

Motivations of Facebook Users for Responding to Posts on a Community Page

Fei-Hui Huang

Department of Marketing and Distribution Management,
Oriental Institute of Technology,
Pan-Chiao, Taiwan 22061 R.O.C
kiki_huang@yahoo.com

Abstract. This study used an Internet-based survey to understand what motivates Facebook users to like, share, or comment on the posts on a community page. This study investigates the classification of post content on a community page, the consumer–brand relationship, and motivations of users to identify how they influence user engagement with SNSs. This study used a Web-based survey to collect data on users’ personal preferences, self-perceived relationships with brands, and motivation for responding to different forms of content. This empirical study explored the impact of consumer–brand relationships, post contents, gender, and motivation on users’ response behavior to posts.

Keywords: User’s motivation, Social networking sites, User-Web interaction, Virtual brand communities.

1 Introduction

The Internet has become a powerful tool and one of the most important communication channels worldwide. An increasing number of companies and organizations manage their brand communities by using free-of-charge social media platforms to establish relationships with consumers. Social media, especially social networking sites (SNSs), provide a new method of communicating to accelerate and escalate group formation, scope, and influence (Lin & Lu, 2011). The SNSs such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter are tremendously popular, with more and more people spending increasing amounts of time on SNS (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Facebook, for example, has more than 800 million active users, and more than 50% of them log on to it on any given day. Facebook offers users with more than 900 million objects to interact with, and an average user is connected to 80 objects, including community pages, events, or groups (Facebook, 2010). This has led to users spending 700 billion minutes per month on Facebook (Facebook, 2010). Facebook tends to be characterized by greater social support and more trusting and closer relationships than do other SNSs (Keith et al., 2011). Marketers have also embraced Facebook, with a wide range of companies and organizations using this platform to share information about their brand through newsfeeds and posts. The key to a successful brand community on

SNS needs the users' interaction and involvement. The three objects Facebook offers—liking, sharing, and commenting—are examined in this study to investigate the interaction between a brand and its consumers and to understand users' motives for engaging with community pages. A greater number of users liking, sharing, or commenting on a post is likely to result in the success of the marketing. The more the users are willing to interact with posts on the fan pages, the more they are exposed to the information in the posts, leading to greater success for the brand in marketing terms. This study primarily investigates the classification of post content on a community page, the consumer–brand relationship, and motivations of users to identify how they influence user engagement with SNSs.

1.1 Consumer–Brand Relationships and Post Content

Companies are increasingly focusing on nurturing brand communities on SNSs as a vital part of their marketing and brand-building activities (Algesheimer, Dholakia & Herrmann, 2005). Marketers aim to form close relationships with their customers in an attempt to disseminate information, interact with highly loyal customers, bring consumers together, and thus increase their brand loyalty (Arnone, Colot & Croquet, 2010). The loyalty and trust in particular products, brands, or organizations may be reflected in participation in the virtual community (Casal et al., 2007; Koh & Kim, 2004). Also, consumers who experience a strong relationship with the brand are willing to recommend it to others, feel emotionally inclined toward it, and perceive themselves as part of it. Hence, consumer–brand relationships and post content may be important factors in motivating users to participate in and contribute to community pages.

1.2 Motivation in User Behavior

Identifying the factor that motivates the users' liking behavior is also an important issue for marketers. However, motivation is not a unitary concept. According to the self-determination theory (SDT), motivational drivers are generally subdivided into extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Deci, & Ryan, 1985). Extrinsic motivation (e.g., to interact with Facebook friends or other fans on the community page and to gain rewards) and intrinsic motivation (i.e., to satisfy self-needs) are used in this study to find out what motivates user's response on the posts. Furthermore, several factors that drive user extrinsic motivation have been identified in previous studies. For instance, Yang et al. (2010) have noted the roles of entertainment value, perceived network externalities, interpersonal norms, and social norms in influencing YouTube users' intentions to share videos. Dholakia et al. (2004) identified four types of value—purposive, interpersonal, social enhancement, and entertainment—implicit in the motives of virtual community participants. These factors are also adapted in this study for eliciting specific user extrinsic motivation in responding to different category of post content. In addition, gender is one of the most common types of segmentation

used in marketing practice. There are gender differences in motivations for Internet use. In this study, the effect of gender on Facebook users is also explored.

