

Analysis of the User Participation Pathes & Values in Brand Social Marketing

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Abstract: The current brand social marketing generally fall into a "brand owner self-important" misunderstanding, which is clearly contrary to the "Social" connotation of social marketing, and Social marketing without "user participation" isn't really "social".Considering the close connection between user participation and social marketing, the paper tries to analyze the user participation of brand social marketing based on the perspective of paths and values,By answering the questions of "user participation is the core content of brand social marketing", "the user participation pathes in brand social marketing" and "the user participation values in brand social marketing", we will promote brand social marketing to truly realize "user home field".

1. Introduction

What is the brand social marketing? Is the brand social marketing the content or activities posted on social platforms?The brand social marketing is actually an relationship-based information exchange, which is the act of creating content to promote a product or brand on various social media such as Weibo, Xiaohongshu, Facebook and Twitter, etc. The key point is to find the target consumers and make them socially interact with each other around the product or brand.Since WEB 2.0, target consumers are more segmented and spread across all types of social media, and brand owners need to be active where they appear and stay, communicating with them about the brand and inspiring them to ask and answer questions to each other about the brand.A small story from life may give us a better understanding of what social marketing is all about:one morning, a mother drove her children to school, accidentally scraped a car,and left in a hurry,because she was worried that her child would be late, but she put a note on the window of the scraped car, indicating her responsibility and leaving her cell phone number."Which one of you is this car? I'm so sorry for scraping it in the morning!" I didn't expect her to receive a reply soon: "I am the owner, it doesn't matter, to send the child is important, later", many internet users have retweeted and liked this friendly interaction, even the damaged car brand 4S store also followed up with the comment. "this kind of high quality car owner is really rare, in order to encourage her the store is willing to provide 20% off the preferential price of paint repair".

The participants in this case were instantly and seamlessly connected on social media, fully reflecting the power of brand social marketing as "everyone's participation", where the brand owner instantly responded to the user's interactive needs about the brand, and the timing and scenario of its

appearance and the benefits it provided were just right. So why is it that we can use social marketing so easily in our life, while some well-designed social marketing campaigns struggle to engage users? This effect comparison aroused the author's research interest, the paper tries to think about and analyze the user participation of the brand social marketing based on the perspective of paths and values, through answering questions such as the "user participation is the core content of social marketing", "the user participation pathes in brand social marketing" and "the user participation values in brand social marketing",so as to promote the brand social marketing really realize the "user home field".

2. User participation is the core content of brand social marketing

Brand social marketing is essentially a kind of communication with the concept of "Social", and its dominant power isn't in the brand but in the user, therefore, the lack of "user participation" of social marketing isn't the real "Social ",this means that the core content of brand social marketing is "user participation"^[1]. User participation refers to the production and delivery of goods (or services) in the process of the user must provide the corresponding activities or resources (including psychological, time, emotional, behavioral, etc.) to enjoy the service, which also makes the user from an simple consumer into a producer^[1]. The homogeneous competition of brands makes the psychological value of users more and more important. By designing a more participatory user experience model, a multiple emotional connection between brands and users can be built to meet the complex and variable psychological needs of users. Brand social marketing is in the use of social relationship chain for word-of-mouth communication, relying on user participation to obtain maximum returns with minimal investment, and its performance will be more accurate and efficient.

For example, in 2019, 999 cold and flu Ling "NONGHAO 2019, the next station, the future can be expected" theme activities have attracted a lot of people to participate,the social marketing idea of "Wishing Screen Bus Kiosk" instantly shows the passersby's personalized messages such as wishing photos and New Year's wishes on the screen, and encourages them to laugh at life through the exclusive customized experience. Similar social marketing cases include the 2019 national flag avatar screen in the circle of friends, the 2017 Christmas hat screen, etc. Whether users participate depends mainly on whether the activity or content is "relevant" (solving pain points), whether it reflects the user's personality, whether it allows users to generate customized contents, and of course it also depends on whether the threshold for participation is low enough.

