

AN EMPIRICAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC STUDY OF ENGAGEMENT ON SOCIAL NETWORKS

AZEVEDO, Livyson Saymon Leão¹

¹Tech Manager, Universidade de São Paulo — USP

ABSTRACT

This article addresses how companies are shaping their businesses to meet the needs of surviving in an increasingly technological market, increasing their participation in this global computer network conglomerate, producing tangible and impactful content that, in the end and with this objective, engages the participation of these impacted users. Social networks are completely linked to computer science, as they were born from technological advances provided by the development of more robust software, in this way, the way society interacts and is modified by them, also becomes one of the social responsibilities of the area. Starting from a chronological narrative that presents the history of social networks in an informed way, it is possible to identify in the text the main networks used and the way that their users adhere to in their routine. There is a legitimate concern to bring the reader into a corporate context without disconnecting the institutions of ordinary people, making a comparison between the impacts of social networks on corporate strategies, as well as on their customers. The text addresses the socioeconomic issue that affects internet users, their demographic differences and the sense of community, as it brings to debate the influence that the content produced by these brands bring to the target audience. And as a central objective, the text also reports techniques used to generate greater engagement that both companies around the world have been looking for and investing in. We mainly discussed the concept of “engagement”. For it, we used the bibliographic review and the empirical study on the topic.

Keywords

Engagement; Internet Content; Internet Users; Social Sciences; User Experience

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of social networks is to connect people you know or not, with similar ideals. The use of the internet made the development of these tools a lot easier, due to the fact that it crossed geographical limits. Social networks have always been present in man's life if we take into account that he is a social being and that he has always lived in groups of acquaintances.

The first computerized social network was created in 1997, but SixDegrees was not financially successful. In 2000, new bets were placed on the market, but were not successful. The one that most resembled the concept of social network used by today's society was Friendster, created in 2002, one of the pioneers in the segment, which obtained numerous users due to the fact that it had innovative features for the time. However, the chain grew so much that it ended up not meeting all the demand. Even with all the problems that existed with the social networks of the time, people and organizations continued to believe in the future of relationship media, initiating a process of studies and significant investments for the development of new tools.

According to data extracted from Statista (2020), these relationship tools are responsible for

83% of internet traffic. About 4.57 billion people have access to the internet, representing 59.35% of the world population, with 903.59 million internet users in China alone and 454 million Internet users in Latin America. Brazil has more than 150 million active users, an interesting market for the institutions that maintain social networks. Among the ten most accessed sites in Brazil, at least five are considered social networks. Brazil is the fifth country with the largest number of active users on the internet, behind only China, India, the United States and Indonesia. Currently, systems like Facebook, with 2.603 billion active users, Youtube and WhatsApp with 2 billion and Instagram with 1 billion, are successful among different types of audiences, still according to Statista (2020).

The man is inserted in social groups, which are built during the whole trajectory of his life: in the family, school, in the community he inhabits, in the work environment, in short, in the relationships he develops. The need to relate and ensure contacts with these groups has ceased to be limited, thanks to the existence of relationship media, since distance is no longer an impediment. It is well known that the media have made an enormous contribution to the development of man.

Man is a social being, and for this reason, he feels the need to live in community. Through the advancement of communication, man aims to meet his needs. Each group of users is interested in different subjects, such as fashion, sports, the job market, entertainment, politics, education, health, among others. Based on this,

organizations identify which customers are interesting for their business, using advertising for that purpose. According to Monteiro (2010), The migration to digital and the dissemination of contexts to the online world have made man and institutions begin to shape the way they communicate.

An important factor is the rapid feedback that we have with social networks, an intelligent view, which leads the speaker to the interlocutors' conception of what was posted. A direct communication, which leads the author to have ideas and concepts about what his followers like or dislike in his social network, according to Duarte et al (2008).

Connected with the present and aiming for the future within the world wide web, companies have adopted operational strategies that aim to attract a greater number of active users on their pages on the most varied social networks. The area responsible for generating this engagement on social networks is Digital Marketing, which has specialists responsible for planning, managing and monitoring the growth of brands among the digital public.

In view of this new scenario in the use of digital media, this article aims to analyze through an empirical study based on experience and digital research, as well as through bibliographic research, which effective strategies have been leading companies to promote constant content in social networks, making them active and well-liked by this new audience, which therefore helps to increase your revenues.

