

FACEBOOK - THE FINAL FRONTIER FOR TV FANDOM: A LURKER'S PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

Connecting to others whether it is via location or opinion is inherent to how society forms community. The technology of Web 2.0 and especially social media has opened a new avenue for creating communities online and marketing to such communities can lead to better communication between consumers and those producing the product. By engaging communities online those who market film and television shows can use this new avenue to better communicate with their fans and build better communities. Through the studying of three online fan pages on Facebook this paper observed how television and film companies are using this environment to market to their audience as well as what is working well and where improvement can be made.

Keywords

Online community, social media, television fandom, Facebook

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter increase the ways in which we can interact both personally and professionally. This advancement in technology has not only opened up new avenues for communication but has also changed the way we communicate and create online communities. Through this new technology there is an opportunity to share opinions with more than just our friends, opinions can potentially be shared with the whole population of the Internet with easy filter and respond technology.

In their 1998 paper, Nahapiet and Ghoshal highlight that social media by its intention and aim is designed to create communities. It allows these communities to be more specific and specialised than the ones we live in physically as it takes advantage of the nature of Internet technology. By enabling people to find others who share common interests and views communities can grow and expand beyond the physical constraints of geographical location. With the new technology of Web 2.0, social media platforms such as Facebook provide new ways to form communities.

The phenomenal success of facebook.com as the leader in the social media space has revolutionised how online communities are created and used. Facebook.com has grown quickly since it first went online in 2004 and has become the social network of choice. Experian Hitwise (2011) found the term “facebook” was the most searched term in the US for 2010 for the second year running. Google found, based on their aggregation of search queries, “facebook” was the tenth most searched term in 2010 and second most searched term in 2009 across the globe (google.com, 2011). This phenomenal success has made Facebook the largest platform for community online and a logical place for those with a common interest to share those interests online. One such passionate community interest is that of fans of television and film productions.

Those who share a strong interest in or admiration for a particular sport, art form, or famous person are more commonly referred to as fans (Oxford Dictionary, 2010). Fans have a very strong interest and passion in every minor detail of their interest and this passion is what binds a group of fans together. Fandom evolved from the passions of people following sport and sport personalities but has over the years come to include science fiction writing and with the invention of Television with media fandom in the early 1970s evolving with a focus on relationships between characters within television and movie media franchises (Coppa, 2006).

The “new technology” of social media and especially Facebook provides the ability to connect people more effectively. Some of the ‘older’ media such as television and film production are left with a challenge for their marketing and promotions departments in how to use this new environment to promote their products to their fans (Siapera, 2004).

Although there has been literature on how to promote using the web, there is little research into the use of social media itself to promote and create community for Television shows and Films. The research question for this paper is: How does Facebook facilitate community in television fandom sites?

This paper is structured as follows: Section two will review online communities and discuss how using social media to market to and build online communities. Section three will describe the case studies of the research. Section four will discuss the findings and discussion gained from the research. Section five will discuss the conclusions gathered from the research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term community as defined by Gusfield (1975) has two major uses. The first and traditional use is defined as a network of individuals drawn together by geographical location – neighbourhood, town, and city. The second use is defined as having a “relational” affect with “quality of character of human relationship, without reference to location” (p. xvi). It was also noted that these two are not mutually exclusive, although, Durkheim (1964) states that modern society develops community around interests and skills more than around geographic location.

2.1. What is an online community?

A virtual or online community can be classified “by the software (technology) that supports it. These software technologies support the communication within the community, and can help to create the boundaries of the community” (Lazar & Preece, 1998, p. 85). Many online communities are based on traditional, physical communities as many of the relationships that create the online community evolved from the already existent geographical ones with an intention to expand the community via the Web.

Online communities “...offer a means by which individuals can seek a new form of community, rather than shun a currently useful one” (Foster, 1996, p. 31). Online communities differ in their relationship to physical communities as they have the potential of crossing geographical and political boundaries in order to pursue mutual interests or goals. Virtual communities also have a unique advantage over physical ones whereby the users cannot see one another and therefore cannot form prejudices before reading what they have to say (Rheingold, 2008). The technology of social media enhances this possible building of a virtual community.

Wang and Fesenmaier (2003) identify four areas related to members’ needs. These areas were developed for communities on the Internet and not Web 2.0, however, the framework is quite relevant when evaluating Web 2.0 communities as members’ needs would still be the same despite the changing technology. The areas are: Functional, Psychological, Social and Hedonic.

