



Credocast

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SOCIAL MEDIA BRANDING

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The Fenty Effect

“To build a strong brand, a significant amount of awareness must exist in the target audience’s minds, so they respond positively to marketing and advertising activities.”

Underestimate Brand Communication at Your Risk

Brand communication gives meaning to a company, product, or service. To build a strong brand, a significant amount of awareness must exist in the target audience’s minds, so they respond positively to marketing and advertising activities.¹ It plays a vital role in shaping that brand awareness, with social media being both a key vehicle and driver.

Brand communication is used to inform, persuade, enlighten, teach, remind, and enrich audience knowledge about an entity, its benefits, values, product or service offerings, etc.² It delivers meaningful and focused messages about the brand to a target audience. In the ever-evolving communication landscape, entities that stand out from their competitors are those with formidable brand communications. These entities have strategically invested time and money to create awareness and intentionally influence the public’s perception of their brand, fostering brand recognition, increased engagement and, ultimately, sales for products and services.

This thought-piece addresses how to leverage social media as a tool for branding communications as well as highlight the Fenty Beauty model as a social media branding case study.



Miles, Stuart. *Company Brand Improving Awareness and Perception of Value* (Shutterstock).

Social Media: The Evolving Battleground

Gone are the days when advertising and marketing spend solely on traditional media (television, radio, etc). Businesses must remain relevant by utilising different social media platforms to create awareness about their goods and services, gain new customers, strengthen relationships, build digital communities, and retain customer loyalty.

¹Keller (2003) in Bartlebysearch. Essay about The Importance of Branding in Marketing. Available at: <https://www.bartleby.com/essay/The-Importance-of-Branding-in-Marketing-F3J6FCKATJ>

²Hitesh Bhasin (2021) What is brand communication? Available at: <https://www.marketing91.com/brand-communication/>

“Social media increases a brand’s visibility, shaping a particular brand persona for the audience.”

Social media increases a brand’s visibility, shaping a particular brand persona for the audience. This perception drives brand recognition, brand loyalty and, ultimately, sales.³ Brands looking to leverage social media must know the best platforms for their target market (audience) to maximise their reach, engage with the right audience and disseminate their strategic and tactical messaging.

Companies must choose the proper social media channels based on their audience segmentation and be consistent with their brand identity (mission, vision, logo, colours, slogans, etc.) while showcasing their products or services to their online audience.⁴

Fenty Beauty is a multi-million-dollar cosmetics line by celebrity entertainer Rihanna. It launched in 2017 to fill a gap in the cosmetics market for underserved women of colour. It became so successful that it generated \$550 million in revenue at the end of its first year of operation.⁵ The Fenty brand launch demonstrated the first time underrepresented, underserved women and cultures were featured in global prestige beauty campaigns, in line with its “Beauty for All” brand.⁶ Rihanna’s success with the Fenty brand is an example of how strategic branding and the power of social media can facilitate market dominance and success.



Accelerate with Google

Pick Your Shade – Facebook or LinkedIn?

It would seem like new social media platforms emerge weekly, so entities must carefully focus their marketing efforts on the platforms most relevant to their target audience. Where does the target audience live? Determine the best platforms for branding communications based on this vital question. Below are the most popular social media channels based on demographics, content and strategies to adopt.

³ Megan Mosley (2019) How Social Media Increases Brand Awareness. Available at: <https://www.business2community.com/social-media/how-social-media-increases-brand-awareness-02165638>

⁴ Stacy Jackson (2018) Importance of Brand Consistency: 7 Key Approaches for Keeping Aligned. Available at: <https://www.clearvoice.com/blog/brand-consistency-why-its-so-important-how-to-achieve-it/>

⁵ Eleanor Lees (2021) What Is the Secret to Rihanna’s Fenty Beauty Success and What Are the Top-Selling Products? Available at: <https://www.newsweek.com/rihanna-fenty-beauty-success-billionaire-best-products-1617018>

⁶ Sandy Saputo, Rihanna’s Fenty Beauty: A case study in accelerating innovation by tapping new markets. Available at: <https://accelerate.withgoogle.com/stories/rihanna-fenty-beauty-a-case-study-in-accelerating-innovation-by-tapping-new-markets>

“Entities must carefully focus their marketing efforts on the platforms most relevant to their target audience.”



