

Social Media Marketing in Manufacturing Industry :

A content analysis of Mongolian Cashmere Companies' Use of Facebook

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Abstract

This paper initiates an investigation on how cashmere companies employ social media, particularly Facebook, as a means of advertising, engaging and interacting with their followers, fans, consumers in Mongolia. A qualitative research method is applied in this study to understand the quantity of companies' wall posts on FB, and to identify the main themes of posted contents on their FB wall (Content analysis) and to explore the interaction between companies and customers, and to examine the relationships between the FB marketing and customers' attitude and behavior (Semi-structure Interview). The results show that Monglolia cashmere manufactures in this study focus mostly 3Ps in their post content including product, place, and promotion. Product features and values were described attractively to take customers' attention, especailly mixed with promotion events or activities. Most of posts with promotion received more likes and shares. And those companies seem 'ignore' their potential customers when they did not reply their questions or contacted the commenters via message. The study contributes to knowledge of social media marketing in Asian market.

Keywords: Facebook marketing, customer engagement, customer intention

INTRODUCTION

In the past 10 years, the internet has changed the way people work, communicate and live. This new kind of online content, applications, and services called social media. Social media is an innovative tool for communications on a business level. Social media allows people to develop or maintain relationships with individuals who may not be close to themselves geographically. When it comes to location, social media websites allow families, couples, and friends to stay connected using a simple click of a button. Social media sites consist of online networks (e.g. Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn), wikis (e.g. Wikipedia), multimedia sharing sites (e.g. Youtube and Flickr), bookmarking sites (e.g. Del.icio.us and Digg), virtual worlds (e.g. Second Life), rating sites (e.g. Yelp), blogs (e.g. TMZ), and virtual game worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft). With the help of these services, users can instantly send text, images, audio, and video without any technical knowledge. The rapid growth and adoption of social media globally made it the focal point for business decision makers. Today, businesses are allocating their resources to identifying ways to make profitable use of social media.

Social networking sites have become a powerful marketing tool and technology has completely changed our relationship with information. Technology allowed us to access various sources of information regardless of time and place. Chi (2011, 46) defines social media marketing as a "connection between brands and consumers, [while] offering a personal channel and currency for user entered networking and social interactions." Social media in marketing is to use it as a communication tool that makes the companies accessible to those interested in their product and makes them visible to those that don't know their product. It should be used as a tool that creates a personality behind their brand and creates relationships that they otherwise may never gain. This creates not only repeat-buyers, but customer loyalty. Fact of social media is so diversified that it can be used in whatever way best suits the interest and the needs of the business. Social media

gives marketers a voice and a way to communicate with peers, customers and potential consumers. It personalizes the "brand" and helps to spread the message in a relaxed and conversational way.

Mongolia is an independent republic in East Asia, whose economic activity in Mongolia has traditionally been based on agriculture and livestock. Mongolia has also extensive mineral deposits: copper, coal, molybdenum, tin, tungsten and gold account for a large part of industrial production. Trade is significant for Mongolia's economy the combined value of exports and imports equals 98 percent of GDP. Recently, Mongolia is also most heavily Facebook oriented (in 2018, approximately 64.1 percent of the population in Mongolia had access to the Internet and Facebook).

There are currently over 30,000 independent businesses in Mongolia, chiefly centered around the capital city. The majority of the population outside urban areas participates in subsistence herding; livestock typically consists of sheep, goats, cattle, horses, and Bactrian camels. But with production of over three thousand tons of raw cashmere per year, Mongolia is the second largest producer of raw cashmere in the world, behind China with production of about twelve thousand tons per year. Cashmere is the second largest hard currency-earning export for Mongolia after mining. The cashmere sector in Mongolia has grown relatively quickly in recent decades.

