

## Determinants of Customer Brand Engagement in Social Media Sites: A Conceptual Framework

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**Abstract:** In this study, we conducted a systematic and structured literature review to develop the conceptual framework for customer brand engagement in social media sites. The social media is rapidly changing the way brands are communicating with their primary consumer segments. Customer brand engagement relatively new in the marketing literature has only limitedly number of studies. This study presents five motivational drivers of customer brand engagement in social media and the relationship between these drivers and engagement. This study contributes to the understanding of customer brand engagement and its antecedents. The antecedents like social influence, brand involvement, social media usage, economic benefits and entertain benefits are found to effect brand engagement in social media. This study believed to contribute in understanding the causes and effects of the customer engagement in social media sites.

**Key words:** Brand engagement, customer engagement, brand community, social media, social network, marketing

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### INTRODUCTION

Social media is rapidly emerging as new channel for customer engagement and interactions. There are millions of customer interactions taking place everyday on social media sites such as facebook, twitter, youtube, etc. as well as a vast number of customer support forums and online communities. Customer Engagement (CE) in the marketing literature is a new phenomenon which has recently received considerable attention. Customer engagement is defined as “a customer’s behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm” (Doorn *et al.*, 2010). Brodie *et al.* (2011) proposes that engaged customers have a key role in enhanced business performance by providing Word-Of-Mouth (WOM) about the products, services and brands. Consumer engagement has been one of the most widely discussed topics in the social media research. Facebook brand page activity may potentially influence engagement.

Brand can post an item of content on its page and reach is the number of people who receive an impression of a piece of content. Interactions are when a user likes, comments on or shares the content. Reach depends on several factors, like number of fans, number of interactions and number of friends that fans of a brand page have. Brands have to provide content that fit needs of the customer, in order to engage the customer by

clicking the like button or responding to the brand’s message. Facebook activity is related to number of posts and what kind of content is been posted.

Social media usage in India as number of internet users in India reached 302 million users by December 2014. India is a key market for social media giants active as social media users in India grew to around 106 million and India is among the top three countries in terms of number of people using facebook (100m+users) whereas twitter is seeing an increased user base of over 33 million. The popularity of social media sites has also spread to companies and firms as part of their strategies. Research studies shows that 93% of fortune 500 companies have accounts on social media sites. About 21% of Fortune 500 corporations had corporate blogs, 78% use twitter, 74% has facebook, 84% has joined Glassdoor, 93% use LinkedIn and 13% use Instagram.

More than 70% of organizations operating around the world are now active on social media. Companies across variety of industries such as automobile, travel and tourism, banking and financial services, retailers, airlines fashion and education and many more using social media to tap opportunities in the market. The use it to build brands, promotions, product development, customer service, employee engagement and recruitments, etc. In many organizations, the number of social media-specific roles is limited. Simply measured survey of over 350 social

**Table 1: Customer engagement definition**

Researcher	Definition
Algesheimer <i>et al.</i> (2005)	Consumer's intrinsic motivation to interact and cooperate with community members
Shevlin (2007)	As repeated and satisfying interactions between customers and a company, product or brand and the interactions that enhance the customers' emotional connection with the company, product or brand
Bowden (2009)	A sequential psychological process that customers move through to become loyal towards a brand
Evans and McKee (2010)	The simple act of participating in an online environment
Mollen and Wilson (2010)	An outcome of repeated interactions that strengthen the emotional, psychological or physical investment a customer has in a brand
Van <i>et al.</i> (2010)	A customer's behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm. Customer engagement is a behavioural construct that goes beyond purchase
Hollebeek (2011)	The level of an individual customer's motivational, brand-related and context-dependent state of mind characterised by specific levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity in direct brand interactions
Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2011)	Consumer engagement is a multidimensional concept comprising cognitive, emotional and/or behavioral dimensions
Nammir <i>et al.</i> (2012)	The level of a customer's various "presence" (physical, emotional and cognitive) in their relationship with a service organisation
Cvijik and Michahelles (2013)	Is followers' reaction to the characteristics and content of the material they share online
Alhabash and McAlister (2014)	Encapsulates the psychological responses to online messages
Khan (2014)	Is expressed symbolically (use and creation of messages) and physically (actual product use)

media marketers found that 65% of teams have between 1-3 people dedicated specifically to social media. This present study aims to review social media literature and create a framework to understand the causal relationships between various antecedents and outcome of customer engagement.

