

Where Do Social Media Conversations Start?

Understanding the Value of Published Media Brands in Igniting Social Conversations

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INTRODUCTION

In his 2013 PDRF paper entitled “Community Explorer: Unlocking The Power of Community-Oriented Marketing”, David Shiffman asserted:

In today’s socially connected world, success is contingent upon how well publishers, and all content providers generate earned media impressions and whether they are able to become part of the consumer conversation. Consumers want content they can talk about and share with others...and marketers are looking for media partners who can help infuse their brands into the social world.

Shiffman’s paper described the evolving “connected” world and the implications for marketing. This paper took a unique approach to describe how to locate and understand communities formed by consumers and to leverage these groupings for the purposes of more effective marketing. Shiffman’s work included social media but was not limited to this platform of connection. Additionally, Shiffman’s paper listed both printed and digital representations of magazines and newspapers as “sources of information and inspiration for communities.”

While Shiffman’s work was based on in-depth interviews with both scientists and consumers, the work in this paper leverages the social imprint made by consumers on Twitter to isolate natural communities. What this research finds is, in fact, that communities form simply from the act of following and sharing between consumers within social media platforms such as Twitter and that published media brands have a significant role in this community building. Social media is a newer touch point that published media brands can utilize to connect with passionate consumers.

Shiffman’s discussion inspired the work in this paper. More specifically, the desire to understand better the role of published media brands in the social media sphere. This paper will begin by discussing some recent successes that Condé Nast and Meredith have had in igniting social conversation and consumer connection. The paper will then describe the social media analysis that was executed for the purposes of this work. We will describe the results of this analysis and explore possible business applications emanating from the insights gleaned. Moreover, we will reinforce the concept of communities and their importance as content spreaders and reflections of brand importance.

PUBLISHED MEDIA BRANDS AND SOCIAL MEDIA TODAY: SOME EXAMPLES

In February, 2015 Wired.com quickly reacted to the “viral phenomenon” of “what color is this dress”, which was a viral photo and meme that originated from a washed-out photograph of a dress posted on the social networking service Tumblr. It caused great dispute over whether the dress pictured was blue and black, or white and gold, and in the first week after the surfacing of the image alone, more than 10 million tweets mentioned the dress. Wired.com swiftly posted an article around the science of why no one agrees on the color of the dress and pushed it out via social channels within a day of the original post. It drew 15.4 million page views, most of which were generated within a couple of days of posting. 4.1 million of these page views came from social media sources.

In May 2015, Vanity Fair created a social conversation by introducing trans-gender celeb Caitlyn Jenner, formerly known as Bruce Jenner in Caitlyn Jenner: The Full Story. Premiering the new “her”—as Jenner referred to her emerging gender identity—was done with a photo spread, interview, and Vanity Fair cover shot by Annie Leibovitz, which was released by Jenner via Twitter. Delivering 11.4 million page views, 4.8 million which came from social channels, this story not only created a large following online, but also drove many new consumers to the magazine and, not surprisingly, much conversation in the offline world.

Another online and offline discussion was generated when The New Yorker released their alarming piece on the big earthquake expected to come to the Northwest in “The Really Big One”. Also pushed out via social channels, The Really Big One generated almost 7 million page views, half of which came via social.

Although not as cutting edge as the Conde Nast’s examples, Meredith magazines also regularly experience the extended community response driven by printed magazine content. For example, the July 2015 issue of Better Homes & Gardens featured

a mouthwatering visual of a tray of homemade Neapolitan ice cream bars. BHG's social media editors posted the cover on Facebook and within a few short weeks received over 1,000 comments about the recipe. Another favorite was the 'Owl Cake' which generated nearly 9,000 shares and a reach of over one million.

Not surprisingly, More magazine, the "smart, stylish guide for women of influence", has an extremely engaged and opinionated audience. More magazine's social editors regularly post empowering messages that get liked and shared among this affluent, professional audience. They speak out when they agree - meme: "I used to care what people thought about me, until I tried to pay bills with their opinions" - and disagree with what is featured on the content (reaction to Michelle Obama on the cover led to multiple comments from both sides of the aisle in this community).

