

Original Article

Social Media Marketing: A Digital Frontier in Iringa Municipal

Lusekelo Kibona

Department of Computer Science, Ruaha Catholic University (RUCU), Iringa, Tanzania.

Corresponding Author : lusekelo2012@gmail.com

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Abstract - This study examined the evolving landscape of social media marketing and its impact on contemporary business strategies. The research focused on understanding how various social media platforms are utilized for marketing, the effectiveness of different strategies, and the challenges faced by businesses. Data was collected from 100 respondents through structured interviews and surveys, analyzing key indicators such as social media platform usage, content creation, engagement, advertising, and analytics. The findings revealed that while social media marketing had a significant impact on customer engagement and brand visibility, businesses encountered challenges related to high costs, technical issues, and the need for skilled personnel. The study also highlighted the importance of adapting to algorithm changes and emerging trends while addressing ethical considerations. The results underline the need for businesses to adopt a holistic approach to social media marketing, incorporating effective strategies and addressing operational challenges to leverage the full potential of digital platforms.

Keywords - Social Media Marketing, Platform Utilization, Content Creation, Engagement Metrics, Paid Advertising, Analytics Tools, Marketing Challenges, Algorithm Changes.

1. Introduction

As social media platforms have evolved from simple communication tools to comprehensive marketing channels, they have revolutionized the way businesses engage with their audiences. This shift has been driven by the platforms' ability to offer targeted advertising, real-time interaction, and extensive reach, fundamentally altering traditional marketing paradigms. Historically, marketing efforts relied heavily on traditional media such as print, radio, and television [1](G. Belch & Michael Belch, 2014). However, the marketing communications landscape has undergone significant changes with the rise of digital and social media [1, 2]. While marketers have begun shifting budgets towards new media, traditional media still play an important role in integrated marketing communications [1]. Recent research has shown that integrating traditional and new media can enhance advertising effectiveness, improve consumer memory, and foster positive attitudes [2, 3]. The internet, in particular, has progressed rapidly and can significantly contribute to marketing mix effectiveness when combined with traditional media like television [3]. Despite the growth of new media, traditional media, especially television, continue to account for a larger share of advertising expenditures [4]. Historically, marketing efforts in Tanzania were primarily conducted through traditional media such as television, which was the main source of information for domestic tourists visiting

Kitulo National Park [5]. The banking sector in Tanzania underwent market-driven transformation in the 1980s as part of broader structural adjustments, shifting towards a market orientation [6]. More recently, e-marketing has emerged as a significant strategy for Tanzanian SMEs to expand their customer base, with 27% of businesses adopting internet-related marketing approaches [7]. The growing popularity of social media has further influenced marketing practices in Tanzania, prompting SMEs to consider various media platforms for business expansion [8]. However, challenges such as security concerns (21.9%) have affected the smooth adoption of e-marketing strategies in the country [7]. Social media has evolved significantly since its inception, transforming consumer behavior and marketing strategies. The early platforms competed directly with each other, targeting general audiences [9]. However, around the turn of the century, social networks shifted towards niche markets and competed for user attention rather than against each other [9]. This evolution has facilitated improved communication between businesses and customers, as well as among customers themselves [10]. Social media platforms have become increasingly sophisticated, effectively influencing consumers and reaching them efficiently [10]. The rise of social media has led to a greater reliance on online reviews and recommendations, impacting traditional retail industries [11]. These platforms now play a crucial role in shaping



consumer trends through various mechanisms, including social influence, personalization, and advertising [11, 12]. The evolution of social media in Tanzania has had a significant impact on various sectors. Media firms adapted to the emergence of social media by converging and partnering with these platforms to enhance competitiveness and reduce operational costs [13]. In the public sector, the adoption of social media was slow, with only 28.5% of government websites connected to social media platforms in 2016 [14]. However, social media marketing has become increasingly important for businesses, with Instagram emerging as the most effective platform for promoting sales revenue in the telecommunications industry [15]. For micro-enterprises, WhatsApp was the most preferred social media platform, followed by Facebook and Instagram. The use of social media enhanced business performance in terms of customer base, sales growth, profit maximization, and brand enhancement despite challenges such as information security risks and costs [16].

Social media marketing has revolutionized modern business strategies, offering unprecedented opportunities for brand building and customer engagement [17]. Companies leveraged various social platforms to reach diverse demographics, manage online reputations, and measure return on investment [17]. These platforms provided businesses with direct communication channels to interact with consumers in real-time, enabling personalized experiences and valuable data analytics for strategic decision-making [18]. Effective strategies included selecting appropriate platforms, creating compelling content, and collaborating with influencers [19]. Social media marketing proved particularly beneficial for micro and small enterprises, offering a relatively inexpensive platform for implementing marketing campaigns and promoting brands globally [20].

The impact of social media promotion was significant, combining speed and relevance to boost brand awareness and sales ratios [20]. Overall, social media emerged as a pivotal force in driving business growth and innovation in the digital age [17]. Social media marketing has become an essential tool for businesses to build relationships with customers and promote their products or services. Effective strategies include creating and sharing valuable content, managing online communities, and measuring results [21]. Facebook and Twitter were identified as two of the most commonly used platforms for these purposes [21]. To implement successful social media marketing campaigns, businesses should establish clear objectives, develop appropriate strategies, and use key performance indicators to measure their return on investment [22]. The study by [22] proposed three main objectives for social media marketing, each with specific strategies and revenue indicators. Additionally, four important social media marketing costs were identified as applicable to most strategies. Content marketing was also highlighted as a crucial component of an effective online marketing strategy

[23]. These findings provide valuable guidelines for marketers seeking to optimize their social media marketing efforts. Social media marketing strategies have gained importance for businesses in Tanzania. Studies showed that effective strategies include frequent content updates, incentives for participation, and creative approaches like experiential, image, and exclusivity messages [24]. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Tanzania have embraced social media for marketing, recognizing its potential to expand business performance [25]. Research on supermarkets in Tanzania revealed that social media performance, analytics, and active presence positively impacted business performance [26]. For SMEs promoting products on Facebook, factors influencing strategy selection included promotion objectives, content, and Facebook user characteristics. The study found that these factors significantly influenced promotion strategies, which in turn affected the choice of Facebook for product promotion campaigns [27].

These findings highlight the growing importance of social media marketing for businesses in Tanzania. In this study, the problem addressed was the significant shift in marketing strategies driven by the rapid evolution and widespread adoption of social media platforms. Prior to this shift, businesses relied heavily on traditional marketing channels such as print, radio, and television to reach their target audiences. However, the rise of social media introduced new dynamics that altered the landscape of marketing. Companies faced the challenge of adapting to these changes and integrating social media into their marketing strategies effectively. Despite the potential benefits, many businesses struggled with understanding how to leverage social media's capabilities for brand promotion, customer engagement, and market analysis. The study aimed to investigate how social media marketing had disrupted traditional marketing practices and identify the key factors influencing its adoption, effectiveness, and impact on overall marketing performance.

The objective of the study was to examine the transformative impact of social media on contemporary marketing strategies and practices. Specifically, the study aimed to identify how businesses have integrated social media into their marketing efforts, assess the effectiveness of various social media platforms in enhancing brand visibility and customer engagement and analyze the challenges encountered in leveraging these digital tools. The main contribution of the study was its comprehensive analysis of how social media platforms have reshaped marketing strategies and customer engagement practices. By systematically examining the integration of social media into marketing efforts, the study provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of different platforms in boosting brand visibility and driving customer interaction. Additionally, the study identified key challenges that businesses faced when utilizing social media tools, such as managing data privacy concerns and adapting to rapidly changing digital trends. These findings not only enhanced the

understanding of social media's role in modern marketing but also offered actionable recommendations for businesses to optimize their social media strategies and overcome common obstacles. This contribution is vital for helping businesses navigate the evolving digital landscape and leverage social media to achieve their marketing goals. The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: Methodology is presented in section two, results and discussion are in section three, and while conclusion and recommendations are presented in section four.

2. Methodology

The study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the impact of social media on marketing strategies and customer engagement, with a sample size of 100 participants. The methodology consisted of both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to ensure a comprehensive analysis.

2.1. Sample Size and Selection

The research included a sample size of 100 participants. These participants were selected through a stratified random sampling method to ensure representation across various industries and business sizes. The sample consisted of marketing professionals, business owners, and social media managers actively involved in implementing and managing social media marketing strategies.

2.2. Data Collection Methods

Data was collected using a combination of structured surveys and in-depth interviews. The structured surveys, administered online, gathered quantitative data on the usage of different social media platforms, the frequency of marketing activities, and the perceived effectiveness of these strategies. The survey included questions with Likert-scale and the like responses to measure the degree of effectiveness and adoption of social media marketing practices. In addition to surveys, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 respondents to gain qualitative insights into the challenges and benefits experienced in social media marketing. These interviews allowed for a deeper exploration of the strategies employed, the specific obstacles faced, and the subjective experiences of the participants.

2.3. Data Analysis

The quantitative data from the surveys were analyzed using statistical methods to determine trends, patterns, and correlations in social media marketing practices. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data. Qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common themes and insights related to social media marketing challenges and successes.

2.4. Validation

To ensure the reliability and validity of the data, the study employed a pilot testing phase for the survey instrument and

conducted follow-up interviews to clarify and verify findings. Additionally, triangulation was used by comparing quantitative survey results with qualitative interview insights to enhance the accuracy and depth of the study's conclusions. This methodological approach provided a robust framework for understanding the impact of social media marketing and offered actionable insights for improving marketing strategies in the digital age.

3. Results and Discussion

Through a combination of quantitative survey data and qualitative interview insights, the study explored the extent to which social media platforms are utilized, the effectiveness of these marketing efforts, and the challenges faced by businesses in leveraging digital tools for marketing purposes.

3.1. Demographic Information

The demographic information collected in the study offered a detailed view of the participant profiles, providing insights into their age, gender, education level, occupation, and primary business. This data was essential for understanding the diverse backgrounds of the respondents and how these factors influenced their perspectives on social media marketing practices.

