

Instagram Marketing: A Content Analysis of Top Malaysian Restaurant Brands

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Abstract

The use of social media among businesses grows tremendously as operators engage, and build relationships, with customers through social media. Drawing on the Diffusion of Innovations theory, this exploratory study investigates the adoption and implementation of Instagram in restaurant sector. However, this study focuses only Malaysia's top ten restaurant brands. Only seven of the ten restaurants have an Instagram account and the results suggest that early adoption may not lead into early implementation. The research findings are expected to help managers promote their pages on Instagram, and academically, this study expands the application of DOI theory into photo based social media application to predict the photo based social media adoption and implementation among restaurants.

Keywords: Instagram, restaurant, Malaysia, diffusion of innovations

1 Introduction

Social media have changed how consumers seek information, evaluate products, and give product feedback. In 2012, one of five of consumers searched Facebook for brand or product information, and almost 42% of consumers became social network friends with a brand for additional information (FleishmanHillard. 2012). Realizing the importance of social media for business, many operators now engage in social media to grab consumer attention and stay connected with their customers.

With over 200 million active monthly members, 20 billion shared photos, 1.6 billion likes daily, and 60 million average photos uploaded a day, Instagram, is perhaps the most popular image-based social medium for smartphones. Research on Instagram continues to increase but most studies tend to focus on individual use, such as the use of Instagram to share museum experiences and library engagement (Salomon. 2013). To the authors' knowledge, few studies investigate business use of Instagram.

Studies suggest that photos and videos help attract customer intention to purchase (Hautz et al. 2013). The restaurant industry, in particular, has been slightly slower than other businesses in using photo-based social media such as the Instagram (*The*

Huffington Post, 2013). Photos in gastronomy blogs and restaurant advertisement for example, help tourists to experience sensory appeal, creating mental impression and inspire them to plan visit to the restaurant (Wang, 2014)

The Diffusion of Innovations theory laid the theoretical foundation for this research notes. Using two research streams, adoption and diffusion modelling (Hashim et al. 2014) this study investigates the *adoption*, when the restaurant opened its account, and the *implementation*, how the restaurant uses its page. This paper begins with literature on diffusion of innovations theory followed by the methodology. Next, the results are presented before concluding with a discussion of the study's academic and managerial implications.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Malaysia Restaurant Industry: An Overview

To date, Malaysian tends to dine out due to several reasons. For example, with the current economic climate has led woman to participate in the Malaysian workforce and they have limited time for the meal preparation (Siew Heng & Khee Guan. 2007). Moreover, busier lifestyle has caused the demand of convenience food increases. In addition, dining out trend is one of the ways to socialize with their friends and family. As a result, the popularity of dining out culture has paved the way for the development of the restaurant industry in Malaysia. In 2010, the establishment of a restaurant in 2010 amounted 145, 320 establishments. Selangor recorded the highest number of restaurants establishments with 24, 233 establishments compared with other states followed by WP Kuala Lumpur and Johor which the number of establishment is 15, 801 and 15, 291 (Department of Statistics Malaysia. 2011).

2.2 Restaurant Marketing on Social Media

The rise of the Internet witnessed restaurants shifting their promotions from traditional advertising such as newspapers and brochures to online marketing. One of the first articles to discuss restaurant marketing on the Web concluded that Web marketing would become a necessity rather than an opportunity (Murphy et al.1996). Web sites help increase restaurant visibility, as consumers search for information online, but Web sites tend to one-way communication. Because of this limitation, restaurants are adding social media marketing that has higher interactivity than Web sites (Beese. 2011).

In the past few years, there has been a shift from text-based social media marketing to the rich photo-content social media marketing (Jennifer. 2014). Instagram is one of the popular photo-based social media sites for businesses to share pictures with their customers (Katherine. 2013). For example, Comodo Restaurant in Manhattan has implemented a new way to present the menu to their customers, called Instagram menu. The restaurant has created *#ComodoMenu* and added it to the bottom of the menu card. This new way of restaurant marketing encourages customers to add, share, and check out food offered at restaurants.

2.1 Diffusion of Innovations (DOI)

Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) describes the innovation adoption and implementation processes at both the individual and organisational levels (Roger. 2003). Organisational adoption studies investigate factors influencing the adoption of innovations, adoption rates and adopter categories while diffusion examines the implementation of technology in an organisation.