There is large number of literature on Social Media Marketing in the United States of America and other developed countries. Although there has been rapid growth in the number of manufactures using social media for their marketing in Mongolia but there is limited information or research on their health issue. This paper initiated an investigation on how cashmere companies employ social media, particularly Facebook, as a means of advertising, engaging and interacting with their followers, fans, consumers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing consists of the attempt to use social media to persuade consumers that one's company, products and/or services are worthwhile. Social media marketing is marketing using online communities, social networks, blog marketing and more. Social media marketing is related to relationship marketing, where the firms need to shift from "trying to sell" to "making connections" with the consumers. Today's customer are more powerful and busy, therefore, companies should be reachable and available in every social media communication channel such as Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, Forums at any time (Gordhamer, 2009).

Social media offer a unique marketing communication method (Eagleman, 2013). Marketing activities via online applications that allow the production of information and being collaborate among users (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010) and leverage mobile and web-based technologies to create interactive medium where users and groups member sharing, co-creating, discussing, and modifying known as user-generated content (Kietzmann et al., 2011). By manipulating the user generated content has enable businesses to forecast the future purchasing behavior of their customers more accurately (Kim and Ko, 2011), enhances brand post popularity (Vries et al., 2012), attract new customers (Michaelidou et al., 2011), build awareness, increase sales and build loyalty (Castronovo, 2012). The rapid use of users and the intensity of user-generated content might create not only a lot of opportunities for small business enterprises but also can eliminate a lot of its threats.

This media has implications for firm's marketing strategy variables such as communication costs (Gecti & Dastan, 2013), branding (Bruhn et al., 2012), sales (Chen, Fay, & Wang, 2011; Kumar & Mirchandani, 2012), segmentation (Foster,

West, & Francescucci, 2011), market research (Patino et al., 2012), and public relations (Eyrich, Padman, & Sweetser, 2008; Luo & Jiang, 2012). Additionally, research provides insights on how consumers use various forms of social media to interact with firms and their brands, such as consumer engagement with brand Facebook pages (e.g. Girona & Korgaonkar, 2014; Muk & Chung, 2014) consumer generated brand content across Facebook, YouTube and Twitter channels (Smith, Fischer, & Chen, 2012), and retweet behavior (Kim, Sung, & Kang, 2014). SMM activities and their effects on firm performance.

Kim and Ko (2010a), social media can have a dramatic impact on a brand's reputation. One-third of survey participants posted opinions about products and brands on the brand's blog, and 36% thought more positively about companies that have blogs. A recent study by DEI Worldwide (2008) provides the following statistics: 70% of consumers have visited social media sites to get information; 49% of these consumers have made a purchase decision based on the information they found through the social media sites; 60% said they were likely to use social media sites to pass along information to others online; and 45% of those who searched for information via social media sites engaged in word-of-mouth. The report states that companies not engaging in social media as part of their online marketing strategy are missing an opportunity to reach consumers. With a significant percentage of people passing along information to others through social media, the value of one customer is worth far more than what he or she initially spends. Thus, firms and brands now need to factor in the value of customers and also the influence of social media on them.

Facebook marketing

Facebook is a popular website with endless benefits for a company to gain new customers and revenue. The conversation between brands and consumers serves as a basis to develop and nurture the brand-customer relationship and build a reputation (Tao & Wilson, 2015).

Every time a user interacts with the brand on Facebook, that activity will be displayed in the news feeds of their Facebook friends. Facebook has recently released a number of tools for marketers known as 'social plug ins', which are designed to drive deeper engagement with customers (Harris & Dennis 2011).

Facebook communities where users are members are the most relevant for marketers (Casteleyn, Mottart, & Rutten, 2009). Through these communities, marketers are able to identify consumer tastes and likes, which is essential in helping to create market segmentation and targeting and positioning strategies (Acar & Polonsky, 2007; Treadaway & Smith, 2010). Marketers can gain valuable information on community members' profiles and from the news feed statements that users post on their walls and pages (Casteleyn, Mottart, & Rutten, 2009).

