

Chapter 7

Does Social Media Enhance Brand Fandom?

An Empirical Exploration

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ABSTRACT

In the present day, social media has highly affected the fan culture and fandom for brands. Brands have their fandom, especially luxury brands. The current study aims to explore the influence of social media in enhancing brand fandom through two factors under social media: interaction and usage. Further, the study also seeks to explore the influences of brand fandom on brand loyalty and online purchase intention. The study will undersign the importance of interactions on social media sites to understand the influence of social media on in shaping and reshaping the perception of brands in their mindsets and developing a love for them. Perceptual responses will be gathered from 232 undergraduate and postgraduate students (aged 17-27 years) studying in an Indian private university and subsequently analyze using partial least square. The study seeks to find a relationship between the influence of social media interaction and social media usability on brand fandom. The proposed relationships have been tested using SPSS 17 for Windows.

INTRODUCTION

Earlier explorations on fandom have given significant stress on 'textual poaching' (Jenkins, 1992), i.e. fans of media texts as active audiences produce and manipulate textual materials as part of their consumption. But in the digital era, fan activities are not limited to particular film, genre and actors but extended towards technology

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(Busse and Gray, 2011), brands and commodities. SM(SM) has become an arena where brands especially luxury fashion brands (Kim and Ko, 2012) not only promote their products and have spontaneous consumer interaction but also increase brand awareness (McCulloch, 2013) leading to brand fandom (BFAN). Fans are committed, loyal, emotionally connected (Sandvoss, 2005) and bring in with them more viewers (Jenkins, 2006a). This characteristic can also be found for brands the consumer use. Fans lobby for their brands and are not separated rather connect with other fans as an individual unit (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998; Hills, 2002; Sandvoss, 2005) thus paving the way for BFAN.

Objectives of the Study

Brand love or allied constructs has been a dominant term (Albert et al., 2008). It was suggested as an important component of consumers' relationships (Bagozzi et al., 2016). Thus, the study tries to posit that brand love leads to brand fandom (BFAN) which draws the string of brand loyalty (BLOY) further developing the online purchase intention(OPI). However, the influence of SM in the development of BFAN is yet not explored. It is vital as the young generations of consumers are more active over SM interacting and exchanging information about products (Lenhart et al., 2010). Further, they represent a major chunk of online shoppers and decision makers in buying products (Barker et al., 2015). Accordingly, this empirical investigation proposed two constructs to investigate the influence of SM interaction and usability on brand fandom. SM interaction (SMINT) refers to the exchange of information and know-how occurring between online members of several brands, products and services (Kalpan and Haenlin, 2010). SM usability (SMUSA) refers to the benefits harnessed from the effective and efficient usage of social networks through the exchange of appropriate information and know-how (Lee et al., 2015). Further, exploration will take place about the way BFAN contributes to BLOY and OPI of young online shoppers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

SM Interaction (SMINT)

SM is groups of internet community that is constructed on the conceptual and technical bases of Web 2.0, and that accommodates the formation and interaction of user-generated content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Companies have usually embraced social networking to its best possibility regarding engagement and interactive alliance with its end users. Studies have also suggested that managers may

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