

Company content to engage the user on Facebook

Contenido de empresa para atraer al usuario en Facebook

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Abstract

This study examines how companies organize content on their Facebook pages to build relationships with their followers, and stimulate sharing, participation, dialogue, and involvement. We made a textual analysis of page sections and keyword posts to see how content matches the identity and the communicative style of organizations. The goal is understand what elements a company uses to be credible, and to establish and maintain relationships with users. Research was conducted on companies that have the greatest number of followers and the best reputation on social media. Though promotional qualities were central, even in content telling the story, identity and goals of the company, a fair amount of attention was also found to be given to the production of sections and texts. The results of this study can be a starting point and a useful interpretation for scholars and industry, in assessing the role of content in increasing loyalty.

Keywords

Corporate Communication, Social Media Content, Facebook, Engagement, Corporate Reputation.

Sumario

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1. Introduction

This study intends to understand the ways companies use social media, especially Facebook, to relate to employees, users, and stakeholders (Constantinides, 2014; Kane, 2015). We know that 84% of businesses around the world use social media to converse with different targets, and the one most widely used is Facebook (93%, Social Media Marketing Industry Report, 2016), being utilized by more than a billion and a half active users in the world (Digital Social & Mobile, 2016). The other platforms, in the order, are: Twitter (76%), LinkedIn (67%), Youtube (53%), Google+ (49%), Instagram (44%), Pinterest (40%), followed by other social media.

A wealth of literature is available on how marketing strategies are adopted to increase user engagement (Chu et al., 2013; Kartik Hosanagara & Nair, 2013; Koschate-Fischer et al., 2014; Vivek et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2014). Conversely, little existing research investigates the ways companies manage their presence on platforms. Some studies explain how social media is used in different business activities (R. Rauniar et al., 2014). The present study, on the other hand, examines how businesses can organize content, strengthen their credibility, and cultivate relationships.

2. Literature review

As stated in the literature, following the logic of being online, especially on a social networking generalist, such as Facebook, the principal aim is not to search out potential consumers to guide them in acquiring a product, or to follow-up customers so as not to lose them, and neither to bombard clients with information and promotions. Instead, the overriding goal is to actively encourage a proactive dialogue, which is open to experimentation and the creation of "creative" communities, whereby innovative solutions can be developed and needs, both manifest and latent, can be expressed (Guinan et al., 2014). Referring back, at least in part, to the view of George Gerbner (1976), the cultivation of attitudes and beliefs does not merely entail customer loyalty to brands and products, but the long-term construction of a cultural system the center of which is made up of values identified with, and the tacit knowledge of, the company. The evolution of this system depends on the participation of actors in the constant review of knowledge and processes (McQuail, 1983). As a result, this mechanism also promotes the creation of new products and brands through shared experiences. In this paper, we investigated how some of the most popular and appreciated social media companies approach their followers. The set of content types published by companies are presented in 4 macro-categories, as identified by the literature, particularly the functionalist approach of uses and gratification: information, entertainment, incentive and socialization.

- **Information content** is the main resource that feeds online dialogue and the reason why users follow business posts. Consequently, companies need to carefully make this content exhaustive and up-to-date. When an individual is satisfied with the content offered, they express it by clicking the links, staying on the longer pages, reading details and discussions, commenting and using the various multimedia features (Vries et al., 2012; Cvijkj & Michahelles, 2013). It should be noted that although the follower is active, it does not mean they are necessarily proactive, as well (Dolan et al., 2015);

- **Entertainment content** serves to make the platform a fun and enjoyable environment for the user as it is stimulating, promoting evasion, hedonistic pleasure, aesthetic enjoyment, and the venting of emotion (Taylor et al., 2011; Eden et al., 2014). Teaser, slogan, word games, for example, exhort the follower to leave comments and, in general, tend to intensify the level of participation and interaction of users (Parket al., 2015);

- **Incentive content** uses remuneration tools that a company offers to users to entice them to participate and collaborate. They are rewards, such as public recognition, obtaining content, gifts and/or products, the awarding of bonus points, prize draws for competitions and/or surveys (Muntinga et al., 2017). This type of content is mainly used to encourage responses to issues which particularly interest an enterprise, but which would not otherwise induce user response. However, greater user involvement is not guaranteed (Cvijkj & Michahelles, 2013);

- **Socialization content** serves to motivate community members to develop a sense of belonging to a company's world. The more effective the content, the more users are encouraged to co-create. When this happens, conversations increase and common attitudes, languages, and behaviors are developed. Socialization content also contains information and entertainment content (Leung, 2013; Hollebeek et al.; 2014).

