

Using Social Media as a Marketing Channel

How relevance, realness, and remarkableness influence interactivity and engagement

Keywords: social media, marketing, interactivity, engagement, empowerment, advertising

Abstract

This research explored a potential working framework for using social media as a marketing channel. Based on an extensive literature review and a multiple case study, important factors for using social media have been identified. Companies should provide relevant information, show signs of real behavior, and design remarkable campaigns in order to enhance interaction between and engagement amongst customers. This should be the ultimate goal as interaction and engagement allow a company and its communicated message to be accepted and adopted by the crowd more efficiently and effectively. Future research is needed to test and enhance the framework. The research is relevant for practitioners and scientists as it provides new and further elaborated insights on the use of social media as a marketing channel.

Introduction

The emergence of digital media and internet-based social media allow for new ways of communication. Social media have empowered people to search and share information, knowledge, experiences and opinions. Social media can attract, involve, and engage people. It allows for interaction, making it a many-to-many communication tool. Different to using traditional media, people are now in control, not companies. This gives opportunities and calls for new (social) strategies. How to make use of social media as a marketing channel is topic of this research.

Many Dutch start-ups and SME's can be found in the advertising industry. Although the recession diminished incomes and revenues, interactive media agencies have a flourishing future ahead because they are perceived as the parties that hold the answer to the social media questions of companies. To help the interactive media agencies to provide better services to companies, and to help entrepreneurs and companies in general, more knowledge on effective social media advertising and using social media as a marketing channel is needed.

The 2010 version of the annually conducted research of Tijdschrift voor Marketing, Trendbox, and Google among 427 marketers, revealed that the most prevalent challenge for marketers is how to make use of social media (Hielkema and Vugt, 2010). As such the challenge of this research is to give answers on how to use social media as a marketing channel

Many companies have doubts about how to pursue the opportunities provided by social media. These doubts come from ignorance, a lack of knowledge and disbelief about the potential and implications of social media, even at the most senior levels (Hulme, 2010). On the other hand, numerous examples of companies that made success because of using social media can be found on the web and in books (Godin, 2008). This helps companies to belief that social media can help to provide value. It is evident that more and more people, i.e. customers, use social media for their personal, social, and economical objectives. Companies are aware of the fact that aligning social media in business strategies call for new ways of doing business and

different, more human behavior from the side of the firm. Companies now start to follow the customer to the social media with the aim to interact. Unfortunately, companies focus too much on the tools and technologies instead of focusing on people and their online behavior. 50% of the companies dive in the social media without a clear strategy (de Hooze, 2010). This points to the need for more knowledge on strategically using social media as a marketing channel.

Interactivity is found to enhance the quality of a website and can provide value for business. Furthermore, companies know that they can co-create their products and advertisements with their customer. They know that listening to the customer online provides insights in the companies' performance. They know that they can engage people and make them (brand)fans of the company, using social media (Li & Bernoff, 2006). Companies know about the opportunities but are not fully aware of how to grasp them.

However, how the behavior or communication of companies should be (re) designed to make social media a successful marketing channel needs more answers. Answers on using a medium successfully for marketing and communication purposes can be found in the marketing and advertising literature. Ad frequency, expenditure, and creativity all have some influence on the effects. However, different to traditional media the online world can be accessed 24/7 by a global audience that has the power to do whatever they want with it, making it a very dynamic medium. As such knowledge from traditional media cannot be copied one on one.

As more and more people use social media more frequently, and as more and more media start to become social, entrepreneurs, marketers, advertisers, and companies in general need knowledge on how they should cope with these developments. This knowledge is necessary for companies to feel ready to start integrating social media within their marketing strategies. Social media are full of opportunities, but many are yet to be found. The number of people, time spent, and the amount of content available on social media is increasing by the day. This research gives insights in the social media phenomenon and provides guidelines for designing future marketing strategies. For entrepreneurs and SME's operating in the advertising industry this research gives insight in how to develop effective marketing campaigns in social media.

Theories from social and marketing science will be used and put in a social media perspective to gain a better understanding of how to use social media as a marketing channel. It explores how theories from behavioral and social science can be used for understanding how companies should behave when applying social media as a marketing channel. Understanding people's motivations and objectives for using social media provides directions for understanding how companies can design their new marketing campaigns. As such this research looks at why and how individuals come together to participate in and contribute to social media. This research provides an extensive literature review on social media marketing. It not only reveals what value social media can provide businesses and how social media should be used, it also points to the importance and the need for

knowledge on how to develop successful social media strategies.

Social Media can be accessed 24/7 which make them very dynamic. Opposite to what was used in traditional media, companies have no longer control over their message, as the company does not determine when broadcasting stops online. As such consumers have the power on the web. This research shows how this empowerment can have value for businesses. More specific it shows how companies can deal with this new producer-consumer-relationship.

The aim of this research is to provide practitioners with knowledge that can enable them to design their online behavior and new marketing strategies in a way that provides success for the long run. Rather than focusing on the technology, and diving into the social media without a thought strategy, this knowledge allows companies to better conceptualize and foresee the impact of the company's intentions. Concepts that are found to be important drivers of success or failure when using social media as a marketing channel will be drawn from literature and analyzed. The literature allows to draw a conceptual model which will be further explored through conducting a multiple case study. Together, the literature and the multiple case study have result in the identification of success factors for how to use social media as a marketing channel. However, more research needs to be conducted in the future to determine if there are more success factors and if these can be put in a framework.

As with traditional mass media, a message needs to reach the right people in the social media. However, online, people contribute

more and much faster to the diffusion of the message (Rogers, 2005; De Valck, et. al 2009). This diffusion is expected to be influenced by word-of-mouth communication (Smith, et al, 2007). The research shows that a well developed marketing campaign catered at social media can positively influence a customer's response.

This research will aim directly at what drives people to interact and engage with communication or brands. This is important as interaction and engagement positively influence a person's knowledge about the message or communicated brand and consequently helps forming an attitude towards the company that sends the message or owns the brand. This research explores whether relevance of the message, real behavior of the sender, and remarkableness of the campaign affected the customers response, in terms of interactivity and engagement.

Marketing campaigns of interactive media agencies will be analyzed to explore this proposition. Combining an extensive literature with a multiple case study allowed to identify success factors that helps practitioners to develop social media strategies in the future. Ultimately this explorative research leads to the identification of success factors for dealing with social media as a marketing channel.

In the next section, the literature gives the first input for possible success factors. Next, the methodology section will provide information on how the proposed success factors will be explored. A multiple case study provides further exploration of the success factors. The results generated from the data will be provided in section 4, and analyzed in section 5. After

analyzing the results, a discussion will be provided to relate the findings to the literature on social media. This research will finish with a conclusion and recommendations for practitioners and future research.

Literature Review

As the aim of this research is to deepen our understanding and increasing our knowledge of how to use social media a literature review will be conducted. As this is a fairly new field of research, research from both scientist and practitioners will be used to cover all important aspects of social media. This review will start with a broad view on the implications of the coming into existence of the world wide web on businesses. Next, it tackles advertising to give a broad insight in how advertising works. Then the research will focus on people as they are the most social medium in the world. Literature discussing the empowerment of the customer and the usage of social media is what follows. This is important information for this research because it already provides some answers on how companies can be accepted in social media and as such how companies should use social media as a marketing channel. The literature review will continue by discussing how ideas are diffused over people in general and more specific in social media. Finally, the literature review gives directions for what is to be explored in this research. Conclusions will be drawn for designing a conceptual model. The model is further explored with a multiple case study in subsequent chapters to identify success factors that answers how to use social media as a marketing channel.

The world wide web

E-business has the potential to provide value to entrepreneurial

start-ups and other ventures (Amit & Zott, 2001). It has been found that e-business creates value that goes beyond the value that can be realized through the value chain of Porter, the formation of strategic networks, or the exploitation of specific competencies. The value and effectiveness of an internet strategy “can only be judged in the light of the business goals it is intended to support (Cothrel, 2000).” Debate about the effectiveness of applying internet to achieve business objectives have led researches to point to how internet can serve as either a distribution channel, communication channel, or transaction channel (Kiang et al., 2000; Peterson et al., 1997; Bagozzi & Dholokia, 2002). This is what makes the web so unique, it can be used for several purposes. In the beginning of the third millennium, marketing expert Michael Porter (2001) stated; “The winners will be those that view the internet as a complement to, not a cannibal of, traditional ways of competing.” Or as Spaulding (2009) suggests; “social media can be used for every activity within the value chain of Porter.

Different to using traditional channels in the communication, distribution, or transaction activities of companies, it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of the internet activities. It is the additional value of the second –generation of Internet-based services that let people collaborate and share information online in perceived new ways, i.e. web 2.0 that can give businesses a competitive advantage, a distinctive strategy or an effective business model, which is important (O'Reilly Media, 2004). Hinchcliffe (2007), pointed “that even Gartner, Forrester, McKinsey, and many others have all weighed in on the trends or

made recommendations, sometimes cautious and sometimes optimistic, that organizations should start heading down the web 2.0 path.” Web 1.0 is considered as the ‘flat’ web in which information is only provided i.e. sent. Web 1.0 is characterized by a one-way flow of communication. Web 2.0 is more dynamic, allowing for two-way-flow of communications to occur.