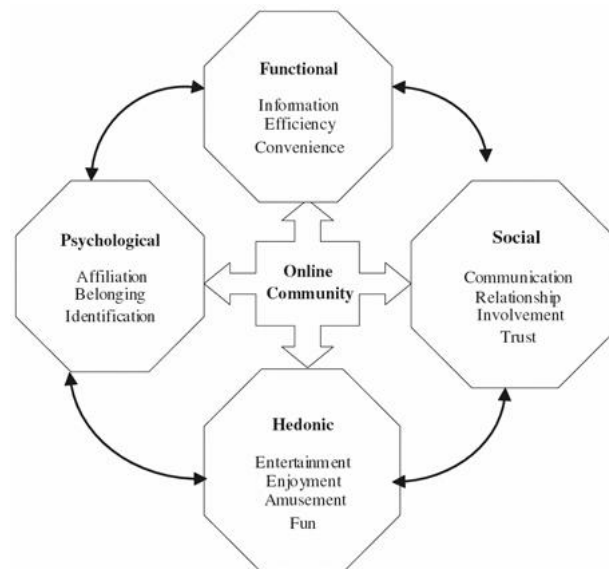


Figure 1: Wang and Fesenmaier Theoretical Framework of Members Needs (2003)

- Functional - members not only require an efficient way to communicate with other participants but they also require a convenient way of doing this. Social network technologies enhance the ability of the community to meet functional needs of the members.
- Psychological - communities build affiliation and identification and provide their members with a sense of belonging. The use of social networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter enable members to interact within their communities to invoke feelings of affiliation and belonging.
- Social - communities are seen to flourish where members interact and reciprocate in an environment of trust where social norms are established. Social networking tools have the capability to support easier methods of interaction and relationship building.
- Hedonic - to keep using and being involved in a community, members need to derive some kind of enjoyment or entertainment. Social networking tools enable members to play games, share photos and comment on other members’ photos.

Each of these four areas does not act independently from each other as can be seen from Figure 1. Each measure has an effect on the others. For example, the functional measure provides information

both in a convenient and efficient manner to members and by doing so it allows members a sense of affiliation, belonging and identification to the community. The community can be seen to be the authority on the topic due to this efficiency as they can become the main source of information for the community. It provides members' with the ability to interact and communicate with each other, providing opportunities to build relationships both with each other and the community leaders themselves. It also builds trust and through this members' can feel the reason to join such a community and want to belong to such a community.

It is from these social and psychological measures that enjoyment and amusement can be derived for members. If the members gain a sense that they belong to the community and are socialising with that community they can therefore be deemed to be having fun. If a member is deriving enjoyment and fun from something they are more likely to socialise and feel like they belong.

2.2. The evolution from online communities to Social Media via Web 2.0

The idea of communicating online with those of similar interest or to share information is a feature that the Internet can easily provide. Message boards, online forums and personal web pages became more and more the logical choice to use for those who had the Internet to share their ideas. However, when the Internet began, speeds for loading of pages was slow and therefore sites were designed for simple information retrieval. In 1979, Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis from Duke University created Usenet, a discussion board system that allowed Internet users to post public messages. This was the first technology used to create online communities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). As technology evolved and faster Internet speeds became available personal web pages, online encyclopaedias and content sites were developed on the Web. With the advent of Web 2.0 these started to be supplemented by blogs, wikis, and collaborative projects (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

“Web 2.0 is a term that was first used in 2004 to describe a new way in which software developers and end-users started to utilise the World Wide Web; that is, as a platform whereby content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 60).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) went on to define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content." Businesses also refer to social media as Consumer-Generated Media (CGM). The blending of technology and social interaction for the co-creation of value is a common thread running through all definitions of social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The availability of faster Internet allows users to share photos, thoughts and video much more readily than it was in the earlier days of the Internet and with this faster technology websites like Bebo, Myspace and Facebook have propelled the concept of online community into an easier more convenient and useable technology.

2.2.1. Facebook

Founded on February 4th 2004, Facebook.com has grown quickly as the social network of choice. According to Experian Hitwise (2010), the term “facebook” was the most searched term in the US and for the second year running in 2010 with “facebook login” and “facebook.com” being the second and fifth respectively. Based on the aggregation of billions of search queries people typed into Google “facebook” was the second most searched term in 2009 and tenth most searched term in 2010 across the globe (google.com, 2011).