According to Descartes (2011), the objective of the methodology is to arrive at the answer for the presented doubt, dividing the problem in several parts, thus serving as the basis for the research project. For an in-depth study of the subject addressed, bibliographic and documentary research. Documentary research has its similarities to bibliographic research. The big difference is that the first is focused on approaches to contributions from authors on certain subjects, the sources are constituted of materials printed materials found in libraries, the second form of various information that have not yet received an analytical treatment, where the sources are diversified and dispersed.

Analyzes of users of social networks were carried out, through their public profiles on the internet. Everything that was posted (photos, videos and texts) by these users were evaluated to define what type of profile they fit into, what intentions of the posts and what is the relationship of these posts with advertising. Feedbacks were also evaluated in order to address gaps in Communication. Users were made up of users from the most diverse social networks, such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, among others. The research was carried out throughout the construction period of the project.

2 SENSE OF COMMUNITY NETWORK

Engagement comes from the verb engage, which, in turn, comes from the French, engager, which means commitment, and in the broader context, instigate an individual to something. In Marketing, the word is widely used to define

professionals who are entirely committed to some delivery or advertising scope. It has also become very popular with young people to refer to citizens involved in projects or social causes. The first dated quote comes from 1966, when an Armed Forces decree took over the term when referring to young people who joined the Military Corporation. However, in recent years, with the advent of social networks, the term has come to be used by technology professionals when referring to users' adherence to their digital platforms according to Junior, Pereira e Correira-Neto (2013).

The emerging communication that integrates and brings people and brands together has made large companies adopt global growth actions within social networks, either through the production of relevant content or by providing some type of value to their customers, such as, for example, promotions. And this communication, in order to establish loyalty to it, there is a need for continuous updating, which is done in a consistent and active way. According to Rocha (2020), the support of new technologies compelled even the most traditional sectors to adopt more digital guidelines:

Social media can be studied from this perspective, that is, as an emerging form of communication to which traditional media converge, in a technologically supported environment, where different people, media, organizations and platforms meet, having as the most important element the content, regardless of media support. Social media consists of a process of producing information in continuous flow, in which technology, services, content, platforms and advertising are in an integrating process of digital content in constant transmutation and where users actively consume and produce information,

products and services. (ROCHA, 2020, p. 8).

Sociology itself is based on the premise that an individual can only be studied in his relationship with others, since that is the only way to understand that citizen. This explanation is based on empirical experiences, because, throughout human history, man has always been a social being who lived in groups and fought for the preservation of his group. Even in times when access to the internet was not popular, man lived in collectivity or under organized systems that supported collectivism and the sharing of responsibilities and obligations. According to Ramos (2014), Aristotle argued that man is a social being because he is an animal that needs other members of the species.

The internet has completely changed human identity, but it has not made it lose its community link. Individual interests become public and unite people who have similar interests, creating, even if geographically distant, new groups of society. Digital networks have created interconnections that link complex bonds, which instigate sociability, information and communication.

As with people, so with companies. Users are interested in brands that have some link with their consumption or that, through posts, arouse interest in them. Engagement within these networks is completely related to the emotional bond that is created in this process of cyber interaction. Izard (1991) argues that any type of engagement will only be possible if the user has some kind of emotional bond “[...] It is important to be aware that emotions constitute our primary motivational system”.

Although many studies are focused on technology, it is necessary to understand that the social changes caused by the use of technology are not directly linked to the technology itself, but rather, in the way we are connected to it. Many companies have been rapidly investing in fomenting debates on how to make their brands grow on networks, become subjects between these connections and become actors present in the lives of their users. The market is competitive, and those who are going digitally, choose to lose customers.

Even the form of power was changed with the arrival of social networks. For many years, the traditional media, TV, radio and newspaper, had a great monopoly of spaces for advertising, where only the most powerful could pay for these advertising areas. The most powerful continue to have greater advertising power, but, on networks, advertising space has become more accessible, allowing ordinary users and small businesses alike to expose their businesses, and in many cases, compete with large corporations for a slice of market. According to Ullmann (2010), buying advertising spaces is no longer synonymous with influence:

[...] Those who had a lot of money used to have more influence. When you had money, you could buy more advertising, which was more influential before the advent of the internet, because your message could reach a wider audience than word of mouth. Money still has a lot of influence and you can buy your way to the general public, but that does not guarantee influence. (ULLMANN, 2010, p. 173).

3 INFLUENCE

Social influence has always been a prominent factor in the history of civilization, just find the great deeds and the biography of great leaders to understand how such a characteristic was so decisive in different times and social contexts. Within corporate contexts, the results achieved are completely linked to the power of influence that corporate objectives have on the work of employees. In social networks, this dynamic is the same, more influential brands consequently have higher financial revenues resulting from the sale of products or the provision of services to their influencers.

