

THE UTILITY OF FACEBOOK PAGE WALL COMMENTS: A CASE STUDY

A THESIS

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Economics and Business

The Colorado College

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Bachelor of Arts

By

Sarah Palmer Andrews

May/2010

THE UTILITY OF FACEBOOK PAGE WALL COMMENTS: A CASE STUDY

Sarah Palmer Andrews

May, 2010

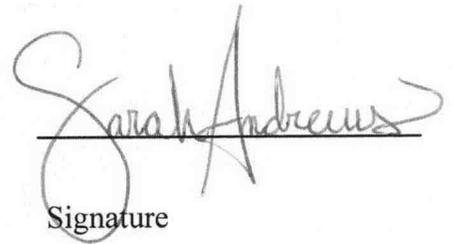
Economics

Abstract

This thesis provides a case study of four major companies' Facebook pages. Comments made by consumers were collected and analyzed for the pages belonging to Dove, BMW, Taco Bell, and Starbucks. This thesis argues that while many believe Facebook to be an extension of Viral Marketing, the case studies provided within show that Facebook is not even a form of marketing. It is an additional but still necessary avenue for the consumer to contact the company.

KEYWORDS: (Facebook, Viral Marketing, Consumer Relationship)

ON MY HONOR, I HAVE NEITHER GIVEN NOR RECEIVED
UNAUTHORIZED AID ON THIS THESIS

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sarah Andrews". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a solid horizontal line.

Signature

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	5
2.1 Framework.....	5
2.1.1 Innovation.....	6
2.1.2 Communication Channels.....	7
2.1.3 Time.....	8
2.1.4 Social System.....	8
2.2 Viral Marketing.....	9
2.2.1 How It Works.....	9
2.3 Previous Studies.....	13
3 METHODOLOGY	16
3.1 Definition of Categories.....	20
4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	28
4.1 Discussion.....	43
5 CONCLUSION	45
SOURCES CONSULTED.....	48

LIST OF TABLES

2.1	Potential Benefits and Risks of Viral Marketing	10
2.2	Relevant Facebook Definitions	15
4.1	Sample Comments on Taco Bell Page	29
4.2	Sample Comments on Starbucks Page	31
4.3	Sample Comments on BMW Page	33
4.4	Sample Comments on Dove Page	35
4.5	General Types of Comments on Each Page	37
4.6	Types of Comments on Each Page	40
4.7	Categorical Relationships of Comments.....	41

LIST OF FIGURES

2.1 ELEMENTS AND STAGES OF INNOVATION ADOPTION.....	6
3.1 SAMPLE WALL COMMENTS FROM TACO BELL.....	18
3.2 SAMPLE WALL COMMENTS FROM REEBOK.....	19
4.1 GENERAL COMMENTS ON DOVE'S PAGE.....	37
4.2 GENERAL COMMENTS ON TACO BELL'S PAGE.....	38
4.3 GENERAL COMMENTS ON BMW'S PAGE.....	38
4.4 GENERAL COMMENTS ON STARBUCKS'S PAGE.....	39

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Every day, hundreds of million of people from across 70 countries access one website. This website allows people to identify themselves through pictures, music, and writing. It gives users the ability to interact with people in real time through a chat feature and obtain free promotions for becoming a fan of products. The average user spends more than 55 minutes everyday on this website. This is prime real estate for marketing, but not the traditional kind, the viral kind.

Almost every college student in America has a Facebook account. There are currently more than 400 million active users, and 50 percent of these users log on to Facebook in any given day.¹ Facebook was created by Mark Zuckerberg when he was a sophomore attending Harvard. It its first inception, Facebook (released Feb. 4th, 2004) was only for Harvard Students.² Within the first month, over half of Harvard had become registered users of Facebook. Eventually, the website was opened to other Ivy League students, other college students, high school students, and then everyone over the age of 13 subsequently. Facebook is currently the largest social networking site on the web.

¹ Facebook, "Press Room: Statistics," available from <http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics>; Internet; accessed on Feb. 9th, 2010

² Zachary M. Seward, "Judge Expressed Skepticism about Facebook Lawsuit," *The Wall Street Journal* (2007-07-25):

Before the advent of social networks online, word-of-mouth marketing existed.

Traditionally, word-of-mouth marketing implied a person telling a friend about a product that had personally really enjoyed. This would proceed in a linear fashion among people and was not a profitable way for a company to market a product.³ Social networks online have exponential growth because of their speed and interconnectedness. "If your brand and its offerings make a strong connection to the lifestyle and values of your customers, they will increasingly want to find you online, in the places they hang out, and 'friend' you."⁴

There is no longer an option to just ignore social networking. If a company does not have a strong presence in the network, pranksters and people with negative views of the company can take over. These people can create hate groups and spread negative messages because consumers will look for the companies to be on the network.⁵ Even ensuring a presence on a network is no longer sufficient, a company must now ensure that it is the dominant presence referencing their product. For the majority of people, domain names do not come easily. This means that instead of typing in a URL to find a company's homepage, they Google the name of the company. This leaves the possibility for a dissatisfied consumer or aggressive competitor to take control of the search results for that particular product or company. Instead of the homepage being the top search result, if left uncontrolled, the top search return could be a page of upset consumers. This is also the case for Facebook. If a company does not have a page on Facebook, someone unrelated to the company could make a fake one and provide misinformation to people

³ Tom Funk, *Web 2.0 and beyond : understanding the new online business models, trends, and technologies*, (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2009), 172.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

who believe they are looking at a real page. This essentially requires that every company makes sure that they control the use of their name on the web, and specifically on Facebook.

This thesis takes a look at viral marketing on Facebook. It specifically looks at commercial pages from businesses, such as that of Taco Bell, Starbucks, BMW and Dove, and why people become fans of the page. It also examines the types of comments these fans post on the wall of the company. The comments were grouped into general as well as specific categories that describe their meaning as well as purpose. These comments were recorded during the same period of time for all of the pages studies. This study was limited to company pages, which allowed comments to be left in free form so as to not bias the comments.

Over 3 million active Pages exist on Facebook created by companies and individuals to promote their new or pre-existing products. These companies have over 5.3 billions fans, with 20 million more people becoming fans everyday.⁶ This is a very large part of the marketing plan for these organizations.

The thesis is organized in the following manner. The second chapter will discuss relevant marketing and business literature and theory relating to viral marketing and word-of-mouth marketing. This entails a history of both viral and word-of-mouth marketing, a review of the potential benefits and risks of viral marketing, the components of a successful viral campaign, and a brief history of previous studies relating to this topic. This chapter will also include the framework for which this thesis is based upon. The third chapter will discuss the case study methodology used to conduct this study.

⁶ Facebook, "Press Room: Statistics," available from <http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics>; Internet; accessed on Feb. 9th, 2010

The fourth chapter will explain the results of the case studies. The final chapter will summarize the thesis and highlight its contributions to theory and practice.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Framework

For a marketing campaign to be successful, it must reach consumers. The way the marketing material reaches consumers is through various processes of diffusion. In order to relate an individual's perceptions of a product or page on Facebook to their adoption and potential diffusion of it, we must establish a framework. Rogers defines diffusion as "the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system."¹ Diffusion is a type of communication, which is necessarily an interaction between two individuals attempting to converge or diverge on a concept.² This is in contrast to a linear one-sided conversation, however when one looks at the antecedents or predecessors to this piece of communication, it almost always becomes part of a total process in which information is exchanged among more than one individual. While some people use diffusion to refer to a spontaneous exchange of innovations and dissemination to refer to a planned exchange, they will be used interchangeably in this paper, as it is almost impossible to tell a difference in actuality.

