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### **Improving Social Media Response to Endorsement Marketing in an Endorser-Product Page**

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**ABSTRACT** - Celebrity endorsers and social media are staples in modern-day marketing. In Facebook, where these two collide, timeline posts are the main vehicles for landing endorsement marketing objectives. Here, we investigate how they are communicated, what their attributes are and, most importantly, if they work at all. We show how to measure fan responses according to page administrator objectives and to improve communication materials design in an Endorser-Product page. Content analysis via descriptive coding categorized naturally-occurring 1:43 BSKIN Timeline posts into sell types and extracted consumption and reach scores from fan responses, where 77 percent of posts had low consumption and 95 percent had short reach. For improved social media response, we recommend page administrators to publish materials using similar techniques as higher-scoring posts from the 1:43 BSKIN Endorser-Product Page: pictorial, 2-way conversations anchored on the endorser while offering additional material reward, using hard sell qualities for optimal reach and soft sell qualities for consumption.

### **Key words**

SNS Marketing, Social Media Endorsement Marketing, Facebook Data Analysis

## INTRODUCTION

It is common practice to use celebrity endorsers in the marketing of new products as they lend brand equity to the 'unknown' product (Mukherjee 2009). Businesses today also have a new staple in their marketing strategy when launching products— the use of social media, with Facebook as their preferred site (McClane 2013).

Most celebrity endorsers have official and unofficial Facebook fan pages, just like new products. However, both types of pages are usually independent from each other. Endorsements usually appear only as posts in a product page's timeline or vice-versa.

Social media endorsements are not disappearing anytime soon. Facebook data scientists claim that users are 50 percent more likely to remember promotions on Facebook when visibly endorsed by someone they know (Simonite 2012).

Although this may be good news for business owners, gauging if endorser-led promotions are worth their price is still a loose science. Currently, Facebook page owners can only view trends in fans activity thru the proprietary business page analytics tool, Facebook Insights. However, the downloadable Facebook Insights Data report provides an overwhelming 90 key metrics that page administrators may not necessarily need or understand. Some claim that many of these data points are repetitive and do not help marketing at all (Hussain 2012).

There is an agreement though that the ability of the page to engage an audience and attract more fans are the more important data points. These features could lead to converting fans into customers for the business (Hussain 2012). Simply put, business owners are concerned about *consumption* (patronage of page content by fans) and *reach* (the number of people and potential people viewing the content).

Even if the terms *consumption* and *reach* both appear in the Facebook Insights data report, it does not explain how conversion can be attained, or at the very least, if it is at bay. Extensive online research also reveals little on how page administrators can tell if endorsers are helping at all. Since product endorsements come at a price, there is even greater pressure for business owners to ensure that their endorser-linked posts serve their objectives.

In February 2012, a new cosmetic and skin care brand, BSKIN, contracted an up-and-coming boy band, 1:43, to endorse their flagship BB Cream product. With 1:43 having a Facebook fan base of 30,000 at the time, BSKIN created a unique Facebook page on its new product that solely targeted fans of the band— resulting in a hybrid Endorser-Product fan page: 1:43 BSKIN.

This Endorser-Product page is a perfect environment to understand which administrator posts yielded the intended response from fans. This was the subject of this study. We aim to understand the dynamics operating in an Endorser-Product fan page and how it results to high consumption and each through the conversations of its 2 main actors. With the study results, we may later recommend communication strategies for people marketing new products using endorsers via social media.

### **Research Questions**

To answer the general research problem: "How can Facebook posts get better response?" we addressed first the following research questions:

- How are administrators communicating endorsed marketing objectives?
- What are the attributes of these communication materials?
- How are fans responding to such communication?

### **Scope and Limitations**

The study focused only on a single Endorser-Product fan page (1:43 BSKIN). No comparison was made with other pages since the supporting administrator and quantitative data required for the study is only available for this page.

The study did not focus on the effectiveness of: (a) social media as a marketing platform, (b) endorsers for social media marketing, or the (c) BSKIN marketing mix. Rather, it focused on the type of communication that generates positive feedback in an Endorser-Product page.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Content analysis (Jupp n.d.) via descriptive coding (Lichtman 2013) was used on the following naturally occurring data that were on the Facebook Timeline: (a) responses from page fans and (b) posts by the page administrators. These data were taken from the BSKIN 1:43 Facebook Fan Page (<https://facebook.com/bskin143>) during its entire page lifecycle, from February 16, 2012 December 12, 2012). A total of 94 administrator posts, 6 fan posts and 196 fan responses were processed.