2 Methods

The study used a Web-based survey that comprised of (1) five questions to measure customer–brand relationships, (2) seven questions exploring user’s motivation in his/her response to the brand posts, and (3) two questions on user demographics. Six Facebook pages (Traditional Chinese) for international brands were selected for the survey: Starbucks, MacDonald’s, Apple, HTC, 7-Eleven, and Nike. The survey participants were 225 Facebook users who were familiar with Traditional Chinese. Among them, 123 (54.7%) were men and 102 (45.3%) women.

To explore the effect of post content on user responses, the study applied card-sorting techniques to identify the categories of the posts. Two social media managers, who have served in media and Internet companies and have more than two years’ experience in curating Facebook fan pages, were asked to help in naming and classifying the posts. Through a bottom–up approach to naming, classifying, and grouping, the study categorized the posts into seven categories: (1) product and service news, (2) prizes and sale information, (3) charity and social services, (4) product- or service-related knowledge, (5) greetings and chat, (6) questions and voting, and (7) brand stories. A total of 42 posts (7 posts \times 6 brands) were selected and displayed as snapshots in each questionnaire. The actual numbers of shares, likes, and comments on all posts were obscured to avoid influencing user response output. Furthermore, not every category of content could be found on the six brand pages, and therefore, the seven categories of posts were not counterbalanced in all selected pages. The study, hence, focuses only on discussing how the content categories, motivation, and customer–brand relationship affect users’ output; it is unable to draw comparisons between different brands.

Customer–brand relationships were measured using a five-point Likert scale for five items adapted from the customer-brand relationship questions (Park et al., 2010). The response options were as follows: (1) I think the brand is part of me, (2) I think the brand can represent me, (3) I feel personally connected to the brand, (4) I feel emotionally bonded to the brand, and (5) I think the brand can tell people something about me. In addition, the survey included questions to identify factors that motivated user responses to the posts (liking, sharing, commenting, or doing nothing). The scale was adapted from questions developed by Dholakia et al. (2004). The participants were asked to select one option from the seven items or to select others and fill in the reason.

Finally, data analysis focused on examining the effects of customer–brand relationships, user motivation, and content categories on the responses to Facebook page posts. A multinomial logistic regression was conducted to model the level of user-brand relationships among the four types of user responses to the posts. A chi-square

test was conducted to examine whether the type of motivations and content categories lead users to respond differently to the posts.

3 Results

3.1 Effects of Customer–Brand Relationship on User Responses to the Posts

Multinomial regression results indicated a significant relationship between customer-brand relationships and the four types of user response to the posts ($\chi^2(12) = 79.45$, $p < .01$) with pseudo R-square values 0.049 (Cox and Shell) and 0.022 (Mc Fadden). The regression model shows 52.3% overall correct predicting percentage from 1,575 observed samples (225 participants \times 7 responses). However, by looking into the observed frequencies, it revealed that the participants having low customer-brand relationships preferred to “do nothing” as their response to the posts. Other three types of responses cannot find a specific pattern.

3.2 Effects of User Motivation on User Responses to the Posts

A chi-square test indicated that there is a significant relationship between user motivation and their responses to posts ($\chi^2(21) = 1089.69$, $p < .01$). A post-hoc Bonferroni corrected pairwise comparison revealed a significant difference in the effects of user motivation on their response. Overall, users who had one of the following three motivations were significantly more likely to make a response (“like”, “share”, or “comment”) ($p < .01$), than “do nothing”. These motivations are: “to share information or idea with friends;” “to disclose opinions, tastes, preferences, or interests;” or “to endorse and help promote the post.”

