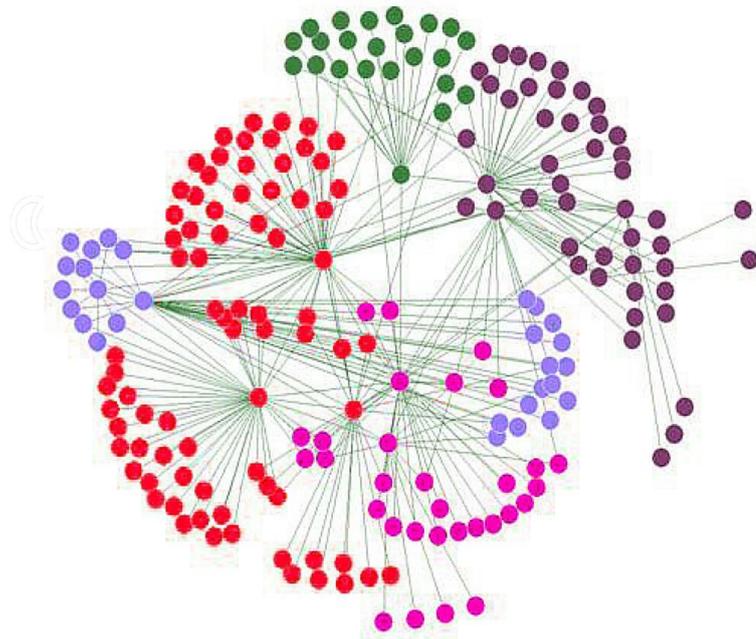


Dissertation 2009



An investigation into how
Advertising cuts through
the clutter on Facebook.

w w w . o n l i n e p r i x i e . c o m

17.06.2015



1.0 Introduction

‘The secret, from an advertiser's point of view, is to do something unexpected, to market or advertise in an unusual way or unique place so you are heard above the din and become memorable.’ States (Strauss 2006)

However masses of information are available to an audience with new media becoming increasingly popular. Online networks are growing vastly on a frequent basis, providing new tools and applications for advertisers to utilise. The way they manage this process can determine effective communication and brands now face challenges in thinking of innovative ways to differentiate themselves in this cluttered environment.

Throughout this study an analysis of advertising amongst the popular social networking site Facebook will be carried out, to enable the researcher to understand what makes advertising in this medium become successful and stand out amongst the eventful activity taking place.

Many organisations are using the social site as a way of capturing the attention of a focused target audience allowing more accurate market research to be carried out.

‘As the advent of networked computing is opening new opportunities for market-orientated consumer interaction, it is also opening up opportunities for marketing researchers to study the tastes, desires and other needs of consumers who interact in online communities.’ (Kozinets 2002)

Valuable demographics have been identified within this area and can be very useful to organisations wishing to target specific consumer groups. It is interesting to see which brands have been successful in using the new medium compared to those that have failed.

Previous campaigns and discussions will be assessed throughout the literature and possible questions that arise will be tackled within the Secondary research.

Aims/ Objectives

The aim of the research carried out will be to determine how adverts within this social medium should be constructed to generate appeal.

It will be beneficial to see how messages are perceived amongst users of Facebook with addressing a range of communication models including the decision making process.

An observation of advertising effectiveness will be carried out to enable the researcher to gain an understanding of how adverts avoid the clutter and generate appeal, looking at behavioural patterns upon the site and deciding which strategy marketers should be taking to approach this kind of audience.

2.1 Literature review

2.2 A Cluttered Environment

Advertising is everywhere and proves very difficult to avoid, 'Somewhere between 254 and 5000 is a number that represents just how many commercial messages an average consumer gets each day,' (Creamer 2007)

The problem with mass amounts of information means that selective messages will not always pass through and reach the receiver accordingly. We can refer to this as clutter which is apparent in the on and offline world and is a variable that will most probably affect our attention span and the way we absorb information.

'All the evidence including the evidence of clutter in the media, points to people giving very little attention to any advertisements. In fact it would be a revolutionary theorist who suggested that people give active attention to most advertisements.' (Brown 2005: 137)

We cannot be conscious of all Information at one time so we will filter out that which does not appear appealing or relevant to us, 'working as our selective perception' (Wells et al 2007:138)

Adverts have to stand out and engage with an audience to sustain sufficient attention. 'The duration of the initial attention which we pay to a stimulus is often less than one second. In that short period we decide to continue or discontinue our attention' (Franzen1994:31)

With considerable amounts of material within one place, it becomes difficult to identify that of which is most relevant to us, generating problems for the brain to absorb it correctly. This has a negative affect for marketers as they struggle to push forward brand personality or they try too hard and simply add to this clutter.

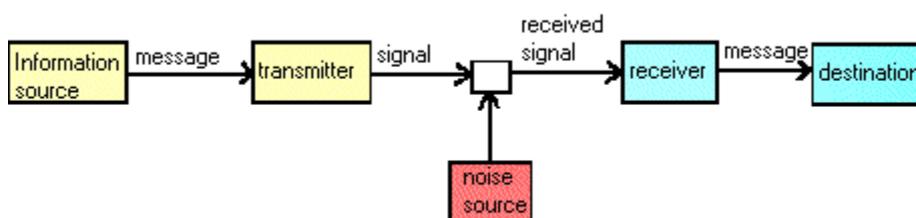
'It seems like the goal of most marketers and advertisers nowadays is to cover every blank space with some kind of brand logo or promotion or an advertisement,' Walker Smith added. (Keane 2008)

The majority of people will generally filter out the information they do not wish to pay attention to, or become distracted by other activity around them, referring to the

affect of noise. Mixed messages and distorted images can be the result of high amounts advertising amongst other activity.

2.3 Communication model

Shannon and weaver's model demonstrates how communication is transmitted through a linear process from sender to receiver. At any point in the process, interference can distort the message sent out, referred to as noise.



Shannon and Weaver (1947) (cultstock.ndirect.com)

With the increasing popularity of web 2.0 and the use of the Internet clutter has encouragingly increased to higher levels, with this allowing more potential for noise to occur. 'In 2008, '16 million households in Great Britain (65 per cent) had Internet accesses.' (National statistics 2008)

Within this medium Social Networks have become a new advertising and marketing platform and they encourage further growth.

'A 2005 Yankelovich study put it this way: "New media have the potential to deliver even more saturation, clutter and intrusiveness than traditional media, in which case the new media will only worsen marketing resistance." (Creamer 2007)

Social Networks have become extremely popular amongst Marketing and Advertising, offering opportunities for niche pinpoint targeting, making it easier to deliver messages at a penetrative level.

'Over supplied markets, combined with demanding consumers in a connected world of peer-to-peer relationships, have pulled the rug from under much of marketing's traditional rules of engagement,' (Earls cited in Aitchison 2009;2)

How these advertisements engage with a 'tech savvy' audience has yet to be defined.

