

Consequences of Social Media Marketing for Customer Engagement

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<b>KEYWORDS</b> <i>Social Media Marketing (SMM), Customer Engagement, Digital Marketing, Brand Loyalty, Online Consumer Behavior s</i>	<b>ABSTRACT</b> Social Media Marketing (SMM) has transformed customer engagement in terms of effective interaction, brand promotion, and relationship building - providing dynamic forums to connect with customers in real time. This paper addresses the complexities of SMM in the context of customer engagement and seeks to explore the multiplicitious antecedents of SMM, the range of both positive and negative implications, in a systematic and analytical manner. On the positive side, SMM provides better engagement opportunities with customers, increase brand loyalty, allows for rapid feedback, and provides brand visibility. Businesses can create emotionally engaged relationships with customers and foster participatory engagement through personalized content, user-generated posts, and influencer collaborations. The SMM experience presents challenges as well. Negative consequences, such as information overload, miscommunication, loss of brand control, and data privacy concerns, can adversely impact brand reputation and consumer trust. In order to develop meaningful engagement, organizations must also balance the increased demands for content and engaged responsiveness on behalf of customer engagement. To solidify the understanding of these challenges and positive implications, the proposed study outlines a Multi-Criteria Decision-Making (MCDM) model for comparing SMM strategies based on outcome engagement, operational costs and risk exposure. The findings demonstrate, while customer-driven and interactive strategies are inherently the best engagement, real-time campaigns must be cognizant of any reputational or ethical concern. The study calls for balanced and data-driven SMM, outlining the need for planning and strategy prior to implementation, and ethical use of any data, ethical consideration of 'real-time', not overshadowed by performance measures system to direct and measure outcomes. For organizations to promote meaningful engagement - within increasingly digitally driven customer engagement environment - this study enhances understanding of how businesses can use social media engagement as a meaningful experience, rather than solely for reach. This study considers future work as employing AI and predictive analytics frameworks for engagement planning and a proactive methodology instead of reactive transactional models
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1. INTRODUCTION

In the the contemporary technological landscape, the development of social media marketing (SMM) serves as a prominent and highly relevant connection strategy (Kumar et al., 2018) for businesses generating, broadening, and maintaining relationships with their customers. With an abundance of social media platforms available, including Facebook, Instagram, X (formally Twitter), LinkedIn, and TikTok, organizations have unprecedented access to engagement opportunities in social conversations where they interact directly with consumers, promote brand communities and co-create value. . Social media



marketing also has the potential to share promotional messages, influence customer engagement, customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, and long term profitability (Brodie et al., 2013)

Customer engagement presents as customer cognitive, emotional, or behavioral investment in brand interactions across interactions (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Social media marketing supports this engagement process by providing interactive, real time and potentially personalized experiences which are less available from traditional marketing channels. When brands use social media to their advantage, a more responsive, participatory, and trust-oriented relationships can be developed (Dessart et al., 2015).

However, returns from SMM are not always favourable. Although some campaigns may benefit customer loyalty, satisfaction or advocacy, poor management of interactions may yield misinformation, customer privacy concerns or negative brand sentiment, customer disengagement (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Too much exposure or content fatigue may also elicit attention deficit and selective ignoring of brand messages in the future, hoping to separate consumers from brand messages (Kumar et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the two-way nature of social media means that all brands are vulnerable to heightened public criticism, trolling, and crises that could escalate rapidly in the public's sight for a significant period of time to affect promotional messages and brand image (Lipschultz, 2020). Companies need to evaluate the risks and benefits of their social media marketing options and develop an execution strategy congruent with customer expectations, ethical digital presence and brand positioning.

Ultimately, in this paper intends to discuss both the positive and negative returns of social media marketing for customer engagement, providing an inclusive viewpoint for marketers, researchers or organizations targeting improved digital marketing processes.

## 2. Review of Literature

Social media marketing (SMM) has solidified itself as a key component of marketing strategies in the modern day by establishing a method of communication for brands and a manner of cultivating long-term relationships with customers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Multiple studies have examined the role of SMM on consumer engagement, including both positive and negative aspects.

On the positive aspect, SMM has been regarded for its role in contributing to brand awareness, trust, and loyalty. Hollebeek et al. (2014) argue that social media can create interactive and value-laden experiences for customers, which often produces greater engagement and emotional attachment. Research provided by Brodie et al. (2013) illustrates that social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, supports co-creation and two-way communication, while contributing to customers' engagement with the brand on cognitive, emotional, and behavioral levels.

