Clothing Company Differentiation Through Social Media

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to analyze social media techniques utilized by some of the dominant clothing companies in the industry. This will provide a base of information to strategize a social media approach to increase followers for the Birds Apparel clothing company across multiple social media platforms.

This study investigated the impact social media marketing techniques had on consumer response, and their effectiveness in translating this into a paying customer. Collaborations with photographers, a revamped website, and giveaways were all used as methods to draw new followers. Results from data collected from surveys and on the Birds Apparel social media accounts and website indicated that social media platforms are essential in the success and growth of a clothing business. Along with approaches taken to directly increase followers via social media, word of mouth was paramount in the spread of this clothing company.
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CHAPTER 1

Purpose of the Study

With the boom of social media the last two decades, and because everyone and anyone has access to free means of marketing through various social media platforms, the clothing industry has become saturated with new start up companies. With these free and increasingly popular social media platforms comes the opportunity to bombard the general public with advertising. Social media has also allowed for direct targeting of specific audiences. Companies have capitalized on this free marketing from sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter and have utilized this as a means to establish and build upon their fan base in an interactive way. Since these marketing platforms are readily available, a company must have a specific course of action in order to not only successfully differentiate itself, but to utilize it in a way that maximizes their exposure to the public. The goal of this study was to determine the effectiveness of promoting my clothing brand through the use of differentiation in social media.

Ultimately, the entire customer experience is essential in promoting a brand that is to be successful. From the social media exposure that draws them to the company, to the functionality of the website and customer service— culminating in the experience when they receive the package and the clothing. This study analyzed clothing companies who have experienced success or failures as a result of their individual marketing campaigns implemented through social media. Aspects of differentiation were examined based on their success and, in turn, were drawn upon in order to formulate an effective marketing plan for my own company, Birds Apparel. This new environment created by social media’s presence in everyday
society has opened the door to opportunities for companies to start with little initial investment in fields such as marketing and advertising, and yet still experience success.

**Significance of the Study**

With this constant contact provided through social media, it is difficult for companies to find a way to differentiate themselves from the competition. Understanding how social media functions, and being able to apply it in a way that maximizes company reach, is paramount in the success of a start up clothing company. Additionally, understanding which media platforms have the biggest impact on the specified target market is essential to maximize this effort. Based on the clothing style and accompanying designs, Birds Apparel is centralized more around the youth culture with emphasis on the urban and hip-hop demographic. While the designs have an urban essence, the target audience is not restricted to this demographic and is intended to extend to the majority of the youth from ages 10-25. This intended audience ties in perfectly with the state of social media, which is dominated by the youth who have grown up accustomed to and intertwined with a society revolving around social media.

In order to achieve maximum reach across this audience, research was an essential component. Success of this start up clothing company revolves around differentiation and being able to stand out and establish a name for itself in this saturated market. Analysis of other companies effectively utilizing social media served as a basis for the types of approaches and innovative thinking in how to communicate most effectively with the intended demographic. Ultimately, the entire experience from capturing attention, through marketing and advertising, to delivery
of the final product all has a factor in the consumer’s likelihood to make a purchase and become a repeat customer. Understanding these factors and how to plan an effective marketing system determines a company’s success and will help increase company spread, social media following, and customer base and profits.

**Interest in the Study**

I started my clothing company, Birds Apparel, about a year ago and have been experimenting with different marketing and advertising promotions, primarily through social media. I want to explore the impacts of social media on consumer response, and see how coupling social media with a great user experience with the company can impact a business’ success. Studying and analyzing what successful clothing companies do should be the first step in any industry where a company is attempting to establish itself. Companies constantly produce marketing campaigns that either bring plentiful success or are ineffective, which provides valuable customer implemented experiences indicating how they react to certain approaches. Application into my own social media marketing for clothing releases allowed me to test, record, and analyze my own personal data to add to this study. It also provided me with the ability to make needed adjustments after the first clothing launch and institute these changes into the next release—providing an even more expansive body of data to draw conclusions upon. This research provided me with an effective structure to further develop and implement a business strategy centered on customer satisfaction and increased exposure to new individuals.
CHAPTER 2

Introduction

Streetwear is defined as “a genre of contemporary apparel, united by sportswear and military looks, and one that speaks to a spectrum of subcultures with emphasis on skateboarding and hip-hop” (Hundreds, 2011). Streetwear and its evolution as a style has a unique tie to this centuries assimilation with social networking. With the mass adoption of social media as a means of free advertising, social media has effectively blurred the lines between marketing and customer service. Social media has become a part of the customer experience, as it provides constant exposure and contact within the twenty-four-seven nature of social media platforms (“State of the Media,” 2012). With an influx of social media for clothing company exposure, focus comes on discovering ways to differentiate as a company. Having a better understanding of the resources and how to effectively communicate using these platforms is essential for success in today’s start up clothing industry.

