

**Brand Communication on Social Media.
Particularities in the Quick-Service Restaurants Industry**

Raluca-Maria TUDORACHE and Andreea Elisabeta BUDACIA

Abstract

The present paper aims to outline how brands communicate on social media, with particular attention to the characteristics of the QSR industry. Brand communication on social networks represents a relevant topic within the field of advertising and digital marketing, as it is an area of continuous growth and constant transformation, offering significant development potential for brands. This research examines a series of theoretical foundations relevant to the topic, highlighting tactics and strategies of social media communication, current trends and best practices in this area, as well as specific approaches adopted within the QSR industry at a global level. With all this in mind, the paper emphasizes the importance of developing a social media communication strategy in building successful long-term relationships with potential and existing consumers online.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Social Media, Digital Communication, QSR, Social Media Strategy

JEL Classification: D12; D83; L10; L81; M31; M37

Social Media Communication Tactics And Strategies

From the perspective of companies and their businesses, multiple reasons can be identified for a brand to develop a social media communication strategy, “ranging from the relationship a brand builds with its consumers through social networks, to the improvement of sales or reaching new audience segments.” (Koopertiva.ro, 2025)

Social media constitutes an attractive territory for companies, providing them with an extended communication area through which they can reach target audiences with lower investment compared to other forms of advertising, as highlighted in the platform analysis from the previous chapter. From this standpoint, the necessity of a strategic approach becomes evident, one that integrates the company’s general communication objectives and adapts them to the specific features of the digital ecosystem, in such a way that they respond to the requirements of each platform and meet user expectations.

This strategic endeavour in social media communication serves to consolidate the online presence of brands and comprises stages such as choosing the relevant platforms for potential consumers,

identifying the appropriate frequency of communication efforts, and shaping the way in which interaction with users will take place across the selected media.

Given the multitude of social networks on which brands may operate, communication strategies can be categorized from the perspective of the number of channels addressed as follows: the extensive strategy, the selective strategy, and the exclusive strategy.

The extensive strategy refers to activating as many channels as possible within the digital ecosystem, ensuring that the brand is present in numerous moments of users' online experience. On the one hand, this strategy provides increased accessibility for potential consumers who wish to obtain information and interact with the brand, with the variety of channels suggesting significant flexibility and adaptability on the company's part. On the other hand, such a strategy requires considerable effort and involves a wide range of resources, as the brand must develop relevant content for many communication platforms.

The selective strategy entails carefully choosing a few relevant channels on which the brand will concentrate its communication efforts. In this case, the brand selects two or three social media platforms where it invests intensively to ensure message coherence and optimal adaptation to each audience's specificities. This strategy enables companies to allocate fewer resources compared to an extensive strategy while effectively reaching the most important segment of potential or existing consumers. On the Romanian market, the selective strategy is the most frequently adopted approach in brand communication on social media, as it provides an optimal balance between allocated resources and achieved results.

The exclusive strategy consists of selecting a single communication channel within the digital ecosystem, with all resources being directed toward one social media platform. This strategy implies a much lower investment compared to the other two approaches, but it also limits the brand's visibility outside the chosen platform. The exclusive strategy may prove effective in certain cases, such as when a brand already benefits from a strong market reputation, making an extensive online effort unnecessary, or when aiming at a niche audience that is highly active or has a strong community on a single social media channel.

The choice of how many channels a brand should activate within the social ecosystem is influenced by multiple factors, including both the demographic and psychographic profile of the target audience, as well as the resources that the company can allocate to its social media communication efforts. Taking these factors into account, the three strategies outlined above can be applied in direct correlation with the communication needs and possibilities of companies and brands.

From the standpoint of the demographic and psychographic profile of the target audience, companies must primarily consider age-related characteristics of the segment they intend to address in the digital environment and implement a strategy that facilitates access to these users. (Perju-Mitran, Budacia, 2017) Moreover, the gender of the targeted audience segment also plays an important role in conceiving a suitable strategic communication approach. (Perju-Mitran, Budacia, 2015)

When the target audience includes several age groups, it is recommended to implement an extensive strategy encompassing both platforms preferred by mature audiences (such as Facebook or LinkedIn) and those favored by younger audiences (such as TikTok or Snapchat).

When the target audience is more restricted, the selective strategy is most often the optimal solution for brands that wish to communicate effectively on social media. This strategy allows the brand to target groups of the highest interest and allocate resources efficiently.

Regarding the exclusive strategy, it is not widely implemented by brands on the Romanian market. Although it limits the communication potential on social media, it enables the construction of a discourse tailored to the needs of the primary consumer segment.

From the resource perspective, the size of the promotional budget allocated to digital communication activities can be decisive in choosing a brand's social media platforms. A larger budget implies the availability of more resources, which can be reflected in an extensive strategy covering multiple channels, a selective strategy focused on a few channels with significant investment, or an exclusive strategy focused on a single platform.

