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Generating trust using Facebook-A study of 5 online apparel brands

Radhika Sharma^{a,*}, ShirinAlavi^b, VandanaAhuja^a

^cJaypee Business School, Sector-62, Noida, U.P.,-201309, India

^bJaypee Institute of Information Technology, Sector-62, Noida, U.P.,-201309, India

Abstract

In this world of growing social media usage, organizations need to adopt well directed social media strategies to create relationships with consumers. Social media marketing enhances consumer engagement and creates brand awareness. This paper aims at studying the impact of the Facebook content posted by 5 online apparel brands, on building trust among consumers. Consumer needs for self gratification and their level of engagement and involvement, with an organization make them depict specific behaviors online. A multiple linear regression analysis is conducted to study the impact of total number of posts, hosted by an organization as well as the number of reactions and comments on building consumer trust. Results of the study indicated a positive relationship between trust and number of posts, comments and reactions.

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1. Introduction

Social Media Marketing is a growing trend which is being adopted by more and more companies in the recent years. This maximizes the number of touch points between organisations and consumers. Companies which have not embraced the social media space, always stay behind their competing brands. Present day consumers are internet literate individuals who like to share their opinions with their peers at the click of a button. A platform like Facebook, has provided significant marketing, branding, promotional and selling opportunities to the brands. It has converted even a consumer into a seller, people are selling directly through Facebook pages & communities only. Through these social media sites, consumers can freely give feedback, exhibit their reactions to a post or product, share their opinion with peers and can also share their grievances with the companies. These social media sites are a hub of unstructured data and many valuable insights can be drawn from that data with the help of sentiment mining, netnography, social network analysis etc. The proliferation of Facebook users, has given a green signal to the marketers to use Facebook to create stronger consumer-brand relationships.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: radhikasharma10.8.1993@gmail.com.

Shopping for apparels online has become the present day trend in youth across the globe. This has resulted in the growth and proliferation of several online apparel brands. This paper studies the Facebook presence of 5 online apparel brands – Craftsvilla, India Rush, Stalkbuylove, Voonik and Limeroad. The paper traces the usage of Facebook for generating trust among the consumers using social media analytics. When a company posts content on Facebook, it creates a certain level of engagement with the consumer. In Fig 1, the levels of consumer engagement on Facebook involve:

- Liking a post-If a consumer scrolls down his Facebook newsfeed, he/she may ‘like’ content which catches his/her attention. This is a mild level of consumer engagement.
- Giving a reaction to the post in the form of emoticons(Love, Anger, Sad, etc) - Facebook introduced a series of emoticons which enabled consumers /individuals to not only share their ‘liking’ for a piece of content, but also their anger/sadness towards the same. Certain consumers may actually bother to share the exact nature of their emotion towards a brand, by using emoticons showing anger or even love.
- Commenting on the post-Words play a bigger role than emotions. A consumer, who is more engaged with a brand, may go beyond *liking* to *commenting* on the content created by the organisation.
- Sharing post - Highly engaged customers may bother to *share* content created by an organisation. This is indicative of consumer trust, in an organisation.
- Creation- Customers who have moved beyond a state of *engagement*, to a state of *involvement*, may actually get involved in co-creation and even create content for an organisation.

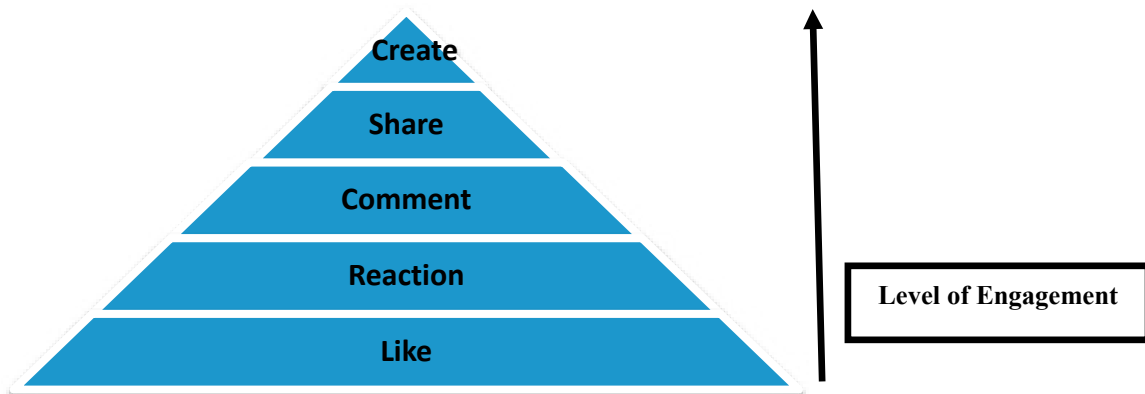


Fig. 1. Facebook Consumer Engagement Pyramid

A consumer only shares a post when he feels connected with the brand. As a consumer moves from a stage of engagement, to a stage of involvement with an organisation, he may even share the content that the company has posted.

Hence the following independent variable become important in this context-

- (i) Page reactions (likes, emoticons depicting laughter, anger etc.)
- (ii) Comments (on an organisational post by a consumer) and
- (iii) Total number of posts (indicative of volume of content).

In this paper, a comparative analysis has been conducted on these five brands across the above independent variables. These are used to measure the impact on trust: a dependant variable, measured by the number of times the content is shared by the consumers. A multiple regression analysis was conducted for this purpose.

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