

Social Media Marketing Strategy: Facepunch

Abigail George

MKT 3220

Hillary Smith

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Abstract

This paper presents a social media marketing plan for Facepunch Studios, a British game development company primarily known for its popular survival game *Rust*. The plan focuses on enhancing the visibility and engagement of the *Rust* brand through an analysis of its current social media strategies and a SWOT analysis. Additionally, the paper examines opportunities for improving brand perception, increasing community engagement, and leveraging key competitor strategies. The research identifies strategic actions for Facepunch to take advantage of its established fanbase while addressing weaknesses such as its community reputation and inconsistent branding across platforms.

1. Introduction

Facepunch Studios, a British game development company, has become well-known for its survival game *Rust*, a title that blends open-world sandbox mechanics with the competitive dynamics of multiplayer survival. As the company's flagship product, *Rust* serves as the primary driver of Facepunch Studios' brand visibility. The game boasts a large, global fanbase, yet its community engagement has been marred by a reputation for toxicity. This paper outlines a social media marketing plan that builds on Facepunch's existing strategy, aiming to enhance the brand's visibility, foster positive community interactions, and drive further engagement.

2. Social Media Marketing Objectives

The overarching objective of this social media marketing plan is to enhance Facepunch Studios' online presence, with a specific focus on *Rust*. The objectives of the marketing strategy are as follows:

- **Increase engagement on TikTok** by utilizing community-generated content, trending memes, and viral trends.
- **Improve the community perception** of *Rust* by highlighting positive interactions within the player base and curating a more inclusive image.
- **Drive traffic to the *Rust* website** by strategically linking social media content to the company's online platforms.

3. SWOT Analysis

A thorough SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis provides the foundation for developing the marketing strategies for Facepunch Studios.

Strengths:

- **Established Player Base:** *Rust* has cultivated a large and loyal fanbase with significant global reach, especially within the survival game genre.
- **Replayability:** Regular server wipes and consistent content updates ensure the game remains fresh, engaging both new and returning players.
- **Studio-Driven Content:** Facepunch Studios maintains a high level of content curation on its social media, showcasing polished game clips, updates, and in-game events, which elevates the brand's image.

Weaknesses:

- **Toxic Community Reputation:** The *Rust* community has developed a negative reputation for harboring racism, misogyny, and other toxic behaviors. This damages the game's public image and could deter potential partnerships or sponsorships.
- **Inconsistent Branding Across Platforms:** *Rust's* social media presence lacks cohesion, with separate accounts for Facepunch Studios and *Rust* across platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter. This inconsistency complicates brand recognition and message clarity.
- **Limited Use of Memes and Community Clips:** The current social media strategy does not fully capitalize on viral trends, memes, or fan-generated content, missing an opportunity to increase organic engagement.

Opportunities:

- **Community Engagement:** By focusing on positive community behaviors and showcasing collaborative gameplay, Facepunch can work to improve *Rust's* image and build a more inclusive environment.
- **Memes and Trending Content:** Incorporating memes, viral trends, and player-created content could significantly expand the game's reach, especially among younger audiences.
- **Influencer Partnerships:** Partnering with influencers or popular content creators could help reshape *Rust's* image and attract a broader audience.

Threats:

- **Negative Press or Virality:** Toxic incidents or community backlash could rapidly damage the game's reputation, especially in the viral age of social media.
 - **Genre Competition:** Similar survival games like *ARK: Survival Evolved*, *DayZ*, and *The Forest* represent direct competition for *Rust*'s player base.
 - **Community Burnout:** Without meaningful gameplay innovation or new features, players could experience burnout, diminishing long-term retention.
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4. Key Competitors Analysis

Facepunch Studios competes with several well-established survival games, each with their own social media strategies. Two major competitors include *ARK: Survival Evolved* and *DayZ*.

ARK: Survival Evolved

ARK maintains a consistent social media presence across multiple platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter. Its strategy focuses on influencer partnerships and community-driven content, leveraging fan-generated media to keep players engaged. *ARK* has a particularly strong presence on YouTube, where it showcases gameplay trailers, developer insights, and fan collaborations. This multi-platform engagement fosters both brand loyalty and community growth.