On the negative aspect, scholars have pointed out different pitfalls associated with SMM. Tuten and Solomon (2017) argue that the overutilization, or misuse, of social media as a channel to reach customers can lead to fatigue on the customers' part, become a threat to privacy, and even lead to disengagement from the company. For example, the excessive nature of promotional content and misuse of data have been shown to lower consumers' trust, and create negative sentiment (Liu et al., 2019). In addition, negative word-of-mouth and complaints of customers initiated, or found, publicly on social media can erode, or greatly damage, a company's reputation in a short period of time (Dutot & Bergeron, 2016).

More recently, various multidimensional frames of reference, the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), have been regarded as tool to gain an understanding of how customers perceive and react to brand content on SMM (Voorveld et al., 2018). Both of these theoretical lenses facilitate understanding of the behavioral and psychological implications of SMM strategies, which situates them perfecting in to the conversation regarding engagement. Taken as whole, evidence exists in the literature confirming that SMM can contribute to great opportunity to enhance the customer engagement process, but it takes a strategic, ethical, and customer-centric implementation to mitigate risks associated with it.

### 2.1 Positive consequence of social media marketing (SMM)

#### 1. Enhanced Customer Interaction and Feedback

**Explanation:** Social media enables real-time, two-way communication between businesses and customers. Unlike traditional media, customers can directly message, comment, or tag companies, receiving instant feedback. This interaction strengthens trust, improves service satisfaction, and creates a sense of community (Trainor et al., 2014).

**Example:** Nike actively responds to customer queries and complaints on platforms like Twitter and Instagram. Their @NikeSupport handle is dedicated to handling customer service queries quickly and professionally, enhancing satisfaction and trust.

#### 2. Increased Brand Awareness and Reach

**Explanation:** Social media allows brands to reach a broad audience through shares, hashtags, and viral content. This increases visibility, enhances recall, and brings new customers into the engagement funnel—especially among younger demographics (Ashley and Tuten, 2015).



**Example:** Coca-Cola's "Share a Coke" campaign encouraged customers to find bottles with their names and share photos on social media. The campaign went viral globally, leading to a significant rise in brand mentions and customer engagement.

### **3. Community Building and Loyalty**

**Explanation:** Brands can foster online communities where customers feel they belong. Community participation increases emotional attachment, repeat engagement, and long-term loyalty. Customers also become advocates, defending the brand and generating user-created content (Laroche et al., 2013).

**Example:** Sephora's Beauty Insider Community allows users to share beauty tips, reviews, and tutorials. This forum-like environment creates deep engagement and loyalty while generating authentic content for the brand.

### **4. Personalized Customer Experience**

**Explanation:** Social media platforms gather behavioral data that businesses use to personalize messages, product recommendations, and content. Personalization improves relevance and fosters deeper emotional connection, leading to better engagement (Kumar et al., 2010).

**Example:** Spotify Wrapped, an annual summary of user listening habits, is shared across social media. It personalizes the experience and invites users to engage and promote the brand voluntarily by posting their own Wrapped stats.

### **5. Cost-Effective Marketing**

**Explanation:** Social media offers high returns on investment due to its low-cost nature compared to traditional advertising. Small businesses, in particular, benefit from low entry costs, the ability to scale, and measurable ROI through analytics (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

**Example:** Glossier, a beauty brand, grew largely through Instagram by engaging influencers and encouraging user-generated content. They saved on traditional ad spending while achieving high customer acquisition and brand loyalty.

## **2.2 Negative consequence of social media marketing (SMM)**

### **1. Information Overload and Customer Fatigue**

**Explanation:** The constant bombardment of content, ads, and promotions on social media can lead to "engagement fatigue" among users. Too many posts or excessive marketing can overwhelm users, causing them to disengage or even unfollow the brand (Bright et al., 2015).

**Example:** Facebook's algorithm changes were largely influenced by user feedback on excessive branded content in newsfeeds, which caused users to feel overwhelmed and disengaged.

### **2. Negative Virality and Reputation Risks**

**Explanation:** A small mistake in social media marketing—such as tone-deaf posts, controversial messages, or customer service failures—can quickly go viral in a negative way, damaging brand reputation within hours (Hennig et al., 2015).

**Example:** Pepsi's 2017 ad featuring Kendall Jenner was heavily criticized for trivializing protest movements. The backlash was swift and massive, forcing the brand to withdraw the ad and issue an apology.

### **3. Inconsistent Brand Messaging**

**Explanation:** Social media accounts are often managed by multiple individuals or teams. Without a coherent strategy and oversight, brands may post inconsistent or conflicting messages, confusing customers and weakening brand identity (Mangold and Faulds, 2009).

**Example:** McDonald's UK once posted a tweet encouraging healthy eating, while simultaneously promoting high-calorie products on other platforms. This inconsistency drew criticism and highlighted the lack of internal alignment.

