Common Mistakes in Social Media. A Case Study on a Non-Profit Company

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Abstract. This article is an idea about the new social media seen as a phenomenon of socializing on the Internet, specific to the last years. We believe that this phenomenon influences the daily activity of each person, carried out within the institutionalized or free time. Social media have become the channel of direct communication between companies and consumers, and that is why companies need to pay great importance to the strategic online marketing plan and allocate the funds needed for its development.

We think, like most academics and researchers, that social networks have become the cheapest and most active form of customer communication and a tool for developing and deploying online businesses. Once again, it is true that technology does not help us if we forget about the main asset of the companies, the human resource. We strongly believe and sustain the idea that the success of social networks is based on the social human character or brain. By communicating, each of us looks into the mirror of the society we live in, and we expect continuous confirmation of our way of thinking, behaving, talking, etc. This is the axis on which SM is based.

In this article, we are explaining in detail that the online businesses need to avoid the frequent mistakes made in commercializing through social media channels.

Keywords: social media, common mistakes, SM tools

JEL Codes: M31, M37

1. Introduction

Social media generally manifest themselves through blogs, discussion forums on specialized topics attached to large sites, social networking sites, real-time messaging platforms, wiki sites. Through social media, companies can send an advertising message, they can “take the market pulse” and benefit from free advertising through testimonials left by customers on the company’s website.

The media coverage of the new content on the site is done through RSS feeds and Atom feeds, which are linked to programs that check a list of news sources on behalf of the user and display the news they find.

Social media allow global communication, not just with friends or followers. Social media have become a recruitment channel, but they also bring the disadvantage of rejecting the candidate, depending on personal posts on social media accounts.

A study by Eurocom Worldwide, involving 318 multinationals from Europe and the United States, revealed that one fifth of the company’s directors admit to reject job applications because of social networking posts [Reynolds, EWAS, 2012].
Social media advertising has proven to be highly effective and less costly than radio, TV or print media, and has been adopted by companies, governments and non-profit organizations. It is important to note that, in order to be effective, the message needs to be adapted to the market segment to which the company is addressing.

2. Common Mistakes in Social Media Explained

On Social Media, consumer’s behaviour is different. Below are the most common mistakes made by companies in social media [Trita, 2004]:

1. **Not adapting communication strategy to Social Media.** “Over 80% of brands do NOT have a Social Media strategy!” [Allen,2016]

   Online debuts are based on existing customers who need to be associated with the network through discounts or other forms of “call-to-action” (commenting on posted content, distributing it, and recommending the company to others). The advantage of the network is that, once connected with a client, it can also connect with members of its virtual network.

   Social media offer many opportunities, but poor content can reverse the medal, representing a form of negative advertising. Therefore, a different strategy for the digital environment and for each type of network is recommended, depending on the goal pursued by the members who join the network.

   The company’s offline marketing strategy does not suit the consumer in social media. The consumer enters the network during leisure time to relax, to entertain himself, to seek information about everyday life. For example, what exercises can be done to strengthen a muscular group, how to feed yourself healthy, how to make the house more interesting, what decorations you can do with the materials you have in your house, etc., or historical subjects, geography, news in the field, etc. They do not enter the network to buy a product or a service.

   An exception to this is LinkedIn or ResearchGate. LinkedIn is a professional network dedicated especially to collaborating between companies, hiring staff or discussing technical, specialist topics. ResearchGate is dedicated to researchers, discussions between them and the promotion of their projects.

   Therefore, the company has to respond to these requirements through various articles and then refer to the product it sells.

   Some items are required to appear on all social networks, namely business information: address, contacts, and work schedule. The client also needs to feel that it is important and that he can bring about a change in the way he wants.
In recent years, users have migrated a lot on networks dedicated to mobile devices or those that allow the transfer of photos and movies (Fig. 1).

2. **Create accounts on as many social networks as possible**

As noted above, not all networks respond to the needs of all companies. Managing content on a large number of social networks is difficult even when using dedicated social media management tools, such as Buffer (Fig. 2).

3. **Not using Social Media Management Tools**

These tools allow for the management of messages sent to each network, depending on the right time. They also allow the manager to examine the impact of each message, the number of people interacting with the message, the type of interaction (positive, negative), from what geographic area they come from, what type of device they use to connect to the internet, etc. Depending on the statistics provided by them, the message needs to be continually adapted.

