

The identification of criteria for the optimal use of Facebook pages for marketing purposes: a South African perspective

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Keywords

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Abstract

The development of non-traditional communication channels in recent years has progressively created a world more digital, networked and interlaced by a myriad of communication tools than ever before. With Facebook being the most prevalent social network, this study aims to guide local South African organisations to use Facebook optimally to engage and communicate with their customers. The study strives to incorporate the latest ideas about social media marketing in the relevant literature with the opinions of local social media marketing experts. The generally ineffective use of Facebook as a communication channel by small, inexperienced organisations is seen as a justification for identifying a set of criteria to guide organisations in using Facebook pages as a driver of communication. The empirical phase of the research adopted a cluster analysis methodology and sampled 34 local social media experts. The empirical research produced a list of seven criteria (clusters) each focused on an aspect of the optimal use of Facebook pages for marketing purposes. These criteria should assist South African companies in developing more successful social media marketing strategies using Facebook.

1. Introduction

A variety of factors contribute to successful marketing. One such factor is effective interactive communication with customers, aimed at encouraging the buy-in of customers (Cant, Van Heerden & Ngambi, 2010:326). The selection of the most appropriate channels to support communication with customers is thus an important decision for any organisation and contributes significantly to the successful marketing of the firm, its brand and its products (Ume-Amen, 2011:2). Marketers have access to a wide range of channels, both traditional (e.g. television, radio and print) and non-traditional (e.g. digital and online), to enable communication with customers (Ogden-Barnes, 2012:5).

In the context of non-traditional communication channels, the popularity of Facebook among social media users, as well as among businesses as the channel of choice, underscores the need to ensure that organisations use Facebook effectively to reach their customers (as Facebook users inevitably represent customers or potential customers) (Heivadi & Khajeheian, 2013:549). The literature suggests, however, that firms still struggle with utilising Facebook to its fullest, mainly because they lack clear criteria to guide them in achieving this goal (He & Nguyen, 2016). The study that this article reports on, aimed to identify such criteria that could be used to guide the efforts of organisations in leveraging maximum value from their Facebook pages (assuming they had chosen Facebook for this purpose). Drawing on the academic literature on this topic, a number of criteria were identified that researchers saw as important in driving the successful adoption of Facebook as a social media channel. These criteria were then introduced to a total of 143 social media experts in South Africa and they were asked to indicate which criterion they thought were the most important. Using cluster analysis, an initial list of 48 criteria drawn from the literature was narrowed to seven key criteria that the respondents felt were the most important. These key criteria are presented in the latter part of this article and serve as a valuable 'roadmap' for firms to use when adopting Facebook as a marketing channel.

In the remainder of this article, the context and literature review are presented, followed by the research objectives, methodology used, as well as the findings and conclusion.

2. Context and literature review

In the realm of non-traditional marketing, which includes digital and online marketing, social media (commonly viewed as a subsector of digital marketing) has grown significantly in importance in recent years as a communication channel (Alakali, Alu, Moses & Ogbu, 2013:1-3; Tamilarasi, 2015:97). Within the world of social media, one channel, in particular, is far ahead of the others in terms of its popularity, namely Facebook with almost 1.8 billion users (Statista, 2016). Facebook is also often positioned in the business and academic literature as the channel of choice for organisations (Bekoglu & Onayli, 2016:261; Cheung & Leung, 2012:1).

Before discussing Facebook as a key social media marketing channel, it is appropriate to define social media. Becker, Naaman and Gravano (2010:1) define social media as a widely accepted circulation channel allowing users (mostly individuals) to share substantial amounts of user-generated materials concerning their personal experiences and interests over the web using specially developed social 'environments' or sites. Examples of these social sites include Twitter, LinkedIn, blogs, YouTube, WhatsApp and Facebook; there are several thousand social sites available today (Tsakiris, 2015). According to Gunelius (2011), these social media publishing and communication tools, sites and destinations are aimed at facilitating conversations, engagement and participation by users.

