

PRODUCT COMMUNICATION STRATEGY DRIVEN BY SOCIAL NETWORK PROFILES AN EXPERIMENTAL TEACHING MODULE

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Abstract

This paper describes the development and testing of an experimental teaching module on product communication strategy. The study aims to answer the question of how new social platforms such as Facebook can help in developing new strategies for product communication. Developing links between a product and consumer preferences. In this experimental learning module, students of the New Media Production course developed new strategies for product communication, identifying possible active archetypes on narrative consumer preferences on Facebook profiles. The conducted experience evidenced that the experienced cycle is a major contribute to the learning of product communication in the digital age, due to associations between consumer preferences and the new product communication strategies.

Keywords:

Communication Design, Product communication, Learning, social media.

INTRODUCTION

Presently, social media such as Facebook has a huge influence in product communication, not only as output media, but also as input media. The data gathered from each user profile is a major advantage when building new communication strategies, all the process of updating is overwhelmingly dynamic. The process developed in this experimental teaching module allows the contribution and definition of systematic approaches to a future dynamic system of interpretation of qualitative data, applied to social profiles in social web media in platforms like Facebook.

THE RETRIEVAL OF QUALITATIVE INFORMATION

From all the qualitative information gathered from Facebook user's page, excluding personal info, the qualitative data lacks guides of interpretation. The representation of product brands on Facebook congregates in their pages many consumers that share common ideas and opinions about products made by that specific brand. The page could be identified as a 'common place' where consumers also share their narrative preferences, their favourite stories, though those might become too populated with references to states of mind.

The user's preference panel can be a useful tool to update the communication strategy of a brand but requires a systematic approach in interpreting information. This problem is interesting because it shows that it exists qualitative data that can be retrieved, useful to achieve new goals in product communication, creating a synchrony between product communication and consumer preferences.

José Martins (2007) implemented a model of emotional archetype offers that approached, using previous definitions from the author Carl Jung, a systematic approach for defining the emotional universe applied to product communication. A group of emotions can be identified according to states of mind in a unique way as we perceive the world; these emotions are present in our daily life and in our communication. Narratives, stories and myths play an important role in defining our preferences as consumers.

THE EMOTIONAL ARCHETYPE LINK

Visual narratives in television shows or movies are a reunion of emotional states of mind, they project images and behaviours. Those representations are common in fictional narratives (television shows, movies, etc.) and in brand communication (publicity, showrooms, etc.). Using a pictorial emotional archetype identification system, there is the possibility to ‘adjust’ product communication to the dominant consumer group preferences in narratives.

A pictorial stimulus is crucial to capture attention, pictures are essential when it comes to clearly presenting short messages and stories. Whenever information is presented using visual stimuli, it is more likely to be recognized later (Boyd, 2009).

The students used a method divided in four phases. After choosing a brand present in the social web platform Facebook they identified the archetypes already in use by the brand. The study of the brand page in Facebook and their community of users were followed by retrieving a narrowed group of profiles. After identifying the dominant narrative types, those were tagged with related and compatible emotional archetypes using the system proposed by José Martins (2007). The process ended with a trend board design where students applied the pictorial references obtained from the process of archetype definition.

EXPERIMENTAL STRATEGY

In this educational project, students worked with a commercial brand present in the social network Facebook. The students chose a product and identified the communication archetypes in use by the brand.

The brand’s page was studied as a ‘common place’. That denomination was applied to a site congregating several consumers that shared interest in the chosen brand. Each student retrieved a narrow group of pages, the minimum being five. Afterwards, students collected qualitative data from the user’s information page, in the section of Arts and Entertainment, in particular the narrative preferences related with television shows and movies. The process excluded any information related with music. The data was then arranged into a table shape and the most present narrative models were highlighted. Using imdb.com narrative type reference for identification, narrative models were then compared to Martins’ Emotional Archetypes chart (2007, pag.38) and the search for compatible associations was conducted.

Following the analysis of archetypes present in the Art and Entertainment preferences, those were arranged in a star schematic shape, creating areas of dominance for each archetype, thus showing what the predominant vectors were, Figure 2.

