

Chapter 71

Improving Customer Relationship Management Through Social Listening: A Case Study of an American Academic Library

Margaret C. Stewart

University of North Florida, USA

Maria Atilano

University of North Florida, USA

Christa L. Arnold

University of North Florida, USA

ABSTRACT

In the dynamic world of social media strategy, developing an effective approach to customer relationship management (CRM) online is challenging. With best practices for CRM on social media still being uncovered, the value of social listening is becoming recognizable in contemporary social CRM. This chapter presents a case study that shares the actions, insights, and experiences of using social media for CRM at the academic library at a mid-size American university located in northeast Florida. Using specific examples of how social media is used to engage in social listening and to enhance CRM, the social listening practices and social media strategy of this library are highlighted in relation to how they influence and potentially improve CRM. By examining the practices of this individual institution's library, a better understanding of how academic libraries engage with customers using social media as a CRM platform comes to light. In addition, ideas for future research on the intersection of social listening, CRM, and social media strategy are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

Social media is changing the relationship between organizations and customers. As a result, social media platforms present unique opportunities for customer relationship management (CRM) and are becoming increasingly popular channels to deliver CRM. The dynamic nature of social media makes it difficult to establish guidelines and best practices for social media CRM. In this book chapter, an original case study presents how an American academic library uses social media for CRM practices, and emphasizes the role of social listening with the library's social media strategy. The Thomas G. Carpenter Library at the University of North Florida (UNF) in Jacksonville initiated its social media presence in 2009, and is committed to strategically developing an effective social media strategy to best engage with all university stakeholders. This book chapter presents a detailed case study examining the library's use of social media focusing on how social listening strategically contributes to CRM. This case study discusses the findings in consideration to two overarching questions: (1) How does an American academic library utilize social listening toward CRM strategy? (2) How does an American academic library engage in CRM using social media? Upon addressing these questions given the practices and social media of the UNF academic library, opportunities and suggestions for future research regarding social listening as a social media CRM strategy are posed.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Social Media's Role in Academic Libraries

According to a recent study published by Pew Research Center, 74% of individuals who have utilized a library or bookmobile in the past year are social media users (Rainie, 2016). On a daily basis, half a billion tweets emerge on Twitter and a good portion of these include interactions between businesses and customers. Not surprisingly, online customer interactions grew 70% between 2013 and 2014 (Coen, 2016). For these reasons, understanding the role of social media within the realm of academic libraries is increasingly important, especially as social media continue to evolve.

In 2005, when social media was still in its infancy, the term "Library 2.0" was coined by Michael Casey, author of the blog LibraryCrunch. By linking libraries to the technology-driven Web 2.0, web based tools such as social media effectively give "library users a participatory role in the services libraries offer and the way they are used" (Casey, 2010). While the number of users on social media continues to grow, libraries now have a presence on Facebook, Twitter and other websites in order to easily reach their constituents online (Palmer, 2014). According to a survey completed by the American Library Association in 2016, 86% of libraries in the United States use social media to interact with customers (Yu, 2016). Academic libraries in particular have developed a strong social media presence in order to reach students, most of whom are traditional students in the 18-22 age range and fervent users of social media. A survey of 104 undergraduate students completed by Florida State University found that students found social media posts regarding building operations, study support services, and library events to be beneficial to their academic success (Stvilia & Gibradze, 2016). In order to reach customers and communicate the worth of library resources, academic libraries have adopted social media as a cost-effective way to connect with users and promote library value (Gaha & Hall, 2015).

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