3.1.1. Age of the Respondents

In the study, the age distribution of the respondents, as illustrated in Table 1, highlighted a varied range of experiences and perspectives regarding social media marketing. The youngest group, aged 18-24 years, comprised 20 participants. This group was generally characterized by their familiarity with and heavy use of digital technologies and social media platforms.

They often represented emerging trends and innovative approaches within the digital marketing sphere, driven by their comfort with evolving technologies and new media channels. The next age group, 25-34 years, included 30 participants. This demographic exhibited a more developed understanding of social media marketing, reflecting both professional experience and personal engagement with digital tools.

They were often in roles that required them to strategize and execute marketing campaigns, blending both traditional and contemporary methods. Their insights were invaluable in understanding how practical experiences shaped their use of social media for marketing purposes. Participants aged 35-44 years, numbering 25, brought a perspective shaped by a balance of traditional marketing knowledge and the integration of digital strategies. This group included mid-career professionals who had witnessed the transition from traditional to digital marketing and had adapted their approaches accordingly. Their opinion provided a slightly different view of the challenges and successes in merging old and new marketing practices. The oldest group, those aged 45 years and above, also included 25 respondents.

Table 1. Showing demographic information of the respondents

Demographic Category	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-24 years	20	20%
	25-34 years	30	30%
	35-44 years	25	25%
	45 years and above	25	25%
Gender	Male	55	55%
	Female	45	45%
Education Level	High School or Below	15	15%
	Diploma/Certificate	25	25%
	Bachelor's Degree	40	40%
	Postgraduate Degree	20	20%
Occupation	Business Owner	20	20%
	Marketing Professional	30	30%
	IT Professional	25	25%
	Sales Professional	15	15%
	Other	10	10%
Primary Business	Retail	35	35%
	Manufacturing	25	25%
	Healthcare	15	15%
	IT and Technology	10	10%
	Finance	10	10%
	Other	5	5%

This demographic was less represented in the digital marketing landscape but offered critical perspectives on the adoption of social media marketing strategies. They often had extensive experience in traditional marketing fields and were navigating the evolving landscape of digital media. Their insights into the integration of these new tools with established practices were crucial for understanding the broader impact of social media marketing across different career stages.

3.1.2. Gender of the Respondents

In the study, gender distribution among the respondents provided valuable insights into varying perspectives on social media marketing. As per table 1, the sample included 55 males, who predominantly occupied roles in marketing and IT sectors where they frequently engaged with digital tools. This group generally exhibited a high level of enthusiasm for integrating advanced technologies into marketing strategies. Males were often found to be early adopters of new platforms and tools, utilizing their technical expertise to experiment with and leverage social media for business growth. Their contributions were marked by a focus on data-driven approaches and innovative marketing tactics. On the other hand, the sample included 45 females, who also played significant roles in the field of social media marketing. Female respondents contributed diverse viewpoints shaped by their experiences and engagement with different social media platforms. They were often involved in content creation, brand management, and customer engagement, reflecting a more nuanced understanding of audience interactions and the impact of social media on consumer behavior. Females in this group highlighted the importance of community building and

customer relationship management through social media channels, emphasizing a more relational and strategic approach to digital marketing. The gender distribution in the study showcased how different experiences and perspectives influenced social media marketing strategies. While both males and females utilized social media platforms effectively, their approaches and insights often varied based on their roles, experiences, and the specific challenges they encountered in their marketing practices. This variety enriched the study, providing a comprehensive understanding of how gender-related perspectives shaped the use and effectiveness of social media marketing in various contexts.

3.1.3. Education Level of the Respondents

The educational background of the respondents significantly influenced their perceptions and practices related to social media marketing. As shown in table 1, among the 100 participants, 15 individuals had completed only high school or lower levels of education. This group generally possessed limited exposure to advanced marketing theories and tools, leading to a more basic understanding of social media strategies. Their use of social media for marketing purposes often relied on fundamental techniques and platforms, and they tended to focus on direct engagement and simple promotional tactics. Despite their limited formal education in marketing, many exhibited a keen interest in learning and adapting to new trends through practical experience. In contrast, 25 respondents held diplomas or certificates, reflecting a more specialized education in fields related to marketing, communication, or digital technologies. This educational background equipped them with foundational

knowledge and skills relevant to social media marketing. They were often involved in implementing more structured and strategic approaches, using their training to optimize social media campaigns and analyze engagement metrics. Their understanding of social media marketing was informed by both theoretical principles and hands-on practice, allowing them to contribute valuable insights into effective marketing strategies.

The study also included 40 respondents with bachelor's degrees, who generally demonstrated a sophisticated grasp of marketing concepts and the application of social media tools. Their academic backgrounds often included comprehensive coursework in marketing, data analysis, and digital communication, which enabled them to leverage social media platforms effectively. This group was adept at integrating advanced techniques into their marketing strategies, including data-driven decision-making and targeted content creation. Their higher education facilitated a deeper understanding of market dynamics and consumer behavior, contributing to the more innovative and strategic use of social media. Finally, the 20 respondents with postgraduate degrees brought an advanced level of expertise to the study. Their extensive academic training in areas such as marketing, business administration, and digital strategy provided them with a nuanced understanding of social media marketing. They were frequently involved in high-level strategic planning and research, applying sophisticated analytical tools and theoretical frameworks to optimize social media campaigns. Their contributions highlighted the importance of advanced knowledge and research in shaping effective social media marketing practices, underscoring the value of continued education and professional development in the field.

3.1.4. Occupation of the Respondents

In the study, as indicated in Table 1, the occupation of respondents provided valuable context for understanding their approaches to and experiences with social media marketing. Among the 100 participants, 20 were business owners. These individuals typically face unique challenges and opportunities in utilizing social media for marketing. As entrepreneurs, they were responsible for overseeing all aspects of their business, including marketing strategies. Their perspectives often reflected a hands-on approach, with a focus on direct engagement and practical, results-driven tactics. They utilized social media to build brand awareness, interact with customers, and drive sales. The role of social media was integral to their marketing efforts, as it allowed them to engage directly with their audience and adapt their strategies quickly based on real-time feedback. The study also included 30 marketing professionals whose expertise in the field greatly influenced their use of social media. These individuals often possessed formal training in marketing and were well-versed in various digital marketing strategies. Their approaches to social media marketing were typically more sophisticated and strategic. They employed a range of techniques, including

targeted advertising, content marketing, and performance analysis, to optimize their campaigns. Their insights into social media marketing were informed by both their academic background and practical experience, allowing them to implement advanced strategies and measure their effectiveness with precision. In addition, 25 IT professionals participated in the study. Their technical expertise provided a distinct perspective on the role of technology in social media marketing. They often focused on the technical aspects of social media platforms, such as integration with other IT systems, data security, and the optimization of digital tools. Their contributions highlighted the importance of technological infrastructure in supporting effective social media marketing strategies. They were adept at using data analytics to inform marketing decisions and enhance campaign performance, leveraging their technical skills to address issues such as system integration and automation.

Furthermore, 15 sales professionals were involved in the study. Their experience in direct sales and customer interactions informed their approach to social media marketing. They used social media to support their sales efforts by engaging with potential customers, sharing promotional content, and gathering feedback. Their focus was often on leveraging social media to drive sales leads and improve customer relationships.

Their insights revealed how social media can be a powerful tool for enhancing sales processes and building a more dynamic sales strategy. Lastly, the study included 10 respondents categorized as "Other," representing a variety of roles that did not fit neatly into the primary categories of business, marketing, IT, or sales. These individuals brought diverse perspectives and experiences to the study, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of social media marketing practices. Their varied backgrounds included roles in customer service, administration, and consulting, each of which offered unique insights into how social media was utilized across different functions and industries. Their involvement accentuated the broad applicability of social media marketing and its impact on various aspects of business operations.

3.1.5. Primary Business Sector of the Respondents

The distribution of respondents by their primary business sectors, as shown in table 1, revealed varied applications and challenges in social media marketing. Among the 100 participants, 35 were involved in retail businesses. These respondents often highlighted the significant role social media played in driving foot traffic to physical stores and enhancing online sales. Retailers described leveraging social media platforms to showcase new products, run targeted promotions, and engage with customers through interactive content. They frequently reported using social media to respond to customer inquiries in real-time, build brand loyalty, and create a community around their products. The emphasis was on using

visually appealing content and strategic advertising to influence purchasing decisions and track customer preferences. In the manufacturing sector, represented by 25 respondents, social media marketing was approached with a focus on brand awareness and industry positioning. These professionals discussed using social media to highlight their manufacturing capabilities, share behind-the-scenes insights into their processes, and engage with industry stakeholders. The emphasis was often on showcasing product quality and innovation, building relationships with potential business partners, and establishing thought leadership within their sector.

The use of social media for business-to-business (B2B) marketing was particularly notable, with efforts aimed at demonstrating expertise and fostering connections with other businesses. Fifteen respondents came from the healthcare sector, where a strong focus on patient engagement and education characterized the use of social media. Healthcare professionals utilized social media to disseminate health information, promote wellness programs, and interact with patients and their families. The challenge in this sector often involved navigating regulatory constraints while trying to create meaningful interactions that could improve patient care and community health awareness. Social media was seen as a valuable tool for addressing health concerns, sharing updates on medical advancements, and offering support and guidance to patients.

The IT and technology sector, represented by 10 respondents, approached social media marketing with a focus on innovation and technical expertise. These respondents discussed the importance of using social media to showcase their technological solutions, engage with tech enthusiasts, and build credibility within the tech community. The

strategies employed often included sharing updates on new product releases, participating in industry discussions, and highlighting successful case studies. Social media was utilized as a platform to position their companies as leaders in technology and to foster a network of industry professionals and potential clients. Finance sector respondents, also numbering 10, used social media to build trust and educate their audience on financial matters. Their efforts focused on sharing insights about market trends, investment strategies, and financial planning. Social media was seen as a means to enhance customer engagement by providing valuable information and fostering discussions around financial topics.

