

Types of Online Viral Marketing in Book Industry

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Abstract: Companies need to engage communities into their marketing activities. Community marketing is a strategy to engage an audience in an active, non-intrusive prospect and customer conversation that focus on the needs of existing customers. Nowadays, as the role of social media has been growing in significance, community marketing can be more organized. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter can no longer be seen merely as leisure activities, since they have proved to have played important role in driving large groups of people. The purpose of this paper is to show whether various social media platforms can also be useful in community marketing, considering the great impacts they have in modern society.

Keywords: word-of-mouth marketing, social media engagement, community marketing, information system

1. Introduction

Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have grown very rapidly in the last decade. We can no longer see them merely as leisure activities, since they proved to have played important role in driving large groups of people. The political revolutions in several North African countries are the proof.

The purpose of this paper is to show whether various social media platforms can also be useful in community marketing, considering the great impacts they have in modern society. In addition, we also would like to focus on other platforms other than the popular ones (Facebook and Twitter) which can also be used in community marketing. We discovered that for reading communities, there is another social media platform that focuses in literatures, which is 'Goodreads'. Thus, we are conducting Research Paper Analysis. We are going to review some existing research papers that already focused their findings on the use of social media in business.

2. Problem Definition

People choose to read, particularly books, as a regular leisure activity. However, this hobby can turn them into avid readers. These habits are shaped by the individual's environment, particularly family and friends, and influence their perception of their reading behavior and skills (Hardy, 2008). When considering the reading construct, it is a common belief that a reader is someone who reads books and a non-reader is someone who either reads nothing or reads other materials, e.g., magazines.

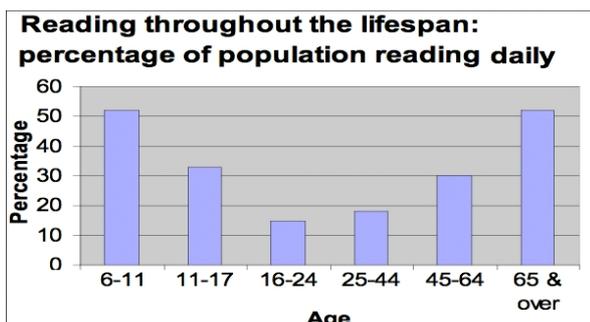


Figure 1: The Percentage of US Book Readers Based on Ages

In the times of rapid digital technology development, traditional textbooks are having severe competitions against digital books. However, Willingham (2012) argues that technology is not always a bad thing against traditional books, for two reasons:

The great success of e-books as simply the porting over of traditional books into another format. However, the market of traditional books still cannot be neglected since they have different content, different structure, and they are used for different purposes.

Electronic textbooks stand a much higher chance of success if publishers will exploit the rich research literature on multimedia learning, but most are not doing so.

Do you happen to be reading any books or novels at present?
(% answering yes)

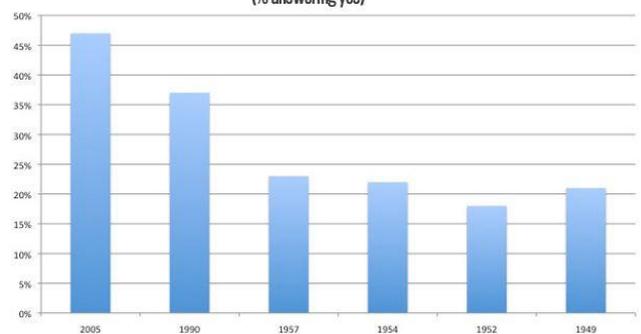


Figure 2: Percentage of reading in the USA over the years
(www.danielwillingham.com)

The development of social media also brings people with the same interest together. Hence, nowadays we can find a lot of online reading communities which exist on Facebook, Twitter, goodreads.com, Amazon Book Club, or Red Room Writer Society.

Therefore, book companies need to engage these communities into their marketing activities. According to Bryan (2004), 'community marketing is a strategy to engage an audience in an active, non-intrusive prospect and customer conversation which focuses on the needs of existing customers'. Nowadays, as the role of social media has been growing in significance. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media is a group of Internet-based applications

that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 which allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content.

Corporate decision makers try to identify ways in which firms can make profitable use of various social media applications, such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Path and Twitter. Social media is preferred as a powerful marketing tools because it can reach wide range of people and enable the companies to directly interact with their consumers, next to a fundamental reason that social media is less costly than any traditional marketing activities (Qualman – 2010).

In this paper, we are going to focus on the biggest social media platforms, which are the most preferable to be used in promoting books to the readers. The platforms are Facebook, Youtube and Twitter. Facebook, originally known as ‘The Facebook’, has reached a user base of over 800 million people with the simple idea of connecting individuals. The system started from the thought of creating a student network for thousands of schools and universities in the U.S., which in the end evolved into a complex network accessible through everyone in the world and revolutionized the way people communicate with each other (Camacho & Kumar - 2012).