**Literature review:** In digital era, the term "consumer engagement" typically refers to the ways in which consumers engage with brands through digital channels such as the brand's website, blogs, social networking sites and videos. The term 'engagement' is defined as a mental state of enjoyment of the representation of an action or object. The consultancy define engagement as "an outcome of repeated interactions that strengthen the emotional, psychological or physical investment a customer has in a brand" (Mollen and Wilson, 2010). Many other researchers define engagement as the simple act of participating in an online environment. Customer engagement is a psychological state, but can be manifested into action (Doom *et al.* 2010).

Bowden (2009) defines customer engagement as a sequential psychological process that customers move through to become loyal towards a brand. Brodie *et al.* (2011) makes an extensive analysis of definitions and conceptualizations of the term engagement in social sciences and management disciplines and the term customer engagement in the marketing and service literature. All the customer engagement behaviours are proposed to comprise five dimensions: valence (positive or negative) form and modality, scope (temporal and geographic), nature of impact and finally, customer goals. Parveen and coauthors studies shows that only 664 business organizations out of 7910 use some form of social media in Malaysia.

Customer engagement has also been explored as a new perspective in the field of customer management (Verhoef *et al.*, 2010). Vivek *et al.* (2009) examines various disciplines including psychology, sociology and management and defines consumer engagement as the intensity of consumer's participation and connection with the organization's offerings and/or organized activities. Table 1 lists some of the important definitions of customer engagement.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Large number of theories and models are used to study the social media research (Ngai *et al.*, 2015). Motives are also a key concept in the study of online communications. Much of the research on social media invokes uses and gratifications perspective of mass communication and examines the motives behind using social media. Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) (Eighmey and McCord, 1998) that has been applied to traditional media as well social media. Motives are also a key concept in the study of online communications. Uses and gratifications theory has been widely used to examine the users' motivations for using certain media including social media (Yang and Lai, 2011). Cvijikj and Michahelles formulated a conceptual framework in which they propose that digital engagement on a social network depends on several elements like:

- The type of content published, i.e., the nature and content of the messages
- The post format which could be understood as the message's wrapper

Table 2: Important theories used to study customer engagement in social media

Theories	Researchers
Personality traits/five factor model of personality	Correa <i>et al.</i> (2010), Labrecque <i>et al.</i> (2011), Lu and Hsiao (2010) and Zhang <i>et al.</i> (2009); Zhong <i>et al.</i> (2011); Laurans (2012)
Economic benefits	Hsu <i>et al.</i> (2015); Sztrojiny (2001); Wernand (2011); Reitz (2012); Anderson <i>et al.</i> (2014); Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman (2014); Kumar <i>et al.</i> (2015)
Entertainment benefits	Wernand (2011); Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman (2014)
Self-determination theory	Khan (2014)
Social attractiveness	Kleck <i>et al.</i> (2007); Tong <i>et al.</i> (2008)
Social capital	Lin <i>et al.</i> (2009); Chai and Kim (2010); Shiue <i>et al.</i> (2010), Hau and Kim (2011); Sztrojiny (2001); Kumar <i>et al.</i> (2015)
Social capital theory	Chai and Kim (2010), Hau and Kim (2011), Lu and Hsiao (2010)
Social cognitive theory	Chiu <i>et al.</i> (2006); Hsu and Lin (2008) and Lin <i>et al.</i> (2009)
Social exchange theory	Blanchard (2008); Hsu and Lin (2008); Lin <i>et al.</i> (2009); Nammir <i>et al.</i> (2012); Stam <i>et al.</i> (2014)
Social identity theory	Blanchard (2008); Cheung and Lee (2010), Dholakia <i>et al.</i> (2004); Chung <i>et al.</i> (2014)
Social influence	Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002); Hsu and Lin (2008); Kwon and Wen (2010); Wang <i>et al.</i> Lin (2012); Kumar <i>et al.</i> (2015)
Social influence theory	Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002); Cheung and Lee (2010); Dholakia <i>et al.</i> (2004); Koo <i>et al.</i> (2011); Wang <i>et al.</i> (2012); Leung (2012)
Social media experience	Khan (2014); Laurans (2012)
Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)	Leung (2012); Brooks (2013); Kumar <i>et al.</i> (2015)
Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)	Hsu and Lin (2008); Kumar <i>et al.</i> (2015)
Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)	Hsu and Lin (2008); Kumar <i>et al.</i> (2015)
Uses and gratifications theory	Chen <i>et al.</i> (2013); Dholakia <i>et al.</i> (2004); Leung (2012); Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman (2014)
UTAUT model	Brooks (2013)