The challenge for these professionals was to present complex financial concepts in an accessible and engaging manner while also adhering to regulatory guidelines. Finally, the "other" category, which included 5 respondents from varied business backgrounds, offered a range of perspectives on social media marketing. These respondents represented diverse fields such as consulting, education, and non-profit organizations. Their use of social media varied widely depending on their specific needs. However, common themes included efforts to build brand presence, engage with stakeholders, and leverage social media for community outreach and education. This group provided valuable insights into how social media marketing strategies could be adapted to fit different organizational goals and contexts.

3.2. Social Media Platform Usage in Marketing

The study investigated various aspects of social media platform usage to understand how businesses leveraged these tools for their marketing strategies. The indicator of Social Media Platform Usage was explored through several sub-indicators: Frequency of Platform Use, Platform Preferences, and Reasons for Platform Choice.

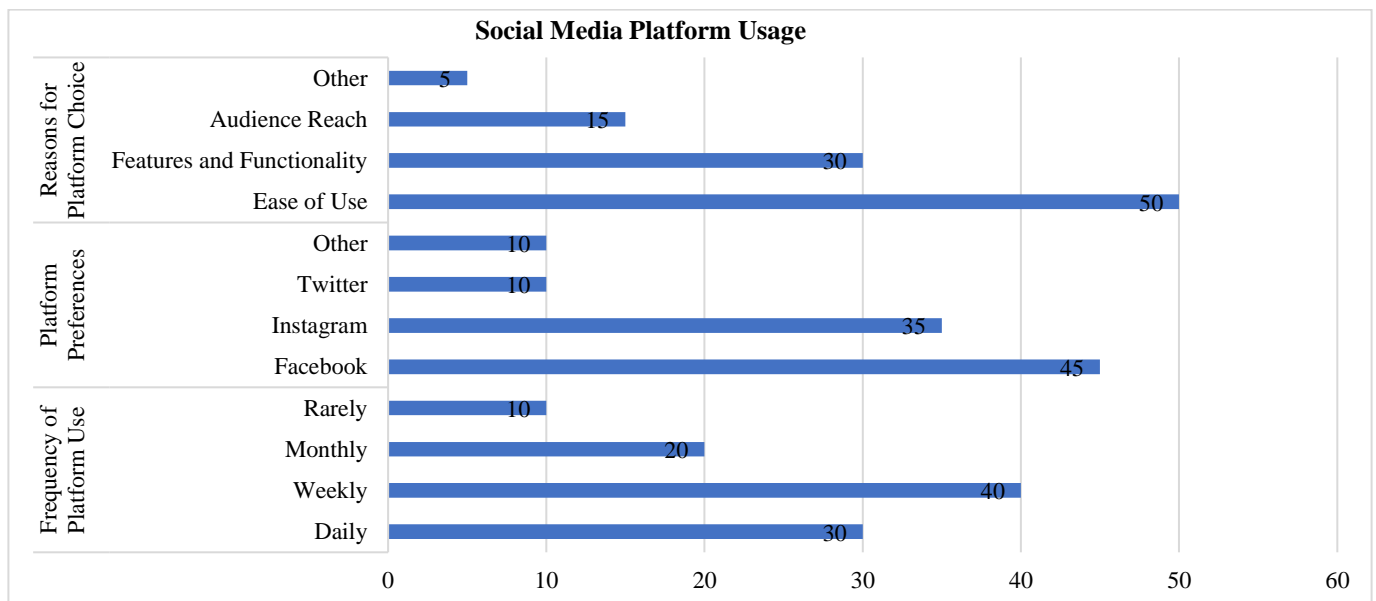


Fig. 1 Showing the social media platform usage in marketing

3.2.1. Frequency of Platform Use

In the study, respondents provided insights into their frequency of social media platform use, which was a key indicator of their engagement strategies.

As per Figure 1, the data revealed that 30 respondents reported using social media platforms daily, reflecting a high level of commitment to maintaining a continuous online presence. These respondents emphasized the importance of daily interactions in staying relevant and engaging with their audience. One respondent explained:

"...we post daily to keep our audience engaged and informed. It's crucial for us to remain visible and active in our customers' feeds. Daily posts help us stay top-of-mind and drive consistent engagement..."

A larger group of 40 respondents engaged with social media platforms on a weekly basis, demonstrating a regular but less intensive approach compared to daily users.

These businesses focused on creating and sharing content on a weekly schedule to maintain engagement without overwhelming their resources. As one interviewee noted:

"...we find that posting weekly strikes a good balance. It allows us to manage our content creation efficiently while still staying in touch with our audience regularly. Weekly updates keep our audience interested and help us track performance without the pressure of daily posts..."

In contrast, 20 respondents reported using social media platforms monthly, indicating a more sporadic engagement. These respondents often cited limited resources or strategic decisions as reasons for their less frequent use. One participant shared:

"...we update our social media accounts monthly because our content requires careful planning and execution. Although we post less frequently, we make sure our content is highly relevant and impactful when it goes live..."

A smaller group of 10 respondents used social media platforms rarely, reflecting minimal engagement with these tools. For these businesses, social media was not a primary focus, often due to different marketing priorities or resource constraints. A respondent commented:

"...we use social media sparingly because our current marketing strategy focuses more on direct sales channels. Social media doesn't play a central role in our marketing efforts, so we only post when we have major updates or announcements..."

These insights demonstrated the diverse approaches businesses took towards social media engagement, ranging from daily to rare use. They highlighted how the frequency of platform use influenced their marketing effectiveness and customer interactions.

3.2.2. Platform Preferences

In the study, respondents provided detailed insights into their platform preferences, as illustrated in Figure 1, shedding light on their choices and the underlying reasons behind them.

Among the 100 respondents, Facebook emerged as the most preferred platform, with 45 participants highlighting its central role in their marketing strategies. This preference was attributed to Facebook's extensive reach and versatility. One respondent explained:

"...Facebook has been our primary platform due to its broad user base and diverse functionalities. We use it for everything from targeted advertising to community engagement. The platform's ability to segment audiences and run various types of ads has made it indispensable for our marketing efforts..."

Instagram followed as the second most favored platform, with 35 respondents citing its visual appeal and engagement capabilities as key factors for their preference. The emphasis on high-quality images and videos was seen as particularly advantageous for businesses aiming to showcase their products or services. A respondent shared:

"...Instagram's focus on visuals fits perfectly with our brand's identity. We use it to post eye-catching images and stories that resonate with our audience. The platform's features, such as Stories and IGTV, allow us to create engaging content that drives interaction and brand awareness..."

Twitter was less favored, with only 10 respondents indicating it as their primary platform. Despite its lower preference, Twitter was valued for its real-time updates and brief interactions. One participant noted:

"...we use Twitter mainly for quick updates and engaging with trending topics. Although it's not our top platform, it's useful for staying current with industry news and participating in relevant conversations..."

Additionally, another 10 respondents used other platforms, such as LinkedIn or Pinterest, reflecting a more niche or varied approach to social media marketing. These respondents highlighted specific reasons for their choices based on their business needs and target audiences. As one respondent remarked:

"...we use LinkedIn to connect with professionals and build our network. It's a crucial platform for B2B marketing and thought leadership..."

The data revealed a clear distinction in platform preferences among businesses, with Facebook and Instagram leading in popularity due to their extensive features and user engagement potential. This distribution of platform preferences emphasizes the importance of tailoring social media strategies to align with the strengths and audience characteristics of each platform.

3.2.3. Reasons for Platform Choice

In this study, respondents provided comprehensive explanations for their platform choices, focusing on various factors that influenced their decisions.

According to Figure 1, the majority of respondents, 50 out of 100, emphasized ease of use as the primary reason for selecting specific social media platforms. They found that platforms like Facebook and Instagram were user-friendly and required minimal technical expertise to manage effectively. One respondent elaborated:

“...we chose Facebook because it’s incredibly easy to navigate and manage. The interface is intuitive, which means even team members who aren’t tech-savvy can create and post content without any issues. This ease of use saves us time and reduces the need for extensive training...”

Another significant factor that guided platform choice was the features and functionality offered, as highlighted by 30 respondents.

These individuals appreciated the diverse tools and capabilities that certain platforms provided, allowing them to customize their marketing strategies and engage with their target audiences more effectively. A respondent noted:

“...Instagram’s features, like Stories, IGTV, and in-app shopping, were key reasons we decided to focus our efforts there. These tools allow us to engage creatively with our audience and drive more direct conversions. The platform’s constant innovation keeps us ahead in the competitive market...”

Audience reach was the deciding factor for 15 respondents, who prioritized platforms with a broad or specific audience demographic that aligned with their business goals. They chose platforms that would maximize their visibility and interaction with potential customers. One

participant stated:

“...we selected Facebook mainly for its unparalleled audience reach. It’s the one platform where we can target a vast and diverse demographic. The ability to run targeted ads to specific age groups and regions has significantly boosted our brand’s visibility...”

A small number of respondents, 5 out of 100, cited other unique reasons for their platform choice, such as industry relevance or alignment with brand values. These respondents often selected niche platforms that catered specifically to their business sector or allowed them to communicate more authentically with their audience. For example, one respondent mentioned:

“...we chose LinkedIn because our business operates in a B2B space, and LinkedIn is the best platform for professional networking. It aligns perfectly with our brand’s focus on business partnerships and thought leadership...”

These explanations highlighted how businesses weighed various factors, ease of use, features, audience reach, and other considerations when choosing social media platforms for their marketing strategies. The study revealed that while ease of use was the most common reason for platform choice, other factors like functionality and audience reach played crucial roles in shaping the digital marketing landscape.

