Dissertation Report On

To study the behaviour of large companies on negative facebook comments

Submitted By:

AVINASH KUMAR MAURYA

Roll No: 2K13/MBA/19

Under The Guidance of:

Vikas Gupta

Assistant Professor

DELHI SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
Delhi Technological University
Bawana Road Delhi 110042

April -May 2015

<u>CERTIFICATE FROM THE INSTITUTE</u>

This is to certify that the Dissertation Report titled <u>To study the behavious of large companies on negative facebook comments</u>, is a bonafide work carried out by Mr. <u>Avinash Kumar Maurya</u> of MBA 2013-15 and submitted to Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University, Bawana Road, Delhi-42 in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of Masters of Business Administration.

Signature of Guide   Signature of Head (DSM)
Mr. Vikas Gupta   Prof. P. K. Suri

Place: Delhi

Date: May 2015

DECLARATION

I Avinash Kumar Maurya, student of MBA 2013-15 of Delhi School of
Management, Delhi Technological University, Bawana Road, Delhi-42 declare
that Summer Internship Report on To study the behavior of large companies on
the negative facebook comments submitted in partial fulfillment of Degree of
Masters of Business Administration is the original work conducted by me.

The information and data given in the report is authentic to the best of my
knowledge.

This Report is not being submitted to any other University for award of any
other Degree, Diploma and Fellowship

Name of the student: Avinash Kumar Maurya

Place: Delhi

Date: May 2015

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I thank to the God Almighty for showering his blessing at each stage of this project work.

I wish to extend my heart fully thanks to sir Vikas Gupta (Guide), Assistant Professor, Delhi School of Management for his friendly help and encouragement given to me.

I wish to extend my profound gratitude to Ms. Karishma, Research Scholar Delhi School of Management for her guidance and valuable suggestions throughout my internship. I express my sincere thanks to all faculties of DSM for their encouragement to complete the project work within stipulated time.

My hearty thanks to my friends and parents who were always there with support and encouragement.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have helped me in the completion of this humble effort.

PLACE: Delhi

DATE: May 2015   **Avinash Kumar Maurya**

<u>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</u>

Of ET 500 companies 2012, almost 80 percent use some form of social media to communicate with customers and other stakeholders. However, these media pose the risk of providing a forum for comments critical of corporate leadership, services or products. Most marketing specialists recommend that negative comments should be treated as opportunities to resolve potential business problems. This paper seeks to assess whether large companies adopt the recommended approach when reacting to negative comments.

When facebook was launched in February 2004, the website was intended as a communications forum for students enrolled at Harvard; the site was later expanded to include other universities. In fact, the term facebook is derived from publications, issued at many American colleges that display the names photographs of students attending an institution for the purpose of promoting social interaction. Following the site launch, the owner of the facebook commenced to implement a series of enhancements that altered the site's original scope. High school students were invited to join and the posting of photographs and videos were promoted. A live chat capability was added to the site. Eventually, corporations and other businesses were also recommended within the facebook community.

A recent survey indicates that as of January 2011, 84 percent of the 200 fastest growing private companies around the world maintain a facebook presence. Business participation with facebook and other social media sites is motivated primarily by the desire to utilize a global and popular marketing and recruitment channel that permits direct interaction with the clients and potential customers or employees. In addition, the marketing potential of facebook is enhanced by useful demographic data provided to corporate sponsors of facebook sites visitors, based on the visitor's age, gender, geographic location, interests, and other factors. Finally, facebook is an especially attractive medium for corporate marketing because businesses are permitted to develop application that links their facebook site to the

company's official web page. This facilitates the placement of orders and other transactions. For example, the official facebook site of amazon.com includes an app that allows visitos to write book reviews and submit them directly to the company's web page.

Interaction is made possible by the "wall", a component of the facebook page available for every registered individual and organisation. Corporations generally post five types of entries, or discussions threads, to their wall:

1. Direct marketing of products or services
2. Promotion of sponsored events
3. Surveys
4. Informational announcements
5. "Fun" postings, usually in the form of questions related to recent or upcoming events

In order to comment on these entries, individual must become a "fan" of the company's page; being a "fan" indicates that the commenter has clicked a button indicating that he or she likes the organisation's products or services, or has a favourable opinion of the sponsoring business. Many employees of the organisation chose to become fans of their employer's page.

Most companies also permit fans to initiate their own discussion threads that do not originate from the sponsor. Other fans or representatives of the company can post responses to these comments. Visitors to an organisation wall can select to see only those discussions initiated by the sponsors and its fans; some organisations do not allow initiation of discussion threads by fans.

Social media and public relations specialists have admonished corporate sponsors of facebook pages to analyse fan comments with considerable care. Although the individuals permitted to contribute to a company's wall are putative friends of the company, some persons become fans merely to post comments of a negative, or even highly derogatory, nature. In addition, legitimate fans may write comments that are critical of an organisation's products, services or employees. Social media specialist have attained near-consensus, concerning the most appropriate method of handling unfavourable comments: do not delete negative comments, rather attempt to respond to these remarks in as positive a manner as possible. Appropriate responses are intended to foster good public relations by assuring customers that their voices are being heard, their complaints are taken seriously, and

problems are being addressed. Unfavourable comments must not be ignored, because this clearly demonstrates a lack of corporate concern for the opinions of current or future clients.