Table 1

WordStream

For Fenty Beauty, Instagram is their most active social media platform with over 11 million followers. Fenty Beauty became the biggest beauty brand launch in YouTube history and was named one of Time Magazine’s best inventions of 2017 due to its huge commercial success.⁷

Crafting a Social Media Brand Personality

Determine brand goals

What does the brand aim to achieve using social media? Identifying the set goals shape all the branding initiatives on recognised social media platforms.⁸ It also helps the brand develop content that reflects and reinforces its persona and objectives.⁹ For example, Fenty Beauty’s strong social media brand stems from branding that communicates embracing all beauty types. As a company whose brand goals are about diversity and inclusivity, their inclusion marketing content supports their strategic objectives with photos and content depicting women of different ethnicities, colours, shapes and sizes. They are also the first cosmetics company to create make-up specifically for the albino community. Their “Beauty for All” vision translates in everything they do on social media, where they take pride in “showing and not telling.”¹⁰

Develop content for each platform

Social media branding content should never follow a one-size-fits-all approach. The brand must develop, and curate content specifically tailored to their select platforms and users (see Table 1). Using the Fenty Beauty success model, they strategically leveraged user-generated content (UGC) to promote their brand by sharing new products, behind the scenes content, video reviews, etc.

⁷ Sandy Saputo, Rihanna’s Fenty Beauty: A case study in accelerating innovation by tapping new markets. Available at: <https://accelerate.withgoogle.com/stories/rihannas-fenty-beauty-a-case-study-in-accelerating-innovation-by-tapping-new-markets>

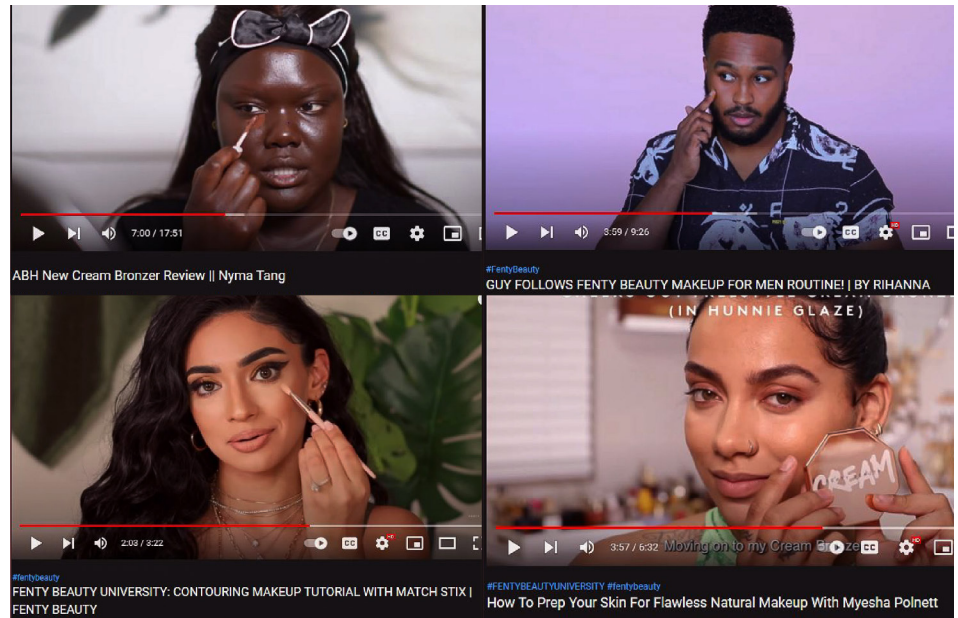
⁸ Grin, A Guide to Branding Yourself on Social Media. Available at: <https://grin.co/blog/a-guide-to-building-your-personal-brand-through-social-media/>

⁹ Luke Buesnel (2021) Why having a brand ‘personality’ is effective on social media. Available at: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-having-brand-personality-effective-social-media-luke-buesnel/>

¹⁰ Sandy Saputo, Rihanna’s Fenty Beauty: A case study in accelerating innovation by tapping new markets. Available at: <https://accelerate.withgoogle.com/stories/rihannas-fenty-beauty-a-case-study-in-accelerating-innovation-by-tapping-new-markets>

“Authenticity builds trust. Trust in turn, builds marketing receptiveness and drives new business.”