Science suggests, marketers need new approaches for communicating in the interactive marketplace (Ozuem, Howell & Lancaster, 2007). It is advised to focus on the consumer and how to change his behavior. There is a need for a new perception of the consumer. Domination of mass media is coming to an end because new media technologies are increasing the fragmentation of media usage (Ammani, 2009). As media usage is fragmenting increasingly, one of the most important tasks of companies and advertising agencies is to choose the right medium to bring across the message at the right time. But advertising does not stop after choosing the right medium. Designing and implementing the campaign can further improve the effectiveness of the campaign.

Advertising

Through advertising, organizations communicate with their customers, both current and potential (Bendixen, 1993). One of the first and most broadly accepted models in marketing and advertising is AIDA (attention → interest → desire → action). It simplifies and structures the decision making process of customers from noticing an advertisement to the actual purchase. A customer’s response to an advertisement, consciously or unconsciously, should ultimately affect behavior (Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999). The customer is affected in three ways; 1)

cognition, what does the consumer think about the product or brand, 2) affection, what does the customer feel or posit as a response to an advertisement, and 3) what is the subsequent behavior. Another dimension that could affect behavior is prior experience. Behavior is generally translated in terms of customers individual purchasing or usage (i.e, choice, consumption, loyalty, and habits). In sum, one of the objectives of marketers and advertisers is to communicate a message to influence customers’ knowledge and feelings about products or brands and/or let customers experience the product or brand so that customers buy or use the product as preferred by the marketer and advertiser (Gabriel et al. 2006; Aitken et al. 2008). Vakratsas & Ambler (1999), reviewed 250 articles and books on advertising to come up with a taxonomy that describes several advertising models and theories to give generalizations about how advertising works. Their conclusion is that advertising works, however the effectiveness of an advertisement or promotion can only be measured within the context, which reflects the objectives, product category, competitions advertising activities, other aspects of the marketing mix, the stage of the product life cycle and the target market. Moreover, all three dimensions; cognition, affection, and experience, affect the effectiveness of advertising. Noteworthy, there is little evidence to support the notion of hierarchy models; in which customers sequentially follow the dimensions of cognition to affection to purchasing or using a product or brand. Rather, it can be seen as a dynamic process in which the various stages are walked through. As so many variables affect the effectiveness of advertising it is very hard to measure it.

Besides giving full credits to the authors' contribution to our understanding of how advertising work, I feel knowledge of media and communication channels can make further contributions. Evidently, advertising can only exist when using certain marketing channels to place the advertisement in. Knowing about the AIDA model and the persuasive hierarchy model helps understanding how advertising works. But, we can only start this process when reaching the customer. Therefore, knowledge about media consumption and use can further increase our understanding of advertising. Every medium has its own characteristics that help increase the effectiveness of ad placement. Different media can be used for different reasons. Furthermore, the relative importance and significance of various media may change in time (Bendixen, 1993). As the internet has granted itself a dominant position in the daily lives of many customers, marketers and advertisers might want or need to change their media mix to reach them. Bendixen (1993) found no support for concluding that different media have different effects. Rather, it is the extent of usage of that medium that influences effectiveness. However, the increase in internet usage since 1993 must have made the internet a potentially more effective medium to communicate to and with customers.

Evidently, the objective of using the web, or social media as a marketing tool, tells what has to be achieved in order to be considered successful. A campaign is successful when the objected targets are achieved with the social media campaign. Further explanation of what could be determined as successful when

using a marketing channel in general could give further directions to what is to be considered successful when using social media as a marketing channel. The first noticeable objective of any company is to reach the customer with information about its products or brands. Then the hierarchical steps of information processing, to attitude forming, and the out coming behavior could occur. But to reach the customer in the social media, and how to make this hierarchical steps happen, more knowledge is needed about this phenomenon. The next two paragraphs further investigate the behavior of customers on social media.

Social Media is often seen as the cause of the changing marketing landscape, but it is the broader social-behavioral change that provides directions for successfully dealing with this landscape. Traditional media had a huge impact on people's life. Same goes for the impact of the web. The web enriched the way people communicate and build relationships with other people. It also changed the communication and relationships between people and companies. Social media allowed this change to happen, but it is the change in behavior on which companies should focus, besides just the tools and technologies.

Empowerment

What has changed among many things is how people search for information, communicate and build relations. Now social media can be used to serve that purposes giving the consumer power. This empowerment led to a change in producer-consumer relationships. Individuals are increasingly used to interacting with content, rather than passively receiving messages

from traditional media. People's belief in the 'realness' of companies is descending and relationships are under pressure. 87% of people feel companies are not interested in them (Hulme, 2010). People feel that companies are only interested in selling products without a clear understanding of people's need. That's why people feel they are not listened and as a result have less confidence in companies' offers. People simply don't trust companies' communication anymore. If companies do not bring relevant information to the customer, the customer feels empowered to find the information himself on the web.

And these are some of the reasons why people move to social media. To find information that is relevant to them and information they can trust. They can compare and verify the information they find with anyone including companies on the social media. In 2006, 83 percent of online consumers said they trusted recommendations from friends and peers and more than half trusted reviews from strangers (Li & Bernoff, 2006). People have always relied on reference groups when forming opinions and making purchase decisions (De Valck, et al. 2009). This hasn't changed that much, except from the fact that the group of influentials is bigger on the web. As suggested by Dholokia et al, (2004), a person's intention to participate together as a group motivates someone to participate in virtual communities and allow one to be influenced by the group. For a company to become part of the group of influentials, it must be accepted to participate and contribute alongside the customer in the social media.

Social Media usage

Individuals' motivations for participating and contributing to

social media are numerous but help to understand the expected behavior of companies. Dholokia et al, (2004) make the distinction between functional goals (finding and sharing information) and social goals (being someone by socially engaging with the group). Thus, motivations for active participation in the online world can be found in the desire of finding and sharing knowledge and information (Koh & Kim, 2004). Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) suggest that consumers contribute online for several reasons being; social interaction, economic incentives, concern for other consumers, and to enhance own self-worth. Active contribution of people to the online world happens when the community provides informational value (Wiertz & Ruyter, 2007). People that contribute more frequently and provide more helpful information contribute more knowledge. Messages or advertisements that provide value either in the form of information or entertainment are perceived as less intrusive (Ying, Korneliusen & Gronhaug, 2007). As such relevant ads are less intrusive.

Dholokia et al, (2004) make an important distinction between two types of virtual communities being (1) network-group-based virtual communities and (2) small-group-based virtual communities. The first community consists of participants that primarily strive for the same functional goal (e.g., product information or product experiences) and do not know each other in personal. In the second group participants have personal relationships with each other, making the interaction among the members of greater importance to the participants. Dholokia et al, (2004) found that consumers participating in network-group-based communities are motivated (stronger than in small-group-

based communities) to do so because of purposive and self-discovery value perceptions. Whereas in small-group-based communities, motivations to participate in the community can be found in maintaining interpersonal connectivity and social enhancement. For a marketer or interactive advertising or media agency this means that to be part of a group or to reach the target group with the communication message certain goals can be achieved. Within the network-group-based communities participants are primarily looking for purposive goals. To keep the community alive, marketers and advertisers should aim at matching these goals. Therefore relevant information should be provided for the community. Considering the small-group-based communities, marketers should match group members' preferences to interact together. Such community websites should be provided with tools that allow its members to interact with each other. To use virtual communities as described by Dholakia et al (2004), as a marketing channel companies should participate by being relevant in order to interact with the community members and bring across the communication message. The previously discussed literature point to the customer's quest for relevant information or content. Then the hierarchical steps of information processing, to attitude forming, and the out coming behavior could occur. But that is not enough. It also suggests that companies need to win trust.

Being accepted in social media

Acceptance within a community depends on social contracts, i.e. the implicit or explicit rules and agreements to give up rights for other benefits such as power, social relationships and trust (Spaulding, 2009). A user is more

likely to trust if he is more disposed to trust and has a belief that the other party has competence, benevolence and integrity. As such behavioral expectations are often created alongside the forming of a community and the members' reason or goal to participate. As a company to become part of a community social contracts must be known and trust must be won. Transparent and authentic behavior is necessary to be trusted (Li & Bernoff, 2006; Jarvis, 2009). Successful companies are those who really belief in their products or services. Without belief, one cannot operate transparent and as such will be trusted less (Godin, 2008).

But even when companies provide relevant information and show behavior that makes them trustworthy, the message should still be noticed. People are exposed to hundreds of commercial messages a day. This challenges companies to be noticed among all other messages of consumers. Advertising execution characteristics, such as quality of the ad and message itself affect the effectiveness of an advertisement (Malthouse & Calder, 2010). Creative advertising in nontraditional media was found to enhance recognition, and this positive effect increased over time (Baack, Wilson & Till, 2008). Remarkable advertising is considered to positively influence the reaching of the target group.

Important concepts

The previous paragraphs discussed the importance of providing relevant, trustworthy, and remarkable information and messages to reach the customer and be accepted within the social media. Next, a translation to the concepts relevance, realness and remarkableness will be introduced

and related to the hierarchical steps of information processing, to attitude forming, to behavior. Behavior of the company, should affect behavior of the customer, which in return should provide value for the company.

The previous literature pointed at the importance of relevance in the communication. People have the power and increasingly the habit to 'zap' away the message. Providing relevant information for the right group has never been easier and more effective because of the data social media hold. Communicating relevant information to a group of people in for example a community or blog is expected to kick-start interactivity. People will online share and search relevant information, making it an important variable for interactivity and engagement to occur. Providing relevant information is comparable to the first steps of the persuasive hierarchical model introduced earlier. People's attention and interest is expected to be reached when providing relevant information. Companies should look at their customer insights to decide how they can be relevant.

