

Social Media Platforms and Public Relations for Brand Promotion

Yiyang Jiang*

School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London, London, United Kingdom

*Corresponding author: zczl610@ucl.ac.uk

Abstract. Throughout a half century's evolvement, public relations have become a bridge that extends the idea of organizations to the public mind. One of the challenges public relations meets is getting customers' attention to the advertisement. In the current world, online social media gradually substitute conventional media to serve as a communication channel. They are a variety of online platforms, including business networks, collaborative projects, enterprise social networks, microblogs, photo and video sharing, products review, social bookmarking, and virtual worlds. Unlike traditional media, which is one-way communication, consumers only receive messages delivered to them without giving feedback to spreaders. Social media software is two-way communication, meaning that customers are supported to give feedback on goods and services. The social media platform is expected to be a new way of advertising, while it encourages dynamic communication between marketers and consumers. Because of this, the application of social networks plays a crucial role in promoting public relations activities. This study targets to analyse how public relations practitioners find it possible to depend on different social media platforms to gain customers' attention for the organizations or brands they serve. The natures of platforms, influencers, and followers will be the objectives of starting this research.

Keywords: Public relations, social media, customer attention, online advertisement, TikTok, YouTube.

1. Introduction

Public relations have entered modern life and become links between media and the public for fifty years. Through their evolvement in a half-century, public relations have experienced three different procedures, from research to definition and application. In the 1960s and 1970s, acceptance of news releases and the proportion of content in the news media were primary case-study objectives [1-3]. In the 1980s, it had been an emerging academic field of applied communication, informing several areas of mass communication and offering theoretic and conceptual tools in health, risk, political communication, etc. [4]. In the last decade of 19 century, public relations could be defined as the management of communication between organizations and the public [5]. Contemporarily, being influenced by internet technologies, public relations are applied to building and maintaining organizational public relationships, shaping a positive organizational impression on the public. Also, public relations take responsibility for boosting communication when both organizations and the public have access to online media [6].

Although public relations play a prominent role in stimulating two-way communication, it is a permanent engagement and challenge that public relations attract more public attention for the organizations they serve. In terms of the application of public relations, various media are its fuels to run. Formerly, conventional media such as television, radio, magazine, and newspaper served as the premier platform for public relations activities. Currently, online media, namely social media, gradually substitute the traditional one to deliver organizational voices to the public [7]. In this era of rapid development of the new medium, whether social media platforms are capable of benefiting public relations to attract more consumer attention is a question that requires to be deeply explored. This article will analyse below three dimensions of social media according to precedent studies to explain their availability in catching customers' eye.

1. Social media provide public relations with platforms to interact with consumers.

2. Social media provide public relations with more customers as they have an enormous number of users.
3. Social media provide public relations with voice leaders to spread or propagate their ideas.

2. Social Media Platforms, Users and Influencers

2.1 Social Media Platform

Social media provide an interactive platform for public relations to introduce the brands and consumers to receive information and pay attention to what they are interested in.

2.1.1 Platform Functions

Digital engagement strongly depends on the platform, which is the process of building relationships with potential or existing customers through digital channels such as social media. For example, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat are of service to social interaction and undoubtedly play a crucial role in strengthening the brand connection with customers. Facebook and Instagram also fill an empty moment for their users, meaning that some people spend their free time on social media for leisure [8]. Furthermore, those users are more likely to be fascinated by fresh or creative stuff as they expect amusing visual impact can distract them, escaping the boring situation. At this time, any online marketing activity is more attractive because its customers highly concentrate on them. Thus, the platform has two-way communication and advertising capabilities to deal with the lack of consumer awareness.

2.1.2 Platform Differences and Public Relations Engagement

Social media differ, but their advertising engagements also distinguish across platforms, and the emotional feelings they bring to the audiences are the most striking differences. From the negative emotion perspective, advertising on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter scores the highest. Advertising on YouTube is unavoidable and intrusive for users, who have to wait a few seconds to skip the advertisement and continue watching the video. By contrast, advertising on Instagram is more entertaining, and that on Pinterest stimulates users to provide topicality. From the angle of public relations, they consider how they could help attract customers and build a profitable marketing relationship with those customers by relying on these platforms [9]. Based on those known traits of various platforms, public relations find it targeted to design advertisements and other forms of marketing available to deliver positive perception to the audiences, ensuring the users from different platforms can be attracted by them.

