Chapter 19

Deriving Psychodynamics Among Consumers Through Social Media: A Qualitative Analysis of Network Performers

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ABSTRACT

Despite an increasing interest in understanding consumer behaviour through social media, there is paucity of research concerning psychodynamics among consumers derived by online social networks in emerging economies. The aim of this paper is to explore the role of vloggers (video bloggers) as key network performers to derive consumer psychodynamics (consumers’ interactions reflected in a company) through social media, specifically YouTube, through the lens of the experiential view and the Social Network Theory. This work will contribute to the extant literature by determining (1) the relevance of the experiential view approach in online social networks’ performance, (2) how psychodynamics among consumers are conducted through social media, specifically YouTube, and (3) how key network performers as YouTube’s vloggers derive psychodynamics among consumers. Using an inductive approach and grounded theory to analyse the results, the research findings provide a more comprehensive understanding of online consumer behaviour, therefore, yields more valuable information by examining the experiential view in a digital environment.

INTRODUCTION

Social networks have existed since long time ago, however the online communication technologies are revolving social interactions with their dynamism, exponential growth and reach. Since the rise of the Web 2.0, marketing communication has evolved into a multiplatform-based conversation, where consumers interact with their favourite brands and share opinions between each other. Social media, mobile...
technologies and web communities are important drivers for the integration of new dynamics in social networks, making consumer behaviour study even more complex.

For years, direct marketing has tried to engage consumers by holding personal communications with them; nevertheless, their reach was limited until the arrival of online channels. Large information available online and UGC (User Generated Content) through digital media perform as feedback inputs and outputs in the current marketing communication process, representing a turn in the way communications took place, since it allows to engage in bilateral conversations of unconceivable reach every time everywhere. However, the power of viralisation potentiates the challenges derived from uncontrolled marketing communication marketers will face in an upcoming future.

Integrated marketing communication strategies that include online channels are necessary in corporate communications (Spenner, 2010) and some consumer-oriented companies know it. Social media encourage interaction among peers and content co-creation, therefore content creators have become strategic partners to the companies in building and positioning their brands while fostering consumer’s loyalty (Rajagopal, 2013). For example social media users as the owners of Doug the pug, a dog that has reached the status of a “celebrity dog” who’s Facebook page has over 4.4 million likes, his Instagram account has over 1 million followers and his Twitter account has over 32,800 followers, has advertised through product placement, brands like Calvin Klein, Lamborghini, Starbucks, Fiji water and Coke among others, increasing brand awareness and bringing these brands to conversation by linking his own experiences with them.

Mobile usage has increased significantly over the past 10 years (OECD, 2014), their popularity has lead to new market opportunities as the creation of new applications for delivering customised experiences. Integrated marketing communication strategy developed by Taco Bell, which consisted in a blackout of every communication channel to introduce their new digital app with features that allow customers to tailor their orders and create a unique experience for each of them. However, these campaigns are not always well managed nor measured by the brands, since the convergence between digital media has empowered consumers to pursue informal communications among several channels, such as electronic word of mouth. This is the reason why the study of online networks within the area of consumer behaviour is so important, to analyse consumer experience with a brand through online social interactions.

Although online communities become a network of meaningful social relations that can be widely distributed geographically, Brodersen et al. (2012) revealed that despite the global nature of the online content, video consumption appears to be limited by geographic relevance and proximity between viewers, since it is diffused through word-of-mouth across social networks. Despite an increasing interest in understanding consumer behaviour through social media, there is paucity of research concerning psychodynamics among consumers derived by online social networks since existing research has focused on analysing user’s profiles and text blogs mainly in developed countries (Biel and Gatica-Pérez, 2013). Consequently, it becomes important to explore the impact and effects of consumers’ interactions derived by network performers like vloggers (video bloggers) in emerging economies as the one of Mexico.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to analyse the role of vloggers as key network performers to derive consumer psychodynamics through social media, specifically YouTube, through the lens of the experiential view developed by Holbrook and Hirsch (1982) and the Social Network Theory. In this way, this work will contribute to the extant literature by determining (1) The relevance of the experiential view approach in online social networks’ performance, (2) How psychodynamics among consumers are conducted through social media, particularly YouTube (whether they are positive or negative, conscious or unconscious), (3) How key network performers as YouTube’s vloggers derive psychodynamics among