The purpose of this study is to examine the facebook pages sponsored by major international organisations to determine if the advice proffered by social media professionals is actually being adopted. More specifically, the study investigates if large corporations are responding to the unfavourable comments posted on their facebook wall or if these businesses prefer to delete or ignore the critical voices.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Of ET 500 companies 2012, almost 80 percent use some form of social media to communicate with customers and other stakeholders. However, these media pose the risk of providing a forum for comments critical of corporate leadership, services or products. Most marketing specialists recommend that negative comments should be treated as opportunities to resolve potential business problems. This paper seeks to assess whether large companies adopt the recommended approach when reacting to negative comments.

When facebook was launched in February 2004, the website was intended as a communications forum for students enrolled at Harvard; the site was later expanded to include other universities. In fact, the term facebook is derived from publications, issued at many American colleges that display the names photographs of students attending an institution for the purpose of promoting social interaction. Following the site launch, the owner of the facebook commenced to implement a series of enhancements that altered the site's original scope. High school students were invited to join and the posting of photographs and videos were promoted. A live chat capability was added to the site. Eventually, corporations and other businesses were also recommended within the facebook community.

A recent survey indicates that as of January 2011, 84 percent of the 200 fastest growing private companies around the world maintain a facebook presence. Business participation with facebook and other social media sites is motivated primarily by the desire to utilize a global and popular marketing and recruitment channel that permits direct interaction with the clients and potential customers or employees. In addition, the marketing potential of facebook is enhanced by useful demographic data provided to corporate sponsors of facebook sites visitors, based on the visitor's age, gender, geographic location, interests, and other factors. Finally, facebook is an especially attractive medium for corporate marketing because

businesses are permitted to develop application that links their facebook site to the company's official web page. This facilitates the placement of orders and other transactions. For example, the official facebook site of amazon.com includes an app that allows visitos to write book reviews and submit them directly to the company's web page.

Interaction is made possible by the "wall", a component of the facebook page available for every registered individual and organisation. Corporations generally post five types of entries, or discussions threads, to their wall:

1. Direct marketing of products or services
2. Promotion of sponsored events
3. Surveys
4. Informational announcements
5. "Fun" postings, usually in the form of questions related to recent or upcoming events

In order to comment on these entries, individual must become a "fan" of the company's page; being a "fan" indicates that the commenter has clicked a button indicating that he or she likes the organisation's products or services, or has a favourable opinion of the sponsoring business. Many employees of the organisation chose to become fans of their employer's page.

Most companies also permit fans to initiate their own discussion threads that do not originate from the sponsor. Other fans or representatives of the company can post responses to these comments. Visitors to an organisation wall can select to see only those discussions initiated by the sponsors and its fans; some organisations do not allow initiation of discussion threads by fans.

Social media and public relations specialists have admonished corporate sponsors of facebook pages to analyse fan comments with considerable care. Although the individuals permitted to contribute to a company's wall are putative friends of the company, some persons become fans merely to post comments of a negative, or even highly derogatory, nature. In addition, legitimate fans may write comments that are critical of an organisation's products, services or employees. Social media specialist have attained near-consensus, concerning the most appropriate method of handling unfavourable comments: do not delete negative comments, rather attempt to respond to these remarks in as positive a manner as

possible. Appropriate responses are intended to foster good public relations by assuring customers that their voices are being heard, their complaints are taken seriously, and problems are being addressed. Unfavourable comments must not be ignored, because this clearly demonstrates a lack of corporate concern for the opinions of current or future clients.

The purpose of this study is to examine the facebook pages sponsored by major international organisations to determine if the advice proffered by social media professionals is actually being adopted. More specifically, the study investigates if large corporations are responding to the unfavourable comments posted on their facebook wall or if these businesses prefer to delete or ignore the critical voices.

1.2) Objectives of the study

A. To find the reaction of the large organizations to negative facebook comments.

B. To find whether they are indulging in deleting the negative facebook comments.

C. To observe their attitude in respond to the customer queries on their official facebook pages.

Evolution of Facebook

Dramatically changing the landscape of identity construction, Internet technology has mobilized people around the world to re-conceptualize their image. "We are moving from rooted identities based on place, and toward hybrid and flexible forms of identity" (Easthope, 2009).Where identity was once ascribed by family name and reputation, users now exert the utmost influence in shaping their virtual image to reflect both actual and ideal identities. Interpersonal interactions mold the construction and perceptions of one's offline and online identity. However, Whang and Chang (2010) believe, "the development of online relationships differs from offline relationships because of the features of the internet. As an example, physical attractiveness plays a crucial role in the development of offline relationships but not in that of cyber-relationships" (pg. 291). Social networking Websites (SNWs) provides a medium for users to express themselves beyond physical features and labels, to share experiences, discuss interests, and influence one another in a selective network. In addition, social networking Websites are not constrained by the same geographic boundaries as real life networks; allowing users to make and develop relationships with individuals of similar interests around the world. Lastly, SNWs provide an optimal format for users to keep a "personal narrative going" in which they "integrate events which happen in the external world, and sort them into an 'ongoing' story about the self" (Marsh, 2005). While impression management is not a new theme in social sciences research, the implications of constructing an omnipresent digital identity is one specific to the development of social networking Websites (SNWs). The first research on this topic alluded to identity in computer-mediated environments (CMEs). CMEs were the first to establish the trend of presenting an online identity to the public. "CMEs are virtual digital places that occupy

