



Social Media Customer Service

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Abstract

Social media has emerged as a powerful platform, transforming how businesses connect with and serve their customers. It is a powerful tool that enables brands to offer real-time interaction and personalized support to consumers. It facilitates immediate responses and interactions, a critical factor in customer satisfaction. Customer service has evolved from a mere transactional function to a strategic imperative that can significantly influence a company's reputation and bottom line. Social media customer service is customer support delivered through social platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X, and LinkedIn. It is an essential component of a comprehensive strategy for customer experience management and brand loyalty. It could influence even more potential customers. This paper examines the critical role of social media in customer service

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1. Introduction

For decades, customer service was synonymous with phone calls, email exchanges, and face-to-face interactions. However, the digital revolution ushered in a paradigm shift, with social media emerging as a powerful force transforming the customer service landscape. A lot of companies provide service through social media, and your competitors are probably already doing it. Social media customer service helps customers solve problems, answer questions, and resolve complaints across platforms like X, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok. When done well, social media becomes another touchpoint in your customer's journey. Social media enables real-time interaction and immediate responses to customer inquiries. Figure 1 is a representation of social media customer service ^[1].



Fig 1: A representation of social media customer service ^[1].

Social media has evolved from networking to a full-fledged customer service battleground, where most consumers expect consistent interactions across multiple channels. Unlike traditional support, it meets customers where they already are — on social media — allowing brands to respond quickly and publicly. This visibility makes it a powerful tool for building trust, but also a challenge, as customer expectations for speed and resolution are higher than ever.

2. Methodology

This study used a qualitative methodology, incorporating a literature review, to explore the applications, benefits, challenges, customer experiences, behaviors, and effectiveness of social media customer service. This approach allows researchers to gather data from a wide range of sources, including peer-reviewed scholarly journals and other important resources.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Social Media

The following section provides a comprehensive review and

analysis of the existing literature on social media.

Modern social media, also known as social networking, include Facebook (Facebook, Inc, Menlo Park, California, USA), Twitter (Twitter Inc, San Francisco, California, USA), YouTube (San Mateo, California, USA), LinkedIn (Sunnyvale, California, USA), Instagram (Facebook, Inc, Menlo Park, California, USA), and Pinterest (San Francisco, California, USA). Both traditional and modern social media are illustrated in Figure 2^[2]. Modern social media began in 1978 when Ward Christensen and Randy Sues created a bulletin board to inform friends about meetings and announcements and to share information. Since then, social media has become an integral part of our lives^[3]. Social media gives companies another way to reach people that traditional media cannot. They allow your company to boost its brand. Companies that fail to invest in a strong social media presence will soon realize they missed out on a serious competitive advantage. As shown in Figure 3, the critical characteristics of social media are connectedness, collaboration, and community^[4].



Fig 2: Critical characteristics of social media^[4].



Fig 3: Traditional and modern social media^[2].

Social media (also called Web 2.0 or social networking) refers to Internet- and mobile-based tools that allow individuals to communicate, share ideas, and send personal messages and images. Web 1.0 is the “read-only Web.” Consumers are allowed to read information created by the provider of the online information. Web 2.0 allows users to

create content, post, and share audio, graphics, text, and video online^[5].

Social media are computer-mediated communication tools that enable users to share and consume content in various modalities, such as text, images, and video^[6]. Recently, the use of social media has expanded into the healthcare field.

Healthcare professionals now use SM as part of their daily activities. Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, activities, events, and interests. The majority of social networking users use these sites to form self-organized interest groups for fundraising, awareness, marketing, and general support.

SM sites may include wikis, blogs, and social networks.

These are easy-to-publish websites known as wikis. Multiple users can quickly and easily edit them. Wiki is a Hawaiian term meaning “quick.” Wikipedia is the most commonly used Wiki among healthcare professionals, who use it to find medical information. However, Wikipedia sometimes contains factual errors that lack the depth of traditionally edited, peer-reviewed information sources.

Blogs, for example, are the oldest, most established, and most evaluated form of social media. They provide the opportunity to publish large amounts of information in a variety of media (text, video, and audio) in an open forum. Healthcare workers have used blogs for peer-to-peer communication. Medical blogs generally target one of two different audiences: patients or providers. Microblogs provide a dynamic, concise way to exchange information on social media.

