KFC Social Media Strategy SWOT and Ethical Analysis

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Part 1: Social Media Analysis

Executive summary

The fast-food industry needs to reach customers quickly and become the leading driver of global growth. In this industry, one of the main representatives is KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken), which is also pursuing different strategies to reach its customers. KFC has an international presence, and due to this, it faces the challenge of dealing with a diverse range of customers who also have different backgrounds and different expectations and needs. It has effectively overcome this challenge through the effective use of social media. However, it is still far behind in its efforts to use social media as a channel and make effective strategies in comparison with its competitors. KFC's competitors, such as Subway and McDonald's, have an effective presence that can be seen in their number of followers. KFC needs to venture into the world of social media to get the potential benefits of increased sales, customer service, advertising promotions, and human resource strategies.

Introduction

Social media has an enormous influence on modern life, and thus, it is not possible to ignore its usage. Marketing over social media has gained importance both for consumers and for marketers. The use of smartphones has provided customers with access to social media, even if they are not present in their offices and homes. People get online and contribute much towards the profits of businesses by allowing easy techniques to be used by marketers. For instance, the worth of brand and brand recognition can be increased by using social media as a channel. This not only provides an easy opportunity to target customers, but it is also a cost-effective method. KFC is also using this as a part of its marketing strategy and making efforts to overcome the weakness in its strategies over this media.

Social media has one major drawback: bad word of mouth cannot be stopped easily. If there are many advantages to having quick feedback for consumers and companies, then this quick feedback also serves as a disadvantage for companies (Evans, 2010). Companies do not get much time to defend their position, and this brings them a loss. There are many ethical dilemmas that companies face

during marketing on social media. For instance, there are millions of users online at a single point in time, and if a single instance of bad word of mouth starts at any time, then its spread is so fast that it becomes difficult to stop that discussion.

There are many situations in which companies fall prey to conspiracies that can be carried out against them. It is often seen that a trend starts on Twitter regarding one thing, and no one can stop it until it causes a huge loss to the company. Since its use of social media, KFC has also suffered from numerous such conspiracies, which have greatly reduced its customer loyalty. It is also facing problems due to these instances of bad word of mouth. It is time for its leadership to pay attention to the current marketing strategies and make it possible to lessen or neutralize the effect of any such conspiracy.

Description

KFC is currently using different social media platforms. These include Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. There are different strategies that the company is using to have its presence on these media to gain an advantage from their usage. The strategies also differ with the change in social media tools. For instance, KFC uses different marketing strategies for Facebook and analyzes competitors' strategies. The current approach of KFC is to use reactive strategies and respond to the marketing needs of the company in comparison with its competitors. KFC currently has 49,351,104 followers on Facebook, and it is the most prevailing social marketing tool. It provides the greatest probability to influence many potential customers and establish brand awareness. Also, KFC is present on Twitter and has 1,270,000 followers. Twitter followers can tweet and use different hashtags and provide their instant feedback related to the product's features, like quality and price, in tweets. This is the best way to have an instant change in marketing and other strategies aimed at increasing revenue and facing the intense competition in marketing.

KFC uses Twitter to establish its brand worth. Twitter is a free micro-blogging social network. This network makes it possible for users to post short messages called tweets. These tweets can be seen by any subscriber who is called a follower on social media (Kwon & Sung, 2011). This social media tool can be accessed through desktop computers, laptops, and phones, as well as other devices. Customers also subscribe to the KFC page and get attached to all tweets being posted by public relations teams working on Twitter. For this purpose, there is no need to visit the KFC profile, but once you subscribe, you easily get tweets as they get posted.

KFC on Twitter is using another strategy that also keeps its accounts in some locations or countries private and allows only specific users to subscribe. It does so as a proactive approach to avoid damaging its reputation on social media. The third platform that KFC uses is LinkedIn, which has 6,073 followers. It is using this platform to reduce its turnover and gain a competitive advantage. Its activity informs users about open vacancies and the desired profiles of its employees.

Summary

The KFC marketing team started the use of social media marketing in 2010. It started this by adding social sharing buttons to its sites and calculating results. There were surprising results regarding customer feedback on the use of social media. With all other activities on social media, there was also news sharing regarding the KFC brand and its social media presence. Now, the marketing team has decided to turn these subscribers into social influencers. KFC email databases are surging with subscriptions, and the quality of their signups is also high. KFC has 49,351,104 followers on Facebook as compared to McDonald's and Subway. They have 76,110,501 and 24,227,121 followers, respectively. Thus, KFC is performing well on Facebook as compared to its competitor Subway, but at the same time, it is not performing well on Facebook as compared to McDonald's, which has more followers than KFC. McDonald's is also serving in the best way regarding the quality of its website and content for the users, and Subway needs to improve its quality. KFC is also good regarding the quality of its Facebook page, users' ease of access to information, and its attractiveness. On its Facebook page, KFC has an FAQ portion that contains all the anticipated questions so that no negative publicity can be carried out against the company over social media. In this way, customers get the answers to those questions and do not indulge in conspiracies against the company.

