brian Solis created an infographic outlining the conversation prism of all of the social media platforms out there for users, businesses, and organizations to take advantage of (JESS3, n.d.).

Essentially, this infographic highlights the various platforms available as well as categorizes them based on the function they serve. Note, this infographic is relatively “old” in social media standards, but the key concepts are still important. This is different from most of the other visualizations out there for social media, which focus more on the application of the social media platform rather than the specific type of platform.

Several other defining characteristics should be noted when it comes to social media. Each of these computer-based applications and platforms allows users to share and create information, disseminate ideas in various forms, share content, and respond to these pieces of content. In addition, each platform allows you to create your own personal identity with a picture or avatar. An avatar is acceptable to use on certain platforms, but most individuals use one consistent photo across all of their respective accounts online. This is done for several reasons, but a prominent one is to establish a proactive positive **online reputation**.

Figure 1.1 Social Media Conversation Prism



Source: Jesse Thomas (JESS3) / Brian Solis

In addition, there is a possibility for these pieces of content (videos, images, posts, updates, etc.) to go viral. **Virality**, or rapid dissemination of information from person to person, is one way in which news, stories, and updates reach across various networks in a short amount of time.

There are various examples of a post, update, story, or even video becoming viral. Some platforms, like Facebook, allow this to happen much more easily since the content is shared within the platform itself. In 2016, Chewbacca Mask Mom became famous when she filmed herself on Facebook Live wearing a Chewbacca mask from Kohl's (Eordogh, 2016). Her laugh became contagious, and everyone began sharing this video. It became the most watched and viral Facebook Live video ever in 2016 with over 130 million views (Eordogh, 2016). We have also seen brands get their moments in the spotlight by engaging with their biggest fans. Let's take Ocean Spray for example. When TikTok user Nathan Apodaca filmed himself on his skateboard drinking a bottle of Ocean Spray while Fleetwood Mac's song "Dreams" was playing, it became a viral hit. Not only did the challenge go viral with the CEO of Ocean Spray and Fleetwood Mac joining as well, it also reintroduced both Ocean Spray and Fleetwood Mac to a younger audience, making the song hit most of the top played music charts and having Ocean Spray bottles selling out at stores. All of this can be attributed to social media. As a result, this case study has become an iconic commercial for TikTok in showing how it all starts on their platform (the campaign is called It Starts on TikTok).

In other cases, brands have used certain platforms, such as TikTok, to go viral. E.L.F. Cosmetics found by attaching their videos to popular songs and posting them on TikTok, their products sales increased significantly (Flora, 2020). Even newspapers have gotten notoriety for their work going viral on TikTok, including *The Washington Post* with Dave Jorgenson ("21 Inspiring Brands on TikTok to Fuel Your Creative Strategy," n.d.). Jorgenson stated that the success of creating viral content for *The Washington Post* has been due not only to the type of content they share but also the nature of the platform:

The metaphor that I use often is we've been invited to this dinner party by TikTok, TikTok is the host, and TikTok is a really good cook and they do everything right. We just got invited and we don't want to walk into the house and say "Hey, this is how you cook your steak." We might bring a bottle of wine and be like "Hey, we brought this to help make the meal better, and we also have some new jokes you haven't heard." (*The Washington Post* Has a Surprisingly Popular TikTok Account," n.d.)

The overall fundamental use and motive behind social media has been to establish personal connections with others and tell our stories virtually. Why do we share what we share online for the world to see? What motivates us to create content for others to see? Think about the last time you used social media—what did you share? Why did you share it on a particular platform?

It's important to explore not only where you shared this information, but how and why you decided to share it with one person, a few people, or everyone in your respective communities. Sometimes, what you share, post, comment, and discuss on various social media platforms is not just for your friends but for the entire world to see. What you say on social media is public and can be used as documentation. Each action taken on social media has a specific purpose—whether we are creating the content ourselves or consuming the content to be shared with our communities. Yet we also have the power to comment on and engage with the content as we see fit.

Some fundamental characteristics make social media unique compared to other types of media platforms. First, the platforms are web- and mobile-based applications. Most of the rising applications are mobile based to fit the growing trend for more mobile capabilities without a desktop- or web-specific requirement like Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp, and others have done.

Second, the power of **user-generated content (UGC)** is a prominent characteristic of why businesses and individuals like social media. UGC is content that is created directly by a user. This could be a video that you created over the holidays showcasing your zip-lining experience over the Costa Rica terrain with a GoPro camera, or even an infographic outlining the main items to bring to the Kentucky Derby, SXSW, or Coachella. UGC is not the only type of content that can be created on social media; for example, there is **branded content** (BC or brand storytelling), which a lot of businesses create. This type of content allows brands to emerge as their own media outlets and create their own content uniquely aligned with their goals, mission, and brand voice. We have seen this for various brands, especially in the entertainment industry. Take the Netflix show *Emily in Paris*, for example. The star of the show (Emily, who is played by actress Lilly Collins) works in marketing and social media, but the show has its own handle on Instagram (@emilyinparis) like the character does in the show. Why is this an effective strategy? This can help brands create advocates or brand ambassadors to help pass along these pieces of branded content (or assets) to other communities around the world. Social media provides an open and dynamic online community. Individuals and corporations can participate in various communities linked together by similar interests and backgrounds. These communities can brainstorm ideas, share perspectives, and engage in dialogue to formulate networking relationships.

For example, Hootsuite, a global social media management company based in Vancouver, Canada, has created a brand ambassadorship program for users around the world to share their stories and experiences openly and to connect with other potential users and stakeholders in social media (Photo 1.1). Other companies (such as Fast, IBM, Applegate, and Public) have similar programs to bring together fans, customers, and loyal advocates for the brand to establish a community. Adobe, for example, has created an ambassador program in two different areas of the company. Adobe Insiders, a group of professionals across the social media and marketing industry, focuses on using their platforms to share insights, stories, and experiences using Adobe products for their work. Adobe Education Leaders make up educators who are at all levels in a program that focuses on creativity, education, and bringing together ideas and perspectives in and out of the classroom.

Let's build something great together

As Hootsuite spreads its wings across the globe, we meet people who are passionate about our product. Explore our Community programs and find out how you can help bring our brand to the globe.



