ISSN (Print): 0974-6846 ISSN (Online): 0974-5645

Social media and Relationship Marketing Strategies of Malaysian Car Brands

Kamisah Kormin* and Rohaizat Baharun

Faculty of Management, University Technology Malaysia, Skudai, 81310 Johor Bahru, Malaysia; kamisah.kormin@gmail.com, m-rohaizat@utm.my

Abstract

Objectives: This paper aimed to provide an overview of social media marketing strategies used by Malaysian car brands and analysis of their success. **Method:** Data collected through content analysis method to the top 10 Malaysian car brands' website and their Facebook platform. **Findings:** This study found that all brands have at least two social media presence and Facebook is the most popular platform among others. It indicated that the Malaysian car brands have begun to fully embrace the enormous benefits that social media offers. Furthermore, marketing strategies adopted by Malaysian car a brand in Facebook is congruent with the motive of the customer engages with them in social media. For this reason, this study suggests that most of them succeed in social media marketing campaign. **Contribution/Value**: Literatures related to social media is still limited, thus the finding of this study contributes to the knowledge and provides an insight to the Automotive Industry practitioners on their current practices and performances. We end this paper with limitations and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Content Analysis, Facebook, Malaysian Car Brands, Relationship Marketing, Social Media

1. Introduction

The growth of social media has dramatically reshaped the entire process of business and marketing. Social media has changed how companies-customers communicate from unidirectional to bidirectional form of communication where customers are now allowed to discuss and share their opinion publicly. Social media has gained tremendous popularity due to its special functionalities that are not generally available in traditional media. One of the most important characteristics of this media is its ability to reach broad audience very fast and with very little investment. For example, Wearesocial reported that the current world Internet users are 3.419 billion or 46% of world total population, with year to year growth is around

332 million new Internet users. Apart from that, 2.307 billion of Internet users (or 31% of world's population) are reported active in social media with expected 219 million year to year growths (Table 1). In the context of Malaysia, Malaysian is reported as one of the most socially engaged in the world with the current active social media user is 18 million or 59% of Malaysian total population. As social media is running by using Internet as the backbone, this simple statistic provides a clear evidence how this technology offers huge potential for reaching new customers and making business more profitable through the concept of viral. Viral or *electronic* Word of Mouth (*e*WOM) is a unique and distinctive characteristic that is very synonym to social media. When brand's fan 'like', 'share' or 'comment' to any brand or user post, the post

^{*}Author for correspondence

Users	Number of users	Percentage from total	% Year to year	No. of year to year growth	
		population	growth		
World's population	7.395 billion	-	2.5 %	+ 177 million	
Active Internet users	3.419 billion	46%	10 %	+332 million	
Active social media users	2.307 billion	31%	10 %	+219 million	
Unique mobile users	3.790 billion	51%	4 %	+ 141 million	
Active mobile social users	1.968 billion	27%	17 %	+ 283 million	

Table 1. Statistics of global Internet users, social media users and mobile social users as January, 2016

is likely to instantaneously appear in his/her friends' feed and this gives a free publicity to the brands. According to ComScore², for each incremental day post is published on the brand Facebook page; reach among fans increases by 2.5%. Therefore, for many brands with a limited customer base, they have the chance to reach billions of users, both in and out of their geographic area.

Social media is also associated with low investment and financial risks³⁻⁶. This is due to the fact that the majority of social media sites are free to access even for business use where the brands can freely create profile and post information regarding their product or business activities. Apart from that, advertising cost in social media for instance, through Cost-Per- Click (CPC), Cost-Per-Impression (CPI) and Click Through Rate (CTR) are very cheap. According to Calliduscloud, brands can save their marketing cost 40-60 % less than ads on traditional channels like print media, television and radio. In contrast, brands have to invest around USD 100,000 to produce TV ads, whereas a social media advertisement on Twitter or Facebook for example, can cost as little as USD 1-USD 5 per click^Z. With the growing emphasis on social media, how to effectively utilize this new media environment has become one of the most important topics in public relations and marketing research.