The continued rise of the streetwear culture can be tied to the nature of social media. Social platforms provide a new channel of marketing that allows for any musician, skateboarder, or athlete to engage with their fans on a constant basis. It allows for the dissemination of information on what they are wearing, what they are listening to, and what they are working on—instantly communicating this to their community of followers via social media. As a clothing company, remaining relevant with the consumer base becomes as much about staying connected with fans on a daily basis as it is about continuing to deliver quality clothing with unique graphics. Analysis of clothing companies that have successfully utilized social media to grow their customer base provides a framework of strategy in order to
successfully promote one’s own brand. In particular, the companies who have had success through strategic planning and implementation, coupled with a differentiation factor, are the companies I drew approaches and innovation from.

**History of Social Media**

With the onset of the Internet came a more effective and globalized means of communication that in the early 2000’s gave birth to social media. This platform paved the way for social networking and content communities such as blogs and Facebook, making the ability to post photos, information, and any other content easy and readily accessible (Kaplan, 2010, p. 62). As the popularity of these sites boomed, businesses began to capitalize on the opportunity to connect with current and prospective customers. Clothing brands capitalized on this opportunity as well, implementing these platforms to expand their reach and maintain constant contact and advertising with consumers. The instant access provided by these networks allows for enhanced marketing, sales, public relations, and communications with customers (Sakfo, 2010, p. 21).

Facebook proved to be a pioneer and constant force as it instituted the rise of social media with its rapid explosion in popularity since its conception in 2004. It has continued its dominance as a premier social media site even a decade from its launch ("Social Media Website," 2014). With its massive number of subscribers, Facebook excels in promoting the growth of small businesses by providing pages businesses can build allowing fans to follow, share, and spread the company to their friends on this global platform.

This global power then expanded its reach with its 2012 acquisition of an up and coming social application known as Instagram. This application timed itself
perfectly with the rise in popularity of the smart phone, as its function solely revolves around the posting of pictures to a community of followers primarily through mobile devices. This acquisition created a symbiosis between the two companies, as Instagram’s membership increased almost twenty three percent after it was purchased, and Facebook too saw an increase in its membership base. This relationship provided yet another benefit, as Instagram accounts can be linked to Facebook so that all posted pictures also show up on the Facebook feed, creating even more exposure opportunities for businesses (“Social Media Websites,” 2014).

Twitter is yet another example of a social media site with a large following and the ability to provide an outlet for immediate exposure to the masses. This application took a slightly longer route to its current status and popularity, as it was founded in 2006 while smart phones were on the cusp of becoming a staple in our culture. Once the smart phone became a nearly universal item, Twitters popularity exploded as a mobile application, allowing for quick posts and pictures of everyday thoughts, ideas, and upcoming events. It also provided the ability to directly target audiences through direct tagging and hashtags to generate more views based on what people are looking for (“Social Media Websites,” 2014). With all of these mobile applications, the onset of the mobile device has only increased the prominence of society’s constant use and exposure to social media and marketing, creating even more of a necessity for clothing companies to establish a constant presence via these outlets.

While this study revolves around these three social media platforms, each platform provides a unique experience with a distinct way to connect with consumers. Twitter is an effective communication tool used for quick updates to
stay connected with the community of followers. With a restricted word count, each post is meant to serve as an update by an artist or clothing company on upcoming projects, releases, or day-to-day activities. While Twitter serves as more of a quick daily update, Instagram is a much more visual content platform with stronger emphasis on each post. For clothing brands, Instagram is utilized much more to display physical products. Effort is taken into posting quality photos that display the new clothing article, and these visuals have a strong influence on consumer decisions. Where Twitter serves to update the followers, Instagram serves to influence those fans to become customers through purchasing the products displayed. Lastly, Facebook is a culmination of the two sites that serves as a more formal community. Facebook allows the freedom to post photos and updates, a similar structure to that of a blog, to thoroughly inform followers. Posts can be made without restriction on length, updating the followers and detailing the products to come. Additionally, photographs can be added to these posts so that there are visuals along with supporting content to communicate a brand’s products and vision. Effective implementation of all three platforms provides constant engagement and interaction with fans and potential customers.