3. Materials and methods

To select the companies for study, we used their position in the world reputation rankings, as established by Interbrand and Reputation Institute. To ensure greater positioning significance, we also observed the ongoing presence of companies in each rank over a three year period (2014-2016). Comparing the first 100 positions in the last three years in the two rankings (Interbrand and Reputation Institute), we found 171 companies.

The "Best Global Brands" classification, made by Interbrand (<http://interbrand.com/best-brands/>), uses brand strength parameters (price, brand's role in buying decisions, customer loyalty, ability to attract and motivate talents, positioning versus competing brands, analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the brand compared to attractiveness) and economic-financial data (transparent data on annual financial performance, longer-term returns, at least 30 percent of revenue coming from an area other than the site, significant presence in Asia, Europe and North America and large Geographical coverage in emerging markets; impact on stakeholder business).

The "Global RepTrack Results" classification, made by Reputation Institute (<https://www.reputationinstitute.com/research/Global-RepTrak-100>), measures the reputation of more than 7,000 companies operating in more than 25 industrial sectors and more than 50 countries around the world, making consumer interviews to understand the emotional connection to a brand, creating trust and satisfaction with expectations. The dimensions investigated include: product / service quality, degree of innovation, conditions offered by the workplace, ethics, honesty and transparency of governance, citizenship (understood as attention to environmental issues and social responsibility), value of leadership and performance at the financial level, in terms of profitability and prospects for economic growth.

Of 171 companies, only 30 held a stable position in both rankings for the entire three-year period, and only 18 of these allowed access to the pages of their headoffice worldwide, regardless of where the consultation takes place. As our concern is to describe how organizations connect to their users through company identity, we decided to restrict our analysis to these 18 companies. Pages dedicated to the followers in a particular country tend to be more focused on specific products and services modeled on that country's cultural peculiarities, and so their content would fall outside the objectives of this research. The study of the selected companies was carried out by taking information from their official Facebook pages. A period of one week was selected - March 27 and April 3. This time span was chosen because it is the smallest unit to measure and analyze online conversations (<https://go.forrester.com/>). The Forrester research and consulting company (Nasdaq: FORR) is considered one of the most influential in the world. It carries out annual surveys of more than 500,000 consumers and entrepreneurs who are among the business and technology leaders in order to identify and develop customer-oriented strategies.

This specific interval was chosen after verifying that it was a standard period, where there were no public holidays and there were no special events for any of the companies in question. This allowed us to make a valid comparison of the different companies under investigation, to examine their habitual behavior on Facebook. The collection of information concerned some elements regarding company identity and content: recognition of identity by users, such as the presence of a blue check; the presence and degree of participation in predetermined sections on the part of a company; assessment of the type of material inserted, which was then organized into categories, as indicated by the literature. We proceeded with a textual analysis that recorded the most recurring keywords in the content on Facebook business pages. Keywords were then associated, by semantic assonance, and categorized according to 4 macro-groupings, as identified by the literature, particularly the functionalist approach of uses and gratification: information, entertainment, incentive and socialization.

4. Results

All the 18 companies surveyed, except for two, have official pages that are identified by the blue check mark. It certifies that the contents have been processed by company managers.

By counting the number of posts, we found that the companies published about 8.62 posts, or just over one per day, in their weeklies. The distribution of these posts vary considerably among organizations: the most active companies post 1 to 3 or 4 messages per day, while others, not even 1 every week. In these cases, the engagement capacity (EU) is, of course, very low - below 0.1%. The User Engagement Index (EU) indicates the percentage of users who shared posts over a week. The formula used to compute this index is the following: $UE = \frac{PTAT}{\text{fan number of page}} \times 100$ and was calculated using the weekly data provided by the Facebook platform and collected at the time of detection. For the most active, the average is around 0.2%. This is the case of Visa (whose last post dates back several months before the survey), Pampers (who only relies on some posts that retraces business history), Starbucks, Adidas and Honda Motors (in standby only in the week of collection data).