Though social media has been widely adopted by global users and majorities of public relation practitioner believe that social media is the most cost-effective and powerful channel to build brand-customer relationships^{8–12}, little is known on the extent to which Malaysian brands engage with social media to cultivate relationships with customers. The research studies within Malaysian context thus far are more focusing on customer perspective^{13–19}, while limited focus is given on brand perspective^{20–22}. However, how Malaysian brands used social media and how effectively and efficiently they use social media for marketing purpose have yet to be analyzed. Therefore, analysis on

brand's page is necessary to get insight on what kind of strategies Malaysian brands used to develop brandcustomer relationship in social media and their strategy performances.

Focusing on Malaysian car brands, the main goals of this study is two folds: First is to investigate social media channel used to engage with customers. Secondly is to examine brand marketing strategies, particularly in Facebook channel and their performances. To meet these goals, the following research questions are offered:

- RQ1. What type of social media used by Malaysian car brands for their relationship marketing strategies?
- RQ2. What are strategies used by Malaysian car brands in Facebook to develop brand-customer relationship?
- RQ3. What are the outcomes of their strategies?

With the significant benefits that social media offers and limited literatures of social media practice in Malaysia, this paper is hope to add knowledge to practitioners and academic scholar on the current scenario of social media practice within Malaysian car brands. By examining social media performance, Automotive Industry practitioners may diagnose problems and ameliorate their current marketing practices.

The structure of the paper starts with literature review, methodology used finding and discussion of the study, as well as limitation and recommendation for future research.

2. Methodology

A web-based content analysis was employed to achieve the main aim of this study. Ten (out of twenty nine) passenger cars registered with Malaysian Automotive Association (MAA) were selected for the analysis. Data collection was conducted in two stages; first, we investigated the brand's

website to examine the existence of social media channel used for social media marketing. If the channel exists, it will be coded as 1, otherwise 0. In stage two, content analysis on their official Facebook page was carried out to examine social media marketing strategies used by the selected brands in this channel. Two weeks posts, from 1st March to 15th March, 2016 were retrieved in one day, due to the rapidly changing of social media data. Brand's Facebook strategies were analyzed from four dimensions, frequency of the post (i.e. total post in two weeks and average post per day), type of the post, media use (i.e. video, picture or text only) and interactivity. Following²³, the type of post was divided into three categories, transactional, informational and entertainment as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Type of post and description

Type of post	Descriptions				
Transactional	Brand post about product advertisement, deal, price promotion and remuneration				
Informational	Brand post about events promotions, general information, press release, CSR activities, corporate ability, tips and education				
Entertainment	Brand post that promoting family and friend relationship, aspiration, seasonal greetings, memories, lame joke and asking fans to participate in quiz etc				

The existence of these type of post was coded as 1 (present) and 0 (absence) and therefore, one post may have more than one category. For example, the main intention of the brand to deliver the post is to introduce their new product. But, as a strategy to attract higher engagement, the brand attached humorous elements in the post. Therefore, this type of post will be coded as transactional and entertainment. Interactivity is defined as the degree to which two or more communication parties can act on each other, on the communication medium or on the messages and the degree to which such influences are synchronized, and thus, captures the notion of an interdependent exchange of information and the degree of influence that the communicating parties exercise over the communication process²³. Adopt²³, interactivity is operationalised by tallying the number of interactivity tools comprised in each brand content. The interactivity includes external link/weblink, hash tags,

page/person tags, question, call to actions and contests. Coding is based on the number of interactive tools used. The outcome of social media marketing was accessed by the total number of fan, total interaction and engagement rate. Total engagement represents to the number of active participant who engage with the brand by liking, sharing or commenting the post. Engagement rate is the percentage of total interaction divided by total number of fan. The coding process was done by two coders, and percentage of agreement between coders is 93%, which indicates strong reliability.

3. Result and Discussion

This section presents the results of the study from the perspective of social media marketing strategies and their marketing performance. Subsequently, we discuss these results which include their implication and recommendation to the practitioners.