**History of Streetwear**

The concept of streetwear first developed in the early 1980’s with a lot of influence coming from the rising urban, hip-hop, and rap culture scene. Bobby Hundreds, of the prominent clothing company The Hundreds, defines streetwear as “a genre of contemporary apparel, united by sportswear and military looks, and one that speaks to a spectrum of subcultures with emphasis on skateboarding and hip-hop.” With the progression of fashion, particularly this genre categorized as
streetwear, this definition has become blurred to incorporate a wide range of designs, styles, and fits of the clothing. Ultimately, streetwear is and will forever be rooted in two origins: Graphic T-shirts and exclusivity (Hundreds, 2011).

![Figure 1: Streetwear Graphic Tee](image1)

![Figure 2: Birds Apparel Graphic shirt](image2)

Companies starting streetwear brands begin with the basics, t-shirts with graphics emulating their logo, and then expand from there to outerwear, hats, and anything else they choose to develop. What creates the mass appeal from fans of these companies, however, and what drives the prices some companies are able to charge for items is exclusivity. This concept of limited quantities is a driving force in sales for companies, as fans want to wear something that not everyone will have. The sense of being one of the exclusive wearers of an item has had a major impact on the success and growth of the streetwear culture that has become so prevalent.

**Utilizing Social Media to Build a Brand**

With the plethora of social media sites available in today’s culture, knowing which ones to use to reach your target audience is a must. Companies must be selective and only involved on platforms most utilized by the target audience. This is done to avoid wasting efforts on marketing with applications that do not have a
following from the desired audience. This is why identifying key people and organizations that can inform a desired consumer base is so vital. This is why “the most essential tools are those that help companies understand what matters to their customer experience, which is today’s primary source of competitive advantage” (Schawbel, 2014). Understanding your company vision and identifying your ideal target audience are essential in honing in on the direction you wish to take your company. Having a fully developed concept will allow for ease of research into the understanding the target customer needs and in determining which social media tools are beneficial or irrelevant to a particular business.

Through analyzing the successes of other established clothing companies, the primary themes that stand out surround how well you can build and communicate your brand’s culture initially and how you can continue to build excitement for your product’s for each release. Michael Pino, (2013) owner of the brand Acropolis relates the importance of using social media to build a fan base and clearly establish a story and vision to connect with fans. Building this fan base begins with establishing a steady following prior to releasing products, which serves to create a potential for new followers and new customers via “liking” and sharing of photos and information about the company. Having this fan base prior to releasing products provides a starting point for the sharing of products. Twenty six percent of people are more likely to pay attention to an advertisement posted by one of their social network acquaintances (State of Media). Essentially, social media platforms link the “likes” and interests of one another’s social network acquaintances, which provides an excellent opportunity for companies to raise brand awareness (Schawbel, 2014).
The constant nature of social media has created the ability to maintain a personal connection with fans and potential customers (“Dennis Todisco of Diamond,” 2013). The head of social media and marketing for the prominent Diamond Supply Co., Dennis Todisco has utilized social media and its ability for mass exposure as a way to propel the company to the top of the streetwear industry. His early adoption and implementation of social media was used to create “an open two-way street” with customers. He values these platforms for being able to create genuine fan to fan and owner to fan interaction, which makes a customer feel part of the brand lifestyle. This personal touch and ability to interact with fans on a one on one basis is a key feature in social media that allows for anybody to check a company’s feed and within minutes get an overview of the company, culture, and products available. To further enhance customer experience and personal appeal, giving insight into the daily lives of employees and owners in addition to product promotion establishes a sense of brand loyalty and appearance as more than simply a brand for money (“Manuel Rappard of RPMWEST,” 2013).

