

A SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TYPOLOGY: CLASSIFYING BRAND FACEBOOK PAGE MESSAGES FOR STRATEGIC CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract

Growing attention for Social Media marketing has resulted in a burgeoning field of research and practice; yet, hitherto few studies have provided empirically grounded and comprehensive typologies for assessing, classifying, and in turn, informing the future development of Social Media marketing communications. The lack of such comprehensive and valuable typologies appears to be related to (i) the limited applicability of traditional marketing theories in the context of novel Social Media; (ii) the focus of existing studies on a limited brand category or messaging category; (iii) the plethora of Social Media platforms that complicate the development of contextually relevant messaging strategies. To overcome this void in the literature and these three challenges, this study presents the results of a longitudinal Multi-Grounded Theory study of three Fortune 110 companies—Delta Airlines, Wal-Mart, and McDonald's—of six weeks of Facebook Page messaging data (n=256 brand posts). The proposed typology encompasses seven overarching message categories—namely Brand Awareness, Corporate Social Responsibility, Customer Service, Engagement, Product Awareness, Promotional, and Seasonal—with a total of 23 sub-categories. This typology provides a valuable theoretical and empirical starting point for framing Social Media marketing strategies, and for informing the design and development of successful Social Media marketing messages.

Keywords: Social Media, Facebook, Typology, Social Media Marketing Strategies, Consumer Engagement

1. Introduction

Social Media is one of the fastest growing marketing platforms in the world. Due to the unlimited scope of consumer markets Social Media can address, more and more companies have started to invest into the development and execution of Social Media marketing strategies. Beyond the range of possibilities provided by Social Media, three advantages make it an attractive alternative or complement to traditional marketing channels, namely its inherently free, personal, as well as social nature. Not only does this offer companies significant cost advantages over traditional media channels (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010), but it further opens up possibilities for targeting smaller market segments – effectively reaching market segments of one – and accruing earned media exposures and referral marketing to occur in unparalleled scale and scope in ways not heretofore feasible (Carpenter and Shankar, 2012).

This unparalleled scale and the proliferating opportunities for Social Media marketing have resulted in a burgeoning literature base on Social Media marketing. Yet, few of these studies have provided strong empirically grounded and comprehensive typologies for assessing, classifying, and in turn, framing Social Media marketing strategies as well as for informing the design and development of successful Social Media marketing messages. This void in the literature and the lack of messaging typologies appears to be related to three challenges facing an in-depth understanding of social media marketing messages which has led to this investigation of posts to develop a logical, analytical understanding for brand messaging strategies for predicting engagement and consumer-brand interaction. First, existing theories from traditional—i.e., offline—marketing messaging offer only limited insights and applicability for understanding online and social marketing messages (Kwok and Yu, 2012), hence, researchers are faced with a lack of grounded theory to guide their analytical efforts. Second, existing literature analyzing social media messages has generally focused on either a specific category of brands (e.g., restaurants) or a specific message category (e.g., viral videos), limiting our understanding of the diversity of messaging types and strategies across brand categories. Third, researchers interested in developing such a typology are faced with an overwhelming plethora of Social Media platforms, which may obstruct the analysis and formulation of a comprehensive, yet, generalizable typology.

In order to overcome these three challenges, this study adopts a Multi-Grounded Theory approach, which allows the bottom-up development of a typology through multiple dialectical and enriching iterations of inductivism and deductivism (Goldkuhl and Cronholm, 2010). Furthermore, rather than developing the typology based on data from multiple Social Media platforms, this study focuses on a single medium, Social Network Sites, a single vehicle, Facebook, and a single channel, Pages, to formulate a typology that is comprehensive enough to classify any single brand Facebook Page marketing message, but generalizable enough to account for the range of product/service-involvement categories—namely airlines, big box retailers, and fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs)¹. Hereto, we formulate the following general research question: *What messaging types do brands employ for communicating and engaging with their consumers through Facebook pages?*

