Social media marketing strategies: Mexican business application

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Abstract
Nowadays, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT's) play a crucial role in the social, economic, and cultural development of a country. The rapid pace of technology development and adoption of it is bringing about a change in social dynamics. Of all the ICTs, the Internet is the tool that has touched upon all aspects of life. Through it, Social Media is leading major evolutionary trends, both in society and business; where values, culture, norms, and behavior are making paradigm shifts. There are several diverse enterprises trying to find out the way to enter and stay into the new dynamic of communicating with their customers; for instance, by using the new platforms where clients are. Thus, there is an increasing need for digital content and networking skills used as marketing tools for improving business results. This paper discusses the importance of Social Media and its impact on business. It sheds light on the social networks strategies that can help companies to use this phenomenon to connect better with their customers, employees and society; since communication represents the 'transmission of information, ideas, attitudes, or emotion from one person or group to another' (Fill 2002). The aim of this research is to explain the best practices on Social Media in order to inform entrepreneurs, who are willing to invest in Mexican business, how to get directly to their targets through innovating methods online.

1. Introduction
Social Media Marketing (SMM) has continued to gain importance among marketers in recent years, with many companies and brands using social networks to boost their reputation and connect with target audiences (Key Note 2012). Social networks can be used as an efficient marketing tool to achieve specific goals in any industry all over the world. In the current present, due to virtual globalization Mexican enterprises are taking part in this process by adopting some marketing online strategies which allow them to increase their participation within the global market. Nevertheless, very few companies use social networks as a platform to develop business and promote their products or services. There exist various applications of Social Media; one of them is including social networks to improve the position of a company towards its competitors. Due to the positive results when using these Social Media strategies, the demand of research on this field by the entrepreneurs worldwide, has intensively increased. Besides, the use of these technologies allows organizations to get closer to their customers and establish long-lasting relationships with them.

In the current present, companies are always looking forward to create new markets, as well as developing true loyalty among their current customers. Traditional marketing strategies are override by innovations, such as Social Media networking. Entrepreneurs who want to play an appropriate role in this "modern" work frame should be accurate informed about development trends; so they will continue being competitive within the market they are performing. To achieve better practices in regards of social networking, it is essential to identify precise marketing online techniques that will be studied throughout this research paper.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Social Media
Social Media is the interaction among people in which they create, share or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks (Ahlqvist et al. 2008). Furthermore, Social Media depends on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive; which means, an introduction of substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities, and individuals (Kietzmann & Hermkens 2011). Social Media differ from traditional or industrial media in

many ways, including quality, reach, frequency, usability, immediacy, and permanence (Morgan, Jones & Hodges 2012). For content contributors, the benefits of participating in Social Media have gone beyond simply social sharing to building reputation and bringing in career opportunities and monetary income (Tang; Gu & Whinston 2012). This is absolutely useful when talking about business. Social Media technologies take on many different forms including magazines, Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, microblogging, wikis, social networks, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking. Technologies include blogging, picture-sharing, vlogs, wall-posting, music-sharing, crowd-sourcing and voice over IP, to name a few.

It is important to mention that Social Media refers to an online platform; whereas a Social Network is the interaction among the actors who are participating in the Social Media platform. In other words, a Social Network is a social structure made of nodes (which are generally individuals or organizations) that are tied by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as values, visions, ideas, financial exchange, friendship, kinship, dislike, conflict or trade. The resulting graph-based structures are often very complex (Social Networking 2014). Therefore, while *Facebook* has the role of a Social Media Platform, the interaction among individuals or organizations, is the Social Networking experience. Since the beginning, Social Media sites were the reality of the Internet; even now the content is relatively inexpensive for publishers to produce, reason why, the use of these platforms is growing considerably every year. According to the eMarketer report (eMarketer 2013), "Worldwide Social Network Users: 2013 Forecast and Comparative Estimates," nearly one in four people worldwide were supposed to use social networks in 2013.

