



# Social spending: Managing the social media mix

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## KEYWORDS

Social media;  
Marketing;  
Budget spending;  
Social media mix;  
Mission control

**Abstract** There is incessant demand for ‘proof’ of return on investment (ROI) for social media spending, and a significant degree of uncertainty among marketers with respect to allocating effort and budget to social media. In this article, we address these issues by identifying different ways that organizations use social media, highlighting important distinctions in these approaches and describing how to frame the spending decision for social media. Additionally, we identify dimensions that can be used to differentiate important types of social media in a social media mix, and relate this to tactical marketing execution. We also highlight the different nature of social objectives, the ‘backward’ process for meeting them, and the importance of establishing a social media ‘mission control’ as part of that process.

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## 1. Marketing spend on social media

Organizations both large and small have jumped on the social media bandwagon, feeling their way around to make sense of its usefulness. They have tweeted on Twitter, created fan pages on Facebook, and posted videos on YouTube. Perhaps akin to the development of websites in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, organizations today sense that social media is—and will remain—an important fabric of commerce, and that they must get on board. However, given the frequent demand by management for ‘proof’ of return on investment (ROI), it appears that there is a fair degree of uncertainty with respect to allocating marketing effort and budget to social media, and limited understanding of important distinctions among various types of social media.

This article provides guidance on reducing this uncertainty by describing a lens for strategically thinking about social media, and by identifying important dimensions of social media with respect to tactical execution. First, like Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), we find it useful to clarify the difference in meaning between social media and Web 2.0, two terms used frequently as synonyms—which they are not. Next, we identify different ways that organizations use social media, highlight important distinctions in these approaches, and describe how to frame the spending decision for social media. Finally, we identify dimensions that can be used to differentiate important types of social media, and relate this to tactical marketing execution.

## 2. Web 2.0 and social media

It still remains geeky cool—at least among marketers or management types; perhaps less so among

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