**TEAM Lab** – *Social Media Literature Review*
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The purpose of this Paper is to investigate the development and effects of corporate usage of social media in promoting products, focusing mainly on how tobacco companies use social media to communicate with consumers and build brand loyalty. Previous studies conducted by Jenssen and colleagues (2009) have found that adolescents are consistently exposed to tobacco content on the internet. Additionally, the National Cancer Institute (2008) has found that tobacco use reduces life expectancy by 14 years and is the source of more than 400,000 premature deaths a year, thus exceeding the combined death toll of HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, motor-vehicle collisions, suicide and homicide.

This is of concern since over a quarter of the world's population has access to the internet, and the number continues to grow on a daily basis (Elkin, Thomson, Wilson, 2010). Tobacco companies are aware of the ability of social media networks to surpass time zone differences, geographic distances and even language and cultural barriers. Social media connects users globally 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. And unlike the traditional mediums for advertising, social media is unregulated and without a governing body. Tobacco industries promote on social networks that are based out of one country to evade the restrictions of another. Furthermore, cigarette and smoking advertisements can even be found on websites that claim no affiliation with tobacco industries (Ribisl, 2003).

This paper will begin by introducing the concept of social media, then evaluate and review how businesses are using these social networks to create change at the individual,

organizational and community level. Lastly, this paper will discuss where the future of Social

Media is heading.

**What is Social Media?**

Social Media is a revolutionary trend that stems from the concepts of Web 2.0 and User

Generated Content (UGC). Web 2.0 evolved in 2004 from the Web 1.0 model of creating and

publishing content online. Whereas Web 1.0 limited the control of creating and publishing

content to specific individuals, Web 2.0 expanded the capabilities and granted control to all users

of the World Wide Web. This model of participatory and collaborative thinking became the

platform behind the ideological and technological foundation of Social Media. In short, Web 2.0

is a place for people to share, cooperate and cocreate (Freeman & Chapman, 2011). Some

examples of Web 2.0 include wikis, blogs, podcasts and social networking sites such as

Facebook and Twitter.

Similarly, User Generated Content represents all the ways in which end-users of the web

use Social Media. According to the Organization of Economic Co-Operation and Development

(2007), UGC must: (1) be publically accessible to a selected group of people, (2) show creative

effort and (3) been built outside of professional routines and practices. Examples of UGC include

anything produced by the web user such as text, audio and video. The first condition of UGC

requires context to be published on a website and made publically accessible, this excludes e-

mails and instant messaging. The second condition of UGC requires users to upload original

content, thus excluding reposted material. The final condition of UGC requires content to be

created out of the desire to connect and express oneself to others as well as to achieve fame and

recognition. Therefore according to the third condition of OCED (2007), UGC excludes content with a commercial market.

**Concerns for Social Media**

As concluded by the National Cancer Institute (2008), the effects of social media on society can be examined at the individual, organizational and community levels. Tobacco companies take advantage of the multi-level construct by optimizing their ability to use social media to influence the beliefs, knowledge and attitude of the individual, thereby shaping the structure of mass media at the organizational level and the environment at the community level.

Within the organizational level are the advocates that either support or oppose tobacco usage. They utilize social media networks to change perceptions of tobacco, ultimately creating a foundation for the type of regulations and public policies that will be enforced. At the community level is the cultural environment that is shaped by policies that determine the location, type and amount of exposure to tobacco advertisement within a neighborhood (Israel, Checkoway, Schulz & Zimmerman, 1994).

Concerns arise when tobacco companies take advantage of social media to create websites and blogs for consumers to post videos, design advertisements and comment on, as it is duly noted by marketers that the brands that are the most successful are the ones that engage the consumers the most (Freeman & Chapman, 2011). Companies have since discovered that traditional forms of advertisement such as television programs and commercials are having less impact on consumers. According to David Penn (2006), the previous rational models of

advertisement have been abandoned as the important brand response of the modern consumer is unconscious and emotional.

