

Paradoxes and strategies of social media consumption assignment



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Paradoxes and strategies of social media consumption among adolescents
Downloaded by Tides University At 11:12 April 2015 (P.T.) Ornate H; been Barcaroles and Carols Alberta Barras Rossi Ornate H; been Barcaroles and Carols Alberta Barras Rossi are both based at Management School, Federal university of ROI Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, Brazil. Abstract purpose -
The purpose of this paper is to study paradoxes and strategies of social media consumption among adolescents.

Young people belonging to Generation Y have enthusiastically embraced social media as a means of achieving connectedness and managing social relationships. However, there is still a limited understanding of how adolescents actually differentiate between the media they use and of the effects of social media on their lives. This study differs from previous work by proceeding from the assumption that social media present a number of technological paradoxes and identifying what behavioral strategies they develop to derive the greatest possible benefit from, and cope with the ambivalent outcomes of, social media consumption.

Design/methodology/approach - An exploratory study design was chosen, combining the use of focus groups and in-depth interviews with 50 Brazilian adolescents aged between 13 and 17 years. Topics of discussion were designed to cover a range of social media relevant to young people. Findings

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– The authors propose a conceptual model of social media consumption by young people and identify its positive and negative outcomes and the behavioral strategies of media selection and differentiation used to cope with them.

These behaviors enable adolescents to derive maximum benefit from social media while minimizing the effort required to use them. Originality/ value – This research contributes to marketing theory and practice by assessing the adolescent perspective of social media consumption and offering an integrated model of outcomes and behavioral strategies which they use. This model provides insights relevant to the planning of marketing communications directed towards young people. Key. Rods Adolescents, Generation Y, Social media, Media use, Paradoxes of technology, Social media effects Paper type Research paper Introduction Studies on the importance of social media had been widespread throughout the sass, principally in the fields of communication and communication genealogy (Barker, 2009; Bat, 2008; Boyd, 2008; Octet et al. , 2002). However, more recently, concern has been raised over the impacts of these media on consumption habits and their potential use in the development of communication and marketing strategies (MIS, 2010, 2012).

A particular area of interest in the study of these media has been their impact on the lives of consumers – in particular, those belonging to Generation Y (or Millennial). Young people today represent the first generation born since the advent of the Internet, and the first to grow up in an era of global interactivity (Bat, 008; McMillan and Morrison, 2006).

Moreover, they have enthusiastically embraced the Internet and social media
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as a means of achieving connectedness and managing relationships with friends and acquaintances (Boyd, 2008; Huntley and Shells, 2010).

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DOI 10. 1108/YES-10-2013-00408 However, while the emergence of this generation creates a wealth of opportunities for marketing through social media, the development of relevant strategies has been hindered by an often incorrect understanding of how young people really adopt and use social media. VOLVO. 15 NO. 2014, up. 275-295, O Emerald Group Publishing Limited, SINS 1747-3616 YOUNG CONSUMERS PAGE 275 media.

Along with the widespread image of the “hypertension” adolescent, results showing positive consequences of social media consumption are as common as those indicating negative ones (Bassoon et al. , 2011; Helene et al. , 2006; Huntley and Shells, 2010; Milan et al. , 2009). These incongruous results may arise, at least in part, from the exclusively adult and frequently paternalistic view of numerous consumer studies, which characterize adolescents as mere “developing people” and as passive subjects of consumerism and marketing strategies (Gregory-Thomas, 2007; Quart, 2003; Scorch, 2004).

Indeed, some academics have pointed out a notable lack of accounts from adolescents themselves about their own consumption habits (Cody, 2012; Cook, 2008; Mason et al. 2011). Understanding how adolescents choose to adopt or abandon social media, and how they decide how to use each one according to their personal background, would be of great relevance to marketing strategies, given that the structural features of social media, while

certainly important, are not the only factor determining whether young people accept and engage with them Online.