In the past, the relationship between reader and magazine was limited to letters to the editor, but today with the opportunity for connection through social media, this relationship with the brand is growing and not limited to the readers of the printed magazine. In fact, with the decline of newsstand reach and sales in the U.S., many editors are seeing social media, not cover lines, as the primary tool to extend brand discoverability to a wider community of interested consumers.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH

In an effort to explore the real world interplay between published media brands and social media within a broad content category, Condé Nast, Meredith Corporation and GfK conducted a focused social media analysis looking at 12 lifestyle brands.¹ The questions driving this analysis:

- *Who are the people interested in lifestyle magazines?*
- *What else are they interested in?*
- *How do they segment in terms of common interests/communities?*
- *How influential are those segments for the overall network? And, how many people can be reached by the segments?*
- *How important are specific magazine titles for the different segments?*
- *What are the segments' affinities for other brands (potential advertisers)?*

To evaluate these questions, GfK SMI conducted a Twitter Affinity Network Analysis. The Twitter Affinity Network Analysis is based on the concept of co-citation networks, in this case co-following networks. GfK defines the distance of two nodes (Twitter users) in an original sample of users by the number of common friends (followees) they have (beyond the sample). This means that if users A and B both follow users X, Y and Z, then A and B are connected by an edge weighting 3, because they have 3 friends in common. A cluster analysis in this network delivers segments of users that have large overlaps in their friends. To avoid the over- or underweighting of edges due to user followed by all or only very few, GfK uses a process of normalization of relative edge weights and gradient thresholds for top users.

For the purposes of the analysis initiated for this paper, GfK collected all followers of 12 lifestyle magazine Twitter accounts, resulting in 9,829,339 unique users defined as the 'lifestyle magazines' Twitter audience'. Next, the friends (followees) of a random sample of 50,000 of this audience were collected delivering 6,664,878 unique friends. This data was used for the co-following network cluster analysis. Based on the results, GfK calculated the connections to the 12 magazines as well as a list of users followed by a cluster ranked by a specificity measure (users that are relevant in defining the specific nature of a cluster). The results based on the sample were extrapolated to reflect the actual numbers. At the same time, GfK calculated adjusted centrality metrics of the initial sample on a second network layer based on direct connections between the initial sample to show the average influence of users in the cluster within the overall network in terms of information diffusion.

FINDINGS

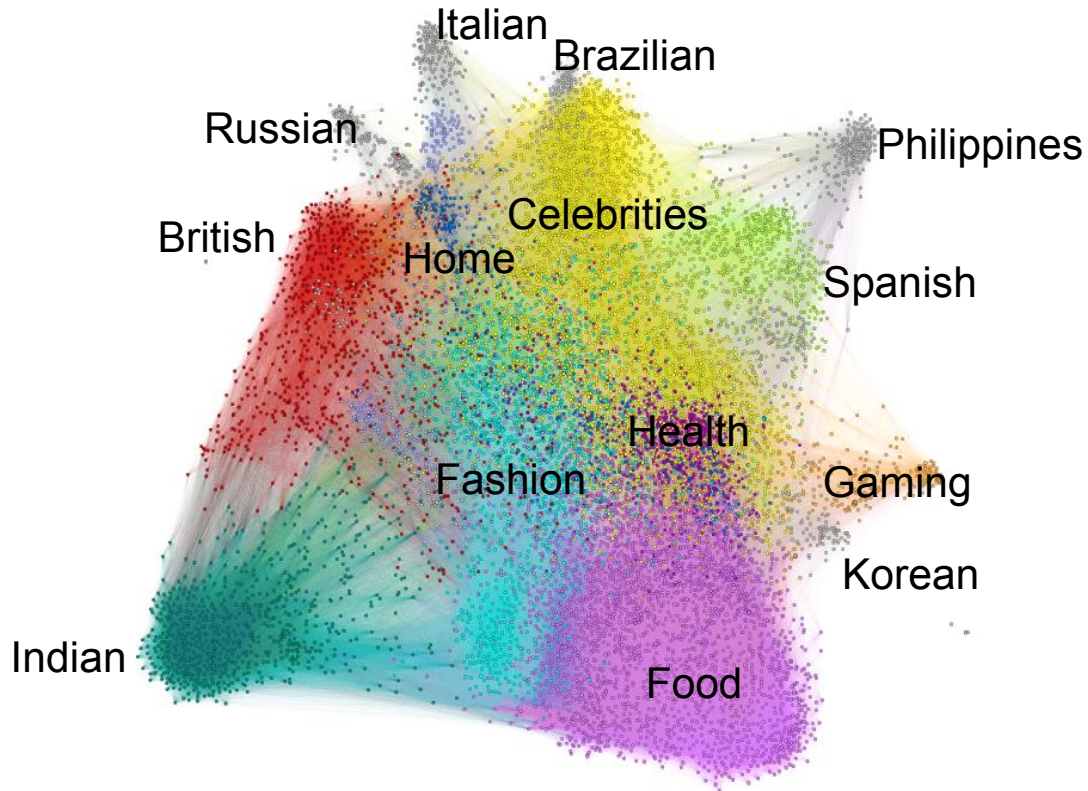
In parallel to the concept of communities introduced in David Shiffman's 2013 PDRF paper reference above, a visual representation or cluster map of the topical groupings is generated as one of the first outputs of the GfK analysis (see map below). The map arrays like Twitter groupings or communities. One will notice that the types of communities included in the map include topical communities – such as food, celebrities, fashion, etc. – and also geographically based communities.

