

You might be reputable but are you ‘Liked’? Orchestrating Corporate

Reputation Co-Creation on Facebook

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Abstract

Purpose: This chapter expands traditional approaches to Corporate Reputation Management by employing postmodernist approaches to value co-creation in order to identify how Facebook Features can be used to facilitate company-consumer Corporate Reputation co-creation.

Methodology/approach: Using content analysis of Facebook Fan Pages the chapter explores how 29 of the world's most reputable corporations use Facebook Features.

Findings: To a surprising degree, the corporations in the sample, despite having virtually limitless access to marketing communications resources, fail to make full use of the opportunities Facebook offers them. It appears that they have not yet fully adapted to this novel medium.

Research implications: Facebook together with the locus has also shifted the focus of corporate communications from one-way company controlled transmission of information to multi-party user controlled conversations. Thus, Corporate Reputations can no longer be managed. Instead, by offering consumers experiences and emotional triggers, corporations can engage them into willingly marketing the corporation and its products to each other

Originality/value of paper: This is the first systematic analysis of the practices the world's most prominent corporations utilise (or fail to employ) on Facebook. It illustrates that companies that adapt to the Social Media ecology can successfully orchestrate customer experiences that foster the co-creation of the desired Corporate Reputation.

Keywords: Corporate Reputation, Marketing, Facebook, Content Analysis, value co-creation

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Corporate Reputation has yet to be defined in a succinct and generally accepted statement (Barnett & Pollock, 2012) but there seems to be some consensus on its being the observers’ collective judgments on the financial, social, and environmental impacts of the corporation over time (Barnett, Jermier, & Lafferty, 2006), the collective, overall assessment of the attractiveness of an organisation by its stakeholders (Van Riel, 2007) relative to a reference group of peers (Fombrun, 2012). Some authors see it as an asset (Fombrun, 2001; Rindova & Martins, 2012) and others as a resource (Goldberg, Cohen, & Fiegenbaum, 2003; Lee, 2012) of the firm but all agree on its ubiquity, importance and overarching role in marketing strategy. Although it is becoming increasingly more difficult for consumers to distinguish between the corporation, its products and sub-brands (Van Riel, 2007) it is important to note that the term ‘Corporate Reputation’ refers solely to the reputation of the organization as a unique and inseparable entity.

A definition is meant to be the statement of an object's essential attributes that form its ‘essence’ (Aristotle, 2007), what Deleuze described as a time-dependent difference-creating power (Colebrook, 2006), which guides us to know a thing by its definable form, antecedents and consequences (Aristotle, 2007). In the case of Corporate Reputation, however, it appears that its ‘definitional landscape’ (reviewed in Barnett, et al., 2006) which is shaped by no less than seven conceptual frameworks (Fombrun, 2012) as well as its tangled web woven by its antecedents and consequences (discussed in Balmer & Greyser, 2006) resemble Bertrand Russel’s (2004/1946, p. 192) description of essence itself as a “hopelessly muddle-headed notion”. For the purposes of the research presented here we

propose that the quest for the elusive “one vision, one voice” (Barnett, et al., 2006, p. 31) is sidestepped in favour of acknowledging Corporate Reputation as a distilment of all interactions, depictions, facts (Hasanbegović, 2011) and rumours related to the corporation, as in the Greek word for ‘Reputation’ (Woodhouse, 1910): *Φήμη* (fimi), the root of the English word *famous*, the French *fameux*, and the Italian *famoso* (Famous, 2012), which denotes Rumour, unverified Information, good or bad Opinion about someone or something, Fame, Celebrity, good and bad Name, Glory, Kudos and Renown (Manthala (Μανδαλά), 1999). Our approach is consistent with Fombrun’s (2012, p. 103) social constructivist repositioning that emphasizes Corporate Reputations’ “independent ontological status, which stakeholders may or may not share, and that can be experienced, assessed, valued and influenced”.

The Building Blocks of Corporate Reputation: Assessors, Media and Attributes

Dowling & Gardberg (2012) reviewed 30 measures of Corporate Reputation used in 50 countries, Walker (2010) examined the 54 most cited articles on the topic, Inglis, Morley, & Sammut (2006) performed an econometric analysis through which an elaborate four-dimensional measure (RepuTex) was collapsed into a single factor measure and Groenland’s (2002) focus groups ascertained the dominance of the emotional over all other dimensions of the most commonly used measure of Corporate Reputation (the RQ). All seem to concur that Corporate Reputation is qualitatively (Groenland, 2002), statistically (Fombrum, Gardberg, & Server, 2000) and conceptually (Fombrum, 2012) confirmed to be a “difficult to rationalise and verbalise” (Groenland, 2002, p. 309) non-rational, emotional reaction (Groenland, 2002) to the organization as being ‘good’ (Keh & Xie, 2009), appealing (Fombrum, 1996) “desirable, proper or appropriate” (Suchman, 1995, p. 574).

It follows then that Corporate Reputation is not only dependent on the assessed and their reference groups (Fombrum, 2012) but, most importantly, on the assessors (commonly referred to as 'stakeholder groups' Groenland, 2002; Keh & Xie, 2009; Puncheva & Zarkada-Fraser, 2004; Walker, 2010). Moreover, as reputation experienced before it is assessed (Fombrum, 2012), it follows that it is dependent on the medium through which it is experienced and the context of the assessment.

These observations guided us in delineating the study in terms of adopting the perspective of one of the multitude of possible assessors – the customer – as well as in selecting the medium of stakeholder-organisation interaction – Facebook Pages - and focusing on those of the attributes of Corporate Reputation the stakeholder can experience through the Features of Facebook Pages and which can cause the reputation-forming emotional reaction.

The Assessor: King Customer.

For the exploratory study presented here we adopted the perspective of the Facebook user that could be a potential or existing customer and consumer. Customers are only one of the many stakeholder groups that might be influenced by Corporate Reputation in their decisions to develop a relationship with the company (Puncheva & Zarkada-Fraser, 2003) but they are usually the largest group and the one without which the organisation cannot exist. In practical terms, adopting the consumer perspective resulted in three design parameters.

First we used the RQ© (Harris Interactive, 2012) – a consumer-based Corporate Reputation rating representing B2C customers – and the FORTUNE Top 50© (CNN Money, 2012) - a business executives-based rating of Corporate Reputation representing the

B2B customers - as surrogate measures of the 'you are reputable' part of the issue at hand and as a sampling frame.