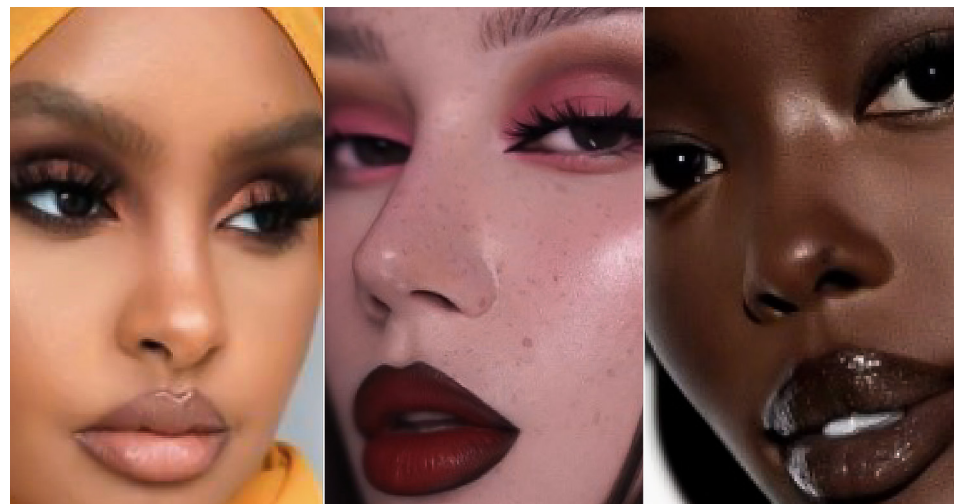
Specifically, their content features professional tutorials by makeup artists and social media influencers (YouTubers) trying out Fenty Beauty products and sharing reviews on Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and TikTok.



Fenty Beauty by Rihanna (YouTube)

Humanise the brand

Giving a brand a human feel makes it easy for the audience to connect. Introduce social media followers to the people behind the brand, showcase how services are provided and how consumers benefit from the product. No one likes to partner with a faceless brand, nor will they feel a sense of connection. Authenticity builds trust. Trust in turn, builds marketing receptiveness and drives new business.¹¹ People react strongly to brands the same way they do to people. Fenty Beauty launched via social media on September 8th, 2017. Their social media content included photos of lines forming outside their retail stores worldwide. Hundreds of excited fans posted selfies of themselves wearing Fenty products on social media. The company’s first re-post was a Muslim woman wearing a hijab and the brand’s lipstick.¹²



Fenty Beauty (Instagram)

Be consistent

The goal is not how much you post but rather how regularly you post without jeopardising concept quality. Consistency entails the brand’s messaging, tone, and aesthetics across all social networks.¹³

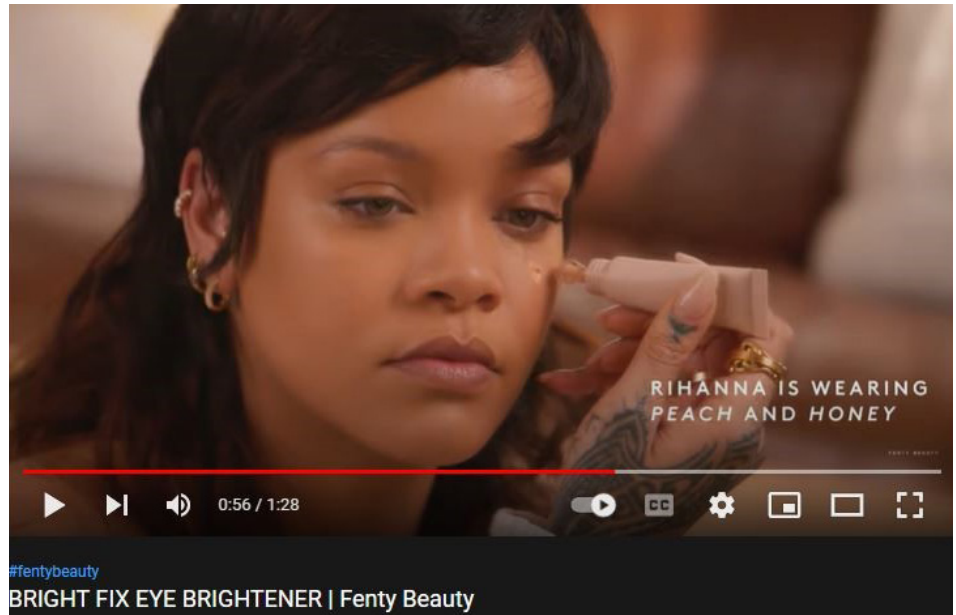
¹¹ Stacey McLachlan, Christina Newberry (2021) 22 Benefits of Social Media for Business. Available at: <https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-for-business/>

¹² Sandy Saputo, Rihanna’s Fenty Beauty: A case study in accelerating innovation by tapping new markets. Available at: <https://accelerate.withgoogle.com/stories/rihannas-fenty-beauty-a-case-study-in-accelerating-innovation-by-tapping-new-markets>

¹³ Christina Newberry (2021) What is Social Listening, Why it Matters, and tools to Make it Easier. Available at: <https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-listening-business/>

“The more active the brand is on social media, the more accessible and responsive it appears and the more likely its audience will connect, follow and, ultimately, promote and support the brand.”