2.1.3 TikTok Platforms

The emerging market of short videos brings a new opportunity and possibility to public relations to establish a closer relationship with the public. In recent years, a social software called TikTok has changed internet user behavior, shifting from desktop to mobile. TikTok was founded in 2017 as the international version of the popular Chinese platform Douyin [10]. According to a statistical report, during the Covid-19 Pandemic, the number of new users witnessed a soaring growth to its peak, 980.7 million first-time installs in 2020, which is sevenfold the figure in 2017 (131.5 million in 2017, 655 million in 2018, 738 million in 2019 and 740 million in 2021). In July 2021, TikTok reached the milestone of three billion downloads globally [11]. What benefits public relations most is that the TikTok is not only a platform with billions of customers but also allows them to learn about an organization or a brand in the short run, such as a one-minute video, shortening cyber distance among them.

Furthermore, the gender and age of the users are the factors contributing to the success of public relations. 24% of TikTok's global audience were young women between the ages of 18 and 24, while male users of the same age occupy approximately 18% of the app's audience [12]. Next, approximately 57% of TikTok worldwide users were women until January 2022. Male users were approximately 43 % of the total [13]. Because of this, public relations are able to hold activities due

to the preferences of customers of different gender and age groups and boost the marketing strategies to reach expectations. Therefore, the diversity of social software creates more groups of customers in public relations and makes their actions effective.

2.2 Social Media Users or Customers

All social media users are potential consumers. Advertising or holding other public relations activities inside plays a significant role in brand marketing, being fascinated by advertisement according to their living habit, hedonic motivation, and psychological perception [14].

2.2.1 User's Perception and Relevance to the Advertisement

It has been argued that online users will be more involved and engaged in adopting new social systems if they perceive such systems as more productive, functional, and able to save time and effort. Second, people are more likely to be attached if they perceive the targeted one as more useful and valuable. Third, advertisers are more capable of tailoring and customizing the kinds of messages posted based on their customers' favour through social media platforms. Indeed, customers would be loyal and satisfied if they suppose a level of personalization as stated. According to Celsi and Olson, cited in Alalwan, relevance is "the degree to which consumers perceive an object to be self-related or to some extent to achieving their personal goals and values." Customers will give approbatory attitudes to social media ads and decide to purchase when they believe it can fulfil their goals and preferences. Customers are more likely to perceive usefulness in the online service system if they find this media system relevant and personalized according to their requirements. In view of this, customer perception and relevance to the advertisement are the keys to attracting them on social media.

2.2.2 Hedonic Motivation

Social media platforms are regarded as new places for people to entertain and cheer. Notably, customers are more passionate about social media advertisement due to their level of creativity and attractiveness. In addition, the high level of interactivity in the media raises customers' ability to control, contribute, and interact with others. Thereby, the customers prefer to be hedonists on such platforms, spending time and paying attention to gain more pleasure.

2.2.3 Habit

Based on customers' daily interaction with social media platforms, they are more likely to have habitual behaviour toward such platforms and most of the marketing activities posted on them. Namely, customers who habitually see social media advertisements are more likely to be influenced by them and positively react to them [15]. Therefore, the personal habit of social platform users, staying their attention on the advertisement, enhances the effectiveness of public relations.

2.2.4 Advertisements on YouTube

YouTube is a social community founded in 2005 which features content, allowing users to post, view, comment, and link to videos on the site. Furthermore, the young generation between 18- and 34 years old watch YouTube videos more than any cable TV channel and are the most frequent users. The previous statement demonstrates that advertising can enhance customers' informativeness, pleasure, and credibility and also decrease irritation because advertising messages are well personalized to deal with customers' interests and preferences. According to Lee, Kim, and Sundar, cited in Dehghania, Niaki, Ramezanib, and Salib, personalization does not indicate a direct influence on advertising value. However, it indirectly influences informativeness, credibility, and entertainment. They also support YouTube in obtaining enough awareness from its customers.