Furthermore it showed that companies are not being trusted anymore and as such are not considered genuine. To make customers form a positive attitude towards the company, it must show its realness. Also, in the light of the recession, pollution, diminishing resources people feel the need for security. Now it's possible to outperform competition by showing proof of honest and real behavior. Transparent behavior is what people call for and what stems them positive towards the company and its message. This might ultimately lead to engagement from the customer side. Transparent and authentic behavior is expected to

positively influence one's attitude towards the company. Forming an attitude will affect customers' behavior.

Creativity is found to be important in advertising, especially nowadays. People are exposed to hundreds of commercial messages a day. To stand out from the crowd and to be noticed one should aim to be remarkable. This could not only draw one's attention to the ad and as such inform the customer. It might as well have influence on a positive attitude towards the ad. Ultimately this should affect behavior.

This paragraph introduced important concepts for using social media as a marketing channel being; relevant information, real behavior, and remarkable advertising. The next paragraphs will discuss what benefits or is influenced by these concepts. At the end of this chapter the concepts will be further defined into working concepts.

Customer response

Companies' communications object a desired behavior or customer response. This could be purchasing the offered product, talk about it with their peers, take part in the distribution of the content, being involved with a brand, becoming loyal to the brand. However, these responses only occur if customers know about the company and its products and brands. As such customers first need to be reached effectively. After a customer is reached, a certain response will follow. In this research the customer's response is termed as interactivity and engagement. These terms are often used in social media literature. However, a clear difference between the two terms is hard to give. When customers interact and engage, the spread of the message will occur

and ultimately objectives can be achieved

Interactivity is a valuable way of improving communication quality of business websites (Liu and Arnett, 2000; Chen and Yen, 2004). Even though people do not know each other in the offline world, strong relations between members and the community as a whole will develop and groups will form when people interact (Dholokia et al, 2004; Wiertz & Ruyter, 2007). But even in the absence of interaction among members, a community can exist because they have a psychological sense that relates them to the brand community (Carlson et. al, 2008). Srinivasan et al., (2002) found that e-loyalty, that is, customer loyalty to a business that sells online, has a positive effect on positive word-of-mouth and willingness to pay. Although this research was about online retailers, it generally shows that loyalty towards a website positively effects positive word-of-mouth communication. Others found that promoting customers involvement in a community may increase brand loyalty (Shang et al., 2006). Companies should encourage people to participate in communities to make interaction happen.

Social Media have found to positively contribute to long-term relationships with consumers (Andersen, 2004; Carslon, et al., 2008). Brands like JEEP, APPLE, and DELL all have build and used social media platforms that allow the members to interact with each other. They found that increasing levels of psychological sense of brand community leads to greater brand commitment. Same goes for identification with the brand. For marketers this means that striving to create interactivity among brand users will provide value. This is further supported by Aitken et al,

(2008) who suggest that marketers should look at what consumers do with advertising these days. Groups of empowered viewers and/or consumers can generate word of mouth (Aitken et al. 2008). The production of online content from consumers leads to word-of-mouth (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). Some consumers even make their own advertisements for the brands the like (Muniz & Schau, 2007).

This word-of-mouth advertising means that the customers spread the communicated message, not the company. This is desirable for several reasons. First, it is likely that those who speak to others and spread the message in fact only do so because they feel the receiver might benefit from it. As such, the value of customers reached through others is higher for the company. Second, people have more trust in their peers than in companies, allowing the message to be more accepted by the customers. Third, if the company does not have to spread the message, the investment in advertising is likely to be less because the media don't have to be bought.

Interactivity with and between customers can offer great opportunities for companies. It is expected that the concepts discussed in the previous paragraph positively influence interactivity. Meaning that the company's message will spread faster because of online word-of-mouth, which could be easily enhanced by the social media sharing-buttons and the customers motivations for using them. Both the understanding of techniques and social behavior are important. Relevant, real and remarkable information makes participation and contribution, increases time spent and as such interactivity.

Interactivity evidently produces more information.

Engagement is when people are involved in the sharing and spreading when communicating with others. Involved people have formed an attitude towards a company's brand and can become advocates. Additionally, deciding to co-create the message or to let the customer take part in the distribution of the content obviously allows for engagement to occur. Co-creation helps develop products and services, builds engagement and potentially creates advocates. Research showed 82% of the overall sample (n=1000) thought that being involved in the development of a product or service would make them more likely to tell others about the company (Hulme, 2010).

Interactivity and engagement are expected to positively influence the diffusion of the message among people. Interactivity and engagement can take many forms. Several scientists have showed that people show different levels of interactivity and engagement. Every community member has a role and every role has different causes and effects. Because of different online behavior people can be distinguished in many ways, for example; number of visits, time spent, number of comments, likes, reviews posted, etc. In general a community member has the role of 'lurker' or 'poster' (Shang et al., 2006). A lurker searches for content whereas a poster provides content. As such content is the driver of website quality and visits. No clear distinction between interactivity and engagement could be drawn from the literature. As such the terms will be used simultaneously. Before the working concepts in this research will be further defined, the next paragraph will look at how messages can be

spread, or in other words; how ideas diffuse over time by people.

Diffusion of ideas

A research among a cooking community of De Valck et al. (2009) not only shows how consumers make use of communities (i.e. how they participate) but even more important they shed light on how this participation influences customer decision-making processes. They took a sample of what they call a virtual community of consumption being "affiliative groups whose online interactions are based upon a shared enthusiasm for, and knowledge of, a specific consumption activity or related group of activities." Participants of a community form reference groups in which a person or group of people significantly influence other individual's behavior. Participants' number of visits to the community and the time spent there, is likely to affect the extent of community influence. Furthermore, those who interact the most are more likely to affect other members. If we make a distinction between receivers and senders (i.e. lurkers and posters), we can state that the senders influence the receivers. Receivers search for information and senders generate this information. The senders influence the receivers. As such, marketers should specifically cater their product or brand information to the senders within the social media. This could also occur offline. However there is also a group that is both receiver as sender as they discuss information.

De Valck et al (2009) found six general roles a participating member could play in a community based on five variables that are significantly different among the members (figure 1). The six roles are based on frequency of visits,

time spent and information retrieved, provided or discussed by the participant. The roles can be distinguished by means of involvement in the community. They found members to have a factual, interactional, and recreational orientation towards the community.

Core members use the community for all three distinguished forms as they score highest on all five variables that determine a specific role. Representing only 6% of the total community, this is the smallest group of participants in the community. However, these participants are influencing the decision-making process of other participants the most and could, for the marketer or advertiser, be well the most important and maybe even the only target group within a community.

As such the success of a community as a marketing channel depends on the participants reached within this community. When reaching the core members it is likely that diffusion of information among members occurs more rapidly or more cost-efficiently because only 6% of the group needs to be targeted for. "When the core member group is enthusiastic about a product, service, or company they are likely to spread the word, thus marketing effort directed at this small group can have a much larger impact." However, two less active member

groups account for more than 50% of the total community. It should not be forgotten that these members can be of great influence in the offline diffusion of information. As such, these groups should not be forgotten and could be catered with other ways of targeting.

Surprisingly, this research is quite in line with the findings of Rogers (2005) about the diffusion of innovations (figure 2). This theory shows that innovators and early adoptors need to be reached to make diffusion of innovations happen. Noteworthy adding up the percentages of the first two groups in both theories comes to exactly the same 16%. For a comparison, see the next page.

In his book Diffusion of Innovations, Rogers (2005) defines diffusions as "the process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system." Members who adopt innovations are separated into five groups being the innovators, early adoptors, early majority, late majority and laggards. Innovators are the first individuals who have started the diffusion process and have adopted the innovation. Laggards are those who adopt an innovation relatively at last compared to the other members in a social system.

Member type profiles^a.

	6%	10%	14%	17%	28%	25%	N = 1007	ANOVA
	Core members	Conversationalists	Informationalists	Hobbyists	Functionalists	Opportunists	Sample mean	F-statistic (p-value)
Frequency of visits ^b	6.3	4.7	4.5	5.3	2.9	2.5	3.8	241.9 (0.00)
Duration of visits ^c	4.5	2.2	2.7	3.4	2.3	1.9	2.6	143.2 (0.00)
Retrieve information ^d	3.6	3.2	3.6	2.5	3.0	2.0	2.8	293.4 (0.00)
Supply information ^d	3.5	2.7	2.7	1.9	1.4	1.3	1.9	313.4 (0.00)
Discuss information ^d	3.0	2.5	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.4	713.9 (0.00)

^a The table contains unstandardized mean values and ANOVA results. F-values in bold are significant ($p \leq 0.05$).

^b Values range from 1-7 (1 = less often; 2 = 2-3 x p/month; 3 = 1 x p/week; 4 = 2-3 x p/week; 5 = 4-5 x p/week; 6 = 5-6 x p/week; 7 = several times p/day).

^c Values range from 1-6 (1 = < 15 min; 2 = 15-30 min; 3 = 30-60 min; 4 = 60-90 min; 5 = 90-120 min; 6 = ≥ 120 min).

^d Values range from 1-5 (1 = I never do it; 5 = I do it very often).

