An Introduction to

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Alan Charlesworth

An Introduction to Social Media Marketing

Social media has given marketers a way to connect with consumers in an unprecedented and revolutionary way, but the very newness of this medium is as challenging as it is exciting, particularly to those who aren't 'digital natives'. This is the first textbook for students to offer a step-by-step guide to this newly dominant marketing discipline.

Mirroring its sister text *Digital Marketing: A Practical Approach*, this book is grounded in solid academic underpinnings, but has a lighter, hands-on approach that is perfect for shorter courses and additional reading. Chapter exercises not only help develop knowledge, but test the learners' understanding of how the various concepts and models are best used by requiring them to investigate how they are applied in real-world scenarios.

The book is supported by the author's excellent website, which includes links to continually updated statistics as well as articles that keep the reader in touch with the constant changes in this dynamic area.

Topics covered in this book include:

- social networking
- consumer reviews
- social service and support
- real-time social media marketing
- blogging
- viral marketing and influencers
- advertising on social media,

and much more.

An Introduction to Social Media Marketing is the first of its kind and ideal reading for students who want to work in a digital marketing environment, as well as the traditional marketer who wants to get to grips with this vibrant and potentially lucrative facet of present-day marketing.

Alan Charlesworth is a Senior Lecturer in Marketing and has been involved in digital marketing as a practitioner, consultant, trainer, researcher, educator and author since 1996.

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To Sam, Chris, Beth and Olivia

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Preface

As, I assume, is the case with the majority of writers of non-fiction books, the first task is to develop a framework for the content, that is, the chapters and the sub-sections of those chapters. For me, getting that right that is the hard part, filling in the content is the relatively easy part. With this book the framework (almost) developed itself – a list of the various elements that make up the social media marketing mix. My problem was how I pitched that content. The original title of this text was *Strategic* Social Media Marketing. However, I felt that there were too many *operational* issues that impacted on effective social media marketing to ignore them and concentrate on strategy. So it is that the book has sections dedicated to strategic and operational aspects of social media marketing – though as you will find, there is often little to differentiate between where *strategy* ends and *operations* begin. But isn't that always the case?

In my previous books I was able to make each chapter roughly equal in length. For this book – despite numerous restructuring exercises – I found that to be impossible. Although it is the case that many of the various elements of social media marketing are interrelated and so relevant content for some subjects is covered in other chapters, the main reason for this disparity is, quite simply, that some subjects have more to write about them than others. It is also the case that many institutions do not teach social media marketing as a distinct subject, and so may well use this book as a secondary text to either a digital or strategic marketing module – in which case readers might only be interested in, for example, chapters which cover only the use of Facebook. If that is the case, I would urge readers to at least take a look at the other chapters. As I said, many of the various elements of social media marketing are interrelated and so rele-vant content for some subjects is covered in other chapters – content relevant to Facebook will be in many more chapters than the one on *social networking*.

The subject

This is a book on social media marketing – it is not a book on social media, nor is it a book on *marketing* per se. To get the best from this book the reader should be aware of – though not necessarily an expert in – common

marketing theories, strategies and tactics. To spend time explaining aspects of marketing – segmentation, for example – within this book would be to diminish the focus on its titular subject area. The content is, therefore, driven by social media marketing applications rather than elements of traditional marketing – though naturally there is some commonality.

Nevertheless, it is inevitable that each chapter will integrate elements of marketing within its subject area. For example, facets of the marketing mix are a constant throughout the book, as are issues associated with buyer behaviour, product/service, customer/consumer and market orientation. Other more strategic elements of marketing permeate the book. Relationship marketing, for example, is an inherent component – or objective – of many aspects of social media marketing.

Terms of reference

Throughout the book it is necessary to give examples of the various platforms being covered within the chapters. In this regard, I have taken the easy path of using those platforms and brands that are most popular at the time the book was published, namely Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. However, my reason for this is that the majority of readers will recognize them, and it should not be perceived as 'favouritism' on my part. Indeed, these branded social media platforms do not carry all before them in other parts of the world. For example, there is Orkut in Brazil, VKontakte and Odnoklassniki in Russia, Cyworld and Me2day in South Korea and Qzone, Tencent Weibo and Sina Weibo in China.

When talking about social media presences I constantly refer to *products, brands or organizations*. My reasoning behind this is such is the nature of social media that – for example – a Facebook page is a marketing tool of a product, a brand or an organization, where the content is written on behalf of that product, brand or organization. In this case, *organization* can be a not-for-profit or public body as well as a company or firm.

Any book that has pretensions as an academic text must have appropriate academic underpinnings, which this book has. There are, however, four addenda to this:

1. The practical nature of the content means that there are also significant 'practical' underpinnings – that is, there are also references to the work of practitioners who have proved themselves at the coalface of digital marketing.
2. References are also made to statistics or research findings from commercial organizations. Although there may be an element of bias in *some* of these, they are up to date and represent real-world issues.
3. The academic research in the subject area is either limited – or missing altogether. For example, on one subject that is critical to much of social media marketing, the *Journal of Marketing Communications* acknowledged

this fact in the introduction to its March 2014 special issue on *Word of Mouth and Social Media*, saying that '. . . to date, relatively little academic research scrutiny has been devoted to WOM as it relates to social media and other web-driven consumer-generated phenomena'.

4. The academic research in the subject area is out-dated or – in some cases – of dubious quality.

Considering the final point in greater detail, a comment taken from one of the better pieces of academic work is worthy of note. Doherty and Ellis-Chadwick (2006) make the point that:

> Much of the discussion of the internet's potential has been conducted at a conceptual level, and there have been rather fewer contributions that have empirically explored the actual benefits delivered via the internet, or the wider organizational impacts that it might engender.

Although this particular comment refers to literature about Internet retailing, I find it to be equally applicable to most digital marketing-related academic articles. Other criticisms I would make of academic research include:

•   Whilst some findings pass the test of time, many conclusions do not. For example, any comments with regard to social media marketing made in 2000 – a time when Facebook and Twitter did not exist – are not necessarily true for contemporary social media users. Indeed, as this book was completed Facebook celebrated its tenth birthday – and it would be several years after that before Facebook developed into the social giant we recognize now. Twitter is two years the junior of Facebook. Therefore any research conducted into social media prior to this century's second decade has to be considered for its validity in today's social media environment.

•   A continuation from the previous comment is that some later work uses the findings of earlier research without question, making subsequent conclusions potentially flawed. This becomes more relevant when consideration is given to the way the public's adoption of social media has impacted on both social media itself and the way that marketing can be practised on social media.

•   A surprising amount of the research is conducted only on university campuses, with respondents being either academics or students. Whilst this might be acceptable in *some* research, when looking at anything that is related to social media this sample is not a reasonable representation of the population.

I also find that the results of a great deal of academic research actually tell us nothing new. Or rather, tell *practitioners* nothing they have not already discovered by trial and error.

For example, *Internet Research* featured a paper by Hsu et al (2013) entitled 'The Effects of Blogger Recommendations on Customers' Online Shopping Intentions'. The stated purpose of the paper's research was:

> ... to examine whether the blog reader's trusting belief in the blogger is significant in relation to the perceived usefulness of the blogger's recommendations; and how the blog reader's perceptions influence his/her attitude and purchasing behaviour online. The moderating effect of blogger's reputation on readers' purchasing intentions is also tested.

In my opinion, that describes research of a psychological nature – though as I am a marketer I would say the subject is consumer behaviour. Full biographies of the three authors are not available with the paper but their university departments are listed as Computer Science and Information Management. Whilst I do appreciate there are academics who have dual specialisms – there is no indication that any of the authors have any qualifications or experience in marketing, let alone consumer psychology. So, before I had even read a sentence of the paper I had my doubts about its value and validity in the 'real world'. Furthermore, as I do when marking students' dissertations, I started with a quick look at the reference list for the paper. Of around 80 references, fewer than a quarter were to marketing, psychology or even business-related journals, the majority being from computer science fields, including several related to the *Technology Acceptance Model* (TAM). My background of working with *techies* within an e-marketing environment means I am aware of this model. It is an IT concept that looks at how users accept technology and in particular considers the factors that influence their decision about how and when they will use that technology. Call me naïve if you wish – but in my opinion anyone who is using the Internet to read blogs that may influence their purchase behaviour has already not only accepted the technology of the Internet, but is comfortable with it. So why would research into consumer behaviour even mention a model designed to evaluate a technology? By this point I would normally have stopped reading the paper as I felt it carried little or no validity to my 'practitioner' outlook on the subject of digital marketing. However, I still had this preface to write, and this paper looked to be a contender for an example of my view towards academic papers in my field of study. So I read on.

