

Opinion Piece

Why Facebook Reactions are good news for evaluating social media campaigns.

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Abstract

Evaluating any aspect of a marketing communications campaign is challenging for marketers, especially when the campaign includes social media. In the past, social media and paid social activity such as Facebook has been measured with metrics such as clicks, impressions, likes, comments and fans. While these measurements provide an insight into the numbers of viewers exposed to content and some indication of how well the content is 'liked', they are less efficient at providing an understanding about how consumers engage with the content. In particular, it is difficult to measure how consumers respond emotionally to messages and despite various tools and technologies, true measurement of audience sentiment is difficult to measure. The trial of Facebook Reactions provides an opportunity for marketers to measure such emotional engagement. This paper explores how this new addition could help marketers measure social media in the future.

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Introduction: Why do we need to evaluate?

Evaluation is an important part of any marketing communications campaign. It allows brands to measure the effectiveness of messages, review if the optimal channels have been used and assess if the mix has been right. It also provides an answer to the ultimate question, "What was the return on investment?" Such information not only allows marketers to review past campaign performance but also provides valuable insight for future campaign planning and investment.

Measuring social media: From behavioural metrics to understanding emotional responses.

Existing techniques for measuring social media have been criticised in the past by bodies such as the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) for their 'vanity measures' and the measurement of 'fake' followers leading to lengthy debates regarding 'the monetary value of the like'. Despite this, metrics such as fans and new fans, Retweets, reach (paid and organic), shares and likes are still central measures of social media success. While such measures are useful to understand how consumers behave, they provide less insight into how consumers feel.

In addition, while comments or posts allow some opportunity to evaluate reactions to communications the need to understand how consumers engage with social media remains.

In particular, evaluating how consumers respond emotionally to social media campaigns is important if marketers are to fully understand the impact of their campaigns. Facebook Reactions allow marketers to gain a better measurement of consumers' emotional response to content.

Facebook Reactions

Facebook Reactions which are currently being piloted in Ireland and Spain provide consumers with the opportunity to respond to consumers' news feed items by selecting one of six new emojis; Love, Haha, Yay, Wow, Sad, and Angry. This

provides marketers with an opportunity to measure how consumers emotionally respond to content².

By inviting consumers to indicate how the content makes them feel emotionally in one simple click, the impact can be measured within six emotional categories¹:

- “Love” Love
- “Haha” Amusement
- “Yay” Happiness
- “Wow” Surprise
- “Sad” Sadness
- “Angry” Anger

This allows for more precise measurement of engagement than has previously been possible. In the past metrics have included measures such as % increase in desirable content or % decrease in undesirable content. Providing consumers with a way to respond with more discreet measures will provide more precise data for evaluation. For example possible metrics in the future could include:

- % increase in Love replies
- % increase in Haha replies
- % increase in Yay replies
- % increase in Wow replies
- % decrease in Sad replies
- % decrease in Angry replies

As well as quantitative measures such as the increase or decrease of items, Facebook Reactions will enable emotional preferences to be evaluated. This will provide marketers with a better understanding of how different emotions influence impact. Furthermore, layering existing Facebook data will enable marketers to see how content behaved within different demographics. I.e. the majority of users that reacted with ‘anger’ were 18-25 / from a particular city / married etc. which will eventually enable content creators to tailor messaging to specific audience segments.

Conclusion:

Facebook Reactions provide an opportunity for marketers to gain a better understanding of how consumers engage emotionally with social media content. With the potential for more precise measurement of emotional response, these metrics will allow brands to consider new ways to measure campaign effectiveness in the future. This will necessitate that marketers will need to consider the emotional objectives of marketing communications campaigns.

References

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