Figure 1: Member type profiles and role

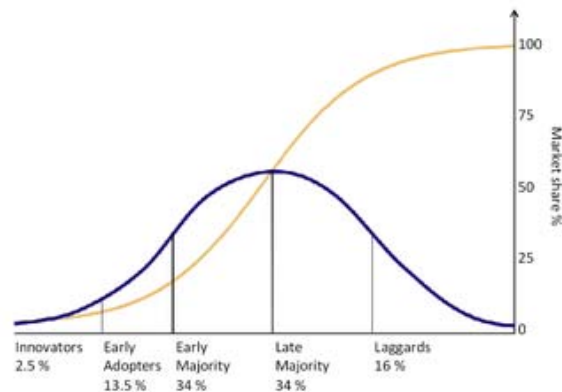


Figure 2: Diffusion of innovations

The essence of the diffusion process is the information exchange through which one individual communicates a new idea to one or several others. The diffusion of innovations is essentially a social process in which subjectively perceived information about a new idea is communicated from person to person. The meaning of an innovation is thus gradually worked out through a process of social construction. Thus, the innovation-decision process is essentially an information seeking and information-processing activity in which an individual is motivated to reduce uncertainty about the advantages and disadvantages of the innovation.” As mentioned earlier, the essence of the diffusion process is the information exchange about the innovation between individuals. “At its most elementary form, the communication process involves (1) an innovation, (2) an individual or other unit that has knowledge

of, or has experienced using, the innovation, (3) another individual or other unit that does not yet have knowledge of, or experienced with, the innovation, and (4) a communication channel connecting the two units.

Considering the channels through which an innovation is communicated, a distinction is made between mass media channels and the interpersonal channels. The first, mass media channels, are those means of transmitting messages that involve a mass medium such as television, radio, newspapers, and so on, which enable one or a few individuals to reach an audience of many. Mass media are particularly good for informing an audience about the existence of an innovation in order to create awareness-knowledge. Interpersonal channels provide a two-way exchange of information. Adoption depends mainly on subjective evaluation of those who have already adopted the innovation. Interpersonal channels are more effective in persuading an individual to accept a new idea. As such, the heart of the diffusion process consists of the modeling and imitation by potential adopters of their network partners who have previously adopted the innovation.

Rogers (2005) himself “suggests that interactive communication technologies may be changing the diffusion process in certain fundamental ways, such as by

removing or at least greatly diminishing, the role of spatial distance in who talks to whom about a new idea.” Comparing the data of De Valck et al. (2009) with the adoption cycle of Rogers (2005) provides the first evidence for the suggestion made by Rogers. Both researches suggest that diffusion of an innovation or new idea occurs when the first 16% of the total is reached. Both researches pointed at the importance of reaching the first group of people, for the impact of marketing efforts.

How to effectively reach the first group of people with social media is what will be researched here. Effective reach can be simply measured in terms of number of people reached. Reaching the right people is not enough. Even more important for success is when people adopt the message or new idea i.e. that knowledge is created. Attitude needs to be formed with this knowledge and ultimately this should result in the, by the company objected behavior. More people can be reached when the message diffuses over the target group. This diffusion occurs through interaction and engagement. As such, the core of this research is how company's can cause this interaction and engagement to happen. It is expected that relevance, realness and remarkableness positively influence interactivity and engagement.

Conclusion

The literature review shed light on what is important when using social media as a marketing channel. It showed that there is an ever increasing need for companies and consumers, to provide the customer with relevant information. Furthermore, it showed that using social media as a marketing channel calls for

transparent and authentic behavior of the firm. Companies must be real in their communication and behavior to gain trust and be accepted by the customer. Also, as customers are exposed to many forms of communication of firms, it is important the company stands out from the crowd. To make campaigns stand out and be noticed in 2010, remarkable campaigns are necessary. This might ultimately make the customer behave in a way desired by the firm. Speaking of social media, the terms interactivity and engagement are often mentioned. People have the power to make and break brands online. They share information and opinions, making it of utmost importance that customers are given the power to spread the message of the company that sends the message. As people interact and engage on social media, companies should try and benefit from this. If customers interact and engage with the company, the spreading of the message is more (cost) effective. The final paragraphs of this literature review will link the literature review to the object of study and the working concepts used in this research. These will lead to a conceptual model that will be further explored through a multiple case study.

- Object of study:

The object of study in this research is social media as a marketing channel. It is expected that success or failure in social media could well depend on certain variable characteristics. A message needs to be relevant, behavior of the company should be real, and the campaign should be remarkable in order to generate interactivity and engagement among the users, which next to effective reach determine the success or failure of social media as a marketing channel. To explore whether these factors can form the first input of

a future framework that allows one to effectively use social media as a marketing channel, this research takes social media marketing campaigns as the unit of analysis. The will reveal whether the factors that are drawn from, the literature are present and if they have an effect on the success or failure of social media as a marketing channel.

- *Concepts:*

The following defines the concepts present in this theory.

Relevance – A message is only relevant when it caters for the need for information and knowledge of the consumer. Insights from customer needs form the basis of the communicated message. This makes the message more relevant for the customer.

Real – A company is real when it shows of transparent, authentic, and honest behavior. It is the believability of the company.

Remarkable – A message can be considered remarkable when it is different to ads from competing companies. Creative ads and creative messages are considered as remarkable.

These three factors are expected to determine success or failure of social media as a marketing channel. Success is determined as interactivity and engagement.

The concepts explained above are expected to ignite a customer's response in terms of interactivity and engagement.

Interactivity and Engagement – are present when communication about the company or message between customers occurs within the social media. This is keyboard and click behavior in sending and sharing textual comments. Online interactive communication is when

people communicate and share text with the objective to inform others by sharing knowledge and information. People interacting with others affect the knowledge about the message. Knowledge will form the customers' attitude.

People that are engaged do more than just interacting with other people or with the company. Engaged people are empowered and involved people that make the message so personal they add their own views, co-create with the company and as such actively help spreading the message with the objective to make other people fans of the brand. Engagement has more affect on the attitude of the consumer. It already shows signs of positive behavior for the company.

It is expected that when using social media; relevant, real, and remarkable communication influence interactivity and engagement, making it a successful marketing channel or not. This is formulated into the following proposition that will be further explored in following chapter to see whether it might be used as a framework for designing social media marketing campaigns.

- *Proposition to be explored*

A message that has a high level of relevance, realness, and remarkableness is likely to generate high levels of interactivity and engagement.

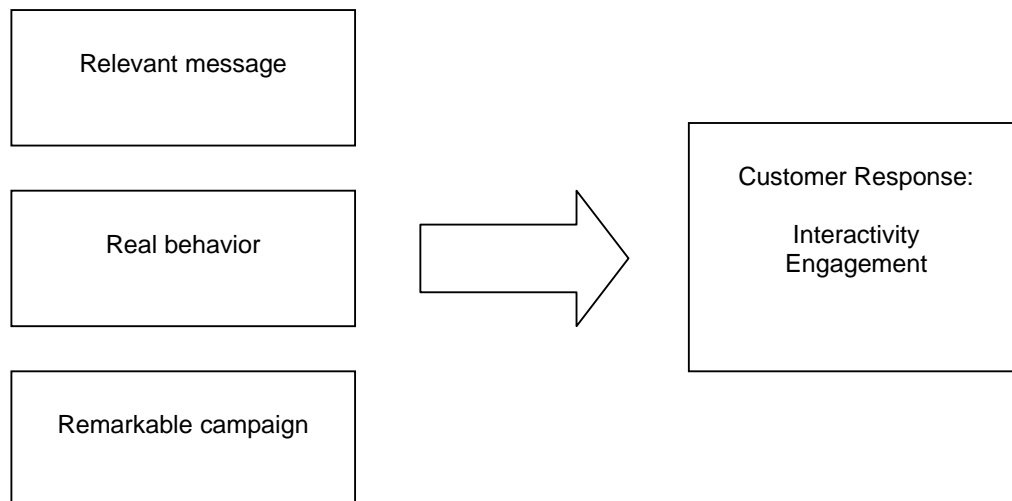
- *Domain*

The domain of this research is all social media used as a marketing channel. The theory applies to anyone interested in how to use social media effectively as a marketing channel. Marketers, entrepreneurs and companies can apply this knowledge in their social media marketing efforts. For the marketer and entrepreneur this research gives answers on how to

communicate a message in social media most effectively. It helps interactive media agencies to generate more knowledge on how to use social media and to develop more effective advertising campaigns for their clients. These clients, companies, can also benefit from this research as it provides insights in the social media phenomenon. In general it helps anyone dealing with the online empowered customer. As such the domain of this research is all social media used as marketing channels.

In here the independent variables of the sender will be analyzed. This is expected to have an effect on the dependent variables. The performance of the company will be measured as interactivity and engagement. Many factors have been found that drive the success of social media as a marketing channel. The probabilistic relation between the concepts presume that if the independent concepts change, it is likely that the value of the dependent concepts change in the expected way (Dul & Hak, 2008).

The conceptual model is presented underneath



Methodology

In this chapter the chosen research methods will be discussed and arguments for using these methods will be given. The propositions is explored through a multiple case study. A multiple case study is a study in which (a) a small number of cases in their real life context are selected (at least two instances to achieve the research objective) and (b) scores obtained from these cases are analyzed in a qualitative manner (Dul and Hak, 2008).

