

# Chapter 1

## The Dynamics of Social Media Marketing Content and Customer Retention

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### ABSTRACT

*Social media platforms are the key tools to facilitate online engagement; however, to stimulate a discussion, the content published on the platforms is significant as it must appeal to different consumers. The quality of the content and platform type is key to successful engagement. Maintaining positive relationships with consumers is a vital activity for many brands in social media. Trust, satisfaction, fairness, and mutual dependency are key factors to retaining customers. Moreover, positive brand attitudes and higher purchase intentions were found to be linked to positive evaluations of companies' social media postings. To maintain value, firms use social media platforms that facilitate consumer-to-consumer as well as consumer-to-business engagement. Drawing from social influence theory, this chapter explores how social media marketing content (SMMC) impacts customer retention.*

### INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Maintaining positive relationships with consumers is a vital activity for many brands in social media. Trust, satisfaction, fairness and mutual dependency are key factors to retaining customers (Nguyen & Mutum, 2012; Koufaris & Hampton-Sosa, 2004; Martínez & del Bosque, 2013). Moreover, positive brand attitudes and higher purchase intentions were found to be linked to positive evaluations of companies' social media postings (Beukeboom, Kerkhof, & de Vries, 2015). To maintain value, firms use social media platforms that facilitate consumer-to-consumer as well as consumer-to-business engagement. However, there is no general classification of what counts as engagement (Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan, 2010) due to the many types of social media platforms and usage purposes.

Online engagement does not solely depend on the medium of technology; Shin's (2018) study on virtual reality environments, described as a type of social media platform (Ngai, Moon, Lam, Chin,

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& Tao, 2015), concluded that technical quality does not directly impact value or experience. For VR, content that encourages active conversation or community gaming is what motivates human-media interaction and facilitates users' online experience. Harrigan, Soutar, Choudhury & Lowe (2015) agree, stating that customer relationship orientation is needed to drive social media technology. Additionally, the interpersonal communication among users, including communication with the brand, can impact how content is perceived by the majority of observers. Lu, Fan, & Zhou (2016) propose that the presence of social media increases the consumers' trust. This means that exposure to socially shared posts by active sharers can increase the likelihood of purchase intentions, because trust can be established if material content is shared by a mass network or by central social networks.

Various scholars have developed taxonomies of social media in specific areas of study (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011; Tafesse & Wien, 2017; Vilnai-Yavetz & Levina, 2018). Kietzmann *et al.* (2011) developed the Honeycomb social media model, which focuses on addressing seven functional building blocks: identity, conversation, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation and groups. The model provides guidance on how companies can respond to various audience needs with the social media platforms they use. Kietzmann *et al.* (2011) affirm that their framework is useful for analysis of the increasing number of social media platforms and their various capabilities towards specific user communities. However, the model views the various social media platforms subjectively and focuses on the technology value. The model does not consider the possible social influence that induces online users to engage. Therefore it is important to understand social media content from the perspective of consumers and the social influence behind the content that observers acknowledge to impact their decision-making.

Tafesse & Wien (2017) developed a framework that categorises different social media posts for different online activities from the perspective of customer management and message strategy. The model details various categories of post content and their purpose, providing guidance on maintaining online customer interactions. However, the types of post content categorised in the study were based on a single-message strategy. Customers have multiple interests and reasons for using social media, therefore marketers would likely be expected to generate post content with more than one message strategy. An issue in generating content for brands is posting content that encourages consumers to share or interact based on the content that also benefits the firm.

Akpinar & Berger's (2017) study addresses what type of content is effective and valuable. Their study's findings implied that content that evokes emotion impacts consumers' decision to share or interact. However, Akpinar & Berger (2017) implied that whether the content is emotionally or informatively appealing will depend on the purpose of attracting the consumer. This is supported by Pressgrove, McKeever & Jang (2018) who investigated the likelihood of content being shared on Twitter. Pressgrove *et al.* (2018) concluded that while positive emotions can evoke content sharing, if it does not have a practical significance to the observer, the likelihood of content sharing reduces. Yet unlike Akpinar & Berger's (2017) study, Pressgrove *et al.* (2018) do not specify what content is categorised as informative information or an emotional content, or consider the various engagement purposes. Individuals are likely to use social media platforms for various reasons, so responses will vary.

The studies of Vilnai-Yavetz & Levina (2018) and Fu, Wu & Cho (2017) were undertaken from the perspective of the non-financial motives for sharing e-business content. Both found that self-expression, community connection and belonging were key motivations. It is important for firms to understand how they can develop their social media strategies, by understanding how online consumers access content and what influences them to become interactive based on firm-generated content. However, the study

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