

Social Media Strategic Plan For Under Armour

Ashley Leers

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George Young, Ph.D.
Thesis Chair

Kendrick Brunson, D.B.A.
Committee Member

Robert Young, M.S.
Committee Member

James H. Nutter, D.A.
Honors Director

Date

Abstract

This thesis is a study of the effects of social media on an organization's integrated marketing communications strategy in general and provides a proposal of how the sports apparel company Under Armour could use social media to enhance its promotional strategies. It is a discussion of the implications that social media has on consumer behavior with focus on how social media has changed the way today's consumers interact with brands. This thesis provides an analysis of the growing importance of social media being implemented within a business. Benefits discussed include the appeal of social media over traditional media, increased customer satisfaction, increased loyalty, and brand awareness. A list of essential social media networking sites is discussed under the different platforms of networking, promoting and sharing, highlighting their importance to a business. Under Armour's current social media presence is discussed and how social media has become a new component of the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) mix. An illustration of how Homeland/Embassy strategy uses social media is provided as an example of how Under Armour could use social media in its IMC mix.

Social Media Strategic Plan For Under Armour

Social media is widespread and has grown rapidly in the past few years. In fact, statistics show that in 2013, 73% of all Internet users 18 and over use social networking sites (Brenner, 2013). With such a large amount of the population using social media, businesses have identified it as a valuable marketing tool. Social media makes it possible for a business to be in direct communication with its customers and makes it easy to target different audiences. With the rapid growth rate of online social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Google+, businesses can utilize these sites for promoting their brand, engaging with consumers and developing relationships. Because of its ability to convey a message to a majority of potential consumers, social media has become a new component of the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) mix and it has changed to a more interactive level of relationship between brand and consumer. Therefore it is critical for Under Armour to employ an effective social media strategy to be successful.

Social Media and Social Networks Changing Business

What is Social Media?

Safko & Brake (2009) define social media as “Activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media” (p. 6). Unlike traditional media, which only allows for one-way conversation, social media allows for two-way interaction and instant communication. Ryan and Jones (2011) stated:

Social media is not only changing the way people communicate online, but is impacting the way they consume other media too – people are using their online social connections to filter, discuss, disseminate and validate the news, entertainment and products they choose to consume, online and offline. (p. 15)

What is a Social Network?

An important element of social media is the platform in which it is used, known as social networking sites. Svatosova (2012) stated that social networking sites are places for people to meet and connect with friends and communities that share the same interests. It allows users to share media to inform, entertain and connect with others.

Social Media Has Changed Consumer Behavior

Communication has changed. With the creation of social media, it has allowed for people to communicate with one another freely, uncensored and with no limitations. Anderson (2012) explained that social media has created a fundamental shift in the expectations of people and communities because of the instant ability to communicate and share information. As a result, online behavior is developing at such a fast rate. People are continually turning to social media to connect with one another. In fact, according to Duggan & Smith (2013), 73% of online adults are using a social networking site and 42% of online adults now use multiple social networking sites.

Consumers share more. With the rise of social media comes the rise of instant information sharing. Before, only close friends and family would know personal information about an individual. However today, social media provides a platform and opportunity to share information and as a result, social norms are emerging as to what

people expect of themselves and others. Shih (2011) stated, “Not only is it socially acceptable to share aspects of our identity on Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn, but it has become expected that we do so” (p. 33). With this knowledge, businesses can learn more about the specific needs, wants and desires of target market consumers. They can identify the characteristics of their target market better than the old days of formal market research.

Customer expectations of companies have changed. There are many social norms that have emerged for how companies are expected to interact with customers. One expectation is the demand for authenticity. The customer expects that the company’s social networking sites feel personal and authentic. De Beule (2014) explained that treating customers like insiders by sharing valid and important information is a great way to show off the company’s authentic side. A second expectation is transparency. Shih (2011) stated, “Today’s companies are rewarded for openness and transparency about business practices, community involvement, and shortcomings” (p. 39). For example, Apple is rated as the most transparent company by US consumers even though the company has well-documented supply chain issues (Sudhaman, 2013). A third expectation is engagement. Customers expect companies to listen to what they have to say and that they have a voice in matters that are important to them. Even more, customers expect real-time response. Because consumers are using social media 24/7 due to the popularity of iPhones, they expect companies to keep up with them in a timely manner. Another expectation of companies is a long-term view of customer relationships. Shih (2011) stated, “The goal is to win customer loyalty in the form of

Facebook fans, Twitter followers, and word-of-mouth instead of optimizing for click-through rates on a specific campaign” (p. 39).

