WHAT MAKES FACEBOOK CONTENT ENGAGING?
AN ANALYSIS OF CONTENT FROM THE 14 BIG TEN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study was to investigate different factors’ effect on the level of engagement of Facebook content. The two major factors studied were “Content Medium” (whether content contained text, photos, links, or videos) and the “Nature of Content” (the theme associated with the post, such as athletics, research, student life, etc.). The effect of text and video length on engagement was also considered. Posts were placed into the following categories in terms of “Content Medium”: Text, Text & Photo, Text & Link, Text with Link & Photo, and Video. Posts were also categorized by “Nature of Content,” which included over 60 possibilities (only categories with a minimum of 30 posts were examined). To gain insight about effects on engagement, Pairwise Comparisons of mean engagement rate were conducted for both “Content Medium” and “Nature of Content.”

APPLICATION TO CONTENT STRATEGY
Content is often posted without evidence of engagement potential. This study was designed to shed light on potential content strategies for University Facebook pages (as well as a broader scope of organizations with similar content goals) in terms of how content should be shared (Content Medium) and what themes content should contain (Nature of Content).

• Ensure the majority of content is either a mix of text and photo and/or plain text (these were the two most engaging types of content).
• Limit the amount of links used in posts (posts containing links were the least engaging).
• Limit the number of words in a post containing text to under 50 (posts with 0-50 words were significantly more engaging than posts with 51-100 words).
• Capitalize on fan base interests in varsity sports, campus scenery, and holidays (these are the most engaging content themes).

STUDY DESIGN
• Data from ≈1,400 Facebook posts was collected from the 14 Big Ten University pages
• Posts were codified according to content medium (text, photo, text/photo, text/link, text/link/photo, and video) and nature of content (theme associated with post)

MEASURING ENGAGEMENT
Content engagement was measured by dividing the sum of “Likes,” “Comments,” and “Shares” by the number of fans on the day of a post.

Preliminary Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Medium</th>
<th>Mean Engagement Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text &amp; Photo</td>
<td>0.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text &amp; Link</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text &amp; Link &amp; Photo</td>
<td>0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video</td>
<td>0.022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The percentage of total fans who engaged with a post is referred to as “Engagement Rate.”

At least 48 hours was allotted between recording a page’s fan base and any content uploaded on the same day.

Engagement Rate + Likes + Comments + Shares = Total Fans

CODIFYING CONTENT - METHODOLOGY

Page: University of Iowa
Date of Post: Feb. 5, 2015
Content Medium: Text (between 51-100 characters) and Photo
Nature of Content: “Throwback/School History”
Likes + Comments + Shares = 350
Fan Base on Feb. 5, 2015 = 83,219
Engagement Rate: 350 Impressions / 83,219 Total Fans = 0.4%
Mean Engagement Rate for “Throwback/School History” is 0.5%

Posts containing 0-50 characters were significantly more engaging than posts containing 51-100 characters.

Page: University of Iowa
Date of Post: Feb. 5, 2015
Content Medium: Text with Link & Photo
Nature of Content: “Throwback/School History”
Likes + Comments + Shares = 350
Fan Base on Feb. 5, 2015 = 83,219
Engagement Rate: 350 Impressions / 83,219 Total Fans = 0.4%
Mean Engagement Rate for “Throwback/School History” is 0.5%

Posts consisting of a combination of text and photo had a significantly higher mean engagement rate than all other types of content, except for plain text posts. Text & Photo and Plain Text posts accounted for only 25% of the recorded content.

Special thanks to Professor Bill Hedgcock for his mentorship throughout this study.