Second, all the data used in the study are easily accessible to the general public at no cost. Moreover, they are available in a format that can be understood by people that do not have any marketing, corporate communications or business research skills.

Finally, we followed simple data collection procedures that reflect the way anyone with an elementary understanding of the internet and basic search skills can navigate the maze of information and participate in the mediated experiences of Web2.0.

The Medium: Facebook Land of Negotiated Identities

Almost half (Facebook, 2012) of all internet users in the world (The Internet Big Picture, 2012) are interconnected on Facebook, a single platform to which they dedicate 23% of their on-line lives; "a staggering 53.5 million minutes per month" (Edwards, 2012) or over one hour everyday (Mavidis, 2010; Patterson, 2012).

Facebook was chosen as the 'country' of this study not only in terms of its staggering size, but also because of its born global nature. Search engines direct customers to social media sites (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010) and consumers see, follow up and invite their Friends to see a variety of marketing communications, thus actively participating in "the negotiation of increasingly complex corporate environments" (Hearn, 2008, p. 197). Finally, technology has been acknowledged as a change agent of Corporate Reputation, both in respect to its measurement and in its conceptualisation (Dowling & Gardberg, 2012). The research project presented here seeks to explore if and how the world's most reputable corporations respond to the demands of this new and exciting medium. In their study of the ecology of social media Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre (2011) identified

Facebook as the platform with the highest number (five out of the possible seven) of corporation-consumer relationship forming functionalities and the one that best cultivates those most pertinent to the development of emotional bonds between the corporation and the consumer, namely presence, conversations, identity, relationships (which is the strongest of all the elements of the ‘honeycomb’ of functionalities for Facebook and also the one for which Facebook stands out amongst other platforms), conversations and reputation itself.

The Attributes: Morsels of Information, Triggers of Emotion

Traditionally, Corporate Reputation has been measured as a collation of numerical ratings based on knowledge, observations or rumours (Hay Group, 2012) regarding the corporation’s performance on vision and leadership, financial performance, workplace environment, products and services, and social responsibility (Harris Interactive, 2012) but also allowing for assessments of emotional appeal (Harris Interactive, 2012; Hay Group, 2012). We hereby propose that the function of Corporate Reputation resembles the psychological process of admiration which is defined (Immordino-Yang, McColl, Damasio, & Damasio, 2009) as a social emotion evoked by witnessing virtuous behaviour or displays of virtuosic skill which motivate us to reward the object of our admiration.

In the time of television-mediated strictly parasocial interactions between passive audiences and media figures which, through repetition, acquired meanings of relationship (Giles, 2002), virtuous behaviour of the corporations (such as charitable donations) and their agents (e.g. the employees’ volunteering) were communicated through PR messages. Virtuosic skill (the superiority of products, for example) was communicated through advertising. In both cases, messages were transmitted in the format the corporations chose to adopt, through loud streams of monologue on as many mass media as possible.

Viewers, subsequently, made judgements about the corporations and responded as if some of them had been somehow incorporated into their social networks (Giles, 2002) but they could only form relationships with the few firms that they had some personal interactions with (as clients, employees or neighbours sharing externalities). In the brick and mortar world, the sharing of the experiences derived from such relationships (e.g a service encounter) remained limited by space, time and the breadth and depth of the consumers' social network. Thus, the ability of any one consumer to share and influence Corporate Reputation was negligible.

The function of Web2.0, and Facebook in particular, as a potential instrument of Corporate Reputation is largely unexplored. Even though more than 4,000,000 businesses have utilized the Facebook Page feature "to engage with their customers directly and authentically" (Facebook Inc., 2012, p. 80), their marketing communications management practices are still *terra incognita*. "[A]necdotal evidence demonstrates that social media have greatly impacted the culture and economy of [advertising, communication, marketing, and public relations] and inspired paradigm shifts" (Khang, Ki, & Ye, 2012, p. 281). Their review of 10 years of research which focused mostly on users (primarily student samples) of the broadest possible range of web-based technologies failed to prove that Social Media were actually integrated into, let alone alter the nature of the corporate communications mix (Khang, et al., 2012). All we know, so far, is that by the end of 2009 only 21.3 percent out of the 408 franchise systems operating in France were present on Facebook (Perrigot, Basset, & Cliquet, 2011; Perrigot, Kacker, Basset, & Cliquet, 2012) and in 2010 only 79% of the Fortune 500 companies had some form of Social Media presence (Dekay, 2012).

Corporate communication practices on Facebook have not been examined in the context of Corporate Reputation but studies of marketing appeals in Chinese and US Social Media Sites (Tsai & Men, 2012), franchisee attraction (Perrigot, Basset, & Cliquet, 2011; Perrigot, Kacker, Basset, & Cliquet, 2012) and dialogic strategies of not for profit organisations (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009) as well as dealing with negative comments (Dekay, 2012) tell a story of lost opportunities. The full scope of consumer engagement is nowhere near achieved as a result of the corporations persisting in their old ways despite their treading new realms.

This exploratory work aims to expand on the work of mapping marketing communications practices from the perspective of the Corporate Reputation formation processes (e.g. Bennett & Kottasz, 2000; Hutton, Goodman, Alexander, & Genest, 2001). It is here proposed that on Facebook these processes differ significantly from those on traditional media as they are structured by the medium and its functionalities. Company presentation rests with each and every one of the Page Features and is delineated by its technical specifications that dictate how information and stimuli are organised. At the same time, verbal and visual messages related to personnel, vision, philanthropy, products and even financial performance are simultaneously present in an archival format alongside expressions of the emotional response they have generated in the form of Likes, Shares, Comments and user generated content that expresses admiration as much as resentment in an interplay of images, sounds, words...in endless layers upon layers of meanings and personalised yet widely distributed context-creating content.

“Your Page is the central place to grow your business, build your brand and develop relationships with your customers” says Facebook (2012) in the introduction to the tools it

provides for corporate users. These tools, listed here, and their Corporate Reputation formation potential are the subject matter of our empirical research.

