

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Mary Beth McCabe, National University Richard Weaver, National University

ABSTRACT

Social media marketing strategies have transformed how organizations interact with their audiences and customers. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are being utilized for communications by nearly every organization. This study looks at how educational organizations who provide services to K-12 educators use social media and judge to what extent it is effective. Social media usage was evaluated to determine if interaction is collaborative, meaningful, and measurable. Data was gathered from the content, frequency and type of messages and a rubric was used to measure the effectiveness of several organizations. The studied educational organizations were found to have quite varied choices for preferred social media and had a great range of effectiveness in the media used. The most effective were found to engage two-way communication with their followers rather than simply broadcasting messages.

JEL: M30, M31

KEYWORDS: Social Media, Engaging Customers, Interaction, Effective Marketing, Communications

INTRODUCTION

The problem is that social media marketing is not engaging for all organizations although for some it has been very engaging. What factors lead an organization to get motivated customers through social channels, while others fall flat? The authors noticed that some organizations had strong connections and frequent community engagement, and others did not exhibit such behaviors of their members. This research will consider engagement to action toward purchase behavior and the challenges that organizations face on that path. The authors will consider previous research and consumer behavior theories such as Maslow (1943, 1954), Alderfer ERG Motivation theory (1969) and Hofstede et al. (2010). The framework here reviews evaluative criteria such as the purpose of the organization, and if there is a resulting response that could lead to some positive result or even to financial success. Why did some succeed? What difference was there? The authors' results provide advice to be more effective. One of the most critical challenges for organizations is how to find the Return on Investment (ROI) in Social Media Marketing. This research is intended to explore how a variety of organizations address these marketing challenges. As organizations consider where to invest their marketing resources, they need to know what has the greatest impact toward their goals. This task leads to the following research questions that guided this study: 1. What services and information are offered? 2. How is the organization and its services presented on social media? 3. How does the organization utilize social media? And, 4. What is the organization's implied value proposition to potential users/customers?

The challenges of marketing educational programs in a complicated world led the research team to investigate which companies are promoting educational programs and how are they promoting them. The educational organizations faced the problem of solving specific issues. Five outcomes of educational programs were the basis of the research search on the internet: a) establish a positive school culture, b) increase academic performance, c) improve safety d) decrease problem behavior, and e) establish or

encourage physically active classrooms/education (McCabe & Weaver, 2018). These outcomes were used to identify organizations offering services to K-12 educators to accomplish the five outcomes. Once identified, the organizations became the subjects for this research. The researchers examined how they are promoting themselves on social media and then evaluated/explained how the messages were being communicated through these marketing channels. The paper summarizes the effectiveness of the social media for the organizations in the study, using five criteria: Usability, Efficiency, Accessibility, Interaction and Metrics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of the literature for this research is consumer behavior focused, especially related to Alderfer (1969) and his ERG (existence, relatedness, and growth) concerning what motivates people to behave. Studies by Maslow (1943, 1954) and Hofstede, et al. (2010) indicate levels of hierarchy of how humans will behave. Alderfer (1969) considered more empirical studies in his motivation research. Since this is a study of social media, the authors especially want to focus on the relatedness part of ERG, which includes all of the needs which involve relationships with significant other people and depends on a process of sharing or mutuality. The elements of this research include exchanges of acceptance, confirmation, understanding and influence. These elements are all associated with the practice of social media. The opposite of relatedness is not anger, instead it is a sense of distance, lack of being connected or indifference (Alderfer, 1969).

