Blurred Lines: Defining the Motives for Mobile and Social Media Use for Marketing Strategy

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Abstract

Research on social media continues to play a key role for firms and marketing professionals. Traditional marketing strategy relied on segmenting discrete target markets based on demographic, socio-economic, and geographic sectors. With the proliferation of mobile and social media technologies, those delineations become less clear. Mobile technology allows users to access information wherever they are, and social networking communities allow members to cross over into multiple socio-economic groups. Yet, for most organizations, the traditional methods of marketing and customer engagement remain the same. Review of the literature reveals multiple outcomes and inferences of what motivates social consumers to use mobile technologies and to actively participate on social media sites. A multi-faceted approach is critical for organizations seeking to capitalize on the ever-growing market of mobile and social media users.

Keywords: Social Media, Mobile Computing, Marketing, Strategy, and Motives

1. INTRODUCTION

As of 2014, mobile internet access officially surpassed desktop PC-based internet access (Bosomworth, 2015). This represents a significant paradigm shift. No longer are users tied to fixed locations or work desks to use the internet. They are able to login to a website from nearly any location. This change in how consumers get online represents a shift for how traditional marketing strategies must adjust for the revolution in consumer behavior.

There are approximately three billion Internet users or 42% of the global population. Daily internet use has more than doubled from two hours to 4.5 hours. The US population averages more than five hours online every day (Banks, 2015).

In order for marketers to devise effective strategic marketing plans, they must first understand who the social consumer is and how to properly segment their target markets. Traditional marketing segmenting involved demographic, socio-economic, and geographic

segments. The proliferation of mobile technologies and social media networks has blurred these lines. While the Marketing Mix often associated with the Four Ps of Marketing (price, product, promotion, place) (McCarthy, 1964) has been well-established in the classroom as well as in the field, there needs to be a consideration for a 5th P, participation (Tuten & Solomon, 2015).

Are marketing efforts aligning with how the consumer is participating in the mobile and social world? There needs to be a deeper understanding into how businesses and organizations interact with the social consumer (Solis, 2010). What is the engagement process with existing and potential customers? And does their mobile computing and social media participation behavior really matter?

What impact does a 93% mobile penetration rate (Tuten & Solomon, 2015) have on traditional marketing strategy? And further, how are firms adapting to the new mobile-dominated environment? Are marketers able to capitalize on the ubiquitous rise of social media? The purpose of this paper is to answer these questions by providing further insights into the motives and attitudes of the social consumer.

2. MOTIVES FOR MOBILE COMPUTING

Seven Motivators for Mobile Computing
In a benchmark study conducted by AOL and BBDO (2012), 1,000 mobile users were surveyed on their use of mobile computing and more than 600 of those participants agreed to have their internet activities monitored. What they found were seven mobile touchpoints or key motivators for the user.

The seven motivators are as follows:
1. Accomplishment: Users are seeking to manage their time to achieve a specific task.
2. Socialize: Users want to connect with other people.
3. Prepare: Users are planning and getting ready for future activities.
4. Me Time: Users are looking for leisure and entertainment.
5. Discover: Users are seeking to learn new things and expand their knowledge.
6. Shop: Users are focusing on locating and purchasing a product or service base on a perceived need.

7. Expression: Users are eager to share their passions and opinions (AOL-BBDO, 2012).

The 1,000 smart phone users were asked to provide survey responses for three different moments in which they utilized their devices. Additionally, the users' mobile computing activities were tracked and logged for 31 days with metering technology provided by Arbitron Mobile Oy (AOL-BBDO, 2012).

As shown in Figure 1, of the seven key motivators, the top three influencers to consumer mobile behavior are Me Time (46%), Socialize (19%), and Shop (12%). The bottom three are Expression (2%), Discover (4%), and Prepare (7%).
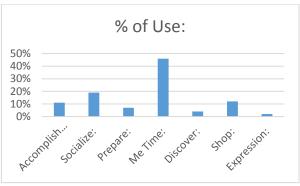

Figure 1

As shown in Figure 2, when recording how many minutes were spent for the 31 days, the top three influencers to consumer mobile behavior were Me Time (864 minutes), Socialize (410 minutes), and Accomplish (133 minutes). The bottom three are Expression (21 minutes), Discover (47 minutes), and Prepare (61 minutes).

