

Increasing Social Media for Women & Minority firms

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Abstract

Medgar Evers College is located in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn New York. While Brooklyn continues to experience unprecedented economic growth, many small businesses in Crown Heights are not surviving. CUNY, Santander Bank Foundation and Carnegie Mellon funded several entrepreneurship and experiential learning projects to be implemented at the College. The Social Justice and Social Entrepreneurship project launched with participants completing the Hootsuite certification in social media. Once participants received certification, they were tasked with completing Social Audits and Social Media strategies for women or minority businesses. Participants were encouraged to grow the firm's social impact using the Klout measurement.

Key Words: Social media, marketing, networking, specialists training, social dynamics

The project was implemented during fall 2015 as to have optimal impact during the peak retail season.

Contents:

1. The Demand for Social Media Skills
 - 1.1. Hootsuite executive interview
 - 1.2. Hootsuite training and Certification program
2. Comparison of Women and Men Business Utilization of Social Media
3. Participants and outcomes
 - 3.1. Summary of Cohort Outcomes
 - 3.2. Selected Participants Social Media Experiences
4. Summary and Conclusions
 - I. The Demand for Social Media Skills

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Social media has globally changed the face and feel of the Internet. From teens to seniors new work and play options exist that have changed the social dynamics of a flatter global world changing both market reach and penetrations options for small to large corporations. Lacho & Marinello stated that women small business owners could use social networking to market their business and to network online. However the broad majority of women and minority businesses don't have the knowledge of expertise of how to effectively utilize social media to its greatest advantage. Younger women owned businesses; those under 35 are an exception (Lacho 2010). The shift to greater resources is growing faster for social media than other traditional sources of marketing.

If the demand for social media is growing how then is the industry developing the skills to service this growing market place? Fall 2015, Medgar Evers College was approached by Hootsuite, a market leader in the delivery of social media services and training. Hootsuite developed training for their platform as one of their social media training options. The firm's first broad based social media offering was in beta test in preparation for market launch. Hootsuite's challenge was that their client demand for social media specialists and managers exceeded the supply of qualified talent. The solution was to create both training and certifications that would increase the supply of qualified social media experts. Medgar Evers College was given access to the Hootsuite platform, on-line social media training modules, and social media certification examinations.

During the program launch Medgar Evers College's Dean of the School of Business and the Director of the Entrepreneurship & Experiential Learning Training lab reviewed the training modules and completed the certification examinations. A cohort of 20 students was given access to the training modules.

II. Comparison of Women and Men Business Utilization of Social Media

According to Brandwatch 2015 females are utilizing social media less than men for business reasons, statistics show that women use social media to share more personal information than men who utilize social media mainly for business reasons. Women are more vocal, expressive and willing to share in their personal lives but have not bought this into their business Statistics show, women are biologically wired for social networking according to data compiled by FinancesOnline.com

Generally, females use social networking sites to make connections and stay in touch with family or friends. Men, by contrast, use social media to gather the information they need to build influence for their businesses. Social media helps businesses perform research, gather relevant contacts and ultimately increase their status. In table 1, FinanceOnline.com statistics show that men and women have varying degrees of online activity across different sites. 74% of Internet users are using social media, with women (76%) having a slight edge over men (72%).

In the Nielsen Data, illustrated in graph 1 note that among Internet users, a greater percentage of women use Facebook, Tumblr, Pinterest, Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter.

For example, 22% of women are active on Twitter, compared to just 15% of men. Facebook, which is used by 71% of the online population, is dominated by women (76 percent) as opposed to men (66 percent). On average, women have more than twice as many posts on their Facebook walls and they have 8% more 'friends' than men. One social network that boasts more men (24%) than women (19%) is the professional-networking site LinkedIn.

Men are more likely to use Google+ than women, despite only 10% of the internet population spending time on the network, as shown in Quicks Sprout's infographic. Pinterest, not surprisingly, has a more female-centric user base with 33% of female Internet population using it, compared to 8% of all men.

III. Participants and outcomes

.3.1 Summary of Cohort outcomes

Many historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have implemented entrepreneurship programs to support economic development. (Rolle, Billy, Pittman 2015). Medgar Evers College also has a history of supporting economic development in the community through entrepreneurship (Billy, Egbe, Rolle et.al. 2016). Support of community entrepreneurs began with Medgar Evers College students Social Media training and certification on Hootsuite Media Podium software. A total of nineteen (19) students enrolled in Social Media training, of the 19 students who attempted the training 15 or 79% were successful in completing all 6 components of the training. Of the 19 who enrolled in the training 11 were women and of the 15 who completed all 6 components 9 were women.