3.3. Content Creation and Strategy for Marketing

The study investigated the role of content creation and strategy in social media marketing, focusing on how businesses in Iringa Municipal utilized various content types, maintained content frequency, ensured content quality and engagement, and aligned their content with target audiences. Researchers examined how different content strategies impacted marketing outcomes and how businesses adapted their approaches to meet the expectations and preferences of their audiences.

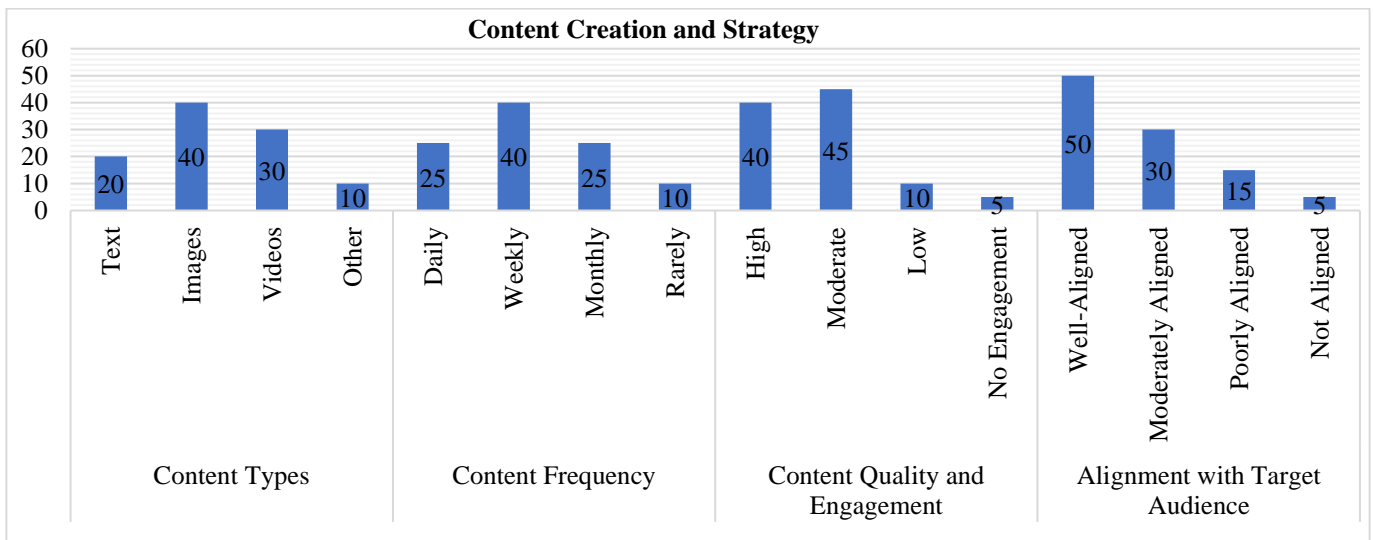


Fig. 2 Showing the content creation and strategy for marketing

3.3.1. Content Types Employed in Marketing Strategies

In the study, respondents, as demonstrated in Figure 2, provided detailed insights into the types of content they used for marketing on social media platforms. A significant portion of respondents, accounting for 40%, reported that they primarily utilized images in their marketing strategies. They believed that visual content, especially high-quality images, had a stronger impact on audience engagement and was more likely to be shared, thereby increasing their brand visibility. One respondent emphasized:

"...we found that images resonate well with our audience, particularly when they are visually appealing and relevant to our products..."

Videos were the next most popular content type, with 30% of respondents indicating that they leveraged video content for their marketing efforts. These respondents highlighted the effectiveness of videos in conveying more complex messages and engaging users on a deeper level. One participant noted:

"...videos allow us to tell a story and connect emotionally with our audience, which has been crucial for building our brand identity..."

The use of video was seen as particularly powerful in creating dynamic and memorable content that could hold the viewer's attention longer than text or static images. Text-based content, while used by 20% of respondents, was generally employed to provide detailed information or to accompany images and videos rather than stand-alone. These respondents acknowledged that while text is essential for conveying detailed information, it often requires more effort from the audience to engage with it. As one interviewee stated:

"...text content is important for SEO and providing detailed explanations, but it doesn't grab attention as quickly as images or videos..."

Lastly, 10% of respondents utilized other forms of content, such as infographics or interactive posts. These forms were seen as niche but effective in specific contexts, particularly when aiming to educate or engage audiences more interactively. Generally, the study highlighted a clear preference for visual content, particularly images and videos, in social media marketing strategies, reflecting a broader trend towards visually-driven engagement on digital platforms.

3.3.2. Content Frequency in Marketing Strategies

In this study, the frequency of content posting by businesses was a key focus, revealing how often different organizations engaged with their audiences through social media. As shown in Figure 2, 25 respondents, constituting a quarter of the sample, opted for daily content updates. This approach was typically adopted by businesses aiming to maintain a high level of visibility and interaction with their audience. One respondent explained:

"...daily posts were essential for us to keep our brand in front of our audience consistently. It helped us stay relevant and maintain high engagement levels. Although it required a lot of

effort, the impact on our brand presence was significant..."

The majority, 40 respondents, preferred a weekly posting schedule. This strategy allowed businesses to balance regular engagement with manageable content creation workloads. One respondent articulated:

"...we chose to post weekly as it struck the right balance for us. It kept our audience engaged without overwhelming our team. We could plan our content effectively and ensure that each post was thoughtfully crafted..."

Additionally, 25 respondents utilized a monthly posting frequency. This less frequent approach was often employed by businesses focusing on major updates or key announcements rather than routine content. A respondent noted:

"...monthly postings were our strategy to concentrate on significant content and promotional events. It allowed us to make the most impact with fewer but more substantial updates..."

Lastly, 10 respondents engaged in posting rarely, a practice suited to organizations with specific needs or limited resources.

One respondent shared:

"...we posted rarely, primarily for special occasions or important news. This approach worked for us as it ensured that each post was meaningful and not just part of a regular schedule..."

These varied strategies reflected how different businesses tailored their social media content frequency to align with their goals and resources.

3.3.3. Content Quality and Engagement

In this study, respondents provided detailed insights into their approaches to content quality and engagement on social media. According to Figure 2, 40 respondents rated their content as high quality, which they attributed to their focus on creating visually appealing and well-crafted posts. One participant shared:

"...we invested heavily in designing high-quality visuals and crafting engaging copy. Our goal was to ensure that every piece of content was not only visually stunning but also resonated with our audience on a deeper level. This commitment to quality led to increased likes, shares, and comments..."

Another 45 respondents described their content quality as moderate, balancing between maintaining a good standard and managing the resources required. A respondent commented:

"...our content was decent and consistent, but we did not always have the luxury to invest in top-notch graphics or extensive copywriting. Despite this, we managed to keep our audience engaged through regular posts and interactive elements..."

In contrast, 10 respondents acknowledged a lower level of content quality, often due to limited resources or less emphasis on content production. One participant noted:

“...we struggled with producing high-quality content consistently, which sometimes led to lower engagement. We were aware that our content could be better but were constrained by our available resources...”

Finally, 5 respondents reported no engagement from their content, indicating a disconnect between their posts and audience interests. As one participant reflected:

“...despite our efforts to create content, we found that it did not resonate with our audience, leading to minimal interaction. We realized that our approach needed reevaluation to better align with what our followers wanted to see...”

These explanations illustrated the varying degrees of success businesses experienced with content quality and engagement, highlighting the challenges and successes encountered in their social media marketing efforts.

3.3.4. Alignment with Target Audience

In this study, the alignment of content with the target audience emerged as a critical factor in determining the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies.

According to Figure 2, fifty respondents reported that their content was well-aligned with their target audience, which they attributed to their strategic planning and audience analysis.

One respondent explained:

“...we conducted thorough research to understand our audience's preferences and behaviors. By tailoring our content to these insights, we ensured that our posts resonated well with them. This alignment was key to achieving higher engagement rates and a stronger connection with our followers...”

These businesses utilized various tools and analytics to segment their audience and create content that addressed their specific interests and needs. In contrast, thirty respondents indicated that their content was moderately aligned with their target audience. They acknowledged some level of customization but admitted that there was room for improvement. A respondent shared:

“...while we made an effort to align our content with what we knew about our audience, there were instances where our posts did not fully address their evolving interests. We managed to engage with a portion of our audience, but we realized that more precise targeting could enhance our results...”

These businesses faced challenges in maintaining a perfect alignment due to limitations in data or shifts in audience preferences. Fifteen respondents felt that their content was poorly aligned with their target audience, citing insufficient audience research or misinterpretations of audience needs. One respondent mentioned:

“...we struggled to connect with our audience because our content was not always relevant to their interests. We did not invest enough in understanding our audience, which led to lower engagement and fewer interactions...”

Finally, only five respondents reported that their content was not aligned at all with their target audience. These businesses faced significant difficulties in connecting with their audience and often noted a lack of feedback and engagement. A respondent remarked:

“...despite our efforts to create content, we found that it was completely off the mark for our audience. We recognized that without proper alignment, our social media efforts were largely ineffective...”

These insights highlighted the varying degrees of alignment with target audiences and the impact it had on the overall success of social media marketing strategies.

