

DEVELOPING CREATIVE STRATEGIES WITH FACEBOOK CONVERSATIONS

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Introduction

Globally, there are over 1.4 billion people who use Facebook on at least a monthly basis. The number of connections and conversations on Facebook exist at a scale previously unimaginable. What does this data mean for marketers? Aside from the unique capabilities for targeted reach, people are more than just a combination of demographic characteristics. They express their interests on Facebook. They talk about issues that are important to them and to their network. For marketers, these conversations on Facebook may provide a valuable marketing signal.

From a large marketer's standpoint, television remains the largest share of marketing budgets. And yet, it is difficult to walk a user from discovery to conversion using TV only. Accurately measuring TV audiences and cross platform reach is also a challenge. On the other hand, Facebook conversation data may provide a view into these audiences. For example, a marketer could assess the show's social traction, get an idea of audience demographics, and inform creative execution of marketing strategies from popular topics discussed among target demographics.

How do these conversations differ from the conversations that people are having in real life? With marketers in mind, Facebook assessed the value of conversation data for informing marketing campaigns. To contextualize the best use cases for these conversations, we can evaluate how sentiment analysis, hashtags, or brand mentions compares to other benchmarks.

In this paper, we will explore three areas including conversations around TV shows, topic research, and brand mentions during an ad campaign. We will deep dive into each of these 3 areas walking through the research methodology and results for each application. We will use the cumulative takeaways to outline the best ways for marketers to shape their campaigns with these conversations.

Television Viewership Volumes

Television viewership is commonly studied via numerous methodologies. Partnering with Keller Fay, we are able to apply their methodology for measuring offline data on television viewership to the Facebook platform. By comparing the results of running the similar methodology in offline and online situations, we are able to understand the nuances of conversations on Facebook.

Methodology

For a series of network primetime shows in the US, Facebook measured the volumes of posts, comments, likes, and shares during the fall 2013 pilot season. We followed around 50 TV shows and calculated share of conversations across broadcast primetime shows for each. Using a three-step process below to classify these TV conversations, we quantified the volume of Facebook conversations across episodes and series:

- Used an existing internal process that cross-references posts against publicly available information about television shows.
- Gathered posts declaring that a user is watching a television show (watching Law and Order),
- And built a taxonomy of keywords and hashtags to find relevant posts (e.g. "#svu", "law and order:svu")

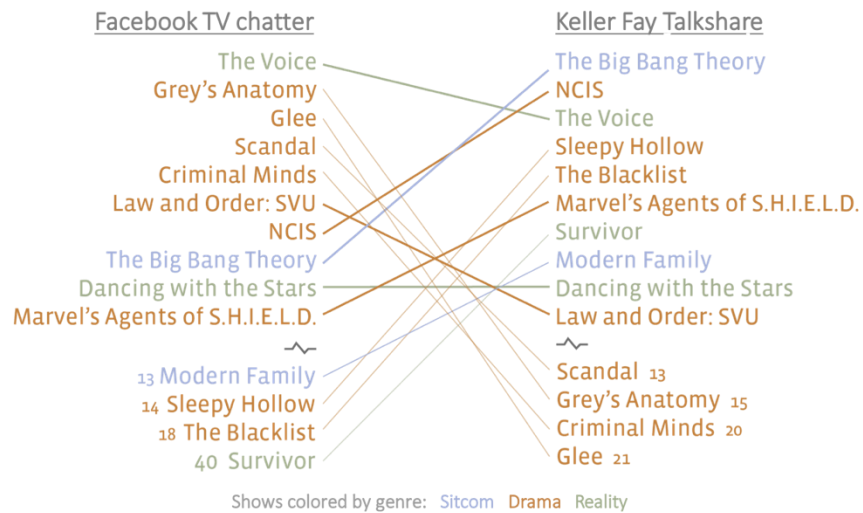
We then correlated Facebook conversation volume with off-line volumes as measured by Keller-Fay TalkTrack data.

