

Enhancing the Use of Social Media for SEAFDEC Visibility

INTRODUCTION

The popularity of social media is growing, without signs of slowing down. It has become the platform for people to access information, interact with others, and even to transact business. In Southeast Asia, 61% of the population are active on social media based on 2019 data, up from 55% the previous year and significantly higher compared to the global average of 48%. That translates to about 402 million people actively using social media in the region. These users are active across variety of social media platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram, but for about a decade, Facebook has been the most popular. This document and the workshop were made with Facebook in mind as the primary social media platform.

Not only are most of the region's population exposed to social media, but the time of exposure is also remarkable. In 2018, internet users in the Philippines spent three hours and 57 minutes daily on social media. In Indonesia, users spent three hours and 23 minutes, Thailand three hours and 10 minutes, and Malaysia three hours total. These figures show that up to 30% of the time people spend online are dedicated to consuming content on social media.

Compared to websites, social media platforms offer distinct advantages.

1. **Information delivery:** The most important advantage is the way information is delivered to the audience. With websites, users must remember the website address and type it into a browser. Alternatively, they may follow links to the website or find information they need through a search engine. With social media, information is delivered directly where the audience is spending their time, often leisurely.
2. **Targeting:** Targeting refers to the delivery of relevant information to an interested audience. Useful information in websites reach their target audience mainly through search engines. In social media, the way platforms have been programmed increases the chances that relevant content reaches the target audience, even if they were not looking for it. This is done through algorithms that analyze a user's interests based on their history of social media activity and connections.
3. **Interaction:** Social media allow users to interact with content, the producers of the content, and other content consumers. The ability to comment, react, and share posted content are very important features found in social media platforms.

Despite all the advantages of social media, they are not yet able to replace the role of conventional websites. Websites are better at organizing large volumes of information and are customizable depending on the needed function. Thus, for organizations like SEAFDEC with a large amount of information to offer the public, social media platforms and websites are complementary. Websites host and organize most of the information while social media is a cost-effective tool to stir up interest among the public and to link the target audience to the website.

ESSENTIALS OF AN EFFECTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

Maximizing the effectiveness of SEAFDEC's social media platforms requires information staff to understand the ever-changing online trends and the many social media features that can be harnessed. However, there are core principles that are the foundation of every successful social media strategy.

1. **Understanding the audience:** The target audience for an organization's social media strategy must be defined to guide the production of information that will be suited for them. Who are they and where are they from? What language do they understand? What level of education do they have?

More important than just knowing who the audience are, is understanding them. What kind of information will they find interesting? SEAFDEC information officers should be careful not to assume that their audience has the same amount of background knowledge and understanding as they. What may seem simple or important to SEAFDEC staff will not always be understandable or interesting to the audience. Thus, producers of content for social media should be able to place themselves in the frame of mind of their target audience.

It must be noted that a very specific audience, such as fisheries experts or policymakers, will restrict the number of people that will engage with your social media. It helps to have more than one type of audience in mind and produce a variety of content that will be interesting for them.

2. **Content:** At the very heart of any information campaign is content. Interesting content will usually attract its own audience on social media. Poor content, on the other hand, is likely to be ignored or may even harm the image of the organization. Being into research and development, SEAFDEC is in an advantage because the organization produces its own original information.

However, producing good content is more than just presenting good data. Information needs to be properly packaged and “angled” to maximize its relevance to the intended audience. That means if SEAFDEC will want to reach the general public, highly technical information must be trimmed down and simplified. The topic must also be angled based on what will be interesting to the audience.

For example, the public will not be interested to know that AQD’s project was able to improve the survival of the fish silver perch in the hatchery. However, they will be interested to know that the project will contribute to saving the declining population of the fish. Topics that are angled towards environmental conservation, fish as food, contributions to the economy are usually interesting to the public. They will not be interested in very detailed science and complex policies. However, these details may still be presented if the target audience includes academics and researchers.

