



# Customer loyalty through social networks: Lessons from Zara on Facebook



Ana Margarida Gamboa, Helena Martins Gonçalves\*

ISEG, Universidade de Lisboa, Rua Miguel Lúpi 20, gab. 311, 1249-078 Lisboa, Portugal

## KEYWORDS

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**Abstract** Companies' escalating investment in social media—in particular, in Facebook—has become reality. However, most firms still do not see social networks as a vehicle for cultivating and winning customer loyalty, but rather as a resource for creating brand awareness. In this article, we offer a different view. By examining fans and non-fans of the Zara brand on Facebook, we discovered that Facebook enhances the relations that increase loyalty via trust, customer satisfaction, perceived value, and commitment. Our results revealed that these relations are stronger for fans of the brand than for non-fans, and suggest that customer satisfaction is the strongest determinant of loyalty. This indicates a new opportunity for marketing managers to achieve customer loyalty: Facebook.

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## 1. From awareness to loyalty on Facebook

With almost a billion customers on Facebook, why is your brand not there? Facebook is one of the largest social networks accessible to all brands, from the largest to the smallest all over the world. The prevailing notion suggests that Facebook, as a medium, is mainly oriented toward the achievement of brand awareness. This view is too narrow: Facebook may also act as a vehicle for achieving customer loyalty. Via dynamic interaction with its fans on

Facebook, the brand can improve customer satisfaction and strengthen client relations—both major drivers of loyalty. Settling solely for increased awareness, the brand misses a golden opportunity to further engage fans and develop customer<sup>1</sup> loyalty. The new greatest challenge lies in achieving customer loyalty through social media, particularly Facebook.

What does your brand have to do to achieve loyalty? A case study of Zara provides insight and suggests tools to attain this goal. Herein, we present a concise review of Web 2.0, social media, and

\* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: [ana.mcgamboa@gmail.com](mailto:ana.mcgamboa@gmail.com) (A.M. Gamboa), [helenamg@iseg.utl.pt](mailto:helenamg@iseg.utl.pt) (H.M. Gonçalves)

<sup>1</sup> The terms customer and consumer refer to the people who buy or use the product or service and are used interchangeably in the text.

Facebook. The review is followed by a brief sketch of customer loyalty and its main drivers. Distinguishing between fans and non-fans, we propose to help marketing managers recognize the extent to which a brand's presence on Facebook can contribute to customer loyalty. We also indicate what loyalty determinants are more relevant to the brand's fans. In sum, we identify valuable Facebook communication factors managers may use to develop strategies and good practices toward achieving customer loyalty.

## 2. Are you on the web?

Most all brands today participate in Web 2.0 through a website, a blog, a Facebook page, Twitter, LinkedIn, or some other online space. Web 2.0 represents a powerful medium because customers are—or, at least, can be—there: 70.2% of the population in developed countries uses the Internet, representing 32.5% of the world's population. The Internet has the highest penetration rate in North America (78.6%), Oceania (Australia and proximate islands, 67.6%), and Europe (63.2%), but Asia has the highest total number of users: over a billion. Internet use is balanced between men and women ([Internet World Stats, 2012](#)).

But simply having a presence is not sufficient. Companies need to know how to use Web 2.0 and social media because these vehicles give consumers more power and influence over the brand. Brand-to-consumer and consumer-to-consumer interactions can occur anytime and anywhere, so developing the right strategy for each moment—for each contingent—is essential. Marketing managers must know their audience and identify the benefits of social media to their brands. This knowledge is particularly important when considering one of the world's largest social networks: Facebook.

