



Taking a global view on brand post popularity: Six social media brand post practices for global markets

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Abstract Brand post popularity positively relates to consumers' purchase intentions, actual sales, and stock prices. Research suggests that social media posts should be vivid, practical, interesting, personalized, and interactive. However, cross-cultural research also suggests that practices might not be equally effective across different regional markets. While vividness and practicality could be consistently important across cultures, characteristics of interest, personalization, and interactivity might need to be adapted to the cultural conditions of specific target markets. We consider how individualism/collectivism, long-term orientation, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and high-context/low-context cultures could influence brand post effectiveness. We provide suggestions for how to manage social media brand post popularity from a cross-cultural perspective to inform both domestic and global social media marketing campaigns. Suggested practices include: (1) making brand posts engaging; (2) targeting the 'I' in individualistic cultures and the 'we' in collectivist cultures; (3) focusing on consumers' identity in less long-term oriented cultures and on functional information in more long-term oriented cultures; (4) ensuring that posts help reduce uncertainty; (5) planning for one-way communication in higher power distance countries and two-way communication in lower power distance countries; and (6) making messages less direct in higher-context cultures and more direct in lower-context cultures.

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1. Taking a global view on brand post popularity

The use of social media for marketing has thoroughly been studied by academics, applied by practitioners, and adopted by organizations. It represents

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a stable new reality that decision makers in a wide range of businesses must accept, embrace, and master. By 2013, there was a near universal adoption of Facebook and Twitter among leading brands, with YouTube also gaining in brand reach (Statista, n.d.). Companies such as Coca-Cola, GoPro, McDonald's, Samsung, Nike, Oreo, KFC, PlayStation, Converse, Yo Amo Los Zapatos, and Red Bull all have thoroughly embraced the power of social media to help gain the attention, engagement, and market share of international audiences. For example, GoPro had 2.2 million interactions in 2014, during which time subscribers watched an estimated 10,200 years and 35 days of Red Bull video on YouTube (McCulloch, 2014). Nike capitalized on the 2014 World Cup by partnering with YouTube celebrities to increase its subscriber base. The company's "Winner Stays" video featuring superstar soccer players had 98 million views, 30,000 comments, and 795 years of total time viewed, making it the most viewed brand video of 2014 (McCulloch, 2014). For most managers, emphasis on the substantial value and importance of social media is not new information, as practical tips on managing a brand's social media presence have been around for a while (e.g., Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Yet, marketing managers will want to set the bar higher and find new areas of mastery to increase the effectiveness of their campaigns.

One set of ongoing critical marketing decisions for managers concerns how and what to post on social media. These decisions are important because certain characteristics of a brand's social media post will impact the brand post's popularity in the form of likes, shares, and fans. This popularity could make the posts more effective in communicating the company's message to engage and influence consumers. Academic research on word-of-mouth marketing suggests some characteristics that can make social media posts most popular and effective. However, managers' understanding of these effects likely fails to account for the substantial cultural differences that occur across global markets.

Social media use varies by culture and region (de Mooij, 2013). For example, compared to U.S. social media users, Koreans have fewer but stronger social connections, more anonymity, and more frequent use of graphical non-verbal communication (e.g., use of emoticons and emojis). French social media users tend to engage in discussions that are more impersonal to stay in touch with friends, while U.S. and U.K. users tend to use social media as a tool for researching products. Research comparing cultural differences between Korean and U.S. college students' social media use found that U.S. students tend to use social network sites to seek entertain-

ment whereas Korean students used social network sites to obtain social support from existing social relationships (Kim, Sohn, & Choi, 2011). Research also suggests that status updates and photographs are more important for U.S. users than for French users (Vasalou, Joinson, & Courvoisier, 2010). Overall, this evidence suggests that managers could benefit from understanding how to manage social media marketing campaigns across global markets. Thus, we make specific suggestions for designing and coordinating culturally relevant brand posts within global marketing campaigns.

In this article, we outline generalized practices to increase brand post popularity and suggest more specific practices that could appeal to distinct cultural preferences. We present a simple conceptual model that can guide readers through our discussion and suggestion of culture-specific brand post practices. This presentation will involve five components. First, we outline the value of brand post popularity and generally suggested practices. Here, we explain the value that brand post popularity holds for managers and other stakeholders. We then outline a set of generalized practices that have been shown to increase brand post popularity. In the next section, we present important cultural differences to consider when interfacing with global markets via social media and explain how general practices can be incorporated differently according to a range of cultural differences. The different cultural interpretations are then used to suggest a set of culturally-relevant global brand post practices for managers using social media to promote their products. We conclude by emphasizing the importance of taking a cross-cultural perspective to promote products using social media.

2. The value of social media use and brand post popularity

By 2015, around 96% of marketers were using social media as a marketing channel (Stelzner, 2015). Social media use has been related to increased purchase intentions, increased sales, and even increased stock prices. Specifically, company social media use and the popularity of brand posts can impact what consumers think about a product or brand. Research suggests that following a brand's Facebook updates positively relates to what consumers think about a product or brand, how loyal they are to the brand, and whether or not they intend to purchase a product or brand (Beukeboom, Kerkhof, & de Vries, 2015). Survey research by Chadwick Martin Bailey (2011a) suggests that 77% of respondents interact with brands on Facebook

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