In 2011 statistics from Facebook.com show that they now have over 500 million active users with 50% of those users logging into Facebook at least once a day. In particular, 48% of 18-34 years old demographic log into Facebook when they wake up, with 28% of them logging in via their smart phone before getting out of bed. Facebook is not just an online community for the younger demographic, the 35 year old and up demographic represents 30% of the 500 million active users on Facebook (Facebook.com, 2011).

Users spend over 700 billion minutes on Facebook per month. An average user is connected to 80 community pages, groups and events as well as this the average user creates 90 pieces of content each

month with more than 30 billion pieces of content (web links, news stories, blog posts, notes, photo albums, etc.) shared each month (Facebook.com, 2011).

The Facebook community is not limited to the website. The use of mobile technology has led to more than 200 million active users currently accessing Facebook through their mobile devices, with those users being twice as active on Facebook than non-mobile users. In addition, there are more than 200 mobile operators in 60 countries working to deploy and promote Facebook mobile products, (Facebook.com, 2011).

The reach of Facebook in particular is vast as 70% of its users are from outside the United States and therefore with the help of over 300,000 users the site has been translated into 70 different languages (Facebook.com, 2011).

2.3. Using Social Media to market to and build online communities

The gaining of competitive edge requires organisations to form relationships and foster positive perceptions about products and services. It is for this reason Hagel and Armstrong in their 1997 paper stated, "Virtual communities have the power to re-order greatly the relationship between companies and their customers. Put simply, this is because they use networks like the Internet to enable customers to take control of their own value as potential purchasers of products and services" (p 8).

Hagel and Armstrong (1997) went on to further identify five defining elements for a virtual community business model that could combine to deliver a powerful value proposition: distinctive focus, capacity to integrate content and communication, appreciation of member-generated content, access to competing publishers and vendors, as well as commercial orientation (Hagel III & Armstrong, 1997, pp. 8-10).

However, the growth of social media has impacted the way member-generated content is created as well as the way organisations use this to communicate. The emergence of Web 2.0 has provided a set of tools that allows people to build social and business connections, share information and collaborate on projects online (Parise, Guinan, & Weinberg, 2008). Social media marketing is being integrated into many organisations' promotional and marketing communications plans. Using Web 2.0 is a principle organisations have adopted to connect with their targeted markets better (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Web 2.0 tools are being used to do what traditional advertising and promotion does which is to persuade consumers to buy a company's products or services. As yet many companies do not take full advantage of what Web 2.0 can do as this technology allows consumers to converse easily with each other about products both in a positive and negative fashion - something many companies may not prefer to happen. Companies may be missing an opportunity to gain a competitive edge by using this technology. These tools can be used to get the consumers involved, inviting them to participate in promotional and marketing-related activities from product development to feedback to customer service. (Parise et al, 2008)

Consumer participation however is hard to get and therefore may require some incentive for the consumers to share their thoughts, opinions and experiences on a company Web site. One way to motivate consumers to use the online community is to allow them to network among themselves on topics of their own choosing. That way the site is not all about the company, it is also about the consumer (Parise et al, 2008).

"In an online community, every company needs to find an effective balance between trying to steer the conversation about its products and allowing the conversation to flow freely" (Parise et al, 2008). Companies are finding that giving consumers the opportunity and freedom to say whatever is on their mind, positive or negative will be seen as an indication of a fair and open community, however, moderators should be used to keep things running smoothly and coherently, but they should not always keep the conversation on a predetermined track. "The more that consumers talk freely, the more a company can learn about how it can improve its products and its marketing" (Parise et al, 2008).

This freedom to express oneself is important when considering online fandom communities as given the passionate nature of the members it only serves as a positive measure on the part of the television and film productions to encourage and nurture this community.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research for this paper is conducted using an ethnographical approach called Netnography as described by Kozinets (2009). With many people now using online communities the Internet has become an important area of research. Netnography is a method specifically designed to study cultures and communities online.

Netnography much like ethnography allows various approaches to research. Myers (1999) states the following guidelines for ethnographic research in Information Systems. Ethnographers should write up their field notes on a regular basis, these notes can include observations, impressions, feelings, hunches, and questions which emerge. Another guideline is it is important for ethnographers to regularly review and develop their ideas as the research progresses. Lastly, since an ethnographer produces a large amount of data, the researcher must develop strategies to deal with this right from the start. At every step of the way the ethnographer should be summarising, indexing and classifying the data as appropriate (Myers, 1999).