In fact, a sound knowledge of adolescent behavioral strategies in the consumption of social media should be the starting point for businesses planning marketing initiatives. Downloaded by Tides University At 11:12 April 2015 (APT) In the hope of shedding some light on this issue, this paper argues that young people are people in their own right and play an active role in their own consumption habits (Bat, 2008).

Moreover, the study proceeds from the view that social media do not have exclusively positive or negative consequences, but actually reflect paradoxes of technological products (Mimic and Fourier, 1998). Taking these assumptions into consideration, we differ from previous work by identifying, from the perspective of the adolescents, what behavioral strategies they develop to derive the greatest possible benefit from, and cope with the ambivalent outcomes of, social media consumption.

This article begins by reviewing the literature on the use of social media by adolescents. We then detail the methodology of the study, which involved the use of focus groups and in-depth interviews with 50 Brazilian adolescents aged between 13 and 17 years. We go on to propose a conceptual model of social media consumption by young people and identify TTS positive and negative outcomes as well as the behavioral strategies of media selection and differentiation used to cope with them.

Finally, we discuss what implications young people's approach to social media has for the planning of marketing strategies aimed at them. Overall, <https://assignbuster.com/paradoxes-and-strategies-of-social-media-consumption-assignment/>

this study contributes to marketing theory and practice by offering an adolescent perspective and providing insights relevant to the planning of marketing Background literature Social media Kaplan and Heinlein (2010) define “ social media” as Internet-based applications that use the Web 2. 0 platform and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Hansen et al. 2011), however, use the term somewhat more broadly to refer to a set of online tools that support social interaction, including services such as email, blogs, microblogging, social networking sites (SNS), and online multilayer games. Many of these tools are generally well-integrated and accessible through various digital technologies, such as phones, laptops, tablets and even videotapes (Hendricks et al. , 2011). Because the limits between one kind of social media and another are often blurred, they may be also seen as a “ multimedia” (Timescale et al. , 2010, p. 34) or a “ polymeric” (Mindanao and Miller, 2013, p. 170). For this reason, some authors prefer to study them together or in groups (Heinlein, 2011; Killian et al. , 2012; Mindanao and Miller, 2013). This paper adopts the same approach, treating social media more as an integrated group of media with different capabilities than as a collection of distinct technologies, while, at the same time, acknowledging the different ways they are used and the different impact which each one has according to its importance among adolescent users. PAGE 276 YOUNG CONSUMERS VOLVO. 15 NO. 2014 Adolescents’ motivations and activities in social media Downloaded by Tides University At 11:12 April 2015 (APT) Adolescence is a life phase characterized by a growing focus on identity development and socialization (Livingston, 2007). Because adolescents identify strongly with each other and tend to associate into groups, the literature commonly speaks of a youth

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subculture (Hiroshima and Solomon, 1993). However, a phenomenon which may be particular to young members of Generation Y is their tendency to conduct social relations using the Internet and social media.

As Rickrack and Solomon (2007, p. 18) point out, “ the place where these youth connect – their touchstone -?? has morphed from yesterday’s coffeehouse to today’s website. ” In this respect, Huntley and Shells (2010) and Killing et al. (2012) suggest that digital media offer teenagers social functions, such as interaction and keeping in touch with peers. McMillan and Morrison (2006) argue that the experience in virtual communities is firmly rooted in the real world and that online social life reflects offline relationships in various ways.

SONS, for example, allow young people to stay in touch with their friends even when they are not able to gather in unmediated situations (Boyd, 2008). Moreover, they provide a means for the teenager to relate to other social groups, seek out people with whom he or she most identifies and undertake identity experiments (Barker, 2009; Tossup and Lacunae, 2009; Vulnerable et al. , 2005). The colonization in media use, especially in multilayer games, may also be an important source of entertainment for young people (Frosting-Hendrickson, 2009; Janis and Martens, 2005).

Currently, several types of social media are widely available to teenagers via cell phones and other mobile media (Tufted and Rasmussen, 2010).