Examining the many social media channels that are available today indicate that the social network called Facebook is the largest and perhaps the most well-established of all (Ostrow, 2010). It is also one of the oldest social media channels and by October 2012, only eight years after its introduction, it had accumulated an audience of one billion active users (Facebook, 2012). This statistic has since grown to 1.79 billion active users monthly (Statista, 2016). Facebook facilitates user-driven communications between its hundreds of millions of daily users, enabling them to share their thoughts with a network of family, friends and colleagues on their personal profiles (Myers, 2011). Certainly, a further important psychological driver that should be recognised as being behind Facebook's popularity as a social channel, is the "fear of missing out" (Steggink, 2012:8; Abel, Buff & Burr, 2016:41).

Because of its wide reach and customer-centred nature, many organisations have adopted Facebook as an additional or alternative channel for communicating with their customers. The readiness of organisations to accept Facebook may, in part, also be ascribed to the fact that it is a handy 'tool' to use to monitor what competitors are doing and to benchmark themselves. In implementing Facebook as a marketing communication channel, organisations either strive to become part of the conversations being initiated by users, or they initiate conversations of their own in the hope that their customers will participate (Fournier & Avery, 2011:194).

There are also recognised negatives associated with using Facebook as a marketing channel, that need to be noted (Webster, 2016). These include the potential for customers to vent their frustrations on Facebook; the problems associated with the accurate measurement of impressions given how Facebook works; the auction nature of Facebook advertising that puts smaller businesses at a disadvantage; and the fact that Facebook is a time-consuming channel that may require full-time monitoring (Webster, 2016). These and other possible challenges of using Facebook, however, do not detract from developing criteria for the better implementation of Facebook pages.

Facebook is still a relatively new communication channel for many companies that are either considering its implementation or have recently adopted it (Mayo, 2010). Several researchers maintain that very few organisations, even larger firms, have yet fully mastered the effective use of Facebook as a marketing communication channel (Belkin & Ramers, 2011:1; Fournier & Avery,

2011:2; Owyang, 2010:4; Ramos, 2010:3). This is also true of South African organisations that are still coming to terms with Facebook as a marketing tool (Levitt, 2010).

3. The research problem

Notwithstanding the growth of social media as a means of communicating with existing and potential customers, many businesses – both large and small – are still struggling to come to terms with exactly how to best put these channels to work for their respective firms (Barry, Markey, Almquist & Brahm, 2011). Organisations are increasingly including social media as part of their communication strategies (Grainger, 2010:3), although this may be due in part to the cost effective nature of social media channels, Facebook included. However, it appears from research undertaken elsewhere (Alterian, 2011:27; Belkin & Ramers, 2011:1; Owyang, 2010:9; Patricios, 2008:100; Ramos, 2010:4) that organisations generally lack knowledge on how to use social media, especially Facebook, as an effective communication channel. Certainly the nebulous and highly dynamic and evolving nature of social media has contributed to this general lack of knowledge. It has been suggested by researchers, such as Owyang (2010), that organisations may need a set of criteria to guide them through the process of using Facebook optimally. This shortcoming also appears to be true of South African organisations (Patricios, 2008:100). The research problem is thus that no scientific guidelines exist for the effective implementation of Facebook as a marketing communication channel in the South African context.

The social media provides an increasingly popular channel of choice for organisations to use to support their communications with customers (Owyang, 2010:4). Perhaps the main benefit of social media as a communication channel is its interactive, customer-driven nature (Li, Li, He, Ward & Davies, 2011:10606). Customers using social media can easily initiate communication with, or instantly respond to communication from the organisation. At the same time organisations find it difficult to comprehend and manage the new-found power in the hands of customers to direct communications with and about the organisation. Organisations may find this transformation challenging as they have become used to traditional one-way communication channels, such as television, radio and print, where the marketer generally initiates and takes control of the communication that occurs (Parent, Plangger & Bal, 2011:220). Owyang (2010) undertook research to measure the effectiveness of organisational efforts to leverage good marketing from Facebook pages in order to determine the critical criteria for the optimal use of a Facebook page. This study culminated in the design of a scorecard that could be used to measure the effectiveness of Facebook pages. The proposed study builds on this research by Owyang (2010) with the aim of developing a 'home-grown' set of criteria based on South African circumstances.