Results

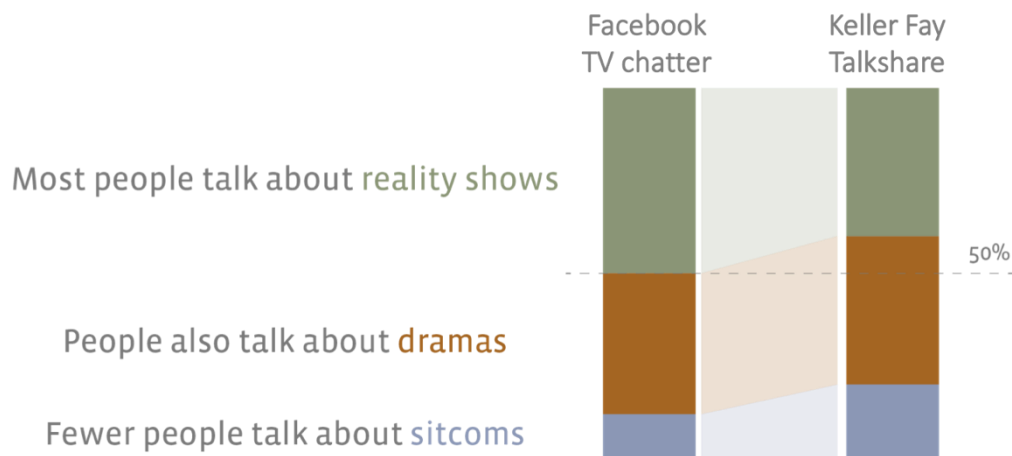
Overall, we found that the relative popularity of a show was largely similar per conversations on Facebook as compared with offline with a correlation of 0.73. In particular, we found that the volume of conversation data for a specific TV show varied by genre (e.g., dramas) and audience demographics:

- **Ranking:** We also looked at the top 10 shows (both FB and Keller Fay) and found that 6 of the top 10 shows are common among the offline and online conversation rankings. The top 10 for each measurement methodology is listed

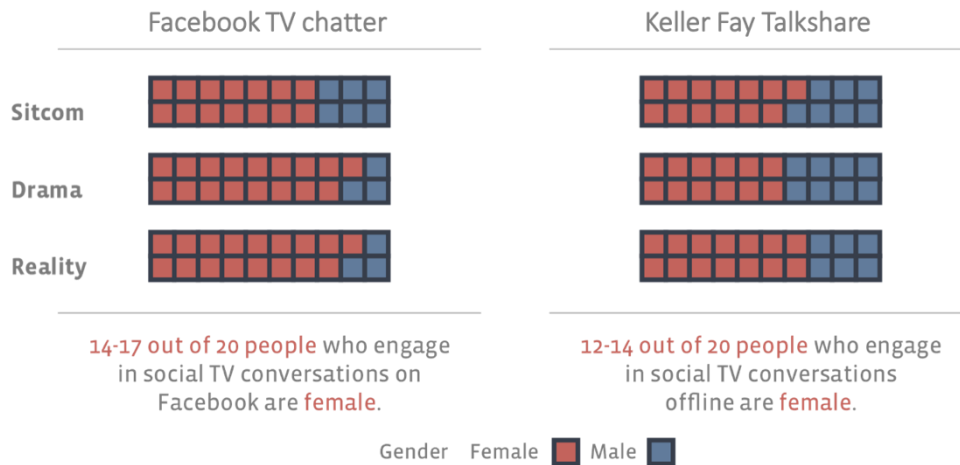
below and lines indicate the cross-referencing. Scandal, for example, is in the top 10 per the Facebook methodology and while not in the top 10 for Keller Fay, it is just below at number 13



- **Genre:** We see an overall similar share of conversations dedicated to various genres as shown below. However, there are specific biases where Facebook conversations over-index as compared with offline. For example, there are more conversation about reality shows on Facebook when compared to Keller Fay Talkshare but fewer about sitcoms:



- **Demographics:** Next we look at the volumes of each genre of TV shows by gender. Across all genres of TV and both online and offline venues, conversations about TV are dominated by women. This skew is even more evident in online conversations, compared to offline conversations. Online conversations also tend to skew younger compared to offline ones:



Overall we observed that TV conversations on Facebook are similar to offline. This serves as a baseline validation and motivation to continue exploring the value of conversations in other contexts. However, we do see that Facebook conversations are more conducive to certain genres and audiences (specifically reality shows and women). This can help in developing marketing strategies to complement TV broadcasts by developing a heightened understanding of demographics around people who talk about TV on Facebook.