neither Facebook: Influence and Identity 3 space nor time" (Schau and Gilly, 2003). In CMEs, computer-savvy individuals create personal Websites which communicate their identity beyond 3D encounters. In recent years, SNWs have popularized the construction and presentation of personal identity online. Social networks provide a platform for communication and the extension of consumer influence. SNWs are "one of the fastest growing arenas of the World Wide Web" and Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn are currently among the most visited Websites in the United States of America (Trusov, Bucklin, Pauwels, 2009). This study extends prior theory developed on the topics of identity creation through personal web pages on CMEs. The widespread availability of the Internet, at school, work, airports, and mobile devices makes Facebook accessible almost everywhere and provides a more connected, interactive experience than CMEs. The Facebook user experience includes joining groups, becoming a fan, updating a personal status, and games (e.g. Farmville and Sorority Life). These features are accompanied by the basic social networking elements of posting information, communicating with other users, uploading pictures, writing notes (blogs), and sending event invitations, all of which contribute to a more interactive Facebook experience. Recent statistics (2010) provided by Facebook reveal 50 percent of their active users log-in everyday, and 35 million use the status feature to update their profiles daily (Hepburn, 2010). The fundamental differences between CMEs and SNWs create a new platform for identity construction online. Facebook and personal Websites differ in three key areas, interactivity, standardization, and usability. Regarding interactivity, personal Website users tend to log-in and update their information less frequently. In the context of Facebook, 60 million status updates are posted each day (Hepburn, 2010). In addition, communication with Website viewers is also limited in personal Websites (CMEs). In contrast, half of Facebook's active users log-in daily, instantaneously responding to "pokes," friend requests, status updates, and Facebook: Influence and Identity 4 comments. The uniform format of all Facebook profiles challenges users to be more expressive and strategic to distinguish their identity. Personal Websitesare unique by comparison; each personal Website is a reflection of the user's time, knowledge, and effort to enhance their site through graphics and various links. The last difference is ease of use. The technology acceptance model "posits that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use determine an individual's intention to use a system (Wade and Schneberger, 2006). The substantial learning curve associated with personal Websites makes them less common, as their use is restricted to more motivated or knowledgeable users. On the other hand, Young (2009) explains "that the interaction is not merely between individual and tool (computer that is) but rather a form of socialization that is

underpinned by one's conscious decision to create an online identity that is accessible to others." Therefore when a person has the social motivation to join a networking site they work to overcome learning curves to participate in a fulfilling social experience. The lower learning curve of Facebook allows users of all ages and skills to actively socialize and participate with a minimal time investment to use the site. Comparing contemporary SNWs and personal Websites, we see how Facebook has evolved and became a strong household presence with the development and availability of the Internet. In 1999, four million Americans posted personal Websites, and by 2001 this number slowly climbed to 11 million pages (Schau and Gilly, 2003). More recently, social networkers have been quicker to join Facebook, as the site increased their United States user base from 42 to 103 million in 2009 alone (Corbett, 2010). Thus Facebook is the ideal social networking site to use for a qualitative study that explores how most Americans construct their online identities. The ease of use of today's leading SNWs has resulted in millions of people using these sites to connect with others. As in other social situations, users construct and present their identity through the profile. Peluchette and Karl (2010) explain that "Facebook provides a profile

Facebook: Influence and Identity 5 template which prompts for different kinds of personal information (e.g., favorite quotations, political affiliation, favorite music and education), [and] users have considerable freedom to provide such information or not and to post any other information or pictures of their choice." As in personal Websites, Facebook participants use their creativity to define themselves through "digital collages using symbols and signs to represent and express their self concepts" (Schau and Gilly, 2003). The object of this study is to understand the process of how individuals define themselves, and what attributes of their identity they find most important to share with their network. Drawing upon the established theories of self-concept and social distance corollary, this research examines the routes users employ to identify themselves. Uncovering user selfperceptions and applying aspects of social comparison is an especially appropriate topic in the context of social networking. It is in this forum that users can obtain immediate feedback on their personal views, consumption, and thus their identity. Understanding how users construct identity in Facebook has implication for products, services, and advertising that is related to facebook.

The expansion of the internet and technologies to use it on the go has led to an expansion of new software and applications to connect with each other. The expansion of these technologies has led all of us to have a device that is connected to the internet and furthermore the world we live in. With this device, be it a smartphone or computer, we can easily communicate our thoughts and ideas with the world we live in. Just like with normal communication the thoughts that we share can be both of a positive distinction or a negative one.

When we are happy we want to share that with everyone so they know that. When we are upset or angry we want to direct this towards the people that we feel have done us wrong. Now with the help of public social platforms like Twitter and Facebook we can share this with not only our friends and family but also the public. Thanks to these platforms our voices have gotten stronger and it shows in the many public ways people now complain about our experiences. The dilemma with social media and companies is that it's now an important part of how a company markets itself to consumers and most consumers expect a company to be present on the major social mediums. For a company to be active on social media gives it a legitimacy that shows it knows trends, positive reactions with consumers and the company in question can market its way directly to consumers that like the product or service. This is a huge break for small companies without a large marketing budget. They can now reach out to potential customers at a fraction of the price that was needed a couple years ago to reach the exact same demographic. This should mean that small companies can quickly grow if they have a product or service that people will like because the public awareness of these products is heightened. There is of course two sides to the coin and being in the public spotlight brings with it some negative side effects. For a company to be so public and transparent means that negative feedback also will be public and transparent. Consumers that are unhappy with your product or service can now express that to the same large demographic that you, the company, use to push your products. This has led to a negative backlash in both sales and public opinion for these companies. The problem of negative public feedback is something I feel has not been discussed. Most of the research around this problem is how it affects the company in a positive light and therefore I decided to immerse myself in the negative side. It is a very important part of the discussion and it needs to be analyzed and the results shown for companies so they know that the grass isn't only greener on the social media side of marketing. I also want to analyze how the companies should combat this problem, especially if the negative feedback is fake and how companies should use social media as tools to

address this. The subject is ever growing and a big part of our daily lives which means there is always something important to be found in this research.