Sadly I could gather no enthusiasm to continue further after reading the hypotheses, which included *H2a* 'Trust will positively affect blog readers' perceived usefulness' and *H3* 'Blog readers' attitudes toward shopping online will positively affect their intentions to shop online'. In an academic text I should not really use the term *well duh!* But ... *well duh!* Do the answers to those questions really need researching? Anyone who has ever worked in any kind of sales environment selling any product in any industry, market or environment will tell you that if someone trusts a person who is recommending

a product then they are more likely to purchase that product. As for shopping online, isn't anyone who is psychologically in a position to trust an online blogger already making purchases online? Bringing the subject more up to date, online retailers certainly knew the answers to these questions around 1997. I certainly did and I am not even going to mention the role bloggers played in the early Internet, except to say that they were – probably – the first Internet authors to be *trusted* by users.

As a footnote that builds on comments I made earlier, I checked the sampling procedure for the primary research of the paper, which included placing a banner on the Facebook page of one of the authors requesting the page's visitors complete the questionnaire. I'll leave a question hanging: is that a good example of a valid sample?

My scepticism toward *academic* research is not, however, absolute. Of course there are papers out there which challenge conventional thinking and so inspire marketers to reconsider practices. One which springs to my mind is 'A New Marketing Paradigm for Electronic Commerce' by Donna Hoffman and Thomas Novak. Published in 1996 – and so written at least a year earlier – this paper predicts (almost) exactly what impact the Internet has had on *digital marketing* in the years since that time. It's available online, take a look and see what you think.

Note that as I take the same ethos and beliefs (as expressed in this preface) into all my writing, much of the above – or similar – can be found in the preface of some other of my books.

Chapter exercises

At the end of each chapter there are a number of questions that will help readers to build on their knowledge and understanding of the subjects and issues covered in that chapter. Note, however, that very few of the exercises have simple or finite answers – they are designed to promote discussion more than they are some kind of test of information presented in the chapter. Indeed, most exercises ask readers to seek out more up-to-date statistics than those presented in the chapter and then discuss the findings.

Online support

The book has its own website: www.AlanCharlesworth.eu/SocialMediaMarketing. This site is maintained as a support platform for the book's content. Primarily, this is by means of:

- Adding to the content of each chapter, so supplementing information and statistics in the book.
- Providing links to articles and material that update – where necessary – the content of the book. As you will appreciate, in such a dynamic subject some aspects are constantly in a state of flux.

An Introduction to
SOCIAL MEDIA
MARKETING

Find out more about the three sections of the book

Section 1 – the introduction

Section 2 – Strategic Social Media Marketing

Section 3 – Operational Social Media Marketing
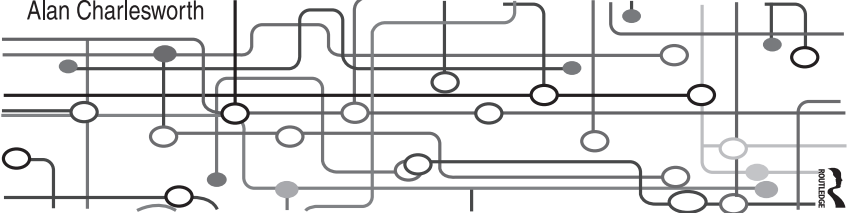
In such a dynamic subject there will always be Updates and additional information

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This website provides an additional resource that will compliment and enhance the published text *An Introduction to Social Media Marketing.*

There is also a wealth of information available on my own website – alancharlesworth.eu – including links to articles, research papers and tips, hints and advice from the experts – all of which will help with your studies and Social Media Marketing practice.

Lecturers, see the Instructor Site where there is a wealth of information that will help you deliver your Social Media Marketing classes using this book.

Alan Charlesworth

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Figure 0.1 The homepage of AlanCharlesworth.eu/SocialMediaMarketing

Further online support can be found on the author's Facebook page: Facebook.com/AlanCharlesworth.DigitalMarketer. Although this covers all aspects of digital marketing (i.e. not only comments on social media specifically), to be effective social media marketers should keep themselves aware of what is happening in the wider digital marketing environment.

Finally, whether you are a student, trainee, lecturer, trainer or practitioner, I hope you find this book *useful*. Note that I have refrained from wishing that you *enjoy* reading it. Although I have tried to make it easily readable, you should *enjoy* a John Grisham mystery or Robert Ludlum adventure whilst relaxing in a comfy chair or sunlounger. I have written this book not to entertain – but to help you achieve a professional or educational objective. Of course, if you do get pleasure from it, that is a bonus.

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Acknowledgements

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1 Introduction

Social media: the what, why and how

It's not about the brand, it's about the customer.

This is a book about marketing that will help marketers – be they students or practitioners – to learn about the newest facet of the subject: the use of digital social media as part of a strategic marketing initiative. However, before we can even make a start on studying social media marketing it is necessary to have an understanding of what social media is and why – and how – people and organizations use it.

Social media defined

> **"**
> what is understood by the term *social media* is still open to some debate
> **"**

Such is the speed of developments within it, many aspects of the digital world are still to be assigned a satisfactory definition – and what is understood by the term *social media* is still open to some debate. I have previously defined social media as 'a collective term for the various social network and community sites including such online applications as blogs, podcasts, reviews and wikis' (Charlesworth 2009), although a more tangible description might be 'any web presence where users can add their own content but do not have control over the site in the same way as they would their own website'. These definitions reveal a conviction on my part – and that of others – that social media existed long before the digital revolution made it the cultural phenomenon it is now recognized as being.

Lessons from history

In the influential *Writing on the Wall* (2013) Tom Standage argues that social media can be traced back to Roman times – hence the book's subtitle, *Social Media, the First 2000 Years*. At that time members of the elite in society would exchange letters – with those letters then being copied and shared via speeches and books with fellow members of their social

circles. Whilst the technology has changed since those times, the craving to connect with friends and share information is much the same. This leads Standage to assert that many of the questions prompted by *digital* social media have arisen before and so history provides some valuable lessons to the twenty-first-century marketer.

Before Internet technology made it possible, however, social contact between communities of like-minded people who shared views on everything from politics to the best way to grow tomatoes was restricted by the logistics of geography and limitation in communication media. And if you wanted to praise or denounce a product, brand or organization you could do so only to your close circle of friends and associates. Such restrictions do not apply to the digital generation, however. Be it on a PC, laptop or hand-held device, user generated content can be spread around the world at the touch of a keyboard or mouse. Other definitions, such as that from Marketo (2010), describe social media as 'the production, consumption and exchange of information through online social interactions and platforms'. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) associate social media with digital technology when they describe social media as 'a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content'. This association of social media with the Internet relies on the reader comprehending another misunderstood – and over-used – term from the digital lexicon: Web 2.0. As the first decade of the new century drew to a close, observers such as Tapscott and Williams (2006) drew popular attention to the link between Web 2.0 and the new social media by suggesting that the old web was about websites, clicks and 'eyeballs', but the new web – Web 2.0 – was about communities and participation. In their paper, 'Web 2.0: Conceptual Foundations and Marketing Issues', Constantinides and Fountain (2008) used the following definition which, seemingly, also describes social media using the term:

> Web 2.0 is a collection of open-source, interactive and user-controlled online applications expanding the experiences, knowledge and market power of the users as participants in business and social processes. Web 2.0 applications support the creation of informal users' networks facilitating the flow of ideas and knowledge by allowing the efficient generation, dissemination, sharing and editing/refining of informational content.

Although this has a rather academic feel to it, their subsequent paragraph cuts to the chase with regard to the impact of social media on marketers:

> Web 2.0 presents businesses with new challenges but also new opportunities for getting and staying in touch with their markets, learning about the

	HOME WEB 2	EXTENDED WEB 2
Two-way (horizontal web)	In this square, communication is two-way from the organization to the customer but is controlled by the organization. It is made up of the organization's own blogs and forums.	Elements of this square are those most often associated with Web 2.0. These are the sites over which organizations have no control and in which people talk to one another. It includes individuals' blogs, social network sites, traditional forums or discussion areas, Q&A pages and sites such as Wikipedia.
	HOME WEB 1	**EXTENDED WEB 1**
One-way (vertical web)	In this quadrant, communication is one-way from the organization, mirroring traditional marketing where the marketing message is controllable The organization's own websites – including images, video, podcasts, as well as texual content – make up this section.	This square represents the websites on which the organization can place content, but which they do not control. This includes consumer and review sites as well as (for example) videos on YouTube, photographs on Flickr and groups the organization has set up or sponsored on social network sites such as Facebook. It also includes ads hosted on other sites.
	You control (home web)	Others control (extended web)

Figure 1.1 Web 2.0.

needs and opinions of their customers as well as interacting with them in a direct and personalised way.

Based on David Bowen's original concept (entitled Web 2007), Figure 1.1 might help readers with the notion of Web 2.0 as well as demonstrating its link with social media. The matrix attempts to describe how Web 2.0 translates into online activity. Note the cross-over to social media in that the four quadrants, effectively, show how web content moves from that controlled by the organization to that over which it has no control.