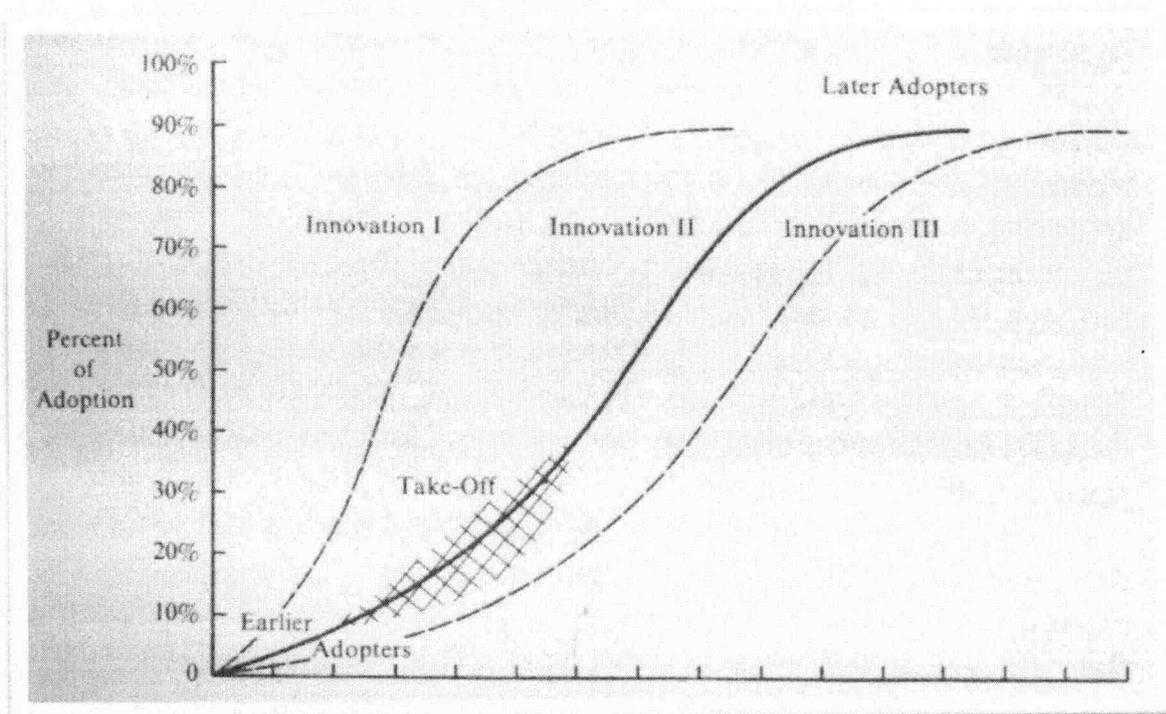
Rogers discusses the four main elements in the diffusion of innovation implied in his definition of diffusion: innovation, communication, channels, time, and social system.

¹ Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of innovations*, 3ed. (New York: Free Press, 1983), 5.

² Rogers, Everett M., and D. Lawrence Kincaid, *Communication Networks: Toward a New Paradigm for Research*, (New York: Free Press, 1981)

³ Diffusion scholars attempt to answer the questions (1) what are the differences between early adopters and late adopters, and (2) how the perceived characteristics (ease of transition, low risk, etc) of the innovation affect the rate of adoption. In order for diffusion to be most successful, each of the four elements must meet certain requirements detailed below.

Figure 2.1: Elements and Stages of Innovation Adoption



Source: Rogers & Kincaid (1981)⁴

Innovation

An innovation, in this study, is a company page on Facebook that is perceived as new. As most of these companies in this study, are not new, what is meant then is that the company page is perceived to be the legitimate page created by the company. The

³ Rogers, "Diffusion of innovations," 453.

⁴ Rogers, "Diffusion of innovations," 11.

emphasis here is on the perception of the page; it need not be actually created by the company, only perceived as such.

Communication Channels

In its most basic form the diffusion interaction requires 4 things: (1) an innovation, (2) an individual with knowledge of the innovation, (3) an individual with no previous knowledge of the innovation, and (4) a way for the two individuals to communicate.⁵ Mass media has always been considered the most effective way to communicate quickly, but face to face (interpersonal channels) are typically the most effective in convincing the other individual to agree. Facebook has combined these two mediums together.⁶

Lazarsfeld and Merton studied various communication channels and were the first to write about the idea of homophily.⁷ Homophily is the theory that people who communicate with one another are more similar than those who do not communicate with one another. In a situation without constraints people are more likely to interact with those similar to them. This becomes significant because people who are similar are more likely to adopt the same products. This is the basis for Laurens Rook's research. He argues that individuals follow their peers when making decisions.⁸ Thus, friends on Facebook are more alike than not in company and product likes or dislikes. However, some differences are necessary in order that one person be aware of the page, and the other unaware.

⁵ *ibid.*, 17.

⁶ Subramani, Mani R., and Balaji Rajagopalan, "Knowledge-Sharing and Influence in Online Social Networks via Viral Marketing," *Communications of the ACM* 46, no. 12ve (2003): 300.

⁷ Lazarsfeld, Paul F., and Robert K. Merton, "Friendship as Social Process: A Substantive and Methodological Analysis," in *Freedom and Control in Modern Society* (New York: Octagon, 1964),

⁸ Laurens Rook, "An Economic Psychological Approach to Herd Behavior," *Journal of Economic Issues* 40, no. 1 (2006): 75-95.

Time

Time is a very important part of the diffusion process in marketing. Even if a product diffuses entirely throughout a social network, it fails if it diffuses too slowly. There are three main parts to the decision making process which must happen in a timely matter. *Knowledge* occurs when an individual becomes aware of a company page. *Persuasion* occurs when the individual forms a positive or negative impression of the page. *Decision* occurs when the individual becomes a fan of the page or chooses to not become a fan.⁹

The rate of adoption of a fan page is typically an s-shaped curve. Initially a few people become fans of the page, but eventually the diffusion curve begins to gain trajectory as more people become fans, and then the rate of adoption levels off. However, there is some variation around the s-shape as some pages' rate of adoption is much higher and therefore steeper.¹⁰

Social System

The social system in this study is the online social networking site, Facebook. In general, "a social system is defined as a set of interrelated units that are engaged in joint problem solving to accomplish a common goal."¹¹ Within Facebook, each individual is easily distinguishable from another, and interacts with other individual in order to create and maintain friendships. Facebook also represents a boundary in which diffusion of the product page may occur. An individual, who is not a member of Facebook, may not view or be a fan of a company page.

⁹ Rogers, "Diffusion of innovations," 453.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 11.

¹¹ *ibid.*, 24.

Within the social system, there are social structures. At its most basic structure, this is the idea that you are only allowed to suggest a friend to become a fan of a page. An individual cannot tout the merits of a page to just anyone, it must be someone within their social structure. Feick and Price delve further into this and focus specifically on women as most likely to diffuse innovations.¹²

Viral Marketing

How it works

Steve Jurvetson and Tim Draper first used the term viral marketing in 1997.¹³ Since its relatively new inception, this term has become over-used and undefined. Many people have used the term interchangeably with word-of-mouth advertising where product information is spread verbally within a social group.¹⁴ However, other people have decided "true viral marketing differs from word-of-mouth in that the value of the virus to the original consumer is directly related to the number of other users it attracts."¹⁵ This is different because the instigator of each new branch of the virus has a vested interest in passing on the product information. Shirky argues that viral marketing will soon come to mean word-of-mouth advertising if it does not already.¹⁶ It is the point of view of his article that viral marketing is to be viewed as a campaign to facilitate truthful communication among social networks about a product.

¹² Lawrence F. Feick and Linda L. Price, "The Market Maven: A Diffuser of Marketplace Information," *The Journal of Marketing* 51, no. 1 (1987): 83-97.

¹³ Christopher Knight, "Viral Marketing," *Boardwatch Magazine*, no. Nov. (1999)

¹⁴ Joseph E. Phelps et al., "Viral Marketing or Electronic Word-of-Mouth Advertising: Examining Consumer Responses and Motivations to Pass Along Email," *Journal of Advertising*, no. December (2004): 333.

¹⁵ F. Mark Modzelewski, "Finding a Cure for Viral Marketing," *Direct Marketing News* Sep (2000)

¹⁶ Phelps et al., "Viral Marketing or Electronic Word-of-Mouth Advertising: Examining Consumer Responses and Motivations to Pass Along Email," 333.

A viral marketing campaign is a campaign that allows and encourages the individual to share the marketing message. It was given the nickname viral because the rate of exposure to the marketing message can be exponential, like a viral infection.¹⁷ Seth Godin explains viral marketing with an “ideavirus.”¹⁸ An idea that is stagnant has no value, while an idea that is shared between people is an “ideavirus.” These types of campaigns have tremendous value to marketers.

Traditional marketing requires the advertiser to talk directly to the consumer. The goal of the consumer is to avoid the messages of marketer. Televisions ads are expensive and a general shot in the dark. Ads are impersonal, interruptive, irrelevant and only occasionally effective. People don’t spam their friends, so if an individual passes along a message promoting a product, it is typically effective and relevant.¹⁹ Thus the marketing campaign has the capability of exponential growth.

Benefits and Risks

The benefits and risks of viral marketing have been well researched and examined and are summarized in the table below.

*Table 2.1: POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS OF VIRAL MARKETING*²⁰

Potential Benefit		
Financial	Potentially Inexpensive	(Dobele et al, 2005; Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004, Welker, 2002)
Diffusion Speed	Reach Audience in a short time	(Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004)
	Rapid, fast diffusion	(Helm, 2000; Welker, 2002)

¹⁷ [http://www.marketingpower.com/ layouts/Dictionary.aspx](http://www.marketingpower.com/layouts/Dictionary.aspx), (accessed February 1, 2010).

¹⁸ Seth Godin, *Unleashing the Ideavirus*, (New York: Do You Zoom, 2000), 224.

