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"What can the brand manager expect from Facebook?"

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What can the brand manager expect from Facebook?

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ABSTRACT

Managers cannot afford to ignore social media and have stepped up their involvement in the belief that social media activities extend the brand's reach and engagement with consumers. Facebook is the preeminent social medium with an ever increasing branded content. One hundred brands selected from the Interbrand "Best Global Brand Report" form the basis of this study to test research propositions about the ability of branded Facebook pages to expand and engage users. Data captured from branded Facebook pages was supplemented with socialbaker's data. No correlation is found between the size of a brand and the number of Facebook fans, and there is no consistent relationship with user engagement and brand size.

The authors discuss broadening reach, improving engagement, interaction and activity and the implications for social media strategies and make recommendations for managing Facebook presence. Paid advertising is required to increase brand reach to all potential category users.

Keywords: social media; consumer-brand marketing, engagement, metrics, penetration, brand management

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Working Paper

1. Introduction

Social media usage has boomed at an unprecedented rate and continues to grow. In 2016, the number of active social media users totalled 2.3 billion worldwide (Kemp, 2016). Two-thirds of US social media users and 77% of UK social media users report buying products online in the past 30 days (Kemp, 2016). As 24/7 accessibility and consumer engagement become the standard (Powers *et al.*, 2012), brand managers see the necessity to establish a social media presence. In 2016, nearly two-thirds of marketers budgeted to increase their social media advertising and 82% of marketers agree that social media marketing is core to their business (Salesforce Research, 2016).

Branded social media communication can be split into two categories, 'organic' activities created by the brand on social media and placed for free and 'paid' content that is more likely to be seen by consumers in exchange for payment made to the media owner (Fulgoni, 2015). The term social media covers a range of platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat. Kaplan & Hanelein (2010 p 61) define social media as 'a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content'. This definition is used in a recent review of advertising in social media that identified the need to better understand the industry perspective of social media advertising (Knoll, 2016).

Social media are not a new phenomenon as they have much in common with traditional word of mouth (Keller and Fay, 2012). However, social media expands individual influence to include people outside their 'circle of close friends' (Liu-Thompkins, 2012) thereby increasing the number of people they trust (Powers *et al.*, 2012). Facebook enables brand managers to create two-way relationships with consumers and can accelerate sharing of brand information amongst consumers that can impact a brand's performance (Fulgoni, 2016). Facebook remains the dominant social media platform with 1.59 billion users globally, 83% of users access Facebook via their mobile phones and 50% use a computer (Kemp, 2016).

In Parson's (2013) content analysis of the Facebook pages for 65 of the top 100 global brands, most brands aim to develop relationships with consumers. This is important as the majority of branded content is consumed via the consumer's newsfeed, rather than from the brand page, with (on average) 16% of fans being reached by brands that post on 5 out of 7 days (Lipsman *et al.*, 2012). Social stories appearing in the newsfeed have a higher response than paid media, such as home page ads, and research suggests advertising effectiveness will increase when users actively engage with a message (Jung *et al.*, 2016).

Branded Facebook pages remain an important component of a social media strategy, as the more brand page memberships of consumers the higher their likelihood of 'click through' on seeing advertising (Kim *et al.*, 2016). This explains why 74% of Fortune 500 companies have a corporate Facebook page (Barns, Lescault and Holmes, 2015) and 100% of the Advertising Age Top 100 Advertisers have established Facebook brand pages (Lipsman *et al.*, 2012).

The relationship between membership of branded pages on Facebook and likelihood to click on advertising can be misleading. Prior brand purchase, rather than the act of becoming a fan may explain any increase in engagement (LaPointe, 2012). As the most frequent category buyers have larger repertoires (Banelis, Riebe and Rungie, 2013), they are more likely to be 'fans' of multiple Facebook pages. Their increased propensity to click on advertising reflects their greater frequency of purchasing from the category, as encoding of advertising into memory and retrieval of brand information will be easier for brand users than non-users (Vaughan, Beal and Romaniuk, 2016).

The largest brands in a market attract more users and their users show (slightly) greater loyalty than shown by users of smaller brands in the category, this is the Double-Jeopardy pattern (Ehrenberg, Goodhardt and Barwise, 1990). It follows, that the largest brands will also attract a greater numbers of ‘fans’ in their branded Facebook pages and their ‘fans’ will engage slightly more often within the Facebook environment than ‘fans’ of smaller brands.

