

Facebook as a Marketing Communications Tool - Facebook Official Pages Content Analysis for Jordanian Telecommunications Companies in the Mobile Operators Sector

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate how Jordanian telecommunication companies in the mobile operators sector utilize Facebook as a marketing communication tool. And how do their fans engage with them on Facebook. Jordanian telecommunications companies utilize Facebook as a marketing communications tool to reach consumers in a transparent way. They don't seem to control the messages on their page, as they let consumers speak freely and criticize their companies in public. In addition, Jordanian telecommunications companies don't push their advertising for products and services on Facebook. However, only Zain integrates its product related messages with the main website. Jordanian consumers post on average 65 times per day. Males were more active with 81% of the posts while only 19% were from females. Jordanian consumers criticize and spread negative word of mouth much more than praising the companies and they engage the most with giveaways and lowest with societal posts.

Key Words: Content Analysis, Facebook, Marketing Communications, Jordanian Telecommunications Companies, Zain, Orange, Umniah

1. Introduction & Literature Review

Marketing communications is a vital part of the company's success or failure in the market. The new channels of communication give opportunities to help companies to real time conversation with the consumers and a better track to monitor the trends in the marketplace (Assaf, Noormohamed, and Saouli, 2012). Nowadays, the public perception around companies can triumph or break them. The judgment of the key stakeholders of companies is crucial for long term success. Social media allows altering the methods of executing and measuring public relations campaigns. Shifting the controlled messages by companies to the hand of the stakeholders, who can be part of the communication and give ideas or ask directly while getting immediate responses (Matthews, 2010). Mangold and Faulds (2009) argue that managers should reduce the level of control of company to consumer messages and start to talk more with (not to) consumers to influence their discussions on social media to be in line with the company's goals, because social media changed the rules.

Consumer have the ability to freely share their experience with brands, and those conversations influence the all elements of consumer behavior, from searching for information until post of purchase behavior .

According to Jordanian Telecommunications Regulatory Commission report (2013) Jordan increased the growth rate of internet users from 13.7% in 2006 to 72% in Q3 2013. That growth rate facilitates the ways to marketers to reach their consumers. Moreover, in the Jordanian telecommunication sector, Jordan has a very high penetration rate of active mobile subscription, with 10,227,821 active users reaching 155% penetration rate. The mobile operators sector has 4 active companies. The market share of those companies as follow: Zain 38.1%, Orange 34.1% Ummiah 26.9%, and Frendi left with less than one percent (0.9%).

Regarding studies on content analysis of Facebook brand pages, McCorkindale (2010) studied the content analysis of 55 Facebook fan pages to determine how Fortune 50 companies used Facebook.

She found that most organization 80% did not post a recent update. In terms of type of contents 65% of pages use photos. Only 31% had videos, and 36% provided links. In addition, regarding social responsibility, only 22% of companies had posts referring to the social responsibility. Finally, McCorkindale (2010) conclude that companies were not creating dialogue with their fans. Instead, their communication messages were just one sided.

Parsons (2013) studied 70 brands from the global brands 2010 and Brandz Top 100 most valuable global brand 2011 list to evaluate the content of their official Facebook pages and found that 92% had a presence on Facebook, seeking to establish a relationship with consumers more willingly than providing just information to them. However, they are still trying to control somehow the message by preventing them from posting directly to the wall. The message types vary from providing information or asking about consumers' experience with the products to conducting marketing research via polls. Also they try to integrate traditional media advertising by sharing videos of the commercials on Facebook.