¹⁹ Tom Funk, *Web 2.0 and beyond : understanding the new online business models, trends, and technologies*, (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2009), 172.

²⁰ Low Jiun Wee Xavier and Goh Yun Shuang Summer, "Viral Marketing Communication: The Internet Word-of-Mouth" (Ph.D. diss., Blekinge Institute of Technology: School of Management, 2009),

Diffusion Speed Cont'd.	Boost Adoption speed	(Dobele et al, 2005; Hill, 2006)
	Exponential	(Helm, 2000; Funk, 2009)
Peer-to-Peer transmission	Voluntary Transmission by sender	(Dobele et al, 2005)
	Herd behavior, Peers follow peers	(Rook, 2006)
Audience Reach	Access to diverse audience though social contacts	(Helm, 2000)
Potential Risks		
Lack of Control	Uncontrollable nature, especially audience reach, content and few possibilities to measure success	(Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004)
	Total loss of control especially timing and content	(Welker, 2002)
	Spam	(Dobele et al, 2005; Subramani & Rajagopalan 2003)
	Lack of control mechanism: (1) No control over distortion process (for e.g. information may be filters, incomplete or biased) (2) Adverse selection of consumers	(Helm, 2000)
Potential negative impact	Risk of backlash and negative brand impact	(Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004)
	Negative WoM leads to boycott, ruin and unfavorable attitudes	(Dobele et al, 2005)
	Hate Sites	(Helm, 2000)
	May lead to negative perception of brands	(Phelps et al 2004)
Consumer Dependency	Consumers unwilling to provide referrals unless there is some return	(Helm, 2000)
Lack of legal standards	Emerging legal issues have to be taken into consideration	(Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004)

Lack of ethical standards	Consumers may feel exploited, cheated, used	(Dobele et al, 2005)
	Emerging ethical issues need to be considered	(Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004)
	Consumer privacy invasion	(Phelps et al 2004)

Components of Success Viral Market

Some characteristics of successful diffusion campaigns were briefly mentioned in the framework chapter, however a more in depth explanation is necessary for attributes common to a successful viral marketing campaign. The influencers must be perceived as knowledgeable rather than an agent of the marketer.²¹ Once an influencer has been perceived as knowledgeable in a certain area, they are given authority by the “volume of ratings they have made and their helpfulness to others.”²²

When initiating a viral campaign, marketers must think of ways to encourage people to become influencers and spread the product knowledge. One of the most effective methods is to make the product appear to be brand new. “Some consumers apparently value the appearance of being on the cutting edge or ‘in the know,’ and therefore derive satisfaction from promoting new, exciting products.”²³

Facebook provides another key mechanism in creating a successful viral campaign: the ability to forward on a product thought or idea. This means if an individual becomes a fan of a company page, they immediately have the ability to suggest it to a friend by a click of the button. This is an example of explicit advocacy. Implicit advocacy

²¹ Subramani, Mani R., and Balaji Rajagopalan, "Knowledge-Sharing and Influence in Online Social Networks via Viral Marketing," 300.

²² Funk, "Web 2.0 and beyond : understanding the new online business models, trends, and technologies," 172.

²³ Shawndra Hill, Foster Provost, and Chris Volinsky, "Network-Based Marketing: Identifying Likely Adopters via Consumer Networks," *Statistical Science* 21, no. 2, A Special Issue on Statistical Challenges and Opportunities in Electronic Commerce Research (2006): 256-276.

would be when a friend fans a company page and that action is reported on another's homefeed. Network targeting occurs when a company becomes aware that an individual became a fan of their page and the company actively targets that individual's friends through advertisement without the initial individual's awareness.²⁴

Previous Studies

Katz and Lazarsfeld conducted one of the first formal studies of word-of-mouth marketing in 1955. Their research proved that it is one of the most important influencers in the purchasing of household goods and food products.²⁵ They even compared it to contemporary marketing practices of that time. Word-of-mouth was found to be seven times as effective as print media, four times as effective as door to door selling, and twice as effective as radio commercials in ability to influence customer's decision to switch brands.

There was continued research on this topic throughout the 1960s and 1970s that continued to prove the importance of interpersonal marketing.²⁶ A study done in the late 1960's showed that almost 60 percent of respondents cited Word-of-mouth as the most important factor in influencing their choice of car diagnostic facility.²⁷ Feldman and Spencer (1965) proved that 65 percent of residents in a given area choose a physician based on word-of-mouth²⁸, and Arndt (1967) concluded that consumers who obtained a

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ E. Katz and P. F. Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence*, (Illinois: Free Press, 1955)

²⁶ J. J. Brown and P. H. Reingen, "Social Ties and Word-of-Mouth referral Behavior," *Journal of Consumer Research* 14 (1987): 350.

²⁷ J. E. Engel, R. D. Blackwell, and R. J. Kegerreis, "How Information is used to Adopt Innovation," *Journal of Advertising Research* 9 (1969): 3.

²⁸ S. P. Feldman and M. C. Spencer, "The Effect of Personal Influence in the Selection of Customer Services," *Proceedings of the Fall Conference of the American Marketing Association* (1965): 440.

positive word-of-mouth concerning a food item where significantly more likely to purchase the item.²⁹

Word-of-mouth motivation is usually motivated by one of the following reasons: (1) unselfish motivations, (2) product involvement, and (3) self-enhancement.³⁰ These three motivations can manifest themselves in different ways. For example, a consumer can recommend a product to friend because of a personal positive experience with the product. A consumer can also fan a company page on Facebook because they want to appear in the social group that can purchase products from this company. Others may even project negative Word-of-mouth so that they may appear knowledgeable in that company's expertise.

Despite its significant importance, Word-of-mouth marketing still remains a very neglected area of research in marketing.³¹ Only a very small percentage of Word-of-mouth communications were initiated by active marketing campaigns.³² Consequently, only a relatively few number of companies have tried to harness word-of-mouth's full potential. This paper is meant as a way to better understand the motivations behind becoming a fan of a company's Facebook page and better identifying the type of consumer who engages in this activity. Table 2.2 provides definitions of words that are used throughout the rest of the thesis. These words would not be typically be recognized by someone unfamiliar with Facebook.

²⁹ Johan Arndt, "Role of Product-Related Conversations in the Diffusion of a New Product," *Journal of Marketing Research* 4, no. 3 (1967): 291-295.

³⁰ D. S. Sundram, K. Mitra, and C. B. Welker, "Word-of-mouth Communications: A Motivational Analysis," *Advances in Consumer Research* 25 (1998): 527.

³¹ G. Silverman, "The Power of Word of Mouth," *Direct Marketing* 64 (2001): 47.

³² W. G. Mangold, F. Miller, and G. Brockway, "Word-of-Mouth communications in the Service Marketplace," *The Journal of Services Marketing* 13, no. 1 (1999): 73.

Table 2.2: Relevant Facebook Definitions

Profile	A user created feature that showcases pictures uploaded by the user as well as interests, hobbies, location, age, and other identifiable traits determined by user.
Page	A feature created by a company, typically where they can showcase pictures and descriptions of products. It can be expanded to include games and other links.
Fan	A user can only access the full features of a Page when they become a Fan. They become a fan by clicking a button on the Page
Friend	There are many security settings on profiles that the user may choose. Most often, the user decided that only their friends on Facebook may view their pictures, write on their wall, or tag them. You friend someone by clicking a button on that user's profile. That user must then accept the friend request.
Suggest	A built in feature that allows a user to notify a friend that they think they would benefit from being a fan of a particular page.
Wall	A part of the profile, friends are allowed to write comments here. Any actions taken by the user (such as becoming a fan) are also highlighted here for the individual's friends to see.
Homefeed	A compilation of all highlights from a user's friend's walls.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Facebook has over 3 million active pages to date in addition to their traditional profiles.¹ These pages cover a variety of genres and product categories. These pages have the ability for the consumer to comment directly on the pages providing a wealth of data to both the consumer and the company.

These 3 million pages have been made by companies looking to cash in on viral marketing and they see it as a viable way to engage current consumers and attract even more customers. Pages can have many different features, including interactive games, online surveys, or even just the regular wall on which people who are fans of the page can make comments. These comments are saved on the page indefinitely unless the company deletes a specific comment off its page. Any person with a Facebook account can access the entire history of comments made on a given page, but only fans may write comments.

Another of the most important features of a Facebook page is the “suggestion” button. It allows any fan of the page to access their Facebook friend list and select people who they think would like to become a fan as well. This built in feature of pages is very important because it allows the marketing technique to go viral that is instead of

¹ Facebook, “Press Room: Statistics,” available from <http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics>; Internet; accessed on March 24th, 2010.

progressing in a linear fashion, it has the potential for the exponential growth. Many pages even give incentives to people to entice them to invite more people. The purpose of every page is to promote a product or company, the goal is to have as many people fans of the page as possible, and the tool is to get current fans to invite their friends and so on.

