Conceptualising and evaluating experiences with brands on Facebook

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Despite the growth in the number of brands with a presence on social media such as Facebook and YouTube, questions remain about how to conceptualise and measure people’s experiences with brands’ content on social media, and how to measure the value of people’s behaviour around such content to brands. By interrogating quantitative data garnered from 6,400 respondents we sent to Facebook pages belonging to 27 brands across six brand categories during June 2011, this paper presents an overview of how we designed two sets of metrics, and some of the findings from these metrics: (1) a series of ‘value of experience’ metrics based on the likelihood of people who claim to have had positive experiences with a brand’s content on Facebook to say they are likely to do different social media, purchase funnel and brand advocacy actions for that same brand; and (2) a series of ‘value of a fan’ metrics that measure the likelihood of people who say they are likely to do different social media actions on a brand’s page (such as post positive comments or share content) to say they are also likely to do different purchase funnel and advocacy actions for that brand.

Introduction

With around 19 million over-14s in Great Britain visiting Facebook at least once a month (IPA 2010), the online networking service offers brand owners significant opportunities to attract and interact with people on an ongoing basis through messages, videos, competitions, games and other content, depending on what they want to achieve.

However, two questions with which marketers and advertisers have been grappling are (1) how can people’s experiences with brands’ content on social media be conceptualised and measured, and (2) how can the value of the activities of people who interact with that content be measured (Fisher

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2009; Murdough 2009; Trusov et al. 2009; Ray 2010; D’Silva et al. 2011; Kim & Ko 2011; Powell et al. 2011)?

The role of this paper is to present and discuss methods and findings from a quantitative online study that Starcom MediaVest, London, conducted during June 2011, which sought to concisely measure people’s claimed experiences of brands’ Facebook page content, and their claimed likely behaviour during and following those visits. We created three main questions for the research. Do people who claim they have had positive experiences with brands’ content on Facebook (such as emotional or cognitive experiences):

1. have a greater likelihood of saying they are likely to do an action on a brand’s Facebook page (such as make a positive comment or share that content) than those who claim they have not?
2. have a greater likelihood of saying they are more likely to do a purchase funnel action (such as consider or prefer a brand’s product) than those who claim they have not?
3. have a greater likelihood of saying they are likely to talk about and recommend the brand and Facebook content than those who claim they have not?

If these questions were answered in the affirmative, we would be able to derive two sets of metrics, as follows.

1. A ‘value of experience’ metric, not based on a monetary value, but rather upon the likelihood of people who say they have had positive experiences with brands’ content to say they are also likely to do a social media action, a purchase funnel action and advocacy action.
2. A ‘value of a fan’ metric, that measures the likelihood of people who say they are likely to do a social media action to also say they are likely to do a purchase funnel action and advocacy action.

It should be noted that our goal was not to uncover causality, but merely possible associations between variables. For example, people who already prefer a brand may have a high likelihood of saying they are likely to post a comment on its Facebook page. Further, we would stress that our research is based on claimed likely behaviour rather than actual behaviour.

Data would also provide a set of benchmarks for each brand to compare across time, for brand against brand from the same brand category, for
brand category against brand category, and for brand and brand category against averages.

The experience marketing paradigm

Gilmore and Pine make the claim that marketing has moved beyond the mere promotion of products and services, to centre upon subjective experiences such as the senses, emotions and cognition (Gilmore & Pine II 2002). Such literature reflects earlier work from sociology in which authors argue that late modernity is partly characterised by the aestheticisation of production, to help create what Featherstone calls ‘the aestheticization of everyday life’ (Featherstone 1991, p. 65). According to Featherstone (1991), and Lash and Urry (1994), the aestheticisation of production has occurred as practices from cultural media (such as art, design, literature, music, radio and film) have steadily impacted and helped organise marketing, advertising, design, packaging and display, to the extent that people tend to understand and attribute value to brands, products and services partly in terms of the experiences they have with their mediation (also see Leiss et al. 1986; Lury 1996; Borghini et al. 2010).

