

Social Impact Theory: an examination of how immediacy operates as an influence upon social media interaction in Facebook fan pages

Article

Accepted Version

Perez Vega, R. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1619-317X>, Waite, K. and O'Gorman, K. (2016) Social Impact Theory: an examination of how immediacy operates as an influence upon social media interaction in Facebook fan pages. *The Marketing Review*, 16 (3). pp. 299-321. ISSN 1472-1384 doi: 10.1362/146934716X14636478977791 Available at <https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/67496/>

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work. See [Guidance on citing](#).

To link to this article DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1362/146934716X14636478977791>

Publisher: Westburn Publishers Ltd.

All outputs in CentAUR are protected by Intellectual Property Rights law, including copyright law. Copyright and IPR is retained by the creators or other copyright holders. Terms and conditions for use of this material are defined in the [End User Agreement](#).

www.reading.ac.uk/centaur

CentAUR

Central Archive at the University of Reading

Reading's research outputs online

TITLE: Social Impact Theory: an examination of how immediacy operates as an influence upon social media interaction in Facebook Fan pages

Dr Rodrigo Perez-Vega*, Marketing and Reputation, Henley Business School, University of Reading, Whiteknights Campus, Reading, RG6 6UD. Tel: +44 (0) 118 378 8381, E-mail: R.PerezVega@henley.ac.uk

Dr Kathryn Waite, School of Management and Languages, Heriot-Watt University Edinburgh EH14 4AS. Tel: +44 (0) 131 451 8285, Fax: +44 (0) 131 451 3296, E-mail: k.waite@hw.ac.uk

Professor Kevin O’Gorman, School of Management and Languages, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh EH14 4AS.

*Author for correspondence: Dr Rodrigo Perez-Vega, * Marketing and Reputation, Henley Business School, University of Reading, Whiteknights Campus, Reading, RG6 6UD. Tel: +44 (0) 118 378 8381, E-mail: R.PerezVega@henley.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

This paper proposes that Social Influence Theory is an appropriate approach for understanding social media interaction. Increasingly organisations are looking for ways to develop an effective presence in social media to increase awareness, customer satisfaction, sales and consumer engagement with the brand. The influence of interpersonal interaction upon attitude, beliefs and behaviour, has been studied within social psychology. Different forms of immediacy: physical, temporal and social are theorised as exerting distinct influences upon individual behaviours. This paper reviews the concept of social influence and introduces social impact theory (SIT) a conceptual framework to guide research enquiry and inform practice within the social media marketing. It examines in detail the concept of immediacy and indicates how an understanding of immediacy might explain Facebook behaviours

Key Words: Social Media, Facebook, Social Influence, Social Impact Theory, Online Branding, Literature Review

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Dr Rodrigo Perez-Vega

Rodrigo Perez-Vega, BA (Hons), MSc, MRes, PhD is a Lecturer in Marketing at Henley Business School. His research interests focus on the use of social media by consumers and by brand managers for marketing purpose. Rodrigo has worked extensively within digital marketing and brand management roles for FMCG and service organisations.

Dr Kathryn Waite

Kathryn Waite, BA (Hons), Dip CIM, MBA, MSc, PhD is an Assistant Professor in the School of Management and Languages at Heriot-Watt University. Her research interests relate to information provision and use within the online environment. Her work examines how use of information communication technology influences financial services decision making with a focus on complex products such as pensions. She is interested in critically assessing the extent to which trust, engagement and empowerment outcome are achieved. She is a member of the editorial advisory boards of the *Journal of Financial Services Marketing* and the *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing* and a member of the senior advisory board of the *International Journal of Bank Marketing*.

Professor Kevin O’Gorman

Kevin O’Gorman is Professor of Management and Business History and Head of Business Management in the School of Languages and Management in Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh. He trained in Glasgow, Salamanca and Rome as a philosopher, theologian and historian. His research interests have a dual focus: Origins, history and cultural practices of hospitality, and philosophical, ethical and cultural underpinnings of contemporary management practices. Using a broad range of methodological approaches he has published over 80 journal articles, books, chapters, and conference papers in business and management.

INTRODUCTION

Social media is a new channel of communication between brands and consumers, which is characterised by brand to consumer and consumer to consumer interaction (Daugherty, Eastin and Bright, 2008). Brand fan pages have become a forum for online brand community expression, where brand fans can share their enthusiasm about the brand with other members with a common interest in the brand, and be aware of news regarding that brand, as well as the promotional activities being undertaken (Kozinets, 1999). Hence, fan pages are a major factor for brand communication, and they are used by brands to integrate and interact with their customer base (Dholakia, Bagozzi and Pearo, 2004).

The adoption of technologies associated with web 2.0 raises questions regarding how interaction and communication in computer-mediated environments are influencing consumer decision making (Blank, 2013). Increasingly organisations are looking for ways to develop an effective presence in social media to increase awareness, customer satisfaction, sales and consumer engagement with the brand (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010). There is considerable academic interest in how social media interactions influence behaviour (Li, Lee and Lien, 2012; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010), and there is growing practitioner interest in how to apply the techniques of “co-creational marketing” and “social influence marketing” within social media (Gamble and Gilmore, 2013; Li et al., 2012).

Social influence marketing is a technique that employs social media and social influencers to achieve marketing and business goals (Singh, 2009). It draws on the fact that as potential customers make a purchasing decision, they are being influenced by various forces (Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004). Within the field of social psychology, the concept of ‘social influence’ and its influence upon individual behaviour, attitudes and beliefs is widely studied (Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004; Cialdini and Trost, 1998). Social influence has also of interest to marketers as consumer-to-consumer interactions are believed to affect consumer behaviour,

attitudes and feelings towards a product or brand (Libai et al., 2010). Trends towards brands being present in online environments (Fournier and Avery, 2011) plus the innate human need to anthropomorphize objects to facilitate interactions with non-material objects (Brown, 1991) make brand-consumer interactions within social media subject to similar effects. However, social influence forces are complex and can include individuals who have a strong social influence upon a consumer and also the format of the technology employed, for example, influence can come from mere virtual presence (Naylor et al., 2012). Hence there is a need to identify a theoretical framework to guide decision making.

The purpose of this paper is to propose Social Impact Theory (SIT) as an appropriate framework for social media enquiry. We use Facebook fan pages as context to develop our argument for several reasons: according to the Content Marketing Institute (2014) Facebook is the leading social media platform used by content marketers. Facebook is a popular platform for companies to use due to the number of consumers that can be found there (1.09 billion daily active users on average in March 2016 according to Facebook). A challenge associated with the use of fan pages by a brand is to elicit engagement behaviours towards it in the form of clicks, comments and shared content (de Vries et al., 2012). In addition, customer engagement with the brand in its social media presence has become a top metric for marketing practitioners (eMarketer, 2013). Therefore, this paper first introduces Facebook behaviours as forms of customer engagement., it then reviews the concept of social influence and introduces social impact theory (SIT) is an appropriate conceptual framework. Finally, it examines in detail the concept of immediacy and indicates how an understanding of immediacy might explain Facebook behaviours. The paper concludes with a call for empirical work to test these assertions.

FACEBOOK BEHAVIOURS AS FORMS OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

Facebook offers companies several options to contact and communicate with their customers. Four engagement behaviours are identified as prominent in terms of consumer-brand interaction in this environment: Page Liking, Content Liking, Content Sharing and Content Commenting. These behaviours are of interest because they represent the type of interactions that consumers and brands can have in Facebook fan pages. Interaction rates are one of the top engagement metrics that marketing practitioners use to measure their success of marketing activities in social media (eMarketer, 2014) and this type of behavioural outcomes have also been used to measure fan page engagement (Jahn and Kunz, 2012). This section will now detail how each of these behaviours is enacted.