The advancement of technologies implied an expansion in the social environment and made it even more difficult to map decisions by digital influence. Goals, dreams and consumer desires change at an even faster rate, and advertising needs to be constantly aligned with the current issue. On the other hand, influenced people tend not to notice the intervention of this advertising in their decisions. According to Paraiso (2011), companies that explore and develop strategies to get closer to their audience through social networks have an 18% growth in revenue.

Customer satisfaction is something that has led many technology companies to adopt a specialized area in quality, which is responsible for ensuring that the product delivered, in addition to following good market practices, also meets the needs of customers. One way of ensuring this alignment of expectations is by listening to customers through these technological channels.

During the fast growth of social media, the ways companies usually use in their

marketing are changed; social networks became a great approach for companies to improve their communication with customers. The wide usage of social networking sites and tools by individuals makes companies want to think carefully on how they can benefit from such usage in rebuilding their relationship with customers and increasing their engagement level. (RABAYAH et al, 2017, p. 5).

A phenomenon that brings value to brands is the "friends and family effect", a traditional and age-old path, where everyone in your network — family, friends, neighbors, co-workers etc. — is influenced by the use of such products. Brand and where advertising for the products of that brand, carried out organically — word of mouth — ends up being a cheap, tangible and extremely effective resource for brands. Within the network, this same dynamic can be realized, only, with a much greater coverage and without geographical limitations.

Social influence and word of mouth. People like to share stories, news and information with those around them. We talked to our friends about great vacation destinations, we talked to our neighbors about good deals, and we gossiped with coworkers about possible layoffs. We write online reviews about movies, share rumors on Facebook and tweet about recipes we've just tried. People share more than 16,000 words a day and there are more than 100 million conversations about brands every hour. (BERGER, 2013, p. 5).

Obviously, depending on the area of activity, companies can find a high number of competitors, and this makes the job of adding value to the brand even more difficult. But there are, of course, success stories in related scenarios in the market. Some research, marketing and

psychology techniques can help with this engagement process.

Whether to meet the needs of individuals or legal entities, the digital media used for these purposes end up being the biggest beneficiaries, as they have their products, social networks, as this means of transactions. The secret of these media was to ensure that this diverse audience was always engaged within their networks.

4 ENGAGEMENT

The metric analyzed to address the success of user engagement will depend on each social network, given that each one proposes to deliver a specific type of product. Instagram, for example, has content that promotes engagement with photos and videos, instigating the delivery of features that encourage users to have their personal routine exposed. Facebook and Twitter, for example, end up investing in information advertising and socio-political debates. LinkedIn, on the other hand, almost alone, divides in the disclosure of professional projects. Regardless of their niche, the major digital media understood that the most effective way to keep the public engaged is to provide an open platform for companies and individuals to produce the content that, consequently, reaches different non-segmented audiences.

Berger (2013) reinforces that depending on the adopted social network, both the advertising plan and the posted content, as well as the engagement indicator to measure adherence to that content, need to be different too "People share practically valuable information to help

other people Whether saving a friend's time or making sure a colleague spends a few dollars the next time he goes to the supermarket ...".

With the immersion in the networks, companies now have a greater number of sales and need representatives who are responsible for presenting the product catalog. These social media professionals end up doing the job of connecting the online community to the narrated stories, generating a high number of interactions by these consumers. "Creating content that is not your brand, but that relates to topics that your audience is interested in, is the quintessential idea inherent in the clear majority of successful social media and content marketing campaigns", according to Luttrell (2014).

The first phase of a campaign project is research. Surveys allow social media analysts to evaluate proposals that may arise from the board and see if what is asked is related to the needs of customers. This analysis requires an identification of the personas affected by these future campaigns, where the socio-economic characteristics of current and possible customers will be identified. Purchase history is also used for this analysis. After this analysis, some pilot proposals are launched so that the media team can choose the one that seems most feasible and, working with this hypothetical scenario, decide to try, in some cases, some advertisements targeting only a few of these — A / B testing.

Most products are designed to meet the needs of a wide variety of users with varying levels of skill, domain knowledge and many other factors. Even with a clearly defined user group, there can be significant variations. Wouldn't you like to know about all these users and all the variations

between them? Of course. But the reality is that most testing budgets are small, and any usability testing you can do should be done quickly, so that your understanding of the user experience can be added to the ongoing product development. (KRUG, 2014, p. 43).