Discussing these devices, Whisker (2011) suggests that cell phones are also important mechanisms by which young people connect with their parents and improve their self-esteem. Grant and Donahue (2007) indicate that they

have become the constant companions of teenagers, serving as a convenient form of entertainment and a way to redefine social space.

It is common for teenagers to use many forms of media simultaneously – for example, they may do their homework with the TV on while talking or text messaging on their cell phone, and checking their Facebook or MySpace pages, all at the same time. Basted et al. (2010) argue that young people are more prone to multitasking than other age groups because, among other reasons, it provides a heightened sense of control over media consumption and also an experience of greater assimilation within their social network.

Consequences of social media consumption for adolescents While many studies have investigated the adolescents' motivations for social media consumption, the impact of these media on the welfare of adolescents has remained a matter of debate. For some researchers, the Internet and social media contribute towards developing and maintaining social legislations, allowing adolescents to meet new people, stay connected with their families and maintain geographically dispersed social networks (Barker, 2009; Franken, 2002; Whisker, 2011).

According to Babcock et al. (2011) online communication can complement offline relationships and, thus, contribute to friendships among young people. Moreover, as computer-mediated communication offers some anonymity, it allows people to feel less inhibited and express themselves in ways that they would not feel comfortable doing in person, due to shyness, appearance and/or sexuality (Seller, 2004; Tossup and Lacunae, 2009). This “online distribution effect” (Seller, 2004) is related to the reduction of social

presence in online communication, i. . The level of sensory contact that can be achieved between people through a given communication medium (Short et al. , 1976). Given that adolescents are often very concerned by the way they are seen by others (Taut and Elliott, 2001), the ability to control details of their self-presentation online is particularly important for them. However, for Barge and McKenna (2004), new media are contributing to the individualizing of leisure time and to a reduction in time spent in offline legislations with VOLVO. 15 NO. 2014 YOUNG CONSUMERS PAGE 277 friends and family members. Helene et al. (2006) also argue that relationships developed online are more superficial than offline relationships. Assuming this to be true, the reduced quality of online relationships would have particularly serious implications for young people who use the Internet more intensively (Milan et al. , 2009). According to Beckmann et al. (2005), adolescents are also particularly vulnerable due to their brain's plasticity and proneness to risky and impulsive behaviors.

Rebind et al. (2010), Sun et al. 2008), Www and Change (2007) call attention to an increased risk of addiction associated to some social media, while Acquits and Gross (2006) warn that there is frequently a conflict between young people's desire to protect their privacy and their actual behavior on SONS. Downloaded by Tides University At 11 12 April 2015 (APT) In summary, there are no simple clear-cut conclusions about the impact of social media on social relations and adolescents' welfare.

Corroborating this view, a recent survey of Internet specialists conducted by the pew Research Center revealed that opinion is more or less equally divided on the question f whether hypersensitivity will have more positive or <https://assignbuster.com/paradoxes-and-strategies-of-social-media-consumption-assignment/>

more negative consequences for future generations (Anderson and Rainier, 2012). Rather, it is more plausible to say that they harbor tensions between simultaneous and opposing consequences, reflecting the paradoxes of technological products (Mimic and Fourier, 1998).

However, there is a significant dearth of both empirical and theoretical accounts of adolescents' specific practices in attempting to mediate the intricacies of their lived experiences and social contexts (Cody, 2012; Cook, 2008). Rather than focusing on adolescents as rotor of study in their own right, many studies of youth consumption are driven by policy efforts rooted in an adult-driven paternalistic paradigm, regarding young people as fragile and vulnerable to the Machiavellian strategies and invasions Of consumerism (Gregory-Thomas, 2007; Quart, 2003; Scorch, 2004).

As a result, studies of this type are still all too often devoid of young people's own voices (Cook, 2008; Mason et al. , 201 1). In this sense, a more youth-focused perspective should be a way of providing valuable insights for understanding teen media consumption and risk negotiation. According to Bat (2008), adolescents do not simply submit to media-based marketing strategies; instead, they are active participants and producers of their cultural consumption processes.

