Practitioner Article

Corporate blogs and internet marketing – Using consumer knowledge and emotion as strategic variables to develop consumer engagement

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ABSTRACT   In a fiercely competitive environment, organizations that want to retain their consumers and increase consumer-brand loyalty need to focus on increasing the consumer's brand knowledge along with the consumer emotion about the brand. Our previous research already indicates that increasing consumer-brand knowledge (CBK) and emotion contributes to increased consumer perceived value in the brand, which is directly linked to greater consumer-brand loyalty, by building greater brand customer-centricity. We conceptualize an experiment to increase the knowledge level of a consumer, pertaining to brand, where we use a simulated lab environment where a set of consumers are exposed to a corporate brand blog for a fixed duration. The variation in levels of CBK is calculated. We further develop a research instrument to measure the emotion levels of consumers, pertaining to a brand, both before and after exposure to the corporate blog. Subsequent to this study, we attempt to find a correlation between variations in CBK and consumer brand emotion, which clearly indicates that as a consumer's knowledge about a product or brand increases, so does his emotional attachment with the brand. This subsequently increases the consumer adoption of, and relationship with the brand.

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INTRODUCTION

It should come as no surprise that humans are emotional creatures. Even a casual glimpse into the nation's brand or product shelves reveals that consumers make buying decisions based in part on their feelings and emotions about particular brands. And marketers have long recognized the fact that emotions play a key role when consumers are talking about – or purchasing – products in categories as disparate as those represented by brands like Mercedes, Kodak and Louis Vuitton.

Although none of this seems all that newsworthy, marketers appear to be rediscovering the power of human emotions.[1] Suddenly, it seems that the new marketing millennium is all about emotions. And whatever has sparked this resurgence of interest, is apparently contagious.

In this context, brand positioning gains importance as a strategic marketing function. It further becomes vital for organizations to recognize the consumer as a significant dimension in evaluating and positioning organizational brands.[2] This can be achieved through adoption of appropriate brand management strategies. Our previous studies, as part of our research in the domain of branding, have indicated that building customer centricity in a brand by leveraging consumer-brand knowledge (CBK) is a significant strategic thought that organizations can explore in the wake of the rising vulnerabilities of brands, in the face of rising consumer empowerment. It creates new opportunities for brand–customer dialogue, knowledge creation, and, critically, provides a new context in which the interests of a corporation and those of its customers can be more closely aligned.[3] The collaborative version of the Internet, termed Web 2.0, as coined by Tim O'Reilly in 2005, has altered the manner in which information is published, consumed and utilized on the Internet resulting in a paradigm shift in the way interactions take place within the organizational workspace, as well as between the organization and the external customers. Web 2.0 is a collection of open-source, interactive and user-controlled online applications expanding the experiences, knowledge and market power of the users as participants in business and social processes. Blogging is shaping into a useful organizational tool for brand propagation and interaction with consumers with several corporates having effectively launched corporate blogs, thereby shaping consumer perception, by adding to consumer knowledge about organizations, brands and products. Blogs are no longer a subculture of the Internet; they have become a mainstream information resource. As blog audiences grow and persist over hundreds of posts, more of the 'back story' is contained in an archive or across conversations throughout the community and more and more is taken for granted as known.

In the era of consumer empowerment, the average consumer is faced with numerous product and brand choices. Brands have a simple, common purpose: to make it easy for people to express their personal style. Companies constantly evolve their brands to better meet customers' needs – through innovative and inspiring design; through convenient and engaging store experiences; and by communicating with people in a way that connects to how they live, adopt and use a brand.

This is the value that brands deliver to their customers. Brands should strive for the timeliness and classicism and should allow customers to express themselves. Brands should appeal to every customer through the creation of an intimate connection. When customers think of any brand, they feel comfortable and good about themselves in all kinds of situations.[4] Through changes of social and economical environment (that is, growth of consumerism), people are pursuing higher quality living. This in turn

leads to the higher demand of product varieties. The focus earlier was on the traditional 4Ps of marketing where marketers promoted products' tangible benefits, but the focus now is at promoting a product that touches consumers' inner feelings. The consumer–brand relationship evolved from pure monetary transaction to emotional transaction. The value of a product is not only determined by its objective value, but also by the way consumers perceive this product.[5] It is argued that cognition leads to conclusion, but emotion leads to action.[6]

Marketers therefore promote their products by targeting consumers' emotional impulse and desire. This kind of branding strategy is called emotional branding. This is a customer-centric, empathetic and cultural story-driven strategy that captures customers' deep emotions, and it can therefore be widely applied to different product and service contexts. Through the emotional appeals, consumers tend to give their brands personalities.[7] Consumers also form communities around their brands. This enables the brands to achieve a unique market position, and the products no longer compete through their basic product attributes.[8] Most of the consumers are driven more by an emotional marketing strategy than a rational marketing strategy.[9]

In this context, companies can explore the marketing paradigm for cost effective consumer communication channels to establish interactive touch points for manipulating the consumer mind space and ushering greater product adoption by building a consumer-brand connect. In a previous study, we have already studied the usage of a corporate blog for the purpose of increasing consumer knowledge levels. We now move ahead to explore the dimension of consumer emotion, the ability of a blog to impact consumer emotion and the connection between CBK and consumer brand emotion (CBE), in an Internet marketing paradigm.