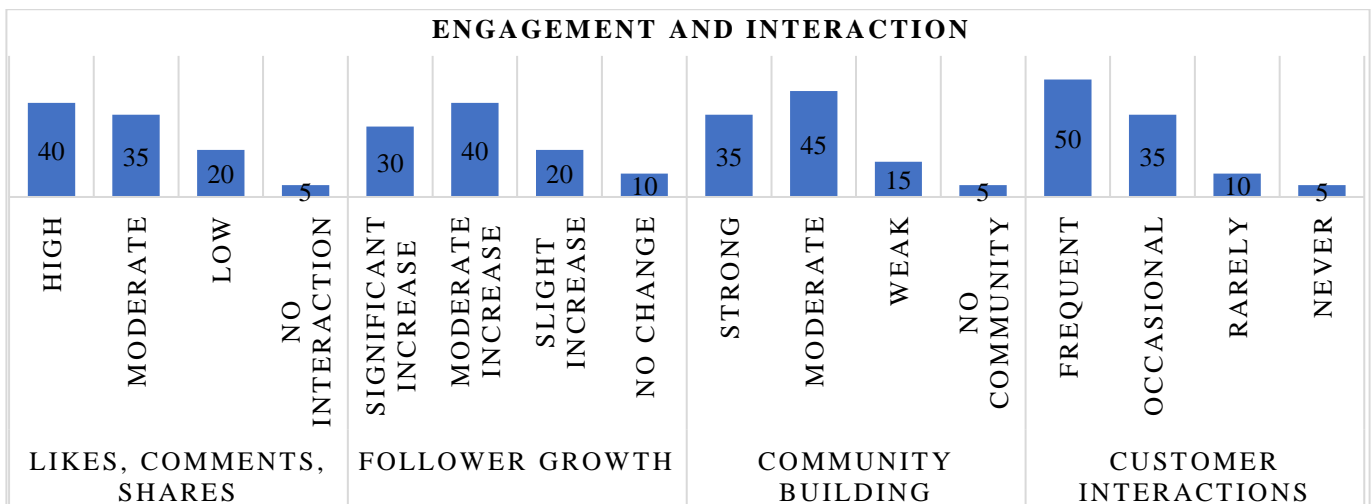


Fig. 3 Showing engagement and interactions in social media

3.4. Engagement and Interaction

In the study, the Engagement and Interaction indicator was analyzed to assess how social media marketing strategies influenced various forms of audience engagement. The sub-indicators, including Likes, Comments, Shares, Follower Growth, Community Building, and Customer Interactions, provided a comprehensive view of how effectively businesses were able to foster meaningful connections with their audience. This aspect of the study explored how different metrics reflected the success of marketing efforts and the ways in which businesses were able to engage their followers and build a loyal community.

3.4.1. Likes, Comments, Shares

In the study, respondents provided detailed insights into their experiences with social media marketing, particularly regarding audience interaction metrics such as Likes, Comments, and Shares. According to Figure 3, 40 respondents reported a high level of interaction, indicating that their posts frequently received significant engagement from their audience. They highlighted how high engagement levels reflected well on their marketing strategies, enhancing their visibility and brand presence. One respondent noted:

"...our content consistently garners high numbers of likes, comments, and shares, which confirms that we're resonating with our audience. This engagement not only boosts our brand's visibility but also encourages further interaction..."

In contrast, 35 respondents observed moderate levels of interaction, which, while positive, did not achieve the same impact as the high engagement seen by others. These respondents often cited that while their content was receiving attention, it did not always translate into substantial interaction metrics. A respondent explained:

"...we're seeing a decent amount of likes and comments, but it's not as high as we'd hoped. This moderate engagement suggests that while our content is somewhat engaging, there's room for improvement in driving deeper interaction..."

Meanwhile, 20 respondents experienced low levels of interaction, with their content garnering minimal likes, comments, or shares. This lower level of engagement was often attributed to factors such as content relevance or targeting issues. One participant shared:

"...our posts receive very few likes and shares, which points to a potential disconnect between our content and our audience's interests. We need to reassess our content strategy to better align with what our followers want to see..."

Lastly, 5 respondents reported no interaction at all, which highlighted significant challenges in engaging their audience. They noted that despite their efforts, their content failed to spark any engagement, reflecting possible issues with content quality or platform strategy. One respondent remarked:

"...we've struggled to get any likes or comments, which is concerning. This lack of interaction indicates that our current approach might not be resonating with our target audience, and we need to re-evaluate our strategy to address this problem..."

These varied experiences illustrated the range of engagement outcomes that businesses encountered, emphasizing the importance of optimizing content and strategies to enhance audience interaction and achieve better marketing results.

3.4.2. Follower Growth

In the study, the impact of social media marketing on follower growth was explored in depth, revealing a spectrum of experiences among respondents. As demonstrated in Figure 3, a significant number of respondents, 30 out of 100, reported a substantial increase in their follower counts. These individuals attributed their success to well-executed marketing campaigns and strategic content planning. One respondent elaborated on this success, saying:

"...we saw a dramatic increase in our followers after launching a targeted campaign. The content resonated deeply with our audience, and the strategic use of hashtags and promotions significantly boosted our follower count. This growth has been crucial for expanding our brand's reach..."

Another 40 respondents observed a moderate increase in their follower base. While their growth was positive, it did not reach the levels achieved by those with significant increases. These respondents noted that their efforts had yielded tangible results but were often constrained by factors such as budget limitations or less aggressive marketing strategies. As one respondent explained:

"...we managed to grow our follower base moderately, which is encouraging. However, we believe that with a more aggressive content strategy or increased budget for promotions, we could achieve a more substantial increase..."

Twenty respondents experienced only a slight increase in followers, indicating that their strategies had some effect but were less impactful compared to the moderate or significant increases. These respondents often cited challenges in engaging their audience or optimizing their content. One participant mentioned:

"...we saw a slight uptick in followers, but it wasn't as impactful as we had hoped. It seems that while our content is somewhat effective, it hasn't been enough to drive a more noticeable increase in our follower base..."

Lastly, ten respondents reported no change in their follower numbers, signaling a lack of significant impact from their marketing efforts. This stagnation often reflected broader issues such as ineffective content strategies or misalignment with their target audience. A respondent noted:

“...despite our consistent efforts and regular content updates, our follower count hasn't changed. It's clear that our current approach isn't working, and we need to re-evaluate our strategies to see why we aren't seeing any growth...”

These diverse outcomes highlighted the varying levels of effectiveness in follower growth strategies, underscoring the importance of tailored and dynamic approaches to social media marketing to achieve desired results.

3.4.3. Community Building

In the study, the impact of social media marketing on community building was thoroughly examined, providing insights into how effectively different strategies fostered engagement and connection among followers. A significant number of respondents, 35 out of 100, as illustrated in Figure 3, reported having built a strong community around their brand. These respondents described how their efforts in creating engaging content and initiating interactive campaigns led to a robust and active community. One respondent highlighted their success by saying:

“...our community has grown into a vibrant and engaged group of followers. By hosting regular Q&A sessions, creating interactive polls, and responding promptly to comments, we've managed to build a strong sense of belonging among our audience. This strong community has become a valuable asset, with members actively advocating for our brand...”

Another 45 respondents experienced a moderate level of community building. While they successfully engaged with their audience, the sense of community was not as deeply established as it was for those with strong communities. These respondents noted that their strategies were somewhat effective but had room for improvement. As one participant explained:

“...we've made decent progress in building a community around our brand. Our followers interact with our posts and participate in discussions, but we haven't reached the level of strong community engagement that we aspire to. We're still working on finding the right balance between content creation and audience interaction to enhance our community-building efforts...”

Fifteen respondents reported weak community building, indicating that their social media strategies had not significantly fostered a sense of community among their followers. These respondents often cited challenges such as low engagement rates or ineffective content strategies. One respondent reflected on their experience, saying:

“...although we have a reasonable number of followers, the sense of community is quite weak. Our engagement levels are low, and our content doesn't seem to resonate deeply with our

audience. We need to revisit our approach to make our interactions more meaningful and foster a stronger sense of community...”

Lastly, five respondents indicated that they had not managed to build any community around their brand. This lack of community was often attributed to factors such as infrequent posting or a lack of engagement strategies. A respondent shared their frustration, stating:

“...despite our best efforts, we haven't managed to build a community. Our posts go largely unnoticed, and there is minimal interaction from our followers. It's clear that our current approach is not effective, and we need to explore new strategies to engage with our audience more effectively...”

These varied results highlighted the different levels of success in community building through social media marketing, highlighting the need for targeted strategies to enhance engagement and foster a stronger connection with followers.

3.4.4. Customer Interactions on Social Media

In the study on social media marketing, the extent of customer interactions emerged as a critical factor in assessing the effectiveness of marketing strategies. A notable portion of respondents, 50 out of 100, reported that they engaged in frequent interactions with their customers, as shown in Figure 3. These respondents described their active engagement strategies, which included regular responses to comments, direct messaging, and real-time interaction during live sessions. One respondent shared their approach, stating:

“...we prioritize frequent interactions with our customers because it builds trust and strengthens relationships. Our team makes it a point to respond to comments and messages promptly. During live sessions, we actively engage with viewers by addressing their questions and feedback. This consistent interaction has significantly enhanced our customer relationships and loyalty...”

In contrast, 35 respondents reported occasional interactions with their customers. While these respondents also engaged with their audience, their interactions were less frequent and often limited to periodic responses or specific campaigns. A participant described their approach, saying:

“...we try to interact with our customers regularly, but it's not as frequent as we would like. Our interactions usually occur in response to specific inquiries or during special promotions. Although we maintain a level of engagement, it's not as consistent as we believe it should be to fully capitalize on the benefits of social media...”

Ten respondents noted that they interacted with their customers rarely. These respondents found it challenging to maintain regular engagement, often due to resource

constraints or prioritizing other aspects of their marketing strategy. One respondent reflected on their limited interactions, stating:

“...our customer interactions are quite rare. We often focus on content creation and paid promotions, which leaves us with limited time to engage directly with our audience. We realize that this is an area we need to improve to foster better relationships with our customers...”

Finally, five respondents reported that they never engaged with their customers through social media. This lack of interaction was typically due to a strategic decision to focus on other marketing channels or an underestimation of the importance of social media engagement. A respondent explained their position, saying:

“...we haven’t prioritized customer interactions on social media. Our strategy has mainly been centered around other marketing methods, and social media engagement hasn’t been a major focus. We understand that this might affect our overall effectiveness and are considering changes to integrate more direct interactions in the future...”

These findings highlighted the diverse approaches to customer interactions in social media marketing, emphasizing the varying levels of engagement and their potential impact on building and maintaining customer relationships.