Beyond the number of channels selected, another important aspect for specialists in constructing a social media communication strategy is the posting frequency on each channel. This frequency depends mainly on the specific characteristics of each platform and the industry in which the brand operates, as both factors strongly influence user expectations regarding the content delivered by brands on social media.

Considering brands' preference for Facebook, Instagram and TikTok as platforms to actively communicate on, it becomes necessary to include frequency recommendations for these key digital territories. At the end of 2024, social media specialists from Hootsuite recommended a frequency of 3–5 posts per week for Instagram (and 2 stories per day), at least 3–5 posts per week for TikTok, and 1–2 posts per day for Facebook (Macready, 2025) to maintain brand visibility and achieve optimal user engagement. These values represent general recommendations; however, the optimal frequency also varies depending on the brand's industry and the specificities of the local social media market.

Beyond the choice of suitable platforms and the establishment of an optimal frequency, it is also essential that brands define the way they intend to interact with users on social media platforms. Based on an analysis of the insurance industry in Italy, P. B. Floreddu and F. Cabiddu (2016) proposed a classification of brand interaction strategies on social media, which includes the following approaches: egocentric, conversational, blind, proactive, transparent, secretive, and supportive. The author of this paper considers these categories to have relevant applicability beyond the initial research sample, finding them useful for classifying interaction strategies in social media across most industries within the Romanian market.

The egocentric strategy refers to using social media platforms as one-way channels to disseminate information from the brand, without generating interaction within online communities. In this context, the egocentric strategy may be employed to increase brand visibility on social media, although it does not benefit from direct user involvement in the content. Such an impersonal approach may not work effectively across all industries, but it may prove useful for product or service categories in which consumers primarily seek constant informational updates from brands.

The conversational strategy reflects the brand's involvement in the digital ecosystem and its openness to engage in dialogue with consumers on social media. In this case, brands respond to all comments received on social networks and pay close attention to their interactions with users, with the goal of building long-term relationships with existing or potential consumers. This strategy constitutes a

best practice for brand interaction across industries and markets, being recommended for addressing both positive and negative comments to provide resolution when needed.

The blind strategy entails brands ignoring negative comments in favor of interacting solely with positive messages. This way, brands can build lasting relationships only with appreciative consumers, while risking an escalation of tensions with those users expressing dissatisfaction. The author of this study does not encourage the use of this strategy, as neglecting negative feedback on any platform can harm a brand's image.

The proactive strategy represents a brand's commitment to respond adequately to both positive and negative comments, through communication efforts aimed at assisting users reporting unpleasant experiences on social media. By applying this strategy, brands can effectively manage conflict situations and prevent potential image crises in the digital environment. The author of this study regards this as a best practice for any industry and platform.

The transparent strategy goes a step further than the proactive approach, as it involves addressing all negative posts about the brand, not only comments and messages on owned social media pages. In this case, the strategy emphasizes company transparency and reinforces consumer trust in the brand, as conversations unfold in an open, public context.

The secretive strategy involves redirecting negative situations toward private communication channels to avoid exposing problems on the brand's public social media platforms. Within this approach, negative posts are not only ignored but are entirely removed from the company's channels to protect its image. From this perspective, the discovery of a brand's secretive behavior by users may have negative consequences on consumer trust.

The supportive strategy focuses on providing personalized information at the request of users, assisting them throughout all stages of the communication process regarding the brand's products or services. The company's availability to deliver tailored information and its personal approach help improve the relationship between the brand and its existing or potential consumers on social media, ensuring a favorable experience throughout the purchasing process. (Floreddu, Cabiddu, 2016)

The strategies identified by Floreddu and Cabiddu function independently from one another; however, maximum efficiency is achieved when specialists succeed in combining compatible approaches in a way that shapes an operational structure advantageous for brand interaction on social media.

In other words, specialists hold the responsibility of optimally shaping existing social media strategies by integrating the most promising platforms for a brand's online activity, identifying the appropriate posting frequency for each of them, and establishing an ideal interaction approach within these platforms, such that the implemented techniques converge into a unified communication effort leading to the achievement of the brand's objectives within the digital ecosystem.

Trends and Best Practices in Social Media

As the digital ecosystem has evolved, the content created by both users and brands has also taken on multiple forms of expression across social networks. In this context, brands' approaches have undergone several distinct stages, each corresponding to a trend or a popular consumption behavior among users.

In its early stages, brand communication on social media emerged as an extension of traditional advertising materials. In order to save resources while ensuring an active presence in the digital sphere, advertising spots and posters were often redistributed on brand-owned social media platforms. This period may be regarded as the *era of economization*, when social media channels were perceived merely as amplifiers of classical advertising efforts, without requiring additional marketing investment.