Blogs

The dictionary meaning of a blog is a frequent, chronological publication of personal thoughts and links. Blogs are customizable online web spaces that allow users to post content, which are displayed in reverse chronological order. Depending on the blogging software or service used, entries may include video and other rich media. Visitors to an individual's personal blog can typically post comments to specific entries and can also elect to be automatically notified whenever a new entry has been posted by subscribing to a blog's feed. Blogs are personal journals or reversed-chronological commentaries written by individuals and made publicly accessible on the web. To many people, blogs are not much different from regular websites, however, they have distinctive technological features that differentiate them from other forms of computer-mediated communication. These features include: (a) easy-to-use content management system; (b) archive-oriented structure; (c) latest–information–first order; (d) links to other blogs; and (e) ease of responding to previous blog postings.[10] However, with the evolution of blogging technology, and the fast expansion of the blogosphere, the form, content and functions of blogs have expanded tremendously. These weblogs are often perceived as low-threshold tools to publish online, empowering individual expression in public. Although a weblog is a personal writing space, its public nature suggests a need to communicate[11] and invites feedback. Weblogs can be positioned as their own genre, situated on an intermediate point between standard web pages and asynchronous computer-mediated communication along dimensions of frequency of update, symmetry of communicative exchange and multimodality.[12] Because of the flexible and interconnected nature of blogs, people can use blogs for various purposes including: keeping personal diary[13,14]; interacting with

other bloggers[15]; building a virtual community and disseminating messages to a mass audience.[16]

Even though the majority of blogs contain personal thoughts or feelings of authors that are not intended for mass dissemination, blogs exist in a public arena, the Internet, and messages posted in blogs are open to anyone with an Internet connection.[17] More and more bloggers are recognizing this mass communication potential of blogs and use blogs to publish their opinions on public issues and to disseminate them to a mass audience.[18] Bloggers desire connection with their audience, want to insert themselves into known, sometimes unknown social spaces, to update, inform or advise, to greet or grumble, to pontificate, confess, create and to think.[19] Blogs are a global phenomenon that has hit the mainstream. In 2008, Technorati tracked 133 million blogs in 81 languages. Technorati is a real-time search engine for blogs that tracks what is current and popular. Bloggers are collectively creating close to one million posts every day and blogs have become integral to the media ecosystem. Since all blogs are on the Internet by definition, they may be seen as interconnected and socially networked. Discussions in the blogosphere have been used by the media as a gauge of public opinion on various issues. The active blogosphere can be defined as – 'The ecosystem of interconnected communities of bloggers and readers at the convergence of journalism and conversation'.[20] Bloggers are not a homogeneous group. There are personal, professional and corporate bloggers, all having differing goals and covering a myriad range of topics, using different techniques to drive traffic to their blogs, different publishing tools on their blog and distinct metrics for measuring success.

Corporate blogs

This concept has found widespread acceptance in the corporate world with the emergence of 'corporate' or 'organizational' blogs. These are people who blog in an official or semi-official capacity at a company, or are so affiliated with the company where they work that even though they are not officially spokespeople for the company, they are clearly affiliated[21] and endorsed explicitly or implicitly by the company. Also termed as a hybrid of the personal blog,[22] they are increasingly being explored by public relations practitioners and feature the insights, assessments, commentary and other discourse devoted to a single company. Organizational blogs seem to appear at the intersection of personal reflection and professional communication. They have evolved from both online and offline modes of communication and have characteristics of both personal and professional communication.[23] Posts in blogs are tagged with keywords, allowing for content categorization and also for gaining access to the content through tagging as a theme-based classification system. Linking is also an important part of the blogging activity as it deepens the conversational nature of the blogosphere and its sense of immediacy.[24] Blogging is shaping into a useful organizational tool for brand propagation and interaction with consumers with several corporates having effectively launched corporate blogs. An effective blog fosters community and conversation,[25] drives traffic to the product website, and serves as a medium for interaction with consumers thereby shaping consumer perception, eliciting responses, and through a two-way thought exchange process, aids in fostering a connection with the consumers. Further, consumer feedback can be leveraged for organizational consumption with respect to new product development, product features and consumer expectations. Blogs have a comparative advantage of speedy publication – they have a first mover advantage in socially constructing interpretive frames for current events.[26] Blogs are no longer a