"Time is the most precious asset right now. If we can be worth their engagement, that's the highest benchmark for advertising" *Jim Stengel, CMO, Procter & Gamble.* (Lewis 2008)

To gain an understanding of this, it is fundamental to understand the basic concept of how advertising works and what it is aiming to achieve in the system,

'We are dealing with a system rather than a hierarchy, Ferguson, (1989) states, "In a system, every variable acts with other variables, in such a way that cause and effect cannot be distinguished. A variable can be both cause and effect, at the same time. Reality cannot be split up. Everything is interconnected," (Franzen1994:4)

2.4 How advertising works

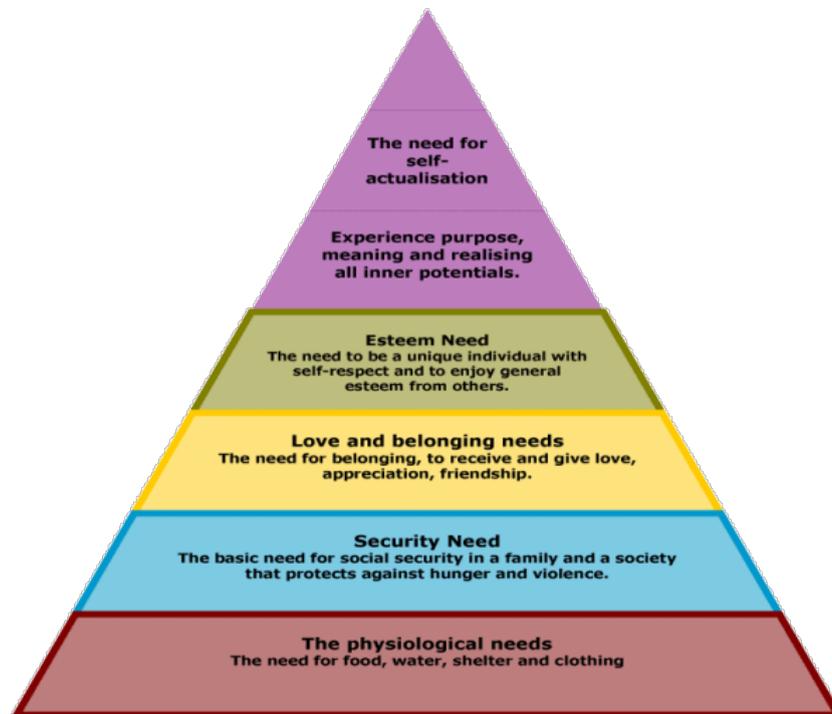
A commonly used acronym to describe the purpose of advertising is, DRIP (ASA.org), adverts are highly effective if they Differentiate, Reinforce, Inform and Persuade the target audience. However people have different attitudes and emotions making it necessary to understand what lines of appeal could be relevant.

An understanding of peoples 'needs' can be crucial when looking at how to approach customers.

'Each person has his or her own set of unique needs; some are innate (biological), others are acquired.' (Wells et al 2006: 135)

According to Abraham Maslow (1970) these needs can range from Physiological, such as needing water if you are thirsty, right to the top of Self actualization which demonstrates requiring certain things to achieve self fulfillment.

Maslow (1954) Hierachy of Needs



(Saverage 2008)

When targeting a specific audience it would be relevant to assess the needs of the majority, for example a new perfume aimed at females maybe classed as a product that fulfills a sense of belongingness and this should be implemented into the marketing strategy.

Advertising works to build relationships with consumers and emphasise the importance of certain brands. There are two main competing views of how we are persuaded. The first view is the Strong theory, (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) and the second view is the Weak theory, (Attention, Trial, Reinforcement and Nudging). A lot of expense goes into creative advertising which captures emotional feeling. This is said to encourage people to take an Interest in the brand experience offered and resulting in a purchase. However the opposing theory ATRN suggest that we are already aware of what captures our attention and advertising simply reinforces that certain brands are present and are concerned with driving our awareness,

'Andrew Ehrenburg of the London business School sees advertising as a weak force, one that cannot act as a prime mover in the capitalist system, but which is used defensively by most advertisers as a means of protecting the status quo'(Jones 1990) Instead of targeting us with fancy adverts and persuading us to buy, Marketers could take a step back and look at the communication process in general, like how we may simply trial products because of recommendation through Word of Mouth and reviews from others.

Most people have repertoires and especially amongst Fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) products. Within most cases if something stands out to us at a given moment we may buy on impulse simply because we like it.

'the processes in the brain that carry this out include both a cognitive (thinking) and an affective (emotional) element, as well as a positive emotional affect, simplified as 'liking' which has been found to be the a key element in many effective ads.' (White 2003)

It is not just a case of pushing adverts in front of the consumer's eyes with a burst of impact but more about the repetition and brand establishment that comes into play.

For well established brands, a major function of continuous advertising is to keep reinforcing this long term memory so that it continues to be easily triggered.' (McDonald, 1992: 105)

Having adverts on a day to day basis in a popular area supports brand Salience, 'probability that something will be in the conscious mind at any given moment' (Sutherland & Sylvester, 2000:16), There is no definite answer that one of these theories works better than another but it is possible to try and understand buyer behavior to enable us to understand what makes people 'tick' and what feeds their emotions.

'Leath and Riley (1998) argue that it is imperative to understand that emotional and subconscious triggers lead to a product choice. However it is necessary to understand that these 'need states' are a result of the situations individuals find themselves in at a particular point of time, and that these will change at different points in time.' (Yeshin 2006:171)

Social networking sites have created a dramatic shift in the way that consumers interact and communicate, the way that they are formed and the performance within them can demonstrate how they function in terms of being a suitable tool for advertising and marketing.

2.5 Social Networks

‘A social network is composed of nodes (people, groups, organisations or other social entities such as nation-state) connected by a set of relationships (Wellman 1996)

People who do not necessarily communicate with one another in the offline world are now able to communicate with one another in an easy accessible space.

This includes communication from companies to the public and also widens the whole communication cycle.

‘Social networking sites are online communities of people who share interests and activities, or who are interested in exploring the interest and activities of others. They typically provide a variety of ways for users to interact through chat, messaging, email, and video, file sharing, blogging and discussion groups. (Experian, 2008)

There are many of these social networks available such as Myspace, Bebo, Faceparty and Twitter, however the most popular to date and commonly mentioned in the media is Facebook.

‘The website originally named The Facebook, was initially released on February 4, 2004. Each entry included a picture, a list of personal attributes on the right, and a list of friends. (Baloun 2007)’

‘the company says the number of active users are more than 50 million and more than 20 million pieces of content (web links, news stories, blog posts, notes, photos etc) are shared each month.’ (Inside Facebook 2008)

It has been proven from recent information that Facebook has made an impression with the younger generation speaking out about their thoughts and opinions on certain brands and issues that arise in the media.

“Rapid growth of social networking sites in recent years indicates that they are now a mainstream communications technology for many people.” (Whiteside;2008)

Organisations have picked up on the success of Facebook as a marketing tool and brands are realising that they need to connect with their target consumers and listen to their opinion, this having a more personal approach and moving away from Push advertising to Pull (ATRN)

An example of this was Cadbury's gaining media attention through a successful and initiative way of listening to their consumer's opinion.

'93 Facebook groups, with upwards of 14,000 members between them, petitioned for Wispa (a bar discontinued in 2003) to be re launched. Cadbury listened to their views and re launched the product in late 2007. In a Web 2.0 world, brands have to learn to 'cede control to customers', as A.G. Lafley, P&G's CEO said (Lafley 2006). Cadbury has shown this with Wispa and Facebook users are learning they can make a difference.' (Poynter 2008)

From the Bring Back Wispa campaign that was initially launched by lovers of the favoured Cadbury's chocolate bar. Press and media picked up on the force of how the online campaign turned into a mass word of mouth formation increasing the reputation of Cadbury's Wispa.

More and more organisations opted to advertise in this social space after realising it was a new way to tap into their consumers.

