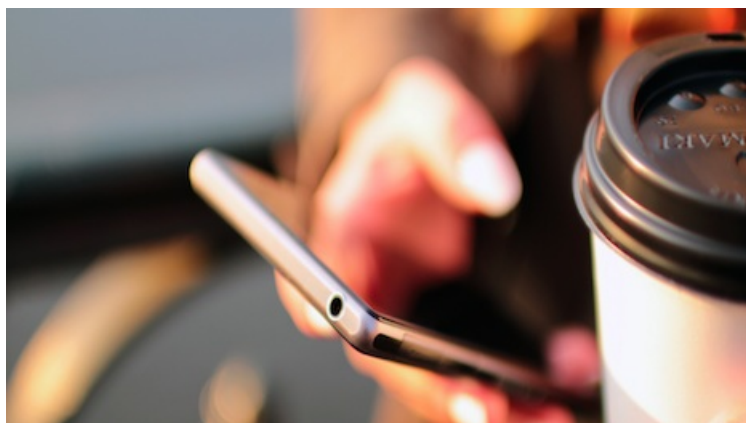


MARKETING

Untended local social media pages are a brand's vulnerable spot

April 10, 2017



Luxury brands need to claim their local social media pages to avoid damage to the brand

By DANNY PARISI

NEW YORK Brands could be missing out on a golden opportunity if they do not take advantage of local social media, an incredibly important part of the modern digital marketing landscape.

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Speaking at Forrester's Consumer Marketing Forum 2017 in New York on April 7, a representative from SOCi, a company that specializes in local social media management, elaborated on the ways that brands can benefit from taking control of their local social media pages, and the harm potentially done by leaving them untended. The crux of the argument rests on the fact that social media is one of the top ways consumers find brands and an active local presence increases the chances of consumers heading into the store.

"Social is the new word of mouth," said Warren Kay, chief revenue officer at **SOCi**. "It's how people are getting referrals and making decisions and purchases.

"Seventy-eight percent of consumers go to social media and use it as a way to make a decision about a purchase or a job," he said. "It's a significant part of the purchase process for consumers now."

Brand image control

It is no surprise that social media is absolutely huge in the modern marketing landscape. But even seasoned digital marketers may be surprised at just how massive social media platforms have gotten.

Social ad spend accounts for 10 percent of global brands' marketing budgets and is set to rise to 20 percent by 2021. Eighty-two percent of businesses say social media is core to their marketing plans and 67 percent will increase social ad spend in the next 12 months.

What this means is that brands need to be more in control than ever of their social media presence, and one aspect of this that is often overlooked is local social media pages.

If a brand owns 20 locations, they may own the social media pages for the brand itself but not necessarily for each location that they own.

And this goes for whether they create a page for each location or not. Social media platforms will create pages for those businesses regardless, based on customers searching for them, rating them and talking about them on social media.

This means that a brand may have an untended social media page for one of their locations floating around, where off-brand or inappropriate messages can become associated with the brand.

Mr. Kay cites an example where Taco Bell, a company that spends millions of dollars on developing and protecting its brand image, was dealt a blow by an employee at a small location who posted photos of himself licking taco shells on a local Taco Bell's Facebook page.



The infamous Taco Bell shell-licker. Source: ABC News

While this location was only one store in the scheme of Taco Bell locations, for many people in the surrounding area, this was their local Taco Bell and the image of an employee licking their food will be indelibly linked to the brand.

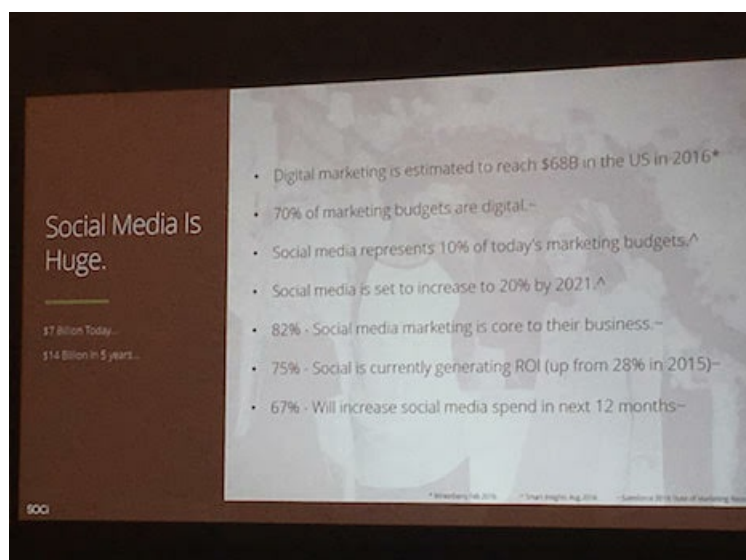
This is especially egregious given that social media is one of the top ways consumers find products. Facebook is ahead of Yelp to be the number one consumer review platform and it is the number two search engine behind Google.

Local social media

With social media as one of consumers' top ways of finding products, it is more important than ever that brands prioritize their local social media channels and equip those pages with unique and engaging content that will drive up social media SEO.

This is important on all social media platforms and not just Facebook. Instagram accounts for a large amount of brand interactions, especially in fashion ([see story](#)).

Making a brand's presence known on local social media channels is not exclusive to brands that own their own locations. For brands that are often carried at other retailers, they can still lobby for a presence on that retailer's location-specific social media channel ([see story](#)).



Some social media stats

The biggest step that brands can take is to claim their local social media pages. With that minimum step, they can prevent off-brand or offensive content from being posted and controlling the brand image that diffuses out to the local communities that make up their base.

"If you're not putting out content, you're not being found on social media," Mr. Kay said. "Conversations are happening without you if you're not a part of that conversation.

"Tight local control of social media pages gives brands the power to control the message being sent to their customers."

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