



**Maynooth  
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**School of Business Research Seminar Series 2017-2018**

***'Driving Engagement with Native Ads: The Role of Message Format'***

**Dr Gillian Moran**

**Date: Wednesday, 25 October 2017**

**Time: 12.00pm**

**Venue: An Foras Feasa Meeting Room, Iontas Building**

### **Paper Abstract**

Social media marketing has grown rapidly in response to the promise of enhanced customer-brand engagement on these sites, and it now represents a significant proportion of marketers' activities and budgets. Yet, there is inconsistent evidence as to what drives customer-brand engagement in the social media environment. Here brand communications, also known as native advertising, compete for consumer attention against friends' posts, celebrity updates, sports results and news headlines. Hence while social media sites adeptly connect brands and their fans, it is the brand's own communications that are required to engage these fans.

This paper attempts to uncover the drivers of customer-brand engagement, understood as fan behavioural responses, with native advertising on social networking sites. Through the application of two widely used message format considerations from the marketing communications literature, namely interactivity and media richness, we highlight the role of native ad format in inducing customer-brand engagement. Specifically we identify how message format effectively encourages liking, commenting and sharing behaviours towards native ads. Furthermore we consider the moderating role of brand type as we assess whether the native ad formats used by experiential brands are similarly effective at driving customer-brand engagement for more utilitarian brands.

This empirical study analyses real-world native ads to test our hypotheses. The results reveal that native ad format plays a significant role in driving customer-brand engagement, and that this role differs by brand type. We find positive relationships between interactive content components and likes, comments and shares. Surprisingly, and in contrast to popular belief, media richness is not as strong a driver of native ad engagement as expected. These findings add clarity to the previous inconsistent findings on message format in the marketing literature. Moreover, this study provides practical guidance to marketers challenged with creating effective brand communications for social media. It indicates the necessity for marketers to base social media marketing decisions on insights gained from data analytics.

### **About the Speaker**

Dr Gillian Moran is a lecturer in Marketing at Maynooth University School of Business. Her research interests include digital and social media marketing including communications and e-word of mouth, as well as customer-brand engagement. Gillian has published articles in peer-reviewed journals, such as the Journal of Advertising Research, and has presented her research at national and international conferences. She earned her PhD in Marketing from the Smurfit School of Business at University College Dublin. Prior to joining academia Gillian worked in a variety of marketing roles both in Ireland and abroad.

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