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Persuasive messages, popularity cohesion, and message diffusion in social media marketing

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ABSTRACT

Social media marketing is an influential marketing method. Liking or sharing social media messages can increase the effects of popular cohesion and message diffusion. This research investigates how persuasive messages (i.e., argument quality, post popularity, and post attractiveness) can lead internet users to click like and share messages in social media marketing activities. This research develops hypotheses on the basis of elaboration likelihood model and a 392 fans survey from a fan page on Facebook. Structural equation modeling analyzes questionnaire data. Results show that the three types of persuasive messages are important to click like and to share post messages. Post popularity is essential and works through both central route and peripheral according to research model. In addition, different message characteristics and user groups have different communicating behaviors. This research provides valuable recommendations for social media marketing activities.

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1. Introduction

As online users and browse time increase, networks become powerful marketing channels. Only touching and persuasive messages can change users' attitudes and induce enthusiastic interactions (Bhattacharjee & Premkumar, 2004; Coulter & Punj, 2004). Social media marketing, which uses social networks such as Facebook to enable content sharing, information diffusion, relationship building, and fans cohesion (Cheung & Lee, 2010; Kim & Ko, 2012), is an influential marketing method nowadays.

The automatic connections of social media marketing easily spread messages. Social media scale creates synergistic effects, making it a powerful communication tool. Thus, marketing managers must persuade internet users to spontaneously share messages with relatives, colleagues, or friends. Therefore, effective dissemination of information

becomes an essential factor in social media marketing success and persuading internet users to facilitate promotions is paramount for recent marketing research.

On the basis of elaboration likelihood model (ELM), which posits two routes of persuasion process (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), this research explores how social media marketing persuades internet users to forward messages to reach popular cohesion and message diffusion. This study investigates message characteristics and how internet users' evaluations affect communicative intention. Moreover, this research analyzes different user groups to understand their communication purposes.

2. Literature review

2.1. Using persuasive messages to change internet user behavior

Persuasion is an active attempt that changes receivers' actions and beliefs via reasonable and sensible expressions (Lee & Xia, 2011). Persuasive messages focus on benefits to and communication with receivers (Lee, Keller, & Sternthal, 2010).

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) is an important marketing strategy that affects internet user behaviors (Park & Kim, 2008; Park & Lee, 2009). Suspicious of traditional advertisements, users prefer trustworthy friends, or even information coming from strangers online. Social media sites like Facebook (like, comment, sharing) or Youtube (like, dislike) enable the expression of opinions and emotions (De Vriesa, Gensler, & Leeftang, 2012; Yang, 2012).

ELM is a theory of persuasion researchers often use regarding behavioral changes among message receivers. ELM defines central

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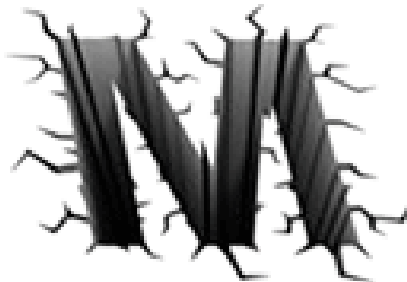
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