Hootsuite Ambassadors

Passionate about social media? So are we. That's why we invite our most passionate fans and expert users to join our Ambassador program, where they get to showcase their social media expertise and help us deliver a better product. Check out what they're up to: #HootAmb

► Photo 1.1 Hootsuite Ambassador Program

Source: Hootsuite Inc.,
<https://www.hootsuite.com/community/ambassador-program>

Social media has been characterized as distinguished compared to other forms of media due to the power of its real-time content creation and the level of engagement it offers to users across many respective platforms. That said, social media provides a range of different opportunities, challenges, and experiences for users to take part in, such as the following:

- Dialogue on a one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many format in real time
- New relationships, connections, and professional and personal opportunities for your personal brand
- Visual and immersive storytelling through video, live video, photos, and other multimedia content
- Providing awareness of the brand voice, story, and people behind the scenes
- Sparking creativity with communities through challenges that can go viral in popularity
- Becoming a resource for education, training, and support for the community
- Entertaining through memes and video content that capture current trends and views on topics in society
- Initiating behaviors and call-to-action statements for audiences to note
- Sending persuasive messages that are strategically targeted using advertising and personalized data
- Responding immediately to customer inquiries and providing updates on crisis situations

One of the most important things to be aware of is that the definition as well as the statistics, practices, and strategies of social media will change on a frequent basis. You do not need to have all of the answers or even know all of the platforms in play. If you try to learn every single change that happens with each platform, that will become your life as a social media professional. However, it is important to note you may be asked to come up with your own definition of social media, per se, so think about the defining characteristics, features, and overall attributes that make up this dynamic and evolving set of platforms.

HOW HAS SOCIAL MEDIA EVOLVED?

Social media is still a very young profession and industry, even though it has matured substantially over the years. At each stage, expanded sets of features have been added to meet the increasing expectations of audiences. With each new feature being implemented by one platform, others follow and sometimes take the idea and incorporate it into their own version. Google launched Google+ (RIP) to compete with Facebook. Instagram created Instagram Stories to compete with Facebook. Instagram added Reels to compete with TikTok. LinkedIn jumped on the Stories bandwagon to compete with TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. TikTok was rebranded from the success of Musical.ly. Facebook is offering a Jobs feature to compete with LinkedIn. LinkedIn offers LinkedIn Live to compete with Facebook and Twitter live video features. YouTube features Stories

to compete with Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. Facebook bought GIPHY, which brings questions on whether or not platforms like Twitter and Snapchat can still use them. Clubhouse, the social audio platform that offers exclusive invites, has faced its own competition in the social audio space with Twitter adding Spaces, and Instagram opening up their Live Room features on the platform.

Okay, did you get that? So many different platforms competing with each other—it's essentially a digital media soap opera. Or, think of it as a battle in *Game of Thrones: Social Media Edition*. Every platform is out there to buy, conquer, and get as much digital real estate as possible to garner the most attention and use time.

The Current State of Social Media

Social media platforms are in constant flux and evolution, and managing the change in those platforms could become your job in addition to your other responsibilities. Keep in mind that you want to take a tier system approach to looking at social media in general. Social media platforms are divided by function and overall purpose. However, most social media platforms are indexed, edited, and revised over time, as well as categorized and searchable online through search engines. Some of the main types of social media platforms are wikis (e.g., Wikipedia), blogs (e.g., WordPress, Medium, and Blogger), video conferencing platforms (Google MeetMe, Facebook Messenger Rooms and Messenger, Zoom, BlueJeans, Microsoft Teams), collaborative crowdsourcing sites (e.g., Google Drive, Dropbox, Slack, Asana, Trello, and Box), messaging (e.g., WhatsApp, WeChat, Messenger), micro-blogging (e.g., Twitter and Weibo), live streaming (e.g., Twitch, Facebook Live, Instagram Live, LinkedIn Live, and going live on TikTok), mobile-based platforms (e.g., TikTok, Dispo, Snapchat, and Instagram), social audio (e.g., Clubhouse, Twitter Spaces, etc.), podcasts (e.g., Soundcloud, Anchor, Apple Podcasts, etc.), and business networking (e.g., LinkedIn), to name a few.

Facebook, the largest social media platform in the world, is an example of a **social networking site (SNS)**. Social networking sites can be defined as “(1) web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 211). Using an SNS, an individual can control personal information to share with others. Users can also affiliate with businesses and large organizations that have a presence on these sites by adding them as “friends” (Boyd, 2006).

Twitter, on the other hand, allows individuals and brands to create, curate, and communicate information in real time in a limited number of characters. Twitter allows users to push content to their followers that can include textual information, hyperlinks, images, videos, and even interactive GIFs for entertainment, information, and conversation purposes. Users can also participate in chat sessions surrounding particular common interests and topics by following a hashtag, which is a keyword preceded by a # sign to allow users to track and follow certain conversations. Many corporations presently have integrated a branded hashtag to help manage their reputation (e.g., Cinnabon, Star Wars, Pixar, and Popeyes), as well as embracing user-generated hashtags from their community. Some examples of branded hashtags include #EmilyInParis (for Netflix's *Emily in Paris* show), #LifeNeedsFrosting (e.g., Cinnabon), and #VPDebate or #Election2020 (2020 Election and Debates). Corporations are able to monitor, track, and evaluate the success of a hashtag within a campaign through social media monitoring platforms and analytics using an application programming interface (API). Using API, corporations can create tools and

software programs to work with Twitter. In addition, users can get content out to audiences who are not part of the community with the use of hashtags for key terms on trending topics, news items, community events, and industry-related issues.

Visual and “snackable” content forms such as Instagram and Snapchat are emerging as dominant platforms among users, particularly in the younger generations of audience members. These two platforms are constantly challenging each other with their features. Facebook tried to buy Snapchat in 2013 for \$3 billion (Fiegerman, 2014), which caused the social networking giant to continue advancing Instagram (which it bought in 2012) with similar features to compete with Snapchat. Since then, Instagram has grown not only in popularity but in features that make it competitive in the social media landscape. Going live, having stickers supporting causes, raising money, and shopping capabilities are just some of the features that have been added. However, TikTok has risen in popularity as a visual and snackable content that combines music, entertainment, and culture. Creators, influencers, and brands have all flocked to the platform to capture the virality and presence the platform has among certain audiences, such as Generation Z. Other platforms are somewhat embracing a mobile yet exclusive visual experience with invitations, such as Dispo, which is a visual first platform that shares snapshots, but taking a more simplistic approach in sharing visual content. This social platform, which was founded by influencer David Dobrik and colleagues, is considered to be the “anti-Instagram”, where it forces users to post pictures, but are not allowed to add a caption explaining the photo.