The time of publication which refers to the chronological or psychological timing of the post. Reitz (2012) study examined how perceived facebook company page features (i.e., perceived information quality, perceived enjoyment and perceived interactivity) predicted online consume engagement, loyalty and purchase intent. 233 online surveys were collected from U.S. Facebook users who “like” companies on facebook to test the online consumer engagement framework. The research findings shows that perceived facebook characteristics influence online consumer engagement which influences loyalty and ultimately purchase intent. Vivek *et al.* (2011) studies shows that participation and involvement serves as antecedents of CE while value, trust, effective commitment, word of mouth, loyalty and brand community involvement are potential consequences.

Table 2 lists some of the important theories used to study the customer engagement. Jayasingh and Venkatesh (2015) studied the factors influencing the brand page engagement of 134 Indian brand pages. The research shows that the key determinants for consumer engagement are content-related and frequency of brand posting activities and not on number of fans following the page.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**The conceptual model of customer engagement:** Based on the theoretical background presented, the research model

is shown in Fig. 1. The rationale of the model is explained below. The major reason for people to use social media is to access and share information.

According to Wang *et al.* (2012), Hsu *et al.* (2015) users tend to use social media to acquire and share information with others. Similarly, Park *et al.* (2009) suggest that knowledge acquisition and sharing is one of the needs met by students using social media. Lee and Ma (2012) on the other hand, find that information seeking is a significant factor affecting users’ intention to share information.

Thus, we may recognize that users are more likely to search and share information by using the social media if they have information seeking needs.

Chua and coauthors found that the motivations that bring people use social media are leisure/entertainment, easy access, information resources/services and obtaining high quality information.

Other scholars have found that the motivations for using social media are entertainment, information seeking, socialization, passing time, escapism and professional advancement (Chen *et al.*, 2013).

Additionally, researchers have found that a purpose to which users use social media is present themselves online to develop and maintain their social networks and relationships (Boyle and Johnson, 2010; Ellison *et al.*, 2007).

Based on these we recognize that the motivations for using social media can be divided into four types, namely entertainment, socialization, information seeking and self-presentation.

