User and Firm Generated Content on Online Social Media:
A Review and Research Directions

Abhinita Daiya, Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur, India

Subhadip Roy, Indian Institute of Management, Udaipur, India

ABSTRACT

Social media communication content has gained a lot of interest in e-commerce literature. The present research note explores the scope of social media communication content across content source and levels of analysis. Based on a comprehensive review of 36 empirical papers spanning a decade (2004-2016), the research in social media content source is divided as user generated and firm generated. The levels of analysis are divided into three groups: users and society, platforms and intermediaries and firms and industries. Subsequently, a grid with six cells is created that has the content source (user/firm) on one axis and level of analysis on the other. The findings reveal communication content across users and society to be the most researched area, whereas, platforms and intermediaries being the least researched. Further, a set of future research questions are proposed for content in social media across various levels of analysis.

KEYWORDS

Conceptual Paper, Firm Generated Content, Level of Analysis, Research Questions, Social Media, Social Media Marketing, Source of Content, User Generated Content

1. INTRODUCTION

The advancement of internet has led to the popularity of social networking. Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook), microblogging sites (e.g. Twitter), content communities (e.g. YouTube) and virtual social worlds (e.g. SecondLife) are now being used by various segments of people across age groups (Chu, 2011). In early 2014, social media users comprised of 26% of the global population and 135 million new users were being added to the network every year (Kemp, 2014). This heavy growth in the social media usage has attracted marketers to use the same to communicate and promote their products. A number of marketers worldwide are integrating social media to their marketing strategy and increasing the proportion of social media advertising in the marketing budget for their plans (Slabaugh, 2013).

With the rise of social media (SM), consumers are found to develop interactive communication with brands, companies and competitors (Lipsman et al., 2012). This interactiveness allows consumers to share their views (Lipsman et al., 2012), and discuss about brands through the social networking sites (Kietzmann et al., 2011). In the course of the same brands are also getting involved in social media to understand what consumers think and feel about them (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Consumers have also been found to use social media to discover new products, brands and services (Slabaugh, 2013).

Even though the first social networking site (SixDegrees.com) was launched in 1997, academic research in social media gained importance after the launch of Orkut and Facebook in 2004 (Boyd and Ellison, 2008). Since then, marketing researchers have explored the role of social media in various areas of marketing such as advertising, consumer behavior, relationship marketing, to name a few (Aral et al., 2013). However, the newness of the field implies that many research questions are still unanswered (Aral et al., 2013).

In the present research the scope of empirical research in social media on the intersection of two distinct dimensions i.e., source of communication on social media and level of analysis is explored. The source of communication is categorized as user generated communication (UGC) and firm generated communication (FGC). The levels of analyses have been categorized as (a) users and society, (b) platforms and intermediaries, and (c) firms and industries. Based on the intersection between the categories of communication and level of analyses a grid consisting of six compartments is created. Subsequently a review of existing social media research focusing on source of communication at various levels of analyses is conducted. Thereby the authors explore the possible research questions that are yet to be answered. The findings provide a comprehensive picture of social media research with respect to source of communication and level of analyses. The research questions generated would provide ample scope for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Boyd and Ellison (2008, p. 211) define social media as *"web based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they can share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system."* In past half a decade, social media websites have received a lot of attention in interpersonal communication and collaboration (Kane et al., 2014) and joined the mainstream of the global internet culture (Keen, 2007). These sites, having variety in their architecture, attracted millions of individuals to adopt them in their daily practices. Subsequently, communication and new information tools such as, blogging, audio/video/image sharing and mobile connectivity were incorporated with these sites (Boyd and Ellison, 2008).

There are various typologies to classify social media. The two major ways to distinguish social media are based on (1) source of communication (Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2014); and (2) means of interaction (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010) respectively.

Social media could be further sub-divided into two categories on the basis of sources of communication. These are: a) firm generated social media communication; and b) user generated social media communication (Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2014). In case of firm generated communication, the content is fully under the control of the company. This kind of social media communication has become popular because of its viral nature (Li and Bernoff, 2011) and speed of reach of the information than that of traditional media practices (Keller, 2009). In case of user generated communication, the growth of communication is increased through the formation of "groups" on social networking sites with common interest (Winer, 2009). The users rather than the marketer create the content created in this case (Daugherty et al., 2008). This kind of communication is expected to be more trustworthy and cost effective to understand consumer perceptions towards brands (Christodoulides, 2012).

The classification of social media based on the type of interaction could manifest itself through: a) collaborative projects, b) blogs, c) content communities, d) social networking sites, and e) virtual gaming and social worlds. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), collaborative projects are user generated content created simultaneously by many end-users. Here many end-users can create and

14 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/article/user-and-firm-generated-content-on-online-social-media/161646

Related Content

Enhance Customer Engagement via Facebook Fanpage for Increased Purchase Intentions: Case of eWallet
Mansi Guptaand Alka Sharma (2021). *International Journal of Online Marketing (pp. 62-77).*
www.irma-international.org/article/enhance-customer-engagement-via-facebook-fanpage-for-increased-purchase-intentions/268406

A Mobile Market: Opportunities and Strategies in Higher Education
Thomas J. Hayesand Mary M. Walker (2012). *International Journal of Technology and Educational Marketing (pp. 55-69).*
www.irma-international.org/article/mobile-market-opportunities-strategies-higher/69184

B2C Market: Development of a CRM Scale
Gisela Demo (2015). *Marketing and Consumer Behavior: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 709-719).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/b2c-market/122974

Impact of 2.0 on Contemporary Marketing
Dora Simõesand Sandra Filipe (2015). *Marketing and Consumer Behavior: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 767-788).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/impact-of-20-on-contemporary-marketing/122979

Innovative Tourism Partnership Models: The Case of Nautical Stations in Portugal and Spain
Marta Isabel Amaral, Ana Isabel Rodriguesand Pedro Manuel Cravo (2020). *Managing, Marketing, and Maintaining Maritime and Coastal Tourism (pp. 151-170).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/innovative-tourism-partnership-models/240051