Make sure you are on the main platforms being discussed and highlighted in society (see Table 1.1). In this case, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Snapchat, and TikTok are some of the most familiar. Each of these key platforms has set forth some interesting advances and experienced changes throughout its history within the industry.

Table 1.1 Key Players in Social Media

Platform	Founded	CEO	Key Features
Facebook	February 2004	Mark Zuckerberg	Profile, News Feed, Groups, Events, Video, Photos, Search, Messenger, Pages, Video Meetings
Instagram	October 2010	Kevin Systrom	Profiles, Business Pages, Layout, Boomerang, Instagram Live, Stickers (Donations, Music, Shopping, Reels), GIFs, Shopping, Live Rooms
LinkedIn	March 2003	Ryan Roslansky	Business Profiles, Pages, Groups, Lynda, LinkedIn Live, LinkedIn Stories
Twitter	March 2006	Jack Dorsey	Profile, Newsfeed, Live Video, Images, GIFs, Fleets, Spaces
YouTube	March 2005	Susan Wojcicki	Video, YouTube Red, YouTube Live
Snapchat	September 2011	Evan Spiegel	Snaps, Snapchat My Story, Live Stories, Discover, Spectacles, Lens Studio
TikTok	2012	Kevin Mayer	Feed, Challenges, Filters, Music, Effects, Live

With the key players in social media, it is important to note that each of these platforms has evolved and had some significant milestones as a company. Some have been bought, transformed, and evolved through the years. Table 1.2 presents some of the main milestones for each platform.

Table 1.2 Major Milestones for Key Players in Social Media	
Platform	Major Timeline Events
Facebook (newsroom.fb.com/ company-info/)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February 4, 2004: Facebook is founded by Mark Zuckerberg along with Dustin Moskovitz, Chris Hughes, and Eduardo Saverin • March 1, 2004: Facebook expands from Harvard to Stanford, Columbia, and Yale • September 1, 2004: Facebook Wall is launched • 2005: Photo uploading option is offered • April 1, 2006: Mobile is launched • February 9, 2009: Like button is introduced • September 22, 2011: Timeline is introduced • April 9, 2012: Facebook buys Instagram for \$1 billion • February 19, 2014: Facebook buys WhatsApp • March 25, 2014: Facebook buys Oculus Rift • March 25, 2015: Messenger is launched • September 25, 2015: Facebook 360 video is launched • December 3, 2015: Live video for profiles is launched • February 24, 2016: Facebook Reactions is launched • June 9, 2016: Facebook 360 photos are available • October 16, 2016: Workplace by Facebook is introduced • October 8, 2018: Portal is introduced • March 2020: Facebook introduces measures and features to support small businesses impacted by COVID-19 • May 2020: Facebook purchases GIPHY for \$400 million
Instagram (instagram-press.com/ our-story/)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 6, 2010: Instagram is launched • April 9, 2012: Facebook buys Instagram • June 30, 2013: Instagram video is launched • December 2013: Instagram Direct is launched • August 26, 2014: Hyperlapse is launched • March 23, 2015: Layout from Instagram is introduced • September 1, 2015: Improvements are added for Instagram Direct • October 22, 2015: Boomerang is introduced • August 2, 2016: Instagram Stories is introduced • August 31, 2016: Zoom is introduced • January 24, 2017: Live Stories are available globally

(Continued)

Table 1.2 (Continued)

Platform	Major Timeline Events
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August 31, 2017: Live Stories are available on the web • January 23, 2018: GIF Stickers are introduced • February 1, 2018: Type Mode in Stories is introduced • 2019: Instagram introduces cyberbullying, shopping, and AR filter tools • 2019: Instagram introduces Reels first in Brazil, and then more than 50 countries in 2020 • May 2020: Instagram introduces Challenges • March 2021: Instagram introduces Live Rooms
<p>Twitter (about.twitter.com/en_us/company.html)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 21, 2006: Jack Dorsey sends out his first tweet • March 2007: Twitter makes a splash at SXSW Interactive • August 2007: First Twitter hashtag is proposed by Chris Messina • April 2010: Promoted Tweets are launched • June 2010: Promoted Trends are launched • May 2011: Twitter buys TweetDeck • June 2012: Twitter receives a new design • January 2013: Twitter launches Vine • November 2013: Twitter files for initial public offering (IPO) • August 2014: Promoted Video is launched • January 2015: Direct Messages and mobile video are introduced • March 2015: Twitter buys Periscope • October 2015: Twitter launches Moments and Polls • January 2016: Periscope is embedded in tweets • November 2017: Twitter allows tweets to grow from 140 characters to 280 characters • 2019: Introduces bookmarks and dark mode features • 2020: Twitter launches Audio tweets • 2020: Twitter releases Fleets to audiences, adding another platform incorporating stories • 2021: Twitter releases Spaces to compete in the social audio space
<p>LinkedIn (about.linkedin.com/)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2003: LinkedIn is launched • April 2007: LinkedIn reaches 10 million users • February 2008: LinkedIn launches mobile version • January 2011: LinkedIn launches IPO • May 3, 2012: LinkedIn buys SlideShare • April 9, 2015: LinkedIn buys Lynda.com • June 13, 2016: Microsoft buys LinkedIn • 2019: LinkedIn Live is available in beta form • May 2020: LinkedIn Stories are available

Platform	Major Timeline Events
YouTube (www.youtube.com)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> February 14, 2005: YouTube is created and founded by Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim November 2005: YouTube has its first million-hit video with Nike February 2006: YouTube negotiates deal with NBC November 13, 2006: Google buys YouTube for \$1.65 billion May 2007: YouTube launches Partner Program June 2007: YouTube hosts presidential debate with CNN August 2007: YouTube launches ads August 2009: Usher and Justin Bieber video is posted January 2010: Movie rentals are available July 2012: Olympics are available to live stream December 2012: "Gangnam Style" hits 1 billion views 2014–2016: Creation of YouTube Red April 2020: PewDiePie is the most followed YouTube account with 104 million subscribers 2020: YouTube marks 2 billion users on the platform
Snapchat (www.snapchat.com)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 2011: Snapchat is initially released October 2013: My Story is launched May 2014: Video Chat is launched September 2016: Snapchat is rebranded to Snap Inc. September 2016: Snapchat Spectacles are introduced March 2017: Snapchat files for IPO 2017: Snapchat launches SnapMap 2019: Snapchat launches Lens Studio
TikTok (www.tiktok.com)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Musical.ly founded by Alex Zhu and Luyu Yang in 2014 2016: Music.ly claims 70 million downloads September 2016: ByteDance merged to create new app and rebrand it ByteDance purchased Music.ly in November 2017 for almost \$1 billion 2018: Available in 154 markets and in 75 languages 2019: Fourth most popular app downloaded in 2019 and 800 million users worldwide 2020: Charli D'Amelio becomes the first creator to hit 100 million followers on TikTok September 2020: TikTok works with Oracle and Walmart for U.S. presence to not get banned 2021: Oracle and Walmart collaboration is put on hold until further notice 2021: Possible opportunities to schedule TikToks on platform are discussed

Sources: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, TikTok, and Snapchat.