I chose for the case study method because the time and money constraints of this research does not allow for collecting data from a large sample. This is the most common reason for conducting a case study (Dul & Hak, 2008). The research will be a theory-oriented research with the aim of exploring a proposition. Theory-testing research is aimed at testing propositions. However, the topic of this research is rather new and therefore needs further exploration before propositions can be tested. "Exploration for theory is collecting and evaluating relevant information about theory and practice in order to decide how exactly research could contribute to the development of theory (Dul and Hak, 2008)." The literature review allowed for exploring the field of social media as a marketing channel. Gathered information is creatively combined in order to formulate the proposition and the conceptual model of this research. According to Dul and Hak (2008), this information might come from any source that is in contact with the object of study (insights from experts, practitioners, stakeholders, existing research, the researcher's experiences, and imagination, etc.). In this research there is no quantitative hypothesis testing and therefore there is little basis for scientific generalization

of the research finding. However, case studies are generalizable to the theoretical proposition (Yin, 2003). Still, considering the limited amount of data this research provides, further exploration is considered more valuable because the topic is new and expensive mistakes can be made by companies when basing their future decisions solemnly on the findings of this research.

The general goal of this research is to discover how relevance, realness, and remarkableness influence interactivity and engagement. The general goal is specified in two research objectives. The first research objective is to evaluate existing literature in the academic fields of marketing, communication and advertising to discover factors that have been found important for the success of social media as a marketing channel. The second objective is to further explore and expand the literature by executing a multiple case study. "Case study research is a useful strategy (a) when the topic is broad and highly complex, (b) when there is not a lot of theory available, and (c) when "context" is very important (Dul and Hak, 2008)."

To empirically examine the relationships between the message characteristics and the success of social media as a marketing channel, four cases will be selected from the population. Many companies are heading down the social media path nowadays. Numerous cases can be drawn from the web to compare and to test propositions or further explore the topic. But, this does not allow for representative measures. Interactive media agencies have the most experience dealing with social media as a marketing channel, enhancing the validity of this research. They provide their

clients with a concept, strategy and design for social media campaigns. As such they can provide the best data for exploring the subject of this research.

Utrecht, the central region of the Netherlands, houses several interactive advertising and media agencies of which 15 are gathered in a recently set up foundation called Creative Connection. It allows drawing data in the form of cases for exploring the propositions as they have experienced what makes social media successful or not. The population is all social media marketing campaigns developed by parties from the Creative Connection foundation in Utrecht. For this moment, the member companies of the foundation learned by trial and error, investing time, energy and money, resulting in knowledge and experience with social media as a marketing channel. The sample of this research consists of four randomly chosen cases from the creative connection foundation. After the choice for the cases was made, interviews were arranged, planned and conducted.

One of the most important sources of case study information is the interview (Yin, 2003). Semi-structured interviews are conducted and recorded. A semi structured interview implies that before the interview, questions will be formulated. A list of predetermined questions is build up which are considered as relevant to the research question. During the interviews these questions were elaborated by sub questions that came up during the interview. To fully give answers on how SME's use social media and to explore the proposition of this research, it was considered useful to let the interviewee expose his knowledge and believes about what

worked and what did not work when using social media as a marketing channel. If all questions would be predetermined, there is not much room left for real insights. Social media is a broad and complex topic and each campaign has a different context. To fully discover this context and to retrieve reliable data semi-structured interviews were conducted. The interviews were conducted in Dutch for two reasons; (1) for the interviewees it was considered more comfortable to give answers in their native language and (2) the quality of the answers will be better if the interviewee can express himself better in his native language. The recorded conversations with the media agencies were written down in text. The texts allow for more reliable measures of the concepts in the theory.

Considering the background of the companies, size, years on the market and built experience with social media; differences in knowledge between the agencies will exist. This will probably lead to different point of views on how social media can successfully be applied as a marketing channel. They all have their own experience. Some agencies work for big advertisers, others for smaller companies. Some work for profit organizations, others for non-profit. These differences will help to find a pattern in what factors determine success or failure in social media. In specific, it helps analyzing whether the message communicated during the marketing campaign is relevant, real and remarkable and how much this affects interactivity and engagement.

To enhance the validity of this research interviews with three experts, other than the cases, have been conducted to determine what

makes a message relevant, real, and remarkable. Furthermore these interviews allowed for describing interactivity and engagement in more detail. Valid measurement is achieved when scores can be considered to capture meaningfully the ideas contained in the corresponding concepts (Dul & Hak, 2008). One expert, Daan Sip, is community marketer at Red Chocolate interactive advertising. He has five year of experience with developing social media campaigns for small and big companies. He gives advices on how to use social media on one of the Netherlands biggest weblogs (www.molblog.nl) of the Netherlands.

Stefan Harzevoort, internet entrepreneur for 8 years, owner of a social media agency and blogger at www.dutchcowboys.nl was asked for advice on how to measure the concepts of this research.

Gerrita van der Veen, social psychologist and former director of Synovate market research and present partner at HIGHValue brand advice, brought in experience and knowledge about product development. This was compared to social media development and conclusions have been drawn for how to measure the concepts.

For each concept, three questions were developed that had to be answered positively to notice the presence of the concepts in the cases.

Message

For measuring relevance, the cases will be analyzed on whether customer insights or market research was used to determine how the message can be made relevant for the target group. As with every marketing effort, an offer or message can only be relevant when it caters for a need, which can be a frustration or wish. To further improve the relevance

of the message for the target group the company might want to test the potential message it wants to send with the target group.

A message is considered as 'real' when it proves the company that sends the message shows transparent and authentic behavior. Transparency gives believability to the promise made by the product or message. It shows the open and honest behavior of firms and makes the message trustworthy. Authenticity is enhanced when the company can proof its origin and intentions are truthful. A company that allows co-creation to occur is more real than a company that does not. Logically, a company that gives the message in the hand of the target group is more confident and less afraid something wrong or negative would be done. As such co-creation gives power to consumers, enhancing the realness of the message.

A message is considered remarkable when it stands out of the crowd. The message has to contain distinctive features compared to competition and previous advertisements in and out of the market where it operates. Logically, when a message is never seen elsewhere before it is more remarkable. Another important feature of the concept remarkable, is when it shows marketing as a service. Marketing as a service is rather new in marketing and still not very clearly defined. It is doing marketing without the clear objective of selling more, but more of providing additional value to someone's life. For example the Nike plus community of Nike and Apple, where consumers can track their runs, meet other runners, see their physical developments, download running music for free etc. It is marketing to get to the heart of the consumer.

Customer response

Interactivity and engagement are closely related and often seen as the same. And used simultaneously in this research. Interactivity is seen as talking and sharing about the company to fulfill not only personal goals like status, but also for others' goals like providing knowledge to others. Interactivity is present when people participate in the distribution of the content through sending and sharing information. This is often catered for with sharing-buttons that allow for easy distribution of online content. Leaving behind comments is also considered part of interactivity as it shows that people talk about a company. Without a first comment, people cannot respond, and interactivity will be less present.

Engagement is when people are so touched or influenced by a message that they engage with it for fulfilling mainly personal goals. Engagement happens when the message reaches the heart of the consumer in a positive way. When people embrace the message they want to become part of the message and will start talking with the company or message. A two-way or three-way-flow between people and the company occurs when people are engaged to talk with others. They feel empowered and are involved with the message and as a result want to become friends or followers of the company or message. Some engaged people feel the message comes so close to them they are like evangelists of the message and start to give their personal touch to it.

The next section provides an overview of the results found when conducting the interviews. The three questions that measure the scores of each concept are placed in a table for better analyzing and representing the results.

Results

Four cases have been studied for generating results. This section of the research will give a summary of the most important results found during the interviews. Per case, the most important background information will be given before the social media campaign will be described and the results of the measurements of the concepts.

O, het leukste bureau van Utrecht - Case Say Cheese Gouda

Gouda, a relatively large Dutch city in the centre of the country was coping with a bad image. Interactive Media Agency 'O' decided to start a campaign to change this negative image with the objective to make the citizens of Gouda form a positive and proud attitude towards their hometown. A website was launched where citizens could upload a picture of themselves smiling in the camera. The pictures were printed and distributed through the city. A guerilla marketing action was undertaken to generate more free-publicity. A movie was made that went viral. All exposure about the campaign was brought together on the websites blog. On twitter, hyves, and linkedin more people were informed about the campaign increasing interactivity. Engagement occurred as people uploaded their picture and started to contribute to the distribution of the content to get as much people involved in the campaign. The closing event on the market was a success.

The message in this campaign was very relevant for the target group. Negative news about the city was topic of the day. The campaign was developed in the sense that it looked as if it was an initiative from the citizens, which is partly true. This clearly enhanced the realness of the campaign. As such,

the campaign resulted in a collective effort of the citizens to give a positive image to the city. Co-creation and empowerment took many forms; people making and uploading personal pictures, people and companies volunteering to contribute, people informing others through sharing information on social media. Interactivity between people and the company occurred as people used to twitter and hyves to inform each other and reacted on the weblogs messages. Interactivity about the campaign happened mainly offline, although this was not measured. As the campaign manager put it; "Everybody talked about it". People felt engaged in the sense that they volunteered to help spreading and engaging other people the message; hanging posters, distributing postcards containing the pictures, and helping with the guerilla marketing action.

