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FAN PAGES ON THE CUSTOMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIP AND ITS MOTIVATION TO PARTICIPATE: A CONCEPTUAL PAPER

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this conceptual paper is to review the relationship between customers and their motivations to participate in Facebook fan pages. It defines and presents the effects of fan pages in a manner that shed light on the constructs and sets the stage for future research. This article also explores its factors that contribute to the participation in fan pages of social network as well as a thorough understanding of why an attraction of fan pages among customers exists and whether customer integration and engagement effects on their brand loyalty. This will further determine whether companies do benefit from their brands' Facebook fans. This paper provides a conceptual framework for considering predictors of participation in fan pages of social network. It indicates factors that contribute to the consequence as well as practical insights for managers.

Keywords: fan pages, customer-brand relationship, motivations to participate, uses and gratification theory, customer engagement theory, involvement theory, personality traits theory, brand communities, Facebook.

INTRODUCTION

Facebook is one of the important tools using by many company to promote their product. Facebook, a social web sites provides a platform for people to interact, communicate and share with one another, enchancing human connectivity and sociability (Nie, 2001). Hence, there a big opportunities for a company to sell and promote their product to a big number of potential buyers. There a more research needs to be done in order to explore more on the benefit of Facebook in business world.

The popularity of Facebook has attracted attention from the business world and inspired a wide range of marketing activities aimed at utilising the new platform. Facebook allows business users to create a custom page promoting their businesses.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a huge wave of change of interaction between consumers and firms through online social media (Chen, Fay & Wang, 2011; Rohm, Kaltcheva & Milne, 2013). However, there is limited empirical research on brand fan pages on social networks, particularly Facebook which has become the most popular online services in the world (Jahn & Kunz, 2012). Apparently, most companies are oblivious to the benefits of fan-pages in Facebook. There are also expectancy of companies in receiving negative feedback and responses from customers, as well as users that pursue in giving a bad image for their conflict of interest. This would create an unhealthy environment which could not be controlled by the organization or company involved (Hönisch & Micha Strack., 2012). Not only that, Cheung, Chan & Limayem (2005) revealed that personality traits are under-investigated in studies of social media. Most research covers various kinds of character in human as revealed by Mount, Barrick, Scullen & Rounds (2005), online shopping motivations and behavior (Huang & Yang, 2010). However there are limited studies that investigate and identify various types of traits of online shoppers. These social networking sites offer a process of interaction over time between users and their brands of interest. Ultimately, their relationships with their brand are strengthened through self-reflection techniques and self-directed information seeking (Gilpin, 2011). A thorough understanding is needed of why an attraction of fan pages among customers exists and whether customer integration and engagement effects on their brand loyalty. This will further determine whether companies do benefit from their brands' Facebook fans.

Uses and Gratification Theory is described as a concept that delivers an understanding of reasons people actively reach for any specific media for their personal satisfaction. It is a central approach in comprehending mass communication (Severin & Tankard, 1997). Its perspective is more on a positivistic approach where it is in line with the socio-psychological communication tradition and in a mass media scale of communication (West & Turner, 2007). The two main reasons for customers to engage in these platforms are social connections such as keeping in touch with friends and information sharing such as events or gosips (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008). This notion is agreed by Foster, Francescucci & West, (2010) and LaRose, Mastro & Eastin (2011) as well as Sheldon (2008) who revealed that entertainment also play a pertinent role in their participation in social networking sites.

In a different perspective, a study conducted by Ellison, Charles & Lampe (2007) found that the ability of a social networking site such as Facebook to strengthen friend relationships such as bonding social capital, expanding an individual's network such as bridging social capital and keeping in contact with past relationships are the many factors that contribute to the motivation of people in engaging in Facebook. This is similar with the works of Raacke & Bonds-Raacke (2008) who points out the achievement of people in feeling connected through Facebook are

among their motivation in this engagement. Additionally, finding old friends, making new friends, learning about events, creating social functions are other factors that contribute to their engagement to Facebook as one of the social networking sites. Wang, Tchernev & Solloway (2012) identified four motivational elements in the usage of social media, which are; emotional, cognitive, social and habitual use. Nonetheless, not all are in consistent gratification. In their analysis of needs for using Facebook groups, Park, Kerk & Valenzuela (2009) indicated four elements, which are; socializing, entertainment, self-seeking, and information.

