

Cyberspace 2012, Brno

Opinion Leadership 2.0: Identifying Characteristics of German Facebook Users

Dipl.-Kffr. Saskia Städtner
University of Technology, Ilmenau (Germany)
saskia.staedtner@tu-ilmenau.de

Dr. Daniel Schultheiss
University of Technology, Ilmenau (Germany)

Dipl.-Medienwiss. Alexander Bohn
University of Technology, Ilmenau (Germany)

Prof. Dr. Nicola Döring
University of Technology, Ilmenau (Germany)

Agenda

1. Relevance
2. Research Questions
3. Method
4. Results
5. Discussion and Overview

1. Relevance

Relevance

- weekly usage of social networking sites up to several hours

Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, 2010

- Facebook ranks as one of the most important online social networks.
- comScore, 2012
- currently about 25 million active Facebook users in Germany
- Increase of 5,8% since the last six months

allfacebook.de, 2012

Relevance

- weekly usage of social networking sites up to several hours

Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, 2010

- Facebook ranks as one of the most important online social networks.
- comScore, 2012
- currently about 25 million active Facebook users in Germany
- Increase of 5,8% since the last six months

allfacebook.de, 2012

Two-Step-Flow of Communication

- Study "The People's Choice" (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, 1944) as pioneer in the research of interpersonal communication
- opinion leaders take information from the mass media and pass relevant parts to less interested people
- opinion leaders as multipliers

Opinion Leaders

- assume the role of trendsetters
- important for advertisers
- characteristics of offline opinion leaders: sociability, social activity and high accessibility, knowledgability, higher information-seeking
- (e.g. Eurich C, 1977; Katz E & Lazarsfeld P, 1962; Reynolds FD & Darden WR, 1971; Kingdon JW, 1970; Montgomery DB & Silk AJ, 1971)

Opinion Leaders on Facebook

But which characteristics identify opinion leaders on Facebook?

2. Research Questions

Research Questions

- How far there are differences in information-seeking between high, medium and low opinion leaders on Facebook?
- Are there differences in gender between high, medium and low opinion leaders regarding information-seeking?

3. Method

Method (1)

- field study on German Facebook users
- online questionnaire
- ad-hoc sample of $N = 463$
- \bar{X} age 27.65 (SD = 5.909; min.=15, max.=59)
- 77% female, 23% male

Method (2)

Opinion-Leadership-Scale

Items of the Opinion-Leadership Scale	Factor 1
1. I like introducing new brands and products to my friends.	0,78
2. I like helping people by providing them with information about many kinds of products.	0,82
3. People ask me for information about products, places to shop or sales.	0,83
4. If someone asked where to get the best buy on several types of products, I could tell them where to shop.	0,79
5. My friends think of me as a good source of information when it comes to new products or sales.	0,88
6. I know well about new products.	0,88
7. I know well about new sales.	0,84
8. I know well about new offerings shops/internet shops.	0,77
9. I like passing my knowledge about products to other people.	0,75
10. Regarding to a special product I feel as an expert.	0,66

Method of Extraction: principal component analysis

Declared total variance: 62,46%; n = 463 ; CA = 0,94; KMO-coefficient: 0,94; Items 1-5: Market Maven Scale, Items 6-10: self-constructed

Method (3)

- Participants could reach 50 points
- Groups of opinion leadership:
 - low (10-23): n=98
 - Medium (24-36): n=240
 - High (37-50): n=117

5. Results

Differences in information-seeking

	High (N=117)	Medium (N=240)	Low (N=98)
Entertainment	4.50 (1.80)	3.92 (1.83)	3.28 (1.90)
Internet	4.39 (1.94)	3.44 (1.92)	2.74 (1.88)
Media (without Internet)	4.21 (1.86)	3.59 (1.83)	2.64 (1.82)
Culture	3.90 (1.78)	3.22 (1.74)	2.82 (1.81)
Politics	3.74 (2.01)	3.30 (2.03)	2.87 (2.05)
Science	3.50 (1.77)	2.93 (1.74)	2.50 (1.82)
Fashion	3.54 (1.84)	2.55 (1.58)	2.27 (1.60)
Engineering	3.33 (1.95)	2.66 (1.71)	2.10 (1.50)
Economics and finance	3.37 (1.88)	2.75 (1.75)	2.08 (1.65)

Means are all significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Differences and (split) gender

	High (N=117)	Medium (N=240)	Low (N=98)
Index of information-seeking	44.38 (16.73)	36.89 (15.56)	29.96 (15.89)
<i>female</i>	40.52 (17.08)	33.91 (15.12)	28.99 (15.75)
<i>male</i>	55.57 (8.96)	46.47 (12.97)	35.33 (16.14)

Means (and standard deviations) of the information-seeking-index for the three groups of opinion leaders

Index of information-seeking: 0-84;
Means are significant at the $p < .001$ level.

6. Discussion

Limitations

- based on self-assessments of opinion leadership
- ad-hoc sample: no generalisation
- more female participants could skew the data

Discussion

- OL useful to initiate viral marketing
(→ word-of-mouth)
- OL in our study as a good target for information which is not based on special products
- small component of whole results

Thank you for your
attention!