Topic Research

We learn from the TV viewership work that Facebook conversations are similar in volume and takeaways to our offline data though nuanced by a specific topic and audience demographics. Consider your own Facebook News Feed and your network of friends: while some post often, others post on rare occasions. Across Facebook, we consistently observe, that, relative to males, females on Facebook are more active in uploading photos and video, messaging, providing status updates, posting on walls, commenting, and liking posts. Therefore, it should not be surprising to observe a larger than expected share of females in any given topic-based audience. It would be more important to understand how much more females are talking about a specific topic than they do about other related topics.

If we normalize for these biases, how can we use Facebook data to explore a specific topic area? This next example comes to us from our Creative Shop team who uses conversation data for insights in the creative development process. In particular, we look at the realm of food, and health data.

Methodology

Using a similar methodology to the TV viewership example, we counted food conversations on Facebook in the US during the summer of 2015:

- Created a taxonomy of relevant terms (e.g. “lunch”, “Feeling hungry”, “bbq”, etc.)
- Built a regular expression to surface relevant public posts,
- Analyzed the terms by audience after normalizing with a baseline volume of generic activity on FB by each audience

We then look at the volume of conversations split out by time of day, topic trends (GMOs, farm-to-table, etc), and audience demographics.

Results

We uncovered the following key insights:

- **Time of day and week:** We found that around half of all food conversations happen during the weekend. Additionally, we also found that food conversations peak during lunch and dinner. This confirms our expectations of food topic discussions.
- **Topic Trends:** We then categorized all of the food conversations and found current trends during the month of May 2015. In particular, we observe conversations about ingredients, wellness & fitness, cooking, and others. The figure below illustrates the key phrases identified within each of these trends with the size of the word corresponding to the relative volumes

Food - ingredients

- Kale
- Bacon
- Avocado
- Peppers
- Wheat grass
- Broth/Ramen

Wellness/Fitness

- Diets
- Stress/Happiness
- Gluten free/Vegan
- Healthy/fresh/organic
- Gym/ Juicing



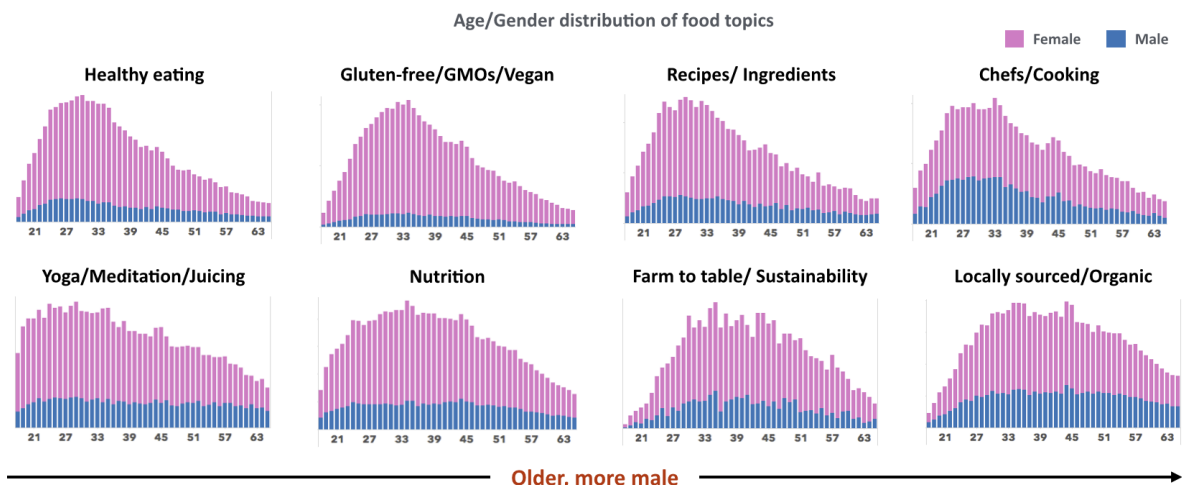
Food - Cooking

- Baking
- Aging (meat)
- Sauces

Other trends

- Chefs/Recipes
- New /Ethnic restaurants
- Food additives

- **Audience Demographics:** We also wanted to understand the audience composition for each of these different topics. We split the volume of conversations by age and gender. As expected, all of the topics have a heavier skew towards female and younger. Therefore, we then organize the topics by relative audience composition patterns. As seen below, as audiences move from younger to older and female to male, the conversation progresses from healthy eating and yoga to chefs and locally sourced ingredients.