3.5. Advertising and Paid Promotion

In the study of social media marketing, the focus on advertising and paid promotion revealed significant insights into the strategies employed by businesses. The indicator on Advertising and Paid Promotion encompassed two critical sub-indicators: Paid Ad Usage and Targeting Effectiveness. The examination of Paid Ad Usage showed how businesses utilized paid advertising to enhance their reach and visibility.

Respondents provided detailed accounts of their experiences with paid ads, illustrating various approaches to integrating these tools into their marketing strategies. Simultaneously, Targeting Effectiveness was explored to understand how well these paid ads reached their intended audiences and contributed to marketing objectives.

3.5.1. Paid Ad Usage in Social Media Marketing

In the study on social media marketing, the exploration of Paid Ad Usage revealed varied practices among businesses regarding their engagement with paid advertising. The analysis of Paid Ad Usage, as shown in Figure 4, indicated that a substantial portion of respondents, specifically 40 out of 100, engaged in the regular use of paid ads. These businesses reported that regular investment in paid advertising allowed them to maintain a consistent presence on social media platforms, effectively reaching their target audiences. One respondent emphasized the benefits of this approach, stating:

“...our strategy revolves around regular paid advertising because it keeps our brand visible. By consistently investing in ads, we ensure that our promotions reach a broad audience and stay top of mind with potential customers. This regular exposure has been crucial for driving our sales and engagement...”

On the other hand, 35 respondents reported using paid ads occasionally. These businesses adopted a more sporadic approach, utilizing paid promotions during specific campaigns or peak periods. A respondent who used paid ads occasionally explained their strategy:

“...we don’t rely on paid ads every day, but we do ramp up our spending around major product launches or promotional events. This approach helps us manage our budget more effectively and still achieve significant impacts during critical times...”

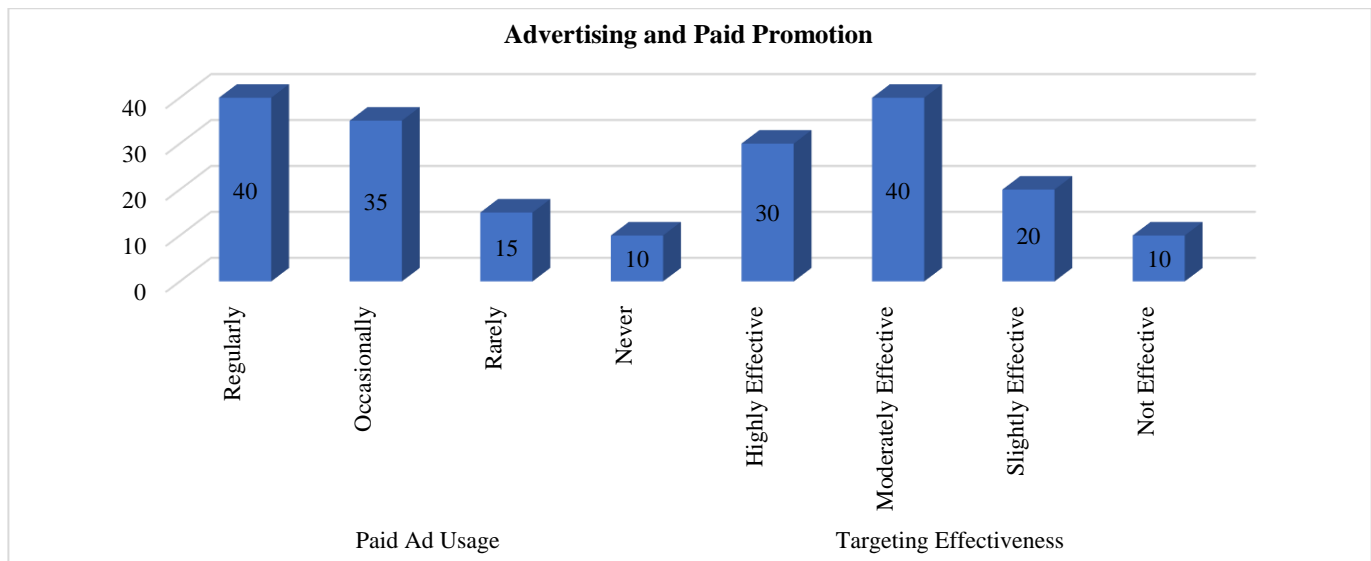


Fig. 4 Showing the Advertising and Paid Promotion

A smaller segment of the sample, 15 respondents, admitted to rarely using paid ads. These businesses expressed that they preferred organic methods of engagement or had budgetary constraints that limited their ability to invest in paid advertising. One such respondent noted:

"...we rarely use paid ads because we've focused on building organic reach and engagement. Our resources are limited, so we prioritize content creation and community interaction over paid promotions..."

Lastly, 10 respondents reported never using paid ads. These businesses either relied entirely on organic social media strategies or were not convinced of the value of paid advertising. As one respondent articulated:

"...we've chosen not to use paid ads at all. Our approach is solely based on organic growth and leveraging our existing audience through regular content updates and engagement..."

These insights into Paid Ad Usage provided a comprehensive view of how businesses across various sectors approached social media advertising, illustrating different strategies and the rationale behind their choices.

3.5.2. Targeting Effectiveness of Paid Ads

In the study focusing on social media marketing, the effectiveness of targeting strategies used in paid advertising was assessed, revealing diverse experiences among respondents. According to figure 4, the data indicated that 30 out of 100 respondents found their targeting efforts to be highly effective. These businesses reported significant success in reaching their desired audience segments with precision, which they attributed to the sophisticated targeting features available on social media platforms. One respondent highlighted their positive experience, saying:

"...the targeting tools we use have been incredibly effective for us. By honing in on specific demographics and interests, we've seen a marked increase in engagement and conversions. The ability to tailor our ads to precise audience segments has truly maximized our advertising ROI..."

Conversely, 40 respondents rated their targeting efforts as moderately effective. These businesses experienced some success with their targeting strategies but noted that some limitations and challenges prevented optimal outcomes. A respondent with a moderate view of targeting effectiveness explained:

"...our targeting strategies have been somewhat effective, but we still face challenges in reaching all our desired customer segments. While we have seen improvements, there's always room for better precision and adaptation to changing audience behaviors..."

Twenty respondents found their targeting strategies to be slightly effective. They acknowledged some benefits from their targeting efforts but felt that the results did not fully meet their expectations. A respondent reflecting on their less

favorable targeting results stated:

"...we've noticed some benefits from our targeting strategies, but they haven't been as impactful as we had hoped. There are still gaps in reaching our ideal customers, and we struggle with fine-tuning our approach to achieve better results..."

Lastly, 10 respondents reported that their targeting efforts were not effective. These businesses struggled with the limitations of the targeting tools or encountered issues that rendered their efforts less successful. One respondent who found the targeting to be ineffective shared:

"...we've tried using targeting features, but they haven't produced the results we expected. We often find that our ads don't reach the right people or generate the level of engagement we need, which has led us to reconsider our approach..."

In summary, the study illustrated a range of experiences with targeting effectiveness in social media marketing, showcasing how businesses across different sectors navigated the challenges and benefits of targeting strategies in their advertising efforts.

3.6. Analytics and Measurement

In the study, the focus shifted to the Analytics and Measurement indicator, which scrutinized how businesses leveraged social media analytics tools and incorporated data-driven decision-making into their marketing strategies. The Use of Social Media Analytics Tools was assessed to understand how businesses tracked and evaluated their social media activities. Additionally, the study explored Data-Driven Decision Making, examining how companies utilized analytics to guide their marketing strategies and improve their outcomes.

3.6.1. Utilization of Social Media Analytics Tools

In the study, the use of social media analytics tools was a critical area of focus, providing insights into how businesses monitored and evaluated their social media performance. According to Figure 5, the findings indicated varying levels of engagement with these tools among organizations. A significant portion of respondents, 25 out of 100, reported extensive use of social media analytics tools. These businesses utilized advanced analytics platforms to track a broad range of metrics, including engagement rates, audience demographics, and campaign effectiveness. One respondent described their approach:

"...we heavily rely on social media analytics tools to guide our marketing strategies. The data we gather is invaluable for understanding which content resonates most with our audience and which strategies yield the best results. For example, by analyzing engagement metrics, we can fine-tune our content to better meet our audience's preferences..."

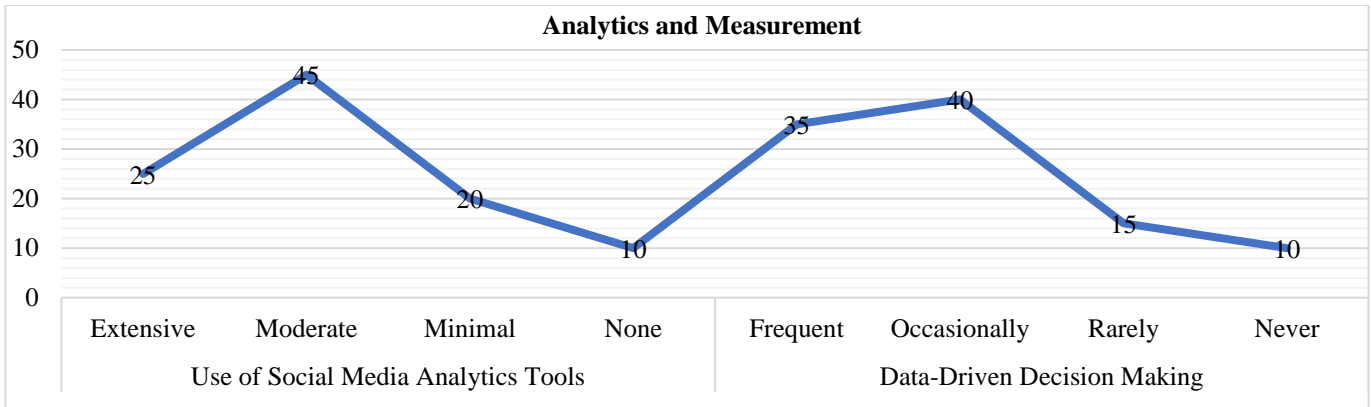


Fig. 5 Showing the Analytics and Measurement of social media marketing

In contrast, 45 respondents indicated a moderate use of these tools. These organizations employed analytics to monitor key metrics and make general adjustments to their strategies but did not delve as deeply into data analysis. As one respondent explained:

“...we use social media analytics tools to get an overview of our performance and track basic metrics like likes and shares. While we don’t use all the advanced features, having access to these tools helps us make informed decisions and tweak our strategies as needed...”