- 1) Category and a Page name that represents the business,
- 2) Cover Photo that represents the firm and showcases its offerings,
- 3) Profile Picture where they can upload either their logo or another image that they wish people to associate with the business,
- 4) About section, meant to make people understand what the company does,
- 5) Photos and Videos,
- 6) Wall posts where most of the company-consumer interaction takes place,
- 7) Milestones of the company history and
- 8) Extra Tabs where companies can have applications, more information, promotional material and longer pieces of text

From Communication to Co-Creation of Significations

In the postmodern “*pastiche* and collage” (Kvale, 1995, p. 23) world of Facebook, 721 million active Facebook users (that is over 10% of the global population) were found to be engaged in a total of 69 billion friendships with a median value of 100 and an average of 190 friendships (Backstrom, 2011). Since then Facebook has grown to a billion users who log into Facebook at least once a month (Sengupta & Bilton, 2012) whilst an estimated 150 million people update their Status at least once a day, 209 million Comment on other’s posts and 247 million Like another user’s content. Each one of these Posts can reach on average 156,569 friends-of-friends (Goo, 2012). The impact of these statistics on Corporate Reputation is an unprecedented magnification of the breadth and width of shared

experiences and opinions. The scale of potential propagation of rumours is simply unpredictable.

In the mass media framework of passive viewing that characterised modernity it clearly made sense for corporations to ‘talk to’ customers and prospects in the belief that if you project a consistent message often and loud enough it will, eventually, become the truth, thus shaping the desired Corporate Reputation. In the monologue of the commercial image and story line-producing industries, corporations were the sources of crafted significations that were transmitted through selected media to targeted individuals who, at the moment of message transmission, happened to be acting as receivers.

In the post-information postmodern world of Facebook, receivers also become sources of noise as well as transmitters of the message and the messages they choose to add on it. They Like, and entice other consumers to Like; they Share, thus adding their approval or they Share but add a derisive Comment which flashes on their friends’ Walls and turns what is designed to be promotional to defamatory material; they Comment, and Comment again; they multi-task and media-mesh and thus triggering an unintended interplay of new and traditional media in a constant search for information, alternative perspectives, and even emotional fulfilment (Luck & Mathews, 2010). What they actually do is that they add infinite numbers of bits and bytes as well as divert the message to unintended receivers who add their own verbal, musical or visual decoding. Thus, the poles in the general communication system (Shannon & Weaver, 1949) become interchangeable and a neat linear sequence is transformed into a whirlwind of hyperreal “rampant, disjointed significations” (Sternberg, 1995, p. 85) spinning in space and time whilst staying frozen

forever on a timeline or at the depths of a What's on Your Mind or Recommendations or Recent Posts by Others Feature.

Corporate Communication on Facebook is like an endless party where people invite themselves and the host mingles with some new, old, good, and often some not so good Friends. Thus Corporate Reputations are not built by strategically chosen actions and communications but co-created. It is here argued that the co-creation of Corporate Reputation on Facebook cannot really be managed; it can only be orchestrated by a corporation that fulfils Darwin's criterion for the survival of a species: the one most adaptable to change (quoted in a Facebook Status Update by the American Marketing Association, which, incidentally, was Shared by 181, Liked by 350 and Commented on by 11 people in seven hours).

A note on methods & procedures

The primary concern for the development of the sampling frame was that data was freely and easily accessible to the general public. Thus we combined the B2C Reputation (the 32 companies that were rated as at least 'Good' with a score of over 74, in the 2012 RQ® (Harris Interactive, 2012) see columns 'Rank B2C and RQ Score in **Error! Reference source not found.**) with that of B2B evaluations (the top 50 of the World's Most Admired Companies (CNN Money, 2012) shown in columns 'Rank B2B' and 'Fortune Score' in **Error! Reference source not found.**). As 31 companies featured in both lists, a total of 59 companies were defined as the research population.

The most common way to find a company Page on Facebook (based on a preliminary observational study we conducted) is to type the company name and Facebook in a browser so this is exactly what we did. We copied the name of the Company from the

source and pasted it into the Google Chrome Search Bar/ URL line followed by 'Facebook'. The first page that came up on the Results Page was clicked on and opened. One company (GoldmanSachs) had no Facebook presence and for six companies (Berkshire Hathaway, Apple, SC Johnson, Honda, Toyota, and Exxon Mobil) the first Page that came up did not belong to the company and in most cases it was actually against the company. These companies and another 29 companies that did not have the term 'official' or the term and logo for copyright (©) in the texts they provided on their Pages were excluded from the study so as not to violate the criterion of document authenticity (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The 23 companies that were included in the content analysis (Berelson, 1952; Krippendorff, 1981; K. Krippendorff, 2004; Weber, 1990) phase of the research are listed in Table 1.

The Facebook presence of nine of the companies in the sample (Amazon, P&G, Microsoft, Costco, IBM, Best Buy, Wal-Mart, Wells Fargo and Lowe's) had been previously examined in relation to their handling negative comments on Facebook (Dekay, 2012) and one of the companies in the sample (Wal-Mart Stores) was the number one Social Media Star according to CNN Money (Konrad, 2012).

Table 1:

Compilation and comparison of Reputation metrics and Likes for the companies included in the study

Company name	Rank B2C	Rank B2B	RQ Score	Fortune Score	Likes 24/8/2012	% change likes in a week
Wal-Mart Stores	40	11	69.35	6.93	19,798,202	0.95
Intel	6	32	81.94	7.15	12,259,784	1.05
Amazon.com	8	7	81.14	7.95	9,807,810	2.77
Best Buy	27	36	75.92	6.25	6,259,580	0.58
eBay		45		6.77	3,575,399	0.99
Southwest Airlines	23	4	76.88	6.17	3,165,828	0.26
Hewlett-Packard	25		76.43	6.71	2,085,733	0.24
Microsoft	16	9	80.16	6.66	1,936,973	0.43
Lowe's		49		6.36	1,375,003	2
Deere		39		7.32	1,329,636	0.44
Kraft Foods	7		81.67	6.34	908,214	0.25
General Electric	30	13	74.22	6.43	864,220	1.34
Costco Wholesale	20	29	78.03	6.68	647,070	0.51
UPS	13	30	80.51	7.42	384,765	0.5
Cisco Systems		28		7.07	325,820	0.37
Wells Fargo	45	41	66.15	6.25	201,428	0.65
Singapore Airlines		18		6.3	178,019	0.63
IBM	26	12	76.27	7.64	148,457	1.16
Accenture		49		7.4	129,610	0.77
Procter & Gamble	11	5	80.98	7.43	89,997	0.77
BMW*		19		6.88	75,675	0.44
Sony*	14	46	80.44	5.85	19,243	0.25
Samsung Electronics*		38		6.16	11,000	-0.4

* The Facebook Page that came up first on the search was the Greek Page.

