

A STUDY ON EMOJIS IN MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyse the use of emojis in marketing communications. This would enable companies to connect with their target customers on a deeper level and also develop high range or wide communication campaigns. The structure and tasks of the paper are predetermined by its aim to prove that companies use emojis in communicating with their customers. This paper focuses on the definition and classification of emojis, characteristics of the most used ones, and analysis of their use in various marketing communications. The method of analysis is semiotic analysis. It reveals the opportunities that lie before companies to communicate with their audience in a new and interesting way.

The paper gives examples how companies and users communicate through emojis. Understanding the role of emojis presents opportunities for innovation in communication. Through certain examples we would see how analysing them reveals more information about users' personalities. The analysis aims at revealing the opportunities that relatively new type of communication gives companies on the one hand and user, on the other hand.

KEYWORDS: *Emojis, digital communication, social media, marketing communication, sales promotion, companies or organizations.*

INTRODUCTION:

The significance of the paper is raised by the challenges that specialists in the area of marketing and advertising faced in today's developing markets, where creativity and flexibility are of utmost importance. Today's economy seems to be an abundance of products and services, and users seem to be more addicted to advertising messages. This results in much more aggressive and innovative approaches on behalf of the companies.

Communication is becoming more and more diverse, and companies should spend more efforts than ever to create better marketing communications through flexibility, individuality

and creativity. The paper reveals the opportunities that lie before us by analysing the use of emojis. It focuses on defining and classifying the various emojis; characterizing the most used ones; analysing various marketing communications; using semiotic analysis to analyse the role of emojis in companies' and users' communication.

Emojis found on smartphones and tablets have quickly become a language that is adopted as a common language between speakers whose native language is different for younger generations. Therefore in 2015 Oxford Dictionary announced the word of the year wasn't a word, it was the "tears of joy" emojis. The practical implications are the research is to be of value to all specialists in the area of communications, marketing and advertising, since the main goal for each company is profit and it is a consequence of multiple factors.

The very first emoji-con – "a multi-day celebration of all things emoji" was a unique event that took place in San Francisco in November 2016. It was aimed at engaging people from all walks of life with different flavours and forms of emoji, through exhibitions of emoji artwork, screening of emoji films and more affirming the growing hype associated with emoji-driven non-textual communication.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

The existing literature on the psychological and linguistic aspects of emoji is limited, whereas a large amount of research exists in the field of analysis of emoji usage. **In 2015, Eisenstein and Pavalanathan** wrote that the introduction of emojis was a potentially a dramatic shift in online writing, potentially replacing user-defined linguistic affordances with predefined graphical icons; with the ability to access a large number of colourful and expressive emoji pictographs, it became natural for users to stop employing non-standard orthographies for expressive communication in social media.

Kelly and Watts (2015) agreed, and said that emoji could serve relationally useful roles in conversation, not necessarily associated with discrete expressions of emotion, and could also play an important role in controlling a conversational thread or in encouraging playful behaviour.

Stark and Crawford (2015) believed that the practical use of the emojis were intended to normalize, capitalize and focus on the collective strength of affect in human social relations online, where emojis acted as exuberant forms of social expressions.

In 2016, **Bliss-Carroll** said that viewing emojis simply as a one dimensional lens is a complete underestimation of their ability to serve as a signifier of emotion, clarifier of intent and mediator of self-identity; they convey a host of interpersonal emotional expressions in a much more charming manner, and are ready to be hailed as a “new universal language”.

Echoing the same sentiment, **Gullberg (2016)** wrote that the emojis were merely used to convey emotions, but could also efficiently and politely react to another person’s message, which may not need a long reply, act as tools in maintaining relationships, be used as inside jokes, and be an indication of the enthusiasm of the person.

Chairunnisa and Benedictus (2017), said that people hope, while not communicating face-to-face, that the person still understands their feelings, ideas and impressions, something that emojis makes possible, and makes the communication effective and understandable.

Kyle, Malone and Wall (2017) believe that emojis have become popular for clarifying online communication; they also believe the use of the same brings out certain psychological concepts such as emotional expressions, emotional mimicry, emotional appraisal, pragmatics and intention detection.

Emoticons and Emojis – Definition and Classification

“Emoticons are representations of body language in text based messages, where the communication channel is limited to transmission of letters and punctuation marks”. History is not really sure when the first emoticons was used since different sources point to different discoveries, “A historical newspaper specialist at the digital archival company Proquest believes he has found an example of a sideways winking smiley face embedded in the New York Times transcript of an 1862 speech given by President Lincoln. Other historians are not so sure, saying the semicolon alongside a closed parenthesis is either a mistake or a misinterpretation of something that is perfectly grammatical for that era,” (“Is That an Emoticon in 1862?”. The New York Times.2009)

Emoticons have developed depending on the language of use, letter input system or the kind of community that uses them. They can roughly be divided into three basic types: Western one-line type; Eastern one-line type; and Multi-line ASCII art type. “Western emoticons are known for being rotated by 90 degrees, such as “:-)” (Smiling face). Or “:-D” (Laughing face). They are usually made of two four characters and are of a relatively small number.