The number of social network users around the world would rise from 1.47 billion in 2012 to 1.73 billion this year, an 18% increase. By 2017, the global social network audience will total 2.55 billion (Chart 1.1). This means that the growth of the Social Media sites in people´s life tends to keep going up, getting into an essential way to communicate to markets. In the following chart, it is observed the increased of users within Social Media sites in the last few years all over the world, and also a prospective idea about the future trends.

Social Network Users Worldwide, 2011-2017
billions and % change

Note: internet users who use a social network site via any device at least once per month
Source: eMarketer, April 2013
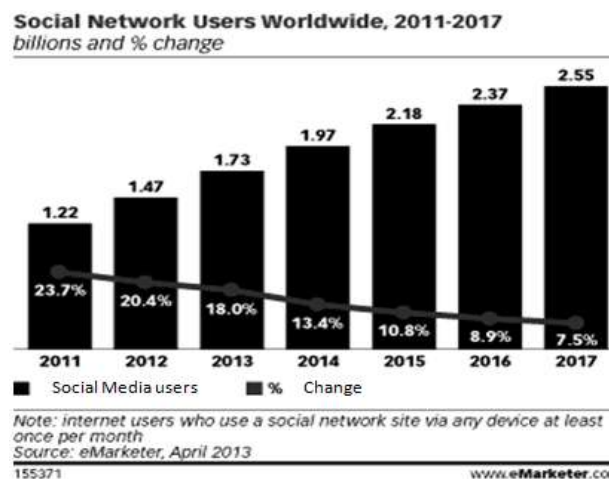155371   www.eMarketer.com

Chart 1.1, eMarketer.com 2014

Otherwise, due to the development of technology, there are several different types of Social Media coming up all the time, and even when researches have tried to classified this online spaces according to their use or features, the reality shows that the boundaries between the different types have become increasingly blurred (Shi, Rui & Whinston 2013). Social Media platforms are always getting updated, and each one of them includes the same characteristics than the others, so they can become strongly similar, and just being differenced by the original intention they were created for.

So far, there are plenty of Social Media sites working online all over the world. Every day, some of them disappear or become into something else, meanwhile the others are evolving with society, getting adapted to the people´s needs. In this way, there are some Social Media focused on specific market groups; for instance, gamers, scholars, businessman & entrepreneurs, professionals, etc. Or on a particular activity; for example, discussing, sharing, publishing and social networking, just to name a few (chart 1.2).

Chart 1.2, The pluginin   exchange 2013

Another central concern when manipulating Social Media is how to **manage** them in order to recover the findings and insights needed to measure the functionality of these platforms. There is an increasing trend towards using Social Media monitoring tools that allow marketers to search, track, and analyze conversations on the web about their brand or about topics of interest (Nowlin 2013). This can be useful in PR management and campaign tracking, allowing the user to measure return on investment, competitor-auditing, and general public engagement. Tools range from free, basic applications to subscription-based, more in-depth tools. There are also specialized tools to identify every aspect of a Social Media Site, in regards of the level of interaction between the segments and brands. Levels of impact can be studied through the activity of individuals, depending on the platform.

According to Jan H. Kietzmann (2011), there is a Honeycomb Framework of Social Media based on seven functional building blocks, which can be useful for measuring the participation of a community. These functional building blocks are explained below:

1. Identity: The identity block represents the extent to which users reveal their identities in a Social Media setting. This can include disclosing information such as name, age, gender, profession, location, and also information that portrays users in certain ways.

2. Conversations: The conversations block of the framework represents the extent to which users communicate with other users in a Social Media setting. Many Social Media sites are designed primarily to facilitate conversations among individuals and groups. These conversations happen for all sorts of reasons. People tweet, blog, etcetera to meet new like-minded people, to find true love, to build their self-esteem, or to be on the cutting edge of new ideas or trending topics. Yet others see Social Media as a way of making their message heard and positively impacting humanitarian causes, environmental problems, economic issues, or political debates.