Twitter is a real-time information network that connects users to the latest stories, ideas, opinions and news. The real difference between Twitter and Facebook is the limitation of sending a message on Twitter, which cannot be longer than 140 characters.

Bal and Urquhart (2012) argued that taking traditional forms of marketing and improving upon them with social networking, a successful marketing strategy can be successful if done right, which ultimately results in an increase of clientele, brand awareness and revenue.

Furthermore, according to Hoffmann and Fodor (2010), the principles are the consumer’s motivations that lead to the companies’ return on investments (ROI), which is measured by active participations such as a tweet or retweet, comments, review, share, or recommendations. The consumer’s reactions and participations might be out of the companies’ control, but the frameworks and strategies of using social media platforms are fully under the companies’ supervision.

One example among the industries that directly optimizes the use of social media marketing is publishing industry. Social media industry can be used in establishing trends, reporting news and opinion, and generating buzz. Through social media, publishers can monitor trends, and ‘listen’ conversations online about their products (Nelson – 2006).

Several publishing companies, most notably Penguin Books, Harper Collins, or Simon and Schuster, already exist on Facebook, Twitter, as well as company blogs and mobile phone social media platforms such as Instagram. As the technology of mobile phones also moves rapidly, they have now worked together with online stores such as Apple Store (iBooks).

This study will focus on several popular social media platforms, which are Youtube, Facebook and Twitter. The platforms are used by the company for their business activities. However, the company still has no specific measurements regarding the online feedback they get from the consumers. We still have no idea how many or what types of online participation are considered a good or bad remark toward the company and how the feedbacks are going to be used to improve the company’s business performance in the future. This study will also try to fill the gap on those matters.

3.Literature Analysis

Boyd and Ellison (2007) defined social network platforms as a web-based social media applications through the creation and maintenance of relationships (networking). It can be supported by allowing users to create a profile and remain in contact with their network. Kaplan and Haenlein created a classification scheme in their Business Horizons (2010) article, with six different types of social media: collaborative projects (for example, Wikipedia), blogs and microblogs (for example, Twitter), content communities (for example, YouTube and DailyMotion), social networking sites (for example, Facebook), virtual game worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft), and virtual social worlds (e.g. SecondLife).

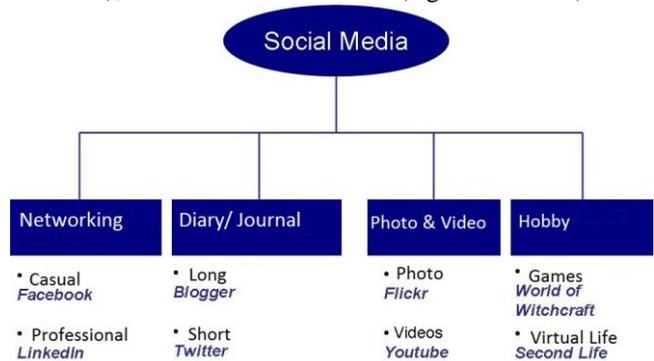


Figure 3: Different Types of of Social Media Platforms
(Cavazza, 2008)

In this paper, we are going to specifically talk about Youtube, Facebook and Twitter, and some other related uses.

3.1 The Use of Social Media in Publishing Business

3.1.1 Youtube

YouTube is a video-sharing website, on which users can upload, view and share videos. It uses some video technologies such as Adobe Flash which enables us to watch movie clips, TV clips, and music videos. Nowadays, with the fast development of mobile and smart phones, the video upload can be done at anytime and from anywhere (Burgess et al. – 2009). When YouTube was launched in 2005, it was possible to upload long videos. However, due to a problem of copyright infringement, they decided to reduce the limit into a ten-minute limit in March 2006. The main reason behind this policy was because they found that the majority of long videos were unauthorized uploads of TV shows and films (Lange, 2008). Nowadays, subscribers can upload their own videos to Youtube, create playlists and interact with the other users on the website.

3.1.1.1 Book Trailer

The most common use of Youtube in promoting a book is 'book trailer'. A book trailer is a video advertisement for a book which employs techniques similar to those of movie trailers to promote books and encourage readers.

Book publishers face the challenge to get attention of the generation which is ruled of technology. They have to compete against entertainment market that includes TV, cable, online social networks, downloadable music and video, podcasts and video games. In the USA itself, the number of time that Americans spend in has declined from 117 hours a year in 1999 to about 105 in 2006 (Chmielewski, 2006).

Therefore, in 2006, a book company based in the USA, Little Brown and Co, created a teaser video to promote a mystery novel called 'Echo Park' on the Internet. The video trailer was aired on YouTube before the book was released, which arised excitement among the readers. By the time the book was out on sale, the readers had already anticipated to buy them.