Page Liking

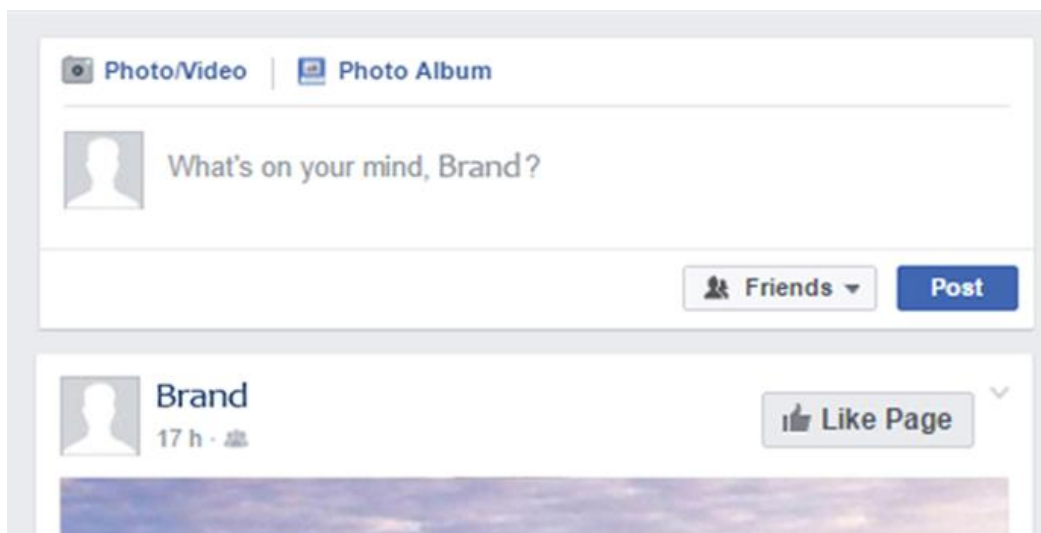
‘Liking’ a page on Facebook essentially serves as an opt-in mechanism for ongoing communications with the owner of that page (Poynter, 2008). The internet makes it possible to overcome geographical restrictions and to build fan communities world-wide. Borle, Dholakia, Singh and Durham (2012) and Dholakia and Durham, (2010) examined the degree to which participating on a Facebook fan page affects customer behaviours. In a longitudinal study, conducted in cooperation with two restaurants, they showed an effect of membership on the fan page to behavioural loyalty, spending in the restaurants, and the restaurant category overall. Their findings support the idea that Facebook fan pages are useful for deepening the relationship with customers, creating online communities and increasing consumer engagement (Jahn and Kunz, 2012).

A fan can be anything from a devotee to an enthusiast of a particular brand. Typical characteristics of fans are self-identification as fan, emotional engagement, cultural competence, auxiliary consumption, and co-production (Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki and Wilner, 2010). In practice, users become fans of a Facebook fan page by pressing the “like-

button” which indicates to their social network that they like this brand; this preference is then added to their profiles The new content of this fan page is automatically posted to their personal Facebook news feed, and they can like this content, share it with their friends, post comments on the fan page, get in contact with the company, forward offers from this page as well as interact with other fans. Therefore Liking the page is the first step towards other forms of interaction with the brand in this environment. Figure 1 provides an example of liking behaviour.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

Figure 1 Example of Page Liking Behaviour



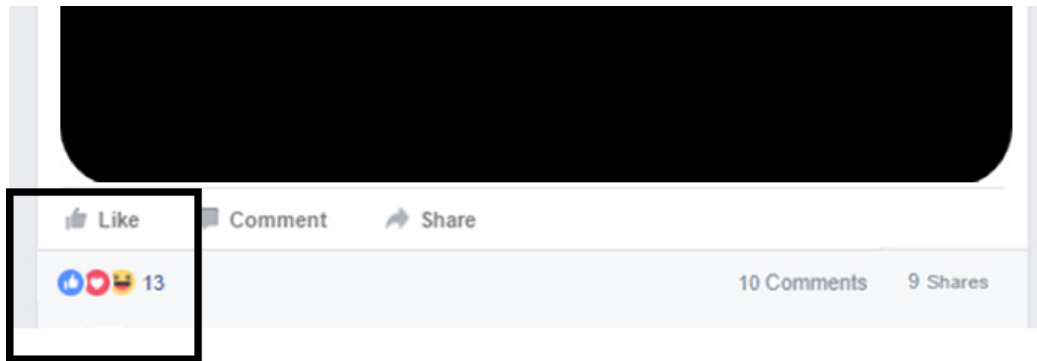
Content Liking

Facebook defines “Liking” content on its platforms as making a connection (Facebook, 2014). The consequence of “Liking” content in this platform according to Facebook is to generate a story, and content may appear in that individual’s timeline, it may be displayed on the Page that individual is connected to, and next to content in third party sites. Liking content also may result in the person endorsing the content or other brands, as well as delivering branded messages to others around the user’s social network (Li et al., 2012).

A study by Chadwick Martin Bailey (cited in Owyang, 2010) reports that 33 per cent of Facebook users are fans of brands, and 60 per cent of these consumers are more likely to purchase or recommend to a friend after ‘liking’ brand content. Some authors suggest that liking content in social media is a manifestation of affective evaluation of people, situations or objects (Alhabash, McAlister, Hagerstrom, Quilliam, Rifon and Richards, 2013). Yet other authors argue that motivations behind liking contents were aimed at financial or social rewards, with users looking to receive discounts or to show brand support to their friends (Harris and Dennis, 2011). This evidence suggests that liking content is not only a meaningless action by users of social media, but there are other cognitive, affective and behavioural drivers underpinning their liking behaviour. Figure 2 provides an example of content liking behaviour.

INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE

Figure 2 Example of Content Liking Behaviour

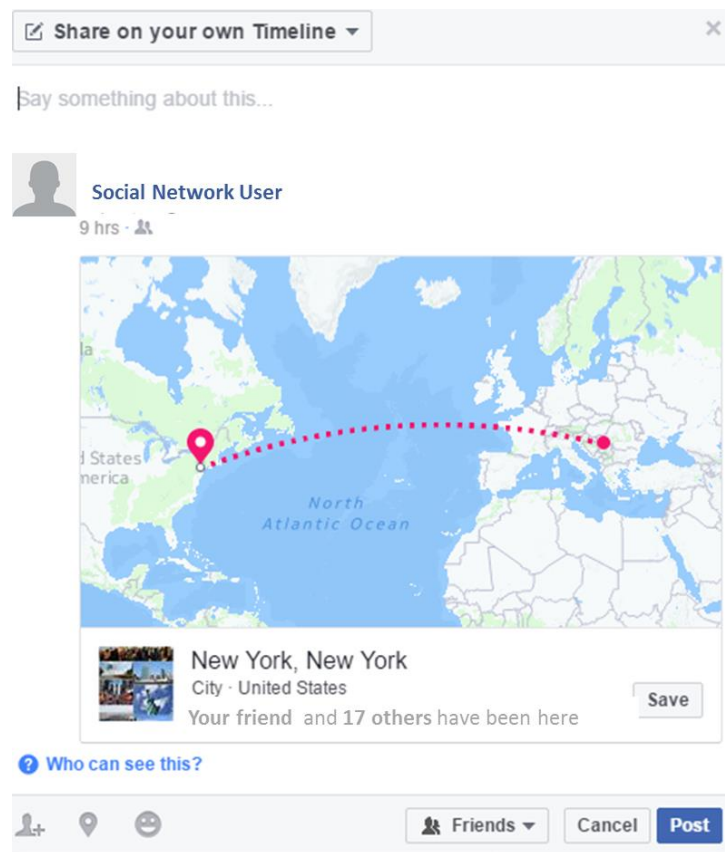


Content Sharing

Content sharing happens when users decide to share content with others within their social network. Content sharing help users to build an online identity based on the type of content that they share and socialise with other users in online environments (Brandtzæg et al., 2010). The barriers for sharing content online and in particular in social media websites are considerably lower compared with earlier times (Hargittai and Walejko, 2008). Recent developments on the web and in the realm of other digital media have made it increasingly possible for people to share their creations with others. Sharing is a simple way for users to co-create together with the message source content that is relevant to them and to build their identity based on the content that is being shared (Karahasanović et al., 2009). In some social networking sites (i.e. Twitter) sharing content is perceived as a way to show support to the content being shared. Sharing content is one of the most important criteria for the success of social networking sites together with sociability (Brandtzæg et al., 2010). Figure 4 shows an example of content sharing behaviour.

INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE

Figure 3 Example of Content Sharing Behaviour



Content Commenting

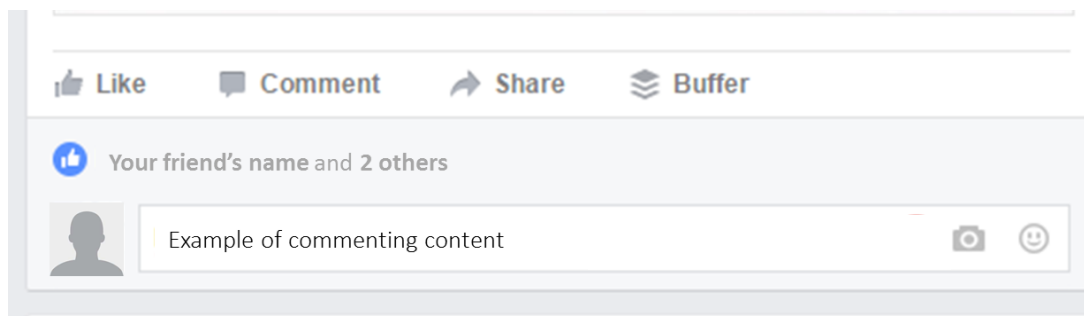
Giving the possibility to comment on someone's post is a feature that has been added to social media sites to encourage sociability (Keenan and Shiri, 2009). Sociability according to Preece (2000) is the ability to interact with others or to socialise, and it is another of the important features to the success of social media websites (Brandtzæg et al., 2010). By allowing users to comment on content, social connections are being strengthened, and the formation of online virtual communities is possible.

INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE

This section has detailed four types of Facebook engagement behaviours: liking, content liking, content sharing and content commenting. One challenge associated with the use of fan pages by a brand is to elicit interaction by attracting people's attention and inducing them to click on

the page to become a fan, or clicking on the content (de Vries et al., 2012). There is emerging research that looks at the factors determining the types of behaviours in an online context. For instance, Li et al. (2012) proposed and tested via simulations a model that used social influence factors as determinants of behavioural outcomes, including click-through rates. Moreover, Naylor et al. (2012) also found, in their empirical study, that social influence factors such as mere virtual presence can affect intentions when engaging with a brand in social media settings when the sources of influence have certain demographic characteristics. Thus there have been several calls for research to examine what other factors determine behaviour in social media settings (Marketing Science Institute, 2014; Schultz and Peltier, 2013). This paper will now discuss how Social Impact Theory and in particular a study of immediacy provides the basis for empirical enquiry.

Figure 4 Example of Content Commenting Behaviour



SOCIAL IMPACT THEORY

Social Impact Theory (SIT) seeks to explain how social influence causes changes in behaviour, attitudes and beliefs of individuals as a result of their interaction with others (Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004; Cialdini and Trost, 1998). Social influence is defined as the direct and indirect influence processes that can operate at the interpersonal, group or socio-cultural level, and that involve effects that may be subconscious or conscious, and can impact on thoughts, judgements and observable behaviours (Turner, 1991). Social influence can be divided into three sub-types: “norms”, “compliance” and “conformity” (Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004). Table 1 presents an overview of how theory within social psychology addresses each sub-type, this shows that Social Impact Theory addresses the influence of conformity.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Table 1 Overview of Social Influence Theories

Sub-Type of Influence	Description	Theory
Social Norms	Habitual custom or “the way we do things.”	Theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991)
Compliance	The action to consent to a certain request, and all the motivations surrounding this behaviour	Affect-infusion model (Forgas, 1995)
Conformity	The act of changing one’s behaviour to match the responses of others	The objective consensus approach (Mackie, 1987) Conversion theory (Moscovici, 1980) Social influence model (Penrod and Hastie, 1979) Self-categorization theory (Turner, 1985) Social impact theory (Latané, 1981)

Adapted from: Cialdini and Goldstein (2004)

Conformity behaviour involves forming an opinion as a result of external pressure by others. The pressure can be either real or perceived and can be either direct or indirect. Conformity can mean moving from one opinion to a contradictory view but it does not necessarily mean changing to an opposite perspective, it can also involve remaining in the same position as a result of peer pressure, a term known as conformity by omission (Sorrentino and Kelley, 1984). Conformity can be considered a response to the strength of social norms (Cialdini and Trost, 1998; Goldberg, 1954). Conformity exerts social influence as a way of satisfying basic psychological needs (Deutsch and Gerard, 1955). These needs can be summarised as the need to assess correctly the way our external environment works (informational social influence) and the need to be liked by the people that are around us (normative social influence). These needs influence individuals to conform to the views, thoughts and behaviours of others. SIT proposes that conformity is gained if the source of external pressure has three key: source strength, source immediacy and source numbers (Table 2).

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

Table 2 Three Social Forces Comprising Social Impact Theory

Social Force	Explanation	Illustration
Strength	Salience, importance or intensity of the influencing source. Can be related to the source itself (Transituational strength) or related to the context-specific roles that the influence and the influenced occupy (Situational strength)	Transituational Strength: age, gender, physical characteristics, and perceived intelligence, physical appearance. Situation-Specific Strength: Actor and audience, teacher and class, peer pressure and alcohol consumption.
Immediacy	The proximity of influencing source and the individual who is the target of the influence. Can be physical, temporal or social	Physical Immediacy: Geographic location, seat spacing, crowding. Temporal Immediacy: time between announcements, duration of announcement Social Immediacy: perceptions that others are “like us.”
Number	The number of influencing sources directed towards the individual	Numbers in a crowd, numbers in class, numbers in an online community.

Source strength is the salience, importance or intensity of the influencing source. SIT proposes that strength is either trans-situational or situation specific (Latané 1981) and that as strength increases so does the degree of social impact. Trans-situational strength is relatively stable across different contexts and time. Empirically, the concept of strength as a trans-situational has been tested a wide range of forms. For instance, the influence of personality traits on nomination behaviour (Miller and Bruiner 2008), the influence of source status on paranormal belief (Markovsky and Thye, 2001) , the influence of witness status on juror verdicts (Wolf and Bugaj, 1990) and the influence clothing worn by source on donation behaviour (Williams and Williams, 1989) . Situation-Specific strength changes according to the context within which social influence is exerted. Situation-specific strength is related to the roles that the influencer and the individual being influenced occupy. Empirical studies have included the influence of the presence of an audience in inducing stage fright (Seta, Crisson, Seta and Wang, 1989), the influence of peers upon alcohol consumption (Pedersen, LaBrie and Lac, 2008) and the presence of a caregiver upon time to call for assistance (Williams and Williams 1989).

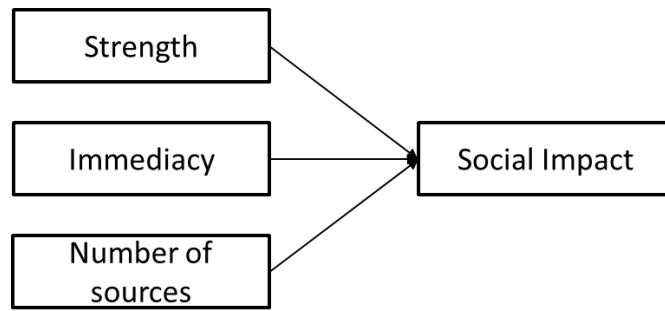
Source immediacy is closeness in space or time, communication clarity and richness as well as the absence of intervening communication barriers or filters (Latané 1981). As immediacy increases so does the degree of social impact. There are three main types of immediacy: physical, temporal and social. Immediacy is also studied in the form of psychological distance; that is defined as the subjective experience that something is close or far away from the self (Trope and Liberman, 2010) and acknowledges the subjectivity of immediacy of objects, people and events. Empirical work has focussed on the effect of physical immediacy on behaviours and cognitions. For instance, Pedersen et al. (2008) found that physical proximity of college students affected the levels of alcohol consumption at university, Bourgeois and Bowen (2001) found that groups of friends that were physically close shared similar beliefs to those that were physically more distant in other courses. Research into temporal immediacy

has found that as the time between interactions increases so social impact decreases (Sedikides and Jackson, 1990).

Source number is the numerical value of sources of influences and that as this numerical value increases so does the degree of social impact (Latané, 1981). There is some debate about whether continuing to increase numbers results in similar increases in social impact through a need for conformity. For example, Asch (1951) found that three sources increased conformity but after that number was reached no further gains in social impact were made. Elsewhere researchers have suggested that, dependent upon context, there is an “ideal” number of sources after which adding more influencers will diminish the amount of social impact gained or in other words in some situations “less is more” (Latané and Wolf, 1981; Tanford and Penrod, 1984). Finally, SIT proposes that the multiplication (interaction) of source strength, source immediacy and number of sources produces social impact. The relationships suggested by SIT (Latané, 1981) are graphically represented in Figure 5.

INSERT FIGURE 5 HERE

Figure 5 Social Impact Theory



Adapted from Latané, 1981

THE INFLUENCE OF IMMEDIACY IN SOCIAL MEDIA

This paper next considers the concept of source immediacy in more detail and applies it as a way of explaining behaviour within social media. Immediacy is a multi-dimensional construct, and different types of immediacies exist between source and target which are labelled: physical immediacy, temporal immediacy and social immediacy. Various types of immediacies have been tested empirically in a range of offline and online settings (Blaskovich, 2008; Miller and Brunner, 2008; Pedersen et al., 2008; Bourgeois and Bowen, 2001; Hart, Stasson and Karau, 1999; Jackson and Latané, 1982; Bassett and Latané, 1976) and through computer simulations (Fink, 1996; Latané and L'Herrou, 1996; Latané and Liu, 1996; Latané, Liu, Nowak, Bonevento and Zheng, 1995). Evidence suggests that source immediacy relates to social impact at the behavioural (Chidambaram and Tung, 2005; Miller and Brunner, 2008; Pedersen et al., 2008) and cognitive level (Blaskovich, 2008; Argo, Dahl and Manchanda, 2005; Bourgeois and Bowen, 2001; Knowles, 1983).