subculture of the Internet; they have become a mainstream information resource. They further provide a tremendous opportunity for forward-thinking companies and management to have a significant positive impact on their public perception.[21] People who read organizational blogs perceive an organization's relational maintenance strategies as higher than those who read traditional web content only,[27] thereby making a blog a useful tool for creating and maintaining value-laden relationships with current and potential customers. Usage as an information repository materialises. As blog audiences grow and persist over hundreds of posts, more of the 'back story' is contained in an archive or across conversations throughout the community and more and more is taken for granted as known.[28] Launching a corporate brand blog is representative of an organizational desire to share information and engage in a conversation. This is especially true when the blog allows visitors to post their own comments. The informality of communication helps companies build trust,[29] converse with people and even manage public perception by posting suitable responses. The ability of a blog to induce consumer participation by making consumers comment on the posts hosted by the organization creates a dialogue and helps the organization achieve consumer engagement. Although the ability of a blog to achieve higher volumes of engagement in terms of volume of comments is significant, of greater importance is the knowledge capital created through exchange with consumers, which can be mined to extract explicit information that can be leveraged by the organization as a decision support system for consumer segmentation and strategy formulation. The advantage of blogs is that posts and comments are easy to reach and follow due to centralized hosting and generally structured conversation threads. Currently, all major browsers support RSS technology,

which enables readers to easily access posts without actually having to visit the blogs. Corporate blogging is primarily about three attributes–Information, relationships and knowledge management. Although there are many different types of corporate blogs, most can be categorized as either Internal or External.

External blogs

External blogs are publicly available weblogs, where company employees, teams or spokespersons share their views. They are thereby a window to the company culture, are often treated more informally than traditional press releases and sometimes all posts go through a review before they are posted. Comments are allowed on posts in some blogs. *External* corporate blogs, which are primarily tools to interact with organizational consumers, partners, marketing intermediaries, associates and components of the external environment of the organization, that is, media, government agencies and other general bodies, offer a more up-to-date view of the organization as compared with other traditional communication channels. They serve as tools for marketing, customer relationship management (CRM) and public relations. At times organizations hire community evangelists to derive maximum benefits by engaging individuals (consumers, partners, marketing intermediaries, employees and so on) and benefiting from community participation. For the purpose of this research we shall focus on external corporate blogs.

These corporate blogs are being used by organizations to create an ecosystem to serve as a tool towards moving customers and prospects through the sales and marketing process to land new customers or up-sell existing ones by providing means for breaking down organizational barriers. By providing an unmediated way to engage consumers or revealing personalities behind a product, providing informal product

views, disseminating timely information which helps supplement the public relations and marketing processes, providing stories about the decisions that shaped the product, propagating time sensitive information that would take too long to publish through formal channels, strong consumer associations with the product can be developed. They are giving established companies and obscure brands alike the ability to connect with their audiences on a more personal level, build trust, collect valuable feedback and foster strengthened business relationships. More importantly, these companies are enjoying tangible returns in their blogging investment in the form of increased sales, partnerships, business opportunities, press coverage and lead generation.

Key Findings of a study conducted by the Society for New Communications research in 2009 include the following:

- Eighty-one of the Fortune 500 companies or 16 per cent currently have public-facing blogs.
- Five of the top 10 companies have public blogs: Wal-Mart, Chevron, General Motors, Ford and Bank of America.
- Ninety per cent of the Fortune 500's blogs have the comments feature enabled.
- The computer software/hardware technology industry has the most blogs, followed by the food and drug industry, financial services, Internet services, semi-conductors, retail and automotive, respectively.

Structure of a blog

Most corporates use simple well-defined blog structures. Each post usually has a title, a body, a permalink, a date/time stamp. They generate news feeds, representing weblog content in machine readable format, or notify centralized tracking tools about updates. Blog archives enable readers to access previously posted content. The relatively simple structure of weblogs

coupled with a variety of tools and services that enable the tracking and analyzing of weblogs makes them useful organizational tools. Significantly functioning as content management systems, a substantial volume of organization-specific information is available on a blog and the online accessibility of the blog satisfies the need for information at any point of time. Used in reference to a consumer's quest for company-specific information, a blog serves as a valuable data repository, maintained by suitable organizational representatives or community managers dedicated to the function of blogging, which can shape a consumer's perception about an organization or brand. Every new post in a blog is actually a new page, which has a permalink (that is, a permanent URL identifier to a specific post). This favors the indexing of a post by Google (that is, potential customers can come across organizational product posts through Google)[30] and allows for bookmarking the same using appropriate sites. A blog promotes user participation by allowing users to comment on the organizational posts. The comment link on blogs is usually located at the bottom of every post, with a number indicating volume of comments already posted for that particular post. The user comments are listed in a chronological order below each post. In this way, comments are integrated into a post, resulting in a themed conversation between the corporate, the user (consumer) and other users (consumers), who have posted a comment, forming an interesting supplement to the post hosted by the organization.