1.3) Background

In this chapter of the thesis I will be presenting the purpose of this essay, question for the case and the delimitation of the thesis. Also included in this part is overall information of different areas of information that the thesis touches on.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to find how companies use social media as tools to address negative feedback from rogue/consumers on Facebook. In what way are the tools used and is feedback met in a different way compared to other communication forms i.e. email and face to face discussions. Are there any interesting similarities or differences between the different forms of communication and the end result a customer receives?

Delimitation

The results in this research are based on feedback from a survey sent to marketing professionals at companies (Both big and small) that I expect to be active on Facebook and Twitter. Results are also based on qualitative interview with a social media strategist. It is important to note that his response do not give a definite answer for all companies that use social media as a marketing tool but the results of these data collection methods are based on the answers that were given. I have decided to focus on Facebook and Twitter because Google+ and Instagram are still quite new and not widely used by companies as of yet. I do believe Google+ has potential to grow into one of the bigger Social mediums but that is something we will find in time. I have come to this conclusion with help of Lindgren & Bandhold (2009) and their definition of trends. Trends are defined as "a product or service that creates a deeper change in the way we act and not a temporary whim of fashion. Lindgren & Bandhold, (2009)" They separate trends into two different types, of which we have safe trends and unsafe trends. Safe trends are trends that have a clear path, for example Facebook and Twitter. Unsafe trends are sporadic and have an uncertain future, for example Instagram and Google+. I feel the focus should be on mediums we know are going to be around for a while.

Social Media

Social media is a phrase used to describe a phenomenon of platforms created to ease the interaction of people in which they create share and exchange information and messages in a wide range of different communities and networks. To break it down even further "Media" is a form of communication. To make social media even more effective, these communities and networks use both mobile and web-based platforms for these social media services. Social media is a revolution to older techniques of communicating between each other, such as Twitter and Facebook. Social media can take many different forms including, online forums, blogs, social networks, videos, pictures and podcasts. In this thesis we will be focusing on social media network websites Facebook and Twitter, which are the largest social mediums at this moment in time. Businesses usually refer to social media as a form of (CGM) Consumers-Generated Media. This a common distinction of the trend and means that all definitions of social media is a blending of social interaction and technology for the creation of value by the user. Social media is different from the usual print and electronic media in the fact that it is very inexpensive for all types of users and makes it accessible to enable anyone to publish or read information.1 (WebTrends, 2012)

Facebook

Facebook is a social networking service that was launched in early 2004. It is currently owned and run by Facebook, Inc but was founded by Mark Zuckerberg. As of writing this, Facebook has over one billion active users and now more than half of its users are accessing the network via mobile devices. The website's membership was initially limited to students attending the university where is was founded, Harvard. It later on expanded to other schools and in the end opened up for everyone to use. To use the site users must register an account with Facebook after which they then are allowed to attach personal data to their profile, add friends and start sending messages. There is also a service called Groups which lets users join organized groups over a common interest or subject. Examples of groups are, workplace groups or groups of certain interest. For companies Facebook poses a huge potential to attract customers. Companies have two different ways to use Facebook as a marketing platform. The first is an advertising platform offered by Facebook where companies can pay to showcase commercials that are directed at users that might need that product. Through complicated algorithms Facebook analyzes what a user does and the person's interests, products that

would suit the user are shown to that person. These personalized commercials have revolutionized targeting specific demographics. Facebook has a second platform to offer company's exposure called "Pages" which was introduced in 2007. A company starts a Facebook Page which works as an internal website for the company on Facebook. Like pages look and behave much like a user's profile would except it is a company or a brand behind the profile. Owners of these pages can send updates to followers of the page which will appear on the users own Facebook news feed. Users can also discuss with the company publicly on the company's Facebook .