It was not long before the use of brand ambassadors became an advantageous solution within the digital ecosystem as well, leading to a stage characterized by the frequent implementation of influencer marketing. These personalities, who had succeeded in building significant online communities over time, became essential tools for communication specialists. Their involvement in brand campaigns and social media activations marked the establishment of the *era of collaboration*.

However, users began to have increasingly higher expectations of brands active on social media. Partnerships with influencers quickly lost their novelty and became a fundamental tactic, making room for another dimension that users wished to see addressed by brands. This subsequent stage in the existence of the digital ecosystem was defined by a shift from traditional advertising thinking to a *social-first mindset*, in which the primary stake of communication on these platforms became the quality of the content distributed by brands. The intensification of user creativity on various networks compelled brands to replicate this behavior, which ultimately solidified the *era of content*.

Once content creativity became the standard for all successful brands on social media, the need for differentiation emerged, helping them remain relevant even as user attention shifted toward cultural moments or dynamic trends. From this necessity, brands altered their approach to content, distancing themselves from the rules of traditional advertising and embracing a form of reactivity that enabled them to connect naturally with online communities during key moments. In 2025, the digital ecosystem can be described as entering the *era of infiltration*, a stage in which brands attempt to reach relevant audience segments by behaving more like users themselves, sharing common interests, and creating content that addresses important social media topics in creative ways. (MØRNING, 2025)

The era of infiltration, in which the social media ecosystem currently finds itself, requires a specific content approach, one that reflects the Internet's tendency to move away from the standard formulas that defined it in recent years. Specialists at the MØRNING agency outline a set of characteristics that capture the essence of this “wild” content: *random*, *clandestine*, *brutal*, and *demystified*.

Random refers to unedited, seemingly nonsensical content that encapsulates the current absurd nature of the Internet. This aspect signals the need for constant experimentation and the inclination of brands to generate conversation through content.

Clandestine reflects greater freedom for brands to access relevant niches on social media and connect with new audience segments in unexpected ways, uncovering surprising opportunities.

Brutal emphasizes a direct approach to brand communication, simplifying advertising elements and leaving more room for creative chaos.

Finally, *demystified* highlights users' desire for increased transparency from brands and their involvement in spreading niche knowledge across social networks. (MØRNING, 2025)

Based on this analysis of the social media ecosystem, identifying the main trends in the digital sphere constitutes an essential step in outlining brands' strategic approaches. After reviewing several

specialized reports from the social media advertising industry, the present work highlights seven trends that brands must consider to succeed on social platforms.

The first trend concerns the necessity of *experimentation* on the social networks where the brand is active, to identify the specific types of content that work best for the products and services being promoted. In an ecosystem where users display a relaxed and indulgent attitude, brands can test different approaches without facing significant risks of negative backlash. Creating relevant content is the most important aspect for brands, with the goal of publishing materials that users can naturally resonate with. (MØRNING, 2025) From this perspective, brands have begun to move away from traditional promotional rules and to integrate more forms of entertainment into the content they produce. (Hootsuite, 2025)

The second trend concerns *brand transparency* on social media. Cyclically, the Internet appears to be returning to its early period, when users had open access to a large number of resources, a tendency reflected in their current behavior on social networks. Once again, social platforms host open discussions on current events, many of which also involve brand-related experiences. In this context, brands are encouraged to actively participate in this demystification of information and contribute with their own added value. (MØRNING, 2025) In doing so, brands have the opportunity to build trust-based connections and secure long-term user engagement in their social media efforts. (TikTok, 2025)

The third trend addressed in this work is *social listening*, a tactic that no social media specialist should overlook. Social listening enables brands to stay updated on topics of audience interest, identify key moments that can be leveraged through content, and pinpoint issues negatively impacting consumer experience. Moreover, this tactic is effective in identifying viral formats that can generate engagement on social networks, offering brands opportunities to join ongoing discussions. In other words, social listening forms the foundation of any successful social media strategy, representing a constant effort required of specialists to maintain brand relevance in the digital ecosystem. (Hootsuite, 2025)

Taking the previous idea a step further, the fourth trend emphasizes the necessity for brands to generate and participate in conversations within the digital ecosystem. In response to the new liberalization of online information, users have formed niche communities where they discuss issues of concern, communities with significant potential for brands whose products and services meet their specific needs. From another perspective, brands also have the opportunity to approach niche topics with the sole purpose of sparking conversations with indirect audience segments, relying more on a wave of attention than on providing a complete solution. (MØRNING, 2025) In this regard, social media has given rise to a wide variety of interactive formats through which brands can simulate such conversations, further contributing to the development of long-term, trust-based relationships. (TikTok, 2025)

