Does ‘Liking’ A Brand Drive User Loyalty?

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59% of consumers have â€˜likedâ€™ a Facebook brand page in the past 6 months

When it comes to Facebook â€œlikes,â€• social network users are sending brand marketers mixed signals. An eVoc Insights study indicates 59% of Facebook users have â€œlikedâ€• a Facebook brand or company page in the past six months. Although this statistic may seem promising for brands, how â€œlikingâ€• a brand connects with consumer loyalty is still vague.

When surveyed by eVoc, 54% of Facebook users who â€œlikedâ€• the page of a brand or company that sells a product or service said they were somewhat or much more likely to purchase from that brand. The study confirms that the most â€œlikedâ€• pages are for food brands, TV shows, music, movies and clothing.

Although the eVoc Insight statistic suggests more than half of consumers are agreeable toward purchasing from the brands on Facebook, consumer behavior suggests otherwise. According to a study from the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute, an Australia-based marketing think tank, just 1% of fans of the biggest brands on Facebook engage with the brands on the site.

The Ehrenberg-Bass Institute study looked at Facebook metrics for the top 200 brands, and through an examination of activities such as â€œlikes,â€• comments, posts and shares, the research group found nothing substantial to link a brandâ€™s Facebook presence with loyalty.

Limited consumer engagement with brands on Facebook suggests there may be a disconnect between the reasons why consumers actually â€œlikeâ€• a brand and the reasons brands think consumers are â€œlikingâ€• their page. When the CMO C asked Facebook users in Q4 2011 about their expectations after â€œlikingâ€• a brand on Facebook, the top expectation (67%) was to be â€œeligible for exclusive offers.â€•

However, when the CMO Council asked marketers what they thought it meant when a consumer â€œlikedâ€• their brand page, a quarter of marketer respondents answered, â€œbecause they are loyal customers.â€•

The link between â€œlikesâ€• and loyalty remains unclear. Although consumers respond favorably about their likelihood to purchase from a brand they follow on Facebook, thatâ€™s not overly evident from their Facebook timelines. Marketers should keep in mind that for consumers, Facebook remains primarily a place to interact with peers and share experiences.

Although many consumers have opened up to brands that are present on Facebook, brand marketers should not expect they've earned consumer loyalty simply because a consumer has clicked the â€œlikeâ€• button.

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8 February 2012