3.1.2 Twitter

Twitter is a microblogging platform in which the users can write down their thoughts in 140 characters. A user can be a follower of another user, and he/she has a choice to follow and unfollow a conversation or a person (Grant – 2012).

Cha et al (2010) believes that for its real-time functions, Twitter can spread three types of influence:

- 1) *Indegree influence*, which is indicated by the number of 'followers' of a user.
- 2) *Retweet influence*, which we measure through the number of 'retweets' obtained by the user.
- 3) *Mention influence*, which we measure through the number of mentions containing the name of the user, which indicates the ability of that user to engage others in a conversation.

With these three influences, book publishers can increase traffic. Twitter is much more immediate and works well once a company already has an established identity. Therefore, a big publishing company such as Penguin or Simon & Schuster can quickly gain followers on Twitter. Companies can do anything related with books through Twitter, ranging from announcements to something trivial (Waldram – 2009).

3.1.3. Facebook

Facebook has changed social life of the people and various marketing activity drastically. Facebook made it possible to bring people with together share their interest and activities across political, economical and geographical board¹. Facebook is providing a platform in which includes video and photo sharing, web forum, blog and web marketing, sharing communities opinion. All these activities help people to develop social network or social relation among themselves.

According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), social networking such as facebook provides several of element which helps user to develop technical or semi technical profile and articulate own views to the people or community within the system or profile. It is essential that user should trust while sharing important information such as images, video, personal and relationship information, views and opinion about various issue.

According to Dwyer, Hiltz, and Passerini (2007), facebook user shows more trust while sharing information of web-site compare to another social networking site. Privacy feature provides more flexibility for user while sharing content on social networking site. According to Preibusch, Hoser, Gurses, and Berendt (2007), privacy feature of facebook provides user to share information which may conflicts with other user or friends who might have different conceptualized thinking. This is implies that facebook user can share information without getting involved in any kind of conflict with other users.

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2011, p. 256) three basic criteria which makes viral marketing effective and that must be met: "the right people need to get the right message under the right circumstances". Viral marketing can be driven by three kind of people i.e. market maven, social hubs and salespeople.

Most of the time market maven create the message and transfer to social hubs such as Facebook. If market maven created message is not effective then salespeople make it more effective and then transmit to social hubs.

Generally, this message needs to be more effective because this message would help to trigger emotions of the receiver. These message can be either positive (e.g., joy) or negative (e.g., disgust, fear) (cf. Kaplan/ Haenlein 2011, p. 257). Success of viral marketing can be influence by delivering right message to right people in right environmental condition. With constant increased number of people Facebook would be the perfect platform for viral marketing.

3.1.4. Goodreads

Goodreads was founded in December 2006 by the Chandler couple, Otis and Elizabeth Chandler. The website provide extensive database of books, ranging from textbooks to fiction books, such as novels, comics and children's books. Users can register then make their profile page, just like they do in other social media platforms such as Facebook or Myspace, then start making reviews of the books they have read. Users are able to sign up and register books to generate library catalogs and reading lists. Users can also create their own groups of book suggestions and discussions. As of July 2012, the site reported 10 million members, 20 million monthly visits, and 30 employees (Lee – 2012). It can also now be accessed through mobile phone applications.

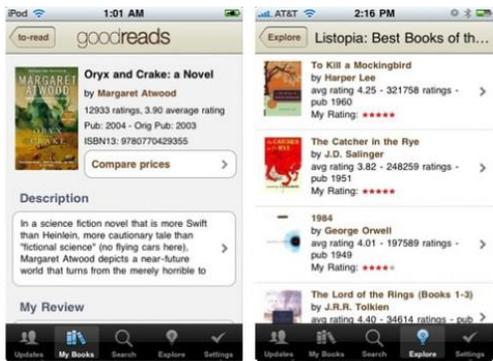


Figure 4: The Appearance of Goodreads Mobile Application

3.1.4.1 Acquisition of Goodreads to Amazon

Recently in March 2013, the giant online retailer Amazon decided to buy the majority of shares of Goodreads. This has stirred controversies among the reading communities, who think Goodreads is no longer an 'honest' website. Many people believe that the books reviews on the website will be manipulated by Amazon for their business purposes (Flood – 2013).

3.2 Who Market Books with Social Media?

Below are the different subjects in book industry who are benefited by the use of social media marketing.

3.2.1 Authors

An author is a person who writes a book. In the book industry, authors usually get their income in terms of royalty, which are paid by the publishers they work with.

Most of international best-selling authors already have huge fan base all around the world, which also made them popular in the virtual world. For example, J. K Rowling, the author of the young adult fiction, 'Harry Potter', has around 1.7 million followers on Twitter. Another famous writer who are known for his best-selling non-fictions, Deepak Chopra, also has more than 1.4 million followers.

