



Leveraging the social media paradox

October 2012

Sometimes it pays to think in a contrarian way.

During the Second World War, the US Air Force employed Abraham Wald, a statistician, to help it determine where to place reinforcing armour on its bomber craft to help save airmen and planes. The bombers were big and heavy aircraft so additional armour could only be used selectively and it was Wald's job to identify the most vulnerable spots. He analysed damage on planes after every bombing raid and identified the most frequently hit areas. Then he recommended armour be placed everywhere else.

Why? He surmised that because anti-aircraft guns weren't very accurate weapons, then the distribution of hits ought to be random. So given that the planes he was looking at were the ones that made it back, then they could withstand being hit in the areas that he saw were damaged. The ones that were hit elsewhere were the ones that didn't make it back.

It's essential we maintain
critical thinking and consider
contrary viewpoints whenever
we use statistics and data and
especially when we use it to
understand social media.

Numerous studies have tried to identify the "value of a Facebook fan" or the ROI that campaigns generate from social media, but most often these studies look at fans and non-fans and measure ROI as the difference in consumption of the brand between the two. Thinking in a more contrary way, we should consider that the more someone consumes a brand in the first place, the more likely they are to become a fan. Correlation doesn't imply causation (otherwise we might conclude that taking cocaine makes you rich, given that the income of a cocaine user is 25% higher than the national average).

The IPA's landmark study 'New Models of Advertising Effectiveness' concluded through a meta-analysis of 254 campaigns that "participation-led campaigns are good at market share defence but little else".

Compared to other types, those based around participation-led campaigns under-perform – except on share defence



Meta-analysis of 254 IPA campaign case studies over past 7 years

Source: IPA 'New Models of Advertising Effectiveness' –
Very large business effects among participation-led campaigns (indexed vs. all campaigns)

“The people **LEAST** likely to engage deeply... are the **MOST** important for growth.”

Martin Weigel
Head of Planning, W+K Amsterdam



The IPA defined participation-led campaigns as those “where the goal is to create a common dialogue, co-creation experience or ‘conversation’ between brand and audience”.

Intuitively this makes sense, we know with TV and other media that users of a brand are more likely to notice and engage and that participation and interaction with marketing initiatives is greatest among those who are closest to the brand.

Which gives us a social media paradox, described by Martin Weigel (Head of Planning, W+K Amsterdam) as: “The people LEAST likely to engage deeply...are the MOST important for growth.”

So is social media an ineffective marketing tool? Not at all, there are numerous examples of campaigns that have used social to deliver powerful brand effects and sales. The key is to acknowledge that your most enthusiastic fans are also most likely to engage with your brand and use that knowledge to develop strategies that harness their evangelism and advocacy to others.

How? At Ipsos ASI Digital, our research has identified three ways:

- 1 Play to the strengths of each platform – they’re not the same
- 2 Deliver content people want to engage with
- 3 Be relevant and add value

PLAY TO THE STRENGTHS OF EACH PLATFORM

Our Social Media U&A study interviewed 600 UK social media users in July 2012 and showed that their motivations for using each platform were quite distinct:

- Motivations for using **Facebook** are around sharing enjoyment with friends & others around you
- **Twitter** is more about discovery and connection with like-minded people
- **LinkedIn** is similar to Twitter but with greater motivation for building relationships, and for recognition of status and achievements
- **YouTube** is about entertainment, discovery and relaxation...much more like TV

This implies that brands need to behave in different ways on different platforms:

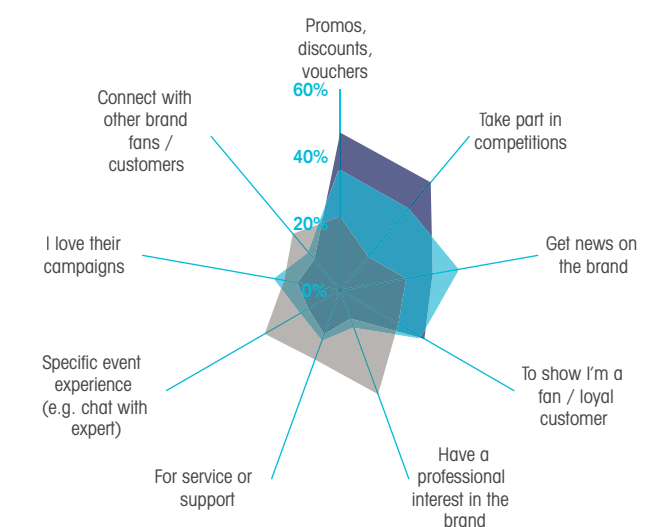
- **Facebook:** do things that bring friends together
- **Twitter:** facilitate discovery and share information between like-minded people
- **LinkedIn:** bring together experts and help them help each other
- **YouTube:** entertain & inform

DELIVER CONTENT PEOPLE WANT TO ENGAGE WITH

The content people seek from brands also varies by platform. On **Facebook**, the most popular reasons cited for connecting with brands were transactional (promos/vouchers/offers and competitions), compared to **Twitter** where the primary motivation was news. On **LinkedIn** users are much more oriented towards seeking service and support and learning from experts.

Deliver what people want to engage with..

Why do you connect with brands on _____?



Source: Ipsos ASI – Social Media U&A Survey July 2012

BE RELEVANT AND ADD VALUE

45% of people who've liked a brand on Facebook have subsequently unliked a brand. The main reasons for unliking are due to content that's boring (35%), posts being too frequent (31%), irrelevant content (30%), repetitive content (28%) and because the brand was only liked to access a one-time offer (26%).

Innocent is a great example of a brand that avoids these pitfalls. Their Facebook activity perfectly reflects their values and adheres to their policy that anything they post should be fooey – Funny, Useful, Humorous or Interesting. They get tremendous levels of engagement including 1000s of fans who send them knitted hats (that Innocent places on bottles in-store) and publish photos of them in their timeline.

TURN THE PARADOX TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

Pete Blackshaw, Global Head of Digital & Social Media at Nestlé, recommends that brands: "Favour those with influencing power and all else equal... Identify influentials online and derive advocacy."

So by developing strategies that harness the evangelism of their fans, brands can encourage re-transmission and word-of-mouth advocacy of their messages to connect with those who are less committed.

Communications and campaigns that achieve this are the ones that will go beyond market share defence and help brands grow and acquire new customers.

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Ipsos MORI is one of the largest and best known research companies in the UK and a key part of the Ipsos group, a leading global research company. With a direct presence in 84 countries, our clients benefit from specialist knowledge drawn from our five global practices: public affairs research, advertising testing and tracking, media evaluation, marketing research and consultancy, customer satisfaction and loyalty.

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