The use of quality photos is another way to grab attention. Sometimes, a single well-composed photographed with a short informative caption will gain more attention than a photo album with dozens of mediocre photos.

3. **Strong Branding:** Branding is how an organization distinguishes itself from others, visually and in other modes of communication. Maintaining a consistent image is very important to strengthen the brand of an organization. SEAFDEC has established a brand book specifying the official colors and proper use of the logo. This is a good start and must be strictly followed towards strengthening the SEAFDEC brand. Standardizing fonts, complementary colors, and institutional icons will be helpful to further strengthen visual branding. The conversation tone is also an important aspect of branding. SEAFDEC seems to use a formal, serious tone in most of its writing and presentations. If this is adopted by the information officers, visuals and writings must follow with very few exceptions.
4. **Consistent monitoring:** Knowing how well a social media account is doing is easy because many monitoring tools are available, especially in Facebook. Consistent monitoring will help information staff to see how they are performing with respect to pre-identified goals and serve as a feedback mechanism on what can be improved. Among the most important metrics are the number of followers, audience growth rate, and engagement rate.
 - a. **Followers** – This metric is more important than “likes” for the purpose of communicating information. Likers may choose to unfollow a page and not receive any content. Meanwhile, followers may choose not to like a page but they would still see a page’s posts. This metric gives a picture of the size of the direct audience a Facebook page has.
 - b. **Audience growth rate** – This metric is simply the rate at which the number of followers has increased over time. It is a better gauge of the current performance of Facebook pages than simply the number of followers. For example, a page with 5,000 followers that gained 500 in the current year (10% growth rate) is a better performer than a page with

10,000 followers that also gained 500 in the past year (5% growth rate). For the purpose of monitoring SEAFDEC social media accounts, the time period is suggested to be yearly.

- c. **Engagement rate** – This metric is a computation of how many social media users interacted with individual posts through reactions, commented, and shares. The higher this number, the more relevant the individual post was to the audience. Lower engagement rates mean the content of the post may not have been interesting enough or relevant to the viewer such that they did not interact with it.

PREPARING A SOCIAL MEDIA CALENDAR

It is good to have many followers on social media, but an organization that seldom posts anything is not maximizing the potential of its large audience. Frequent posts also mean that the organization's content is seen more often in the newsfeed of its followers. However, frequent posting, even three times a week, can be a problem during times when there are no activities or news that may be interesting to the target audience.

A social media calendar is a planning tool that helps organizations to schedule posts on social media. Information officers may decide on their target frequency of posting and plan out content ahead of time. Such content need not rely on internal news or information and allow some time for expert review and approval. Among the content that can be included in a social media calendar are:

1. Fun facts and trivia related to fisheries or SEAFDEC
2. Periodic posts regarding a priority program
3. Promoting free publications that may be downloaded from the website
4. Sharing interesting posts from the previous years
5. Links to articles or videos from other organizations
6. Greetings on holidays and other special occasions

The mix of content may be planned out through a social media calendar. Some posts may function to educate or entertain the audience. However, promoting SEAFDEC's brand should also be the function of some posts. Information officers may decide, for example, that 80% of content should be educational while 20% should promote the organization.

Optimizing the schedule of posting will be easier with a social media calendar. There are days and times when people are more active on social media, such as weekends or in the evening when people are not busy at work and in school. The behavior of a Facebook page's audience may be studied through the Insights panel.

MONITORING FACEBOOK PAGE PERFORMANCE

Built-in tools of the Facebook platform provide metrics that help gauge the performance of an organization's Facebook page. The Insights panel dashboard is accessible at <https://www.facebook.com/'xxxx'/insights/> (where "xxxx" is the address of the Facebook page). A dashboard on the left side provides navigation to many metrics used to measure Facebook pages. Meanwhile, on the top right is a link to "Export Data" that allows detailed information to be downloaded as an Excel or CSV file format. The information may be about the page as a whole, or about individual posts and videos. The date range of data to be retrieved may also be customized, however the maximum date range as of this writing is only for 180 days. To get data for a full year, information officers may choose to download in parts, or periodically prepare quarterly or monthly reports. When viewed in a spreadsheet program, metrics may be easily extracted or computed.