RESEARCH METHOD

The aim of this study is to describe evidence of Mongolian Cashmere Companies' use of Facebook and initiated an investigation on how cashmere companies employ social media, particularly Facebook, as a means of engaging and interacting with their followers, fans and consumers. Content analysis is a qualitative media research method designed to examine communication messages according to specified rules and procedures and statistical measures (Riffe et al. 2005). A qualitative research method is applied in this study which includes two phases: the first is to analysis the content of wall posts on Facebook by those companies to interact with customers; and the second is to interview the FB posters and FB followers. The objectives of these two phases of the study are provided as follows: (1) *Content analysis*: To understand the

quantity of companies' wall posts on FB, and to identify the main themes of posted contents on their FB wall. (2) *Semi-structure Interview*: to explore the interaction between companies and customers, and to examine the relationships between the FB marketing and customers' attitude and behavior.

The list of Mongolian Cashmere Companies was collected from the website of Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The cashmere companies were selected and checked for their social media marketing (website, Facebook). The selected participants meet the following requirements (1) Exist more than 1 year; (2) Product manufacturing in Mongolia; (3) Use social media for their marketing. The sample consists of three of the main cashmere companies in Mongolia, from the Complete List of Listed Companies on the Mongolian Stock Exchange in Ulan Bator as of Nov 25, 2017. Thus data for study were obtained through a content analysis on the Facebook pages of the three cashmere company.

Table 1 Sample collection, Cashmere companies Facebook page active ability

Companies name	Number of Posts/Per week/month	Number of followers	Shares of per posts	Active ability
Gobi Cashmere	6/14	222,332	150	Most active
Goyo Cashmere	4/13	217,362	63	Medium
Naadam Mongolian Cashmere	0/4	159	1	Low
Blue Sky Cashmere Co.Ltd	0/3	6,056	2	Low
Altai Cashmere	0/2	24,526	8	Low
Evseg Cashmere	0/4	86,751	3	Low
Cashmere workshop	0/3	37,035	9	Low
Goyol Cashmere	3	46,477	22	Medium
Choir Cashmere LLC	No post since 2017 Oct	11,051	9	Low
Buyan Cashmere	0/1	8,792	6	Low
Saran Cashmere	0/0	5,222	3	Low

RESULTS

Information Dissemination

The 3 Facebook pages were coded to determine what was posted or published about the company. All the pages posted an official logo. Corporations also have the ability to post news updates on their Facebook pages. All the pages did have recent news posted. If a corporation posted information on its site or added material to its site such as photos, articles, etc., an update may appear in the minifeed.

Wall Posts

One of the most frequently accessed areas on a Facebook wall. According to Facebook, (2009), "The Wall is the center of your profile for adding new things like photos, videos, notes, and other application content. The Publisher at the top of your Wall allows you to update your status and share content through many different kinds of Wall". A wall post is a blurb that can be posted by anyone visiting the site and in this case, postings were from current employees, former

employees, fans, potential job applicants, solicitors, consumers happy with a product, consumers complaining, a headhunters for the competing corporations, or information seekers, such as journalists. Wall posts can be publicly viewed by anyone visiting the site and the site administrator has the ability to remove wall posts. The items coded included: the overall number of wall posts; whether the poster could be identified as an employee; and the date range of the posts. Finally, the most recent 26 postings on the wall were coded as being positive, neutral, or negative in tone. Regarding the overall number of wall posts, Goyo had the most 11 of posts, Gobi followed by 9 posts. The content of wall posts mainly focus on Products, Promotion.

Products

All the posts often describe about product characteristics, product value. At first, because it's cashmere products, the style is often appeared in all posts, sometimes with photos and videos. Style describes the product's look and feel to the buyer and creates distinctiveness. 2 companies' most of post about style was tried to give an advice and ideas to customers how to match cashmeres to another clothes. For example, *'This type of blazer can adapt with any type of pants and skirt, do not be afraid to look like man type. But it's still possible to create a feminine style with wearing sweater inside of your blazer'* (PostGB420). Giving an advice sometimes makes customers feel important and warm.