Who “Owns” Social Media?

Indeed, a lot of marketing professionals, PR practitioners, communication scholars, and others have discussed and proposed an argument for why their discipline should “own” social media. Everyone wants to claim ownership of the social media discipline and profession (it’s almost like the Iron Throne from *Game of Thrones*), yet not every profession knows how to make the most of the emerging platforms. Each profession may know how to use social media specifically for its industry or discipline, but it may not be aware of the vast possibilities or ways in which others are using it.

There are many answers to this question, and this has arisen at many professional conferences, academic sessions, and discussions online. Some would say marketing has ownership of social media from a business and analytical standpoint. Marketing most of the time has the finances and support needed to provide businesses and organizations with the means for creating, disseminating, and analyzing the content and how well it is received. Yet some would say the platforms themselves “own” social media. Social media is not like traditional media in a way that we would classify it on the media spectrum, but there has been a shift in the “pay-to-play” model, essentially forcing users and corporations to pay for their content to be seen by the right target audience at a specific time on their platform. Both Google and Facebook have led the way in this area and have forced this transformation, which has led to this current paid content model for social media.

There is a difference, of course, between owned media platforms (e.g., blogs) and earned or shared media platforms (e.g., social media). One way to approach the difference between these types of media is to recognize that one is controlled by the user and the other is controlled by others. Blogs essentially are controlled by individual users who are given the opportunity to decide how their page should look, what content to share, and whether or not they want comments to appear. The power of control is quite prominent, and one way to think about it is like owning a house. You can do whatever you want to it. On the other hand, social media is somewhat controllable by the user or brand, but the user or brand is somewhat “renting” the space like an apartment. There are terms of service agreements to follow, and the platform has the opportunity to change these agreements, switch up the features and designs, or even shut down its services.

So, with everything being said, who “owns” social media?

The answer is no one owns social media. Social media is open for everyone to use, create, share, engage, and come together on. No discipline is the primary owner of social media. All disciplines need to collaborate and work together. Most of the time, social media is its own department, where it works with others internally and externally. The barrier of entry is minimal, and the opportunity to be part of many diverse communities has never been more accessible for professionals, businesses, and organizations.

The correct question would be who collaborates with social media, and who needs to know social media? The answer to this question is simple: Everyone works with and needs to know social media.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGICALLY

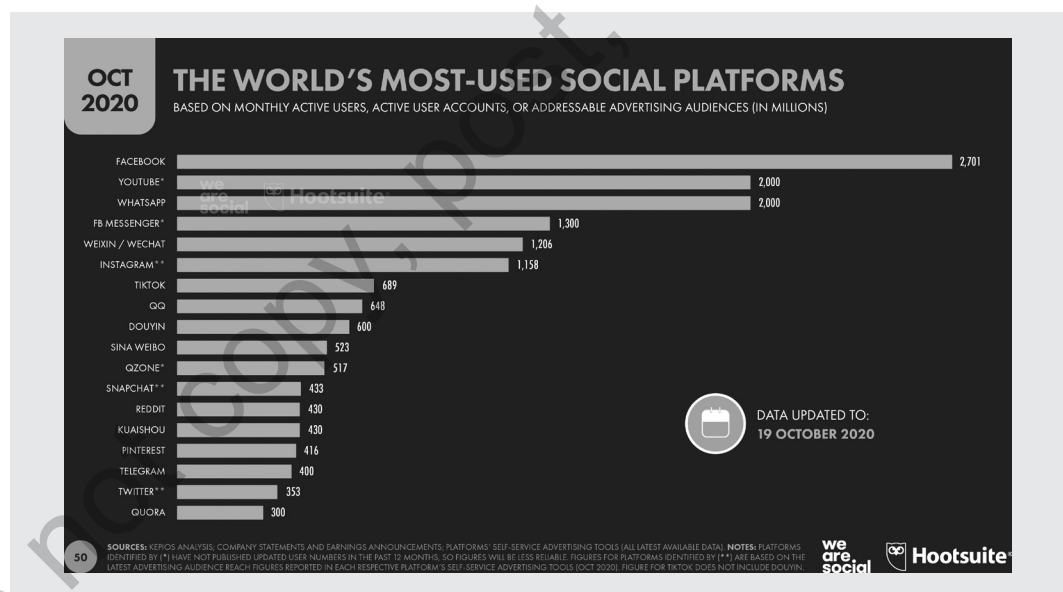
Social media can be for personal use, but you can also use it professionally. Many times, we see how a group uses it for one community it is interacting with, but we

forget how this is perceived from other perspectives. On social media, you need to find the balance that allows you to interact and create content that educates and informs your professional audiences of your level of expertise and thought leadership, but you also want to be personal enough so you are not perceived as a robot. There is a fine line between these two worlds, and that is why it is important to use social media strategically and effectively based on your own needs and expectations in the field. Each person is different—there are certain etiquette and professional guidelines to follow and review, but you have to be confident in knowing your own community, voice, and presence online. Social media is all about first impressions, and you want to make sure your name stands out for the right reasons.

Which Social Media Platforms Should I Use?

Choosing the right platforms for your role comes down to a few factors. First and foremost, you do not have to be on every single platform. As presented in Figure 1.2, Facebook still remains the most popular social media platform, followed by YouTube, WhatsApp, and Messenger. Yet, like all reports on social media, once content is published, it is out of date and has not accounted for other mobile-based platforms (e.g., TikTok) gaining traction within the community and in society.

