

Simple Usability

Briefing Paper

Twitter Brand Pages: A first look at usability

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Overview

Twitter first launched a selected list of twenty one brand pages in December. Most were brands that were already distributing commercial content via Twitter, but the new brand page provides a much anticipated point of difference between corporate and personal accounts. **The question is how does each brand rate in terms of new, interesting, compelling and provocative content to keep audience engagement high? What kind of layout and content works best?**

Using innovative eyetracking technology, the consumer research and usability experts at **SimpleUsability conducted the first piece of research of its kind** on these pages.

The team observed users looking at the layouts and features of four of these new Twitter brand pages, **Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Staples** and **HP**. By recording eye movements and actions online, they could see exactly what elements each user was drawn to, distracted by and engaged with. Importantly, the company then worked with the subjects to try and understand the decisions they took, replaying their activity to users, showing where and what they looked at and asking appropriate questions to determine their behaviour and choices.

First impressions

Users were drawn to different sections of the branded pages depending on the features each employed. All pages received initial attention on the section of the page that contained imagery. Generally this was the promoted tweet, but on the Staples page the promoted tweet did not contain any visual elements so the header image initially received more attention.

<p>Coca-Cola Users were quickly drawn to the embedded video content with the majority of users deciding to click and watch it.</p>	<p>McDonald's The promoted tweet included a very promotional style of picture. This captured the gaze of users but failed to engage them.</p>	<p>Staples The header image featuring the competition grabbed the initial attention but users quickly moved on the promoted tweet which had related content to the header image.</p>	<p>HP The promoted tweets automatically allow users to view any embedded media. The image here really attracted interest with a dog looking at a HP product.</p>

Key findings

1. Header images need to work hard



Header images can communicate how users can interact with the page.

HP directed users to their promoted tweet from the header image. We observed users following the arrow in the header image to the related information contained within the promoted tweet. This showed on the simplest level how companies could direct users to the content that they wanted them to see.



Advertising can lead to too much of a corporate feel.

Only featuring products on the header image can lead to abandonment, as users quickly move over this section of the page. On the Coca-Cola brand page, users paid little attention to the advertising oriented header image in favour of exploring the content in the promoted tweet.

"It's just a big corporate burger place really."



Competitions and promotions can entice users and encourage exploration.

The Staples brand page featured information on a competition in the header image, which users tried to access. Users felt that they should have been able to click it, but to progress users had to either enter the URL used on the image or click on the link in the promoted tweet. This lack of clear direction for the users caused confusion.

"I was more looking for offers, if they made the [header image] link to the offer that would be great... if you've got an offer you want people to click into it."

2. Promoted tweets need to take advantage of embedded visuals



A promoted tweet featuring an image draws users in.

This can quickly convey and affect the brand values of a company. Users made assumptions about the company on whether they were either corporate or approachable from the content of the image. On the HP brand page, users quickly empathised with the dog looking directly at them and felt that it showed a more humorous, and less corporate, side to the company. This was something

they were not expecting from HP on their brand page, so formed a more positive opinion of them as a result.

“It was nice with the picture of the dog...it showed me something i wasn’t expecting...[something] a little bit fun.”

“I think [the photo on the HP page] is quite engaging, whereas McDonald’s just has a picture of their Big Mac, [which is] nothing you haven’t seen before in terms of McDonald’s.”



The colourful shot on McDonald’s brand page initially drew the attention of the users, but lost it just as quickly. Users perceived the image as advertising, which fed in to their impression that the page felt very corporate. This in some cases led to abandonment of the page rather than encouraging further exploration.

“There’s nothing really that interests me about it.”



Promotional tweets can reinforce other featured content.

The promoted tweet on Staples featured a link to the competition referenced in the header. The promoted tweet and the header image supported each other as they were relaying the same message to the users in two different forms, one predominantly pictorial and the other completely text based.



Embedding video in the promoted tweet instantly engages the user.

On the Coca-Cola brand page, users were immediately drawn to the embedded video in the promoted tweet, with the majority choosing to watch it. Even though the video was a minute-long Christmas advert, nearly all the watched it to the end. Users liked that they had something to interact with on the page and that video content was provided for them to watch.

“I looked at the advert...that was very good; you have more interactive things [on the page].”

3. Users make brand decisions based on tweets



A range of tweets on the page communicates to users the level of interaction between the company and the user. The HP page featured tweets for different types of interaction including general replies, retweets and complaints. This gave the feeling that the company was being honest and that the tweets were genuine interactions with their followers.

“I noticed they were answering tweets from people that had technical issues, I’ve got a HP product myself so that appealed to me...if they are replying to tweets, that’s pretty good.”

Advice for brand owners

The general purpose of Twitter is still finding a person or a company that you are interested in and interested in hearing from, and following them so you can receive their updates in your live feed.

Once a user has chosen to follow somebody on Twitter the likelihood that they will return to the profile page, or in this case brand page, again is very limited. All the information the user wants from that person or company will be displayed in their live feed on their homepage, so they will have no great need to navigate back to the profile or brand page. That means that as the brand page will likely be seen only one time by the user they have to really present themselves in a way that appeals to their intended audience. The brand page potentially has one shot at attracting the user to become a follower. If the companies fail to do this, then they will have lost potential followers, and potential customers, and therefore they will have a much narrower audience and customer base receiving updates from them.

With recommendations on who to follow provided by Twitter, users may never actually see the brand page itself, as they can choose to follow the company from the listings on the 'Who to follow' page. So while Twitter shifts to incorporating the new features to the brand pages in order to engage those who see the page, the likelihood is that many of the brand's followers may never see the page at all. This means that the strength of a company's following will be based on what they tweet. If a company posts too frequently and floods users' live feeds, or post generally uninteresting updates, then users will be likely to remove it from their 'Following' list.

Also, with regards to the header, companies should keep in mind that due to its size and position on the page, users might assume that it is a clickable banner. As seen when users viewed the Staples brand page, the contents of their header was akin to that of a typical banner advertisement. This meant that some users thought they could click on it to view further information about the promotion, especially due to the fact that they could see a URL in the header. When they were unable to interact with the header they were annoyed and lost interest in page. While the promoted tweet detailed the competition and provided a shortened bit.ly link users missed the connection between two. HP, on the other hand, while using their header for a promotion, include an arrow in the image pointing to the promoted tweet in the 'Tweets' column so users can easily understand what the promotion in the header related to on the page.

Summary

- **Twitter brand pages will either succeed or fail depending on how well the company comes across and how effectively the page engages the user.**
- **Brand pages should be an invitation for users to learn more about the company and their products and should make users want to follow them to receive their updates.**
- **While pages should feature video and images advertising the brand and products, they must be engaging and sensitive to the platform - too much of a corporate feel to the page will deter users. The Coca-Cola brand page put more emphasis on advertising products through the use of header and background images and featuring its Christmas advert as the promoted tweet. However users liked that there was a video to play at the top of the page and were drawn in by it.**
- **Competitions and promotions will likely entice users into exploring the page and featured video and pictorial content will instantly engage the user.**
- **If a brand page comes across as either too sales-heavy, it will not hold the user's attention. Users preferred when they could see the more 'human' side to the brand, as with HP. This featured non-corporate looking photos and variety and integrity in its tweets. The HP page did not put a great deal of emphasis on advertising and it displayed/replied to tweets from followers including complaints.**