

Research on the Causes of Declining User Engagement on Social Media Platform and Management Countermeasures

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Abstract: *In the era of digital economy, the emergence of digital technologies such as Internet, big data and cloud computing affects the global information ecology and lifestyle. Social media platform has become an indispensable digital infrastructure for billions of users around the world, and its core value lies in promoting unprecedented connectivity, user-generated content sharing, community building and cross-cultural real-time interaction. However, the evolution of digital technology, the change of market demand and the emergence of emerging competitors are significantly affecting user engagement in social media platforms and challenging the vitality and long-term sustainability of social media business models. Facing the key problem of declining user engagement, this study aims to deeply analyze the root causes, and put forward corresponding management suggestions, so as to provide effective strategies for the platform to meet the challenges and revitalize user engagement.*

Keywords: Platform, Social media platform, User engagement, Countermeasures.

1. Introduction

In the past two decades, the emergence and development of the Internet, big data and cloud computing have changed human information access and lifestyle. In the era of digital economy, the emergence and diffusion of social media platforms fundamentally reshape the mode of global information dissemination, social interaction and business operation logic. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok have evolved from digital space to an indispensable infrastructure for the daily lives of billions of users around the world. Their core value proposition is to promote unprecedented connectivity, user generated content sharing, community formation, and real-time engagement across regional and cultural boundaries (Alnaqbi & Ali, 2025). From the perspective of business management, user engagement refers to the intensity, frequency and depth of user behavior interaction (such as comments, creation, content consumption) and related emotional commitments (such as satisfaction, perceived value, and sense of belonging), which determine the key development of the platform (Hollebeek et al., 2014). High user engagement helps to promote the key performance indicators of the platform, amplify the network effect, and generate rich behavior data for algorithm optimization and targeted advertising. Therefore, user engagement is one of the strategic issues most concerned by Platform Management (Tiwana, 2014).

However, the development of digital technology, the change of market demand and the emergence of alternative platforms have affected the user engagement of social media platforms. For example, Meta's earnings report for the fourth quarter of 2023 shows that the growth of daily active users in Western core markets has stagnated, and the emergence of issues such as data privacy and security has also led to increasing concerns about negative experiences. This is a noteworthy signal, which will affect the operational vitality and long-term sustainability of the social media business model. In this case, the social media platform needs to comprehensively analyze

and take action against the problems caused by the decline of user engagement. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the key reasons for the decline of user engagement in social media platforms, and put forward some management suggestions, in order to provide effective suggestions for coping with the decline of user engagement in social media platforms.

2. Theoretical Basis

2.1 Social Media Platform

Social media platform is an online service or website based on digital information technology such as the Internet, which enables users to create, share, disseminate, interact and build communities. Its core lies in the use of network effect to connect multiple users to form a dynamic virtual social space. The social media platform has diversified functions (such as publishing text, sharing pictures or videos, live broadcasting, comments), which greatly reduces the threshold of content creation and interactive engagement, promotes communication between users, and naturally enhances opportunities for value co-creation (Dessart, 2017; Balaji & Roy, 2017). Therefore, on the social media platform, users are not only the recipients of information, but also the producers and disseminators of content. In addition to simple social contact, the functions of social media platform also extend to a wide range of fields such as information acquisition, knowledge sharing, entertainment, brand marketing, business transactions, public opinion formation and political engagement. Social media has reshaped the mode of information dissemination, the form of interpersonal communication, the way of cultural expression and the mechanism of social organization, and has become an indispensable digital infrastructure and an important part of the public sphere in contemporary society. However, with the continuous development of social economy, social media platforms are also facing challenges such as information overload, algorithm bias, digital divide and so on.

2.2 User Engagement

The term “customer engagement” was introduced into the marketing community in 2006. It is defined as the establishment of a positive relationship between customers and enterprises, which is reflected in customers’ psychological cognition and behavior (Brodie et al., 2011, 2013; Vivek et al., 2012; Hollebeek et al., 2014). In the context of the social media platform in this paper, we propose user engagement. User engagement refers to the emotional connection and behavioral investment between users and the social media platform, the content on the social media platform and other users and the community, which is interactive, co-creative and community-based. The emotional aspects of user engagement include user satisfaction and pleasure with the platform, perception of content quality and relevance, feeling of community atmosphere and trust in the platform. User engagement can be reflected in user activity, content consumption, content creation and social interaction. In the current increasingly severe market environment of social media platform competition, user engagement will have a profound impact on the survival and development of social media platforms, and become the key to the competition of social media platforms.

