

The value of a Facebook fan

Understanding how people experience brands on Facebook and then go on to recommend a brand is critical in developing a social strategy, explains **Steve Smith** of Starcom MediaVest Group

With around 175 million people logging onto Facebook every day, according to Facebook, the social network offers brand owners significant opportunities to attract, engage and interact with people in real time, through posts, videos, competitions, games and other content, depending on what they want to achieve.

However, a question which marketers and advertisers have been grappling with is, how can the value of a brand's activities and the activities of people who interact with that brand and its content be measured and expressed?

One of our goals at Starcom MediaVest is to understand how people experience brands and content on Facebook. People's experiences of a brand and its content on Facebook should be important concerns of brand owners because positive experiences are likely to lead to positive brand actions.

A review of literature from psychology and experiential marketing shows a consistent set of experience dimensions, all of which are important for brands to deliver upon on Facebook. They are (i) the senses, (ii) the emotions, (iii) cognition, and (iv) behaviour. Creating measures on these

dimensions helps us significantly in the development and improvement of Facebook strategies and, therefore, in the design of content and interactions. They also enable us to create benchmarks for individual brands against themselves going forward, and against their competitors.

As part of our social media research, we have, to date, sent 8,300 people to 38 separate Facebook pages and asked them to view and read some of the content on those pages. (We match the brand to the person according to a series of questions that measure how much the person has an affinity with the brand). Following the person's visit, we find out how much they have been impacted on the first three experience dimensions. We do this by asking them how much they agree or disagree with a range

of statements. Secondly, we look at the likelihood of positive impacts in these areas leading to the fourth dimension, behaviour. In so doing, this provides us with a series of tangible metrics for understanding the 'value of a Facebook fan'.

Across all the brands we have surveyed to date, people are most likely to agree that the Facebook content they experience has stimulated their curiosity, with 47% of visitors over the whole of our study reporting this. People are least likely to report they have been impacted emotionally (Figure 1).

A way to evaluate the effect of brand experience is to look at the propensity of people who are impacted on these measures to then go on to different activities, such as a particular social media action (e.g. comment, share and tweet about the brand); different purchase funnel behaviours (e.g. enquiry and preference), and recommendations. When designing a brand's strategy for Facebook, a brand needs to decide which activities it wants to achieve, and how feasible this is, and then measure how effective it is in accomplishing this.

Creating curiosity via Facebook is particularly important to media brands. A newspaper publisher will want to create curiosity through stories and the like in order

FIGURE 1

	All respondents
Stimulated my curiosity	47%
Made a strong impression on my visual or hearing senses	46%
Made me think	40%
I experienced strong positive emotions	36%

FIGURE 2

Of curiosity impacted who then visit site

Across Facebook brand pages	80%
Retail	88%
Media and entertainment	83%
Technology and telecoms	79%
Finance	79%
Health and beauty	77%
Food and drink	76%
	Curiosity
Technology and telecoms	52%
Finance	50%
Health and beauty	50%
Retail	47%
Food and drink	45%
Media and entertainment	44%

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 TV, print or a digital ad. In these cases, curiosity is likely to be the reason for a page visit, which is therefore primarily functionally oriented, and the content needs to meet that need. Alternatively, an element of a marcomms campaign may be to use Facebook to continue an experience that starts on another medium.

A way a brand can meet curiosity is by linking through to its website, where it has more control over content and access to visitor data and cookies. Or it may provide a telephone number on the Facebook page, or recommend that a person visit a store.

When looking at the propensity of people whose curiosity has been impacted by a brand's Facebook content to then visit the brand's website, we see that visitors to retail and media and entertainment brands are most likely to do this. However, visitors to content on Facebook pages from these brand categories are among the least likely to agree that this content has stimulated their curiosity (Figure 2). Understanding that great value exists, by instilling curiosity, means that brands, especially retail and media/entertainment brands, need to configure greater curiosity in visitors.

Positive impacts, across the experience dimensions we have identified, consistently correlate with the likelihood to perform social media actions, such as post a positive comment or follow the brand on Twitter. On average, 55% of people who have been impacted on these experience dimensions are then likely to post a positive comment. This compares with only 13% of people who are not impacted (Figure 3).

Although people are least likely to agree that a brand's Facebook content has engaged them emotionally, the table above shows that emotional impacts tend to be most likely to lead social media actions, such as writing a positive comment. Fifty-nine percent of people who agree to this statement are likely to do so. People who are impacted by content from brands related to media and entertainment are most likely to post a positive comment; those related to Finance and Health and Beauty are least likely (Figure 4).

Our research shows that emotional connections are not the sole domain of particular 'emotional' brand categories or brands, such as Coca-Cola or Apple. For example, 36% of visitors to the Coca-Cola Facebook page reported being impacted emotionally, yet 46% of people who visited the Barclaycard page reported the same. However, emotions that are experienced are likely to be different. Brand owners need to think about what sort of emotions they want to stimulate, how they can do this, and then test how successful they are at achieving it. For example, while Coca-Cola tends to configure emotions around joy, many financial brands configure emotions around trust, relief and security.