Conceptualising experiences with brands on social media

The central question for this study is, ‘What, if at all, is the association between people’s claimed experiences of brands’ Facebook page content, and their claims about their likely subsequent behaviours?’ We first needed to conceptualise the notion of ‘experience’. To do this, we did not take a determinist position that social media designers, brand designers, marketers and the like are able to actually govern people’s experiences of what these agents create (cf. Bruner 1986; Fuss 1989; Schwandt 1998; Guba & Lincoln 2004). Instead, we adopted an approach posited by Grint and Woolgar (1997), that technologies can be understood as ‘texts’ that configure particular readings (interpretations), but are not determinate of them (see also Kukla 2000; Hutchby 2001). An upshot of this approach is that, although how people experience phenomena (such as objects, pictures, video, words) – whether they are online, on television or in print, for example – is the consequence of how they ‘read’ those phenomena, designers are able to configure particular readings. Thus, while all readings are possible, not all are equally probable.

Another upshot of this approach is that any claimed likely behaviour following exposure to a brand’s Facebook pages cannot be isolated solely
to that exposure. Practically, this means that marketing practitioners (and, in the case of this study, social media practitioners) need to accept that experiences people have with their designs exist within an ecology of experiences. As Maklan and Klaus argue in their study of customers’ experiences of UK mortgage services (2011), people’s experiences are likely to arise in part from the cumulative effect of media channels, rather than being driven by a single episode. Nevertheless, given our epistemology, we would expect that even a single episode can play a contributory role in a person’s behaviour, however small.

Conceptualised in this way, we can understand that a brand’s content on social media forms one of many interfaces to that brand (cf. Simon 1969; Lury 2004) through which brand owners are able to articulate the brand and configure particular readings, and therefore experiences. Nevertheless, because of its configuration, it is conceivable that people’s experiences of a brand’s social media are qualitatively different from those encountered via other media such as retail, television and print (e.g. Hui & Bateson 1991; Hoch 2002; Grace & O’Cass 2004; Arnold et al. 2005; Ofir & Simonson 2007).

An observation that Maklan and Klaus make (2011) is that because most academic literature from marketing about experience is of a conceptual nature, scholars have tended not to address the issue of generalisability. This was a concern of ours. In order to undertake subsequent research that would compare our findings with people’s claimed or actual experiences via other media, we needed to employ a set of concepts that research practitioners would be able to use across these. Therefore, we decided that the concepts and experience statements we planned to use should be generic, and not specific to social media.

Brakus et al. (2009) produced a rigorous set of statements for measuring people’s experiences of brands across different brand interfaces. In their study, the authors investigated literature from philosophy, cognitive science and experiential marketing. From philosophy, Dewey (1922, 1925) identifies intellectual experiences resulting from knowledge, perception through the senses, feeling and doing. Reflecting Dewey, Dubé and LeBel (2003) distinguish four ‘pleasure dimensions’: intellectual, emotional, social and physical pleasures.

From cognitive science, Pinker (1997) isolates four responses to environmental stimuli, which closely resemble the experiences Dewey proposes: sensory perception, feelings and emotions, creativity and reasoning, and social relationships. From experiential marketing, Pine and Gilmore (1999) pinpoint aesthetic (which incorporate sensory effects), educational, entertaining and escapist experiences within retail settings and

From this review, Brakus and colleagues derived five dimensions of experience that can be used to measure people’s experiences across different interfaces between people and brands: sensorial, emotion, cognitive, behavioural and social. They then generated a 12-item scale from a series of empirical and statistical studies that focused on these dimensions. For our study we constructed a cut-down and amended version of this scale, consisting of four statements, specifically to measure sensorial, emotional and cognitive experiences of brand content on Facebook. In the conclusion of their paper, Brakus et al. (2009) call for empirical research to examine whether their scale can predict specific behavioural outcomes. In response to their call, we used our amended version to see if responses to these statements following exposure to brands’ Facebook pages are associated with claimed likely social media, purchase funnel and advocacy actions.