The ideological facet of social media is taken up by McConnell and Huba (2007) who are more philosophical in their definition, suggesting that it is 'the sum total of people who create content online, as well as the people who interact with it or one another'. Bryan Eisenberg (2008) – perhaps reflecting on his background as practitioner in, and writer on, online marketing – claims the various elements that make up social media do not actually represent media but a 'platform for interaction and networking'. His argument is that traditional media provide platforms for delivery of ads near and around relevant content (though it is common for those with a technical background to refer to social networking sites as 'collaboration platforms', the description being more of the physical entity than the concept recognized by marketers). Eisenberg's point raises the issue of whether we are trying to define the publisher of the communication or the content of that communication?

Twitter co-founder Evan Williams adds to the confusion by offering a term describing Twitter without using the word 'social'. In an interview with *Inc.* magazine's Issie Lapowsky, Williams said:

> **"**
> Twitter was really more of an information network than it is a social network
> **"**

> They called it a social network, they called it microblogging, but it was hard to define, because it didn't replace anything . . . but the insight we eventually came to was Twitter was really more of an information network than it is a social network.

Commenting on the phenomenon of social media, online marketing educator Aaron Kahlow (2009) takes the 'publisher' issue a stage further, suggesting that marketing, journalism, advertising and media intersect in what he calls 'user controlled media (UCM) – [that is] the media users control, leverage, rate and review, forward, tag, and ultimately decide if it's worth our time, our friends' time, and everyone's time'. Perhaps a little cynical, but it is in many ways an accurate description. Another practitioner, this time authority on search engine optimization, Danny Sullivan, provides not a dictionary definition but a list of variants of social media that go a long way to describe the concept. His five types of website that comprise social media are:

- Social News Sites (e.g., Digg, Reddit).
- Social Bookmarking Sites (e.g., Delicious, StumbleUpon).
- Social Networking (e.g., Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn).
- Social Knowledge (e.g., Wikipedia, Yahoo Answers).
- Social Sharing (e.g., YouTube, Flickr, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr).

Whilst this list is excellent in helping the e-marketer visualize the concept in practical terms, it ignores the fact that some aspects of social media can be part of sites that have primary objectives other than providing an outlet for members of society to communicate with others. This includes sites that encourage consumer generated content (CGC), rather than sites that are themselves part of consumer generated media – perhaps a more realistic description of websites that are socially inclined. Such content would include user comments in a product review on a retail website – a type of website not included in Sullivan's list. Being descriptive without categorizing, the e-tailing group's (2009) list of 'social media tools' includes Facebook, Twitter, viral videos, customer reviews, customer Q&A, blogs, community forums, social listening tools and product suggestion boxes. Whilst this list helps identify aspects of social media, it is a somewhat confusing list of generic elements and branded websites – and *viral* videos seem a strange choice, why not call them 'consumer generated videos'? It is this wide-ranging list of potential elements of social media that prompts me to disagree with the notion that social media

marketing can be renamed as online public relations. Whilst this has some merit, in that reacting to poor comments or reviews might be considered part of the public relations (PR) function, other aspects must be part of a strategic communications strategy and so beyond the remit of the PR department. Perhaps it is that in some companies (and consultancies) the skills necessary to participate in social media can be found in PR and so that discipline is trying to claim social media marketing as its own?

Dark social

A report published by McKinsey & Company (Aufreiter et al 2014) brought a sharp reminder to organizations that social media might be sexy and topical, but it is not always the only – or the best – method of communicating with customers. Figure 1.2 shows the use of smartphones and tablets for email and accessing Facebook. Depending on one's digital marketing objectives, email could be a better platform than social media – in particular, email is nearly 40 times better than Facebook and Twitter at acquiring customers.

Indeed, some commentators suggest that 'social' messages can achieve more if sent by email (that is, direct to the recipient) than if those messages are placed on a public forum such as Facebook. That only the addressee sees the 'social' message has led to email being dubbed *dark social* – that is – not visible to everyone.
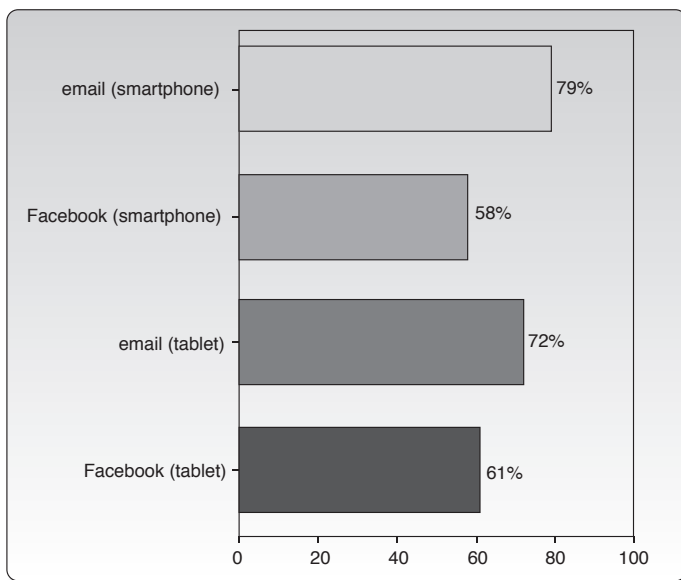
Figure 1.2 The use of smartphones and tablets for email and accessing Facebook.

So it is that for researchers, writers and practitioners of social media marketing, the first problem is actually determining what 'social media' is – or at least what others perceive it to be. Ironically, however, it is the flexible, dynamic and innovative nature of the medium which means that other than listing tactics in a social media market-ing strategy or trying to write books on the subject, *what it is* doesn't really matter. In many ways, social media is whatever it is perceived to be by an individual participating in it.

> " the first problem is actually determining what 'social media' is "

The Prosumer

In his 1980 book, *The Third Wave*, Alvin Toffler proposed that the customer '*will become so integrated into the production process that we find it . . . difficult to tell . . . who is the producer*', and dubbed such a customer a *prosumer* (i.e. a portmanteau of producer and consumer). Given that this was a time before (even) the personal computer was com-monplace, let alone the Internet, this was a particularly insightful suggestion.

The term was revised by Don Tapscott in his 1996 book *The Digital Economy* and more significantly *Wikinomics* (2006, with Anthony Williams) where he used the term to describe how the gap between producers and consumers was blurring – with the prosumer concept being applied to such things as open-source software (where users are encouraged to 'hack' the original to their own benefit) and musicians who sample the work of others. Tapscott and Williams postulate that wikinomics encourage organizations to share product development with not only consumers, but other organizations. Evangelizing the concept, the authors are convinced that we are at the beginning of a new scientific paradigm of open and collaborative endeavour. Tapscott and Williams acknowledge the many pitfalls to their proposition (not least that of intellectual property rights, where multiple entities are involved in developing a product), but critics suggest their concept as being rather Utopian and not applicable in the majority of real-world situations (indeed, their in-text examples of successful applications of wikinomics are rather limited) and an attack on the legitimate right of a company to make a profit. Others, such as Andrew Keen in his book, *The Cult of the Amateur* (2007), see wikinomics as being responsible for creating a global mediocrity as amateurs get to run society. Commenting specifically on consumer generated media, Keen says '. . . just as I want my doctor to have gone to a credible medical school . . . so I want to be informed and entertained by trained, talented professionals'. Ultimately, as with all

aspects of marketing, any involvement of the wider community in the development of products is dependent on the product, the market and the selling organization at any given moment in time.

Why people use social media

> " consumers no longer trusted adverts and advertisers "

As revolutionary as the Internet was, its acceptance as a communications medium was accelerated by the world into which it came of age; this is particularly true of the environment in which marketing was being practised. By the mid-1990s whole generations had grown up with 'marketing' as an intrinsic – even invasive – part of their lives and scepticism of the discipline was, and still is, rife. Consumers no longer trusted adverts and advertisers. With or without the web something was set to change – and the web was only a catalyst. Meadows-Klue (2008) summed up the situation perfectly, commenting that 'The expanding volume of marketing messaging has led to customers craving this authenticity, and their sophisticated (and growing) sense of marketing literacy affects the impact of advertising across all channels.' For these disillusioned customers help was at hand, as Clay Shirky (author of *Here Comes Everybody*), speaking on the BBC series *The Virtual Revolution* (2010), commented: 'In the twentieth century, if you had something to say . . . you could not broadcast a message.' The Internet was to profoundly change that situation. Amongst the first to not only recognize, but illustrate, the notion that markets were changing were Levine et al in *The Cluetrain Manifest: The End of Business as Usual* (1999), which includes on its first page: 'Networked markets are beginning to self-organize faster than the companies that have traditionally served them. Thanks to the web, markets are becoming better informed, smarter, and more demanding of qualities missing from most business organizations.'

Social media isn't the only solution

Part of the widely respected annual *Digital Influence Report* from Technorati Media (2013) was data that should please all digital marketers, but serve as a warning to any hubris social media marketers might be tempted to exhibit.