Marketing has had two roles in companies. The first is to influence customer demand using the marketing mix toolkit. The second is to take a leadership role in helping companies develop a stronger focus on customers – to create a customer orientation. Out of several brand aspects, the brand-customer relationship[2]

dimension has been the focal point of this research study.

In this context, we explore the dimension of CRM. CRM advances marketing's mission on both fronts. CRM supports the effort to become more customer focused and enables companies to create and share deep customer insight within and beyond the company. Properly implemented, this new intimacy will ensure that the right value propositions are created and the right customers are recruited, retained and developed. CRM is an enterprise wide approach to understanding and influencing customer behavior through meaningful communication to improve customer acquisition, customer retention, customer loyalty and customer profitability. CRM can be viewed as an application of one-to-one marketing and relationship marketing, responding to an individual customer on the basis of what the customer says and what else is known about that customer.[31] It is a management approach that enables organizations to identify, attract and increase retention of profitable customers by managing relationships with them.[32,33] Further, identifying strategically significant customers. In the academic community, the terms 'relationship marketing' and CRM are often used interchangeably.[34] The heart of marketing is relationships and nurturing long-term relationships should be the goal of marketing practice.

Brand customer centricity

Increased competition reduces brand loyalty, making the job of the marketers more complex. Further, customers also become indifferent to the myriad marketing messages being thrust upon them. As a result, marketing needs to be more well directed and specific, because customers, whether consumers or businesses, do not want more choices. Customers have hidden or overt preferences which marketers can reveal by building a learning relationship.

An increasing number of organizations have specialized in meeting the increased complexity of the individual needs. As more and more consumers gain access to powerful new media and information tools to compare brands, products and services.[35] Organizations in a range of industries are responding by developing advocacy-based strategies and practices.[36] The strategy behind customer advocacy is simple. By assisting consumers to find and execute their optimum solution in a given market, it will be easier for an organization to earn their long-term trust, purchases and loyalty.[37]

In the meantime, in the highly competitive business climate, developing and maintaining unique product features has become hard and costly. Technical progress does not necessarily assure commercial success or sustainable competitive advantages. Products are becoming more and more like commodities. According to Naomi Klein, author of the much-debated book 'No Logo', leading companies like Nike, Microsoft and Tommy Hilfiger put brands before products claiming that they no longer produce things, but images of their brands.

What consumers know about a brand will influence their reaction when confronted with brand-related stimuli (for example, a branded product, a brand user, a category). Managing CBK hence becomes a crucial task for brand mangers.[38,39] In this context, we explore the concept of a brand, from a consumer's perspective. A brand is the perception of value that a customer believes he receives in purchasing a particular product, service or experience from a particular organization. Consequently, a great brand effectively retains customers while simultaneously attracting new ones. Branding is the process by which companies distinguish their product offerings from competition. Hence, it is vital for organizations to establish a healthy and purposeful consumer–brand relationship. This can be achieved by building strong customer centric brands. Companies need to have a thorough

understanding of the customer beliefs, behaviors, product or service attributes, and competitors. CBK can be defined in terms of the personal meaning about a brand stored in consumer memory, that is, all descriptive and evaluative brand–related information.[40] Different sources and levels of knowledge such as awareness, attributes, benefits, images, thoughts, feelings, attitudes and experiences get linked to a brand and its understanding by the consumer. To be effective, a brand needs to resonate with customers.[41]

When a brand faces aggressive competition in the marketplace, brand personality and reputation of the brand help it distinguish from competing offerings. This can result in gaining customer loyalty and achieve growth. A strong brand identity that is well understood and experienced by the customer helps in developing trust, which in turn results in differentiating the brand from competition. A company needs to establish a clear and consistent brand identity by linking brand attributes with the way they are communicated which can be easily understood by the customers. The brand can be viewed as a product, a personality, a set of values, and a position it occupies in people's minds. Brand identity is everything the company wants the brand to be seen as.

A brand tries to establish a coherent perception of the company for its different stakeholders and reflects a good corporate reputation in the eyes of the general public.[42] Nevertheless, the single most important public of a brand is its end consumers, who are drowning in the overwhelming abundance of brands and brand communication. Brand identity and image significantly contribute to the degree of customer centricity of a brand.

