Chapter 16

Desperately Seeking Customer Engagement: The Five-Sources Model of Brand Value on Social Media

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ABSTRACT

Since 2004 when Myspace was converted from a file storage service to a social networking site, social media has become an integral part of people’s everyday experiences. Social media has also come to play an influential role in business. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the Five-Sources Model of Brand Value that illustrates the importance of functional, emotional, self-oriented, social, and relational brand consumption experiences helping different organisations get a clear sense of where they can add value to their marketing communication strategies on social media. The model is consumer-centered and is grounded in consumers’ experiences collected through interviews and Facebook focus group. This chapter is based on an on-going project that first started as a Masters research in 2011. It has continued with conferences and academic papers, in conjunction with consulting and lecturing on social media applications in New Zealand business and education context.

INTRODUCTION

It has become clear in the past few years that the most noticeable changes in all aspects of our collective, private and public lives are connected to the emergence of social media. In practice, this means that new media has “transformed consumers from silent, isolated and invisible individuals, into noisy, public, and even more unmanageable than usual, collective” (Patterson, 2011, p. 2). Millions of ordinary social media users now have the ability to discuss and share their ideas and opinions publicly, influence
service or product development (even building design), create a brand community and communicate with brands on Facebook and Twitter (Benson & Morgan, 2015). The practical consequence of this is perfectly illustrated by Marc Kushner, whose architecture firm proposed a community building, by sharing photorealistic renderings of the building on Facebook and Instagram “to let people do what they do: share it, comment, like it, hate it...two years before the building was complete, it was already a part of the community” (Kushner, 2015). This example shows why many businesses nowadays accept the need to shift their traditional marketing into social media marketing. However, some doubts have also been raised as to the benefits of social media ventures. It is, therefore, not surprising that both academic and market research put a great deal of time and energy into understanding the meanings and functions of social media in business. It is crucial for companies and organizations to translate the abstract descriptions of emerging concepts and ideas into concrete applications and strategies to be used. Therefore, the following research question is posed: How are brands conceptualised in the consumption of a social media community?

To answer that question, this chapter introduces the Five-Sources Model of Brand Value creation, which describes the specific social media practices for effective collaboration between firms and consumers. This model is grounded in the reality of consumers’ experiences, and evaluated against existing marketing concepts. The chapter is first concerned with a number of ways in which social media may impact the relationships between brands, consumers, and, all in all, the process of brand value creation. Secondly, this chapter offers a practically tested foundation for branding via social media, paying attention to consumers’ role in the production and consumption of brand experiences. Finally, the chapter aims to provide marketing practitioners with a new way to examine proposed social media tactics.

The first part of the chapter introduces a theoretical background within which to think about the changed relationship between organisations and individuals. It then goes on to present the Five-Sources Model of Brand Value, offering five new perspectives to discern how consumers experience brands in social media settings. The model is supported by figures and examples illustrating the nature of consumer-brand interactions, and how brand value can be activated via social media. This includes functional, emotional, self-oriented, social, and relational aspects of brand consumption. With a strong focus on the research data, this chapter will present solutions and recommendations, concluding by discussing future research directions and making suggestions for additional reading.

BACKGROUND

The idea of community has a long history in sociological, cultural and communication research. The term is often applied, regardless of online or offline context, where a specific type of bond between people defines the community. The idea of a consumption community arose as marketers recognised that consumers often have shared emotions and habits in the consumption of common objects (Friedman et al., 1992), for example, of beloved brands such as Macintosh, Harley-Davidson and Star Trek. Muñiz and O’Guinn (2001) define these communities as a human consumption experience in which members are not necessarily physically close and their social relationships are defined by shared morality, consciousness, rituals and traditions. Further, Schouten and McAlexander (1995) argue that these relationships help to form consumption subcultures that meet some specialised needs of those consumers (Fournier & Lee, 2009).