'The classic coat will define your elegant choice perfectly that was created by 140 production conveyor and was made with the open pocket, inner side is divided into parts' (PostGY413).

Product value is the second point that 100% posts included. The posts belongs product value seeks to make customer acknowledge comfort feeling, impressions, elegance and value. *'The new shade of shawl is a luxury product that combines the Mongolian people's mind and Italian technology'* (PostGB321). Customers who purchase high value items frequently will have the highest customer lifetime value.

'Men who have designated their own style can express themselves perfectly and make an impression. The only Gobi cashmere single-breasted suits describe the quality and would be the name card of your success' (PostGB322).

'Do you agree that our brand always broke the stereotypes that cashmere shirts should be basic cashmere colors? We are delivering the choices that will express innovation and preciousness' (PostGY328).

Women are decorating the city street wearing colorful and stylish coats! It's a good idea to follow the trend, but you have to have the one to wear in every situation which is cashmere coat that never get old' (PostGY321).

Promotion

Discount: Most of posts discount shows the percentage of sale that 20%, 50%, even 20% to 70%. Sometimes high percentage of sales can attract more buyers.

The products are being sold under the factory at discount of 20% with the variety of colors and style options until 25th of the month' (PostGB321).

GOYO brand is announcing the up to 50% sale at prototype that was made by Italian designer at Center Library Stor.' (PostGB324).

GOYO brand is announcing the up to 20% sale to all knit designs for the customers who have loyalty card till the end of March. Classic new items also included in this sale.' PostGY327

Posts also expressed more offer for customers. For example: *Every customer who buy coat, blazer or shawl will take a part in the lottery and customers who buy coat will be gifted as a cashmere scarf'* (PostGB324).

For the promotion event, there were not many events during the observation period.

You are invited to the open job exhibition (PostGY323).

We are joining to the HACKBAATAR. Let us meet there with the best designers (PostGY327).

Free gifts with purchase promotions offer shoppers an extra incentive to buy, and can provide the retailer offering it with increased sales, as well as improved brand loyalty. Most of free gift receivers share their experiences with others online. Companies posted their announcement on their promotion with the photo. For example: *We sort out the gifts with purchase. You will get gifts if you buy coat or printed shawl (PostGB319).*

Gifts are included in every purchase that is brooch (PostGB327).

You will get the printed shawl with every coat purchasing until the March will end (PostGY323).

Urgent push tries to push products towards customers using attention grabbing claims to put products into the minds of customers. Companies often embedded that claims to the most of posts about promotion.

Very seldom sale! Your spring essentials! (PostGB321).

You have only two days to make smart choice. So don't hesitate and lose your chance to get it own (PostGB324).

Spring time=Shopping time! Only one day left to end up the big sale (PostGY331).

Coupons are a great way to attract customers and keep current customers coming back. Three of companies utilize the coupons very seldom. For example: *You will be gifted by coupon for free cleaning service If you purchase above 50,000tugrik (PostGY320).* But sometimes some companies at a risk of losing potential sales by not offering coupons while their competitors are using it.

Posts about push always contain the hidden meaning to put products into the customers mind to make customers buy. For example: *Every man must have a blazer that has excellent quality, perfect fitted and able to wear with everything. It will be precious if it is cashmere! (PostGY413).*

The sun is rising late and it is getting warmer that reminds us the spring and the stylish coat season is officially starting (PostGGY321).

Every year, there are cashmere "must have" items in the stylish ladies' wardrobe. We can't suppose the weather condition when season is changing abruptly. At that time, cashmere will be your loyal friend. (PostGY324), (PostGY324) uses the strong word "must have" for customers to express about their important feeling to make a customer buy.

Cold seasons' gloomy days are ending and starting the warm days to make a colorful choice that looks shiny in the sun light! (PostGY327).