Figure 1.2 We Are Social and Hootsuite Digital 2020 Report



Source: Hootsuite & We Are Social (2019), "Digital 2019 Global Digital Overview," retrieved from <https://wearesocial.com/blog/2020/04/digital-around-the-world-in-april-2020>

To choose a particular platform, a social media professional must consider the following:

Audiences. Make sure to look first to where your audiences are going. Who are these individuals, and where are they having their conversations? You will of course be able to collect some information

from these audiences (demographics, etc.); think about the amount of information Facebook has collected about you over the years from likes, comments, shares, and even videos watched. In addition to clear demographic points, understanding the lifestyle, opinions, interests, and behaviors (otherwise known as psychographics) of audiences is a key indicator for understanding our audiences more effectively.

Purpose. Platforms will continue to compete with each other to grab the attention and number of users from other platforms. Take the example of Facebook, which acquired Instagram for \$1 billion and has transformed it into a dominant multimedia platform. Yet when Facebook wanted to buy Snapchat as well, Snapchat said no. As a result, Facebook has tried to copy various features of the mobile application for its own platform, ranging from filters on Instagram to the Messenger app. Each platform essentially has a specific function and audience in mind. Not all platforms are equal or founded on the same vision or principles. As time goes by, the competition among these brands for eyeballs and usage will only become bigger and more prominent.

For a social media professional, not only is understanding the functions and specifics of the tools important, but so is understanding the behaviors and reasons why people are using these tools in the first place. Each platform has a different overall purpose, as well as trustworthiness factor, whether it involves getting news, creating personal content, engaging in customer service, sharing negative experiences or responding to a crisis, sharing and creating stories, or initiating a call to action to drive sales, strengthen reputation, and build on an established community.

Relationships. Identifying the current state of relationships between users on social media platforms is crucial at first. Some users will be your biggest fans and want to be on every platform you are on. However, some users may just want to be on one channel with you based on your brand voice there. This has to be determined and thought out carefully to make sure you are spending the appropriate time, resources, and engagement necessary to foster these relationships as proactively as possible. When it comes to being on social media, you want a strategy in place for why you have a presence on each platform. Your network is indeed your net worth, and there is no better way to connect, engage, and proactively seek out professionals in the field. #MarketingTwitter for example is a great way to start to learn, engage, and be active in the community to meet some of the game changers in the social and digital industry.

Personality. Determining the platform you feel best establishes the personal voice for your business, organization, and even individual brand is something to consider and keep in mind. Certain platforms will feel more natural to you, but try to utilize each platform consistently to present a comprehensive brand across the board. Everyone wants the power to showcase who they are and why they are unique.

Showcasing your personality could come in a variety of different forms, from creating content on platforms like Instagram or TikTok to showing videos about various trends and daily activities (e.g., Gary Vaynerchuk and his #DailyVee shows on YouTube, or creator David Dobrik with his videos and short clips on TikTok). Other professionals in the industry showcase their personality based on the content and insights they share. Social media professionals such as Nat Balda (WhatsApp), Jenn Crim (Grand Ole Opry) share insights on what it is like to work

in the social media industry for students. Jess Zafarris (*Adweek*) has created unique insights on what certain industry words mean and define them in creative and informative videos on TikTok. In addition, Brittani Warrick, a social media strategist who has helped her aunt (singer Dionne Warwick) embrace Twitter and social media for her brand, shares her strategy through visuals and threads on Twitter. Brands have to showcase their personality with content showing not only what they are doing but also what they can do to become a resource for their respective audience members. White papers, e-books, webinars, blog posts, podcasts, and even Twitter chat sessions are just some of the methods that are highlighted and expanded upon for brands.

Content. The new model for content creation and marketing on social media has shifted from just pushing content for the sake of self-promotion to becoming more personalized, interactive, and focused on storytelling. Develop the messages and pieces of content that your audiences want. The ideal situation is to think about pieces of content your audiences want, but do not realize they want, from you. This will take some additional brainstorming sessions and strategic planning in order to uncover the messages, pieces of content, and stories to showcase on social media. If you have strong content, this will allow you to become known as a resource for your **thought leadership**. Brands, individuals, and organizations can become thought leaders in their area as they continue to produce, share, and create content as a go-to resource for innovative ideas; persuade people to take action in response to their created content; and are viewed as trusted sources of information in their area. Social and digital publications such as Morning Brew, The Next Web, Fast Company, Digiday, and more are thought of as resources to get news out about trends in the industry, but many social media professionals become contributors to publications such as *Adweek*, *Social Media Today*, and *Forbes* to showcase their thought leadership and expertise on various topics in the industry.

Some pieces of content will resonate with an audience on one platform rather than another. You do not always want to post the same content across all platforms. There are some combinations that will work (e.g., Instagram and Facebook with videos), but you want to repurpose and reformat content that is designated with a particular community, platform capabilities, and purpose in mind. In addition, the content needs not only to reflect on the brand's voice but also to connect with the audience in terms of user expectations from a brand using this platform.

Innovativeness. Users want to be part of a platform that continues to raise the bar for what a social media platform should be. Responding to user audiences and suggestions is another focus these platforms have to be aware of. People have noticed that Facebook has copied a lot of its new features from other platforms like Snapchat. Yet other platforms have been willing (or at least appeared willing) to listen to their audience members' suggestions for new features. In December 2016, Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey went on social media and asked Twitter users what they would like to see in the New Year on the microblogging platform. While this came at a time when Twitter was challenged with key personnel leaving and advertisement and metrics dropping, it was better late than never. Adam Mosseri, Head of Instagram, is active on Twitter and Instagram making sure he is able to answer questions and provide updates on new features on the platform for audiences and get their feedback. One of the benefits to platforms like Twitter is the opportunity to not only get access to breaking news but also connect with the game changers in the field immediately, bypassing some of the traditional gatekeepers pre-social media.

Analytics. Data will of course be your friend when it comes to engaging with content and audiences on social media, depending on the platforms in question. You will be able to determine the time, frequency, responses, and views you will get. These data and insights will help you determine when it is appropriate to post content and share videos, and even how long a response people expect from a customer comment on social media. In addition, analytics and data will help you determine at the end how well you (or your team) did in addressing the question, challenge, or content created for a campaign. Most of the links, updates, and conversations are archived online and available for collection either through the native measurement platforms on the platform itself or through a third-party service.

Actions. After we have an idea of the audience we want to engage with based on user activity level, we can determine some of the actions these individuals take to participate in our communities online.

