

YOUR FUTURE IN FOOD

Food Digital Marketing – A Case Study



It's no secret that many businesses are using online marketing and social media promotion to promote their products, and food businesses are no exception. Developing an online marketing strategy is not necessarily hard, but it does take considerable time and effort to do the necessary research and implement an effective, successful strategy. The following is a case study that highlights important considerations when developing a digital marketing strategy.

Ben and Kali have turned their love of baking into a carrot cake bar business. They prepare their product in a community commercial kitchen and have obtained their Safe Food for Canadians Licence. This allows them to sell their product outside of Manitoba to other provinces across Canada. Although farmers' markets and in-store retail markets have been producing a modest return on investment (ROI), they felt that they needed to reach out to new customers. They decided they needed to come up with a plan to get their business and product online. They believe the bar is a great product for busy families and could conveniently be purchased online and easily shipped.

Goal: To expand exposure to a larger client base and increase return on investment (ROI).

Objective: To create a digital marketing campaign to promote their product and increase sales by 20 per cent in Year One.

Ben and Kali considered various online platforms — Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and Twitter — for marketing their bars. Recognizing they do not have the time to keep a number of sites up-to-date, they decided to focus their energies on two platforms.

Statistical Research: Some of the information was found on the Facebook and Instagram profiles:

www.socialpilot.co/blog/facebook-stats-infographic
www.socialpilot.co/instagram-marketing/instagram-stats

Research: Based on their sales at farmers' markets, Ben and Kali know that customers aged 18 to 34 purchase their product most often, with women purchasing their product slightly more often than men. The type of person that would like this product is an active person who has one or more devices in the household that are used multiple times in a day. Retail sales for their product seemed to peak in October for their sales region.

Competitor Research: The couple looked at competitors' marketing activities and products — where they are found, when they post, how often they post and where they get the most interaction, shares, likes and comments. Although some similar food businesses use multiple social media platforms, Ben and Kali felt comfortable in choosing to focus only on two: Facebook and Instagram. Facebook and Instagram are two of the top three most-used social media platforms worldwide (YouTube rounds out the top three).

Facebook: Facebook is the most-used social media platform in the world. Men and women between the ages of 25 and 34 are the largest demographic among Facebook users. Live videos generate watch times three times longer than those that are no longer live, and 59 per cent of video posts get more engagement time than other posts. About 20 billion messages are sent between people and businesses every month. Twenty-six per cent of people who click on ads report making a purchase. Facebook allows you to know your audience, build your own community, promote your brand and help keep your audience engaged

Instagram: Instagram is the favourite social media platform of youth aged 16 to 24. Eighteen to 34-year-olds make up the biggest share of Instagram's audience. Adult Instagram users are on the app nearly 30 minutes per day. 90 per cent of Instagram users follow at least one business. Seventy per cent of shopping enthusiasts turn to Instagram for product discovery and one-third of the most viewed stories are from businesses. There are 500,000 active influencers on Instagram. Influencer marketing takes up more than half of the marketing budget for 17 per cent of advertisers.

Infrastructure: To put a plan together, Ben and Kali needed to work on putting this information into their digital marketing campaign. The couple did a Google search to learn about different scheduling tools for posting on Facebook and Instagram; some are free, while others charge a fee. They chose to use Hootsuite. They had to think seriously about how to create and use a content calendar to optimize their promotions. Because they hadn't used these platforms for business purposes before, Ben and Kali decide to consult a digital marketing consultant to make sure they were on the right track and that their efforts would optimize platform value. They quickly learned that they needed to develop their own standard operating procedures to move forward. A calendar was created to reflect a weekly posting schedule. The couple chose to move forward with using Facebook and Instagram, but thought they could occasionally repurpose their posts to other platforms

Audit: Having put plans in place, Ben and Kali realized that they had to constantly measure and evaluate their work. They had to be flexible with the plan, try it out and look at alternatives. It's important to always be monitoring and re-evaluating your system to determine what is working and what may need improvement.