Social media platforms such as Facebook allow individuals to post photos and messages and share them with friends, relatives, and acquaintances all over the world. Media-sharing sites comprise social media tools optimized for viewing and sharing. They are great resources for education, community building, marketing, and research. They have become encyclopedic resources.

Today, many social media tools, including social networking sites, blogs, microblogs, wikis, and media-sharing sites, are influential in our everyday lives and are available for health care professionals (HCPs).

Mobile social media (MSM) is the combination of social networking and mobile technologies. It is becoming a global phenomenon, enabling IP connectivity for people on the move. It is mediated by mobile devices such as smartphones, tablets, or laptop computers. It refers to social media applications such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, MySpace, and Twitter, delivered via mobile devices. These popular social media platforms have developed mobile apps to give users instant access from anywhere, at any time [7]. Figure 4 shows the most annoying industries on social media [8].

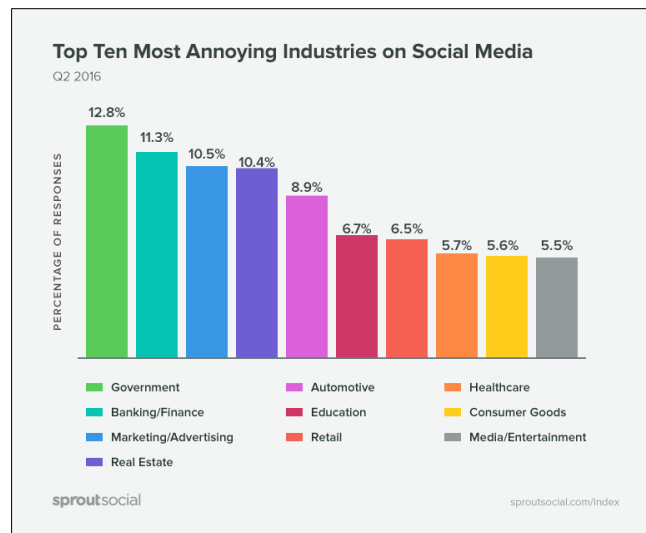


Fig 4: The most annoying industries on social media [8].

3.2. Social Media for Customer Service

Modern customers are increasingly skipping phone queues and contact forms altogether. Instead, they are heading straight to platforms like X, Instagram, or Facebook, where conversations are public, replies are expected fast, and bad experiences can go viral in minutes. Traditionally, customer service was confined to phone calls and emails. However, the advent of social media has shifted this paradigm. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram now serve as touchpoints for customer interactions. This shift is driven by customers' desire for quick, convenient resolutions to their inquiries and complaints. Social media platforms allow for more personal

and empathetic communication. It turns customer service from private, one-on-one chats into public moments, each one adding to your brand's narrative. It makes customer service more transparent, faster paced, and public. Companies can directly engage with customers, acknowledging their individual needs and preferences [9,10]. The choice of platforms should be guided by your customer service strategy, target audience, and the type of interaction you want with your customers. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are crucial for different aspects of customer interaction. Figure 5 shows the role of social media in customer service [1].



Fig 5: The role of social media in customer service ^[1].

Social media customer service (or social customer service) is the practice of providing customer support on social media platforms. It is a dynamic way for businesses to engage with customers where they are already active, offering real-time, personalized service. This approach extends beyond traditional support channels, leveraging social networks like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn for direct communication.

Integrating social media into your customer service strategy enhances the overall customer experience and contributes to your brand's success. It leads to increased customer satisfaction by offering a direct, convenient way for customers to communicate, especially through social media posts. Figure 6 shows the reasons you should provide social media customer service ^[11].



Fig 6: The reasons you should provide social media customer service ^[11].