## 3. Web 2.0 and social media: The customer's power

Until recently, customers could only communicate with brands by sending a letter, making a phone call, or going to the store. Today, however, customers can establish contact more quickly via new forms of interactivity facilitated by Web 2.0. Web 2.0 has changed the communication model from one-to-many, whereby only the company played an active role, to many-to-many, whereby the collaboration and participation of consumers becomes imperative ([Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiwan, 2010](#)). This new model of interactivity is closely linked to the concept of

Web 2.0: a set of open source applications that allows for the expansion of experiences, knowledge, and the power of users in an interactive way that the users control ([Constantinides & Fountain, 2008](#)). This shared knowledge can thus be understood as collective intelligence. Web 2.0 facilitates several applications:

- *Blogs*—online journals that can combine content with audio and video;
- *Social networks*—applications that allow users to create personal pages accessible to others for the exchange of information;
- *Communities*—sites that organize and share particular content;
- *Forums*—sites to exchange ideas and information; and
- *Content aggregators*—applications that allow customization by users.

We examined one aspect of Web 2.0: social media. The concepts of Web 2.0 and social media are sometimes confused. Web 2.0 supplies the technological components, such as applications and online tools, that enable social media; social media provides the social aspects of Web 2.0—such as participation, conversation, and connectivity to the community—that allow users to create and share their content ([Constantinides & Fountain, 2008](#)). In this regard, the prosumer (producer/consumer) concept dating from the 1980s is now even more pertinent. Users become producers of brand content, while companies strengthen their relationships with customers ([Constantinides & Fountain, 2008](#); [Crittenden, Hanna, & Rohm, 2011](#)). Such brand proximity and relationship improvement can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Social media is a space in which customers can express themselves freely, always be up-to-date, find out what people or brands of interest are doing, and escape their routine ([Dong-Hun, 2010](#)). Here, customers can help build a brand; share information about it; exchange opinions among peers; and speak with the brand via compliments, complaints, and questions ([Patterson, 2012](#); [Pehlivan & Weinberg, 2011](#)). Web 2.0 platforms also commonly challenge users to contribute to brand building by proposing new slogans, suggesting fresh logos, and sending pictures that fit the brand image. Everything counts; it is important to the brand to capture customers' attention and use the viral power of Web 2.0.

#### 4. Social media: For companies big and small

Via social media, companies now have at their disposal tools that allow them to communicate with millions of customers simultaneously. This ability allows information to be delivered quickly through feedback and has lasting impact through the establishment of long-term relationships. These tools require very low investment as compared to other means of communication in marketing (Dong-Hun, 2010; Harvard Business Review Analytic Services, 2010). Thus, social media represents enormous opportunity for all companies, from the smallest of electronic-based outfits to old and established bricks-and-mortar companies with a presence on the Internet. This is why companies increasingly mark their existence on social media. A study of the Fortune 100 Best Companies revealed that 79% use social media and 54% have a Facebook fan page; 71% of Inc. 500 companies used Facebook in 2010 (Dong-Hun, 2010). The more highly networked the organization, the more benefits that can be derived from using Web 2.0 tools. Consider that in 2010, social networking's monthly penetration in Europe reached 84.4% of all users and represented 22.8% of all page views. European women spent 24.3% of their online time engaged in social networking, and men spent 16.8%. These numbers are above the worldwide average (comScore, 2011).

To take advantage of social media, companies are starting to use it as an amplifier of word of mouth, a contact tool with customers, a channel for direct sales, and a space for social commerce (Dong-Hun, 2010). Firms need to realize that social media is global and local at the same time: a local event becomes global through the viral power of social media, and what is global can be reinterpreted through the lens of local culture. For small companies, the use of this inexpensive and convenient tool fulfills the main goal of exposure. It is very important for these small businesses to have guidelines regarding how to use social media effectively, as they typically do not retain specialized marketing collaborators. Nonetheless, all companies need a presence. If a brand is not present and is not being actively managed on Web 2.0, the company runs the risk of being talked about by hundreds—or even millions—of people without knowledge of what is being said and by whom (Harvard Business Review Analytic Services, 2010).