The rapid spread of social media usage presents a challenge, as research has failed to keep up with practice (Romaniuk, 2012). This paper seeks to expand our understanding of the use of Facebook by large brands and explores the relationship between large brands, their attraction of ‘fans’ and their level of engagement.

The article is organised as follows: a literature review of key concepts with research propositions generated at the conclusion of each section. Brand penetration and loyalty are explored before focusing on engagement in relation to social media; next research propositions are generated to describe the relationship between Facebook brand pages and social media penetration and engagement. The relationship is examined empirically with two quantitative studies. Results are discussed and the paper concludes with recommendations.

2. Literature review

Acting as a form of creative publicity, advertising aims to remind and refresh brand memory structures to increase the likelihood of consumers thinking of the brand when they next making a purchase (Ehrenberg *et al.*, 2002). For brand communication to effect sales and brand growth, it needs to reach as many potential customers as possible, as empirical data shows an increase in brand penetration is the main route to brand growth (Kennedy and McColl, 2012).

2.1. Penetration/loyalty

Brand penetration measures the size of a brand's customer base, defined as the proportion of people buying from the category that purchase the brand at least once in the time period (Dawes, 2006). Empirical studies consistently find that brands, irrespective of their size, follow a negative binomial distribution of purchase frequency, with many light buyers and very few heavy ones (Ehrenberg, 1959; Goodhardt, Ehrenberg and Chatfield, 1984). Brand loyalty remains important, but penetration dominates loyalty (Yang, Bi and Zhou, 2005).

Advertising can assist an increase in penetration by publicising the brand to non-users, with the reach of media channels an important consideration. Social media still have relatively low reach compared to traditional mass media options. Globally, Facebook has achieved an average penetration rate of 31%, varying from 59% in North America to 6% in Central Asia, whereas the internet has an average penetration rate of 44%, with 88% penetration in North America (Kemp, 2016).

Advertisers use the cost-per-thousand metric to compare advertising costs across different media platforms. Digital ad rates are much lower than ad rates in traditional media, making digital media attractive to advertisers looking to expand their reach without necessarily having to spend more money (McKinsey & Company, 2015). However, the low-cost reflects the highly cluttered environment, reducing advertising effectiveness. Facebook is much more cluttered than TV and radio environments (Nelson-Field, Riebe and Sharp, 2013).

Encouraging the fans of a brand to become brand advocates and to create new brand networks that include light buyers is a way to increase social media reach (Nelson-Field, Riebe and Sharp, 2012). For every brand fan there is the potential to reach 34 friends of fans for the top 100 brands and this figure increases to a multiplier of 81 on average when extending analysis to the top 1,000 brand pages (Lipsman *et al.*, 2012). So whilst brand pages engage the most loyal customers of a brand, positive word-of-mouth may encourage other users to join (Knoll, 2016).

2.1.1. Social media penetration research propositions:

1. **The more valuable a brand, the larger the size of its fan base**

This proposition is based on the assumption that the more valuable brands will have more resources to invest in social media, as well as larger customer bases and a greater number of heavy buyers. This will result in the most valuable brands having the largest fan bases in Facebook. Empirical research shows strong brands, identified through Interbrand's most valued brand list, outperform the market (Madden, Roth and Dillion, 2011). Larger firms tend to spend more on marketing, and allocate more resources to advertising (Cheong, Kim and Kim, 2013).

It is clear that focusing on the raw count of 'likes' or total number of brand engagements provide a limited view of a brand's social media performance, whereas looking at the brand's reach and frequency of contact will improve understanding of how and where brand messages 'cut-through' a cluttered social media environment (Lipsman *et al.*, 2012). This leads to our second research proposition:

2. **Big brands are active participants on Facebook – (a) they are the principal initiator of communication and (b) they are quick to respond to user questions.**

Our third proposition is based on the assumption that the more valuable brands will have more resources to invest in social media and this will result in a higher rate of overall growth (the monthly addition of 'fans' is subtracted by the 'fans' that no longer follow the brand to provide the growth figure).