Place

Place strategy plays important role in the marketing mix. Through the use of right place, a company can increase the sales and reach the target customers. During the observation the companies often embedded the address or phone number into the most of posts. As we realized three companies' most of stores are placed in the center area of the city.

The exhibition "Opening ceremony of blazer season" is held at second floor of the State Department Store (PostGB342).

GOYO is sold in all stores. Factory store, Chandmani Center, 2nd floor of State Department Store, Shangri-La Moll (PostGY321), (PostGY413), (PostGY323), (PostGY331), (Post GY320).

If you visit the store you can choose from over 500 options. More info from - 77115353 (PostGY321), (PostGY324).

Please visit our stores to make a choice that makes you bright from others. Goyo is sold in all stores. Factory store, Chandmani Center, 2nd floor of State Department Store ,Shangri-La Moll (PostGY327).

Customer Engagement

Likes and shares

Our participants showed little interest in, or use for, the 'Like' button. 'Likes' are mainly for their own (or close friends') benefit rather than in actively recommending brands to others or in brands being recommended to them. "'Like' is recognition that you thought a particular thing was good, or funny...it does not imply a relationship going forward.' (a male follower). Or 'it's just my habit to click likes in this page' (a female follower)

Most of reasons why Facebook followers share the companies' posts were to inform their FB friends about the news of the companies which they are interested or they think their friends are interested. The participants expressed their emotion in information sharing. '*Sharing allows me to inform my friends of products they maybe care about*' (a female follower). '*I share the posts that I interested in to let my friends know about this*' (a female follower). This is called eWOM. The results show that, around 20% of likers share the companies posts, which implies the high level of eWOM for cashmere manufactures in Mongolia.

Customer interaction (FB message)

To explore how the companies interact with their followers, a semi-structure interview was conducted with random 20 followers who clicked 'likes' or 'share'. The results were categorized in four main issues:

Private contact

Most of respondents (88%) confirmed that they have not got any instant message from the companies even they asked questions on comments of wall posts. 'I never got message from them. It seems they ignore my concerns'. (a female liker).

Other respondents also did not receive direct messages from the companies but they sent their questions again to the company via instant messenger. 'I asked them via messenger and they replied me' (23 female liker).

Customer attitude to companies' interactions.

Among 88%, 66% of them expressed their disappointed feeling when the company ignored the customers on social media and marketing is not seriously enough. Also they feel company does not respect the customers who interested their product even if it is a policy. Most of them prefer the company interacting with customers. '*I think the company's social marketing is not very well, they can't reach the customers. They just post something, that's all. No feedback no interaction. They should improve its operation. I think they don't dignify their customers and spurn*' (a male liker). '*I feel lost my interest with product and trusts will decrease*' (a female liker) *Why they run a Facebook page If they don't want to communicate with customer? I really don't understand. They should close it or need to hire more professionals.*

Another 22% of respondents expressed their ignorance of private interaction from the company ('*Basically, I think most of Mongolians adjust well with the bureaucracy. So I feel don't care.*') or they explained that "*maybe I wasn't potential customer. That is why they did not realize or it was out of stock I don't know.*"

But 12% of them who received the answers from the companies via FB massagers expressed their satisfaction about the interaction, and plan to purchase the products.

Customers' intention

The interview data showed the interesting results that 40% of commenters did not intend to buy the products. They just clicked the 'like' as their habits or typed a comment when they are curious. "I don't have intention to buy this product" (a female liker). But their intention could be based on the answer provided by the companies. *'I just asked. I would consider if price was affordable.'*

And 60% of commenters originally considered buying the product. *'I had some intention to buy the coat. It was necessary because it was beginning the spring time'*, or *'I had intention to buy it. It looks simple to me and I want to try it on'*. However, most of them did not receive the contact from the companies.