In retrospect and for future analyses we will limit the analysis to US based activity only. While it is interesting to see the broad reach of content following and spread from a global perspective, this information may not be germane to publishers seeking to focus their attention on their specific market. What is interesting, however, is that the topical clusters are at the center of the cluster map while the geographically based clusters are on the periphery.

¹ The 12 lifestyle magazines followed for this analysis: Allure, Better Homes & Gardens, Bon Appetit, Family Circle, Glamour, Martha Stewart Living, Midwest Living, More, Self, Shape, Vanity Fair, and Vogue.

The cluster map represents a co-following network, in this case, of the lifestyle magazine Twitter audience. Within the map, the nodes represent users and the edges represent joint interests. The closer two nodes are to one another the more friends/interests that the users share in common. The clusters or communities are mutually exclusive.

Cluster Map Lifestyle Magazine Analysis



The following table shows the size of each of the topical communities in the map above as determined by the number of users falling within each individual community.

Community Size

Community Name	Number of Accounts
Food	400,863
Celebrities	349,116
Fashion	201,489
Health	92,637
Home	53,862
Gaming	51,747

In our analysis of the 12 Lifestyle magazines, we found that the largest of the user based communities cluster around food based interests followed in second by a community of users who seem to have a shared interest in Celebrities.

The output from social media analyses includes multiple different ways to look at interactions and connections between users. The tables that follow provide a taste for such output.

Relative Community Influence on Other Six Topical Communities

There were 6 topical communities that were clearly identified in this analysis: celebrities, home, health, fashion, gaming and food. The table below shows the average network influence by each individual community. The average network influence is a metric that demonstrates the influence of the given topical community on the other communities. For example, the fashion community, with a .57 average network score, is the community with the highest influence – that is, the greatest number of users outside of the Fashion community that be reached by the members of the Fashion community. Another way to describe this, those in the fashion community may have a broader set of interests that connects them with users from the other communities.

The community the analysis found with the lowest average network influence score is Gaming. First, it was a surprise to the authors of this paper that Gaming was even a community in this lifestyle title group analysis. It is no surprise, though, that this community's influence on the other communities would be low.

Topical Communities and Average Network Influence

Community Name	Average Network Influence
Food	0.10
Celebrities	0.19
Fashion	0.57
Health	0.07
Home	0.10
Gaming	0.00

Community Influencers

The following two tables delve deeper into two communities – Food and Fashion. There are two metrics that both of these tables introduce – followers by community and followers by network. The followers by community score is the percent of users who are part of the given community following a series of listed accounts. Whereas the followers by network score represents the percent of the overall lifestyle magazine audience network following a given user. Thirty-seven percent of the Food community follows the New York Times on Twitter, for example, while 28% of the lifestyle network of 12 titles that we analyzed follows this account.