This thesis poses the question, why do people become fans of product pages and what types of comments are these people making. The comment analysis will help companies better understand the type of consumer they are attracting on their pages which will in turn allow them to better market their product on Facebook. An analysis of the comments will also reveal in certain cases why the person decided to become a fan of the product in the first place. This allows the company to better understand how to incentivize people into becoming fans.

It was decided that a review of several major company's Facebook pages was the best way to gather data. Previous studies have looked at the responses to specific game applications that you can add on to Facebook but there has not been a study conducted on the comments of a company or product's Facebook page.² The pages were selected to represent a broad range of products, companies, and clientele. The pages were Dove, a division of Procter & Gamble, Taco Bell, BMW and Starbucks Coffee.

In order for a page to be selected for this study, it had to allow "free" comments to be made on its page. This means that a fan is allowed to create a new comment and is not required to respond to an original post by the company itself. For example, Reebok posts new statuses daily about products or events and in order to write on their wall, fans must

² Ermecke Rebecca, Mayrhofer Phillip, and Wagner Stefan. 2009. Agents of diffusion- insights from a survey of facebook users.

directly respond to the post. When free comments are allowed the page will look like the one in Figure 3.1. from Taco Bell.

Figure 3.1: Sample Wall Comments from Taco Bell



Source: Facebook.com

A page that does not allow free comments has a wall similar to Reebok found in Figure 3.2 below.

Figure 3.2: Sample Wall Comments from Reebok

Reebok Reebok ZigPulse, our most advanced shoe yet, is in! The specially designed sole sends a wave of energy down the length of the shoe, allowing key leg muscles to do less so you can do more. It's like an energy drink for your feet. Shop now for best selection! <http://www.reebok.com/US/search?t=zigtech&x=0&y=0>



ZigTech

March 12 at 1:20pm · Share

92 people like this.

View all 45 comments

Reebok Reebok Today Reebok launches ZigTech. The energy drink for your feet. Feel the shoe with the energy boost. Its unique sole propels you forward.

Reebok ZigTech Commercial [HD]
Length: 0:31



March 11 at 12:59pm · Share

46 people like this.

View all 11 comments

Source: Facebook.com

As seen in Figure 3.1, when fans are allowed to make “free” comments, their comments are immediately observable and need not relate to any general topic. In Figure 3.2, the comments are hidden by a link. In order to see the comments by the fans you must click the “View all # comments” link. All of these comments are also supposed to be responses to the original post by the page creator. Obviously, it was easier for the purposes of data

collecting to focus solely on companies that allowed “free” comments, but it also allowed the comments to be more reflective of the intent of the writer as opposed to a response to a question or statement.

In order to have continuity, one hundred of the first comments from the week of January 25th to January 28th were recorded for each page. These comments were read in order to determine how to code each specific comment.

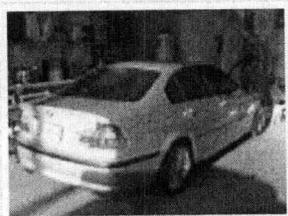
Broad categories were determined by conducting a general reading of all of the comments and then the categories were defined more specifically with a more intensive reading. It became apparent that one could apply the same categories to the comments from all of the pages. The categories are defined below. Each comment was classified as belonging to one or more of these categories and certain comments were annotated to be used as representative comments for the categories. Examples obtained from various Facebook pages are given below the categories.

Definition of Categories

Possession of Brand- these comments focus on the commentator purely speaking about their own possession of the brand. The comment truly has no relevant value other than an individual making others aware that they have possession of a product in the brand.



Arnold Miranda This is my 330i E46. I love this car.



 January 27 at 6:54pm · Report

Fake- these comments are spam. They have no relevant connection to anything and are promotions to get “25 free songs now” or “learn how to lose weight and keep it off.” The accounts making these comments have mostly been hacked or do not belong to an individual. They make no relevant contribution.



Karen Duling I'm writing a story about people BULLIED BY THEIR BOSS. Has your boss ever taken credit for your work? Does he/she scream? Overload you with impossible tasks? Constantly criticize? Have double standards? If so, please send me your "stories". Thanks! KDuling1@aol.com or Karen Duling on FB

January 26 at 9:46pm · View Feedback (1) · Report

Cross Promotion- these comments are from individuals or companies who wish to create a business relationship with the product or company. They are ideas to promote each other or even just pleas for support because they will reciprocate support.



T Van Alden Have your Starbucks with us: Combat Radio:
<http://www.latakradio.com/Combat.php> and support the troops!
<http://www.combat-in-effect.com>

January 26 at 4:12pm · Report

Brand Love- these comments specifically show that the writer loves and supports the brand as a whole. They do not mention individual products.



Lisa Pruitt I love Dove!

Yesterday at 1:11pm · Report

Problems with the Brand- these comments are from people who have a problem with the brand itself either from a personal experience or just opinion. These comments do not mention a specific problem with a product.



Caryn Falk Christianson Dove makes my skin itch.

Fri at 6:34am · Report

Prefer Competitor- these comments make no specific reference to the company who runs the page but instead show their support for a competing brand or company.



Ronn Dunnnett I couldn't buy the BWM 1series 3 door in Canada and BMW does not offer any 3 door models in North America so I purchased a beautiful Volvo C30 T5. Excellent vehicle and an excellent value for the money. I was a loyal BMW customer, but they obviously do not care about my demographic so I'm a very happy Volvo owner now – and a very loyal one too.



Yesterday at 2:53pm · Report

👍 Ashish Chougule likes this.

Employee- these comments very clearly originate from the personal account of someone who works for the company. They make no specific contribution other than to claim employment.



Jacque Nordhus Dear Starbucks, thank you for hiring me in 2004 and allowing me to meet so many wonderful people, try and learn about so many coffees and their origins, meet and help those in my community from volunteering locally to simply pouring them a cup of the world's greatest coffee, allowing me flexibility to fulfill my family...

See More

January 26 at 7:35pm · View Feedback (1) · Report

Suggestions- Location- these comments are a plea to the company to build a location or provide a product in a specific location.



Pranav Shah when is it opening in india????!!!!

Sat at 12:57pm · Report

Suggestions- General Business- these comments are productive suggestions on way to change business practice to better suit the consumer. They are from regular customers who do not exhibit inside knowledge of the business.



Mary Lou Woodward YOU SHOULD DELIVER. I HAD SURGERY AND I MISS YOUR FOOD. ALSO, SINCE YOU ARE ALWAYS SHORT ON FIRE SAUCE, HAVE YOU THOUGHT OF MARKETING IT LIKE YOU DO YOUR MILD SAUCE?

Fri at 2:52pm · Report

Suggestions- Product- these comments give ideas of ways the company could improve their product for the consumer. Again, these comments do not seem to come from trade professionals but rather a regular customer.



Amy Campbell BRING BACK THE GORDITA CRUNCH MEAL. RUDE!

Sat at 12:18am · Report

Includes Picture- these comments include a picture. They may also accompany text.



Parrish Jackson Provo Taco Bell



Sat at 12:03am · Report

Personal Experience- these comments include a personal experience the individual has had with a company or their product. These are both positive and negative experiences. This does not include merely purchasing the product “possession of brand.”



Koko Kim Sit In Starbucks With Friends When I have Nothing To Do Drink Caramel Frappuchino And See If There Is Anyone Hot! Perfect Entertainment For Both MY Eyes & Mouth :P LOL

January 27 at 3:00am · View Feedback (1) · Report

Product Love- these comments show love for a specific product produced by the company.



Sally O'Leary Vanilla, soy, latte' 180 degrees, no foam with 3 pumps of chai!!!! I am hooked:)

January 26 at 8:09pm · Report

Help with Product Location- these comments are requests by the consumer for aid in finding a specific product. These are not suggestions for a product location but a question of all the stores in an area that carry a product.



Christina Lovell I use Doves gentle exfoil face wash and I can't find it anywhere HELP!!! it's perfect formy face!!!!

January 26 at 12:30pm · Report

Brand Knowledge- these comments contain quite a bit of information about the product or company enough that is it very noticeable. The people making these do not seem to be employees of the company but rather very informed connoisseurs.



Marcos Rittner That's my sweetie E46 325i.

The BMW E46 is the fourth generation of the 3 Series compact executive cars produced by BMW, produced from 1998 when it succeeded the BMW E36 until it was replaced by the BMW E90 in 2006. The E46 was released in 1998 to worldwide markets (excluding the United States) in the sedan body style. ...

[See More](#)



January 27 at 6:40pm · Report

Official Statement- the moderator of the page makes these comments. This is usually a spokesperson for the company and is an official answer to a question or even a product announcement.