3. User participation pathes in brand social marketing

3.1 To enhance user sense of controllability

Many famous psychological experiments have shown that even if the probability of controllable and uncontrollable results is the same, most people are willing to accept the controllable process, indicating that giving users an sense of controllability can significantly increase user satisfaction^[1]. From the point of view of the degree of solving user pain points, in the brand social marketing to enhance the sense of user control controllability belongs to the basic path of user participation, whether it can be enhanced is a decision criterion for how and where users participate, while the design of specific control points need to be more closely integrated with the user's product experiences. Thinking back to the way Xiaomi used to enhance user participation, if it wasn't for its 100 iron fans to share their real product experiences on Xiaomi forums, but to limit them to only talking about the advantages of Xiaomi products without mentioning the defects, then this controlled user participation node is no different from brand self-aggrandizement, but also contrary

to the connotation of "user participation" of social marketing^[2].

3.2 To give users an exclusive experiences

However, enhancing the sense of controllability can only attract users with basic participation needs. Giving exclusive experiences is the advanced path of user participation, because it can't only give the brand a unique personality but also establish an exclusive emotional connection between the brand and the users. Users in brand social marketing are no longer loyal to the "brand", the decisive factor influencing their purchase is replaced by the product experiences, the interaction between the user and the brand throughout the business relationship defines the product experience and brings the user back to the core of the brand network. User experiences are the only product factor that triggers users' emotions and has become a highly competitive product value. Users no longer focus on product performance but on the pleasure and value brought by product experiences. One of the important motives for users to participate in social marketing is to get an exclusive experience and create a brand that belongs to themselves only. Buying standardized products only shows that they are an user, but participating in social marketing makes it possible for them to become a creator, which is a higher level of demand satisfaction for users. Exclusive experiences are customized based on user usage preferences and affect how users perceive the brand. The most common forms are online customization of product appearance, taste, features, services, etc. Users participate in creation with their personal wisdom and thus gain a more personalized sense of involvement.

3.3 To create user fun

We can consider creating user fun as the ultimate path of user participation, because it can bring users the creativity of "play" and enhance brand stickiness, and the latter is a reflection of the degree of brand relationship, but it should be emphasized that "fun" isn't the ultimate goal of brand social marketing but to promote user participation and user interaction. If a social marketing campaign is funny, but lacks a reason for user participation and user interaction, the fun is only superficial and unsustainable. For example, playing games can create a variety of user fun, so why does a good game product always make players addictive? Can we take the gamification design concept to create user fun for brand social marketing?

The key to its success is to find the elements in the game that can enhance user experiences and the core experience, so that the participating users can feel the value and are more motivated to participate^[3]. Gamification can use game element symbols and the framework of game mechanics they build to create new connections between community members and themselves, other members, and community affairs in a community, thus constructing a new context^[4]. A good game designer often understands human weaknesses and can create a kind of game experience with high stickiness and high return rate, although playing games doesn't really solve users' "pain points" from real life, but can be addictive because "how to attract and retain players" is always the most important issue of gamification design, and a set of mature design ideas has been formed. Brand social marketing can fully use gamification thinking to understand user's human nature, and guide user participation with gamification design ideas to create more diverse user fun.

4. User participation values in brand social marketing

4.1 Building and enriching brand awareness

Among all marketing elements, user's brand cognition is still the king, and building and

enriching brand cognition belongs to the basic value level of brand communication, but having social interaction doesn't necessarily help users to form correct brand cognition. To reach users on the more fragmented social media, the first prerequisite is to build up brand cognition with memory points, and the drastic changes in the media environment have also led previous top-down brand indoctrination to be deconstructed by the bottom-up social experiences shared by users. On the other hand, various online circles are full of deep interactions between KOLs, KOCs and brand fans, who have grown to be the main force leading users to deconstruct brands.

Social media has a finer user group and a complete communication loop, which has also created various kinds of labeled user circles, who are used to using internet languages, nicknames, emojis and many other personal expressions to deconstruct brands, and then react to the brand itself through interest affiliation and circle identity. For example, Estee Lauder's "Little Brown Bottle" and SK-II's "Shen Xian Shui" are actually nicknames derived from the word of mouth of internet users in social platforms. The nicknames of hot skincare products such as "Little Black Bottle", "Little White Bottle" and "Big Red Bottle" all originated from leveraging marketing of the "Little Brown Bottle", and these popular expressions were fed back to the brand advertising after the network hype, while the nickname of L'Oreal's "Zero Point Cream" is more like a product of social media, brand and consumer collusion, but either way, it will build and enrich users' brand perception.

