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Social Media Marketing Strategies: Air Arabia as a Study

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Research Article

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Abstract: Social media marketing is one of the best tools used by different companies to reach targeted customers. The main objective of the research was to assess social media marketing strategies in Air Arabia airlines and its productivity in interacting with potential and loyal clients. The study objectives include: to determine the social media marketing strategy used by Air Arabia and to assess the effectiveness of social media marketing strategic plans for current and future clients. The study adopted a qualitative approach. In order to attain the target, content analysis was used as the data collection method, which was taken from the social media channels reports provided by air Arabia social media executives. The data were thematically analyzed to gain a better understanding of the data collected. The study findings indicated that the company's social media strategy is based on posting regular content that is mainly videos and photographs, with increased interaction on photos. The company's Facebook account has the highest number of subscribers. The main reason for using social media marketing was to tap the new technology in their business, thus drawing in a pool of customers online. The study concluded that Air Arabia gained a competitive advantage over other airlines due to its strategic use of social media. Air Arabia's main strategic plan for communicating with its customers was to build loyalty, thus increasing its competitive ability in the traveling industry. The main recommendation from the research is for Air Arabia to create its brand to the target market and listen actively to their clients online to expand its customer base. Overall, the social media strategy of Air Arabia is effective in achieving its goal.

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

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. A large number of users continues to attract the attention of corporations across the globe. Major social media platforms have generated billions in revenue from advertisers because of the numerous advantages that it offers 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 online behavior. Social media is an avenue 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.

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?
RQ3: How does the electronic word of mouth impact airlines marketing through social media channels?
RQ4: How have social media channels affected the way companies in the airline industry market?
RQ5: How are Air Arabia's social media presence and interaction perceived by users?

Literature Review

Social media strategy
Effing & 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 researchers declared in the literature review that the research concerning social media strategies is a dramatically rising area of interest. Moreover, their study refers to the shortage of sufficient framework for analyzing and contrasting social media strategies. The authors argue that there are not yet standards for measuring professional social media practices and strategies. The authors also argue that the research currently started being more concerned with the topic of social media strategy, and that previous work was preliminarily focused on case studies. Furthermore, the authors listed key elements of social media strategy based on unexamined theories. These key elements are the target audience, channel choice, goals, resources, policies, and monitoring and content activities.
Moreover, they have discussed the seven elements of social media strategies in-depth in the review, 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 discussed in the literature is the channel choice, which defines the efficiency in addition to the suitability of communication out of a specific social media channel, as various populations have to be addressed by various social media channels. The third element is the goals. The authors argue that social media is supposed to be in a string with the business goals of the organization, as it is very

important for social media to carry clear objectives in order to be sufficient.

The authors stated in their paper that the fourth element, which is the resources and they explained that the significant resources supposed to be assigned to be effective in social media, as the effectiveness of the social media strategy will rely on the organization's resources and the goodness of the message. Therefore, some of those who work with social media channels need to be well educated and trained for the sake of gaining the proficiency needed. The fifth element is the policies, where the duty of social media channels is to remove the boundaries among the organization and society. The core importance of polices is to defend the organizations' reputation, which can be harmed if employees who are in charge of social media don't have enough understanding of what should and what should not be used. Monitoring is the sixth element the authors listed in the review, which means that 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 measure the activities. Content activity is the last element listed in the literature, the main aim of it is to shape the timeframe of scheduled posts to different social media channels. Effing & Spil mentioned that the schedule is supposed to be clear and specific, where it provides the organization detailed information about the posts (Effing & Spil, 2015). A new framework for social media strategies was developed based on the findings of the case studies in the paper, which is the "The Social Strategy Cone".

The authors believe that this framework could be used as a tool to value the comprehensiveness of social media strategies. According to the authors, the cone framework consists of three levels: Maturity, Diffusion, and Initiation. The Maturity of social media strategy level includes the Monitoring and Content Activities elements, on the other hand, Diffusion includes Goals, Resources, and Policies element, and while 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 modernism, 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. Moreover, 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 personals are monitored in the organization. Mostly, organizations select purposely or not purposely a place between dimensions. 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 neither regulate everything employees are allowed to say.

