

Biggest and most successful brands on Facebook in the light of analysis

Ludovít Nastišin

University of Prešov in Prešov

Department of marketing and international trade

Konštantínova 16, 080 01 Prešov, Slovakia

ludovit.nastisin@gmail.com

Abstract: Critical voices claim that the golden era of Facebook is over. To find out how much truth there is to this evaluation, we present the analysis of thirty Facebook profiles of brands with some of the highest amount of likes. Among these were brands like BMW and Mercedes-Benz, Adidas Originals, Nike and also food brands like Oreo, Skittles and Coca-Cola. This paper also brings the theoretical background for this area, which logically supports the following analysis. Results show the performance during the first half of 2016 to find out more about development in likes, posts, user interaction and other key performance indicators (KPIs). Analysis shows that Facebook critics claiming that the network is dead couldn't be more wrong!

Keywords: Facebook, brands, analysis,

JEL Classification: M19

Acknowledgement: This article is the partial output of currently solved research grant VEGA no. 1/0806/16 "Research on issues of consumer behaviour of a new generation of customers with emphasis on identifying preferences and usability of mobile platforms in the process of e-commerce of the subjects localized predominantly on the Central European Market."

1. Introduction

Facebook isn't just powerful. It's flexible. No matter what type of company you run, it has enough different marketing options that you can tailor your marketing efforts to fit your company, your budget, and your time constraints. Yes, it can take some time to get to know all of its features, but it's worth it. Facebook still is growing at a rapid pace, and every day it becomes a more indispensable part of social media marketing. It's also important to strike while the iron is hot. For the moment, companies that are savvy about Facebook marketing still enjoy an early-adopter advantage. Once more traditional marketers start transitioning into the space, competition will increase, advertising prices will rise, and users will become much pickier. If Facebook is not a current part of your marketing campaign, it should be. Set aside some time to tinker around, start a few test campaigns, and see what happens. Like anything, it takes practice to get good at it.

2. Social media marketing

This term stands for the use of social media platforms and websites to promote a product or service.(Felix et al 2016) Most of these social media platforms have their own built-in data analytics tools, which enable companies to track the progress, success, and engagement of ad campaigns. Companies address a range stakeholders through social media marketing including current and potential customers, current and potential employees, journalists, bloggers, and the general public. On a strategic level, social media marketing includes the management of the implementation of a marketing campaign, governance, setting the scope (e.g. more active or passive use) and the establishment of a firm's desired social media "culture" and "tone". To use social media effectively, firms should learn to allow customers and Internet users to post user-generated content (e.g., online comments, product reviews, etc.), also known as "earned media", rather than use marketer-prepared advertising copy.(Schivinski et al 2016) While social media marketing is often associated with companies, as of 2016, a range of not-for-profit organizations and government organizations are engaging in social media marketing of their programs or services. (Bačik et al 2015)

When companies join these social channels, consumers can interact with them directly.(Zhang et al 2011) That interaction can be more personal to users than traditional methods of outbound marketing and advertising. Social networking sites act as word of mouth or more accurately, e-word of mouth. The Internet's ability to reach billions across the globe has given online word of mouth a powerful voice and far reach. The ability to rapidly change buying patterns and product or service acquisition and activity to a growing number of consumers is defined as an influence network.(Assaad 2013) Social networking sites and blogs allow followers to "retweet" or "repost" comments made by others about a product being promoted, which occurs quite frequently on some social media sites. By repeating the message, the user's connections are able to see the message, therefore reaching more people. Because the information about the product is being put out there and is getting repeated, more traffic is brought to the product/company.

These websites are about building the virtual communities, that allow consumers to express their needs, wants and values, online. Social media marketing then connects these consumers and audiences to businesses that share the same needs, wants, and values. Through social networking sites, companies can keep in touch with individual followers. This personal interaction can instill a feeling of loyalty into followers and potential customers. Also, by choosing whom to follow on these sites, products can reach a very narrow target audience.(Assaad 2013) Social networking sites also include much information about what products and services prospective clients might be interested in. Through the use of new semantic analysis technologies, marketers can detect buying signals, such as content shared by people and questions posted online. An understanding of buying signals can help sales people target relevant prospects and marketers run micro-targeted campaigns.