This research uses the purely observational or 'lurker'¹ method of Netnography whereby the researcher does not participate in the interactions of the community and only notes and observes how the community interacts (Kozinets, 2009).

3.1. Data collection and Analysis

Three Facebook Fan pages of popular TV shows were selected and joined to form the basis of this research. Each page was selected for a unique reason and selection was based on type of audience, likely age of community members and size of online community. The researcher observed the pages by the lurker method of Netnography and noted the status updates, links, posts, pictures and videos as well as the comments made by members and interactions of each of the three communities. These notes were recorded in a daily journal over a six week period 15 November 2010 to 26 December 2010.

Every post was noted and assessed against the four areas as described in Wang and Fesenmaier's theoretical framework for online communities, these areas are: functional, psychological, hedonic and social.

3.2. Context of the Case Studies

The series selected for this study are:

Doctor Who

Doctor Who is a British science fiction television programme produced by the BBC. The program depicts the adventures of a mysterious and eccentric Time Lord known as the Doctor who travels through time and space in his time machine, the TARDIS (an acronym for Time And Relative Dimension(s) In Space), which normally appears from the exterior to be a blue 1950s British police box. With his companions, he explores time and space, faces a variety of foes and saves civilizations, helping people and righting wrongs.

The programme is listed in Guinness World Records as the longest-running science fiction television show in the world. Furthermore, as the "most successful" science fiction series of all time, in terms of its overall broadcast ratings, DVD and book sales, iTunes traffic, and "illegal downloads". It has been recognised for its imaginative stories, creative low-budget special effects during its original run, and pioneering use of electronic music (originally produced by the BBC Radiophonic Workshop). The

¹ A lurker is one who lurks, in particular a user of an Internet chat room or newsgroup who does not participate. (Oxford Dictionary, 2010)

show is a significant part of British popular culture in the United Kingdom and elsewhere it has become a cult television favourite.

The programme originally ran from 1963 to 1989. With an unsuccessful attempt to revive regular production in the form of a 1996 television film, the programme was relaunched in 2005 and is currently in its sixth season of this relaunch.

The Doctor Who Fan Page was selected as it already has a vast cult following and already existent large community, many of whom are from a technology background and therefore use technology like social media already. The show is aimed at a family audience meaning that the show is viewed well by the 35-44 age demographic as well as the children audience demographics.

The Facebook Fan page studied was created in February 2010 by a fan, Craig Hurle and has 20 thousand members. It is noteworthy that the BBC does not manage the Facebook page being studied due to the laws in the United Kingdom governing the Television Licensing which prohibit the use of promotion through third party technology.

The Big Bang Theory

The Big Bang Theory is an American sitcom created by Chuck Lorre and Bill Prady and is produced for the CBS network in the United States. The program follows five characters: physicist Leonard Hofstadter and theoretical physicist Sheldon Cooper who are roommates; their neighbour Penny, an attractive blonde waitress and aspiring actress and Leonard's and Sheldon's equally geeky and socially awkward co-workers and friends Howard Wolowitz, and Rajesh Koothrappali. The show's humour comes from the geekiness and intellect of the four guys which are contrasted for comic effect with Penny's social skills and common sense.

The show premiered on CBS on September 24, 2007 and is currently in its fourth season.

The Big Bang Theory Fan Page was selected as it too appeals to the technology audience as well as a youthful audience, marketed toward the 18-30 year old demographic, both of which thrive on technology.

The Facebook fan page studied was created in August 2008 and is run by the CBS promotions departments. The page currently has over 9 million members.

Glee

Glee is a musical comedy-drama television series created by Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk and Ian Brennan, and is produced for FOX network in the United States. The program focuses on the high school glee club New Directions competing on the show choir competition circuit, while its members deal with relationships, sexuality and social issues. The show mixes both drama, comedy and musical numbers to tell its weekly morality story.

The show premiered its pilot on FOX on May 19, 2009 and the series began airing September 9, 2009 and is currently in its second season.

The Glee Fan Page was selected as it appeals to the tween demographic with efforts in its second season to appeal to the 18-49 year old demographic as well. This audience is more likely to be very technology savvy.