Customer engagement

The Image of the airline company is highly important and it represents a significant part in attracting consumers. Moreover, the airline company may distinguish itself from other competitors by having a magnificent feature, as the effect of the airline will be reflected in the consumer's perceptions (Lee, Ng, Chan, Choy, Tai, Choi, 2018). According to a research done by Lee, Ng, Chan, Choy, Tai, Choi (2018) to analyze the social media engagement in Hong Kong carries, they argued that one of the powerful determinants of the anticipation of service goodness and sincerity is the social media engagement, which drove to a significant demand to estimate the efficiency of social media engagement in the aviation industry. The study concluded the organization branding is a very significant operator linked with the organization's revenue. Regular and faithful clients, who are engaged in the social media activities of an airline company tent 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.

In fact, the customer engagement term has been explored in so many scholarly works of literature. According to Dijkmans, Kerkhof, and Beukeboom (2014), all the work has been done due to customer engagement to a brand or an organization is explained in a relation of a mixture of three main aspects. Those three aspects are: 1) emotional aspects, which mean being affirmative toward the organization's performance, 2) behavioral aspects; being involved in the organization's performance, 3) cognitive aspects that mean being curious about the organization's performance. In this paper, the researchers studied the engagement term on its most general scale, which is based on consumer involvement with the organization's social media performance.

Furthermore, Customer engagement is featured by ongoing activities between a consumer and an organization that boots the sentimental or psychological employment a consumer had in the company. Consumers should obtain an equation in the charge and interest through time so the consumer and company engagement keep going. The main dominant enablers for consumer engagement are social media as they are very distinct from the traditional technology platforms. Indeed, they offer two-way interactive communication between the organization and the brand and it's consumers (Harrigan, Evers, Miles and Daly, 2016). Their research was based on the conceptualization of customer engagement, which employees 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 a loyal consumer. Thirdly, absorption refers to a deeper level of involvement in the brand, which is considered to be positive.

The fourth dimension, which is the 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 identification of dimension is involved in the theory of social identity. At this stage, the consumer will identify some

organizations over others, especially those that identify their self-image (Harrigan, Evers, Miles, and Daly, 2016).

Moreover, airlines as being categorized in a service industry, customer satisfaction are the main concern. Whereas, a satisfied consumer may add different benefits to the company such as promoting positively about the company and maintaining a very powerful relationship with a company and 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 and E-WOM

According to Dellarocas (2003), "Word of mouth, one of the most ancient mechanisms in the history of human society, is being given new significance by this unique property of the Internet Online feedback mechanisms, also known as reputation systems" (Dellarocas, 2003).

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 citizens 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 rising fields, having lately scored an expansion of approximately 5% through the past 20 years (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 the relationship between the organizational social media strategy and measure its efficiency on the consumers (Seo, Park, 2017). For the present study, Air Arabia Airlines has been chosen as a case company as it is highly active on social media platforms and it is the main carrier at Sharjah International Airport. Air Arabia is a main player in the aviation industry at Sharjah, it is also very popular for being the oldest and a major company in the United Arab Emirates. Moreover, passengers are highly active on social media platforms and their number expansion if predictable by social media experts; therefore the significance of the networking channels in the marketing performance in the aviation field is expected to be boosted markedly (Seo, Park, 2017).

According to a study done to measure the effectiveness of German airline industry on using social media channels, the study concluded that German airlines companies stated that, overall German airline organization 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.

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

Mass communication theories are used in terms of certain research. Mass communication theories are descriptions and forecasts of social phenomena that strive to describe mass communication to different features from the perspective of individual and cultural lives as well as social policies. The mass communication theories (Persuasion Theory and Social Media Strategy Cone) are effective due to the reason that the ones search solutions for how customers communicate with mass communication tool (in terms of the particular research – Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram), for example, video, photo, carousel, link, or status, its role in client's lives, and the effects it produces on people. Persuasion Theory is a mass communication theory that is connected with information directed at subtly shifting the positions of the target audience. Social Media Strategy Cone is based on three core aspects: maturity (content activities, monitoring), diffusion (goals, resources, policies), and initiation (channel choice, target audience).

Persuasion Theory

Persuasion Theory is a mass communication theory. DeFleur (2016) states that the theory focuses on messages that are specifically aimed at modestly and subtly changing the receivers' attitudes and options.

The persuasion theory is applicable to the study because it provides a guide on how social media can be used in marketing for organizations. Applying the theory to Air Arabia, researchers can easily identify the effectiveness of the social media marketing strategy in place. Social media platforms continue to grow in relevance as one of the most suitable means of reaching and interacting with clients. The messages portrayed on social media platforms could be termed effective if they meet the psychological factors underpinning the persuasion theory. The first psychological factors are that the audience must be willing to receive the information and is receptive of the same. Social media platforms like Facebook have algorithms that utilize making it easier for businesses to identify its most suitable target audience.