3.1 Type of Social Media Use

Social media is defined as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content²⁴. Blog, photo sharing (e.g. Flickr, PInterest, Instagram), social network (e.g. Facebook, Google+), microblog (e.g. Twitter), business network (e.g. LinkedIn) are among the most popular category of social media²⁴⁻²⁶, with an emphasis on the development of relationship between users and the community. The investigation from brand's website shows that at least two and maximum five type of social media platform used by Malaysian car brands. Table 3 provides the detail statistics of social media adoption. Facebook is identified as the most favorite platform where 100% of the brands use this channel to engage and develop relationship with customers, followed by Youtube (90%), Twitter (70%) and Instagram/ Pinterest (70%). Other type of popular social media such as business network (i.e. LinkedIn), social networking (i.e. Google+) and photo sharing (i.e. Flickr) are not used by any of the brands. From this result, we can conclude that brands are fully aware in the need to use social media for brand-customer relationship. Despite the popularity of Facebook among users, it can be seen also that all brands choose this channel as main platform to communicate with their current and prospective customers. It is very intriguing to see majority of the car brands use three and four

channels for marketing purpose. Despite the downside of social media on brand reputation (i.e. unfavorable customer's comments that openly seen by public), brands seem agree that the benefits of social media offers are something that cannot be ignored. Negative and unfavorable comments would not be a big issue if Online Reputation Management (ORM) approach is properly planned and implemented. ORM is the process of positioning, monitoring, measuring, talking and listening to all online conversation. If potential risk happens, brands can immediately take action before things get worst. Perhaps KFC Malaysia and Air Asia were among good example on how they reacted towards online potential risk and how they use this media during risk to preserve their reputation. In June 2011, an employee of KFC Malaysia posted a video of food tampering and started to circulate in Internet. As part of its crisis response strategy, KFC Malaysia posted a video to tell its side of the story and regain customer confidence. Similarly, following the crash of Air Asia plane in December 2014, Tony Fernandez, the CEO of Air Asia used Twitter to update followers on recovery efforts, expressing concern to the family of the victims and keep giving morale support to his staffs. The way Tony Fernandez used social media is the best effort to save reputation during crisis²⁷.

3.2 Social Media Marketing Strategies in Facebook

In terms of brand's strategies in Facebook, Perodua shared the highest number of post during 1st March to 15th March, 2016 with average 1.47 posts per day, followed by BMW with 1.33 posts while Honda and Chevrolet share 1.27 posts per day respectively. The least active brand is Suzuki with only 0.53 posts per day. Overall, all brands made in average one post per day, the result implies that Malaysian car brands are very proactive and made serious attempt to develop relationship with their customers. Table 4 provides a detailed numerical description of social media marketing strategies and marketing outcome of each selected brands.

Content analysis results indicate brands employ more transactional type of posts (88 posts) than informational type of post (85 posts). Entertaining type of post such as contest, lame jokes and greeting was not popularly used with only 52 type of this post were shared. For comparison among brands, 100% of post shared by Mazda contains informational type of post, Honda (89%) and BMW (75%). Perodua shared the highest number of transactional post (95%), followed by Toyota (81%) and Suzuki (62%). None of Mazda and Suzuki posts contains any entertaining elements, while Proton produces the highest entertaining post with 67%. In²⁸ urged that customer engages with brands resulting from their motivational drivers. Research has found a variety of motives drives customer engagement, but three main drivers are seeking for economic benefits, information and entertainment²⁹⁻³¹. Prior research also shows that transactional type of post attract highest customer response in terms of like, share and comment 32,33.

Table 3. Type of social media used by Malaysian car brand

Type of social media	Proton	Toyota	Honda	Nissan	BMW	Perodua	Kia	Suzuki	Chevrolet	Mazda
Blog ^a			X				X			
Business network										
Micro blog ^b		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Photo sharing ^c	X			X		X	X	X	X	X
Virtual world										
Video sharing ^d	X	X	x	X		X	X	X	X	X
Virtual games										
Social bookmarking										
Social network ^e	X	X	x	X	x	X	x	X	X	X
Total	3	3	3	4	2	4	5	4	4	3

Note: a(corporate blog), b(Twitter), c(Pinterest / Instagram), d(Youtube), and e(Facebook)