**Differentiating a Brand**

“The initial stages of social media were about showing up and experimenting; in the next chapter, organizations will strive to find their point of variance” (Mahapatra, 2013). Establishing that point of difference becomes a driving factor in the success or failure of a clothing company. Brand failure often comes as a result of a lack of innovation personal investment in the brand. Brands copying what they see a successful brand do, do not stand out and are essentially “playing catch up with trends.” Some brands even choose to outsource their social media, removing the sense of self and vision within the brand and creating disconnect in engagement
with customers (“Dennis Todisco of Diamond,” 2013). The streetwear culture is based on the concept that your customers want to feel part of your brand, and by outsourcing or copying others brands you are eliminating the essence of differentiation and removing the personal connection they feel.

In order to build a fan base and continue to draw new customers to your company via social media, there are a number of approaches that can have a major impact. Almost all of the top 50 streetwear companies heavily use sponsors, whether they are musicians, celebrities, or skateboarders, to help with spread and exposure through exploiting their social media sites to draw attention the brand (Hundreds, 2011). Often these sponsors have a large following and can promote a brand that may not otherwise be able to reach a customer through their own social media profile. Clothing is provided for free to the sponsor in order to grow the brand presence to new markets (Figure 3). This provides the ability for a fan of an artist or celebrity to find a new brand and provides instant marketing for the clothing company.

Figure 3: Artist Curren$y wearing Diamond Supply Co. sponsored clothes
Another approach taken by many companies to increase brand awareness revolves around a mutual benefit for both brands. Collaborations with other companies draw upon others followings to expand. Each brand’s social platform creates a kind of cross branding that allows fans of one brand to find another one they may have not previously known of or followed. One of the most monumental examples of a successful collaboration is that of Diamond Supply Company’s collaboration with powerhouse, Nike, which skyrocketed popularity and put the brand in the spotlight of a vast majority of the public (Hundreds, 2011). Nike benefited through incorporating the limited edition mentality brought from the streetwear culture and gained the additional fan base brought to them through the urban following of Diamond Supply Company. Diamond’s popularity as a result of this collaboration grew immensely as Nike’s stature catapulted them to the top of the streetwear industry and exposed Nike fans all over to their brand. Ultimately, this collaboration birthed the Diamond Dunk, arguably the most famous Nike Dunk of all time (Hundreds, 2011). This mutually beneficial collaboration brought exposure and increased fan base to both companies through cross dissemination of the product and release dates enhanced via social media.

Further along the lines of variance, differentiation through social media can come in the form of identifying and establishing your own style that can be portrayed through these platforms. Strong visuals and look books, which display products and the company culture, have become a key area of distinction between companies as various approaches can help highlight a company in a sea of startup brands. The company, Bloodbath (2013), looks to constantly push the boundaries with creativity. Ramon Cho of Bloodbath relates the different ways in which people
look at look books; some want to focus on the garments and details, while others want a story to dive into (Figure 4). Finding this point of differentiation to break from traditional look books and product shots can help a company stand out from competitors. This continued progression by companies such as Bloodbath, who push the boundaries of visuals, creates a strong brand appeal from customers. Blackscale is another company who breaks tradition in many aspects of its visual collections (Figure 5). Its dark colors, tones, and look books provide a strong visual appeal and unique product shots divulged across their social media outlets (Hundreds, 2011). The unique approaches taken by these brands’ pop in comparison to others, attracting the consumer as they filter through the constant imagery put out by companies via these social platforms.

Innovation and risk taking can also lead to the creation of a niche that allows for a company to establish its name and see success. Differentiation and creation of a successful brand can also come from outside the box thinking, in which companies extend a brand to more than just the clothing. The company, 40ozNY built a strong audience through creation of a social media Tumblr page. Through their success with the page, they were eventually able to capitalize on the fan base they had established, as they converted their followers into customers by producing their
own products (“Dennis Todisco of Diamond,” 2013). This reverse engineering of the typical brand building structure allowed them to acquire a large audience before making the move towards product development and releases. In essence, they created a potential market before ever establishing a brand. Another company, created by Jeff Staple, took a wholesome art approach to establish themselves as a top brand. Jeff Staple created both a clothing company as well as a design firm: Staple Pigeon and Staple Design. He strategically blended his design firm and clothing company through continuous cross marketing on social media, which exposed his art fans to the clothing brand and vice-versa (Hundreds, 2011). This innovative technique coupled art and design with clothing, essentially blending what defines streetwear. He was also able to create two separate markets as some fans came for the art and others came for the clothing—consequently mixing them together so that he expanded his customer base through this duel promotion.

