Chapter 25
Consumer Engagement in Social Media Platforms

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ABSTRACT

If 'to be social' is the sum of people's online interaction intentions, that can be monitored by marketers but not coerced, how can we make best use of these powerful new media? The answer lies in understanding the internal, psychological needs that are fulfilled by the social media and how they are demonstrated and testified by liking, sharing and engaging in general with specific pieces of content, while rejecting others. In this environment, marketers are called to develop a "brand as a person" strategy, in order for their brands to mingle and interact with consumers beyond the traditional marketing communication framework. In this chapter, we explore and discuss the strategic use of the social media as a concept that needs to be thoroughly understood but seemingly hasn't been yet by a large majority of marketers.
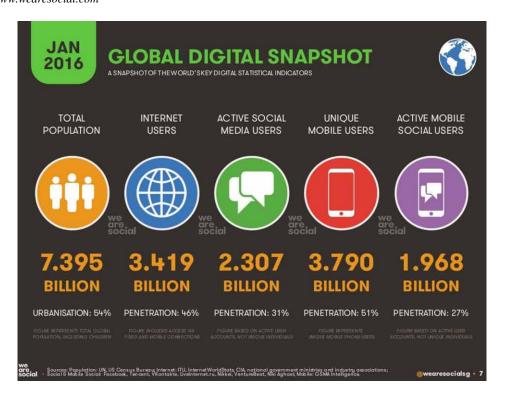
Questions

- Why marketers can't afford to ignore the social media?
- How a brand can benefit from a social media marketing strategy?
- What are the psychological characteristics of social media users?
- How different 'sharer tribes' influence digital marketing strategy decisions?
- Why is brand-as-a-person better than brand-as-a-brand?

INTRODUCTION

When both, scholars and practitioners are talking about social media, the word revolution comes up often. Yet, there might still be some readers that are skeptic about our space allocation dedicating a whole chapter on the social media marketing? So, let's talk numbers first:

Figure 1. Social media penetration
Source: www.wearesocial.com

According to the comprehensive research conducted and published by the 'We are Social' agency (www.wearesocial.com), more than 6 out of 10 people with access to the internet are accounted as active social media users, adding up to the overwhelming amount of 2.307 billion users. From a regional perspective, according to the same source, 59% of the total population of North America is active social media users, a percentage that changes to 50% for South America and 48% for West Europe and East Asia. In more detail:

To better understand the reasons for the penetration of the social media and how they have transformed the way we live, think and behave, Table 1 combines the aforementioned percentages, on the premise that all active social media users have internet access. The purpose of this meta-analysis is to showcase how dominant this new "habit" of maintaining a social media life has become and why we, as marketers must wholeheartedly and proactively embrace it: these numbers tell the story of a paradigm shift that mandates an in depth analysis and understanding of users' motives and needs when interacting in the social media arena.

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