Chapter 82

The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Brand Trust and Brand Loyalty:
An Arab Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Social media gives firms a better platform to promote and build brand trust and loyalty. The objective of this study is to develop and validate a conceptual model that integrates the relationships among social media marketing elements, brand trust, and brand loyalty. Data was collected from 242 social media users in Saudi Arabia and the model was tested by employing structural equation modelling using SPSS and AMOS. The model was tested using a two-stage process, model evaluation and testing the significance of the model. Results of the hypotheses tests reveal that brand communities, entertainment, interaction, and customization features have a significant and positive relationship with brand trust and brand loyalty. The findings of this study provide a guide to social media marketers to build brand trust and loyalty.

1. INTRODUCTION

The technology boom of recent years has led more and more businesses to resort to social media as an interactive platform enabling effective marketing. Initially, social media was simply perceived as an opportunity to remain connected with friends and family. Social media enables interactive communication with a wide range of people to transmit messages, feeling, and emotions (Hossain & Sakib, 2016). During the last decade, social media has reached billions of people globally, due to the ease of sharing and accessing information, interacting and generating content online (Hajli, 2014). People give almost one-third of their time interacting in online social media (Lang, 2010). Further, social media provides the ability to connect with like-minded people and businesses through various virtual communities (Hagel & Armstrong, 1997; Wellman & Gulia, 2018). For this reason, researchers and industry sages enthusiastically encourage firms to engage and gain from participation in social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Building and maintaining brand trust and loyalty are the central themes of research for marketers for a very long time (Bennett & Rundle-Thiele, 2002; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Oliver, 1999). In the effort to promote brand loyalty, marketers have utilized various platforms and means such as classical marketing mix variables, internet marketing, and social media marketing (Keller, Parameswaran, & Jacob, 2011). Yet, many studies (e.g., Edelman, 2010; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011) have lamented that marketers do not seem to appreciate and utilize social media's full impact. While firms may have joined social media to increase brand loyalty and acquire more customers, the question still remains on how to build brand loyalty through social media (Godey et al., 2016). An understanding of how the different factors of social media marketing (SMM) influence brand loyalty is important from a strategic perspective. Further, research examining the effects of social media marketing from the perspective of branding literature is still exploratory and lacks empirical evidence (Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014). This study addresses these gaps in literature.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a framework that shows how the SMM elements (brand community, entertainment, interaction, and customization) influence brand loyalty. We test this model and further examine the mediation effect of brand trust on these relationships, which has been neglected in previous studies (Laroche, Habibi, Richard, & Sankaranarayanan, 2012). Findings from this study will contribute theoretically to the literature on the antecedents of brand trust and loyalty. From a practice perspective, this study will enable marketing managers to use social media as a tool for building brand trust and loyalty.

The study first develops a conceptual framework to show the dimensions of SMM, brand trust and brand loyalty. Thereafter, the study describes the research methods, justifies the empirical methods and explains the results. A discussion of the implications of the findings and directions for future research concludes the study.

1.1. Research Setting

The context of this study is Saudi Arabia. While there has been a phenomenal increase in social media, few researches have been conducted to investigate the use of social media by marketers. A recent study surveyed 372 social media users to assess the factors influencing consumers' attitudes toward SMM and their impact on social media usage (Sohail & Al-Jabri, 2017). Another recent study examined the effectiveness of Facebook in particular as a marketing tool in Saudi Arabia (Al-Hadban, Hadeel, Al-Hassoun, & Hamdi, 2015). They found a strong relationship between organizational presence on Facebook and

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