Despite the success of Web 2.0 and the opportunities it offers, some companies worry about customer power in this scenario. Autonomous, user-generated content could pose a danger to the established brand culture and contribute to

the abuse of authors' rights (Wilson, 2007). Another concern entails lack of control over content: everyone can proclaim themselves experts in a particular subject field and influence others who might not be able to tell the difference (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). These fears—which are generated largely by ignorance—cause many companies to use social media in an experimental way and not delve further.

Compounding this is the difficulty of measuring social media's impact on performance, which limits corporate investment (Harvard Business Review Analytic Services, 2010). As profit is one of a firm's main goals, most managers are very skeptical when no perfect formula exists to measure the potential of the digital world. Extant metrics, such as return on engagement for Facebook, are still very new and controversial (Harvard Business Review Analytic Services, 2010; Socialbakers, n.d.).

Nonetheless, Web 2.0 is a reality. In this age of information, communication, and technology, it is vital for the company to properly integrate a Web 2.0 component aligned with its goals. Accordingly, starting to use social media as a strategic business driver involves knowing how to use one of the largest social networks in the world: Facebook.

Our study examines Zara—one of the most recognized fashion retailers globally, and the oldest and biggest brand of the Inditex group—as an example of a big company that takes advantage of social media, namely Facebook. Zara operates 1,808 stores in 86 countries (Inditex, 2013) and as of last year, the brand's Facebook page had about 19 million fans. Zara also maintains a presence on the social media platforms Twitter, YouTube, and Pinterest.

#### 5. The world is on Facebook

Created in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook was initially developed as a tool for Harvard students to identify and bring together people from different poles of the university. In 2006, Facebook became a social network available to anybody and has since attracted millions of users (Kowanda, Nur'ainy, & Nurcahyo, 2009). Functionally, Facebook offers a set of tools that allows users to manage their profile. They may share their thoughts and goings-on via status updates, and contact friends by sending a private message or writing on their wall. Users can see reminders or comments about new items that friends publish; they can also play games and try out other applications that are recommended through friends or brands (Patterson, 2012).

Worldwide, 800 million unique monthly visitors make this social network one of the most visited sites on the Web (Ebizmba, n.d.). In 2012, Facebook

was the social network with the most pages viewed ([Marketing Charts, 2013](#)). Although its age demographic is skewing upward, most Facebook users still fall in the 18- to 24-year-old age group, followed by users aged 25 to 34 ([Quintly, 2013](#)). Similar to the overall number of Internet users, Facebook enjoys the highest penetration rate in North America (44.1%), Oceania (Australia and proximate islands, 39.7%), and Europe (30.3%); however, Asia has the highest total number of users with 273,501,760 ([Socialbakers, n.d.](#)).

While Facebook may be the most popular social medium, companies should still consider their target audience in choosing the perfect fit regarding social media platform use. For example, LinkedIn is the preferred social medium for business-to-business relations, with about 200 million users. Twitter is another widely used social medium, boasting 250 million unique monthly visitors; it is very popular among young people who value quick, short communications.

Facebook is preferred for business-to-consumer relationships and is the most embracing social medium in terms of gender and age compared with the others. For companies, the biggest challenge lies in creating a personal relationship with the customer such as they have with friends on Facebook. To this end, firms must create useful and appealing content, exhibit dynamic actions that make each customer want to follow the page, quickly answer all requests, and listen to what people have to say. In short, the brand page on Facebook must be a space where customers feel they can talk with the brand and be part of a community. Beyond the commercial focus, a relational context must exist.

On Facebook, Zara ranks as one of the fashion brands with the largest number of and most valuable fans. [Syncapse \(2013\)](#) estimates the value of a Zara fan at \$405.54; comparatively, an H&M fan is worth \$306.08 and a Coca-Cola fan is worth just \$70.16. Classified as affordable luxury, Zara is a pioneer among fast fashion companies. Zara imitates the latest fashions with cheaper versions; it sells trendy and properly made, yet inexpensive clothes in beautiful, high-end-looking stores. Customers have a large say in determining the brand's line: client suggestions are integrated into the clothes' production. Featuring designs culturally in tune with customers, Zara has positioned itself as the clothing of the middle class ([Inditex, 2013](#)).

