

Theoretical Guidelines for Social Media Marketing Communication

ABSTRACT

Social media (user-generated content) create many innovative opportunities for those organisations that realise that electronic word of mouth (eWOM) can be powerful in an online environment. eWOM is now considered to provide an organisation's online marketing communication with a competitive edge since consumers know and trust their friends' recommendations regarding products and services. Social media provide organisations with an opportunity to create consumer experiences for consumers by making available social media tools. Organisations are interested in brand online communities because of their ability also to build brand equity and product differentiation in the long term. Although organisations realise the huge potential of social media for eWOM and establishing an organisation's brand, there are no clear theoretical guidelines for social media marketing communication. This article proposes theoretical guidelines in terms of which social media marketing communication can be considered. These guidelines are evaluated by means of a case study of a recent social media marketing communication campaign in South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

It is common knowledge that the idea of a Web2.0 began at a conference in 2004 where O'Reilly (2005) set out the principles and practices of this new web platform, which led to numerous applications such as social media networks. Web2.0 basically allows the generation of web content by users and, in the process, transfers control to the user. The consumer participates and is actively engaged in the communication process (O'Reilly, 2005). According to Bosch (2009:185), Web2.0 is known as the "so-called second generation of web-based communities" with various applications that allow for increased collaboration and sharing among users (see Table 1 on page 4). Viral marketing or word-of-mouth marketing (WOM) allows organisations' brands to be peer-reviewed in an online environment where consumers know and trust their friends' recommendations concerning products and services (Cheung, Lee & Rabjohn, 2008:229). According to Cruz and Fill (2008:743), people like to share their involvement with products and services for various reasons. These would include the 'prestige' that may be derived through sharing their experiences or ownership of products and services. These conversations are shared with family, friends and other members of the online community in social networks.

Cheung et al. (2008:229) state that web-based technologies have created numerous opportunities for eWOM communication. eWOM communication refers to any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or organisation, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet. eWOM communication - through social media sites - allows consumers to obtain information related to goods and services not only from the few people they know, but also from a vast, geographically dispersed group of people, who have experience of relevant products or services.

Currently, there are no clear theoretical guidelines for social media marketing communication. The purpose of this article is to identify some theoretical guidelines for social media marketing communication, based on the literature and to evaluate these against a South African social media marketing communication campaign.

1. SOCIAL MEDIA

Evans (2008:37) defines social media as "participatory online media where news, photos, videos and podcasts are made available via social media web sites via submission and are normally accompanied by a voting process to make via media items become more popular". Social media are thus characterised by the content trail they leave on social media sites and also by the voting process that represents the perceptions of the users of particular content. Another definition is the one formulated by Daugherty, Eastin and Bright (2008:1), who refer to social media as "user-generated content created or produced by the general public rather than by paid professionals and primarily distributed on the Internet".

Social media are unique in that they are 'media rich' and empower users to share their opinions, insights, experiences, content and contacts with their friends and family through multiple content

forms. Similar to multimedia, social media allow for multiple content forms such as text, audio, still images, animation, video and other interactivity content forms (see Table 1). At the same time, users are able to learn more about favourite products and brands (Charton, 2007). Social media further focus on messaging while having huge potential to distribute content to a large number of people (Social networking goes mobile, 2007).

Social media are not a new phenomenon, but popular social network sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter have made social networking more accessible to the masses. Currently, thousands of sites are related to social media. According to the social comparison theory developed by Festinger (1954), human beings compare their opinions and abilities with others because of a drive to evaluate themselves. This theory reinforces the perception that people in general enjoy social networking because of a need to look externally to assess and judge their own opinions and to see how they compare to the online group. Later work on the social comparison theory includes the suggestion that people search for other people with whom to compare themselves in order to validate themselves. In the absence of real comparison, for instance, in a virtual reality context, people are tempted to construct a social reality in which they are the 'star' players (Suls & Wheeler, 2000:34).