With all these expectations, it is imperative that companies become customer-centric. By putting loyal and valuable customers at the core of the company’s strategy, they will be able to respond quickly to customers and have a deep knowledge and understanding of their needs. Svatosova (2012) explained that society is in an information age where customers know more about competitors and their offers resulting in a more demanding and selective consumer. Therefore, it is beneficial for companies to have a loyal following of consumers, which is a result of a customer centric business.

As an outcome of these expectations, the way business is conducted has changed. Before, companies did not have the opportunity to be more responsive to their loyal customers’ needs, wants and desires. Now, companies can benefit and improve their business by utilizing social media.

The advertising landscape has changed. The goals of advertising have not changed with the introduction of social media; only the methods of achieving the goals have changed. Consumers are turning away from traditional media such as TV and magazines and increasingly use social networking sites to search for information (Bruhn, Schoenmueller & Schafer, 2012). As a result, businesses have found that social media advertising offers a potentially unique advertising opportunity as Americans are spending an average of 12 hours per month on social networks, with 18-24 year olds averaging 20 hours (“State of Social Media,” 2013). With this, new methods have been used such as

advertisement targeting, hypertargeting, constant communication, and interactive advertising.

Advertisement targeting. Conventional wisdom has been that “joining the conversation” by establishing a presence on social networking sites was the only way to effectively sell with social media. However, the advertising landscape has changed with the implementation of targeting prospective consumers with paid search or display advertisements. Kincy (2011) stated, “Marketers have partnered with social platforms to deliver advertising to the user based on characteristics such as location, age, interests and usage habits” (p. 40). This has resulted in a new stream of advertising that has a main focus of targeting social users. Now marketers can target prospective customers using options such as ad targeting, display ads, social ads, and promoted ads.

Hypertargeting. Social media has also allowed for companies to implement hypertargeting, which is “the capability on social networking sites to target ads based on very specific criteria” (Shih, 2011, p. 111). This enables the advertiser to make advertisements less generic and more important to the consumer viewing the ad, in effect, making it more personal. Hypertargeting via social media also allows for cost-effectively reaching passive buyers. Companies can get the message to those who are in the market for the product now and make an impression for the future when the person might be ready to buy. Even more, the person may relay the message to social acquaintances that might be ready to buy and hearing an advertisement message from one within the social network can be more effective than from a distant company.

Constant communication. Social media has impacted the advertising process by creating an avenue to attract new attention as it allows for constant communication with consumers. This means that companies can encourage behavior changes on a regular basis. The use of a customized new media “trigger” such as text messages, have been found to be an effective method by influencing customers to become involved and continually motivate them to take specific actions (Hill & Morgan, 2011). The company Amazon displays an example of this. They were one of the first companies that would offer product recommendations to customers based off of their purchase history. These recommendations accounted for 30 percent of their revenue. Facebook and Amazon just recently announced a partnership allowing users to link their accounts to receive highly personalized recommendations based on their activity and interests (Tuttle, 2013).

Interactive advertising. There has also been an increase in interactive advertising, defined as “all forms of online, wireless, and interactive television advertising, including banners, sponsorships, e-mail, keyword searches, etc.” (Tan, Kwek, & Li, 2013, p. 90). This new media has allowed for consumers to select preferred information, building two-way communication with advertisers, which engages them in the advertising process.