The tools in “Social Media Management Tools” provide information about social networks only. To analyze the behaviour of people after arriving on the site, it is recommended to use traffic analysis and consumer behaviour tools such as Google Analytics (GA). GA provides information on the number of people who visit the site, the posts on each social network, how many people subscribe to the newsletter, how many fill out the form, or download information from the site, what they bought from the site, etc.

Many social networks offer advertising facilities, access to professional groups, access to specialist courses or other special contra-cost features. Some networks show information about who viewed the profile. It is recommended to use these services, but it should be borne in mind that, in the social media, the person-to-person relationship and the reciprocal recommendations bring the greatest gain. The manager can pay for promoting a message, movie or image.

If the company knows the target, it can opt for the promotion paid for that target only. For example, the company has noticed that most customers interested in IT gadgets are men aged 20 to 45. The company can choose to target the advertising messages to those who have this profile and have a great chance to become customers. You can choose to send the message to specific audiences (Fig. 3).

Based on this information, the previously formulated strategies can be continually updated.
Fig. 1. Number of active users on different social media networks
[Source: http://www.adweek.com/socialtimes/social-media-active-users/494127]
Fig. 2. Buffer – an application for managing posts across different social networks, depending on the appropriate time (maximum involvement of members) [own source]

4. Buying fake fans

If a company that promotes musical instruments on a company's network will be showing pictures of pets in sympathetic positions, the company can get likes, comments or even have the message shared further, but has not reached its goal. People who like that picture will not be interested in musical instruments, will not return to the page and will not buy the musical instruments. This is even worse when buying a paid advertisement.

Social media empower publics by providing a platform for their voices during crises. Digital-enabled platforms allow individuals to become influentials by sharing their insights and expertise with others. [Xinyan, 2018] It’s better to be become a real influencer, then to pay for getting fans.

5. Promoting the brand too aggressively

Social media consumers can be interested in the company’s product / service to the extent that it meets their requirements. However, messages that present the product as the cheapest on the market or the most bought or where the emphasis is placed too much on the brand’s reputation can cause an unwanted reaction of members by removing social media friendship.

6. Focus on numbers and popularity
Statistics are important, but there are companies with lesser reputation and loyal customers who have more to gain. Building authentic relationships with prospects and customers, offering answers, help, services, products for their problems will make them loyal. They will recommend the company.

![Fig. 3](image-url)  
*Fig. 3. Market segmentation in Social Media [own source]*

7. **Dissemination of spam content**

There are 2 types of content considered spam in Social Media (Fig. 4) [Trita, 2004]:

Click-baiting – posts that have “salesy” commercial titles and do not provide content information;
Like-baiting – content by which the company is practically “begging” for likes, shares, comments, +1, tweets etc., e.g. funny pictures with animals babies which have nothing to do with the content / activity of the site.

8. Delete negative comments

Aggressive ad messages on social networks may have opposite effects. The interest of members should be awakened by interesting, funny messages, so that they have the impression that they benefit if they interact.

Negative comments can be an opportunity to increase the company’s reputation, as Chiciudean (2012) explains. By keeping negative comments, the company demonstrates its honesty, its ability to correct its mistakes. The company demonstrates how much customer satisfaction counts, apologizing for the inconvenience, compensating the customer and offering better products and services. Denial could lead to the creation of a negative trend among clients, which can be viral in the online environment.

Some unfortunate events or dissatisfied clients can turn into opportunities to improve the service / product, to be in line with sustainable development principles, etc.

9. Non-uniform messages on different social networks

It is recommended that the company submits the same offers across all networks. If a product is technically different, has a different price, packaging, after-sales services, etc., it will mislead network members, as they do also have accounts in multiple social networks.

10. Content identical on all social networks

There are many networks, and the message needs to be adapted on each network. The company may also make the decision not to activate a message on a specific network. We remind here LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, Pinterest, Twitter, Google Plus, Instagram networks. Each of these networks has very large audiences.

For example, LinkedIn is a professional network where personal content can be reported as spam. On this network, businesses post information about new industry achievements, innovations, job ads, event announcements, etc. Professional networks distribute information to potential customers through statistics, case studies, infographics, reviews, specialist studies, and more. On such a business network, people or businesses can be found in search of business, employment, and employment contacts.

On Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, personal messages and photos are common and no one is bothered if the same message is posted twice.

Instagram or Pinterest are photo management dedicated networks, and YouTube is for movies.

It is not recommended to post direct sales or promotion messages, but satisfied customer images, “How to use a product” videos or specialty posts, technical advice, medical advice can send indirect messages, and increase the network rating and redirect customers to the company business website.
Along with these, there are niche networks with a small number of customers, but passionate about a certain field. For a business, it is best to become a member of such a network, specialized in the field of business or related to the field. Such examples are TripAdvisor for travel reviews, or OpenTable for restaurant reviews.

The Facebook network has the largest number of active users (Fig. 1), which means that current and future customers are certainly spending time in this virtual space. Although it is not a professional network, it is recommended to create an account on this network.

Social networks also display different statistics that can form an overview of traffic and engagement of members. In LinkedIn, the degree of involvement of members is measured by:

- impressions – the number of views per update;
- clicks, clicks on the content displayed, company name or logo;
- interactions, whenever people have liked, commented or distributed each update;
- involvements – the number of interactions plus the number of clicks divided by the number of impressions.

As mentioned earlier, professional networks come across different categories of people than Facebook or Google+, and especially aim different goals. NASA’s latest discoveries or a new innovation model may be of interest to LinkedIn members, but the likelihood that the same number of Facebook people to be interested in this message is very small. Choosing networks that will become promotional channels and adapting the message to each network are crucial to a successful strategy. A limited LinkedIn group specializing in new technologies will present many technical details, but Facebook will especially present the benefits of these technologies in their day-to-day or professional work.

11. **Brand activity and ad campaigns are not monitored**

   The perception of the brand can change very easily in the online environment, where negative news is sent much faster than the positive ones. Therefore, it is necessary to use management tools to monitor notoriety, loyalty, brand associations, market share, twin products, etc.

   Sometimes, the impact of some advertising campaigns is not what you have expected by failing correctly to focus on the target audience, the advertising message, the form, or the period in which it was transmitted. In this sense, the marketing manager can use web analytics and social media management tools. Managing multiple social networks is time-consuming; it is the equivalent of time spent with the customer in the physical store.

   It is possible to analyze how many people have established connections and what is the trend of this activity. Those posts that have added a higher interaction should be tracked and new similar posts should be added, while removing those that do not generate clicks, comments, tracking, and direct interaction. The profile of people interested in the content posted can be discovered, but also who are follower fans.

12. **Paid advertising is not considered appropriate in social networks**
From the chart below (Fig. 4), we notice that the most expensive form of advertising is Direct Mail and the cheapest is Social Media, the difference being more than 20 times. For this reason, each company should attach great importance to this type of advertising because it is much less expensive than TV, newspapers or radio commercials and because it allows sending different messages for each market segment.

![Costs associated with different marketing channels to reach 1,000 people](source: Life, 2017)

Hidden costs are associated with all forms of advertising. At social media marketing, the only hidden cost is the time. However, time does not depend on so many variables, as is the case with the hidden costs of other traditional means of communication.

13. **Do not convert fans into customers**

The social media presents articles of general interest, but reference can be made to landing pages where call-to-action messages exist (subscription, form filling, purchase). Customers must also be offered after-sales services to reassure them.

Remarketing is another loyalty technique.

14. **Send bulk messages to all fans**

Messages should be tailored to consumer segments, according to the statistics provided by social media management tools.

15. **Attack competition**
Companies that do not have high-quality products and services are tempted to stand out through the attack of the competition, which can trigger devastating actions of the incriminated company against the attacker.

16. **Neglect of content**

Permanently updated quality content is the recipe for success in social networks.

A survey by Fractl and MOZ on a sample of companies shows that they can be attracted by other companies by receiving mailing offers with discounts, coupons and demos / samples and by publishing interesting content for customers (53% of the companies have emphasized the importance of quality content). Another important criterion is that the company’s products / services are returned by search engines (48%) and have social media posts and ads (26-27%) (Fig. 5).

**Fig. 5. Effective means of increasing the attractiveness of a company** [source: Libert, 2015]
In order to be successful in social media, a posting plan is needed for a 6-month period. First of all, the audience’s interest is to be watched and posts with events such as festivals, conferences, holiday periods, holidays, periods of “back to school”, “black Friday” shopping etc. should be synchronized.