To compute for the **audience growth rate**, the number of followers at the start of a reporting period (e.g. 1 Jan 2020) is deducted from the followers at the end of the period (e.g. 31 December 2020) and

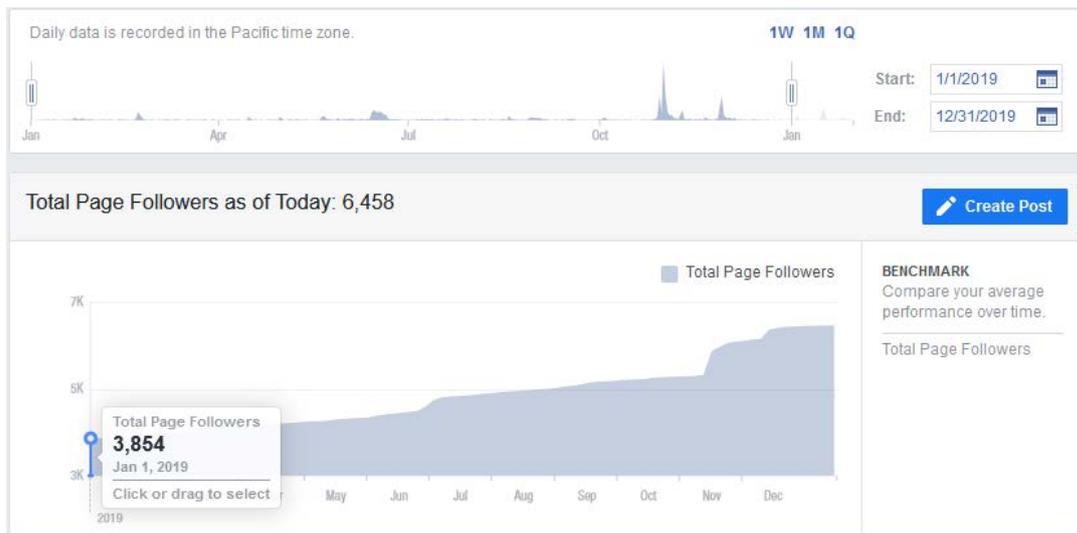
divided by the followers at the start. The decimal number is multiplied by 100 to get the percentage value.

Audience growth rate (%)

$$\frac{followers_{end} - followers_{start}}{followers_{start}} \times 100$$

For example, the AQD page had 3,854 followers at the beginning of 2019 and this has grown to 6,458 by the end of the same year. This translates to a 67.57% growth rate for 2019.

$$\frac{6,458 - 3,854}{3,854} \times 100 = 67.57\%$$



Engagement rate may be accessed through the Posts link at the Insights sidebar (<https://facebook.com/xxxx/insights/?section=navPosts>). The engagement rate may be seen by selecting it from a drop-down menu by clicking the down arrow on the top right of the table on “All Posts Published.” The numbers suggest which posts were most interesting to the audience and will help in planning future posts.

All Posts Published

Reach Engagement Rate

Published	Post	Type	Targeting	Reach	Engagement Rate	Actions
01/28/2020 4:31 PM	The November-December 2019 issue of AQD Matters,	📁	🌐	3.6K	40%	View Promotion
01/25/2020 6:30 AM	NEW SPECIES OF SOIL-CLEANING WORM NAMED	🔗	🌐	19.6K	7%	View Promotion
01/17/2020 4:14 PM	Interested bidders must submit a letter of intent to	🔗	🌐	892	9%	Boost Post
01/16/2020 9:50 AM	SEAFDEC/AQD is pleased to announce that the 2020	📁	🌐	13.6K	9%	Boost Post

Post Clicks / Reactions, Comments & Shares
Reactions / Comments / Shares
Post Hides, Hides of All Posts, Reports of Spam, Unl...
Engagement Rate