Hofstede, et al. (2010) considered organizational culture and cooperation and survival and sustaining the group. Their work focuses on long-term vs. short-term orientation, indulgence vs. restraint, and deep evolution of cultures. This edition focuses on the concept of a "moral circle" that carries culture. Related to this study are the concepts of the avoidance of uncertainty, long-term vs. short-term orientations, and how the workplace and culture relate. The study is important for consumer behaviors of the business to business communication via social media, studied in this paper. This research resulted from an accidentally created database at IBM over three decades. Giddens (2001) looks at social anthropology, or the division of labor between sociologists and anthropologists. The research in this study looks at social media, which include social processes within societies and society in the larger picture. Hofstede looked at both groups and categories. A group is a number of people in contact with each other (Hofstede, et al. 2010). A category consists of people who have something in common, but may not have had any contact (Hofstede, et al. 2010). The researchers explored how social media is worthwhile for an organization's communication and growth. The authors drew on several studies for the criteria to select educational organizations for inclusion in this study: 1. DePorter, B., & Hernacki, M. (1992) with Quantum Learning and Supercamp focused on outcomes of K-12 education. 2. DePorter, B., Reardon, M., & Singer-Nourie, S. (1999) 8 Keys to Success, and, 3. Given, B. & DePorter, B., (2015) transformation due to human imitation of positive interactions, and goal-setting behaviors that lead to achievement in K-12 schools.

Social Media

Media can be considered social because it stores and transmits human knowledge that orginates in social society (Fuchs, 2017). The most accessed websites include social networking sites like Facebook, Linkedin, YouTube and Twitter. They support communication, collaboration, content sharing or building of online communities (Fuchs, 2017). Lee, Hosanagar & Nair (2016) found that social media content related to brand personality is associated with higher levels of consumer engagement but mention of information, such as price or ratings, content leads to lower levels of engagement. However, overall higher engagement happens combining information with the brand personality content. The successful marketer will choose content that informs along with the brand content to improve social media engagement. How do organizations get the attention of an audience online? Using graphics or photographs are two methods to get attention. Ozmen (2015) analyzed users' attitudes about online

content, including how information is retrieved and processed. The study was geared to find out how to better capture the attention of users, by using photo retrieval. How should online ads be presented for more effective responses? Users lost attention faster and stopped viewing earlier while viewing non-uniform photo sizes. They also were attracted by keywords and the initial presentation. They gave more importance to specific details over general information, indicating that being explicitly clear in the content may lead to even greater value to users. Attitudes toward information retrieval and processing do matter. eMarketer estimates adults in the United States watch TV for four hours a day and consume another six hours on digital media. Of that time, three hours are on mobile devices (nonvoice) and two hours on desktop/laptop computers. Since the number of devices has exploded, new multichannel attribution models have been expanded to more than half of U.S. companies (eMarketer, 2016).

Using these new models, now marketers theoretically can measure the attention given to each of these devices accurately. eMarketer predicted that cross channel measurements and attribution models will be used by 6 in 10 digital marketing and media practitioners in 2017. In 2016, these same practitioners said that they would be investing in the models, but did not all follow through on the promises. The authors considered motivation and intentions vs. actions as they researched social media for educational organizations. Wang & Kimozmen (2017) studied how social media positively impacts a business by improving customer satisfaction, among other things. It allows businesses to improve customer engagement, Customer Relationship Marketing (CRM) capabilities and overall performance. Wang & Kimozmen (2017) studied social CRM, a merger of social media into database-related marketing strategies and researched helping organizations meet their goals by improving capabilities and implementation. Motivation for successfully implementing the brand experience in social media channels is different for service organizations. Swani & Milne (2017) found that there are challenges in the successful implementation of social media strategies for brands. This can be segmented between services versus goods organizations. Services, not goods, messages were more popular with known corporate brand names. For products, not services, using the product brand name, image and video would be more successful in reaching the audience. Swani & Milne (2017) found that service messages generated more comments than goods messages in their study on Facebook. This study considered the number of comments users generated on Facebook pages.

Generic or organic means non-paid content to advertisers. Organic social media is created by brands, not paid for advertising, but it can lead to more visibility when the consumer shares it with others (Fulgoni, 2015). The second option is where marketers pay for internet companies to serve advertising in response to relevance and search behavior (Rutz & Bucklin, 2011). Having followers on social media does not mean that everyone will see all content when they open a social media platform and scroll through the newsfeed. The percentage of followers who automatically or organically see page posts gets smaller as social media platforms have included paid advertising in the business model, which limits the non-paid or organic results.