After completing the six training modules students moved to the Social Media Marketing Certification exam. Eighteen (18) students attempted the exam, 50% were males and 50% were female. The exam results showed that 11 students passed the certification exam five (5) women and 6 men.

A Social Media Audit and Strategy component was added to the training. Students completed a Social Media Audit and Strategy on a minority or women owned business. Stipends were given to assist in seeding future support of social media audits and strategies. Graphs 3 & 4 represent the outcomes of the participants in the case study.

Two audits and strategies of merit were by Aliza Carter and Anika McInnis, which are cited in “Selected Participants Social Media experiences.”

3.2. Selected Participant’s Social Media experiences

ALIZA CARTER

THE CANDYSHOP

SOCIAL MEDIA AUDIT

The CANDYSHOP objective for conducting this Social Media Audit is to analyze and understand the effectiveness of current social media efforts, get accurate information based on measurable targets and insights to continue with positive insights or adjust negative insights to attain better performance in the near future.

Goals

The goal is to evaluate the current social channels, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter analyzing the overall quality of the traffic and the engagement rates. After analysis amplify the results that works and measure it with the conversion rates. The engagements that are not successful tweak or abandon.

Solution

The current social media efforts for The CandyShop according to Klout a third party platform that test your how influential your social media efforts currently are, offer ways on how to track and improve your social media influences. Klout scores the company after they have permission to give an initial numerical assessment of the company’s’ influences or voice on social media. The first day we signed up with Klout was December 27, 2015 and the brand score was closer to 0. Our score was 10; needless to say in the social media world we were not making an impression. After taking the Hootsuite Social Media Course Certification, paying close attention and taking notes because the life of the brand was in desperate need of a voice. Making the necessary changes like a proper and consistent high-resolution quality thumbnail picture throughout all social channels. Making sure our cover photos for Facebook was functional as per branding guidelines. These steps seem basic but skipping one or two throws your score off. I would compare it to missing or paying late on a bill, that action affects your credit score negatively. Same with social media channels if they are inconsistencies with the different platforms the brand suffers and is not appearing as trust worthy as needed.

THE CANDYSHOP SMA

The CandyShop brand was struggling before the social media audit to be an engaging forum. For example on Instagram the impact or reactions was not as high as our competitors, not realizing why, after taking the course the competitor was sharing relevant information whereas The CandyShop was sharing more than 30% promotional information. The course teaches one to make social media a two-way engagement of relevant and educational information in order to be influential and a source of trusted information. This will attract people and build a close-knit community around your brand. Major note is that your social media forum should be used for 1/3 promotional need only.

After the social media audit we have implemented tools like Facebook insights to get data, which confirmed we have our target audience females and males 18 to 34 years old. The post engagement data confirmed that our created content and curated content needed to be adjusted due to low post engagements. Incorporating Klout services like scheduling curated informative and relevant post has helped with a precise systematic approach that is measurable. At the start of this audit our original Klout score was 10, today our score is 56 all due to performing a thorough social media audit and implementing change on all social channels.

Today we were even recognized as a “Style” expert on Klout! Needless to say with clear business objectives, informational relevant content and accurate target audiences The CandyShop brand is on its way to being an influential leader in its industry.

Social Media Strategy Outline

The Social Media Strategy

- Increase traffic to website through social media channels
- Create relevant information to share pair with high-resolution graphics
- Create a content calendar with key dates, which is great to have organization annually.
- Use paid strategies like Facebook ads to fine tune target audience.
- Most importantly we will have earned the “voice of the brand” through clear goals, informative messages and quality products to generate leads and sales.
- Build audience from owned properties like our email list and blog, also include keywords for optimal results in google SEO
- Start interacting with influencers within the industry, currently the brand has been building a relationship with Dollhouse Cosmetics who has a voice on social media and has given The CandyShop networking opportunities to date. We hope to foster this relationship to greater heights, and acquire new influential relationships.

ANIKA MCINNIS

BLACKMARKETWARES

SOCIAL MEDIA AUDIT

BlackMarketWares is a community organization and lifestyle brand rooted in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. We work to expose youth to new horizons through arts, sports, and entrepreneurship.