**Conclusion**

Social media is a valuable facet necessary to stay current in today’s mass marketing world, providing constant exposure through mediums we humans constantly interact with. The greatest aspect is that utilizing and building a brand through these marketing ploys costs next to nothing, and allow creativity and differentiation to run free (“Dennis Todisco of Diamond,” 2013). Regardless of how small the brand, differentiating yourself through unique approaches can establish success. Ultimately while differentiation may continually build a company following, retaining the personal connection with fans and staying true to self is vital in building brand loyalty and ensuring long lasting success.
CHAPTER 3

The goal of this study was to determine the effectiveness of promoting my streetwear brand through the use of differentiation in social media. Insight into methods of differentiation were achieved through analysis of existing companies with strong social media presence, which translated to their success. These distinctions assisted in initiating a unique marketing plan created to bring increased exposure and recognition to Birds Apparel. The objective of this study was to understand the type of social media content that most successfully promoted my streetwear brand.

Data Collection Plan

The target market comprised the audience examined throughout this study to determine how the implemented social media strategies affected followers and company sales. There are numerous factors that can go into an increase or decrease in sales. However, since there were new strategies initiated into the social media promotion, this research focused on the changes in followers and sales since the beginning of their implementation. These changes included collaboration with two photographers with established followings and planned and executed build up prior to the product release (Appendix A).

The project was essentially a two-pronged experiment, where data was analyzed and evaluated after the first clothing product launch, and then once again was evaluated after adjustments and additions were made for the second release. The second release involved a further collaboration with the new photographers as well as additional exposure provided by a contest giveaway implemented on the Instagram account. Connection was also made with blogs and a few sites in order to
increase exposure to new individuals based on their following. Data came in the form of monitoring and recording traffic coming to the Birds Apparel Facebook page, as well as the actual company website. Both have programs that monitor views, and Facebook takes it a step further by tracking the number of “likes”, shares, and which posts drew the most interest. Additionally, Instagram followers were monitored to see if there was an increase in followers and individual post “likes”. Lastly, qualitative data was examined through short surveys customers and followers filled out. The sample size for this survey consisted of fifty individuals. The survey questions were developed after monitoring the progression of the first release and related to the effectiveness and methods used to promote my brand. The survey was pilot tested to ensure unbiased questions were presented to each individual. Questions asked included the impact the collaboration with the photographers and additional incentives had on an individual's purchase or follow decision. Additionally, there was a free response section added for extra comments or recommendations not covered by the survey questions (Appendix B). This survey aided in evaluating the effectiveness of the new release techniques and what aspects drew them to follow or make a purchase.

**Data Analysis Plan**

The largest basis for analysis was weighted on the difference in numbers of followers and customers from both before the social media implementations and after. This difference was helpful in determining the success of the first product launch, which revolved around a carefully planned and executed social media campaign. The responses based on the survey served as supplemental data to analyze what was and was not successful within the plan. This was then utilized to
alter the social media strategy for the second clothing release in order to bring continued success. The numbers and increased social media and website traffic were then evaluated after the second release to determine the overall success of these strategic social media actions.

**CHAPTER 4**

Dissemination of the first and second clothing releases via social media, as well as the accompanying surveys, yielded information on the effectiveness of various methods in expanding the follower base of Birds Apparel. Information was drawn from metrics found both on the Instagram and Facebook accounts, as well as the web store itself. These results showed the increase in exposure, followers, and interaction that took place between the Birds Apparel accounts and the potential customer base.