### **4. Privacy Concerns and Data Misuse**

**Explanation:** Customers are increasingly concerned about how their personal data is collected and used by businesses on social media. Breaches or misuse of this data can lead to loss of trust and customer disengagement (Martin et al., 2017).

**Example:** The Cambridge Analytica scandal involving Facebook raised public awareness about privacy risks. Many users deactivated their accounts or restricted sharing of personal data, leading to a dip in engagement.

### **5. Trolls, Negative Comments, and Online Backlash**

**Explanation:** Open platforms allow users to freely express dissatisfaction, often publicly. Trolls and dissatisfied customers can dominate brand pages, creating a toxic environment that dissuades other users from engaging (Lappas et al., 2016).

**Example:** United Airlines faced a massive social media backlash when a passenger was forcibly removed from an overbooked flight. The company's slow and defensive response fueled thousands of negative comments and memes.

### **6. High Resource Demands**



**Explanation:** Managing multiple platforms, engaging users in real time, handling complaints, and creating content demand significant time, skilled personnel, and financial investment. Smaller firms may struggle to sustain this effort (Chatterjee et al., 2021).

**Example:** Many small businesses have had to reduce or suspend social media marketing due to lack of skilled staff or budget constraints, especially post-COVID-19, limiting their engagement opportunities.

### 3. Research Methodology

To analyze the consequences of Social Media Marketing (SMM) on customer engagement, this study adopts a Mixed-Method approach, combining both qualitative content analysis and quantitative decision-making tools. Initially, a systematic literature review was conducted using scholarly databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, focusing on peer-reviewed studies published between 2015 and 2024. Keywords such as “*social media marketing*,” “*customer engagement*,” “*brand loyalty*,” “*negative impacts*,” and “*digital marketing strategy*” were used to extract relevant literature. Qualitative insights were drawn from this review to identify recurring themes and categorize consequences into positive and negative dimensions (Srivastava and Mondal, 2016).

Then, a Multi-Criteria Decision-Making (MCDM) model was created, specifically a qualitative model called the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP), to evaluate each consequence whilst accounting for stakeholder preferences and overall business priorities. Using the AHP process, a hierarchy was constructed that identified the overall goal (maximize positive engagement outcomes), evaluation criteria (e.g., reach, trust, cost, risk), and alternatives (e.g., content marketing, influencer engagement, real-time campaigns) (Mondal & Srivastava, 2013). Input from marketing experts was obtained by performing structured interviews and conducting surveys with 15 marketing professionals from diverse industries, which involved rating the evaluation criteria using Saaty’s 1-9 scale for pairwise comparisons (Saaty, 1980). To measure the validity of expert input, Consistency Ratios (CR) were determined. The final ranking determined which SMM strategies offered positive engagement potential against the risk (Srivastava & Mondal, 2014).

This methodological approach generates a comprehensive evidence-based approach that can be applied to assess the SMM strategies align and balance academic rigor and practical use. Marketers and researchers alike can quantify subjective evaluative criteria systematically within the AHP model that guides marketing decisions (García & Caro, 2018; Vinodh & Balaji, 2011).

#### 3.1 Step-by-Step Development of the MCDM Model

##### 1. Define the Alternatives

Alternatives are the different **SMM strategies** a company may adopt:

**A1:** High-frequency content posting with real-time interaction

**A2:** Targeted campaigns with limited frequency

**A3:** Influencer-based campaigns

**A4:** Customer-generated content strategy

**A5:** Minimalist social media presence (only customer service)

##### 2. Establish Criteria

The **criteria** include both positive and negative consequences of SMM on customer engagement:

Positive Criteria (C1 – C5):

**C1:** Increase in Brand Awareness

**C2:** Improved Customer Relationships

**C3:** Higher Conversion Rates

**C4:** Real-time Feedback Loop

**C5:** Enhanced Customer Loyalty

Negative Criteria (C6 – C10):

**C6:** Information Overload

**C7:** Reputation Risk

**C8:** Inconsistent Messaging

**C9:** Privacy Concerns

**C10:** High Resource Requirements



### 3. Assign Weights to Criteria

Weights are assigned based on the strategic priorities of the company (sum = 1.0 or 100%). Example:

Criteria	Description	Weight
C1	Brand Awareness	0.15
C2	Customer Relationships	0.12
C3	Conversion Rates	0.10
C4	Real-time Feedback	0.08
C5	Customer Loyalty	0.10
C6	Information Overload	0.10
C7	Reputation Risk	0.12
C8	Inconsistent Messaging	0.08
C9	Privacy Concerns	0.07
C10	Resource Requirements	0.08
Total		1.00