Dove Only 30% of men admit that they use women's skin care products to their friends. With new Dove Men+Care face and body wash, he won't need to hide his skin care products! Does your man steal your Dove products to keep his skin healthy and moisturized? Grab this coupon! <http://bit.ly/51fbtd>

January 28 at 10:07am

Not English- many of these products are sold internationally and thus have comments on their wall that are not English. The researcher ignored these comments.



Lara Marie Naujoks Salut à tous le monde.

Je suis très désespérée, car je cherche mon meilleure copain quand j'étais petite. Je l'ai trouver, mais le problème est que je ne lui peut pas surajouter dans ma liste et je voit seulement ses groupe de fan entre autres celle-ci. Il s'appelle LEE ROBERTS GUSMAN. Si toi Lee ou quelq'un d'autre lit m...

See More

January 27 at 9:16am · Report

Suggestions-Marketing- these comments give suggestions about ways the company could market its product differently. They also suggest to markets in which the consumer would like to see them.



Louise Bromby Love the Campaign for Real Beauty!!! About time too, somebody had to do it.. Shame us Brits can only see the video clips on youtube—they should be on prime time telly! Please join this group and stand united for real beauty too

Marketing Love- these comments show appreciation for the current marketing plan. They give examples of how a specific campaign convinced them to try the product.



Michelle Goncalves I think Dove sends a very positive message but most of us know it is a new angle on marketing. You're doing a good job with it though. I really like the soap & that's why I joined this fan page. I do like your products.

Sat at 6:34pm · Report

Requests for Coupons/Samples- these comments were blatantly attempting to solicit freebies from the company in the form of coupons or samples.



Jean Petersen Zuelke how about some demos for me to do my way???

January 25 at 4:24pm · Report

Responses to Question- these comments were responses to a question posed by a previous comment by either a consumer or the company itself.



Linda Morris Shackelford A Rocking Chair! in my Z3 with the top down so the rockers could stick out :-)) I looked like the Beverly Hillbillies coming to town!

47 minutes ago · Report

Plus Video- these comments contained a link to a video.



Nikola Gluvakov <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ILLtBWOfI>



New BMW design

www.youtube.com

Few seconds of BMW design in 3ds max. Static and animated with HDRI in mental ray

January 28 at 9:38am · Share · Report

Problems with Product- these comments wrote about a specific problem with a product produced by that company.



Harveer Singh Bhangra I have a '05 5-Series.... with disc drive navigation. It's stop working unfortunately and i can't tell whether its a disc error or disc read error. The dealers are being extremely unhelpful and are not one is letting me test a disc from another similar vehicle. I don't mind paying for a diagnostic or a new disk reader ...

Once all of these comments were coded within a particular specific category, general categories that encompass many specific categories were created. This data was also used to see if a particular type of comment was made more often on all of the pages. This knowledge will be used to determine what type of consumer becomes a fan of a page.

This chapter has discussed the research methods used in this study to identify the types of comments made by fans on product pages on Facebook. Chapter four discusses the key findings using this methodology.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The purpose of chapter four is to present and interpret the data analysis. This chapter begins by giving examples of the various categories of comments and then synthesizes all of the data succinctly. The discussion section explains the relevance of the information learned.

Results

Each of the groups on Facebook that were analyzed promotes very diverse products and companies. Very specific categories were determined in order to classify the comments from every page. The comments in each specific category vary slightly in their manifestations on each page, so examples from each category on the Taco Bell Page are given in Figure 4.1, on the Starbucks page in Figure 4.2, on the BMW page in Figure 4.3, and Dove in Figure 4.4.

Table 4.1: Sample Comments on Taco Bell Page

Possession of Brand	
No examples	
Fake	
	<p>Tim Crewz hey check out the face of jesus on this door..this is real...</p> <p>http://cgi.ebay.com/Jesus-Face-on-Door-Unbelievable-Jesus-Rocks_W0QQitemZ180464055951QQcmdZViewItemQQptZLH_DefaultDomain_0?hash=item38 minutes ago · Report</p>
Cross Promotion	
	<p>Cindy Brantley my drywall co. did interior buildout on 2 new taco bell stores in jacksonville fla there nice & would love to do more.</p> <p>Yesterday at 2:10pm · Report</p>
Brand Love	
	<p>Tiffany Leeann Furman deff one of my favorite places to eat :)</p> <p>Yesterday at 3:58pm · Report</p>
Problems with the Brand	
	<p>Cory M Hill YOU FUCKED UP MY ORDER</p> <p>Sat at 1:19am · Report</p>
Prefer Competition	
	<p>Lauren Nicholee Harris Taco bell is good but Taco Buenno is sooooo much better!</p> <p>46 minutes ago · Report</p>
Employee	
	<p>Eric Brodersen ☺ cloze at Taco Bell.....sleep.....open at Toarminas of Marquette!.....get in the car and drive up the hill.....Cloze at Taco Bell.....sleep.....dayshift at Taco Bell.....</p> <p>Yesterday at 2:56am · View Post</p>
Suggestions- Location	
	<p>Cassia Arellano IT WOULD BE GREAT IF TACO BELL COMES TO PERU</p> <p>3 hours ago · Report</p>
Suggestions- General Business	
	<p>Landon Bloss Taco Bell should deliver</p> <p>I love taco bell</p> <p>6 hours ago · Report</p>
Suggestions- Product	
	<p>Stephanie Bieck I like the 5\$ box minus the cinamin twists can u jus replace it with another taco?? It would be soooooo much better (:</p> <p>Yesterday at 9:19pm via Facebook for iPhone · Report</p>
Includes Picture	
	<p>Jessica Anne This is how we work at our TacoBell (Halloween 2009) ~♥~ Jackson Rd. Taco Bell MI</p>  <p>Sat at 4:30pm · Report</p>

Personal Experience	
	Jennifer Delgado In the drive thru right now !!!! Sat at 5:18pm via Facebook for Android · Report
Product Love	
	Jaron Hamblen u make good 5 layer beefy burritos. they r fantastic. Sat at 4:11pm · Report
Help with Product Location	
No Examples	
Brand Knowledge	
	Mason Wiltfong RIP Mr. Bell founder of Taco Bell :(
Official Statement	
	Taco Bell Check out the latest action at Winter X Games 14: http://espn.go.com/action/xgames/winter/2010/index
	Taco Bell Sponsors Winter X Games 14 - 2010 [HQ] Length: 0:06
Yesterday at 8:23pm · Share	
Not English	
	Vall Cortés mi pRima tenia un perrRo llamaDo taco bell! xD Sat at 8:41pm · Report
Suggestions- Marketing	
No Examples	
Marketing Love	
No Examples	
Requests for Coupons/Samples	
No Examples	
Response to questions	
	Whitnee Mccollum fiesta platters are back! yay! Yesterday at 8:42pm · Report
Tb Bell likes this.	
	Taco Bell Fiesta Platter are back at the Bell! http://www.tacobell.com/platters/ Yesterday at 9:21pm · Report

Table 4.2: Sample Comments on Starbucks Page

Possession of Brand	
No examples	
Fake	
	Dani Diaz http://www.facebook.com/pages/#/pages/l-3-RollerCoasters/310590950086 Unanse 10 minutes ago · Report
Cross Promotion	
No examples	
Brand Love	
	Austin Alvarado cant live without! 19 minutes ago · Report
Problems with the Brand	
Problems with the Product	
	Sheri Czachor Not loving the new price increases! Not only do I have to pay extra now for my Peppermint white mocha since the holidays are over, but its even more expensive now with the price hike. YIKES! No more Venti's for me...only Talls now :(3 hours ago · View Feedback (1) · Report
Prefer Competition	
No example	
Employee	
	Xochitl Miranda ♥ workin' at starbucks!!!!:D 6 hours ago · Report
Suggestions- Location	
	Woonghee Lee i love starbucks mocha!!! but there is no starbucks in Helsinki, Finland..... that makes me sad..... 4 hours ago · View Feedback (1) · Report
Suggestions- General Business	
No examples	
Suggestions- Product	
	Kathy Gage Hollan please bring back the cranberry orange muffins 2 hours ago · Report
Includes Picture	
	Derek Croucher now thats a good coffee  5 hours ago · View Feedback (8) · Report
Personal Experience	
	Luke Grwinski ♡ Sittin' Starbucks doing my paper on Down Syndrome....I should prolly get of Facebook and do that. 2 hours ago · View Post
Product Love	



Emmalou Vandehey i love their pumpkin spice latte durring the halooweenie times and durring this time of year(i know its not a drink) but i love their vanilla bean cupcakes!

32 minutes ago Report

Help with Product Location

No examples

Brand Knowledge



Rowland Fam The new Gold Card is not that good. As much as I spend here you would think that they could develop an award program that actually gives awards. I get the same drink everyday (365 days) and if I have friends or family with I get there's. On average that is 5.27 each day with the old gold card now my average is close...