Overall, the results are not that high, showing that while users are followers, they are not particularly involved. Businesses must therefore improve their content to have a more consistent relationship with users.

Five of the companies were not active during the study period and so were excluded from the research. The remaining 13 (see Table 1) had contents and posts and were so examined.

Table 1. The companies' engagement in the week under review, detected by Facebook

ENTERPRISE	POST	LIKE	SHARE	FAN	PTAT	UE	ER
Amazon.com	25	33944	1871	27191805	138555	0,50%	0,02%
Cisco Systems	17	4194	543	839684	4046	0,48%	0,02%
Intel	12	16666	5800	35520928	10870	0,03%	0,02%
BMW Group	12	163900	3864	19938178	85259	0,42%	0,03%
Sony	10	19337	2853	7559159	15711	0,20%	0,02%
Robert Bosch	9	25998	618	1060009	19153	1,80%	0,20%
Johnson & Johnson	8	3650	1420	746618	5275	0,70%	0,08%
Panasonic	5	275	44	346399	1852	0,53%	0,10%
eBay	4	1357	53	9527674	33721	0,35%	0,08%
IBM	4	3999	557	893413	33954	3,80%	0,95%
Nike	2	22200	1839	27879642	118793	0,42%	0,21%
Carterpillar	2	529	36	561965	3934	0,70%	0,35%
PepsiCo	2	359	63	218576	1112	0,50%	0,25%
Average	8,62	22801	1505	10175696	36326	0,36%	0,03%

The organization of content in the Business Pages menu (see Table 2) consists of several sections: all have the home page, information, posts, photos, videos, people they like (as expected given the platform), and only a few have created special sections for their users.

Table 2. Organizing content in sections

Sections	n.	Companies
Events	8	BMW, Cisco Systems, Intel, Johnson & Johnson, Nike, Panasonic, PepsiCo, Sony
Faq, informative notes and surveys	8	Amazon.com, Cisco Systems, eBay, Intel, Johnson & Johnson, Panasonic, PepsiCo, Sony
Link to other social channels	7	Bosch, Cisco, eBay, Nike, Panasonic, Sony
Webtv businesses	6	BMW, Cisco Systems, eBay, IBM, Intel, Johnson & Johnson
Job opportunities	4	Cisco, IBM, Intel, PepsiCo
Business location	3	Intel, Nike, Sony
Space for Communities	2	Amazon.com, Carterpillar

The category analysis are presented in order of importance.

Table 3. Macro categories of post content

Companies	Information	Entertainment	Incentive	Socialization
Johnson & Johnson	6	0	2	0
Intel	2	7	2	1
PepsiCo	0	0	0	2
Panasonic	4	0	1	0
Sony	2	5	0	3
IBM	4	0	0	0
Cisco Systems	9	5	1	2
Nike	2	0	0	0
Carterpillar	1	0	1	0
Amazon.com	6	6	5	8
eBay	2	1	1	0
Robert Bosch	8	0	0	1
BMW Group	12	0	0	0
Average	4,5	1,8	1	1,3

In detail (see Table 3), most of the post content (58 out of 122) fall into the **information category**, confirming statements in the literature. The companies that use them the most and, most importantly, more effectively, given the indexes of engagement (almost two-thirds of the companies surveyed), provide information centered on their identity. Of the 406 posts reviewed, 57% concern aspects of quality and innovation of product and service, consistent with core business and mission, 29% try to gain user confidence by focusing on credibility and business history, while the remaining 14% includes information that meets the needs and interests of users. Notably, Johnson & Johnson encourages reactive behaviors precisely because it offers medical information.

Just over half of the companies surveyed focus on **incentives** (13 out of 122) and nearly half create engagement, such as Johnson & Johnson, Intel and Cisco. The analysis of keywords (178) reveals the use of gifts, bonus points and surveys (80%), with a focus on combining them with the interests of their consumers (60%), and on applying irony and play (25%).

Nearly half the companies (17 out of 122) create posts with **socialization content**, to develop a sense of belonging and sharing among users and to encourage co-creation. Two-thirds of the companies, that released this kind of content obtained positive results, as was the case of Cisco, Intel, Sony and PepsiCo. The analysis (102 keywords) shows that the objective is always mainly promotional, encouraging customers to give suggestions on how to improve products/services, to express their desires, and sometimes (in one-fourth of cases), to customize content according to their specific needs and tastes.