Ultimately, you want to take all of these important factors into consideration to determine whether or not you want to be on particular social media platforms. One way to do this is by thoroughly identifying which platforms you are currently using (inventory), determining how well they are performing (audit), and making a choice on what to do with each platform (decision action steps) as outlined in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3 Performance and Decision Action Audit

Activity Level	Actions
Inventory + Benchmark Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key audiences and where they are in their relationship with the client (organization, business, agency, etc.) on social media Identify the rationale for why they are on each platform (e.g., to be educated, consume content, gain insights, build communities, or host events and promotions) Evaluate each platform to determine audience, content, relationships, analysis of brand voice, and overall purpose
Evaluation (Short-Term and Long-Term Impacts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look at each platform to determine how well it is doing in terms of its KPIs (key performance indicators) and the overall health of the brand community, voice, and investment Evaluate the longevity of the platforms that are aligned with the brand's mission and business objectives, and determine which platforms to keep and which ones to vote off "social media island" (aka shut down)
Decision + Action Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formulate a decision tree to determine the overall actions that need to be taken into consideration when evaluating social media platforms Invest in platforms that have an established community but are growing in audiences so more resources and support is needed, or perhaps shut down platforms that are not bringing back return on investment (ROI) to the client or are no longer available Determine whether some platforms are fine, so there is nothing that needs to be done Set a timeline and date for when you do the evaluation and health report again for all of the platforms

Working in Social Media

Working in social media can be very exciting yet demanding, and the roles constantly change as quickly as the platforms do. Neill and Moody (2015) explored the changes and duties happening for social media strategists and discussed the various tasks, experiences, and expectations facing these professionals in their roles. These duties ranged from handling communication issues to testing emerging technologies, and even discussion of the importance of understanding the collection and analysis of data emerging from these platforms. Yet one of the growing areas of discussion about working in social media is whether or not you need to have the same principles and practices for your personal use as your professional use, which Moreno, Navarro, Tench, and Zerfass (2015) examined in their research. Professionals working in social media have a high level of usage of these platforms for the sole purpose of creating influence in their community, establishing proactive relationships, and becoming relevant influencers in their own right in their thought leadership circles.

The workload and skills necessary to succeed in the field are changing. Some underlying skills and abilities are still important for organizations looking to hire social media professionals. Writing, research, and creative execution are traditional skills seen in marketing, public relations, and other communication disciplines. However, the rising expectations of the maturing field have also allowed the expectations for young professionals entering the field to be a bit higher. Of course, this depends on the industry, business, and even company or organization in focus. There is no real set “standard” for the expectations, roles, or even qualifications. Yet, certain fundamental skills, experiences, and qualifications do need to be taken into consideration (these are discussed and highlighted in greater detail in Chapter 5).

The information we share on social media is vastly different from the capability of the original platforms. When Facebook got started in 2004, you were only able to share updates via text, but it has evolved to allow chat bots, live video, virtual reality, mixed reality, and 360-degree immersive experiences.

BRIDGING THE SCIENCE AND ART OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media encompasses both the research and theoretically driven work being done to explore networks, relationships, and how individuals respond and react to various messages and information online. Understanding the foundation of why people share information publicly and privately provides social media professionals with a sound view of why certain things occur without reinventing the wheel. On the flip side, exploring the creative possibilities for these insights turning into actionable steps and strategies is also important. Bridging these two perspectives together in a way that is both integrated and comprehensive is one of the most important accomplishments of a social media professional.

What Can Science Tell Us About Social Media?

Researchers who have explored social media in their work have used a variety of different theoretical frameworks to help explain and predict why certain attitudes, behaviors, and actions are taken online. These frameworks include dialogic

theory (Kent & Taylor, 2016; Yang & Kent, 2014), user gratification theory (Gao & Feng, 2016), psychological empowerment theory (Li, 2016), and theory of planned behavior (Freberg, 2012). Even in social media research, there are still some challenges and opportunities for researchers to determine how to effectively measure certain concepts in the field, such as engagement (Jiang, Luo, & Kulemeka, 2016; Sisson, 2017; Smith & Gallicano, 2015). Further research in understanding these concepts, as well as how they can be strategically applied, needs to be taken into consideration. Even though social media is a source for engagement and an opportunity for users and businesses specifically, little research up to this point discusses how exactly social media fits in the overall strategy from a marketing and communications standpoint (Killian & McManus, 2015), which brings forth the growing need for a bridge between practice and research to address this.

Social media can be accomplished by looking at the scientific elements that make up the communities. It helps the strategist understand not only what is happening but also why and how things happen and evolve at any given time. The tools and methods used in traditional disciplines like marketing, education, computer science, public relations, advertising, and communication, among others, can help test and evaluate online behaviors. Social media professionals cannot rely just on the creative artistic opportunities social media allows us to use and take advantage of. Instead, we have to hone our analytical and scientific approaches and fine-tune our research skills. This will allow us to make sense of the substantial unstructured data available so we understand what is being presented and in what context it is presented. This adds to the growing expectation and need for social media professionals to have a solid research foundation and background to help them make sense of the data and apply it in a creative and innovative way.

Research. You will have to become one with statistics, Excel spreadsheets, data, and many other mathematical elements when it comes to social media. There are two parts of the equation a successful social media strategist needs to be aware of when looking at the various platforms. First, the actual information and data are collected in a systematic way from the various platforms or third parties. Also consider the physical elements that are created, shared, and constructed on social media. Social media strategists have to organize the information in ways that show us what is going on. This will help identify trends, gaps, opportunities, or even challenges that need to be addressed in a systematic and applied manner. The second element is that research comes down to a science in the systematic process in which the data are analyzed. Most of the time, the data are in raw form and need to be organized in a way that makes sense and is understandable to both the strategist and the client/organization in question.

How Is Social Media Like an Art?

While the previous sections briefly discussed the science (research- or theory-driven) aspect of social media, it is also important to note areas on the other side of the social media coin. Understanding the creative execution is an area most people associate with social media, but each platform has a strategic purpose behind each area.