Companies are now tapping into the untainted, unfiltered and unbiased feedback of consumers on social media networks (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2004). Social media users expect the content they view on the web to be authentic and transparent however, businesses are using covert advertisements to pose as either entertainment or consumer-generated media (Freeman & Chapman, 2007). By utilizing websites such as YouTube, tobacco companies can hire actors and screen writers to create fake blogs, also known as "flogs", to infiltrate at the individual level. Gaining direct access to consumers allows tobacco companies to formulate the right questions to ask for follow-up research, understand the current needs and trends of the consumer, as well as quickly address rumors and complaints. Companies have since allocated a tenth of their annual budget towards activities of buzz marketing and viral marketing (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2004).

Buzz marketing is used to generate publicity and excitement about a product. The activity associated with the product must be outrageous and publicity worthy to capture the attention of consumers. To accelerate the craze surrounding a product, companies hire buzz agents and brand pushers to convince consumers that they need the product. According to Word of Mouth Marking, 10% of the consumer population makes up the "influentials" that dictate the choices and trends for the rest of the population. Tobacco companies have attempted to reach the "influentials" through Facebook as this social media network currently has no policy against advertising tobacco, alcohol, firearms (Freeman & Chapman, 2008).

Another technique used by tobacco companies is viral marketing. This second technique is also known as "word of mouse" marketing as it is an adaptation of the traditional "word of

mouth" marketing technique. Like buzz marketing, viral marketing is dependent on the consumer participation. The emphasis is placed on unpaid peer-to-peer sharing of sponsored content (freeman & Chapman, 2008). The goal is to have minimal contact between the suppliers and the consumers. Therefore the tobacco industry would share the content with a few key "influentials", allowing them to spread the content to other consumers. Thus a hallmark of viral marketing is its' speed and exponential growth. To encourage social media users to spread the content, suppliers have provided incentives such as prizes, discounts and limited editions of certain products to name a few (Freeman & Chapman, 2008).

**Countering the Negative Uses of Social Media**

The tobacco industry has been quick to adapt to social and policy changes by altering their marketing form and character. Instilling regulations and a code of conduct on companies regarding the use of social media is quite challenging. Tobacco industries can argue that social media networks are being used for legitimate marketing research and can disguise marketing through giveaways and samples (Freeman & Chapman, 2009). To counter the negative usage of social media by tobacco companies, health promotion agencies can also take advantage of these vehicles to disseminate antismoking messages. By providing a two-way dialogue about the risks associated with tobacco use, health agencies can develop and post their own viral videos to reach the global society. Freeman & Chapman (2008) encourage health agencies to be more strategic with their presence on social media networks and to work to "appear alongside or ahead of the potentially harmful advertising".

Furthermore, the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) encourages individuals, organizations and communities to become

involved in the regulation process of tobacco advertisement. From monitoring and enforcing advertisement bans on social media networks such as YouTube, social media users can change what is being posted and shared. Additionally, users can urge these social media networks to adopt a similar smoke free campaign that was placed on movies and television (Chapman & Freeman, 2007).

**Concluding thoughts of Social Media**

Social Media was built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 to allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content that occurs at a global level ( Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media has the ability to cross international boarders within seconds, making it an ideal platform for tobacco companies to promote their products. In order to successfully counter pro-smoking campaigns, health agencies must be on the lookout for the next big change of social media.

With the development of Web 3.0 underway, health agencies must be intentional in using social media to reach consumers at the individual, organizational and community level. Web 1.0 was an era of static websites with content that can only be read that gave way to Web 2.0's interactive websites with content that can be written and read. Web 3.0 has yet to be fully developed but is expected to boast websites with the ability to reason (Hendler, 2009). Over the years Web 2.0 has generated too much content so that users don't necessarily get what they're are looking for when using the social media networks. With capabilities of reading, understanding and filtering content and context, Web 3.0 be will ultimately be able to "deliver the right message, at the right time, to the right person, on the right device" (Williams, 2009). The next generation of social media will make marketing to consumers even simpler for

industries such as tobacco companies thus health agencies must be doubly prepared to counter

cigarette and smoking advertisements.

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