Thousands of social media sites are available online. The following grouping of types of social media sites has been suggested by a well-known social-media strategist (Cosme, 2008):

- Social networking sites
- Social bookmarking sites
- Social news sites
- Video-sharing communities
- Photo-sharing sites
- Professional networking
- Web-based encyclopaedia
- Community answer sites
- Blog-networking communities
- Social media aggregators
- Microblogging
- Blog publishing
- Social web-content discovery
- Social media search
- Social event calendar
- Mobile-phone platforms

2. THE NATURE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Traditional marketing messages alone are no longer enough to build an organisation's brand, and organisations therefore now also consider using social media. There are numerous definitions of social marketing. According to Evans (2008:13), social media marketing is an application of

social media in that it uses natural conversation strategically to benefit the organisation. Cosme (2008) explains social media marketing as “establishing relationships between companies and current and/or potential customers, and tapping into the power of peer-to-peer influence”. The nature of social media provides a unique opportunity to complement an organisation’s traditional marketing activities along with other new media opportunities. It is therefore an extension of online marketing but focuses more on social media content and communities (Cosme, 2008). Social media marketing provides new ways for organisations to interact with their target audience and to encourage customers to spread the message for the brand (Charton, 2007). It furthermore creates a ‘richer’ understanding of customers’ needs by ‘tapping into customers’ intelligence’ through having access to their conversations (Mullins, 2008).

This article is concerned with social media marketing communication, which is an extension of social media marketing and refers to the integration of social media tools into an organisation’s marketing-communication mix (Holt, 2009). These social media tools are referred to as social media marketing communication tools.

According to Suliman (2008), social media have an important place in the organisation’s marketing-communication mix, but consumers play an important role because of their nature. Social media marketing does not entail targeted advertising but rather the recognising of opportunities that will lead to “meaningful engagement and sustained relationships between the brands and communities” (Universal Mcann, 2008).

However, social media marketing communication also poses a risk in that it can tarnish an organisation’s online reputation by means of negative viral marketing over which it has little or no control. Another risk is that no one might participate in its social network sites because of a lack of appropriate encouragement (Evans, 2008:158).

Social media marketing communication uses social media to reach the target audience by means of numerous tools. Some of these tools engage consumers with an organisation’s brand as indicated in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Examples of social media marketing communication tools and their uses

Tool	Explanation	Use by organisation
Blog	An individual provides commentary in the form of a personal diary about various topics of interest. Visitors to the blog may respond to messages (Stanyer, 2006).	Builds customer community Encourages customer conversation
Product blog	Similar to a blog, but messages are aimed at selling products or services. In many instances the blogger has entered into affiliate programmes or joint ventures with another organisation (Goodfellow & Graham, 2007).	Builds customer community Encourages customer conversation

Blog press room	A blog maintained by an individual or an organisation in which information is fed to the media by means of press releases, videos, photos and screen shots (Wyld, 2008).	Brand/product publicity
Review blog	An extension of a blog but promoting new products and services and providing opportunity for professional reflection and viewpoints (Schrecker, 2008)	Brand/product publicity
Message board	An electronic platform in the form of a forum where various messages about different topics can be posted (Maclaran & Catterall, 2002).	Builds customer community Encourages customer conversation
Podcast	A digital media file that can be downloaded from the Internet by users and played back using various Internet and communication technologies (Lu & Hsiao, 2009).	Builds customer community Encourages customer conversation
Vlog	The same as a blog, but the medium is a video where the message can be seen and heard by users (Lu & Hsiao, 2009).	Builds customer community Encourages customer conversation
Wiki	A web page or several web pages, the content of which can be modified by users who can access these pages (Mason, 2008).	Builds customer community Encourages customer conversation
Really simple syndication (RSS) feed	Users can be connected to Internet content by subscribing to a feed (Luckhoff, 2009).	Attracts traffic to a web site Leaves a content trail
Widget built into social media sites	An applet that can be built into an HTML web page to add content and to make it interactive (Dmochowska, 2008).	Builds customer community
Beacon	An advertisement system on Facebook. Data are sent from external web sites to Facebook to allow targeted advertisements while users can share their activities with their friends (Facebook backs down, 2007).	Builds customer community Encourages customer conversation
Fan page	A page of a celebrity within a social media site such as Facebook or MySpace. Many organisations also create a fan page for a brand (Luckhoff, 2009).	Builds customer community Encourages customer conversation
Games, competitions, incentives	Providing entertainment to online community members while surfing the web site (Sicilia & Palazón, 2008)	Attracts traffic to a web site Builds customer community