People are not oblivious to the fact that Facebook has become a necessity to their social and cultural life (Krämer & Winter, 2008). Users can obtain many benefits as Facebook offers (a) visualize the self by Döring (2003), (b) organize experiences into a coherent self, Gilpin (2011) (c) define and identify important self-aspects, and it offers multiple options for self-completion (Kramer & Haferkamp, 2011; Zhao & Martin, 2008). Apart from that, this social networking site provides (d) a highly interactive environment which allows people to inform comprehend the symbols of self-completion (Robin, 2007). These elements give opportunity to express them. Previous studies reported that Facebook is indicated as a tool for identity formation (Döring, 2003; Gilpin, 2011; Krämer & Haferkamp, 2011; Robin, 2007; Zhao & Martin, 2008). It is closely linked to classical theories of social psychology (Tajfel, 1974; Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981).

Customer engagement theory is derived from the U&G theory which primarily focuses on consumer engagement. It is a widely discussed concept in the service research community (Brodie et al., 2011; Libai et al., 2010; Van et al., 2010; Verhoef et al., 2010). In the perspective of personality traits theory, there are unlimited research of U&G that are committed to a broad range of personality traits Finn, (1997), namely typology of five Anderson & Revelle (1995), three personality traits Eysenck (1991), and the advanced system of 16 primary personality factors (Catell et al., 1970; McGuire, 1974). Historically, research of the prediction of personality as motivation dated since the 1950s. Since then, it has been one of the most important tools in investigating human behavior. Trait theory is one of the most researchable streams of personality studies (Kassarjian, 1971). These traits are described as consistent behavioral in the conduct of people Pervin (1996) which forms the foundations of individual differences. There are some critics explaining on the small amounts of variance in broad variables such as the Big Five Kassarjin (1991) and some are too narrowly focused on domain-specific traits which led to innumerable concepts and scales (John & Srivastava, 1999). Brand communities on the other hand are influenced by the participation of consumers in terms of their satisfaction and the degree of consumer influence within the community. Additionally, Algesheimer, Dholakia & Herrmann (2005), reported that a positive influence of community participation on word-of-mouth, brand image, and community loyalty. In essence, Jahn & Kunz (2012) clarified that community identification is a central influence for community participation and further revealed that it is an important tool for a successful branding strategy.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Jahn & Kunz (2012) revealed the positive effects of fan-page usage on fan-page engagement. Therefore, it is posited that;

H₁: There is a positive and significant relationship between brand fan-page usage intensity and fan-page engagement

The U&G theory covers three gratification areas as the foundation of this study. Hirschman (1982)'s literature on content area is used in this study by differentiating it between the functional and hedonic values delivered. Thus, information Foster, Francescucci & West, (2010); Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, (2008), entertainment Algesheimer et al., (2005); Sheldon, (2008); Song et al., (2004), are critical among social media users. This notion is agreed by Childers et al. (2001), that analyzed utilitarian and hedonic experiences as an explanation to online shopping behavior. It is also in line with Huang (2008) who reported that hedonic motives and experiences produces higher acceptance of e-commerce websites.

Therefore, it is proposed that;

H_{2a}: There is a positive and significant relationship between functional value of the fan-page content and fan-page usage intensity

H_{2b}: There is a positive and significant relationship between hedonic value of the fan-page content and fan-page usage intensity

The relationship area where the interaction could benefit the fan-page user consists of two main kinds of relationships, which are; the interaction with other users and the interaction with the brand or company behind the brand. Social networking sites are dependent on these growing, maintaining and broadening relationships to others (Ellison, Charles & Lampe, 2007; Sheldon, 2008). Customers are also willing to put investment to a brand (Algesheimer, Dholakia & Herrmann, 2005; Fournier & Avery, 2010). Therefore, it is posited that;

H_{3a}: There is a positive and significant relationship between social interaction value of the and fan-page usage intensity

H_{3b}: There is a positive and significant relationship between brand interaction value of the and fan-page usage intensity

H_{3c}: There is a positive and significant relationship between social interaction value and fan-page engagement

H_{3d}: There is a positive and significant relationship between brand interaction value and fan-page engagement

A number of studies reported that participation in fan-pages among users symbolizes their identity, image of status of themselves (Algesheimer, Dholakia & Herrmann, 2005; Peluchette & Karl, 2009). Therefore, it is hypothesized that;

H₄: There is a positive and significant relationship between self-concept value of the fan-page membership and fan-page engagement