Consumer brand emotion

In the branding literature, the concept of brand identity is defined as a unique set of brand associations that a firm can create or maintain. It may involve a value-proposition with functional, emotional or self-expressive benefits. It does not matter whether the associations are tangible or emotional/symbolic or both.[43] The emotional linkage between brand and consumer has been proposed as important in building strong brands. It has also been confirmed in research that consumers look for and buy emotional experiences around what has been bought and no longer buy products and services alone.[44,45]

Emotional attachment to brands has attracted recent research attention.[46] Researchers have long considered attitudes to be insufficient predictors of brand commitment (for example, loyalty), and suggest that true loyalty requires the customer to form an emotional bond with the brand.[47] Calling for greater research in this area, it is suggested that the boundaries of the attitudes construct need to be recognized so that another construct reflecting emotional attachment can be articulated.[48] The nature and character of the emotional attachment construct is reflected in discussion of brand relationships,[8] brand love,[49] lovemarks[9] and brand communities.[50,51] Brand commitment among others, and various dimensions like passion, commitment and intimacy considered by many researchers to better explain brand loyalty.[52,53]

For the purpose of our research we define CBE as a state of emotional attachment (evoked in response to the brand as a stimulus), which is characterized by strong positive affinity towards the brand and a tendency of the brand to dominate the consumer's cognition. CBE is subject-specific. Different consumers may enjoy different levels of emotional attachment with respect to the same brand.

THE PREVIOUS STUDY

A previous study focused on analyzing the improvement in CBK by exposure of the consumer to a corporate blog.[3] The objective of the study was to demonstrate that corporate blogs can be used by

organizations for increasing the level of CBK. A focus group of consumers was subjected to a set of product/brand blogs. The corporate blogs used for the purpose of the study were Facebook, Volkswagen, Google and Cadbury.

In this study, we calculated the pre- and post-CBK scores (Table 1), for four brand blogs with a focus group of 30 respondents for these blogs. An experimental set of 10 questions was developed for each of the four blogs, the respondents were asked to answer the questions before and post exposure to the blog, subsequently the scores were measured and the CBK levels were calculated.

Subsequently, ΔCBK (Table 1) was calculated as the variation between the pre- and post-CBK levels, divided by the pre level of CBK.

In all the four cases it was observed that the respondents took greater interest in answering the questions after exposure to the corporate blog. The response of the respondents was evaluated and a considerable improvement in the level of consumer knowledge was observed.

THE PRESENT STUDY

We attempt to analyze the improvement in CBE by exposure of the consumer to a corporate blog. A simulated lab environment is created where a set of consumers are exposed to a brand blog for a period of half an hour. We use a research instrument – An Experiment Grid I, whereby a focus group of 30 respondents was asked to rate their emotion pertaining to a brand, before, and after the exposure to the blogs. The variation in the CBE levels, as mapped subsequently, is then, empirically measured.

The key to creating brand loyalty is developing a consistent and salient brand perception through the association of specific emotional experiences with a product or service.

CONSUMER BRAND EMOTION

Before 'emotion' becomes as nebulous a concept as 'satisfaction', it might be helpful to determine the exact response we are trying to elicit. In an effort to get all the cards on the table, let us relate one of the dictionary definitions of 'emotion', which describes 'a psychic and physical reaction – physiologically involving changes that prepare the body for immediate vigorous action'. The 'emotional' revolution that has engulfed the marketing world is undeniable: brands are constantly seeking to win our wallets by way of our hearts. The brand that makes a connection with the consumer, wins their confidence and their

Experiment Grid-I

Brand Blog		Questionnaire		
Use one word to describe YOUR perception of the given brand on the following attributes:				
Active engagement	Superb	Excitable	Constructive	Unnoticeable
Advertising and jingle	Excitable	Full of life	Admired	Disgustful
Appealing	Smart	Magnetic	Excitable	Unnoticeable
Attitudinal attachment	Graceful	Well off	Royal	Disappointing
Behavioral loyalty	Sincere	Genuine	Responsible	Disappointing
Believable	Recognized	Genuine	Responsible	Disappointing
Captivating	Superb	Mesmerizing	Full of life	Unnoticeable
Cheerful	Full of life	Happy	Well off	Disgustful
Empathy	Understanding	Compassion	Responsiveness	Disappointing
Excitement	Terrific	Fascinating	Encouraging	Disappointing
Intense	Associable	Genuine	Intelligent	Disappointing
Likeable	Purposive	Smart	Magnetic	Disgustful
Mesmerizing	Captivating	Purposive	Superb	Unnoticeable
Sensorial experience	Intensely	Spirited	Stunning	Disappointing
Spirited	Splendid	Encouraging	Amazing	Disappointing