3. The Causes of Declining User Engagement on Social Media Platform

3.1 Algorithmic Fatigue and Information Overload

On the social media platform, the algorithm driven information flow not only improves the user experience and the business value of the platform, but also causes the dual pressure of homogenization experience and information environment overload caused by algorithm recommendation, which eventually leads to cognitive fatigue and behavior withdrawal of users.

In terms of information overload, the design mechanism of social media platform enables the platform to continuously push new information (such as the infinite decline of short video platform, the continuous refresh of news, etc.), and this “information waterfall” has become a typical feature of the digital age. For users, this “endless” information environment is prone to lead to serious cognitive overload, such as the brain is unable to process and filter the effective information in the massive amount of information, resulting in decision-making difficulties, distraction and memory loss. More importantly, this “information waterfall” makes users subconsciously worry about missing important content, leading to long-term stress and anxiety. In addition, when the content of social media platform is low-quality, misleading and extreme, it will greatly consume users’ limited attention and energy, and damage the credibility and market position of the platform.

In terms of algorithm fatigue, personalized recommendation algorithm is to continuously push similar or highly relevant content based on users’ past browsing records, interactive behavior and other data. In this case, the information that users are exposed to is limited to a specific field by the algorithm, resulting in a high degree of homogeneity of the browsing content. In the long run, it will be difficult for users to access diversified views, and get tired of repeated patterned

content, and even fall into a state of “information cocoon room”. This state makes users feel that the world displayed by the platform is only a mirror image of their preferences, not the whole picture of the real world, hindering the development of cognition and thinking, aggravating the estrangement and prejudice between social groups, resulting in the decline of user engagement.

3.2 Lack of Security of Data Privacy

Users’ concerns about social media platforms are mainly in three aspects: excessive data tracking and excessive generation of user portraits, a sense of loss of control over algorithm black boxes, and the risk of privacy disclosure. First of all, users usually leave traces and data when using social media platforms, such as browsing history, likes, comment interaction, location trajectory, attention or fan relationship network. These massive data are used to build fine user portraits, so that users can carry out accurate advertising push. In addition, these data processed by algorithms can also be used to affect the user’s information environment, such as the ranking of social updates, the type and frequency of recommended content, the visibility of communities (groups or topics), and the loss of privacy boundaries. Secondly, users generally face the dilemma of “algorithm black box”. Users may not understand why some social posts can get high exposure while their content is buried, why they suddenly see specific types of content or ads, and what is the basis of information flow ranking. This opacity causes users to feel strongly out of control and powerlessness, and worry that the algorithm will strengthen the information cocoon or bias. Finally, the privacy setting interface of the social media platform is complex and scattered, which makes it difficult for some users to manage historical dynamic visibility, control advertising preferences, restrict data sharing, and set the permissions of strangers’ private messages. At the same time, data leakage events involving users’ private data, address books, private message records and so on make users worry that sensitive social information is exposed to risks, thus affecting the trust and impression of social media platforms in users’ hearts and reducing user engagement.

3.3 Transformation of Social Media Platform Value Proposition

The reason for the decline in user engagement of social media platforms may also come from the dual pressure of the platform’s own core contradictions and external competition. On the one hand, compared with other types of platforms, social media platforms should focus on its core value proposition, social value (connection and sharing). However, in pursuit of growth, social media platforms have gradually added many functions (such as e-commerce, payment, small games, short videos, etc.), resulting in its bloated functions, vague positioning, and loss of its original unique appeal and distinctive social focus. On the other hand, some commercialization strategies are eroding the user experience (McCombs & Nolan, 1992). Content, stories, video patches and other high-density, highly intrusive advertisements squeeze the original content space. With the large number of such posts generated and pushed, the social media platform page is occupied by a large number of Posts wrapped with advertisements, resulting in the drowning of some posts with

high-quality content on the platform, and the real social content is difficult to be seen. In addition, with the intensification of market competition, platform's long-term unified interface design, core functions (posting, praising and commenting) and interactive mode are lack of innovation, which leads to users' weariness of the platform's aesthetics and interaction, and further leads to a decline in their freshness and exploration desire for the platform.

4. The Impact of Declining User Engagement on Social Media Platform

4.1 Loss of Users and Decline in Platform Revenue

First, the decline in user engagement indicates an increase in user attrition. With the increase of user churn rate, it will affect the interaction between users, further weaken the role of the platform in social interaction, and ultimately erode the number of users and market share of the platform. Secondly, the decline in user engagement means that the advertising exposure of the platform decreases, resulting in a significant weakening of the advertising orientation ability based on interest and social relations. Finally, the decline in user engagement will significantly weaken the social network effect, which is reflected in the following aspects: ordinary users lose the sharing power due to less "social feedback", content creators who rely on platform operation will transfer to other platforms due to less fan interaction, lower content exposure and lower revenue, and the decline in the quality and freshness of information flow content will further accelerate the loss of users, resulting in a vicious circle.