In a 2012 study conducted by HubSpot, 62 percent of marketers indicated that in the past six months, social media became more important to their marketing campaigns. Facebook was selected as the initial development platform for a social media engagement typology because of the astounding level of following and dedication it receives from users. According to the same HubSpot study, 80 percent of social network users prefer to connect to brands through Facebook, making this a vital point of study to have a stronger understanding of implementing analytics for marketing. Hereto six weeks of

¹ Sometimes also referred to as Consumer Packaged Goods (CPGs)

data from three Fortune 110 companies—Delta Airlines (#83), Wal-Mart (#2), and McDonald's (#107)—were used from March-April 2012 for a total of 256 brand Facebook posts for analysis.

Our final typology for classifying brand Facebook Page marketing messages encompasses seven higher-level, overarching categories—namely Brand Awareness, Corporate Social Responsibility, Customer Service, Engagement, Product Awareness, Promotional, and Seasonal—with a total of 23 sub-categories. By adopting a Multi-Grounded Theory approach and going through multiple iterations of coding, theorizing, and empirical testing of the 256 brand posts, we propose a comprehensive, yet, generalizable typology. This typology is useful not merely for informing future theorizing and empirical research on Social Media marketing strategies and messaging, but also for assessing the relations between the delineated messaging categories and various messaging strategies, engagement metrics, and sentiments so as to assess which categories are more successful for achieving high and positive engagement amongst consumers.

This paper is organized as follows. First, we critically review existing literature proposing typologies on Social Media marketing messages. Then, we present our selection of case companies and the Multi-Grounded Theory approach adopted in this study as well as the various iterations of our dialectical data collection and analysis process. Subsequently, we conceptualize and illustrate the proposed typology along with a set of vignettes from the original data set. Finally, we discuss our findings and implications for future research.

2. Literature Review

An assessment of existing typologies for assessing Facebook or other social media marketing messages reveals few such typologies exist; hence, few insights exist for theoretically informing the classification of Facebook strategic marketing communications. Further, from the four identified studies that investigate online messages, as summarized in Table 1, none of the authors adopted a strategic lens in the development of such typologies. From the four studies, we found that only one focuses on engagement metrics, whereas two other studies focus on the communication dimension. Yet, none address the use of social media as a critical element of the business and marketing strategy.

As Table 1 shows, the first study, by Jensen and Jepsen (2006) focuses online communication tools as distinct from offline tools and highly diverse. Although the study provides relevant insights into the diversity of Online Marketing Communication (OMC) tools, the study is solely conceptual and provides no concrete empirical insights regarding messaging content, engagement metrics, or business strategies.

The second study by Waters et al. (2009) entailed a content analysis of 275 nonprofit company profiles on Facebook. While the study focuses on communication, only basic descriptives regarding the profiles were presented that led the authors to conclude that the majority of nonprofit organizations have not integrated Facebook applications into their social network presence. Hence, the authors did not focus on the use of Facebook as a strategic marketing tool.

The third study (Jenkins, 2011) reviewed 30 YouTube videos by for-profit brands in order to analyse virality. Although the study assesses emotional content in the original message, it ignores the cognitive content embedded in these video messages as well as subsequent consumer engagement leading to virality.

The fourth and final study (Kwok and Yu, 2012) provides the most detailed typology of all four studies through an analysis of 982 Facebook messages by restaurants. However, the authors merely classify these messages into two categories: communication and marketing messages, and compare their respective popularity. However, the mutual exclusivity (i.e., discriminant validity) of these two categories can be challenged, and the typology provides little insights into the underlying brand strategy, messaging content, and subsequent engagement for each of these categories.

In short, then, the existing typologies provide few theoretical insights that could inform a typology for classifying and analyzing Facebook-based marketing messages. Furthermore, given the fundamental

difference between Facebook and traditional media marketing messages, adopting existing theories and classifications regarding traditional marketing messages appear to be of limited applicability to the social media context (Kwok and Yu, 2012). Hence, in what follows, we will present data collected and how the message typology of brand Facebook Page communications was developed.