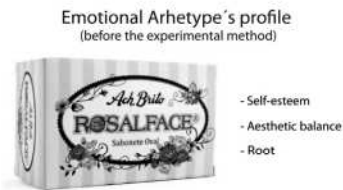


Figure – First product profile - Project by Ana Malta

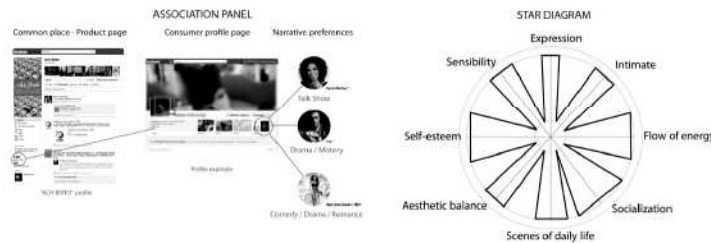


Figure 2- Association panel (left) and dominant archetypes (right) – Proj. Ana Malta.

The results were then compared with the first study and if any difference was found, a new possible communication strategy was obtained. The process was completed with the construction of a panel of the new visual trends related to the strategy the resulted from the experimental approach. The examples shown in the figures 1 and 2, resulted from a student exercise with the Portuguese product "Ach Brito-Rosa Alface" from the proprietary brand Claus.

The musical preferences were excluded because they are more difficult to define in what the archetypes involved in the message are. If each person might require a different set of products to play a desired role, then it might also have identification preferences seen in television or movies. The dramaturgical perspective on consumer behaviour portrays people much like actors playing different roles. Solomon states that people play many roles, and each one has its own script, props and costumes (2006, page. 210). That analysis, was followed by the identification of emotional archetypes using José Martins' definition. The emotional archetypes are common patterns to all human culture. They might be seen as states of mind or ways of perceiving the world. Martins states that archetypes are symbolic elements that recover states of mind common to us all, enabling creative work with defined objectives. A pragmatic way for them to be recognized is through associations of emotions that are grouped by affinity (2007, page. 31). Martins also presents several main areas of archetypes: the instinct, ego, spirit and reason, figure 3.

INSTINCT		
Flow of energy Holding	Recreational Warrior	Root Socialization
SELF		
Self-esteem I am a Star	The private Aesthetic balance	Rebel Exaltation of the senses
SPIRIT		
The search for the unconscious Expression Cosmic feeling	Idealism Visionary leadership Sensibility	Expansion Global tribe Strength of Unity of Mankind
REASON		
Scenes of daily life Great goal	Formalization	Rationalization

Figure 3 – Martins, J. Emotional Archetype's table (2007)

In the contemporary society the consumer is driven to a certain product brand due to emotional reasons (Sharma Et Al, 2010). The actual communication and dissemination tools influence the consumer on brand and product perception. The consumer uses an approach where the brand is not deeply analysed on quality and durability aspects, but instead the network relations produced by the brand. This network is constituted by product reviews, product placement, etc. Companies are aware of this situation, therefore, all image creation is encased in stories, creating a variety of myths able to engage and position the brand on a symbolic function in the imagination of consumers.

RELATED WORK

The use of Archetypes Models in modelling communication is wide spread in visual communication design. The use of social web tools gives another insight about consumer preferences, creating a better definition of consumer preferences, when those preferences are oriented also by archetype driven products such as television shows and cinema.

An archetype represents a holistic, intuitive approach to the understanding of a brand (Steidi, 2012). This experimental module in the use of user data profile from social web media to define new product communication strategies was only possible with the help of students from the New Media Production course – Master in Graphic Design (ESART 2012).

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER WORK

The results obtained with this project are interesting and state the need for new approaches in the analysis of qualitative data. The results obtained in the experimental method could implement already existent strategies in product communication. Although they cannot substitute the already existent strategies they can improve certain vectors in communication design.

This experiment proved to be valuable, because it gives another perspective on social web media to students, not only as a display channel, but also as a means to retrieve qualitative data.

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