Note the difference between percentage of use and minutes spent per month for the top three motivators. While the percentage of use had Shop (12%), the actual minutes spent had Accomplishment (133 minutes) ranked higher than Shop (126 minutes). One could argue, the more effective mobile shopper is actually faster than a novice mobile user, thus reducing the number of overall minutes spent shopping (HBR, 2013).
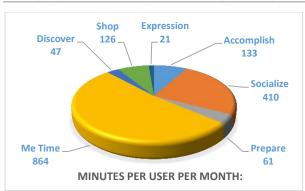
MINUTES PER USER PER MONTH:

Figure 2

The overwhelming finding is that for both minutes spent and percentage of actual mobile use, the leading motivator for mobile users is Me Time. Me Time can range from watching funny videos to playing games and relaxing to music.

At first glance it may appear that each of the seven motivators are distinct and result in discrete and unrelated usage. Further post-survey interviews revealed otherwise.

For instance when a mobile user is planning a trip and what to pack for vacation, they may check the local weather app for their destination. But post-survey interviews found that many users enjoy checking the weather of other locations in which they have no plans to visit. Mobile users may have dream vacation goals for Hawaii or Alaska, and checking the weather app becomes less of a utility to accomplish a task and more of a leisure activity for pleasure.

Similarly, when a mobile user orders dinner online, this is recorded under the Shop motivator. It is evident that the motive for ordering the pizza online is convenience, ease of use, and to save time in order to enjoy more relaxation time at home. What is even more remarkable is the same mobile application can fulfill different motivation needs at different times (AOL-BBDO, 2012). For instance Amazon.com might be used to look for a new floor lamp (Shop), read the reviews for a new computer (Prepare/Discover), to commiserate with other purchasers (Socialize) or to enjoy humorous reviews (Me Time) of Haribo Sugarless Gummy Bears (Rusch, 2014).

Traditional marketing strategy has been to focus on where consumers are spending their money. Retailers spend an exorbitant amount of time, money, and resources to capture the online shopping market (Reichheld, Markey, & Hopton, 2000). The online shopping experience is focused on providing utility, (e.g., buy more, check out quicker, etc.) but the users are not necessarily there to buy more and finish sooner. The user may be there to window shop and explore options for a new watch or to look at reviews for future purchases such as holiday and birthday gifts for grandchildren. Firms are not designing the user experience for "Me Time" rather they are trying to maximize the buy it now process. However, users are avoiding these buying prompts and creating hacks and work-a-rounds to get the relevant information they want without purchasing anything (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010).

3. MOTIVES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

Nearly two billion internet users are on at least one social networking site (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). As of the first quarter of 2015, there are a reported 1.44B active users (Statista, 2015) on Facebook, making it easily the most widely used social networking site. Interestingly, most users do not choose one single social media platform; rather they use several different sites for various communication purposes (Skeels & Grudin, 2009).

Aside from its ubiquity, social networks allow their members to join in the conversation and be a part of bigger whole. When participants are trying to connect with old high school friends or join the group discussion of a popular athlete's fan page, the motive to participate in social media is driven by what's known as the Affinity Impulse (Bernoff, 2008). Social media sites provide a method for users to feel a sense of inclusion and connection with the groups toward which they have an affinity.

Personal Utility
One of the most significant motivators for social media use is personal utility. Personal utility in this context would ask the question, what benefit or value does the user gain by using the social media site? Some of the personal uses include playing online social games, reading friends' status updates, sharing status updates, and consuming content. While these activities appear to lend themselves to achieving a connection to others (Cook, 2013), or are driven by an affinity impulse, however, Joinson (2008) suggests that "connecting" with friends on social media is more about surveillance and having the ability to observe others without prying or appearing intrusive. Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter allow users to see what other people are doing, how they look,

and where they are without the need for actual communication. For personal gratification, social consumers maintain social ties and keep up to date with distant relationships. What's interesting is that most of these relationships have already been established. Most users utilize social media to preserve existing friendships, rather than making new ones (Quan-Haase & Wellman, 2004).