In the case of Air Arabia, users with a history of travel or showing an interest in air travel can be specifically targeted. Assessing how well the social media strategy of Air Arabia targets its audience will determine how effective the strategy is. The second psychological factor is selective exposure. The social media strategies for Air Arabia should be structured in a manner that will prompt clients to partake in the service and engage with the brand. Other psychological factors like selective perception should also be considered when businesses seek to utilize social media to market and engage clients. According to the theory, audiences tend to only pick information that is they consider being pertinent to their lives. A social media strategy that fails to correctly identify and tailor its message to that of the audience is unlikely to be successful or effective. Finally, selective memorization is a factor that should be considered during the analysis process of Air Arabia's social media strategy. Users tend to remember content that resonates with their personal opinions and beliefs. The company's use of social media can, thus, be evaluated based on its lasting impression on potential clients.

Social Media Strategy Cone

A second useful theory to utilize for this research is the 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 framework consists of seven essential elements of strategies about social media and is grounded on a systematic literature review of strategies to include appropriate case studies. 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. Table 1 shows a summary of the maturity stages to key elements of social media strategy.

Table 1

Maturity stage	Stage indicators	Cases	Key element (incremental)
Initiation	Experiments	Satellite company	Channel choice
	No control	Print Company	Target audience
	Learning	Electronics engineering	
	Personal initiatives		
Diffusion	Introduction of policies	Municipality	Policies
	More focused campaigns	Defence company	Goals
	Allocation of some resources	University	Resources
	Goal oriented		
	Alignment to existing plans		
Maturity	Increasing resources	Sports brand	Monitoring
	Content activities	Restaurant	Content activities
	Monitoring and social listening software	E-commerce start-up	

(Source: The social strategy cone: Towards a framework for evaluating social media strategies, p. 6)

According to DiStaso and McCorkindale (2013), Social Media Strategy Cone theory is grounded on the notion that simply using social media is not and, instead, a strategically social media approach must be adopted and executed for desired outcomes.

Figure 1. The social strategy cone
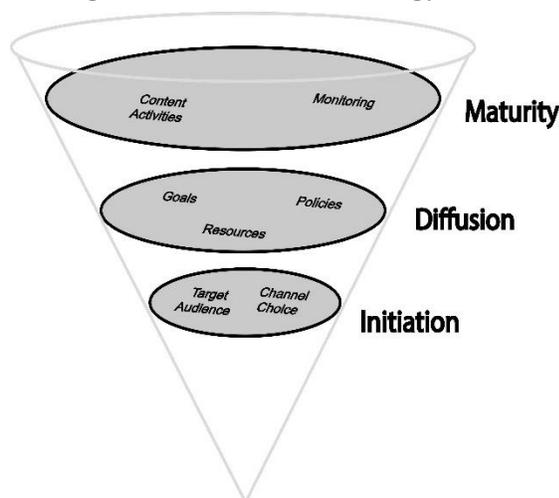
(Source: The social strategy cone: Towards a framework for evaluating social media strategies, p. 7)

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 coin will indicate the stage that Air Arabia's team has reached in its quest to promote the airline online through popular social medial 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 is 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 permeate in the social media strategy of a business. Incorporating the Social Media Cone Strategy framework in this research will guide a more thorough and valid analysis of Air Arabia and its social media presence.

Methodology
Qualitative Approach
This study relies on qualitative content analysis. Content analysis is traditionally a quantitative research endeavor. Berelson (1952) describes it as a "research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (p. 18). Moreover, the qualitative approach includes describing data without transforming them into statistics. There are many reasons why this research depends on the qualitative method. This method helps to draw a better understanding of the relationship between the company and consumers who are using social media platforms. Furthermore, it enriches the study with qualitative data that has been taken from consumer's behavior and attitude daily towards social media.

Content Analysis

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 authenticate and confirm the conclusions obtained from the outcome of the interview that has been done with Air Arabia's social media director and executive and to support them with a realistic narration that probably mirrors these theoretical assumptions in reality. The data includes reports about the posting patterns on 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 during 2019.