Cobb-Walgren et al. used to study that a consumer's brand awareness, as formed by advertising, influences purchase intentions through a social media channel. To confirm this process, an empirical test performed by Kim and Park, cited in Dehghania, Niaki, Ramezanib, and Salib and determined that consumer's attitudes toward advertising positively influence purchase intentions under the below five hypotheses:

H1: Consumer has perceived informativeness through YouTube advertising, which is positively affecting advertising value;

H2: the consumer has perceived customization through YouTube advertising, which is positively affecting advertising value;

H3: the consumer has perceived Irritation in YouTube advertising, which negatively affects advertising value;

H4: Advertising value through YouTube ads will positively affect brand awareness;

H5: Brand awareness through YouTube ads will positively affect on purchase intention of consumers.

Consequently, all hypotheses are valid, as there is not enough evidence to reject them [16]. As a result, customers' attitude plays a determining role in effectively exercising marketing strategy, and their favourable impression of the brands on social media is capable of boosting public relations.

2.3 Social Media Influencers

Social media influencers such as vloggers, bloggers, and other online celebrities spread different daily voices. People spend much time on social media and listen to their comments about any kind of stuff that exists in the world. It is argued that followers' views of a brand or a piece of news can be influenced by what they express to the public, which means that they can attract public attention and affect their perspective on an event.

2.3.1 Voice Leaders

Social media influencers represent a new type of independent third party to shape audience attitudes through blogs, short videos, vlogs, texts, pictures, etc. Based on the nature of their work, they take accountability for keeping up with hotspot topics, trends, and fashions since they have to express and share their views for the first time to gain more clicks and followers [17]. Besides, as they have popularity and influence, their followers easily trust what they deliver. Hence, they usually act as a role of opinion leaders for some current issues, and their followers' points of view would be possibly affected by them.

2.3.2 Power of Social Media Influencers

The influencer's ability to influence the target audience's attitude, perceptions, and even purchase behaviours make them powerful in the eyes of brands. The participants attribute the influencer's power to various factors, but the influencer's trustworthiness is considered a major power source. This consensus among all participants was described by one participant as follows: influencers are one of the most influential reference groups for customers who are seeking the recommendation of trustworthy sources in today's world, where it is challenging to distinguish between wrong and correct information. This is because customers are pragmatism, valuing the ideas of someone who personally has tried a product [18]. Experience and practice are more persuasive to the customers; those influencers attract their attention to a brand.

2.3.4 Cooperation between Public Relations and Social Media Influencers

Social media influencers promote a brand or an organization. The customers' attitude to a brand or organization can be shaped by how those influencers claim to their followers. Because of this, public relations practitioners are responsible for building a cooperation relationship with them and letting influencers become mediators to interact with the customers.

2.3.5 Influencer Marketing on TikTok and YouTube

Video is a prime communication channel for both TikTok and YouTube, where the influencers advertise products to the public. Firstly, each influencer has their identity position, which can be divided into a food blogger, beauty blogger, outfit blogger, education and knowledge blogger, science blogger, and tourism blogger. In other words, all industries can be born influencers, and to help brand public relations to establish a stable relationship with the public, most of them are their followers. The food bloggers engage in different advertising restaurants, new-release food and beverages, and

cookers; branding of cosmetics and skin-caring products is taken responsibility by the beauty bloggers; education and knowledge bloggers disseminate learnings while recommending or selling associated books. Besides, marketing video has different forms, such as dramatic videos and daily vlogs. The influencers design a script and employ actors to perform the plots; the marketing products are presented to the audiences in the form of props. The latter tends to deliver brand information and usages to the public through the process that the influencers record in the video. Meanwhile, influencer marketing gradually makes many niche brands become famous and well-known. What could impress the customers is the vivid and amusing video content, and its presence provides a comfortable watching perception to them. However, there is a limitation on advertising time. The higher reward paid to the influencer, the longer time that the advertisement occupies in the video to introduce the product. Therefore, the public relations practitioners require to consider below two points when cooperating with the influencers on TikTok and YouTube:

1. Choose suitable and reliable influencers whose identity is associated with the products.

2. Make an agreement with the influencers on a proper advertisement placement time in the video, which not only lets the audience know more about the brand but also does not feel impatient for it.