Doorn & Roos - Case Eristoff

Eristoff, a vodka brand, wants to be a 'challenger' meaning that their marketing efforts have the objective to show that the brand is different and therefore looks different at things. A story around the brand was developed. People that bought a bottle of Eristoff vodka could access a website for two months for viewing, voting and at the launch of the campaign posting projects. Projects had to "make life just a little nicer." A website was launch were the projects were displayed. Each month the people could vote for one project over a total period of one year. Furthermore, people could send each other singing telegrams containing the name of the receiver.

The campaign was based on customer insights. The target group was found be ready for different marketing efforts. As such the message was relevant. Because the

target group was give full control over which projects were chosen to invest the available marketing budget the message was very real. Compared to competition and in line with the objective, this campaign was very creative. Projects have been proposed to and uploaded on the website and the singing telegram was forwarded. The website attracted 35.000 unique visitors. As a result interactivity occurred on the website. However, there was not much attention for the campaign on other popular social media. Nevertheless, free publicity was reached. Because people co-created the projects, engagement occurred.

Alta - LG

LG introduced their new KS 360 mobile phone targeted at youngsters with the objective of brand activation. The phone was perfect for keeping track of your social network. As such, the campaign was launched on hyves. People were asked to gather their friends in the "LG friends top 100" micro website. The person who gathered the most friends made chance to win one of the phones. Hyves was the main carrier of the message. Additional an online game was developed and a radio commercial was played on Slam FM. People were also provided with a widget that could be placed on their personal hyves profile for interesting others and linking friends to the top 100 website. During the campaign 800,000 people were reached and 4,000 people participated in the friends top 100 which was perceived as a successful.

The relevance of the message was mediocre. Although youngster generally are interested in (new) mobile phones, most of them already have one with a contract. This makes that not everyone is interested in buying and as such

searching for a new phone. However, the prices made available were relevant for the target group. This is what made people contribute with the campaign. As such engagement occurred through creating a personal friend top 100 and playing the online game. The widget made available allowed for participation in the distribution of the content and as such the spreading of the message among the target group. The promise made by the product was simple and true; the phone helps to stay in touch with your social network. The market for mobile phones is a very competitive one. Compared to competition the message was not very remarkable.

Evident – Vrede van Utrecht (VUU)
The local authority and the province have set up a foundation named 'de Vrede van Utrecht' (hereafter referred to as VUU). This non-profits main objective is to capture the heritage of Utrecht city, one of the oldest cities in the Netherlands. They organize all sorts of cultural events ranging from outdoor music festivals to walking routes by night along Utrecht's most remarkable sights. In 2013 Utrecht wants to celebrate peace and until then several events will be organized for different target groups. A newly developed website functions as a social platform that allows to provide information to all target groups. One event, DJ on the Dome, was input for this research. The campaign allowed upcoming DJ's to upload their own made music on a website. Social media involved in the campaign were 22tracks and twitter. On the website people could vote for the uploaded tracks. DJ's that were voted for most were invited to play their music on Utrecht's Dome during a party.

For the target group of youngsters, this campaign was quite relevant.

Although there are many other night outs to think of, this one was other than others. Furthermore, it was the people themselves that could decide on the music of the night. The message scores very good on relevance, realness and remarkableness. The co-creation element positively affected this. Because people could upload, vote and share their opinions interactivity occurred. The use of 22tracks and twitter also allowed this interactivity to occur. Many people were engaged during the campaign through keeping track of the DJ competition. In total, 313 DJ's uploaded their tracks and the website attracted 31.000 unique visitors. 7000 people came to the party eventually. The new website attracts more visitors and people stay longer because they also look for information about other events. Social Media is perceived as a good marketing channel for the future.

Overview

Before analyzing the results an overview of the measurements will be given. As mentioned in the previous chapter, each concept was measured on three elements. Each measure was highly present, moderately present or not present at all. An 'h' was given when the measure was highly present in the case, the letter 'm' when it was partly present, and no letter when it was not present. Presence of the concepts was either measured through the mentioning of the concept or sub-element by the interviewee and/or through the interpretation of the interviewer.

The data from the cases were examined to discover whether relevance, realness, and remarkableness had influence on attitude and behavior of the consumer. In most cases the level and frequency of the concepts of interactivity and engagement were

high when the concepts of the message were present.

The following tabulation shows the frequency and levels of the concepts in the theory.

Concepts	Measures of concepts	Case Say Cheese Gouda	Case Eristoff	Case LG	Case VVU
	Used customer insights?	H	M		
Relevance	Catered for frustration, problem or wish?	H			M
	Message was tested with target group?	H	M		
	Sender of message is authentic i.e. was truthfull in its origin/heritage and intentions	H	H		H
Real	Message was transparent; gives believability to the promise made by the product/message. (no hidden secrets, honest and trustworthy)	H	H	M	H
	Customers were asked to co-create	H	H		H
	Message had distinctive features compared to competition and previous advertisements	H	H	M	H
Remarkable	Such a message was never seen before	H	H		H
	Message shows marketing as a service		H		M
	People participate in the distribution of the content: sending and sharing buttons i.e. retweets, likes, etc.	H		M	H
Interactivity	People participate with the goal to help others through sharing knowledge	H	H	M	H
	People talk <i>about</i> the message, brand and/or company i.e. leave comments	H	H	M	M
	People talk <i>with</i> the company and others; two- or three-way-flow of communication between	H	M		H
Engagement	People feel empowered and are involved i.e. become friends, followers, sign up for newsletter/RSS feed	H	H	M	H
	People contribute by enhancing the message with their personal views i.e. they do co-create.	H			

Table 1: Overview of present concepts

As can be derived from the table, the Say cheese gouda case contains the most measurements, followed by case Eristoff and case VVU. Case LG does not allow for much measurement as few concepts were present.

Overall, when using social media as a marketing channel, high levels of relevance, realness, and remarkableness allowed for high levels of interactivity and engagement to occur. But, these results must be handled with caution.

The results indicate that relevance and realness were key contributors of interactivity and engagement. Sending a relevant message to a certain target group was found to

form the basis of using social media as a marketing channel successfully. Realness had more to do with the behavior of the sender of the information, in these cases the advertisers behavior. The campaigns in which the advertiser behaved most transparent and authentic showed the highest levels of interactivity and engagement. Most messages from the cases were remarkable, but the data hardly provided reason to believe that this influenced interactivity and engagement.

In the third case, where the LG KS 360 phone was introduced to the market, not much data could be found on the message and its influence on attitude. However, interactivity and engagement also

occurred in the case of the LG KS 360 phone even in the absence of most concepts in the message. This is likely due to the fact that a phone could be won when people participated in the campaign, not for social goals.

The next section will analyze the results.

Analyses

In here the cases will be analyzed to further explore the relation between the independent and dependent concepts. It is expected that when using social media; a relevant, real, and remarkable message influences interactivity and engagement, making it a successful marketing channel or not.

Hereafter the cases will be referred to as 1) for case Say Cheese Gouda, 2) for case Eristoff, 3) for case LG and 4) for case VVU.

The expected relation between the concepts of the message and its influence on the concepts of the customer response can hardly be derived from the results. In three of the four cases light evidence for the proposed relation between the concepts can be found, but it is likely that other factors than the independent concepts influenced the dependent concepts. In both case 1, 2, and 4 scores on the independent concepts led to higher scores on the dependent concepts.

In case 1 the interactivity between and engagement of people was clearly noticed. Already before the launch of the campaign many people engaged through uploading a picture and helping distributing them. The message that influenced this was very simple. The city had to smile again which was translated to "Say Cheese Gouda." Because the sender of the campaign was a citizen of Gouda himself and

had discussed and tested the idea with other citizens, the message was made very relevant and real. Furthermore the campaign stems from a non-profit organization and had the help of many volunteers, the origin of the message had a very human character. The open character of this campaign made it very suitable for using social media. Many people shared this campaign with others. The campaign's message and its purpose were loaded with positivism and was easily understood and communicated; interactivity and engagement was the result. In case 1 support for the proposition is found; the message indeed positively influenced interactivity and engagement.

The social character of case 1 made the use of social media as a marketing channel successful. There was no objective to reach the masses but 'just' the local Gouda citizens. The relevance of the message was so high because people could easily recognize themselves in the goal of the campaign; making people proud of their town of residence. Because the local government never came up with such a campaign as the people of the media agency, people might have been waiting for the campaign to happen. Once it was launched many people felt engaged already. "We can actually say that once we threw our message outside it really started. This is a success factor. And also the link with the social media. I think the success is that as a person you can take part in it. It is not directed by a company. Just put your own face online..." Finally there call for a positive sound received an answer. The benevolence of people to participate and contribute to the campaign was so high because the message was so relevant. Furthermore, many options were provided for participating and

contributing. The open character of the campaign allowed it to become a collective effort of the citizens. Anyone that had an idea or time available could participate and contribute. The transparent character of the campaign made people feel personally attached to the goal it pursued. As the interviewee stated; "Some people asked us if they were allowed to start their own Say Cheese Gouda hyves or twitter page, to write their own blog posts. We gave them the campaign designs and let them pursue their goals. That's the fun side of it, that we don't keep it to ourselves. If I'm the only one sending tweets, its less fun then when five different people do this. Then diversity can occur." Remarkable about the campaign was that it placed the citizens of Gouda in the spotlight. People could find their pictures on the street, on buildings, on the web, and occasionally even on the local and national newspapers and television. This surprising effect not only helped the spreading of the message, but is also likely to have influence interactivity and engagement.