The initial survey attempted to determine how an individual had come to make a purchase on the website. Customers who bought a product from the online store were prompted to answer whether they had found the Birds Apparel website from one of the following: Instagram, Facebook, or word of mouth. Of the purchases made online, the survey revealed that the largest number of individuals had found the site through word of mouth. Twenty-four customers found the site through word of mouth, with Instagram second at fourteen people. Lastly, the Facebook account directed six individuals to the site leading to a purchase. This survey indicated that Instagram was the more effective of the two social media platforms in turning followers to customers. However, the large constituent of customers who found the web site through word of mouth left open the need for further data to understand where the most site traffic was coming from.
The first release, and subsequent survey administered helped to narrow down the impact various social media marketing methods had in expanding followers and gaining paying customers. The first release was a late winter clothing release consisting of both long sleeve shirts as well as hooded sweatshirts. Collaboration with a photographer was utilized to tap into another individuals follower base and convert them into followers of Birds Apparel’s social media platforms. Both Facebook and Instagram accounts publicized the seasonal release, and photos were posted incrementally in the weeklong build up to the release date. Additionally, a new website was implemented at the time of the release to provide a greater professional appearance for the company.

The collaboration with an established individual with his own follower base created additional exposure for Birds Apparel. Before and after comparisons of Instagram followers showed an increase from 664 to 703 followers, an increase of ~5.8% in followers. Additionally, the average number of likes generated on each Instagram post prior to the release was 44.39 likes. After the new clothing release and added exposure from the collaboration, the subsequent photos averaged 77.46 likes. This significant increase in followers as well as likes per photo was promoted by the more professional nature of the photographs (Appendix B: Q5).

Facebook metrics were able to not only portray the number of followers, but also the amount of exposure each new post received. Facebook’s structure provided the unique opportunity to expose non-followers to the Birds Apparel Facebook page. While followers of the page itself only slightly increase as a result of the first release, the average exposure of each post was amplified. Followers increased from 317 to 332, but the average number of exposure grew from 455 people reached
prior to the release, to 627.8 per post after the first release. One post within the first release even reached as high as 1,100 individuals exposed to a single post (Appendix C: 3). This spike in exposure per post translates to greater individuals seeing the lookbook photos and products offered on the website. It also provides a direct link to the website, which allows for the opportunity to turn an exposure into a direct customer. This exposure did translate into a growth in sales for Birds Apparel. Two of the four products released online completely sold out within the first week and a half of this release, while the remaining products sold down to just a few remaining pieces in the following weeks. This was an accomplishment that the company had yet to experience in such a rapid timespan.

The website metrics provided additional insight on exposure to the company website, directed from both social media platforms and word of mouth. Prior to the first release, a more professional website was implemented to complement the higher quality photographs used as a result of the collaboration with a photographer. With the old website, an average of 50 individuals per week accessed the site, with occasional spikes to approximately 75 viewers corresponding to dates posts were made on Instagram and Facebook (Appendix C: 1). Following the new release and simultaneous launch of the new website, weekly viewers increased to 100-125 per week, averaging 500 views per month (Appendix C: 5). This increase in actual website views was a valuable metric in understanding the impact the collaboration, new website, and overall increased professional appearance had on consumer perception. Viewing the website is the final stage, as an individual links to the website primarily through either the Instagram or Facebook accounts. Thus, they were interested enough to further explore the company by going to the
website, getting them one step closer to converting them from a follower to a paying customer. This was supported by the fact that online sales increased compared to the prior website.

Following the first release, a more detailed survey was administered to conclude the effectiveness of the release as well as determine improvements for the second release (Appendix B). Once again, the survey question regarding how the individual found Birds Apparel resulted in a majority stating word of mouth. This implies that new followers largely found the company through those already following Birds Apparel. Of the 55 survey responses, 47 people answered they follow Birds Apparel on Instagram, while 32 said they follow via Facebook. Here, while most found the company through word of mouth and Instagram, they have made the conscious decision to stay updated via Instagram and Facebook at similar rates (Appendix B: Q2).

Questions were then asked regarding the changes made to the website layout and photography collaboration. The overall consensus was that the majority of individuals were split in the “agree” and “strongly agree” categories when asked if the new website and photos provided and increased professional appearance (Appendix B: Q4, Q5). This was supported by the final question, which displayed 52 of 55 survey responses with a positive reflection of the new release methods. Data showed that 32 of the 55 “strongly agreed” that these changes were positive for the company direction, as another 20 “agreed”. The increased professional direction of the company along with collaboration aided in increasing followers and exposure on the social media platforms.
The second release built off of the new website and professional collaboration, with added variants to determine their effectiveness at furthering company exposure and increasing social media following. The second release featured two new collaborations with photographers who also had their own following, as well as an Instagram contest giveaway to promote follower and brand interaction. This contest required followers to tag their friends on a Birds Apparel contest photo to draw traffic to the Instagram page (Appendix A). This decision was based on previous research that stated that twenty six percent of people are more likely to pay attention to an advertisement posted by one of their social network acquaintances (State of Media). Having their friends tag them was a method used to draw them to check out the account.