The viral power of Facebook is quite significant; many brand campaigns have become successful due to the power of Facebook. Consider Procter & Gamble's 'Thank You, Mom' campaign, which debuted during the 2012 London Olympic Games. Composed of short video clips showing the work and commitment

mothers from around the world contributed toward creating great athletes, 'Thank You, Mom' generated several thousand shares on Facebook. Likewise, AirBaltic created a campaign that challenged its Facebook fans to vote for their favorite destination from three alternatives and, later in the day, offered huge discounts to the chosen travel destination. Men's body care brand Axe launched a Facebook application that allowed men to boast they were in a relationship with multiple women; the campaign was a huge success both in Tunisia and globally. Procter & Gamble, AirBaltic, and Axe captured the attention of their fans by appealing more to emotions than to cognitive features, thus stimulating fan-brand relationships. Affective gratification and recreation (hedonic attributes) are certainly the key elements of these campaigns' successes. Emotional reward and enjoyment (Procter & Gamble campaign); entertainment, enjoyment, and playfulness (AirBaltic and Axe campaigns); and self-presentation by self-enhancement in relation to others (Axe campaign) are specific features found in these campaigns and referred to in other studies. The goal is to attract and keep attention, and to create bonds with the customer.

Failures can and do occur, however. A huge mistake made by brands entails not providing timely answers to fans' questions and criticisms. Dell blundered when blogger Jeff Jarvis ranted about negative experiences with his new Dell laptop and the brand did not respond swiftly. Consequently, a big debate ensued on Facebook that hurt Dell's reputation online. Another mistake entails removing brand criticisms from Facebook. Nestlé was accused of lack of transparency when it deleted a video and critical comments regarding its purchase policies for palm oil. In the end, Nestlé had to back down. These failures reflect two phenomena. First, social networking is a recent trend that has grown rapidly in a short period of time. As such, many companies do not have the immediate perception of its impact on customers and do not know what to do. Second, the more traditional character of many companies and their managers is an obstacle to perceiving the importance of a good performance on Facebook. These companies do not know and do not want to know about Facebook; therefore, they do not allocate appropriate resources to manage their brand presence.

Because it has become quite common for customers to air grievances about brands on Facebook, it is critical that companies have a strategy to win and keep customers, particularly if the brand values customer loyalty. Listening and acting at the right moment are crucial. When a company responds to a complaint or a negative review, 18% of the unsatisfied customers become loyal customers and buy more ([RightNow, 2011](#)).

These are just some of the reasons why it is so important for brands to have online communities—without geographic or social boundaries—via which admirers of a brand may connect (Laroche, Habibi, Richard, & Sankaranarayanan, 2012). These communities are important for sharing information about the brand, spreading the history and culture of the brand, and providing assistance to other customers or new customers who can become fans by recommendation. For companies, online brand communities provide an opportunity to involve, obtain valuable information from, and communicate with customers. Relations are strengthened and feelings of trust arise, leading to brand loyalty. For the purpose of our study, customer loyalty is defined as an attitude of intent to purchase a product or service. It requires a deep commitment to the brand that is understood as a psychological link to the brand prior to the purchasing intent (Lin & Luarn, 2003).

## 6. Loyalty: Offline and online worlds

Brands strive to win customer loyalty because repeat purchases are critical to company success and profitability. Can Facebook be a useful tool in achieving customer loyalty? Nearly all brands consider digital social media important in creating brand awareness, but most do not yet use these Web 2.0 applications to attain customer loyalty (Harvard Business Review Analytic Services, 2010). A few companies, however, have already reported an increase in customer satisfaction and loyalty as business benefits of using Web 2.0 (Bughin & Chui, 2010).