Sponsoring of content category	Organisations are given a category in a suitable section of a social-media site where they can post original content (Charton, 2007).	Brand/product publicity
Video advertisement	An engaging audiovisual advertisement that is generated by users and available on sites that are part of the Google content network (Li & Thomasch, 2008).	Builds customer community Encourages customer conversation Brand/product publicity
Online social-media press release	A press release with multimedia features that can be accessed online (Standard Bank's online social media release, 2009).	Brand/product publicity
Social media aggregator	A web site that allows for searches on social media and provides the marketer with the opportunity to read opinions of consumers about their products or services (Capper, 2008).	Brand building
Hyper targeting	Targeting individuals with tailor-made messages using available demographic and behavioural information (Milton, 2009).	Brand/product publicity
Mobile platforms	Using the Internet or social conversation sites to reach online consumers (Boyd, 2008a).	Brand/product publicity

3. PROPOSING SOME THEORETICAL GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING COMMUNICATION

Thousands of online consumer communities can be found within social networking sites. Realising that consumer communities provide important feedback on the quality of products and/or services, organisations want to tap into this new market. Farquhar and Rowley (2006:164) explain that in some instances even new ideas about an existing product can be generated. They further refer to a definition of online communities by Hagel and Armstrong (1997) as “computer-mediated space where there is an integration of content and communication with an emphasis on member-generated content” (Farquhar & Rowley, 2006:163). Online communities therefore exist because they have been generated or at times even initiated by users.

Organisations are more interested in brand online communities because of their added ability to build brand equity and product differentiation in the long term. According to Casaló, Flavián and Guinalú (2007:777), a brand community is “a set of individuals who voluntarily relate to each other for their interest in some brand or product”. However, the use of the community for commercial purposes depends on the reason for its existence. As online communities generally consist of a close network of relationships that do not always want to be exposed to advertising messages, it is not easy to use these social structures to carry out marketing actions (Flavián & Guinalú, 2005:421).

Based on a broad literature review, theoretical guidelines are proposed for evaluating a social media marketing communication campaign, which does not alienate the target market through intrusive advertising messages. These guidelines are: situation analysis, sustainability, interaction and value. Each of these guidelines is based on findings in the relevant literature.

3.1 Situation analysis

In terms of situation analysis, a needs analysis, the demographics of the online community, access to the online community and the objectives of the social media marketing campaign are all important.

Because online communities have become such an important medium, marketers need to know exactly whom they want to target with their marketing messages. Before an organisation uses social media, it is imperative first to do a situation analysis of online communities so as to ascertain what online community will meet the needs of the organisation. Pitta and Fowler (2005:287) point out that Hagel and Armstrong (1997) also investigated consumer motivations for joining an online community and that their findings indicated that reasons included: having a shared interest in the topic and wanting to build both relationships and transactions that may result from such membership.

According to Casaló et al. (2007), marketers should analyse such communities' conversations, their behaviours, demographics and concerns in order to establish what their needs are. Shang, Chen and Liao (2006:400-413) explain that brand communities can do a great deal for an organisation's brand, for instance sharing information, keeping alive the history and culture of the brand and also providing assistance in usage. The experiences in the community may constitute a major part of the consumer experiences of the brand.