See More

4 hours ago via Facebook for iPhone · View Feedback (1) · Report

Official Statement



Starbucks There's still time to donate to the Haiti Relief. We're proud to announce we've already collected nearly \$450k (USD) from our customers in US, UK/Ireland and Canada! This is in addition to the already announced \$1 million (USD) we donated from The Starbucks Foundation to the American Red Cross. Thank you.



Join Wyclef Jean by donating to the Haitian relief effort at participating Starbucks

www.youtube.com

In response to the Haitian relief effort, Starbucks today committed support and funding to the growing international relief effort.

Starting today, Starbucks stores in the U.S. and Canada will enable ...

4 hours ago · View Feedback (1,911) · Share

Not English



Paola Montijo lo mejor de lo mejor !!!!!!! este sii es cafeeeee!!!!!!

4 hours ago Report

Suggestions- Marketing

No examples

Marketing Love

No Examples

Requests for Coupons/Samples



Vicky Arringdale Sasser How do you get a free drink on your B-day?

2 hours ago Hide Feedback (1) Report

Response to Questions

No examples

Table 4.3: Sample Comments on BMW Page

Possession of Brand	
	Kyle Reece 5.28i 35 minutes ago · Report
Fake	
	Ana-Maria Cojanu http://ipremii.com/index.php?r=AaVM about an hour ago · Report
Cross Promotion	
No Examples	
Brand Love	
	Mahmoud Amer BMW..... The best about an hour ago · Report
Problems with the Brand	
No Examples	
Prefer Competition	
	Ronn Dunnett I couldn't buy the BWM 1series 3 door in Canada and BMW does not offer any 3 door models in North America so I purchased a beautiful Volvo C30 T5. Excellent vehicle and an excellent value for the money. I was a loyal BMW customer, but they obviously do not care about my demographic so I'm a very happy Volvo owner now - and a very loyal one too.
	
	 Yesterday at 2:53pm · Report
Employee	
No Examples	
Suggestions-Location	
No Examples	
Suggestions-General Business	
No Examples	
Suggestions- Product	
No Examples	
Include Picture	
	Jules Gv 
	 Yesterday at 2:55pm · Report
Personal Experience	



Daniel Forslund Me and three friends picked up five hitch-hiking swedish blondes once. They were dying for a ride, and we didn't mind giving up some space :)

3 hours ago · Report

Product Love



Will Kershaw 's step mom got a 2009 bmw 335 xi with i drive it is sweet

Yesterday at 10:02am · Report

Help with Product Location

No Examples

Brand Knowledge



Troy Hinnant 2011 550i what a machine i own a 09 550i and its all that cant wait to order my 2011 v8 twin turbo 400 horses rock on

Yesterday at 10:46pm · Report

Official Statement



BMW What is the oddest thing you have ever transported with your BMW?

4 hours ago

👍 578 people like this.

Not English



Vasil Petkov Kolov tova e kolata :)

4 hours ago · Report

Suggestions- Marketing

No Examples

Marketing Love

No Examples

Requests for Coupons/Samples

No Examples

Response to Questions



Eugene C. Thumm Jr 28 cases of Coors back in th 70's when you couldn't buy it in Missori

2 hours ago · Report

Table 4.4: Sample Comments on Dove Page

Possession of Brand	
No examples	
Fake	
	<p>Muhammad Fawad MUHAMMAD FAWAD GRAPHIC DESIGNER</p>  <p>5 hours ago · Report</p>
Cross Promotion	
	<p>Phlare Mag Azine PHLARE MAGAZINE, "women helping women", is a mega fan of DOVE! Please send media/advertising contact info to info@phlaremagazine.com ~ Thanks! -Ashley B. Cook, CEO/Editor www.phlaremagazine.com</p> <p>16 hours ago · Report</p>
Brand Love	
	<p>Laura Hudson Dove is really great for my skin!!</p> <p>5 hours ago · Report</p>
Problems with the Brand	
	<p>Caryn Falk Christianson Dove makes my skin itch.</p> <p>Fri at 6:34am · Report</p>
Prefer Competition	
No examples	
Employee	
No examples	
Suggestions- Location	
No examples	
Suggestions- General Business	
	<p>Jason Budden Two things don't work on your Dove Dimensions site. The coupons won't print, despite the fact my printer settings are exactly what you require them to be. Also, your "Contact Us" link brings up an error, so I was forced to contact you here.</p> <p>Yesterday at 12:32am · Report</p>
Suggestions- Product	
	<p>Lindsey McDonald Vork Dove, I love your products and use them on a daily basis (hair and body wash, deoderent, body spray, etc.) One thing I am disappointed about is I have yet to find a weekly "deep conditioning" product for my dry hair. I have to use a different brand. Please come up with something!</p> <p>Sat at 10:58am · Report</p>
Includes Picture	



Christopher Gamotin Quintas i dont have a twitter acct and we dont have another soap in the house. we only have dove. we love the body wash and im looking forward to using dove for men :D



January 25 at 10:01pm Report

Personal Experience



Sue Nehring If you are on a tight budget and need a good exfoliator. I have found that lathering Dove bar soap in your hands with water and then adding a teaspoon of used coffee grounds to it and rubbing this lightly(duo to it's large granular texture) on your damp face, makes an excellent exfoliating cleanser. Skin looks bright a...

See More

January 27 at 1:05pm Report

Product Love



Malaysha Rice Also tha Dove Shampoo Is Good To Use Too

January 27 at 2:36pm Report

2 people like this.

Help with Product Location



Christina Lovell I use Doves gentle exfoil face wash and I can't find it anywhere HELP!!! it's perfect formy face!!!!

January 26 at 12:30pm Report

Brand Knowledge

No examples

Official Statement



Dove Soap leaves soap scum. Dove® doesn't. Play The Soap Toss Game for a chance to win FREE Dove instantly! <http://bit.ly/aCmj3e>

January 26 at 12:16pm

Not English

No Examples

Suggestions- Marketing



Louise Bromby Love the Campaign for Real Beauty!!! About time too, somebody had to do it.. Shame us Brits can only see the video clips on youtube—they should be on prime time telly! Please join this group and stand united for real beauty too

Marketing Love



Saving Queen I love the online Dove game with the coupon.

Yesterday at 2:43pm Report

Requests for Coupons/Samples



Debra Law can you send me some samples of various products of yours to try?

Yesterday at 10:33am Report

Response to questions

Jason Budden Two things don't work on your Dove Dimensions site. The coupons won't print, despite the fact my printer settings are exactly what you require them to be. Also, your "Contact Us" link brings up an error, so I was forced to contact you here.
 Yesterday at 12:32am · Report

Dove Hi Jason. Thanks for bringing this to our attention. We'll get those fixed ASAP. In the meantime, you can grab a Dove Men+Care coupon here. <http://bit.ly/5f1btd>
 8 hours ago · Report

Table 4.5 contains the quantified data from one hundred comments made on each of the pages. These categories are very general.

Table 4.5: General Types of Comments on Each Page

Category	Dove	Taco Bell	BMW	Starbucks
Support Brand/Product	57%	59%	12%	46%
Suggestions	5%	20%	0%	12%
Customer wants to be associated	15%	10%	76%	8%
Don't like it	2%	3%	3%	3%
Aid	12%	0%	0%	1%
Official Statement	5%	2%	1%	1%
Fake and Not English	4%	6%	9%	30%