Such a calendar ensures a minimum of traffic and presence on social networks. It can be updated and improved every day, but a guideline has already been formed.

Social networks also allow you to create a companion page associated with your personal account. Differences are not major, but it is recommended that company, postal, telephone, email, other than personal information be posted on the company account. Professional posts will be made from this account.

17. Copied content

Copying content from various other networks or sites may at best increase the reputation of the sites where it was copied from. Search Engines do not return sites with identical content. They will choose that site that has greater authority.

Addressing must be adapted to each network. LinkedIn will receive a professional message / tone, because the audience is made up of professionals. On Facebook, Twitter, or Google+ networks, you can post spiritual and playful messages to more relaxed clients who engage in common conversations.

18. The frequency of posts is inappropriate

Interesting and consistent posts are ideal. There should be avoided posting a large number of messages in a short period of time or missing posts for months. In the first case, members may be disturbed, agitated. Posting too often can have an adverse effect, as customers do not have time to read posts or the message becomes boring and the customer feels “bombarded” with information.

Posting too rarely can lead customers to think that there are serious issues within the company and thus lose confidence in the company. Customers can interpret rare posting as a lack of company’s interest in the customer.

19. Posts in inappropriate moments

Each network has its own features and good moments for socializing. Social Media Management Tools (such as Hootsuite, Buffer) are very useful because the message can be stored in the database of these tools and will be displayed by them at the right time. Thus, the ideal hours for posting the message for some of the most important networks are shown in Fig. 6.
Fig. 6. **Optimal time to display the message on the network** [source: Triță, 2014]

20. **Inappropriate use of # hashtags**

Hashtag is a word or phrase preceded by the # sign that labels a certain type of content to be identified later on. They can be used to highlight search words, but they should not be used too frequently.

21. **Inappropriate creation of contests, applications, surveys and offers**

Their lack is translated into the lack of consumer involvement. Prize competitions that are not related to the products and services offered by the company lead to attracting false fans and will not translate into ROI.

Surveys are a way to find out what customers expect and to share their company’s interest in increasing their satisfaction with using the company’s products.

22. **Lack of attention to detail**

Grammatical mistakes and lack of diacritics may create a first bad impression, which will change with considerable effort.

23. **Failure of fans**

Failing to know fans, the lack of interaction with them can make them believe they are just „likes” for the company.
Through social networks, it is possible to increase audience confidence by involving fans who will promote the company’s products, free of charge and effortlessly. Customers’ recommendations are those that make a significant contribution to improving the company’s image and branding. On the social networks, the latest breakthroughs in the industry can be posted, but also pictures, texts, movies to support the brand, associate with celebrities in the industry, and ask for advice or initiate conversations on the topic.

It is very important to remember that in order to benefit from the social networking benefits it takes a lot of dedication, of interesting daily posts. Members of the network must have the feeling that there are common interests, that the company is interested in their desires, opinions and requirements. In this case, the company has to apply two approaches: on the one hand, reactive (to provide positive feedback to customers) and, on the other hand, proactive (to surprise customers through creativity and create new needs).

24. Non-anticipation of future trends

Good entrepreneurs react. Large entrepreneurs anticipate. In other words, sustainable businesses are the ones that anticipate and take into account the trends of the future. Entrepreneurs usually start a business in order to change their own life and inspire others to do the same. They start the ideas that they then teach others to implement.

Currently, the economic environment is very competitive. This competition can be faced by innovation. Innovation is the result of the creativity of human resources. According to the Ministry of Economy, the creative sectors bring 7% to Romania’s GDP at the moment and the target is to reach (10%) by 2020 [StartUp, 2016].

There are multiple opportunities in social networks for entrepreneurs who anticipate human needs. Sometimes, they are successful without looking for it, they become social entrepreneurs. Social entrepreneurs create solutions for social, cultural and environmental issues, often with no personal economic gain in mind. They focus their attention on the issues that immediately affect their group of friends. It is a conscious change to be made by many entrepreneurs in the coming years. It takes only a change of mentality and a cognitive awareness of people outside the circle.

The entrepreneur’s skills for modern business are: digital and IT knowledge, leadership, technology, employee involvement, innovation, strategy and planning, vision, agility, knowledge of trends and forecasts, lifelong learning.