To integrate social networks into their marketing strategies, companies have to develop a marketing model. D'Andrea et al (2012) provides marketing model (SNeM2S) based on social networks. The model includes the following steps:

- Selection of the potential social networks to use;
- Setting out a financial plan (regarding hiring social media brand managers or consultants);
- Designing or modifying organizational structures to manage the social network in the companies' market (this may involve adding a social media unit to an existing marketing branch or creating a new social media branch);

- Selection of target market(s);
- Selection of the products, services, brand(s) or company messages which will be promoted;
- Performance measures for the social media strategy such as evaluation, data analytics, etc.

3. Facebook

Facebook is big. As the largest social network in the world, it has more than 1.79 billion active users, 62% of whom log in on a daily basis. With such a large user base, ignoring Facebook really isn't an option for most marketers. You can bet your ideal market is using Facebook nearly every day. The question is: how do you target all of those users with your marketing? The good news is that the Facebook advertising platform allows you to zero in and specify the type of people you're looking for. You can target by location, demographics, and interests. Facebook represents a huge potential market for your social media efforts, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to stand out from the crowd.

1.18 billion people log onto Facebook daily active users (Facebook DAU) for September 2016, which represents a 17% increase year over year (Facebook 2016) The Implication: A huge and vastly growing number of Facebook users are active and consistent in their visits to the site, making them a promising audience for your marketing efforts. There are 1.66 billion mobile active users (Mobile Facebook MAU) for September 2016 an increase of 20 percent year-over-year. There are 1.03 billion Mobile Daily Active Users for June 2016 which is an increase of 22% year-over-year. On average, the Like and Share Buttons are viewed across almost 10 million websites daily. In Europe, over 307 million people are on Facebook. The Takeaway: This isn't just a U.S. phenomenon – a worldwide market is available via Facebook. Age 25 to 34, at 29.7% of users, is the most common age demographic. What this means for you: This is the prime target demographic for many businesses' marketing efforts, and you have the change to engage these key consumers on Facebook. Five new profiles are created every second. The Implication: Your potential audience on Facebook is growing exponentially. Facebook users are 76% female (out of 100% of all females) and 66% male (out of 100% of all males). This is stat is one that you really have to think about because it's comparing the percentage of all females against the percentage of all males who are on Facebook. Sorry for the confusion. (Vermeren 2015)

Highest traffic occurs mid-week between 1 to 3 pm. On another note, a Facebook post at 7pm will result in more clicks on average than posting at 8pm. Go figure. How this can help you: You have the potential to reach more consumers and drive higher traffic to your site during peak usage times, but people may be more likely to be more engaged in the evenings. This statistic may be a factor when you are planning social communication scheduling. (Also consider that Facebook has a global audience, so you may want to plan around the time zone of your key market.) On Thursdays and Fridays, engagement is 18% higher. The Implication: Again, use this information to determine when to post in order to optimize your social media marketing efforts. There are 83 million fake profiles. The Takeaway: Nothing is perfect, so always remain thoughtful and strategic in your efforts. Also, fake or not, these are still potential consumers. There are various reasons for fake profiles, including professionals doing testing and research, and people who want to segment their Facebook use more than is possible with one account. Role of Facebook in Internet Marketing. Photo uploads total 300 million per day. The Implication: Again, this is an indication of engaged users; also, it is an indication that there are a lot of photos, as well as other information, competing for users' attention, so target your efforts strategically. (Zephoria 2016)

Average time spent per Facebook visit is 20 minutes. What this means for you: You could have a short time period to make your impression, so use it wisely with relevant, interesting and unique posts and offers in order to get the most return on your efforts. Every 60 seconds on Facebook: 510 comments are posted, 293,000 statuses are updated, and 136,000 photos are uploaded. The Implication: Again, there are a lot of engaged and active users, but also a huge amount of information competing for their attention, so quality and strategy on your part matter. 4.75 billion pieces of content shared daily as of May 2013 which is a 94 percent increase from August 2012. 50% of 18-24 year-olds go on Facebook when they wake up. What this means for you: Facebook is important to these users, and potentially, if done correctly, so is the content you post on it. One in five page views in the United States occurs on Facebook. How this helps you: This is a huge market on the web; if you use social media marketing efforts on Facebook well, you could have huge returns to show for it. 42% of marketers report that Facebook is critical or important to their business. The Takeaway: This is a crowded marketplace, but you can't afford to sit it out, because odds are fairly high that your competition is there. The key is to use Facebook marketing correctly and make sure that

your efforts stand out from the crowd. 16 Million local business pages have been created as of May 2013 which is a 100 percent increase from 8 million in June 2012.. Facebook marketing has transformed how business is conducted, and its use by local businesses to extend their markets continues to explode. (Zephoria 2016)