Related to innovation adoption and implementation, bandwagon effects accelerate technology adoption, while the leapfrog effect accelerates technology implementation. Bandwagon effects describe adopting a popular technology because of fad or fashion (McBride. 1997). Poorly designed hotel Web sites (Morosan & Jeong. 2008) and failure to reply to guests' enquiry are examples of assimilation gaps in Internet technology diffusion.

While bandwagon effects accelerate technology adoption, the leapfrogging leads to late adopters bypassing early adopters in effective technology use (Ismail et al. 2011). For instance, a study on Malaysian hotels website implementation found a non-linear website implementation pattern and late adopter hotels outperformed the early adopter hotels in website implementation (Hashim. 2014). This exploratory study examines the current adoption and implementation of Instagram among the top brand restaurants in Malaysia.

3 Methodology

This study uses Web content analysis to analyse the restaurants Instagram account. The content analysis, from 1-30 June 2014, drew on the top 10 restaurant brand Instagram accounts from top10Malaysia.com (RHA Media, 2012). Of the 10 restaurants, seven had an Instagram account. Table 1 below describes the restaurant sample. The adoption date, from instagram.com, is the date of the first image uploaded.

Table 1. Summary of restaurant background and Instagram information

Restaurant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Type	Fast food	Cafe	Fast food	Coffee Shop	Casual dining	Fast food	Casual dining
Began operation	1982	1998	1973	1999	1995	1981	1994
Specialty	Burger	Coffee	Fried chicken	White coffee	Sushi	Rice-based menu	Roast chicken
Outlets	250+	115+	500+	237+	80+	130+	93 +
Adoption Date	11 Sep 2012	18 Feb 2012	7 Mar 2013	5 Jun 2012	2 Oct 2012	25 Jun 2013	1Aug 2012
Page age as on Jun 2014-10-26 (in days)	657	863	480	725	271	370	698

Total photos	189	340	146	33	73	100	203
Total videos	3	2	12	0	0	1	3
No. of followers	4492	21,396	3734	198	4541	289	27,612

4 Results

Table 1 above illustrates how these seven brands implemented their Instagram pages. Of the seven restaurants, Restaurant G had the highest number of followers, 27,612, followed by Restaurant B with 21,396 followers. Restaurant D has the least number of followers, 198. Based on the adoption date, five restaurants started using Instagram in 2012, followed by the other two restaurants in 2013. Restaurant B has the oldest page age and Restaurant E has the youngest page.

Next, this study investigates the number of photos posted on the page until June 2014. Restaurant B had the most posts, 340 photos, since launching the page in 2012, followed by restaurants G (203 photos) and A (189 photos). Showcasing leapfrog effect, where late adopters performed better than early adopters, restaurants C and F have 146 and 100 photos, respectively, compared with less than 100 photo posts by restaurants D and E since 2012.

Concerning videos, restaurant C posted the most videos, 12 since the restaurant adopted Instagram in 2013. This result could be a leapfrog effect. Restaurant C surpassed the early adopters, restaurants A and G with three videos, restaurant B with two videos, and restaurant F with one video. Restaurants D and E did not post any videos.

5 Conclusion

Academically, this study adds to diffusion of photo-based social media marketing research particularly in Malaysia. As photos are worth a thousand words, customers can digest information easily by viewing a photo instead of reading text. Restaurants should keep their information updated and maintain an active online presence.

The results show only seven out of the top ten brands with an Instagram account. With it increasing popularity, photo-based social media presence seems to be very helpful in promoting restaurants. The results illustrate that early adoption does not necessarily lead to early implementation. Restaurants not updating their pages, D and E, may have jumped on the Instagram bandwagon, while Restaurant C exhibits technology leapfrogging in Instagram implementation versus the early adopters in number of video post.

Some limitations of the study should be highlighted. First, this study is limited to the top ten restaurants in Malaysia. Future research could replicate this study in other industries such as hotels, use a larger sample. Second, the absence of inter-coder reliability, other studies could also address a shortcoming of this exploratory study and check the inter-coder reliability (Krippendorff. 2012). Moreover, future studies

could also examine the number of photo sharing by customers and classify the photos and videos according to the types in order to elaborate more on restaurant's strategy.

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