What is interesting to note is the combination of account types that members of this food community follow –among others there are published media brands (examples: Bon Appetit, Saveur, and The New York Times) and celebrities both in and out of the food world (examples: Giada De Laurentiis, Mario Batali and Jimmy Fallon).

Top Accounts Followed By Food Community

Account Name	Followers By Community	Followers By Network
Bonappetit	32%	10%
Foodandwine	29%	10%
FoodNetwork	31%	12%
Epicurious	20%	5%
Nytfoodfeed	18%	5%
Bourdain	22%	7%
Zagat	23%	9%
Bflay	18%	5%
WholeFoods	24%	10%
SAVEURMAG	14%	4%
Nytfood	16%	4%
GDeLaurentiis	17%	5%
Rachaelray	19%	7%
TheOnion	24%	11%
Altonbrown	15%	5%
Emeril	14%	4%
GuyFieri	16%	5%
Mariobatali	15%	4%
Jimmyfallon	38%	28%
Latimesfood	14%	4%
Nytimes	37%	28%
Beardfoundation	12%	3%

The results for the Fashion community are similar to those shown for the Food community. We can see that members of this community are following a combination of accounts – published media and fashion brands being the two primary types of accounts. Maybe not surprising, Vogue seems to be the highest followed brand both by the Fashion community and the lifestyle network of titles overall – 87% and 72%, respectively.

Top Accounts Followed By Fashion Community

Account name	Followers By Community	Followers By Network
styledotcom	40%	11%
WhoWhatWear	42%	12%
wwd	39%	11%
DVF	29%	7%
DazedMagazine	27%	6%
proenzaschouler	24%	4%
marieclaire	42%	14%
alexa_chung	31%	8%
TheCut	34%	10%
Modelinia	25%	5%
YSL	46%	18%

BoF	35%	11%
RachelZoe	38%	13%
Refinery29	27%	6%
polyvore	23%	5%
TeenVogue	39%	15%
voguemagazine	87%	72%
tmagazine	27%	7%
mrjaymanuel	25%	6%
MichaelKors	41%	17%
cocorocho	29%	8%
ELLEmagazine	52%	27%
beautylish	25%	6%
katespadeny	24%	6%

Account Categories Influence on Communities

The following table illustrates the share of brand users by account categories (entertainment and sports accounts, fashion accounts, retail accounts, etc.) followed by each community. For example, not surprisingly 69% of brands followed by users in the Celebrities community are entertainment and sports brands. Across all 6 of our topical communities, we can see that the biggest proportion of brands followed fall into either the entertainment and sports or media and journalism set of brands. Published media brands would fall under the category of Media and Journalism. Interestingly, 42% of accounts followed by users in the Food category fall into the Media and Journalism category.

Product Brand Categories By Community

Account Categories	Celebrities	Fashion	Food	Gaming	Health	Home
Entertainment & Sports	69%	29%	35%	44%	40%	36%
Fashion	6%	29%	3%	5%	7%	11%
FMCG Food/Beverages	0%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%
Internet Services	3%	2%	5%	8%	4%	4%
Media & Journalism	19%	29%	42%	26%	38%	38%
Politics/NPOs/NGOs	1%	2%	5%	3%	3%	3%
Public Services / Administration	0%	1%	3%	2%	2%	1%
Retail	0%	5%	0%	1%	1%	2%
Technology & Automotive	0%	1%	0%	6%	0%	0%
Travel, Tourism, & Recreation	0%	1%	3%	1%	0%	2%
Other / Undefined	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%

And the last table shown below depicts the percent of users within a community that follow the magazine Twitter handle. For example, 83% of the users in the Food community follow Family Circle and 47% of the Fashion community follows Allure.