Studies from psychology show that when people experience positive emotions, an attachment is created. However, this attachment may be brief. A person may do a social media action, but not, at a later date, read posts, watch content or enquire about

FIGURE 3

	Likely to do a positive comment	Unlikely to do a positive comment
Experienced strong positive emotions	59%	14%
This made me think	56%	14%
Average	55%	13%
Made a strong impression on my visual or hearing senses	52%	12%
Stimulated my curiosity	52%	11%

FIGURE 4

	Of people impacted emotionally who are then likely to post a positive comment
Media and entertainment	62%
Technology and telecoms	60%
Food and drink	59%
Retail	58%
Finance	57%
Health and beauty	55%



“Research shows emotional connections are not the sole domains of particular ‘emotional’ brand categories or brands such as Coca-Cola or Apple”

the brand or its products. When a person returns to a brand's content on Facebook and, therefore, continues to be impacted emotionally, that attachment is likely to become deeper and long lasting, and lead to a greater likelihood of purchase funnel behaviour.

Thus, intentions around future planned purchase funnel actions and likelihood to revisit brand content on Facebook are further tests for how well a brand owner has been able to stimulate an emotional connection between the brand and a person. Our research shows that people who are

impacted on these experience dimensions are up to three times more likely to prefer that brand over its competitors. Overall, 69% of people who experience strong positive emotions are then likely to go on to prefer the brand, versus only 23% of people who do not experience these emotions.

The propensity of people who are impacted emotionally to then go on to brand preference shifts across brand categories, with visitors to FMCG and retail category brands' Facebook content being more likely than visitors to considered category brands to go on to preference (Figure 5). The clue

here is 'consideration'. Brands from considered brand categories such as technology, finance and media and entertainment also need to place great weight upon cognitive impacts in order to generate propensity to prefer.

Establishing greater likelihood of advocacy should be one of the main reasons for brands to use social media. In our study, people who are impacted across these experiences are on average three times more likely to recommend the brand or its products than people who are not impacted. Again, those who report they are impacted emotionally are most likely to recommend the brand or its products (Figure 5).

The importance of advocacy means brand owners need to target and continue to engage influential and highly connected people. A brand may have 100,000 followers, but how connected and influential are they? To target such people, brand owners need to identify some of the socio-demographics of visitors, the number of 'friends' with whom

facebook Search

Starbucks

29,022,717 likes · 339,272 talking about this · 4,518,466 were here

Food/Beverages

We are the premier roaster and retailer of specialty coffee in the world since 1971.

Like Message

29m

FIGURE 5

Of people impacted emotionally who are then likely to prefer the brand

Health and Beauty	75%
Food and drink	71%
Retail	70%
Media and Entertainment	68%
Technology and Telecoms	65%
Finance	63%

Of people impacted emotionally who are then likely to recommend the brand

Health and Beauty	71%
Technology and Telecoms	66%
Food and drink	65%
Retail	62%
Media and Entertainment	62%
Finance	59%

FIGURE 6

Of people who post positive comment who are then likely to prefer the brand

Finance	68%
Media and Entertainment	66%
Technology and Telecoms	69%
Retail	73%
Health and Beauty	73%
Food and drink	70%

Of people who do not post positive comment who are then likely to prefer the brand

14%
17%
21%
25%
29%
27%

Difference (percentage points)

54%
49%
48%
48%
44%
43%

they regularly communicate, what they communicate about, how often they communicate, and how often they receive replies.

Integration of Facebook into owned spaces (e.g. brands' own websites) enables brands to achieve some of this. Linking the Facebook Graph API into owned sites makes it possible for brands to garner user data, which can be extended by employing tracking cookies. Once influential people have been targeted, brand owners are able to target their Facebook friends. Starcom MediaVest data shows that doing so can improve media efficiencies significantly.

Another way of evaluating brands on Facebook is to look at the propensity of people who do social media actions to then go on to different purchase funnel actions.

Across all the brands we have surveyed, we have found that for every hundred people who post a positive comment, 69 of them are likely to prefer that brand over its competitors. This is our average benchmark, but when we look across brands we see a wide deviation from this mean, from 56% to 79%. While visitors who post positive comments to health and beauty and retail brands on Facebook are most likely to go on

to prefer those brands over their competitors, visitors who post positive comments on media and entertainment and finance brands are least likely to do this.

However, when we look at the likelihood of people who are not likely to write a positive comment who nevertheless are likely to go on to prefer that brand, finance, and media and entertainment brands are the lowest performing, while health and beauty and retail brands are two of the best (Figure 6).

This means that the value of positive comments for the former is actually higher than for the latter. For the latter, it matters less that people write positive comments because a large proportion of people who do not write positive comments still have a propensity to prefer brands from those categories. Nevertheless, because experience impacts are correlated with likelihood to post a positive comment and such like, this proportion represents a high number of people who are left unengaged. By engaging them, brand equity is likely to increase, and they are more likely to post a positive comment, which is likely to then appear in the newsfeeds of friends.

CONCLUSION

In order to take greatest advantage of Facebook, brand owners need to go through a number of procedures. Firstly, a brand owner needs to set a clear strategy for what it wants to achieve via Facebook. How can a

brand feasibly deliver on experiences according to its brand identity and other brand characteristics? The experiences it wants to generate in visitors need to accord with the brand's overall strategy. For example, as we have shown, the types of emotions 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.

The importance of curiosity exemplifies the advantages to brand owners of making Facebook integral to a marcomms campaign, for example, by using it to continue an experience started elsewhere, such as on TV or in print. Alternatively, it may be used as a significant resource for creating curiosity and driving enquiry, which may then be met through brands' own websites and store visits.

Lastly, people who are impacted emotionally are most likely to go on to social media and brand actions. By impacting people emotionally, a brand owner is able to increase the likelihood of a person forming an attachment with a brand, and so generate revisits to brand content and communication with the brand on Facebook. Vivially, this attachment is likely to also manifest itself in talk about, and recommendations for, the brand and its products both off and online, making careful targeting crucial.

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