- **Cognitive experience statements:** ‘This Facebook page stimulated my curiosity’, and ‘This Facebook page made me think.’
- **Sensorial statement:** ‘This Facebook page had a strong impression on my visual senses and/or hearing senses.’
- **Emotional statement:** ‘I experienced strong positive emotions while viewing this Facebook page.’

**Methods**

We first needed to select an assortment of brands that have Facebook pages, from a range of brand categories. Doing this would allow us to compare findings between brands and between brand categories, and to create benchmarks for them. Thus, for the main study, we decided upon 27 brands from six brand categories: finance, food and drink, health and beauty, retail, media and entertainment, and technology and telecoms.

We wanted to quantitatively measure people’s claimed positive experiences of brands’ content on Facebook, and their claimed likely behaviours. Of course, some people in the study may have been likely to do particular behaviours whether or not they had positive experiences. Nevertheless, we wanted to see if an association exists between experiences and behaviours, and observe any differences between claimed likely behaviours of this group and claimed likely behaviours of people who did not claim to have had positive experiences.
According to Kendall (2011, p. 29), ‘Validity is the extent to which a study ... accurately measures what it is supposed to measure.’ One method that would have been likely to deliver good research validity would have been to interview each research participant from the moment they visited brand pages on Facebook of their own accord, without any stimulus to do so, and then interview them later to discover their actual behaviour. However, a requisite to obtain a large enough sample in order to create statistically significant findings made this method prohibitively expensive. An alternative would have been to use a ‘pop-up’ survey on a brand’s Facebook page, which a respondent could complete following their visit. However, Facebook prohibits this research method, and in any case, the likelihood of obtaining the permission of a wide number of brand owners would have been considerably low.

In consequence, we decided to match each research participant with a brand whose content he or she already had a likelihood to visit on Facebook, based upon their brand and social media behaviour, interests and demographics. We then planned to send each participant to that brand’s Facebook content and subsequently interview them.

Employing a specialist agency, we recruited 6,400 people who are regular Facebook users, who reside in the UK and who are representative of the general UK Facebook population. We then gave these people an online questionnaire that was split into three parts. The first part explored their general social media behaviour, which included questions about any behaviour around brand content on social media. These questions were partly designed to allow us to explore subsets of the overall sample, although findings from this fall outside the scope of this paper.

The second part of the questionnaire asked questions that, along with the first part, enabled us to decide to which brand Facebook pages to send each participant, if at all. We then sent each participant to the most appropriate Facebook page, and asked them to spend a minimum of three minutes browsing the content. Importantly, we asked people not to post anything, enter any competition, play games or watch videos, the reason being that we wanted to ask them about likely behaviours (as below). If during those three minutes a participant returned to the questionnaire, he or she would be eliminated from the research. Upon returning to the third part of the questionnaire, we asked each respondent to answer questions that used five-point responses, running from ‘Very likely’ to ‘Very unlikely’, and respond to statements that used five-point Likert scales, running from ‘Strongly agree’ to ‘Strongly disagree’.
The first part of this final section of the questionnaire asked each participant how much she or he agreed or disagreed with the experience statements we designed. The second part consisted of a series of questions about each respondent’s likelihood to do a selection of actions on the page he or she visited. These included playing a game, entering a competition, watching a video and posting a positive comment. Also included in this were questions about each respondent’s likelihood to follow the brand on Twitter, and Tweet about the brand and/or content. Together we called this set of actions ‘social media actions’. The third part consisted of questions and statements about the likelihood of each respondent to do a variety of behaviours in the near future, with a particular focus on purchase funnel and advocacy actions.