While just 11 of the 55 individuals in the survey answered that giveaway contests led to intent to purchase (Appendix B: Q3), this method of promotion was utilized as a means to gain a following. It was intended that this giveaway would link follower’s friends to the site, turning them into followers and eventually paying customers. While there was a visible increase in followers on the Instagram account, the contest and subsequent steps taken in the second release fell short of expectations. Projections were based on the previous release and the response of gaining 39 followers in the first release, where it was expected to meet or exceed these numbers following this release. Followers of the Instagram account increased from 703 to 726 despite 36 individuals each tagging 3 of their friends on the contest post. An increase of 26 followers is positive and the contest had an impact on attracting new followers as intended, but the response expectations were higher.
The weekly website page view however, was higher than the average of the last release. This second release took place on May 23rd, and after a week of data, the site views reached a high of 346 on May 24th (Appendix C: 6). Added followers from the first release compounded with followers from this giveaway and release meant a greater audience to publicize to. This website received more traffic from the second release, built off of the larger established following. While the Instagram follower increase for the second release was lower than the previous, the collaboration and giveaway contest managed to generate traffic to the website in greater numbers than still had been achieved prior to these releases. The overall social media marketing campaign, along with word of mouth from the two releases made this attempt at attracting new followers to Birds Apparel a success.

CHAPTER 5

Differentiation of a brand becomes a challenge in the present environment where free marketing tools are available at any individuals’ disposal via social media. In order to accomplish its purpose, established brands were researched to understand past marketing ploys that implemented social media in order to gain followers and ultimately customers. This background research was then reflected when implementing a strategy aimed at distinguishing Birds Apparel and increasing its social media presence and following. The ultimate goal of the research, product releases, and data analysis was to learn, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of social media and its perception on a start up brand.

Beginning with an understanding of the purpose of the study, further research concluded the importance of social media as a necessary marketing tool. It allows for constant interaction, and in this globally connected environment, failing
to utilize social platforms make marketing your brand impossible. With an understanding of the importance of constant connection via social media, research on some of the top streetwear brands was conducted to understand how they have grown as a company alongside the continual growth in popularity of social media. Social media marketing techniques were studied from top companies such as Diamond Supply Co., The Hundreds, and Staple Pigeon. The techniques, product releases, and collaborations promoted through social media allowed them to increase following while bolstering their social accounts as an extension of their brand culture.

The research conducted on other companies guided the strategic releases for Birds Apparel. Instagram and Facebook were selected as the main outlets for promotion, and collaborations with other individuals as well as giveaways were implemented to increase following. A change to a new website, and increased professionalism of the product and lookbook photos also took place. Overall, the applied strategies were effective in gaining followers, increasing likes, and converting individuals into paying customers. Followers on both Instagram and Facebook increased after both releases, and the metrics analyzed from the website showed a spike in website views following changes made for the first clothing release.

These overall successful releases showed the power of social media and the effect a proper marketing strategy can have on customer perception and building a following. The results also showed how large an impact word of mouth has on gaining followers. The early research showed the importance of strategies such as collaborations and sponsorships, but dealt very little with how exposure grows
through friends telling friends about a brand they like. Results from the survey supported the findings that individuals find brands through friends. This highlighted the importance of constantly interacting with followers via social media. Regularly releasing posts and pictures, and responding to fans questions and comments builds brand commitment. This translates into an additional form of promotion where the customer advertises for you through telling friends and tagging them in photos or posts, linking them to Birds Apparel social platforms. This form of advertisement proved to be a major way exposure was built throughout the course of this study.