Since the author is an administrator of the subject page, all references on the intention of the administrator, despite lack of supporting evidence can be considered accurate albeit with some degree of subjectivity.

## Categorization

### Fan response categorization

Responses were categorized according to two (2) domains of administrator interest: consumption and reach. Consumption was measured thru any of the following Facebook actions: Like, Comment, Post, Private Message, Poll tick; while Reach was measured thru Post, Share, or Tag.

Coding for these data followed the categories in Table 1. Response values followed a pecking order per domain value: the higher the location, the higher the value or is viewed more positively. For example, a comment showing Trial Purchase Intent is considered a better response than a comment showing interest in a promo/marketing.

Since the administrator represented the interest of BSKIN (or the product), actions that favored product consumption and reach were, naturally, ranked higher (as shown in the code numbers). Those that favored just the endorser or other fans were considered neutral, and those that hampered consumption and reach were rated negatively.

Table 1. Fan Response Categories.

Value	Domain	Response Value
Positive [+]	Consumption [C+]	Repeat purchase intent [C+6] Trial purchase intent [C+5] Product interest only [C+4] Brand interest only [C+3] Marketing interest only [C+2] Like, Poll tick [C+1]
Neutral [=]	Consumption [C=]	Endorser interest only [C= 0] Engagement with other fans [C= 0]
Negative [-]	Consumption [C-]	Negative Comment [C-1] Unliking a Post [C-2]
Positive [+]	Reach [R+]	Product Testimonial [R+3] Sharing of Post [R+2] Tagging of Page [R+1]
Negative [-]	Reach [R-]	Unfollow, Untag or Block – n/a since Facebook does not supply this data

### Administrator post categorization

Administrator posts, which appeared as a Note, Album, Photo, Poll, Event, Poster, Status Update, Message, Quiz, or Video, were categorized into three (3) types of materials:

1. Soft Sell: posts that have no product call to action and usually shared the limelight with endorsers.
2. Mid Sell: posts about the product/product brand yet still lacked a call to action.
3. Hard Sell: posts with a clear call to action, which was usually a product purchase.

A call to action is a statement instructing the audience to perform an immediate, desired response.

Coding for these data followed the categories in Table 2. They did not observe ranking.

All categories were initially present, but were later modified to accommodate emergent categories.

### Attributes Categorization

To determine the defining physical and content attributes of all Timeline posts (administrator + fan posts), they were sorted into clusters in Table 3.

The main content composition refers to the *main* content. For example, if a short text passage introduces a photo album (the main content in this case), the material is considered to be composed as 'Photo only'. Logos and other textual design elements were also not considered as text. Motivators refer to tangible and intangible rewards that were promised or given in exchange for completing an action.

### **Procedure**

Sell content [From **Table 2**] was identified for each administrator post. Since posts sometimes contained content across sell types, the frequency of content was done to determine the dominant sell type of each post. The posts were also segregated according to according to sell type and the month they were published.

Fan responses were assigned response values [from **Table 1**]. These values were added up then grouped according to domain: For consumption, posts were ranked then sorted into ranges of +10 increments. For reach, posts were ranked according to +5 increment ranges. The increments were based on the highest-ranking post. The

Table 2. Admin Post Categories.

Sell Type	Sell Content
<p><b>Soft Sell [SS]</b></p> <p>CO refers to asking fans' opinions in creating new brand experiences/ materials.</p> <p>EX refers to experiences with the endorser, which are unavailable outside the Product brand.</p> <p>AUG are ancillary products, which helped move the actual product (BSKIN BB Cream).</p> <p><b>Mid Sell [MS]</b></p> <p>MAD refers to advertising that sustains brand presence so customers/fans do not switch to competitors.</p> <p><b>Hard Sell [HS]</b></p> <p>CON are online contests where entries require proof of product purchase.</p> <p>EV refers to participation of fans in offline gatherings sponsored by the administrator, where entry also requires product purchase.</p> <p>PUR refers to a trial or repeat purchase of the product.</p>	<p>Brand/Product Awareness [AW]  Consultation for Co-creation [CO]  Exclusive Experience Offer [EX]  Establishing Rapport [RAP]  Augmented Products [AUG]</p> <p>Product Information [PIN]  Maintenance Advertising [MAD]</p> <p>Contest Participation [CON]  Event Participation [EV]  Direct Product Purchase [PUR]</p>

ranked responses produced the following highest and lowest valued groups per domain: (a) high consumption, (b) low consumption, (c) high reach, and (d) short reach. Finally, these groups were cross-referenced with their posts' attributes and sell types.