Source	Jensen and Jepsen, 2006	Waters, et al, 2008	Jenkins, 2011	Kwok and Yu, 2012
Industry	Online Marketing Communications (OMC)	Non-Profit	For-Profit brands (Varied)	Hospitality (Restaurants)
Platform	Online	Facebook	YouTube	Facebook
Total N	n/a	275 profiles (275 non-profit)	30 social video advertisements	982 messages (12 restaurants)
Data Analysis Method	Literature Review	Content Analysis	Exploratory	Algorithmic text mining via SVM
Metrics (typology dimensions)	Four categories of OMCs and related tools	Disclosure, media types, contact points	Emotional Content, Message and Creative Strategy, Virality	Likes, Comments, Message keywords
Domain	Communication Management	Communication	Shareability	Engagement
Limitations	Theoretical (abstract) rather than empirical (concrete); does not consider brand strategy, or qualify messaging content	Provides only basic descriptives of Facebook Profiles of non-profits without considering strategy, messaging content, or product category	Provides only emotional qualification of messaging content, no consideration for product category and purchase-decision involvement	Post type popularity contest; does not consider brand strategy or messaging content; no cross-industry insight

Table 1. Overview of Existing Social Media Message Typologies

3. Methodology

5.1 Brand Facebook Page Selection

As brand-consumer interactions are highly contextual, investigating a single Facebook Page to explore messaging categories would pose a challenge to the generalizability of any findings pertaining to consumer engagement. Hence, three Facebook Pages were selected to represent the social media marketing communications by Delta Airlines, Wal-Mart, and McDonald's; the brand selection rationale is provided next.

First, these brands are all listed among the top 110 Fortune companies ranked by gross revenue, enjoy strong brand equity, and maintain a considerable social media presence. Second, these brands vary with respect to purchase-decision involvement, that is, the extent of interest and concern that a consumer brings to bear upon a purchase-decision task (Mittal, 1989) in relation to the products and services provided by these brands. Representative case studies (brands) were selected from each of three purchase-decision involvement levels: *low* as found for McDonald's and other fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs), *mixed* as is the case with Wal-Mart and other Big Box Retailers, and, *high* purchase-decision involvement found in Delta Airlines. Third, these three brands are representative of both consumables and durables (Sullivan and Sheffrin, 2003), a key factor in brand messaging when considering purchase-decision frequency and the need for tailored messaging.

Although the case study methodology is typically limited in the generalizability of a study's findings, in addition to the diversity manipulated in product category and purchase-decision involvement, we

attempted to further mitigate such generalizability concerns by using longitudinal data (six weeks) and applying rigorous structured analysis techniques. Moreover, confidence in the generalizability of our findings was increased through the adoption of a multiple-case studies design, allowing for within-case in-depth analysis and cross-case comparisons.

Involvement	Brands	Facebook Pages	# of Fans (3/12/12) ²	Talking About (3/12/12) ³	Were Here (3/12/12) ⁴
Low (inexpensive equipment or low cost consumables, i.e., FMCG)	McDonald's	http://www.facebook.com/McDonalds	18,010,469	608,486	2,195,043
Mixed (products evoking either low or high involvement)	Wal-Mart	http://www.facebook.com/walmart	13,419,825	357,878	512,215
High (expensive durables or single-use consumables such as airline tickets)	Delta Airlines	http://www.facebook.com/delta	298,550	5,373	111

Table 2. Brand Facebook Pages selected for analysis in this study

5.1 Data Collection and Analysis

In order to inductively develop a typology of Facebook strategic marketing communication messages, this study adopts an alternative and extended coding approach referred to as Multi-Grounded Theory (MGT) (Goldkuhl and Cronholm, 2010). Whereas the Original Grounded Theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) embraces complete inductivism, the MGT approach combines and integrates aspects of inductivism and deductivism in a dialectical, iterative, and enriching fashion. Hereto, MGT combines three forms of grounding, namely: *empirical grounding*, which is the original form of grounding as advocated in grounded theory and involves the induction of codes from the empirical data in a bottom-up approach; *theoretical grounding*, which is a conceptual form of grounding as advocated in traditional social science theory and involves the deduction of codes from existing theories in a top-down approach; and *internal grounding*, which is a conceptual form of grounding as advocated by the MGT approach and establishes an explicit congruence within the theory itself.