Some of the factors being

- More than half of active users **return daily**
- People spend an average of **20 minutes** on the site daily
- More than **6 million** active user groups on the site
- Over 55,000 regional, work-related, collegiate and high school networks

(Fabernovel 2007)

'Facebook Ads represent a completely new way of advertising online.' Zuckerberg told an audience of more than 250 marketing and advertising executives in New York. "For the last hundred years media has been pushed out to people, but now marketers are going to be a part of the conversation. And they are going to do this by using the social graph in the same way our users do.'(Hof 2006)

With the site becoming more popular and in demand there will be brands competing with one another in a bid to gain the most attention and generate response from their targeted consumers.

The question is how effective will this form of advertising become and how do brands establish strong relationships with consumers amongst the fast moving activity upon the site?

'kopytoff (1986) states "Brands establish relationships with and among people. These relationships leave room for the consumers who participate in the social lives of brands to construct a private and emotional realm around those brands and to create potent stories about their unique relationships with some of the brands they purchase" (Crosswaite 2006)

2.6 Activity present amongst these Networks

The networks allow the consumer to be in control, add content and interact. (According to Rutherford 2007) Users are in control of the activity amongst the network which can be seen as having power over brands. Instead of telling consumers what to do and how to do it, relating back to the Strong theory they are being able to voice their own opinions with one another and be regarded as valuable. Facebook lets members discuss just about anything, from broadcasting what you have had for your dinner, to discussing the latest model of mobile phone.

'These characteristics personal content, user engagement, social relationships, and group dynamics differentiate social media from conventional mass media.' (Moriarty et al 2009:343)

Advertising flyer ads are available along the side of profile pages and constantly change to gain attention, however most people filter these out as they wish to pay more attention to the conversations they have with one another.

The most interesting and interactive way of Advertising on this network is through Applications and Fan pages, which can be added to your page, 'offering to add increased value, user involvement and facilitate connectivity between the member networks in content creativity.' (Page;2008)

These applications are seen as a creative way of pulling people in and generating attention.

'Branded application, brand pages and videos are great pull marketing techniques, but when coupled with an e-mail newsletter sign-up facility or TV advert, brands can strike a balance between pull and push marketing to suit the social platforms.' (Heuvel, 2008 cited in Gohad)

An application that was recently successful was My Starbucks', which was developed to enable members to choose their favourite coffee and place it on their own personal page. This proved to be a clever way of drawing attention to the brand entertainingly but also encouraging brand loyal customers to step forward and show their support. This was also linked with 'My Starbucks Idea' which allowed users to submit their suggestions and opinions.

'Starbucks Asks for Your Advice - Making your customers feel like they're part of the process builds brand loyalty through a sense of co-ownership' (Snowblog 2009)

2.7 The power of Word -of- Mouth

Activity upon the social network encourages word of mouth which is considerably one of the most effective ways of spreading brand awareness.

Peer opinion is most essential to active consumers in today's community, as people thrive to exchange information with one another and gain reassurance.

'Present day society in the developed Western countries is sometimes termed an 'information society', this means that it is characterised by the production, diffusion and consumption of information, in all shapes and sizes.' (Franzen 1994:9)

With members in one confined area constantly generating discussion this (WOM) technique can spiral in the space of seconds.

"Social actions are powerful because they act as trusted referrals and reinforce that people influence people" said Zukerberg. (Hof 2006)

For example if a 'friend' posts a link to a music gig and it appeals to one other person, the message starts to be pushed forward. This then becomes visible in the news feed, generating more attention, eventually the information may pass so far that a snowball effect is generated.

'The real key to starting this word of mouth traffic avalanche is creating unique and interesting or extremely useful content. Nobody bothers to forward boring links to one another.' (McDougall 2006:54) However brands have no control over what is

visible on these pages and if a mass amount of adverts are posted, more clutter is generated making it harder to identify one advert in particular.

There needs to be a right approach and creating problems for users on the site will only cause disruption.

'Every company does have a reputation or image and every day people talk about the company, its products and its services. This talk adds a little or subtracts a little from the reputation day by day, a hidden spontaneous, unsystematic network of talk is either eroding or building the company image.' (Wilson:1994, 8)

It appears that friend's recommendations have become crucial and with encouraging discussion amongst this area, the reliance on what others think becomes unavoidable.

'According to a survey conducted by eMarketer (2008) consumers tend to consult a friend or rely on previous experiences prior to making a decision about a certain purchase.

The survey reveals that 76% of consumers depend on friend's recommendation before buying a product,'

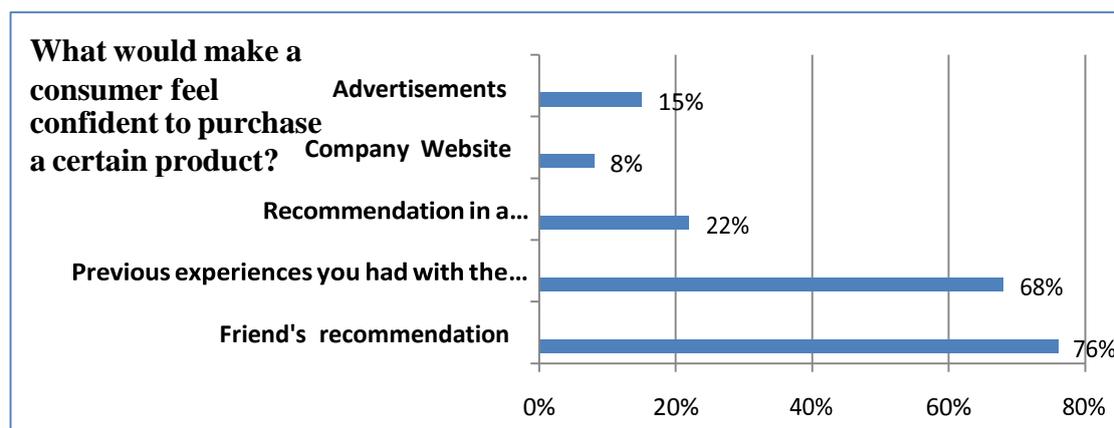


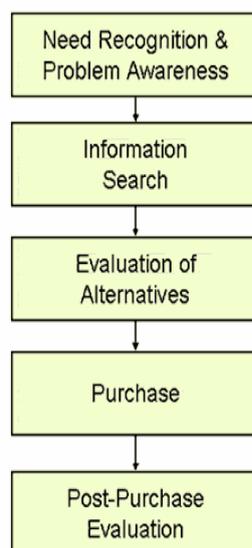
Fig: 6 Factors influencing consumers purchasing decision, eMarketer (2008)

(Gohad 2008)

The theory shows that the power of word of mouth is most definitely strong within social networks, with the talk factor being significantly impressionable towards brands. 'Talk is not passive uncontrollable, amorphous intangible but a measurable, collectible, manageable commodity that can move results to the bottom line like any other marketing tool' (Wilson 1994:9) Taking this information we are able to see that

decisions people make are heavily influenced by others that are close to them in this network.

2.8 Decision making process and Facebook



(Decision making process, tutor2u)

The decision making process demonstrates that we go through different stages before we make an overall purchasing decision. We are influenced by others around us and in the case of Facebook, peer opinion can count for all.

At the stage of information collection, the activity amongst the Social networking site generates spiralling discussion allowing people to exchange information at a high level.

‘There are no secrets. The Networked market knows more than companies do about their own products. And whether this news is good or bad, they tell everyone.’ (Hillman 2009)

There is also a situation of evaluation of alternatives if someone recommends another product rather than the one that you had in mind, this can affect the overall purchasing decision.

Brands have no control over what happens at these stages and the outcome of advertising within social space is not always what was hoped for.

