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Evaluation of Social Media Customer Engagement: A Content Analysis of Automobile Brand Pages

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Introduction

The widespread global usage of Internet media has had a tremendous influence on the social interaction between individuals, the community and the society. Social networking sites (SNS) provide the technological platform for the individuals to connect produce and share content online (Boyd and Ellison, 2008). The rise and continued growth of SNS have attracted the interest of companies who see the potential to communicate their marketing messages to the customers and enter into a dialogue with them using the word-of-mouth (WOM) principles but in this case through a virtual mode. They have evolved their customer approach, shifting from traditional one-to-many communication to a one-to-one approach and offering contact or assistance at any time through SNS such as Facebook, Twitter, My-Space, etc. (Hanna et al. 2011). Automobile is one of the fastest growing industries in the world economy. The Indian auto industry is one of the largest in the world. SNS offer Automobile brand owners the potential for (1) advertising—by facilitating viral marketing, (2) product development and (3) market intelligence—by observing and analyzing the user generated content (UGC) (Richter et al., 2011). Most companies today set-up and moderate a Facebook brand page, while continuously monitoring the consumers' activities. As an outcome of this change in the field of marketing, a new phenomenon, generally known as social media marketing (SMM) was introduced.

Social media marketing is a form of WOM marketing, also known as viral marketing, buzz, and guerilla marketing, which influences consumer-to-consumer communication through professional marketing techniques (Kozinets et al, 2010). This is not to be seen as a replacement for the traditional marketing techniques but rather as an

additional marketing channel that could be integrated with the traditional ones as a part of the marketing mix. The advantage of this new electronic channel is that it can be used to communicate globally and to enrich marketing toward consumers at the personal level (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Through users' feedback or by observing conversations on social media, a company can learn about customers' needs, potentially leading to involvement of members of the community in the co-creation of value through the generation of ideas (Palmer and Koenig-Lewis, 2009).

In this paper we analyze the factors that influence the level of online customer engagement on SMM channels. We focus on the basic element of the company's engagement plan: content to be posted. To answer this question, we evaluate the effect of the content characteristics, such as (1) media type and (2) content type, over the level of online engagement on a Facebook brand page. We measure the engagement level through (1) the number of likes over the content created by the company, (2) number of comments and (3) number of shares.

The aim of this paper is to analyze how automobile brands use a social media network like Facebook to manage public engagement and brand familiarity to communicate and diversify their sales channels. Content analysis is used to identify types of information provided on the automobile brand pages. First several definitions of customer engagement are offered and the position of Facebook brand communities within this framework is identified. Second, official Facebook brand pages of 20 automobile brands are analyzed and their content is compared and categorized using descriptive statistics.

Finally, conclusions are drawn based on the results obtained.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Facebook Brand Communities

Social networks represent a technological platform for marketing, providing access to a large number of users, grouped in non-geographically bound communities, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand, i.e. brand communities (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). Brand communities were found to be a successful tool for increasing sales (Adjei et al., 2010; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006). In addition, they have the potential of improving the relationship between the consumers and the brand (Sicilia and Palazon, 2008) and may influence members' perceptions and actions (Muniz and Schau, 2007). The selection of Facebook as an underlying platform was based on the reasoning that Facebook is currently the largest and fastest growing social network (Alexa, 2012). In addition, according to the findings from a recent market research (Hubspot2011), Facebook is considered by the companies as the most attractive social media platform to be used for marketing, in particular for B2C businesses.

Facebook provides five ways in which companies can use the platform which are Facebook advertisements, Brand Pages, Social Plug ins, Applications and Stories. Of these, Facebook pages provide the largest engagement by direct interaction with the consumers through dialog. There are different ways to define the terms, Although like page is the official name for all Facebook pages which are not user profile pages, we will use the common terminology brand page (Richter et al. 2011) to distinguish pages created and operated by brand owners.

The content shared on brand pages is referred to as posts and appears on the central part of the page, known as the wall or timeline. Each page might have one or more administrator responsible for creation and deletion of content, i.e., the page moderator(s). A brand page can have any number of members, in the continuation referred to as users or fans. Within a Facebook brand page, fans can engage with accompany by (1) posting content on the wall (depending on the communication policy set by the company), (2) commenting on the existing post shared by the moderator, (3) indicating interest in an existing post by pressing the "like" button, i.e., liking, and (4) sharing the post on their profile wall. Each of these actions generates a story, which appears on the wall of each of the fan's Facebook friends. As such, these actions represent a form of WOM communication. Moreover, stories which were generated by fans' engagement over moderator posts foster a propagation of

the marketing message. This leads towards the goal of viral marketing (Kirby and Marsden 2005).