Social media is being increasingly used as a platform to conduct marketing and advertising activities. Organizations have spent a lot of time, money, and resources on social media ads [Alalwan, 2018].
The global growth of prospects (prospective customers) has been steadily decreasing, from a maximum of 45% in 2014 to around 30% in 2016.

For example, in an era of IoT millennials has a different travel behaviour. The prevalence of social media use among the millennial generation may be partially responsible for a shift away from car driving and toward more sustainable travel modes [Delbosca, 2018].

Modern entrepreneurs are somewhat pessimistic about investing in traditional media channels and will therefore invest especially in digital marketing over the next 5 years (Fig. 7).

![Confidence in Economic and Business Growth Prospects](chart1)

**CONFIDENCE IN ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS GROWTH PROSPECTS**

- Business growth prospects
- Global economic growth prospects

![Top Technology-Related Capability Investments](chart2)

**TOP TECHNOLOGY-RELATED CAPABILITY INVESTMENTS FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS**

- Digital marketing: 37%
- Customer experience management: 34%
- Data science/big data: 34%
- Smart/intelligent processes: 30%
- Cloud-based business: 29%
- Business analytics: 29%
- Digital products and services: 29%
- Digital workplace: 26%
- Internet of things/sensor networks: 25%
- M-commerce: 20%

*Source: Gartner, 2016*

**Fig. 7. Trends in the online market in the near future** [source: Gartner, 2016]

A study by Gartner estimates that over the next 5 years, 37% of the online marketing will be invested in improving online customer satisfaction with 34%. In a smaller proportion, about 30%, will invest in smart
3. Case study

We have decided to have a look at a non-profit organization “Environmental Issues” that has a social media presence on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/environmental.issues.global/. It is a platform for discussing environmental issues, where friends can share their thoughts, ideas about environmental issues. It was founded on January 15, 2010 and has 2401 followers. They have also created a group that aims to share with their followers all the beautiful things about Botany and Animals from regions and/or places they have travelled to.

The followers can read interesting article, such as:

1. How do pipelines contribute to climate change?, explaining that methane is 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide when it comes to global warming potential. Methane is a by-product of the digestive process of cows. With 1.4 million cows and heifers in Canada, they produce 18,000 kilotons of methane every year – about three times the amount emitted by the pipeline industry!

2. How nanotechnology can protect the environment using nanobubbles which bacteria get stuck to and die and some biological filters to root out the pollutants?

3. Why growing food is the single most impactful thing you can do in a corrupt political system?

4. “Fontus” – a special bottle that makes water out of thin air, by filtering moisture in the atmosphere. It was invented by a student in Vienna, at an industrial design fair and won several awards. Running out of water seems not to be a problem anymore.

5. They show the negative impact of human behaviour on the environment, through proverbs and relevant pictures: We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children. (Fig. 8)

We may observe that the company has no communication strategy on the internet, although the content is very relevant and catchy. In fact, this is a decisive factor in SM management.

They have a nice community and share information regarding international conferences in the field, such as RACON 2015: “HVAC Industry – A Booming Market. The HVAC Market in India”.
But they have no reviews and it is well-known that testimonials are very important in transforming news into viral information.

We saw that they are not interested to use SM tools to measure the impact of the channel and the messages. It is clear that they do not buy fake funs, promote a brand, disseminate spam content or delete negative comments, but for such an important issue, as environment sanity, the company should involve volunteers to spread the information all around the world and to mobilize each person to contribute to environmental protection through everyday common actions, such as: recycling their own waste management, running a bike then running a car, using solar energy in their houses, planting new trees every year, keeping cleanliness, etc.

Fig. 8. *The negative impact of the human behaviour on the environment* [El, 2017]

Paid advertising would also help a lot and a weekly post between 1pm to 4 pm would improve a lot the traffic and the posting impact.

We believe that the company could gain more funs and could have a greater impact on human behaviours, by using #hashtags, applications, surveys and offers.

We also ascertain that they don’t have accounts on other social media channels, such as: LinkedIn, Twitter, Google plus, etc.
4. Conclusions

In this article we have presented a list of common mistakes on social media and we have realised a case study on a non-profit company, making suggestions on improving communication. The case study is a proof that being unprofessional on SM is the equivalent of losing fans.

5. References