When the last question was asked, 'Would you buy this product if they answered your question?', the results showed that 40% of them said 'yes' or 'want'. *'Maybe I would ask more about the product if they answered my question. I would buy the one'* (a female commenter). *'Maybe it will influence to my purchasing decision. They answered my question. I knew what I wanted to know.'*

30% of respondents expressed no influence from the answers/contact by the companies on their decision to purchase. *'I would buy this product no matter they replied to me or not If I really wanted this one. Even if they did not answer my question it doesn't affect my purchasing decision.'* *'I bought it even if they did not answer my question'*. Most of them are the loyal customers.

And one respondent mentioned her purchase decision could be made if she received the answer from the company. *'Maybe I would ask more about the product if they answered my question.'*

When asking about their continuing to follow the companies' page, 75% respondents confirmed that they will still follow the page. That means customers want to see the new posts again. *'I love this brand much, so I still follow it to update the new style'*. *'I just follow it to see something interesting for buying'*. But 15% of respondents want to quit following the page. *'I don't want to follow it again. They never replied anymore'*. Others expressed 'let it be' action with the companies' fan pages.

DISCUSSION

This study explores the situation Mongolia cashmere companies employ Facebook as a means of advertising, engaging and interacting with their followers, fans, consumers. Understanding Facebook and the strategy behind using Facebook is essential for corporations in this social-media driven environment. In this mostly controlled medium, corporations can take the opportunity to communicate with a wide variety of publics, including journalists, employees, potential employees, customers, and fans. Therefore, determining how corporations integrated public relations tools and strategies was important (McCorkindale, 2010). Facebook wall posts become a billboard for corporations to announce or advertise about their product or related sales. Mongolia cashmere manufacturers in this study focus mostly 3Ps in their post content including product, place, and promotion. Product features and values were described attractively to take customers' attention, especially mixed with promotion events or activities. Most of posts with promotion received more likes and shares.

Facebook wall posts offer also an opportunity for corporations to show they are responding to or engaging with customers, especially in the case with product issues. When a corporation doesn't respond to a complaint by a customer,

then it appears unresponsive from a customer service stand point (McCorkindale, 2010). Social media sites such as Facebook also enable users to take an active role in sharing news content with their networks, with potentially positive effects on their own involvement with the news topics (Greenhow & Reifman, 2009). Users also felt more motivated to express their opinions and persuade others regarding the news topics than those who only turned to online news sites (Greenhow & Reifman, 2009).

Similar to a traditional web discussion board, member and fan pages also have discussion boards where anyone can post and reply. Discussion boards allow corporations to engage with their publics and provide requested information or answers to issues. In this study, most of all posts have big number of likes, shares and comments. Interesting point is that most of FB followers who commented (questions) on discussion board are interested in purchasing. However, the results show that those companies seem 'ignore' those potential customers when they did not reply their questions or contacted those commenters via message. Most of potential customers expressed their disappointed feeling when they could not receive the answer from the comments on the issues they were interested. This is not really good for the companies when they did not provide customer service very well. It's reason why they may lose a number of sales when their potential customers did not get what they want, even for their concern about products. It seems that those companies did not prepare well for customer service on Facebook pages.

Despite of some loyal customers who still continue to buy their products, even, without response from the companies about their concerns, many potential customers may quit their interesting and intention to buy when the company did not actively contact them. Just remember that, customers normally never type their questions if they are not interested in products. Thus, even the wall posts are attracted but no more purchase could be made without customer's interaction. Even on the online platform like Facebook, customers still prefer the interaction with the companies about their concerns, which help their decision to buy. The Mongolian cashmere manufactures should put more efforts in training customer service staffs on FB pages.

CONCLUSION

Findings of this study offer essential components for relevant research development to be applied within the cashmere industry or to be extended to alternative types of brands/companies in Mongolia. As social media have become a topic of interest for many industries, it is important to understand how social media data can be harvested for decision making at the industry level. There are some limitations of this study. First, the time to observe the posts, likes, shares and comments on pages was too short (one month) which do not help to understand about the trend of posts. Secondly, due to limited number of Mongolian cashmere companies that used Facebook pages, it's careful to generalize this study results in other industries.

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