Findings

On delivering experiences

Participants in our research are most likely to agree that the Facebook content they experienced stimulated their curiosity, with 47% reporting this. Participants are least likely to report they have been impacted emotionally (Table 1).

It arises from this spread of experiences that, when designing a brand’s strategy for Facebook, a brand owner needs to decide which activities they want people who encounter their content across different media to undertake. For example, generating curiosity via Facebook can be particularly important to media brand owners. A newspaper publisher is likely to want to create curiosity through news stories on Facebook in order to drive people to its website on which ads for other brands appear. On the other hand, a Facebook page visit may also be a consequence of a call to action, say via television, print or a digital ad, in which case,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience Statement</th>
<th>All respondents (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘This stimulated my curiosity’</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘This made a strong impression on my visual or hearing senses’</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘This made me think’</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I experienced strong positive emotions while viewing this’</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 6,400
Note: Figures were derived by combining responses of ‘Strongly agree’ with ‘Agree’.
curiosity is likely to be the reason for a page visit, and the content therein needs to meet that need.

When a brand owner links through to its website, it is able to exert more control over content, and has access to visitor data and cookies. Alternatively, a brand may be able to meet curiosity by providing a telephone number on its Facebook page, or recommending that a person visit a store. Table 2 shows that, across our sample, people who agree that their curiosity has been stimulated by a brand’s Facebook content are 2.9 times more likely to say they are likely to visit the brand’s website than people who say their curiosity has not been stimulated (sig. = <0.001). In particular, it shows that visitors to retail, and media and entertainment brands in our study who agree their curiosity has been stimulated are most likely to say they will do this. However, visitors to content on Facebook pages belonging to brands from these brand categories are among the least likely to agree that this content has stimulated their curiosity (Table 3). Understanding that great value exists by instilling curiosity means that brands, especially from retail, and media and entertainment, need to configure greater curiosity in visitors.

It should be noted here and throughout that although we are not positing a causal relationship between experience and action, it is conceivable in view of our methodology that a positive experience can have an impact (however small) upon likelihood to do a subsequent action.

### Table 2  ‘This Facebook page stimulated my curiosity’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Of respondents who agree who say they are likely to visit the brand site (%)</th>
<th>Of respondents who do not agree who say they are likely to visit the brand site (%)</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Facebook brand pages surveyed</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail brands</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media and entertainment brands</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology and telecoms brands</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance brands</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and beauty brands</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and drink brands</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agree n = 3,024 sig. < 0.001

Note: Figures were derived by combining responses of ‘Strongly agree’ and ‘Agree’ who were ‘Likely’ or ‘Very likely’. Figures for second column were derived by combining ‘Strongly disagree,’ ‘Disagree’ and ‘Neither’ who were ‘Likely’ or ‘Very likely’. 
Emotions: the key to increasing likelihood of social media actions

We consistently found that participants who say they are positively impacted across the experiences we identified have a greater likelihood to say they are likely to do a social media action than participants who say they are not impacted. In particular, while participants are least likely to agree that the brand’s content has stimulated strong emotions in them, participants who say they experienced strong positive emotions are between 2.3 and 3.0 times more likely to say they are likely to do a social media action than people who say they have not experienced strong positive emotions (sig. = <0.001). This demonstrates why brand owners should seek to configure positive emotions in people (Laros & Steenkamp 2005; Thompson et al. 2006; Esch 2008; Payne et al. 2009; Veloutsou 2009). As studies from psychology show, when people experience positive emotions, a cognitive attachment to the perceived source of that emotion is likely to be created (Bowlby 1979, 1980; Thompson et al. 2006).

