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Conceptual Appraisal on social media engagement and purchase decision

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Abstract

The social media marketing is a phenomenon that has received considerable attention in the networking landscape from people and organizations. The Internet and social media transformed the interaction between customers and brands dramatically. The consumer literature of social networks underscores the growing importance of this new marketing channel in on-line connection and engagement with social customers. The Internet and social media transformed the interaction between customers and brands dramatically. The literature studied on social media involvement identifies gaps may concern future scholars. Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, activities, events and interests within their individual networks. Social media content are more likely to spread faster and quicker than any other object in the context of awareness. Apart from customer engagement, website traffic and brand awareness social media is playing an important role in the consumer buying decision making.

Keywords: social media, social media engagement, purchase decision, decision making, online transaction.

Introduction

Social media have become one of the booming means of communication, and both people and companies in particular are becoming extremely popular. All the media tools have made it possible for people to stay with their friends, meet new knowledge, share user-generated contents (photos, videos and text) and learn about news, trends and products/ service in the news in modern times. They also enable users to communicate with their friends and services (Giannakos, Chorianopoulos, Giotopoulos & Vlamos, 2012). Most of these media are used by people to keep up to date on the latest developments in brands and products by viewing the information on the online community. This type of behaviour, especially for today's younger teenagers who work on social networking platforms, have a strong influence on brand preferences (Haven, 2007). The growth of the social media activities in relation to

recommendations by peers and friends, content generated by users, product reviews, feedback, etc. have given rise to a concept of customer engagement in an online context (Dessart, Veloutsou & Morgan-Thomas, 2015). Customers engage in numerous kinds of behavior such as browsing, interacting, sharing information and social media that enhance their knowledge and intention to buy products and services (Schultz & Peltier, 2013).

While making a major purchase decision, customers regard social media tools as one of the major sources of information. They share good or bad experiences and are also looking for information on various social media products and services. Ng (2013) and Rohm, Velitchka, Kaltcheva & Milne (2013) have stated in this respect that social media engagement of customers is generally based on trust as customers are connected with people they trust and respect. In other words, because of a climate of trust between friends/collateral partners in social media environments, customers share and seek data on social media. Social media is viewed from a broader point of view as tools that influence consumers' behavior through awareness, acquisition of information, attitudes, buying behavior and communication and assessment after purchases (Mangold & Faulds 2009, p. 358). While it is considered as a key part of the promotional mix from a narrower perspective that is necessary for developing strong social ties with customers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009). Social media has the capacity for marketers, in a comparatively low cost and even in less time, to achieve

significant results. This means that marketers must generate improved business performance, including sales growth, superior competitive advantage and profitability, as a strategic imperative. On the other hand, businesses are facing an explosion of messages that have to be monitored and filtered via social media to extract consumers' interests. Moreover, the risk to privacy, financial, social, psychological, etc., which many companies are still unwilling to take over and manage, is uncovered. One such risk concerns how involvement with customers via social media could affect the future behavior of consumers. In order to support the conceptual framework of social media involvement, it is important to understand various relationships associated with social media engagement and to investigate variables that impact on behavioral results.

Concept of Social Media Engagement

Social Media Engagement: A number of studies deal with the concept of consumer participation in marketing literature. The examination of available marketing literature shows the emerging nature of the concept of social media engagement (Hollebeek, 2011). Customer participation in social media has become a major driving force since all social media channels give their customers an opportunity to interact with branded and non-brand-related activities (Greve, 2014). The idea of relationship marketing has notably altered customer engagement on social media channels. Today, enterprises try to reach out to existing and potential customers via social

media platform brand pages. Until 2012, however, consumer research was strongly conceptualised and only recently, but quickly, empirical work has begun to develop (Dessart et al., 2015). The literature shows a lack of agreement on the conceptual field of participation. Many researchers have given various concepts and dimensions of the term "engagement." The terms 'customer engagement' were used by Brodie et al, 2011 and Hollebeek, 2011, and expressed in cognitive, behavioral and motivational action. Accordingly, Van Doorn et al. (2010) noted that customers' behavior goes beyond transactions and can be defined by 'customers' behavioral events with a brand or company focus, beyond the purchase, resulting from motivative drivers.'Hollebeek (2011) defined customer engagement as the "level of expression in the motivational, brand-related and context-related thinking of an individual customer characterized by a grade of brand interaction activation, identification and absorption" (p. 151). Van Doorn et al. (2010) noted that behavior involving clients extends beyond transactions and can be defined as the behavior of 'customers' who have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from drivers of motivation.

