

Unveiling the Power of Social Media: Innovative Strategies and SOCMINT Insights in Modern Marketing

Raluca-Giorgiana Chivu (Popa)

Ionuț-Claudiu Popa

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania

raluca.chivu@mk.ase.ro

claudiu.popa@mk.ase.ro

Abstract

In the era of rapid technological advancements, traditional marketing strategies no longer wield the same effectiveness. The focal point has shifted to social media, a pivotal virtual realm where platforms not only serve as social networks but also as digital advertising spaces utilizing innovative and captivating marketing techniques. Marketers recognize the indispensability of these digital forums, leveraging them to reach a vast audience while optimizing budgetary resources.

In addition to conventional marketing, the less highlighted realm of social media intelligence (SOCMINT) plays a crucial role. SOCMINT involves harnessing data collected from social media platforms to gain deeper insights into consumer behavior. This article delves into research conducted among social media users, unveiling the voluntarily shared data and information. It also measures users' awareness of how other entities utilize their publicly displayed information. In this dynamic landscape, the fusion of strategic digital marketing and SOCMINT emerges as a powerful tandem for navigating the evolving realm of consumer engagement.

Key words: social media marketing, consumer behaviour, social media intelligence

J.E.L. classification: M31

1. Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of digital marketing, the traditional strategies that once defined success are giving way to a new era dominated by the power of social media. The term "traditional" itself has become somewhat antiquated, as marketers navigate an ever-changing terrain where innovation is key to capturing the attention of a digitally-savvy audience. In this article, we will delve into the transformative role of social media in modern marketing, exploring innovative strategies and shedding light on the concept of Social Media Intelligence (SOCMINT).

Social media platforms have transcended their initial purpose as mere channels for social interaction. They have evolved into dynamic spaces where brands and products can harness the potential of digital advertising in ways that were once unimaginable. The traditional boundaries between social networking and advertising have blurred, paving the way for a more integrated and immersive marketing experience.

At the forefront of this marketing revolution is the recognition that social media is not just about creating a presence; it's about engagement and interaction. Brands are no longer limited to static advertisements; they now have the opportunity to craft narratives, build communities, and establish genuine connections with their audience. This shift in approach has given rise to innovative strategies that prioritize authenticity and relatability over conventional marketing tactics.

One of the driving forces behind this paradigm shift is the sheer number of users on these platforms. With a global audience that spans billions, social media provides an unparalleled opportunity for marketers to reach a vast and diverse demographic. What's even more enticing is the ability to achieve this reach with a relatively modest budget compared to traditional advertising channels. The democratization of marketing has empowered businesses of all sizes to compete on a

level playing field within the digital realm.

Amidst the myriad strategies employed in the social media sphere, the concept of Social Media Intelligence (SOCMINT) emerges as a game-changer. SOCMINT goes beyond the surface-level metrics and engagement statistics; it involves the strategic use of data collected from social media platforms to gain a deeper understanding of consumers. This goes beyond demographic information – it delves into consumer behaviors, preferences, and sentiments.

In the course of our research, we explored the landscape of social media users to unravel the layers of data voluntarily shared by them. Users willingly put forth a plethora of information, from personal preferences to lifestyle choices, creating a treasure trove for marketers. The challenge, however, lies not just in collecting this data but in using it responsibly and ethically.

Understanding the implications of SOCMINT requires a closer look at the delicate balance between personalized marketing and privacy concerns. As marketers leverage the wealth of information available, there is a responsibility to ensure that the use of this data respects user privacy and complies with ethical standards. The awareness of users regarding how their data is utilized by entities adds another dimension to the evolving discourse on digital ethics.

2. Theoretical background. Social Media Marketing

In today's business landscape, well-executed marketing has become an indispensable component for achieving pinnacle success, permeating every aspect of our surroundings (Kotler and Keller, 2012, p.1). In recent years, companies have recognized that traditional marketing methods are no longer sufficient to sustain a business, and social connectivity has emerged as the key to optimizing marketing efforts (Geho and Dangelo, 2012, p.61).

For most organizations, including businesses and government agencies, the use of social networks begins in marketing, public communications, or specific departments directly linked to customers. The advent of Web 2.0 and social networks has brought about significant changes, giving rise to innovative and highly effective social business programs (Evans, McKee, and Bratton, 2010, p. 4). The internet represents a massive opportunity for companies to reach consumers directly with information that costs only a fraction of the advertising expenses allocated to traditional advertising (Scott, 2011, p. 6).