In view of this, we found that 70% of participants who say they experienced strong positive emotions say they are likely to do a positive comment on the brand page to which we sent them, while only 22% of participants who say they did not experience strong positive emotions are likely to post a positive comment (sig. = <0.001) (Table 4). The greater likelihood of people who say they were impacted emotionally to do a social media action is also evident when we look at the likelihood of these people to say they are likely to share content from the brand page (Table 5). People who say they experienced strong positive emotions with brands’ content on Facebook are 4.3 times more likely to say they are likely to share that content than people who say they did not experience strong positive emotions (sig. = <0.001).
The research shows that emotional connections are not the sole domain of brands that some brand analysts and others describe as ‘emotional brands’, such as Coca-Cola or Apple. For example, 36% of participants we sent to the Coca-Cola Facebook page reported being impacted emotionally, yet 46% of participants we sent to the Barclaycard page reported the same. It would therefore seem that to describe one brand as ‘emotional’ and another as not can be too imprecise. Our findings suggest that the emotions people experience across very different brands are themselves likely to be varied. Brand owners need to think about

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**Table 4** Respondents who are likely to post a positive comment (all respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Of people who agree, who say they are likely to post a positive comment (%)</th>
<th>Of people who do not agree, who say they are likely to post a positive comment (%)</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘I experienced strong positive emotions whilst viewing this’</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘This made me think’</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘This stimulated my curiosity’</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘This made a strong impression on my visual or hearing senses’</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agree n = 2,380 sig. < 0.001
Note: Figures for first column were derived by combining responses of ‘Strongly agree’ and ‘Agree’ who were ‘Likely’ or ‘Very likely’. Figures for second column were derived by combining ‘Strongly disagree’, ‘Disagree’ and ‘Neither’ who were ‘Likely’ or ‘Very likely’.

**Table 5** Respondents who are likely to share brand content from Facebook page (all brands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Of people who agree, who say they are likely to share brand content (%)</th>
<th>Of people who do not agree, who say they are likely to share brand content (%)</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘I experienced strong positive emotions while viewing this’</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘This made me think’</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘This made a strong impression on my visual or hearing senses’</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘This stimulated my curiosity’</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agree n = 1,672 sig. < 0.001
Note: Figures for first column were derived by combining responses of ‘Strongly agree’ and ‘Agree’ who were ‘Likely’ or ‘Very likely’. Figures for second column were derived by combining ‘Strongly disagree’, ‘Disagree’ and ‘Neither’ who were ‘Likely’ or ‘Very likely’.
what sorts of emotions they want to stimulate and how they can do this, and then test how successful they are at achieving it. For example, while Coca-Cola tends to configure emotions related to joy and childhood memory (LaTour et al. 2009), many financial brands configure emotions related to relief, trust and security (Hansen 2007).

**Future actions**

Because of stimulation of cognitive attachment due to emotional experiences, it is reasonable to suggest that experiencing positive emotions while encountering a brand’s content on Facebook is positively associated with likelihood to prefer that brand, talk positively about it, and have the intention of revisiting that content.

**Purchase funnel actions**

Overall, 69% of people who report experiencing strong positive emotions while viewing brand content on Facebook also report they are likely to prefer the brand over its competitors. This compares with only 23% of people who do not report experiencing these emotions (sig. = <0.001) (Table 6). While we are not claiming a causal relationship, it is conceivable that having a positive experience with a brand may impact likelihood to prefer that brand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6</th>
<th>‘I experienced strong positive emotions while viewing this’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Of people who agree</strong>, who say they are likely to prefer the brand (%)</td>
<td><strong>Of people who do not agree</strong>, who say they are likely to prefer the brand (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All Facebook brand pages surveyed</strong></td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and beauty</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and drink</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media and entertainment</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology and telecoms</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agree n = 2,534 sig. < 0.001

Note: Figures for first column were derived by combining responses of ‘Strongly agree’ and ‘Agree’ who were ‘Likely’ or ‘Very likely’. Figures for second column were derived by combining ‘Strongly disagree’, ‘Disagree’ and ‘Neither’ who were ‘Likely’ or ‘Very likely’.
The likelihood of people who report experiencing strong positive emotions to say they are likely to prefer the brand changes across brand categories. Participants we sent to FMCG and retail category brands’ Facebook content are more likely than participants we sent to considered category brands’ pages (such as technology, finance, and media and entertainment brands) to report they prefer those brands over their competitors (Table 6). We suggest that brands from considered brand categories need to consider placing great weight upon cognitive impacts in order to configure greater likelihood to prefer.