Figure 4.1: General Comments on Dove's Page

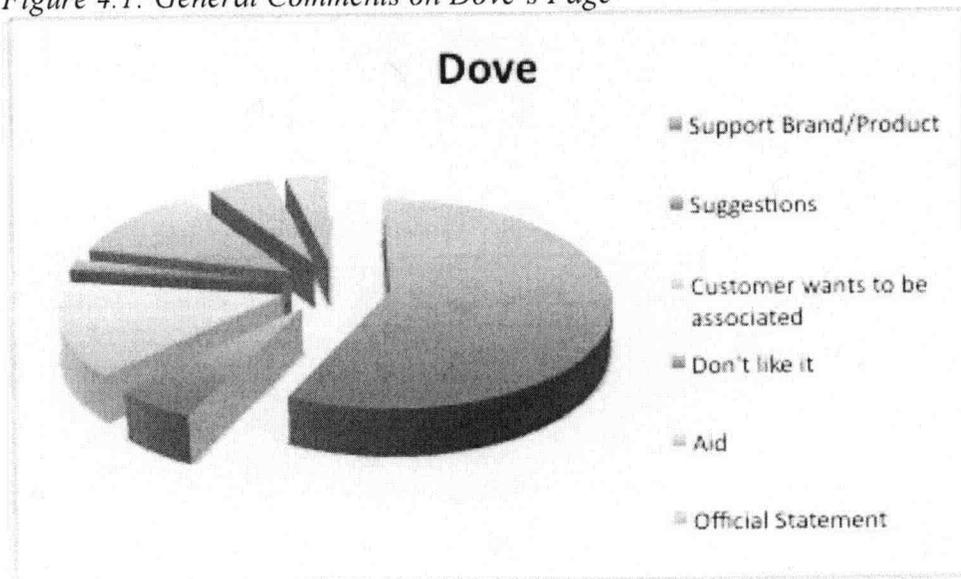


Figure 4.2: General Comments on Taco Bell's Page

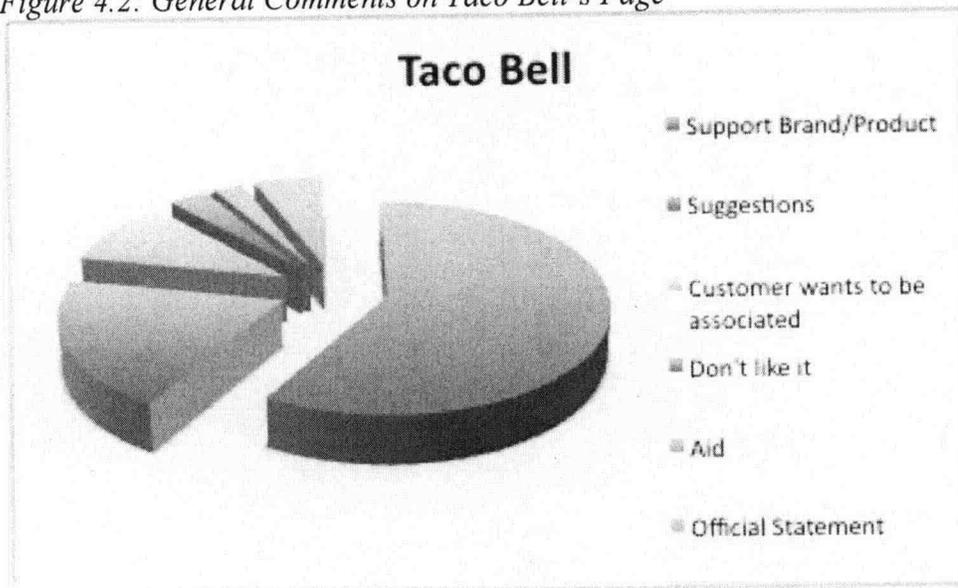


Figure 4.3: General Comments on BMW's Page

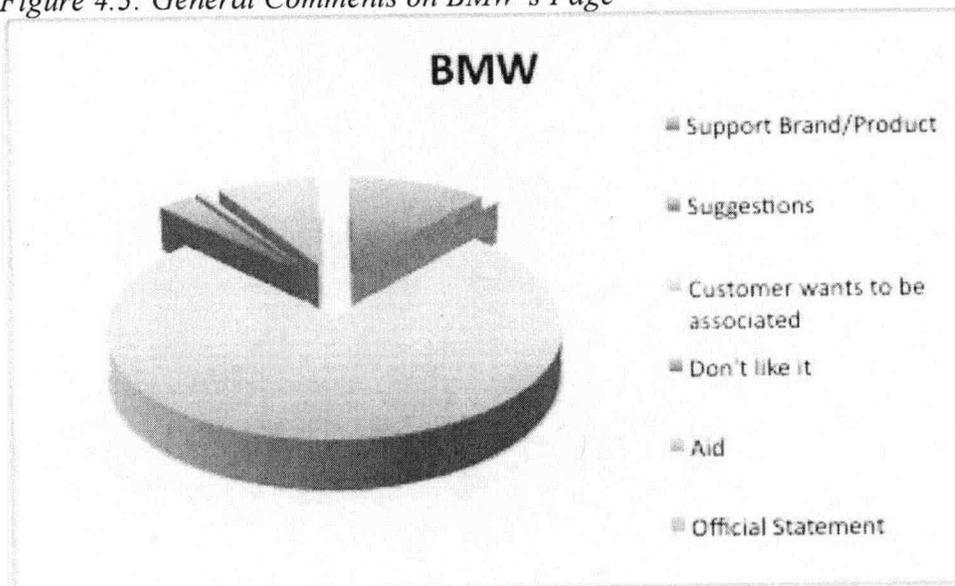
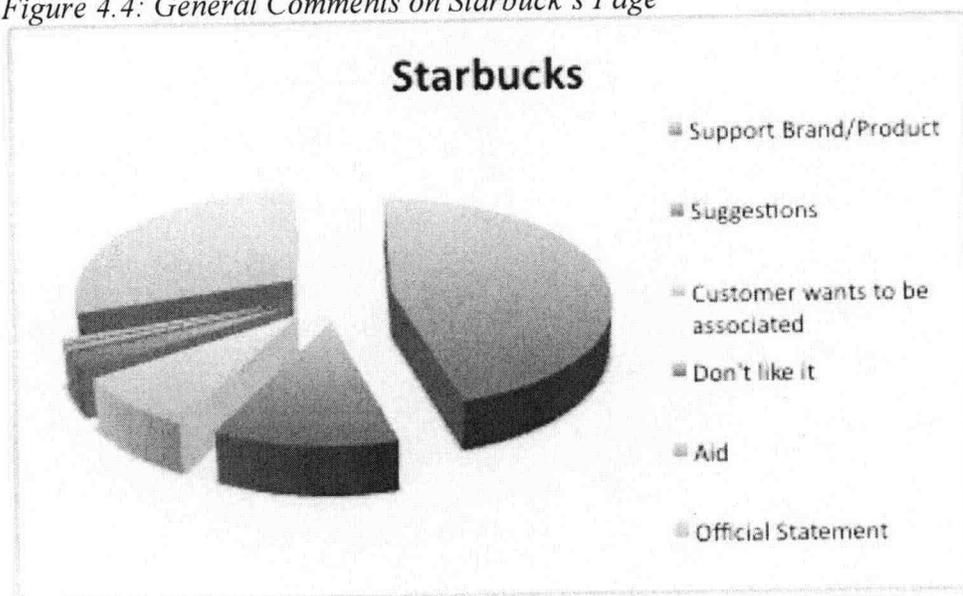


Figure 4.4: General Comments on Starbuck's Page



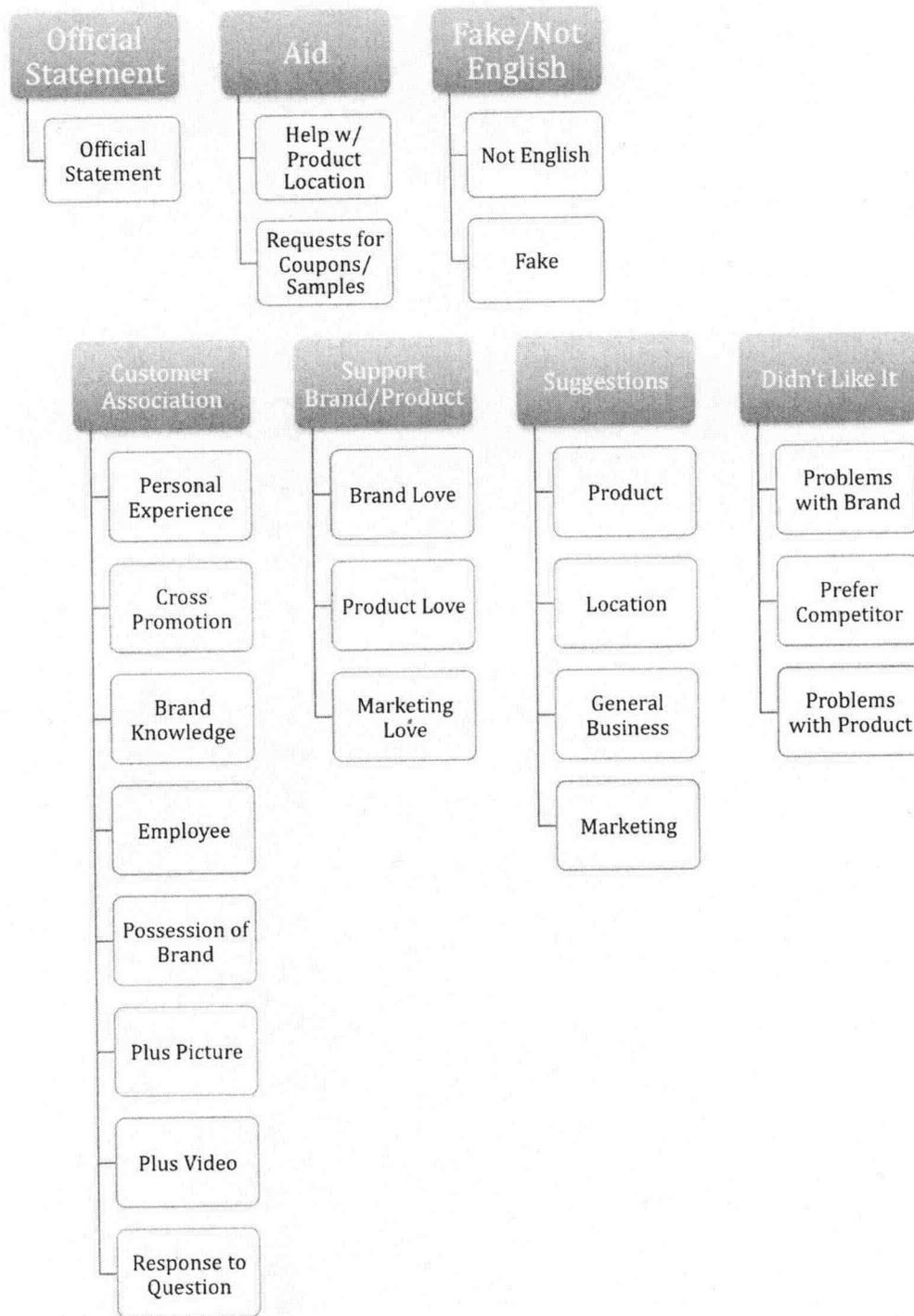
In order to give more specific results, these general categories were broken down into more specific descriptions in Figure 4.10.