A focus upon immediacy is appropriate for three reasons. First, there is very limited empirical evidence that looks at the relationship of immediacy and consumer-brand interactions (Kwahk and Ge, 2012), however there is evidence to suggest that immediacy influences persuasion (Miller and Brunner, 2008) and collaboration in groups (Conaway et al., 2005; Woods and Baker, 2004). Furthermore, empirical testing has shown contradictory results for the influence of immediacy upon behaviour (Jackson, 1986; Mullen, 1985; Jackson and Latané, 1982). One possible explanation is that there a tendency to use only one form of immediacy as the independent variable. This means that more complex interactions between different forms of immediacy have been overlooked.

Second, developing insight into the relationship between changes in immediacy and social impact outcomes is of interest to Internet marketers. Indeed, Miller and Brunner (2008) found that there was a positive relationship between perceptions of sources being present and sources

being influential amongst online users. A detailed understanding how physical immediacy is interpreted online by consumers would help inform decisions about whether websites and social media pages need to be adapted to appear to become from a local source to have a maximum influence upon customer behaviour.

Third, other forms of immediacy such as temporal and social immediacy of a brand can be modified via sponsored posts and social advertising. For example, it is possible to have both synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (time-delayed) interactions (Mangold and Faulds, 2009) and to communicate in real time over great physical distance (Moon, 1999). Hence physical, temporal and social immediacy are very variable in the online environment. This paper now explains how different forms of immediacy are present within the online environment, and it is organised around the forms of immediacies identified: Physical, Temporal and Social.

Physical immediacy

Empirical evidence in computer-mediated environments has shown that physical immediacy affects behaviour in similar ways as in offline environments. Olson and Olson (2000) reviewed 10 years of empirical research in the context of group collaboration in computer-mediated communication and offline environments. They argue that despite the fact that computers and online environments allow users to interact regardless of their physical location, physical immediacy among other elements remains an important factor that determines the outcome of an interaction. This is because differences in the local physical context, time zones, culture, and language persist even when technology allow for physical immediacy to be less relevant to interact with other people. Evidence supporting this view has been provided in different contexts. For instance, Bradner and Mark (2002) found in a series of experiments that interactions performed via computer-mediated communication technology were affected by the geographical immediacy of the subjects. In their study, subjects in physically close locations

had higher levels of cooperation, were perceived as more persuasive and elicited fewer levels of deception compared to subjects that were believed to be in distant locations.

Evidence also suggests that the frequency of interactions moderates the influence of physical immediacy upon behaviour. Research by Bradner and Mark (2002) on cooperation, persuasion and deception found that despite the fact there were significant differences in these variables between online and offline interaction, these differences were not significant after a certain number of interactions. Similar results obtained by Moon (1999) who found a negative relationship between perceived physical immediacy and persuasion in computer-mediated interactions.

Previous research has largely focused on computer-mediated interaction in a work-related setting. Research that focuses on social interaction shows that physical immediacy affects social interactions at different degrees in offline and online contexts (Rosette, Brett, Barsness and Lytle, 2012; Mok, Wellman and Carrasco, 2010; Ganesan, Malter and Rindfleisch, 2005). For example, in face-to-face and telephone contexts, high physical immediacy results in higher levels of interaction. Evidence in online environments suggests that in computer-mediated environments this relationship also exists, with the number of interactions being determined by the social structures (e.g. tie strength, degree of intimacy) than by the physical immediacy that exists between the users (Mok et al, 2010). Other studies have found similar results (e.g., Wellman, Hogan, Berg, Boase, Carrasco, Cote, Kayahara, Kennedy and Tran, 2006). Studies of “friendship” ties on LiveJournal (e.g., Liben-Nowell, Novak, Kumar, Raghavan and Tomkins, 2005) also found an effect of distance.

Drawing on this body of evidence it is proposed social interactions in the context of social media will also increase as physical immediacy increases. It is expected that users will like Facebook pages from organisations that are physically close to them. The act of liking begins

a process of communication. Thus fan page liking results in messages from that brand being present in the news feed of the user. It can be argued that the presence of this content might contribute to online self-identity formation, for example, a study by ExactTarget (2010) found that almost 40% of consumers “like” companies on Facebook to publicly display their brand affiliation to “friends.” In addition, “liking” a page might result in monetary reward as companies often incentivise liking behaviour with special offers and rewards. The First Incentive Theory of Motivation suggests that we are motivated to engage if there is a meaningful reward. This means that if there are vouchers and offers as a result of liking a fan page or content then geographically close fans will respond as a reduction in distance increases the meaning of the reward. Finally, there is empirical research that shows that in a personal context Facebook users’ intention to befriend is inversely proportional to their physical distance for medium to long range distances, however for a short range, there is no influence (Backstrom, Sun and Marlow, 2010).

Since Facebook Page liking behaviour shows affective commitment to engage in a relationship with that brand in social media settings, it is proposed that this will affect the intentions to perform other forms of Fan Page behaviours such as content liking, content sharing and content commenting.

Temporal immediacy

Temporal immediacy refers to the time of the receiver of the communication regardless of actual past or future (Bar-Anan, Liberman and Tope, 2007; Shen and Chiou, 2010; Trope and Liberman, 2003). The more distant in time an event is perceived to be, the less social impact these events will convey to the target. Research into the effects of temporal immediacy on social impact in online environments shows that the more distant in time an event is perceived the less social impact these events will convey on the target. For instance, temporal proximity of events reflect on aspects of attachment to, membership in, and departure from a certain event

in the context of immediacy learning (Haythornthwaite et al., 2006). Even when interactions are occurring in online environments, the temporal proximity generated by “live” events as opposed to recorded ones result in a better experience and more engagement from the participants of immediacy learning courses (Conaway et al., 2005). Temporal proximity in synchronous interactions also have a positive effect in the outcome of teamwork (DeRosa and Hantula, 2004).

Construal level theory (CLT) posits that people use a higher level of construals to represent an object/person or event as the temporal distance increases. Thus as temporal immediacy decreases, people will tend to focus on more abstract elements, while at high temporal immediacy people will tend to concentrate more on operational details. Empirical evidence from Castaño, Suján and Kacker (2008) found that when adoption of a new product is in the distant future, people are more concerned about performance and symbolic-benefit uncertainties. In contrast, in the near future, the concerns are more about switching- and affective-cost uncertainties. The view of CLT on temporal immediacy is also shared by Kahneman and Miller's (1986) norm theory. They posit that people elicit more intense affect to temporally immediate scenarios. For instance, Meyers-Levy and Maheswaran (1992) suggest that the effect of temporal distance on emotional response will be higher on events occurring to close friend one week ago vs. 9 months ago. Thus it is proposed that temporal immediacy will have similar positive effects on Facebook Page behaviours.

Social Immediacy

Social immediacy refers to the perceived similarity with those around us, with similar others being perceived as socially closer to oneself than dissimilar ones (e.g. Heider, 1958, Miller et al., 1998 and Tesser, 1988). High social immediacy is found to increase trust and reciprocity (Charness Haruvy and Sonsino, 2007; Cox and Deck, 2005; Eckel and Wilson, 2002). Low social immediacy results in social norms not being clear for social network participants and has

an effect on the negotiation style and targeted outcome expected from both parties (Rosette et al., 2012). These findings can be explained via social awareness theory and its accompanying research suggests that psychological distance between members of different groups reduce social awareness and increase a self-interested behaviour (Rosette et al., 2012).

