

# Keller Center Research Report

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# Encouraging eWOM on Social Media

Taemin Kim, PhD, Hyejin Kim, PhD, and Yunhwan Kim, PhD

The average American spends approximately 50 minutes a day on Facebook.<sup>1</sup> Facebook is currently the number one social networking platform along with Twitter and Instagram, and has also played a key role in real-estate firms' social media marketing. Roughly 50 million



businesses have a Facebook profile, and users share more than 2.5 billion comments a month on those business profiles.<sup>2</sup>

Consumers' engagement and exchanges with these businesses on social media is a significant marketing goal, and real estate agencies should thus consider electronic word-of-mouth an important success factor in their marketing.

Facebook, for example, is one of the most important social media services to promote electronic word-of-mouth.

## About our Study

Our study explores how businesses' Facebook posts, both informational and emotional, affect customers' electronic word-of-mouth. Informational posts emphasize facts about a product providing a consumer with functional and practical information. Research suggests these posts are more likely to be shared as they distinguish the sharer as knowledgeable and clever. On the other hand, emotional posts focus on the emotional benefits and needs of consumers and are also more likely to be shared, as the post increases social connection with others. For the purpose of this study we will consider only positive emotional content as we narrowed our research to positive endorsement of brands.

Our findings suggest that the use of informational multimedia contents, such as photo and video, as well as a brand's name, and a hashtag (i.e., "#"), work well to promote informational content. Emotional content, including subjective wording or social wording, also increases consumers' electronic word-of-mouth behaviors regarding the brand posts.

## Electronic Word-of-Mouth

Revised from the definition of WOM (word-of-mouth), "eWOM" refers to consumers' communication about a product or business with other Internet users. The Internet has empowered customers to effortlessly connect and communicate with one another as well as with businesses on corporate blogs and social pages. Included in eWOM are many types of customer

activities on the Internet, such as product endorsements on e-commerce websites and brand assessments posted on blogs. We define eWOM as consumers' communication and sharing about a business, product, or brand with others on the Internet or social media.

When consumers *like* brand posts and leave positive comments on the brand posts on Facebook, those responses are known as eWOM behaviors. Marketing on Facebook receives quite a bit of attention from marketers and advertisers because consumers can easily contribute to eWOM with the click of a button. "Liking" posts is nearly identical to traditional WOM behavior in the marketplace. When Facebook users *like* brand posts, the liked posts instantly appear on the both the users' and their friends' feeds. Friends of friends can then see the liked posts, which is similar to the process of WOM because the *like* acts as an endorsement.

## Real Estate Implications

The results of our study suggest consumers will more likely conduct eWOM behaviors (likes and comments) on Facebook if brand posts use both informational and emotional elements.

### *Informational Brand Posts*

Real estate agents and brokers should incorporate multimedia content, such as photos, videos, or graphics, which can make a shared status or post more easily understood as compared with plain text. Multimedia content makes posts more likely to be *liked* and positively mentioned and, as a result, more likely to go viral. Consider also including entertaining photos and videos, which have proven to generate eWOM. Include your firm's brand name in a post. Brand names can increase viewers' memory of the content and in turn may increase viewers' eWOM behavior. Additionally, brand names also play a role in expressing self-identity, and generally self-representation tends to encourage the user's eWOM behavior on social media. Use a hashtag to express informational value in social media. Clients will recognize a post using a hashtag as helpful and useful information. However, URL links and links to questions in informational messages have a negative impact on likes.

### *Emotional Brand Posts*

The degree of subjectivity of a post is positively related to the number of likes and positive comments. A subjective argument is an argument or announcement that contains a real estate agent's opinion, feeling, sentiment, or assessment, in contrast to an objective argument that includes facts and evidence. A subjective argument expresses a state or emotions. Include social words, what people are interested in, what they pay attention to, and how they view the world in conversational posts. If a real estate agent uses the first-person plural pronouns "we", "us", and "our," which often represents group identity, consumers will feel social ties and relationships with the firm. Social words often signal warmth, sincerity, and positive emotions for the business and encourage eWOM behaviors. However, highly emotional posts tend to suppress the number of comments.

### *Using Caution*

Note, real estate firms should implement such factors carefully. Depending on the purpose of the post, beware of including a link or strong positive emotional content. Including a URL link in a brand post or posting intense positive posts has proven to decrease the number of likes and positive comments from consumers.

### **Conclusion**

The primary takeaway from this study is not to show that one Facebook posting strategy is superior or more effective. Instead, the results can serve as guidelines on how to incorporate informational and emotional elements in a real estate firm's Facebook posts in order to effectively stimulate customers' eWOM behaviors. Consumers now, like never before, are just within a firm's reach. Facebook will be one of the most important tools a real estate firm can use to promote their brand and listings.

### **Recommended Reading**

Kim, Taemin, Hyejin Kim, and Yunhwan Kim (2019), "How do Brands' Facebook Posts Induce Consumers' e-Word-of-Mouth Behavior? Informational Versus Emotional Message Strategy: A Computational Analysis," *Journal of Advertising Research*, December, 403-413.

### **References**

1. Stewart, James B. (2016), "Facebook Has 50 Minutes of Your Time Each Day. It Wants More," *The New York Times*, Retrieved November 2, 2017, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/06/business/facebook-bends-the-rules-of-audience-engagement-to-its-advantage.html>
2. Chaykowski, Kathleen (2015), "Number of Facebook Business Pages Climbs to 50 Million with New Messaging Tools," *Forbes*, Retrieved November 11, 2017, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kathleenchaykowski/2015/12/08/facebook-business-pages-climb-to-50-million-with-new-messaging-tools/#380c5f1d6991>

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