Facebook Pages comply with the requirements for being treated as documents as they can be 'read', have not been produced specifically for the purposes of the research but are relevant to the study of reputation and are preserved, (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Facebook Pages are by nature dynamic and in a state of constant flux so what we are really studying is only snapshots taken in a narrow space of time (August-September 2012).

Data was collected from each one of the Facebook categories presented above and manually coded according to the nature of the messages they contained. Visual messages were defined as any type of picture, image or symbols (except punctuation marks) whilst verbal messages we defined as any combination of letters, words and sentences. We also coded and analysed material for its co-creation potential and utilisation of the opportunities for Corporate Reputation enhancement. The scope for co-creation exists in features that allow fans to interact with the Page by Liking, Commenting or Sharing company-generated content or to Post their own verbal, visual or audiovisual content on the company's Page (activities that are visible to the users' personal network on News Feed and on their Friend's Walls).

In manipulating the data we stayed strictly with what the Facebook user sees and experiences, purposefully ignoring the corporate perspective, the Facebook provided metrics (insights) and making no use of data mining and business analytics technologies.

Research Findings

Overview of Practices

In some of the Features of Facebook Pages, it is technically impossible for users to interact with the company. For example, Category and Page Name, the About Section, the Info and some company-created Extra Tabs are spaces designed for Corporate monologue. How these are utilized by the companies in the sample is shown on Table 2 where the numbers represent the number of companies that made use of the feature in t_0 (24/8/2012) and t_1 (a week later) categorized by the nature of the messages transmitted (verbal or Visual). Cells marked as N/A indicate that the type of message is not technically possible to be transmitted in the particular Feature.

Table 2:

Summary of how the 23 companies in the sample use the Attributes of Corporate Reputation on Facebook

Nature of Messages Facebook Feature Category & Page Name	visual representation		verbal communication		scope for co-creation	
	t ₀	t ₁	t ₀	t ₁	t ₀	t ₁
	N/A		23		N/A	
Cover Photo	23		15	17	23	
Profile Picture	21	23	23	19	23	
About	1		23		N/A	
Info Tab	7		23		N/A	
Photo Albums	23		23		23	
Videos	16	19	16	19	16	19
Wall Posts	23	22	22	21	23	
Milestones	21		21		21	
Extra Tabs	22		22		18	

The rest of the analysis focuses on the Features marked in bold letters in Table 2, because Videos, Wall Posts and Milestones require different analytical tools to be approached and are defined as beyond the delineation of this first exploratory study.

Facebook Features as Attributes of Corporate Reputation

We hereby examine each Feature separately and illustrate its most successful uses as well as blunders that show how long the way to adaptation to the new realities still is, even for corporations that are highly visible, innovative and in possession of considerable resources.

Representing the business: the Category and Page Name

When creating a Page, Facebook forces users to choose if they are ‘Local Businesses or place’, a ‘Company organization or institution’ or a ‘Brand or product’ and then to select their Category from a set list of industries. The Category is crucial for Corporate Reputation

as it positions the firm within the reference group (Fombrum, 2012) it believes it should be judged against. So, for example, Southwest Airlines selected Airline and Singapore Airlines chose the Travel/Leisure Category so they will be not judged against each other.

Of all the companies studied, almost half used generic terms as their Category such as ‘Company’ (four companies in total, that is 17% of the sample) or ‘Product/Service’ (six companies, 26%) and the rest selected either the industry they operate in (e.g. Best Buy chose ‘Retail and Consumer Merchandise’) or their most prominent product (BMW, for example, described itself as ‘Cars’).

The issue of naming a page is anything but trivial or a routine matter. Variations in approaches can be to just use the brand name (12 companies in the sample) or an abbreviation (e.g. GE for General Electric and HP for Hewlett-Packard). Finally, a multi-brand firm with numerous product Pages, Kraft Foods, highlights the function of the Corporate Page in relation to its other Pages by giving its Page Name as Kraft Foods - Corporate. The Category and Page Name Features do not allow for interactions with Fans and they are not designed to function as a place for visual communication or meaning co-creation.

Showcasing the firm and its offerings: the Cover Photo

This Feature showcases key corporate brand elements through visual and verbal messages. Companies show their products or new offerings or pick a picture that is iconic of their brand. All 23 firms in the sample have a visual representation of their company on their Cover Photo. In the top half of Exhibit 1, for example, Singapore Airlines puts forward one of the strongest and most consistent brand elements ever. The Singapore girls, slim Asian women dressed in the distinctive Sarong Kebaya SIA uniform, an icon of service

since 1972 (Lindberg, 2000), bridge with their smiles China and France (notice the two sides of the river banks). Most of the corporations (17, that is 74% of the sample), have also included a verbal component. For example, Costco Wholesale, (in the bottom half of Exhibit 1) show a service (the Executive Club Card) held high up, pointing towards the Brand values of value, quality, savings and wow! (*sic*).