A smaller group of 20 respondents reported minimal use of social media analytics tools. These organizations occasionally used analytics for basic tracking but lacked a systematic approach to data analysis. One respondent reflected:

“...we check our social media analytics from time to time, but we don’t use the tools extensively. We look at high-level metrics like follower count and engagement, but we haven’t invested much in deeper data analysis...”

Finally, 10 respondents indicated that they did not use social media analytics tools at all. These businesses relied on more traditional methods or informal tracking, often resulting in a lack of comprehensive insights into their social media performance. One respondent noted:

“...we haven’t really adopted any social media analytics tools. We’re still figuring out how to track our social media impact effectively, and so far, we’ve been managing with basic reporting and manual tracking...”

Overall, the study highlighted a range of engagement with social media analytics tools, reflecting different levels of commitment to data-driven marketing practices.

3.6.2. Data-Driven Decision Making in Social Media Marketing

In the study, the data-driven decision-making aspect revealed varying practices among organizations, reflecting different levels of commitment to utilizing data for strategic choices. As indicated in Figure 5, a notable portion of

respondents, 35 out of 100, reported frequent use of data-driven decision-making processes. These organizations integrated data insights into nearly every aspect of their marketing strategy, continuously analyzing metrics to refine and optimize their campaigns. One respondent elaborated on their approach:

“...we are deeply invested in data-driven decision-making. Our team uses data from social media analytics, customer feedback, and market research to guide our marketing strategies. For instance, we regularly review engagement metrics and conversion rates to adjust our content and target audience. This approach has enabled us to enhance our campaign effectiveness and achieve more precise targeting...”

Another group of 40 respondents indicated that they occasionally used data to inform their decisions. These organizations employed data-driven insights on a less regular basis, often relying on data for major strategic shifts or periodic reviews rather than daily operations. As one respondent described:

“...we incorporate data into our decision-making process, but it’s more sporadic. We look at data when making significant decisions or during quarterly reviews. While it’s helpful to understand the impact of our marketing efforts, we don’t use data on a daily basis. It’s more about making informed adjustments rather than routine analysis...”

A smaller number of 15 respondents reported that they rarely used data for decision-making. These organizations sometimes referred to data but did not prioritize it as a core component of their strategy. One respondent mentioned:

“...we occasionally use data to guide our decisions, but it’s not a primary focus. We rely more on intuition and past experiences. Data helps, but it doesn’t drive our day-to-day decisions. We use it mainly for validating major changes rather than as a central element of our strategy...”

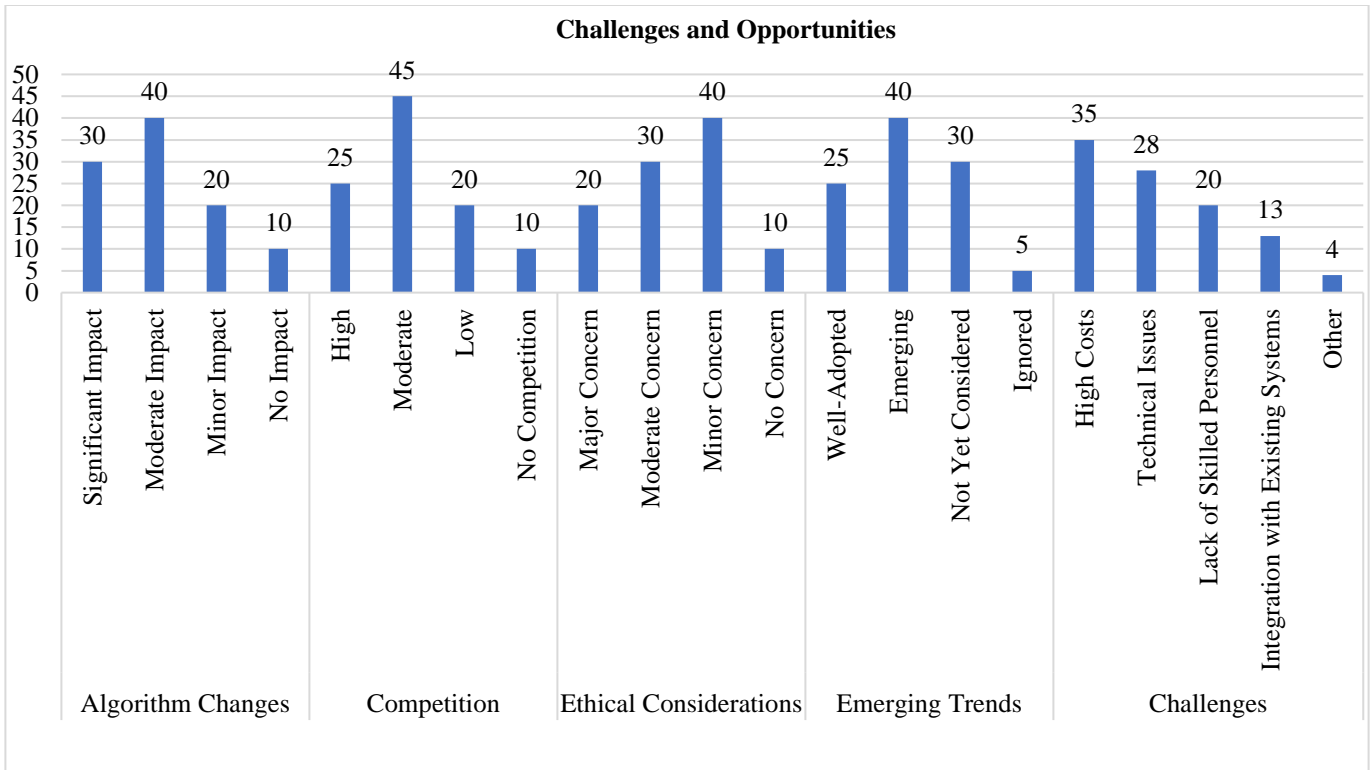


Fig. 6 Showing the challenges and opportunities in utilizing social media marketing

Finally, 10 respondents revealed that they never used data to make decisions. These businesses relied entirely on traditional methods, personal judgment, or external advice without integrating data analysis into their marketing strategies. One respondent noted:

"...we haven't really incorporated data into our decision-making process. We operate based on our experience and intuition. Data hasn't been a significant part of our strategy, and we haven't seen a strong need to change that approach..."

In general, the study illustrated a spectrum of engagement with data-driven decision-making, highlighting a range of practices from frequent and systematic use to minimal or non-existent application.

3.7. Challenges and Opportunities

In the study "Social Media Marketing: A Digital Frontier," the Challenges and Opportunities indicator was examined to understand the various obstacles and prospects that businesses encountered in the realm of social media marketing. The sub-indicators under this category included Algorithm Changes, Competition, Ethical Considerations, and Emerging Trends.

3.7.1. Algorithm Changes on Social Media Marketing

In the study, the impact of algorithm changes on social media marketing strategies was a focal point. The analysis, as indicated in Figure 6, revealed that algorithm changes had a significant impact on the marketing practices of many

businesses. Approximately 30 respondents indicated that these changes had a profound effect, altering their visibility and engagement metrics. For instance, one respondent explained:

"...the frequent changes in social media algorithms have drastically affected our engagement rates. We used to rely on organic reach, but recent updates have made it challenging to maintain visibility without investing in paid promotions. Our strategy had to shift significantly to adapt to these changes..."

A moderate impact was reported by 40 respondents, who noted that while the changes influenced their social media efforts, they did not entirely disrupt their marketing strategies. One such respondent shared:

"...although the algorithm updates caused some adjustments in our approach, we managed to navigate these changes without major disruptions. It required some tweaking of our content strategy and increased focus on analytics to understand the new patterns..."

Meanwhile, 20 respondents experienced only a minor impact from algorithm changes, suggesting that these adjustments had minimal influence on their overall social media performance. As one respondent put it:

"...the algorithm changes were somewhat noticeable, but they didn't significantly alter our marketing outcomes. We continued to see steady engagement and managed to adjust our strategies with relative ease..."

Finally, 10 respondents reported no impact from algorithm changes, indicating that their social media marketing efforts remained unaffected. One respondent remarked:

"...our social media performance stayed consistent despite the algorithm updates. We have a robust strategy that seemed to work well regardless of the changes, which was a pleasant surprise..."

In summary, the study highlighted the varying degrees of impact that algorithm changes had on businesses' social media marketing strategies, reflecting the diverse experiences of respondents in adapting to the evolving digital landscape.

3.7.2. Competition in the Social Media Landscape

The study researched the competitive landscape that businesses face in the realm of social media marketing. The findings indicated that competition played a significant role in shaping marketing strategies, with varying degrees of intensity reported by respondents, as shown in Figure 6. A substantial number of respondents, 25 in total, described the competition as being "high," underscoring the fierce rivalry they encountered on social media platforms. One respondent elaborated:

"...In our industry, the competition on social media is incredibly intense. We're constantly up against larger brands with bigger budgets, which makes it challenging to maintain visibility. It feels like a daily battle to keep our content relevant and engaging, especially when our competitors are pushing out high-quality content at such a rapid pace..."

Moderate competition was reported by 45 respondents, who acknowledged the presence of competitors but did not feel as overwhelmed. A respondent from this group commented:

"...we certainly face competition on social media, but it's manageable. We've found that by focusing on our unique selling points and maintaining a consistent content strategy, we can hold our own. It's more about staying agile and adapting to what our competitors are doing without losing our brand's identity..."