Table 1: CBK levels

Customer	Facebook				Volkswagen				Google				Cadbury's			
	Pre	Post	Post-pre	ΔCBK	Pre	Post	Post-pre	ΔCBK	Pre	Post	Post-pre	ΔCBK	Pre	Post	Post-pre	ΔCBK
C1	3	8	5	1.67	2	8	6	3.00	2	9	7	3.50	1	7	6	6.00
C2	3	8	5	1.67	2	5	3	1.50	4	10	6	1.50	2	5	3	1.50
C3	3	9	6	2.00	2	5	3	1.50	4	9	5	1.25	3	6	3	1.00
C4	3	7	4	1.33	2	5	3	1.50	2	10	8	4.00	2	10	8	4.00
C5	3	7	4	1.33	3	7	4	1.33	5	10	5	1.00	3	8	5	1.67
C6	3	8	5	1.67	2	8	6	3.00	2	9	7	3.50	2	9	7	3.50
C7	3	8	5	1.67	4	9	5	1.25	3	9	6	2.00	2	6	4	2.00
C8	3	8	5	1.67	2	9	7	3.50	2	10	8	4.00	1.5	9	7.5	5.00
C9	3	8	5	1.67	3	9	6	2.00	3	9	6	2.00	3	6	3	1.00
C10	3	8	5	1.67	2	7	5	2.50	4	9	5	1.25	3	7	4	2.50
C11	3	7	4	1.33	2	6	4	2.00	4	9	5	1.25	3	7	4	1.33
C12	3	9	6	2.00	2	7	5	2.50	2	9	7	3.50	2	8	6	3.00
C13	3	9	6	2.00	4	9	7	3.50	1.5	10	8.5	5.67	2	10	8	4.00
C14	3	8	5	1.67	3	9	5	1.25	2.5	10	7.5	3.00	3	8	5	1.67
C15	3	7	4	1.33	2	9	6	2.00	1.5	10	8.5	5.67	1	6	5	5.00
C16	3	9	6	2.00	2	6	4	2.00	2	10	8	4.00	2	8	6	3.00
C17	3	8	5	1.67	2	7	5	2.50	6	10	4	0.67	2	5	3	1.50
C18	3	7	4	1.33	2	6	4	2.00	5	9	4	0.80	3	6	3	1.00
C19	3	7	4	1.33	2	10	8	4.00	2	10	8	4.00	2	8	6	3.00
C20	3	8	5	1.67	2	10	8	4.00	1.5	9	7.5	5.00	2	9.5	7.5	3.75
C21	3	8	5	1.67	4	9	5	1.25	2	9	7	3.50	2	6	4	2.00
C22	3	9	6	2.00	2	9	7	3.50	2	9	7	3.50	3	6	3	1.00
C23	3	8	6	2.00	3	6	3	1.00	3	9	6	2.00	2	7	5	2.50
C24	3	8	5	1.67	2	6	4	2.00	4	10	6	1.50	2	6	4	2.00
C25	3	8	5	1.67	3	8	5	1.67	3	10	7	2.33	2.5	9	6.5	2.60
C26	3	9	6	2.00	4	9	5	1.25	6	10	4	0.67	2	5	3	1.50
C27	3	9	6	2.00	3	9	6	2.00	2	9	7	3.50	2	9	7	3.50
C28	3	9	6	2.00	2	8	6	3.00	5	10	5	1.00	2	7	5	2.50
C29	3	9	6	2.00	2	6	4	2.00	6	9	3	0.50	1.5	10	8.5	5.67
C30	3	8	5	1.67	2	8	6	3.00	4	8	4	1.00	2	7	5	2.50

business. Emotionally connecting consumers to a brand is essential. Without it, relationships are not formed, and loyalty can never develop, as the consumer has to be touched emotionally more than intellectually. The key here is to fulfill consumers' desires over their basic needs.[8] That is, to appeal to consumers' emotions over their reasoned, intellectual needs. By paying close attention to the emotions we elicit through design, we can build a positive perception of any brand. For the purpose of this study we have used a CBE score, and subsequently moved ahead to study the correlation between CBK and CBE.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE EXPERIMENT GRID (TABLE 1)

An experiment grid was developed to map the CBE score. The attributes were elicited as part of our previous research study.[54] The objective here was to study the emotion of a consumer with respect to a brand (CBE) and the impact of variation in CBE levels on consumer emotion. The respondents were asked to pick one word for each attribute listed on the screen, before and after exposure to the corporate blog of a product.

Each of the words pertaining to a respective attribute under the CBE function had a well-defined sentiment Score. These words were lifted from sentiwordnet 1.0, a lexical resource used for sentiment mining. Each synset of Wordnet 2.0 is associated with three numerical scores–*obj, pos and neg*. Both *pos and neg* scores were used for our study. For instance, the word 'like' has a positive score of 0.5.

Sentiwordnet 1.0

We describe SENTIWORDNET (version 1.0), a lexical resource in which each synset of WORD-NET (version 2.0) is associated to three numerical scores *Obj(s), Pos(s) and Neg(s), describing how Objective,*

Positive and Negative the terms contained in the synset are. The assumption that underlies our switch from terms to synsets is that different senses of the same term may have different opinion-related properties.[55] Each of the three scores ranges from 0.0 to 1.0, and their sum is 1.0 for each synset. This means that a synset may have non-zero scores for all the three categories, which would indicate that the corresponding terms have, in the sense indicated by the synset, each of the three opinion-related properties only to a certain degree. The synset SENTIWORDNET[56] is freely available for research purposes, and is endowed with a Web-based graphical user interface.