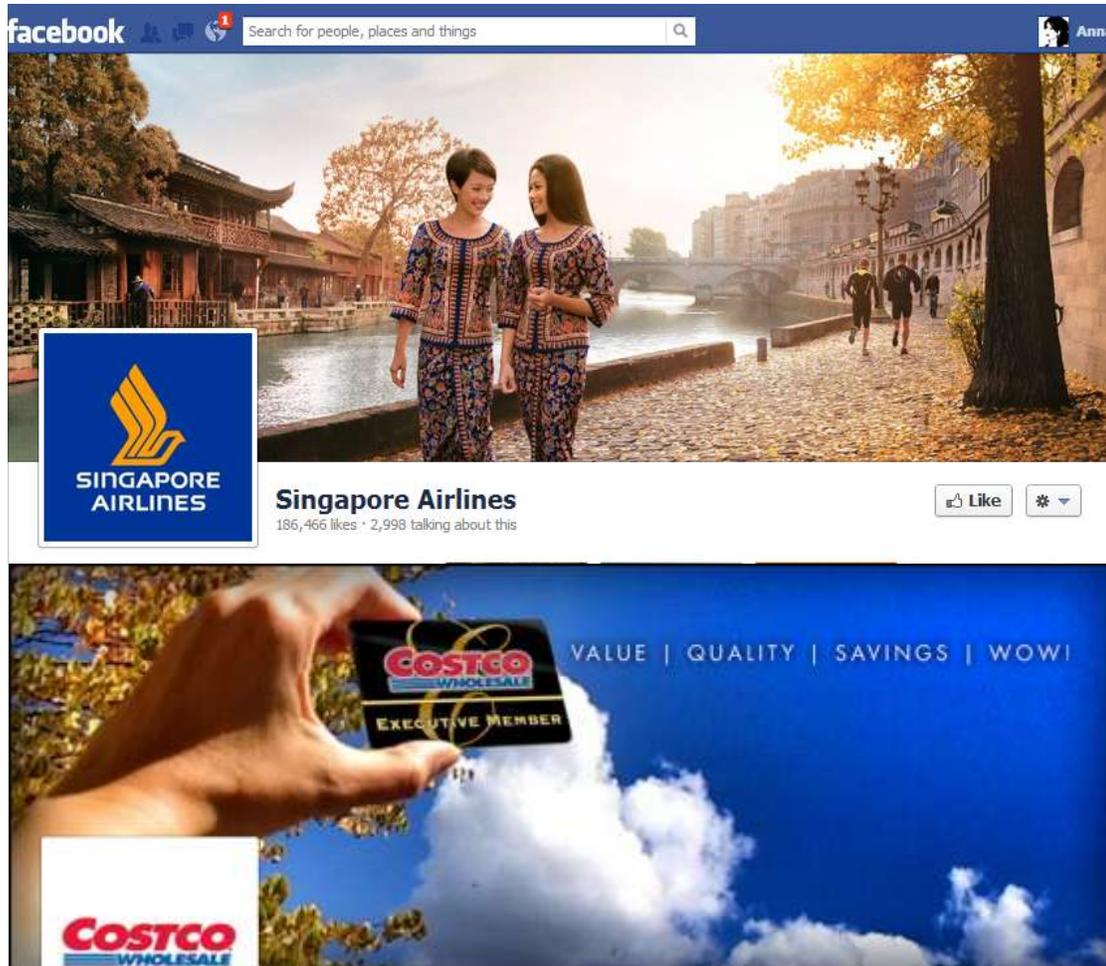


Exhibit 1: Examples of visual and combined verbal/visual representations in the 'Cover Photo' section.

The cover photo is public, the first thing that visitors see, and, thus, extremely important to identity construction and image promotion. Usually, cover photos are changed regularly to reflect strategic repositioning, new products or even the time of the year and

major events. This is prime attention-getting and meaning co-creation territory, as the Cover Photo often attracts more Comments, Likes and Shares than any other Feature. Intel's Cover Photo, for example, had on 11/09/2012 5,245 Likes, 297 shares and 279 comments whilst the Profile Picture had only 220 Likes, 102 Shares and 56 Comments.

It is not surprising that the Profile Picture has generated business for graphic designers and photographers. A search on Google using 'Facebook profile picture' as the search term returned 73,000,000 Videos and 6,100 results in the Shopping search 2,010 of which were priced over \$40.

Associating the business with a single image: the Profile Picture

In our sample, 15 companies (65%) use their logo as a 'Profile Picture' (ebay, for example, as in the middle picture of Exhibit 2) and eight companies (35%) use their logo enriched with visual or/and verbal messages enhancing their brand (as in the UPS logo on the left of Exhibit 2 which is enriched by words & the universal love symbol) and only three use an image that depicts their business (see for example Southwest Airlines on the right hand side of Exhibit 2).



Exhibit 2: Different treatments of the 'Profile Picture' section

Companies' Profile Pictures are visible on the News Feed, the running stream of updates on the activity of Friends and the Fan Pages that users have Liked). It is the *par*

excellence Feature that promotes uniqueness, enhances brand awareness and aims to create recognition in a flash.

As the Profile Picture allows user interaction, it is inevitable that Fans will voice their feelings right next to the logo. The neat and bright Wells Fargo Profile Picture is decorated with 14 extensive and rather bitter complaints by customers with one feeble “Nice BANK” lost in the disdain. One wonders what Comments accompanied the logo’s 16 Shares.

Explaining what the company does: the About and Info Tab

Facebook provides a discreetly marked (just the word ‘About’) but prominent space (at top left, right under the company logo) for the creation of a one-click profile of the business. The first Sentence of the About section appears in a plain box designed to take 40 words.

First the text Posted by the companies in the sample was checked for textual integrity. If a company has used more than 40 words then only a fraction of a sentence accompanies the Profile Picture. The majority of companies (16, which is 70% of the sample) are aware of this, so they just write a catchy sentence. Notably six companies (26% of the sample) appeared to have failed to check their self-presentation for sloppiness (Exhibit 3).



Exhibit 3: Examples of textual integrity. The top picture is GE's About where space is used wisely and the bottom one is the UPS About which was coded as not having textual integrity.

The whole text of the About section was coded in terms of content as shown in Table 3. In the Microsoft text which reads “*Welcome to the official Microsoft Facebook page, your source for news and conversation about Microsoft's consumer products and services.*”, for example, the italicised words were respectively coded as WELCOME + DESIGNATION + PROMPT TO ACTION. The summary results and some characteristic examples are presented in Table 3. In the column marked ‘Pages’ the sub-column marked ‘#’ indicates the number of companies that had the specific content in their texts and the column marked ‘%’ shows the respective percentage of the sample.

