

Big brands being snubbed by Facebook fans

30 January 2012



(PhysOrg.com) -- It wouldn't be much of a friendship if you said 'hi' then didn't speak again for the next few years, yet that's a fair summary of the relationship many Facebook users have with brands they clicked on as 'liking', according to a study by University of South Australia's Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science.

Social Media Researcher Dr Karen Nelson-Field says many brands moved quickly onto Facebook when it emerged as the new frontier for reaching an audience but it has since proved a challenge to engage with those who claim to 'like' them.

Dr Nelson-Field has crunched the data on the new publicly available engagement tool Facebook released late last year called 'People Talking About'. The feature counts user-initiated activities on a Page, including posts, phototagging, liking content on the page, shares, check-ins and new fan likes.

"We looked at the relationship between fan growth and the number of people talking about it for the top 200 brands on Facebook over a six-week study," she says.

While the average proportion of interaction relative to fan numbers is 1.3 per cent, turns out that the bulk of this is actually joining or "new likes".

The average growth (week to week) in numbers of fans is almost 1 per cent, so there is a strong positive correlation between average weekly fan growth and the proportion of 'talking about' numbers to total fans.

Put another way, in any given week less than half of one percent (0.45 per cent) of a brands Facebook fans actually talk about it. This means, most fans are pretty unenthusiastic ones - after initially clicking 'like' they rarely ever interact with the brand again on Facebook.

"While 0.45 per cent is not a totally miserable figure, it is a sobering one, particularly given engagement is supposed to be what differentiates Facebook from other mass reaching media," says Dr Nelson-Field.

"Being a fan now seems like too much hard work for the average Facebook user. People are disliking brands now because of the frequency of the posts the brand puts up," she says.

"Finding that fans are not overly interested in interacting with a brand is not surprising to us. Most buyers care little about most brands.

"Buyers are polygamously loyal, so we switch between a few brands in the category. This is an empirical regularity and documented as marketing law.

"This doesn't mean we don't think [Facebook](#) is an important part of the marketing mix - we do - we simply encourage marketers not to spend a disproportionate amount of time and money trying to facilitate engagement or drive loyalty when we know that's not going to happen with the push of the 'like' button."

Provided by University of South Australia

APA citation: Big brands being snubbed by Facebook fans (2012, January 30) retrieved 17 November 2019 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-01-big-brands-snubbed-facebook-fans.html>

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