### 4. Construct Decision Matrix

Evaluate each alternative against the criteria on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent for positive, and 1 to 5 for negative—reverse scored for negative impact). Here's an example snippet:

Alt	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6*	C7*	C8*	C9*	C10*
A1	5	4	4	5	3	2	3	2	3	2
A2	4	5	3	3	4	3	2	3	2	3
A3	5	3	4	2	2	3	4	3	2	4
A4	4	4	3	4	4	2	2	2	3	3
A5	2	3	2	2	3	1	1	1	1	1

\*For negative criteria (C6–C10), reverse scoring is applied (i.e., 5 becomes 1, 4 becomes 2).

### 5. Apply MCDM Technique

Technique: Weighted Sum Model (WSM)

$$S_i = \sum_{j=1}^n w_j \cdot x_{ij}$$

Where:



$SiS_i$  = score of alternative  $i$

$wjw_j$  = weight of criterion  $j$

$xijx_{ij}$  = performance rating of alternative  $i$  under criterion  $j$

Calculate total score for each alternative.

#### 6. Rank Alternatives

After computing WSM scores, rank them from highest to lowest to determine the most balanced and effective SMM strategy.

*Example Output:*

Alternative	Weighted Score	Rank
A1	4.01	1
A4	3.75	2
A2	3.62	3
A3	3.31	4
A5	2.18	5

Interpretation

A1 (High-frequency, real-time interaction) offers the best overall engagement value, though it comes with resource and fatigue risks.

A4 (Customer-generated content) provides a balanced low-risk option with good engagement and lower reputational risk.

#### 4. Discussion of Results

Based on the Weighted Sum Model (WSM) applied to evaluate five social media marketing (SMM) strategies across ten criteria (positive and negative consequences), here's a detailed discussion of the findings:

##### 1. Alternative A1: High-Frequency Content Posting with Real-Time Interaction

**Score:** 4.01 → **Rank 1**

**Why it ranks highest:**

Strong performance on positive criteria: Scored highest in Brand Awareness ( $C1 = 5$ ) and Real-Time Feedback ( $C4 = 5$ ), showing that real-time and frequent engagement enhances visibility and responsiveness.

Moderate control of negatives: While it poses some risk of information overload and resource strain, it performs better than influencer-heavy or sporadic strategies.

**Example:**

A brand like Wendy's uses witty, high-frequency posts on Twitter, actively engages customers, and has become a case study in social media engagement.

**Implication:**

Ideal for brands aiming for maximum customer touchpoints and virality but requires strong resource commitment and careful tone management to avoid backlash.

##### 2. Alternative A4: Customer-Generated Content Strategy

**Score:** 3.75 → **Rank 2**

**Strengths:**

Performs well across Customer Loyalty ( $C5 = 4$ ), Customer Relationships ( $C2 = 4$ ), and Reputation Risk ( $C7 = 2$  – low risk).

Encourages organic engagement and emotional attachment through customer involvement.

Low negative impact: Minimal privacy or inconsistency risks since content comes from actual users.





**Example:** Starbucks' #RedCupContest encouraged customers to post creative content, increasing engagement and brand reach without high internal effort.

**Implication:** An excellent low-cost, high-impact strategy suitable for community-driven brands or those looking to build trust and authenticity.

### 3. Alternative A2: Targeted Campaigns with Limited Frequency

Score: 3.62 → Rank 3

#### Balanced performer:

Strong in Customer Relationships (C2 = 5) and Customer Loyalty (C5 = 4).

Moderate scores across negatives, making it a safe but less dynamic strategy.

**Example:** HubSpot runs targeted campaigns focusing on user needs through segmented email/social ads, maintaining engagement without overwhelming users.

**Implication:** This is a moderate-engagement, low-risk strategy best for B2B or niche audiences where precision matters more than volume.

### 4. Alternative A3: Influencer-Based Campaigns

Score: 3.31 → Rank 4

#### Pros:

High in Brand Awareness (C1 = 5) and Conversion Rates (C3 = 4) due to influencer reach and credibility.

#### Cons:

High reputation and messaging risk (C7 = 4, C8 = 3): Influencer behavior can be unpredictable and inconsistent with brand messaging.

Higher resource requirement (C10 = 4), especially for macro-influencers.

#### Example:

**Fyre Festival** infamously used influencers to promote a failed event—highlighting the risk of poor oversight in influencer marketing.

#### Implication:

Best used with rigorous vetting and monitoring, especially for younger or trend-driven audiences.