Brand communication has changed. Social media has become a catalyst for information sharing by offering consumers the opportunity to talk to thousands of consumers around the world. In effect, companies no longer are the only ones providing information about their brand. This has resulted in brands not having the same type of control they once had over how they are conveyed and received. Consumers regard

social media users as a trustworthy source of information and are continually turning to social networking sites about brand information (Shih, 2011). Nielsen (2009) found that 70% of Internet users trust the evaluations of consumers on social media platforms. Even more, it implies that company messages about the brand are in the minority position of trust among consumers – consumers trust social users more than companies by a 2-to-1 margin. Gensler, Volckner, Liu-Thompkins & Wiertz (2013) found that brand managers have lost the role as author of their brands story as consumers have gained a more important voice through their brand stories found on social networks. Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson, & Seymour (2011) explained that social media represents an opportunity and risk for a business. The opportunity it provides is a platform for brands to connect with customers. However, the risk is that it has shifted the power to the individual. An individual now can tarnish a brand through the simple act of posting an angry blog. As a result, a business' failures and successes are put on display. Ultimately, due to social media, there is a new contemporary understanding of brands in that brands are viewed as an ongoing social activity and brand value is built through the consumer relationship (Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt & Fuller, 2013).

The Importance of Social Media in Business

Social media has ultimately changed the way that a business advertises and communicates with its customers. A business can be in constant communication with its consumers providing an opportunity to be more responsive to their loyal customers' needs, wants and desires. With new methods such as advertisement targeting, hypertargeting, and interactive advertising, a business is able to deliver its message more

effectively than ever. Therefore, it is important for a company to implement social media as it provides many benefits.

The Appeal of Social Media over Traditional Media

Woodall & Colby (2011) have characterized the appeal of social media over traditional media into four important elements. The first is that social media satisfies an impulse. Consumers have the choice to connect when they wish to and the connections take little effort and are quick. The second element is that social media provides an excitement of sharing. It allows for an individual to share his or her experiences with others and expand their communication to include other people. The third is that social media users are perceived as experts and trustworthy because they are usually within the same network, have experienced the same situation or are family and friends. Therefore, users go to social media seeking advice. The fourth element is that social media provides an avenue to gather and share with people who have similar interests and gain valuable information that traditional media cannot offer. These are all important elements, as users prefer social media to traditional media. If a business does not utilize social media effectively, it will not be able to reap the benefits that social media has to offer.

Cost Effective

Another benefit that social media provides a business is that it is cost effective. It is important for a business to conduct marketing in a cost effective manner while successfully reaching the desired audience and social media has been shown to do that. Zeller (2012) stated, "Social media marketing is cost-effective from the perspective that

the initial investment is more one of time than actual advertising dollars” (para. 10). He continues to say that social media requires more time than traditional media, as it must be managed constantly, however, it is comparably affordable and a more effective promotional technique. Further, social media allows a company to focus its efforts on people who are actually interested in the company, thereby gaining more customers per marketing dollar (Chiles, 2014). Social networks have scale, which provides an enormous user base allowing for a business to attract more customers, increasing the opportunity for more sales. With a more cost-effective marketing tool, businesses can focus dollars in other areas of the company such as R&D, rather than on other budget draining marketing techniques such as magazine advertisements.

Increased Customer Satisfaction

Social media has been found to increase customer satisfaction as it allows for consumers to voice their issues to the organization providing an opportunity for the company to resolve the issues and gauge their satisfaction. Clark & Melancon (2013) stated, “By investing in the relationship through social media communications, marketers can address customer service issues and potentially raise their satisfaction to even higher levels” (p. 135). With increased customer satisfaction, it is a likely indicator that the customer will make a future purchase and be loyal to the company. For example, the Ritz-Carlton hotel chain has the reputation for exceptional customer service making it the only service company in America that has won the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award twice. In fact, a 2010 MEC study found that 79% of Ritz Carlton customers demonstrate high loyalty, advocacy and passion for the company (People Metrics, 2010).

