Social media

Social media is a phrase used to describe platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. While many people use social media for sharing personal information, it can also be a powerful tool for a business as it’s a great way to reach and engage with customers. There are a few different platforms, each with a different way of sharing information; for example, some are more visual, like Instagram, Snapchat and Pinterest, whereas Twitter and Facebook use text and links to webpages to put across messages.

Social platforms

Some of the most frequently used social media platforms are: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Snapchat and YouTube. All of them encourage users to share information with others but each has a slightly different approach.

**Facebook** is a great place to start with digital marketing through a social media platform, especially if you already have a Facebook page that you use personally. You can set up a business page that links directly to your website. Not only can this be a place where you share news and company information, but you also have the ability to allow people to make a booking, leave reviews, and interact directly with you.

**Twitter** is a platform where people typically share breaking news and opinion pieces in the form of ‘Tweets’ which are posts that only contain up to 280 characters and can also include images or video. Most contain hashtags (#) as using these allows users to follow specific topics and conversations.

**Instagram** allows users to edit and share photos as well as videos. It’s primarily used on mobile devices because it requires you to have a camera phone. You create a profile, then upload pictures with captions underneath. The app allows you to put ‘filters’ on the images or change the lighting or focus etc. to make them more attractive, making it a great platform for creative industries. You don’t need Facebook to run an Instagram account; however, Facebook owns Instagram, which allows for some integration between the two platforms, especially when running advertising.

With over 700 million monthly active users, Instagram has launched **IGTV**, allowing users to upload long-form, vertical videos. A little like a YouTube channel, businesses can make short films about new products, services, or anything that promotes their work. This could also be a great way to share behind the scenes footage.

**Like every aspect of digital marketing, social media takes time.**

**Pinterest** allows you to create virtual pin boards with images that often link through to other websites or places that you can buy products. You can categorise the boards and name them however you like. People often go to Pinterest for inspiration, so this could be a great way to share pictures of your venue, hotel or attraction and make sure it links to your website to drive traffic.
Case Study

Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway, Kent

Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway in Kent runs from the Cinque Port town of Hythe, terminating in Dungeness, a National Nature Reserve, with four stations in between. The railway provides an opportunity to explore this unique corner of Kent.

“It’s important to be selective with the channels we use as, like many tourist attractions, we have a small marketing team and time resources are limited. We use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. We began to use SnapChat but found that it wasn’t reaching the right audience. We decide what content to post on which channel by using checks such as length of text, whether it’s an image, video or live feed, what the content is about (an event, brand awareness, urgent information), the audience we want to reach and its relevance. Our audience love to engage with our live video feeds across all our social media channels.”

LinkedIn is possibly the least consumer-facing platform and probably isn’t the best way to connect with customers. However, it is a great way to talk with other businesses and share the more corporate aspects of your business.

YouTube is where users can upload video content to their own channel. This channel would be useful for showing off locations for tourist attractions, behind the scenes footage of new developments in your business and generally showcasing what your business has to offer. YouTube is a subsidiary of Google and using this platform can often contribute to your SEO ranking if Google sees your content as relevant to users. However, it can be time consuming as editing footage and uploading it may not be a quick process.
Like every aspect of digital marketing, social media takes time. It’s best to choose one or two platforms that best fit your business and focus on them.

Using any (or all) of these social media channels can potentially help you reach digital marketing goals in a lot of ways:

- The platforms are usually free to use and have simple setups, making them a cost-effective method of reaching customers.
- You can place ads within your social media feeds on platforms like Facebook and Twitter and include links to your site or calls to action to drive traffic and leads.
- Including links from your business account on social media to your website can help to boost traffic to it.
- Customers can interact with you by ‘tagging’ your company name or sending you a message to ask questions or give feedback.
- Using a visual platform like Instagram can help people understand more about your brand, see your location and tell a story about your business.
- Engaging social media content is often shared widely, exposing your business to new audiences and increasing brand awareness.
- The audience potential is huge: Statista reports that Facebook has over 2.4 billion users and that Twitter has 330 million users.
Like every aspect of digital marketing, social media takes time. It’s best to choose one or two platforms that best fit your business and focus on them, rather than attempting to use all of them, at least to start with. If you have limited time, it might be best to start with Facebook as it is simple to setup and use, especially as you might already be using it personally and have a grasp of its features.

Social media also allows highly customisable ads. Facebook ads, for example, allow you to target users by things like location, interests, industry and even purchase history.