Immediate Gratification

Closely related to personal utility is the need for immediate gratification. Social media communications are in real time. When users post status updates, comments, and share content, the website is updated without delay. The flexibility of social media communication allows for asynchronous communication; however the immediacy of the medium allows members to connect as if they were instant messaging or chatting. For example, the dramatic increase in the number of tweets when there is a national sporting event or significant news event suggests peoples' need to connect with other people in real time. As the users' level of comfort and self-efficacy increases, the need for immediate gratification increases. For some power users this need for immediate gratification can lead to addiction and the constant need to check status updates. For example, some have reported having an increasing need to check if someone has replied to a message or update. The need for immediate feedback and results has increased social consumers' dependence on social media sites (Mehdizadeh, 2010).

Social Pressure

A study conducted on how adolescents use and adopt social media found that online connections can be seen as an extension of offline connections (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). The findings from this study concur with social consumers' need for personal utility in that social media adoption and use is heavily weighted towards maintaining existing relationships rather than establishing new ones.

Network externalities also play a role in the spread of social media use and adoption. Similar to the fax machine, positive network effects raise the value for consumers as markets get larger (Lin & Lu, 2011). The more people that join a certain social network, the more other people see the value in joining that network. This is the crux of social media site survival. Indeed as most of the top social media sites have no subscription fee, they generate their revenue through targeted advertisements to a critical mass.

The primary method of economic viability is achieving an economy of scale. An increase in membership correlates to an increase in value of the social media site (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). While this is true for the social media site, this also has become true for the social consumer as well. As the network of personal relationships grows in its adoption of a certain technology, there is an increase in late adopters. Many respondents reported social pressure as a reason to start using social media sites (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Even further, there appears to be a migration from Facebook to other social media sites such as Instagram and Snapchat for the younger demographic (18-24) while the fastest growing segment for Facebook currently is seniors 65 years and older (Digital Information World, 2015). Before Facebook there was MySpace and Friendster, but those sites have since been dominated by other social media sites. The constant shifting and changing of social media platforms based on network externalities confirms social consumers need to adjust to social and peer pressure.

Validation Impulse

The need for validation leads people to share on social media so they can be recognized and approved by the social network. When social consumers share content or replies on social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs and discussion forums, they are not only providing information to answer an inquiry, but also establishing their persona as someone who is knowledgeable. When social consumers share content to their network, there is the personal benefit also known as "autarky value" and a second underlying value in sharing information with others for their approval (Liebowitz & Margolis, 1996).

Some researchers have found the constant need for external validation can lead to narcissism, while others have found it can also lead to sharing creative output and collaborative opportunities (Leung, 2013). Both motives are driven by the validation impulse. With social media celebrities and YouTube stars alike, there continues to be an inconsumable increase in the output of content from public figures to no name music video producers. There are over 300 hours of video uploaded to YouTube every minute (YouTube, 2015). The need for validation is a strong driver for social media content generation.

Curiosity

Power users of social networking sites reported higher levels of openness to experience (Ross et al., 2009). Higher levels of openness to new experiences are reflected in curiosity. Curiosity can also be related to a type of cultural voyeurism (Solis, 2008). That is, most people who participate in social media sites are either silent observers or participant observers.

Silent observers are those who make no contribution to the discussion. They may be introverts, shy, or simply feel they have nothing to add to the conversation, but there is still a desire to follow the person or series of dialogs. The participant observer is also curious, but does not conceal their identity or their participation in the discussion. The participant observer (Geertz, 1973) joins the group and discerns the cultural practices and norms of the group so as to gain acceptance as an equal member and not to be rejected by the group. Regardless of whether the user seeks to be a silent or participant observer, the strong desire to know and to be kept up to date on the happenings of other people within their network is a significant driver for social media use.