3. Sharing: Sharing represents the extent to which users exchange, distribute, and receive content. The term 'social' often implies that exchanges between people are crucial. In many cases, however, sociality is about the objects that mediate these ties between people—the reasons why they meet online and associate with each other.

4. Presence: The framework building block presence represents the extent to which users can know if other users are accessible. It includes knowing where others are, in the virtual world and/or in the real world, and whether they are available.

5. Relationships: The relationships block represents the extent to which users can be related to other users. By 'relate,' we mean that two or more users have some form of association that leads them to converse, share objects of sociality, meet up, or simply just list each other as a friend or fan.

6. Reputation: Reputation is the extent to which users can identify the standing of others, including themselves, in a Social Media setting. Reputation can have different meanings on Social Media platforms. In most cases, reputation is a matter of trust, but since information technologies are not yet good at determining such highly qualitative criteria, Social Media sites rely on 'mechanical Turks': tools that automatically aggregate user-generated information to determine trustworthiness.

7. Groups: The group functional block represents the extent to which users can form communities and sub communities. The more 'social' a network becomes, the bigger the group of friends, followers, and contacts.

Therefore, the honeycomb framework defines how Social Media services focus on some or all of seven functional building blocks. These building blocks help explain the engagement needs of the Social Media audience. For instance, LinkedIn users are thought to care mostly about identity, reputation, and relationships, whereas YouTube's primary features are sharing, conversations, groups, and reputation. Many companies build their own social containers that attempt to link the seven functional building blocks around their brands. Ergo, each Social Media Platform has its own properties, and depending on them, some are more suitable for working in a business media marketing plan rather than others.

2.2 Social Media for Business

Currently, business is dependent on the end user. With a consumer behavior change drive by Social Media it is inevitable that businesses have to adapt to the new norms. According to the 2012 Social Media Marketing Industry Report, 94% of all global businesses use Social Media to advance their digital marketing efforts. Social Media can be used effectively in many ways to create a buzz, connect with customers, gather customer insights, and also for customer service and support. Many of world's leading brands have used Social Media to their advantage (Wipro Council for Industry Research 2014).

Hence, for a marketer is imperative to be able to identify the benefits of each of the Social Media Sites offered, and select only the ones that are apposite to reach the goals set on the plan. Whether a company is on the scout for new customers, wanting to connect with its industry, searching to spread its marketing message further or simply looking for information about something; marketers in charge, are all turning to Social Media Sites. Actually, many of them are looking for the best practices in Social Media so they may complete the previously stated objectives. In regards of this situation, it becomes mandatory to choose correctly the person in charge of the marketing area of the company. There are some major factors for the correct use of the Social Media, specifically in business applications, which must be taken into account when deciding who will be the link between the corporation and the customers through these online platforms. Some of these factors are:

- Time: There is a direct relationship between how long marketers have been using Social Media and their weekly time commitment.
- Experience: More experience means more time spent on Social Media marketing. For people just beginning with Social Media (less than 12 months of experience), 50% spend 5 or fewer hours per week. However, of folks who have been doing this for 2 years or longer, at least 70% spend 6 hours or more per week on Social Media activities (Stelzner 2013).
- Age: There is a direct relationship between the marketer's age and time spent marketing with Social Media. The younger the marketer is, the more time he or she spends on Social Media.

The marketer must have the ability to face different challenges, not only the changes inside the organization, but also the ones that are affecting the entire society. This person should be aware of the trends of Social Media in order for the company to get adapted efficiently to the new worldwide order in regards of Social Media. Accordingly, it must be considered that the rapidly expanding of Social Media audiences in the emerging markets, are going to be a huge driver of users growth. India, Indonesia, Mexico, China and Brazil, are expected to be the first countries that will increase their Social Media communities in the upcoming years (eMarketer 2013).

On the other hand, since Social Media sites are absolutely similar and diverse at the same time, it is necessary to analyze the goals that an organization is trying to achieve, and select only the Social Media platforms that are suitable for them. Actually, in order to build an acquire strategy of Social Media, it is necessary to mix different platforms, not only depending on the objectives, but also taking into account the country where the campaign will be implemented. In this case, the research is about Mexico, due to which, in the following paragraphs, specific aspects of Social Media in this country will be examined.