Twitter

Twitter is a social media networking service and micro-blogging platform which gives users the opportunity to read and send text based messages of up to a maximum of 140 characters. These messages are also known as "Tweets". It was created in early 2006 by internet entrepreneur Jack Dorsey and quickly gained traction with users online. As of writing this thesis Twitter estimates to have around 500 million active users generating 340 million tweets a day. Twitter has quickly become one of the ten most visited sites on the internet and can be compared to an internet version of SMS. To use the service you can both be a member or just a reader. To read tweets you are not forced to become a member but being a member makes it possible to follow people and the experience becomes a lot more comfortable. To send messages a user profile must be created and is filled in with personal information to complete the profile. Tweets are publicly visible by default but senders can restrict message delivery to just their followers. Users can tweet via the official Twitter website or a whole list of external applications which make use of the Twitter API. For companies and brands Twitter imposes a powerful tool to quickly send out news to people interested in the products or services you are offering. Thanks to Twitter a company can see how many people they are targeting by looking at the follower count. When a message is sent to these followers all of the messages arrive into the target users feed and hard to miss. This makes Twitter optimal if you want to channel users to a product or service. To make sure nobody writes in your name Twitter uses an authorized user logo for companies and other public figure so that other users know they are following the real person or company.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing scholars Schau and Gilly (2003) write that, "we may indeed be what we have self-presented, but we are also a great deal more". The research of this study explores the reasons why organizations indulge in deleting the negative comments from the consumers on their official business pages. Engaging in online identity construction allows users to define themselves by more than just their actual identity schemas, labels we place on ourselves (e.g. student, mother or husband). Instead, Facebook provides users the opportunity to share interests, ideas (blog), appealing images, and their identity amongst a public network. Users manage forums such as Facebook to produce their desired image by communicating through symbolic, digital stimuli. In what Schau and Gilly (2003) refer to as "authenticating acts or self-referential behaviors, users feel free to reveal their true self, and frequently multiple selves" online (386). In this manner, users select the best representations of themselves to strengthen the link between their actual and their ideal (desired) identity. Creating an online representation of oneself with linguistic content, imagery and brand associations, users consider their self-concept, "our mental conception of whom we are" (Hoyer and MacInnis, 2007). With their self-concept schema; users are prone to activate the ideal identity schema. This schema describes "how the identity we seek would be realized in its ideal form" (Hoyer and MacInnis, 2007). For users, these cognitive processes underlying self-concept schemas lay the foundation for the way Facebook users construct their identities. The social actions required for self-presentation are material-oriented and depend largely on individuals displaying signs, symbols, brands and practices to communicate a desired impression (Schau and Gilly, 2003). The deployment of the ideal identity schema causes users to select which consumption behaviors or labels best describe who they are, or desire to be. The social identity theory proposed by Hoyer and MacInnis offers that individuals "evaluate brands in terms of their consistency with our individual identities" (Hoyer and MacInnis, 2007). By this context, we extend Hoyer and MacInnis' theory to include the behavior and status associations linked to the brands, which consumers appeal to. In other words, while users may not make direct brand associations, their behaviors operate in a manner consistent with brands, labels and behaviors presented on their profiles. This behavior further substantiates a user's identity and may facilitate social acceptance in their (desired) network. The value of

being able to continuously update one's profile is highly impacted by the theory of social comparison, in which social networkers use one another as a means to assess their own identities. Zhang and Daughtery (2009) claim that the social networking experience is "a platform for users to compare against each other, and confirm or even enhance their selfidentity." Users are prone to use others as a yardstick to determine their social position, construct self-concepts, and acquire self-esteem, all the while making sense of themselves and their surroundings. The accessibility of networkers' photos, comment histories and videos provide a substantial amount of material to make judgments about others' identities. By processing the available signs and symbols, users themselves can become more critical of the image they project.

Situated Cognition

Young (2007) defines situated cognition as a process of enculturation by which "people adopt behaviors and belief systems of their social groups and eventually start acting in accordance with the norms." Employing the situated cognition theory to analyze how users construct and operate their profiles, we can assess the influence their network has on the creation of their identity and their subsequent behaviors. Facebook is driven by people relating to one another socially through group-oriented behaviors. By this means, users employ the "like" button to reinforce agreement, join groups to show comradery, and become fans to provide support.

Users joining social networking sites, such as Facebook, first conform to social phenomena by joining a heavily used site, and further conform to societal and group pressures as they operate profiles and target specific audiences with communications. The theory of situated cognition is prevalent in studies of both identity and group conformance. Whether offline or online, to become a member of a social network one must adhere to its pre-constructed social norms. "Identity is characterized by the tension between of how a person defines themselves as an individual and how they connect to others and social groups, in affiliative relationships" (Schau and Gilly, 2003). To alleviate this tension, users employ a degree of conformity to generate understanding and become recognized by their

intended audience or social group. Goffman (1959) asserts that the presentation of self is contextual, based on a specific setting and facing a definable and anticipated audience, through such; users operate profiles within the norms of Website and audience. The second concept of affiliated identity has been used to explain personal Website design. Associations built through networks are "important in situating the self within the social world and communicating identity to the intended audience" (Schau and Gilly, 2003). In this manner,

"objects provide a medium of linguistic communication, through which people articulate their relationship to materiality and communicate their places within the social world" (Schau and Gilly, 2003). By these means, consumers are driven to express themselves by their consumption-oriented behavior to relate to others in their network. Drawing on the previously discussed notion of ideal identity schema, people assess their compatibility and set the stage for social comparison by the objects they use to represent themselves in an online context.

METHODOLOGY

Between March 1st, 2015 and March 20th, 2015 I surveyed the official facebook pages of the 5 largest organizations in each of the following five industries:

1. FMCG
2. Banking
3. Automobile
4. Telecommunication
5. Real Estate

The sample population was derived from the ET 2012 listings. These five industries were selected because each serves a broad base of consumers and were likely to have the large numbers of facebook fans and wall comments.

For each organization, the following information was collected:

- Whether or not the company has an official facebook page. This information was derived from the "info" component of a facebook page associated with a business. The fact that a specific page is branded with an organization's logo was not adopted as the primary criterion for determining the existence of an official page. Of the 25 corporations examined for this study, 23 (92 percent) had official facebook presence.

- The number of positive and negative comments posted to each company's wall. "Negative" comments were defined as remarks that evince criticism of an organization's products, services, employees, or social practices. Negative feedback included disagreement with specific sponsor postings, anecdotes that reflected unfavorably upon the sponsor, sarcastic remarks directed to the sponsor postings and admonitions not to use the sponsors products or services. "Positive" comments were those remarks that were not clearly negative. That is, a positive comment was not necessarily promoting or praising the company's products, services, employees, or social practices: rather, the comments lacked by negative content. Comments that were neither negative nor positive – posting that offered no opinion of the sponsoring organizations – were not collected as relevant data. For those sites that permitted only company initiated discussions threads, comments posted on the first full page were

counted. For pages that allowed both company- and fan –initiated threads, all comments on the first four pages were counted. This methodology was adopted in order to more easily manage the data collection process: the number of comments posted to company – initiated discussion threads is considerably higher than postings to pages containing a mixture of a company and fan threads. A total 3000 comments were assessed during the course of this study.