Increasing competition between companies, also a result of Web 2.0 growth, heightens the importance of a relational model between the brand and the customer. The development of long-term relationships plays an essential role in enhancing customer loyalty and profitability (Kalwani & Narayandas, 2011), and the creation and maintenance of these relationships requires that they are human and customized. Therefore, in the virtual world, the establishment of these relationships involves continuous conversation.

Companies need to know the main drivers of customer loyalty in order to develop and implement the right strategy for cultivating it. Both managers and academics recognize that customer satisfaction, trust, perceived value, and commitment are important determinants of customer loyalty. Therefore, these are some of the possible factors that companies could pursue to transition from awareness—defined as the memory or recognition of a brand—to loyalty (Huanga & Sarigöllüb, 2012). After a company has conquered the issue of brand

awareness, it should work to increase repeat purchases and customer bonds to achieve loyalty.

As mentioned, customer satisfaction is a key determinant of customer loyalty: Satisfied customers tend to buy more and comment positively about the brand. Customer satisfaction is an emotional response that relates to the comparison between product/service performance and customer expectation (Cote & Giese, 2000; Lin & Luarn, 2003; Oliver, 1999). Some studies (e.g., Gonçalves & Sampaio, 2012) indicate that customer satisfaction has a direct and positive impact on intent to repurchase. Another important factor for loyalty is trust, which is related to perceived risk and safety. Trust represents a set of beliefs concerning the integrity, benevolence, competence, and predictability of a service provider (Eid, 2011; Gommans, Krishnan, & Scheffold, 2001; Lin & Luarn, 2003). Perceived value is also tied to loyalty. It is determined by the benefits the buyer receives from the purchase and what he/she puts into it (Gommans et al., 2001; Lin & Luarn, 2003).

From the moment relationships between customers and brands start to develop in the context of Web 2.0, online loyalty (e-loyalty) begins to emerge. As this occurs, control over the product/service incrementally shifts from the company to the consumer. In this manner, loyalty is technologically facilitated by the new potential of Web 2.0 (Bailey & Schultz, 2000; Gommans et al., 2001).

A study by Casaló, Cisneros, Flavián, and Guinaliú (2009) revealed that a customer's participation in social networks generates emotional connections with the network subject, helping to establish customer loyalty. Logical questions follow: How do the main determinants of loyalty manifest themselves in this new reality of social networks, particularly on Facebook? And how do these relations differ from the offline context? Evidence exists that customer satisfaction, trust, and perceived value are directly and indirectly related to loyalty (purchase intent), and that the indirect relationship occurs through commitment in the online context (Lin & Luarn, 2003). Therefore, it is critical that marketing managers perceive how Facebook contributes to the achievement of customer loyalty, as well as analyze its determinants and their impacts on loyalty. We obtained important results through our study—developed with customers of the Zara brand—that considered fans and non-fans on Facebook.

## 7. Fan or customer: Are they the same person?

Our study of Zara analyzed the determinants of brand loyalty for Facebook application. Through

an online survey disclosed on Zara's Facebook page, on fashion blogs, and among personal contacts, we obtained 401 valid responses: 102 fans and 299 non-fans. All respondents had previously bought clothes from Zara; in other words, the brand awareness barrier had already been breached. Therefore, the aim of the study was to get evidence on how to use Facebook to achieve customer loyalty and repeat purchase behavior.

All study respondents were social network users in Portugal. Portugal possesses the most social network users, numbered at 4,715,580 (comScore, 2011; Socialbakers, n.d.). Facebook achieved its most significant gains in Portugal in 2010: approximately 98% of Portuguese social network users have a profile on this application. As a result, Portugal ranks 39<sup>th</sup> in the world in Facebook use (Socialbakers, n.d.).

Fans of Zara, who were also customers, skewed quite young: most belonged to the 18-24 demographic (70%) while an incredible 91.2% were less than 35 years old. Zara's fans were predominantly women (92.2%), graduates (49%), and had no income (55%), although 25.5% had between 501 and 1,000 euros per month to spend.

