An Assessment of the Social Media Marketing Strategy of Air Arabia

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Abstract:
Social media has become a popular marketing instrument used by global companies to reach their targeted customers. Social media platforms provide companies with data analytics tools that allow them to track the progress and success of their ad campaigns. This paper aims to examine and evaluate the level of effectiveness of Air Arabia strategies in using social media in communicating and engaging their customers. The main objectives of the paper are to determine the social media marketing strategy and to assess its effectiveness in engaging current and future clients. The study relies on content analysis to systematically analyze the social media marketing reports from the main Air Arabia social media accounts in three platforms, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. The data consists of data analytics reports of the three platforms from January to November 2019. The findings indicate that Air Arabia gained a competitive advantage over other airlines due to its strategic use of social media. Although the social media strategy in place at Air Arabia is effective thus far, there is still room for improvement. The study provides a list of recommendations to improve the performance of its social media strategy.

Keywords: Air Arabia, airlines, social media, marketing strategies, UAE

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Introduction

There are more than 3 billion people on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter with social media becoming a normal part of everyday life for a large number of people. The global social media platforms have generated billions in revenue from advertisers because of the numerous advantages that they offer to both small and large businesses. Most social media platforms have access to a large set of user data and can offer businesses targeted marketing so that they can reach out to users who are more likely to purchase an item or service based on their social media activity. Social media have become the main avenues through which businesses can reach out to clients on a direct and personal level, promote their brand, and improve customer relations. It is therefore imperative that a business develops and maintains a strong presence on social media.

Competition online, however, is stiff with several similar businesses competing for the attention of a specific target audience. Customers expect firms to have a presence online through which interactions, communication, and advertisements can be channeled. To stand out in this competitive field, companies need to adopt a more professional approach in how they manage social media (Zhong, 2018). Having a social media account alone is not enough. Companies need to understand effective ways of framing themselves online, posting patterns that attract clients, and proper platforms to interact with clients (Yates, 2018). Strategic use of social media platforms can lead to numerous advantages like attracting new clients, improving brand image, and spurring customer loyalty.

This paper aims to examine and evaluate the level of effectiveness of Air Arabia Airlines strategies in using social media in communicating and engaging their consumers. Air Arabia is a main player in the aviation industry in the United Arab Emirates. It is one of the oldest and a major airline companies in the UAE. Arabia Airlines is highly active on social media platforms. This paper aims to assess the efficiency of the social media marketing strategies and the quality of its interactions with existing and potential clients. The paper’s main objectives are to determine the social media marketing strategy used
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by Air Arabia and to assess the effectiveness of social media marketing strategic plans for current and future clients. The paper aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the current Air Arabia strategy for social media?
RQ2: To what extent this strategic plan is effective in terms of communicating with their current and future clients?

Literature Review

Social media strategy

Effing and Spil (2015) stated that social media strategy is “a goal-directed planning process for creating user-generated content, driven by a group of Internet applications, to create a unique and valuable competitive position” (Effing & Spil 2015). The authors argue that research interest in social media strategies is getting more attention. The authors listed key elements of social media strategy: the target audience, channel choice, goals, resources, policies, and monitoring and content activities.

They argued that the target group, which is the first element of the strategy is ought to be determined by the organization itself so they can identify the preference population where they can address their social media platforms to, additionally to predict the amount of that population use and access to social media channels. They have argued that the preference population could be stakeholders, groups, and cultures. The second element is the channel choice, which refer to the suitability of communication based on the chosen social media channel by the target population. The third element is the goals. The authors argue that social media must be in line with the business goals of the organization, as it is very important for social media to communicate clear objectives in order to be efficient.

The fourth element, the resources, must be sufficient to ensure effective social media communication. For example, the employees in charge of social media strategy and communication must be well trained. The fifth element is the policies. All social media activities
must be done in an ethical manner to protect the reputation of the organization. The employees in charge of social media must have a good understanding of what could be said on social media. Monitoring is the sixth element. Organizations are supposed to observe all the actions and communication happening in the social media channels, particularly in the time of an event or crisis to assess the activities. Content activity is the last element. It refers to the content and the timeframe of scheduled posts to different social media channels. Effing and Spil point out that the schedule is supposed to be clear and specific, where it provides the organization detailed information about the posts (Effing & Spił, 2015).