### Exclusions

Private messages between administrator and fan were discarded since they did not generate reach. Responses and posts that were deleted/added after the analysis (Aug-Sep 2013) were also excluded.

Table 3. Attributes Clusters.

<p>A. Content Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Both product &amp; endorser</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Product only</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Endorser only</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Neither product nor endorser</li></ul> <p>A.1 If With Endorser</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Focused on one band member</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Focused on entire band</li></ul> <p>B. Main Content Composition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Photo &amp; text</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Photo only</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Text only</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> No photo/text</li></ul> <p>B.1 Photo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> New</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Recycled (previously used)</li></ul> <p>C. Built-in Motivator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Material reward</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Reinforced bond with endorser</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Product benefit</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> None</li></ul>
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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### **Categorization of Administrator posts**

Administrator posts were mostly soft sell (68%), sometimes hard sell (18%), and rarely mid sell (9%). Multi-type materials, or those with content from two or more sell types, also emerged (5%). Soft sell materials were used heavily during the initial months while others were used moderately [**Figure A**]. Note that 60 percent of multi-type materials combined soft and hard sell qualities.

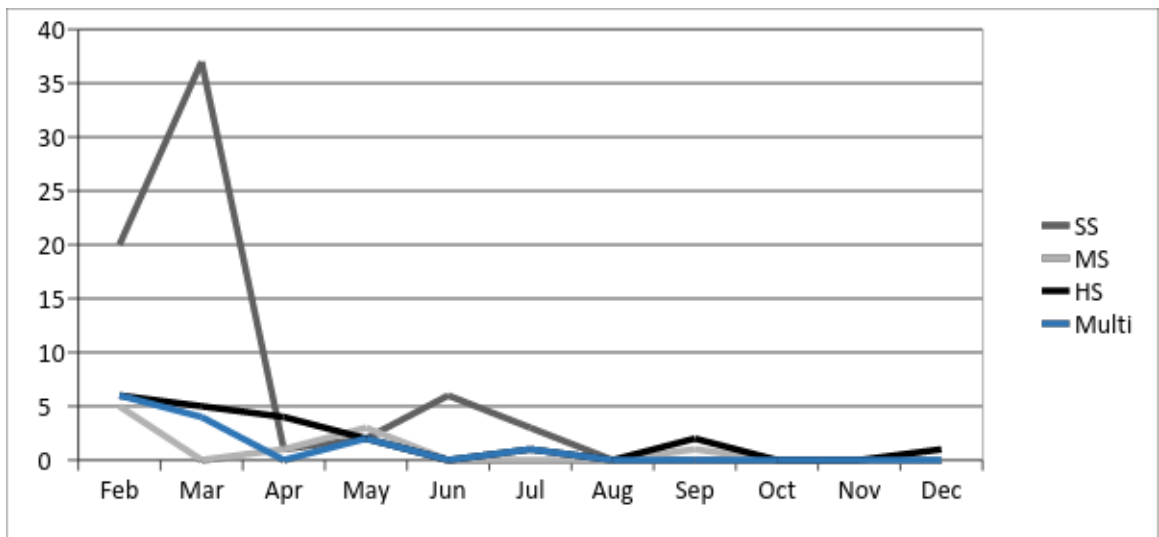


Figure A. Frequency of posts according to sell type during entire page lifecycle.

On Sell content, Exclusive Experience Offer [EX] was the dominant quality of soft sell materials (used 70% of the time), while Maintenance Advertising [MAD] was for mid sell (60%), and Direct Product Purchase [PUR] for hard sell (44%). The degrees to which these content were used varied across time [Table 4]. Establishing Rapport [RAP] and Event Participation [EV] were the only content absent during the first month of marketing.

Administrator posts comprised 84 of the total 94 posts under study; the remaining 10 were fan-generated. In the succeeding results, 'post' refers to all 94 posts appearing on the page's timeline.