A marketing campaign can use this data to find the right audience to tell the right message. For example, when advertising to younger women - the campaign can focus on the food trends that over-index with them (e.g. gluten-free) as opposed to other audiences. These types of insights can drive new concepts for creative development or hone in on the most effective value proposition that will resonate with an audience. On the other hand, it would be risky to assume that all older males are not interested in diets or gluten-free information, for example. Therefore, it would be a bad idea to shrink your target audience based on Facebook topic data to exclude an audience that is not talking about the topic.

Conversations can also identify unexpected potential target audiences and therefore can be used to expand your target. If you have determined an audience based on demographic characteristic for a specific event like the Super Bowl, you could potentially discover a valuable audience outside of your predetermined audience. For example, in an audience analysis of people who talked about the Super Bowl on Facebook, about half of the conversations involved females. This analysis was contrary to the expectation that females would make up a minority of the audience. A brand could use this insight to create a campaign idea personalized to the female demographic. Topic research can be extremely helpful to uncover new insights or trends that support creative ideation and target audience expansion.

Brand Conversations during an Ad Campaign

When evaluating the effectiveness of a marketing campaign, we begin with the objective which usually ties to sales. For a brand campaign in particular, tying the causal effect of ad exposure to sales is often difficult. As a proxy, we can poll consumers about their perceptions of a brand and their intention to purchase a particular product. With this measurement, we

can compare the effectiveness of various marketing treatments by running polls across randomized control trials that isolate the marketing strategy of interest. However, polling requires additional set up and could potentially be costly. Could conversation volumes have been used instead as a proxy for the polling measurement? We will look at an example campaign and examine the conversation volumes that happened during the same time frame for that brand.

Methodology

For the Facebook campaign of a Consumer packaged goods marketer, we ran a test to understand the effects of sequencing display and video ads together over time. The campaign ran for 3 weeks reaching 25M people in the US. The entire target audience was first split into the following 4 treatment groups (and a control who intentionally was not exposed to any ads for this advertiser on Facebook):

- Display ad followed by display ad
- Display ad followed by video ad
- Video ad followed by video ad
- Video ad followed by display ad

All other aspects of this campaign (budgets, bidding strategies, creative rotation, frequency and audience composition) were held constant across these groups except for the format of the creative. The success of the groups was measured with brand polling through Nielsen Facebook BrandEffect. Additionally, for this analysis we captured related conversation volumes starting 3 weeks before and throughout the campaign duration. We counted the brand/product-related conversations including:

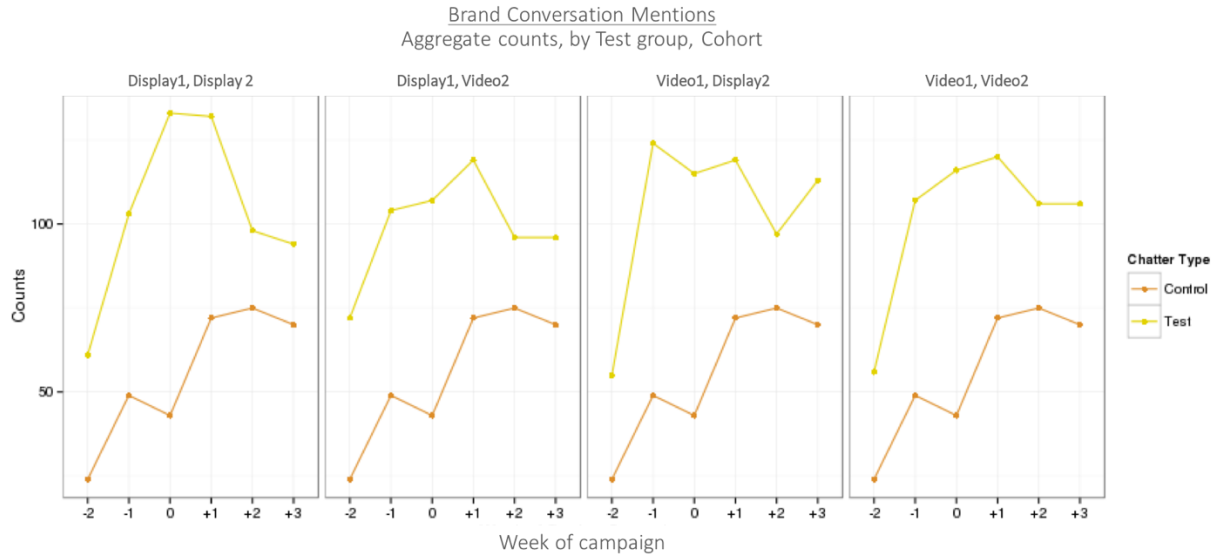
- Counted posts to the Facebook product page
- Built a regular expression to surface relevant public posts
- Identified mentions of the hashtag used by the campaign

These three types of conversations were combined to calculate the weekly volumes of conversations related to this campaign and marketer.

Results

After the brand campaign was over, we did observe differences in polling responses by treatment group. But the focus here is specifically conversation volumes by week and treatment group:

- **Noisy conversations:** Depending on how common the brand name or search keywords are with other words, a lot of noise is introduced into the analysis. For example, people in certain areas of the US refer to all soda as “Coke”. If Coke wants to measure conversation volumes across the country, it will be tough to isolate people talking about actual Coke versus other soda.
- **Low Volume:** Out of over 25 million people reached through the campaign only 2700 people had the brand related keywords/hashtags we were looking for. In particular, the campaign hashtag was used in only 1.3% of these brand related posts. The volume of conversations could make it difficult to detect statistically significant results in terms of brand measurement.
- **Weak signals:** When we split the conversation data by treatment groups, we see an increasing trend in brand conversations for the control group. This trend is likely due to the launch of external marketing campaigns (e.g. TV, print, etc.) at week +1. But, we also observe differences between the test groups even before the campaign starts. Since we have randomly assigned people into these treatment groups, we should not observe any differences pre-campaign. We believe that the weak signal is due to the noise and low volumes:



We thus conclude that using conversation volumes as a measurement indicator of this campaign is not valuable. The accurate way to measure campaign success is to use the various solutions that focus on offline sales and other purchase signals.

Conclusion

Amongst brands, products, and marketers, the recent profusion of online conversation data is often perceived as a source of unlocked potential. However, understanding online conversation data is much more complicated than just counting the conversations. It's important to understand that conversation volumes are biased by topic and demographic and are generally noisy. Based on these nuances, marketers should be cautious about using topic data when:

- **Narrowing your target audience:** People exhibit different behaviors in how often and what types of content they post. It would be risky to assume though that people who do not talk about a topic are not interested and therefore, should be excluded from your target audience.
- **Measuring campaign effectiveness:** Conversation data tends to be noisy and in fairly low volumes. It may be misleading to use Facebook topic data in measuring campaign success. Instead, we marketers should use existing measurement solutions to tie ad exposure to offline sales or purchase signals.

With these nuances though, brands can still use conversation data productively to gain more insights about their customers and inform their creative development. In particular, brands can get the most out of conversation data when using it for:

- **Creative ideation:** Using Facebook topic data you can identify insights into what is top of mind for a particular audience. Marketers can use these insights for discovering and shaping new creative concepts, value propositions, or ad messaging.
- **Audience expansion:** Facebook topic data might reveal that people are interested in your product or service before you believe you should be marketing it. Analyzing the conversation data appropriately, you can determine if there are audiences outside of your core target that you should consider expanding to include in your campaign.
- **Audience personalization:** To develop creative assets for ads that are personalized to your key targets, through Facebook topic data, you can find out more about how that target segment is interested in discussing a topic on Facebook. This personalized topic data can help surface key topics that you could address when creating images or videos for that audience.