DayZ

Like *Rust*, *DayZ* focuses heavily on community engagement. Its social media strategy revolves around user-generated content, with the game's Reddit community serving as a central hub for discussions, feedback, and content creation. *DayZ* also partners with streamers and content creators for gameplay promotion, which helps maintain its visibility. Despite a less polished social media presence than *Rust*, *DayZ* excels in fostering a deep connection with its player base.

5. Social Media Target Audience

The core audience for *Rust* consists of gamers who enjoy multiplayer survival experiences, competitive play, and crafting mechanics. Demographically, *Rust* appeals primarily to young adults aged 18–34, predominantly male (though the female player base is growing). The game's audience is geographically diverse, with significant player bases in the United States, Canada, the UK, Australia, and increasingly in Europe. The majority of *Rust* players have a middle-to-upper-middle-class income level, as the game requires a reasonably powerful gaming PC to run smoothly.

6. Content Strategy and Engagement Plan

The content strategy for *Rust* on social media should be rooted in the game's chaotic and creative nature, capitalizing on viral trends and player-driven content.

TikTok Strategy (Short-Form Content):

- **Objective:** Boost brand awareness and engage younger players.
- **Content Types:** PvP clips, funny moments, trend-based memes, player reaction duets, snippets from "Rust Movies."
- **Themes:** Chaos, player creativity, relatable gamer culture, "toxic but funny" highlights.

YouTube Strategy (Long-Form Content):

- **Objective:** Build deeper community loyalty and expand the game's narrative.
- **Content Types:** "Rust Movies," developer diaries, base-building tutorials, player spotlights.
- **Themes:** Immersion, storytelling, skill-building, community celebration.

Engagement Strategies:

- **Real-Time Interaction:** Actively reply to comments, use in-jokes and memes, and encourage user-generated content.
- **Creator Partnerships:** Partner with prominent content creators for exclusive in-game events, challenges, and live-streamed interactions.
- **User-Generated Content:** Encourage fans to share base builds, funny gameplay moments, and community-driven challenges.

7. Paid Advertising Strategies

Paid advertising should focus on visual content that highlights *Rust*'s chaotic nature and player creativity. Platforms like TikTok and YouTube are ideal for engaging younger audiences with

quick, humorous content. Ads should showcase intense raid moments, player interactions, and community highlights.

Budget Allocation:

- **Social Media Ads:** \$10,000–\$15,000 for TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube pre-roll.
- **Steam Ads/Storefront:** Targeted ads during updates and seasonal events.
- **Influencer Sponsorships:** Sponsored campaigns with mid-to-large YouTubers and streamers.

8. Crisis Management Strategy

Given the complex nature of *Rust's* community and the potential for toxic behavior and controversies, it is essential for Facepunch Studios to have a well-defined crisis management strategy. The objective is to respond swiftly and effectively to any issues that may harm the game's reputation or community dynamics.

9.1 Crisis Prevention

- **Acknowledge the Issue:** Respond promptly to the situation with an official statement that acknowledges the problem without ignoring it. The tone should be empathetic and understanding, demonstrating a commitment to resolving the issue.
- **Transparency:** Provide transparency around the actions that will be taken to address the issue. This could include temporary bans for violators, updates to moderation systems, or changes to game mechanics.
- **Direct Communication with Affected Parties:** If the crisis involves specific players or groups (e.g., those affected by toxic behavior), communicate directly with them and offer support, such as in-game help or additional measures to ensure a safer environment.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, Facepunch Studios has a significant opportunity to enhance *Rust's* social media presence by building on its existing content strategy and focusing on community engagement. By addressing weaknesses such as toxic player behavior and inconsistent branding, and seizing opportunities in influencer partnerships and user-generated content, Facepunch can boost both brand visibility and community perception. Furthermore, paid advertising and strategic content creation on platforms like TikTok and YouTube can expand *Rust's* reach to a broader audience, solidifying its position as a leader in the survival game genre.

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