Many organisations prefer to provide access to online communities on their corporate web sites to connect consumers with one another. Consumers have the option to sign in and join the organisation's online community via its web site where they can interact with other consumers who do business with the organisation. As a result, such online communities are sources of rich and unique information for organisations about their brands. Flavián and Guinalú (2005:409) argue that online brand communities increase the brand's associated intangible and emotional attributes. Brand communities are also increasingly being used not only as market segmentation and brand awareness tools, but also to attract consumers to organisation's web sites.

3.2 Sustainability

Literature reveals that sustainability of online communities is the most serious obstacle confronting organisations. When organisations embark on a social media marketing communication campaign, there is always a risk that no one might participate because of a lack of appropriate encouragement (Evans, 2008:158). Specifically, the management of the

online community, the relevancy of its content, the appropriate technology, the registration requirements, the advertising of the community, the relationships formed within that community, and the membership benefits also contribute to its sustainability.

An important consideration for the organisation is whether the type of technology being used for the online community is in fact suited to the characteristics of the group. For instance, the use of simple technologies as opposed to design systems and procedures that can transmit complex messages (including images and sound) should be investigated based on the characteristics and needs of the group participating in the online community (Flavián & Guinalfú, 2005:408).

In order to attract consumers to participate in an online community, the community should be created in accordance with its members' needs and not with those of the organisation. It should also preferably be managed by external or experienced members who will constantly analyse the online community members' needs (Flavián & Guinalfú, 2005:418-419). If technically possible, members of the community should also be encouraged to generate and publish directly at least part of the content, this then resulting in increased commitment to the community. However, some basic rules for the community should be laid down by external or experienced members. The stronger the links between the members of a community, the better the chances that the community will not disappear or become unstable. Community members can, for instance, organise physical meetings between members, engage the community in charitable causes, propose special offers of outside products to the community members or create international community networks (Flavián & Guinalfú, 2005:418-419). Casaló et al. (2007:787) suggest that the consumers' familiarity with a brand community should be increased by, for instance, including details regarding the community in the organisation's advertisements about the brand. Their research indicates that consumer trust and loyalty may increase when the ties that are established with consumers are reinforced by encouraging increased interaction. This is further confirmed by earlier research by Evans, Wedande, Ralston and Van't Hul (2001) indicating that the sustainability of an online community depends on quality content, value-added features and efficient use of members' online time. Thus, when participants have to register too many personal details, many become hesitant to participate in the particular community.

The stronger the relationships in the online community, the more sustainable and useful will the community be to its members. Pitta and Fowler (2005:288) explain that, while information-sharing is the focus of online communities, the main obstacle still is trust. Relationships are built by consumers interacting in the forum on issues of interest, and over time more participation is encouraged by there being no barriers to participation. Members will later associate particular postings with their authors and in the process build an image of other online members.

According to Farquhar and Rowley (2006:164), the challenge to the organisation is one of recognising the type of relationship that the consumer wants (if any). Online communities

are dynamic and each requires a different approach. The relationship marketing paradigm emphasises different types of relationships, for instance the need for satisfactory e-commerce and dynamic web content. However, in many instances merely a context in which relationships may be strengthened is laid down, while a lifelong partnership is not necessarily built (Farquhar & Rowley, 2006:164).

3.3 Interaction

Social media tools, planned versus spontaneous communication, and also the credibility of the organisation's communication are important considerations towards ensuring ample interaction in social media platforms.

Social media are also characterised by their content trail (Evans, 2008); it is thus evident that communication is of the utmost importance. Organisations are very interested in platforms that provide real-time synchronous communication rather than asynchronous time-delayed communication such as message boards. While many organisations create their own online communities on their respective web sites - for instance discussion forums to provide organisation-to-consumer contact - many online communities do actually emerge on their own and provide real-time communication between consumers. Instant communication can have both negative and positive effects for the organisation. A positive effect would be that of building the organisation's brand, while negative comments, such as anti-brand communities, can damage the organisation's reputation (Maclaran & Catterall, 2002:320).