The brand’s logo, colour, social media theme, slogan, design elements should always be consistent and, as a result, familiar to the audience. This aids brand recognition by its social media community. For instance, Rihanna has continuously posted her make-up tutorials on YouTube. Her social media audience has grown to expect and rely on her authentic, organic and unscripted videos of her make-up sessions.



Fenty Beauty by Rihanna (YouTube)

Engage with the audience

Building a social media profile and posting helpful content consistently is not enough. The brand needs to interact and engage with its audience regularly. It can engage by replying to comments, sharing content produced by users on its profiles, and commenting on the profiles and posts of the target audience. The more active the brand is on social media, the more accessible and responsive it appears and the more likely their audience will connect, follow and, ultimately, promote and support the brand.¹⁴



Fenty Beauty (Twitter)

Use #Hashtags

A hashtag is a word or phrase preceded by the pound symbol indicating content relating to a specific topic or belonging to a content category on social media. Hashtags help make content discoverable on-platform searches and reach more people. For example, #foodblogger can help build a social media community of people interested or active in food blogging.¹⁵ They put your posts in front of different people and expands a brand’s reach on social media.¹⁶

¹⁴ Desiree Johnson (2020) 5 Ways To Build Your Brand Presence on Social Media. Available at: https://www.bluehost.com/resources/5-ways-to-build-your-brand-presence-on-social-media/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=genericsearch&gclid=CjwKCAjwcaRBhBYEiwAK341jU5gZ_SkjSh4ICRPAaJVNI86ztlbxJ60It-NlocLd-L3OB_0EQFgKJhoCDT8QAvD_BwE&gclid=aw.dss

¹⁵ Christina Newberry (2021) Instagram Hashtags 2022: The Ultimate Guide. Available at: <https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-hashtags/>

¹⁶ Agile CRM (2018) 31 ways to increase brand awareness using social media. Available at: <https://www.agilecrm.com/blog/increase-brand-awareness-social-media/>

“Influencers and paid advertisements increase the brand’s reach and visibility.”

Fenty Beauty uses various hashtags (#FentyBeauty) to increase engagement with its followers and to build brand awareness. It also uses hashtags to add a voice to social issues. For instance, it uses #CrueltyFree to demonstrate its commitment to the ethical treatment of animals and join the growing community committed to manufacturing products without animal testing.

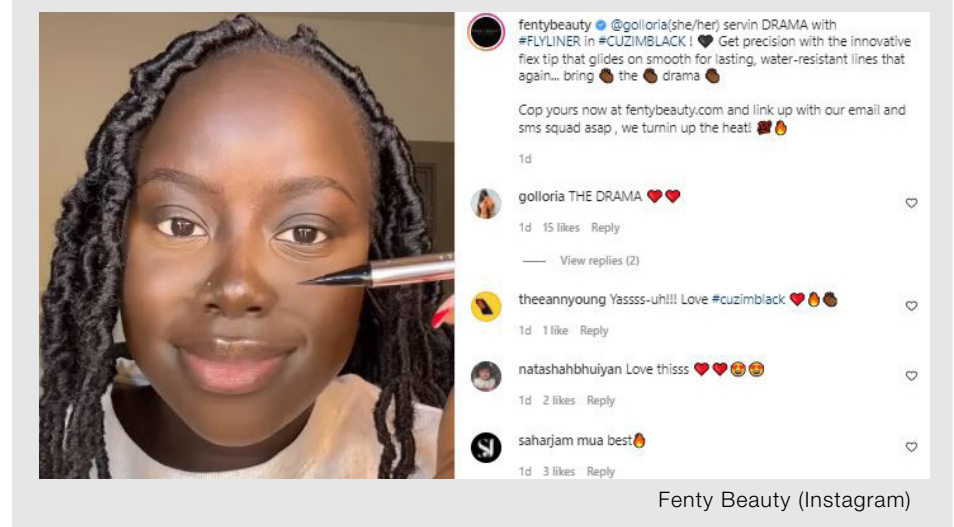
Use influencers and paid promotion

Influencers are content creators with a significant following on social media. Influencer marketing is an effective way to market the brand based on the influencers’ following and reach. They can develop and share digital content that entertains, motivates and connects with their followers which can help drive engagement.

Paid advertisements also increase the brand’s reach, create awareness and visibility. Fenty Beauty consistently uses vloggers, social media influencers, celebrities and paid promotions to increase its engagement and followers on social media.