2.9 The positive and negative Outcomes

Addressing the right people, in the right concept can show positive results for organisations.

Dell Inc, one of the most highly recommended computer manufactures was struggling in the market back in 2006, as they saw a heavy decrease in shares after facing competition from other brands such as Hewlett Packard. To regain strength they decided to employ Federated Media (social Media marketing agency) to devise a creative application on Facebook. Dell had decided to win back most valuable customers by devising a Regeneration Graffiti contest. This enabled users to devise art work that would be used in their next campaign. Incentives were put forward as an award so that the winner would receive a Dell product. The results showed, '1.1 million people voted on their favourite illustration, 7,300 people entered a submission, the contest has almost 1,300 friends, and there are currently 209 comments to the post at ReGeneration.org announcing the winners.' (Taylor: 2008)

With such a high response rate Dell gained the mass attention intended for and consumers were happy to do something for the brand if they were rewarded for it.

'Unlike most marketing campaigns that deploy heavy ads, fake viral videos, or message bombardment, this campaign let go to gain more. Overall, this is a successful campaign as they turned the action over to the community, let them take charge, decide on the winners, all under the context of the regeneration campaign.' (Owyang 2008),

Brands that interact with their target audience through Facebook will also receive important Feedback which is something Marmite discovered through their clever approach.

'Marmite has created a branded group on Facebook that asks members to declare their love or hatred for the brand, and invites them to suggest how the product could be improved.' (Campaign2008)

Gaining response in this format is less time consuming, easily constructed and decreases expenditure. This was a powerful way of gathering useful feedback and

encouraging Word of Mouth. Applying this to the weak theory, Marmite nudged their consumers to voice their opinion which enabled them to gather necessary feedback. Without invading people privacy, they cut through the clutter tactfully.

‘social networking sites can add value and generate revenues through advertising, subscription, and transaction models, (Enders et al, 2008) identified the number of users, their willingness to pay, and their trust in peers and the platform as the key value drivers.’ (Page 2008)

However there are dangers of clever campaigns having the opposite effect to how you wish, New Media Age editor Justin Pearse said:

"On the internet you often have little control of where your ads are shown, something that's been highlighted by the unwitting association of some of the UK's favourite brands with a highly controversial political cause."

‘Companies withdrew advertisements from Facebook after they appeared on a British national Party page, these companies included major chains such as Vodafone and Virgin media, whom said they needed to ‘protect their brand’ (BBC, 2007)

This proves that well known, popular brands have experienced negative effects as their good intentions have fallen back on them.

‘Cova and Cova warned, online groups are very different from those in the offline world. Their behaviour is active, resistant. If we are learning anything in the digital arena, it is that it may be dangerous to talk simply of herds, because those brands that are succeeding in this space are not those that try to herd, but those that give consumers reasons to rally together as active packs.’ (Morning 2008)

Burger King was also a company that experienced negative response as they devised a clever campaign to introduce their new ‘whopper’, but it didn’t quite get the response it was looking for. The popular Fast food brand asked Facebook users to de friend ten people in exchange for a free whopper.

The application raised interest but within a short period of time it started to appear incredibly intrusive, being unable to meet the user’s expectations and was therefore removed.

“Facebook has disabled Whopper Sacrifice after your love for the Whopper sandwich proved to be stronger than 233,906 friendships.” (LaVallee :2009)

Although this is seen as an example of companies trying to push their way through the clutter it can also be a result of bad advertising and ineffective targeting.

'If you deliver value, people will get involved ... If you go over and above what people expect and create super satisfaction amongst the right people, that's when you generate advocacy.' (James 2008)

It only takes one person to pass on negative vibes about a brand to create damaging effects and It is not necessarily how well brands construct messages and deliver them accordingly, it can be a case of who they target first, in what way and how this message is passed on.

Market research has shown that it can be suggested we are not individuals within the decision making process, 'Mark Earls states that 'we are who we are and do what we do as a herd not as individuals.' (Mackay 2005:32)

'Earls asserted that humans have an innate herding instinct; that as individuals we gravitate towards behaviours dictated by the wider group, following the crowd as it were,' there is much evidence that the latent desire to herd is as strong in our online environment as the it is offline. (Morning 2008)

2.10 The behaviour of users of Social Networks

There have always been patterns in society and we are all said to be influenced by one another which can then be seen as acting like a 'tribe' (Cova 2002, 2006) which insists on the primary importance, self selecting 'tribes' in which consumers live out their lives. Marketing here is largely a supportive function to the social interactions that underpin the growth and development of the community of interest.' (Earls 2007)

This could imply that for advertising to stand out and be relevant to us, it may need to capture the attention of an 'opinion leader' making a positive impression for then the recommendation is passed on.

'Malcom Gladwell (2000) identifies a type of opinion leaders 'Market Mavens' and the others being the connectors.'

Market Mavens are innovators, these are people that have an interest in buying and utilisation, being familiar with certain products and actively searching for new ideas. Connectors are there for the people who source the information they need by

communication and standing by Mavens, they then spread the word amongst their network of friends.

In terms of Facebook we could identify the people setting up fan pages and new applications as Market mavens as they set the platform of Interest and stimulate brand choice. Those who pick up on this and follow are Connectors.

‘There are a small number of individuals who have a very large circle of contacts, crossing different communities and walks of life and this is not by chance (Gladwell 2000, cited in Oxley & Nancarrow 2002)

The persuasion through this technique is simply to encourage friends to stay in with the social circle, relating to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and suggests successful targeting means targeting the right people.

‘The underlying behaviours seen in personal spaces may not be as new as many believe. Our research shows that these behaviours are essentially manifestations of a relatively small number of deep seated human needs; for personal recognition and to express individuality or creativity; to belong; to form relationships.’ (Vogt & Knapman 2008)

It is also quite right to say that today’s consumers have become more ‘active’ than passive as Smith (1999) states,

“We talk of impacts as if the advertising message was the dominant element, making its mark on a passive individual. The reality is very different, with the considerations which an individual brings to any contact with an advertisement playing the dominant role.” (McDonald 1992; 98)

2.91 Summary

Through researching and finding theoretical opinion from professional bodies recognisably Facebook is a growing area for all organisations to participate in, we can define it as being like an 'elephant in the room' which proves difficult to ignore.

'The social web can actually provide much deeper and more interesting connections for customers and companies than simply being a marketing channel - it ties into the entire product lifecycle.' (Strauss, 2009)

Public relations have also seen the benefits of using social networks as a way of communicating with their audiences. The credible CIPR updated their guidelines to include social media.

'Social Media allows a two way relationship between PR and consumers which Emma Peacock said provides an opportunity to put communications more centrally within business.' (Profile 2009: 70)

However it is important to understand what works well amongst this particular audience and how it is working to enable correct response for a brand.

'A 2008 study performed by IDC found that 43% of social network users *never* clicked on ads, and only 11% of those who did click actually purchased anything. Compare that to nonusers, 80% of whom clicked on ads at least once per year; 23% of those who did click bought something' (Social Networking 2009)

From the written evidence we can see that some brands are using the new medium to their advantage, and as for others it is proving to be an unsuccessful route.

Guy Kawasaki world's foremost technology blogger is well placed to discuss how business will communicate in the future, and he thinks Facebook (among other social networking sites) will be the way forward' (Matthews 2007)

There needs to be more in depth analysis into how companies approach their target audience before devising ideas to put forward within the Social Network.