Real-time communication is spontaneous and cannot be controlled either by the organisation or by traditional gatekeepers. Marketers could provide the means for consumer-controlled interaction via, for instance, less unsolicited 'outbound contact' and more opportunities for consumers to contact marketers in their own time and own way (Evans et al., 2001:158).

Organisations can benefit from spontaneous discussions by having planned for the online community and by stimulating more interaction. Sicilia and Palazón (2008:257-258) state that brand communities are able to stimulate the trial, adoption and use of products and services by means of interaction. Community members may establish a brand-related discussion but they may also share opinions about any other topic of interest. Consumer interaction within the community may be encouraged by the organisation through proposing different content or topics around which the relationships between members can be grown.

Organisations realise that the WOM influence that online communities may have is immense. People who actively participate in discussions are influenced by the messages. So are those who merely observe and who do not necessarily participate in the interactions (Evans et al., 2001:157).

The power of WOM influence is especially strong because of the source credibility of online communities, since communication in these communities is authentic and comes from users

who have actually experienced the organisation's products and/or services (Brown, Broderick & Lee, 2007:6). Cheung et al. (2008:232) explain that source credibility refers to a message recipient's perception of the credibility of a message source, and not to the message itself. It is defined as the "extent to which an information source is perceived to be believable, competent, and trustworthy by information recipients". Interactions in online communities take place among people who have actually experienced the product or service of the organisation and are considered more reliable and useful by the recipients. In addition, only relevant information should be present in the online community in that consumers want to find information they need quickly to facilitate any decision making (Cheung et al., 2008:234).

Communication in an online community is especially useful since the members of the audience are connected to one another and, in some instances, also to the organisation. Gurău (2008:174) explains that all members of an online community are communicators; the organisation is only part of the network. Any statement made can within hours be followed up, analysed, discussed and even challenged by interested individuals. Members do not need to accept every message pushed from a communicator, but they rather pull specific information that suits their interests and needs. The organisation's challenge thus lies in being able to maintain the credibility of its own communication among all the sources in the specific network.

3.4 Value

Important considerations are functional, social and entertainment values and also an online community rich in social context. Because of its importance, value is dealt with on its own - even though this criterion can also be considered to be part of the sustainability of an online community.

According to Sicilia and Palazón (2008:258-263), within the uses-and-gratification paradigm, the functional, social and entertainment values that members perceive to result from their participation contribute to their participation in that community. A member of an online community experiences **functional value** when the resource-sharing process that usually motivates consumers in online communities is also present in this site. Functional value can include advice, information and expertise on various topics of interest. Online communities require a space where members can both create the content and are responsible for it. One of the most popular avenues for creating and disseminating content is the forum – a web-based application that allows people to post messages and share information. Forums provide a space for supporting debates that continue for an extended period. The online community may also offer downloading options to members. Different incentives may stimulate different people. In the case of young people, downloading (for instance, the latest tones for their cellular phones) appears to be the most appealing strategy in order to capture their attention and interest. This provides unique benefits that are otherwise unavailable in traditional media environments (Sicilia & Palazón, 2008:259-263).

Social value is apparent when the online community also provides different options for primarily social purposes rather than for commercial aims. In order to succeed, an online community must also support social interaction for purposes of friendship, emotional support, self-esteem, social status and social enhancement. Connecting online with friends has become the main attraction of the rapidly growing social networking phenomena, especially among young people. Members should be able to use the site to meet people with specific characteristics (age, sex and geographical location) by using the 'find people' option in order to establish relationships with other members. Members can create friend lists by adding people they find interesting. Once connected, any member can contact other members through the Web, which helps people in the community to get to know one another. The online community should be rich in social context, allowing consumers to have a great deal of information about one another, along with helping to maintain an interpersonal connectivity among its members (Sicilia & Palazón, 2008:259-263).

An online community should allow its members to explore 'new worlds of fantasy', entertainment and fun and therefore provide **entertainment**. The organisation's site should become a reliable leisure place where customers have the opportunity of playing online. In addition, prizes, such as trips or tickets for fun events, may provide additional entertainment value. Games not only entertain consumers, but also reinforce consumers' impressions in respect of the products by creating experiences that strengthen relationships and influence consumer attitudes towards both the organisation's web site and its brand (Sicilia & Palazón, 2008:259-264).