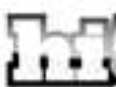## 2.3 Social Media Strategies: Mexican Business Application

Influence of globalization in media technologies is a reality in Mexico, it has became a new form of communication for million people; actually, internet users continue to spend more time with Social Media

sites than any other type of site. At the same time, the total time spent on Social Media in Mexico has considerably increased, primarily, on Facebook (Chart 1.3).

Chart 1.3, We are social 2014

Lately, AMIPCI (Asociación Mexicana de Internet 2013) has published the five most commonly used Social Media platforms in Mexico; which are, Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, Google+ and hi5. Then, if thinking about starting a new business in this country, the information contained in the following table is essential to build an accurate Social Media strategy:

Logo	Social Media Platform	Users behavior	General information
	Facebook	90% of Mexicans have internet access to Facebook 90% goes daily 46% from a Smartphone	**Who should use** Everyone **What to share:** All types of online content, events, ads **Post frequency:** Once or twice a day
	YouTube	60% of Mexicans with Internet access are enrolled in Youtube 77% goes daily 23% from a smartphone	**Who should use it:** Brands with video content and ads, anyone giving explanations or sharing expertise **What to share:** Short (less than 1.5 minutes) video content **Post frequency:** Once or twice a week
	Twitter	55% of Mexicans have internet access to Twitter 61% goes daily 47% from a Smartphone	**Who should use it:** Everyone – from individuals to the largest multinational corporations **What to share:** Start, join, and lead conversations; interact directly with brands and customers **Post frequency:** Multiple times per day
	Google+	34% of Mexicans have internet access to Google+ 44% goes daily 20% from a Smartphone	**Who should use it:** Brands already on the other major Social Media sites, B2B networking, bloggers **What to share:** More formal and professional than Facebook; Hashtags have major search value **Post frequency:** Once or twice a day
	hi5	25% of Mexicans have internet access to Hi5 10% goes daily 8% from a Smartphone	**Who should use it:** Brands performing already in the major Social Media sites **What to share:** All types of online content, events, ads **Post frequency:** Once or twice a day

As time passes by, most marketers are moving into Social Media platforms due to its benefits; such as Sales Improvement, Increment exposure, Growth of business partnerships, Generation of leaderships, Reduction of marketing expenses, Improvement in search rankings, Increment of traffic, Better marketplace insight and Development of loyal fans (Stelzner 2013); just to name a few.

Finally, there must be said that building messages is an important activity, it depends on the information contented the effectiveness of the strategies. Even thought the organization is performing on a B2B (Business to Business) or B2C (Business to Consumer) Social Media strategy, the following elements are necessary to complete the communication process effectively:

1. Determine clearly the objectives of the strategy.
2. Define a plan.
3. Select only the Social Media platforms that suits accurately to the aims stated in the plan.
4. Build a strategic plan for each of the Social Media platforms selected.
5. Embrace errors and set a specific plan for reducing the negative effects in clients' insights.
6. Always respond to any interaction from customers. The answer must be in a personal and timely manner.
7. Stay active on the Social Media sites included in your strategy during the whole period of the marketing plan.

Tips:
- The marketer sender should transmit the information in a way which is relevant to the target audience.
- The receiver target must have the ability to decode the message and to recognize the intended meaning.
- The feedback analyzer should ensure that the receiver has decoded the message effectively by responding to the message in some way.
- All kind of noise must be considered; anything in the environment which impedes the transmission and decoding of the message, e.g. conflicting interests, pressure of work, too many other messages.
- Creativity is the essential element of a Social Media marketing plan.

