Chapter 47

A Netnographic Analysis of Facebook Content Strategy of World’s Top 10 Management Institutes

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ABSTRACT

This research paper analyzes the content strategy of World’s top 10 management institutes that they followed on Facebook to understand the importance of content strategy in building brand communities. It uses the Netnographic approach to analyse the content strategy and establishes that the content context i.e. its relevance to the community matters the most in building strong community. This research would fill the gap that existed in the brand community literature where researchers hardly discussed about relevance of content strategy in brand’s social media strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Since Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) introduced the concept of Brand Community (BC) it has drawn substantial attention in the marketing literature by academicians. They conceptualized BC as, “specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand” (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001) and proposed that BCs would exhibit three traditional community characteristics— shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, moral responsibility (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001, p. 413). In the pre-Internet era, brands connected with their community members in offline World, the most commonly referred example being Harley Davidson community (McAlexander et al., 2002). However, with the penetration of Internet, virtual communities (Armstrong and Hagel III, 1996) came into existence. In the post 2000 period, with the proliferation of social media (Kaplan and
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Haenlein, 2010; Mangold and Faulds, 2009), brands realized the incremental benefit of establishing their communities on these social media websites (Laroche et al., 2012). The value additional features on social media websites (SMWs) have further strengthened brands to have real-time customer engagement (Van Doorn et al., 2010) at a much accelerated pace than it was possible in any of the traditional media channels. It has been observed that BCs created on SMWs have positive impact on customer/product, customer/brand, customer/company and customer/other customers relationships (Laroche et al., 2013, Papagiannidis et al 2013). On the other hand, customers and stakeholders of a brand also find it convenient and effective to converse with brands through these SMWs (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Baird and Parasnis, 2011; Fisher, 2009).

In order to ensure effective customer engagement which has a strong probability to build brand loyalty among community members (Brodie et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2011; Hollebeek, 2011; Malhotra et al., 2013) brands need to follow a well-planned content strategy. However, it isn’t an easy task for brands to create effective content on a regular basis. Hence, some brands become successful on social media while others don’t. It is a huge challenge for brands to formulate their content strategy for building and sustaining high customer engagement on these BCs created on SMWs (Malhotra et al., 2013; Drury, 2008). As part of their content strategy, BCs share necessary information about and around the brand to community members, and help organization build a strong brand (Fournier and Lee, 2009).

In this research paper we have analyzed the content strategy that World’s top 10 management institutes are following on Facebook. Facebook happens to be the world’s leading SMWs with over 1 billion users (Fowler, 2012). The focus was on to understand the influence of content strategy on customer engagement. We analyzed the content strategy of World’s top 10 management institutes on Facebook, for the period of six months. A General Linear Model (GLM) was run between metric dependent variable customer engagement, measured in terms of - no. of likes, no. of comments and no. of shares; and non-metric dependent variables – content type, posting day, posting agility and content context. It was found that content context was the significant variable for customer engagement. Thus, relevance of content mattered the most, i.e. more relevant the content with respect to community’s expectations, more are the chances of customer engagement. This might seem to be an obvious phenomenon. However if it was so obvious, almost every other brand on social media would have gained popularity, unlike few as of now. Hence, we have tried to establish the importance of content strategy in BC phenomenon through this research paper which would be of importance to both academicians and practicing brand managers.

The paper is organized as follows: in the next section of literature review, the literature on the major topics of study namely Brand Communities, Content Strategy and Customer engagement has been discussed and their association is identifies to reach to the conceptual model (Figure 1) and the research question. The following sections describe the research context and operational definition of the variables. Next section pertains to the research methodology adopted followed by the results, discussion and implications. Lastly, the paper ends with the limitations and the future research avenues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand Communities and Its Theoretical Foundation

Brand equity has been an important phenomenon in marketing for quite some time now (Aaker and Biel, 1992; Leuthesser, 1988; Maltz, 1991). It is defined in terms of the marketing effects uniquely attribu-