Online communities are important not only for their informational value, but also for the social support and entertainment options they offer to participants. Within a large online community, where people do not know one another personally, entertainment and social interaction might be perceived as being more important than informational value. Both the entertaining content and the possibility of forming relationships with others draw members back to the web site frequently (Sicilia & Palazón, 2008:259-264).

According to Farquhar and Rowley (2006), value creation is linked to commitment and loyalty. However, value is created differently for different stakeholders, because members of online communities, community organisers and advertisers will all seek different benefits from participation in the community. All stakeholders must be able to experience value from the existence of the community in order for it to continue.

4. RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question for this study was the following:

What theoretical guidelines can be identified in the relevant literature for social media marketing communication?

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Because an understanding of social media marketing is as yet relatively underdeveloped, a case-study approach was used. According to Rowley (2002:16), a case-study approach is well suited to areas of research for which existing theory seems to be lacking. A case-study approach is also useful when the researcher mainly asks *how* and *why* questions.

Permission was granted by Standard Bank to use their social media marketing campaign for the case study. It was however made clear that any information that could compromise their competitive edge in the market would not be revealed by the researcher. The social media marketing campaign is therefore evaluated without revealing sensitive information but is still in accordance with the identified guidelines for social media marketing communication.

The researcher identified four distinctive guidelines for social media marketing communication in the literature, namely situation analysis, sustainability, interaction and value. Each of these guidelines was broken down into different elements that correspond with the literature (see point 3 above and Table 2 on page 16).

In order to evaluate the bank's social media marketing campaign using these guidelines, a variety of evidence from different sources was used. The bank's social media press release, articles about the campaign, comments by the marketing team in the mainstream media, the official web site and the various social media for the campaign were assessed by the researcher according to the above four guidelines.

6. THE CASE STUDY

Standard Bank adopted an integrated, very successful online social media strategy in 2008 as part of the *We got the Kaboom* Marketing Campaign, which was a first for South Africa. In 2009 it introduced an improved strategy with more social media features to build on the successes achieved in 2008.

As part of its sponsorship of South African cricket at both the domestic and the international levels, the bank made use of various social media marketing tools. It also released South Africa's first social media release that besides multimedia content also included links to several other online social networks for the campaign.

This formed part of its marketing strategy that was aimed at 'delivering speedy, smart content' and further at encouraging maximum supporter participation by means of 'sportainment'.

The social media campaign included a special, dedicated cricket web site with links to various social media where cricket supporters could create content by sharing their opinions and uploading or downloading videos and pictures. In addition, the campaign not only employed social media to update cricket supporters with the very latest news on the cricket series as it was happening, but also used a mobile platform and wireless application protocol (WAP).

7. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings in terms of the four guidelines and different elements can be explained as follows:

7.1 Situation analysis

Organisations should do a thorough situation analysis before they consider a social media marketing campaign. As marketers need to know whom to target, they should do a needs analysis, look at the demographics of the intended target audience, consider how the target audience will gain access to the different social media marketing tools and also consider the objectives of such a campaign. Standard Bank's social media marketing campaign complies with the following in terms of the theoretical discussion:

7.1.1 Needs analysis

The campaign addresses the need for a domestic cricket series that not only offers value for money, but further also has global and countrywide impact.

7.1.2 Demographics

The campaign is directed at cricket fans of all ages all over the country.

7.1.3 Access

The campaign has various access points to social media marketing tools as discussed under Section 7.3 below. A special cricket web site is dedicated to cricket and the cricket series. This web site has prominent links to various social media and to the social media release. There are also links to the bank's site and the Achiever Club.

7.1.4 Objectives

The objectives of the social media marketing campaign are to provide instant and smart content to encourage maximum supporter participation and to build the brand.