Although the research showed just how much *digital* has impacted on buyer behaviour, it is retail and brand sites – and not those from social media – which have the biggest impact on influencing a purchase. This is illustrated in Figure 1.3. A timely reminder, perhaps, that any marketing strategy should be made up of the most effective combination of elements
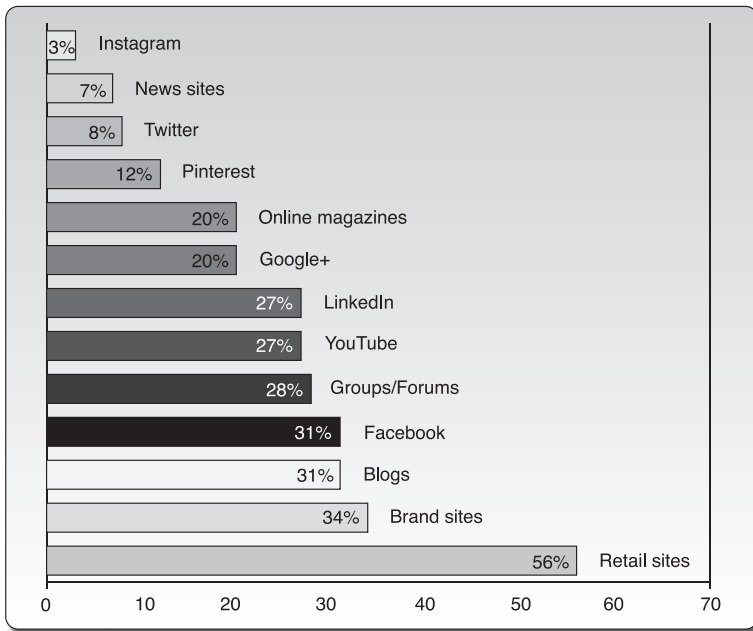
Figure 1.3 Online services most likely to influence a purchase.

of the marketing mix – and not whatever seems to be the most *fashionable* at any given moment in time.

These findings – and the warning to social media marketers – are also reflected in research from YouGov (2014). Although social media may be effective for some digital marketing objectives (as we will see in the course of this book), for retailers at least there is a downside. Furthermore, the survey revealed that many online shoppers in the UK had a negative opinion of a store with a social media presence. Some 55 per cent of respondents stated that they trusted a retailer less if it was active on social media – with only around half that proportion (27 per cent) saying that a social media presence led them to trust an online retailer more (see Figure 1.4).

Other research conducted by retail engagement company Parago (2014) considered how consumers research and buy – off- and online – across several product categories. The results – illustrated in Figure 1.5 – also make grim reading for marketers who see social media as an effective purchase-research channel, with social being amongst the least used channels in the purchase-research process.
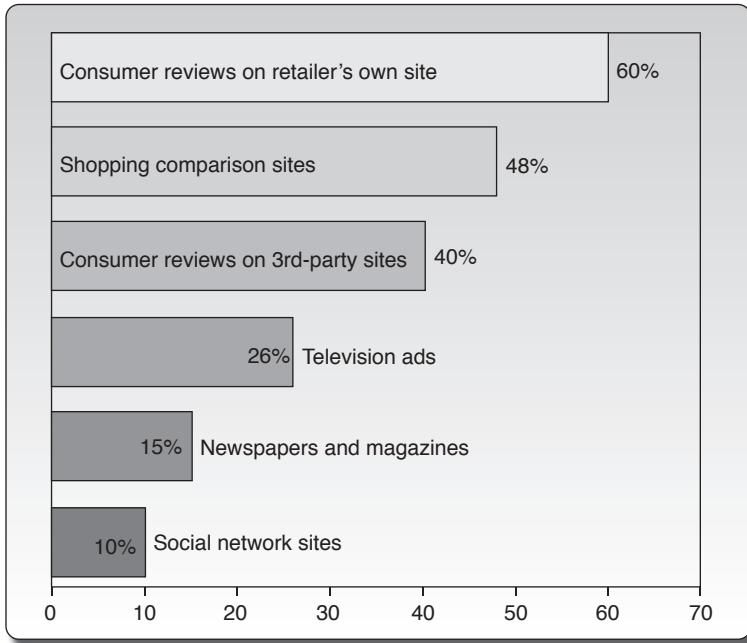
Figure 1.4 Digital sources used to research products according to UK shoppers, December 2013.

	Google	In-store displays	Retail websites	Amazon	Print media	TV	Social media	Mobile apps
Car parts	1	2	3	5	4	6	7	8
Clothing	3	2	1	4	5	6 (equal)	6 (equal)	6 (equal)
Electronics	1	4	3	2	5	7	6	8
Furniture/ houseware	1	3	4	2	5	6 (equal)	6 (equal)	6 (equal)
Groceries	4	1	3	5	2	6 (equal)	7	6 (equal)
Home improvements	2	1	3	4	5	6	7 (equal)	7 (equal)
Sporting goods	1	3	2	4	5	6 (equal)	7	6 (equal)
Toys	1	4	3	2	5	6	7 (equal)	7 (equal)

Figure 1.5 How consumers research and buy across several product categories.

If the environment into which it was born was influential on the recognition and rise of online social media, so too was the psychological and sociological concept on which effective social media is founded: *social exchange theory*.

If the ability – and so the need – to communicate is hard-wired into the human brain, so too is sharing and social bonds. The premise of social exchange theory is that social behaviour is the result of an exchange process where each party seeks to maximize benefits and minimize costs. In a social environment these costs and benefits are intangible and differ from person to person – with each individual weighing one against the other before deciding if what they will get out of any *exchange* is offset by what they must put into it. If the risks outweigh the rewards, any potential relationship will be terminated or abandoned. In the real world, the risks and rewards can be complex. Online, however, they can be more easily gained or discarded – a click of the mouse being all that is required to accept or reject any social contact. For social media to be effective, however, if there is a reliance on the users to be willing to pass on a message to others (social exchange theory), then they must have a network of acquaintances to whom they can pass it. In this regard, Mark Granovetter's seminal paper on social networking, 'The Strength of Weak Ties' (1973), is significant. Granovetter argues that our acquaintances are not all ranked equal, with family, close friends and immediate co-workers (strong ties) being the most receptive to any contact we make. However, those close friends will have their own group of 'strong ties' – with the connection between the two clusters being only a 'weak tie'. In social networking terms this means that participants are dependent on both strong and weak relationships (ties) in order for their message to get maximum exposure. Offline, transmission of a message to weak ties is problematic, being reliant on acquaintances (weak ties) to relay a message to *their* close friends (strong ties) to continue the spread of the idea. In an online environment, however, the simple click of a mouse on a 'friends' link means that a message can instantly go out to both friend's and acquaintances. Furthermore, with a click of their own mouse, those people can forward the message to their friends and acquaintances (and so on) – with geography and time zones being no barrier.

The Social Graph

A term made popular when Facebook founder, Mark Zuckerberg, used the phrase – in 2007 – to describe his new company's platform, the Social Graph builds on Granovetter's *Weak Ties* concept. Using pictorial representation, the Social Graph shows how relationships with, or connections to, other people spread out from the individual. In Figure 1.6, A represents the individual and B, C and D those people to whom they are connected by their own 'ties', which get weaker as they spread from the centre. Depending on the strength of their connection these can be described as direct and indirect relationships.
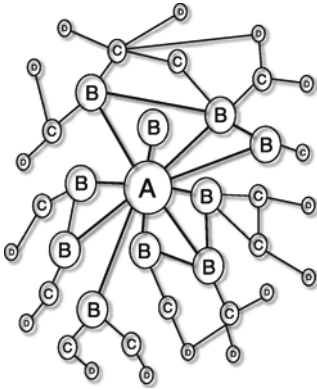
Figure 1.6 The Social Graph.

Launched in 2010, Facebook's *Open Graph* is a kind of global mapping, which aimed to map everybody and how they're related. Although this was of significant interest *socially*, it was its commercial application which attracted the interest of marketers. Using the Open Graph, Facebook could gain valuable insights into its members and users that could help it sell more advertising. For example, if a 'friend' liked a comment made about fly fishing on a Facebook page, then it would be a reasonable assumption that the person doing the liking would be a target for adverts for fly fishing equipment.

A further development which aids online advertisers is the Interest Graph. This replaces individuals (in a social graph) with interests. Using Figure 1.6 again, A might represent holidays. The Bs are the different types of holiday, for example, sightseeing, beach, city centre. The Cs and Ds in turn are sub-elements of holidays, such as swimming, sailing, museums, hiking, water sports, camping, food, and so on. By following the links advertisers can present ads to people who have relevant connections. A holidaymaker who favours city breaks, for example, could be presented with ads for museums.