Although the consumer involvement is often understood as a motivational structure with various intensity, subject to various interpretations. The subject (i.e. a brand) is included and has a valence (positive versus a negative); (i.e. the consumer) (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek & Chen, 2014). Regarding motivation, Rohm et al. (2013) identified cinq motivations for interacting and

engaging with brands on social media (entertainment, brand identification, timeliness of information and service responses, product information, incentives and promotion). Gummerus, Liljander, Weman and Pihlstrom (2012) suggested that engagement is largely based on advantages which may have an impact on social, economic and entertainment activities. Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) identified a number of key Internet motives and found the most prominent motivations in the search for information, entertainment, and convenience. The literature has suggested numbers of different dimensions of the concept. However, there is no consensus on its dimension (Vivek, Beatty & Morgan, 2012). Theory of the concept of customer commitment and its dimensionality in the field of social media is therefore lacking in the literature.

Factors affecting Social Media Engagement:

1. **Social Identity:** Social identity is the psychological state in which you acknowledge that you belong to a group (Dholakia, Bagozzi & Pearo, 2004). According to Kwon and Wen (2010), social identity represents the perception that people belong to the social network community where they can interact with others or interact with social media. They pointed out that the specific effects of social identity are the perceived stimulation, i.e. individuals with a higher social identity, greater pride in expectation and more pride in their group.

2. Utilitarian Motivation: It is defined as an objective motive (Mikalef, Giannakos & Pateli, 2013, pp. 19). Former researchers like Enginkaya & Yilmaz (2014) and Mikalef et al. (2013) noted utilitarian motivations as a taxonomy of forces which involves consumers in the process of procurement. Enginkaya and Yilmaz (2014) identified 5 specific reasons – brand affiliation, survey, search, conference, entertainment, convenience and the selection of products affecting the browsing and purchasing intentions of users. Mikalef et al. (2013) have identified four motivational utilitarian elements that influence customers' commitment: convenience, availability of information, personalized publicity, and product selection. In addition, Rohm et al. (2013) have identified five key motivations that drive social media customer interactions: entertainment, brand engagement, information timeliness, product information and incentives.

3. Hedonic Motivation: It refers to the search for feelings of good pleasure, pleasure and fantasy during the shopping process. Previous studies such as Enginkaya & Yilmaz, (2014); Mikalef et al., (2013) and Rohm et al. (2013) identified the role of hedonic motivation factors in online customer engagement, such as entertainment, socialization, trend discovery and adventure.

4. Past Experience: In addition to motivation factors, past experience in social media engagement is considered equally important. It has been shown that good product experience leads to satisfaction after

purchase, while poor experience leads to dissonance after purchase. In Monroe (1976) it was stated that more information about the brand and, consequently, more positive attitude has a buyer's experience with a certain brand. In other words, previous information and experience of individuals will likely lead to future behaviour.

5. Advertisement: The information generated by companies is referred to as product information, price information, features, availability, access to the product, etc., which is generally shared via media such as advertising, websites, etc.. Basically companies share the information they provide on products or services on websites, on social media websites - facebook, twitter, etc, and the company and brand manager control this information (Bruhn et al., 2012). Former researchers considered information generated by firms to be a pull and shock factor that initiates customers' word of mouth and the impact of brand attitude, image (Bruhn et al., 2012) and behavior subsequently (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015).

Outcomes of Social Media Engagement:

1. Value built-up: Social media have been active in inter-distribution in the past few decades as a locus of brand value, brand innovation and value creation (Gensler, Volckner, Liu-Thompkins et al., 2013). (Ramasamy & Ozcan, 2014). It has become integral to the offerings of businesses (Ramaswamy & Gouillart, 2010), as it not only improves the design and delivery of goods and services, it also becomes a

platform for products and services (e.g., electronic social networking services). Payne, Storbacka & Frow (2008) and Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004) acknowledge that social media companies can offer stakeholders new opportunities to play an active role in the development of value. Co-creation was also considered an important demonstration of client engagement and a source of competitive advantage by Van Doorn et al. (2010). Yi and Gong (2012) argued that both customer involvement and customer citizenship play an important role in service innovation while Ramaswamy & Gouillart (2012) emphasized that customer involvement is only one of its co-creating principles. Kao et al. (2016) and Zhang et al. (2016) have just pointed out that the creation of customer value as a mediator is an important driving force for customer engagement in social media to create stickiness.