Effing and Spil propose a new framework for social media strategies, which is the “The Social Strategy Cone.” The authors believe that this framework could be used as a tool to evaluate the comprehensiveness of social media strategies. According to the authors, the cone framework consists of three levels: Maturity, Diffusion, and Initiation. The Maturity level includes the Monitoring and Content Activities elements. The Diffusion level includes Goals, Resources, and Policies element. The Initiation level includes Target Audience and Channel Choice. The results from this study show that most organizations’ social media strategies are not yet well developed, which makes the new social strategy framework the best tool to examine the success of the social media practices in the organization. In fact, it might be significantly used to create new corporate social media strategies.

**Social Media marketing**

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the importance of social media marketing. Rauschnabel, Hinsch (2016) suggested a new definition of social media strategy based on the findings of their research. According to the research: “Social media marketing is an interdisciplinary and cross-functional concept that uses social media (often in combination with other communications channels) to achieve organizational goals by creating value for stakeholders. On a strategic level, social media marketing covers an organization's decisions about social media marketing scope ranging from defenders to explorers, culture ranging from conservatism to
modernity, structure ranging from hierarchies to networks, and governance ranging from autocracy to anarchy” (Felix, Rauschnabel, Hinsch, 2016). The authors created a social media marketing framework with four main dimensions, which are: 1) social media marketing scope, 2) social media marketing culture, 3) social media marketing structure, 4) social media marketing governance.

The first dimension of the SMM raises the question of whether the organization’s usage of SMM for interacting with one or many stakeholders as an authentic tool for cooperation. The second dimension differentiates between briefness which means traditional mass advertising method to SMM, and modernization, which is recognized as a more adaptable SMM culture. The third dimension deals with the arrangements of the SMM within the organization; there is no need for SMM director since the networks show an organizational structure that all employees are in charge of SMM. The fourth and the last dimension point out the regulations and how SMM personnel are monitored in the organization. The organization needs to find a balance in the framework presented. In terms of SMM governance, for instance, the employees are not supposed to be left free of rules and regulations not too restricted to the point where they can’t communicate.

**Customer engagement**

The image of the airline company is highly important, and it represents a significant part in attracting consumers. The airline company may distinguish itself from other competitors by having a unique identity and features, as the effect of the airline will be reflected in the consumer’s perceptions (Lee et. al, 2018). Lee et. al. (2018) social media engagement is one of the most powerful determinants of quality service in the aviation industry. They argue that the organization brand reputation is linked to the organization's revenue. Regular and faithful clients, who are engaged in the social media activities of an airline company tend to buy their tickets from the same airline and advice their families and friends to do so, which will in return empower the value of the airline company.

According to Dijkmans, Kerkhof, and Beukeboom (2014), customer
engagement to a brand or an organization depends on the co-existence of a mixture of three main elements 1) emotional aspects, which mean being affirmative toward the organization’s performance, 2) behavioral aspects, which mean being involved in the organization’s performance, 3) cognitive aspects, which mean being curious about the organization’s performance.

The main enablers for consumer engagement are social media as they are very distinct from the traditional media platforms. Indeed, they offer two-way interactive communication between the organization and the brand and its consumers (Harrigan, Evers, Miles, & Daly, 2016). Harrigan et. al.’s research was based on the conceptualization of customer engagement, which employs five main dimensions. They are enthusiasm, attention, absorption, interaction, and identification. The first dimension, which is the enthusiasm, refers to the excitement of the consumer towards the organization. The second dimension, which is the attention, indicates the amount of focus the consumer has toward the organization, which may drive the consumer to become a loyal consumer. Thirdly, absorption refers to a deeper level of involvement in the brand. The fourth dimension, interaction, happened to be one of the main dimensions as at this stage the consumer starts to have real communication with the organization, which includes sharing thoughts, suggestion and promoting positively about the organization. Finally, the dimension of identification refers to the stage where the consumer identifies with some organizations (Harrigan, Evers, Miles, and Daly, 2016).

