

Chapter 64

The Influence of Perceived Interactivity of Social Media Advertising and Voluntary Self-Disclosure on Attitudes and Intentions to Pass-Along

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ABSTRACT

Social media provide advertisers with opportunities to disseminate advertising and develop relationships with consumers in an interactive environment. To gain an understanding of this current advertising platform, this chapter examines how the perceived interactivity of an ad in social media and consumers' voluntary self-disclosure affect attitude toward an ad, attitude toward a brand, and pass-along intentions. An online experiment was conducted to test the hypotheses and answer the research question. Contrary to the prediction, a highly interactive social media ad was not more effective than a low-interactive one. High voluntary self-disclosure individuals had more favorable attitudes and intentions to pass-along the ad. Theoretical and practical implications for social media advertising are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Using social media has become a part of everyday life for Internet users. A widely accepted definition of social media is that “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). Examples include social network sites (e.g., Facebook), microblogging sites and blogs (e.g., Twitter and blogger), content sharing sites (e.g., YouTube, Flickr, and Pinterest), to name

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a few. From an advertiser's perspective, these enable consumers to interact with brands without time and space constraints (Spiller, Tuten, & Carpenter, 2011; Wang, Yu, & Wei, 2012). As social media usage becomes more pervasive among Internet users, there exists an opportunity for marketers to engage consumers with their social media advertising (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). Lipsman et al. (2012), for example, point out that all of the Advertising Age 100 Leading Advertisers have established a social presence on Facebook and use social media advertising to interact and engage with their consumers. With the burgeoning of social media's expanded role as an advertising medium (Chi, 2011; Taylor, Lewin, & Strutton, 2011), it is critical to examine the underlying mechanisms that determine consumers' responses to ads on social media and their intentions to pass-along.

Social media ads allow "direct responses" (Spiller et al., 2011) and some form of social interactions (e.g., sharing) within the ad unit or in a landing page (Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB), 2009). According to IAB's definition (2009), a social media ad is "an online ad that incorporates user interactions that the consumer has agreed to display and be shared. The resulting ad displays these interactions along with the user's persona (picture and/or name) within the ad content" (p. 4). This definition highlights two main characteristics of social media advertising: interactivity and voluntary self-disclosure. Interactivity has long been recognized as one of the important components of new media and is generally known to enhance consumer online experience (Noort, Voorveld, & Reijmersdal, 2012). The interactive features in social media ads are what allow marketers to release information about the brand, engage with their consumers and, eventually, help build positive consumer-brand relationships. For example, a consumer can share an ad with other friends, comment, like, opt-in, and opt-out (IAB, 2009). When a consumer interacts with a social media ad (e.g., "like" an ad), the interaction becomes visible in the Newsfeed or in a consumer's wall/timeline (Lipsman et al., 2012). This automatically signifies a voluntary disclosure of personal information with his or her social connections. As a result, a consumer's voluntary self-disclosure of social interactions with a brand may play a crucial role in determining users' responses to social media ads and their intentions to pass-along the ads.

Recent theoretical and empirical investigations on social media have examined topics such as social capital (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007), attitude toward social media advertising (Taylor et al., 2011), consumer socialization (Wang et al., 2012), user-generated ad parodies (Vanden Bergh et al., 2011), storytelling (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012), electronic word-of-mouth (Chu & Kim, 2011), and reach and frequency of brand impressions (Lipsman et al., 2012). However, little attention has been paid to how the two core characteristics of social media ad, perceived interactivity and consumers' voluntary self-disclosure, influence responses to the advertisement. Given the definitive rationale of the unique characteristics of social media ad discussed above, the objective of this chapter is to examine these two understudied, yet important, concepts in the social media research.

Specifically, we empirically investigate if a more interactive social media ad and a higher level of voluntary self-disclosure will lead to a more favorable 1) attitude toward the ad, 2) attitude toward the brand, as well as a higher 3) intention to pass-along the ad. By examining how these two factors influence consumers' responses to social media ad, this chapter contributes to our theoretical understanding of the role of interactivity and consumer psychology in an online environment. From a practical perspective, understanding what affects sharing intention is important, as social media are used to foster consumer-to-consumer conversations and are important avenues for viral advertising. A deeper insight into how the two factors affect consumers might help social media marketers to refine their efforts in order to leverage the power of social media. Furthermore, understanding the effect of voluntary self-disclosure can help policy-makers to develop effective guidelines for protecting consumer privacy.

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