Granovetter's work, however, tends to disregard the impact of any benefits and cost in forwarding the message. In addressing this, when Frenzen and Nakamoto (1993) investigated how word-of-mouth proliferates through networks, they introduced two additional variables: the value of information and moral hazard. By using a message of a discounted price offer, this also introduced a business-related element to what was previously a non-commercial concept. In their study, the value was the discount rate and the moral aspect was availability of stock. Perhaps not surprisingly, as the discount rate rose and the availability of stock decreased, people were far less likely to disseminate the message to a

wider circle of contacts (their weak links) – their reasoning being that the more people that knew the information, the less likely their close friends (strong links) would be able to take advantage of the promotion. Marketers might recognize elements of this in both Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovations* (1962) and the concept of positioning (Trout 1969). For Rogers' *diffusion* to be effective there is a reliance on 'innovators' to pass on their product verdict to 'early adopters', for them to pass on to 'early majority', and so on. At each stage the message-passer will seek to gain kudos from their knowledge (the benefit), but the innovator will want the message to be restricted to close contacts – for the message to spread too quickly will result in the product leaping from innovator to laggard too quickly, so diminishing their status. Similarly, there will be occasions when a product's positioning might require that word-of-mouth marketing is best restricted in order to retain exclusivity in a niche market.

Research by Dr Aleks Krotoski (2009), academic, journalist and presenter of the BBC series *The Virtual Revolution*, set out to examine what social network analysis offered to the study of social influence. Although her research found that there were some contextual differences, the off- and online psychological processes of social influence were by and large the same. Krotoski points out that this contradicts previous literature suggesting that the most central people in a network have the greatest influence *because* they represent the group's norms. Instead, others' perceptions of what a more central community member believed had a greater influence on an individual's personal attitude. This would seem to have some resonance with the seminal work of Allport (1924) who suggested that a key aspect of studying group psychology was what effect the implied or actual presence of others has on the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of individuals.

> " People simply *like* to socialize; it is a natural state of affairs for humankind "

So why do people participate in social media – in whatever form that might take? It is likely to be one, or any combination of, the following:

- People simply *like* to socialize – it is a natural state of affairs for humankind. This can be with existing or new friends and acquaintances in a social context, or networking in both informal and formal environments.
- Self-expression – before the Internet avenues for this were extremely limited, now the world can read, see or hear your views.
- People seek to expand their network of relationships, particularly if they can feel a sense of affinity with others who have similar interests to their own.
- Social media provides people with sources of commercial information which they trust more than sellers' marketing messages.
- The social web can be self-serving for those who seek financial gain. This might include access to free or discounted products, music downloads or searching for a job.

- Social media can massage the ego, providing personal validation sought by some people. Connected to ego, but with a more commercial objective, is the achievement of status within the community. Though improved self-image might be the objective, status can bring financial reward through recognition as an expert in a field.
- People can use social media as a conduit for altruistic acts that benefit the community.

> " participation more or less follows a 90–9–1 rule "

It is worth noting that whilst this is a list of psychological motivations for using social media, if the online marketer wishes to elicit content or encourage participation in the organization's social presence, then it is these same motivations to which they must appeal.

It is important to note, however, that not all aspects of social media require active involvement by participants, in particular consumer generated content such as product reviews. Research from Jacob Nielsen (2006) found that in reality very few actually contribute, suggesting participation more or less follows a 90–9–1 rule:

- 90 per cent are *lurkers* – that is, they read or observe, but don't contribute.
- 9 per cent contribute occasionally.
- 1 per cent participate a lot and account for most contributions.

There has been no subsequent research which contradicts these findings – with Nielsen maintaining that the figures have changed little. This is supported by Baird and Parasnis (2011) who said 'consumers all over the world, across all generations, are swarming to social media, but most interact only occasionally'. Furthermore, speaking at Business Insider's Ignition conference in November 2011, Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg stated that Facebook has more than 800 million users, with as many as 500 million logging on in a single day. However, she went on to reveal that on the average day, only 35 million – 7 per cent – post a status update. So do users really share their lives on Facebook – or are most just lurkers?

> " do users really share their lives on Facebook – or are most just lurkers? "

This is not to say that the e-marketer should ignore the *lurkers* – indeed, many online objectives can be met by simply putting information onto social media platforms for customers to access.

This look-but-don't-touch approach can be explained by a phenomenon known as social validation (or social *proof*). This is an emotional experience which occurs when you are not aware of the correct behaviour in a given circumstance or event – and so look to others for

guidance. Although the original concept has societal origins (for example, etiquette at a formal occasion or simply following the herd), that we seek validation of those we consider our 'peers' has a significant role in SMM. The commercialization of the concept was led by Robert Cialdini, who in his 1983 book *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* lists social proof (people will do things that they see other people are doing) as one of the six 'weapons of influence' that can be used in persuasive marketing. In the social media environment this can translate into the wary customer seeking the reviews or opinions of others before making a buying decision. If the consumer is keen to hear the views of others, the previously mentioned disillusionment with marketing has resulted in the phenomenon of people trusting 'someone like me' – and the Internet provides an ideal medium for this exchange of ideas. Indeed the notion that people trust other people is taken a stage further by research from Reichelt et al (2014) which found that trustworthiness emerged as predominant, with positive impacts on both the utilitarian and the social function of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). In contrast, however, that the expertise of eWOM contributors had minor importance to the person seeking, or hearing, the message, suggests perhaps that the 'expert' (i.e. the company selling the product) is trusted less than a peer who may have no great knowledge of the product's attributes, uses or applications.

Personality types in social media

A research project by First Direct (2013) investigating the rising influence of social media in people's lives identified new breeds of social media personalities.

The Ultras are fanatically obsessed with Facebook or Twitter. They have smartphone apps and check their feeds dozens of times a day – even when at work.

The Deniers claim social media doesn't control their lives, but the reality is very different. If they cannot access their favourite network they can become anxious and feel 'isolated'.

The Dippers access their pages infrequently, often going days – or even weeks – without tweeting or posting an update.

The Virgins sign up to social networks but struggle initially to get to grips with the workings of Facebook and Twitter, but they may go on to become Ultras!

The Lurkers are hiding in the shadows of cyberspace, they rarely participate in social media conversations – often because they worry about having nothing interesting to say.

The Peacocks are easily recognized because they love to show everyone how popular they are. They compete with friends for followers or fans, or how many 'likes' or retweets they get.

The Ranters are meek and mild in face-to-face conversation, but are highly opinionated online. Social media allows them to have strong opinions without worrying how others will react.

The Ghosts are worried about giving out personal information to strangers, so they create usernames to stay anonymous or have noticeably sparse profiles and timelines.

The Changelings go beyond being anonymous – adopting very different personalities, confident in the knowledge that no-one knows their real identity.

The Quizzers like to ask questions on Facebook and Twitter in order to start conversations and avoid the risk of being left out.

The Informers are the first to spot interesting information, and earn kudos and – just as importantly – more followers and fans by disseminating it.

The Approval–Seekers worry about how many likes/comments/retweets they get, constantly checking their feeds and timelines, because they link endorsement to popularity.

However, the public's use of the various social media sites and their opinion of social media in general is in a constant state of flux. This means that in the lifetime of this book, user habits and brand leaders in the media will inevitably change, but as 2014 dawned, these were some of the issues being observed.

A key debate centred around social media usage – with there being some very different views. Despite the claims of the social media platform providers about user numbers and views expressed in the popular press, research into actual use suggests the situation might not be quite so clear.

Research from Brenner and Smith (2013) found that almost three-quarters (72 per cent) of online US adults used social networking sites (up from 8 per cent in 2005) – yet an equally reputable source of Ipsos (ipsos-na.com) found that only 32 per cent of Americans aged 18–64 rated social media as being 'important'. Research from Harris Interactive, on behalf of MyLife.com, suggested that adults who are currently a member of more than one social networking site are becoming 'overloaded' and 'overwhelmed' with multiple social accounts with 52 per cent of respondents having either taken or are considering taking a 'vacation' from one or more social networks. Similarly, a study from Weber Shandwick (2013), in partnership with KRC Research, revealed that while women are highly active and influential on social media, many report having decreased or completely cut off usage of at least one social network in the past six months. Furthermore, a poll conducted (in late summer 2013) for Kantar (Wilner 2013) by TNS revealed that 57 per cent of respondents in America reported having a Facebook account, but three in ten said they had no account with any of the top eight social media sites (Facebook, Flickr,

Google+, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter, YouTube). SocialBakers (socialbakers.com), a company that provides social media analytics, revealed that although Facebook reached 1 billion users in September 2013, earlier in the year the social giant had haemorrhaged 9 million 'monthly active users' in the US alone.

Of greater concern, however, is the main reason that people are leaving Facebook. Research published by Stieger et al (2013) showed that the four main reasons for quitting Facebook were privacy concerns (48.3 per cent), general dissatisfaction (13.5 per cent), negative aspects of online friends (12.6 per cent) and the feeling of getting addicted (6.0 per cent). The research followed a number of initiatives by Facebook aimed at improving targeting for ads – but at the same time making available more details of users.

> 66
>
> three in ten said they had no account with any of the top eight social media sites
>
> 99

Social in personal life, but not for work

Research by Reiss-Davis et al (2013) found that although B2B decision-makers were regular users of social media, they weren't often there in a professional capacity.