**Advocacy**

Many brands depend greatly upon advocacy to encourage new enquiries and sales (Marsden 2006; Keller 2007). Our study shows that brands can give Facebook a central role in helping to encourage advocacy. Again, those who report they are impacted emotionally on a brand’s Facebook page are most likely to say they are likely to recommend that brand or its products. This association is greater among participants we sent to health and beauty brand Facebook pages (Table 7). Overall, while 64% of participants who report experiencing strong positive emotions on these brands’ pages also report they are likely to recommend these brands, only 19% of people who did not report experiencing positive emotions on these pages say they are likely to do this (sig. = <0.001).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7</th>
<th>‘I experienced strong positive emotions while viewing this’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Of people who agree, who say they are likely to recommend the brand (%)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Retail</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media and entertainment</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agree n = 1,554 sig. < 0.001

Note: Figures for first column were derived by combining responses of ‘Strongly agree’ and ‘Agree’ who were ‘Likely’ or ‘Very likely’. Figures for second column were derived by combining ‘Strongly disagree’, ‘Disagree’ and ‘Neither’ who were ‘Likely’ or ‘Very likely’. 
The importance of advocacy means brand owners need to target and continue to engage highly connected and influential people within their personal communities (Cakim 2006; Marsden 2006). (See Wellman (1979) for a discussion of personal communities.) A brand may have 50,000 ‘Likes’ on Facebook, but how connected and influential are these people? To target highly connected and influential people, some of the things brand owners need to identify are people’s socio-demographics, how many networks they have in their personal communities, the number of people with whom they regularly communicate, what they communicate about and how often they communicate (cf. Chua et al. 2009).

Brands are able to integrate Facebook into owned spaces (e.g. brands’ own websites) in order to facilitate identifying some of these characteristics of people. Linking the Facebook Graph API into owned sites makes it possible for brand owners to garner user data, which they can extend by employing tracking cookies. Once they have targeted influential people, brand owners are also able to target their Facebook friends.

*The value of a social media action*

By looking at the likelihood of people who say they are likely to do social media actions to also say they are likely to do different purchase funnel actions, we can obtain a measure of value to attribute to likely social media actions. Of course, this is not to assert a causal relationship. People who prefer a brand, for example, may be more likely to do a social media action than people who do not.

Across all the brands we included in the study, we have found that, on average, for every 100 people who say they are likely to post a positive comment on a brand’s Facebook page, 69 of them say they are likely to prefer that brand over its competitors (Table 8). This compares with only 22% of people who say they are not likely to post a positive comment but are nevertheless likely to prefer the brand (sig. = <0.001). This is to say, people who say they are likely to post a positive comment are three times more likely to say they prefer the brand than people who say they are not likely to post such a comment. Sixty-nine per cent is our average benchmark, but when we looked across brands we saw a wide deviation from this mean, from 56% to 79%. On average, while participants who report they are likely to post positive comments to health and beauty and retail brands on Facebook are most likely to say they are likely to prefer those brands over their competitors, participants who report they are likely to post positive comments on media and entertainment, and finance brands are least likely to say this.
Of all participants who say they are not likely to write a positive comment on a brand’s page, participants who visited finance, and media and entertainment brands’ Facebook pages are least likely to say they are likely to prefer those brands over their competitors. Participants who visited health and beauty, and retail brands but who report they are not likely to write positive comments, are most likely to say this. This means that the value represented by reported likelihood to post positive comments for the former types of brand is actually higher than for the latter. For the latter, it matters less that people report they are likely to write positive comments because a large proportion of people who report they are not likely to write positive comments are still likely to prefer brands from those categories. Nevertheless, because an association appears to exist between people reporting they have positive experiences and them saying they are likely to post a positive comment and suchlike, this proportion represents a high number of people who report they are not impacted on these experiences. By engaging them, brand equity is likely to increase, and it is conceivable that they will be more likely to post a positive comment, which is then likely to appear in the news feeds of friends.