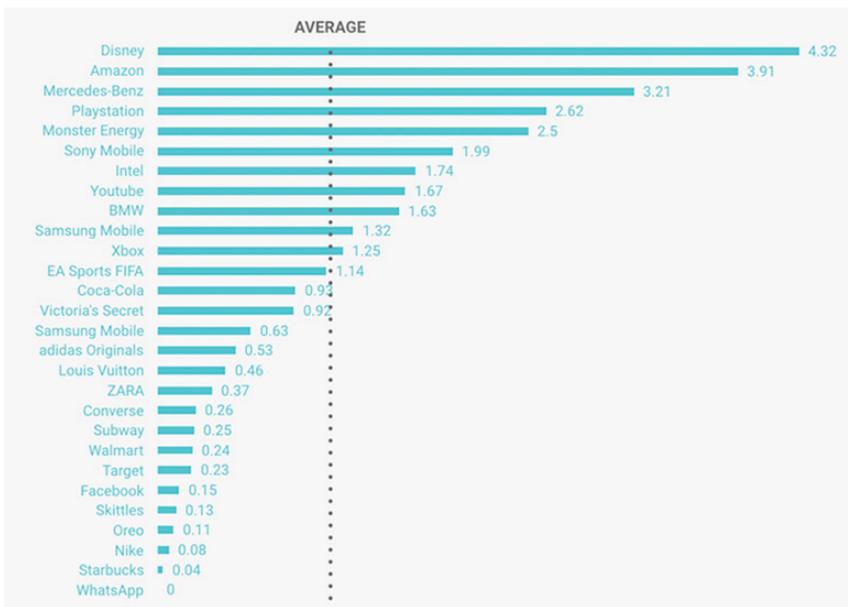
4. Analysis of 30 biggest brands on Facebook

Facebook is still standing tall as the most popular social media network for users and brands are investing heavily into their social media marketing. It offers interaction with users that show admiration for the brand and can be valuable as a more personal approach to new customers. But how well are the top brands on Facebook really performing? It's one thing to see if they are still showing up in your timeline, but are they still posting as much as before? Is high activity on the network still being rewarded? What can you learn from their performance?

Results show the performance during the first half of 2016 to find out more about development in likes, posts, user interaction and other key performance indicators (KPIs). Analysis shows that Facebook critics claiming that the network is dead couldn't be more wrong!

Looking at the overall development of the average amount of fans, there was a nearly linear growth from 38,160,209 to 38,504,247 – roughly speaking, the average brand profile acquired around 344,000 new fans in the first half of 2016. This is a very positive sign for all big brands on Facebook, since it means that the platform is still offering a growing base of fans. This also tallies with findings from an earlier study which showed that Facebook is still going strong as a platform. The monthly fan growth, which was positive over the whole period, fluctuated slightly throughout H1 2016 but showed a rising tendency. On average, the 30 brands were able to acquire around 66,500 new followers per month. There was little growth in January and a notable peak in new fans in March and June. (Leoprechting 2016)

Figure 1. Amount of daily posts

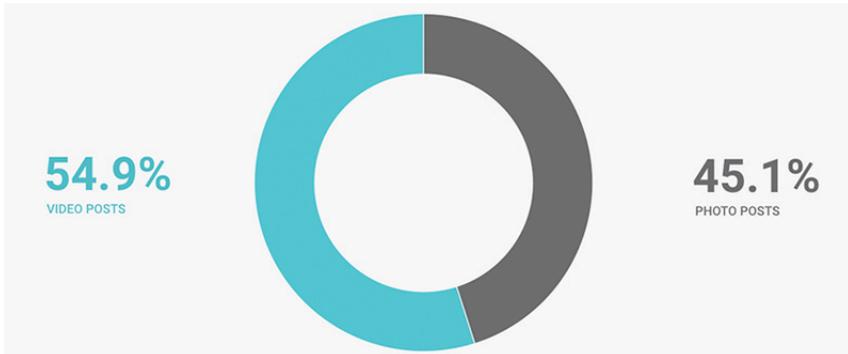


Source: Quintly, 2016

The average number of own posts by the brands showed a significant and steady decrease, dropping from an average of around 150 posts per month in January to an average of a little less than 100 posts per month in June. The strong decrease in posts is an intriguing finding that could be interpreted in many ways. This makes it hard to

determine a definite cause for this development. When looking at the number of own posts, it is important to note that the amount of posts varies greatly among the thirty brands. For example, the Starbucks page only published a post about once a month (8 posts in the first 6 months of 2016). In the same time, MTV posted a stunning 12,134 times. With such a small data set, one page like this already changes the average quite a lot. What's also interesting is that even though the Starbucks page is not very active, it still acquired much more likes than the smaller pages. This might be a sign that users don't value frequent content as much as one could imagine. (Leoprechting 2016)