4.2 Creating and sharing brand image

Brand social marketing focuses on brand influence rather than persuasion, getting users to notice what the brand is doing and engaging them to communicate about it and spontaneously spread. While brands in the traditional media era pay attention to the frequency of exposure and like to invest heavily in spreading the same information to users over and over again, brands in the social media era pay more attention to creating and sharing brand image, which is an advanced value level of brand communication and has more influence on people's purchasing decisions than brand perception. There are many good social marketing cases are by triggering emotional resonance to close the brand-user relations, formerly "the Netflix Review Metro" creative concerns about the loneliness of workers in the subway, after "the hungry&funeral tea" flash creative cures for the unique "funeral" emotions of young people.

If you want to rely on the group wisdom of the user to promote the brand fire, the brand itself first to deliver a brand image with emotional resonance points, to find an insightful reason for users to talk about, buy and recommend brands. such as Coca-Cola nickname bottle to share simple happiness, Jiang Xiaobai expression bottle to hit the growing pain points of young people. In order to get closer to young people, Oreo launched the "play with oreo" brand strategy in 2015, and in 2016 launched a Guinness challenge of "the world's largest cookie box coloring & graffiti", where users could freely use their imagination to combine their personal photos with 108 creative stickers provided by the brand to customize their own Oreo packaging and take photos to share on its social platform, signifying that Oreo's brand definition is no longer limited to just satisfying users' taste needs, but starts to want to create and share its brand image^[5].

4.3 Users co-creating brand culture

Why do some brands' social marketing resonate with users? This is because they actively integrate into the user interaction of social platforms, and strive to find the connection point between brand culture itself and various community cultures, thus realizing the ultimate value level of brand communication, which is the creation of brand culture by the crowd. The Internet has blurred the boundaries of communication and acceptance, merging the two into "users", as Kevin

Kelly pointed out that "whoever has the smartest customers wins ^[1]" and Peter Drucker Peter Drucker also argues that "innovation requires a combination of more than two fields of knowledge to be successful, and that brands should shift their self-publishing communications more toward crowdsourcing brand culture with users" ^[6]. "User co-creation" is to guide product users or consumers to participate in product development and marketing through appropriate rules, to provide their own opinions and feedback, and to achieve a win-win situation through the interaction and cooperation between brands and users. Through "user co-creation", brands bring innovative values that are needed by the market and pursued by users, and through deep interaction, users have emotional resonance with the products, realizing a warmer connection between brands and users, and shifting the brand-user relationship from an one-way output of the brand to a two-way run between the two.

In June 2021, Geely launched the user brand "we", which is an user-led, user-run and user-operated platform, defining the brand culture by user consensus and constructing an user co-creation system based on it. The KOL promotion of Adidas Originals never provides users with specific fashion advices, but encourages them to do DIY matching so as to fully express their own personality and aesthetic power. For example, General Electric, Alaska Airlines, and Kaggle, a data science company, collaborated on the Flight Quest competition, in which the winning algorithm was able to increase the accuracy of flight arrival times by 40% with only \$250,000 in funding. In addition, the fun nature of game-based co-creation is also worthy of brand social marketing, as it easily solves the problem of low public responses and lack of stickiness from an entertainment perspective, and makes the public willing to participate in co-creation activities for a long time ^[4].

5. Conclusion

Brands can achieve innovation only while they made a breakthrough in culture, and Internet users have become very efficient innovators of the brand culture. Brand building is, in short, an set of skills to create cultural influences, and social marketing of brands through "user participation" can greatly change the way brand culture works and the rules of brand building, making more Internet users become "users" of the brand culture^[6]. They can both produce and consume contents, and "social" means that the input and output of information "come from the masses and go to the masses". In practice, those really smart brands have become or want to become a part of users' lifestyle and even social culture.

As a key factor to determine the success or failure of brand social marketing, the higher the lever of user participation, the easier it is for the brand to obtain a high premium, indicating a positive connection between user participation and brand value and even brand loyalty. There is no clear boundary between the three user participation paths of brand social marketing, they are interlinked and integrated with each other, and the value of user participation to brand communication will definitely develop in the direction of crowd-sourced brand culture, by creating a crowd-sourced cultural atmosphere to stimulate user participation and mutual sharing, and using group wisdom to build brand cultural influences to promote the natural transformation of brand communication to sales. Only by making good use of its own natural "user" gene, the performance of brand social marketing will be natural and sincere.

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