Airlines are categorized in a service industry, so customer satisfaction becomes a main concern. A satisfied consumer may add additional benefits to the company such as recommending the company to family and friends, or at least shifting from a normal consumer into a loyal consumer. All of the mentioned benefits help the company to increase its revenue (Lee, Ng, Chan, Choy, Tai, Choi, 2018).

**Company reputation**

The major reason that an organization or a company invests money and resources in social media activities is the assumption that they are advantageous for their organization's reputation. Organization
reputation is defined as a mass exemplification of a company’s previous attitude and results that characterize the company’s capacity to deliver significant outcomes to many stakeholders (Dijkmans, Kerkhof, & Beukeboom, 2014). Company reputation is highly important for many reasons. Consumers tend to select companies with a positive reputation. The reputation of the company impacts the other competitors, where a loyal customer will always stay with a company that has a good reputation.

Social media channels could be positive or negative when it comes to the reputation of the company. Social media by its characteristic enables two-way communication between the sender and the receiver. Therefore, the organization no longer has control over the comments of the customers or clients on their pages, which may cause a risk of reputation damage for a company. Indeed, an opinion of one unsatisfied customer might put the reputation of a company at risk (Dijkmans, Kerkhof, & Beukeboom, 2014).

**Aviation industry and social media**

The international airlines industry is one of the most significant and rapidly growing industries (Knoblich, Martin, Nash, & Stansbie, 2015). Nowadays, airline companies are one of the most active accounts on social media platforms. Therefore, airlines represent the most suitable case to study their social media strategies and measure their efficiency (Seo & Park, 2017).

According to a study done to measure the effectiveness of German airline industry on using social media channels, German airline companies has clearly identified the necessity to provide their consumers with different social media channels to communicate with them. In fact, most of the main German airline companies use Facebook social media channels in addition to Twitter as a corporate professional account (Knoblich, Martin, Nash, & Stansbie, 2016).

Bigne, Andreu, and Hernandez (2018) explore the impact of social media on consumer behavior as it pertains to the budget airline industry. The study employs the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) to research the impact of social influences and, then analyzes online
consumer-to-consumer exchanges of information to determine if they are drivers of customers’ attitudes concerning purchasing airline tickets. The study uses structural equation modeling and the conceptual model is tested with some 441 Spanish participants who are interested in purchasing budget airline tickets. The study revealed that social media affects consumer’s intentions to recommend, via social media networking travel sites, budget airline services. In general, the study indicates that consumer-to-consumer exchanges of information on social media as well as in-person impact repurchase intentions.

Leung, Schuckert, and Yeung (2013) report that the function and role of social media have evolved significantly within the budget airline industry, from information delivery to distribution channels. The study relies on a questionnaire handed out to social media teams at Air Asia, Easy Jet, and Jet Blue, with participants 5, 14, and 17 individuals respectively. Increasingly, these airlines are utilizing their social media pages to deliver promotional materials, encourage user engagement, target and connect with new consumers, and distribute information. The main functions of Facebook wall posts, for example, are to invite users to interact and become involved. The study revealed that most users only comment on Facebook posts that are no more than 2 days old. To encourage increased consumer interactions, airlines should continue to publish frequent posts and encourage users to share and interact with them their posts.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Social Media Strategy Cone**

According to Effing and Spil (2016), Social Media Strategy Cone theory is specifically useful for evaluating social media strategies used by organizations to push their agendas and deliver their messages to their target customers. The Social Media Strategy Cone is comprised of three levels of social media maturity, which are labeled as initiation, diffusion, and maturity. The first level, initiation, includes elements such as target audience and channel choice, both of which have a profound influence on the effectiveness and appropriateness of the messaging through social media. The first level highlights the
significance of the company’s identifying both of these factors to launch a successful media campaign. The second level, which is diffusion, includes the policies, resources, and goals that the organization’s social media team embraces for their communication strategy. These are evaluated to determine their appropriateness and effectiveness at reaching target audiences and utilizing the channels selected. Specifically, the research indicates that channel selection is pivotal for success. The third level, which is maturity, adds two more elements – monitoring and content activities. The purpose of this level is to determine how well the social media messaging is performing and the types of content activities witnessed.