In term of the population and sampling, the sample were social media users who did visit the social media channel of Air Arabia Company, regardless of their nationality, gender, or any other characteristics. Air Arabia Company itself provided the requested data in February 2020.

Analysis

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 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.
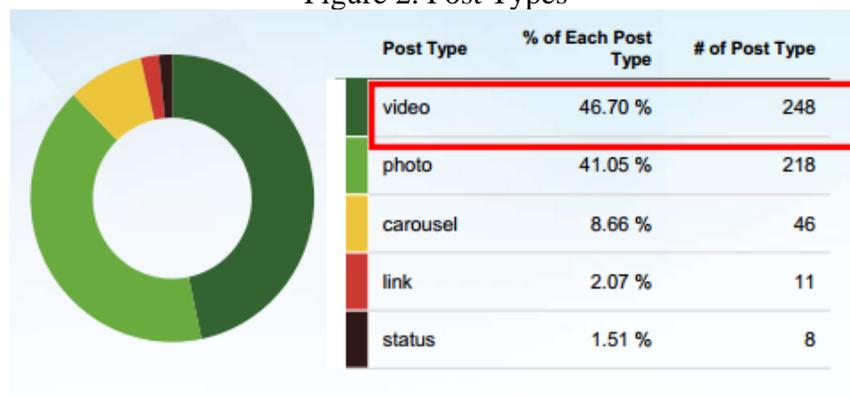
Findings

Content analysis

From the findings of this study, 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 formed part of the overall study 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

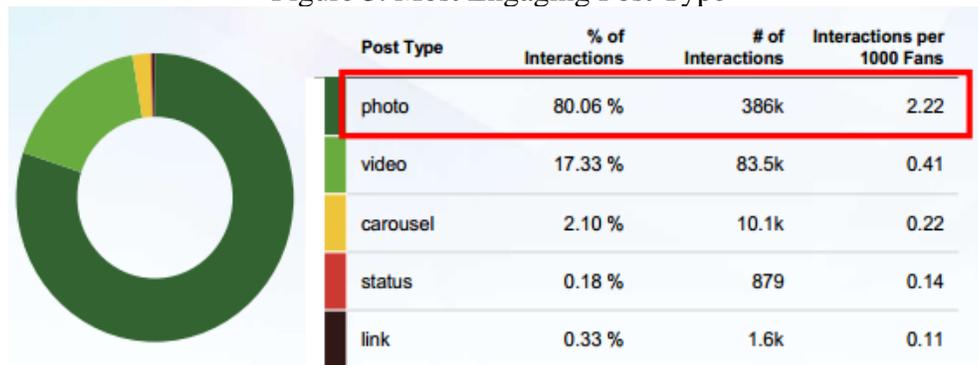| Post Type	% of Each Post Type	# of Post Type
video	46.70 %	248
photo	41.05 %	218
carousel	8.66 %	46
link	2.07 %	11
status	1.51 %	8

(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 have are universal tools of marketing and reaching out to clients regardless of their language. Airline corporations prefer using videos to highlight the various destinations that the flights reach. 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. Air Airline utilizes its social media posts to recruit new clients according to the persuasion theory. 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 modality of communication on social media by Air Arabia is posting. The social media management team uses short captions and texts in its communication on social media platforms. The posts are mainly important public announcements, posts on changes in flight schedules, and communication on various promotions. The choice in the content may reflect a strategy that reduces direct engagement with the client but rather acts as a promotion for the airline.

Engagement
Organizations have recognized the significance of communicating with the 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

Post Type	% of Interactions	# of Interactions	Interactions per 1000 Fans
photo	80.06 %	386k	2.22
video	17.33 %	83.5k	0.41
carousel	2.10 %	10.1k	0.22
status	0.18 %	879	0.14
link	0.33 %	1.6k	0.11