3. **The more valuable the brand, the greater its rate of growth of 'fans'**

2.2. Social media engagement

Engagement is a broad concept, that captures the connection consumers have with advertising, media and brands (Abdul-Ghani, Hyde and Marshall, 2011). A decade ago the Advertising Research Foundation summarised how practitioners define engagement, concluding that 'engagement is turning on a prospect to a brand idea enhanced by the surrounding context' (Plummer, 2006). Another definition from the perspective of content creation sees engagement as 'developing creative with layers of involvement, something to participate in, something worth distributing, something to talk about' (Carroll, 2005). Contextual relevance is a critical aspect, as it helps to direct consumers to see and respond to the advertisement (Wang, 2006). Despite many attempts, the lack of clarity surrounding the term 'engagement' continues, with the quest to find a universal definition considered futile and instead used to describe a range of metrics (Gluck, 2013).

Greater agreement is reached when considering social media's capacity to support brand engagement. Social media enables brands to move away from passive exposure and, instead, engage with consumers (Keller and Fay, 2012) and to build brand communities that enable timely consumer contact at relatively low cost and higher efficiency levels than achieved by traditional media (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Compared with television, it may be stronger at eliciting brand engagement than TV advertising (Keller 2016). However, businesses assume they develop stronger ties with consumers than are likely to occur in reality.

Although many consumers use Facebook, most are not looking to purchase products or to engage with brands on this platform. The contextual setting is social, and the most popular reason for using social media is to discover what friends are doing (Deloitte, 2015).

IBM's research shows that finding discounts when purchasing products is the main reason consumers interact with businesses in social media and more than half of consumers don't consider engaging with businesses via social sites (Heller Baird and Parasnis, 2011).

Social currency is a key driver for sharing content, i.e. doing more than 'liking' a brand and endorsing a brand or product in exchange for looking good or intelligent (Yuki, 2015). Hence, it is not sufficient for brands to have a Facebook presence that attracts its heavy brand users. Social media requires sufficient resource investment and integrated brand management strategies to create branded content considered worthy of sharing with friends on a regular basis. Keller & Fay (2012) believe effective advertising results in people talking about the brand, requiring brand managers to create stories that resonate with consumers to increase the likelihood of it being shared.

There is a need for further research that looks at consumer interaction with brands beyond evaluating the 'liking' of brand pages, Facebook allows two-way engagement of brands with their consumers, thus requiring advertisers to go beyond measuring 'likes' to also examine more active engagement measures, such as consumer's comments (Fulgoni, 2016; Parsons, 2013).

Research suggests a long-term sales benefit from 'liking' a brand page or making contributions to brand pages (Brettel *et al.*, 2015). However, many businesses overestimate the impact of their social media efforts. Only 38% of consumers feel social media interactions with a brand will increase their loyalty to that company and 33% say their loyalty will not increase (Heller Baird and Parasnis, 2011).

An experiment where non-followers of a brand were randomly selected to 'like' a brand suggest the action by itself will have a positive effect on brand equity, purchase intention and brand attitude, as this cohort showed an increase in all metrics in the one month follow-up survey, but no was change shown for the control group that did not ‘like’ the brand (Beukeboom, Kerkhof and de Vries, 2015).

It is evident that all ‘likes’ are not equal, as ‘liking a brand page can occur for utilitarian reasons, e.g. to receive a discount coupon. Fans induced via incentives to ‘like’ a brand page behave similarly to consumers that buy brands on promotion, i.e. they don’t change their loyalty shown to the brand when the incentive is removed (Wallace *et al.*, 2014).

It is time for a reality check on the role of Facebook brand pages. Rather than expecting non-buyers to join the brand’s community of heavy buyers and interact to the same extent, brand managers need to consider how to cater for this group in an efficient way that also encourages brand advocacy across their network of friends and family.

2.2.1. Social media engagement research propositions

4. The more valuable a brand, the greater engagement shown by ‘fans’

This proposition is based on the assumption that the more valuable brands will have larger customer bases and a greater number of heavy buyers that will show a deeper level of engagement. This will result in the most valuable brands having more ‘fans’ who interact with the brand. It will also result in a greater proportion of total posts by fans compared to less valuable brands.

The sharing of branded content is a step up in the tier of social media engagement from ‘liking’ a brand page, but only 7% of a brand’s social engagement activities are shared (Yuki, 2015). Facebook’s own research suggests the belief held by advertisers that acquiring ‘fans’ engaged with a brand will led to increased sales and profit is flawed (Smallwood, 2016). Improvement of social media management by brands remains important, as pushing ‘fans’ to add branded content into news streams has negative effect on sales, driving users away from rather than towards advertised products (Brettel *et al.*, 2015).