Calvi, Cassella, and Nuijten (2010) investigated twelve UK universities libraries to see the ability for Facebook to be an effective marketing communication tool for promotions. They conclude that it may be an effective tool. However, UK libraries only utilize it in minimal levels. Surprisingly, only less than 50% are using the wall, with mostly posted around the end of every months (65% of the posts). Also fans are not posting regularly. The wall posts consist of information about libraries activities, changing in opening hours, and availability of learning rooms. On another study on libraries Tan et al., (2012) analyzed 82 university libraries' Facebook pages across 52 Asia Pacific universities to spot how effective are university libraries are using Facebook. In their study they found that promotion is the highest frequent uses with 39% of the posts. These posts are one way communication. Only 8% of the posts described as two way communication that involves users in a conversation. These posts related to feedback, inquiries and activities. In addition, tan et al., (2012) found that fans interact more with posts that have interests, news and activities. Also users' postings get more interaction than libraries' postings. As it is perceive to be more conversational and informal.

Initially, organizations focused their expenditures on mass media advertising such as television, radio, and print advertising to promote their products. But consumers' trust in advertising declined. A study from famous adobe corporation shows that only 28% of global consumers perceive ads on television as a credible course of information (Adobe, 2013).

With media fragmentation, intense competition, and current financial turbulence the global economies are facing, marketers need to smartly spend their coins in what matters to their brands.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how Jordanian telecommunication companies in the mobile operators sector utilize Facebook as a marketing communication tool. And how do their fans engage with them. The study will try to answer the following questions:

Q1. How do Jordanian telecommunication companies utilize Facebook to communicate with their fans?

Q2. How do fans engage with Jordan telecommunication companies on Facebook?

2. Methodology

The research analyze the official Facebook brand pages of the biggest three Jordanian telecommunication sector companies (Zain, Orange, and Ummiah) for a period of one month from 17th November 2013 to 17th December 2013.

The fourth company were dropped from the study due to their low market share (less than 1%), and their official Facebook page were like a ghost town; only two original post from fans were on their wall in the time period of the study.

The research held in four parts:

- Overview of the total number of likes and the popularity of the page (Likes/Active mobile subscribers)
- Tabs: general view of tabs content categories and how companies integrate different tools in the Facebook page, i.e. Youtube, twitter, Instagram ...etc
- Fans' posts on wall: analysis of types of posts e.g. requests, praise, complaints. And the response time of companies answers to the posts.
- Wall content: analysis of frequency of posting, posts' categories, engagement with each post category, tools used: pictures, videos, text, and links.

2.1 Overview:

Table1. Overview of Jordan Mobile Operators Companies

	Zain	Orange	Umniah	Average
Likes	927,386	450,438	379,630	585,818
Active mobile subscribers	3,896,000	3,488,409	2,752,059	3,378,823
Popularity	23.8%	12.9%	13.8%	16.8%

The competition is intense between Zain and Orange. Zain has a slight edge over Orange with 38.4% to 34.4% market share respectively. Umniah is well behind them with 27.2% market share. However, when it comes to Facebook fan base, Zain is significantly above competitors with 52.8% while Orange has only 25.6% and Umniah 21.6%. When it comes to popularity of the Facebook fan page; calculated as total number of fans on Facebook page/Active mobile subscribers. Zain had well done converting 23.8% of their customers to social media fans. Umniah's effort is better than orange converting 13.8% to fans while orange popularity is only 12.9%.

2.2 Tabs:

Table2. Tabs included in Jordan Mobile Operators Companies' Facebook Pages

	Tab	Zain	Orange	Umniah
Social Media Integration	YouTube	x	✓	✓
	Instagram	✓	✓	✓
	Twitter	✓	✓	✓
	Pinterest	✓	x	x
Customer Service	Map location of offices	✓	x	✓
	Call center operator user guide	✓	x	x
	FAQs	x	x	✓
	Offices working hours	x	x	✓
	Internet inquiry	✓	x	x
	Likes	✓	✓	✓
	Photos	✓	✓	✓
	Rules	✓	✓	✓
	Giveaways	✓	x	x
	Magazine	✓	x	x
	Entertainment Apps	x	✓	x
	Training programs	✓	x	x
	Recruitment	x	✓	x
	Plans Ads	x	✓	✓
	Integrated with Regional branches	✓	✓	x

Facebook let the opportunity to brand pages to have multiple tabs. In this section the authors overview the categories of the tabs and compared between them.