Therefore, brands made very right strategy by sharing posts which are aligned with customer's motive and preference. Facebook is used to publish posts as pure text, text with photos and text with videos. Photos are highly preferred type of media used by all brands with the total is 133, as compared to video (14) and text only (3). As can be seen from Table 3, none of posts shared by Perodua, Mazda and Suzuki used video or pure text, while 95% of Honda's post and 90% of BMW's post were used photos and the rest was video. This study consistent with prior studies^{23,32}, where the use of photo is preferable by other global brands. Besides, prior studies shows that photo successfully draw more customer response (like, comment and share), as compared to video and only text32-34. BMW winning the race on interactivity where most of their post attached with many interactive tools especially hashtag and weblink. BMW used 49 interactive tools, leaving far behind are Kia (29) and Honda (28). Suzuki and Mazda did not attach any interactive tools in any of their post. However, prior research shows that adding high level of interactivity exerts a lower effects of customer response^{23,34,35}. In this regards, many brands have made incorrect decision by attaching their shared posts with many interactive elements. Therefore, brands should reduce the number of

interactivity in their posts if they want to get better engagement from customer.

3.3 Social Media Marketing Outcomes

In our analysis on social media marketing outcomes, Honda has successfully attracted the highest number of fan (1,169,754 fans). Second place goes to Toyota (832,062 fans) and Kia in the third place with 710, 549 fans, while the least popular brand is Suzuki with only 6,084 number of fans. In regards of total engagement, again Honda won the battle with 38,578 fans actually engaged with the brand by liking, sharing and commenting the brand's post within two weeks period. Proton is in the second place with 19,006 active fans and Kia is in the third place with 11,150 active fan and Toyota 10,235 active fans. Even though, Suzuki attracted the lowest number of the fan and total engagement, the percentage of their fan that truly engage with them is the highest among its rival (5.4%). Being the most popular brand in social media, the evidence shows that only 3.3% of Honda's fans are truly engaged with them. Proton also achieve good engagement rate with 4.61% and Chevrolet is 2.64%. Nissan, Perodua and Mazda have attracted very low engagement rate with below 1%, respectively.

Table 4. Social media marketing strategies and marketing outcome

Brand		Brand marketing strategies									Outcome of marketing strategies			
name	me Post frequency		Post type			Media type								
	N	Post per day (mean)	I	Т	E	Video	Picture	Text	Interactivity	Number of fan	Total engagement	Engagement rate (%)		
Proton	15	1	8	5	10	1	12	2	15	412, 720	19,006	4.61		
Toyota	16	1.07	9	13	6	3	13	0	12	832, 062	10,235	1.23		
Nissan	10	0.67	6	3	4	1	9	0	17	463, 498	2231	0.48		
Perodua	22	1.47	6	21	7	0	22	0	19	162, 902	1427	0.88		
Honda	19	1.27	17	17	3	1	18	0	28	1,169,754	38,578	3.30		
BMW	20	1.33	15	7	7	2	18	0	49	285, 518	5257	1.84		
Kia	10	0.67	2	6	5	2	7	1	29	710, 549	11,150	1.57		
Suzuki	8	0.53	4	5	0	0	8	0	0	6,084	343	5.64		
Chevrolet	19	1.27	7	7	10	4	15	0	21	87,497	2,313	2.64		
Mazda	11	0.73	11	4	0	0	11	0	0	105 ,579	837	0.79		
Total			85	88	52	14	133	3	190	1,263,335	91,377	22.98		

Note: I: Informational, T- Transactional, E- Entertainment

There is no specific formula or benchmark to determine the success and failure of social media marketing found in literatures, as the real measure is depends on goals specified by the brands36.37. However, if product awareness is a main goal of the brands to be involved in social media marketing³⁷, we proposed that the ability of the brands to attract at least 100,000 numbers of fans is considered as a major success especially in the context of small population country like Malaysia. Apart from that, Facebook is free where brands do not need to buy the application from the third party. If 100,000 numbers of fans are taken as benchmark, we conclude that 80% of the Malaysian car brands succeed in their product/brand awareness goal. In³⁷ proposed number of active users as relevant metric to measure brand engagement goal. Again, there is no specified benchmark to measure the success. Therefore, we proposed that brands succeed in engagement goal if they achieve at least 1% of engagement rate. Every Malaysian user has an average 233 friends in their social network³⁸. In the case of Toyota (for example) that has 19,006 active fans (i.e. like, share or comment the post) and only 1.04% engagement rate, however, if we multiply each user with an average 233 friends in their circle, these fans will give 4,428,398 times free publicity to the brands in just two weeks. This is very impressive achievement with very little investment and effort taken by the brands.