The other social media site that KFC uses is Twitter, which has 1.27 million followers compared to McDonald's 3.56 million and Subway's 2.47 million. KFC must also revise its strategies regarding this media usage as it is far behind its competitors in terms of followers and presence on this site. It is not effectively using this media and is losing some customers as its competitors are performing well on this site. Even though the quality of Subway is also not good on this platform, it can still attract more customers.

LinkedIn is used by KFC as a part of its marketing strategies, and it has fewer followers than its competitors. KFC has 6,073 followers, and McDonald's and Subway have 490,370 and 105,323 followers. The quality of McDonald's and Subway sites regarding content and ease of use for customers, including feedback, is superior. There are always more online users at a specific point in time than online users at KFC. These online users communicate, and the nature of these Facebook communities is different from that of Twitter communities. People use Facebook mainly to get connected with their friends and family, and in this way, they become the source of information regarding a certain product or service. However, Twitter users have different attitudes, and they have more links with their surrounding happenings, their observations, and their comments regarding the particular situation. Thus, people on Twitter share their surroundings and current situations. Marketers make use of this, and Twitter accounts are used to keep customers updated regarding current trends. In this way, marketers also get information regarding the current customers' behaviors, and they modify the products accordingly.

Part 2: SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
· Strong brand recognition · Less employee turnover · Home meal delivery · Variety in menu · Global presence	· Ineffective presence on social media · Unreliable suppliers · Negative profile-raising · Unhealthy food menu · Use of more traditional marketing · Products only in the chicken range
Opportunities	Threats
· Introducing new products to its only chicken range · Use of technology	· Competitors' strong marketing efforts · Competitors' strong fan following and social media presence · Cultural barriers

Ethical Analysis

In the past, traditional media was used to reach consumers. There was the use of traditional magazines and radio along with the use of television and direct mail. However, this method was not convenient for consumers, marketers, or businesses. The reason was the nature of one-way communication, and the feedback process was very slow. There were a large number of consumers who had no trust in the information provided through this media, especially when it came to health concerns.

Then, with the passage of time, the use of traditional media was replaced by social media. Social media usage consists of different social networking sites as well as different blogging platforms. Now, the use of social media is increasing in this contemporary society. This is due to the nature of dealing that has changed over social media. Now, it is possible for consumers to have instant information regarding any concern about the company as well as its products. It is also possible to get instant feedback over social media. Now, consumers on social media also get the opportunity to talk and exchange different views regarding the company and its products. Thus, they exchange information through easy and instant access. There are online communities of interest on the internet. Thus, this platform is increasingly used to share information among consumers, and it now serves as an authentic source of information that people believe in.

However, there is also a drawback to the use of social media for marketing. There are numerous ways

in which a company's reputation can be destroyed or harmed. One such case is KFC. PETA has stimulated KFC and other fast-food restaurants to provide ethical treatment to animals as a requirement that must be fulfilled (Francione, 2008). KFC's reputation for quality suffered when a video was leaked showing a violation of PETA's requirements. This news spread over social media, and there was a huge loss to KFC. Now, customers have reservations about KFC's treatment of animals. With the initial sharing of information, social media was a powerful tool that spread the video to a large number of customers in no time, and it served as negative word of mouth.

Consumers, in this case, played an active role because this occurred over social media. In traditional media such as magazines and newspapers, they had only a passive role. If the company had used this, it might have prevented the immediate spread of information among consumers. But now, with social media, consumers are both the initiators as well as recipients of information exchanges. Thus, on social media, consumers not only get connected, but they also share information and serve as an advertising channel.

KFC also responded to the video and explained its point of view with effective blogging. There was a video that contained an apology, and it also described the details of the steps that were undertaken by KFC in this regard, and it was also ensured that no such things would happen in the future. However, this was a slow process, and KFC paid heavily in terms of its reputation, loss of customers, and a decline in profits during that quarter. However, after this, it started using good communication tactics to overcome these types of situations in a timely manner (Zhu, Anagondahalli & Zhang, 2017). For this purpose, it has established an online space tasked with dealing with these kinds of crisis situations. This approach does not allow comments to flood a blog. Now, KFC has created a space on its Facebook or Twitter page that is mainly used for customer support as well as feedback. This strategy will assist the company, and it will be able to overcome all the negativity easily if it ever happens over social media against the company.

Conclusion

Social media is serving as an effective way to address consumers' needs concerning the marketing of products and companies. This media has established its credibility among consumers as they actively participate here compared to their passive participation in traditional media. This participation offers the benefit of not only gaining higher credibility and trust, but it can also enhance search rankings for a company or its products. Moreover, all the marketing done through the use of Facebook carries the potential to increase brand awareness, customer loyalty, and sales in the end. With the use of social media, there is a wider audience available for targeting. This also assists in establishing a good relationship with consumers. Thus, KFC is now paying more attention to using this media as it is a two-edged sword. It is not a perfect approach and has certain disadvantages. The best strategy is to use it correctly and turn its disadvantages into advantages by using different strategies.

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