Mainly when processing information companies have to ensure they take the right steps to monitor their progress with the main concerns being presented by 'Mc Cauley' (Global Consumer Planning director at Diego)

ABCD model of advertising evaluation,

- Affect on behaviour,
- Branded memorability,
- Communications,
- Diagnostics.

(Aitchison 2009)

Applying this to the Social networking system of Facebook, we can see that it is a new innovative area of advertising for companies and that facts and figures show that it is a site popular amongst many. However it is difficult to see if people's behaviour is changing because of it, whether brands are becoming stronger in the consumers mind and if the messages delivered are strong, clear and emotionally adapted. If the platform is working in this way then it should be analysed and constantly updated.

The main questions that arise from the proposed Literature and can be researched further are,

What works well in gaining attention within this area without disturbing the regular social activity? And,

Is there something that users particularly perceive as engaging amongst the social networking site that helps adverts become successful?

3.1 Methodology

In order to obtain the answers to questions raised within the Literature, it is necessary to carry out primary research to enable the Author to gain new findings which give thorough support to the analysis.

'Research is a structured inquiry that utilises acceptable scientific methodology to solve problems and creates new knowledge that is generally applicable.'(Grinnel 1993:4 cited in Kumar: 6)

There is no doubt that as a platform for advertising and marketing, Facebook is presenting positive results for some organisations and rather negative for others.

Following this there needed to be an understanding of what people are paying attention to on the site and how this is standing out to them amongst a cluttered environment.

The regular users of Facebook were targeted and asked a selection of questions that enabled the researcher to gain an insight into what was actually standing out apart from the conversation with friends.

A range of methods were used to collect the response needed, this meant that more in depth research could be carried out to obtain accurate and trustworthy results. Using more than one method is referred to as 'Triangulation.'

'The term is borrowed from land surveying, and means simply that you get a better view of things by looking at them from more than one direction.' Using triangulation involves combining quantitative and Qualitative methods in order to check on the accuracy of the data gathered by each method.' (Mcneill & Chapman 1985)

Both Qualitative and Quantitative Methods proved valuable to this research as specific facts and figures needed to be obtained along with elaborate answers.

Qualitative however was beneficial to this study as people's perceptions of Facebook needed to be closely analysed to enable critical analysis.

'Researchers adopting a qualitative perspective are more concerned to understand Individuals' perceptions of the world. They seek insight rather than statistical analysis.' (Bell:6)

3.2 Method 1: Questionnaire

The Author's first method of gathering primary research was in the form of an electronic survey which was sent out virally to reach a mass audience.

Using the Internet as a way of feeding out this questionnaire proved to be an encouraging choice as participants were able to remain anonymous and relaxed without being under pressure. The Internet also has a shorter response rate according to (Sauders et al 2007:6) of 2-6 weeks instead of the traditional method of posting them out which has a response rate of 4-8 weeks.

The questionnaire was constructed through surveymonkey.com as this proved to be an easy and well structured format. As the target audience was users of Facebook it made complete sense to post a link to the questionnaire upon the Authors personal profile.

The questionnaire that was constructed included a range of open and closed questions in order to gather specific and tailored answers as well as detailed personal opinion.

However some of the respondents tended to provide long winded answers that strayed away from the direction intended, meaning there was almost too much in one answer to enable the researcher to detect specific points that were made. The amount of respondents to the questions was rather lower than expected and there could have been genuine reasons for this. The message sent out may have appeared to look like 'spam' with people being weary of opening the link, or that the volume of competing researchers probing for feedback at this time was marginally high.

Therefore when constructing this method of research again it would make sense to create hard copies, this avoids competing with other researchers using electronic forms and it also gives participants an option to hand write.

3.3 Method 2: Focus group

As the Information gathered from the questionnaires was slightly sceptical in sections, a Focus group was an appealing option to encourage in depth and detailed conversation on the chosen topic.

'Focus groups have been used for some years now in market research and have recently become more popular with sociologists, although Cohen and Taylor (1972) used group interviews in their study of long term prisoners in the maximum security wing of a British prison' (Mcneill and Chapman 1985)

The group included eight people with four of each gender, female/male which enabled an unbiased response. This mix also enabled the researcher to note whether male opinion differed greatly from female.

A script of questions was constructed beforehand and referred to in attempt to gain precise feedback. The facilitator encouraged the respondents to explore their own attitudes and experiences of Facebook and discuss them freely. At the end of the questions participants were shown print shots of adverts taken from the facebook site and asked which one stood out to them the most.

With the discussion running smoothly and most people engaging in the topic, this activity provided answers that were interesting and most relevant.

Validity and reliability

Overall this method proved to be a very sufficient and manageable experience and gave useful formula to work from. Most of the information obtained from this focus group supported that which was previously acquired from the questionnaires.

However minor issues did arise, as the males in the group were rather more confident than the females which led to them speaking up over others and making them feel unconfident in adding opinion.

It was also very difficult to keep the conversation specific to the answers as respondents tended to stray away from this and bring up irrelevant details.

3.4 Method 3: Interview with PR assistant from Mywardrobe.com

As well as speaking to users of Facebook it appeared beneficial to receive Information from a company whom carry out advertising on the site. This however proved rather difficult as many companies are either too busy or prefer not to disclose personal Information.

With persuasion a representative from the Public relations team at Mywardrobe.com agreed to comment, giving a brief overview of how the performance of how Facebook had worked for them so far.

My wardrobe is an online retailer which specialises in designer clothes, their products are classed as expensive and top of the range compared to other online retail.

The Interview was in a structured format and set questions for the respondent to answer were created. This made it adequate to gain the exact information required and as the questions constructed were sent via email they needed to appear clear and concise to avoid any confusion.

After sending the email to Frankie a response was given two days later which proved to be extremely quick.

During the stages carried out to gain the research Validity and Trustworthiness was checked to ensure that all the material obtained can be used to the researchers advantage.

'According to Merriam (1994) Validity and reliability are important factors that must be taken into account when writing scientific research or dissertations. It is important that the result from a research is valid and reliable for the result a conclusion to have effect in reality.'

Limitations

The research carried out within this study was based on a small scale due to insufficient resources. Therefore it was to be investigated further; a wider scale would prove to be more beneficial in gaining a larger response.

It also proved difficult in gaining response from organisations involved with Facebook which lead to complications for the researcher when trying to obtain two different viewpoints in the study.

Ethics

The researcher considered ethical issues within the research process and all the data collected was controlled. None of the participants were harmed or offended in anyway.

Results and Analysis

Results and Findings from the questionnaire

Once the online survey was completed and a sufficient amount of response was obtained, the results were tabulated into graphs, showing clear findings.

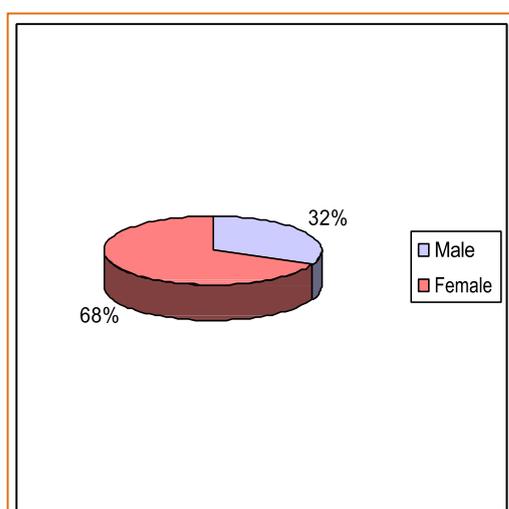
The first two questions were straight forward closed questions based on age and gender, but it enabled the researcher to see who the main target audience and frequent users of the social medium were.

