

# THE MOST POPULAR BRAND AND THE PRICE OF POPULARITY

A 2010 survey by ICT of brands on social media found Starbucks to be the most popular consumer brand on the social Web. This was determined by using analytics to index consumer brands against the most popular



personal brand on the planet: Lady Gaga. At that time, Starbucks had over 705,000 followers on Twitter and over 5,428,000 fans on Facebook and while ITC didn't issue any evidence that a huge fan base generates high profits, it is, without a doubt, how Starbucks reached ultimate brand awareness.

Starbucks online marketing strategy gets praise for extreme consumer engagement, but it is important to note that Starbucks intensive consumer engagement is due to the fact that the company is actively involved in promoting itself in through multiple social media channels.

**Social Community:** Starbucks has its own social network, My Starbucks Idea, where customers are asked to share their ideas on anything related to Starbucks. The site gives users the ability to see what peers are suggesting, vote on ideas and check out the results. The site not only gives the company sufficient feedback on its products and services, but it also creates the feeling for the users that they have some role in the corporate decision-making process.

**Social Media Blog:** Ideas in Action is a blog written by Starbucks employees and talks about what Starbucks is doing with the ideas posted by users on the My Starbucks Idea site. The blog keeps customers in the loop with their ideas, and in doing so, increases their sense of loyalty to the brand. The blog is also useful in sustaining and promoting corporate culture internally.

**Microblogging:** Starbucks participation on Twitter is concentrated on answering questions and re-tweeting what people say about the brand.

**Facebook:** Starbucks uploads content to their Facebook page such as videos, blog posts, and photos. The company also invites fans to events. Starbucks fans on Facebook, have a place to initiate discussions and make comments, and many of them do.

**Video Content:** Over 4,800 people subscribe to Starbucks YouTube Channel, where they can upload commercials as well as informational videos explaining the origins of different coffee blends plus some of their charity work. Subscribers also upload videos showing Starbucks's history, prompting them to relate more to the brand, and enabling them to embed its videos anywhere they like on the web.

Starbucks social media strategy is to get people more engaged with the brand. For example, the marketing department of Starbucks promises to let customers connect with employees so they will be able to decide what kind of arts, books and music will be included in the store. By being actively involved in its numerous social platforms, Starbucks is showing its customers, "Hey, we care about what YOU have to say."

Nevertheless, we also need to put a price tag on this kind of engagement and popularity. And while Starbucks does not disclose its social media marketing budget, we can assume that being the most popular brand online certainly does not come free!

**Lesson Learned: Social media is not free. It takes time, resources and a tremendous amount of work.**