Numerous works of Correa, Hinsley & Zuniga, (2010); Ryan & Xenos, (2011); Zhong, Hardin & Sun, (2011), revealed a positive correlation between personality and total internet usage including social media and social networking sites. The pioneer to study the relationship between personality and patterns of social network use were (Ross et al., 2009). The study reported the positive relationship between (1) Extraversion and Facebook use, number of Facebook friends and associations with Facebook groups; (2) positive relation between Neuroticism and revealing private information on Facebook; (3) positive correlation between Agreeableness and number of Facebook friends; (4) positive correlation between Openness and number of different Facebook features used; (5) negative relationship between Conscientiousness and overall use of Facebook. Therefore, it is posited that;

H₅: There is a positive and significant relationship between personality traits and fan-page usage intensity

Rosenbaum, (2008), posited that there is a positive relationship between participation in the community and the user and company. Brand loyalty is the central concept for relationship marketing (De Ruyter, Wetzels & Bloemer, 1998). Loyalty encompasses of attitudinal such as commitment and behavioral such as purchase and patronage. This is in line with the findings from Dick & Basu, (1994), where “relative attitude” and “repeat patronage” are central parts of loyalty relationships with other conceptualizations (Bloemer & Kasper, 1995). Jahn & Kunz (2012) posited that fan-page engagement contributes towards brand loyalty of a product or service. This involves an emotional bond of brand with fan-page engagement to the fan-page community. The theory of involvement is also connected with this relationship, which defines as “a person’s perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests Zaichkowsky (1985) p.342. This describes a high establishment between fan-page usage and engagement with the brand, as indicated by (Olsen, 2007; Quester & Ai, 2003). Therefore, it is proposed that:

H_{6a}: There is a positive and significant relationship between Fan-page usage intensity and brand loyalty

H_{6b}: There is a positive and significant relationship between Fan-page engagement and brand loyalty

The conceptual framework demonstrates the influence of fan pages on brand loyalty and the effects of consumer values on fan-page participation. It is based on an integration of theories which are uses and gratifications theory Katz (1959), customer engagement theory Brodie et al., (2011); Van Doorn et al., (2010) and involvement theory (Zaichkowsky (1985). This framework describes the satisfaction of customers to a brand fan page, which will further lead to a higher brand loyalty.

With the extension of Jahn & Kunz, (2012), conceptual model, this study investigates the transformation of consumers into fans of their brand. In line with this, it is believed that fan pages are built with the intention of attracting customers who purchase online products besides other activities such as chatting and browsing. No doubt, the quality and variety of apparel clothing are the most important factors that influence customers to purchase these products. However, factors such as fan page participation (fan page usage intensity, fan page engagement) are also believed to play a vital role in creating loyalty of brand among customers.

In addition, functional and hedonic value may also contribute to the positive participation of the fan page. Similarly, social interaction value and brand interaction value cannot be neglected as many 'Sunnah' food owners are believed to have failed to attract customers owing to the lack of these practices. The same applies to self-concept value and this element is also presumed to be a contributory factor leading customers to engage in their fan page, particularly among the youngsters. Most importantly, the personality of customers also contributes to their usage of fan pages. Having said that, it is expected the above variables will have a significant impact on their loyalty of the brand in the context of this study of health products based on 'Sunnah' food.

CONCLUSION

Previous research has highlighted the influence of fan pages on brand loyalty and the effects of consumer values on fan-page participation. This research attempts to provide insights into its facets. As the health food industry is highly competitive in terms of attracting and retaining customers, it is essential for 'Sunnah' food owners to have an in-depth understanding of what the customers want and, meet their expectations, as these are considered pivotal to a company's operational survival.

This study will also provide some unique explanations of how personality of potential buyers, their relationship with the brand, and how motivation influences the customers' participation to purchase the product. Online brand owners, will have better knowledge and understanding of customers' expectations and therefore they can be well positioned to take advantage of those growing demand in health products based on 'Sunnah' food in Malaysia. This study will portray Facebook fan-pages as an excellent marketing tool in fostering users' behavior such as brand advocacy and word-of-mouth activity. This study is significant for managers to acknowledge that online social media plays an important role in assisting them in developing more proactive brands in interacting with their consumers in terms of product information, addressing customer service issues, engaging consumers with content relevant to the brand, providing timely information regarding promotions and new product launches and fostering consumers-generated comments. From an academic perspective, despite the increasing interest in online fan pages, there has been very little research in this area, particularly on the relationship between the personalities of buyers into these online services mainly Facebook. Therefore, it is expected that the originality of this research will be judged through the contribution it makes to extend the body of literature on the apparel industry in Malaysia. The significance of this study is that it not only portrays the effect of fan pages on customer behavior, but also indicates the motives for participation and the crucial constructs to manage them successful

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