Table 3:

The content of the first 40 words of the About section

Content Code	Pages		Example Text	Example Company
	#	%		
DESCRIPTION	6	26	A world leader in agricultural, construction, forestry and turf care equipment with an age-old commitment to those linked to the land.	Deere
DESIGNATION	12	52	Welcome aboard the official Singapore Airlines Facebook page! We hope you enjoy your journey with us.	Singapore Airlines
WELCOME	9	39		
HISTORY	1	4	“If we work together, we’ll lower the cost of living for everyone... we’ll give the world an opportunity to see what it’s like to save and have a better life.” - Sam Walton	Wal-Mart Stores
PEOPLE	1	4	This page is managed by George Faulkner and Kevin Winterfield, and follows the IBM Social Computing Guidelines.	IBM
RULES OF ENGAGEMENT	2	9		
PROMPT TO ACTION	3	13	We love science, technology, innovation and hearing from you! So, say hello.	General Electric
SLOGAN	8	35		

Just like the About section, the Info section is a pure monologue with no means of establishing if anyone is paying attention to the primarily verbal messages. The only visual messages used are symbols such as ®, @, © or a bing© map with no place for co-creation. Of the 23 companies we studied, only P&G had utilized the interactive map feature thus providing spatial inferences: a building entrenched in the urban fabric, close to a river and a highway.

Companies can choose which of the Facebook set sections of the Info they fill in. The sections in order of popularity were: Basic Info and Contact Info (filled in by all of the companies in the sample), History (21, that is 91% of the sample), Company Overview (18, that is 78%), Mission (15, that is 65%), and Description and General Information (6 and 5 each, that is 26% and 22% respectively).

Almost half of the companies have posted engagement rules detailing what users can and cannot post on the Page, measures that will be taken against offenders, such as banning them from the Page, and copyright terms in the Info Tab. Nine companies (40%), however, have created an Extra Tab for Terms and Conditions and one (Hewlett Packard) have added visual messages (a woman wearing a headset in front of a computer screen) to the communication guidelines.

Making the virtual real: Photos

Photos organised in Albums have been extensively utilised by all companies in the sample for providing the physical evidence needed for consumers to make inferences about all aspects of Corporate Reputation. Most importantly, images and their captions position the corporation in physical and social space as well as in time, build expectations and supply evidence of delivering the covenanted service. This is a section of lively dialogue, overflowing sentiment and users' being really personal in sharing not only their reactions to the company Posts and content but also submitting and discussing their own life stories with other Fans. In this section, we only analysed the Album's titles and not their contents as this is a project in itself requiring an in-depth netnographic and visual anthropology approach.

People feature strategically in the Photos section in at least 10 (43%) company Pages (see Exhibit 4).



Exhibit 4: People as Corporate Reputation Ambassadors from left to right Walmart shareholders, Kraft employees and Accenture leadership.

Albums are used extensively for product launches (as in Exhibit 5) and they generally seem to create a strong consumer reaction unlikely to be achieved by a traditional PR event for the same purpose. Intel has here created an open to anyone, space and time constraint-free, ongoing, virtual event out of a product launch. Almost 12, 000 people have Liked and 1,626 have Shared this collection of photographs showing the product itself (a processor), the products the product goes into (personal computers) and people using them, the company representative presenting the new family of products, a snapshot of the presenter's visual aids and the attentive audience. The Intel logo appears in most of the photographs.

The 10 latest of the 435 comments on the Album are also shown in Exhibit 5. People admire the product and the company but also call for the elimination of Intel (in Spanish), explain production processes to other consumers, Like the previous users' Comments, ask about prices, Share the photos but they also share their experiences with the product and an Indian/English girl of school age shares a hyperlink to a drawing of palm trees in the dessert. The interactions are limited to mutual Likes and Intel has not answered or commented on any of the latest 150 posts.

facebook

3rd generation Intel® Core™ Processor Family Launch

By Intel (Albums) · Updated about 5 months ago · Taken in San Francisco, California



Like · Share

👍 11,833 people like this.

📄 1,627 shares

💬 View previous comments 49 of 435

 **Prince Khizar Tanveer** I also have intel core i7
30 April at 16:36 · Like · 🗳️ 2

 **Rohit Lalwany** 3rd generation of computers. Wow!!!
30 April at 17:48 · Like · 🗳️ 1

 **Don Alf** the matrix is near....gg
30 April at 18:41 · Like · 🗳️ 2

 **Mahkota Primadona** oke!
30 April at 20:59 via mobile · Like · 🗳️ 2

 **Nathaniel Estrella Baes** i love "Intel" is my favorite brand
30 April at 21:59 · Like · 🗳️ 3

 **David Valentine** Ivy Bridges new Sandy Wich heat dissipation design adds an extra layer of spicy thermal paste crammed below an integrated heat spreader. Voiding the secret recipe solder of previou... See More
30 April at 22:01 · Like · 🗳️ 2

 **Codar Cues** Awesome!
30 April at 22:42 · Like · 🗳️ 1

 **Rafael Ribeiro** ae e computador!!!!!!!um intel
1 May at 02:42 · Like · 🗳️ 1

 **Claudia Stefania Rodriguez** por lejos los procesadores de intel son los mejores, no tienen comparacion....
1 May at 05:32 · Like · 🗳️ 3

 **Maeda Tood Taison** ivy bridge very hot!
1 May at 08:46 · Like · 🗳️ 2

 **Maria Elisa Garcia** ELIMINAR INTEL
1 May at 17:43 · Like · 🗳️ 2

Exhibit 5: Facebook Photo Album specifically created for a product launch

Photo Albums, however, can go a lot further than just presenting products. They can add context to the corporate offerings and provide inferences about the covenanted service performance in a way that no print or televised advertisement could ever hope to achieve. Albums are there; people go looking for them and invite their friends to peek as well. They hold all the excitement of opening your host's bathroom cabinet, or the sadness and sweetness of going through your shoebox of High School memorabilia. Hewlett Packard, for example, has made full use of triggers to emotionally connect their history to their Fans' past. They have uploaded a Photo Album of the first workshop of the company titled "Birthplace of Silicon Valley - 367 Addison Avenue", comprising 12 pictures (one of which is shown in Exhibit 6). The photos look as if they were just private snapshots of private spaces and the effect is highlighted by the forgotten coffee mug on the work bench in the photo of Exhibit 6.



Exhibit 6: Sample of HP Album of its origins

This HP Album has received 2,663 Likes, 43 Comments and has been Shared 604 times. A young man from Singapore has Commented that “Big things have small beginnings”, a middle aged woman from California has added a touch of her personal story under the Album “That’s just a couple of streets over from where I grew up. I am a Paly girl all the way!” as did an elderly man who wrote “Worked for HP 14 1/2 years..had a chance to meet and talk to both of them...The best bosses of their day..” but a former employee of HP who now lives in Ireland admonished them to “get back to your focus on innovation .. like apple (*sic*)”. Scrolling through the Shares history we counted 10 people from as far away

from Palo Alto as Italy and Japan who had shared the Album with an introduction along the lines of ‘this is where it all began’ in their own language.