The procedure/methodology

For the purpose of this research the following steps were followed to create the research instrument and carry out the procedure:

1. The experiment grid I was administered to the respondents and their responses were tabulated.
2. The respondents were exposed to a corporate blog for a period of 10 min.
3. After the exposure the respondents were administered the grid again and their responses were tabulated.
4. Δ (Delta) CBE was calculated, which is the difference between the post and the pre scores divided by the pre score of respondents (as shown in Table 2).
5. Finally, to see the relationship between the CBK and CBE levels, correlation was calculated between ΔCBK and ΔCBE (as shown in Table 3).

OBSERVATIONS

The content appears to strike an emotional chord with the consumer, enticing him to engage with the organization.[57] Hence, consumer emotion is a vital parameter, which organizations should attempt to leverage. The experiment shows that the

Table 2: CBE levels

Customer	Volkswagen				Cadbury				Facebook				Google			
	Pre	Post	Post–pre	ΔCBE	Pre	Post	Post–pre	ΔCBE	Pre	Post	Post–pre	ΔCBE	Pre	Post	Post–pre	ΔCBE
C1	2.5	10.125	7.625	3.05	1.125	8.675	7.55	6.711111	2.125	5.75	3.625	1.705882	2.125	9.875	7.75	3.647059
C2	3.125	8.875	5.75	1.84	3.125	8.125	5	1.600000	2.675	7.675	5	1.869159	3.525	8.75	5.225	1.482270
C3	3.125	8.125	5	1.6	4	9.875	5.875	1.468750	3.125	9.875	6.75	2.160000	3.875	8.675	4.8	1.238710
C4	2.75	9.625	6.875	2.5	1.75	10.125	8.375	4.785714	3.675	8.675	5	1.360544	2.125	9.875	7.75	3.647059
C5	3.125	7.75	4.625	1.48	3.125	9.875	6.75	2.160000	3.125	7.5	4.375	1.400000	3.75	7.775	4.025	1.073333
C6	2.125	10.125	8	3.764706	2.125	10	7.875	3.705882	2.675	8.125	5.45	2.037383	2.225	9.75	7.525	3.382022
C7	3.125	7.5	4.375	1.4	2.75	8.375	5.625	2.045455	3.125	5.375	2.25	0.720000	3.235	9.85	6.615	2.044822
C8	2.125	10	7.875	3.705882	1.675	10.125	8.45	5.044776	2.125	6.875	4.75	2.235294	2.123	10.13	8.003	3.770318
C9	2.75	8.375	5.625	2.045455	4	9.125	5.125	1.281250	2.75	8.125	5.375	1.954545	2.975	9.125	6.15	2.067227
C10	2.75	10.125	7.375	2.681818	3.125	9.875	7.125	2.590909	3.275	9.675	6.4	1.954198	4	9.25	5.25	1.312500
C11	2.75	9.5	6.75	2.454545	3.125	7.5	4.375	1.400000	3.125	7.75	4.625	1.480000	3.675	8.375	4.7	1.278912
C12	2.125	7.875	5.75	2.705882	2.125	9.875	7.75	3.647059	2.125	6.75	4.625	2.176471	2.125	9.575	7.45	3.505882
C13	2.125	10.125	8	3.764706	1.75	10.125	8.375	4.785714	2.675	9.125	6.45	2.411215	2.675	8.675	6	2.242991
C14	2.75	6.875	4.125	1.5	3.125	9.875	6.75	2.160000	3.675	9.875	6.2	1.687075	2.125	8.775	6.65	3.129412
C15	2.75	9.625	6.875	2.5	1.625	10.125	8.5	5.230769	3.125	6.625	3.5	1.120000	1.575	10.13	8.55	5.428571
C16	2.75	8.675	5.925	2.154545	2.125	9.875	7.75	3.647059	2.125	7.5	5.375	2.529412	2.125	7.75	5.625	2.647059
C17	2.125	7.675	5.55	2.611765	3.675	9.875	6.2	1.687075	3.65	9.875	6.225	1.705479	3.75	6.675	2.925	0.780000
C18	2.75	7.5	4.75	1.727273	3.125	7.875	4.75	1.520000	3.125	8.125	5	1.600000	3.875	7.125	3.25	0.838710
C19	1.75	10.125	8.375	4.785714	1.675	7.875	6.2	3.701493	2.75	6.5	3.75	1.363636	1.975	9.775	7.8	3.949367
C20	1.75	10.125	8.375	4.785714	2.125	10.125	8	3.764706	3.125	8.5	5.375	1.720000	2.125	10.13	8	3.764706
C21	2.75	6.5	3.75	1.363636	3.125	9.875	6.75	2.160000	3.675	10.13	6.45	1.755102	2.125	9.875	7.75	3.647059
C22	2.125	9.75	7.625	3.588235	3.675	7.875	4.2	1.142857	3.125	9.875	6.75	2.160000	1.675	5.125	3.45	2.059701
C23	2.75	7.5	4.75	1.727273	2.675	9.875	7.2	2.691589	3.275	9.875	6.6	2.015267	2.975	9.125	6.15	2.067227
C24	3.125	10.125	7	2.24	2.125	7.875	5.75	2.705882	3.75	10.13	6.375	1.700000	3.325	8.125	4.8	1.443609
C25	2.75	8.375	5.625	2.045455	2.75	10.125	7.375	2.681818	3.125	8.5	5.375	1.720000	2.225	7.5	5.275	2.370787
C26	3.125	7.5	4.375	1.4	3.675	9.875	6.2	1.687075	2.65	9.875	7.225	2.726415	4.825	8.125	3.3	0.683938
C27	2.75	8.5	5.75	2.090909	2.125	9.875	7.75	3.647059	3.125	8.25	5.125	1.640000	2.125	9.675	7.55	3.552941
C28	2.125	9.875	7.75	3.647059	2.125	8.125	6	2.823529	2.875	9.875	7	2.434783	3.425	7.125	3.7	1.080292
C29	2.75	10.125	7.375	2.681818	1.125	8.875	7.75	6.888889	3.125	9.875	6.75	2.160000	3.875	7.125	3.25	0.838710
C30	2.125	8.5	6.375	3	2.125	9.875	7.75	3.647059	2.125	7.25	5.125	2.411765	3.425	7	3.575	1.043796