The basic tabs were found of all the companies (likes, photos, and Rules). Also, all companies integrate some of the social media tools to their Facebook page. Instagram and Twitter is common in all pages. Youtube dropped in Zain’s page but they add Pinterest instead.

Zain and Umniah build their tabs to be useful for customer support purposes. Customers can easily access the page to know some basic information such as nearest office of companies, how to navigate in the call center menu... etc. Surprisingly, Orange doesn’t have any kind of dedicated tab for customer support. However, fans can reach a page through another tab (Orange Worldwide) with various clicks to reach a FAQ page. We believe that this process is confusing and time consuming for their customers.

Advertising for the latest plans were utilized by Umniah and Orange. Zain doesn’t put a dedicated tab for that purpose. While for entertainment purposes, only Umniah doesn’t have a dedicated tab for it. Moreover, only Orange integrates recruitment process to Facebook page; as they have a tab called “Join Our Family” where it directly links to their official website for recruitments.

Social responsibilities are important for companies in the eye of the public. Only Zain -to a degree- incorporate that philosophy in their Facebook page. Zain has a dedicated tab for giving the youth the opportunity to apply for free training programs for self-development purposes. Also, Zain has another tab for achieving some customers’ wishes e.g. Paying school tuition fees, 1000\$ Gas coupon, Paying the fees for Omrah ...etc.

Lastly, Orange and Zain both are international companies. They both integrated the other regional pages together in their Facebook page. Orange did it as a dedicated Tab while Zain did as (like) for other Regional Zain pages.

2.3 Fans’ Posts on Wall

All the three companies allow the fans to post directly on the wall, indicating that Jordanian telecommunication companies do not control the content and facilitate to open a transparent dialogue with their customers.

Total numbers of fans’ posts in a period of one month were 2075, on average 65 posts per day, 970 post for Zain, 346 for Orange, and 759 for Umniah. Males were more active with 81% of the posts while only 19% were from females. Jordanian telecommunication companies were replying on the majority of the posts. Zain only ignored 1.1% of them, Umniah came second with 1.8% and lastly Orange with 6.4% of the fans’ posts were ignored. However, despite Zain’s replying to the posts, 3.7% of the posts were not fully followed up. As some fans asked new request to the same post but get no answers. Orange 0.9% and Umniah had only 0.4% not followed up posts.

Posts of the fans were analyzed and coded into four categories 1) Question 2) Complaint 3) Praise 4) Other.

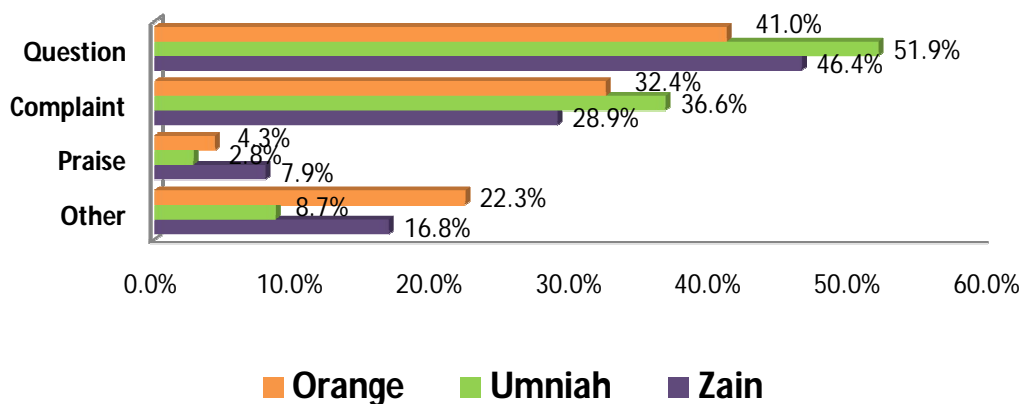


Figure1. Fans’ Posts on wall

Starting with the – Other- category, the fans here were just posting greeting messages, quotes or anything not related to the company’s products or services. 16.8% of posts on Zain’s were in this category while Orange and Umniah got 22.3% and 8.7% respectively.

