Produce Meets Pinterest

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Introduction

Social media use continues to rise among a variety of audiences (deVries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012; Hambrick & Kang, 2015). Although late to the party, agriculture has witnessed the tool's power to connect businesses with consumers (Abrams & Sackmann, 2014). Companies use social media to build positive, long-lasting relationships by endowing the public with information concerning the products they purchase. Because of the weight social media carries as an influence on purchasing decision, agriculturists are using them at greater rates to promote their goods and services (Topp, Stebner, Barkman & Baker, 2014). In fact, the California produce industry has created a foothold across social media platforms, enabling large and small produce companies to create greater brand awareness and achieve a wider consumer response.

While Facebook leads in social media platforms, Pinterest continues to gain popularity. With over 150 million users worldwide, Pinterest shows no sign of slowing (Koh, 2016). The ability to explore content through rich visual images is the platform's charm. Food-related content is the most pinned category (Smith, 2015) and foodies aren't the only users capitalizing on the trend. Agriculture's contributions are helping to further shape the visual landscape (Topp et al., 2014).

Conceptual Framework

To gain a better understanding of agriculture's presence on Pinterest, Topp et al. (2014) completed a content analysis of 428 agricultural industry accounts. Local producers comprised nearly 60% of industry pinners. When examined by industry sector, livestock related accounts were the most prevalent (53.7%). However, among produce-related pinners, vegetable accounts topped the list (15%) followed by specialty crops (9.1%), fruits (6.8%), and nuts (4.7%). In follower rankings, specialty crops topped the list with vegetables in a distant third place behind livestock. Regarding content generation, livestock had a commanding lead, with vegetables and specialty crops in a close race to for the second and third positions.

Pinterest's popularity among produce companies is on the incline. In 2013, the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) partnered with former First Lady Michelle Obama and Sesame Street to launch the *Eat Brighter* Campaign. The movement's goal was to make a change in the eating habits of America's children. Produce companies have placed Elmo, Cookie Monster and Abby on produce packaging, signage and ads as motivation for consumers to add more fruits and vegetables to their diets (Miller, 2014). Many of these vibrant images landed on Pinterest boards.

Avocados from Mexico and Duda have credited Pinterest with providing consumers with access to new ways to integrate these commodities into their diets (Strailey, 2015; Strailey, 2016). Most consumers only enjoy avocados through guacamole or munch on raw celery with or without peanut butter. Pinterest offers produce companies a new platform to supplement their marketing efforts and engage consumers by sharing recipes and tips for unconventional uses.

Methodology

Located in Salinas, California, Tamimura & Antle (T&A) is a grower-shipper specializing in vegetable production and is an industry leader in the field as well as in digital and social media use (C. Antle-Wilson, personal communication, June 22, 2016). T&A maintains a vibrant presence on Facebook (over 25,2600 page likes), Twitter (1,604 followers), Instagram (4,503 followers and 509 posts), LinkedIn (2,200 followers), and YouTube (24 video posts with one

garnering over 179,496 views). With Pinterest, the produce giant maintains 20 virtual boards, each displaying recipes featuring produce they grow and ship, company news, and other agricultural topics of interest to consumers (Pinterest, 2017). To capture a better picture of produce industry Pinterest activity, this study profiled Tanimura and Antle's (T&A), customer engagement through the platform. The objective for this study was to analyze the company's Pinterest account using Pinterest Analytics and provide insight about Pinterest's impact on the company's digital marketing plan.

To complete an analysis of T&A's Pinterest account, permission and log in information was acquired through consultation with the company's marketing manager. Next, the Pinterest Analytics program was used to export and analyze engagement data (Banducci, 2014). Analytic reports were generated for the months of June, July, and August 2016. Analytics for this project included the amount of views, repins, likes, comments, and domain impressions. Based on the data analysis, motivation regarding consumer activity and digital traffic movement from Pinterest to the company's website were explored (Evans-Cairo, 2012; Honigman, 2013).

Results

T&A Pinterest Analytics were gathered and reviewed for a three-month span. When compared with the company's presence on other social media platforms, Pinterest use and content available were low. In August 2016, T&A's Pinterest account had 157 followers. The metrics captured repins and pin impressions, which include likes, reach and clicks. The average number of repins per month was a low of 10, while average monthly pin impressions were 2,008. Of the three months analyzed, T&A did not have consistent repin ratios. Using each month's average repins with 157 followers, T&A had a 4.77 in June, 1.757 in July and only a .65 repins ratio in August.

Isolated Pinterest successes were noted in August, when user repins of T&A content generated 1,119 impressions with 543 derived from the company's news post board alone. Specifically, a pin about red onions generated 344 impressions and the repins people saved from T&A's account generated 594 impressions with 376 from clicks on "A Special Buckaroos Rodeo" link.

Conclusions/ Implications/ Recommendations

In order to improve Pinterest use for T&A, repins need to increase. While impressions can lead to pins, repining places the content on users' boards, and shares it with the users' networks (Pinterest, 2017). When a recipe featuring T&A produce is repined, more viewers are exposed to the ingredient list and have a greater likelihood of taking action to purchase the fresh ingredients. Extending the reach by finding the sales data associated with the timing of pins could formulate Pinterest use connections to sales generations.

The analytics measured and calculated determined Pinterest is a viable piece of T&A's digital marketing plan. Further research is recommended to showing engagement of specific pins and tracking return on investment of those consumer Pinterest users. While purposeful through consumer attraction, T&A will benefit knowing if Pinterest results in an increase of products purchased as a result of engagement with the pins they feature.

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