Increased Loyalty

Loyalty is of great importance to marketers as it is more cost effective to retain customers than to compete for new ones. Shaffer & Garnett (2011) found that 51% of Facebook users who follow a company and “like” on Facebook are more likely to buy their products or services than those who have not used the “like” function for the company on Facebook. Even if consumers cannot display this loyalty by purchasing the product, they can still display their loyalty by showing a liking for the brand (Clark & Melancon, 2013). Increased loyalty is of great importance to a business because when a customer is loyal to a company, it has been found that they are willing to pay more for services and display attitudinal loyalty. Attitudinal loyalty is when a customer tells others about how great a product or brand is. This differs from behavioral loyalty, which is the act of purchasing a product. Behavioral loyalty is critical for any business; however attitudinal loyalty generates word of mouth, which is invaluable in attracting customers (PR Loyalty Solutions, 2012). Even more, the implications of a loyal customer are customer retention, repurchase intentions, and brand engagement (Fraering & Minor, 2013).

Brand Awareness and Positive Word of Mouth (WOM)

Social media can provide many opportunities to raise brand awareness. Goodman (2014) stated, “Successful social media marketing has the potential to generate more traffic to a website, send customers to a retail location, create awareness for a brand and build allegiance” (para. 6). Social media has made the identity of a brand’s supporters transparent to others who are prospective consumers. The consumers can view a brand

page and are likely to see people who have voluntarily affiliated themselves with the brand and in some cases have provided useful information (Naylor, Lamberton & West, 2012). This generates positive word-of-mouth (WOM) as consumers who are loyal to the brand actively show and convince others of their loyalty. According to Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt, & Fuller (2013), “The degree of involvement with social media applications like Facebook fanpages, i.e. the level of brand page commitment, as well as brand awareness could therefore be an indicator of positive WOM activities” (p. 345). They continue to say that brand awareness is the first important requirement of WOM. When the brand has a strong presence in a consumers mind, it is likelier that they will talk about the brand. Further, customers purchasing products or services based on a referral have been shown to buy more (Wagner, n.d.). In fact research found that 71% of consumers are more likely to buy when referred by social media (Klapec, 2014). As a result, with more referrals, there could be an increase in customers and purchases, resulting in increased revenues.

The Benefits are Many

In summary, social media has provided many benefits for a business that add value to the company, can help increase topline and increase customer satisfaction. Social media has provided insight into the minds of the consumer, has helped brands engage directly with current and future customers, and has been shown to increase customer satisfaction. It has helped to reduce marketing expenses, focus marketing efforts and increase brand awareness. By utilizing this tool, a business can better serve its customers, which positively benefits the company.

Essential Social Media Sites

Because of the abundance of social networking sites, it can be very difficult to know where to commit a company's time and resources to help the organization grow its sales and revenue. Turner & Shah (2011) have broken social media platforms into three different categories as a way to help identify which tool is the most appropriate for the company's specific tasks: networking platforms, promoting platforms and sharing platforms.

Networking Platforms

The first category is networking platforms. These are tools that allow the company to build relationships with others. Turner & Shah (2011) stated, "Social media is the perfect tool for people who understand that what you're doing today will influence your success tomorrow. It's a great way for businesses to build relationships with people who will buy your product in the future" (p. 106). Among the top 2014 popular social networking sites, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and MySpace fall under the networking platform.

Facebook. Facebook provides a platform for users to connect with friends, family, coworkers and acquaintances. It has been ranked number one on eBizMBA (2014) with 900 million monthly visitors. Facebook is essential to a business because it is a powerful tool that allows an organization to engage in customer relation management (CRM). It allows companies to share information, photos and videos, provides the avenue to talk to existing and potential customers and provides customer support. Having a presence on the number one social networking site allows a company to directly

communicate and share with its current and future customers and gain valuable information that can provide a competitive advantage.

Twitter. Twitter ranks second on eBizMBA (2014) with 310 million monthly visitors. It provides users the channel to ‘tweet’ updates about their activities to communicate with their followers. The newest benefit of Twitter for marketers is its new direct message (DM) feature, which allows user to choose to receive DMs from anyone. Rinaldi (2014) stated, “This functionality enables companies to promote their brand and products directly to Twitter users without needing to follow them” (para. 6). Therefore, Twitter is essential for a business to utilize as it allows the company to be in constant contact with customers, and provides up to date information about the company and its actions in the community. This satisfies the consumer’s expectation for transparency and real-time response, building trust and customer satisfaction.