Anyone can view your entire business Facebook page without having to ‘like’ it, as business pages are completely open. This means the page is indexed by search engines, meaning anything you post can appear in search results (this does not happen with personal profile pages). You can share videos and images on the platform too, making it a good all-round platform to begin with.

Social media also allows highly customisable ads. Facebook ads, for example, allow you to target users by things like location, interests, industry and even purchase history. You can target a suitable audience for your service.

Resources
If you want a full breakdown of social media, what it is and what it can do, read ‘What Is Social Media? Explaining the Big Trend’ by LifeWire for an extensive guide.

MOZ frequently update their social media blog on a wide range of related topics.

Checklist

✓ Choose the most suitable platform for your business and focus your attention there. Each platform has its own setup guide and help section to guide you through.

✓ Remember that some platforms are faster paced than others, for instance Twitter users expect answers from a company quickly, so be aware of your time constraints.

✓ Imagery and video makes posts stand out in newsfeeds and can be more engaging than text alone. Refer to your checklist for including visual content on your website.

✓ People often use the more visual platforms like Pinterest and Instagram for inspiration, so this could be a great way to share pictures of your venue, hotel or attraction and make sure it links to your website to drive traffic.

✓ LinkedIn might not be considered consumer friendly but could be useful if you were looking to hire more staff or gain information on what competitors are doing.
York Gin, York

“We always respond to people who have commented on our posts. If you have lots of responses, an emoji will suffice! This creates goodwill towards our brand.

There are many international and national days which can trigger marketing ideas and news events can be helpful to stay topical on social media. We try to do something different from everyone else to get noticed. Don’t just follow the crowd for the sake of it.

We also aren’t afraid to share other brands’ content if it’s appropriate and we love it. Chances are your followers will too and appreciate you telling them about it. Emotional responses to social posts are great and humour is a good tool - who doesn’t like a laugh or a smile?

As soon as you open a channel, your followers will assume they can contact you on it: to order products, ask questions, give feedback etc. We’ve been very clear that, however customers contact us, we will respond as quickly and positively as possible. As a result, we’ve made lots of sales and contacts through instant messaging.”

Facebook Business covers the basics with their ‘How to set up a Facebook Page for Your Company’ guide. If you are already set up, and want to know how to build an active and engaged audience for your business, read Facebook’s ‘Promote Your Page’ section.

Read ‘Getting Started on Social Media’ from HM Government to cover the basics, plus see links on most of the platform’s set up guides aimed at small business owners.

‘How to Start A Successful YouTube Channel for Your Business’ from Wix covers the basics of getting started on the platform from a business perspective.
Paid advertising

The social media platforms we have looked at so far are free to use if you want to use them to connect and engage with customers. But it is also possible to use paid social advertising as a digital marketing tactic to reach customers and get your message out there. This is similar to using paid search instead of organic as we explained in the Google AdWords section.

Paid social advertising uses sponsored content or advertising to boost your website presence, products or services in third party feeds and pages. You are paying to display adverts and a cost is incurred, depending on the type of ad you use. Many of them incur a cost-per-click (CPC). By choosing the specific audience you want to reach using a range of demographic tools, paid social can be a way to get your message to your customers or potential customers effectively, inexpensively, and efficiently.

Some important information about paid social advertising:

- Paid social advertising targeting options allow you to reach a highly targeted audience, so is a great option if you're looking to market to a specific group of potential or previous customers.

- You can set a budget beforehand to ensure you manage the cost of your ads.

- Due to the way platforms like Facebook control the content users see when they log on (called an algorithm), using paid social is becoming more necessary to reach people with your brand’s message than by simply posting as normal.

Paid social advertising uses sponsored content or advertising to boost your website presence, products or services in third party feeds and pages.

It’s important to consider the type of ads that will do well on specific platforms. For example, the wide variety of Facebook ad formats make it perfect for business-to-consumer (B2C) campaigns, whereas highly visual content will do better on Instagram for increasing web traffic sales and driving awareness.

Checklist

- Make sure you set a goal for your paid campaign before you start. The most common are: Increased traffic, increased visibility, higher engagement rates, lead generation or sales.

- Select the social platform that is most likely to help you achieve this goal by checking that the format of your ad fits or asking yourself if the people more likely to be using a specific platform fit your brand's demographic.