Multi-line ASCII art type emoticons, on the other hand, consist of a number of characters written in several, or even up to several dozens of lines. When looked at from a distance, they make up a picture, often representing a face or a posture. Finally, Eastern emoticons, in contrast to the Western ones are usually unrotated and represent faces or gesture from a point of view easily comprehensible to the reader.

Moving further into the revolution of the simpler language and expressions, we see the rise of emojis, “An emoji is a step further, developed with the modern communication technologies that facilitate more expressive messages. An emoji is a graphic symbol, ideogram that represents not only facial expressions, but also concepts and ideas, such as celebration, weather, vehicles and buildings, food and drinks, animals and plants, or emotions, feelings, and activities”. Emojis have been used more and more especially in mobile communications and social media. They are Unicode (one code for all devices) graphic symbols that are used as a shorthand to express feelings, concepts, ideas. Compared to emoticons, emojis are a lot more in numbers.

The importance of emojis in communication was further acknowledged by Oxford Dictionaries as word of the year 2015. The “face with tears of joy” emoji was the most used emoji globally in 2015. The word emoji has seen a similar surge: although it has been found in English since 1997, usage more than tripled in 2015 over the previous year according to data from the Oxford Dictionaries Corpus. (Oxford Dictionaries Corpus. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2015> Retrieved November 15,2017.)

USE OF EMOJIS IN MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

Perhaps the most significant contribution of emojis in marketing communications is their brevity and clarity. Advertising, being part of marketing communications, is the most expensive form of marketing communications. This is where semiotic and signs in particular come to play an important role. Knowing how expensive advertising space is, one would always consider new, interesting forms of expressions. It is through the use of signs and their meaning that we are able to do so.

Having found the answer to clarity and brevity of expression, companies have been using signs as means of communication for a long time. The results are always fascinating when the right appeal is mediated through the right sign, so that the right target audience is reached.

Emojis are a great means of communication, especially when smartphones are the mediators.

This is why the ad of Mercedes-Benz India Twitter post are extremely popular with millenials, since they tend to use more mobiles as a communication device more than the desktop computer. Due to the desire to reach younger audiences, companies have started to use emojis as means of communication more and more. Some of them go as far as crowding the entire message with emoji icons.

EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF EMOJI USAGE

The use of emoticons in literary criticism has numerous advantages. As the days of critical wine and roses dwindle down to a precious few, critical emoticons provide a cheap and easy (substitute if you must, quick and dirty) means for streamlining critical commentary. This economical expression and delivery of emotional judgement allows us critics to finally dare to say what we really mean in contexts hitherto dominated by indirection and obfuscation (Bloom, 2010). Since emoticons have long ago found their way into literature critique one can rest assured that emojis have done so in lives of ordinary people as well.

A recent study conducted in the college reveals the impact of emojis on people's day to day lives. The result shows that ninety percent of the students rated emoji message more meaningful as compared to normal texting.

EMOJIS IN INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

So far we have seen only through visual examples, the communication through emojis in messaging and social networks. However, this is not the only medium where emojis play a vital role for communication. In recent years we have seen a rise in animation based children's movies and this is no coincidence. Our little precious ones play's an important part when it comes to spending the family budget. "Although the kinds of products marketed to children have remained much the same, the buying power of children and adolescents has increased exponentially over time. The affluence of today's children and adolescents has made youth a market eminently worthy of pursuit by businesses. Youths now have influence over billions of dollars in spending each year.

In the late July 2017, the release of "The Emoji Movie" was the first animation movie where emojis conquer the wide screen. Basically it is a story of a multi-emotional emoji, called Gene, who sets out on a journey to become a normal emoji. For the first time in history

emojis convey not only single human emotions but personify humans. Personification is a special type of metaphor where human characteristics are attributed to animals, natural phenomena or object. Thus, otherwise static pictograms become alive.

STICKER'S IMPACT ON EMOJI

The emergence and widespread use of stickers has impacted the status of emoji, and some research has begun to improve the user experience of stickers. Whether stickers will replace emoji is an interesting topic for researchers. Under the impact of stickers, how to further enhance emojis performance in emotion and semantic expression and improve user experience is also a direction worth exploring.

CONCLUSION

Emoji data and information analysis is not only reduced to analyse user's text messages. The usage of the emojis in marketing communication gives companies a new, unorthodox and more involving way of approaching their target audience. This paper reached its goal; that is, proving that companies are actively using emojis in their communication with customers. The study analysed in the last section shows how people react emotionally towards emoji communication. Understanding the role of emojis in our daily life and how they come to manifest themselves in integrated marketing communications is important to all who look for more creative and profitable communication.

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