LinkedIn. Ranking third is LinkedIn with 250 million monthly visitors. LinkedIn’s philosophy is “Relationships matter.” Its purpose serves as a gathering site for individuals to maintain professional relationships, look for jobs, recruit candidates, and exchange solutions for problems in the business environment (Safko & Brake, 2009). Hughes (2014) stated that LinkedIn helps business-to-consumer networking as, “your brand is how you identify with your customers both current and future, and LinkedIn provides a perfect way to shape that brand image the way you want it” (para. 4). Ways to do so is by actively posting on the site with timely, interesting and relevant posts. Therefore, having a presence on this LinkedIn can provide networking opportunities, recruit top candidates, and reinforce the company brand.

MySpace. Ranked number 10 on the top 15 social networking sites with 40 million monthly visitors, MySpace has rebranded itself as a social entertainment network. New features allow users to connect to Facebook and Twitter via MySpace to find friends and update their status. Bhargava (2013) stated that marketers have plenty of reasons to get excited about the new MySpace. With high profile celebrities such as Justin Timberlake promoting the new MySpace, likely, a new marketing tactic will be more artists and musicians using MySpace as a way to share their work. This is significant for brands working with these celebrities as it can provide an opportunity to share content and information on this new platform. With its focus on music, television, celebrities, and games, MySpace will be of great value to brands that are pop-culture based and geared toward social entertainment.

Promoting Platforms

The second category is promoting platforms. These are tools that are often used for sales and marketing to drive traffic to the company's web site or social media channels. Within this category are Youtube and Google+.

YouTube. Youtube was created to share videos with the public and allows users to tag videos, join communities, comment and post videos on websites. Rinaldi (2014) stated, "Video will continue to be the hottest content type for social media marketing in 2014. Companies will try to create the next great viral video buzz while spreading awareness of the brand through short videos" (n.pag). This is of great importance to a business as it provides the benefit of higher click through rates (CTR). Soma (2013) outlined that click through rates (CTR) are always higher for a video than banner, image

and text advertisements. He explained that high percentages of audiences interact with videos and browse through the advertisements. Knowing this, specific demographics and consumer-based categories can be targeted via video advertisements.

Google+. Ranked fifth on eBizMBA (2014) with 120 million monthly visits, DeMers (2013) stated, “With Google using the platform to collect personal information, Google+ should no longer be thought of as ‘just’ another social network” (para. 8). Dyer (2013) stated, “Sharing things on Google+ and encouraging others to +1 your content works essentially the same way as Facebook “likes”, but the impact is more pronounced because Google Search favors sites that have received more social credibility from others” (para. 2). Not only does this increase search engine optimization (SEO), the larger the user’s Google+ network, the more directly or indirectly the user can influence the search results of the people in their circles (Dyer, 2013). Among the many features Google+ offers, Google+ Local focuses specifically on businesses and their locations. The benefits include, “more online visibility, enabling consumers to find a link to your website, what your business has to offer, and any other information you think they should have” (Dyer, 2013, para. 8).

Sharing Platform

The third category is sharing platforms. Turner & Shah (2011) stated “Sharing is a key activity for social media practitioners. When you share, you’re building a relationship” (p. 99). These platforms are designed to provide helpful tools to share information about a company’s services or products. Within this category are Pinterest and Instagram.

Pinterest. An essential site that is growing rapidly is Pinterest, which allows users to share recipes, jewelry, fashion, photography and more. Primarily used for images, Crawford (2013) stated, “This is a great tool for marketing your business because people who are referred to products on Pinterest spend 70% more money than visitors referred from other channels” (para. 1). With this knowledge, a company can utilize Pinterest to gain positive word of mouth, referrals, and the opportunity to demonstrate expertise and credibility in any given area. Pinterest allows for businesses to position themselves as being more authentic and worthwhile to follow as “The more generously you share images the better the perception of your company is in the Pinterest community” (p. 80). Ultimately, Pinterest will help a business grow, as it will establish the brand through pictures and fulfill consumer’s expectations of authenticity.