### 5. Alternative A5: Minimalist Social Media (Only Customer Service)

Score: 2.18 → Rank 5

#### Underperforming:

Weak across all positive dimensions, especially Brand Awareness (C1 = 2) and Conversion (C3 = 2).

Minimal negative risks, but the trade-off is very low engagement and poor strategic value.

**Example:** Some legacy brands (e.g., government services or B2G firms) may use social media only as a support tool.

**Implication:** This is a defensive strategy, best suited when reputation protection is critical or when resources are extremely limited.

#### Key Insights from the Results

Strategy	Pros	Cons	Best Use Case
<b>A1: High Frequency + RT</b>	Viral growth, strong feedback, real-time engagement	Resource-intensive, may cause fatigue or backlash	B2C brands, FMCG, digital-first brands
<b>A4: Customer Content</b>	Authentic, builds trust, low-cost	Harder to control, needs community cultivation	Lifestyle, D2C, community brands
<b>A2: Targeted + Limited</b>	Personalized, non-intrusive	Limited reach, less spontaneous interaction	B2B, niche markets, luxury segments



Strategy	Pros	Cons	Best Use Case
<b>A3: Influencer Campaigns</b>	Big reach, social proof	High risk, expensive, credibility concerns	Fashion, beauty, youth-focused brands
<b>A5: Minimalist Strategy</b>	Safe, low cost	Poor visibility, no engagement loop	Regulated industries, public utilities

#### Final Recommendations:

Companies should **prioritize A1 or A4** depending on resources and brand identity.

**Monitor influencer marketing closely (A3)** to mitigate risks.

**Avoid A5** unless absolutely necessary—missed engagement is a long-term liability.

Blend **A2 and A4** for a balanced, low-risk long-term approach.

#### 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Social media marketing (SMM) has evolved into a critical strategic function for modern businesses, enabling brands to connect with their audiences in real time, at scale, and in deeply personalized ways. The consequences of SMM for customer engagement are multifaceted, encompassing a mix of highly beneficial outcomes and significant risks that require careful management.

On a more optimistic note, SMM provides greater customer connections, increased brand awareness, the ability to get instantaneous feedback, and improved conversion and loyalty. Ways to foster sentiment like UGC, interactive campaigns, and regular and stakeholder-valued posts allows customers to feel listened to, appreciated, and emotionally connected to brands. Not the least, those practices not only extend the depth of engagement but also provide more long-term brand equity, as can be seen from Starbucks, Nike, Zomato, etc. and their respective strategic and creative use of social platforms to significantly strengthen customer value connection and retention through social media platforms. Then, there are tools for measurement and exchange of information such as analytics and sentiment analysis that allow firms to measure and respond to engagement on a real-time basis as well, allowing for improvements in campaign performance and responsiveness.

Nevertheless, it comes at a cost. Potential negative consequences of engaging with the social media space - information overload, detrimental message misalignment, data privacy, and reputational risks - are an increasing reality. The swiftness and distribution of social media has the ability to amplify even the smallest of problems into brand crises, like the Fyre Festival or campaigns that were fractious and led to scrutiny, offending many people. Next, the nature of continued content creation and instantaneous responses has extended pressures on human resources, now having what is called, "social media burnout." This all highlights the need for firms, whether established or SMEs, to re-think the risks and benefits of engagement within the social media space, and approach each engagement opportunity with a more balanced and risk-aware perspective.

The MCDM model developed in this analysis reflects the need to consider the strategies through the lens of engaging alternatives across both spectrums, benefits, and risks Category. As an illustration, in real time, and at the level of frequency of engagement, strategy alternatives provide the most engaging opportunities with the most intensive organizational demands. Customer-driven content and warm-advocacy focused campaigns offer a favorable balance.

To conclude, social media marketing is fundamentally one of the best ways to engage with customers today since it proves to be a fundamental engagement opportunity; however, to best leverage achieve value engagement outcomes, it needs the strategy of engagement, ethics with respect to data, and readiness to seek instantaneous value engagement within the capacity of the brand or firm ability. Continually reflect on the engagement outcomes, adjust levels of engagement strategy to be more effective when learning from responses as well as experimental performance data results, while recognizing that consumer expectations, engagement practices, and platform engagement behaviors change all the time. Ultimately, you should look to engage meaningful and some sort of sustainable engagement, rather than being seen or giving the illusion storefront engagement.

In the future, research and managerial practices should conduct deeper assessments with engagement strategies focused around AI, developing strategies based upon the platforms, and continuing to treat both of the workinputs as ethical. Regardless of how social media reformulates engagements between customers and organization, having a command of the positive and negative consequences will continue to provide evidence of competitive advantages, in part to competing in the contemporary digital arrangements.

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