Accordingly, while social media may not automatically bring about changes to social relations among young people, it is nevertheless possible that the coping strategies adolescents apply to them may determine what their effects will be. Therefore, instigated by the issues discussed, this research proposed was guided by the following questions: RSI . Assuming that social

media reflect paradoxes of technology what are the consequences (both positive and negative) of its mediation of adolescents' social relationships?

ARQ. What behavioral strategies do young people develop to enjoy the benefits from, and cope with the problems of, social media consumption?

ARQ. What are the possible implications of the way in which young people use social media for the planning of marketing strategies? Method Given the scant existing research approaching their activities in social media from the perspective of adolescents themselves, we chose an exploratory study design, combining TTYL qualitative techniques: focus groups and in-depth interviews.

The purpose of this combination was to take advantage of the greater breadth provided by focus groups and the greater depth of one-to-one interviews (Morgan, 1997). Furthermore, it allowed us to compare the findings obtained from each source to assess their validity. Focus groups allow the researcher to understand the experiences of consumers in their own terms, as well as directly exhibiting the similarities and differences between the opinions and experiences of the participants (Morgan, 1997).

The use of focus groups is PAGE 278 YOUNG CONSUMERS also well suited for the study of adolescents, as many of them feel more comfortable and give more actionable answers when in the company of people their own age (Cello, 1996). The research project was presented to the staff of a high school in a major city in southern Brazil, chosen out of convenience because the researchers had access through personal contacts. Brazil has the seventh largest online population in the world (45. Million from work or

home), and one of the most socially engaged on the Web (96.0 per cent of users on social networking sites) (commerce, 2013). Internet use in the country has been growing at high rates (16 per cent in 2012), largely due to the recent integration of residential broadband access beyond the large cities (cornered, 2013). By involving the teachers of the high school in the study, we were able to organize a group of students with wide experience of Internet use and social media.

Parents received written information about the study and were asked to give informed consent prior to the focus groups. All participants were assured of the anonymity of their replies from the outset. In total, a convenience sample of 30 adolescents aged between 14 and 17 years (17 girls and 13 boys) was obtained in this manner. Although there is no precise benefiting of age at which a person is considered adolescent, our sampling process followed approximately the range used by Chaplin and John (2005), who consider people aged between 13 and 18 years to be adolescents.

All participants of focus groups reported possessing cell phones and computers at home, besides being active users of SNS (such as Facebook and Twitter) and instant messengers (such as Windows Live Messenger and Skype) – see Appendix. The participants were divided according to school grade and gender into four focus groups to produce a more comfortable atmosphere for the exchange of information. Dividing by grade may be considered more appropriate than by age because grade is a better discriminator of lifestyle (Chaplin and John, 2005; Cello, 1996).

For example, a 14-year-old in high school will bring different experiences to a group than a 14-year-old in eighth grade. The focus group meetings were conducted in a room designed for the purpose at the adolescents' own school and lasted an average of 90 minutes. Conducting a focus group with teenagers requires following some rules to elicit the most productive discussion (Cello, 1996). We reassured the respondents that they did not need to raise their hands or be concerned about using appropriate language.

Moreover, the moderator's role was limited to stimulating and guiding discussion. However, it was necessary periodically to call on some participants who were hesitant to speak up, asking them to contribute and reinforcing their productive comments. Discussion in the focus groups was guided by a semi-structured script designed to stimulate and catalyze the adolescents' answers on the topics of interest (Table I). Topics were designed to cover a range of social media relevant to young people, not simply focus on a single technology.

This approach was adopted on the assumption that, given the widespread accessibility of various forms of social media among young people, it would be more useful for the purposes of the study to explore the distinctions and associations which young users make between such media for their own ends, rather than being confined by existing categorization in the literature which classifies different media according to their technological features. In this sense, this approach relates to the understanding of "polymeric" of Mindanao and Miller (2013). As mentioned, the research also included in-depth interviews.