

TwitterTube

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Social networking sites have created a new form of communication. Generation Y in particular has been affected by online trends. Twitter is especially driven by celebrity power; it has become a forum for celebrities to reach fans, and consumers are enjoying the 'direct' contact. Interestingly, celebrities also use this as a platform for endorsements, not only for their own brand identities, but also for their movies, albums, products and so on. Twitter provides an insight into celebrity life with real-time updates of their daily activities, thus becoming like reality television in the form of micro-blogging. Rather than product placement in television or movies, Twitter is a platform for 'accidental' celebrity endorsements, or product placements within twitvids, tweetphotos and tweets. Celebrities can mention a brand or their own line on a social networking site and it reaches their target audience as instant, subtle, cheap advertising. Thus, Twitter may be viewed by consumers as being a way to interact with their favourite celebrities, but it is also a marketing platform for endorsements.

In some ways Twitter has made television based reality shows redundant, as fans can access a wide variety of their favourite celebrities all in one place 24/7. It is like a reality-TV station that never stops. However, just like any so-called 'reality-TV' show, it is of course carefully selected material. This puts the power in the hands of the celebrities, where they can choose what information they want their fans to see or read. They become not only the media source and the headline, but also the consumer, as they too are able to enjoy all that Twitter offers as a micro-blogging site. In giving the power of media to the celebrities, it also allows them to better construct their own brand identities. Furthermore, rather than relying on paparazzi, they can create their own hype and media attention through their tweets. It also gives a new way for them to tip off the media on both their controversial news as well as their good deeds. Thus, Twitter is the perfect outlet for advertising, marketing and public relations.

Twitter offers only limited activities compared to other social networking sites, such as Facebook, but its simplicity means celebrities can easily keep it updated for their fans without a huge commitment. Although, many celebrities have admitted to having other people update their accounts, the consumers still feel as if they have been given an insight into the celebrity's daily life. While reality TV shows are very obviously 'put on' and structured, Twitter allows for a more subtly structured view of the celebrity's life. The celebrity is given time to decide how they want to portray themselves and exactly how to word their messages, while seeming casual about it. On the other hand, in reality TV, the coincidental drama captured on camera and the staged conversations are a lot more obvious to the viewer.

Twitter does have privacy issues, but in some ways it is more private and personal than an actual reality-TV show. Rather than having strangers with cameras follow the celebrity around and have their home invaded, they can tweet from wherever they want without being concerned with makeup, clothes and image. It also allows for somewhat 'subtle' endorsements, as a celebrity can simply mention a product's name in a casual tweet or refer to a charity event they are attending and the message is delivered directly to the target audience within seconds at no cost. A perfect example of a celebrity who uses Twitter solely for endorsements is Leonardo DiCaprio, who tweets only about environmental/charity related issues and his own movies. For DiCaprio, Twitter is the perfect medium for his endorsements

as he already has an online presence with two websites (one for his film career and one referred to as his 'eco site'), Facebook and YouTube, which are all linked together.

Twitter's links to other social networking sites and people's individual websites creates a never-ending commercial cycle, strong fan-loyalty and effective viral marketing opportunities. As each piece of communication creates a viral 'call to action' method, which leads the consumer to read more information on the other sites. The direct contact with the fans also means celebrities can receive feedback from the consumers and can adjust their tweets to reach their target audience. This two-way communication means that when an endorsement message is delivered to the consumer via a celebrity's tweet, the advertisers can evaluate whether it is working successfully. For instance, if consumers are re-tweeting the message, replying to the tweet or the message becomes a trending topic, then it suggests that the message is being delivered successfully. Thus, Twitter allows for direct, viral, two-way communication, giving endless possibilities for the advertising industry, as well as the pop culture industry.