UPS, on the other hand, attempt to position themselves as a state of the art and innovative organization by showcasing the means they use for their intermodal transportation. Their Album of planes, trucks, cargo ships and loading cranes also includes a gondola with the caption “a Venice Delivery Boat: That’s Logistics! Packages are delivered by boat in Venice on the Grand Canal”. These photos (shown in original size in Exhibit 7), however, do not seem to have captured the consumers’ attention as the album has elicited only 28 Likes, 74 Shares and one Comment from a female former employee of UPS in Paraguay who is complaining about the quality of the pictures in Spanish thus illustrating our point that new media are novel eco-systems that require adaptation of the introduced species for survival.



Exhibit 7: UPS Photo Album of means of Transport (original photo sizes and quality)

Decay (2012) have demonstrated that positive responses are more likely to be elicited by marketing messages that are not of the ‘hard sell’ type. At least 10 of the companies in the sample (44%) have utilized the Photo Albums for integrating themselves into the social fabric of Facebook. Informal socialising through photos that are irrelevant to the business or at least loosely related, with the logical link left to the semantic framework of the viewer seems to generate positive responses. Amazon’s “Holiday 2011” Album

shows their customers demonstrating Christmas spirit, eBay celebrates Mother's Day by collecting photos of their customers with their moms and Kraft Foods share romantic Valentine's Day photos. The fact that these are three of the most commercialised days globally, we suppose is unlikely to be coincidental. Regardless of our skepticism, however, the fact remains that Fans Share, Like and lavish admiration on the company that remembers their mums, treasures their pets in Santa hats and lends romance to their on-line flirt. Even eBay's National Dog Week Photo of a pooch wrapped in a fluffy pink towel has elicited 9,612 Likes, 1,803 Shares and 139 laudatory Comments such as "ssssooo fffuuunnnnnnyyyyy!!!!111!!!" alongside personal revelations ("My dachshund, Gidget, is like my second child. I think my daughter Laurel would agree that I spoil the dog more than her sometimes! Lol").

Engaging consumers into play and learn: Extra Tabs

Facebook is transforming social learning into an 'anytime, anywhere' experience' as it is the *par excellence* harbour for self-disclosure, the repository of recorded experience and a medium for the co-creation of knowledge (Harris, 2012). Providing a flexible company-controlled social learning space is the primary function of Extra Tabs that are used for presenting aspects of the business, rewarding Fans for Liking the Page but also for interacting informally. After counting and classifying Tabs we opened each one of the, coded the content and tested if the applications actually worked. The coding was performed between 11 and 13 September 2012.

One company (IBM) had no Extra Tabs, four (Intel, eBay, UPS, IBM and Walmart) had 10 and the rest between two and nine. Out of a total of 129 Extra Tabs the companies provided nine (7%) that did not work, thus creating an impression of not upholding even the

simplest and voluntarily undertaken promises. There were 119 Tabs with visual and 131 with verbal content, but only 61 (47%) were interactive and allowed Shares, Likes and Comments. It is these 61 Tabs that are of a particular interest as they show the companies' understanding of the particularities of the medium and the *modus operandi* of the playful, easily distracted connected consumer. They also signal a commitment of resources to providing free entertainment and educational value to the Facebook crowd that have fun or take a break from their boredom by hopping on and off Pages.

Facebook gives companies the freedom to choose which two or three of their Extra Tabs will be shown on the Front Page and for which visitors will have to click and scroll. These choices are of paramount importance to the orchestration of Reputation forming experiences as they signal marketing objectives and set the tone and scope of interaction. Eight companies (35%), for instance, present 'Deals' or/and 'Contests' among their three first Tabs (always after 'Photos') to engage Fans and prompt them to immediate action. Thus they answer the fundamental relationship question: what's in it for me?

The monologue attitude is adopted by 19 companies (that is 83% of the sample) who use this prime real estate (Top Tabs) to provide mostly textual information about their business. Many are didactic in tone and static (such as rules of engagement).

Reputation co-creation through play and learn is utilised to varying degrees by 14 companies (60%) who have customised applications that range from pictures with text to games and viral promos. The co-creation potential is dependent on the technology behind the applications and reflects both communication objectives and the corporations' degree of adaptation to an environment that is characterised by attention-grabbing devices aimed at a low attention span audience.

Microsoft, for instance, promotes a new product in an Tab, by allowing users to Like and Comment on its text, video and photos, but, most importantly, by strongly encouraging Fans to Share the content, not only with other Fans but to anyone they might think is worried about their phone's speed (notice the Share button on the top right of **Error! Reference source not found.**).

Think your phone is fast? Share

We bet people that Windows Phone is simply faster at the everyday stuff they do on their smartphones.

Windows Phone Challenge: Finding a ma



What do you think?

169 comments Add a comment

Phil Bell
windows phone isn't smart, it genius.
Reply · 150 · Like · Follow Post · March 1 at 10:48pm

Saikat Ghosh · Subscribe · CCIC at Emdee
Digitronics Pvt. Ltd. · 103 subscribers
ya...I support !!!
Reply · Like · June 23 at 10:03am

Rick Cruise · Subscribe · National Institute of Information Technology (NIIT)
lucky x_X
Reply · Like · June 27 at 5:55pm

Conor Raypholtz · Top Commenter · Indiana State University
apples and robots may be smart but a window is genius.
Reply · Like · August 26 at 6:23pm

View 3 more

André Scheffler · Junior IT Engineer at Atos
Exactly that is what I like most about WP: it does the daily stuff smooth & fast - without any additional apps.
Reply · 44 · Like · Follow Post · March 1 at 11:54pm

View 167 more

Facebook social plugin

Exhibit 8: Microsoft's Extra Tab, promoting a product and enticing Fans to provide feedback to the marketing and production department, play, learn and teach their friends