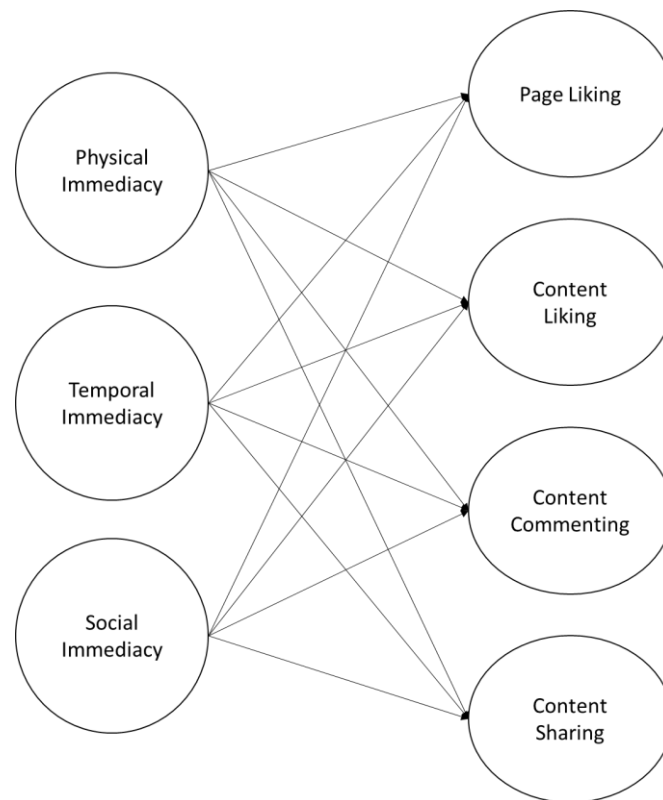
The strength of weak ties (SWT) theory also supports the significance of social immediacy (which within the theory is called *tie strength*) as a determinant of behavioural and cognitive outcomes (Granovetter, 1973). Tie strength is the amount of time, emotional intensity, intimacy, and reciprocity that exist between two individuals, and it determines the diffusion of influence and information. This means that strong tie relationships are more likely to have a greater amount of information flow between the dyads, and also have a higher level of influence over each other (Brown and Reingen, 1987; Granovetter, 1973; Leonard-Barton, 1985; Reingen and Kernan, 1986). Tie strength has also shown to influence consumer engagement behaviours such as word-of-mouth (Wirtz and Chew, 2002). Empirical evidence indicates that the amount of word-of-mouth generated is higher within groups with many strong tie relations (e.g. close friends) as opposed to within groups with many weak ties relations (Fitzgerald Bone, 1992).

Social immediacy has also been found to drive sharing activity in online environments such as sharing music content within an individual social network (Tran et al., 2011). Thus it is proposed that social immediacy also has a relationship with Facebook Page behaviour.

Figure 6 represents the type of relationships that are proposed in this paper between Facebook behaviours and different forms of immediacy.

INSERT FIGURE 6 HERE

Figure 6 Relationship between Immediacy and Facebook Engagement Behaviour



DISCUSSION

Social influence is recognised as a critical shaper of consumer behaviour in situations characterised by ambiguous information or in situations where there are unclear standards of conduct (Mangleburg, Doney and Bristol, 2004). In other words, people rely heavily on others behaviour when they do not possess much information regarding a certain outcome or behaviour. An example of this would be thinking that because a restaurant is full this is an indication of good food or conforming to certain behaviour because other individuals who are thought to be like you behave in the same manner (Banerjee, 1992; Cialdini, Kallgren and Reno, 1991). In this respect, the presence of others or looking at what others are doing is deemed to be a driving force to future behaviour, as well as the creation and change of beliefs and feelings (Banerjee, 1992).

Empirical evidence on the impact of different forms of immediacy in the context of social media is still very limited. Results from studies in other settings suggest that an understanding of immediacy as a determinant of social impact would provide insight into online behaviours such as consumer engagement. For example, Chu and Kim (2011) found that people that are susceptible to normative and information influence positively affect their engagement behaviours in social networking sites. Their study provides supportive evidence that social impact factors have a positive effect on the generation of electronic word-of-mouth communications. This paper has considered how immediacy might influence consumer behaviour within social networking sites.

Online environments allow for the modification or concealment of those elements that can help targets determine closeness. Thus social immediacy can be manipulated to allow individuals to choose what kind of information is disclosed to others (Guadagno and Cialdini, 2005). This ability to manipulate social immediacy can also be used by brands and other stakeholders to leverage the decision of other users that are close to a given target. For example, content in web articles, or playlists in social media sites that rely on video content display the popularity that a given content had with other users that are socially close to the client. For this reason, it appears to be crucial to understand further the implications of these constant changes in the form immediacy manifest in this medium to understand its full effect as a social impact factor.

SIT has been tested in both social psychology (DiFonzo et al., 2013; Doohwang et al., 2011; DeWall et al., 2010; Miller and Brunner, 2008; Pedersen et al., 2008; Latané and L'Herrou, 1996; Jackson and Latane, 1982) and marketing literature (Kwahk and Ge, 2012; Naylor et al., 2012) resulting in supportive evidence that at least one of the social forces proposed by the theory (strength, immediacy and number of sources) affect consumers' behaviour.

Consumers are assuming increasingly active roles in the marketing process resulting in a blurring of traditional boundaries between producers and consumers (Kim and Hardin, 2010; Cova and Dalli, 2009; Konczal, 2008). Amongst the drivers of this change are: continued innovation of information communication technology (Akar and Topçu, 2011; Hardey, 2011) an increasing consumer desire for interaction with brands (Dauhgerty et al., 2008) and consumer resistance to marketing control (Cova and Dalli, 2009). Within this environment, social media development has acted as a marketing catalyst (Qualman, 2012; Smith, Deitz, Royne, Hansen, Grunhagen and Witte, 2012; O'Connor, 2010; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010).

Social media enables individuals to not only read content provided by others but also to create their content that can also be shared among their peers. In social media users can also connect with brands by becoming "fans" of that brand on their dedicated brand fan page.

Social media websites are characterised for allowing both synchronous and asynchronous communication (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Increasing interest has been devoted to the role that time plays in affecting consumers' judgments and behaviours (Hoch and Loewenstein 1991; Hornik and Schlinger, 1981; Jacoby, Szybillo, and Berning, 1976). However, the body of knowledge applied to the online context is still very limited.

In this paper, we have examined the concept of social influence and applied different forms of immediacy to social network behaviour in accordance with Social Impact Theory. Social impact theory is proposed as an appropriate approach to explaining changes in behaviour, attitudes and cognitions as a result of the presence of others. Facebook behaviour of liking, sharing and commenting were examined as forms of customer engagement. Customer engagement is of increasing importance within the marketing literature. This is because consumer engagement positively affects elements that are valuable for companies such as

consumer trust (Hollebeek, 2011), satisfaction and loyalty (Bowden, 2009) and commitment (Chan and Li, 2010). These elements are considered to be strong indicators of long-term sales, word-of-mouth and brand advocacy (Brodie et al., 2011).

Implications for Practice

There are several questions that practitioners face that are addressed from a detailed consideration of different forms of immediacy. For example, the introduction in 2012 of a new structure for global brands to manage their local presence via Facebook (Darwell, 2012). This new structure allows brands to display unified elements of social influence such as the number of people already liking or talking to the page, but also enabling users to be redirected to localised versions of the page based on their physical location. The question is whether geographical localisation of Facebook fan pages has a positive impact on the levels of engagement with those brands. There appears to be no study in the literature that can provide empirical evidence of this, and that could certainly inform marketing practitioners on the effectiveness of this practice. In our discussion we have examined in depth the concept of immediacy and formulated three research propositions that seek to explain differences in consumer behaviours within Facebook. These research propositions argue that an increase in physical, temporal and social immediacy will positively affect these behaviours.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

It is appropriate at this point to make a connection between the concept of immediacy and the concept of telepresence and interactivity found within online research (Klein 2003, Griffith and Chen 2004, Cho, Wang and Fesenmaier, 2002). Telepresence is defined as the feeling of “being there” (Steuer, 1992) and originated in virtual reality research as a consequence of computer-mediated interactions (Hyun and O’Keefe, 2012). The focus of telepresence research is on how closely computer-mediated experiences simulate real-world interaction with a

product or person rather than on how the interaction within the online medium generates social influence (Shih, 1998). The concept of interactivity is defined as “the extent to which users can participate in modifying the form and content of the mediated environment in real time” (Steuer, 1992). Studies in interactivity focus on responses to the structural properties of the online medium such as “the hardwired opportunity of interactivity provided during an interaction” (Liu and Shrum, 2002, p.55). Interactivity research therefore focuses on the information system itself rather than the social practices and influences within the online space.

There is a need for empirical work to test our assertions. Empirical evidence of social influence within social network is limited. For example, Lim, Cha, Park, Lee and Kim (2012) found that reducing temporal immediacy in social media can enhance users’ co-experience in video streaming platforms, and to the knowledge of these researchers no empirical testing has been done in online environments using temporal immediacy as a determinant of social impact. Experimentation with different configurations of Fan pages can provide evidence of which configurations elicit higher levels of engagements with a brand. This kind of methods are already being used to increase conversion rates of landing pages, and the practice should extend to the management of Facebook fan pages. We argue for the continuation of experimental designs in social media environments as this will allow testing the impact of different configurations on behaviours that are of interest for marketing academics and practitioners.

We argue that immediacy of the sources in the form of time distance, social distance and physical distance are constantly being manipulated and changing for the user of social media websites. However, its effect as a determinant of social impact in social media environments remains an understudied subject. Within the broader stream of Social Impact Theory testing empirical work has tended to focus on physical presence as an operationalization of immediacy.