Fenty Beauty (Twitter)



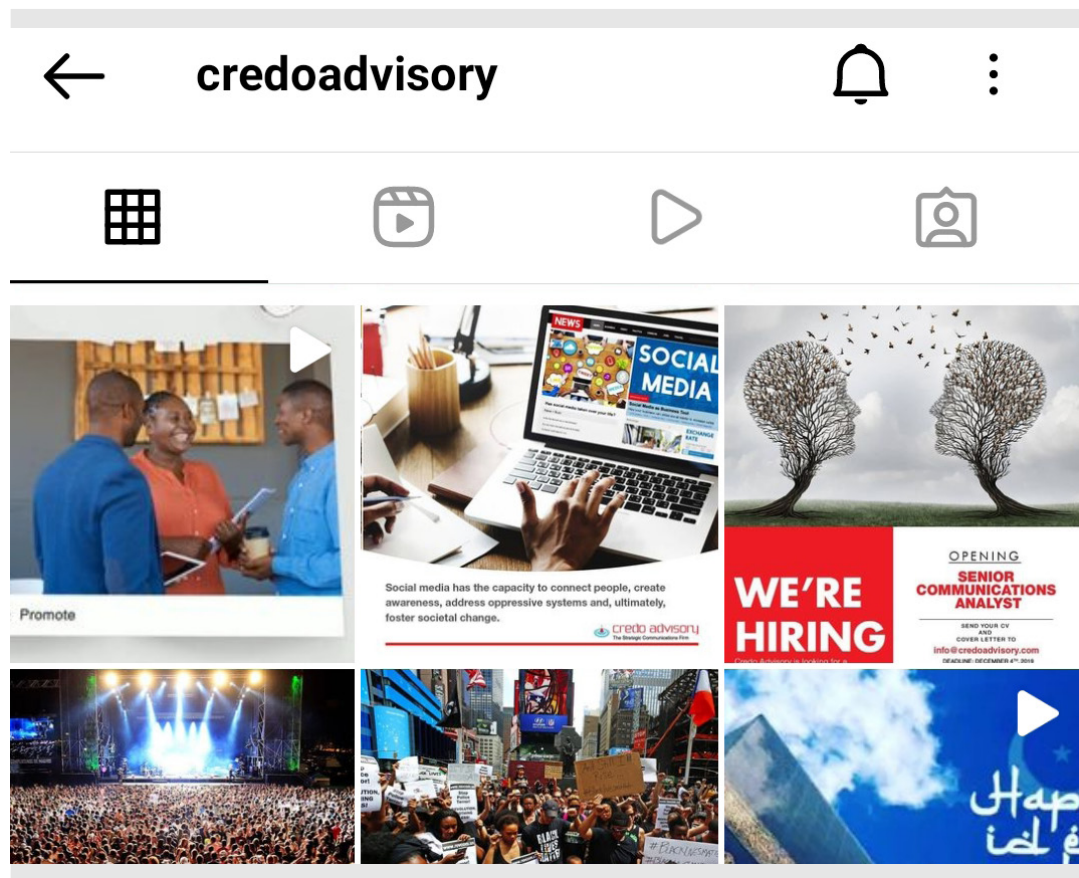
Fenty Beauty (Instagram)

“To be on the radar and stand out in this digital era, one has to take advantage of these media platforms, understand their features and develop or strengthen branding strategies for maximum brand communication impact.”

Credo Experience

At Credo Advisory, we leverage social media to reinforce our branding communications. We produce and curate digital content (videos, infographics, GIFs, images, etc.) and messaging that shape public perception of our firm as thought leaders in the field of strategic communications. Our social media branding communication also helps us grow an online community of people passionate about communications. Credo provides its clients with social media advisory that has helped governments, organisations and individuals develop, reposition, strengthen and differentiate themselves in the growing and competitive social media landscape.

Using our expertise, we worked with the United Kingdom Nigeria Infrastructure Advisory Facility (UKNIAF) to provide technical communication assistance in designing and developing their corporate branding portfolio, including creating a range of marketing collaterals.



Conclusion

Fenty beauty understands the importance of social media to its brand. It leverages the platforms optimally, which has led to its success and has built a community of loyal followers.

There are many ways to establish a brand identity, craft a corporate image, increase brand awareness, increase patronage, and succeed in public engagement. Still, social media is one of the best channels to achieve this given the current global communication trends. To be on the radar and stand out in this digital era, one has to take advantage of these media platforms, understand their features and develop or strengthen branding strategies for maximum brand communication impact.