Finally, just over one third of the companies surveyed (24 out of 122) organize posts around **entertainment content**. In half the cases, they are posts aimed at encouraging product or service loyalty, and so can be considered promotional (over 144 keywords reviewed). Among posts that

encourage more participation (such as Intel, Sony, and Cisco), texts are trying to involve users through amusement and content, that meets their tastes and interests, such as showing live chat or talent shows, or games.

5. Discussion

This study highlights how the most popular companies using Facebook carefully organize the content for their users, though there are no improvement margins, especially in posting.

Most companies (16 out of 18) guarantee the authenticity of the content with the presence of the blue check on their pages. This means that the content is packaged by a corporate's executives, and so is consistent with company mission, vision, values, core business, and business communication goals (Parsons, 2013). For research purposes, this is a very useful result, since it shows that companies set up a relationship with their followers presenting themselves through elements consistent with the image, principles and orientations of the enterprise (Ngai et al, 2015). This study indicates the importance of creating comfortable, adherent, and above all, stimulating environments on the part of companies, in order to stimulate relationships with followers, while maintaining a coherent business identity. Indeed, an organization must be easily recognizable, and use trustworthy content that enhances their reputation in communities. They also need to be able to verify the presence of users, and their interest in participating in conversations, to identify the profile of different groups, and finally, to monitor the type of conversations that are being developed, the frequency in the exchange of messages between users, and the intensity of content sharing (Treem, P.M. Leonardi, 2013; 2016). Interestingly, most of the 13 most active companies create specific sections, customizing content bids according to both the interests of the company, and also those of its users. Among the sections, the most active ones are those sharing events, linking to company pages on other social, and creating spaces for communities. This all shows the will to foster relationships through engagement in common initiatives and shared interests. Further, though posts are promotional in nature and transversal to different content, those with an information focus (the majority) are organized in such a way as to nourish relationships with users. To this end, organizations are aware of having to meet user expectations and gratify them, while they are browsing and talking. In line with other relevant studies (Vaast & E. Kaganer, 2013 ; Simulaet al., 2015), social media use clearly needs to go beyond mere passive listening to rumors and feelings from the network, and any indications which may be drawn from users' comments.

As indicated in many studies (Chui et al., 2013; Roberts et al., 2016; Ruehl & Ingenhoff, 2017), the companies active approach involves three main ways: first, stimulate the development of interacting communities to provide answers, support customers, moderate comments, and gather opinions, suggestions and complaints, focusing mainly on the involvement of influential and opinion makers (for example, bloggers and early adopters), individuals particularly knowledgeable of company features and prevailing online positions; second, customize user experience to increase engagement and loyalty; and third, make the user a co-creator of business processes. In this latter mechanism, the company exploits the creative intelligence of the network to utilize amateur content designed to promote and enhance corporate products and services and, above all, to suggest innovative solutions and solutions through open source crowdsourcing systems or environments for think tanks. According to the McKinsey report (Global Media Report, 2015), 90% of business management hopes to develop consumer co-creation, but at present the share of user involvement in these processes is just 12%. To bring users closer to shared design, companies employ such tools as games, rewards, training and peer recognition. Among the subjects so far involved, 28% were curious and eager to learn, 26% wanted to have fun, participate in online games and test their skills, and 20% wanted to get awards and rewards.

The present study indicates that many companies organize their Facebook content to involve users, but they use more incentive content than socialization content. This suggests that companies attending to create user involvement form primarily through incentive content, while more satisfying results might well be obtained if greater emphasis was given to socialization content. Indeed in the few cases (5 companies on 13) where socialization contents is predominant, the users are more likely to participate and co-create.

6. Conclusion

This study on content organization provides a clear picture of business intentions on Facebook, but cannot be considered complete. It is no coincidence that it is part of a broader research which also aims to analytically correlate the content packaging with the engagement obtained, in order to examine the degree of engagement effectiveness of content. To do this, it is indispensable to build specific indicators capable of calculating the degree of activation of the followers. The goal is to verify whether the quality of content posted by companies determines different responses in users. However, even at this stage, the present study remains a useful starting point for scholars who are dedicated to examining the use of social media in business communication practices in line with corporate communication principles.

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