On the other hand, 20 respondents experienced low levels of competition, suggesting that their niche markets or specific strategies shielded them from the more aggressive competitive pressures seen by others. One respondent explained:

"...In our particular niche, we don't face as much competition. There are only a handful of players, and we've built a loyal audience that engages with our content regularly. This has allowed us to focus more on quality and less on quantity without the constant pressure of keeping up with what everyone else is doing..."

Lastly, 10 respondents reported facing no competition at all on social media, which allowed them to operate without the

constraints or challenges typically associated with a competitive environment. As one respondent noted:

"...We're in a unique position where we don't have any direct competitors on social media. This has given us the freedom to experiment with our content and engagement strategies, and we've seen great results without the need to constantly monitor what others are doing..."

The study highlighted how varying levels of competition influenced the social media marketing strategies of different businesses, with some respondents feeling the intense pressure of high competition. In contrast, others operated in more relaxed environments with little to no competitive threat.

3.7.3. Ethical Considerations in Social Media Marketing

The study revealed that ethical considerations were a significant factor for businesses navigating the complexities of social media marketing. The respondents' perspectives, as illustrated in Figure 6, varied widely, reflecting different levels of concern regarding ethical issues in their marketing practices. For 20 respondents, ethical considerations were a major concern, influencing every aspect of their social media strategies. These respondents expressed deep worries about the potential for misleading content, the invasion of customer privacy, and the manipulation of data. One respondent emphasized:

"...Ethics in social media marketing is not just an afterthought for us; it's a guiding principle. We're acutely aware that our audience expects transparency and honesty. Any slip-up can erode trust, and that's something we can't afford. The challenge is balancing effective marketing with maintaining that ethical integrity. It's not easy, especially when competitors might not hold themselves to the same standards..."

A larger group of 30 respondents reported moderate concern regarding ethical issues. These businesses acknowledged the importance of ethics in their marketing practices but found themselves grappling with the practicalities of implementing ethical standards consistently. A respondent from this group shared:

"...We do our best to adhere to ethical guidelines, but it's a constant struggle. Sometimes, the pressure to produce results can push ethical concerns to the back burner, but we try to keep them in focus. It's about finding that middle ground where we're still competitive but not compromising our values..."

Meanwhile, 40 respondents considered ethical considerations to be a minor concern in their marketing activities. These businesses often viewed ethics as important but not necessarily central to their strategies, focusing more on outcomes and results. One respondent reflected:

"...We're aware of the ethical debates in social media marketing, but honestly, it doesn't affect our day-to-day operations much. We have

guidelines in place, but as long as we're not crossing any legal boundaries, we don't see it as a major issue. The reality is that in this competitive environment, being overly cautious about ethics can slow us down..."

Finally, 10 respondents indicated that ethical considerations were of no concern in their social media marketing strategies. These respondents typically operated in environments where ethical issues were either not relevant or were perceived as non-problematic. A respondent in this category remarked:

"...In our line of work, ethics doesn't really come into play with our social media marketing. We're focused on driving sales and engagement, and as long as we're compliant with the law, that's all that matters to us. We haven't encountered any significant ethical dilemmas, so it's not something we worry about..."

The study highlighted a range of attitudes toward ethical considerations in social media marketing, ranging from those who viewed ethics as a cornerstone of their strategy to those who saw it as a peripheral concern. This diversity in perspectives **underscored the difficulty of resolving ethical dilemmas in the field of digital marketing.**

3.7.4. Emerging Trends in Social Media Marketing

The study explored how businesses in Iringa Municipal responded to emerging trends in the rapidly evolving digital marketing landscape. The findings revealed that businesses were at different stages of adopting these trends, reflecting a broad spectrum of engagement with new and innovative practices. Among the respondents, 25 businesses had well-adopted emerging trends in social media marketing, demonstrating a proactive approach to staying ahead of the curve. These businesses had not only recognized but also integrated new trends into their marketing strategies. One respondent explained:

"...We've always prided ourselves on being early adopters. Whether it's leveraging AI-driven analytics or experimenting with new platforms like TikTok, we believe that staying on top of trends is crucial for maintaining our competitive edge. It's about anticipating where the market is going and being there before everyone else..."

This group saw significant value in embracing change and often led their industries in innovation. A larger group of 40 respondents were in the process of adopting emerging trends, although they had not yet fully integrated them into their operations. These businesses were aware of the importance of staying current but were more cautious in their approach. A respondent noted:

"...We're definitely exploring new trends, but we're careful about how quickly we jump on board. It's important to us that we understand the implications fully before we commit resources. For instance, while we see the potential of influencer

marketing, we're still figuring out how it fits with our brand..."

This cautious optimism reflected a desire to innovate without risking the stability of their existing marketing strategies. Another 30 respondents had not yet considered emerging trends in their social media marketing efforts. These businesses were often focused on more traditional methods or had limited resources to explore new trends. One respondent admitted:

"...Honestly, we're still catching up with the basics. Our priority right now is getting a solid foundation in place before we start looking at new trends. It's not that we don't see their value, but we need to walk before we can run..."

This group represented businesses that were either slow to adapt or more concerned with solidifying their current strategies before venturing into new territory. Finally, 5 respondents indicated that they had ignored emerging trends altogether. These businesses typically operated in niches where they felt trends had little relevance or where the perceived benefits did not justify the investment. One respondent remarked:

"...For us, the tried-and-true methods work just fine. We've seen trends come and go, and frankly, a lot of them don't seem to stick. We prefer to focus on what we know works rather than chasing after every new thing that comes along..."

This perception highlighted a resistance to change that was rooted in a preference for stability and predictability. Overall, the study revealed a diverse range of attitudes toward emerging trends in social media marketing, from those who eagerly embraced innovation to those who were more hesitant or dismissive. This variation underscored the different strategic priorities and risk tolerances among businesses, shaping how they navigated the ever-changing digital marketing landscape.

3.7.5. Challenges Faced in Social Media Marketing

The respondents in the study described numerous challenges they encountered while implementing social media marketing strategies. As indicated in Figure 6, the most significant challenge reported by 35 respondents was the high costs associated with effective social media marketing. Many businesses struggled with the financial burden of investing in paid advertisements, advanced analytics tools, and content creation. One respondent mentioned:

"...allocating a budget for social media is a constant challenge. It's not just about the ads but also paying for quality content creation and the tools to analyze performance..."

These expenses were particularly burdensome for small to medium-sized enterprises that operate on tighter budgets. Technical issues also emerged as a major challenge, as reported by 28 respondents. Businesses often face difficulties in maintaining smooth operations across various social media platforms. This included problems related to platform-specific

features, managing multiple accounts, and keeping up with constant algorithm changes. Respondents expressed frustration over these technical barriers, which often led to inconsistencies in their marketing efforts. For example, one interviewee stated:

"...every time there's a new update or change in the algorithm, it feels like we're starting from scratch. It's exhausting trying to keep up..."

Another significant issue was the lack of skilled personnel, highlighted by 20 respondents. Many businesses find it difficult to hire or train employees with the necessary expertise in digital marketing and social media management. This shortage of talent hindered their ability to execute effective marketing campaigns and analyze the data generated from these efforts. One respondent remarked:

"...we have the tools, but without the right people to use them, it's like having a car without a driver. We need skilled marketers who understand both the creative and analytical sides of social media..."

Integration with existing systems was identified as a challenge by 13 respondents. Businesses often struggle to incorporate new social media marketing tools with their established IT infrastructure. This issue was particularly problematic for companies with legacy systems that were not designed to support modern digital marketing technologies. As one interviewee noted:

"...Our CRM and sales software are outdated, so integrating social media data has been a nightmare. We're constantly facing compatibility issues, which slows down our marketing processes..."

Finally, a few respondents (4) mentioned other challenges, including issues like regulatory compliance, rapidly changing consumer behavior, and competition in the digital space. These additional hurdles, while less frequently cited, added layers of complexity to the overall challenges faced by businesses in social media marketing. The shared response from respondents painted a picture of a marketing landscape fraught with obstacles, requiring significant financial, technical, and human resources to navigate effectively.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that effective social media marketing hinges on a multifaceted approach involving platform usage, content creation, engagement, and data analysis. The research found that businesses leveraging a variety of social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, experienced varied levels of success. High engagement was achieved by regularly producing diverse content, including text, images, and videos, tailored to

audience preferences. Companies that employed targeted advertising and paid promotions saw notable improvements in visibility and customer acquisition. However, the effectiveness of these strategies was heavily influenced by the businesses' ability to track and analyze performance metrics using social media analytics tools. This data-driven approach enabled companies to refine their strategies and optimize their marketing efforts.

Despite these advances, the study identified several challenges that businesses faced in social media marketing. High costs associated with advanced tools and advertising, technical issues, and a lack of skilled personnel were significant barriers. Additionally, businesses struggled with adapting to rapid changes in social media algorithms and navigating ethical considerations. Emerging trends presented both opportunities and challenges, with some businesses successfully adopting new practices while others lagged behind. In general, the study highlighted that while social media marketing offers substantial benefits, overcoming these challenges requires a strategic blend of effective platform utilization, innovative content creation, robust analytics, and proactive management of emerging issues.

The study recommends that businesses invest in a comprehensive social media strategy that integrates diverse platform usage with targeted content creation and data analytics. Companies should prioritize training for their marketing teams to handle technical issues and leverage advanced tools effectively, addressing the high costs and lack of skilled personnel identified as significant challenges. Implementing regular monitoring and analysis of engagement metrics will allow for continuous improvement and adaptation to algorithm changes and emerging trends. Additionally, businesses should consider ethical implications in their marketing practices to build trust and credibility with their audience. By adopting these recommendations, companies can enhance their social media presence, drive higher engagement, and navigate the complex landscape of digital marketing more effectively.

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