Social publishing entails the creation and dissemination of content through websites and platforms that meet the audience's needs, enabling the sharing of user-generated content without barriers and without adhering to traditional broadcasting and publishing models. There are four categories of social marketers: individual users, independent professionals, professional collaborators associated with organizations such as mass media news, and brands. Brands utilize social media for content marketing distribution or promotion within a campaign. Social publishing channels include blogs, microsharing sites, bookmarking sites, and social news, allowing sharing and participation similar to social communities. Social community orientation is based on creating networks, and social publishing relies heavily on knowledge exchange (Tuten and Solomon, 2018, p. 14).

Given the connectivity of today's world, the influence of social conformity is growing, and customers are increasingly curious about others' opinions, sharing ideas and reviews, collectively shaping their own brand image, often different from the one companies intend to project (Kotler, Setiawan, and Kartajaya, 2017, p.13). Sharing and reading for pleasure are considered common desires, and as a result, 70% of Internet users claim to have posted some type of content on social networks. The popularity of visual sites is continually growing, emphasizing that images are the most popular type of content (Quesenberry, 2018, p. 144).

The use of social media allows overcoming traditional constraints such as geography, time zones, and digital technology enables the refinement of marketing messages to target specific market segments, achieving connectivity with a much larger audience (Ryan, 2014, p. 22).

However, this strategy is not always easy to implement, especially when it comes to the challenging issue of attribution. That being said, there are certainly many brands that seem to master it, including some of the most globally renowned companies such as KFC, Nike, Netflix, Red Bull, Lego, Starbucks, Coca-Cola, Heineken, Chanel, Uber, etc. (Gilliland, 2020).

It seems, however, that recently, social media marketing has increasingly adapted, providing users with a more personalized experience, made possible by the information they publicly share. For instance, if a user posts on their Facebook account details such as gender, date of birth, residence (through information about place of birth and current address), education level, and job (implicitly providing an idea of income level), socio-demographic characteristics become easily accessible and can be readily utilized by marketing professionals for targeting. Furthermore, if the user shares information about their interests (through photos, group memberships, liking certain pages), marketers find it even easier to precisely target them for products or services they may purchase or use.

Social media intelligence involves the collection of data from social media conversations to inform future marketing actions. Unlike social listening, which focuses on monitoring conversations, social media intelligence goes a step further by utilizing patterns and trends in data for decision-making.

For instance, marketers seeking to leverage social data intelligence observe conversations on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter to gauge sentiment around their brand or products. This data can then be utilized for more effective ad targeting or adjusting the topics covered in blog posts.

In addition, social media intelligence can analyze demographic data, identify trends in customer behavior, and track competitor activity. All of this information contributes to informing campaigns, creating more effective content, and enhancing the return on investment (ROI) of social media efforts.

The four main components of social media intelligence include monitoring, collecting, analyzing, and taking action. In the monitoring phase, various social networking sites where the target audience is active are observed to understand responses to products or services in different scenarios. Social media listening tools, such as Hootsuite Streams, aid in monitoring by tracking keywords, hashtags, and phrases related to the brand.

Once relevant conversations are identified, the next step is data collection, encompassing demographic information, user behavior, sentiment analysis, trends, and more. The goal is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the target audience to tailor campaigns accordingly.

After collecting substantial data, the analysis phase interprets the information, either manually or through automated tools, to uncover insights into customer behavior and conversational trends. For example, positive conversations from a specific demographic may lead to an increased advertising spend for that group, while negative sentiment about a competitor might present an opportunity to gain market share.

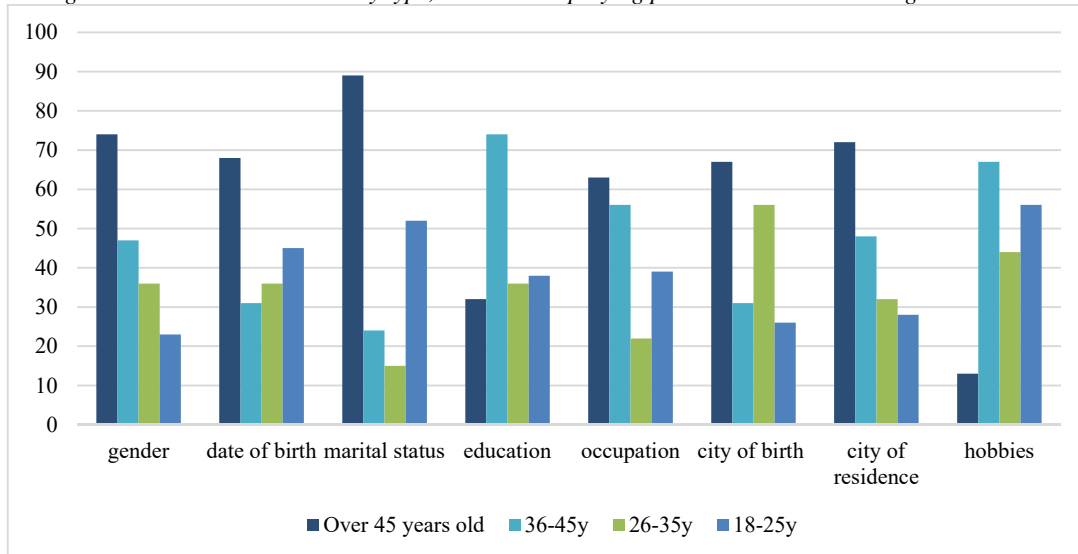
The final step is taking action, translating the comprehensive view of the target audience into actionable steps. This could involve A/B testing, optimizing landing pages, creating targeted campaigns, or adjusting product offerings. The ultimate aim is to use insights from data analysis to make decisions that enhance the customer experience and increase ROI.