METHOD

Building on a previous search engine study of website effectiveness, these are the steps in the author's current research, conducted from 2015-2017: 1. Searched for providers of identified outcomes, using Google, using variations of key words associated with five educational categories. (DePorter & Hernacki, 1992) 2. Visited and documented content. 3. Identified social media linked to website. 4. Visited social media platforms using multiple devices. And 5. assessed the digital approach used by the identified organizations. The authors considered how these organizations used social media for promotional messaging. The research team considered the product or service that they are promoting in the analysis. The team built spreadsheets and scored them on how effectively they promoted on social media. The authors gathered data on social media metrics such as frequency and timing of content published of 11

ranked websites on specific keywords. The methodology considered the social media promotion of the organizations.

On November 16, 2016, the researchers gathered the data by visiting each social platform that was listed on their organization's website. Overall, there were approximately 60 different platforms where the authors gathered publicly available data. This was done through the use of links provided on the websites, as that was the most reliable way to locate the content, although there are other ways to search for these pages, too. The research included measuring popularity as evidenced by the number of followers or likes. Using the following adapted rubric, the authors created a ranking system (1-4, four being highest) based on the following factors. Higher scores meant social media experiences were ranked more effective than those with lower scores (Aziz & Kamludin, 2014). The last two items in the rubric were adapted to fit social media parameters. 1. Usability – effectiveness – degree user can complete goal. 2. Efficiency – resources needed by user to complete goal. 3. Accessibility – can everyone access what is necessary to complete goal. 4. Interaction – how easily user can learn to interact with Social Media, and 5. Metrics – The number of followers, viewers and reviews indicating satisfaction on social media. The authors determined the total scores and ranked the social media effectiveness for each of the service brands, seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Sample Images of Links



Figure 1 includes sample images of the links to social media platforms seen on websites.

Findings

The social media platforms were a variety of for-profit, non-profit, public, and private organizations. Here are a few exploratory findings about specific social media included: two social media winners stood out: FISH Philosophy! and Edutopia. Fish Philosophy! was a commercial website. Both of these organizations had a very clear social media marketing strategy that was relevant to the search phrases. The Fish! Philosophy website had prominent links to their Facebook, Twitter, Linkedin, and YouTube social media accounts, and clear 'contact us' information. Most of the other social media uses from other organizations were not memorable user experiences, because they were mostly about them, and not relevant to the audience. They seemed very self-promoting and bureaucratic. They looked like they were created by committees, rather than serving a specific audience. They were trying to satisfy many audiences, and therefore satisfied very little. Edutopia used bold visual images, including photos of founder and philanthropist George Lucas, and content seemed very fresh. The experience included wide-angle panoramas, sliding graphics, and offered relevant case examples of how people learn using an evidencebased approach. Table 1 describes the website name and the social media platforms that were found linking to that site on November 7, 2016. Every organization listed on the website at least two social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter). The greatest number of social media platforms listed was six. All of the websites had at least Facebook and Twitter account in social media. The next most popular was YouTube, followed by Linkedin, Pinterest, Instagram, Flickr and one had Google+. Later in this report, the reader will see how interaction with followers differed by platform and by organization. As indicated in Table 1, Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development (ASCD) had six different social media platforms on which they promoted the organization. Success for All and Counseling in Schools had only Facebook and Twitter accounts referenced on their websites. None of the organizations were missing social media entirely.

Organization	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	LinkedIn	Pinterest	Instagram	Flickr
NY State Ed Department	Yes	Yes					
Greater Good Science Center	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			
Assoc. Supervision & Curriculum Dev.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Nat Association of Elementary School Principals	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes
Edutopia	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	
FISH!	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			
Success for All Foundation	Yes	Yes					
American School Counselor Association	Yes	Yes		Yes			
Counseling in Schools	Yes	Yes					
We Are Teachers *	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes
Safe Supportive Learning	Yes	Yes	Yes				

Table 1: Use of Social Media This Table Presents the Various Social Media Sites Used by the Organizations in the Study on Nov. 7, 2016

Table 1 describes the primary platforms for social media as indicated on the websites on a specific date, November, 7, 2016.*We Are Teachers also linked to Google+.