3.3. Social Media Applications

There are different applications, such as Social Customer Care. Social customer care is all about proactively meeting your customers' needs. Social media is where your customers live, making it a key part of delivering standout customer care. Supporting them there means meeting them where they are, creating faster, easier, and more natural interactions. It shows brand values, every customer's voice, and is committed to improving the user experience. Social customer care, when coupled with social listening tools that flag certain terms, improves your crisis management skills. Delivering great customer service on social media goes beyond quick replies; it is about building trust, showing empathy, and creating meaningful connections. Other applications are Immersive Technologies: Augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) are no longer futuristic concepts; they are transforming the social media customer service operations. These technologies allow brands to create immersive, interactive experiences that solve problems, answer

questions, and engage customers in entirely new ways.

Other applications include Social Listening. Across all types of organizations, customers crave being listened to. Listening to your customers builds their trust in you. Besides finding out what customers are saying in their comments and messages online, social listening lets you get a big-picture view of brand sentiment, what people think of your company, and how it changes over time. Additionally, social media listening can help you become more proactive. Traditional listening opportunities, like focus groups, are more expensive (in terms of time and money). For larger companies, the perception your customers have of your brand can shift in days, even weeks.

4. Discussions of Benefits and Challenges

4.1. Benefits

Social media interactions are often public, making them powerful tools for brand building. By staying closely attuned to customer experiences on social media, you can eliminate

outdated data, stay agile, and make smarter, more informed decisions. By effectively harnessing social media's capabilities, brands can engage customers dynamically, address their concerns in real time, and significantly boost overall satisfaction. Other benefits of social media customer service include the following ^[12]:

Automation is an important aspect of social media services. Automating social media customer service tasks is necessary to reply to everyone quickly. Many customers also prefer instant answers to common FAQs, whether delivered by a person or a bot. AI can generate automated responses to common questions, saving time for human agents. While AI can automate many tasks, human interaction remains essential for complex issues and for building customer relationships. Furthermore, it is imperative that social media can be a more *cost-effective* way to provide customer service than traditional channels like phone calls or emails. Businesses can use social media to automate tasks through chatbots and AI, reducing the need for human resources.

Another important part is cost-effective Support. Utilizing social media customer service platforms can be more cost-effective than traditional phone-based Support, as they allow handling multiple queries simultaneously and can reduce workload through automation and chatbots. Besides ensuring every customer can reach a human member of your team for Support in some way, consider offering a premium support option.

In social media, personalized experiences are an important factor. The most important thing you can do as a brand is to make your customers feel like you are listening and addressing their unique needs and preferences. Everybody wants to be seen, and with a social customer care tool, you can ensure that every customer receives a customized response. This prompts social customer care teams to deliver more personalized and effective Support. Empathetic, personalized customer service builds trust, increases customer engagement, and improves customer retention. In situations where a customer is upset or frustrated, a more personalized and empathetic approach is necessary.

Negative customer feedback can help improve services. It can be tempting to protect your brand on social media by pushing away customer complaints or shielding your company from criticism. Customer care conversations can be a great resource for learning and unlearning. Negative feedback can be a goldmine of information that refines your product, service, and customer interactions. Deleting complaints makes you look like you are hiding something. Sharing positive customer service stories on social media can reinforce your brand's commitment to customer satisfaction. Competitive Advantage is key in social media services. In a market where many companies still rely on traditional customer service channels, offering efficient social media in customer service can give you a competitive edge.

Some benefits of social media customer service are displayed in Figure 7 ^[14].



Fig 7: Some benefits of social media customer service ^[14].

4.2. Challenges

While social media offers numerous benefits for customer service, it also presents unique challenges that businesses must address. Sometimes, customers need to talk to a real human being. There is still an urgent need for knowledgeable humans at almost every digital touchpoint. Crises and negative comments can quickly spread on social media. Other challenges of social media customer service include the following ^[12]:

Protecting customer information shared on social media is paramount. Businesses must comply with data protection regulations to maintain customer trust. As *data privacy*

becomes a paramount concern, businesses will need to invest in robust security measures to protect customer information. Furthermore, speed is important. For customer service via social media, time is of the essence. Responding promptly is as important as the Support a brand provides. Response speed is critical in today's competitive landscape. By responding promptly, companies can effectively manage customer concerns, foster positive relationships, and enhance their reputation for attentive service. The time it takes to triage and respond appropriately determines whether you build loyalty or lose customers to competitors. For example, a customer experiencing issues with a product can tweet their concern

and receive a prompt response from the brand. This interaction solves the problem quickly and enhances the customer's perception of the brand. *Proactive Customer Service* is also essential. Proactive customer service on social media involves not only responding to direct queries or complaints but also actively monitoring and engaging with customers. This approach shows that your brand values customer feedback and is committed to customer satisfaction. For positive feedback, a simple thank you or acknowledgment can boost customer loyalty and advocacy. In cases of negative comments, reaching out proactively can turn a potentially harmful situation into a positive customer service experience. *Communication* is found to be significantly important. It ensures that you have a dedicated social media customer service team and trains them in both the technical aspects of your products or services and the nuances of empathetic, effective communication. They should respond quickly, accurately gauge the customer's tone, and offer solutions aligning with your brand's values. Additionally, *multiple languages are advantageous*. It helps provide support in multiple languages, meaning customers can connect with you in their native or preferred language. This makes your service more accessible and inclusive. By ensuring language is not a barrier, a company provides a truly global service. Since language is deeply tied to culture, train your team to understand cultural nuances, expressions, and etiquette to avoid misunderstandings and provide respectful service. Hire customer service representatives who are fluent in the languages your customers speak. Other important areas are *Transparency*. *Transparency* addresses concerns publicly and maintains transparency. When issues arise, it is important to be authentic and transparent. Acknowledge the problem publicly and then transition to a private conversation for resolution. This approach shows that your company is fearless in admitting mistakes and is committed to solving them. The proactive, transparent approach solves problems and demonstrates your company's commitment to customer satisfaction, earning praise and loyalty from users worldwide. Finally, training is an essential element of social media. The rapid pace at which social media platforms introduce new features, combined with changing user behavior, necessitates a workforce that is agile, informed, well-trained, and adaptable. Investing in employee training is vital for delivering exceptional social media customer service. Training your social media customer service team in your brand's voice and values is pivotal for maintaining consistency and authenticity in every customer interaction. This training should encompass understanding the brand's personality, whether it is professional, friendly, informative, or quirky. Conduct regular training sessions focusing on quick yet considerate response strategies.

5. Results

The research results show that social media customer service enhances communication, improves customer satisfaction, and strengthens loyalty. However, its effectiveness depends on response time, communication quality, and proper management. Challenges such as infrastructure and skills gaps must also be addressed. Businesses increasingly use social media to connect with customers and build relationships^[15]. Despite its advantages, social media customer service faces several challenges. These include delayed responses, negative public feedback, and lack of skilled personnel to manage online interactions effectively

^[16]. Organizations must therefore invest in training and proper management strategies. Customers expect quick responses, and delays can lead to dissatisfaction^[17]. Additionally, quality of communication plays a significant role. Clear, polite, and helpful responses improve customer experience, while poor communication damages brand reputation^[18]. Further research also indicates that effective social media customer service increases customer loyalty and trust. Customers who receive satisfactory service are more likely to continue engaging in a business and recommend it to others^[15]. However, challenges such as poor internet connectivity, lack of trained personnel, and high volumes of customer inquiries can affect service delivery^[16]. Critical factors in determining customer satisfaction in social media customer service challenges are crucial.

6. Conclusion

Social media has evolved from being just a space for casual updates and memes to the frontline of customer support. It has become an indispensable tool in the customer service arsenal. Its ability to provide immediate, transparent, and personalized service aligns perfectly with customers' expectations. It is reshaping how customers experience your brand. Social media has irrevocably transformed the landscape of customer service, shifting the paradigm from one-way communication to dynamic, real-time engagement. By harnessing the power of these platforms, businesses can build stronger customer relationships, enhance brand reputation, and drive growth.

Social media customer service has never been more important. It has firmly established itself as a consumer expectation. It is the practice of using social platforms to support, assist, and engage with customers right where they are already talking. It offers support or service to your customers through social networks such as Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, or other platforms. It has the potential to create lifelong fans. Mastering it is beneficial and essential for any business aiming to thrive and grow. The future role of social media in customer service is bright, with emerging technologies promising to revolutionize how we interact with customers. More information about the uses of social media in customer service can be found in the books on^[19-22].

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