We argue that the dynamic nature of immediacy within social networks recommend this context as a site for further study and we aim to test in a future study the effects of these types of immediacies on consumers' behaviours with brand fan pages on Facebook.

REFERENCES

- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*, 50(2), 179-211. doi:10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T
- Akar, E., & Topçu, B. (2011). An examination of the factors influencing consumers' attitudes toward social media marketing. *Journal of Internet Commerce*, 10(1), 35-67. doi: 10.1080/15332861.2011.558456
- Alhabash, S., McAlister, A. R., Hagerstrom, A., Quilliam, E. T., Rifon, N. J., & Richards, J. I. (2013). Between likes and shares: Effects of emotional appeal and virality on the persuasiveness of anticyberbullying messages on Facebook. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 16(3), 175-182. doi:10.1089/cyber.2012.0265
- Argo, J. J., Dahl, D. W., & Manchanda, R. V. (2005). The influence of a mere social presence in a retail context. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32(2), 207-212. doi: 10.1086/432230
- Asch, S. E. (1951). Effects of group pressure upon the modification and distortion of judgments. *Groups, leadership, and men*, 222-236.
- Backstrom, L., Sun, E., & Marlow, C. (2010, April). Find me if you can: improving geographical prediction with social and spatial proximity. In *Proceedings of the 19th international conference on World wide web* (pp. 61-70). ACM. doi: 10.1145/1772690.1772698
- Banerjee, A. V. (1992). A simple model of herd behavior. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 797-817. doi: 10.2307/2118364

- Bar-Anan, Y., Liberman, N., & Trope, Y. (2006). The association between psychological distance and construal level: evidence from an implicit association test. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 135(4), 609. doi: 10.1037/0096-3445.135.4.609
- Bassett, R. L., & Latane, B. (1976). Social influences and news stories. In *meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC*, 343-356.
- Blank, G. (2013). Who creates content? Stratification and content creation on the Internet. *Information, Communication & Society*, 16(4), 590-612. doi: 10.1080/1369118X.2013.777758
- Blaskovich, J. L. (2008). Exploring the effect of distance: an experimental investigation of virtual collaboration, social loafing, and group decisions. *Journal of Information Systems*, 22(1), 27-46. doi: 10.2308/jis.2008.22.1.27
- Borle, S., Dholakia, U., Singh, S., & Durham, E. (2012). An empirical investigation of the impact of Facebook fan page participation on customer behavior. *Marketing Science*, 52(2), 1-36.
- Bourgeois, M. J., & Bowen, A. (2001). Self-organization of alcohol-related attitudes and beliefs in a campus housing complex: an initial investigation. *Health Psychology*, 20(6), 434. doi: 10.1037/0278-6133.20.6.434
- Bowden, J. (2009). Customer engagement: A framework for assessing customer-brand relationships: The case of the restaurant industry. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 18(6), 574-596. doi: 10.1080/19368620903024983
- Bradner, E., & Mark, G. (2002, November). Why distance matters: effects on cooperation, persuasion and deception. In *Proceedings of the 2002 ACM conference on Computer supported cooperative work* (pp. 226-235). ACM. doi: 10.1145/587078.587110

- Brandtzæg, P. B., Lüders, M., & Skjetne, J. H. (2010). Too many Facebook “friends”? Content sharing and sociability versus the need for privacy in social network sites. *Intl. Journal of Human–Computer Interaction*, 26(11-12), 1006-1030. doi: 10.1080/10447318.2010.516719
- Brodie, R. J., Hollebeek, L. D., Juric, B., & Ilic, A. (2011). Customer engagement: conceptual domain, fundamental propositions, and implications for research. *Journal of Service Research*, 14(3), 252-271. doi: 10.1177/1094670511411703
- Brown, J. J., & Reingen, P. H. (1987). Social ties and word-of-mouth referral behavior. *Journal of Consumer research*, 14 (3), 350-362.
- Castaño, R., Sujan, M., Kacker, M., & Sujan, H. (2008). Managing consumer uncertainty in the adoption of new products: temporal distance and mental simulation. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 45(3), 320-336. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.45.3.320>
- Charness, G., Haruvy, E., & Sonsino, D. (2007). Social distance and reciprocity: An Internet experiment. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 63(1), 88-103. doi:10.1016/j.jebo.2005.04.021
- Chidambaram, L., & Tung, L. L. (2005). Is out of sight, out of mind? An empirical study of social loafing in technology-supported groups. *Information Systems Research*, 16(2), 149-168. doi: 10.1287/isre.1050.0051
- Cho, Y. H., Wang, Y., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2002). Searching for experiences: The web-based virtual tour in tourism marketing. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 12(4), 1-17. doi 10.1300/J073v12n04_01
- Chu, S. C., & Kim, Y. (2011). Determinants of consumer engagement in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in social networking sites. *International Journal of Advertising*, 30(1), 47-75.

Cialdini, R. B., & Goldstein, N. J. (2004). Social influence: Compliance and conformity. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.*, 55, 591-621. doi: 10.1146/annurev.psych.55.090902.142015

Cialdini, R. B., & Trost, M. R. (1998). Social influence: Social norms, conformity and compliance. Gilbert, Daniel T. (Ed); Fiske, Susan T. (Ed); Lindzey, Gardner (Ed). *The handbook of social psychology*, Vols. 1 and 2 (4th ed.). , (pp. 151-192). New York, NY, US: McGraw-Hill, x, 1085 pp.

Cialdini, R. B., Kallgren, C. A., & Reno, R. R. (1991). A focus theory of normative conduct: A theoretical refinement and reevaluation of the role of norms in human behavior. *Advances in experimental social psychology*, 24(20), 1-243.

Conaway, R. N., Easton, S. S., & Schmidt, W. V. (2005). Strategies for enhancing student interaction and immediacy in online courses. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 68(1), 23-35. doi: 10.1177/1080569904273300

Content Marketing Institute (2014). New Content Marketing Research: B2C Challenged with Measurement [Website] Available from: <<http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2014/10/2015-b2c-consumer-content-marketing/>> [Accessed on: 02/04/2015].

Cova, B., & Dalli, D. (2009). Working consumers: the next step in marketing theory?. *Marketing theory*, 9(3), 315-339. doi: 10.1177/1470593109338144

Cox, J. C., & Deck, C. A. (2005). On the nature of reciprocal motives. *Economic Inquiry*, 43(3), 623-635. doi: 10.1093/ei/cbi043

Darwell, B. (2012). Facebook launches 'global pages' for brands to offer localized experiences [Website] Available from:< <http://www.insidefacebook.com/2012/10/17/facebook-launches-global-pages-for-brands-to-offer-localized-experiences/>> [Accessed on: 27-05-2014].

Daugherty, T., Eastin, M. S., & Bright, L. (2008). Exploring consumer motivations for creating user-generated content. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 8(2), 16-25. doi:10.1080/15252019.2008.10722139

De Vries, L., Gensler, S., & Leeftang, P. S. (2012). Popularity of brand posts on brand fan pages: an investigation of the effects of social media marketing. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26(2), 83-91. doi:10.1016/j.intmar.2012.01.003

DeRosa, D. M., Hantula, D. A., Kock, N., & D'Arcy, J. (2004). Trust and leadership in virtual teamwork: A media naturalness perspective. *Human Resource Management*, 43(2-3), 219-232. doi: 10.1002/hrm.20016

Deutsch, M., & Gerard, H. B. (1955). A study of normative and informational social influences upon individual judgment. *The journal of abnormal and social psychology*, 51(3), 629. doi 10.1037/h0046408

DeWall, C. N., Twenge, J. M., Bushman, B., Im, C., & Williams, K. (2010). A Little Acceptance Goes a Long Way Applying Social Impact Theory to the Rejection–Aggression Link. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 1(2), 168-174. doi: 10.1177/1948550610361387

Dholakia, U. M., & Durham, E. (2010). One café chain's Facebook experiment. *Harvard Business Review*, 88(3), 26.

Dholakia, U. M., Bagozzi, R. P., & Pearo, L. K. (2004). A social influence model of consumer participation in network-and small-group-based virtual communities. *International journal of research in marketing*, 21(3), 241-263. doi: 10.1016/j.ijresmar.2003.12.004.

DiFonzo, N., Bourgeois, M. J., Suls, J., Homan, C., Stupak, N., Brooks, B. P. & Bordia, P. (2013). Rumor clustering, consensus, and polarization: Dynamic social impact and self-

organization of hearsay. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 49(3), 378-399.
doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2012.12.010

Eckel, C. C., & Wilson, R. K. (2004). Is trust a risky decision?. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 55(4), 447-465. doi:10.1016/j.jebo.2003.11.003

eMarketer (2013). Social's Value Measured in Engagement Over Sales [Website]. Available from: <<http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Socials-Value-Measured-Engagement-Over-Sales/1010116>> [Accessed: 04/03/2015].

eMarketer (2014). Better Measurement, Metrics Needed for Engagement [Website]. Available from: < <http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Better-Measurement-Metrics-Needed-Engagement/1010684>>. [Accessed: 15-08-2014].