The Glee Fan Page studied was created in March 2009 and is run by the FOX promotions departments. The page currently has over 10 million members.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

For six weeks a daily journal was kept assessing each and every interaction made by the three Fan Pages moderators and members. Table 1 shows an overview of how each fan page was assessed against the four areas as described in Wang and Fesenmaier's Theoretical Framework for online communities of, functional, psychological, hedonic and social.

Table 1: A breakdown of how each case applies to Wang and Fesenmaier Theoretical Framework

		Big Bang Theory	Glee	Doctor Who
Functional	Information Efficiency	X	X	X
	Convenience	X	X	X
Psychological	Affiliation	X	X	X
	Belonging	X	X	X
	Identification	X	X	X
Hedonic	Entertainment	X	X	X
	Enjoyment	X	X	X
	Amusement	X	X	X
	Fun	X	X	X
Social	Communication	X*	X*	X
	Relationship			X
	Involvement			X
	Trust			X

*The feature was used but more in a acknowledgement rather than a true community communication measure

This section is broken down into each measure of the Wang and Fesenmaier theoretical framework for online communities. It firstly defines each measure and then discusses how or how not each of the cases meets that measure. Quotes from the journal have been provided as they were written as well as the format they were posted in.

4.1. Functional

Members not only require an efficient way to communicate with other participants but they also require a convenient way of doing this. Social network technologies enhance the ability of the community to meet functional needs of the members (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004).

Facebook fan pages provide members with an efficient and convenient way to receive information. When one “likes” a page they instantly receive all posts from the fan page. “Like” is the term used by Facebook for becoming a member of a page. It is also used as a term to show that members have a positive opinion about a post made by a friend, member or page moderator. This information is added to the members’ own personal news feed which is the Facebook equivalent of an intranet portal homepage.

This use of the technology means that each Fan page has the potential to provide information in a *convenient* centralised manner as well as provide *information efficiently* to all its members. This means that each Fan page can easily promote and provide information to their community without requiring the members to visit the Fan page independently as this information is already in their news feed. The three fan sites studied address the provision of information efficiency and convenience in similar ways:

The Glee Fan page provided posts on its page as a method to remind its members when the show was airing both in the day before the show as well as on the day itself. The moderators also provided updates for both the East and West Coast of the USA to remind members when the show was about to air on their respective side of the country. These updates provide convenience to the members as it reminds them of when episodes of Glee will be on televisions. For example:

29/11/10 GLEEks! Check out the full performance of “Hey Soul Sister” by The Warblers from TOMORROW night’s all-new episode – http://youtu.be/X-Ysqz_sMU0

The above link to a video performance from the upcoming episode to be aired on the 30th of November received 18011 likes and 1574 comments. The comments were more of an excited nature but didn’t really spark any cross communication amongst the members. It can be assumed that the information about the upcoming episode was a useful and efficient reminder to the members about when the show was on. This method was used in weeks where there were repeat episodes as well

22/12/10 It’s Christmas at McKinley High in tonight’s encore episode of “A Very Glee Christmas” at 8/7c!

The above post received 7138 likes and 806 comments and was used to remind members that the repeat episode was to air on the 23rd December. The comments showed how the members were excited about the repeat episode.

Similarly, The Big Bang Theory Fan page used the same method to remind its members when the show was airing. The moderators of this page however in weeks when the show aired they provided updates of several different media types (video and pictures) for days before the show as well as on the day itself. In weeks where the show did not air, no updates of this type were provided. For example:

07/12/10 Thursday: The excitement is building and it can only mean one thing... well, Sheldon says it best... <http://bit.ly/gB6fcI>

This update was a link to a promotional video on the CBS website for the upcoming episode 7516 likes and 577 comments. Some good discussion points were made by community members, including how they could not see the video due to the region locking on the site. Although this information was provided for some as a convenient manner those who could not see the video due to the region locking may not see it as such.

09/12/10 'The Alien Parasite Hypothesis' - First Look! NEW Big Bang Theory tomorrow night!

This update was a link to promotional photos for the upcoming episode. It received 6335 likes and 286 comments. Unfortunately many of the comments on this post were spam links to nonrelated products and could have been avoided if proper moderating of the community was done.

10/12/10 How far will Sheldon go to satisfy Amy Farrah Fowler's carnal needs? Find out TONIGHT on an all-new Big Bang Theory! P.S. Happy Birthday Simon Helberg!! <http://bit.ly/gB6fcI>

This update was another link to a promotional video on the CBS website for the upcoming episode 5444 likes and 487 comments. It once again was region locked so although this information was provided for some as a convenient manner those who could not see the video due to the region locking may not see it as such.