- The percentage of positive and negative comments included within the sample for each organization.

- The percentage of negative comments to which responses were posted by the sponsoring company. Responses may have been posted by representatives of the organization, by fans, or combination of both.

3.1 Choice of data collection method

The goal is to create both a qualitative and quantitative results for the background of the thesis. I have used three different methods to collect information from what I feel is a good base for my results.

3.1.1 Interview

To collect data I have used a secondary from internet to gather qualitative data straight from a respondent that is educated in the subject. To find out how strategy is created and also how it is used in regard to negative feedback.

3.1.2 Data Collection

I have also done some personal data collection of how companies respond to negative feedback by following the discussions publicly on their social media pages. These data collection have been carried out during 7 days. During those days I have followed the companies' actions on their social media pages. Looking for posts containing both praise and critique towards the company and then how the company answered.

3.1.3 Survey

I have made use of a secondary internet survey to gather as much background and quantitative data as possible. The interview was completed after the surveys answers had been received to give me more background to be able to create more precise questions. The questions were predetermined before the interviews took place and they were not strictly limited towards a certain answer but instead built upon the interests of area of research.

6.2 Selection

I have decided to collect information from secondary social media official pages. The reason for this is that it gives clear picture to analyze how companies, like his own behave on social media. This gives me a view of how strategies are created and used. The survey went out to businesses in the same from all different types of areas and professions to give me a wide data collection.

DATA ANALYSIS

A. Censorship (deletion) of negative comments

The study revealed that, at a minimum, 50 percent of sampled corporations are likely to engage in the practice of deleting negative comments posted to official facebook pages.

It is difficult to obtain direct evidence of censorship, because this entails continual observation of a specific page and noting the absence of comments that were previously posted. During the course of the study, this occurred only once.

However two types of indirect evidence are available. First, many published posts refer to the names of individuals who have written unfavorable comments: careful review of the page indicates that no post from the named individual is now available. It is likely that the original posting was deleted by the sponsoring organization.

Second, five of the sampled pages contained only positive comments. Although it is conceivable that unfavorable postings were never submitted to these pages, this seems improbable. It is more likely that the sponsors have adopted a policy of deleting, or not permitting the posting of negative remarks. Some facebook participants such as the official page of the Ashok Leyland announced that negative comments will not be published.

Also, many page sponsors inform their fans that profane, obscene, or other objectionable material will not be published. In addition, one of the sampled sites announced that it would not permit the posting of content concerning customers service issues. These matters must be communicated to the corporation via a dedicated telephone line or email address. Another sampled page explicitly refuses to post comments that are not directly related to the main theme of the page. For example, remarks pertaining to poor service will not be published to a page whose purpose is to recruit employees. Thus, deletion of negative comments is an accepted practice within the facebook community and conditions of deletion are often carefully

explained by the sponsoring organizations. However, the high volume of censorship evinced by this study seems to indicate that unfavorable feedback may be occurring for other than those stated in published rules for posting.

B. Responses to negative comments

Of the corporations represented in this study, 60 responded to fewer than half of unfavorable remarks posted to their sites, three never responded to negative comments. Only two corporate sponsored sites, 8 percent of the total sample, responded to all the negative comments.

For those organizations that issued responses, not all feedback was provided by an official representative of the page sponsor. In many instances fans assumed the role of defender of the company's products, services, employees, or social practices. Because a large number of fans of corporate pages are also employees of the organization, it is conceivable that these defenders are also employees. In fact, responders occasionally identify themselves as the individual employed by the corporations.

The study revealed that a majority of negative comments were posted in response to explicit marketing efforts initiated by the sponsoring company. For example, a large FMCG received 2242 positive remarks and 20 negative comments in response to the promotion of a new line of eatables. This pattern was especially prevalent on facebook pages associated with large FMCG and major manufacturer of household and personal products.

Discussion threads initiated by the page sponsor, but not having an explicit marketing focus, elicited the largest number of positive responses. The majority of these responses were received as a result of fun postings.

Pages that allowed comments to be posted only to discussion threads initiated by the sponsoring company received fewer negative comments than those pages permitting fans to originate their own remarks.

Discussion

Strategy #1: Establish a written policy for blog comments.

Setting very clear boundaries with readers about which types of comments are appropriate, and how you'll handle them, can help prevent problematic behavior from happening in the first place. In addition, you can simply point to the comment policy on your blog if you get complaints for deleting a comment (for example).

Best-selling author Tim Ferriss has a comment policy on his **highly trafficked blog**. It reads:

"Comment Rules: Remember what Fonzie was like? Cool. That's how we're gonna be — cool. Critical is fine, but if you're rude, we'll delete your stuff. Please do not put your URL in the comment text and please use your PERSONAL name or initials and not your business name, as the latter comes off like spam. Have fun and thanks for adding to the conversation!"

Even the **Mayo Clinic**, the renowned medical center, has a comment policy for all of their blogs, letting commenters know that comments are reviewed before going live. It reads:

"We encourage your comments on Mayo Clinic's various blogs, and hope you will join the discussions. We can't respond to every comment, particularly those that deal with individual medical cases and issues. We review comments before they're posted, and those that are off-topic or clearly promoting a commercial product generally won't make the cut. We also expect a basic level of civility; disagreements are fine, but mutual respect is a must, and profanity or abusive language are out-of-bounds."