The combining of these three grounding approaches results in a theory development process that encompasses four stages and unfolds iteratively through the oscillation of theory generation and theory grounding (i.e., validation), as follows:

- **Inductive coding (or open coding):** the initial theory development process is performed inductively with an open mind and as free as possible from precategorizations, implying that this stage allows the data to speak for itself. In our study, we explored and inductively grouped a pilot data set of two weeks of brand Facebook Page messages from three case companies without any theoretical grounding with the aim of developing initial categories and labels.

² These represent the engagement metrics at time of data collection

³ Number of unique people who have created a story about the page (e.g., like page, post on wall, likes/comments/shares on page posts, answers question, responds to event, mentions page, tags page in photo, checks in at page's location, or recommends location)

⁴ Count of total check-ins and mobile device location shares the page accrued over the past seven days

- **Conceptual refinement:** after the inductive establishment of initial categories, the second step in the theory development process encompasses the critical reflection on the data itself. Although various approaches to conceptual refinement exist, we used functional determination; assessing the function a phenomenon has and how this is related to other functions). Hence, this stage involved the formulation of comprehensive definitions of emergent low-level categories of messages and their alignment with the deductively informed messaging strategy distinction (informational–transformational).
- **Pattern (or axial) coding:** after the establishment of initial categories, we proceeded with axial coding. Axial coding involves the combining of categories into theoretical statements (Axelsson and Goldkuhl, 2004, 2008) in which we identified and proposed action patterns in terms of conditions (e.g. overall strategy), actions/interactions (e.g. messaging category), and consequences (e.g. consumer engagement; likes/comments/shares).
- **Theory condensation (selective coding):** following the establishment of action patterns through axial coding, the final step in the theory development process involves theory condensation referred to as selective coding. Selective coding involves the densifying of the theory, by identifying a few core categories under which we can include all the data and proposing the final coding scheme.

The MGT process was completed by two graduate research assistants who were extensively trained and subsequently guided by the primary investigators throughout the coding process. A pilot study of a different two-week period of Facebook messages from the same three brands was coded independently. An initial interrater reliability of 93.7 percentage agreement and .73 Cohen's Kappa (i.e., substantial agreement; c.f. Landis and Koch, 1977) provided a strong assessment of the coding process reliability and the emergent coding scheme validity.

Following the completion of the coding scheme (i.e. the developed theory), we empirically validated the coding scheme by testing it with an additional four weeks of data from the three case brands. The empirical validation resulted in minor change to the coding scheme in terms of integrating two lower-level categories that were not mutually exclusive. Furthermore, a few posts in the new dataset presented novel messaging types that were re-evaluated and necessitated the mere adjustment of existing sub-categories. Hence, a grounded typology of brand Facebook Page strategic marketing communication messages emerged as presented in the next section.

4. Results

The typology that emerged from the MGT approach described above, revealed seven overarching messaging categories of Brand Awareness, Corporate Social Responsibility, Customer Service, Engagement, Product Awareness, Promotional, and Seasonal were developed encompassing a total of 23 subcategories across these seven umbrella categories. Although a single Facebook message could be categorized under more than one umbrella category—e.g., a post that fosters both Brand Awareness and Product Awareness simultaneously—the underlying subcategories are designed to be mutually exclusive. In what follows, each of these categories is defined (Table 3).

Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide examples of each overarching messaging category or subcategory, Table 4 below provides some illustrative vignettes of some of the most popular messaging categories found in the dataset.