Creativity. The demands of being creative today in social media are more important than ever. Without creativity, there is no buzz, excitement, or word-of-mouth conversations that spark audiences to share content. New tools, software

programs, and people are coming on board with social media, which is raising the bar to take ideas that would be considered good at any other point in time to the next level. Any person can go about sharing and creating content, but content that is unique, invokes an inspired and emotional response, and can cut through the digital and irrelevant noise really makes an impact on the audience. That's what creativity does for social media. It's about not just looking at the tools or thinking creativity is all about being artistic. It is the light that shines on the brand and communities that help generate these innovative conversations through insights and data that leads them to have these great ideas. **Informed decision making** (coined by Rich Calabrese) is about taking creativity, data, and insight into account for social media. Creativity can be disseminated from the top down (organization to key publics), but there is also the co-creation aspect of creativity, where you are able to use your community to help share, brainstorm ideas, and discover content, stories, or original ways of approaching an idea. The ultimate goal is not just to have one organization or brand tell a story but also to create a spark for others to be motivated to participate and share these conversations and stories with others.

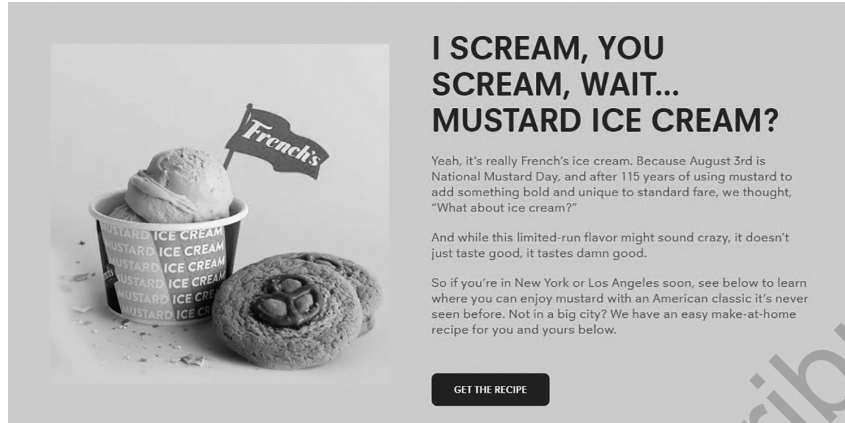
When it comes to being creative with content, certain campaigns and brands have been particularly innovative. Brands now realize that if they extend their presence by embracing their culture and popularity among their audience members, they can achieve great things. Consider Taco Bell. Taco Bell announced the opportunity to be part of their pop-up hotel in California, which would be branded in the Taco Bell logo and merchandise. The result? The fast food brand did not have any paid media to the campaign but in the campaign succeeded in multiple ways: It got more than 4.4 billion earned media impressions, more than 5,000 media stories, and 2 million Instagram posts; and the campaign's branded GIFs on Instagram stories garnered 1.2 million views (United Entertainment Group/Edelman, Taco Bell, n.d.). This was an integrated marketing campaign where the brand's drive for success was embracing the culture and showcasing it across a vast array of social media channels.

Other tactics—like creating new limited edition products to create a buzz, or generating fear of missing out (FOMO) moments—can also drive brand awareness and creativity to new heights. Going against the grain and in a space where the brand would have never been conceived before could be one direction to go. To go where no mustard company has gone before—that's what French's Mustard did with their social media brand campaign featuring French's Mustard Ice Cream. Yes, you read that correctly: mustard ice cream. Sounds delicious! The overall purpose of this campaign for French's Mustard was “to sell something familiar, make it surprising. To sell something surprising, make it familiar” (Fitzco/McCormick French's, n.d.). When promoting a product, your visual has to generate both brand awareness and message recall and recognition. The thought of mustard ice cream surprises and intrigues—pairing them together in a photo of a scoop of mustard-yellow ice cream accomplishes this even more. French's ad plays on this strange pairing with a funny twist on the old “I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream” line (Photo 1.2). The campaign succeeded in driving brand awareness and interest through French's partnership with Coolhaus Scoop Shop by using pop-up ice cream trucks and posting on social media (specifically on Instagram) and partnering with 18 influencers who got surprise and delight packages with the limited edition ice cream experience (Fitzco/McCormick French's, n.d.).

Creativity can be experimented with. A brand's message does not have to be delivered by the lead actors (i.e., the company itself). Supporting actors (i.e., spokespeople) can play a role as well. In fact, many sports teams and brands have used their mascots as the vehicle for testing out messages, content, and platforms.

► **Photo 1.2**
French's Mustard Ice Cream Campaign

Source: French Mustard Ice Cream Campaign (retrieved from <https://www.mccormick.com/frenchs/mustard-ice-cream>)

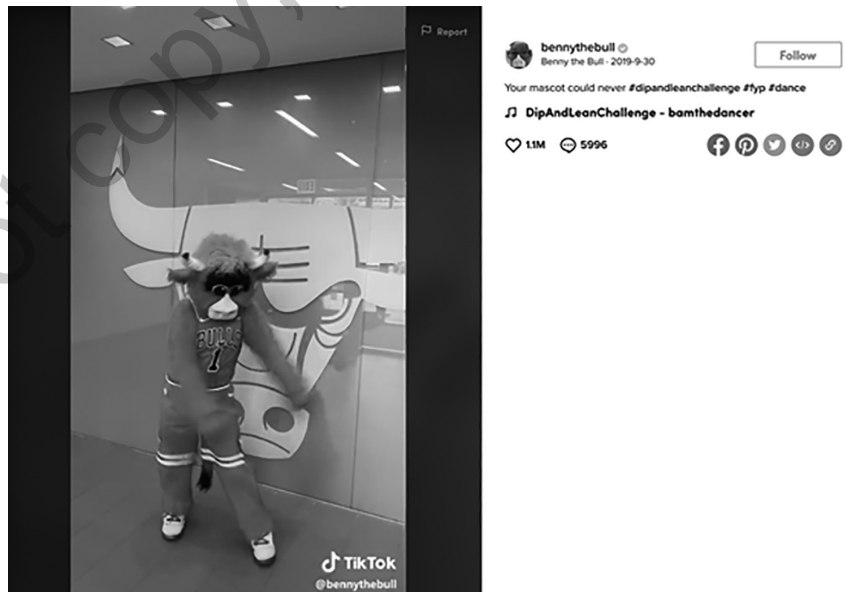


Benny the Bull, the mascot for the NBA Bulls team, is one channel through which the professional team has put forth new ideas, content, and entertainment for their audiences in unique ways ("Benny the Bull," n.d.). Benny the Bull is successful on TikTok because of his constant dance moves and choreography to popular songs and challenges. In one TikTok, Benny does the #DipAndLeanChallenge in front of the Bulls logo, capturing the attention of TikTok users with a dance challenge while reinforcing the Bulls brand (Photo 1.3). Although Benny is present on other platforms, TikTok allows creativity and the emphasis on popular music and audio tracks to make a strong connection with the audience.