The Glee and The Big Bang Theory fan pages both provide information for convenience and efficiency for special events such as the Golden Globes for its members.

15/12/10 Congratulations! GLEE has received 5 Golden Globe nominations: Supporting actress in series, mini-series or motion picture made for tv: Jane Lynch, Supporting actor in series, mini-series or motion picture made for tv: Chris Colfer, Best Performance by an Actress in a TV Series - Comedy: Lea Michele, Best Performance ...by an Actor in a Comedy: Matthew Morrison, Best Comedy: Glee.

Many members would not have been able to find out if the show had been nominated without doing a search of the web for this exact information. As you can see from the above post all the relevant information regarding the show's nomination and specifically about those who were nominated have been provided to the community in a simple efficient manner. This received 20476 likes and 1152 comments. Most of the comments were of a congratulatory manner but did spark some cross member conversation, but only a very small number of comments made.

15/12/10 BAZINGA! The Big Bang Theory scored 2 Golden Globe Nods including Best Television Show - Comedy or Musical!! Get all the details! <http://bit.ly/bG6cD9>

This post received 13307 likes and 688 comments all of a congratulatory nature. Much like the Glee Fan Page many members would not have been able to find out if the show had been nominated without doing a search of the web for this exact information.

Unlike the other two Fan pages, The Doctor Who Fan page did not have an episode air until the last week of the observation period. This however did not stop the moderators providing convenient information about the upcoming show. Not only did the show provide links to articles about the

upcoming episode they also provided a daily countdown to promote the episode. This countdown tool became more amusing from 11 days before the episode as the moderators used picture of the 11 actors who played the lead character of the Doctor to signify how many days were left before the episode was to air, much like the 12 days of Christmas advent calendars.

The Doctor Who Fan page tried to provide as much information possible to its members around the world of when the Christmas episode was to air in their country. When it was announced that BBC America would air the episode almost at the same time as the UK a post was made on the Fan Page.

17/11/10 GOOD NEWS FOR AMERICAN DOCTOR WHO FANS, BBC AMERICA WILL SCREEN THE DOCTOR WHO CHRISTMAS SPECIAL AND DOCTOR WHO PROMS ON CHRISTMAS DAY AT 9PM EST

This post lead to many comments from members requesting when the episode would air in their respective countries. The moderator of the fan page commented back on this post saying when information was available. This lead to the following post:

24/11/10 Canada's SPACE has announced the DOCTOR WHO CHRISTMAS SPECIAL will air on Boxing Day at 9pm EST, So to recap The DOCTOR WHO CHRISTMAS SPECIAL will air on Christmas Day in the UK and USA, and on Boxing Day in Canada and Australia. 31 days to go.....

It is for this reason many join fan pages, many of the members would not have known when the episode would have aired if not for this post which conveniently appear in their news feed.

4.2. Psychological

Communities build affiliation and identification and provide their members with a sense of belonging. The use of social networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter enable members to interact within their communities to invoke feelings of affiliation and belonging (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004).

By the design of the technology of Facebook, when you join a Facebook Fan page, you clearly become a member of that community as every page you fan becomes a “badge” on your own personal profile page. It also announces to your “friends” on Facebook that you “liked” the fan page. This public announcement in your feeds provides a clear sense of identification and affiliation with that page. By joining fan pages the member gets a sense of community. You are attached to other people who share a common interest and now have an opportunity to share, discuss and communicate with those who have the same interest as you do. This sense of belonging is key to any community whether it be online or not.

4.3. Hedonic

To keep using and being involved in a community, members need to derive some kind of enjoyment or entertainment. Social networking tools enable members to play games, share photos and comment on other members’ photos (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004).

Facebook Fan page members do seem to get a sense of fun and amusement from joining these pages. Not only do they get provided with efficient and convenient information whenever a picture, link or wall post is posted. Furthermore, it provides the opportunity for members to “like” and comment on what has been posted. This interacting can lead to not only enjoyment and fun but socialisation and network connections for the members. This is evident by the number of “likes” per post. By simply “liking” a post on Facebook one can show they were amused or approve of what has been posted.

If the members did not find amusement or enjoyment from this then they would not join the page. This being said there are many members who are more passive in their membership than others. For example of the 10 million members on the Glee page only 1% seem to be actively involved in commenting on the page’s posts, the same can be found on the other pages observed.