The pie charts below show a large percentage of females being 68% compared to the 32% of male responders, this indicating that females spend more time on the network. Although according to Mintel reports (2008) there was an equal percentage of 44% female and male aged 16+ using the site, which therefore leads to the impression that the male users avoided answering the questions.

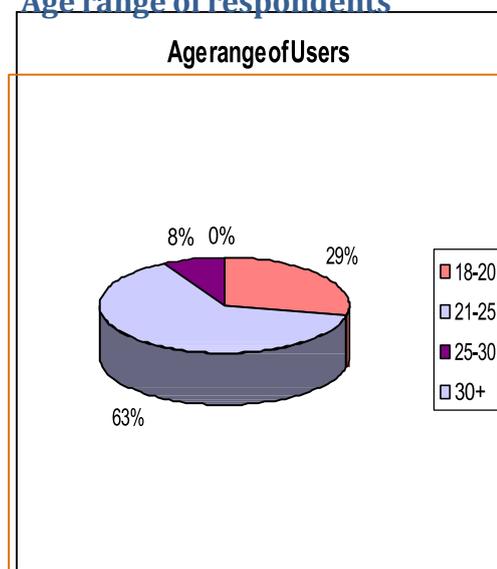
The age range also showed a particular pattern amongst the 21-25 year old bracket, and very little response from the 30+, which was predictable considering the target audience, was originally set to be younger.

4.1 Demographic answers from questionnaire.

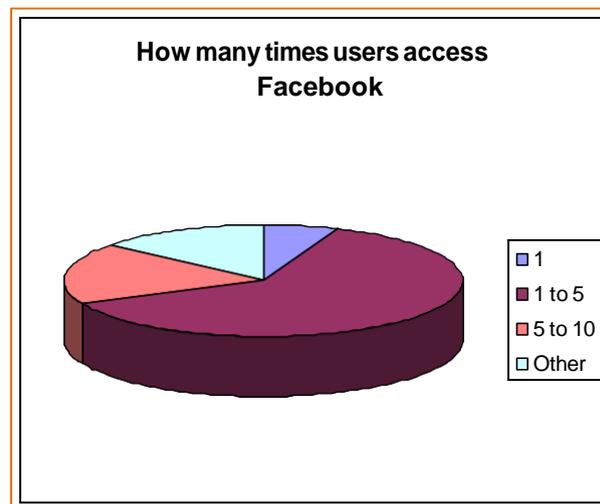
Gender of Respondents



Age range of respondents



4.2 Question 3, How many times a day do you access Facebook?



Just over half of the respondents said that they access Facebook one to five times a day which interestingly suggested that social networking sites have been incorporated into the daily routine. We are able to acknowledge the fact that this implies online media has vastly grown and people are opting to use it to obtain information that is quick, convenient and easily accessible.

'They are perceived as offering the advantage of allowing members to send messages instantly to a wide circle of people, in a way that is cheaper and easier than other competing channels of communication.' (Whiteside 2008)

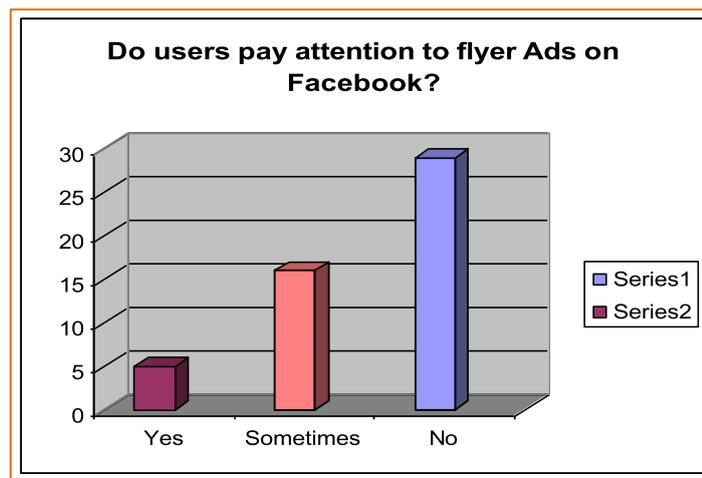
With brands aiming to target their consumers on a regular basis this area may prove to be a valuable choice, helping to generate a 'mental presence' which Moran (1990) describes as the result of the sum of the received and registered communicative stimuli relating to a brand, both quantitatively and qualitatively.' (Franzen, 1994 :161)

The more we are exposed to a brand the more we are likely to remember it, after numerous exposures to the advert, Top of the mind awareness will eventually be achieved.

'Repeat purchase products, may work by involving people with the brand, and that this involvement becomes 'logged' in the long term memory' (McDonald 1992: 134)

This supports brand Salience which was mentioned previously in the Secondary research.

4.3 Question 4 Do users pay attention to flyer ads?



The majority of the respondents said they did not pay attention to this form of advertising which is amongst the profile pages. Some of the reasons being,

- "They are never of any interest to me "
- "The adverts look untrustworthy and dishonest"
- "I only go on Facebook to socialise with friends"
- "They just get in the way and do not have a relevant purpose"

We can see from the feedback that the adverts which appear less engaging and rather simple have a very limited effect on the audience. There is no 'likability' as 'Biel and Bridgewater's (1990) analysis revealed that the most important factor for ad-likeability is meaningfulness. And that tallies with the correlation with aided recall, which had been established years before by both wells and Baucer.' (Franzen, 1994:143)

If there is not any information present which is relevant to the viewer or it is simply meaningless then it becomes screened out, giving the adverts very little chance of cutting through the clutter and creating any action.

Communication behind these adverts will need to be persuasive in obtaining response from users, however if they do not appear worthy of attention this will not be achieved.

'The level of attention is important, but an insufficient condition for effectiveness. What matters is attention plus persuasive communication,' (Franzen, 1994: 163)

These adverts need to be accepted in this area before they can provide successful communication. Referring back to the secondary research and how adverts that have no relevance to the target segment will be dismissed.

Trust has to be established before a message will be accepted and as comments from the questionnaire show, the overall image of these adverts does not present this trust.

The adverts maybe simply too obvious, where as using,

'teaser surreal and puzzle advertising, (by sending incomplete or obscure messages) to arouse involvement and discussion amongst target audiences.' (Smith 2002:80) would create more discussion.

Peter Cunningham (International Business Development Director at Wasabi) supports this finding by stating'

"The general consensus is that a social network is where people come to meet with their friends and that interruption advertising is unwelcome. Traditional interruption marketing techniques such as banner ads have not worked well as seen by the very low CPMs that are paid for advertising banners on social networks – basically users don't read and don't click." (LinkedIn)

4.4 Question 5,6 and 7

The next two questions following on from this related to Facebook applications, including fan pages and appreciation groups. Users were asked whether they were members of any groups or brand appreciation groups and what their overall thoughts of these were.

The majority of people answered yes, to having joined several groups and found the applications entertaining.

Examples of response given,

“Applications are a fun way of interacting with companies, if you get updated about products or seasonal offers for a particular brand, you feel personally approached.”

“They are a way of expressing yourself, just like we used to stick Take That stickers on our pencil cases at school.”

“The good ones look and feel like adverts”

“They are useful if you wish to find information about a product you love.

“They can be irritating when they bombard you with too much.”

Analysing the reaction to this question clearly shows that the applications are a more favourable option to advertising, rather than flyer ads that create a negative ambience. We can see that people find them more appealing as they are engaging and somewhat alluring.