According to DiStaso and McCorkindale (2013), Social Media Strategy Cone theory is grounded on the notion that simply using social media is not sufficient, and that a strategically social media approach must be adopted and executed for desired outcomes.
The hierarchy of the cone provides a good way of analyzing the effectiveness of the social media strategy that Air Arabia has implemented. The framework of the social strategy cone will indicate the stage that Air Arabia’s team has reached in its quest to promote the airline online through popular social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Small companies that have just started are expected to be at the initiation stage of the social media strategy framework. At this stage, companies are concerned with
obtaining their target audience and selecting their preferred channels to reach out. The target audience of business includes people who are more likely to be interested in what the company offers and are, therefore, more likely to make a purchase or buy into a service provided. The choice of the platform that firms choose to establish a presence is as critical because it determines the audience that engages with them as well as the level of interaction available. A platform like Facebook is preferred because it has the largest subscriber base compared to other platforms. Instagram, on the other hand, could be the preferred option for businesses that want to reach a younger audience. Twitter allows businesses to engage more with clients and is good for companies that resolve customer service issues to a large client base. All these factors come into play when considering the most optimum platform through which the business can bet engage its users. A business of the stature of Air Arabia has been in operation for a long period with a strong presence on popular social media platforms and is therefore expected to have met the criteria for this stage.

The second stage, the diffusion stage, is characterized by the firm implementing its policies, resources, and goals in its social media strategy. Analyzing the presence of Air Arabia online should also follow the same pattern and look at how the airline manages to incorporate these aspects into is the current strategy. A corporation like Air Arabia should use its social media platform to highlight that they are and their driving values. Social media is a platform for interacting and forming closer ties with one’s market and potential. These aspects should guide the analysis of the company and its social media strategy. The second stages assess how well the company’s target audience is taking the message. The stage also shows that the company is aware of how well utilized their social media channels are.

Finally, the Social Media Cone Strategy advocates that at the maturity stage, monitoring and content activities are considered the ultimate means through which performance is assessed. To understand how Air Arabia’s current strategy is working, it will be necessary to assess how well the content is received and its potential impact on consumers. At the maturity stage, maintaining the brand image is crucial and should
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permeate in the social media strategy of a business. Incorporating the Social Media Cone Strategy framework in this research will provide a more thorough and valid analysis of Air Arabia and its social media presence.

Methodology

Berg (2007) defines content analysis as a “careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material to identify patterns. The main purpose of using the content analysis method is to analyze the data which include social media marketing reports from the Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook accounts of Air Arabia. Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are the most social media platforms that the airline uses. This study analyzes major and the most peak posts made by the airline and the interactions by its customers from January to November 2019.

The data collected were thematically analyzed to understand how social media is utilized by Air Arabia. Content analysis was conducted on the three main platforms that Air Arabia is present. Statistics are provided by Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook that show the engagement that these platforms have with clients. The channels provide relevant statistics showing the number of impressions that a social media post has and the number of engagements that it has formed.

Findings

Air Arabia used several social media channels to communicate with customers. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram were preferred in providing information on several issues related to the company through photos, videos, statuses, links, and carousel. The content from these three platforms constitute part of the overall thematic analysis. The data showed the following themes concerning Air Arabia’s use of social media: The type of content used, the platform preferred, and the engagement with clients.
**Content Types**

**Figure 2. Post Types**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post Type</th>
<th>% of Each Post Type</th>
<th># of Post Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>video</td>
<td>46.70%</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>photo</td>
<td>41.05%</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carousel</td>
<td>8.66%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>link</td>
<td>2.07%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>status</td>
<td>1.51%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Air Arabia, p. 5)