Magazine Community Followers

Cluster	Allure	BHG	Bon Appetit	Family Circle	Glamour	Midwest Living	More	Martha Stewart Living	SELF	Shape	Vanity Fair	Vogue
Celebrities	17%	6%	6%	5%	26%	7%	0%	4%	14%	9%	19%	22%
Fashion	47%	4%	3%	1%	24%	0%	6%	5%	10%	4%	19%	14%
Food	11%	26%	77%	83%	9%	64%	47%	37%	17%	10%	24%	16%
Gaming	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1%	4%
Health	6%	3%	2%	3%	5%	7%	31%	4%	49%	68%	2%	2%
Home	2%	54%	2%	2%	2%	14%	6%	41%	1%	0%	4%	2%

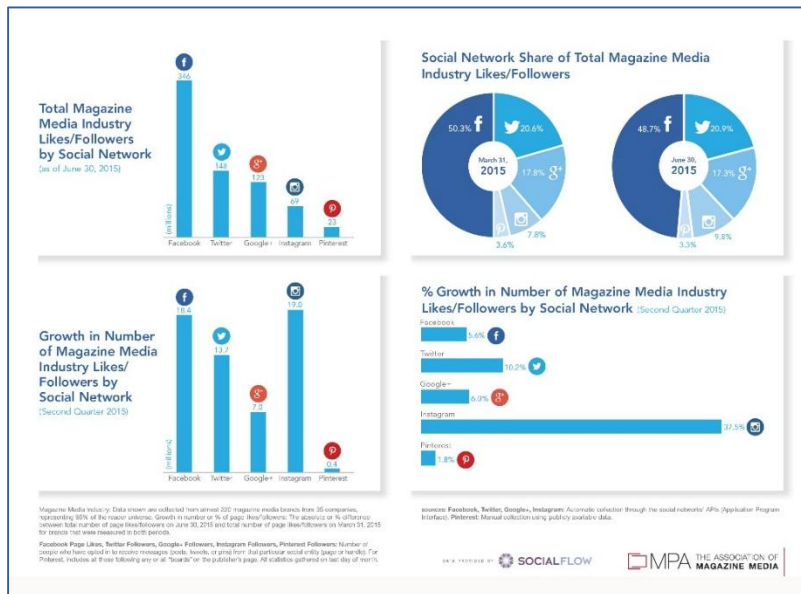
SUMMARY AND APPLICATION OF FINDINGS

Similar to the conclusions drawn in Shiffman’s 2013 paper, we found that communities represent unique and powerful opportunities for publishers. In today’s socially connected world, it is imperative that media brands are able to not only be part of the conversation, but, as they have traditionally done in the offline space, lead discussions and stimulate new thinking and ideas. Social media analyses can be a comparatively easy way to identify and describe communities of interest that can enhance companies’ understanding of their consumers and stakeholders.

As newsstand sales continue to decline, there is clear evidence that there are opportunities to expand the magazine media brand audience by sharing content and activating communities beyond their own vertical, including celebrities and other brands. Social platforms are becoming a new channel, that similar to newsstand, introduces the content and power of the brand to potential readers. In addition, through social analytics, media brands can start to understand the content that is most influential and far reaching within these communities. With this insight, media brands are able to show the breadth their content by entering into conversations with influencers in new topic verticals.

Another application is with advertising. Publishers have the content and the audience – now extended into the socially connected world. Advertisers have products and services that are targeting specific passion points and communities. This analysis uncovers the opportunity for advertisers to sponsor best performing content and reach an audience in a different environment. As social communities in general are growing, it is evident that this applies to magazine media brands as well. This is clearly documented with the MPA’s Magazine Media 360 Social Media Report. For example, there are currently 148 million Twitter followers of magazine media content, an increase of +10.2% in the last quarter alone. The editor/reader conversation certainly does not stop with the printed magazine.

MPA's Magazine Media 360 Social Media Report Q2 2015



Bottom-line, social media offers publishers an opportunity for discoverability at broad scale, but also uniquely targeted to passions and interests, in a way that the declining newsstand market never could.

NEXT STEPS

This analysis is really just a first step in uncovering the potential for publishers to mine social communities to connect users with content that aligns with specific passion points. While the primary focus of this paper was the relationship between published media brands and social media within a broad content category, this could be expanded to include other more specific communities, such as those noted in Shiffman's paper (including political/social communities or charitable organizations), providing opportunities for co-branding and partnerships.

The authors wish to acknowledge the inspiration provided by David Shiffman's 2013 PDRF paper: *Community Explorer: Unlocking the Power of Community-Oriented Marketing*