Usually, the authors / writers update their social media account with relevant information about their books, such as date of release or public events. The famous Brazilian author, Paulo Coelho, has his own way. He organizes regular internet chat with his readers around the world to keep in touch with them.



Figure 5: The Official Twitter Page of J.K Rowling, The Author of Harry Potter (www.twitter.com/jk_rowling)

3.2.2 Book Publishers

Publishers also need to make use of the rapid growth of social media to boost their business performances. Prominent publishing companies in the United States have already done it. Popular companies such as Penguin Books or Random House have already existed on Facebook and Twitter to reach out to the consumers.

It has been discussed before that one of the popular marketing activities is the use of book trailer. However, book trailer is sometimes seen as either a fresh marketing strategy or an act of desperation from an industry that's losing customers every year to an online, film-centric culture.



Figure 6: Twitter Page of Dark Horse, US Comic Book Publisher (www.twitter.com/darkhorsecomics)

3.2.3 Book Stores

Probably books stores are not as avid social media users as book publishers. Some of them already existed in the internet. Not only by creating Facebook pages or Twitter accounts, but also by putting advertisements on the sides of Facebook display.

Some big business in the USA such as Barnes & Noble or Penguin Books have also created online retailers. In Switzerland, we can also find book stores like Stauffacher and Thalia.

3.2.4 Amazon

Talking about book stores, we cannot neglect amazon.com. The Amazon team divided their social media activities into group or segments: amazon book, amazon book club, amazon book kids, and amazon kindle (online book).

3.2.4.1 Who / What is Amazon?

Amazon started in July 1995 by offering books online. It tries to be the most consumer-centric-company where people can find and buy almost everything they want. They are not limited to shelf space or business hours like traditional stores, so they are able to offer more than 3 million book titles and

more than 1.7 million of other products 24/7 throughout the year (Homburg/Kuester/Krohmer 2009, p. 455). That means Amazon is best in offering niche product that would not be profitable if they were stocked in a physical store. Other advantages offered by Amazon are the personalized shopping experience, the possibility of "Search Inside The Book", checkout using the "1-Click Shopping" or other functions like "Wish Lists" or personalized recommendations (Amazon 2011, "Overview").

By clicking on the Amazon-link, the customer is directly transferred to a website where Amazon presents the product and offers additional information. The customer only needs to do a few clicks to buy the product. During the buying process Amazon automatically shows a list of other articles under the title "Customers Who Bought This Item Also Bought". With the collected data from thousands of different sales, Amazon knows best what the customers might like in addition to the item they were looking for. Another point is the "Frequently Bought Together", where a bunch of products are offered with a discounted bundle price. With these consumer-friendly activities Amazon tries to increase its sales.

3.2.4.2 Amazon's Market Strategies

Online marketing played a significant role for the success of Amazon.com. However, just launching online portal wasn't good enough to get the huge success in this business. Most pivotal term in online marketing is *find-ability*.

The secret to internet marketing success is using right *keywords* at the right time so that customer or searcher would be able to find you easily (Lutze, H. F. (2009), P.1). That's what Amazon.com did in initial stage, when searcher looking for any kind of book by using the name of the book or author's name. First URL was reflecting from Amazon.com. Amazon presents a 'search-find-obtain experience' to its shopper like no other e-trailer (Homburg/Kuester/Krohmer 2009).

Search engine serving hundreds of millions data to us on the daily basis, and data continuously on the increase. After the keywords the most prominent factor which determines the page rank is based on HTML code. HTML code increases the credibility and potential to be searchable.

At last, most important aspect of search engine which often overlooked by the companies is customer focus approach. Company design the keywords or website according to search engine not focus on customer. In this case they forget customers are our target audience not search engine. Since at the early stage Amazon.com approach was customer centric, which was significant in Amazon's growth and success. "I think somehow I am congenitally customer focused. And I think that from that comes to figure out customer-focused strategies as opposed to, say, competitor-focused strategies" (Kirby and Stewart 2007).

4. Conclusion

The success of social media marketing activities are determined by how much the companies use specific content and how well they are received by customers / fans / users.

One condition must be added that the companies have different starting conditions: some are already longer on Facebook / Twitter, already have a bigger fan base, or simply all have better financial and human resources, as well as values that influence their presence on Facebook.

Companies can direct communications in the social media era to their advantage by publishing active posts, ask for specific content such as product development, from which the company can not only gain insight, but also sometimes they can even re-publish (repost) relevant information.

However, social media marketing can also sometimes become boomerang to companies if they are exposed to bad feedback from the consumers. Social media offers consumers a great platform to communicate their dissatisfaction with certain products and services, to the public (for example, through blogs) or to existing contacts (through a social network such as Facebook). This will be out of control of the companies, and there is nothing they can do besides taking the negative feedbacks as reflections to perform better in the future. That is why good management of social media is required.

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