Creativity doesn't always mean thinking completely outside the box when it comes to proposing new ideas for a campaign. What it does mean is making informed decisions based on the landscape, industry, audience, and brand through brainstorming sessions, data analysis, and insights gathered.

► **Photo 1.3**
Benny the Bull on TikTok

Source: TikTok/
@bennythebull



Storytelling. Everyone has a unique story to share. The worst thing to do is try to tell a story just like someone else's because that will not be authentic to your brand. Plus, stories that are not executed correctly will be lost in the mix. You could have the best visual effects and videographer out there, but if the execution of your story is not there, it is a waste of time.

Successful stories connect and resonate with audiences on a personal level to drive them to feel a specific emotion based on what they have seen from you. Whether via a video or post, you will make a strong connection if you tap into the emotions of an audience member. Once this connection is made, a memorable experience is added to the story, and this allows the receiver to consider what actions to take. Users may just view the piece of content, but they may also be compelled to share it with their network for others to see and experience as well.

The best person to share your story according to what best represents your personality and vision is you. All successful social media brands, companies, and professionals spend a lot of time and energy sharing their stories in creative and unique ways.

Brands and users can use storytelling effectively in several ways:

- *Allow users to be part of the experience.* Some brands allow users to get these experiences and share their viewpoint with others on behalf of the brand. Build ambassador programs, loyalty programs, and communities to gather insights, formulate relationships, and bring forth new stories into the spotlight for the brand as a whole.
- *Listen and create relevant content.* Data will be your friend when you need it to be in social media. Use data as a guide to what stories and pieces of content you feel will most resonate with your audiences. Taking the initiative to ask questions or telling your audience to do something specific (e.g., snap us back a selfie, post a picture on Instagram, etc.) allows you to gauge the user-generated content aspect but also use the buzz, insights, and data to make a more informed decision on what stories to showcase next.
- *Showcase your values.* When you are looking at brands or individuals, they may want to focus on their products and services as well as what they can offer you in terms of making a sale. Yet sometimes brands and others stand up for what they believe in and share content featuring what they want to be known for in a different way. Brands such as Patagonia and Aviation Gin have all been forward-thinking in approaching their views and perspectives as a brand on social media. Patagonia has focused their efforts in supporting the national parks, whereas Aviation Gin has been active in supporting those in their community (such as bartenders) who have been impacted by economic challenges. The consistent messaging for these two brands made their social media campaigns extremely successful from a strategy perspective.
- *Share your point of view.* Gary Vaynerchuk has become a storytelling content machine. From a personal branding standpoint, he has mastered this down to a science by consistently sharing his story and experience through videos, essentially vlogging his daily activities, and moves in a consistent and branded manner with his videographer, David Rock (otherwise known to the social media world as “DRock”). Gary also emphasizes this strongly to point out the difference between documenting

and creating content. Documenting your daily activities online does not mean you are creating content; rather, it is a version of creating that focuses more on the practical aspect of sharing than on storytelling (Vaynerchuk, 2016). The difference is that documenting is creating content of who you are rather than creating content for who you want to be (Vaynerchuk, 2016).

How Can We Bridge Science and Art Effectively?

Throughout this book, you will note there is a growing need for understanding both sides of what makes social media a strategic profession and industry to work, research, and teach in. Most of the time, only one side of the coin is presented. Having a balanced approach to research and practice is not only necessary but expected by those working in the field.

Several new expectations are outlined for social media professionals to adapt to not only for their own sakes but also for their clients, organizations, businesses, and communities. Some of the following will be discussed in later chapters:

- Social media is not owned by one person or platform. It is owned by the community.
- Social media is an established field to be in. It is not easy, free, or replaceable. Social media professionals serve as the digital front door for brands. The field and profession need to garner the same respect as other roles and departments.
- Social media is more than just posting updates and taking snaps. It's a strategic mindset to embrace.
- The primary reason for social media is not to publish content to generate hype or FOMO, but to have a purpose and rationale behind it and to be a win-win for you and your audiences.
- Saying you are an expert or “guru” on social media doesn't truly show your expertise. Your work and the relationships you formulate do.
- Social media needs to shift from promoting to everyone, to fine-tuning your efforts on engaging with your audiences at the right time, on the right channel, and in the right situation.
- Quality over quantity—whether it is followers, content, or conversations—always wins.
- Social media roles will evolve, blur with other duties, and sometimes actually disappear.
- Social media is not about audiences just “seeing” your content. It's about your audience sharing and responding to your content.
- Social media is about being “social.” Don't be a programmed robot.
- Social media has challenges. Which field doesn't? It has a dark side. However, we have to look at the field in a balanced perspective.

- You are what you present yourself as online. First impressions are all that count.
- People want engagement and content that resonates with them, not spam.
- Be authentic and consistent, not a constant salesperson.
- Social media is more than just content. This is surface level, and there's much more below that is planned, brainstormed, argued, and executed before the post button is even pushed.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Social media is an evolving area of professional activities and personal relationships. These platforms will continue to evolve or, in some cases, disappear completely. This is an industry where change comes at a rapid pace and is always on the move. Social media professionals may at times feel they are “out of date” with the technologies even

though they are just catching up on last week's news. There are many areas in which social media can be viewed as both an art and a science, but some fundamental aspects create bridges between these two areas. Relationships, strategy, and people are what make social media the platform, community, and industry it is today.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What is your definition of social media? What are some attributes you would assign to social media and why?
2. What are some of the biggest milestones for social media in your opinion?
3. What are the challenges and opportunities in social media? How can creativity and strategy come together?
4. Discuss why research, creativity, and practice are key parts of what makes social media prominent today.

EXERCISES

1. You enter a job interview and the human resources director asks you to define social media and answer the question, “Is social media a science or an art?” Discuss your thoughts on this and use a current campaign or case study not mentioned in this chapter as evidence to support your points.
2. You are applying for an internship with Texas Roadhouse for the summer, and the manager has asked you to come up with some potential ideas for the restaurant to use for storytelling on social media. Provide a few suggestions for content Texas Roadhouse could consider creating that is both branded and user-generated, and include a rationale for each.
3. You have been asked to create a social media audit for a local nonprofit in town. The firm is on all of the social media platforms but does not get as much engagement on Twitter as it wants. Discuss the process you will go through in determining which platforms to use and no longer use.

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