More specifically, users who tended “to share information or ideas with friends” were found significantly more likely to “share” (52.5%, $p < .01$), compared to the other three response types (like, comment, and do nothing). Further, users who preferred “to interact with other fans on the page” were significantly more likely to comment (19.0%, $p < .01$) on the post. Furthermore, those who selected the “no special reason, just want to like, share or comment” option were significantly more likely to “like” (29.1%, $p < .01$) or “do nothing” (36.1%, $p < .01$). Users who reported having “other” motivations for responding to posts tended to “do nothing” (59.5%, $p < .01$) or “comment” (8.6%, $p < .01$). The following self-reported explanations were provided by those who noted “other” motivations: “I’m not interested in the topic”; “I don’t like the post, the post doesn’t touch my heart”; “I got the information but that’s all; no idea in my mind.”

3.3 Effects of Content Categories on User Responses

The chi-square test indicated a significant relationship between content categories and user responses ($\chi^2(18) = 45.92$, $p < .01$). Post-hoc results showed that users tend to “like” both “product and service news” (17.8% $>$ 10.4%, $p < .01$) and “brand stories”

(14.0% > 8.0%, $p < .01$), compare to “share” those two categories of posts. However, 14.6% users selected the “do nothing” option for the “brand stories” content, which is significantly higher proportion than that of users selecting the “share” option (14.6 > 8%, $p < .01$). The “question and voting” category was significantly likely to lead users to comment on the post, which was higher than the proportion of “likes” (29.3% > 15.1%, $p < .01$). This analysis did not find any significant content categories that were likely to drive users to “share” the posts.

3.4 Gender Difference

The surveyed responses to the posts showed that gender significantly affected user interaction with different posts ($\chi^2(3) = 14.554$, $p < .01$). In general, compared to female users, males are significantly more likely to share (59.7% > 40.3%, $p < .05$) and comment on posts (67.2% > 32.8%, $p < .05$). On the other hand, more female than male users do not respond to posts (52.6% > 47.4%, $p < .05$). However, no significant gender difference was found for “Liking” posts (54.3 % and 45.7%, $p > .05$). Furthermore, a significant difference between genders ($\chi^2(7) = 37.864$, $p < .01$) was found regarding the gender effects on user motivations. More specifically, more male users wanted to “share information or ideas with friends” (60.2% > 39.8%, $p < .05$) and “to interact with other fans on the page” (76.2% > 23.8%, $p < .05$) than did females. More female than male users, however, wanted to “collect or subscribe to the posts” (78.6% > 21.4%, $p < .05$) and responded to the post for “no special reason, just want to like, share, or comment” (55.0% > 45.0%, $p < .05$). Other motivations were not found to differ according to gender. Otherwise, no significant gender difference was found between content categories ($\chi^2(6) = 37.864$, $p > .5$) and customer–brand relationship ($t(223) = 1.207$, $p > .05$).

4 Discussion and Conclusion

This empirical, survey-based study considered six different Facebook brand pages and asked participants to complete a questionnaire on their favorite page among the six. The study explored the impact of consumer–brand relationships, post content, and motivation on users’ response behavior to posts.

The results revealed that the most popular response of Facebook users is “liking” the post (52.1%), followed by sharing (23.8%), doing nothing (20.4%), and commenting (3.7%). Furthermore, “liking” is a popular activity⁴ for both male and female Facebook users; however, gender differences were found in respect to other activities: Male users tended to share or comment on posts, while female users tended to do nothing. In addition, the consumer–brand relationship was found to explain a small part of user’s response on posts.

The content and user motivation were found to be important factors affecting user responses. Most users simply like or share in response to the “product- or service-related knowledge” posts and like or to do nothing in response to the “brand stories” posts; however, many users are willing to follow and comment on “question and

voting” content. Other types of post content including prizes and sale information, charity and social services, and greeting and chatting do not have significant difference in terms of user responses. Furthermore, gender difference can be seen in responses to different types of posts. After reading “product and services news” or “question and voting” on the fan page, most male users clicked the like button while most female users chose not to respond.