Table 3: Correlations between ΔCBK and ΔCBE for the four corporate blogs

Correlations between ΔCBK and ΔCBE		
Blog name		
Cadbury	Pearson's correlation	0.979**
Volkswagen	Pearson's correlation	0.953**
Facebook	Pearson's correlation	0.707**
Google	Pearson's correlation	0.879**

**Significance (two-tailed), $N=30$.
Source: SPSS 16.0 output tables.

degree of CBE changes with the level of increase in CBK (Table 2). A corporate blog serves as a touch point between organizations and consumers where a bidirectional-learning process can commence between the two entities. Success of these marketing endeavors of organizations depend on their ability to establish and manage interaction with their customers. The greater the latitude of this interaction, the greater the organizational ability to generate and manage knowledge about its customers. A corporate blog helps increase the dimension of this interaction by helping the customer ask questions, get responses, look for information, contact customer service, contact senior organizational executives, portray his viewpoint, and at times access other forums related to the same organization/product/ service, while at the same time helping the organization capture consumer information as also actionable data to aid customization of offerings.

CONCLUSION

Regardless of the industry, most operators will claim at least a strong working knowledge of the many and varied touch points at which their company interacts with the customer. What is typically lacking is any real sense of the relative importance of those touch points in how they forge and reinforce the emotional engagement between the company and customer. Not all touch points are created equal and focusing on the ones that have the greatest

potential to impact the customer's product knowledge and emotional engagement with the company or brand is not just wise – it is required. The most successful companies in the world understand that brand and business growth do not result from the kind of emotion that is manufactured in an advertisement. Instead, these companies channel all of their energy into creating magnificent products that add true, tangible value to people's lives. Emotion – and the financial commitment it inspires – actually emerges as an organic side-effect of satisfied functional needs. To reap the enhanced financial benefits that can result from customer loyalty, marketers have enthusiastically pursued strategies intended to keep customers coming back. In fact, marketers want to move beyond customer 'retention', which is merely a behavior, to generating customer 'commitment', 'delight' and even 'evangelism' – all of which represent enduring psychological bonds that link a customer to a company.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

A higher assimilation of brand-related knowledge results in the improvement of consumer emotion pertaining to the brand. It is in the organizational interest that ways and means are developed to increase the consumer's knowledge with regard to product or brand. Organizations can successfully leverage brand blogs to engage consumers, build a bond with them, and then subsequently increase their knowledge about an organization/product/brand. Subsequent improvements in consumer emotion pertaining to the brands will result in faster product adoption by the consumers.

If an emotional connection is truly the key to an enduring customer relationship, companies should not be targeting consumers based on their demography or lifestyle. Rather, they should focus their efforts according to the consumers' evident potential to develop meaningful brand

connections. In addition, instead of directing their efforts at stimulating trial through reduced switching costs, marketers should refocus their attention on establishing and enhancing these powerfully differentiating emotional bonds.

That's the road to a brand relationship, not just to a transaction.

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