4. Conclusion, Limitation and Future Research

There is dearth of literature focusing on how Malaysian brands develop relationship with customers in social media. This study contributes to knowledge by exploring social media strategies used by Malaysian car brands and their marketing performances. The finding highlights that brands adopts multiple social media channel to communicate with their customers. They also frequently update their Facebook with average one post daily and share type of post that congruent with customer's motives. Additionally, this study shows that brands use photo more frequently than video and text only. Strategies used by Malaysian car brands are consistent with strategies used by other global brands. Furthermore, in terms of marketing success, on overall, brands manage to achieve good rate of engagement and

subsequently social media is proven as an alternative marketing tool that must be seriously adopted by any brands to receive free publicity with very minimal cost and effort.

Although this study expands the literature, it does have some limitation. The drawback of this study, we did not experimenting the statistical correlation between brand's strategies and marketing outcome. The investigation between these variables is very important to understand factors that may have significant impact on marketing outcome. Additionally, we did not measure the link between engagement rate and financial measure, for example, how much engaged customer actually buy or consider buying the product. The other limitation is the time frame taken for analysis is very short and the sample taken in the study is limited. For future research, longer time period such as a month data and higher number of the sample is encouraged to get better picture of Malaysian car brands activities in social media.

For future research, we plan to expand this study which include bigger samples from diverse industries and investigate whether there are similarities and differences of strategies used between industries and between Malaysian local and global brands. The analysis will also contain wider dimensions such as brand reputation and brand personality. Finally, we would like to investigate the effects of brand's strategies on post popularity and brand popularity in Facebook.

5. References

- 1. We are social. 2016. Available from: http://wearesocial.com/special-reports/digital-in-2016
- ComScore. 2015. Available from: http://www.comscore. com/it is a social world
- 3. Hennig-Thurau T, Malthouse EC, Friege C, Gensler S, Lobschat L, Rangaswamy A, Skiera B. The impact of new media on customer relationship. Journal of Service Research. 2010; 13(3): 311–30.
- Ioakimidis M. Online marketing of professional sports clubs: Engaging fans on a new playing field. International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship. 2010; 11(4):271–82.
- Treadaway C, Smith M. Facebook marketing: An hour a day. 2nd ed. New York, Indianapolis: John Wiley and Sons; 2012.

- 6. Abeza G, O'Reilly N, Reid I. Relationship marketing and social media in sport. International Journal of Sport Communication. 2013; 6:120-42.
- 7. Calliduscloud. 2015. Available from: http://www. leadformix.com/short-takes/should-you-advertise-onsocial-media.html
- 8. An analysis of the increasing impact of social and other new media on public relations practice. 2016. Available from: http://www.instituteforpr.org/wp-content/uploads/ Wright_Hinson_PR_Miami.pdf
- 9. Bartlett M. How to use social media to develop realtor relationships. Credit Union Journal. 2010; 14(39):1-4.
- 10. Hackworth BA, Kunz MB. Health care and social media: Building relationships via social networks. Academy of Health Care Management Journal. 2010; 6(1):55-67.
- 11. Social media initiatives help build relationships. 2013. Available from: www.docstoc.com/docs/44023184/Socialmedia-initiatives-help-build- relationships/
- 12. Selina D, Milz T. Social media will be a driving force for relationship development. Credit Union Journal. 2009; 13(32):16.
- 13. Mun WF, Mei Li L. Fernandez PR. Social life connects the world: Malaysian youth's usage behavior of social network sites. International Journal of Arts and Sciences. 2011; 4(3):157-78.
- 14. Shu Xu C. The emergence of social media in Malaysia: Customers perceptions of the effectiveness of AirAsia weblog. [Master thesis]. University Tunku Abdul Rahman; 2012.
- 15. Shojaee S, Azman A. An evaluation of factors affecting brand awareness in the context of social media in Malaysia. Asian Social Science. 2013; 9(17):72-8.
- 16. Sarwar A, Haque A, Yasmin F. The usage of social network as a marketing tool: Malaysian Muslim Consumers' Perspective. International Journal of Academic Research in Economics and Management Sciences. 2013 Jan; 201(2):93-102.
- 17. Hassan S, Shiratuddin N, Salam S. Social media as persuasive technology for business in Malaysia. IJEBR. 2015; 11(2):18-39.
- 18. Haida A, Rahim HL. Social media advertising value: A study on consumer's perception. International Academic Research Journal of Business and Technology. 2015; 1(1):1-
- 19. Samat MF, Hashim H, Yusoff RNR. Endorser credibility and its influence on the attitude towards social media advertisement in Malaysia. Society of Interdisciplinary Business Research; 2014. p. 144-59.
- 20. Ainin S, Parveen F, Moghavvemi S, Jaafar NI. Factor influencing Facebook adoption by SMEs and performance

