

Missed opportunities for SA car brands on social media

By  Nick Paul

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What's the point of being on social media as a business? Well obviously, it's because your customers are there. But there's more to it than that, social offers businesses one of the most unique opportunities for marketing to date: to be able to converse with their customers one-on-one without that customer needing to set foot in a store. Simply put, this builds loyalty through long-term relationships.



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This is light-years ahead of how things worked in the past, especially for car brands, presenting incredible opportunities to market their brands and build meaningful relationships with their customers. And, for a product with such a high price point and long buying-cycle (I think only property trumps that), relationship-building should be a key marketing function.

So how are SA's car brands shaping up?

In the latest insightful report by Unmetric, Volkswagen, South Africa's most engaged car brand responded to just over half of the users who posted to their timeline in the last quarter of 2015. A cursory visit to the VW page shows that the only posts they respond to are customer complaints. That's as good as it got for car brands, some respond to close to 0% of their fans' posts, effectively making their social media presence no better than a 1980s TV advert.

Let's look at some more numbers. [The report](#) mentions Land Rover who had the highest sentiment score as the lowest responder for the last quarter of 2015 with less than 5% of user posts responded to, they take on average about 30 hours to do this. Its customers, unsurprisingly, hardly ever posted to the page with far fewer than 200 users posting during this period compared to Mercedes' almost 800 fan posts. This is surprising since Land Rover has around 400,000 South African fans and are one of the most regularly posting brands, having a 13% share of voice, second only to Mercedes' 29%. And I'm not trying to pick on Land Rover specifically as almost two thirds of SA car brands responded to customer posts less than 30% of the time.

The opportunity

It almost feels like car brands are just screaming "Me! Me! Me!" to their fans, despite being presented with superb user-generated content for free on their timelines. Just go to any of their pages and check the "visitor posts" section for an endless ticker of brand-loving pics of their beloved vehicles.

This is a tremendous opportunity for these brands, they have an army of brand advocates out there who are volunteering compelling, heartfelt content for free. We all know that word-of-mouth marketing like this is some of the most effective, so why is lame thumbs up the most these posts get from the page admins?

Car brands should be collecting these images and resharing them by featuring them on their pages, this goes a long way to reinforcing a culture of brand advocacy and hopefully making many more life-long customers. Likewise they should be identifying the most active fans and key influencers to nurture relationships with these people and reach and engage a new generation of loyal consumers. The first brand which capitalises on this stands lot to gain in getting a one-up on their competition.

ABOUT NICK PAUL

I started out in the world of social media growing Africa's largest Online Travel Agency, Travelstart's presence from just around 1500 followers to over 3 million across the globe, a community which was also one of the most highly engaged in the industry. A creative problem solver who values honest marketing, I believe in demystifying what happens on social so that businesses are more clued up as to how they're achieving their goals.

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