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Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Conversation Drivers and Minority Micro-Influencers

Written by Rhys Ryan, CEO & Chief Engineer

Client:	A major broadcast and streaming cable network
Focus:	Announcement over the acquisition of a popular literary work into a television series
Period:	Two-month announcement period, 2022
Concerns:	Negative backlash on social media
Goals:	Demographic and DEI analysis and Identification of minority micro-influencers
Results:	Black Women contributed more than other demographic groups and Identification of minority micro-influencers
Disclaimer:	*The Network asked to remain anonymous. All data and charts presented in this paper are accurate, but the names have been changed per the client's request.*

Ekkobar is a multi-component AI Assessment Platform giving entertainment, sports and political markets control to deliver on the financial promise social media claimed so many years ago. Whereas social media analytics is the 'check engine light', Ekkobar is the 'skilled technician', providing expert answers to fix real problems and surface new opportunities.

info@ekkobar.com • 310-927-2596

The Setup

Early in 2022, a major television network announced the development of a television series based on a famous book centered around slavery and plantation ownership. Shortly after that, a number of negative social media posts surfaced, talking about "black" exposure and a lack of racial balance in broadcasting. This raised concerns for the Network Executives.

Within a short timeframe, several predominant marketing agencies were engaged to examine the depth and breadth of the social media conversation. The agencies utilized existing social media analytic applications to sift through the more than 25,000 posts. However, the applications could not provide any detailed demographic information and instead focused on daily/weekly count changes, locations of post origins, and basic sentiment.

Enter Ekkobar; an Active Intelligence™ Platform developed specifically to answer questions buried within the social media conversation and those that feed it. Partnering with a major ad agency, the two performed a detailed DEI analysis focusing on minority group communities, conversations, and micro-influencers.

The Plot

Mark Twain once said, "Facts are stubborn things, but statistics are pliable." Social media analytic tools can be boiled down to a series of statistical representations. Analytical tools perceive posts as mostly numerical samplings, presenting the number of followers, likes, and basic sentiment analysis. Applied superficially, they bend numbers to reach any conclusion that suits the observer's needs. This paints a shallow picture, missing the critical majority of the "iceberg" that floats below.

For the Network Executives to get ahead of any potential issues, they needed to know the depth of the conversation and breadth of any negative feedback. This required demographic information about the posters and lead to a detailed DEI analysis. Unfortunately, DEI analysis is nearly nonexistent in social media because platforms need demographic information. Without this, there is no way to target the intersection of minority communities with those who have influence.

Ekkobar's solution takes a different approach, realizing that the only way to provide facts is to start with the population, analyzing it from all perspectives. Where analytic tools fail, Ekkobar succeeds by using proprietary AI to understand demographics, influence, popularity, topics, and value. Not only is the "iceberg" revealed, but the subtle psychographics are made visible. In addition, Ekkobar's Founders designed their platform to understand the nuance of multi-level properties, such as television shows, movies, sports teams, and the like. This allows for the examination of the whole as well as the pieces.

The Ekkoscore™

During the development of the Ekkobar Platform, the Founders knew that more was needed than just the standard data set provided by the social media companies. Analytic tools use the number of followers as a gauge of value. Unfortunately, that number doesn't tell you anything about nuanced conversations. What is needed is a method for understanding the conversation and how viewers interact with it. Only Ekkobar can provide this level of understanding.

Ekkobar's process begins with understanding the post chain. Other social media analytic tools see posts as single events. Instead, Ekkobar turns these posts into a multi-dimensional model allowing traversal of the conversation as a neural network or tree. Once the tree is constructed, the number of people interacting with it is revealed. This is known as audience reach and represents the actual value of the conversation.

With the raw social media data, conversation tree, and audience reach determined, Ekkobar uses an AI concept known as "centrality" to calculate an "influence" score. Next, popularity is calculated based on the poster's profile. Together, these two numbers are the Ekkoscore, a computation of importance.

The DEI Conversation Drivers

After calculating the Ekkoscore for each poster, the Platform uses proprietary technology to figure out poster type, gender, and ethnicity. Next, the Platform separates brands from people. Since these two groups act differently, each following their rules about what they post to capture their respective audiences, their value must be evaluated independently. Figure 1 shows how the brands and people fared during the announcement timeframe. While a few of each stand out from the cluster, there is no clear-cut overarching winner, which shows a balanced conversation between the two. Note that the one significant outlier is the Network itself, which is to be expected.
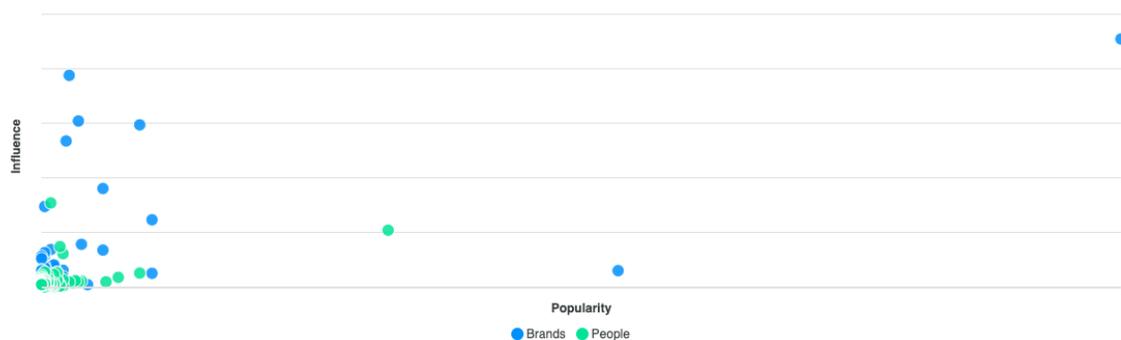

