Chapter 67
Storytelling as an Approach to Voice Complaints and eWOM on Social Media/Facebook

Xiang Ying Mei

Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Norway

Ingrid K. Bagaas

Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Norway

Erling K. L. Relling

Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Norway

ABSTRACT

Customer complaints are unavoidable in any businesses and how firms handle such complaints will affect the public's perception of the company's brand and reputation. While storytelling is being embraced by an increasing number of companies as a different way to communicate their brand, many customers are now also using storytelling as an approach to voice their unfavourable experiences on the social media in regards to a particular unsatisfactory purchase as part of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Such creative and humorous complaints serve as a way to cut through the clutter in order to gain the company's attention. Those companies that embrace such complaints by responding in an equally humorous and creative manner as part of their service recovery process will manage to recover their customers as well as their employees. As such posts are often shared publicly on the Internet, they may become viral and thus can create great positive effect on the company's reputation. Hence, it is important to empower the employees to recover the services using untraditional responses.

INTRODUCTION

Grégoire, Salle, and Tripp (2015) stress that with the possibilities of social media; a new world of Wild West has been created, where angry citizens and customers take the law into their own hands. Studies have shown that angry customers turn to social media channels such as Facebook as part of eWOM as they believe that the traditional channels are not as effective anymore. While eWOM can be both positive and negative, it is the negative eWOM that has detrimental effects on companies and firms. As complaints and negative eWOM have become more common in the recent years, customers who complain on social media have also become more creative as many unsatisfied customers are using stories and storytelling as ways to capture the attention of the companies. From the customers' point of view, storytelling as an approach can be used consciously or unconsciously as it is regarded an easy way to reach out and capture the listeners' attention through sympathy or humour. Such mindset is supported by the essence of storytelling, as human beings are able to remember stories better than pure facts, and stories are something that fascinate people (Lundqvist, Liljander, Gummerus, & van Riel, 2012). As explained by Woodside (2010, p. 535), "if you can harness imagination and the principles of a well-told story, then you get people rising to their feet amid thunderous applause instead of yawning and ignoring you". Furthermore, in many cases when storytelling as a complaint approach was initiated by the customers, some proactive companies also manage to recover the service by responding with stories as part of storytelling rather than providing standardised responses and apologies. Hence, storytelling can be used by a customer to voice a complaint, as well as by a company to subsequently respond to the complaint as part of its service recovery. Such approach creates elements of positive surprises, which turn the entire negative experience to something humorous and fun for both parties (Ferrari, 2015).

This chapter explores eWOM in the context of Facebook and customers' use of storytelling to voice their complaints as well as the companies' subsequent responses with storytelling in order to recover the service. While some of the examples are based on the retail sectors, Tronvoll (2012) argues that customer complaints in any sectors should consider the Service Dominant Logic (SD-Logic) approach. The SD-logic advocates that a service or a product does not have any value until it is being used by the customer (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Customer complaint thus cannot be considered as an after-purchase behaviour but rather as a phenomenological, unfavourable service experience. Hence, service recovery is equally important in any sectors, not just service industries. Additionally, the retail industry is highly susceptible to service failure due to the number of people involved. Despite being a major industry in revenue generation, the study of service failures and recovery in the retail sector is still limited (Koc, 2018). Topics to be explored in this chapter includes storytelling, eWOM, word-of-mouse, service recovery, social media and Facebook as well as examples of creative complaints voiced as storytelling. While numerous studies have investigated customer complaints and service recoveries, investigating this topic through the lens of storytelling is still rather new (Black & Kelley, 2009) as the topic of storytelling in regards to marketing is still relatively under-researched (Mei, Hågensen, & Kristiansen, 2018).

Related Content

Social Computing and the New Market: How Social Computing is Driving Market Competition
Jason G. Caudill (2011). *Social Computing Theory and Practice: Interdisciplinary Approaches (pp. 265-284).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/social-computing-new-market/48859

e-Participation and Immigrants: Interview with Edward Andersson, Deputy Director of Involve
Itir Akdogan (2013). *International Journal of E-Politics (pp. 50-53).*
www.irma-international.org/article/participation-immigrants-interview-edward-andersson/76895

Online Matrimonial Sites and the Transformation of Arranged Marriage in India
Nainika Seth (2009). *Social Networking Communities and E-Dating Services: Concepts and Implications (pp. 329-352).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/online-matrimonial-sites-transformation-arranged/29231

Multimedia-Enabled Dot Codes as Communication Technologies
Shigeru Ikuta (2019). *Advanced Methodologies and Technologies in Media and Communications (pp. 263-276).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/multimedia-enabled-dot-codes-as-communication-technologies/214558

Communicating Nation Brands Through Mass and Social Media
Maria De Moyaand Rajul Jain (2018). *Social Media Marketing: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice (pp. 1497-1514).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/communicating-nation-brands-through-mass-and-social-media/203362