In order to guide local organisations to use Facebook optimally to communicate with their customers, the study will strive to incorporate the latest ideas about social media marketing in the relevant literature with the opinions of local social media marketing experts. This study thus serves as corroboration of the earlier research by Owyang (2010), while incorporating the latest thinking on the matter and adapting it for use in the South African context. The ineffective use of Facebook as a communication channel by smaller, more inexperienced organisations is seen as a justification for identifying a set of criteria to guide organisations in using Facebook pages as a driver of communication. The main contribution of this study will therefore be the formulation of a set of criteria for the optimal use of Facebook pages for marketing purposes in South Africa.

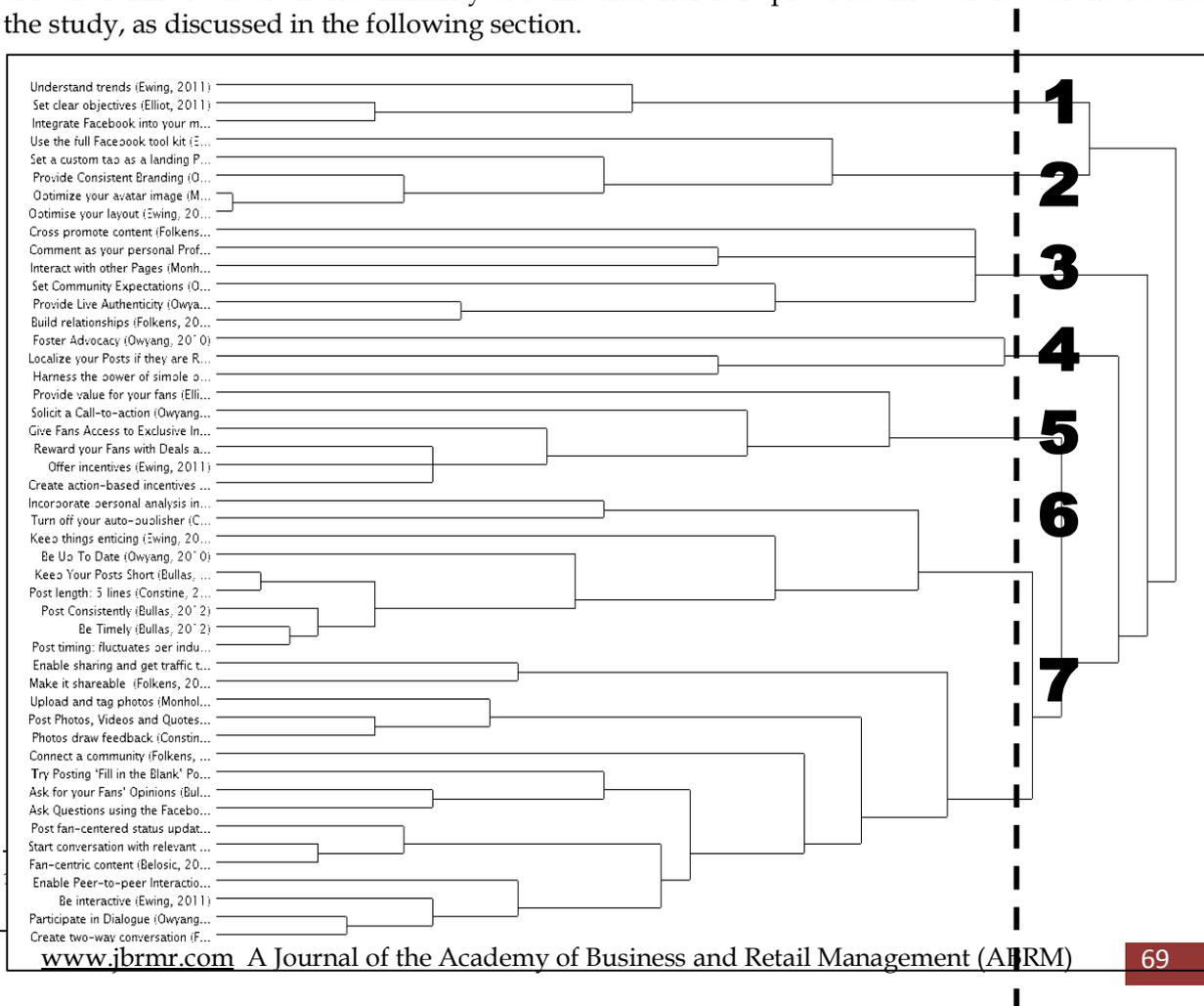
In this chapter, the researcher commences by arguing in favour of the use of the most appropriate marketing communication channels in order to support the building of strong customer relationships. The study then introduces social media, Facebook in particular, as a new, non-traditional communication channel, highlighting the opportunities and challenges faced by organisations in using Facebook to successfully drive communications with customers.