The preliminary research conducted on social media, and the ways established brands have taken advantage of these outlets to promote growth proved beneficial in the success of Birds Apparel’s implementation. Collaborations, a revamped website, and central themes in each release helped differentiate this company and gain followers. While the first release had a greater response in increasing overall following, both releases were successful in promoting the brand in a way that influenced purchases. This professional base and established social media following will allow for continual growth, aided in particular by word of mouth, as the company strategizes and executes future releases.
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bloodbath/


APPENDIX A

Implemented Strategy:

Release 1: Late Winter Release

• Photo Shoot Collaboration
• Photo Posting to Instagram & Facebook prior to release
  o Week long buildup before drop
• New Website launch
  o Switch from Weebly template to Squarespace website
  o Utilize new photos taken through collaboration
  o Upon online purchase, prompt one question survey on how customer found out about Birds Apparel: Instagram, Facebook, word of mouth
• Analyze Facebook, Instagram, and new website metrics
• Administer online customer survey on direction of Birds Apparel after first release

Release 2: Spring/Summer Release

• Collaboration with 2 photographers
• Week Long build up posting photos and information on social media accounts
• Publicize giveaway contest
  o Post giveaway contest photo on Instagram
  o Prompt followers to like and tag 3 non followers on the photo to draw traffic to the Instagram account
  o Announce winner Sunday
• Release Spring/Summer clothes after build up and just before contest ends
• Take metrics from Instagram and website results
APPENDIX B

Survey:

How did you first find out about Birds Apparel?

Answered: 48   Skipped: 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>14.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of Mouth</td>
<td>69.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flyers</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Social Media sites are you following Birds Apparel on?

Answered: 55  Skipped: 0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>58.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>85.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumblr</td>
<td>3.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>5.45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 55
What promotions have the biggest influence on your intent to purchase?

Answered: 54  Skipped: 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product Giveaways</td>
<td>20.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discounts/Sales</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy on Get one Free</td>
<td>51.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>5.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 54
Q4

The new website gave a more professional appearance

Answered: 55  Skipped: 0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Weighted Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(no label)</td>
<td>3.64%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>3.64%</td>
<td>49.00%</td>
<td>43.64%</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q5

The new photos on the website and Instagram added to the professional look of the company

Answered: 55  Skipped: 0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Weighted Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(no label)</td>
<td>3.64%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>7.27%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>49.09%</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, changes to the website are positive changes for the company direction

Answered: 55  Skipped: 0

How likely is it that you would recommend this company to a friend or colleague?

Answered: 54  Skipped: 1

Detractors (0-6)  Passives (7-8)  Promoters (9-10)  Net Promoter® Score

13%  26%  61%  48
APPENDIX C

Website & Facebook Metrics:

1. Previous Website page visits

2. Facebook Likes, Comments, Shares of posts
3. Facebook: Number of Individuals reached per post

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Post Description</th>
<th>Likes</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Reaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>03/08/2015</td>
<td>8:03 pm</td>
<td>Little bit of everything. Lookbook shots, tan photos, &amp; some exploration shots <a href="http://www.birdsapparel.com">www.birdsapparel.com</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/01/2015</td>
<td>7:20 pm</td>
<td>New Sale, New Products Limited Quantities &amp; No Restocks. Get yours before they're gone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.1K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/25/2015</td>
<td>11:09 pm</td>
<td>Birds Apparel's cover photo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/25/2015</td>
<td>11:00 pm</td>
<td>Don't forget about the Hoodies This Sunday 2/28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/22/2015</td>
<td>8:26 pm</td>
<td>2/28 Late Winter Release Longsleves &amp; Hoodies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>919</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Locational breakdown of followers on Facebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Your Fans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>San Luis Obispo, CA</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Anselmo, CA</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco, CA</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfax, CA</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boulder, CO</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Rafael, CA</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles, CA</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isla Vista, CA</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Cruz, CA</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis, CA</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. New Website First release site visits

**POPULAR CONTENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>1 DAY</th>
<th>2 DAYS</th>
<th>3 DAYS</th>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>MONTH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lookbook</td>
<td>34.43%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>29.90%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Products</td>
<td>9.28%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>6.59%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bay Dreams: Cardinal</td>
<td>5.57%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripted Hoodie: Navy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripted Hoodie: Forest Green</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emblem Tank: Black</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emblem Tee: Cardinal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

499 Total Page Views

6. Site Visits for release 2

**OVERVIEW**

Light Grey: Site Visits
Medium Grey: Individual pages visited
Dark Grey: Audience size per page