81 per cent visit Facebook at least monthly but only 2 per cent do so primarily for business purposes; 62 per cent visit Twitter at least monthly but only 6 per cent do so mainly for business; 32 per cent use Pinterest at least monthly, but only 2 per cent do so primarily for business reasons. Any organization thinking of using SM as a significant part of its marketing strategy should be sure to determine the social media objectives if it is to be effective. However, that decision makers do visit sites such as Facebook and Twitter should be considered an opportunity – if the content on those sites can be made *professionally* interesting.

For marketers, the findings from some research is ominous. Typical is that from YouGov in the UK which reported that a 'large increase' in the number of UK consumers had stopped using social media because they'd had enough of social media marketing promotions. When IPG Mediabrands (ipgmediabrands.com) quizzed respondents in the USA in a similar vein (i.e. are too many companies involved in social networking?), nearly half (47 per cent) agreed. Baird and Parasnis (2011) sum up well the attitude of many users in saying that their reason for going onto social media sites is that it is predominantly about friends and family – not brands – with more than half of consumers not even considering any engagement with businesses via social

sites. For those who do engage with organizations on social media, research from Roberts (2011) has findings that are typical of that of other research into the subject. He suggests that around 80 per cent of consumers say that their reasons for any social interaction with brands revolves around coupons, promotions and discounts – and not the brand advocacy expected by the organizations.

Baird and Parasnis (2011) highlight this 'advocacy paradox' – where SM-active consumers expect something tangible for their time, endorsement and personal data and yet most businesses rank getting discounts and purchasing as the least likely reasons consumers interact with them.

> " social media doesn't really connect us, it only allows us to experience what is already there "

Musician turned social media author, Dave Carroll (2012) adds to this notion, saying 'Social media doesn't really connect us, it only allows us to experience what is already there.' Carroll is the maker of the ubiquitous video United Breaks Guitars – which in itself is a lesson to organizations about the power SM gives to consumers. This resonates with those who feel that SM is best used to develop existing relationships rather than creating new connections.

On a brighter note for marketers, according to a new eMarketer report (2014), the most social demographic in the world, millennials (the so-called Gen Y, a digitally savvy group born between the 1980s and 2000), is becoming increasingly responsive to advertising on social media. So although their numbers *might* be falling, those who remain are more likely to engage. Only time will tell if this digitally influential demographic will change their habits as they grow older.

AIDA moves into the digital age

A popular tool in developing marketing strategy, the AIDA model is used to demonstrate buyer behaviour and so establish marketing actions that meet the desires of consumers at the various stages of their journey to purchase. In the original concept, the action – normally a purchase – is the end of the chain of events. However, when considering the impact of social networking on contemporary marketing, an additional element should perhaps be added to make the social media version: Attention, Interest, Desire, Action and *Tell* (AIDAT), where the additional 'T' indicates that the customer should be encouraged to 'tell someone about it' (see Figure 1.7, adapted from Charlesworth 2009).

Figure 1.7 AIDAT.
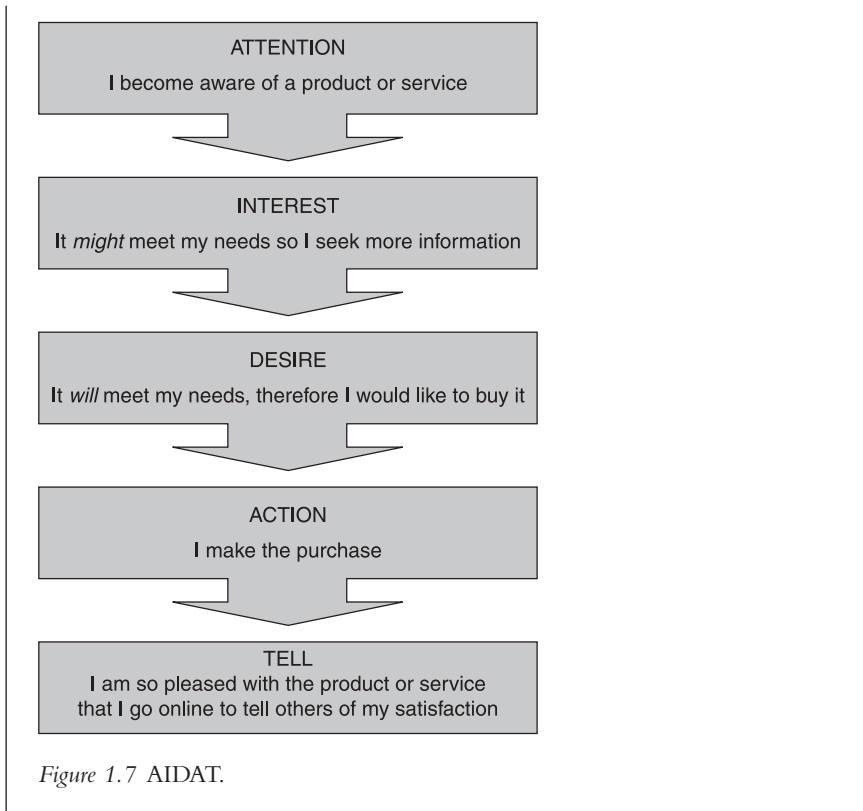
Why – and how – organizations use social media

For those who question the value or role that social media marketing has to play in contemporary marketing, consider that – as reported in the *Wall Street Journal* in August 2013 by chief executive A. G. Lafley (Ng and Vranica 2013) – Procter & Gamble is now spending more than a third of its US marketing budget on digital media. Many would consider the consumer goods company to be the benchmark for effective strategic marketing.

> " more than 60 per cent of consumers believe passion for a business or brand is a prerequisite for social media engagement "

   Before consideration of potential objectives for any social media marketing strategy, there are four key issues to take into account:

1. What do the customers expect from the organization?
   If customers expect the product, brand or organization to be active in social media, then – almost certainly – there must be a social media presence.

2. Will social media marketing be worth the effort?
   Will there be a direct return on investment, or is SMM an essential aspect of marketing (or even business?) on which direct income cannot be generated – as Levine et al suggested with commendable foresight in their influential *The Cluetrain Manifesto* (1999): 'engagement in these open free-wheeling exchanges isn't optional. It's a prerequisite to having a future. Silence is fatal.'

3. Is it right for the organization?
   If the nature of the product, brand or organization doesn't generate passion, then the very culture of the organization might disqualify it from participation in SMM. As Jim Tobin says in his book *Earn It, Don't Buy It* (2013), 'social media is a more natural way of selling that any other form of marketing' – for some organizations, that simply doesn't fit. Furthermore, research from Baird and Parasnis (2011) found that more than 60 per cent of consumers believe passion for a business or brand is a prerequisite for social media engagement. It is also the case that those companies that are starting to derive real value from social business tools are those that have reached a certain level of sophistication in their social business initiatives (Kane et al 2014).

4. Does it fit in with the organization's other marketing efforts?
   It is a frequent failing of online marketing initiatives – including SMM – that they are not in sync with the organization's wider strategic efforts. No marketing exists in a vacuum, and like all other elements, to be effective, SMM must be part of a larger marketing – and integrated communications – strategy.

SMM adoption

An annual report from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth (2013) which investigated the social media activity of *Fortune Magazine*'s Fortune 500 list found that: 77 per cent had Twitter accounts, 70 per cent had Facebook pages, 69 per cent had YouTube accounts and 34 per cent were blogging.

The role of social media recognized?

In order to help reverse a decline in sales, March 2014 saw sportswear brand Adidas announce the creation of a global web of digital newsrooms to build on its current 'moments of celebration and acknowledgement' real–time marketing strategy.

Of particular significance – and relevance to this book – was the comment made by Herbert Hainer, chief executive of the Adidas Group, who said: 'The majority of our communication activities today happen in

social media, because this is the space where our core target consumer is engaging with brand content.'

Samba

As is the case with all aspects of business, any investment in social media marketing needs to have specific and measurable marketing objectives. Just as was the case in the mid- to late-1990s when organizations got websites 'because everyone else has one', too many organizations are now on social media for that same – flawed – reason. It was not a valid reason for developing websites then and it is not a valid reason for engaging in SMM now. Indeed, the very nature of social media means that organizations who attempt SMM without having any meaningful objectives are soon found out by social media users – who, in the main, do not like being marketed at. As social media practitioner and author Shama Kabani (2013) says: 'traditional marketing rules cannot be applied to social media because social media is not a marketer's platform. It belongs to consumers.' That is something many products, brands and organizations have failed to appreciate.