Customer Engagement on Facebook Brand Pages

Customer engagement is considered as a behavioral manifestation toward the brand or firm that goes beyond transactions (Verhoef et al., 2010). Previous studies in the field of customer engagement focused mostly on the consequences of the engagement like trust, satisfaction, commitment, emotional attachment, empowerment, consumer value, and loyalty (Zurich, 2012 pp31). (Vivek, 2009) examines various disciplines including psychology, sociology and management and defines consumer engagement as —the intensity of consumer's participation and connection with the organization's offerings, and/ or organized activities. Customer engagement is a psychological state, but can be manifested into action (Van Doorn et al. 2010 p. 13). (Bowden, 2009) defines customer engagement as a sequential psychological process that customers move through to become loyal towards a brand. (Brodie et al. 2011) makes an extensive analysis of definitions and conceptualizations of the term engagement in social sciences and management disciplines, and the term customer engagement in the marketing and service literature. All the customer engagement behaviors are proposed to comprise five dimensions: valence (positive or negative), form and modality, scope (temporal and geographic), nature of impact and, finally, customer goals. Customer engagement has also been explored as a new perspective in the field of customer management (Verhoef, Reinartz, & Kraft, 2010). It has been highlighted that the emerging concept of customer engagement is highly important in the increasingly networked society.

In the digital context, consumer engagement is visible through the means of publishing, posting comments, subscribing, bookmarking, emailing and networking. Engagement plays larger role in who sees your posts, because it is a major factor in Facebook's News Feed algorithm (Simply Measured, 2010). Previous studies in the field of customer engagement in brand communities focused mostly on the consequences of engagement, including concepts of satisfaction (Bowden2009), commitment and emotional attachment to the brand (Chan and Li 2010), empowerment (Cova and Pace 2006; Fuller et al. 2009), consumer value (Gruen et al. 2006; Schau et al. 2009), trust (Casalo et al. 2007; Hollebeek2011), and loyalty (Andersen 2005; Casalo et al. 2007). Moreover, achieving these marketing objectives was found to be of significant importance for the companies, leading towards increased profitability (Enders et al. 2008;

Hallowell1996; Kumar et al. 2010). Thus, understanding the influencing factors which could increase the level of engagement within online brand communities on social media is a worthy goal which could result in improved attitude towards the brand, potentially increasing company's revenue. In this paper we measure customer engagement with respect to the interaction each post receives according to the post and message type.

Engagement plays an important role in who sees your posts, because it is a major factor in Facebook's News Feed algorithm. Socialbakers measures two types of engagement rates, the average Post engagement rate and the average Page engagement rate. This means that a Page that posts 3 times a day will most likely have a higher Page engagement rate than a Page that posts once a day. This simple truth justifies the need to measure the average Post engagement rate. This formula (absolute interactions divided by number of posts in a given period divided by total fans) takes frequency into account and paints a smarter picture of engagement. Engagement with brand posts impacts its ability to reach a larger audience. If you can't continue to engage users, they won't continue to see your content. Those who engage on your Page are your most valuable audience segment, since they are the ones consuming and sharing your content across Facebook. Engagement on certain types of posts can provide insight into the interests of a particular audience for content targeting.

The algorithm determines which News Feeds your posts are displayed in and ultimately, how many users you're able to reach. When users engage, the actions they take appear in their timelines, making their connection with your brand visible to their friends. And that contributes to awareness for your brand (Simply Measured, 2014). The engaged users metric can be found within Facebook Insights at both the Page and post levels. Engaged users aren't just limited to your fans; anyone who engages with your Page is an engaged user

METHODOLOGY

Our study focuses on the Facebook pages of automobile brands operating in India. In order to identify the factors which influence the level of customer engagement on a Facebook brand page, an analysis was performed to determine the effect that each of the selected independent variables has on each of the dependent variables. To maintain consistency in the obtained results the automobile industry domain was selected. Although some of the findings are general and as such applicable to any product type, such as the effect of media type over the level of engagement, certain findings, such as those

referring to the topics of conversation, are specific for this particular product category.

A sample of 20 Indian automobile brands was selected based on number of fans listed in the socialbakers list. Once the sample was obtained, the information related to post type and the number of likes, comments and shares was collected. This was using Fanpage Karma, social media evaluation tool. The page engagement is calculated by dividing absolute interactions (likes, comments, shares) by total fans. The number of comments, likes and shares is not an absolute measure, but is related to the number of page fans at the moment of posting, a ratio to the number of fans was used as more accurate engagement measure (Socialbaker, 2014). Many brands focus solely on increasing fan growth. Although it is an important objective, it is not the only metric that matters. When creating Facebook content, it is critical to publish posts that engage your social audience. Having high engagement rates is the best way to guarantee that your Fans are interacting with the content that you are publishing. It will also ensure that Fans are continuously returning to your Page, and liking and Commenting of posts and will share interesting content with their Friends.