For social media management to play any role in the brand's overall communication strategy it must at a minimum attract heavy brand users and provide some level of interaction with brand users. This study explores two final propositions about brand engagement with 'fans', based upon the assumption that big brands have the available resources to effectively engage with their 'fans':

5. **The more valuable a brand, the more effective is its fan engagement.**

6. **Big brands facilitate engagement beyond 'liking' of their brand page.**

3. Research Method

100 brands were selected from the Interbrand "Best Global Brand Report" (2014). This listing is widely accepted as a consistent measure of brand performance which has been running annually since 2000 (Madden, Fehle and Fournier, 2006). The method for valuing brands comprises three components, economic value added by the brand, the importance of the brand in the decision to purchase (measured either by primary research, reviewing peer performance or expert panel assessment) and the strength of the brand which is measured by 10 factors which are claimed to measure how resilient and competitively advantageous is the brand in terms of the loyalty it commands. Whilst an accepted method of valuing brands, the measure combines subjective and objective measures and our ability to examine brand valuation is limited to each brand's overall valuation.

Each brand was searched using Facebook and the most popular official page – the one with the most likes – was selected. Pages were subsequently analysed in two concurrent studies using different measures to reflect the research objectives.

It is possible to analyse the advertising effectiveness of brand efforts in Facebook through freely available data comprising of aggregate level figures of total 'stream' impressions, page views, 'likes' and contributions (Brettel *et al.*, 2015). Analysis begins by looking at the three research propositions using publicly available Facebook measures to examine the relationship between a brand's value and its ability to reach highly engaged category buyers. Supplementary data to the Individual Facebook pages was sourced from Socialbakers, a website providing data analytics of all 100 branded Facebook pages (https://www.socialbakers.com/statistics/facebook/pages/total/brands/).

Three Facebook statistics used were as follows:

Number of fans. Refers to Facebook users that 'like' the page at a certain point in time. As this number changes rapidly, data on all 100 pages were collected on one day to minimise distortion.

*Monthly growth. I*s a measure of change in the number of fans a page has. The change is calculated by deducting the number of users who 'unliked' the page from the number of new users who 'liked' the page over a 30 day period.

PTAT. (People talking about this) measures the number of unique Facebook users who have generated a story about the page on a weekly basis. A story is a broad term that covers likes, comments, posts, shares, RSVPs to events and answers to questions posted, but also mentioning, tagging, checking in or recommending the Facebook page (Smitha, 2013). The metric was not available for seven pages (Honda, IKEA, Facebook, KFC, Burberry and Starbucks) with these brands excluded from PTAT metric analysis.

4. Results

The 100 brands were ranked according to the number of Facebook fans, monthly growth and PTAT and the correlation between brand value and each metric computed. The correlation between brand value and the number of Facebook Fans was 0.1 (p=0), and even lower between brand value and Monthly growth of fans (0.04, p=0) and the correlation between brand value and PTAT was -0.02 (p=0.06). This indicates that while there is a statistically significant relationship between brand value and the number of Facebook fans (and brand value and the growth in Facebook fans) it is an extremely weak relationship in terms of potential managerial action. The correlation between brand value and PTAT was virtually zero and so not statistical significant.

The low correlation between brand value and the number of Facebook Fans is surprising, as big brands are known to have more customers so would be expected to also have more 'fans'. As research suggests categorical differences in how 'fans' engage with Facebook (Yuki, 2015), analysis by the category of operation examines if the finding holds across all categories.

Brands were grouped into eleven categories with some sectors combined to form a bigger group (technology and electronics; apparel and sporting goods), while retail, home furnishings, transportation, energy and diversified categories were merged to form an 'other' group.

Table 1: Correlation between Brand Value and Facebook likes in different categories

Group	r	significant
Beverages	0.92	y
Apparel & sporting goods	0.92	y
Luxury	0.31	n
Media	-0.06	n
Restaurants	0.31	n
Automotive	-0.03	n
Alcohol	0.33	n
Other	0.38	y
Technology & electronics	0.21	y

FMCG	0.00	n
Business & Financial Services	-0.34	y
All 100 brands	0.10	y

Table 1 shows the correlation coefficient between brand value and number of Facebook fans computed for each sector. It shows a wide variation between categories, ranging from very strong positive (beverages and apparel & sporting goods) to no correlation (media and FMCG). The data in table 1 is primarily to represent the large differences between the categories rather than to draw specific conclusions about the relationship.