4. Research objective

Figure 1: Similarity matrix (extract)

In the similarity matrix in figure 1, the 48 original items are listed vertically and horizontally on the left-hand side and at the top of the diagram – the figure above is only an extract, as the actual matrix is quite large. According to the hierarchical clustering method used, items indicating high scores in the similarity matrix were regarded as being more likely to be clustered together. The lower the score between two items in the similarity matrix, the smaller the likelihood that these two items will be clustered together. Assumptions regarding their similarity and the likelihood that they will be clustered together can therefore be made for each pair of items in the matrix.

To illustrate these assumptions, refer to the extract provided in figure 1. The items circled above, for example ‘Set clear objectives’ and ‘Understand trends’, are scored 47¹ in the similarity matrix, which suggests a rather high likelihood that the two items should be grouped together. The highest visible score in the extract is a score of 78, awarded to the items ‘Optimise your layout’ and ‘Optimise your avatar image’, which suggests that these two items should definitely and positively be clustered together. For another set of circled items, ‘Give fans access to exclusive information’ and ‘Interact with other pages’, the low score of 8 that appears in the similarity matrix indicates that those items are unlikely to be clustered together. The accuracy of the assumptions based on the similarity matrix above can be seen in a dendrogram (see figure 2), which is a visual representation of the clusters formed based on the similarity of items and therefore provides an overview of the results of the study, as discussed in the following section.



Cluster analysis is always a subjective technique in that the choice of the number of clusters – in this case seven – lies in the hand of the researcher. In support of the choice of seven cluster, a cluster validity exercise was undertaken using three key measures suggested by (Cooper & Milligan, 1988:322), namely a cubic cluster criterion, a Pseudo F statistic and a Pseudo t^2 statistic, all three being used together to point to the optimal number of clusters. Figure 3 below highlights an analysis conducted using these three statistics, which when read together point to seven being the optimal number of clusters. The literature also supports seven clusters as an acceptable number.

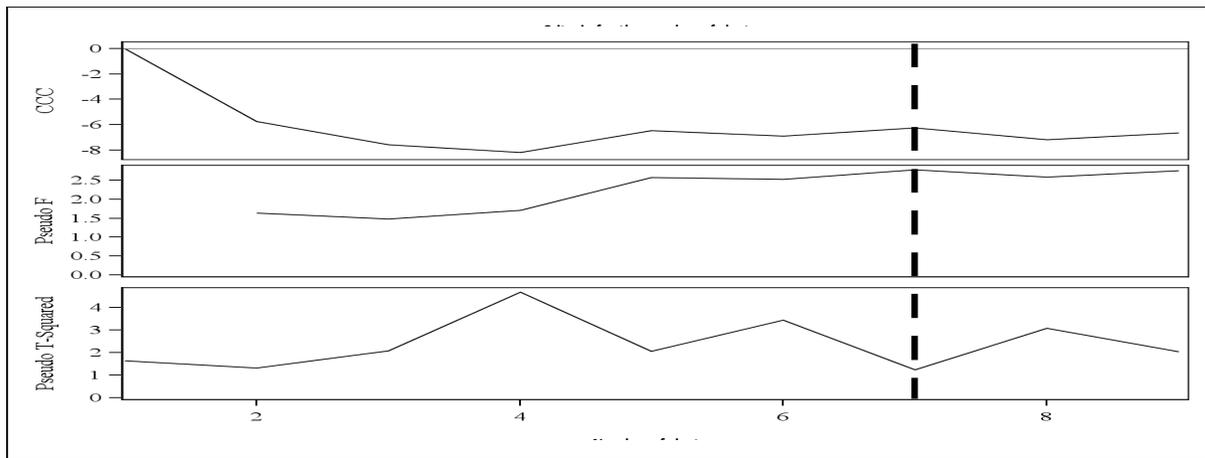


Figure 3: Cluster validity indices

In the next sections, the findings are presented and then discussed.