(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 was 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.
Fig 3.1: A graph showing Air Arabia's video engagement
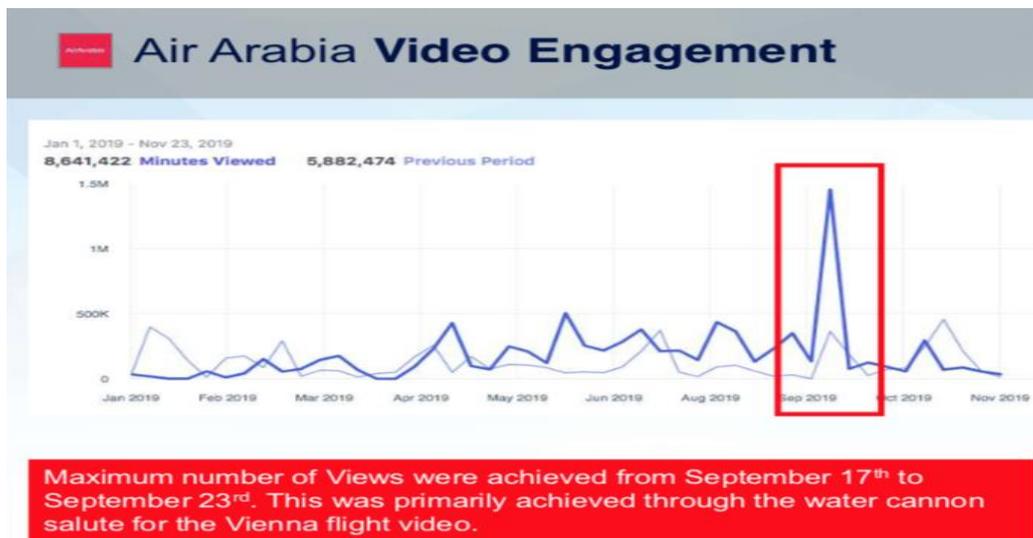
(Source: Air Arabia, p. 7)

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
Also, the findings have revealed 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

(Source: Air Arabia, p. 2)
Figure 5.1 Engagement Metrics (Twitter)

TWITTER ENGAGEMENT

Engagement Metrics	Totals	% Change
Total Engagements	80,655	↘ 11.8%
Likes	12.921	↘ 30.6%
@Replies	2.990	↗ 102%
Retweets	1,598	↘ 64.9%
Post Link Clicks	3.315	↗ 26.9%
Other Post Clicks	58,551	↘ 8.4%
Other Engagements	1,280	↗ 484%
Engagement Rate (per Impression)	2.0%	↘ 34.8%

(Source: Air Arabia)

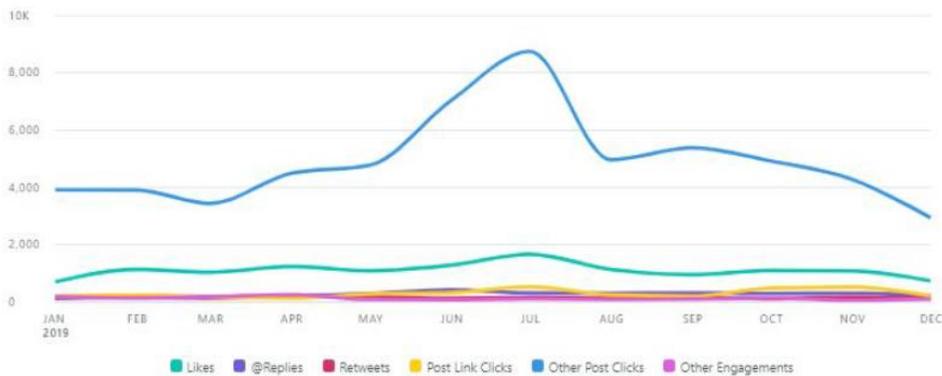Figure 5.2 Engagement Metrics (Twitter)

TWITTER ENGAGEMENT

Twitter Engagement

See how people are engaging with your posts during the reporting period.

Engagements, by Month

(Source: Air Arabia)

Fig 5.3 User engagement and follower growth on Instagram

(Source: Air Arabia, p. 17)