7.2 Sustainability

For the campaign to succeed it is important that the social media marketing tools are sustainable. In addition, the following aspects also all play an important role: management of the social media marketing tools, relevancy of the social media content, the appropriate technology, registration requirements, advertising the community, relationships within the community, and membership benefits. The bank's social media marketing campaign complies with the following in terms of the theoretical discussion:

7.2.1 Management

Social media marketing tools are managed by experts in the bank but there are enough opportunities for user-generated content through various social media platforms such as those discussed under 8.3 below.

7.2.2 Relevancy of content

The content in both the user-generated media and the cricket web site is relevant in that messages are directed at and relevant to cricket fans. The following content is provided to cricket fans:

- Live score feeds of cricket matches
- Up-to-date fixtures related to cricket matches
- Result tables of cricket matches
- Match reports of cricket matches
- Player profiles of cricket series matches
- Highlights of cricket series matches
- Cricket fans have ample opportunities to make contact with fellow cricket fans.

7.2.3 Appropriate technology

The technology used on the bank's official cricket web site is able to carry complex messages through various images and sound. It seems to be a suitable and attractive technology for the target market – where there is access to the appropriate technology; yet it might not work on all computer systems. However, the various social media platforms use uncomplicated technology.

7.2.4 Registration requirements

Members of the target audience are required to register to join the Achiever Club for young fans, while the various social media for the campaign require registration to participate in conversations. However, not too many personal details are required in terms of security.

7.2.5 Advertising of online cricket communities

The advertising of the cricket communities was done not only in various mainstream media but also online. The social media press release also provides detailed information about the online cricket communities and is accessible through the official cricket web site.

7.2.6 Relationships within the online cricket communities

Relationships are built by participating in the social media platforms. Comments are provided on cricket matches and on cricket players. Participants in the online cricket communities are also able to contact one another individually and in that way strengthen relationships.

7.2.7 Membership benefits

Membership of online social media cricket communities offers many benefits. For instance, with regard to the fan page on Facebook, fans can win tickets to international cricket series matches when they upload a picture of themselves or a friend taken at any Pro20 match. By signing up for the Twitter community, various prizes can be won. Membership of Flickr offers the possibility of winning an autographed hat by the cricket

player, Jonty Rhodes, through a competition. Achiever Club members can win Achiever Box tickets to cricket matches.

7.3 Interaction

Continuous interaction lies at the heart of any social media marketing campaign. Thus, besides having to identify ways of encouraging communication (tools), marketers also have to consider planned and spontaneous communication, as well as the credibility of its own communication. The bank's social media marketing campaign complies with the following in terms of the theoretical discussion:

7.3.1 Ways of encouraging communication (tools)

Cricket fans can create their own content by means of various social media marketing tools, for instance through blogs (which include speaking to Jonty Rhodes and live blogging), Facebook's fan page, Twitter, the Youtube community, Flickr and MXit. In addition, there are RSS feeds, Wiki (available to Achiever Club), email updates, podcasts, WAP, Vodafone live and thunda.com (social photography) tools available to cricket fans to communicate online.

7.3.2 Planned versus spontaneous communication

Planned messages are communicated through the cricket web site, whereas spontaneous communication can take place through the various social media platforms.

7.3.3 Credibility of organisation's communication

Standard Bank's own communication is enhanced through communication about cricket development initiatives, thereby showing that it cares for the community.

7.4 Value

Though sustainability of online communities and their value for members of online communities are closely intertwined, they are discussed separately for the purposes of this article. Values, e.g. functional, social and entertainment (online only), are considered important, while communication should further also be rich in social context.

The bank's social media marketing campaign complies with the following in terms of the theoretical discussion:

7.4.1 Functional

Own content can be generated using the various social media platforms. In addition, cricket-related wallpapers and posters can be downloaded, while enough information about the cricket series is provided using various social media.

7.4.2 Social

Social interaction is supported through various social media platforms and the use of social media marketing tools.