Questions were the biggest portion in the three companies. Customers were asking about the products and services of the companies. Also asking regarding technical questions in terms of how can I do this?

E.g. how to transfer credits to another number? How to put password in the modem? How to know the remaining balance? ...etc. Question category in Zain, Orange, and Umniah got 46.4%, 41%, and 51.9% respectively.

Jordanian consumers seem to complain about more than praising companies. On average, complaining were almost 6 times more frequent than praising. Zain had 3.6 complaining parsing ratio while Oranges’ consumers complained 7.5 times more than praising, and Umniah skyrocketing with 13.2 times.

Complaints were on bad signal and the internet speeds were much below advertised and inconsistent especially in areas outside the capital Amman. Also another common issue from consumers was about the mobile services that took credit but they never subscribed to them. Zain’s consumers also have a unique complaint over the mobile credit that vanished constantly even without using mobile services. For Orange, consumers complained about long waiting time to reach customer service by phone.

2.4 Companies’ Posts on their Wall

Jordanian telecommunications companies post on average 2.3 posts per day to stay connected with their fans. However, their posting on categories differs. The posts coded into 7 categories: 1) Giveaways 2) National holidays 3) Societal 4) Product related 5) Informative 6) Questions 7) Other. The percentage of each category illustrated in figure 2.

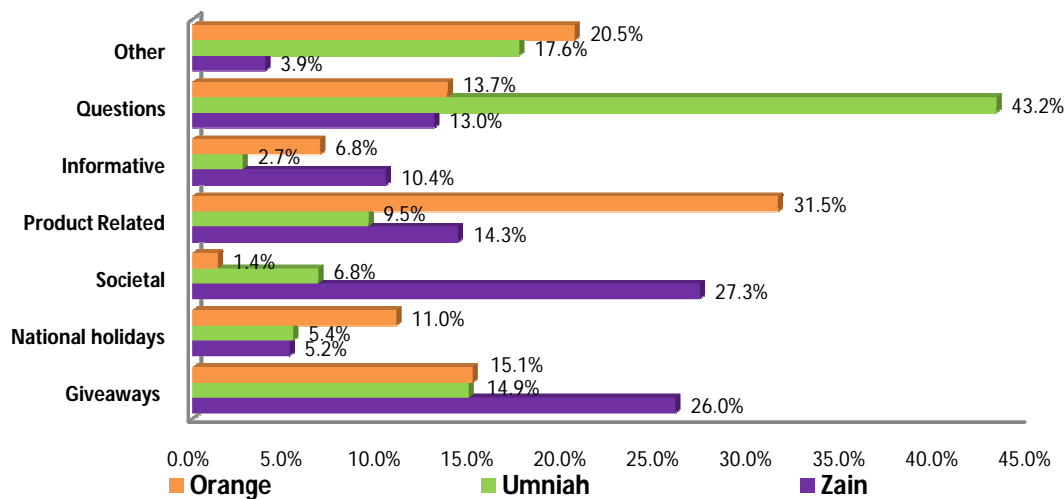


Figure2. Companies’ posts on wall

Jordanian telecommunications companies don’t push their advertising for products and services on social media. Only 14.3% of Umniah’s posts were advertising for their products and services, Orange push 31.5% while Zain had 14.3%, but when Zain do so, they refer the consumers to the official website, which attain integrated marketing communication, unlike Orange and Umniah as they isolate their Facebook from their main website.