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Categories	Subcategories	Definitions Examples	Occurrence Raw (% of total / % of category)
Brand Awareness		Posts that build company presence and attentiveness in digital consumer market	19 (8.44% / n/a)
	Promotions	Posts that contain the use of celebrity and/or event sponsorship which mentions brand's name E.g., Wal-Mart public relations event: Jewel performs a special version of "The Supermarket Song," updated to "The Wal-Mart Song," from her new Children's album released in March.	8 (3.56% / 42.11%)
	Heritage	Posts that seek to bring consumer into company's history; trivia and employee spotlights E.g., Delta post provides a photo album displaying uniforms for flight attendants over time; or a Delta post speaking to Delta's commitment to constant improvement ("Keep Climbing")	9 (4.00% / 47.37%)
	Operations	Posts that inform consumers about production processes and behind-the-scenes operations E.g., Delta posts a video to show the progress of the JFK airport renovations.	2 (0.89% / 10.53%)
Corporate Social Responsibility		Posts that build a brand image of being involved in supporting and strengthening the community, primarily among socially conscious consumers	11 (5.33% / n/a)
	Awareness	Posts contain elements that support nonprofit organizations and/or raise awareness of causes E.g., Walmart post advertises Project 7's Save the Earth Fresh Mint Gum. Project 7 donates proceeds from the sale toward planting trees.	11 (5.33% / 91.67%)
	Fundraisers	Posts that showcase support for specific charity fundraisers E.g., category designed for posts with a specific fundraiser/charity endorsement such as March of Dimes of St. Jude's Children's Hospital.	1 (0.44% / 8.33%)
Customer Service		Posts that aim to build consumer knowledge about product, industry, and brand changes.	7 (3.11% / n/a)
	Openings	Posts that contain store opening notifications E.g., Walmart posts about the opening of a new location.	5 (2.22% / 71.43%)
	Outages	Posts that contain service outage notifications E.g., due to an electrical failure, there is a post that McDonald's will not be able to accept credit cards today.	1 (0.44% / 14.29%)
	PSA	Posts that contain a consumer notice even if it was originally posted by another source E.g., Delta posts information about staying safe in the sun by packing sunscreen in 3-ounce flight approved liquid containers.	1 (0.44% / 14.29%)
Engagement		Posts that build consumer connections/ communities through direct interaction with the brand	71 (31.56% / n/a)
	Assistance	Posts that include advice, home improvement, cooking, life tips, recipes for the consumer E.g., Walmart posts a dinner recipe made with products sold instore.	5 (2.22% / 7.04%)
	Community	Posts that encourage consumers to follow one of the brand's other social media platforms (e.g., Twitter, YouTube) E.g., Walmart posts about following @WalmartSpecials and Marvel tomorrow on Twitter for a tweetchat event.	2 (0.89% / 2.82%)
	Likes	Posts that specifically point consumer to "Like" a message E.g., Walmart post request consumers "Like" the post if they are a fresh berry fan.	6 (2.67% / 8.45%)
	Photos/Videos	Posts which direct consumers to look at new photo albums and/or videos posted by the brand E.g., the release of Delta's Sky magazine accompanies by photos from the newest issue.	2 (0.89% / 2.82%)
	Polls	Posts that request information or prompts answers from the consumer through multiple-choice questions E.g., when preparing to migrate to Facebook's Timeline layout, McDonald's asked consumers what type of	2 (0.89% / 2.82%)