Case 2 was catered at a specific target group. As the people in this target group are heavy internet users, it was decided to use social media as the main carrier of the campaign. Furthermore, as the collection of ideas and votes was a substantial part of the campaign, internet was chosen as the collector. Using the web was more cost-efficient compared to traditional media like mail post or telephone.

The 'making life just a little nicer' projects were very remarkable and quite relevant. Based on customer insights, the campaign was designed to allow the target group to decide what they found to be relevant. The campaign allowed the customer to sit on the chair of the

advertiser and decide on how to spend the marketing budget. The target group was found to be keen on designing and developing marketing campaigns. They like to be creative and to think with the company about the advertisement. Those who love doing this were catered with a relevant message. Doorn & Roos felt they "had to come up with more than an advertising campaign. A successful story forms the basis of a brand. But thinking of such a story brings in risks. Especially for the target group of Eristoff, young people, believability is key. And claiming an heritage that has no true origin works totally opposite. If it comes out the story is brought into the world just to force a cool positioning in the market, the brand will be heavily damaged. A successful story must be solid and true. Logically, because then you can sustain."

As the consumers were given control over the marketing budget in this case, the realness of the message was clearly present. The marketing budget was indeed spent on projects voted for by the customers that bought a bottle of Eristoff Vodka. It clearly showed marketing as a service, meaning that the marketing budget was not spend on reaching and attracting as many customer as possible with the obvious aim to increase sales, but that the marketing budget was spend on services that enrich the consumers life. Although the target group does fancy such marketing efforts, this doesn't happen often yet. As such, this campaign was very remarkable and very distinctive to marketing efforts of competition and previous advertisements. "This online part is totally different from what happens in the market for strong spirits. Almost everything in this market is aimed at life style and aspiration. Eristoff comes close to

you and deals with your own life. In that, we can recognize a good challenger; different than others but with a clear goal.”

This is likely to have influenced the success of the campaign. Interactivity and engagement is likely to have occurred because of people were put in charge of the budget and because the remarkableness made people in the target group willing to spread the word about the campaign. This case does slightly support the proposition as higher levels of interactivity and engagement occurred because of high levels of realness and remarkableness. Relevance was difficult to detract because buying a bottle was not the main message; rather it was the ability to co-create the campaign and together spend the marketing budget that made the message relevant.

Case 3, was just like case 2 and 4 catered at youngsters in particular. For every youngster a new mobile phone with new useful features could be relevant. However looking at it in this way is very straight forward. In this highly competitive market, many advertisers provide relevant messages. And as many already possess a mobile phone and are stuck to their contract for a certain period, the message was only relevant for a part of the target group that likes to easily stay in contact with their friends and the part that arrived at a point at which they might consider buying a new phone. As such relevance was not present in the case and is likely to not have influenced the level of interactivity and engagement. Although the phone was able to do what it promised and as such made the message believable, realness could not be found. As realness of the message can particularly be exposed through the behavior of the sender of the message, in this

case no behavior or a two way dialogue between the sender and the receiver of the message can be found. The only distinctive feature of the message was the communicated unique selling point (being able to easily connect to your online friends) which at the time of the campaign was quite new. This is likely to be the only element in the message that has influenced interactivity. Those who did need a new phone and were looking for it might have perceived this as a reason to collect their friends in the friend top 100 and placing the widget on their personal hyve page. Engagement is likely to have occurred only because a phone could be won. “It must be something really special, a good initiative or a really good message, if you want people to participate and contribute by sending it through. In this case it was simply, you make chance on a mobile phone. Well, pretty good price isn’t it. Right away you see that people take action and leave behind some personal details. It is seen as a less bigger problem because they can win something.” Overall this measurements in this case do not support the proposition. In here, the price that could be won is likely to have influenced the level of interactivity and engagement.

In case 4, no customer insights were used and no formal testing with the target group was done. However, it is no rocket science to imagine that the target group of youngster might find an outdoor party relevant. Further analyses of this case shows that it was the realness of the campaign that is likely to have influenced the levels of interactivity and engagement. Just as in case 1 people were given control on the final event, in this case the party. As such the goal of the campaign was in line with the goal of the target group;

organizing a successful party. The music and artists that had to fill up the parties program could be by the target group itself. VVU and Evident only provided an online platform where the input was gathered and could be vote for. People had to interact and engage to make the party successful. What was remarkable about this campaign was its location, the dome square, where parties are usually organized only on national holidays. Factors other than the concepts in the proposition that might also have influenced the occurrence of interactivity and engagement have not been found. One may argue that DJ's that uploaded their tracks did this to become famous next to become one of the DJ's on the party. As such the message, or the platform, was used for goals other than the party. In this case both realness and remarkableness are likely to have influenced interactivity and engagement, and as such partly supports the proposition.

In both cases 2 and 4 co-creation was part of the campaign. However they differ in result. People were empowered to share their suggestions and opinions on a website that was not linked to the mother brand. Both websites allowed for providing information about the campaign but also allowed visitors to influence the result of the campaign. Co-creation made the campaigns more real and transparent.

Case 2 was the most remarkable, however this was a substantial part of the objective in the Eristoff campaign as it wanted to be a challenger. It did attract much free publicity. The remarkableness and relevance of this message scored high. But although the message scored high it had a negative effect on the level of interactivity and engagement. Case

2 does slightly support the proposition. Despite the singing telegram that could be forwarded to others, it is likely that too few social media were used to spread the message. Furthermore, in case 2 the company itself uploaded projects, not totally empowering the consumers. Only during the launch of the campaign people could upload their ideas for projects. Remarkableness was found difficult to measure. More information about competition and about the perception about the campaign of customers is needed to give conclusions about the effects of remarkableness on interactivity and engagement. Both case 2 (Eristoff) and 4 (VVU) attracted around 30,000 unique visitors to the website, even though case 2 was catered at the whole country and case 4 only at one city. It is likely that the number of visitors is relatively higher in case 4 because the campaign empowered people more than in case 2.

In case 4 the target group was more in charge of the outcome than in case 2. Both cases had the same demographic target group. The difference in both cases is that the campaign of case 4 is from a non-profit organization. Both cases provided marketing as a service to their customers. Both cases let customers in charge of what to do with the marketing budget. It is likely that people could have had more trust in the case of non-profit organization, case 4. These two observations might have affected the positive relation between the message and the attitude in case 4.

Case 4 showed a positive effect of the message on interactivity and engagement. The same positive effect as Case 1. Case 1 and 4 are from non-profit organizations. Both cases show that if relevance, realness, and remarkableness of the

message are higher, interactivity and engagement is higher. This is likely to have influence on the expected relation.

Case 3, scored low on all measures and does not support the proposition because there were too few measurements. Even though it scored no points on relevance, still interactivity and engagement occurred. This is likely to have happened because the people that interact in the case made more chance of winning the mobile phone that was awarded to those who collected the most friends. The price could only be won when people participated. As such the possibility to win the price is likely to have influence interactivity and engagement, not the message. The message itself was hardly relevant compared to other messages about the same product on the market. Although it showed signs of transparency, the phone indeed gives believability to the promise made by the product. On non of the measures this case scored the full one point. This shows neither the message nor the attitude showed much proof of presence. In this same case, the effect of traditional media, radio, led to a boost in the reach of the audience. "A rise in the number of people participating on the micro site followed. The traditional media clearly generated more reach and awareness." Both the price that could be won as the use of traditional media are likely to have affected the measures of case 3 and as such the results.

Further analyzing the data reveals that the three cases that scored highest (i.e. contained most data for measurement) in total had a social event at the end. Co-creation is found in three of the four cases and found to be an important component in using

social media as a marketing channel.

Case 1 and 4, both supported the proposition the most. Both cases empowered people the strongest compared to the other cases. Empowering people increases interactivity and engagement in both cases.

The next section will discuss the findings and relate them to the theory described in the literature review.

Discussion

The previous analyses explored the relation between the independent and dependent concepts. No hard evidence was found for the proposition that a relevant, real, and remarkable message positively effects the interactivity and engagement of people. This section will relate the findings to the theory discussed in the literature review for further interpreting the results.

The success of any campaign can only be judged within its context (Cothrel, 2000). The context of the four cases differed in such a way that it is hard to generalize. Looking at each case independently, the proposition is slightly supported in the cases where most data was gathered.

In all four cases it was decided to use social media not only because it was thought to be most effective in reaching the marketing objectives. Also, the four media agencies wanted to experience the use of social media. Where they used to use traditional media to bring across a message, they now feel the urge for new approaches in the interactive marketplace (Ozuem, Howell & Lancaster, 2007). It might be because of this testing ambition that success was found difficult to define.

In line with Vakratas and Ambler (1999), the objective of the advertiser is the starting point of measuring the effectiveness. In this study each campaign achieved its objective and as such was successful. What determines this effectiveness was expected to be found in the message. Exploring and analysing the literature from the field of marketing communication led to the development of the proposed relation and potential success factors. SME's from the advertising market provided implemented advertising campaigns for exploring and analysing the proposed success factors and their influence on the customer response.