ExactTarget (2010). Facebook x-factors [Website]. Available from:<<http://pages.exacttarget.com/SFF5-US?ls=Website&lss=SubscribersFansFollowersFacebookX&lsm=Corporate&camp=701A00000005OadIAE>> [Accessed on : 18-08-2014].

Facebook (2014). The Like Button [Website]. Available from: < <https://www.facebook.com/like>> [Accessed on: 01-09-2014].

Fink, E. L. (1996). Dynamic social impact theory and the study of human communication. *Journal of Communication*, 46(4), 4-12. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.1996.tb01500.x

Fitzgerald Bone, P. (1992). Determinants of Word-Of-Mouth Communications During Product Consumption. *Advances in consumer research*, 19(1).

- Forgas, J. P. (1995). Mood and judgment: the affect infusion model (AIM). *Psychological bulletin*, 117(1), 39. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.117.1.39
- Fournier, S., & Avery, J. (2011). The uninvited brand. *Business Horizons*, 54(3), 193-207. doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2011.01.001
- Gamble, J., & Gilmore, A. (2013). A new era of consumer marketing? An application of co-creational marketing in the music industry. *European Journal of Marketing*, 47(11/12), 5-5. doi: 10.1108/EJM-10-2011-0584
- Ganesan, S., Malter, A. J., & Rindfleisch, A. (2005). Does distance still matter? Geographic proximity and new product development. *Journal of Marketing*, 69(4), 44-60. doi: 10.1509/jmkg.2005.69.4.44
- Goldberg, S. C. (1954). Three situational determinants of conformity to social norms. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 49(3), 325. doi: 10.1037/h0056249
- Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American journal of sociology*, 1360-1380. doi: 10.1086/268018
- Griffith, D. A., & Chen, Q. (2004). The influence of virtual direct experience (VDE) on on-line ad message effectiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 33(1), 55-68. doi: 10.1080/00913367.2004.10639153
- Guadagno, R., & Cialdini, R. B. (2005). Online persuasion and compliance: Social influence on the Internet and beyond. *The social net: Human behavior in cyberspace*, 91-113.
- Hardey, M. (2011). Generation C: content, creation, connections and choice. *International Journal of Market Research*, 53(6), 749-770.

- Hargittai, E., & Walejko, G. (2008). The Participation Divide: Content creation and sharing in the digital age 1. *Information, Community and Society*, 11(2), 239-256. doi: 10.1080/13691180801946150
- Harris, L., & Dennis, C. (2011). Engaging customers on Facebook: Challenges for e-retailers. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 10(6), 338-346. doi: 10.1002/cb.375
- Hart, J. W., Stasson, M. F., & Karau, S. J. (1999). Effects of source expertise and physical distance on minority influence. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 3(1), 81. doi: 10.1037/1089-2699.3.1.81
- Haythornthwaite, C., Kazmer, M. M., Robins, J., & Shoemaker, S. (2000). Community development among distance learners: Temporal and technological dimensions. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 6(1), 0-0. doi: 10.1111/j.1083-6101.2000.tb00114.x
- Heider, F. (1958). *The psychology of interpersonal relations*. Psychology Press.
- Hoch, S. J., & Loewenstein, G. F. (1991). Time-inconsistent preferences and consumer self-control. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 492-507.
- Hoffman, D. L., & Fodor, M. (2010). Can you measure the ROI of your social media marketing?. *Sloan Management Review*, 52(1).
- Hollebeek, L. D. (2011). Demystifying customer brand engagement: Exploring the loyalty nexus. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27(7-8), 785-807. doi: 10.1080/0267257X.2010.500132
- Hornik, J., & Schlinger, M. J. (1981). Allocation of time to the mass media. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 343-355.

- Hyun, M. Y., & O'Keefe, R. M. (2012). Virtual destination image: Testing a telepresence model. *Journal of Business Research*, 65(1), 29-35. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.07.011
- Jackson, J. M. (1986). In defense of Social Impact Theory: Comment on Mullen. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50(3), 511-513. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.50.3.511
- Jackson, J. M., & Latane, B. (1982). Experimenter immediacy and social loafing. Paper presented at the 54th annual meeting of the Midwestern Psychological Association, Minneapolis, MN.
- Jacoby, J., Szybillo, G. J., & Berning, C. K. (1976). Time and consumer behavior: An interdisciplinary overview. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 320-339.
- Jahn, B., & Kunz, W. (2012). How to transform consumers into fans of your brand. *Journal of Service Management*, 23(3), 344-361. doi:10.1108/09564231211248444
- Kahneman, D., & Miller, D. T. (1986). Norm theory: Comparing reality to its alternatives. *Psychological review*, 93(2), 136. doi: 10.1037/0033-295X.93.2.136
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business horizons*, 53(1), 59-68. doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003
- Karahasanović, A., Brandtzæg, P. B., Heim, J., Lüders, M., Vermeir, L., Pierson, J., & Jans, G. (2009). Co-creation and user-generated content—elderly people's user requirements. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 25(3), 655-678. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2008.08.012
- Keenan, A., & Shiri, A. (2009). Sociability and social interaction on social networking websites. *Library Review*, 58(6), 438-450. doi: 10.1108/00242530910969794

- Kim, J., & Hardin, A. (2010). The impact of virtual worlds on word-of-mouth: Improving social networking and servicescape in the hospitality industry. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 19(7), 735-753. doi: 10.1080/19368623.2010.508005
- Klein, L. R. (2003). Creating virtual product experiences: the role of telepresence. *Journal of interactive Marketing*, 17(1), 41-55. doi: 10.1002/dir.10046
- Knowles, E. S. (1983). Social physics and the effects of others: Tests of the effects of audience size and distance on social judgments and behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 45(6), 1263-1279. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.45.6.1263
- Konczał, J. (2008). Identifying, Knowing And Retaining Your Customers: The ``Prosumer''. *Customer Interaction Solutions*, 26(11), 22.
- Kozinets, R. V. (1999). E-tribalized marketing?: The strategic implications of virtual communities of consumption. *European Management Journal*, 17(3), 252-264. DOI: 10.1016/S0263-2373(99)00004-3. doi: 10.1016/S0263-2373(99)00004-3
- Kozinets, R. V., De Valck, K., Wojnicki, A. C., & Wilner, S. J. (2010). Networked narratives: understanding word-of-mouth marketing in online communities. *Journal of marketing*, 74(2), 71-89.
- Kwahk, K. Y., & Ge, X. (2012). The Effects of Social Media on E-Commerce: A Perspective of Social Impact Theory. In *System Science (HICSS), 2012 45th Hawaii International Conference on* (pp. 1814-1823). IEEE. doi: 10.1109/HICSS.2012.564
- Latané, B. (1981). The psychology of social impact. *American psychologist*, 36(4), 343. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.36.4.343

- Latané, B., & L'Herrou, T. (1996). Spatial clustering in the conformity game: Dynamic social impact in electronic groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70(6), 1218. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.70.6.1218
- Latané, B., & Liu, J. H. (1996). The intersubjective geometry of social space. *Journal of Communication*, 46(4), 26-34. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.1996.tb01502.x
- Latané, B., & Wolf, S. (1981). The social impact of majorities and minorities. *Psychological Review*, 88(5), 438. doi: 10.1037/0033-295X.88.5.438
- Latané, B., Liu, J. H., Nowak, A., Bonevento, M., & Zheng, L. (1995). Distance matters: Physical space and social impact. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 21(8), 795-805. doi: 10.1177/0146167295218002
- Lee, D., Kim, H. S., & Kim, J. K. (2011). The impact of online brand community type on consumer's community engagement behaviors: consumer-created vs. marketer-created online brand community in online social-networking web sites. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 14(1-2), 59-63. doi: 10.1089/cyber.2009.0397.
- Leonard-Barton, D. (1985). Experts as negative opinion leaders in the diffusion of a technological innovation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 914-926. doi: 10.2307/2489217
- Li, Y. M., Lee, Y. L., & Lien, N. J. (2012). Online social advertising via influential endorsers. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 16(3), 119-154. doi: 10.2753/JEC1086-4415160305
- Libai, B., Bolton, R., Bügel, M. S., De Ruyter, K., Götz, O., Risselada, H., & Stephen, A. T. (2010). Customer-to-customer interactions: broadening the scope of word of mouth research. *Journal of Service Research*, 13(3), 267-282. doi: 10.1177/1094670510375600