- Make sure you can measure the performance of your set goal. Some social platforms have tools already in place to help you track your goals (e.g. Facebook), but it’s important to make sure you have the right ones in place to measure your success.
Twitter ads help grow awareness and drive clicks to your website from consumers, but LinkedIn is more ideal for business-to-business (B2B) interactions than reaching your customers.

The ads on Pinterest are often used to generate immediate sales of your product or services. Your paid content blends with other pins, allowing your brand to work as another way for people to visit your site.

You can also drive traffic towards your business’ YouTube channel through paid YouTube advertising too. There are three types of ads available through Google TrueView video advertising. You can:

- Create an ad that is played at the beginning, middle or end of a partner YouTube video, known as an in-stream ad.
- Create ads that are displayed in the search results for particular queries, called an in-search ad.
- Create an ad that appears on the YouTube watch page. This is an in-display ad.

Resources
Read Facebook Business’s Facebook Ads guide for setting up and using paid ads. Most social media platforms will have a similar guide available through their site or app.

If you're already using some paid ads on social media platforms, but want to expand your knowledge or try something new, read ‘Paid Social for Content Marketing Launches’ from MOZ that suggests four tactics to try.

For a look at YouTube advertising, see Brightedge’s post entitled ‘YouTube Advertising’ and consider ‘How to Succeed with YouTube SEO,’ also from Brightedge, as further reading.

Case Study

Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway, Kent

“The only social media advertising we pay for is via Facebook. We don’t promote general content or individual pages as we have found from experience and feedback from other attractions, that although ‘Likes’ and ‘Followers’ will increase, the engagement rate doesn’t increase by the same percentage. The new followers are not as high quality as those that follow you organically.

If we are promoting a new event at little notice or have an event that isn’t selling as well as we’d like, we do pay for Facebook Advertising for that event page. An event page allows consumers to respond, ask questions and invite other people and also sends out an automatic reminder to respondents too.

Facebook Ads Manager allows advertisers to select the location, age, gender, marital status and interests of users to your advert, thus targeting the most appropriate audience to your product. The analytic measurements allow you to monitor the effectiveness of the advert and respond accordingly, altering the message or the placement to achieve the desired results.”
Scheduling tools

If you have numerous social media accounts for your business, you might want to consider using a scheduling tool to help you manage them in a more efficient way. These are online tools that gather together your various accounts and put them into one dashboard, so you can see the separate feeds all in one place, plus you can schedule Tweets, posts and ads to go out at specific times that you choose. This way, you can plan your social campaigns when you have time in your schedule and take the time to ensure they reach the right audience at the right time.

There are a few different tools available, and some platforms have their own version - for example, Twitter has TweetDeck - but the most commonly known are Buffer, Hootsuite and Sprout Social. Each one has a different look and feel, so choose the one that feels the easiest to use for your business. They have various priced plans to choose from, so factor this into your digital marketing budget.

The benefits of scheduling your social media posts:

- It saves you time and can help social media from becoming a distraction. Once it's scheduled you can focus your attention elsewhere, knowing that it's covered.
- It keeps your business visible to your audience and potential customers at all times.
- It's useful for when you want to reach your customers outside of business hours (weekends and public holidays etc), but don’t want to have to log in yourself outside of business hours to set posts or ads live.
- Your posts can be more spread out as opposed to sporadic bursts that might be lost in your customers’ social feeds.

Checklist

✓ Social media is a more instantaneous way of connecting and invites conversation with customers, so be aware that some posts may not be suitable for scheduling.

✓ Make sure you use your scheduling tool's full capabilities as many come with analytic components, so you can measure the performance of your posts.

✓ Avoid scheduling questions or posts that are likely to get a greater response from your customers at a time when you won't be available to answer or respond.

✓ Analyse your post schedule to see if the timing can be better to achieve your set goals.

If you have numerous social media accounts for your business, consider using a scheduling tool to help you manage them in a more efficient way.
As time can be precious when running a business, it makes sense to explore your options with scheduling. If you know that you want to post a certain number of times a week across two or more platforms but that you might not have time during the week to do so in the moment, you could schedule all messages for the coming week on a Sunday night then shift your focus to another area of running your business.

Some posts will not be suited to a schedule. Posts that require you to engage with your audience in a timely manner are better if you are available to be on the platform at that time. However, you can use a schedule to build excitement around a certain occasion, or a deal that will be live on a set date. You can still post valuable and shareable content but have time to manage other aspects of your business while it gets seen by your audience.