3. Research methodology

Within this article, a quantitative research study was conducted among social media users to identify publicly displayed personal information. The research aimed to determine consumers' awareness of the use of their publicly displayed personal information on social media. Among the objectives were the quantification of publicly displayed personal information, the identification of reasons leading to the display of personal information, and the measurement of awareness regarding potential marketing uses of this information.

The data was collected through an online questionnaire, and the data analysis was conducted using the Excel software program.

Figure no. 1. Social media use by type, Internet. Displaying personal data based on age



Source: graphic made by the author

Taking into account the display of personal data based on age, it can be observed that younger and older individuals are more inclined to publicly share a larger quantity of personal information. Meanwhile, individuals aged between 25 and 45 years old tend to be more discreet regarding the public display of personal data.

When asked about the reasons for making certain personal information public or not on their social media accounts, users provided the following responses:

Reasons for displaying personal data on social media platforms can vary and may be influenced by several factors. Here are some common motives:

Connecting with Friends and Family: Many users choose to display personal data to maintain connections with friends and family, allowing them to know more about their lives.

Expressing Personal Identity: Some users believe that displaying personal data, such as interests, hobbies, and significant life events, contributes to expressing their personal identity and creating a more comprehensive image.

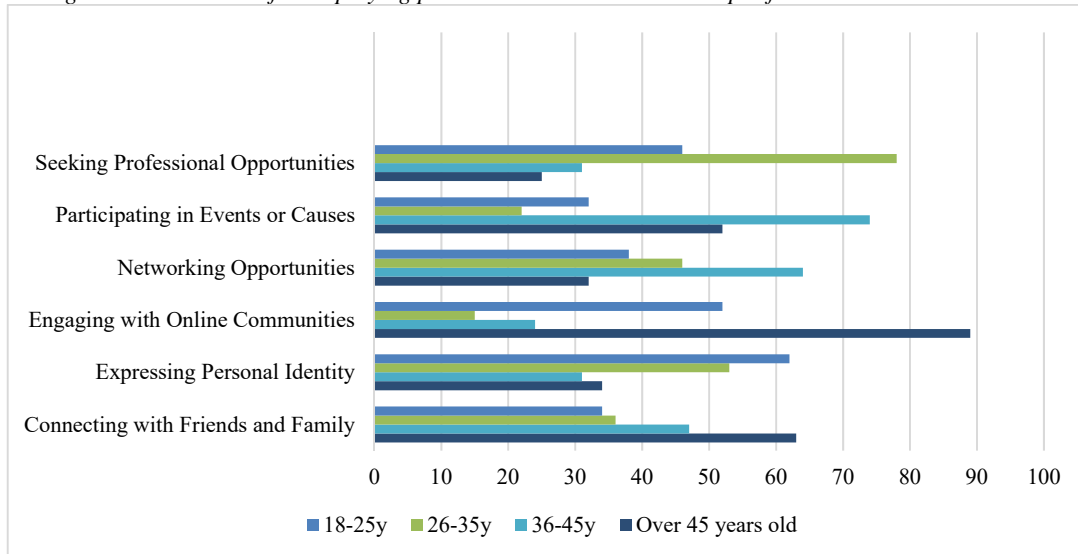
Engaging with Online Communities: Actively participating in online communities with similar interests can be a motive for displaying personal data. Users can find people with common interests and facilitate interaction with them.

Networking Opportunities: In a professional context, some users display personal data to benefit from networking opportunities and collaboration, thereby building relationships in their field.

Participating in Events or Causes: Displaying personal data can also serve marketing or activism purposes. Users may want to share opinions or support specific causes, and personal data can be used in this context.

Seeking Professional Opportunities: Displaying details such as education or professional experience can help users in seeking professional opportunities or help potential employers identify suitable candidates.