Strategy #2: Moderate comments.

Mayo Clinic isn't the only blog to moderate comments. In fact, if your site is hosted on WordPress (the most popular content management system and publishing platform), many comment moderation options are available.

The Settings Discussion SubPanel on your blog (located under Settings → Discussion) has multiple options.

Comments can be turned off for individual articles (or all of them). You can require users to fill out their name and email address before commenting, hold comments in moderation before they appear (either at all times or if the author hasn't posted a previously approved comment), and even automatically place comments in the moderation queue if they have specific words, names, email addresses or IP addresses. You can also blacklist specific IP addresses.

Strategy #3: Ignore hostile comments, but respond to legitimate concerns—in private, if possible.

Whether you decide to delete comments or not, UIC professor of communication Jones recommends ignoring trolls to the best of your ability. "If it's something that doesn't seem legitimate, that's very vitriolic, very angry, it's probably best to just ignore it," he says. Responding to legitimate concerns, however, is a good idea so some discretion is needed.

"It depends on the type of post or comment that you're looking at. If it seems legitimate, if there's a complaint that can be addressed in some way, a good rule of thumb is to address it and stick to the topic and keep it short. So if someone's complaining about a product or service, you can say, 'I'm sorry to hear that. Can we help in some way remedy this? Thanks for your comment," and that's it. Or ask them to message you directly, to try to keep it from becoming a dialogue that you're constantly engaging in."

Strategy #4: Respond to* everyone *privately.

This strategy is not for the faint of heart. Andrew Warner, founder of the website **Mixergy**, would seek out individuals who didn't care for the interviews of entrepreneurs he released on his site. He even went beyond comments on his own site and would contact people speaking about him on outside forums.

"At the beginning, I would go to every single person on Hacker News who put me down and I would look up his or her contact information and call them up," he recalls. "I'd say, 'I just really want to learn, I really respect your opinion, I see that you don't like my interviewing style. I need to get better here. Could you just tell me what it is that you don't like about it?'"

While he didn't implement all the feedback he received, some of it was incredibly useful. "The attitude of 'I see you're watching me and I want to get better, what can I do to get better' really disarms people. They respect the effort. Maybe they give you useful information, maybe they shut up and maybe they continue, which is the worst case, but if they do continue, they were going to continue anyway," he says.

The study reveals that advice proffered by social media and public relations professionals is largely unheeded by major corporations sponsoring facebook pages.

Nearly half the sampled pages evinced evidence of censoring unfavorable comments. Further, a significant majority (60 percent) of the sponsoring organizations responded to few than half of the negative postings. Of the corporations representing Banking, FMCG, Telecommunications, Real estate, Automobile only eight responded any negative comments. These companies did not, apparently, envision responses as opportunities to enhance customer service or satisfaction.

Partial explanation or poor response rate is provided, ironically by the social media specialist who recommended the practice of responding to unfavorable feedback. These specialist notes that certain comments are posted by individuals (designated as haters or trolls) whose comments do not invite genuine discussion between the poster and the sponsoring organization. For example, the remark "you suck" is not necessarily intended to resolve a specific issue or to promote constructive interaction with the company. Thus, responding to such comments serves no useful purpose. However, based on an examination of more than 5000 comments, the study could identify only a very low number of comments initiated by trolls. (Perhaps these were censored by corporate sponsors, prior to posting on facebook.) Thus it seems unlikely that three-fifths of the sampled corporations have low response rates because most of the comments posted to their pages originated from "haters".

Public relations professionals also note that organizations with a social media presence may neglect to respond to unfavorable feedback for fear that the response will further incite fans and result in an ever- expanding thread of unpleasant communications. In 2009, Honda experienced this potential danger. One fan posted the following comment to Honda's facebook page dedicated to discussion of a specific product, the Accord Crosstour:

If I had the cash, I'd buy one of the most fully optioned examples, pay for a day's worth of insurance and take it straight to a crusher. I wonder if Fed-Ex can handle a crate that heavy addressed to Honda HQ.

Soon, Honda posted the following response:

Many of you don't like the styling: it may not be for everyone. Our research suggests that the styling does test well among people shopping for crossover.

A fan quickly replied:

The styling might not be for everyone? Who does like it? Maybe Flintstones cartoon fans, because the front looks like Dino.

Honda continued to respond:

There are more photos on the way. Maybe it's like a bad yearbook photo or something, and we think the new photos will clear things up.

Honda's responses seem to have halted the barrage of negative comments. Rather than ignoring the irritated fans, Honda chose to recognize the unfavorable remarks and address them in a calming manner.

However, Unlike Honda, it seems that the majority of sampled corporations is uncomfortable with negative fan postings and has not developed a strategy for dealing with these challenges.

The study indicates that companies seeking to avoid a high volume of negative comments should consider mixing explicit marketing discussions together with fun threads that lack a marketing focus. Corporations with large number of positive responses- such as ITC, HUL & ICICI bank- have adopted this strategy. This finding is consistent with the advice offered by social media and public relations professionals, who admonished companies to avoid ham-handed and traditional sales tactics when engaging with facebook fans.

Of course the possibility of incorporating fun threads into the facebook wall may be limited by the industry of the sponsoring company. However, many organizations have resolved this problem by hosting pages dedicated, not solely to the company and its products or services but to a company sponsored event.