For many on the Glee and Big Bang Theory pages commenting on posts has simply been “first comment” which seems to be some kind of enjoyment from simply being first to comment on a post without any actual contribution to the post being provide. In addition many comments were positive

towards the show and posts in question. This being said many of the members seemed to simply derive enjoyment from the posts provided, this is evident by the number of “likes” a post receives. This attempt at enjoyment is fleeting and carried to the “likes” but not interaction. Personal enjoyment is indicated but not shared beyond the “like” of the post.

In contrast the Doctor Who Fan page members refrained from providing simple inane comments and mostly commented in a more constructive manner. Many members of this page seemed to get a higher level of enjoyment from the interaction with other members and the community sharing of knowledge and ideas in many discussion points. An example of this is:

28/11/10 You know your a DOCTOR WHO Fan when

This post had 68 likes and 218 comments, many of these comments were of a humorous nature and with much joking between the members.

Discussion was also encouraged by the moderators by posing questions for the community

15/11/10 Todays DOCTOR WHO Question : Who would you have play the Master if John Simm regenerated (as he said he would if he returned) ?

Many comments made were answering the question, some joke answers with comments back and forth amongst members. This effort by moderators appears to be designed especially to encourage the enjoyment of members and encourage them to socialise more with the community.

4.4. Social

Communities are seen to flourish where members interact and reciprocate in an environment of trust where social norms are established. Social networking tools have the capability to support easier methods of interaction and relationship building (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004).

Table 2 shows the features and technology of Facebook available to fan pages to enhance the socialisation for its members. Each box shows which available technology the three cases use.

Table 2: A breakdown of how each case uses Facebook Interactive Technology on their page

	Glee	The Big Bang Theory	Doctor Who
Wall	X	X	X
Pictures	X	X	X
Likes & Commenting	X	X	X
Video	X*	X**	
Links	X	X	X
Notes	X		
Allow members to post onto the wall of the page	X		X

*Most videos are not uploaded to Facebook but linked to YouTube where they are hosted for all to see

** Videos are not uploaded to Facebook but linked to the CBS website where they are hosted but region locked so only IP addresses from the US can view it

Although all three pages have the ability for cross member interaction and reciprocation only the Doctor Who Fan page members interact. This interaction has been encouraged by the moderators of the community by not only replying to comments made by members but actively encouraging discussion amongst members on topics based around the show. For example:

17/11/10 GOOD NEWS FOR AMERICAN DOCTOR WHO FANS, BBC AMERICA WILL SCREEN THE DOCTOR WHO CHRISTMAS SPECIAL AND DOCTOR WHO PROMS ON CHRISTMAS DAY AT 9PM EST

The above post from the page regarding the Christmas Special Episode of Doctor Who was to air on Christmas Day in the USA. Much discussion was made by other members as to when the show would air in their respective country. Feedback was provided by the page’s moderator through the comments on the update of when the episode would air in many of the countries. A week later the following post was made,

24/11/10 Canada's SPACE has announced the DOCTOR WHO CHRISTMAS SPECIAL will air on Boxing Day at 9pm EST, So to recap The DOCTOR WHO CHRISTMAS SPECIAL will air on Christmas Day in the UK and USA, and on Boxing Day in Canada and Australia. 31 days to go.....

This too led to many discussions amongst the members.

Moderators of the Doctor Who fan page also encourage members to socialise with each other for example:

23/11/10 CELEBRATING AN AMAZING 47 YEARS OF DOCTOR WHO!, Since the debut of the DOCTOR, and the very first episode broadcast of the Uneathly Child! How are you celebrating? Let us know at the event below, and join in the celebrations all today at <http://www.facebook.com/The.Doctor.Who.Tardis>

This post got 61 likes and 11 comments from members. One member even suggested the members go watch the first episode to celebrate this occasion and even suggested a website that could allow them to. Afterwards, several members commented again saying that they had done so and further discussion ensued.

The elements of Wang and Fesenmaier's Social element of their theoretical model; Communication, Relationship, Involvement, Trust, do not appear to be encouraged by the Glee and The Big Bang Theory fan pages. Both pages seem to be under a traditional marketing strategy where those running the fan page view the page as a broadcast site for links, photos etc but do not encourage discussion between members.

This was greatly evident on the Big Bang Theory page where the page was only active when a new episode was to air that week.

