



Social Media in The Chemical Industry

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ABSTRACT

Social media may be regarded as any website that provides a network of people with a place to make connections. It is a tool that helps individuals (consumers) to share ideas, content, thoughts, and relationships over the Internet. Many organizations and companies are using social media to spread their message and extend their presence more than traditional marketing can do. This paper briefly presents the use of social media in the chemical industry.

Keywords: social media; social networking; chemical industry

INTRODUCTION

Traditional social media include written press, TV and radio. Modern social media, also known as social networking, include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and YouTube. Both the traditional and modern social media are illustrated in Figure 1 [1]. Modern social media began in 1978 by Ward Christensen and Randy Sues who created bulletin board to inform friends of meetings, announcements, and share information. Since then, social media has become an integral part of our life [1]. Social media gives companies another means of reaching people in ways that traditional media cannot. They allow your company to boost their brand. What can be done of the social media is illustrated in Figure 2 [2].

The chemical industry is lagging behind with integrating social media effectively within the overall marketing strategy. This is perhaps to the perception that social media is a bad fit for companies that operate in a business-to-business (B2B) environment [3]. Chemical companies must find new ways to add value and differentiate their offerings.

The chemical industry cannot continue to deploy traditional approaches to selling, despite rising expenses. It is high time that chemical companies build up a positive reputation using social media. Social media allows you to define the way customers perceive your company, instead of the conventional media defining your company. By building a strong presence on social media, companies are able to interact directly with customers to gain their trust and support. When accidents occur in a chemical company, having a strong social media presence can help dispel customer fears, address their concerns, and increase customer satisfaction [4].

SOCIAL MEDIA BASICS

Social media is consumer-generated media that covers a variety of new sources of online information, created, and used by consumers with the intent on sharing information with others. It employs mobile and web-based technologies to create, share, discuss, and modify consumer-generated content. Consumers are most likely to leverage their power in social media to be more demanding of marketers [5].

The four most popular social media platforms are described here.

- **Facebook:** This is the most popular social media in the US and the rest of the world. It was launched on February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook can sensitize individuals (consumers) about many products and services. A chemical company can use Facebook to communicate their core values to a wide range of customers.
- **Twitter:** Twitter was launched on July 2006 to provide a microblogging service It allows individuals and companies to post short messages, share content, and have conversations with other Twitter users. Many Twitter posts (or "tweets") focus on the minutiae of everyday life.
- **LinkedIn:** This a networking website for the business community. It allows people to create professional profiles, post resumes, and communicate with other professionals. LinkedIn is where chemical manufacturers see the largest audiences.
- **YouTube:** YouTube has established itself as social media. It was launched in May 2005. It allows individuals to watch and share videos. YouTube may serve as home to aspiring filmmakers who might not have industry connections. YouTube can be both a blessing and a curse for some companies.

Other social media include Instagram, Reddit, Pinterest, Flickr, Snapchat, WeChat, and Vine Camera.

IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

To implement a social media strategy, your company should take the following five steps [6]:

1. Pay attention

You want to provide value to conversation that facilitates sales but does not sell directly. The key is to engage customers and be a valuable sounding board for them.

2. Be transparent

People join groups to share ideas and opinions and trust people. Steer conversation about your brand while allowing for individual personalities to key in.

3. Prioritize

Since your company's reputation is on the line, prioritizing your strategy for social media is crucial.

4. Be Flexible

Social media is a moving target. You must keep both your employees and your customers up to speed on the latest developments.

5. Post regularly

Don't let your company's reputation be ruled by customer commentary alone. Update your social media page regularly.

By making social media an integral part of their marketing strategy, companies can develop intimate relationships with customers, increase collaboration, and achieve a true 360-degree view of their customer while making profit [7].

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

Social media can improve an individual's sense of connectedness and can be an effective communication (or marketing) tool for companies. Social media allows companies to increase their presence or visibility. It is largely used in developing awareness in society toward many areas such as education, tourism and economy. Companies in all industries worldwide are taking advantage of the many opportunities that social media offers. Dow Chemicals is a typical example of a chemical company that is using Facebook effectively. Its presence on Facebook serves to influence the public opinion.

In addition to chemical industries, chemical journals are also taking advantage of the social media. Scientific journals, such as the *Journal of Physical Chemistry*, are seeking avenues to communicate in an informal way. Their success is evident in the numbers of its submissions, published articles, and citations [8].

Fear of the risks is one of the main reasons some organizations are reluctant to jump on the social media bandwagon. The key challenge that most chemical companies face is translating their core business into a manner that appeals to a broad range of audience. Some information posted on the social media may be deemed a prohibited selective disclosure [9]. Another challenge is that a lot of companies are using the same strategies to offer the same kinds of goods and services. These challenges must be overcome before more chemical companies adopt social media.

CONCLUSION

Chemical industries face a great challenge: making profitable growth in a highly competitive world. To be successful and remain competitive, chemical companies must move beyond selling products. They must also realize that they must move with the times. Competition and the inability to keep up with changing trends may have negative effect on sales. Some chemical companies are already using social media in creative ways to improve salesforce effectiveness. Companies that fail to invest in having a strong presence on social media will soon realize they missed out on a serious competitive advantage. Chemical companies must continue to have a vested interest in attracting and retaining highly educated and employees who are skilled in multimedia and social media.

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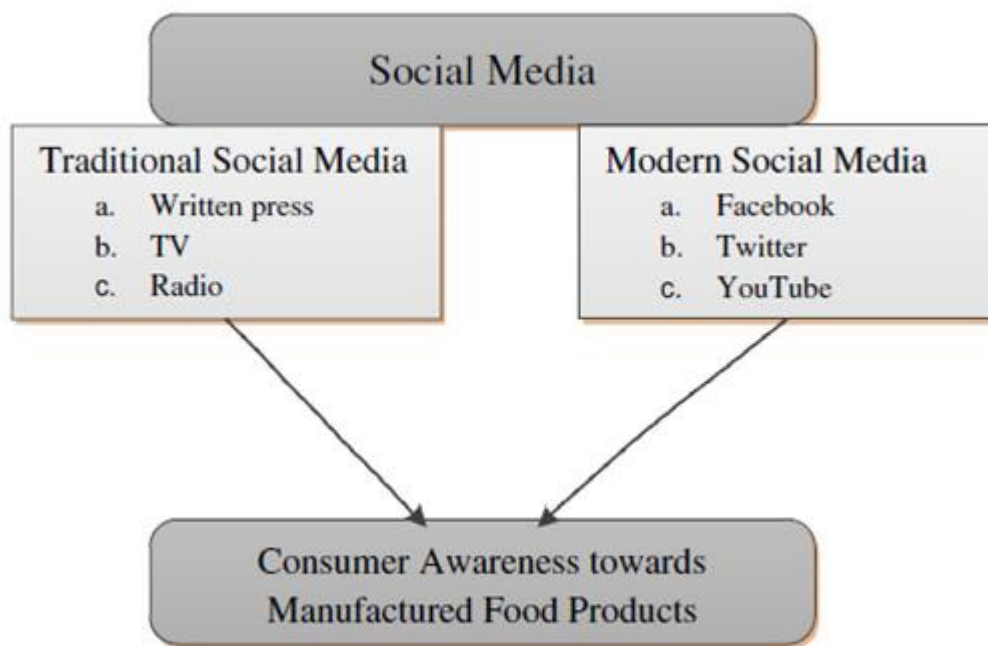


FIGURE 1: Traditional and modern social media [1].



FIGURE 2: Activities on the social media [2].