Different organizations made distinctive choices about their preference for which social media to use. The number of followers is one indication of how invested the organization is in that social media platform. In addition, the number of followers may be reflected in the quality of the content and the shareability of that content. Edutopia has made a significant investment in all three of these platforms. There is a large drop off of followers/viewers after the first two of the educational organizations reviewed. Nine days later, we looked closely at three of these major platforms, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Table 2 describes the number of Facebook followers (i.e., likes) on November 16, 2016. On Facebook, to become a follower, a user needs to click the button that says "like". The first column shows that Edutopia clearly has the most followers, with one million, and the next is we are teachers with 760,000 followers. The remaining pages have much smaller numbers of followers.

Table 3 describes the number of Twitter followers, or those who chose to see tweets on the Twitter platform from that organization. This is a measure of popularity, and of interest in the subjects that are presented by the organization. For some users, this is a newsfeed of the most current and relevant topics that the organization wants to share. It is also seen as a platform where users can repost (retweet) and comment directly to the user. Like Facebook, Twitter followers of Edutopia have the largest sized followers of the organizations chosen, with 850,000. The next largest size of followers is We Are Teachers, with 340,000. The low range of followers with fewer than 100 for Counseling in Schools, also have the smallest number of followers on Facebook.

Brand	# of Facebook followers
Edutopia	1,000,000
We Are Teachers	760,000
Assoc. Supervision & Curriculum Dev.	123,000
Greater Good Science Center	85,000
American School Counselors Association	30,000
FISH! Philosophy	17,500
National Association of Elementary School Principals	6,500
NY State Ed Department	4100
Success for All	2000
Safe Supportive Learning	450
Counseling in Schools	175

Table 2: Number of Facebook Followers

This table presents the number of Facebook followers as of Nov. 16, 2016.

Table 3: Number of Twitter Followers

Brand	# of Twitter Followers
Edutopia	850,000
We Are Teachers	340,000
Assoc. Supervision & Curriculum Dev.	181,000
Greater Good Science Center	32,000
Nat Assoc of Elem School Principals	28,000
Am School Counselor Assoc.	20,000
NY State Ed Department	15000
FISH!	3,200
Success for All Foundation	1,500
Safe Supportive Learning	700
Counseling in Schools	83

Table 3 indicates the number of Twitter followers as of November 16, 2016.

Table 4 indicates audience for YouTube, which is the number of views of the video presented. YouTube (owned by Google) is the second largest search engine by popularity. YouTube is advertiser and subscription supported. Users can subscribe to get YouTube without commercials for a monthly fee. Edutopia was in the number one position for YouTube views. It was also in the top position for Facebook and Twitter followers. The second largest metric was Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center with nearly 4 million YouTube views. Five of our webpages researched did not have a YouTube Channel on this date in 2016.

Table 5 reports a summary of the connections or, in other words, effectiveness and engagement of the social media for the organizations in the study. The five measures were: Usability, Efficiency, Accessibility, Interaction and Metrics. Interaction included responsiveness by the number of and the recency of comments by those communicating with followers. For example, if there was a Facebook comment or review that was ignored, the score on interaction would be reduced. Metrics included the number of likes, followers and views, as shown in Figures 1, 2, and 3. The researchers scored on a 1-5 ranker, independent of other criteria. The totals of the five items ranged from a low of 6 (Counselors in

Schools) to a high of 20 (perfect score) for ASCD, Edutopia and We Are Teachers. Greater Good scored 19 points, just one point from a perfect score.

Table 4: Number of Youtube Views

Brand	# of Youtube Views	
Edutopia	10,400,000	
Greater Good Science Cen.	3,908,000	
We Are Teachers	660,000	
FISH!	570,000	
Assoc. Supervision & Curriculum Dev.	160,000	
Nat Assoc of Elem School Principals	34,000	
NY State Ed Department	0	
Success for All Foundation	0	
Am School Counselor Assoc.	0	
Counseling in Schools	0	
Safe Supportive Learning	0	

Table 4 describes the number of YouTube Views on November 16, 2016.