The most important motivational factor that drives users to like or share posts is the desire to “share information/idea with friends” (maintaining interpersonal connectivity), followed by “endorsing and promoting the post” (social enhancement value). Another major motivational factors driving users to comment on posts are to “interact with other fans” (Social benefits) and “disclose opinions, tastes, preferences, or interests” (Self-presentation benefits). Users’ liking or sharing activity is driven by the general need to maintain relationships, while the commenting activity is based on the specific need to express oneself or to make new contacts. Compared to female users, male users have a higher motivation to share information and interact with others. Thus, the major reason users, especially males, interact with brand posts through liking, sharing, or commenting activity is driven by extrinsic motivation for maintaining relationship and gaining social benefits, which accrue to Facebook friends or other brand page members. Finally, motivation characterized by “no special reason” can drive the users’ liking activity or no responses, and “other” motivational factors drive users to do nothing because they are not interested in the post or they think that reading posts is enough. This study also found that the reasons female users interact with posts are for “collecting or subscribing to the posts” or “no special reason” (Intrinsic motivation). Compared to male users, female users have lower motivation to respond to posts. Many female users choose to do nothing with brand posts.

Many users liking or sharing the brand posts is to receive social support, and some of users commenting on the brand posts is to press self or interact with other users. The several previous study have showed that the users can through their friends and relatives to meet new friends and expand their social network on SNS (Powell, 2009; Iedgjanowski & Kulviwat, 2009) and join the brand communities to dispel their loneliness, meet like-minded others and receive companionship and social support (McKenna & Bargh, 1999; Wellman & Gulia, 1999). This shows that expanding social life, satisfying interpersonal needs, receiving social support, and maintaining friendship are the major reasons people spending time in and interacting with brand communities. Providing the posts with specific content and clear requirements is more important than strengthening consumer-brand relationships for enhancing user’s intention of responding to the posts.

References

1. Algesheimer, R., Dholakia, U., Herrmann, A.: The social influence of brand communities: evidence from European car clubs. *Journal of Marketing* 69, 19–34 (2005)
2. Arnone, L., Colot, O., Croquet, M.: Company managed virtual communities in global brand strategy. *Global Journal of Business Research* 4(2), 97–112 (2010)

3. Casal, L., Flavin, C., Guinalu, M.: The impact of participation in virtual brand communities on consumer trust and loyalty: The case of free software. *Online Information Review* 31(6), 775–792 (2007)
4. Deci, E.L., Ryan, R.M.: *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. Plenum, New York (1985)
5. Dholakia, U.M., Richard, P.B., Lisa, K.P.: A social influence model of consumer participation in network- and small-groupbased virtual communities. *International Journal of Research in Marketing* 21(3), 241–263 (2004)
6. Facebook: Press Room (2010), <http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics> (accessed July 26, 2010)
7. Kaplan, A.M., Haenlein, M.: Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons* 53(1), 59–68 (2010)
8. Keith, N.H., Lauren, S.G., Lee, R., et al.: Social networking sites and our lives. Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project 3 (2011)
9. Koh, J., Kim, D.: Knowledge sharing in virtual communities: an e-business perspective. *Expert Systems with Applications* 26, 155–166 (2004)
10. Lin, K.Y., Lu, H.P.: Why people use social networking sites: An empirical study integrating network externalities and motivation theory. *Computers in Human Behavior* 27, 1152–1161 (2011)
11. McKenna, K.Y.A., Bargh, J.A.: Causes and consequences of social interaction on the internet: A conceptual framework. *Media Psychology* 1, 249–269 (1999)
12. Park, C.W., MacInnis, D.J., Priester, J., et al.: Brand Attachment and Brand Attitude Strength: Conceptual and Empirical Differentiation of two Critical Brand Equity Drivers. *Journal of Marketing* 74, 1–17 (2010)
13. Powell, J.: 33 Million people in the room: How to create, influence and run a successful business with social networking. FT Press, NJ (2009)
14. Sledgianowski, D., Kulviwat, S.: Using social network sites: The effects of playfulness, critical mass and trust in a hedonic context. *Journal of Computer Information Systems* 49, 74–83 (2009)
15. Wellman, B., Gulia, M.: Net-surfers don't ride alone: Virtual communities as communities. In: Wellman, B. (ed.) *Networks in the Global Village: Life in Contemporary Communities*. Westview Press, Boulder (1999)
16. Yang, C., Hsu, Y.C., Tan, S.: Predicting the determinants of users' intentions for using YouTube to share video: moderating gender effects. *Cyber Psychology & Behavior* 13, 1–12 (2010)