Figure 4.6: Types of Comments on Each Page

Category	Dove	Taco Bell	BMW	Starbucks
Brand Love	39%	31%	11%	22%
Product Love	15%	28%	1%	24%
Personal Experience	12%	6%	4%	3%
Help w/Product Location	6%	0%	0%	0%
Official Statement	5%	2%	1%	1%
Request for Coupons/Samples	5%	0%	0%	1%
Marketing Love	4%	0%	0%	0%
Suggestions-Product	4%	9%	0%	5%
Fake	4%	3%	2%	17%
Cross Promotion	2%	1%	0%	0%
Problems w/Brand	2%	2%	0%	2%
Not English	0%	2%	6%	13%
Brand Knowledge	0%	1%	15%	2%
Suggestions-Location	0%	7%	0%	7%
Employee	0%	1%	0%	1%
Prefer Competitor	0%	1%	2%	0%
Problems w/Product	0%	0%	1%	1%
Possession of Brand	0%	0%	15%	0%
Suggestions- General Business	1%	3%	0%	0%
Plus Picture	1%	2%	32%	3%
Suggestions- Marketing	1%	0%	0%	0%
Plus Video	0%	0%	2%	0%
Response to a Question	0%	0%	9%	0%

Figure 4.7 gives a hierarchical graph of the way the more specific categories interact with the more general categories.

Figure 4.7: Categorical Relationships of Comments



From this data, we can see that the majority of Dove's comments are ones in support of the brand and/or product such as the one below.



Sarah Campbell a i am a dove fan now !!!! lol

20 minutes ago · Report

People who wanted to be associated with the company made comments in the second highest category. The last notable category of comments were requests for aid either in finding the product, receiving coupons, or help maneuvering the manufacturer's website such as the one below.



Debra Law can you send me some samples of various products of yours to try?

Yesterday at 10:33am · Report

The majority of Taco Bell's comments were also ones that showed support. However, there was a significant portion of comments that were suggestions to the company. These were ideas for new products, products to bring back, or even potential locations to build new franchises. An example of this type of comments is below.



Storm Soto Taco Bell in Worthington Minnesota would be the best thing in the world!! ppl have to drive an hour to get deliciousness! how gay

Yesterday at 6:41pm · Report

The comments made on BMW's page were mostly focused on associating the fan with the product or company. These comments mostly had pictures and contained facts that only true fans would know about the brand.



Xavier Flach Me in a BMW M5 Touring



Yesterday at 6:09am · Report

It appeared that people were attempting to associate themselves with the common perceptions of the brand.

Starbucks had the highest proportion of comments that were not relevant or not English. The comments that were irrelevant, like the one below, were mainly advertisements from other Facebook groups.



Brian Johnson <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?v=info&ref=mf&gid=192869150046>

Join and you can enjoy over 600 videos like the one below

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpGZWsCapX4&NR=1>
19 minutes ago · Report

The entire page is in English but it still drew many more fans that chose to write in other languages. This page also got spammed more than any other with links to fad diets or other miscellaneous material. A majority of the rest of the comments on Starbucks' wall were people expressing support of the brand.

Discussion

Through the observation of these four Facebook groups, it was noticed that certain companies get many more fans than others. These pages then in turn have many more comments than others. It was found that Facebook pages that allowed pictures to be uploaded by the fans have many more comments. As well, pages that allow "free" comments to be made have many more. It appears that the more control the fans have over the material they are allowed to post, the more interactive they become with the page.

It was also observed that the more involved the company was with the page, the more responses they garnered. For example, BMW posted a question to its page and immediately saw an increase in the number of wall posts. These were people responding

to the question, as well as many other things. Just the inertia of one person commenting on the wall brings the post to the top of the newsfeed for any fan, potentially prompting that fan to visit that page when they would otherwise have not. Facebook pages where the fans questions were answered also had a significant number of wall posts. Dove was very good about answering any questions posted by its fans, making it a good resource for them.

Once a fan made a specific type of comment, it was much more likely for similar comments to be made. For example, once there was a comment expressing discontent with a product, more people would comment with problems they too had experienced. This was found with all the types of comments on all of the Facebook pages. This is useful to know because if the company in control of the page wants to focus the comments in a certain direction, they can manipulate it by making a similar comment.

The data and analysis gathered and consolidated here gives a good outline for the necessary components to create a Facebook page that garners many fan's comments. The page needs to allow "free" comments from the fans so that they feel in control of the content. They also need to have the ability to upload pictures to the wall. It is important though that the page is interactive with the fans. If questions are posed, they should be answered. As well, it is important to ask the fans questions if comment frequency seems to be lagging. If the company does not like the direction of the comments, it can also pose questions to redirect the conversation.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was twofold. First, was to investigate the reasons why people became fans of various product pages on Facebook and second, to determine the type of comments that were made on the walls of those pages. This research was conducted by quantifying 100 comments from four company's pages involved in very different industries.

This research showed that people who were already consumers of the products or services offered wrote a majority of the comments. These comments were mostly displays of affection or support for the company. The next significant category of comments was those written by people looking for help in attaining the product or coupons to get free samples. A majority of these comments were obviously made by people who were also already consumers of the product.

The Facebook page's walls were found to be, essentially, a conversation between consumers about why they like the product, how much they like it, and a few reasons about how the company could improve their experience with the product. If the company tried to direct the conversation in a particular way by asking a question, it was nearly always successful. The more interaction from the page's administration the more the people wrote on the wall and interacted with each other.

The most important finding from this research is that Facebook pages rarely draw in new consumers or convince people to try a product that they would otherwise not try. Facebook pages are useful for a myriad of other reasons, but not as gaining a larger consumer base.

This is one of the first studies conducted analyzing the comments made on Facebook pages. It became apparent during this research that these Facebook pages may not even be types of viral marketing. It does not appear that people share pages with their friends as often as expected and that their friends very rarely become fans of pages just because their friends are. This is most likely because becoming a fan of a page requires much more support of a brand or company than just trying a product. Only people who truly support and enjoy a company become a fan of that page, typically.

The study shows that people are much more willing to try a product from a friend's recommendation than they are willing to publicly become a fan of a product and put a link to it on their Facebook profile. The study goes as far as questioning the validity of considering a Facebook page as marketing. The utility of a page is that the company now has an additional location where they can be easily contacted by the consumer and be given feedback from the consumer.

It is important to note that while this study shows that Facebook pages are not true viral marketing strategies and are not useful in expanding the consumer base, companies still must make Facebook pages. It is a sign of disinterest and a company is behind the times if they do not have one. Additionally, it allows someone to take over the name on Facebook and tarnish the reputation. Therefore, a Facebook page is necessary but not entirely beneficial.

There are several limitations to this study. First, the research assumes that all comments made on Facebook pages are truthful and that anyone affected by the Facebook page would leave a comment suggesting such. A more intense study would most certainly need to interview a sampling of people who wrote comments on the wall.

If this study were to be conducted again, more comments should be analyzed over different periods of time and these comments should be categorized more systematically. The comments should be categorized by more than one researcher and when disagreements occur, decided by a third reader. This would create much more accurate data and an experiment that is more easily replicated.

It would be beneficial to also study the growth rate of fans on the page. This would allow the researcher to better define Facebook pages as viral marketing if the number of fans grew exponentially as opposed to linearly. The researcher could also compare growth rates between pages to determine the best way to attract more fans and therefore more consumers.

The most important question is whether Facebook pages help increase sales or are merely necessary in order to prevent sales decreasing from a Facebook page that tarnishes the brand. A study that was able to observe the number of sales before and after a Facebook page was created would be most helpful.