Figure 2. Video vs. image posts



Source: Quintly, 2016

In total, there were more video posts than photo posts published by the thirty top brands on Facebook in the first half of 2016 as you can see in the pie chart below. This is also true when looking at each month of the first half of 2016 separately. The fact of there being more video posts relates to a general trend of brands having incorporated videos into their marketing strategy as one of the most engaging forms of content, thus benefitting from users experiencing the brand in a more exciting way than via a picture or simple text. Another major advantage is that brands can transmit so much more content with a video, and if this content is shared, the outgoing information is much more extensive. (Leoprechting 2016)

The overall interactions (including likes, shares, comments) remained stable at around 4,900 interactions per month per post, with a slight drop in March. A little side note: Interactions do not include Facebook Reactions (Like, Love, Haha, Wow, Sad and Angry). When looking at this interaction count, keep in mind that it is the average over all the profiles. So when MTV posts an average of 67 times a day, of course the amount of likes is much less than that on a Starbucks post that is one of 8 in 6 months. Still, in average, this is a pretty impressive number – imagine 5,000 people in one place! There was a slight upturn in shares of posts and comments. However, if you look at this graph, it shows that in relation to a total of around 5,000 interactions, a change of 100 is not that significant. On the other hand, shares and comments are somewhat more valuable interactions, since they require a higher status of activity than just pressing a like-button. Keeping this in mind, an average growth of around 100 in shares and comments is a steady development. (Leoprechting 2016)

5. Discussion

To sum things up, Facebook is a great platform for brands to be active on – with the highest amount of members (1.7 billion monthly active users in the second quarter of 2016) there is a giant audience, and the fan counts of the brand profiles show they also actively express their sympathy and interest in a brand. The interaction shows how much the everyday user likes to be in direct contact with a brand's representatives. The high amount of user posts is an indicator for how much fans like to be involved. This also makes communication on Facebook a state-of-the-art form of customer support, with many comments and user posts including requests for assistance.

References

- Leoprechting, v.L., 2016. 30 biggest brands on Facebook analyzed in-depth. [online] Available at: <https://www.quintly.com/blog/2016/10/30-biggest-brands-on-facebook-analyzed-in-depth/>
- Felix, R., Rauschnabel, P.A., Hinsch, C., 2016). Elements of Strategic Social Media Marketing: A Holistic Framework. *Journal of Business Research*. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.05.001.
- Schivinski, B., Dąbrowski, D., 2016. The effect of social media communication on consumer perceptions of brands. *Journal of Marketing Communications*. 22 (2): 189–214.
- Zhang, M., Jansen, B. J., and Chowdhury, A., 2011. Influence of Business Engagement in Online Word-of-mouth Communication on Twitter: A Path Analysis. *Electronic Markets: The International Journal on Networked Business*. 21(3), 161-175.
- Assaad, W., Gomez, J. M., 2013. Social Network in marketing (Social Media Marketing) Opportunities and Risks. 2 (1). Retrieved 7 February 2013.
- D'Andrea, A., Fernando, F., Grifoni, P., 2012. SNeM2S: a Social Network Model for Marketing Strategies. *International journal of e-business development*. 2 (3): 103.
- Vermeren, I., 2015. Men vs. Women: Who Is More Active on Social Media? [online] Available at: <https://www.brandwatch.com/blog/men-vs-women-active-social-media/>
- Zephoria, 2016. The Top 20 Valuable Facebook Statistics – Updated November 2016. [online] Available at: <https://zephoria.com/top-15-valuable-facebook-statistics/>
- Bačík, R., Gavurová, B. a Fedorko, R., 2015. The analysis of the impact of selected marketing communication factors on the online consumer behavior. *Journal of applied economic sciences*, vol. 10, no. 7(37), online pp. 1-3., ISSN 239-5162.