6. Findings

The literature review identified a total of 48 guidelines that could be used for the optimal implementation of Facebook pages by an organisation in a business context. Following the cluster analysis, these 48 guidelines were further reduced to *seven clusters* representing the underlying core criteria determined by the analysis.

The seven clusters/criteria identified are itemised below:

1. **Cluster 1- Proactive planning**
2. Cluster 2 – Retaining customer attention and loyalty
3. Cluster 3 – Building personal relationships
4. Cluster 4 – Enabling and reward sharing
5. Cluster 5 – Communicate accurately and consistently
6. Cluster 6 – Increase reach using multimedia
7. Cluster 7 – Creating captivating content

It should be reiterated that the naming of the clusters identified above was a subjective exercise and that other researchers might have named them differently.

7. Discussion of findings

The criteria identified above, are discussed in more detail below:

7.1 Proactive planning

The literature describes social media as a highly dynamic environment, requiring organisations to plan ahead by setting clear objectives for their respective Facebook marketing strategies. The literature suggests that this is not always the case, with organisations often dealing with their Facebook activities in a stand-alone and ad hoc way. This criterion suggests that constant monitoring of the public's reaction, picking up trends followed by Facebook users and responding to them consistently will make it easier to plan ahead in a subsequent campaign. By determining the social media strategy ahead of time, marketers will be able to incorporate the social media strategy with other communication channels or marketing campaigns. Facebook must be an integral part of the organisation's marketing efforts, not an adjunct to it.

7.2 Retaining customer attention and loyalty

The literature suggested that Facebook pages are often designed inefficiently, while the user longs for a user-friendly experience on Facebook. This causes users to leave the page, while the marketer ideally wants the public to spend as much time as possible on it in order to build a relationship with the brand. It is therefore essential that organisations create enduring Facebook pages that grab the customer's attention and draw them in as longer-term users and hopefully brand disciples, as they share the page with their own network. Consistent branding throughout all of the marketing campaigns launched by an organisation (including their Facebook page) will create a familiar, welcoming feeling in the minds of customers. This positive effect can be replicated on the Facebook platform by consistently repeating similar branding elements as in other marketing campaigns, thereby differentiating the company from others, while comforting fans with a familiar experience (Owyang, 2010).

The layout of the Facebook page should be carefully planned to ensure that fans can easily find the information they are looking for on the page. Clutter must be avoided and the links provided for fans to access various aspects of the page must be optimised. Clearly indicate the functionality or purpose of the page, for example whether it is intended for gathering information, entering competitions or purchasing products (Ewing, 2011).

A Facebook page can be visited by users who officially indicated that they like the page (by clicking on the 'Like' button and becoming fans), and also by people who chose not to do so. Facebook is an ideal portal for communicating exclusive information and building a relationship with fans. A custom landing page can be created where visitors can find basic information and a motivation to like the page. It is only by becoming a fan of a page that users are able to gain optimal benefit from it.

The avatar image or profile picture on a company's Facebook page refers to the company logo or the image chosen to represent the company and is similar to an individual user's profile picture. Since this image appears on the Facebook page next to each communication posted by the company, it should be suitable and highly recognisable. It should not be pixelated or unclear and should represent what the company offers to fans (Monhollon, 2011).

Facebook offers marketers a variety of very effective tools. After creating a Facebook page, fans must be enticed to interact with the company through the page. Some of the features of Facebook include banner advertisements, the creation of events, groups or applications, and even location-based tools that enable fans to use the location service on their phones to post an update on Facebook to indicate that they are visiting a specific place. Making use of these features can help marketers to retain current fans and attract prospective fans to the page (Elliot, 2011).

7.3 Building personal relationships

The public generally prefers to use Facebook for social interaction with other people and not to receive marketing by corporate companies. Organisations, in contrast use Facebook to generate brand exposure, to build relationships on Facebook and to increase profits. There is thus a negative connotation to companies communicating through Facebook and in order to break down the barriers

users have of the business use of Facebook, it is essential that these organisations develop personal relationships with their audience.