As suggested that these applications take a personal approach and simply entertain as well as giving out the relevant message. This form of advertising is tactful as it simply asks for a response and an audience can choose whether or not they wish to be involved with a particular product. In this generation consumers are perceived to be more active than passive preferring this approach.

Stimuli within adverts can arouse emotional or behavioural response, implying this is a factor of the applications, as they appear to establish a connection with the consumer. Arousal needs to occur such as children being aroused by the jingle of an 'ice cream van' or coca cola's 'I'd like to teach the world to sing' (Smith 2002:105)

Respondents were also asked if they found these applications Intrusive and off putting, 'To get through the screen and be notice, advertisements must 'intrude' in the sense that there is something about them to attract attention.'(McDonald 1992:99)

Answers from this question suggested that they could be if they were not structured correctly. As krugman states 'structure in the stimulus elicits structure in the response.' (McDonald, 1992: 133)

Some of the answers collated

- "The dead dog advert is a bit shocking"
- "They are Intrusive as they get your details to see what you are particularly interested in"
- "Not really intrusive just a little bit pointless."
- "They sometimes cover the chat box, invading privacy and interrupting the conversations present."

When an adverts becomes visible within inconvenient times it can create negative vibes leading to an audience choosing to ignore it or disregard it as being worthy of attention. It is impossible to monitor the attitudes of these people in this area at one time.

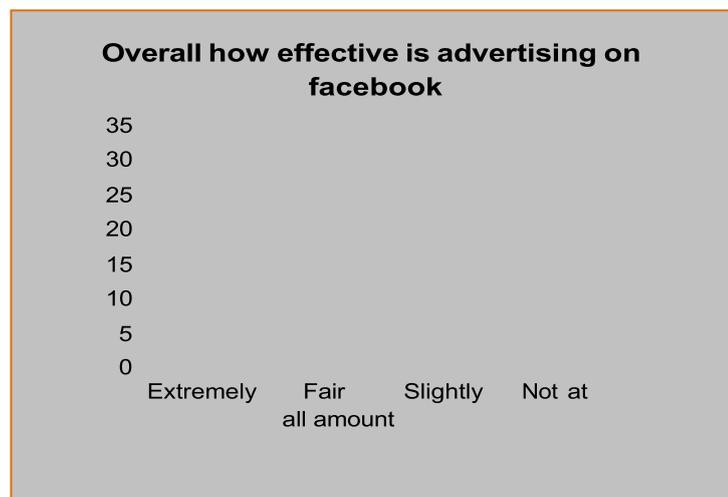
4.5 Question 8 Have you ever purchased or used a service after it has been advertised on Facebook?

The overall answer to this question was no, however a few of the respondents did say they were reminded of products such as the Cadbury's Wispa chocolate bar and online retail stores such as ASOS.

- "I have from a friend's recommendations but not the general advertising"
- "Friends have sent me links to dress websites etc which I can access straight away."
- I have bought something that a friend has recommended when talking to them but never something that I have seen on Facebook. Although the Facebook group did bring to my attention that Wispa's were back - and I did buy one from boots when I next saw it.

From this response the importance of peer recommendation is obvious as through many conversations on a day to day basis, brands are discussed subconsciously. The advertising on Facebook appears to be nudging consumers to purchase, agreeing with the 'weak theory'.

4.6 Question 9 How effective would you say advertising on Facebook is?



The majority of people responded to this question with the answer, 'slightly effective' which shows that people are aware of deliberate advertising on Facebook but are not always willing to absorb the information present. There seems to be gaps in the communication process. Maybe there is too much taking place in this one area adding to the clutter. It could also be that organisations are trying very hard to capture attention at the wrong time and misjudging their audience's attitude.

If these adverts interfere with personal conversations and activity then users will most definitely not appreciate or support being targeted in this way.

4.7 Focus Group Results

The results collated from the focus group highlight specific variables that can determine how well an advert is perceived by the audience.

There proved to be a mixed response from participants but the majority said that they were not fond of being bombarded with adverts that are not relevant to them or appear dull and untrustworthy. Flyer ads in particular are wasted as they are more or less filtered out with gaining very little consumer motivation.

Referring to cognitive dissonance 'Information which is inconsistent with the existing pattern will be rejected, while anything reinforcing it will be welcomed.' (Mackay 2005;37)

Links to sites such as Youtube and music sites seemed to be a recurring favourite amongst users as this being a service that appeals to them and provides entertainment.

Supporting the fact that an audience has to be motivated in engaging with a brand or service, it has to provide meaning or entertain.

EMarketer (2009) research supports this finding by stating that 'younger audiences were more interested in special offers, exclusive information and entertainment value. For ads to resonate with younger baby boomers, they needed to be more relevant and useful.'

There was a consistency throughout the results that showed people are not encouraged to purchase through Facebook, however the majority maybe reminded of products throughout the day, leading to a subconscious purchase decision. For example a Starbucks latte, may appear in the consumers mind if they are looking to for fill a psychological need.

This could prove that brands should place their products in front of consumers at more appropriate times to derive into this conscious mind at the correct moment.

A couple of the respondents mentioned becoming frustrated with being sent messages that were trying to get them to participate in a particular event or become part of a brand group. They said they would much prefer to choose what they are part of rather than have it enforced upon them.

However Peer recommendation was apparent when asking these questions as a couple of the respondents said they would click on a link to an advert or a service if it was sent by a friend, with similar interests to them.

Brands need to chose the right niche, hold relevance, avoid wastage and encourage Feedback

'In young markets consumers are unfamiliar with the product and it's key attributes. Therefore they are less efficient at assimilating key ad information into memory.' (kitchen et al. 2005: 49)

At the end of the questions participants were shown three examples of adverts that appear in the social medium. The facilitator asked them which one appeared the most appealing; the majority chose the Ad that said 'Free stuff', which implies that consumers are still motivated by incentives and intrigued to see what they can obtain from certain offers.

4.8 Response from Press assistant 'Frankie Hales' at Mywardrobe.com

As well as receiving response from the users within the social networks, the researcher found it valuable to receive a different view point, thus being from an organisation who advertises within it. Mywardrobe.com is an online retailer that sells a variety of designer clothing which varies in price, although the majority of it is at a higher price. The advertising they use amongst Facebook is of free form, setting up fan pages and appreciation groups to raise awareness of their site.

From the Interview Frankie stated that online media was the main focus for Mywardrobe.com right now to spread the word across a mass audience. There coverage is increasing year on year. Since launching a group on Facebook their traffic has grown by 64.74% with visits increasing vastly from October 08 to January 09. The main point Frankie maid was that the group helps to spread the word about discounts and certain promotions, pushing word-of-mouth and hopefully encouraging people to visit the site and have a look for themselves.

This response supports the fact that consumers are fond of being updated and informed about any brand offers, especially if they are loyal. Making them feel closely linked to the brand and progressively more involved.

See appendix for Interview response.

Sending out messages from the organisation within Facebook supports an integrated communications mix, making sure that more people are being reached in all possible ways.

5.1 Conclusion

In this final Chapter the Author will pull together the analysis of the results in the previous chapter and come to an overall conclusion of what has been found out and how this reflects that of the Secondary research. Further research recommendations will also be acknowledged.

We can see that social media is definitely an emerging and growing area for advertising and marketing but more attention to the approach is needed. "The best a brand can do is simply get involved and experiment, revising and rethinking as it goes." (Nutley cited in Marcus 2008)

It seems that experimentation is in place at the present time and many organisations are reaping benefits where as others are failing to engage correctly with their supposed audience.