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 average fan change of 330.84 per day, representing a total of 108186 new fans. Air Arabia's fan base has been growing over the months to a total of 1357362 fans. Facebook represents the social media channel where the company has the highest level of user engagement and subscription. 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 user 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 logarithms 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
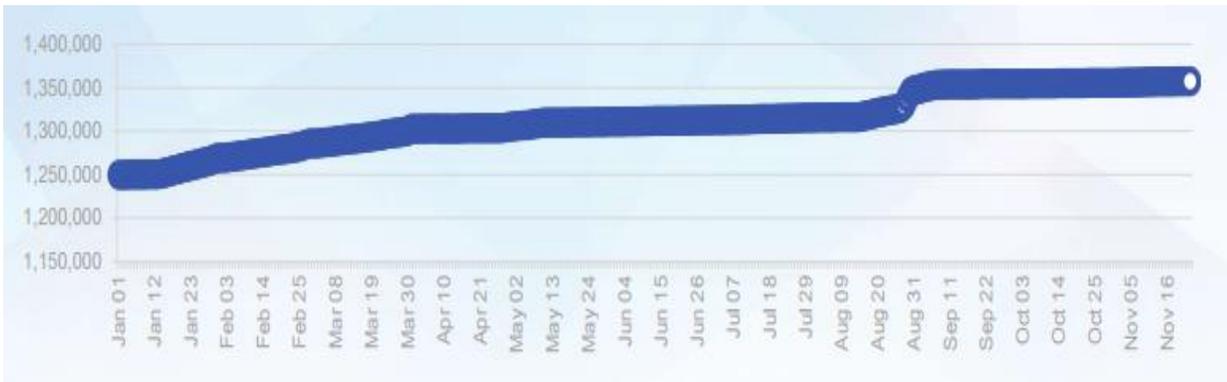
(Source: Air Arabia, p. 3)

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

(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 captioned "Air Arabia souhaite tout le succès à l'équipe Nationale Tunisienne pour les ¼ de finale. Vers une prochaine victoire pour" 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
For 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 and Morocco, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the general market). Experts also apply the plausible theory, with the help of which it is possible to influence a person and force him/her to change their point of view (Wei, 2018). 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. Developing own 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 longest history and the largest digital footprint. Facebook has more users than other newer social media channels and utilizes artificial intelligence logarithms 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.

Theories

Developing policy through the Internet, namely advertising, company Air Arabia increased its income indicators. Such a fact indicates that employees have achieved the goal by adhering to the number of effective strategies. Before arranging the stages of the target in the form of specific publications in the network at a particular time, all employees were informed about the plans for the future. The fundamental strategy used is the theory of social network cone strategy, where seven main factors influencing the final result are combined (Effing, Spil 2015). Correctly setting priorities and determining the sphere of influence, managers tried to perform their work at the highest level. The target audience is one of the main components that affect the awareness of the company. The achievement of direct contact between Air Arabia clients and staff allows learning more about their preferences and interests, as well as what disadvantages they find in the work of the organization. Based on the obtained data, it is possible not only to make an analysis and specific conclusions but also to set new directions for the future development of the company.

Advertising

Managers use marketing strategies both directly in the field and through the mass media. Such social networks as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are widely popular among a vast number of people; therefore there are many opportunities to convey specific information about the company and its services through them (Seo & Park, 2018). The company 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, 2018). The performance of the work depends only on how correctly entrepreneurs and marketers will determine the tactics of

communication with end-users, depending on their characteristics.

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 promoting the relationship between the customer and the organization.

However, with the help of the Persuasion Theory and Social Media Strategy Cone, it can be claimed that Air Arabia should recognize that the power of customers dominates the firms in social media channels. As a result, it is essential to align the social media practices to the characteristics of the consumer. For example, the company should be ready to give up control of the message, in addition to enabling the customer to participate with their feedback freely and openly. Importantly, Air Arabia should choose the proper social media channel to enhance their effectiveness in engaging with clients and potential customers. The company was 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 boost the customer's loyalty, faith, allegiance, and friendliness. The mass communication theories such as Persuasion Theory and Social Media Strategy Cone assist as an effective tool in order to research the target audience, understand its demands and system of functioning. 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 at hand 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

In conclusion, this research aimed at investigating the extent to which Air Arabia uses social media marketing strategies to communicate and engage with its customers. The research was justified on the fact that in a world where social media has become a critical marketing tool, 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 establishing the current social media strategies that Air Arabia is utilizing in its marketing efforts, the effectiveness of these strategies as well as how electronic word of mouth that channels through social media affect the airline. The research employs a qualitative approach to determine the social media strategy in place at the airline as well as its effectiveness. A qualitative approach to the study was preferred because the researcher sought to understand aspects of effectiveness that can be subjective. Data was collected using the main mode, which is a content analysis of the different social media platforms. The statistics of user engagement with posts across the social media accounts of the airline were studied to establish their impact on users.

Under content analysis, the researcher established a better understanding of the choice of media platforms, the level of engagement, and the type of content posted. Videos were the most posted contents by Air Arabia while images attracted the highest level of engagement.

The findings also show that Air Arabia utilizes an array of social media communication strategies that center on two main aims, namely, brand progression and growth and customer engagement by providing a two-way communication channel.

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