Marketers can use Facebook pages to create relationships with fans through constant communication and by reaching out to fans with the aim of getting to know them while at the same time revealing the personality of the company to them. The marketer must try to communicate the same message through more than one channel while adding a personal touch to each message. It is important to make sure that fans know what to expect of the page and to build relationships by providing what is expected.

Facebook is an ideal platform for demonstrating the personality of the company to fans. South African Airlines, for example, demonstrates a professional personality by focusing on service excellence, while Kulula (another local South African airline) prefers to create a vibrant, fun atmosphere with their marketing campaigns. Even if a particular fan is initially not a consumer of the company's products, a relationship can be built over time through strategic communication via Facebook. When the fan finally needs the product that the company provides, the positive image of the company developed over time through Facebook might lead to a purchase (Folkens, 2011).

Promoting advocacy among Facebook fans is essential as customers are more likely to trust each other than to trust a company. Advocacy is encouraged by asking existing fans to recommend the page to others, to like communications on the page, vote for something, or make use of any other creative applications on a page. This provides companies with an opportunity to gain valuable low-cost exposure (Owyang, 2010).

Facebook also allows administrators to communicate on their companies' Facebook pages as either company representatives or in their personal capacities, which will result in actual faces being connected to the company, indicating to fans that there are people behind the company who want to build relationships with them. This feature also exposes all an administrator's Facebook friends to the communication, even though they might not yet be fans of the company (Monhollon, 2011). Facebook is one of the few social networks that requires the use of real names and thus provides authentic people-to-people connections. Marketers should take advantage of this feature and connect fans to the people that run the company by interacting in a conversational manner. Photos and information about the page administrators should be displayed to prove to fans that the organisation's employees are involved and care about them (Owyang, 2010).

Facebook also allows pages to connect with other pages by posting comments or becoming fans. More exposure can be gained and relationships can be built by becoming a fan and interacting with another page. A corporate company could, for example, like a non-profit organisation, or companies that complement each other could like and promote each other during a campaign (Monhollon, 2011). When attempting to build a relationship with fans, marketers should keep in mind that not all fans are fully engaged with every communication channel utilised by the company. Facebook can be used to share exciting new content created for distribution through a different communication channel, for example by posting videos intended for television commercials on Facebook, linking blogging activities to the Facebook page, or repeating images or slogans from other traditional advertisements on the Facebook page. The connection and cross-promotion of communication channels could also lead to greater exposure to new fans (Folkens, 2011).

A good relationship requires clear communication. It is recommended that marketers clearly inform both current and prospective fans about exactly what they can expect from the page by explaining the aim thereof. Some pages may only provide consumers with useful information and updates, while others include games, competitions, special offers, product support, etc. To ensure optimal interaction between the company and the fans, the marketer should clearly stipulate what is regarded as appropriate behaviour and what is not allowed on the page (Owyang, 2010).

7.4 Enabling and reward sharing

Even though it is important that potential fans see an organisation's communications on Facebook, just seeing or reading the communication will be to no avail if the content is not shared with other Facebook users. It is essential that firms encourage their Facebook users to share these communications with the users' personal network. One way to measure the success of a Facebook page is to keep track of the number of fans. An increase in the number of fans indicates that the Facebook page is enjoying greater exposure. It is therefore important to reward fans and make it worth their while to like the Facebook page (Elliot, 2011).

It is recommended that companies provide fans with incentives in the form of discounts or coupons, or even exclusive content or valuable information (Bullas, 2011). Facebook allows marketers to create fan-gates. While any Facebook user can access the general Facebook page, only fans have access to certain tabs or fan-gates. The company could offer a sought-after incentive to fans and promote it on the general Facebook page, with an instruction to users to like the page in order to gain access to its 'fan-gated' section (Belosic, 2012). Fan-gates can be used to launch competitions or for communicating exclusive information to fans, for example information about special sales promotions (Ewing, 2011).

In some instances fans will not benefit from geographically specific information, for example when a product is advertised worldwide but is available only in certain geographic areas. When necessary, Facebook does allow marketers to communicate to certain geographic areas only. This will benefit fans as they will only receive relevant information and information overload will be avoided (Bullas, 2011). While it is important to provide fans with incentives, the marketer should also find ways to lead fans from engagement to purchase (Belosic, 2012). Provide calls-to-action by encouraging fans to sign up for newsletters, browse products on Facebook, click through to the website to view special offers, request quotes or even conduct transactions via the Facebook page. Be careful not to push fans to engage, but make sure that all the possible activities and information sources are readily available and easily accessible to them (Owyang, 2010).