Total Engagement = (Likes + Comments + Shares) / Total Fans

The Facebook Post Engagement Rate formula sums all of the Likes, Comments, and Shares of all posts on a given day and then is divided by the number of Posts made on that day. This is then divided by the total number of Fans on that day, and multiplied by 100 to calculate the final percentage. The Facebook Page Engagement Rate formula is the sum of all Likes, Comments, and Shares on a given day, divided by the total number of Fans on that day. This number is then multiplied by 100 to calculate the final percentage.

Page Engagement Rate = (No. of Likes + Comment + Share / Total Number of Fans) * 100

A crucial factor for finding the right engagement rate for your Page is its size and how often you post. A small Page – for example, a local restaurant that posts daily specials and food reviews – might have a more dedicated, close knit group of followers than, say, a massive global brand with millions of fans. Socialbaker (2014) using the data from over 43,000 Facebook Pages of various sizes and industries, identified engagement rates for eight industries. The data shows a steady decline in engagement as Page size increases, and a significant drop once it gains over 9,999 fans. As a Page grows, their core group of advocates get diluted and there is an increasing need to put your advertising budget behind your content in order to reach the right group of people.

Theoretical Framework

Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) developed a conceptual framework in which they propose that digital engagement on a social network depends on several elements: (1) the type of content published, ie the nature and content of the messages; (2) the post format, which could be understood as the message's wrapper; and (3) the time of publication, which refers to the chronological or psychological timing of the post.

Leung (2012) analysed the content of the Facebook pages of 12 hotels and found that links were the most commonly used post format (37.9%), followed by images (30.5%), plain text (28.7%) and video (2.9%). Leung (2012) also analysed the factors influencing content features on social networks and found that clients' commitment (engagement) could be measured in terms of the number of times they liked, commented on, or shared the post, and how long the interaction lasted on the Facebook brand page.

Reitz (2012) study examined how perceived Facebook Company page features (i.e., perceived information quality, perceived enjoyment and perceived interactivity) predicted online consumer engagement, loyalty and purchase intent. 233 online surveys were collected from U.S. Facebook users who "like" companies on Facebook to test the online consumer engagement framework. The research findings shows that perceived Facebook characteristics influence online consumer engagement, which influences loyalty and ultimately purchase intent. Viveket. al., (2012) studies shows that participation and involvement serves as antecedents of CE, while value, trust, effective commitment, word of mouth, loyalty and brand community involvement are potential consequences. Facebook brand pages positive sentiment is shared far more often compared to the negative, thus making them a suitable platform for marketing.

Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory (Katz 1959) is an approach frequently applied by technology and media researchers to understand the goals and motivations of individuals for engagement with different forms of content. Previous applications of U&G theory over brand

communities and social media showed that consuming entertaining and informative content is an important factor for participation in brand communities (Dholakia et al. 2004; Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013), where entertainment was found to have a stronger effect (Park et al. 2009).

RESULTS

A quantitative methodology was used to analyze 8789 message posted by 20 automobile brands, resulting in a total of 25133487 likes, 265560 comments and 428970 shares. On an average each brand post 440 posts per year. The most prolific brand, Hyundai posted around 1810 posts which is above four times the average posts. Hyundai has the most number of fans on its brand page followed by Tata Nano and Audi India. But the number of fans does not reflect the customer engagement rate or customer interaction rate as such.

A post generates more value as fans interact with them. A brand that posts a lot of content that is of little interest to the fans will be incremental filtered out of their news feeds by Facebook. Brands need fans to continuously interact with their content to generate presence in their news feeds. Table 1 shows that Mahindra Scorpio has the highest average interaction which is followed by Jaguar and XUV 500 and the lowest interaction is related to Ritz Maruti. Brand popularity reflects the number of brand fans, which gives an indication of the brand's recognition on social media.

Facebook supports different post media types: (1) *status*, (2) *video*, (3) *link*, (4) *photo*, (5) *event*, (6) *music* and (7) *offer*. Distribution of each of these types over the obtained dataset is presented on Table 2. It can be seen that 90% of the posts (2,129,353 occurrences) are written in form of the photo media type, followed by video and link type. The highest engagement is related to Status post which is followed by photo media type of posts. The number of likes has been far greater than the number of comments or shares, suggesting it is easier for fans to like a message post.