Non-fans of Zara, who were also customers, skewed older than the fan group: 20% were 34 or older. These non-fans had incomes between 501 and 1,000 euros per month (35.6%) or had no income (29.2%), and had higher education degrees (33.1% were postgraduate).

Interestingly for Facebook, a quarter of the Zara fans followed the page once a month, but almost three-quarters never participated. Most individuals never bought a piece of clothing based on the communication of the brand on Facebook, even though they continued to follow the Zara page. In other words, in spite of the respondents having bought Zara clothes, they never bought based on Facebook communication.

## 8. A brand on Facebook: Purpose and advice

Most of the brands that are on social media want to achieve notoriety, develop interactions with their customers, or just signal a presence (Dong-Hun, 2010; Harvard Business Review Analytic Services, 2010). The ultimate aim in most cases, however, is to develop actions that lead to customer loyalty. An understanding of how the determinants of loyalty are related to this ultimate goal is necessary in order to know what to value in communication on Facebook. Our study of Zara customers draws essential and relevant conclusions for managers. The Zara Facebook page reflects the core values of the

brand—urban and youthful, but always chic and elegant—and acts as a platform for announcing new collections. However, managers of Zara's Facebook page could improve many important aspects: Zara should post more frequently, answer users' criticisms, and promote campaigns on Facebook.

### 8.1. Relations to loyalty are stronger on Facebook

To evaluate the loyalty drivers of Zara's customers, different indexes were computed as the average of the individual items that assessed satisfaction: trust, perceived value, commitment, and loyalty. These items were measured using a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) through the online survey.

There were significant mean differences between loyalty drivers for Zara fans and non-fans: Zara fans ranked higher—except for in 'perceived value,' which was lower and not significant (Table 1). Two important results emerged: Satisfaction was the loyalty driver that showed the highest increase (9.7%) from Zara non-fans to fans; and, on average, the loyalty of Zara fans registered the largest increase (13.9%) compared to non-fans. These results are indicative of Facebook's positive effect on achieving loyalty.

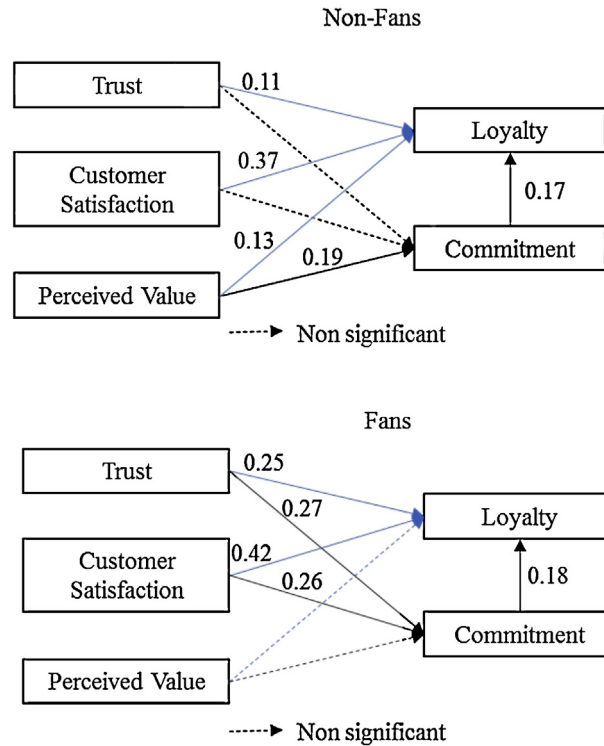
We examined the relationship between customer loyalty and its determinants with a regression analysis. Despite similarity between fans and non-fans regarding the determinants of loyalty to Zara, some differences should be noted.