The study also concludes that companies that permit fans to comment only upon discussion threads initiated by the sponsoring organization elicit less negative feedback than those pages that permit fan-initiated threads. Although the majority of sampled pages permitted any fan to commence a discussion thread, establishing an environment that encouraged sharing and open communications, these pages exhibited a considerably higher level of a fan discontent than those pages that did not allow fan initiated discussions. However it is conceivable that organizations which do not permit fan initiated threads are also exerting greater control over all feedback receive from fans; these organizations may also carefully scrutinize fan feedback to ensure that few negative comments are posted. Thus, these carefully monitored sites appear to elicit only a low number of unfavorable comments.

Social media such as facebook, present an opportunity for businesses to engage in real time conversation with customers, and these conversations can be witnessed by millions of current and potential customers worldwide. However the censoring of unfavorable comments and the refusal to respond to published negative feedback do not promote conversation. Unfortunately, it seems that many large organizations, as represented by the sample population of this study, have not adopted strategies that translate negative comments into useful opportunities for communication.

Implications for future research

Social media represent a rich source for future research focusing upon the rhetorical dimension of online interaction. For example although certain comments may be generally classified as negative, these postings actually represent a broad diversity of types. Some are intended as sarcasm, other as direct criticism of a specific product or service, and yet others as attacks upon an organizations political or social involvement. In addition, the tone of unfavorable postings reflects a wide spectrum: profanity, reasoned analysis, dogmatic pronouncements and humor are all represented. Careful analysis of the type of comments and their tone may reveal identifiable patterns of responses elicited from corporate sponsors. For example, are companies more likely to respond to reason, respectful comments, than to emotional harangues? Will a series of sarcastic postings elicit a response from a targeted corporation?

In addition, further research is needed to determine if negative comments contribute to the sense of community experienced at a specific site. It is conceivable that certain corporate sponsors do not discourage unfavorable feedback, because diversity of opinion enlivens discussion and promotes a higher volume of fan participation. Such conversation may increase the credibility, or at least the entertainment value, of the site.

The ethical implication of using employees as respondent to negative comments deserves further study, especially when employees do not clearly identify their relationship to the sponsoring organization. Employee postings may offer legitimate defenses of an employer's reputation, services, or products: however. If these postings are published as the opinions of fans who masquerade as having no personal involvement with the company, then the integrity of the communication process is called into questions.

The tendency of corporations representing specific industries-including banking, FMCG and automobile- to ignore unfavorable feedback deserves further investigation. What factors, for example, dissatisfied or irritable customers? Similarly, why has the telecommunication sector developed a reverse strategy, resulting in significantly higher rates of response to negative comments?

Useful research may also be conducted with sample populations other than major corporations. For instance, the facebook sites of small businesses or companies located in a limited geographic area may be examined to determine the nature of unfavorable feedback and the frequency of response. Results of this research may differ considerably from the findings of the study, which focuses upon major international corporations.

Appendix

References

ITC Ltd. (2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/itc-ltd/stocks/companyid-13554.cms

Hindustan Unilever (2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/itc-ltd/stocks/companyid-13554.cms

Nestle India Ltd. (2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/nestle-india-ltd/stocks/companyid-13330.cms

Godrej Industries Ltd. (2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/godrej-industries-ltd/stocks/companyid-11764.cms

Britannia Industries Ltd. (2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/britannia-industries-ltd/stocks/companyid-13934.cms

State Bank of India (2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/state-bank-of-india/stocks/companyid-11984.cms

ICICI Bank (2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/icici-bank-ltd/stocks/companyid-9194.cms

Punjab National Bank (2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/punjab-national-bank/stocks/companyid-11585.cms

Bank of Baroda (2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/bank-of-baroda/stocks/companyid-12040.cms

Canara Bank (2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/canara-bank/stocks/companyid-9218.cms

Bharti Airtel Ltd. (2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/bharti-airtel-ltd/stocks/companyid-2718.cms

Reliance Communications Ltd. (2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/reliance-communications-ltd/stocks/companyid-15279.cms

Idea Cellular Ltd'(2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/idea-cellular-ltd/stocks/companyid-3154.cms

Tata Communications Ltd.(2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/tata-communications-ltd/stocks/companyid-11992.cms

Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd. (2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/mahanagar-telephone-nigam-ltd/stocks/companyid-12462.cms

Maruti Suzuki India Ltd.(2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/maruti-suzuki-india-ltd/stocks/companyid-11890.cms

Hero Motorcorp Ltd.(2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/hero-motocorp-ltd/stocks/companyid-13636.cms

Bajaj Auto Ltd.(2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/bajaj-auto-ltd/stocks/companyid-21430.cms

Ashok Leyland Ltd. (2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/ashok-leyland-ltd/stocks/companyid-14041.cms

Escorts Ltd.(2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/escorts-ltd/stocks/companyid-13761.cms

Jaiprakash Associates Ltd. (2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/jaiprakash-associates-ltd/stocks/companyid-1481.cms

Punj Lyod Ltd.(2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/punj-lloyd-ltd/stocks/companyid-18609.cms

DLF Ltd. (2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/dlf-ltd/stocks/companyid-12393.cms

Hindustan construction Ltd.(2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/hindustan-construction-company-ltd/stocks/companyid-13654.cms

NCC Ltd. (2012)

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/nagarjuna-construction-co-ltd/stocks/companyid-11234.cms

Audience: Marketing in the Age of Subscribers, Fans, and Followers (Jeff Rohrs)

Social Media ROI (Olivier Blanchard)

Permission Marketing (Seth Godin)

Contagious: Why Things Catch On (Jonah Berger)