The Role of Fan Identification in User's Attentional Patterns on Sport Team Facebook Pages: An Eye-Tracking Approach

Yongjae Kim, Kutztown University of Pennsylvania
Seungbum Lee, University of Akron
Soojin Kim, Kutztown University of Pennsylvania
Mi-Lyang Kim, Soonchunhyang University
Younghan Lee, Mississippi State University

Communication - Social Media (Professional Sport)

Poster Abstract 2020-017

Despite the popularity of sport team Facebook among sport fans, surprisingly previous research has never examined how and when sport fans pay attention to visual marketing stimuli and what determines their attentional patterns on sport team Facebook pages. For sport teams, understanding consumers’ viewing behaviors is essential in designing and organizing their visual information to maximize the value of their Facebook. The lack of research on patterns of viewing behaviors on Facebook creates a conceptual void in the marketing and communication literature, therefore a further examination of Facebook on various media is needed to help render sport teams’ visual marketing efforts more effectively. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is four-fold: 1) to identify and analyze patterns of visual attention of individuals on a sport team Facebook page; 2) to examine if their visual attention has the different pattern across different media platforms; 3) to identify the determinants of users’ attentional patterns on sport team Facebook pages; and 4) to examine the role of fan identification in attentional patterns on sport team Facebook pages.

For the purpose of this study, 90 participants were recruited by using online public advertisements. Each participant was randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions (computer, smart phone, and tablet condition). After completing the short survey, participants were asked to review 12 sport team Facebook pages on each device condition for less than 10 minutes. During this process, an eye tracker collected eye position and movement data (corneal and pupil reflection). After the experiment, there was Post-Experience Eye-Tracker Protocol to collect retrospective protocols (Ball, Eger, Stevens, & Dodd, 2006). An eye tracker software (imotion) was used to create the visual attention level with the amount of concentrated time one can spend on an object; and create the fixation map of eye movement on each media platform by quantifying eye-movement traces. All participants were given $10 in cash as a token of appreciation.

The study results show that users’ information scanning pattern on the sport team Facebook pages is different from any web interface and varies across presentation modes. The results from the saccades show a counterclockwise spiral pattern. Regarding Facebook users’ information consumption behavior, they quickly scanned all contents on the pages by using a top-down approach to scanning, and then they scrolled up and viewed what they are interested in. The heat map and scan path demonstrated a way how the users optimized their scanning procedure to see details on the pages. Their viewing pattern looks like the U-shape on all presentation modes. Furthermore, participants show the different pattern of sport team Facebook use across the level of identification. The research findings provide empirical evidence that the patterns of information acquisition behaviors vary across different media platforms. This study also provides sport marketers with clear ideas on how to design and organize the visual information on their Facebook. This work was supported by funds received from the Janet B. Parks NASSM Research Grant Program.