First of all—and very importantly—the determinants of loyalty were stronger for fans of the brand on Facebook as opposed to non-fans (Figure 1). Satisfaction was the driver that had the greatest impact on loyalty and was higher for fans of Zara (0.42) than for non-fans (0.37). Additional results showed that satisfaction, trust, perceived value, and commitment better explained the loyalty variations for fans of Zara's Facebook (64% [R<sup>2</sup>]) than for non-fans (36% [R<sup>2</sup>]). In other words, the results (Figure 1) indicated that the relationships established with customers through Facebook added

Table 1. Mean of the loyalty drivers

Zara	Non-fans mean	Fans mean	Δ %
Satisfaction	5.05	5.54	9.70%
Trust	4.63	4.96	7.12%
Perceived value	4.26	4.15	-2.60%
Commitment	3.96	4.31	8.83%
Loyalty	4.46	5.08	13.90%

Figure 1. Impact of loyalty drivers on Zara fans and non-fans (standardized values)



importance—with the exception of perceived value. Interestingly, commitment was driven by customer satisfaction and trust for fans of Zara, but only by perceived value for non-fans. In the offline world, perceived value is essential to develop bonds with customers. But in the online world, Zara must work more to achieve customer satisfaction and trust to strengthen its relationship with customers. Facebook may be just the tool to aid in this initiative.

To understand how the key drivers influence loyalty, a definition of the desired goal is necessary: Should the company win the loyalty or just the commitment of fans? If the brand wants to win customer loyalty, then the aspects to value on Facebook are trust, customer satisfaction, and commitment to the brand. However, if the company just uses Facebook as a way of creating brand awareness, and the primary purpose is to establish customer commitment, then the company must concentrate on trust and customer satisfaction.

The notion that Facebook is simply a tool to achieve notoriety has not been confirmed. We argue that, instead, Facebook is a tool with a lot of potential for the construction of a company's business. Marketing managers play an important role in the administration of this media tool by winning customer loyalty. This becomes easier and more effective if managers know about the key determinants of loyalty most valued by customers.

## 8.2. Customer satisfaction is the most important

Clearly, companies that wish to achieve customer loyalty should more highly value customer satisfaction, as this driver has the greatest positive effect—both direct and indirect—on fans' loyalty (Figure 1). Facebook is a channel of communication that contributes to customers being more satisfied, which in turn forges stronger client-brand relationships. But Facebook only helps to develop this relationship if the customer's experience with the product has been good. As a tool, Facebook has difficulty overcoming bad product experiences due to its strictly being a communication channel.

Because customer satisfaction results from the fulfillment of created expectations, brands on Facebook must take care to quickly and thoroughly answer fans' questions. Frequent interaction, via an interaction process that never disappoints, is crucial. Therefore, an active and dynamic presence is important such that customers perceive Facebook as an excellent way of getting in contact with the brand.

## 8.3. Some tools and practices for managers

As mentioned, the brand must be quick and transparent in all its communications. Dynamism and interaction with fans are important tools to make

people come back, trust in the brand, and be satisfied. However, dynamism is not only about answering rapidly; it also concerns creating content that stimulates fans' active behavior. In addition to engagement, such content—quizzes, poll questions, et cetera—represents an excellent means of glean- ing knowledge regarding customers' opinions about the brand. These characteristics are not present on Zara's Facebook page: the brand is very passive, never throws its fans a challenge, and does not always answer questions and criticisms. When ad- dressed, criticisms are typically referred to custom- er support on the Zara website. As much as possible, Facebook should serve as a stand-alone tool. If a customer asks a question or offers up a critique, he/ she should receive an answer quickly and not be forced to make another attempt at communication; such demands increase customer dissatisfaction.