Altruistic Impulse

Some of the most significant humanitarian and fund-raising events have happened as a result of crowdfunding through social media sharing. As a whole, social media has actually increased altruistic donations and giving (Barry, 2011). People are now able to donate money, resources, and time through a click of a button.

From family tragedies to volunteering opportunities as well as raising capital for political and social causes, GoFundMe has raised over $1B (GoFundMe, 2015). Three of the top five highest crowdfunding projects of all time were hosted by Kickstarter. Kickstarter has raised over $1.5B for projects ranging from new video games, coolers, and potato salad (Kickstarter, 2015). These crowdfunding sites allow social consumers to share their philanthropic interests and experiences with others. There are options to give anonymously for both sites, but there is also the opportunity to self-identify with a cause and to encourage others to do the same.

The origins of the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge have been credited to multiple sources, but it reached the height of its popularity on social media during the summer of 2014. Nominees were challenged and specifically called out by name by a participant to complete the ice bucket challenge and provide video proof within 24 hours or to donate $100 to the ALS Foundation. Did it work? According to the ALS Foundation the ice bucket challenge raised over $100M or a 3,500% increase over donations from 2013 (Vultaggio, 2014).

Why did it work? It was new and unique. There were elements of personal utility and social pressure. It was one of the most shared discussions on Facebook, with over 17 million videos tagged as ice bucket challenge-related content with over 10 billion views by more than 440 million people (Facebook, 2014). Facebook provided a fun and easy way for social consumers to easily upload and share content while giving to a worthy cause.

4. DISCUSSION

Social media can provide marketers and firms with insightful data points based on users' activities, behavior, and preferences. They can even track buying patterns and how often information is shared, leaving social footprints and creating a social identity of the person (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). Traditional marketing efforts have used sophisticated tracking software to determine what users are doing, but have not mined deeper into the motives and attitudes that impact the use and adoption of social media.

Privacy Concerns

As network externalities increase the need for privacy also increases. The irony is most internet users are concerned about privacy, yet are freely willing to disclose and sometimes overshare private information on social media. Social media users' privacy intentions do not match their online behavior, creating a "privacy paradox" (Taddicken, 2013). According to Tuten and Solomon (2015) within the privacy paradox there are two distinct concerns: social privacy and institutional privacy.

Social privacy relates to anxieties of revealing private, inappropriate, or embarrassing information to others. This can also be antecedent to impression management and the desire to control and create the image of the ideal self to one's social network (Siibak, 2009). Some strategies for increasing social privacy are removing tags from photos, asking friends to remove unflattering images, and removing personal information or replacing it with default

data. Institutional privacy refers to the use of personal data by the organization or third-party for marketing and commerce purposes. Surprisingly, users seem to be less concerned with institutional privacy than with social privacy (Tuten & Solomon, 2015).

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the review of the literature, how can marketers and firms capitalize on the motives for mobile and social media use?

Marketers must acknowledge the majority of social consumers will be accessing their websites and apps from a mobile device. This does not mean the user will be outside the home as 68% of all mobile use is at home (AOL-BBDO, 2012). But it does mean the social consumer is accessing web content on small mobile devices with limited screen space and less than ideal processors. If a website, app, or video is not optimized for the mobile device, then the user will not have a positive experience.

The major mobile motivator is Me Time. More than 50% of all mobile use is devoted to seeking pleasure, leisure, and relaxation time. This finding also confirms social media users' need for personal utility. If firms are able to provide content to combine consumer's need for Me Time and personal utility, then there is a greater opportunity to sell to their target market.

Mobile-enabled web content must also provide at least one other motivation for social media use such as immediate gratification in order to pique the curiosity of participant observers. There should be a stark reminder for marketing professionals that more than 50% of social media campaigns will not reach their objective (McCarthy, 2008). There is no magic bullet or single theory to optimize marketing strategy in the new mobile and social media dominated marketplace. A multi-pronged approach to marketing to the social consumer that addresses more than one of the key motivators is required to increase the likelihood of success.

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