Competitors

We are a unique organization because of our multimedia format and specific location of activity, but our primary competitor is S.O.S. (Save our Streets) Brooklyn. They operate an Instagram account, a Facebook, a Twitter, and a LinkedIn.

S.O.S. is a Crown Heights-based organization that prevents gun violence from occurring in two target areas within Crown Heights and Bedford-Stuyvesant. Mentors in the organization mediate conflicts that could end in gun violence, acting as peer counsellors to the young people who are at risk of perpetrating or being victimized. The S.O.S. teams work closely with neighbourhood leaders and businesses to promote a visible and public message against gun violence, encouraging local voices to articulate that shootings are unacceptable.

Every time there is a shooting in one of the S.O.S. target areas, they organize a response gathering at the site of the incident. S.O.S. uses its social media channels to promote these vigils.

BlackMarketWares Analysis

BlackMarketWares has a Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. Our company website, BlackMarketWares.com, is also an important part of our social media strategy. Our customers are students in high school and college, entrepreneurs, college organizations, community groups, media creators, and artists.

By consistently posting on all of our social media channels and updating our website, we are able to reach our customers on all bases. Our current marketing is to use customer targeting. We message the people that we want to engage directly to share information.

Recommendation

We currently run 3 different social media accounts and our website. Moving forward, we will add LinkedIn to our social media circle, due to the possible connections that can be made there with professionals. A key decision we recommend is to implement specific times to analyse.

Content Strategy

BlackMarketWares will gain a lot from promoting our I AM PEACE program. It is a very positive endeavour, which generates likes and shares from our network. Two content marketing expansions from the I AM PEACE program are the Student of the Month series and publishing student-produced articles on the BlackMarketWares article.

Customer Engagement and Interaction

In order to increase customer engagement, we will work on becoming more present in our community by constantly sharing our links. Another major factor is developing more community events, where we can sign people up for our email list, promote our website, and encourage attendees to follow us on social media. Because we are a youth-serving organization, we will work through the students that we currently interact with in order to expose our program to more young people who can benefit from our service.

Content Creation for Multiple Channels

The key of being a small team and creating exciting social media content is to leverage the creativity of our young people. Youngsters are more active on social media and have greater connectivity with their friends. By meeting them where they are, such as tagging or mentioning them in posts, as well as by featuring their work on our website, we will expand our reach. The youth are ready and willing to share things that promote them in a positive way.

Measurements

BlackMarketWares will measure these indicators:

- Facebook likes and shares
- Instagram follower's increases
- Interactions on Snapchat

4. Summary & Conclusions

What we learned is that access to social media skills increase customer engagement options for participants. The two participants' experiences presented here indicate the ability to improve the social impact of start-up or existing businesses. Our liaison with other New York based organizations also validates the demand for intrapreneurs, those with skills in social media that can expand and grow markets inside a major organization. The Hootsuite training implemented by Medgar Evers college is on-line, and self-paced yielding outcomes, which ranged from increased social impacts to partial completion of training. The Hootsuite program has improved the social impact of the businesses that were completed in the social audits and strategies. Additional research and program outcomes for strategies to increase entrepreneurship success in minority communities were discussed in two international conferences funded by CUNY. (Rolle, J. D., Javalquinto, B., Billy, I., Acevedo, R, et.al 2016)

Table 1

Who uses social networking sites

% of internet users within each group who use social networking sites

<i>All internet users</i>	74%
a Men	72
b Women	76
a 18-29	89 ^{cd}
b 30-49	82 ^{cd}
c 50-64	65 ^d
d 65+	49
a High school grad or less	72
b Some college	78
c College+	73
a Less than \$30,000/yr	79
b \$30,000-\$49,999	73
c \$50,000-\$74,999	70
d \$75,000+	78