Instagram. Following the trend of image-centric content, Instagram is a social network that enables users to upload their profile with personal photos and videos and create a following. Instagram benefits a company as it promotes customer engagement. Once a business has a large number of followers, it can encourage followers to participate in activities that involve the business. For example, asking followers to use a specific hash tag or have them post photos of themselves using the business’s services and products. Instagram also helps to build trust and confidence for a company in potential and current customers because it puts a face to the business. Even more, Instagram can be used as a promotional tool for events. By documenting the event and posting it on Instagram, people will be attracted and potentially will want to join the experience (Scott, 2013).

Under Armour's Current Social Media Presence

Under Armour has an extensive social media presence utilizing all the essential social media sites. The company has a visually pleasing and interactive website allowing it to market and advertise its products to customers. Under Armour utilizes Facebook effectively by having a central Facebook page, while also providing different pages specifically targeted to women, football fans and basketball fans. Their Twitter account is used to interact with consumers and build relationships with them. They have created a central twitter page but have also provided specific profiles: "Ask Team UA," "Under Armour Women," and "Under Armour Basketball." Under Armour utilizes YouTube as a promoting tool, which features its commercials and their products in use. They have an extensive Pinterest profile targeted at women, featuring its products, nutrition, workouts, etc. Even more, Under Armour posts photos of its sponsored athletes and events in action on Instagram. Their social media presence continues with the use of Google+ where Under Armour promotes their products, news, events and community involvement. The company has a LinkedIn account, which provides information about the company and positions that are hiring. Clearly, Under Armour has utilized every essential social media site. However, with such an extensive social media presence, it can be hard for consumers to keep up with every aspect of their company.

Under Armour has expanded into many different categories within each social networking site and has not made it known on their website. Currently, their webpage has Twitter, Facebook and Google+ icons in the bottom left corner of the page. This does not even begin to provide current and future followers the knowledge of their extensive

presence on social media. Compared with Nike's use of social media, Under Armour has not promoted all of their social media presence effectively. Nike devotes half of its website homepage to social media, displaying the different categories that people can follow on the different social networks. By integrating their social media presence clearly on their website, Nike displays its knowledge of social media becoming a new component of the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) mix. Social media has become the preferred channel of communication by consumers, therefore, it is important for a company to inform customers of their social media presence on their website. By doing this, a company is correctly implementing an IMC strategy.

What is the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) Mix?

The American Association of Advertising Agencies defines integrated marketing communications (IMC) as "A concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan" (Kotler & Keller, 2006, p. 558). This approach is designed to deliver one consistent message to customers across different types of media – radio, television, magazines, Internet, mobile phones, etc.

Social Media Has Become A New Component of the IMC Mix

With the increase of social media and instant access to information through the Internet, the strategies and tools for communicating with customers have significantly changed. Mangold & Faulds (2009) found that there has been little guidance for marketing managers regarding the incorporation of social media into their IMC strategies. This has been the case for Under Armour. With such a large social media presence, consumers have no way of knowing what social network pages Under Armour offers as it

is not made known unless the consumer directly searches within the specific social networks. Hlavac & Schaefer (2013) discussed that an IMC business model consists of three overlapped circles. These circles consist of the desired target market, the message, and the marketing channel preferred by the desired target market. Therefore, to implement a successful IMC strategy, managers should include social media in their marketing strategy by conveying a unified message starting with the website.

Under Armour has become so focused on improving the customer relationship via social media and increasing its social media presence that they have missed the concept of IMC, which is to convey a unified message that consumers can follow. The social media landscape has become so large that it is important for Under Armour to differentiate itself from the rest of its competitors and make it easy for customers to follow their company on various social media networks. Kitchen, Schultz, Kim, Han & Li (2004) stated that there needs to be a focus on conveying unified messages to customers using the correct blending of the marketing mix. Because all of the firm's marketing activities communicate with customers, it is important that every marketing mix element that is used is consistent with each other. This will warrant that no inconsistent message will be conveyed. Nike has done a great job of this by displaying all of their social network profiles and pages at the bottom half of their website. By doing this, they inform customers of their social media presence and make it easy for future customers to follow them.