The A/B test aims to analyze the strategy adopted for a given market scenario, through which it is possible to know if what was planned is working as expected. It can be done with a small sample of customers and changes are made during the execution of the tests, with the aim of directing the strategy to the desired success. These tests are normally used with the specific focus on small changes or small parts delivered to the user, and are not suitable for large validations, which put a company's reputation at risk. The results obtained in this phase can help companies achieve their strategic objectives, but they can also point out failed strategies and disappoint their stakeholders.

One way to make the strategy more assertive and also to get to know the users who are using the services made available on the company's platforms is using event tracking — a technique of tracking user actions by capturing user actions within a system. Google, for example, offers the most famous tool that is Google Analytics, which is added to applications and is able to provide system administrators with reports on how users are using the features and with which components they are interacting the most. These actions can be extremely important for decision making, creation of a key performance indicator and strategic operational and global planning for the institution.

In the late 1990's, tracking "hits" from search engine spiders and signups on "guestbook" pages and downloading raw server log files to plug data into your favorite Microsoft Access database, was the way to go. As web sites and web visitors have evolved over the years, so have web analysts, and their need to track and obtain valuable data. (LEDFORD et al, 2009, p. 358).

To validate scientific research, some technology companies were consulted to participate in the research, in order to understand whether the best way to direct an understanding of the users of their applications was through data driven methodology, usability tests or a mix of the two approaches. Of the 17 companies consulted, only 5 accepted to participate in the research, granting professionals from the product team — the team responsible for understanding the company's users in order to make strategic decisions based on this understanding.

5 RESULTS

A form was sent to five major technology companies, two of them American based in São Paulo, whose products are social networks so that information could be collected by their product team. The product team then had to answer some questions about how the user engagement process worked and how the company they operated in did to engage users.

The first question was “what methodology does your company use to understand user behavior?” accompanied by the following answer options “usability tests”, “data driven” or “both”. Of this data, 60% of users said that the methodology the company uses is data driven. Of

those 60%, 79% answered that the approach adopted was not sufficient in the second question “is the methodology adopted by your company efficient to understand users?” with the “no” and “yes” answer options.

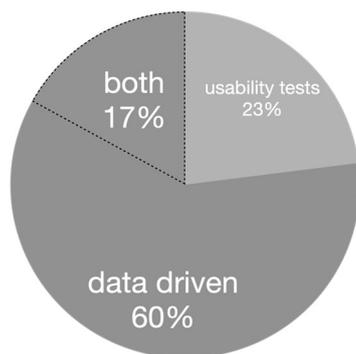


Figure 1: Graphical representation of the answers provided

According to Jeffery (2010), data-driven analysis is extremely important for predictive analysis and serves to partially validate hypotheses, assisting in strategic decisions, but they are not enough if companies offering social networks do not know the contexts of these users, taking into account information about the behavior of users understanding their entire journey within the app and are not even enough to discover deviations in the user experience

Of the companies that used “usability tests”, 23% of the companies surveyed, 62% answered that the approach adopted was not sufficient in the second question. 17% of the interviewees answered “both” in the first question, and surprisingly, 88% of that third group answered that the approach adopted is sufficient in the second question.

It is noticeable as described by Reis (2014) that usability tests have been more effective,

given that they end up offering a variety of information about user satisfaction and in case of negative responses, it becomes clearer for the product team to identify problem areas in the product that may not be obvious in other ways.

A second section of the form addressed “did the company intend to migrate to any other methodology?” with the following “yes” and “no” answer options. Of those who adopted a date to meet users, 72% answered yes; of those who adopted usability tests, 54% answered yes; of those who adopted both methodologies, 82% said they did not.

In the last section, an open question with a field allowing up to 240 characters asks “If your company is not taking the best approach to meet users of your applications, what is the main factor for this to be happening?”. Written in the most diverse ways a possible interpretation for most responses from teams of companies whose approach was inefficient was "just data is not enough to meet the needs of users".

| <i>If your company is not taking the best approach to meet users of your applications, what is the main factor for this to be happening?</i> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Organization |
| The data is not well interpreted |
| data alone say nothing |
| don't know |
| data is just data |
| we should use usability tests |
| data needs to be better interpreted |
| data is strong when used with usability testing |
| I feel that the data only tell you what happened, but not because it happened |
| data without a process is not predictive |
| data are difficult to interpret |
| I believe in other approaches |
| data are difficult to interpret |
| I don't think the data reflects the difficulties of users, only the actions in the app |

Figure 2: Compiled from the most significant answers

6 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is noticeable that companies are concerned with getting closer to customers, producing no longer what they themselves deem necessary for

their audience, but rather, what this audience deems necessary for them to produce. The market is diversified, the information reaches the four corners of the world and the service card is broader. With more possibilities, customers are more demanding, and this has made the strategic life of companies difficult.