Table 5: Connections with Social Media
--

Social media	Usability	Efficiency	Accessibility	Interaction	Metrics	Total
Counselors in Schools	1	1	2	1	1	6
New York Dept. of Ed	3	2	3	1	1	10
Safe Support	2	2	2	2	2	10
Success for All	2	2	2	2	2	10
NAESP	3	2	3	2	3	13
ASCA	3	3	2	3	3	14
FISH! Philosophy	3	4	3	3	3	16
Greater Good	3	4	4	4	4	19
ASCD	4	4	4	4	4	20
Edutopia	4	4	4	4	4	20
We Are Teachers	4	4	4	4	4	20

Table 5 describes the connections with social media, when using the ranking scales (Aziz & Kamludin, 2014).

CONCLUSIONS/FURTHER STUDY

The goals of the study were to answer the questions for selected organizations: 1. What services and information are offered via social media? 2. How is the organization and its services presented on social media? 3. How does the organization utilize social media? And, 4. What is the organization's implied value proposition to potential users/customers? The foundation of the study is based in part on the research of motivation theory, consumer behavior and relatedness (Alderfer, 1969). The authors considered that consumer behavior and motivation theory can be revealed and measured through groups and organizations. The problem faced is that social media is not engaging for all organizations. Some organizations that are connecting through usability, efficiency, accessibility, interaction and metrics are those that are scoring the highest and therefore most effective in social media.

A summary of Table 5 results indicate that the top five scores come from three different top level domains, org, .edu and .com organizations. Top level domains refer to the final characters of a domain name, immediately after the "dot" symbol. The three domains with perfect scoring in the rubric were all .org top level domains. These organizations are all highly engaged with their audiences and use the practice of relatedness (Alderfer, 1969) in their public messaging in social media, referring to exchanges of acceptance, confirmation, understanding and influence. The perfect scores reflected listening to their audience and responding in ways that were meaningful and purposeful. What the most successful organizations did was a best practice use of social media tactics that engaged with their audience. Although there is no specific chart, the authors noted that 'reviews' (i.e., customer feedback) were encouraged by followers on Facebook for 50% of the organizations observed. The ability to give and receive reviews is one indication of engagement in social media practice.

The organizations with the highest scores were the most effective based on the rating system methodology described earlier. The high scores are an indication of success because they are effectively engaged and related to the needs of the followers and users. The authors believe that the results will be useful for a rubric of comparison to rate the potential engagement success of social media outreach and marketing strategies. The education industry and organizations in the study will be interested in the scoring and analysis, because it shines a focus on best practices and encourages certain specific behaviors of relatedness and engagement. Other educational programs not in this study, especially those focused on K-12 education, knowing they need to improve their social media may now be alert to what they need to do in order to promote their communications more successfully. Social media is generally considered on "rented space" compared to the "ownership" of a website, where the organization controls any changes that take place in the architecture, style, or content availability. There are several limitations to the research. Social media platforms are subject to constant change. What works one week in social media to build an audience may not work next month or year. The conversation about effectiveness naturally changes along with the platform algorithm update. A platform (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) that is popular for users today may not be as popular next year, but the study's basic rubric can remain a measurement tool that is usable no matter the platform. This research may be considered a pioneering study in this \$2 trillion education industry. It is based on a services industry, but could be used to study a product also. The authors suggest looking for a correlation between K-12 educational vs. commercial ventures and social media engagement. Geography may place in this conversation, as organizations based in New York may be very different than San Francisco as far as consumer tastes and educational influences via social media. The study of the "effectiveness" was relevant at this point in time. That study of effectiveness and impact will likely only increase in importance, and that can be researched in the future. It would also be valued by the authors to know if there is any pushback to the findings, especially for the learning organizations who scored poorly.

APPENDIX

These are some details about the social media that were researched. The .GOV was New York State education system, a public non-profit. Greater Good Science Center was an .EDU from Berkeley, California. ASCD is the Association of Supervision and Curriculum (an .EDU). NAESP is the National Association of Elementary School Principals, a private non-profit for school principals, 501c3, and an .ORG, seeking membership for elementary school principals. Edutopia is a private (branded) non-profit .ORG., known as sponsors of National Public Radio (NPR) through institutional ads. They are founded by the (George) Lucas Educational Foundation and are entertainment-based. Edutopia is a .org, non-profit organization that looks at assessment, projects for learning, and develops teachers. They use the tagline "join the movement for change" to motivate others to participate. FISH! Philosophy use training videos from Pike's Peak Market in Seattle to help organizations improve teamwork, customer service, employee engagement, leadership and retention through their special training methods. The .COM was FISH!, a

private for-profit firm, with events, written material for the K-12 teachers and other organizations. The promotion focused on selling the products and services. They offered a useful experience due to the tools found on the website and in social media.