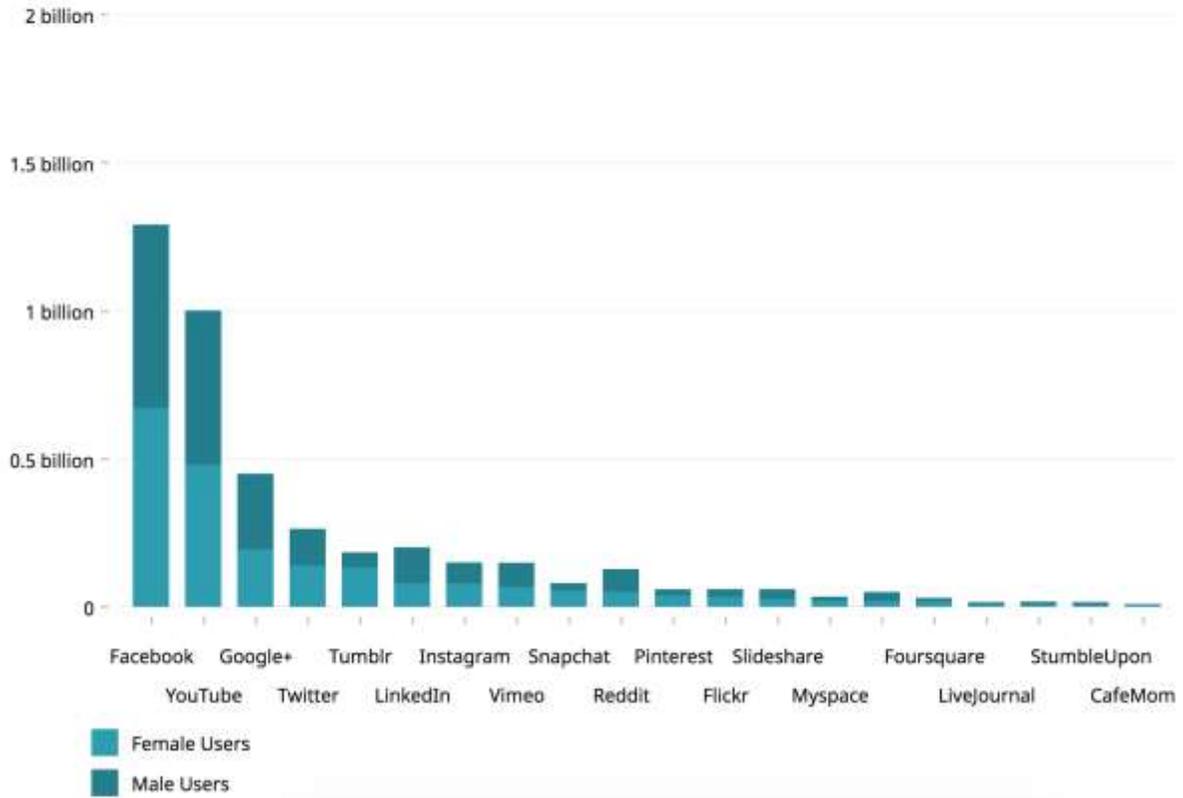
Pew Research Center's Internet Project January Omnibus Survey, January 23-26, 2014.

Note: Percentages marked with a superscript letter (e.g., ^a) indicate a statistically significant difference between that row and the row designated by that superscript letter, among categories of each demographic characteristic (e.g., age).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Graph 1

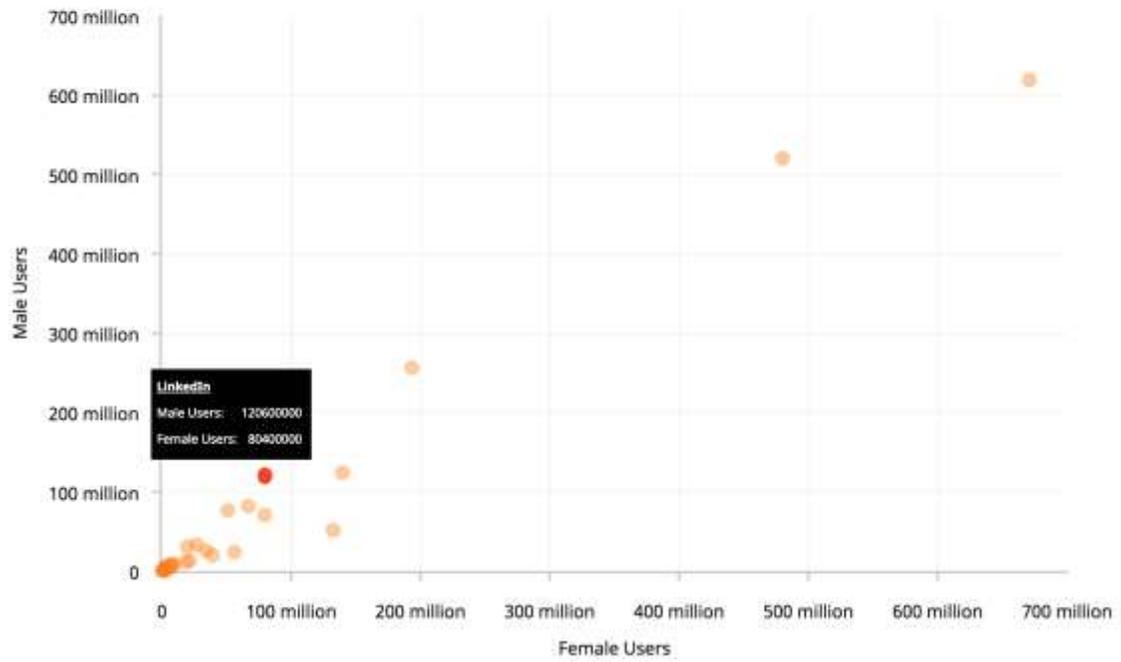
Female Users and Male Users of Social Media Sites pages