2. Brand Equity: It shows the value added to the product that the brand gives (Farquhar, 1989). Several authors, including Brodie et al. (2011), Cal & Adams (2014), Greve (2014) and Kuvykaite & Piligrimiene (2014), pointed out that brand ownership is one of the key results of social media engagement for customers. Brodie et al. (2011) and Kuvykaite & Piligrimiene (2014) supported the importance of customer involvement in these interactive channels, including sales growth, profitability, superior competitive advantage, and brand equity. Contrary to Brodie et al. (2011), Greve (2014) and Jahn & Kunz (2012) have analyzed brand loyalty, one of the brand equity components, and empirically assessed

the impact of customer participation on brand loyalty. Lu et al. (2014) found, to examine more about the brand stock, that only high brand awareness of the online recommended products influences customers' procurement intentions. Schivinski & Dabrowski (2015) emphasized that these two social media conversations have a positive influence on the dimensions, awareness of brands/associations, brand loyalty and quality perceived as customers' branded equity. In addition to authors like Balakrishnan, Dahnil & Yi (2014), Habibi, Laroche & Richard (2014), Laroche et al. (2013), and Tsimonis & Dimitradis (2013) claimed that customer interaction on social media platforms would result in a combination of value which would then influence brand loyalty, brand value, buying and competitive advantage.

3. Competitive Advantage: In the success of a business, the social media play a major role. It is a powerful tool marketers can use to increase chances of success through innovative combinations of companies and customers. A number of academic scientists such as Brodie et al., and Zhang et al., (2016) felt it was important to strengthen the emotional, psychological or physical investments of customers in social media brands, and to result in co-creation of value. This then leads to greater purchasing intentions, competitiveness and profitability. Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004) and Zhang et al. (2016) have even stated that co-creation of customer value is a major factor in achieving the competitive advantage for companies. Scholars such as Edvardsson, Tronvoll & Gruber (2011) as well as

Prahalad & Ramaswamy also support that process (2004). The researchers emphasized that the social media platform and the possibilities offered can bring competitive advantages based on efficient and comprehensive interaction and customer co-creation processes.

4. Purchase Behaviour: Perea y Monsuwe et al. (2004) examined the effects of consumer online shopping and suggested that attitudes towards ease of use and fun and online shopping relate not only to several factors, such as consumer characteristic features, situational factors, product characteristics, previous online experience and trust. In their comprehensive review, they discussed the need for consumers to shop online. The positive and significant effect of the strong links and peer communication (social media) on the intentions of the buyers was observed by Wang et al. (2012) and Wang & Chang (2013), in particular. Weisberg, Teeni & Arman (2011) and See-To and Ho (2014) also saw the influence on the purchasing intentions of customers from past experience as well as from eWOM, both directly and indirectly, through co creation of values and trust. Furthermore, Lu et al. (2014) found that sponsored posts provide customers with high brand awareness that affects their buying intentions. Moreover, Bruhn et al. (2012) have found that communication in social media has a significant impact on brand picture and has an impact on the buying intentions of customers. Fishbein & Ajzen (1975) maintained that buying intent foresaw actual behaviour, based on theory of reasoned action. Ng (2013) shows that online interactions are an important factor in

the purchasing of customers in the context of social media. Other types of social interaction that include product ratings (favourability) and online reviews (visibility) also influence the buying behavior of clients apart from basic social interactions (Ng, 2013). This was also supported by Wu & Wang (2011) who pointed out that interactions between social media are an important predictor of conduct intentions and that they enable users to cultivate, foster and maintain online connections.

Conclusion:

The proposed study will help in providing information on the role of social media communities on the life of consumers. The findings of the study will provide insight on products advertised on different online media and will induce buyers to use social media constantly. It will also create a social network among consumers who uses online portals for interaction. The symbolic interaction will shape the consumer's identity through interactions.

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