4.2 Hinder Platform Innovation and Talent Attraction

When user engagement decreases, the user interaction data, behavior preferences and feedback available connected to the platform will decrease, which will affect the innovation and improvement of the platform. In addition, when it is difficult for the platform to launch attractive new functions or optimize the experience due to the lack of user feedback, its growth rate will inevitably slow down or even stagnate, which will hinder the development of the platform to attract talents and make the platform at a disadvantage when competing with competitors for talents. As time goes on, it will ultimately shake its core competitiveness and sustainable development ability in the fierce market competition.

5. The Management Countermeasures of Declining User Engagement on Social Media Platform

5.1 Improve Platform Content Quality and User Experience

First, platforms can give users full control of the algorithm, provide users with transparent algorithms, and develop preference adjustment tools (such as adjusting the weight of interest tags, shielding specific sources or topics), so that users can actively manage the information flow. Secondly, platforms should take the initiative to break the information cocoon, adjust the inherent algorithm, recommend high-quality, multi perspective related content, and set up a

special "discovery area" to display non-personalized hot and high-quality content. On this basis, strictly manage the quality and security of content, improve the efficiency and accuracy of AI audit and manual audit, and resolutely combat false information, hate speech and harassment. At the same time, platforms need to be highly transparent in rules and implementation, clearly publish community guidelines and review standards, and establish more effective appeal channels and result feedback mechanisms. Finally, platforms should strengthen efforts to support high-quality creators and content, encourage original and in-depth content creation (Asnawati et al., 2022), design a fair and sustainable incentive and cash flow model for creators, and provide necessary creation tools and support, so as to enhance the overall value of platforms and help users retain and become active.

5.2 Guide Users to Use Platforms Healthily and Optimize the Community

First, platforms can actively guide users to cultivate healthy use habits and self-management awareness, such as clearly displaying the platform use time, regular rest reminder, regular shutdown function. At the interactive level, platforms need to promote positive communication, such as introducing a prompt mechanism to encourage constructive comments, giving priority to displaying in-depth discussions. Second, platforms can establish and cultivate professional community management teams, promote positive community norms and set positive examples, strengthen community governance and culture, and create a more relaxed, safe and comfortable communication atmosphere for users.

5.3 Strengthen Privacy Protection and Enhance Algorithm Transparency

In the privacy setting interface, users can easily understand and control their own information (such as location, contact and other sensitive data). In the process of data collection, platforms should clearly inform users of the purpose and scope of data collection, and provide convenient data download and deletion tools. Secondly, in terms of improving the transparency of algorithms, platforms can explain the decision logic of key algorithms (such as content ranking and advertising orientation) to users in simple language without disclosing core business secrets, making the "black box" decision understandable. Third, platforms need to continue to strengthen technical investment, deploy stronger confidentiality measures, establish a strict vulnerability repair mechanism, and ensure rapid response and notification of affected users in case of security incidents. Finally, platforms can regularly publish transparency reports, disclose the content review data and government data requests, and actively listen to user suggestions to ensure the openness, transparency and continuous improvement of the privacy protection system.

5.4 Focus on Core Functions and Strategic Innovation

First, social media platforms should focus on their own positioning, focus on the essence of social networking, and streamline user experience. For example, strictly evaluate and optimize or reduce non-core functions that are excessively distracting, and focus resources on core social functions such

as strengthening the establishment of connections between users, convenient sharing of content, and meaningful interaction. Secondly, when exploring a sustainable business model, platforms need to balance advertising revenue and user experience. For example, embedding advertising into high-quality information content can reduce users' aversion to advertising and increase platform revenue. Third, platforms can apply emerging technologies to improve user interaction experience, such as improving content quality through artificial intelligence and providing intelligent chat assistants, so as to attract users. Finally, platforms can deeply explore and meet the unique needs of specific groups, such as the local life circle with diversified interests, so as to establish unique competitive advantages and user loyalty.

6. Conclusion

With the development of information technology, people's communication and interaction methods are gradually shifting from traditional model to digital model. The digital way of information exchange has brought great convenience to people and greatly enriched their entertainment options. For social media platforms, social attribute is one of their basic functions, so the number of users and user engagement on the platform are extremely important. However, with the intensification of competition and rapid changes in market demand, social media platforms have begun to excessively pursue profits, facing a series of problems such as data privacy and algorithmic black boxes, leading to a decline in user engagement. This article analyzes the reasons for the decline in user engagement on social media platforms, the impact of this decline on social media platforms, and proposes corresponding management measures for the existing problems, in order to provide practical reference for social media platforms.

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