Table 3: Important attributes used in previous research

Attributes	References
Social influence	Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002); Hsu and Lin (2008); Wang <i>et al.</i> (2012); Kumar <i>et al.</i> (2015)
Social capital	Chiu <i>et al.</i> (2006); Lin <i>et al.</i> (2009), Chai and Kim (2010), Shiue <i>et al.</i> (2010), Hau and Kim (2011); Sztrojiny (2001); Kumar <i>et al.</i> (2015)
Economic benefits	Hsu and Lin (2008); Sztrojiny (2001); Weman (2011); Reitz (2012); Kumar <i>et al.</i> (2015); Anderson <i>et al.</i> (2014); Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman (2014)
Entertainment benefits	Weman, 2011; Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman (2014)
User perceptions	Hsu and Lin (2008); Hau and Kim (2011)
User experience	Phua and Ahna (2014); Khan (2014)
User personality	Correa <i>et al.</i> (2010); Zhong <i>et al.</i> (2011); Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman (2014)
Brand loyalty	Weman (2011); Sztrojiny (2001); Anderson <i>et al.</i> (2014)
Brand involvement	Hollebeek (2011); Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2011); Malciute (2012); Phua and Ahna (2014); Rog (2014)
Customer engagement	Sztrojiny (2001); Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2011); Reitz (2012); Malciute (2012); Kuzgun (2012); Johansen (2012); Leung (2012); Khan (2014); Rog (2014)
Social factors	Hsiao <i>et al.</i> (2010); Ip and Wagner (2008); Hollebeek (2011)
Brand experience	Johansen (2012)
Brand attitude	Hsu and Lin (2008); Leung (2012); Rog (2014); Kumar <i>et al.</i> (2015)

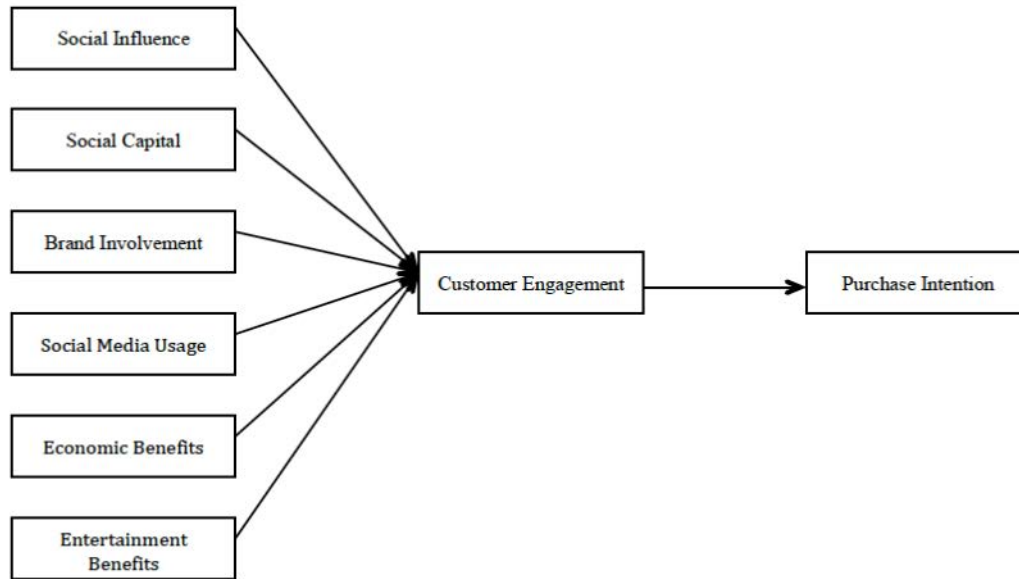


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework of customer engagement

One of the key outcomes of customer engagement is intention to make purchase. Some of important attributes studied by the previous researcher are listed in Table 3.

**CONCLUSION**

The social media has changed the brand engagement drastically. Based on the previous studies, we able to identify some the important antecedent the increases social media brand engagement. They are social influence, social capital, brand involvement, social media usage, economic and entertainment benefits. Engagement is found to have a direct effect on intention to purchase. The present study list some of the theories used to study social media brand engagement and also explains how previous researchers developed the models.

The variable developed in this research is based on the literature review. The important factors like social influence and social capital plays an important role in the brand engagement. Overall the contribution of this study is to identify some of constructs used by previous researchers to study social media engagement. The key findings and new constructed framework can be used by researchers and empirically tested.

The social media research is in early stage and more work is required to include relevant literature from different sources.

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