Engagement Strategy: Ben and Kali soon had a good handle on how often to post and the best days and times to post, based on finding insights into these platforms. They realize there is a method to posting, and not just posting randomly or using times picked out of the air.

Part of their engagement strategy was a plan to respond to comments, queries and even complaints in a timely manner, but with thoughtful answers rather than quick responses. Customer service is critical to building relationships and trust with both new and existing clients, and having your product promoted to potential clients through word-of-mouth.

Social Media Strategies: In their quest to market online, Kali's research found that, when messaging, it is very important to be consistent, invest in visuals, partner with influencers, make what you produce shareworthy, tell a story and use Facebook and Instagram ads.

Testing: Nothing bugs Ben more than clicking on links that are broken — and he is not alone. Keep the links current and relevant and make sure web page access is efficient. Ben was assigned to this important role.

Maintenance Checks: Along with testing, time had to be given to keeping the information (including links, hours, location and contact details) current, and taking information down when necessary. Ben and Kali were committed to keeping all information related to their food product up-to-date.

Measurable/Report: Ben and Kali's marketing consultant stressed the importance of setting time aside each month to review insights, comments, shares, retweets and volumes of each platform. The platforms chosen helped to provide this valuable information. This would guide their engagement strategy, as well as other components of their digital plan.

Website: Through Ben and Kali's mission to go digital, they have seen from competitors' experiences that a website is an important component of bringing everything together. A website is relevant and people often click the website link when they are intrigued by your social media posts.

There are many reasons for having a website. A website boosts credibility as a legitimate business, increases sales among online customers, builds customer trust and engages users with content, to name a few. These carrot bar entrepreneurs are now developing a website.

Blogs: Ben and Kali had never considered using a blog for their business, but found that it is a marketing tool used by many food businesses. Kali feels this will be a great way to tell their story and attract more influencers.

Kali and Ben know there is a lot of work to be done in going digital and know there is more to posting than merely sitting down at a computer again at any given time. Their research took time, but resulted in realizing there are many tools available to help develop a plan. When starting out in their business, they never dreamt of the knowledge needed to market online. The couple is confident that their digital marketing strategy will benefit them now and into the future as they become even more social media-savvy.

As with any marketing strategy, it is important to adopt a continuous innovation mindset. Keep on top of social media trends and adapt and pivot your digital marketing strategy to maintain a competitive edge. If you notice a decrease in engagement, it might be time to incorporate new social media trends into your strategy.

Resources:

Centre of Excellence for Public Marketing – Strategic Social Media Engagement for Public Sector and Non-profit Organizations https://cepsm.ca/product/strategic_social_media_engagement_workbook/

How to Develop a Social Media Strategy Step-by-Step
https://youtu.be/PKUn7wU5slc?list=PLUllurxaY2k4se2oLTt_JHqliGHCE7kQm

Facebook Stats for 2022 (Infographic)
www.socialpilot.co/blog/facebook-stats-infographic

Share of Facebook users in Canada as of March 2022, by age group:
www.statista.com/statistics/863754/facebook-user-share-in-canada-by-age/

100 Essential Facebook Statistics: 2021/2022 Market Share Analysis & Data
<https://financesonline.com/facebook-statistics/>

Instagram by the Numbers: Stats, Demographics & Fun Facts
www.omnicoreagency.com/instagram-

[statistics/#:~:text=%20Instagram%20for%20Business%20%201%20An%20estimated,to%20generate%206.8%20billion%20U.S.%20dollars.%20More%20](#)

6 Social Media Strategies All Food Brands Should be Using Right Now

(<http://pivotsix.com/blog/food-brands-social-media#:~:text=When%20it%20comes%20to%20social,their%20share%20of%20the%20pie>)

The Importance of a Website in 2022

<https://ballenbrands.com/importance-of-website/>

For more information

Go to manitoba.ca/agriculture/food-and-ag-processing/

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