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		photo should be their first cover photo (selection from one of the provided examples).	
	Questions	Posts that request information or prompts answers from the consumer through fill-in-the-blank or open-ended questions E.g., Walmart posts the question "What are you planting - veggies or flowers?" with an advertisement for gardening supplies.	38 (16.89% / 53.52%)
	Appreciation	Posts that recognize and show gratitude for consumer support E.g., excited to reach 300,000 Likes in the community, Delta posts a special thank you with a 20% off Sky Club 30-day Membership.	3 (1.33% / 4.23%)
	Directional	Post that direct a consumer to click/do something (except for Liking) E.g., McDonald's instructs consumers to watch a video of Kyle, a rising basketball player introduced by LeBron James.	13 (5.78% / 18.31%)
Product Awareness		All posts which build product knowledge, understanding, and existence.	63 (28.0% / n/a)
	Name Brands	Posts that mention products sold at the store but are not specifically produced by the posting brand E.g., Walmart advertises that they sell new Philadelphia Indulgence in a post.	33 (14.67% / 52.38%)
	House Brands	Posts that mention products sold and produced by the posting brand E.g., McDonald's posts about their seasonal minty-green Shamrock Shake.	30 (13.33% / 47.62%)
Promotional		Posts that are designed to stimulate immediate or near future purchases through monetary incentives.	12 (5.33% / n/a)
	Deal	Posts include some form of instant reward for the consumer to make a purchase, such as discounts, coupons, limited time deals, and one-day specials E.g., Delta lets consumers know of their current 20% off selected tickets to Latin America and the Caribbean with a post.	5 (2.22% / 41.67%)
	Chance	Posts contain incentives for consumers to make a future purchase by offering a potential reward, such as a contest, giveaway, or sweepstakes E.g., McDonald's is giving away a trip to the 2012 London Olympics Games! Share how you and your family enjoy cooking together in this post to be entered to win.	7 (3.11% / 58.33%)
Seasonal		Posts that remind and inform consumers of seasonal and annual events and related products by the brand	42 (18.67% / n/a)
	Holiday	Posts that mention or advertise specific holidays such as Valentine's, Christmas, or New Years E.g., Delta posts a Spring Break edition of their Tuesday Travel Tip to pack 3-ounce sunscreen to get through security at the airport.	19 (8.44% / 45.24%)
	Season	Posts that reference a climatic or sports season E.g., McDonald's posts a video to advertise their McCafe Shamrock shake-down.	12 (5.33% / 28.57%)
	Event	Posts that mention significant timely events that are not holidays, such as Graduation, tax day, Daylight Savings, or Spring Break E.g., Walmart posts a question to ask how consumers are enjoying the warm weather?	11 (4.89% / 26.19%)

Table 3. *Proposed Typology for Facebook-Based Strategic Messaging*

Category & Subcategory	Category Description	Example Post	Category & Subcategory	Category Description	Example Post
<p>Brand Awareness Heritage</p> <p>Customer Service Openings</p>	<p>Post contains elements that builds on the brand's culture</p> <p>Post contains notification of new locations and access points</p>		<p>Engagement Appreciation</p> <p>Product Awareness House brand</p>	<p>Post that recognize and show gratitude for consumer support</p> <p>Post promotes general products produced by brand</p>	
<p>Corporate Social Responsibility Awareness</p>	<p>Post contains elements that support non-profit organizations and/or raise awareness of causes.</p>		<p>Promotional Chance</p> <p>Seasonal Holiday</p>	<p>Post contains incentive(s) to motivate purchase (e.g. sweepstakes).</p> <p>Post contains holiday elements (e.g. Easter).</p>	

Table 4. Illustrative vignettes of messaging categories.

5. Discussion

With the proliferating use of Social Media, understanding and classifying brand strategies and categories of Social Media marketing messages becomes imperative to effectively implementing and using these tools in a marketing context with the aim of positively impacting consumer engagement. Nevertheless, very little research has empirically examined the diversity of messaging types and strategies on Social Media platforms in practice for proposing a comprehensive, yet, generalizable typology for studying Social Media marketing messages and informing subsequent corporate communication strategies.

As aforementioned, the lack of comprehensive and valuable typologies appears to be, largely, due to (i) the limited application of traditional marketing theories, frameworks, and classifications in the context of Social Media; (ii) the focus of existing research on a single specific, i.e., non-generalizable, brand category or messaging category; as well as (iii) the overwhelming plethora of Social Media platforms that complicate the development of contextually relevant messaging strategies.