As part of Kotlers’ philosophy on marketing, companies should focus on serving the needs of humans. Not just selling them and to benefit of individuals, groups, or society as a whole. (Kotler&Levy, 1969; Kotler, Roberto & Lee, 2002). Zain is the only company that focuses on societal issues as 27.3% of their posts were on social issues e.g. paying tuition fees for students, gathering consumers in a special day to plant trees, and funding remarkable small business ideas. Umniah dedicated 6.8% while Orange only dedicated 1.4%.

In the informative category, the companies tried to give useful in formations and tips for the consumer in general areas of life not related to companies’ products and services. While in the question category, companies asks general questions to stimulate engagement from fans and get some sort of market research. Umniah devoted 43.2% of their Facebookposting efforts on asking their fans questions. Giveaways were simply giving fans free stuff for their participation of contests or rewarding their activities.

2.5 FansEngagement with Brand’s Posts

The final section examine how fans engage with Jordanian telecommunications posts in Facebook in terms of likes, comments, and shares with each post category.

Table3. Average Engagement per Post Category

Post category	Giveaways	National holidays	Societal	Product Related	Informative	Questions	Other
AEPP for Zain	2034.5	982.3	423.0	476.2	477.1	1065.4	719.0
AEPP for Orange	315.9	206.3	30.0	200.4	240.0	266.7	269.5
AEPP for Umniah	213.7	332.3	175.4	122.0	278.0	262.0	254.5

Note: AEPP = Average engagement per post

As shown in table 3. Fans of Zain and Orange prefer to engage with giveaways the most, but in Umniah it is not the case, due to the way they post their giveaways.

The guess and win credit contests with Zain that ask fans to guess 4 digits of a prepaid card to win it, generated the most engagement between all the posts. Umniah trying to advertise for events by giving incentive to people who actually go to that event, but not encouraging people to engage with them in the Facebook. Also, asking question related preferences provokes fans to engage with brands. In contrary, it’s strange that societal posts generate the lowest engagement level as well as posts related to companies’ products and services. It’s important to note that 4 posts were excluded from the calculations due to the use of the paid “Promote” feature in Facebook that allows the post to be seen in all fans’ news feed. This features lead to extremely exaggerate the fans’ engagement.

3. Conclusion & Recommendations

Jordanian telecommunications companies in the mobile operatorssector utilize Facebook as a marketing communications tool to reach consumers in a transparent way. They don’t seem to control the messages on their page, as they let consumers speak freely and criticize their companies in public. Unlike the findings of McCorkindale (2010), Parsons (2013) that found global brands prevent fans from posting directly to their pages.

The behavior of each company differs, Zain show their social responsibility side in their posts. On the other hand, Orange focus more on increase the awareness for the services and products they offer. While Umniah trying to create some sort of personal relationships by asking personal questions to their fans, also it could be seen as marketing research process for future services. Jordanian telecommunications companies seems to follow the advice of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) for being active, honest and humble specially in responding to fans’ inquiries.

On average companies post 2.4 times per day, the majority of the posts were on picture format with a minor focus on text and videos. In addition, only Zain has sort of integration between Facebook and their official website, while Orange and Umniah lacks to achieve that opportunity.

Consumers engage the most with giveaways and surprisingly lowest with societal posts. They find it worthy to enter a contest for immediate giveaways. The guess and win credit contests of Zain generated the most engagement between all the posts. Creating such type of contests will increase the exposure and reach of the brands’ messages on Facebook.

Jordanian consumers seem to criticize and spread negative word of mouth more much more than praising the companies. On average, criticizing are 6 times more than praising. Consumers see an opportunity for customer services support on social media. As they keep asking questions regarding the products and services and seeking help for technical difficulties. Therefore, it is recommended to delegate some authorities to the page administrators for solving customers’ problems immediately.

Future research could compare how telecommunications companies in other countries use Facebook. Or how do brands utilize other social media tools such as Twitter, Blogs, Youtube and Google+.

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