The analysis of the data collected from the three platforms revealed that Air Arabia preferred to use videos as its main form of communication online. 46% of the posts across the three social media channels of the company are videos followed by photos, then carousels, and finally links and statuses. The use of videos is particularly high on the company’s Facebook page and Instagram accounts. Videos are preferred by the airline because they are universal tools of marketing and are proven to be efficient in reaching out to clients regardless of their language. Airline corporations prefer using videos to highlight their various destinations. The airline seeks to influence the behavior of its target audience by displaying videos of different destinations spurring the desire to travel using the airline. Airline utilizes its social media posts to recruit new clients. The second type of content most commonly posted by the airline is images across all three social media channels analyzed in the research. Images often depict destinations that the airline research, however, they can be used to communicate messages and notices quickly and effectively. The least used mode of communication on social media by Air Arabia is text. The social media management team uses short captions and texts in its communication on social media platforms. The posts are
mainly important public announcements, information on changes in flight schedules, and communication on various promotions.

**Engagement**

Air Arabia recognizes the significance of communicating with its audiences more interactively by identifying the most engaging post types. The interactive approach facilitates more interaction and enables customers to share content. Figure 3 highlights the most engaging post types during communication with customers.

Figure 3. Most Engaging Post Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post Type</th>
<th>% of Interactions</th>
<th># of Interactions</th>
<th>Interactions per 1000 Fans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>photo</td>
<td>80.06%</td>
<td>386k</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>video</td>
<td>17.33%</td>
<td>83.5k</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carousel</td>
<td>2.10%</td>
<td>10.1k</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>status</td>
<td>0.18%</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>link</td>
<td>0.33%</td>
<td>1.6k</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Air Arabia, p. 5)

The results showed that photos attracted the highest levels of user interaction in terms of likes, comments, and shares. Photos posted across Air Arabia’s three social media channels attracted an engagement of 80.06% far eclipsing that of the second type which is videos at 17.33%. The user preference for engaging with photos could be explained by a host of factors. The first one could be the easy accessibility of photos compared to videos by users. Videos require more data for an end-user to enjoy unlike photos and this could explain the higher level of user engagement.
Air Arabia mainly posts pictures of far off destinations that attract a large number of users and audiences. The level of engagement with the photos was observed to be higher on the social media platforms of Instagram and Facebook. Instagram has recorded the highest interaction levels since it is primarily a photo-sharing application. Videos attract the second-highest amount of interactions. Video interactions are lower because of the length of the videos and the amount of data that it consumes making them accessible to a smaller number of users. The high interaction levels with photos could indicate the need for Air Arabia to focus more effort in this content form to reach out to as many people as possible.

**Engagement across Platforms**
The findings show that Air Arabia was able to monitor its engagement with customers across different social media channels to gain knowledge on how these platforms help to connect the customer to the organization. Figure 4 shows essential data on several metrics for measuring engagement, focusing on fans, content, and interactions.

**Figure 4. Engagement Metrics**

![Engagement Metrics](Source: Air Arabia, p. 2)

**Figure 5.1 Engagement Metrics (Twitter)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Metric</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Engagements</td>
<td>80,655</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likes</td>
<td>12,821</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@ replies</td>
<td>2,990</td>
<td>102%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retweets</td>
<td>1,390</td>
<td>94.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Link Clicks</td>
<td>3,215</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Post Clicks</td>
<td>58,551</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Engagements</td>
<td>1,280</td>
<td>488%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement Rate (per impression)</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Air Arabia)

**Figure 5.2 Engagement Metrics (Twitter)**
The findings of the content analysis have also shown that Air Arabia’s communication through social media with customers has been effective. The level of outreach differs depending on the social media
platform used. For example, Facebook has led to an increase of fans averaging 330.84 per day from January to November 2019, representing a total of 108,186 new fans. Air Arabia’s fan base has been growing over the months to a total of 1,357,362 fans. Facebook represents the social media channel where the company has the highest level of user engagement. The platform has many reasons for being the channel where Air Arabia has been most successful. Facebook is currently the largest social media platform in the world with more than 2.7 billion registered users across the globe. The platform allows the users to share statuses, pictures, and videos thereby making it suitable for an airline, which focuses on videos and pictures to promote its brand. Facebook also utilizes artificial intelligence to specifically target clients making it useful for companies like Air Arabia. The level of engagement is almost equal on Instagram and Twitter where the clients interact with the airline to make inquiries and for general customer care. Figure 6 shows the growth of fans on Facebook.