Despite the marketing that influencers publish video advertisement resemble on both platforms of TikTok and YouTube, star promotion and live commerce differentiate them. With TikTok's influence witnessing a significant enhancement, an increasing number of celebrities as influencers tend to settle in TikTok for live commerce. The stars interact more with their fans on TikTok, and it shortens the psychological distance between the stars and with fans. Also, as the stars often bring more exposure to the platform, TikTok is keen on working with them. Many celebrities are invited to sell merchandise with the influencers through live commerce and gain higher sales. Thus, the more stars active on TikTok, the more users they attract to TikTok, and the more customer attention will be paid to TikTok [19]. From the angle of public relations, social software with E-commerce, star effect, and great exposure undoubtedly has an enormous number of consumers. It makes public relations activity more attractive and effective.

3. Literature References

This article is based on the roles of public relations and functions of social media to analyse their relevance and how social media can solve the challenge that attracts consumer attention to organizations in public relations activities. The arguments originated from three main components of social media: platform, influencer, and influencer.

Firstly, Voorved, Noort, Muntinga, and Bronner state that social media platforms are experienced as a way to remain up to date. Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat feature social interaction, while Facebook and Instagram are used to fill an empty moment. Also, despite the fact that Pinterest reacts to this function less than others, it is the only medium used for innovation and practical use [20]. Hence, social media systems have their characteristics to deliver to the user. For public relations, delivering to customers through platforms is the initial process to gain their attention. Secondly, Alalwan conducted a study to discover the main factors of social media marketing, including performance expectancy, hedonic motivation, habit, interactivity, informativeness, and perceived relevance. Those shape the customer's purchase attempts to research what extent social media can stimulate the growth of customer's awareness of brands [21]. Thirdly, K. Freberg, Graham, L.A. Freberg introduce the roles of social media influencers and how they work to build public relations as a third party based on audiences' perceptions of them [22].

Overall, academic papers are the primary sources of this article which are credible and peer-reviewed, involving *the Journal of Communication*, *Public Relations Review*, *Journal of Information Science*, *Journal of Advertising*, etc. They provide the arguments with authoritative evidence to analyse the significance of social media in promoting public relations activities. Besides, all the sources introduced above not only mention the feasibilities of social media but also refer to the limitations or weaknesses of the platform, customer, and influencer. Double-sided discussion ensures

academic rigor as well as allows other scholars to a fact with multi-thinking. For example, Voorverd, Noort, Muntinga, and Bronner excluded YouTube and Pinterest when they emphasized the communicative aim of the media. It could be argued that choosing a platform suitable for advertising or marketing to hold public relations activities for organizations is able to maximize brand influence [23].

4. Summary

Contemporarily, the social mainstream medium had witnessed a typical transition. Newspapers, magazines, and broadcasts fade out of people's life, replaced by news Apps, YouTube, TikTok, Twitter, and other social software. The role of public relations is given a more explicit definition under the industrial promotion of a few decades. The purpose of this study was to analyse platforms, users, and influencers on social media and explain them as factors contributing boost public relations activities. Ultimately, the diversity of social media platforms satisfies people's social demands while filling their leisure time. The more time the users spend on them, the more attention they pay to the advertisements or other marketing actions inside. Besides the psychological requirement and recognition, the living habit will motivate the users of each platform to become the consumers of the brands or products held public relations activities on the platforms. Eventually, the influencers play a significant role in introducing and recommending the products, enhancing the popularity of the brands. What should emphasize is that the influencers can also harm a brand, perhaps by expressing negative comments to the public. Similarly, in some cases, negative, unreal, and unreliable messages are associated with a brand or rumours spread on social media. They probability obscure the facts and interfere with the public to judge the brand. This phenomenon justifies that social media platform is a double-edged sword, it boosts public relations to attract attention and brings devastation to their fruits. As a result, the detriments of social media to public relations could be a future research topic in order to study multi-side of the relationship between media and public relations.

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