Dholakia et al, (2004) found that people use network-group-based communities for functional goals and small-group-based communities for purposive goals. In case 1, 2 and 4 people formed their own small-group-based communities that formed around a shared goal. In case 3, the network-group-based community was used to fulfil the functional goal of winning a phone. Aiming for small-group-based communities with a relevant goal that matches an individual's purposive goal is likely to be effective when using social media as marketing channel. The marketing objectives in case 1, 2 and 4 served a less commercial goal than in case 3. It is likely that this has influenced the choice for the used social media. Case 3 was more a mass-marketing campaign and therefore used the biggest network-group-based community of the Netherlands, hyves, to reach the mass.

In small-group-based communities people often do not know each other. However, collectively they strive for a single goal. It is found important to provide the

community with a relevant message containing elements that can help in achieving a personal or group goal. Being real, meaning that the campaign owner is open and authentic in each behaviour makes the adoption within such a small-group-based community more likely to occur. It seems that engaging people and making them interact with each other is particularly possible when sending a relevant message and showing real behaviour in a small-group-based community. Here people strive for the same goal. In network-based-communities people interact with each other for their own social purposes. Using social media as marketing channel is likely to be more effective when using small-group-based communities. To enter someone's personal network is more difficult as was the case in case 3. In case 1, 2 and 4, the campaigns helped achieving the goals of people in small-group-based communities.

Co-creation and empowerment formed important elements of the concepts in this research. In line with the research of Hulme (2010) co-creation and empowerment was found important in all cases for the message and its effect on consumers' response. Both case 1 and 4, in which the relation between the message and the customer response was positive and most evidence was found for the proposed relation, co-creation and empowerment were most prevalent. These cases also show most signs of interactivity and engagement. In line with the literature (Koh & Kim, 2004; Wiertz & Ruyter, 2007; Ying et al, 2007), relevant information was found to be of value to consumers. Case 1, 2 and 4 were found most relevant and most real. Both are likely to have influenced higher scores on interactivity and engagement. However, there was a different

situation in case 2 were the proposed relation could not found. This is expected to find its cause in the level of co-creation. In case 2, only at the launch of the campaign consumers were allowed to co-create. During the following months, people could only vote, and not co-create the projects anymore. Co-creation is likely to be a relative efficient and effective way of not only reaching customers but also attracting them in the participation and contribution.

The campaigns from the non-profit organisations in case 1 and 4 provided the most support for the proposed relation. In both cases engagement was high. Consumers that engaged in these campaigns did it for their own personal goals and the goals of the community to which they belonged. As well as case 2, case 1 and 4 provided marketing as a service meaning that the marketing budget is not spent in favour of the company but more in favour for the consumer. The consumer had influence on what happened with the marketing budget. In all cases the company gave up rights for other benefits than power and social relationships, making the acceptance of the company in the community occur (Spaulding, 2009).

In all campaigns the starting point was to reach the right target group. Only then interactivity can occur. Interaction between people forms communities (Dholokia et al, 2004). In all cases except for case 3, the first group of people that were reached clearly helped the spreading of the campaign among the target group. In line with the findings of Rogers (2005) and De Valck, et al, (2009) reaching the first group is essential for the diffusion of the idea of the campaign. This research showed

that social media are particularly good in making this happen.

For practitioners this implies that for reaching the right target group with social media marketing, relevant information and real behaviour is likely to increase interactivity and engagement and as such the diffusion of the campaign. Opposite to using traditional media, reach is not bought but provided by the target group itself when using social media. For companies with a small marketing budget, social media might well be a very cost-effective marketing channel.

Another benefit is that it is likely that the message will particularly reach the right target group. Relevant information is only sought for by and shared with people that find the information relevant. Relevance is key in this research. Once the target group is reached, realness of the message becomes important. Behavioural expectations of the target group allow for the campaign to be accepted and adopted. Realness makes this adoption more likely because of the transparent and authentic behaviour that firms intend to expose. Co-creation gives proof of the believability of the campaign owner and will therefore enhancing the adoption of the campaign.

Conclusion

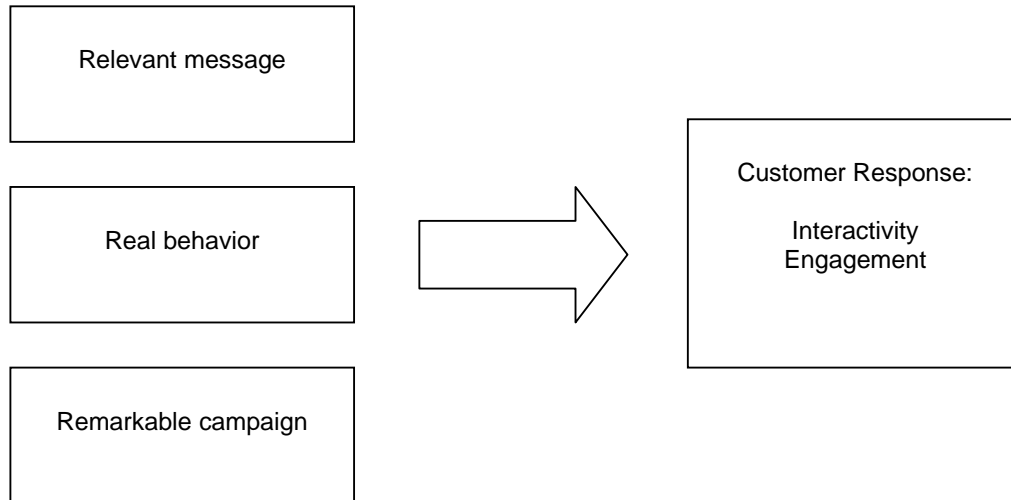
In this research the use of social media as a marketing channel by SME's from the advertising industry has been examined to explore whether certain elements of the message effect a customer's response and subsequent behaviour.

The literature review pointed to the importance of new strategies when using social media as a marketing channel. It revealed the need for more human behaviour of firms. This was translated into a proposed relation; relevance, realness, and remarkableness of the message influence interactivity and engagement of the consumer.

Both the literature and the findings of the multiple case study in this research have provided evidence for the importance of the level of relevance, realness and remarkableness. However, remarkableness could hardly be isolated in this research. Nevertheless, the multiple case study showed that relevance of the message and real behaviour are found to be important determinants of the level of interactivity and engagement among customers. In three of the four cases that have been studied, light evidence for supporting the proposed relation was found. Two cases were found

to be most supportive for the proposed relation. The success, measured by the levels of interactivity and engagement, of both cases can be found in the relevance and realness of the message. Noteworthy, the co-creation and empowerment elements in these cases were found to be important elements of both relevance and realness of the message. Co-creation allows the consumer to provide the company with insights on what is considered relevant by them. Opening up the campaign and allowing it to be remixed or adjusted by the consumer already helps reaching the consumer.

The following framework provides practitioners guidance in designing their social media strategy. The framework shows the important success factors for using social media and creating the desired customer response. This framework needs to be further explored in the future to see whether it is complete and substantial for practitioners to use. It also shows the important factors when using social media. However, further exploration, preferably with more cases or through measuring customers response in a more quantitative manner, should be done in future research to test and expand the success factors.



Due to time and money constraints this research was limited to comparing only four cases. The cases were gathered from a pool of Utrecht based small- and medium size advertising agencies. For all agencies, the campaign was the first to take social media as a marketing channel instead of traditional media. More experienced companies might have provided more and better data for testing the proposition. Furthermore, because social media is a fairly new field of research, clear definitions and hard evidence is limited leaving this research in the exploration phase of the social media phenomenon. As social media itself only officially exist since 2004, not much experience has been built by most companies. Although the cases used for this research are in the industry and work with social media almost on a daily basis, still they just began to see the factors for success. This is a limitation of this research. Having more experience with using social media is likely to provide different results then found in this research.

This research is limited in a sense that all four cases have a different vision on what effect the campaign should have in order to be considered successful. Case 1 was considered successful because “everybody talked about it”. In case 2, the owners of the campaign found it a success because they did something different to compared to competition and because they noticed that the target group felt this too. Case 3, was successful because of the enormous reach (800,000 people). Case 4, was found successful because the campaign owners saw that the use of social media helped the spreading of the message and allowed people to participate. The cases differed in their objectives and also in the extent of social media usage. Future research should aim at trying to find more similar cases for analyzing. Future research could benefit from better sampling. Drawing cases from a larger population might help in finding a better sample for further testing the proposition.

This study is expected to be useful to researchers who are interested in social media as a marketing channel. Furthermore, practitioners

such as marketers and advertisers may benefit from this research both by realizing the potential marketing value of social media and by developing new marketing activities. For practitioners, this research points to the importance of not only listening to consumers but also involving them in the development of advertising campaigns. Social media are mainly a time invest, not necessarily money. Where traditional media can be used to buy consumers attention, social media are there to get consumers attention. This calls for new strategies and more human behaviour. Getting consumers attention with social media can be obtained with providing relevant information and behaving in a transparent and authentic manner. Then, the diffusion of the idea in the campaign or the marketing message will occur. Further research is needed to test whether social media should only focus on

reaching the first 16% of the target group i.e. the conversationalists and innovators. If this is true, marketing budgets can be spend on investing time, not on the spreading of the message, as this will be done by the target group itself. In the future marketers might be better off when only looking at how to effectively reach the first 16% of the target group. In the future marketers should worry about how to attract the right people, not on only reaching the right people. This calls for different marketing strategies. This research already provides some guidelines for doing this; developing a relevant message and behaving in a real, more human way, for example through co-creation and empowering people.

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