Figure 6. Growth of Fans

(Source: Air Arabia, p. 3)

Moreover, the growth of fans showed that the highest number of followers is from Morocco, followed by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. For Instagram, the number of followers jumped from 98,697 in December 2018 to 156,000 in November 2019. With over 66k engagements and 227k views, the company has seen tremendous growth because it placed no direct adverts on Instagram to influence
viewership or engagement. Although the most frequent post type on Instagram were videos, the static posts, mainly images, and received more engagement. Figure 7 shows some of the top Instagram posts, including the number of likes and comments.

Figure 7. Top Instagram Posts

![Image of top Instagram posts](Source: Air Arabia, p. 19)

A general observation of customer behavior showed an exceptional performance of posts across social media platforms. Air Arabia communicated effectively with customers through brand posts as assessed by the number of comments, shares, reactions, and interactions. For example, the post “Air Arabia souhaite tout le succès à l'équipe Nationale Tunisienne pour les 1/4 de finale” received overwhelming engagement from customers with 24.3k total interactions, 22.7k reactions, 778 comments, 799 shares, and 18.48 interactions per 1000 followers.

**Discussion**

**Social Networks and Air Arabia**

Today, the network activities of many companies are firmly established in their daily work routine. Leading executives and entrepreneurs actively develop their business using the Internet as a means to communicate, transmit important information, advertise their company, and provide a wide range of different services. The research conducted based on Air Arabia Company largely confirms that work...
through social networks directly affects the success and effectiveness of achieving the goals set.

Social networks allow people in business to create specific content that contains relevant information about both the company and its special offers or new products. The organization specialists carefully control and choose what kind of information should be disseminated in social networks and select it following the market where the company is located (Europe, Morocco, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the general market). Daily monitoring of customers’ feedbacks and comments about specific posts helps many successful companies quickly contact them and eliminate the cause of dissatisfaction. Thus, Air Arabia not only advertises its services but also strives to increase authority among clients. Reputation is another crucial point that helps the company to expand its customer base and occupy a leading position among competitors. To protect one’s brand, entrepreneurs should be attentive to all controversial situations with customers, as they can reach a particular scale, which will entail a loss of trust of the target audience in the services and reliability of the organization.

The social networks that are mainly used by Air Arabia include Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Facebook has the largest number of fans with the account representing the social media platform that the company has had the largest digital footprint. Facebook has more users than other newer social media channels and utilizes artificial intelligence to get the preferred target audience. Instagram is also useful in reaching out to an audience that is interested in travel and is more likely to book a ticket to go on a trip. Instagram is a visual social media channel where users mainly post pictures and engage with them. Air Arabia has found great success on this platform with interactions on photographs accounting for more than 80% of customer interactions for the business.

Air Arabia produced creative commercials that influenced the decision of customers to use its services. The distribution of advertisements through social media helps to attract a wider audience of customers, while marketing based on the "Word of mouth" tactic on the ground will not yield significant results (Lee, Ng, Chan, Choy, Tai, Choi,
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The performance of the work depends only on how correctly entrepreneurs and marketers determine the tactics of communication with end-users.

**Customer Relations**

Social media plays a critical role in linking an organization to its customers. Social media channels help create a positive relationship with citizens while also providing the organization with an opportunity to access customers (Kelly, 2010). Many organizations develop a variety of social media accounts to enhance their interactions with clients and potential customers. For example, an organization can utilize its social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter to notify its customers about different company events, policies, or expected changes in business orientation. The primary reason for these types of engagements is to enhance effectiveness in communicating with customers through a mix of social media platforms. A customer who receives constant updates on current issues related to the company, for example, will feel valued and appreciated. A satisfied customer will add different benefits to the organization, such as staying loyal and recommending the company to family and friends.