The degree of engagement 'fans' have with branded Facebook pages beyond the PTAT metric shown above is next examined to better understand 'fan' engagement with branded Facebook pages. For the purpose of this study Socialbakers provided access to proprietary data on the top 50 brands for the period 25 March – 25 April 2014. The measures utilised were as follows:

Average engagement rate. Is a metric developed by Socialbakers, which measures the engagement triggered by posts in relation to the number of fans, over the previous 30 days.

Method of user interaction. Facebook enables users to interact with content on pages in three ways: likes, comments and shares. Socialbakers provided data on the total number of interactions for all three methods of interaction. However, two brands (HSBC and Goldman Sachs) were excluded from this analysis as they had no activity during this period.

User posts. Is the sum of all posts created by fans during the period under study.

Admin posts. Is the sum of all posts created by page administrators during the period under study.

Questions response rate. Expresses the percentage of questions that the page administrators have responded to in the period under study. 'Question', here, is defined as a fan post with a question mark. Due to limited data on response rates, this analysis was limited to 34 brands.

These advanced metrics facilitate the exploration of our second set of propositions regarding brand value and engagement and brands were ranked and correlated with their average engagement rate. To explore the balance between the three types of user interaction methods, the individual weights were calculated by dividing the number of likes, comments or shares by the sum of all interactions. To explore the depth and speed of brand interaction with social media the ratio of user to admin posts is computed along with the rate of response by the brand owner to questions on Facebook. Since not all pages allow user posts, those without user posts were excluded from analysis. The user to admin posts ratio and response rates were analysed for the remaining 33 pages.

For the top 50 brands the correlation between brand value and the SocialBakers average engagement was -0.09 indicating no relationship between brand value and the engagement metric.

To explore the proposition that big brands facilitate engagement beyond ‘liking’, ‘likes’ with ‘comment’ and ‘shares’ were compared and showed that ‘liking’ accounts for 86% of all interactions and so dominates engagement.

Finally, the degree of Facebook participation by Big Brands was explored. On average the ratio of user to owner posts is 96, showing ‘fans’ rather than the brand owners dominate engagement. To better understand the impact of prohibiting user posts, the brands which only permit user posts were compared with those with both user and admin posts. The first group had an average of 47 posts compared with the second group which had 1314 posts. Importantly, an additional analysis revealed that the posting activity is highly correlated ($r=0.8$) with fan growth. Results show the importance of content co-creation in growing a fan base and increasing brand page activity.

Socialbakers classifies pages with a response rate to questions of 65% or higher to be ‘socially devoted’. It would be expected that if the proposition that Big Brands are quick to respond to user questions, the majority of the brands would exceed this performance metric. However, using this definition, only ten brands were classified as socially devoted. This finding begs the question: How can a brand expect users to engage with their posts if it cannot manage to engage with their fan's posts first?

5. Discussion

5.1. Broadening the reach of social media

Our analysis shows that there is no significant relationship between a brand's value and the size of its Facebook fan base or its ability to grow its fan base. The lack of correlation between brand value and the People Talking About This (PTAT) metric is not surprising as Facebook's analysis also shows no relationship with a brand's sales or profit (Smallwood, 2016).

On the other hand, the results highlight examples at the category level where brand value and fan numbers show a strong correlation. High-identity product categories, such as apparel show a much stronger relationship than financial services. Results reflect the specific nature of Facebook, which is focused on personal rather than professional use and where entertainment and affection are critical elements of communication. This presents a barrier to some categories, such as professional services firms.

The fact that Facebook pages do not reflect brand size is consistent with the critique of social media's limited organic reach. This presents companies with three alternatives. First, they can accept the fact that Facebook has a limited value for brand growth but can still be used to engage with some of the most loyal customers, (while recognising that it is hard for these customers to further increase their loyalty). Second, they may decide that engagement opportunities are not sufficient to justify the allocated resources and divert

Facebook resources to other media. Third, they can use paid advertising to boost the reach of Facebook.

As a result of the changes in consumer behaviour, stemming from the widespread use of the internet and social media, brands are expected to be present in all channels that consumers use in their purchase decision process and to be available at all times. For this reason, abandoning Facebook might mean that a brand will miss opportunities to satisfy consumer needs and fall behind its competition. The best solution would appear to be the incremental use of paid advertising designed to eliminate the limits set by organic reach.

