Chapter 9

Developing a Successful Facebook Fan Page Based on Costumers' Needs

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, we determine possible needs that customers are fulfilling by participating in the Facebook fan pages. Understanding the needs that customers aim to pursue is the priority of marketing communications. Therefore, the chapter analyzes a theoretical approach to identify and respond to the needs that consumers seek to satisfy on fan pages. The customer needs are evaluated from functional, hedonic, social, and psychological perspectives and all four of the need components make significant contributions to the overall need on fan pages. Businesses in the food service industry are advised to build an emotional bond with consumers, enhance two-way communication, provide useful information and encourage entertainment on their fan pages. Managers of brands that operate fan pages can be guided by our research with regards to deciding which characteristics or content consumers find important in the these pages.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past years, social media have been considered as the next great wave in technology, business, and social life. Social media is defined as "a second generation of Web development and design, that aims to facilitate communication, secures information sharing, interoperability, and collaboration on the World Wide Web" (Paris, Lee, & Seery, 2010, p. 531). Moreover, social media refers to "a group of

Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content." (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Social media exists in a variety of forms and serves diverse purposes. Among them, Facebook is currently the world's most successful social networking website (Cortese, 2011). Facebook counts 1.23 billion monthly active users, 945 million mobile users, and 757 million daily users (Protalinski, 2014). Facebook was originally created for individuals' social and entertainment purposes, and is now also widely used as a marketing platform for businesses (Lin & Lu, 2011). Companies are increasingly investing in social media, indicated by worldwide marketing spending on social networking sites of about $4.3 billion (De Vries, Gensler & Leeflang, 2012). The business can send hundreds of thousands of visits, build passionate followings around a brand, and bring in sales and consumers on its Facebook fan page (Weber, 2009). Facebook fan pages have a significant impact on brand-related communications and serves as an effective tool for customer relationship management (Manthiou, Tang, & Bosselman, 2014). A Facebook fan page includes the following attributes: brand/company's overview, contact information, press releases, RSS feeds, Twitter updates, brand news and status updates and customer comments/interaction (Techopedia, 2014a). Moreover, the emergence of brand communities has coincided with the growth in consumer empowerment. They are venues where intense brand loyalty is expressed and fostered, and emotional connection with the brand forged in customers (Hudson & Thal, 2013).

Many businesses in the hospitality industry have realized the importance of Facebook as a marketing tool and seek to take advantage of this opportunity (Lin & Lu, 2011). Recently, restaurant Facebook fan pages were cited as having the highest rates of member participation in the United States when compared to other sectors in the hospitality industry (Top Dining Brands, 2014). Many businesses use these sites to gain consumers' feedback about their products and services, explore new market segments, and connect both existing and prospective consumers, and inquiry about their competitors (Shih, 2009). Facebook is essentially a platform for sharing, and sharing experiences is innate to human nature (Ulusu, 2010). The communication that occurs as a consequence of natural engagement is pertinent, meaningful, and permanent (Cortese, 2011). Many restaurant businesses have realized the importance of fan pages and are ready to take advantage of this opportunity. Although many information sources provide the latest techniques and enterprise-building tactics so that businesses can immediately benefit from the fan pages, industry practitioners should keep in mind that the use of techniques or skills on the fan pages is an aid to customer communications (Shih, 2009). Understanding customer needs or expectations is always the priority of marketing activities (Muñiz & Schau, 2005). Especially in light of the innumerable competitors of fan pages and the minimal switching costs for users, it is imperative to understand customer needs so that restaurants can create effective fan pages that spark customers' interests, meet their expectations, and inspire loyalty to both the fan page and the brand. However, to the authors' knowledge, no previous studies have investigated customer needs on a SNS with fan pages. This study aimed to fill this research gap.

Some previous studies have investigated the application of SNSs in the hospitality and tourism industry. Most of these studies focused on the users' participation and involvement in online communities (e.g. Chung & Buhalis, 2008; Lee, 2007; Qu & Lee, 2011). Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) investigated users' participation in online travel communities and suggested that four fundamental needs drive the extent to which users participate in these virtual communities: (1) functional need; (2) social need; (3) psychological need; (4) hedonic need. Since Facebook can be viewed as an online community, the desires customers seek to satisfy on fan pages can also be explained by these four needs. However, the study of Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) was conducted especially for online travel communities and done before

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