Content relevance of the brand page is also very important. Nobody wants to see only advertise- ments of the brand or internal information. Brands should share news about the sector, funny things, or make suggestions for the weekend/holidays. A fam- ily care company could, for example, share tips about caring for children. If a company sells shoes for teenagers, it might share information about music festivals, clothing trends, or new movies. In general, brands need to identify their target and its interests because the ultimate goal of developing online social media is to have fans and their pairs voluntarily share content. Customers will value the specific actions targeted to their interests, which in turn will increase customer satisfaction, trust, and commitment. In this respect, Zara manages its Face- book page well, placing all brand news carefully and consistently throughout a campaign. All of the posts—mostly about new pieces in clothing collec- tions—generate thousands of 'likes' and hundreds of reviews and 'shares.' The brand chooses not to post regularly, but only when it has something to captivate its customers.

It should be noted that fans enjoy campaigns that offer advantages to them. Consequently, it can be advantageous for the brand to create exclusive content (e.g., games, applications) for Facebook fans. Fans will be very alert to the brand page and become loyal as a result. This is one aspect that Zara does not develop on its Facebook page; Zara could, however, inclusively develop campaigns to attract fans' friends, like campaigns for votes.

The brand page must always be professional, but never boring. If a brand consistently posts advertise- ments, if the information offered up is not relevant, if too few or too many posts are generated, or if rude behavior toward fans is exhibited, the brand will lose fans and suffer negative repercussions. The

brand page should have funny content, instructional information, entertaining suggestions, and input from opinion leaders giving positive feedback about the brand. Zara is a well-known brand worldwide and presents interesting content on its Facebook page, but probably does not feel the need to exhibit more diverse offerings. This notion could be of value, how- ever, for if viewers like the page and find its contents engaging, they will spread the news to friends and potentially attract more customers to Zara.

## 9. Facebook: Loyalty vehicle

Companies can connect with their customers and take Facebook more seriously by integrating it into their marketing strategy. The reality persists, how- ever, that most firms still consider Facebook as a preferred connection for leading customers to brand awareness rather than cultivating brand loyalty. While it may be difficult to measure the direct impact investment in Facebook has on brand per- formance, it is clear that the platform can enrich customer loyalty—if marketing managers under- stand how to use the social media vehicle.

The actions suggested herein for achieving fans' customer loyalty might not apply to all brands in the same way; consider the case of aspirational brands. Constructed meanings for these brands can be func- tional if they result from utilitarian, tangible, mea- surable, and rational components; they can be aspirational if they result from emotional, symbolic, and intangible assets related to the feelings provid- ed by what the brand represents. The relationship established with a brand tends to complement a functional and emotional component with a prepon- derance of one of the components (Bhat & Reddy, 1998).

The relationship between awareness and loyalty will not be as linear for aspirational brands. For example, many fans of luxury brands like the brand in terms of self-image and status, and also trust the brand; however, they cannot afford to buy it. Luxury brand Dolce & Gabbana was also analyzed in the Zara study. Unlike Zara, which is an 'affordable luxury' brand with more customers (94.4%) than fans (25.4%), Dolce & Gabbana has more fans (40.9%) than customers (15.5%). Therefore, the conversion rate might be much lower and more difficult to attain for Dolce & Gabbana, even if the brand achieves good levels of trust, perceived value, and satisfaction. Nevertheless, it is important for Dolce & Gabbana to create a strong relationship with its fans by taking advantage of social networks because if and when they have the opportunity, these fans might buy some of brand's products.



The expectation is that Facebook will not lose importance, but rather maintain or increase its influence by 26%. Business investment in social media should also grow over the next 4 years, as social media tools are generally affordable and accessible (VanBoskirk, 2011). From an economic point of view, the feasibility of companies using social media fully justifies the investment. From the social point of view, although Facebook users are mostly young people with no or very little income, they represent potential future buyers. As such, valuing them and winning their commitment to the brand—right now—is essential. Ten years into the future, these users will constitute the bulk of the labor market. In this era of social media with substantial growth margins, companies should position themselves on Facebook to start taking maximum advantage of its use and winning customer loyalty—not only in the offline world, but also in the online world.

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