To overcome these challenges and fill the void in the literature, this study adopted a Multi-Grounded Theory Approach for developing a typology of Facebook marketing messages through a dialectical and iterative analysis of longitudinal messaging data from three Fortune 110 companies—Delta Airlines, Wal-Mart, and McDonald's. The seven messaging categories underlying the typology presented in this paper—Brand Awareness, Corporate Social Responsibility, Customer Service, Engagement, Product Awareness, Promotional, and Seasonal—provide a comprehensive, yet, highly generalizable categorization and holistic examination of Facebook Page marketing communications.

By proposing a holistic typology of Facebook Page messaging, we aim to bring value to both researchers and practitioners. In doing so, we hope this classification scheme can inform future descriptive research into Social Media marketing communications, as well as future explanatory research that aims to compute correlations between the messaging categories proposed in the typology - and other dimensions of Facebook or Social Media marketing - and consumer engagement metrics.

Furthermore, we hope the proposed typology can help managers better understand the range of messaging strategies and categories available, as well as offering an analytical tool for assessing the nature of engagement associated with each strategy and category. By understanding which categories trigger the highest and most positive engagement amongst consumers, managers can place those categories at the heart of their future Facebook and Social Media marketing strategies. Relatedly, we hope this typology can help managers identify challenges associated with implementing and using Social Media as a tool for marketing that need to be addressed and overcome.

5.1 Challenges and Future Research

Although this paper represents an initial attempt to offer a comprehensive typology of Facebook Page marketing messages, more work remains to be done. Particularly, we identify three directions for extending the current work. First, the applicability of the proposed typology could be validated in the context of other Social Media platforms, to see if the same messaging categories hold across these media platforms and if different platforms have different emphases. Anecdotally, a quick scan of Delta Airlines' Social Media usage reveals that Delta Airlines uses Facebook largely for creating Brand Awareness, Engagement, and communicating News and Promotions, yet, Twitter is predominantly adopted for Customer Service—in particular its DeltaAssist channel. Hence, although the same categories hold across media, various media will place different emphasis on the multiple messaging categories. Consequently, through exploring the typology in the context of different platforms, we can develop an understanding of the diverse messaging strategies and patterns elicited by the specific affordances of each medium (e.g., immediacy and message length).

Second, although the selection of the three brands for this study—Delta Airlines, Wal-Mart, McDonald's—was aimed at providing a comprehensive sample in terms of industry categories and

consumption frequencies— Airlines, Big Box Retailers, and FMCGs / durables-consumables— as well as purchase-decision involvement (Day, 1970)— high, medium, low involvement respectively— future research should aim to broaden the scope of industry categories and the number of brands analyzed within each category. One way to do this is by analyzing if the same messaging categories can be applied or need to be modified for analyzing non-profit organizations.

Third, despite the longitudinal nature of our study, our pilot dataset for constructing and validating the typology encompassed a mere 256 messages across a six-week period (when considering the cumulative brand activity on Facebook Pages in the given time period). Future research could broaden the time span as well as increase the number of messages analyzed to further enhance the reliability of findings. In this context, it is important to mention that researchers should be cognizant of inherent “temporal” biases in the data set. Certain message categories may appear dominant during a particular data analysis period; however, the popularity of these categories could be related to seasonal or one-off events (e.g., holidays), hence, may not be representative for a brand’s overall Social Media marketing strategy.

Other important next steps include the identification of relevant theoretical perspectives that can be used in order to address the key components and messaging categories that we have identified. More importantly, though, we encourage empirical research on Social Media marketing.

To conclude, the typology provided in this paper provides a comprehensive lens for Facebook Pages marketing messages, in particular, and for Social Media messaging, in general. While the research directions identified in this paper necessitate a more in-depth empirical assessment, the typology that we present takes a critical step towards enriching our understanding of the multiplicity of ways in which brands can use Social Media as a medium for communicating and interacting with consumers. This under-researched domain provides rich ground for further research that is likely to accrue valuable benefits to organizations as well as important avenues and opportunities for research.

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