### Response according to Consumption

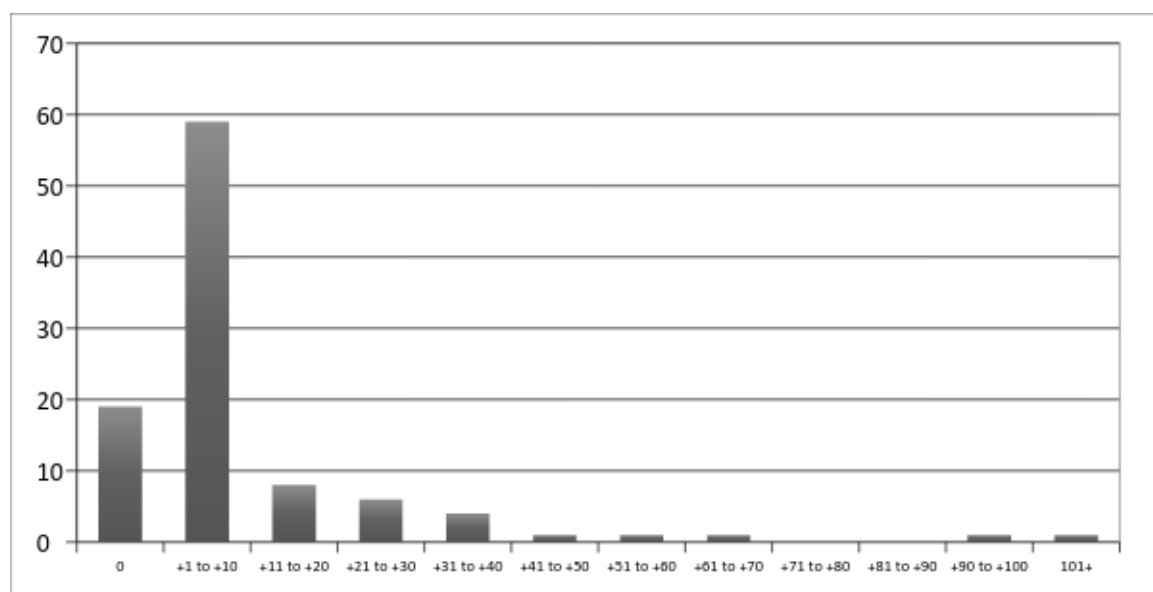
Seventy-seven percent of posts received +10 or lower consumption scores [Figure B] and are considered to have Low Consumption.



Table 4. Frequency of content per sell type.

Month	Soft Sell					Mid Sell		Hard Sell		
	AW	CO	EX	RAP	AUG	PIN	MAD	CON	EV	PUR
Feb	16	1	18	0	3	4	1	3	0	4
Mar	2	0	37	3	1	0	0	3	3	2
Apr	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	3
May	1	0	1	0	1	0	3	0	1	2
Jun	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jul	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Aug	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sep	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Oct	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nov	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dec	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

The top 5 posts with the highest scores (from +41 to 101+ score) were considered to have high consumption. This classification spanned 7 score ranges since we decided that at least 10 percent response from the total number of fans (492) make high consumption, and at least five (5) posts were necessary to create a significant comparison.



**Figure B.** Post consumption (in percentage).

## Attributes of Consumption Posts

The following are the physical and content attributes of high and low consumption posts according to their general range [**Table 5**].

**Table 5.** Attributes of High & Low Consumption Posts

Class	General Range	Dominant Sell type	ATTRIBUTES (in percentage)															
			Content Focus				If with Endorser		Main Content Composition				If with Photo		Motivator (w/ repetition)			
			Both BSKIN & 1:43	Just BSKIN	Just 1:43	Neither	1 Member	Entire band	Photo & text	Photo Only	Text Only	None	New	Recycled	Material	1:43 Bond	Product Benefit	None
High	+41 to 101+	Soft (77)	40	0	60	0	0	100	40	60	0	0	100	0	80	100	20	0
Low	+1 to +10	Soft (67)	45	55	0	0	31	69	21	36	36	7	84	16	27	42	40	12
	Zero	Soft (57)	29	29	13	29	0	100	0	43	57	0	67	33	0	43	29	0

+41 to 101+ range: Posts were dominantly soft sell. The content was focused mainly on the endorser (entire band) and composed of new photos of the endorser [**Figure C**]. The main motivator was having a stronger bond with the endorser, followed by material rewards. All posts contained visual images of the endorser.