**Conclusion**

This research has demonstrated the following.
• People who claim to have positive experiences with a brand’s content on Facebook pages have a greater likelihood of claiming to be more likely to do a social media action than people who do not claim to have such experiences. For example, people who report experiencing strong positive emotions are 3.2 times more likely to say they are likely to post a positive comment and 4.3 times more likely to say they are likely to share that content than people who do not claim to have experienced strong positive emotions.

• People who report having positive experiences with a brand’s content on Facebook have a greater likelihood of claiming to be more likely to do a purchase funnel action. For example, people who say they experience strong positive emotions are 3.0 times more likely to say they prefer the brand.

• People who report having positive experiences with a brand’s content on Facebook are more likely to claim they are likely to do an advocacy action. People who say they experience strong positive emotions are 3.4 times more likely to say they are likely to recommend the brand.

In so doing, we have developed two sets of metrics: first, a ‘value of experience’ metric based on the likelihood of people who claim to have positive experiences with brands’ Facebook pages to say they are likely to do a social media action, a purchase funnel action and advocacy action; second, a ‘value of a fan’ metric, which measures the likelihood of people who report they are likely to do a social media action to also say they are likely to do a purchase funnel action and advocacy action. For example, people who claim they are likely to post a positive comment are 3.1 times more likely to say they are likely to prefer the brand, than people who claim they are not likely to.

The results from this paper show that brand owners need to proceed through three stages in order to take greatest advantage of Facebook. First, a brand owner needs to set a clear strategy for what he or she wants to achieve via Facebook. Experiences of a Facebook page that a brand owner wants to configure in visitors will form part of this. For example, as we have shown, the types of emotion that a soft drinks brand owner may want to evoke may be quite different to those of a financial brand owner. Even within these brand categories, there will be subtle and even significant differences.

Second, the importance of curiosity exemplifies the advantages to a brand owner of making Facebook integral to a marcomms campaign, for example by using it to continue an experience started elsewhere, such as on television, in print or in another place online. Alternatively, Facebook may be used as a significant resource for configuring curiosity and driving
enquiry, which a brand owner may then attempt to meet through the brand’s own website and store visits.

Lastly, by impacting people emotionally with content on a brand’s Facebook page, a brand owner is likely to increase the chance of a person forming or increasing an attachment with a brand, and so increase the likelihood of people revisiting brand content on Facebook and communicating with it. Vitally, this attachment is likely to also manifest itself in talk about and recommendations of the brand and its products both off and online, making careful targeting crucial.

This paper gives a partial response to Brakus et al.’s (2009) call for further research to examine whether the scale they develop can predict specific behavioural outcomes. We have uncovered a number of associations between reported experiences and likely actions. However, further research should be conducted in order to test such associations that may exist in other media such as television, print and experiential activities. Doing so will enable brands to rank the effectiveness of different media at impacting people and impacting likelihood to do different behaviours that are beneficial to brands.

A caveat throughout this research is that it focuses on claimed data. In addition, we have stressed we do not claim to have uncovered causation. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that people’s positive experiences on a brand’s Facebook page are likely, however small, to positively impact likelihood to do different actions. Further research should therefore seek to uncover experiences and actions beyond mere claims, and uncover any causality.

Still further research should be undertaken to examine the effectiveness of using different media together within the same campaign – to test the so called ‘media multiplier effect’, in which an exposure to some elements of a campaign in one medium may increase the impacts of other elements in another medium from the same campaign. Undertaking this will quantitatively test the proposition that including social media in campaigns can increase the effectiveness of those campaigns.

References


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