However, based on the Social Media Strategy Cone, one may argue that Air Arabia should recognize that the power of customers in social media channels. For example, the company should encourage the customers to participate and share their feedback freely and openly. More importantly, Air Arabia should choose the proper social media channel to enhance their effectiveness in engaging with clients and potential customers. Having said that, the company has overall been effective in communicating with followers across all social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Knoblich, Martin, Nash, and Stansbie (2015) contend that a company's effectiveness in communicating with customers can be assessed by checking the number of likes, the number of followers, and post replies because these factors provide information on the attractiveness of social media channels. Social media channels have enhanced involvement and engagement with the consumer, which in turn will
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boost the customer's loyalty, faith, allegiance, and friendliness. As a result, engagement creates an attachment to brand activities such as sales growth, expansion of the product, and consumer comments.

**Effectiveness**

Air Arabia’s current social media strategy involves the use of social media to expand its outreach, market to a bigger audience, and ensure that it is responsive to the needs of its clients. According to the Social Media Cone theory, Air Arabia is at the mature stage of social media strategy where the content posted is first reviewed by the team before it is posted to the public. The high level of engagement across the different social media platforms is indicative that the strategy is working in identifying and attracting the right type of audience. The policies and culture of the company are also present in all the social media platforms ensuring that users get a real feeling of what the company holds. However, the disparity in engagement between videos and photos raises questions on the type of content that would be most effective for Air Arabia. Photos are much better received than videos by users even though videos lead in terms of the number of posts across three different social media channels. The social media managing team would do well to consider increasing the number of photos that they post in relation to the videos.

**Conclusion and recommendations**

This research aimed to investigate the extent to which Air Arabia uses social media marketing strategies to communicate and engage with its customers. We now live in a world where social media has become a critical marketing tool. Therefore, a company with a global outreach such as Air Arabia cannot afford to lose out on opportunities of social media marketing. The study aimed at assessing the effectiveness of the current social media strategies that Air Arabia is utilizing in its marketing efforts.

Social media has become an increasingly important tool in modern day businesses. Through social media channel, companies can better market themselves to a large audience of people and offer new ways of interacting with their existing and potential customers. Businesses
are also becoming more reliant on social media as a tool in shaping its brand image to consumers. The various channels serve as conduits through which customers see and experience the company.

This paper aimed to shed light on the different aspects of Air Arabia social media strategies with the hope that it will help make them more successful and effective. One of the limitations of this study is the lack of interviews with social media marketing executives. Another limitation to the study was the strict confidentiality rules of Air Arabia. The researchers could not access sensitive data on how the social media team and external managers operate. Future studies should incorporate their valuable insights into the assessment of the social media strategies. The competition for the attention of social media users is on the rise with more businesses seeking a competitive advantage on various platforms (Hovstad, 2018).

Although the social media strategy in place at Air Arabia is effective thus far, there is still room for improvement. The company can improve its marketing approach, engagement, and customer loyalty. Air Arabia could expand its use of social media influencers. Currently, the company utilizes public figures such as politicians and leaders as the main influencers in their social media platforms. International celebrities and social influencers such as movie stars, pop artists, and sports persons are used widely by international airlines for brand promotion. The airline can also use brand advocates drawn from within the company, such as existing customers or employees. Positive testimonies from clients tend to work in promoting brands since the public gets a feel of how previous customers experienced their flights. The move will also significantly reduce the cost of advertising for the airline. Another recommendation involves creating a community of fans. Online communities tend to spur customer loyalty. Communication can also range from giving information on products and services to asking questions, gathering opinions, liking, and sharing some of their posts, among others. Moreover, although Air Arabia engages in content monitoring initiatives, it needs to develop a more efficient content marketing strategy in order to ensure sustained customer engagement. As such, the company needs to engage a content quality analyst who can link quality content with the
right and elaborate posting schedule as well as the correct frequency of posts. These steps ensure that customers are kept engaged at all times while at the same time avoiding the posting of low-quality content.
An Assessment of the Social Media Marketing Strategy of Air Arabia

References:


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