- Liben-Nowell, D., Novak, J., Kumar, R., Raghavan, P., & Tomkins, A. (2005). Geographic routing in social networks. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 102(33), 11623-11628. doi: 10.1073/pnas.0503018102
- Lim, S., Cha, S. Y., Park, C., Lee, I., & Kim, J. (2012). Getting closer and experiencing together: Antecedents and consequences of psychological distance in social media-enhanced real-time streaming video. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28(4), 1365-1378. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2012.02.022
- Liu, Y., & Shrum, L. J. (2002). What is interactivity and is it always such a good thing? Implications of definition, person, and situation for the influence of interactivity on advertising effectiveness. *Journal of advertising*, 31(4), 53-64. doi: 10.1080/00913367.2002.10673685
- Mackie, D. M. (1987). Systematic and nonsystematic processing of majority and minority persuasive communications. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 53(1), 41. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.53.1.41
- Mangleburg, T. F., Doney, P. M., & Bristol, T. (2004). Shopping with friends and teens' susceptibility to peer influence. *Journal of Retailing*, 80(2), 101-116. doi:10.1016/j.jretai.2004.04.005
- Mangold, W. G., & Faulds, D. J. (2009). Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix. *Business horizons*, 52(4), 357-365. doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2009.03.002
- Marketing Science Institute (2014). Understanding Customers and the Customer Experience [Website]. Available from:< <http://www.msi.org/research/2014-2016-research-priorities/tier-1-understanding-customers-and-the-customer-experience/>> [Accessed on: 15-08-2014].
- Markovsky, B., & Thye, S. R. (2001). Social influence on paranormal beliefs. *Sociological Perspectives*, 44(1), 21-44. doi: 10.1525/sop.2001.44.1.21

- Meyers-Levy, J., & Maheswaran, D. (1992). When timing matters: The influence of temporal distance on consumers' affective and persuasive responses. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 424-433. doi: 10.2307/2489399
- Miller, M. D., & Cryss Brunner, C. (2008). Social impact in technologically-mediated communication: An examination of online influence. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 24(6), 2972-2991. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2008.05.004
- Mok, D., Wellman, B., & Carrasco, J. (2010). Does distance matter in the age of the Internet?. *Urban Studies*, 47(13), 2747-2783. doi: 10.1177/0042098010377363
- Moon, Y. (1999). The effects of physical distance and response latency on persuasion in computer-mediated communication and human-computer communication. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 5(4), 379. doi: 10.1037/1076-898X.5.4.379
- Moscovici, S. (1980). Toward a theory of conversion behavior. *Advances in experimental social psychology*, 13, 209-239.
- Mullen, B. (1985). Strength and immediacy of sources: A meta-analytic evaluation of the forgotten elements of social impact theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 48(6), 1458. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.48.6.1458
- Naylor, R. W., Lamberton, C. P., & West, P. M. (2012). Beyond the “like” button: The impact of mere virtual presence on brand evaluations and purchase intentions in social media settings. *Journal of Marketing*, 76(6), 105-120. doi: 10.1509/jm.11.0105
- O'Connor, P. (2010). Managing a hotel's image on TripAdvisor. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 19(7), 754-772. doi: 10.1080/19368623.2010.508007

Olson, G. M., & Olson, J. S. (2000). Distance matters. *Human-computer interaction*, 15(2), 139-178. doi: 10.1207/S15327051HCI1523_4

Owyang, J. (2010). A collection of social network stats for 2010. *Web Strategy*, 19.

Pedersen, E. R., LaBrie, J. W., & Lac, A. (2008). Assessment of perceived and actual alcohol norms in varying contexts: Exploring Social Impact Theory among college students. *Addictive behaviors*, 33(4), 552-564. doi: 10.1016/j.addbeh.2007.11.003

Penrod, S., & Hastie, R. (1979). Models of jury decision making: A critical review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 86(3), 462. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.86.3.462

Penrod, S., & Hastie, R. (1980). A computer simulation of jury decision making. *Psychological Review*, 87(2), 133-159. doi: 10.1037/0033-295X.87.2.133

Poynter, R. (2008). Viewpoint-Facebook: The future of networking with customers. *Journal of the Market Research Society*, 50(1), 11.

Preece, J. (2000). *Online communities: Designing usability and supporting socialbilty*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Qualman, E. (2012). *Socialnomics: How social media transforms the way we live and do business*. John Wiley & Sons.

Reingen, P. H., & Kernan, J. B. (1986). Analysis of referral networks in marketing: Methods and illustration. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 370-378. doi: 10.2307/3151813

Rosette, A. S., Brett, J. M., Barsness, Z., & Lytle, A. L. (2012). When cultures clash electronically: The impact of email and social norms on negotiation behavior and outcomes. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 43(4), 628-643. doi: 10.1177/0022022111407190

- Schultz, D. E., & Peltier, J. J. (2013). Social media's slippery slope: challenges, opportunities and future research directions. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 7(2), 86-99. doi: 10.1108/JRIM-12-2012-0054
- Sedikides, C., & Jackson, J. M. (1990). Social impact theory: A field test of source strength, source immediacy and number of targets. *Basic and applied social psychology*, 11(3), 273-281. doi: 10.1207/s15324834basp1103_4
- Seta, J. J., Crisson, J. E., Seta, C. E., & Wang, M. A. (1989). Task performance and perceptions of anxiety: Averaging and summation in an evaluative setting. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56(3), 387. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.56.3.387
- Shen, C. C., & Chiou, J. S. (2010). The impact of perceived ease of use on Internet service adoption: The moderating effects of temporal distance and perceived risk. *Computers in human behavior*, 26(1), 42-50. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2009.07.003
- Shih, C. F. E. (1998). Conceptualizing consumer experiences in cyberspace. *European Journal of Marketing*, 32(7/8), 655-663. doi: 10.1108/03090569810224056
- Singh, S. (2009). *Social media marketing for dummies*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Smith, R., Deitz, G., Royne, M. B., Hansen, J. D., Grünhagen, M., & Witte, C. (2013). Cross-cultural examination of online shopping behavior: A comparison of Norway, Germany, and the United States. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(3), 328-335. doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.08.013
- Sorrels, J. P., & Kelley, J. (1984). Conformity by omission. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 10(2), 302-305. doi: 10.1177/0146167284102017

- Steuer, J. (1992). Defining virtual reality: Dimensions determining telepresence. *Journal of communication*, 42(4), 73-93. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.1992.tb00812.x
- Tesser, A. (1988). Toward a self-evaluation maintenance model of social behavior. *Advances in experimental social psychology*, 21, 181-227. doi: 10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60227-0
- Tran, L., Cebrian, M., Krumme, C., & Pentland, A. (2011). Social distance drives the convergence of preferences in an online music sharing network. In *Privacy, security, risk and trust (passat), 2011 ieee third international conference on and 2011 ieee third international conference on social computing (socialcom)* (637-640). IEEE. doi: 10.1109/PASSAT/SocialCom.2011.195
- Trope, Y., & Liberman, N. (2010). Construal-level theory of psychological distance. *Psychological review*, 117(2), 440-463. doi: 10.1037/a0018963
- Turner, J. C. (1985). Social categorization and the self-concept: A social cognitive theory of group behavior. *Advances in group processes*, 2, 77-122.
- Turner, J. C. (1991). *Social influence*. Thomson Brooks/Cole Publishing Co.
- Wellman, B., Hogan, B., Berg, K., Boase, J., Carrasco, J. A., Côté, R. & Tran, P. (2006). Connected Lives: The Project1. In *Networked neighbourhoods* (pp. 161-216). Springer London. doi: 10.1007/1-84628-601-8_8
- Williams, K. D., & Williams, K. B. (1989). Impact of source strength on two compliance techniques. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 10(2), 149-159. doi: 10.1207/s15324834basp1002_5

- Wirtz, J., & Chew, P. (2002). The effects of incentives, deal proneness, satisfaction and tie strength on word-of-mouth behaviour. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 13(2), 141-162. doi: 10.1108/09564230210425340
- Wolf, S., & Bugaj, A. M. (1990). The social impact of courtroom witnesses. *Social Behaviour*, 5 (1), 1-13.
- Woodfield, K., Morrell, G., Metzler, K., Blank, G., Salmons, J., Finnegan, J., & Lucraft, M. (2013). Blurring the Boundaries? New social media, new social research: Developing a network to explore the issues faced by researchers negotiating the new research landscape of online social media platforms. NCRM Working Paper. NCRM.
- Woods, R. H., & Baker, J. D. (2004). Interaction and immediacy in online learning. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 5 (2), 1-13.
- Xiang, Z., & Gretzel, U. (2010). Role of social media in online travel information search. *Tourism management*, 31(2), 179-188. doi: 10.1016/j.tourman.2009.02.016