7.5 Communicate accurately and consistently

Organisations often try to automate their Facebook activities. Setting up a Facebook marketing plan ahead of time and using an auto-publisher to communicate with an organisation's fans may be a less time-consuming option for the firm, but will not necessarily lead to reaction from fans. Fans should be able to pick up that there is a real personality behind the communications posted on Facebook. Marketers should determine how they can communicate optimally with their fans. This can be done by investigating when to communicate, what type of messages to send, the ideal length of messages and how personal they can be. The marketer must create a pattern of communication based on how fans react.

The company should interact consistently with its fans by keeping pages current and adding fresh content. Existing fans should be continuously intrigued in order to keep them interested in the company. The page should be so original and exciting that it continues to attract new fans. Marketers must consider the usage patterns of their fans to determine how often they ought to communicate through Facebook. It is important that the content of the page maintain a balance between promotional and conversational messages. Ideally, 80% of the content on a page should be informational, educational or entertaining, while only 20% should be about the company's products or services (Owyang, 2010).

A company should post messages regularly (Bullas, 2011). The exact times may vary in different industries – some companies may post messages daily or even more than once a day, while others may benefit more from communicating via Facebook once or twice a week. The day of the week and the time of day could also influence the response received from Facebook fans. Fans may be more active on the social media over weekends than during the week, or at certain times of the day. Marketers should try different approaches to determine the best times to communicate with

their Facebook fans (Constine, 2011). While selecting the optimal time to communicate via a Facebook page, it is also important to be relevant and bear in mind what is happening outside of Facebook. Information on breaking news and messages regarding public holidays, for example, draw more attention than general messages.

It is recommended that marketers should enable fans to easily find relevant information on the page's timeline by adding headings to posts. In some cases, it seems that posts of four or five lines result in more interaction by fans, while other pages gain the most engagement by posting one-line posts. The reason for this may be that fans would rather read less time-consuming posts than large blocks of text. Marketers should experiment with the length of posts and determine what the perfect length is to maximise engagement with their fans (Bullas, 2011).

While it is important to reward fans and provide incentives, this should be done in a manner that keeps attracting fans to the page. Instead of disclosing information about many new products simultaneously on the Facebook page, the channel could be used to build up excitement about products over a period of time, finally disclosing the information after gaining maximum exposure (Ewing, 2011).

Facebook collaborates with other social networks and websites to allow marketers to auto-post updates from other online channels, for example by automatically copying Twitter posts onto Facebook, or auto-posting a link to each new article on the company's website or blog on the Facebook page. While this could save time, it is not necessarily effective. It has been found that Facebook communications that incorporate personal aspects draw more interaction, for example when a page administrator adds his or her name or photo to the communication (Constine, 2011).

7.6 Increase reach using multimedia

The aim of using Facebook pages is, above all, to increase word-of-mouth marketing and get people talking about your brand. The objective is to post communications and have as many people as possible share the information with all their friends, thus multiplying the reach of the campaign. *Marketers should post captivating media files on their pages and encourage fans to promote the company by sharing those files with their friends. They are also advised to take advantage of the social aspect of Facebook and encourage fans to share the company's message. Different types of multimedia could be included to draw the attention of potential fans to the page.*

Facebook allows marketers to post communications and invite fans to share this information on their own individual profile pages, which means that each communication is then shared with all the individual fans' friends as well, thus maximising exposure for the company (Belosic, 2012). For this reason all posts should be interesting enough to convince individuals to share them, and should include a share button to make it easy for fans to promote the company's content (Folkens, 2011).