Figure 1 - Brands vs. People

When using scatter plots, outliers can skew the results, so it's essential to focus on the clusters to determine if any one of them stands out. With the book's story centered around a black female heroine and plantation

ownership, the expectation is that black women are the focus. Figure 2 examines gender, and Figure 3 ethnicity. Both charts show a few outliers, but the clusters support the supposition.
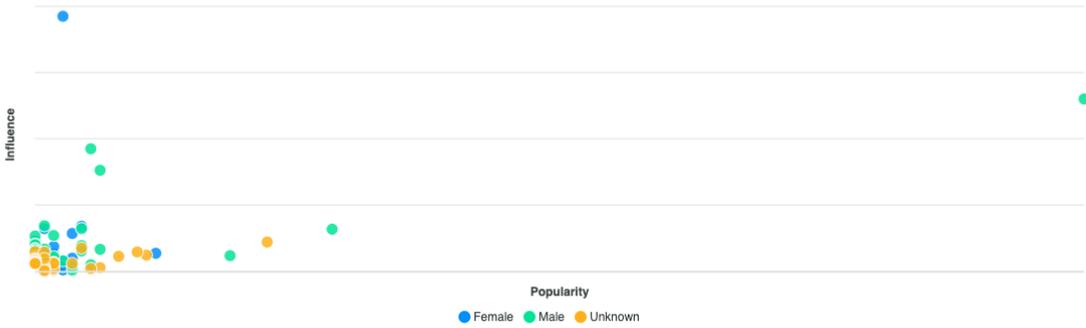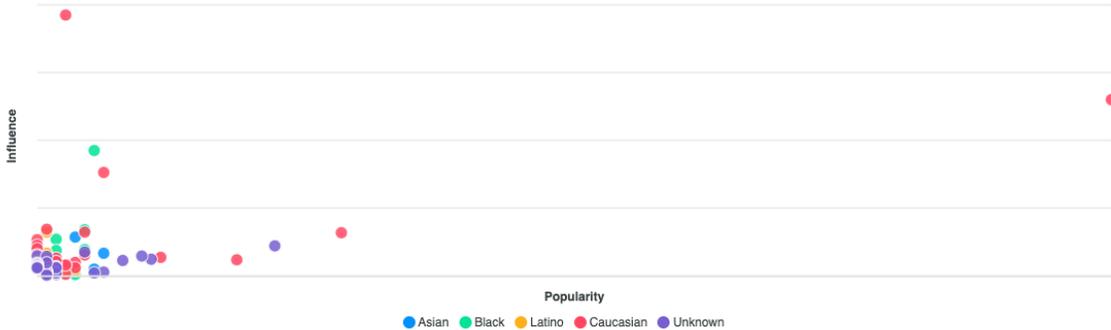

Figure 2 - Gender Impact

Figure 3 - Ethnicity Impact

The Micro-Influencers

Using the demographic drivers, the Ekkobar Platform lists each minority group's micro-influencers by Ekkoscore. As expected, the Network scored high on the brand list and several prominent media outlets. However, several minority-focused media brands, previously unknown to the Network, scored high on the list. Identifying these micro-influencers allowed the Network's public relations team to cultivate new relationships and advocates.

The Network Executives were also surprised by the micro-influencers identified within the most influential minority group, Black Women. Instead of celebrities, as they presumed, there were bloggers, writers, commenters, and online broadcasters classified as targeted public relations partners.

The Wrap

The Network Executive's original goal was to 1) evaluate if they should be concerned about the negative postings, 2) find the minority communities driving the conversation, and 3) identify any micro-influencers. While the purpose of this paper was to focus on the second two points, the Ekkobar Platform showed the number of negative comments was less than 1% of the overall conversation, mostly pertained to "hoping" the Network does justice to the book and does not "mess up."

As for the second and third points, the dominant group of posters was Black Women, with more than a dozen micro-influencers listed. The Network's PR engine could work with these groups to promote the show and create a community based on their mutual interests. With Ekkobar's help and insights, the Network's limited PR resources could efficiently focus on the right groups to achieve positive results.

The Sequel

Moving forward, Ekkobar's Active Intelligence Platform can provide more than just continual DEI analysis. The Platform can monitor social media 24x7, identify any dangers or opportunities that need immediate attention, examine conversations for trends, issues, and insights, expose value hidden in images/videos, list micro-influencers within the post, and much more.

Ekkobar's mission has always been to positively affect the bottom line of entertainment and sports brands. Through this project with the Network, Ekkobar and their partner agency accomplished the mission and went above expectations.