Despite the sensitivity that this engagement study requires for users, it is necessary to understand that innumerable opportunities may be presented, and, therefore, it is necessary to focus on the most important ones, those that can compromise the image of a company or boost revenue.

When evaluating user engagement, as a developer of indicators for specific metrics, using heuristic tests can be a great tool to understand your users through data, but care must be taken that this data is not just numbers. When it comes to users, and users are people, numbers do not necessarily represent their contentment or frustrations with the published content. It is necessary to have a human indicator derived from an empirical study, to practice the empathy of putting yourself in the place of that individual, understanding how our advertising and products are transforming. User experience metrics are completely important and need to have the same weight as numbers extracted from reports.

The success of the engagement is also related to the tradeoff investment versus production. It is necessary to know if the investments for engagement are being greater than the revenue obtained through this engagement. Therefore, monitoring and reviewing the strategy is

extremely important. This entire planning cycle needs not only to generate engagement, retention and exponential growth, but also to teach the professionals involved about adaptability, resilience and commitment to the users studied.

REFERÊNCIAS

- [1] Al-Rabayah, W. and Khasawneh, R. and Abu-shamaa, R. (2016) "Strategic uses of social media for improved customer retention", Business Science Reference, Lincoln.
- [2] Berger, J. (2013) "Contagious: why things catch on", CBS Company, New York.
- [3] Descartes, R. (2011) "Discurso sobre o método", Editora Vozes, Lisbon. 2 edition.
- [4] Duarte, F. and Quandt, C. and Souza, Q. (2008) "O tempo das redes", Editora Perspectiva S/A, São Paulo. 1 edition.
- [5] Izard, C. E. (1991) "Emotions, personality, and psychotherapy. The psychology of emotions", Plenum Press, New York.
- [6] Jeffery, M. (2010) "Data-Driven Marketing: The 15 Metrics Everyone in Marketing Should Know", John Wiley & Sons, New Jersey. 1 edition.
- [7] Junior, A. P. da S. and Pereira, F. A. and Correia-neto, J. da S. (2013) "Engajamento digital: um estudo com páginas de instituições de ensino superior no facebook", Revista Brasileira de Administração Científica, p. 141-146.
- [8] Krug, S. (2014) "Não me faça pensar", Editora Alta Books, Rio de Janeiro. 1 edition.
- [9] Ledford, J. (2009) "Google analytics", Wiley, Hoboken. 3 edition.
- [10] Luttrell, R. (2014) "Social media: how to engage, share, and connect", Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham. 1 edition.
- [11] Magalhães, P. L. (2010) "Influências da evolução tecnológica na comunicação humana:

estudo das redes sociais”, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/30916136/Influencia-s-da-evolucao-tecnologica-na-comunicacao-humana-estudo-das-redes-sociais>, June.

[12] Monteiro, D. (2018) “Comunicação 2.0 - Como o poder da web influencia decisões e desafia modelos de negócio”, Actual Editora, São Paulo.

[13] Paraiso, G. J. B. (2011) “O e-commerce nas redes sociais: estudo sobre os desdobramentos do comércio eletrônico na atualidade”, Undergraduate thesis (Bachelor of Business Administration) – Faculdade de Ciências da Administração, Universidade de Pernambuco, Recife, Pernambuco.

[14] Ramos, C. A. (2014) “Aristóteles e o sentido político da comunidade ante o liberalism”, Revista Kriterion, Belo Horizonte. p. 72.

[15] Reis, A. V dos. (2010) “Testes de usabilidade: fundamentos e definições”, GAMPI Plural, Joinville. p. 2-6.

[16] Rocha, M. (2020) “Marketing nas mídias sociais”, Saraiva Educação, São Paulo.

[17] Statista. (2020) “Global digital population as of April 2020”, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/617136/digital-population-worldwide/>, June.

[18] Ullmann, T. et al. (2012) “Social network analysis for technology-enhanced learning: Review and future directions”, International Journal of Technology Enhanced Learning. Genève, p. 172-190. 4 edition.