- outcomes. Industrial Management and Data Systems. 2015; 115(3):570-88.
- 21. Shahizan H, Norshuhada S, Nor Laily H. Sobihatun Nur AS, Mohd Samsu S. Social media for business: Knowledge gathering through focus group session with business owners. Knowledge Management International Conference (KMICe); Johor Bahru, Malaysia. 2012.
- 22. Zaki NA, Ross M, Weaven S, Shao W. The role of social media in Business-to-Business relationship marketing. International Journal of Technical Research and Application. 2014; 2(Special Issue 4):45-9.
- 23. Tafesse W. Content strategies and audience response on Facebook brand pages. Marketing Intelligence and Planning. 2015; 33(6):927-43.
- 24. Kaplan AM, Haenlein M. Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. Business Horizons. 2010; 53:59-68.
- 25. Berthon PR, Pitt LF, Plangger K, Shapiro D. Marketing meets Web 2.0, social media and creative consumers: Implications for international marketing strategy. Business Horizons. 2012; 55:261-71.
- 26. Kietzmann J, Hermkens K, McCarthy IP. Silvestre BS. Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. Business Horizons. 2011; 54(3):241-51.
- 27. Air Asia CEO turns to Twitter for Crisis Management. 2016. Available from: http://www.bloomberg.com/news/ articles/2015-01-05/airasia-ceo- tony-fernandes-managescrisis- with-social-media
- 28. Van Doorn J, Lemon KN, Mittal V, Na S, Pick D, Pirner P, Verhoef P. Customer engagement behavior: Theoretical foundations and research directions. Journal of Service Research. 2010; 13(3):253-66.
- 29. Consumer motivations to join a brand community on Facebook. 2016. Available from: https://helda.helsinki.fi/ bitstream/handle/10227/798/weman.pdf?sequence=2
- 30. Rohm A, Velitchka D, George K, Milne R. A mixed-method approach to examining brand-consumer interactions driven by social media. Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing. 2013; 7(4):295-311.
- 31. Muntinga DG, Moorman M, Smit EG. Introducing COBRAs: Exploring motivations for brand-related social media use. International Journal of Advertising. 2011; 30(1):13-46.
- 32. Kim DH, Spiller L, Hettche M. Analyzing media types and content orientations in Facebook for global brands. Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing. 2015; 9(1):4–30.
- 33. Luarn P, Lin YF, Chiu YP. Influence of Facebook brandpage posts on online engagement. Online Information Review. 2015; 39(4):505-19.

- 34. Cvijikj IP, Michahelles F. Online engagement factors on Facebook brand pages. Social Network Analysis and Mining. 2013; 3(4):843–61.
- 35. De Vries L, Gensler S. Leeflang PSH. Popularity of brand posts on brand fan pages, an investigation of the effects of social media marketing. Journal of Interactive Marketing. 2012; 26(2):83–91.
- 36. Murdough C. Social media measurement It's not impossible. Journal of Interactive Marketing. 2009; 10(1):94–9.
- 37. Hoffman D. Fodor M. Can you measure the ROI of your social media marketing? MIT Sloan Management Review. 2010; 52(1):40–9.
- 38. TNS. Malaysian Internet users amongst the global social leaders. 2015. Available from: http://www.tnsglobal.com/press-release/malaysian-internet-users-amongst-global-social-leaders