Emily Riley a senior analyst with forester consulting states,

"We're still in the early days of this new medium. We're all still collecting ideas. But it is absolutely clear that it won't be long before social networking sites become the new portals. And that means that marketers must start experimenting with it today." (Precourt 2009)

The main point that appears obvious from the research and analysis is that the adverts within the Social Networking site Facebook are more likely to be effective if they interact with their segmented audience. They have to hold relevance and be of particular interest to the viewer, if they fail to do so, selective perception, will most definitely occur and they then become screened out. This relates back to 'likability' and how it is important that the adverts do not cause irritation.

Instead of cluttering the pages with advertisements a more appropriate way of establishing a relationship with potential consumers would be to take a step back. Giving users the empowerment of being able to choose what they want to be a part of and how they wish to be involved. If any form of advertising disturbs the main activity on Facebook, It will create disruption and users are more likely to turn away from the proposed stimuli.

'So often in the social media sphere, the big brands fall flat on their face, engaging when consumers don't want their engagement and playing in a media sphere that they have nothing to add to. This is partly due to the fact that brands are inherently boring and partly due to the fact that social media unleashes the more meritocracies of all meritocracies' (Adage, 2008)

Flyer adverts in this social area are essentially a waste of time and effort as most people have made it clear that they do not pay attention to them and find it easier to filter them out than actually click to view. Recognisably they are simply adding to the clutter.

This may reinforce the fact that the current generation seeks more information, 'being active' and prefers an innovative way of being able to communicate. Therefore the advertising has to be invigorating before it can become of any value and have the ability to gain the attention intended for.

'It has no value at all unless the recipient chooses to give it one,' (McDonald 1992:98)

Creating a bright colourful advert may look appealing but it is rather to do with the clever communication process behind the brand itself.

"If you're going to build a community, don't centre it around your product, but rather on something deeply relevant to a particular consumer group," said eMarketer CEO Geoff Ramsey. He also suggested keeping fans of your brand pages happy by giving them a lot of content and letting them share the love with others.' (EMarketer; 2009)

From a brand perspective Facebook seeks to remain a successful promotional tool, as special offers are greatly appreciated by users. Once these offers are recognised they are passed on from one to another generating word of mouth action.

Advertising within this medium is adding to brand salience as research showed that consumers sub consciously appear to be taking an interest in products that have been recommended to them by friends in the social circle. Supporting this Gerald Zaltman of Harvard Business school found that "95 percent of our purchase decision making takes place in the subconscious mind" (Aitchison 2009)

Also the media hype generated from campaigns such as Wispa helps in creating "Top of the mind awareness.'

During the process of carrying out this study, Facebook decided to change their overall layout, making brands such as Coca Cola into personal profiles. This was a way of

varying the appearance of advertising on Facebook and optimistically establishing more of a connection with the users.

“Perhaps this is the real challenge whether Facebook gets a face lift or continues “status Quo” Are we as marketers, brand managers, and social media consultants, opening the dialogue or engaging the “fans” in a conversation, or are we just advertising?” (Berkowitz: 2009)

However since the launch of the new layout a vast amount of people have stressed their un acceptance of the change, it has caused a lot of upset for the majority of the users, and acting like a ‘tribe’ they have grouped together and formed a partition against Facebook’s recent decision.

With over one million people speaking out about their disagreement with the page;

- “It is too cluttered and I struggle to see what is happening with my friends”
- “yeah, it’s way too complicated and confusing”
- “Thank GOD I found the little button that says, "go back to the Old FB!" Thank GOD!”

People are not always reluctant to change and the new design made users feel uncomfortable whilst on the site meaning acceptance of the layout was not granted.

This can create implications for advertisers as they struggle to put their messages across. Within this area recipients will simply feel irritated and chose to ignore them, where as a pleased and relaxed audience will be more inclined to absorb the message. ‘Brown also stresses the importance of people being in the right mood for receiving advertising ‘(McDonald 1992:101)

As proposed in the literature, behaviour within this site is very much influenced by one another and capturing the attention of the dominant opinion leaders is more than likely to push forward the message. “These are people whose WOM and/or behavioural in the adoption process is seen as crucial. They are agents of change,’ (Oxley & Nancarrow 2002: 3)

It is clear to say that anything projected forward in front of the viewers has to be carefully controlled as it can be a vicious area for negative feedback. Brands should plan and think very carefully before entering the social world as they need to be tactful as well as differentiating themselves from others to stand out amongst the clutter.

With the present economic crisis marketing and advertising budgets have been cut, turning social media which was viewed as a “budget” focus into “areas of interest” (Precourt 2009). The platform provides the basis for innovative ideas at a lower cost.

‘Facebook insists that social graphs (relationships amongst members) hold tremendous value for advertisers. But unlocking that value requires advertisers to dream up new ways of interacting with customers- basically, to invent a new kind of advertising.’ (Lyons, 2008)

There again if the approach is all wrong, the output could be costly and the relationship between a brand and its consumers will become weak meaning that in the long term this could create implications within the communication process rather than supporting it.

5.1 Recommendations

Following on from this study it would prove useful to carry out an investigation into what users are actually looking for from the social Networking sphere, as many participants from the primary research spoke openly about what they didn’t like to see but suggestions on what they would prefer were unidentified.

Organisations should be asking more questions tactfully to find out what works and what doesn’t before even entering the site and pushing adverts in front of people.

‘Theorists argue that interactive marketing and advertising techniques will not work unless practitioners “step into the shoes” of and approach the Internet from the consumer’s vantage point’ (Cross & Smith, 1997 cited in Rodgers & Thornson 2000)

Throughout the study there is regular recognition made that consumers are more active than passive which is commonly noted as new media has become increasingly popular.

However it could be that some of the users are more active than others as research showed participants had joined several ‘fan groups’ where as others were not interested at all. It would therefore be beneficial to research further, looking at whether the active members play a big role in influencing the more passive member’s within the decision making process.

From the primary research it was apparent that users would still pay attention to adverts if they offered incentives or a service that would benefit them.

An example of this technique is highlighted through Pizza Hut who devised a service application enabling their consumers to order food from their menu without even leaving the Facebook site.

"We are moving fast to put our online customers in charge - any way they want to order from us, we'll be there for them," said Bob Kraut, the chain's vice president of marketing communications.' (Beaumont 2008)

This direct response form of advertising proves to be eye-catching and maybe other brands such as Topshop and Oasis can try and come up with ideas, such as placing a buy it now option upon the product when placing themselves within the site. This may increase the chance of automatic response and purchase intent amongst users as it has definitely increased brand awareness for Pizza hut, enabling them to differentiate themselves amongst the clutter.

Bob Kraut, Pizza Hut: 'We're seeing thousands of new fans join the page each day. In the last month, we've gone from 700,000 fans to 750,000 fans, which makes us the largest restaurant fan page on Facebook.' (O'Neill 2009)

As well as working as a tool to send out company Information to the public, social media can be used as a corporate tool for organisations wishing to communicate efficiently with their internal staff.

'The more connected you are to your co-workers and clients without being intrusive, the better your working relationship.' (Sohn 2007)

At a time of a crisis this kind of conversation may save reputation which is something that CEO Bill Marriot found out after posting a blog response titles the 'Senseless Tragedy' stressing his compassion to families of the employees who had died during the deadly terrorist attack at the company's 480- room hotel in Islamabad. (Davies 2009)

Further studies may show whether this is beneficial for internal communications when brands are devising new ideas for campaigns, as having more people involved in the inside could affect how powerful the message is on the outside.