At the same time, firms need to improve their ability to measure the impact of cross-media campaigns and find meaningful measures for return on investment in the individual medium. Varying the advertising medium shows positive advertising effects, i.e. exposure via television and the internet has a greater effect than repeating advertising exposure within a single medium (Lim *et al.*, 2015).

While brands from the same category might face similar limitations, it does not automatically mean that their success can be replicated. If a brand's potential for consumer involvement is inherently limited, the best solution may be to use Facebook as an indirect support. Relevant activities could include enhancing the brand image by promoting a campaign related to a brand's corporate social responsibility program, or more generally, communicating with other key stakeholders.

5.2. Improving engagement

The fact that the biggest brands are unable to engage effectively with their fans is worrying, especially given that a brand's Facebook fan base is skewed towards heavy buyers, who are more likely to seek engagement with the brand than light buyers. There are two alternative explanations for this failure and hence two alternative courses of action. First, the content created is not deemed sufficiently interesting to motivate users to engage and second, customers may not have any wish to engage with the brand.

The first explanation implies that brands must improve the attractiveness of the content created and the managerially generated content, while minimising cost, may have a detrimental effect on the quality of messages. This aligns with a Harvard Business Review study of 2,100 companies, where two-thirds were actively using social media but only 7% reported successfully integration and most were trying to understand its impact on branding and searching for best practice (Kohli, Suri and Kapoor, 2015). Brands should therefore consider employing professionals to administer their Facebook page.

The second explanation would render any attempt to create more engaging content futile. In this scenario, a Facebook page becomes little more than a company web page. If this is the case, a brand may realistically consider abandoning Facebook as it will not be able to leverage the benefits stemming from its social nature. However, before a brand decides to deactivate its Facebook account, it is advisable to confirm that the lack of engagement is not due to poor content and that the page does not provide enough additional brand exposure.

5.3. Useful interaction

The findings suggest that brands should not rely on benefiting from users' social capital, as not many users share content created by brands, and hence organic reach is not likely to make their posts go viral. Neither should companies see Facebook primarily as a means of gaining deep and meaningful interactions. To minimise the barriers to user interaction, brands need to make their messages easy to understand and incite response by providing tangible rewards. They should strive to get the best out of the low-effort 'like', which can still provide useful information about the popularity of their message. This can be used by brands to test new products, concepts or marketing messages to confirm whether they are likely to be appreciated by their consumers.

(In)activity

Findings of the study suggest that the majority of posting activity comes from users rather than administrators. Brands that prohibit user posting are unable to offset the resulting gap with admin posts. They have much lower activity on their pages, which in turn is likely to discourage users from 'liking' their page in the first place. Consequently, it is recommended that these brands reconsider their decision and allow users to post. However, it is also advisable to put in place some measures to minimise the impact of negative posts on the audience. For instance, brands can try to divert complaints to less 'public' channels, such as email or telephone.

Once a brand decides to allow user posts, it needs to ensure that it has reasonable response rates. Surprisingly, the study revealed that most brands are not committed to addressing questions posted by users. This is evidently a missed opportunity and it goes directly against the interactive nature of social media. The result of this approach is potentially damaging to consumer perception about the brand, as their audience may consider the brand to be ignorant and anything but customer-centric.

4. Conclusion

This paper contributes to our understanding of the value of social media by exploring the potential of social media and effectiveness of social media accounts.

The findings support criticism of social media's limited and skewed organic reach; the most valuable brands are not able to build a correspondingly larger fan base. The capability to recruit fans was found to be contingent on industry type, which significantly decreases the potential benefits for some companies and highlights the need for realistic expectations about return on investment in social media. Marketers are encouraged to support organic reach by paid advertising and to consider alternative uses of social media, especially if their brand sits in a low-involvement category.

Research into Facebook activity revealed that the world's best brands do not enjoy high levels of interaction or engagement. Marketers seem to assume that a 'natural interest in brands' is enough to motivate users to interact and engage with them. In reality, users need reasons to interact with the brand and when interacting, they will choose the most effortless method. In order to improve the levels of engagement, marketers need to post relevant, timely, good quality content, which is likely to require investment in the professional servicing of the account.

There is a need to develop our knowledge about social media and to re-align business expectations and objectives with the realistic potential of social media. Marketers should accept the nature of social media and seek to overcome its limitations by supporting organic reach through paid advertising, while also improving social media account management.

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