2.4 Social Media marketing application in a Mexican Company

Name of the project: Aldea Digital México 2014 (Digital Village)
Company: Telmex
Period: April 11th-27th, 2014
Field: Telecommunications

"Aldea Digital" (Digital Village) is the largest digital event of the world and aims to bring the benefits of connectivity to children, youth and adults so they could improve their lives regardless of their educational level and their digital skills.
- More than 38 lectures were delivered by national and foreign personalities with extensive experience in digital innovation and entrepreneurship including among others: Steve Wozniak (Co-founder Apple), Salman Khan (Khan Academy), Yin Lu (Coursera), Nuria Sanz (UNESCO-México).
- More than 40 workshops for all ages from 8 months to any age grouped were given
- Computers and tablets on loan for everybody.
- Digital Challenges: for example, "Telmex" launched a call for targeted mailing and social networking completely for programmers and designers. Through a series of challenges participants demonstrated their knowledge and skills in programming and design and create a team with the best in the area, and together they created a new company. People made a dinamic with a strong digital scheme to identify urban problems in the first frame of the Historic Center of Mexico City and create social innovation solutions that can be replicated in other areas of the megalopolis.

2.4.1 Social Media platforms: Youtube, Facebook and Twitter

Youtube: there were created some spots especially for this platform to promote the event. First of all, the advertising was shown on the home page of the local websites, as well as at the beginning of the reproduction of certain targeted videos. Besides, the event was promoted by Mexican "youtube celebrities"who have lots of followers.

Facebook: as this site is the principal Social Media platform used in Mexico, a special profile was created which received more than 40,000 likes within the first week it was launched. As part of the strategy, different recognized brands related to the telecommunications field, such as *Telcel*, *Samsung* and *Infinitum*, also promoted the event on their own Facebook profiles. With these strategies, the dissemination of the message was increasing every day.

Twitter: it was created a specific account for the promotion of the event; and as a part of the strategy, plenty of tweets were tweeted all day long during the marketing plan in order to be present in the timelines of the target. Whereas, this site started to follow the companies involved in the project, searching for retweets. At the same time, personalities of Mexico promoted this event through their own twitter accounts. Therefore, the replication of this message was massive.

2.4.2 The Social Media strategy
- There were created viral videos and they were spread all over the Social Media platforms of the strategy.
- Through the web site *http://aldeadigitalmx.com/#* the main information of the messages was transmitted, besides that was the channel that leads to other marketing sources like Twitter, facebook and youtube.

- Conferences were transmitted in real time through internet on the web site *http://aldeadigitalmx.com/#* and in the Tv Chanel "Uno TV

" *http://www.unotv.com/noticias/aldeadigital/*. Also, the followers could watch the repeats at any time through social networks or on "One Channel" web site, which was formed right for this aim.

3. Discussions and conclusions

The new technologies have changed the traditional rules of the communication, making the Social Media platforms have a profound impact on business. As a consequence, marketing strategies have had to get adapted to the new online Social Media in order to get directly to their targets and be closer their customers. Companies can now send instantaneous messages, at the same time all over the world. If used well, Social Media can help businesses build essential emotional connections with people, thereby creating a profound impact both on customers and employees. It all depends on the Social Media marketing planning. However, the role of Social Media in business is influenced by two factors: the relevance of the information gathered and the control over information disseminated. Tracking monitoring and analyzing this deluge of data generated by Social Media has become a hard task on its own. Organizations are now increasingly turning towards Social Media listening and analytics technologies to help them manage their social presence on the sites. The effectiveness of a Social Media marketing strategy depends directly on the previous setting of it, by using the right platforms for the adequate objectives.

4. Research limitations and direction for future research

One limitation of this research was that due to the plenty of information available about these relevant topics, it results difficult to discriminate the valuable data. Besides that, everyday many different Social Media sites are being developed, so the importance of a source becomes obsolete rapidly. Nowadays, it is complicated to measure effectively Social Media impact; reason why, this area will become more sophisticated in the future, as Social Media platforms look to grow their businesses by attracting advertisers to their sites. Since technology is constantly evolving, current strategies used for marketing Social Media will tend to change within the short-term future. Therefore, studies in regards of these business affairs will have to be always updated in order to provide accurate information for the professionals of the marketing field.

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