Twitter and the Interbrand 100

According to research by Simply Measured in 2014, and illustrated in Figure 1.8, all but two of the Interbrand 100 brands were active on Twitter as of Q4 2013, with 92 per cent of those sending at least one tweet per day. On average, each Interbrand company on Twitter posted 12 tweets per day. However, 61 per cent of posted tweets were replies, and 8 per cent retweets. The remaining 31 per cent were organization-originated brand tweets.
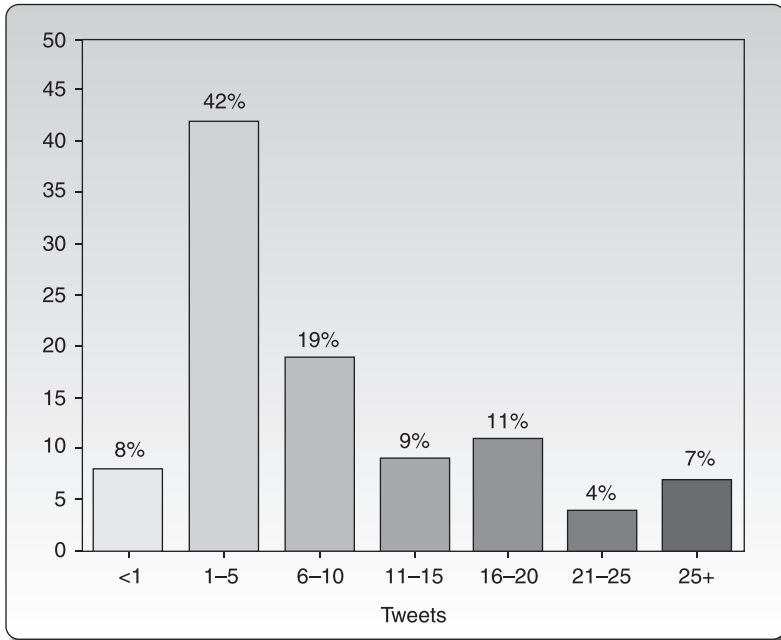
Figure 1.8 The daily tweet count for Interbrand 100 companies.

Since 1997, I have maintained that in marketing terms, there are three core objectives to any Internet presence or activity (note that my 'three objectives' concept was first published in a book I co-authored: Gay et al (2007) *Online Marketing – A Customer-led Approach*). The three objectives are:

1. Brand development – where the online presence compliments and enhances the offline branding efforts of the organization. However, using SMM for this objective is not only effective in building brand awareness, the capacity for interaction also significantly increases brand affinity. The same caveat that applies to all branding strategies is equally valid in SMM brand development – brand value does not necessarily increase sales. Indeed, speaking at the Advertising Research Foundation's Re:think 2013 conference in New York, Eric Schmidt, senior manager of marketing strategy and insights at Coca-Cola, said, 'We didn't see any statistically significant relationship between our buzz (social media chatter) and our short-term sales'. However, Wendy Clark, the cola giant's senior VP of integrated marketing, was quick to respond on the company's Buzzworthy section of its Journey website (coca-colacompany.com), saying, 'None of our plans are simply social, or TV, or mobile or experiential. On the contrary, it's the combination of owned, earned, shared and paid media

connections – with social playing a crucial role at the heart of our activations – that creates marketplace impact, consumer engagement, brand love and brand value.' Given that both quotes come from senior marketers at an organization that has been a benchmark for marketing excellence for over a century, to disregard their opinions would be foolhardy. Research from ExactTarget (2013) found that 77 per cent of Facebook and 70 per cent of Twitter marketers cited brand awareness as their top goal.

2. Revenue generation – where the online presence increases revenue into the organization by direct sales, lead generation or direct marketing. If any of the objectives is still to prove successful – and so is relevant to social media – it is this one. Research from Custora (2013) found that Facebook accounted for just 0.17 per cent of all e-commerce customers acquired, and Twitter was responsible for less than 0.01 per cent. Facebook shops have proven to be equally problematic, with recognizable brands such as Gap and J. C. Penney quickly closing their fledgling Facebook shops. Furthermore, research from PwC (2013) declared that 'the data shows that social media will for the near future remain a backwater sales channel, if you can call it a sales channel at all'. However, the same report suggested social media users are attracted to brands' social sites primarily by deals, promotions, and sales (49 per cent) – which, if these users went on to make a purchase based on those offers, then that would qualify as an income generation objective.

3. Customer service/support – the web is used to enhance the service and support offered to customers – and potential customers. Perhaps to the surprise of many, it is this objective that has proven to be both significant and successful in the social media environment. Eschewing expensive call-centre operations and offering customer service and support on the likes of Facebook and Twitter, some organizations have found that an increasing number of people turn first to a social media presence when they experience a problem rather than a website or offline facility. Indeed, research from Nielsen (2012) found that one in three users prefers to contact brands using social media rather than the telephone.

However, such is the nature of digital media that: (1) it is possible for a single web presence to address one, two or all three of these objectives and (2) it is rare that a web presence addresses only one. Given this second point, perhaps it would be more accurate to describe the site's *leading* or *primary* objective, expressed as a percentage. For example, an online-only retailer might

> 66
> one in three users prefers to contact brands using social media rather than the telephone
> 99

have income generation at 85 per cent (if they don't sell anything they will go out of business) with 5 per cent for branding and 10 per cent for service.

It is also the case that if each of the objectives is practised effectively then there is a *spin-off* or *trickle-down* advantage to the other objectives; this is an important point. In all aspects of digital marketing any marketing action with a specific objective will also influence the other objectives as a spin–off advantage (Charlesworth 2014).

An example of this spin–off advantage can be seen in the majority of university social media presences (it is certainly the case in the one where I work). Facebook and Twitter, for example, are used almost 100 per cent as media for transmitting information to existing students, that is, customers. Such content, therefore, fits in to the service and support category of objectives. However, a potential customer – sorry, student – might, as part of their purchase decision-making process, look at the Facebook pages to get an impression of the culture of the organization as well as the support it offers to students during their time as a student. Moreover – although my own rather ad hoc research into this says it is not the case – do some potential students *expect* to find service on Facebook and Twitter as part of the 'product' they are buying? That they might never use it when they are a student is irrelevant – they would still 'mark down' any university that doesn't offer such facilities.

Furthermore, as digital marketing has matured, it has become apparent that different elements of the Internet can have different strategic marketing objectives; so it is the case with social media marketing. As you will see in the content of this book, social media marketing itself has many facets – and each can be used for differing strategic goals. Indeed, the findings of the J. D. Power and Associates 2013 Social Media Benchmark Study made the point that 'a one-pronged approach to social (media) is no longer an option' – meaning that concentrating on only one aspect of SMM might satisfy one segment of social media users but not another. As the same report says, 'if your customers want service and you're pushing discount coupons out to them while ignoring their attempts to connect with you, you're going to end up with dissatisfied customers'.

Social media is the best-known online marketing

Research by Cort (2014) on behalf of Browser Media investigated attitudes to online marketing amongst small to medium enterprises (SMEs). Interestingly, when SME owners and managers were asked which of the disciplines of online marketing they were most familiar with, 'social media' came in as the top answer. Figure 1.9 shows the full results.

However, studies from Maltby and Ovide (2013) and Constant Contact (2013) both found evidence that although many small business owners and managers are using social media as a marketing platform, they are not very active on it. Writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, Maltby and Ovide

found fairly low rates of regular use of social media whilst the Constant Contact study was more specific, finding that only a quarter of respondents posted on Facebook daily with 32 per cent doing so only weekly. Twitter faired even worse with 13 per cent daily and 18 per cent weekly. However, other platforms trailed in much further behind with daily and weekly average use being less than 5 per cent and 10 per cent respectively.
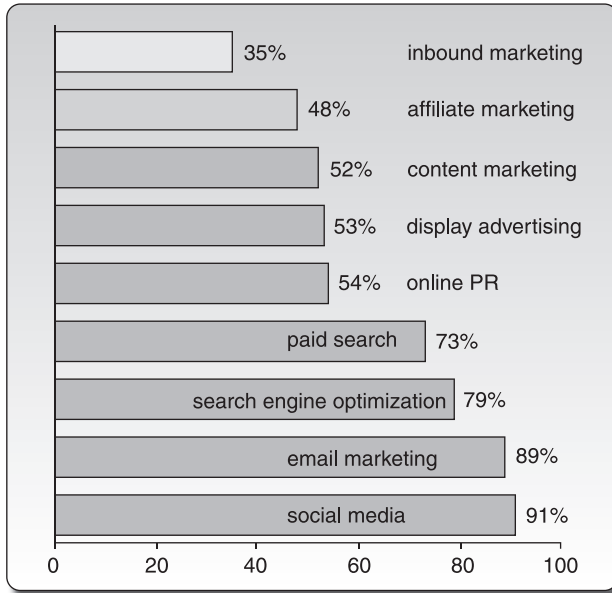
Figure 1.9 Which online marketing disciplines are SMEs aware of?

It might be argued that a fourth social media marketing objective is that of research. I argue that research is not an objective in its own right. Indeed, to be effective in meeting any, or all, of the three objectives stated, some research of the social media environment will be required. This would mirror the situation offline where research is conducted as part of market intelligence gathering which would feed into the marketing strategy. The subject of monitoring social media for market intelligence is covered in Chapter 7.