This range also featured hard sell posts (33%) focused on both the product and endorser [**Figure D**].

+1 to +10 range: Posts were dominantly soft sell. The content was focused on the product and presented either just text or just (new) photo [**Figure E**]. The main motivator was a reinforced bond with the endorser, closely followed by product benefits. All posts did not have content that was solely focused on the endorser. Posts without motivators (all mid sell) were also present [**Figure F**].



**Figure C.** (Left) This fan art by Jaymie earned the top consumption score with 136 likes. Similar fan art also got high consumption scores. (Right) All fan art submissions were guaranteed copies of the BSKIN-produced, 1:43-centric Harmony magazine.



**Figure D.** This administrator post earned 22 likes and 45 comments.



**Figure E.** This soft sell, product-focused photo album earned 4 likes & 1 comment.

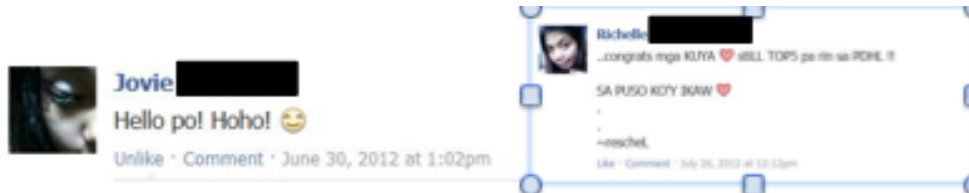


**Figure F.** These plain text posts without motivators earned a total of 3 likes.

Zero range: Posts were dominantly soft sell. The content was mainly composed of text [Figures G & H] and focused on (a) both product and endorser, (b) just the product, or (b) neither product nor endorser. The main motivator was a reinforced bond with the endorser, followed by product benefits. All posts did not have material motivators [Figure I].



**Figure G.** Text posts with focus on neither product nor endorser got zero response.



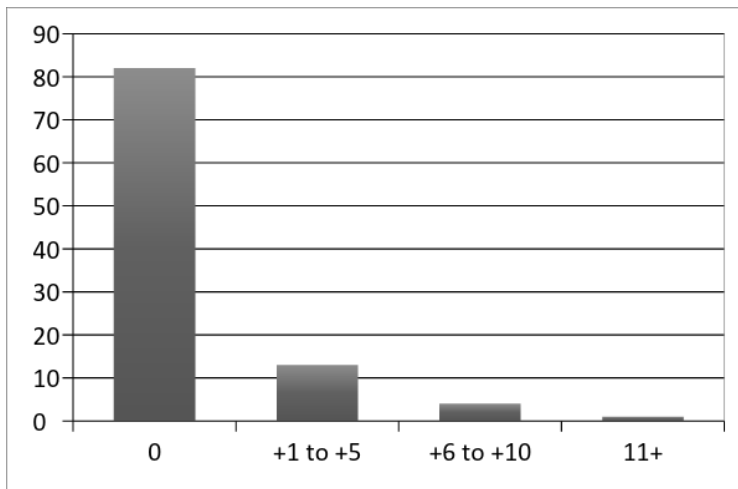
**Figure H.** Text post by fans on the endorser or other topics got zero response.



**Figure I.** Photos on just the product got zero response.

### Response according to Reach

Ninety five (95) percent of posts received +5 or lower reach scores [Figure J] and were considered to have short reach. Due to this high percentage, given the diversity of material, we find a discussion of its attributes insignificant.



**Figure J.** Post Reach (in percentage)

#### **Attributes of High Reach [Table 6]**

**+6 to 11+:** The top 5 posts with the highest reach scores were dominantly hard sell. Their content was focused on both product & endorser (mostly entire band) and composed of both text and new photos. The main motivator was having a stronger bond with the endorser, followed by material rewards (money, pocket book). All posts did not have content that was (a) solely focused on the endorser, (b) purely text, or (c) used product benefit as motivator [**Figures K**].

They added that their product is new and has little brand equity, which does not lend well to an online point-of-sale. They borrowed equity from endorsers and offered mostly exclusive endorser experiences to fans as springboard for brand building. They were careful not to oversell the product/product brand and promoted it in stages—starting with soft & mid sell-type of communication materials in preparation for more aggressive, hard selling. These materials may vary in physical and content attributes but were almost always focused on influencing fans to try the product.