It is to be noted though that the Glee fan page did make an attempt at communicating with its members by posting a "thank you" for reaching 10 million fans by posting two videos.

*16/12/10 Thanks to each of the 10 million GLEE fans on Facebook! To celebrate your awesome GLEEk-iness the cast answers some fan questions just for you! THANKS! Part 1
<http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=475710887098&oid=55482772043&comments&ref=mf>*

*17/12/10 Thank you for so much GLEE support! 10 million Facebook fans and counting! The cast answers more of your questions. Check it out now. Part 2
<http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=476172477098&oid=55482772043&comments&ref=mf>*

These videos had cast members of the show answering questions of fans however; these questions appear to have not been requested from the community itself and therefore do not seem to encourage the community to socialise amongst themselves.

4.5. Reflection on community

As can be seen from the findings, all three Fan pages have tried to take advantage of social media technology to create an online community.

All the fan pages observed align with the functional, psychological and hedonic measure as described by Wang and Fesenmaier's Theoretical Framework for measuring members' needs. By aligning with these three measures a form of community is created. Both the Glee and The Big Bang Theory fan pages are managed by the marketing departments of the networks they are aired on, while the Doctor Who fan page is managed by a fan and not the BBC. This difference in ownership could explain the difference in the focus of how the community is organised as traditional marketing prefers to keep customers away from each other and not discussing the products openly as any negative comments or opinions can provide negative effects on the product and take focus away from the message the company is providing. In contrast, fan communities encourage the communication between members

as they are more focussed on any discussion of the product. This creates a more social community that enhances the hedonistic and psychological aspects of members and in turn generates more activities and interest from fans.

We question whether the Glee and The Big Bang Theory fan page members can really be called fans as it is defined. Members join these communities to be better informed about the show they “like” and to gain an instantaneous gratification from this information, but they do not really share their passion for the show through discussion. In contrast those members of the Doctor Who fan page do discuss and share information through the fan page and can therefore meet the definition.

Another consideration is the size and age of the communities themselves. The Glee and The Big Bang Theory fan pages have millions of members who have joined their page and both have been online for a few years while the Doctor Who fan page only has twenty thousand members and is less than a year old. This size and age difference could make engaging members and encouraging discussion amongst them harder, as a smaller community could be easier to manage. It may also reflect the cult status of Doctor Who achieved after the many years of the programme and science fiction fans in general.

However, we believe the owners of both the Glee and The Big Bang Theory fan pages have missed an opportunity to engage and understand their audience better by not encouraging discussion amongst them as described by Wang and Fesenmaier’s social measure.

A more vibrant community can be created by aligning with the social needs of members as evidenced by the Doctor Who Fan page. Not only does this page align with the functional, psychological and hedonic measures but also the social. Although the site only has twenty thousand members as opposed to the millions of the other two sites, the moderator of the page gathers a fuller understanding of what the members’ needs are and can tailor more effectively for those needs. This communication builds a more vibrant relationship between the page and the members and hence increases the involvement that can be gained from the members of the fan site.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The use of the Web and especially Web 2.0 has led to an evolution into how we as a society communicate. No longer are we limited to seeking out those of common interest in the physical world, but can now expand our reach via the web to create our communities online. Social media technology such as facebook.com has created an easy and efficient way for users to facilitate online communities.

Traditional TV advertising may not always help to promote a show and, it is possible to miss advertisements if you do not watch TV regularly. Given the uptake of social media it is logical that television and film companies seek to find their fans online and help to form online communities there. This can be seen as a burgeoning idea in promotion departments of television shows such as the Glee fan page which was created before the show aired and has attracted a very high membership level.

It is possible to form a type of community by only meeting the functional, psychological and hedonic measures of Wang and Fesenmaier’s Theoretical Framework. This was evident in all three cases having many members join their page. However, television and films can promote more efficiently to their fans and build improved online communities by meeting the social measure, as illustrated by the Doctor Who page. Despite it being the youngest site of the cases studies with the smallest number of members, it best fits with the framework as the members appeared to be more involved and more active than the members of the other two pages. The smaller number of members could be a contributory factor of the site’s successful as it is easier to cater and respond to the needs of twenty thousand members than to ten million.

Further research into the use of social media for fandom communities is needed. Investigation into how communities can enhance fans’ allegiance to their programmes would support new ways of promotion and marketing television programmes.

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