Research by Barnes and Lescault (2014) on behalf of the Center for Marketing Research at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth took its findings from the responses of 118 executives representing 21 of the 22 industries on the Inc. 500 list – the list of the 5000 fastest-growing private US companies compiled annually by *Inc.*

Linkedin	88%
Facebook	84%
Twitter	74%
Google+	58%
Blog	52%
YouTube	50%
Pinterest	33%
Instagram	18%
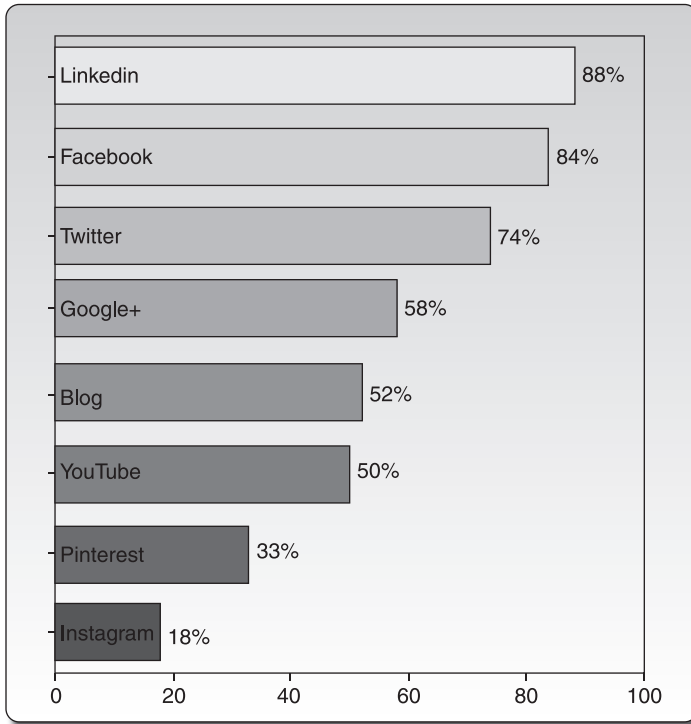
Figure 1.10 The Inc. 500's most commonly used social media platforms.

Magazine (inc.com). This collection of respondents is significant to the study of the use of social media as this group of privately held, for-profit and independent companies (i.e. not subsidiaries or divisions of other companies) represent organizations that are successful in contemporary marketplaces and so can be expected to use contemporary marketing methods. The Inc. 500's most commonly used social media platforms are shown in Figure 1.10.

The executives were asked which social media platforms they felt had the most potential for sales growth for their business. Twitter, at 61 per cent, topped the list with Facebook at 55 per cent and Pinterest at 31 per cent making up the top three.

When asked about the potential for sales growth for their businesses directly through those platforms, the responses were generally positive; the results are shown in Figure 1.11.

However, when asked to estimate what percentage of total annual sales were gained through Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest the news for the social media giants was not so encouraging (see Figure 1.12). This
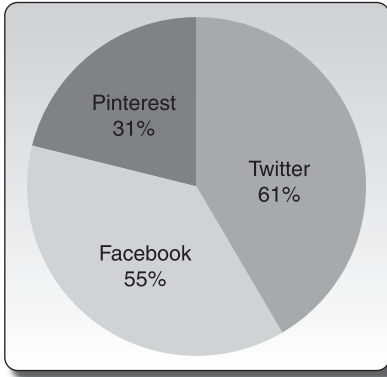
Figure 1.11 Which social media platforms have the most potential for business sales growth?
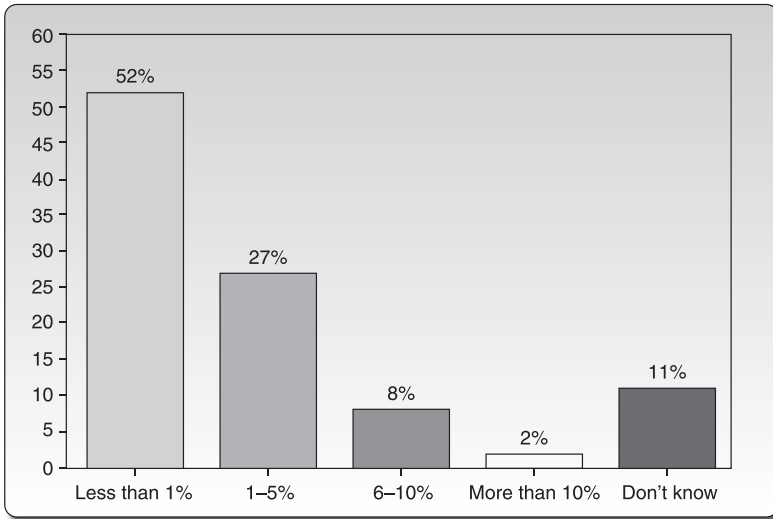
Figure 1.12 Percentage of total annual sales gained through Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest.

suggests, perhaps, that objectives of branding and service are more suitable for any social media marketing strategy.

In selecting specific SM objectives a further consideration is that the *correct* objectives be defined. The aforementioned three objectives all lend themselves to goals that can be measured – but those measurements must have real meaning. For example, a common goal stated by organizations is to have a target number for Facebook 'likes' or Twitter subscribers – and yet in themselves such targets are meaningless. Having 10,000 'lurkers' liking your Facebook presence will add little or nothing to the organization's bottom line, but just ten 'contributors' subscribing to your Twitter account will increase brand awareness significantly as they are likely to share content and make it viral. Similarly, getting a 'like' doesn't give the organization the same level of access to the customer – or potential customer – as a website registration or email. Of course, as with all effective marketing, targeting the right market segments with your social media marketing efforts is essential in achieving any objective.


Paid, Owned and Earned

A concept popular in digital marketing whose popularity is a result of the impact of SM is that of *Paid*, *Owned* and *Earned* media. Like many concepts, the practice has existed for as long as mankind has traded goods for reward, but it is only recently that it has been given a name. The differences between the three elements are these:

Paid (also known as bought) – marketing in any media where the promotion is paid for by the selling organization. Predominantly, this is advertising on any media including TV, print and the Internet, as well as direct mail.

Owned – any media where the product, brand or organization has total control over that media and/or the content in it. This includes such things as brochures, retail outlets, websites and – to a certain degree – SMM sites such as Facebook.

Earned – where the product, brand or organization is deemed worthy of custom and/or loyalty from consumers based on the organization's way of doing business (e.g., offering excellent service as the norm) which generates consumer generated content in social media. It is the latter which has brought the concept to prominence in digital marketing.

Lieb and Owyang (2012) introduced a fourth medium where the three meet: Converged media. This is shown in Figure 1.13.
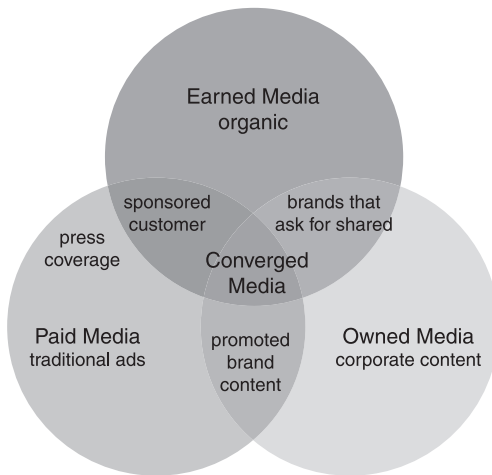
Figure 1.13 The convergence of Paid, Owned and Earned media.

It should also be noted that the Earned element of the concept also exists in its own right as a concept – most commonly known as *permission* or *in-bound* marketing (traditional Paid promotion is *out-bound* marketing). Popularized – if not created – by Seth Godin in his influential book *Permission Marketing: Turning Strangers into Friends, and Friends into Customers* (1999), this concept alludes to the notion that perhaps the biggest change that the Internet brought to business and marketing was that the control of the brand was taken from the marketer and given to the customer (Gay et al 2007; Charlesworth 2009). Indeed, McKinsey & Company has referred to word-of-mouth as being 'the most disruptive force in marketing' (Bughin et al 2010).

It is worth adding a footnote to this introduction that pervades subjects throughout the book – and it is this. If the organization provides a quality product, at an appropriate price, delivered by enthusiastic staff in places where customers expect to find it – not only is there nothing for that organization to fear from what might be considered as negative aspects of social media, but such is the nature of social media that satisfied customers will do the marketers' job for them.

> " such is the nature of social media that satisfied customers will do the marketers' job for them "

Chapter exercises

1. Consider the impact of all of the facets of social media on your life – how much would it change if social media was banned from tomorrow?

2. This chapter introduces the concept that there are three core objectives to any Internet presence – including social media. Debate this concept.
3. This book was published in the autumn of 2014. In this dynamic subject that means that some of the statistics shown in the chapter could well be out of date by the time you read them.

    a. Go online to see if there are any more up-to-date statistics.
    b. Discuss your findings. If there are no significant changes, why is that the case? If there are changes, what are they and what has caused them?
    c. Check the statistics against responses in your classroom for the same research. If you repeated the exercise with your friends or family are the results the same as with your classmates?

The archives of the websites listed below are a good place to start your search for new research and data (note that for full access you may need to register – do so, it will be free and worthwhile).

clickz.com
econsultancy.com
emarketer.com
marketingcharts.com
marketingland.com
marketingprofs.com

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