Table 1. Customer Interaction in Facebook Brand Pages:

Brand	No of Posts	No. of Fans	Likes	Comments	Shares	Total Interaction	Average Interaction
Alto K10	539	1233431	316261	7864	6184	330309	613
Audi India	212	3508833	795158	7308	15872	818338	3860
BMW India	609	2882610	889051	8136	22275	919462	1510
Honda Car India	324	1052786	250727	8270	10920	269917	833
Hyundai India	1810	5559151	2120261	72228	37083	2229572	1232
Jaguar India	323	2274434	3756932	19624	100499	3877055	12003
Mahindra Bolero	235	1854280	2372069	14851	31755	2418675	10292
Mahindra Quanto	298	1193318	819823	3388	2999	826210	2773
Mahindra Scorpio	250	3192222	3982678	34982	63059	4080719	16323
Mahindra Verito	218	1601096	436142	2611	2315	441068	2023
Mahindra XUV500	288	2103563	3294596	24752	48443	3367791	11694
Mahindra Xylo	348	2138125	936219	4715	3589	944523	2714
Mercedes-Benz	582	2095675	1998805	11228	25784	2035817	3498
Nissan	362	1328433	707898	9746	15822	733466	2026
Renault India	431	1455793	349919	6209	9236	365364	848
Ritz Maruti	380	1871776	161545	2905	2662	167112	440
ŠKODA India	534	1226350	744557	8599	7435	760591	1424
Tata Nano	597	3586806	383469	7699	5701	396869	665
Tata Safari	331	1329614	209980	3809	7061	220850	667
Volkswagen	118	2076894	607397	6636	10276	624309	5291
Grand Total	8789	43565190	25133487	265560	428970	25828017	2939

Table 2. Post Media Type and Average Engagement

Post Media Type	No. of Posts	Percentage	Average Engagement
Event	4	0.05	0.0006
Link	179	2.04	0.0225
Music	1	0.01	0.0017
Offer	2	0.02	0.0000
Photo	7,928	90.20	0.1393
Status	64	0.73	0.3031
Video	611	6.95	0.1013

Table 3. Customer Engagement in Facebook Brand Pages

Brand	No of Posts	No. of Fans	Total Interactions	Average Post Interaction	Engagement Score
Alto K10	539	1233431	330309	613	0.0497
Audi India	212	3508833	818338	3860	0.11
BMW India	609	2882610	919462	1510	0.0524
Honda Car India	324	1052786	269917	833	0.0791
Hyundai India	1810	5559151	2229572	1232	0.0222
Jaguar India	323	2274434	3877055	12003	0.5277
Mahindra Bolero	235	1854280	2418675	10292	0.5551
Mahindra Quanto	298	1193318	826210	2773	0.2323
Mahindrascorpio	250	3192222	4080719	16323	0.5113
Mahindra Verito	218	1601096	441068	2023	0.1264
Mahindra XUV500	288	2103563	3367791	11694	0.5559
Mahindra Xylo	348	2138125	944523	2714	0.1269
Mercedes-Benz	582	2095675	2035817	3498	0.1669
Nissan	362	1328433	733466	2026	0.1525
Renault India	431	1455793	365364	848	0.0582

Ritz Maruti	380	1871776	167112	440	0.0235
ŠKODA India	534	1226350	760591	1424	0.1161
Tata Nano	597	3586806	396869	665	0.0185
Tata Safari	331	1329614	220850	667	0.0502
Volkswagen India	118	2076894	624309	5291	0.2547
Grand Total	8789	43565190	25828017	2939	0.1895

The analysis in table 3 demonstrates that the automobile industry continuously posts an extensive amount of content that stimulates large and ongoing interaction with consumers. While some brands may appear to have lower levels of interaction relative to other brands in the top 20 brands. The highest engagement score is related to MahindraBolero, XUV 500 and lowest is Tata Nano.

Table 4. Post Content Type and its Engagement Score

Type	No. of Posts	Percentage	Comments	Likes	Shares	Average Engagement
General	367	4	6293	907354	16147	0.1274
Information	5916	67	149735	18329283	324149	0.1467
Promotion	1323	15	24547	2141444	29353	0.0787
Social	1183	13	84985	3755406	59321	0.1394

It’s clear from Table 4 that engagement is very high for information type of content and social content. 67% of the post is related to informational content. General and promotion post found be showing less engagement score.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the factors that influence the level of engagement over the content shared by a company on a Facebook brand page. This research provides contribution by understanding of the concept of engagement on Facebook Brand Pages, through revealing the role of the content category, post media type, weekday and time of posting as engagement factors. Based on the obtained results clear implications were drawn for SMM practitioners, which point out to the importance of preparation of posting strategies and expose the specific content characteristics that trigger the activity of users. The proposed model was empirically evaluated, based on the large dataset consisted of all activities over one year on the top 20 Facebook brand pages in the Automobile category.

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