The fifth trend remains in the same area as the previous one, focusing on how brands interact with users through comments. *Outbound engagement* refers to the opportunity for brands to connect with audiences outside their own social media pages, thereby accessing new public segments and engaging in novel discussion topics. This tactic proves particularly effective when brands extend their voice to creators' posts, which draws attention from their micro-communities surprisingly and engagingly. In the long run, this tactic can effectively complement a strategy aimed at building a distinctive social media identity through credible relationships between the brand and relevant content creators. (Hootsuite, 2025)

For a long time, the representation of experiences in traditional media was limited to what advertisers deemed worthy of being showcased, carefully selecting the fragments illustrated in

promotional materials. This paradigm shifted with the re-liberalization of the Internet, as users began to make their voices heard and portray everyday experiences through their unique perspectives. From this standpoint, the sixth trend reflects the growing importance of *niches* within the digital ecosystem and the rising popularity of *micro-communities*, small groups whose experiences redefine the relationship between brands and users on social media. (TikTok, 2025) At the same time, the increased relevance of niches marks the transition from a transactional brand-user interaction toward a deeper and more meaningful connection, leaving space for the open conversations mentioned earlier. (MØRNING, 2025)

Finally, the seventh trend in the digital communication industry is the integration of *artificial intelligence* into both strategic and creative activities embedded within social media advertising. The identified tendency refers primarily to generative AI, which has become a valuable tool for advertisers and content creators alike. On the one hand, AI is increasingly used by specialists to ensure a constant flow of communication on social media, helping to streamline repetitive tasks and accelerate research efforts. (Hootsuite, 2025) On the other hand, AI has become an important ally for content creators, who integrate generative functions into their creative processes, transforming such materials into new viral formats across various social platforms. (TikTok, 2025)

Taking all these trends into account, it becomes evident that the ecosystem of social platforms is moving further away from the realm of traditional advertising. Brands are now focusing more on building lasting and meaningful connections with their audiences through content creation that meets user expectations, and less on the transactional quality of online communication.

Social Media Approaches in the QSR Industry

A specific category in which social media advertising manifests itself broadly and interestingly is represented by quick-service restaurants (QSRs). Within this sector, a significant share of marketing resources is directed toward ensuring a relevant and engaging online presence for users.

The nature of the services in this industry encourages a dynamic and interactive approach from all competing brands, with their social media communication reflecting the fast-paced and enjoyable essence of businesses of this type. However, given that QSR products do not generally require a significant financial effort from consumers, securing affinity and loyalty in the digital environment often proves to be a difficult task. Considering the high competitiveness within the category, QSR brands have been compelled to develop original approaches that distinguish them through creativity.

From this perspective, players in the QSR category make significant efforts to establish a notable online presence, often building a humanized brand personality that represents the company's values in an engaging manner for users. Communication is delivered in a relaxed, playful, disruptive, and highly confident tone, an approach that sets the rhythm for the entire digital ecosystem within the category. In this way, brands aim to mirror the profile of their ideal social media consumers and create content that resonates with users as deeply as possible, thus building long-lasting relationships.

Beyond the objective of increasing online visibility and enhancing awareness among social media users, leading QSR brands focus on securing engagement and interactions from their target audiences (Ketchell, 2024). In other words, the primary goal becomes building active online communities, which brands nurture and stimulate through content that connects with users via shared truths or layered storytelling, where products and services are inserted into the everyday narratives of individuals.

From a strategic perspective, QSR brands create content that is slightly cryptic, strongly rooted in cultural context and recent trends, designed to invite interaction and provoke reactions. Posting frequency is relatively high, ensuring the brand remains top-of-mind for users while also encouraging repeated purchases. In terms of platform selection, extensive strategies are often employed, and the necessity of a cross-channel approach is widely recognized, one that addresses the needs of multiple audience categories and enables flexible communication tailored to each digital channel (Team Braze, 2024).

Alongside a solid emphasis on visual communication, focused on products and their appetizing presentation on social media, QSR brands pay particular attention to consumer experiences, those moments that highlight direct consumer involvement and elicit positive emotions among users. Such consumption experiences allow greater creative freedom and enable varied and attractive communication from brands.

Furthermore, QSR players acknowledge the importance of high responsiveness and adaptability in communicating with users. “Quick-service restaurants need to be more attentive to people’s needs. Constant interaction with consumers can create a sense of unity and reassure people that their perspectives are taken into consideration,” as highlighted by the conclusions of a study on the impact of social media in the category (Upadhyay & Patel, 2022). QSR brands use certain social media platforms to provide rapid support to dissatisfied customers, gather real-time feedback, and continuously monitor collective perceptions regarding their products and services.

In the local Romanian market, consumer engagement with quick-service restaurants on social media is increasing. According to Global Web Index data (2024), 6.6% of Romanians posted an opinion about such restaurants in 2024, a 0.9% increase compared to 2023.

Considering these developments, it becomes clear that developing a social media communication strategy is essential for any brand operating in Romania’s QSR sector and beyond.

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