Resources
Lifewire have an informational post ‘What is TweetDeck and Is It Only for Twitter?’ all about this specific tool.

For more on scheduling in general, try ‘A Reference Guide for Social Media Scheduling – Tools and Tactics’ from Razor Social. It covers the reasons it could benefit you, plus takes a look at the tools available.
Influencers and bloggers

An influencer is someone who has the power to affect the purchase decisions of others due to their authority, knowledge, position or relationship with an audience. This audience is usually their social media following – Media Agency UM found that 44% of Brits and 47% of global consumers said they were influenced by opinions shared online as part of their annual study. Influencers post about their experiences and review products and services, including the places they travel to and stay. A blogger writes frequent, long-form content or creates videos based on their experiences. Not all influencers blog, they may only share photos to a social feed or Instagram story.

It can be difficult as a business to know if an influencer or blogger is the right person to work with. They must have the right kind of followers, not simply a large amount. If only a small percentage of their audience is your business’ demographic, even if they share something positive online about your attraction or service, it may not have the desired effect. Look for people who don’t just have large followings, but who have followers that are engaged. That means lots of comments under their posts or frequent shares of their content. These influencers are more valuable to you than a celebrity who has thousands of followers but no real engagement.

Influencers can increase your business’ credibility, bring a fresh perspective to a service you offer or simply provide exposure online for your brand. Working with them can be a positive experience – but remember that it is a business transaction and the interaction with them has to be supportive of and aligned with your business goals.

Start your influencer search close to home
Go through your business’ social media channels and identify the people who follow you most actively – commenting regularly, watching your stories each day, or always liking your posts and content. If they’re already passionate about your business, these people may also be willing to act as brand advocates for you. You can also search for ‘influencer’ and the topic related to your business on Google. The top results might be too expensive to invest in working with, but this will give you an idea of who to look for and the types of content they create.

Journalists can also be great influencers, especially within local communities. Find your local news (papers and magazines as well as online) and journalists’ social channels and see if they are a good fit for posting about your business.

Keep your influencer search focused
Compile a list of potential influencers to approach but optimise your efforts by focusing on engagement and relevance. If an influencer creates content that doesn’t align with your brand values, they could do more harm than good.

How should I approach an influencer?
Establish a connection. Have they recently written a review that you enjoyed reading? “I enjoyed your review of xxx”; Is their video channel one you enjoy? “Here at xxx we always watch your videos because xxx”; Have they worked with a brand that aligns with or is connected to your own? “I loved your video/post about xxx, we do a similar thing here at xxx”.

Let them know why you’re a fan of their content. Give a clear and concrete example of how their work relates to your brand’s goals and what you’d like to achieve through working with them.
What’s in it for them? Influencers want to provide valuable content for their followers, so your brand must align with theirs. And in return for their posting, even if you’re on a tight budget, you need to give them an incentive. This could be:

- A link to their content or their website on your website
- Social shares from your own social media channels
- A link to their content or website in your next email newsletter
- A free product or service so they can test it out before anyone else (make sure their review gets linked directly back to your business)
- The opportunity to provide an interview or testimonial which links back to their website

**During the campaign**

Provide the influencer or blogger with resources. Send them your brand guidelines, photography, videos and anything else you think may help them get to know your business.

The [Advertising Standards Authority](http://visitengland.org/businessadvice) (ASA) works to regulate influencer content on Instagram and other social media channels. It must be clear to followers that a product or service is being advertised to them. If an influencer is receiving payment, each post about your business must be marked as a ‘paid partnership’ at the top. If they are simply advertising your business or a service you offer, the posts must all include the hashtag #AD.
After the campaign

Don’t forget to say thank you! This is still a business partnership, so thank them for working with you. Keep communication lines open because an influencer campaign doesn’t have to be limited to a single post. By following up you may inspire them to post about you again in the future or link to you in a relevant post.

Resources

Have you been approached by an influencer, but not sure where to start? Read Post Planner’s guide ‘5 of the Most Useful Ways to Work with Social Media Influencers’.

Hubspot’s ‘The Ultimate Guide to Influencer Marketing in 2019’ takes a deep dive into the different types of influencer and shows the growth of this form of marketing across all industries, including tourism.

The ASA have official guidance for social influencers on the clarity of their promotions, but it won’t hurt for you to have a read through yourself too. ‘New guidance launched for social influencers’ is a comprehensive guide.

Look for people who don’t just have large followings, but who have followers that are engaged.