The conversation between administrator and fan, for the most part, is one-way. Administrators controlled the frequency and content of timeline posts. When they do require fan participation, it usually involved a product purchase or some offline cost.

Administrators were not concerned with generating or maintaining fans for the endorsers. They also continuously tested how fans react to materials that do not involve the endorsers. Administrator posts, in general, were concerned with generating high product consumption.

**Table 6.** Top Reach Post Attributes

Dominant Sell Type	ATTRIBUTES (in percentage)														
	Content Focus				If with Endorser		Main Content Composition				If with Photo		Motivator (w/ repetition)		
	Both BS KI & 1:43	Just BS KI N	Just 1: 43	Neither	1 Member	Entire band	Photo & text	Photo Only	Text Only	None	New	Recycled	Material	1:43 Bond	Product Benefit
60% - HS															
20% - SS															
20% - MS															
Hard	<b>80</b>	20	0	0	25	<b>75</b>	<b>60</b>	40	0	0	<b>80</b>	20	60	<b>80</b>	0

From this, it can be said that fan responses were below administrator expectations in both quality and quantity. This can be attributed to the large focus on (a) selling the product rather than establishing rapport with the fans, and (b) consumption rather than reach. One unexpected finding was that solely a reinforced bond with the endorsers was not motivation enough to get the target response.

In designing materials, we recommend similar communication with higher-scoring posts: those that facilitate **pictorial, 2-way conversations** that are **anchored on the endorser** and offer additional **material reward**, using hard sell qualities for growing an audience (reach) and soft sell qualities for retaining it (consumption). We also discouraged posts that do not include the endorsers since they were, after all, under an Endorser-Product page, where fans were solicited through the endorser.

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**Figures K.** Photo & text posts focused on both the product & endorser, minus the product benefit, each earned 8-13 Shares.

## CONCLUSION

Endorsers are commonly used in marketing new products as they lend brand equity to the 'unknown' product. Businesses today also have a new staple in their marketing strategy when launching products— the use of social media, with Facebook as their preferred site. The Endorser-Product Facebook page, 1:43 BSKIN, is a unique platform under study that is run by the product (BSKIN) administrator to convert endorser (1:43) fans into product users.

BSKIN administrators communicate their business objectives mostly thru soft sell posts, sometimes thru hard sell, and rarely thru mid sell or multi-type. Soft sell materials, using mostly Exclusive Endorser Experience content, were used heavily during the initial months of marketing while other types were used moderately. When published on the Facebook Timeline, administrator and fan posts generated negative, neutral or positive consumption and reach. Their scores revealed a page's success in attracting and engaging fans. In the 1:43 BSKIN page, 77 percent of posts had low consumption while 5 percent had high consumption. In terms of reach, 95 percent were short while 5 percent had high reach.

For improved fan response, marketing and communication strategists are advised to publish posts which create pictorial, 2-way conversations that are anchored on the endorser and offers additional material reward, using hard sell qualities for reach and soft sell qualities for consumption.

However, these addressed only 2 elements of the marketing mix. Further studies are needed on the integration of price and place when duplicating the Endorser-Product page. Also, research on the cause-and-effect

relationships among different sell types, and comparison with future Endorser-Product pages are recommended.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In designing materials, we recommend similar communication with higher-scoring posts: those that facilitate **pictorial, 2-way conversations** that are **anchored on the endorser** and offer additional **material reward**, using hard sell qualities for growing an audience (reach) and soft sell qualities for retaining it (consumption). We also discourage posts that do not include the endorsers since they are, after all, under an Endorser-Product page, where fans were solicited through the endorser.

We believe that to fully understand the root cause of the unsatisfactory response of fans, the study needs to go beyond the physical and content attributes of the *promotions* on the *product*. Further research is needed on the other equally important elements of the marketing mix: *price* and *place*. Also, we invite research that can establish the direct and accumulated effects of soft & mid sell posts on hard sell posts and on each other. Finally, as there is no known similar research as of this time, future comparative studies with other Endorser-Product pages would be ideal.

## STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

The author/undersigned is responsible for the conception and realization of this work— the literature search, analysis and interpretation of data, as well as the writing of the manuscript. I certify it is truthful original work without fabrication, fraud or plagiarism. I have reviewed this final version and approve it for publication. This manuscript has also not been published or is being considered for publication elsewhere.

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