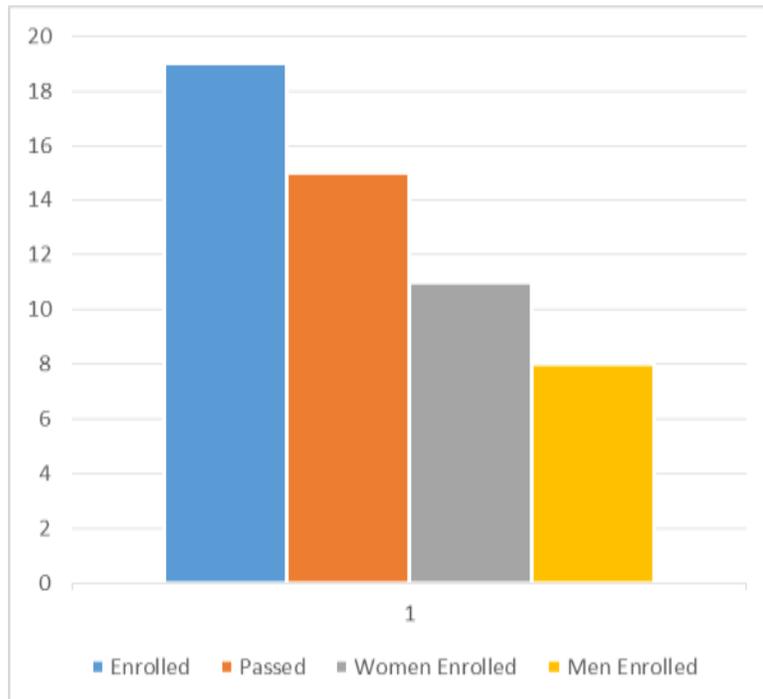
Nielsen Data 2012

Graph 2

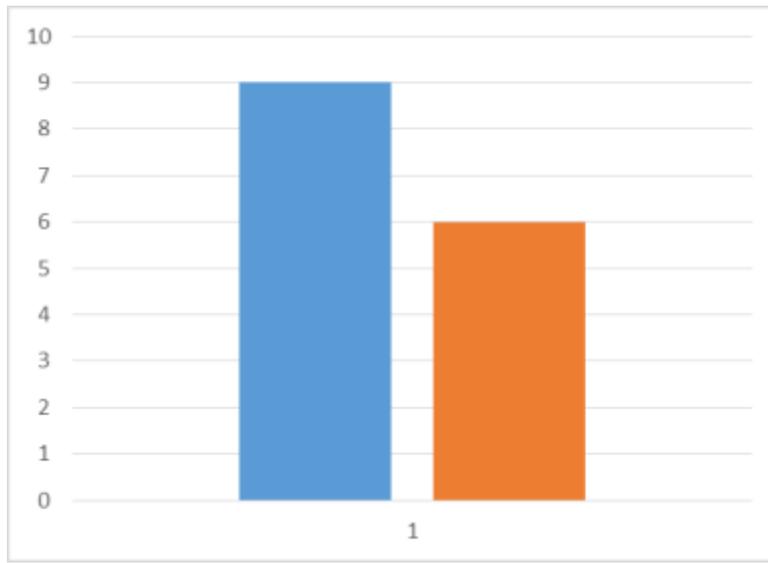
Male Users and Female Users of Social Media Sites pages



Graphs 3



Graph 4



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Tables

(Nielsen) 2012

(Pew) 2014