Under Armour does convey a unified message, however, they have broken their message down into so many different categories within the social media networks

(women, football, basketball) that it is hard for consumers to keep up. Under Armour needs to develop a way to join their extensive presence on social media into one place where customers can see every aspect of what is going on within the company. Further, Under Armour has not made a big enough effort to promote their social media presence on their website. To solve this, an example that Under Armour could use in the area of social media strategy is Homeland/Embassy.

Homeland/Embassy Strategy

Falls (2013) used the illustration of a homeland and embassy to explain the importance of proximity with the company website and social media sites. The company website is the homeland, and the embassies are social networks. What is critical in executing a homeland/embassy social media strategy is “to actually embed the activity occurring in the embassies on your homeland. By doing so, you’re using social media to advocate on your behalf to all direct visitors to your homeland” (para. 17). Without this, there is really no value to having thousands of followers on Twitter because they are not visible with the conversation opportunities on the company’s website. As with Under Armour’s case, a link from the homeland to the embassy is not enough as it is critical to make social networking actively visible on the company webpage. To do this, Falls explained that it is important to integrate all essential social media networks into one page on the company website:

Integrate your Facebook Page into your website with a like box along the lead generation button. Got an impressive following on Twitter or your LinkedIn company page? Embed tweet buttons and LinkedIn buttons and use follower

count bubbles as social proof that you’ve got advocates. If you upload images and videos, embed a Flickr Gallery and a YouTube Channel Widget so the content is available on your homeland as well. (para. 19)



Figure 1. An example of a homeland/embassy webpage.

By integrating social networking sites on the company website using the homeland/embassy strategy, Under Armour can drive traffic to their webpage and differentiate itself from their competition. They will be able to convey a unified message and effectively implement social media into their IMC strategy.

Recommended Strategy For Under Armour

Using the Homeland/Embassy strategy, Under Armour needs to create a “UA Social Media” tab in the head bar on their website to promote all its activity on social media networking sites. Within the “UA Social Media” tab, each social networking site will be laid out in a visually appealing fashion that has up-to-date news from each site. With this, customers can view every aspect of Under Armour’s social media presence on

one webpage. Rather than having the icons for customers to click and be redirected to the social network page which competitor Nike has implemented, the customer can see photos and statuses from Facebook in one corner and see up to date tweets on another part of the page. Customers can have the option to pick and choose what sites to follow without having to go directly to each site.

Using this strategy, Under Armour will be able to drive traffic to its website. Current and future customers who are following Under Armour on social media can be redirected to their UA Social Media page to see everything that is happening with the company. Benefits to this strategy include customer satisfaction improving substantially as all of Under Armour's social media applications can be found on one page, increasing Under Armour's response time to complaints made by customers. With increased traffic to the website, it can help to increase topline. Under Armour will also differentiate itself from its competitors, because they will be implementing social media into their IMC strategy in a new, creative and appealing fashion. When new customers come to view Under Armour's website, they will be pleasantly surprised to see every social media network that Under Armour is using on one page. This will allow them to choose what networks they want to follow and see what is going on with the company. Ultimately, to create a wonderful social media experience and implement IMC, it is recommended that Under Armour execute the Homeland/Embassy strategy to control customer experience and differentiate itself from the competition.

Conclusion

As more companies begin to use social media, it continues to become harder for an organization to differentiate itself because consumers are continually bombarded with advertisements. It is not enough for a company to have a presence on social media, rather, the company needs to engage the customer and capture their attention. Customer expectations of companies using social media continually change, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to stand out from the competition on social media. By implementing the Homeland/Embassy strategy, Under Armour can potentially increase top line due to higher levels of traffic on their website. This strategy will allow ease of use for current and future customers following Under Armour's social media and a faster response time by Under Armour, delivering a more enjoyable customer experience resulting in increased customer satisfaction. And finally, with this strategy, Under Armour can add value to the company as it will properly use IMC and become a driver of change in the social media realm.

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