Bright lettering, banners the colour of speed and passion in the West and good fortune in the East (the third person Commenting verbalizes the red-luck connection and highlights it with a simple visual “lucky x_X”), asking “What do you think?”, a two minute long video promoting a challenge and photos showing the use of the product have generated 169 comments, one of which has received 150 Likes. It is notable also, that because the video is not posted in the Videos Feature but has been uploaded as an application it shows the professional affiliation of the person that is Posting a Comment, thus adding an extra layer of credibility (see the IT affiliations in the three out of the four Comments). In the fourth Comment, for example, Conor Raypholtz expands on the first Comment by Phill Bell, turning the eagerness of a simple phrase “windows phone isn’t smart, it (*sic*) genius” into an enthusiastic quip “apples and robots maybe smart but a windows is a genius” that not only enhances the original comment (which has already been Liked by 150 people, so it must be true, right?) but also bashes the main competitors (something that Microsoft would never be able to even insinuate). The sober portrait of the person that Posted the Comment (a young man, with a university affiliation, so he must know a thing or two about SmartPhones, right?) leaving the sunset of conventional phones behind him adds spark to authority. The company showcases evidence of Performative legitimation and educates consumers on product usage; the Fans endorse it, add personal significations and provide humorous comparisons with competitor in a Corporate Reputation co-creation interplay.

A Note on Limitations and Future Directions

The exploratory work presented here is like a Polaroid snapshot of a Formula 1 race: by the time it fully develops nothing looks like it did when the shutter closed on the action. Facebook technologies come and go, Pages change by the second (that is why we stress the

dates of data collection) so replication is impossible. Nevertheless, we hope the snapshot has provided some insights into how the most reputable companies in the world, vast organisations with access to unparalleled marketing and communications resources, have exploited (and mostly missed) the opportunities that Facebook Fan Pages Features present them with. Their actions (and oversights) have been discussed from the perspective of their ability to provide an exciting and fulfilling experience for the other members of the Facebook community in order to orchestrate the co-creation of meanings that foster admiration and help build and sustain their desired Corporate Reputations.

For this first systematic look we purposefully used the simplest possible methods and analytical tools as the objective was to reflect on the perspective of the Facebook user. Our next steps in the understanding of the evolution and implications of this novel reality will focus on the Features we eschewed in this analysis.

We believe that social media are not a hybrid element of the promotion mix (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), not anymore. They are a unique marketing tool and as such we propose they should be studied. So, the next phase of our research involves an analysis of Photo Albums and Milestones using the tools of visual anthropology in order to explain their effect on consumer-held conceptualisations of the brand and their function as an element of the Promotion & Education strategy of the marketing mix.

Furthermore, value co-creation needs to be analysed on the level of consumer engagement and the motivation behind it. Issues in need of in-depth study are whether people Like in order to gain access to promotions, to express loyalty, because they are intrigued by marketing communications or as part of their social identity construction through conspicuous membership of aspirational brand communities.

Final Thoughts

The Facebook Fan Page has changed marketing communications beyond recognition. It is not the nature and function of the medium that created a novel reality. SMS advertising, for example, is a new technology-driven medium but the logic of the communication between business and consumer is strictly within the “old paradigm” in which “the traditional elements of the promotion mix (...) were the tools through which control was asserted” (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 364).

In the world of Facebook, our data analysis has demonstrated, marketing communications are not about controlling the content and transmission of messages but about engaging in meaningful (and, why not, the occasional silly) conversation. “The new Web conversations are remarkably sensitive to the empty pomposity that has served marketing so well” (Searls & Weinberger, 2001). It is consumers that control the time and place of their interactions with corporations or with each other. They also control the conversation flow to their personal networks and networks of networks, *ad infinitum*, thus making it impossible – or for companies that are willing to invest in sophisticated analytics, expensive - to follow, let alone manage those reputation building (or demolishing) streams of information interspersed with emotion.

Gone are also the days of containing consumer outrage through service recovery, suing for libel and getting activists hanging from factory chimneys arrested. There is no way, so far, for companies to completely eliminate negative Comments that are harmful to their reputation. Once Posted a Comment is seen by all the Friends of the person that wrote it so it can “spread like wildfire” as did the legendary teenage party invitation which ended in thousands of revellers descending on a quiet Dutch town (Facebook party invite sparks

riot in Haren, Netherlands, 2012). By the time the corporation's Facebook team delete it the damage is done.

Having said that, Social Media-based collective identities that “seek to transform the ideology and culture of consumerism” (Kozinets & Handelman, 2004, p. 691) are also a brilliant opportunity to get to know your Friends and foes intimately. Alongside their Likes, Shares and Comments users leave their digital life stories, an invaluable database of socio-demographics, opinions, needs, desires, values, grievances and hates.

Through Facebook, corporations enter the consumer's social milieu and take steps towards reaching the holy grails of branding: a human substance which helps the company “insinuate itself into the lives of consumers in profound ways” (Hearn, 2008, p. 214). Instead of launching attacks on passive audiences corporations now chat and play with active community members. Instead of yelling to be heard over the advertising clatter they now need to listen carefully in order to subtly orchestrate consumer experiences people feel are worth sharing. With sensitivity, respect and painstaking attention to minute detail they can break through consumer boredom. “Corporate messaging is pathetic. It's not funny. It's not interesting. It does not know who we are or care” (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011, p. 267). People on Facebook need proof that corporations know who they are and care to know more. They allow companies into their private space if they prove to be interesting, fun, and amazing enough to attract their Likes and to Share, that is to market the companies' offerings to one another.

Our findings show that companies can control five out of the six points of Balmer's (2006) star of Corporate Marketing using the Features of their Page: they can present the Facebook community with the words and images they think best portray their character

(corporate identity), express what they say they are (corporate communication), show off not only how many Likes they attract but also the pictures of those they seek to serve (marketing and stakeholder management), build and give evidence of upholding the covenant (corporate brand management) and share the traditional sanitised or - if they have really understood the medium - their honest feeling of who they are and what the corporate culture is (organisational identity). What they cannot control is their conceptualisations (corporate reputation). The “what we are seen to be” (Balmer & Greyser, 2006) will always depend on how they are seen to behave as members of the community.

Being a member of a community means occupying a space in other members’ hearts. A monologue, no matter how inspired, cannot open people’s hearts. It is conversations that build relationships, confirm evaluations of social and performative legitimation, and make people want to share the achievements of a company they have as a Friend with their friends through Walls, tweets, emails, over a cup of coffee or during a shopping spree.

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