REFERENCES

Alderfer, C. (1969). An Empirical Test of a New Theory of Human Needs, *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 4, 142-175.

Aziz, NS & Kamlindun, A., (2014). Assessing Website Usability Attributes Using Partial Least Squares *International Journal of Information and Electronics Engineering*, Vol. 4, No. 2, March 2014 p.137-144.

DePorter, B. & Hernacki, M. (1992). Quantum Learning. New York: Random House.

DePorter, B., Reardon, M., & Singer-Nourie, S. (1999). *Quantum teaching: Orchestrating student success*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

eMarketer (2016). Multichannel Attribution Roundup May 2016 https://www.scribd.com/document/318134322/EMarketer-Multichannel-Attribution-Roundup accessed Feb. 24, 2018.

Giddens, A., ed. (2001). The global third way debate. Polity Press, Cambridge, UK.

Given, B. & DePorter, B, (2015). Excellence in Teaching and Learning, https://www.quantumlearning.com/pdf/Excellence-in-Teaching-Chp1-2-web.pdf accessed April 17, 2017.

Fuchs, C. (2017). Social Media: A Critical Introduction, Sage Press, London.

Fulgoni, G. (2015). How Brands Using Social Media Ignite Marketing and Drive Growth Measurement of Paid Social Media Appears Solid But Are the Metrics for Organic Social Overstated? *Journal of Advertising Research*, vol. 55 (3) 232-236.

Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G.J, & Minkov, M. (2010). Cultures and Organizations, Software of the Mind. 3rd Ed. McGraw-Hill, New York.

Lee, D., Hosanagar, K. & Nair, H. (2018). Advertising Content and Consumer Engagement on Social Media: Evidence from Facebook. *Management Science*, Published online Jan 18, 2018.

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological review*, 50(4), 370.

Maslow, A. H. (1954). Personality and motivation. Harlow, England: Longman, 1, 987.

McCabe, M. & Weaver, R. (2018). Digital Marketing Strategies for Educational Programs, *Institute for Business & Finance Research*, Jan 3, 2018, Kona, Hawaii presentation.

Özmen, M. U. (2015). Online information retrieval behaviour and economics of attention. *Online Information Review*, *39*(6), 779-794. doi:10.1108/OIR-05-2015-0139.

Rutz, O. & R. Bucklin (2011). From Generic to Branded: A Model of Spillover in Paid Search Advertising. *Journal of Marketing Research*: Vol. 48, No. 1, pp. 87-102.

Swani, K. & Milne, G. (2017). Evaluating Facebook brand content popularity for service versus goods offerings. *Journal of Business Research.*, Vol. 79, 123-133.

Wang, Z. & Kimozmen, H. (2017). Can Social media Marketing Improve Customer Relationship Capabilities and Firm Performance? Dynamic Capability Perspective. *Journal of Interactive Marketing* (Mergent, Inc.). Aug 2017, Vol. 39, 15-26.

Yang, S. & Ghose, A. (2010). Analyzing the Relationship Between Organic and Sponsored Search Advertising: Positive, Negative, or Zero Interdependence? *Marketing Science* 2010 29(4), 602-623.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Dr. Mary Beth McCabe is a full-time Professor at the School of Business and Management at National University, where she is Academic Program Director for Marketing. She has a Doctorate in Marketing from Alliant International University and an MBA in Marketing from DePaul University. Her research is concentrated in the fields of Hispanic Marketing, Media and Sustainability.

Dr. Richard Weaver is a full-time Professor at the School of Business and Management in National University and has a doctoral degree in Human and Organizational Systems from Fielding Graduate University. He is also the Academic Program Director for the Masters in Global Management Program and Bachelor of Arts in Management and teaches Management and Strategy courses.