7.4.3 *Entertainment (online only)*

Entertainment is provided through both competitions (via the social media platforms) and through tickets that can be won if any cricket series (Pro20) experience is shared with fellow online cricket community members. A Fantasy League offers cricket fans a chance to create their own teams and enter the tournament online and win prize money.

7.4.4 *Rich in social context*

Members of social media platforms have information about one another and may interact on an interpersonal level.

Table 2 summarises the above findings.

Table 2: Summary of guidelines and elements used to evaluate a social media marketing campaign

Criteria	Element	Reflected in social media marketing campaign
Situation analysis	Needs analysis	Cricket that offers value for money Domestic series with global and countrywide impact
	Demographics	Cricket fans of all age groups countrywide
	Access	Special cricket web site dedicated to cricket and cricket series Prominent links both to various social media and to the social media release Links to the bank's site and Achiever Club
	Objectives	Provide instant and smart content to encourage maximum supporter participation Brand building
Sustainability	Management	Managed by experts in the bank but with enough opportunities for user-generated content through various social media platforms
	Relevancy of content	Aimed at cricket fans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live score feeds • Up-to-date fixtures • Result tables • Match reports • Player profiles • Highlights • Contact with fellow cricket fans

	Appropriate technology	<p>Technology used on cricket web site can carry complex messages through images and sound. Suitable technology for target market, which has access to the appropriate technology, but might not work on all systems.</p> <p>Social media platforms use uncomplicated technology.</p>
	Registration requirements	<p>Achiever Club for young fans</p> <p>Social media require registration to participate in conversations.</p> <p>Not too many personal details in terms of security</p>
	Advertising of community	<p>Links advertised in various mainstream media and online</p> <p>Social media press release</p>
	Relationships within the community	<p>Relationships are built by participating in the social media platforms.</p>
	Membership benefits	<p>Facebook (fans can win tickets to international cricket when they upload a picture of themselves or a friend at a Pro20 match)</p> <p>Twitter (by signing up, prizes can be won)</p> <p>Flickr (can win a hat autographed by Jonty Rhodes through a competition)</p> <p>Achiever Club members can win Achiever Box tickets to games.</p>
Interaction	Ways of encouraging communication (tools)	<p>Fan-created content by means of various social media marketing tools, for instance blogs (which include speaking to Jonty Rhodes and live blogging), Facebook fan page, Twitter, Youtube community, Flickr and MXit. In addition, there are RSS feeds, Wiki (available to Achiever Club), email updates, podcasts, WAP, Vodafone live and thunda.com (social photography).</p>
	Planned <i>versus</i> spontaneous communication	<p>Planned messages are communicated through the cricket web site, whereas spontaneous communication can take place through the various social media platforms.</p>
	Credibility of organisation's communication	<p>Enhanced through communication about cricket development initiatives</p>
Value	Functional	<p>Own content can be generated using the various social media platforms; wallpapers and posters can be downloaded regarding the cricket; enough information about the cricket series is provided.</p>

	Social	Social interaction is supported through social media platforms and social media marketing tools.
	Entertainment (online only)	Competitions (through social media platforms) and also to be won for sharing Pro20 experience A Fantasy League offers fans a chance to create their own teams and enter the tournament online and win prize money.
	Rich in social context	Members of social media platforms have information about one another and may interact on an interpersonal level.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Although social media provide many opportunities for marketing-communication purposes, theory regarding social media marketing communication is still relatively undeveloped. The social media marketing campaign analysed in this article suggests clear guidelines in accordance with the existing theory. It is recommended that, in future, more case studies be analysed with a view to constructing a sound theoretical framework to be employed by organisations in conducting social media marketing communication campaigns.

A situation analysis, sustainability of the online community, encouraging ample interaction and providing value to online community members are currently thought to be important aspects to consider in order to reach the target audience through social media marketing communication tools – without, that is, offering intrusive advertising messages. It is clear that eWOM is increasingly gaining ground because of consumers' vulnerability to the trusted recommendations of family and friends regarding products and services.

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