



Article Title

Taxonomy of Facebook messages in business-to-consumer communications: What really works?

Citation

Kwok, L., & Yu, B. (2016). Taxonomy of Facebook messages in business-to-consumer communications: What really works? *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 16(4), 311-328. doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/10.1177/1467358415600214>

Abstract

This research combines machine learning and human intelligence to analyze 2654 Facebook messages initiated by 26 hospitality companies to develop the taxonomy of Facebook messages in business-to-consumer (B2C) communications. Facebook messages can be classified into two broad message types: Sales/Marketing messages, with five sub-categories of Social Responsibility, Direct Boasting, Indirect Boasting, Product Highlight, and Campaign/Sales, and Conversational messages, with four sub-categories of Call for Action, Provoke Feedback, Advice/Suggestions, and Updates. By comparison, Conversational messages received more "Likes" and comments than Sales/Marketing messages. Direct Boasting, Product Highlight, Call for Action, Provoke Feedback, Advice/Suggestions, and Updates received more "Likes" than other types; Provoke Feedback and Call for Action received more comments. As compared to current literature, the results allow managers to advance more specific strategies to better engage with Facebook users and provide a more thorough taxonomy for additional analysis on companies' B2C messages on other social media websites.

Methods

To answer the two research questions, this study adopted the intuitive approach in an exploratory investigation. The researchers combined machine intelligence and human intelligence in data analysis. Text mining techniques allowed researchers to conduct an exploratory inquiry without limit to a specific guiding framework and helped reveal the indicative keywords associated with the "more popular" and "less popular" messages, as well as Sales/Marketing and Conversational messages.

Results

The results allow managers to advance more specific strategies to better engage with Facebook users and provide a more thorough taxonomy for additional analysis on companies' B2C messages on other social media websites.

Conclusion

This study makes an important addition to previous research studies about developing a taxonomy or a classification to analyze Facebook messages. It presents a more thorough

taxonomy of Facebook messages in B2C communications than current literature and measures the attention Facebook users give to each type of messages. With an advanced taxonomy, companies will be able to categorize their B2C messages with a conceptual map. Researchers in information technology may also use the define taxonomy as a foundation for automatic analysis using machine learning techniques. Researchers and managers can now inform machine intelligence with a pre-set query to categorize messages automatically. A reliable text classifier can help companies monitor the effectiveness of their marketing and communication strategies on Facebook. The study confirms that the z-score of number of “Likes” and z-score of number of comments can be another outcome variable for comparing users’ engagement on Facebook among different organizations. By putting restaurants, hotels, and casinos into one investigation, this study also reveals an interesting observation. It appears that restaurants tend to engage their Facebook users on the restaurants’ brand pages rather the restaurants’ corporate pages. For example, Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, and KFC all belong to the same restaurant corporation – Yum! Brands, but the corporate’s Facebook page had very few fans (followers) and thus was not included in the sample. It is probably because most restaurant corporations tend to create very distinguishable brand identities for different restaurant brands so that each brand can target different groups of consumers. Thus, not every restaurant consumer is familiar with a restaurant brand’s corporate structures or the brand’s affiliations, resulting in a much smaller number of fans (followers) of a restaurant corporation’s Facebook page (e.g. Yum! Brands) than the Facebook fans of various restaurant brands of the same corporation (e.g. Taco Bell, KFC, and Pizza Hut of the Yum! Brands).