Figure no. 2. Reasons for displaying personal data on social media platforms

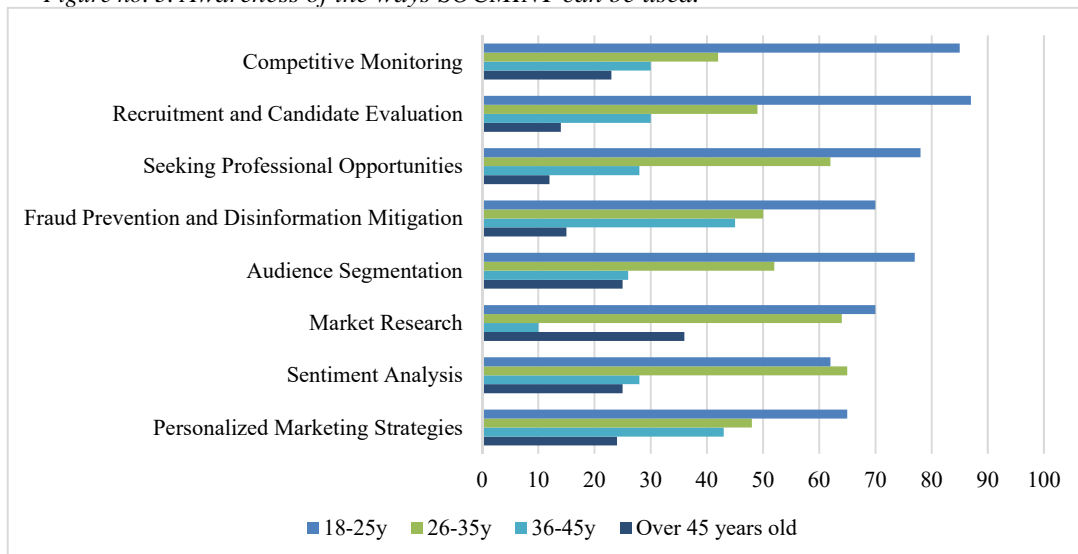


Source: graphic made by the author

In Figure 2, it can be observed that younger individuals predominantly have motives such as seeking new professional opportunities, while older individuals desire to belong to communities.

In response to the question regarding awareness of how publicly displayed personal data on social media platforms can be used, respondents provided the following answers:

Figure no. 3. Awareness of the ways SOCMINT can be used.



Source: graphic made by the author

In Figure 3, we can observe that younger individuals are much more aware than older ones of the ways in which the personal information they publicly display on social media platforms can be utilized.

4. Conclusions

The analysis of social media intelligence (SOCMINT) and the public display of personal information on social media platforms reveal intricate patterns of behavior, preferences, and awareness among users. Understanding these dynamics is essential for businesses, marketers, and

researchers seeking to navigate the complex landscape of online interactions and leverage the wealth of information available.

In exploring the motives for sharing personal data on social media, it becomes evident that users are driven by a variety of factors. Connecting with friends and family, expressing personal identity, and engaging with online communities are common motivations. Additionally, users may seek professional opportunities, participate in events or causes, and contribute to networking. The decision to share personal data is nuanced and influenced by individual preferences and the desire for tailored online experiences.

Moreover, the implications of SOCMINT data extend beyond individual motivations. Businesses can utilize this data for personalized marketing strategies, sentiment analysis, and market research. The ability to segment audiences based on shared characteristics or interests allows for targeted and effective marketing campaigns. SOCMINT also proves valuable in preventing fraud, mitigating disinformation, and monitoring competitors.

The research conducted, as outlined in the provided translations, sheds light on the awareness users have regarding the use of their publicly displayed personal information. Younger individuals exhibit a higher level of awareness compared to their older counterparts. This discrepancy in awareness may be attributed to various factors, including differences in digital literacy, exposure to online privacy discussions, and generational attitudes toward social media.

The quantitative research, conducted through online surveys and data analysis using tools like Excel, provides valuable insights into the public display of personal information on social media. The study aims to determine the degree of awareness among consumers regarding the use of their publicly displayed personal information. Objectives include quantifying the amount of publicly displayed personal information, understanding the motivations behind such displays, and measuring awareness of potential marketing uses.

Analyzing the responses to questions about the reasons for making certain personal information public or not, users express a diverse range of motivations. These motivations align with the identified factors influencing the public display of personal data. Connecting with others, expressing identity, and participating in online communities emerge as recurring themes.

In conclusion, the intersection of SOCMINT and the public display of personal information on social media platforms represents a dynamic and evolving landscape. Users navigate this space with diverse motives, contributing to a rich tapestry of online interactions. Businesses and researchers can harness the power of SOCMINT for targeted strategies and insights, but ethical considerations and privacy concerns must be paramount.

As the digital landscape continues to evolve, understanding user behavior, motivations, and awareness becomes crucial. Businesses must balance the benefits of data-driven insights with respect for user privacy. Moreover, ongoing research and discussions surrounding online behavior and privacy are essential for creating informed policies, ensuring ethical practices, and fostering a digital environment that respects individual choices and preferences.

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