To this end, the addition of photos, video clips or sound clips to a Facebook page can generate up to 100% more reaction from fans than posts containing only text (O'Neill, 2016). When uploading photos or videos onto a Facebook page, it is important to tag the photos to identify the people in the pictures and to gain more exposure from those individuals' friends (Monhollon, 2011). Social media marketers should also strive to attract the attention of the local community by adding images or videos of actual occurrences in the local area, as well as to share success stories on the Facebook page and add pictures where possible (Folkens, 2011). Firms may also want to consider developing their own unique language and 'iconography' in order to create a sense of diversity and to set them apart from their competitors. Fans can even be invited to add photos of them supporting the company on their Facebook page. This increases engagement and maximises awareness (Bullas, 2011). When a link is posted on a company's Facebook page, the addition of a relevant image to the link could result in an increase of up to 65% in the response by fans (Constine, 2011).

7.7 Creating captivating content

Inexperienced marketers may be unsure about the content that should be posted on Facebook. Creating dynamic content and perhaps experimenting with different content on the page could be one way to determine which types of posts will result in the most brand exposure.

Companies should make it easy for fans to interact with them and also encourage peer-to-peer interaction to gain company exposure. They are advised to post enticing messages that encourage interaction with the company. It is also crucial to respond to all communications received from fans, regardless of whether they are positive or negative.

Fans are constantly communicating with each other. Marketers should take advantage of this practice by creating an environment that encourages peer-to-peer interactions about the company and should request that fans respond to their friends' comments. Such discussions will be able to support themselves once a proper question and answer application has become available (Owyang, 2010). Benefits aside, peer-to-peer communication requires a community policy and needs to be monitored in real time in order to result in a positive experience and prevent negative responses from fans (Ewing, 2011).

It is important to keep the fans in mind when posting communications on Facebook. The communications that receive the most responses from Facebook fans will appear more often in the news feed of Facebook fans. Marketers should therefore find ways to encourage interaction with fans by, for example, asking them to share their opinions, stories or advice, asking open-ended questions, or using 'fill-the-blank' statements (Bullas, 2011).

Interaction from fans could also be encouraged by offering products or gift vouchers for purchase via Facebook. Instead of focusing on company information, marketers should aim to post updates that are relevant and useful to consumers, such as useful information regarding the company or the product being promoted. Positive interaction will follow if the needs of the fans are considered and conversations are constructed around topics that interest them (Belosic, 2012). In this regard, the work of Hofstede (n.d.) around the cultural dimensions prevalent in South Africa and the need for local social marketers to take these dimensions into consideration when developing content for Facebook pages, is worth considering.

While it is important to draw interaction from Facebook users, it is equally important to participate in dialogue. It is very beneficial to foster two-way dialogue and acknowledge comments from fans and other interactions with the Facebook page (Folkens, 2011). Posts on a Facebook page must be written in a conversational tone, building on the relationship between the company and the fan. It is very important that marketers monitor conversations and respond when necessary. When, for example, a fan complains about the company on Facebook, the company should explain the reason for the fan's disappointment and attempt to solve the problem or compensate him/her for the inconvenience. This will make it quite clear to consumers that the company is actively involved in the conversation (Owyang, 2010).

8. Research limitations

The limitations of the study should also be acknowledged. This is a South African-focused study and it is feasible that other countries may have different views from what was seen to be important criteria for successful Facebook implementation amongst local social media experts. Also, the criteria identified are broad across-industry criteria. In reality, these criteria may change from industry to industry, suggesting that further industry-specific research may be necessary. Also, the criteria identified have not been further tested 'in the field' and this is an opportunity for further research. There is also the underlying assumption that all local marketing using Facebook is in English; in a multilingual country such as South Africa, this assumption has not been tested. Finally, this research is focused on corporate users of Facebook and does not consider those firms that have chosen not to use Facebook, this may also be an opportunity for further research.

9. Conclusion

The literature review revealed that organisations generally lack knowledge of how to best use social media, specifically Facebook, as an effective channel for marketing communication. Various recommendations, best practices and how-to guides on Facebook marketing were uncovered in the literature, which enabled a list of 48 guidelines to be assembled from the literature review. The 48 guidelines that were identified by way of the literature review were used as a starting point for the empirical phase of the study. In the empirical research, the identified guidelines were categorised using a card-sorting exercise by a sample of industry experts in order to compile a final set of criteria based on the clusters identified. Seven criteria were identified by the sample of participants using a cluster analysis exercise. Suggestions on how the seven criteria might best be implemented by organisations, was outlined in the discussion above. These criteria, while developed within South African context, may also be of value to firms elsewhere in the world.

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