

Moderating Effect of Trust Between Perceived Value and Customer Brand Engagement in SNSs

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Abstract: The Internet has ushered a new age of social media marketing. Presently, many companies have formed a social media presence to promote their businesses online. As the number of active users in Social Networking Sites (SNSs) continues to increase, many companies are making significant investment in SNSs to create a mass of new fans and engage with them. The purpose of this research are two-fold to identify the relationship between perceived value and Customer Brand Engagement (CBE), to examine the role of trust as a moderator on the relationship between perceived value and CBE. A correlational research was conducted and online questionnaire was disseminated to 212 fans in company's brand page. Statistical methods encompassing reliability test and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) were adopted to analyze data collected. The result shows that there are significant relationships between perceived value and CBE. Furthermore, the finding reveals that trust is fully moderating the nexus between perceived value and CBE. This study could offer a useful guidance for companies who have intention to create a presence in SNSs as well as for companies who have established their site in SNSs. Besides, the findings of this study can assist companies to formulate a better strategy for reinforcing their SNSs as well as acts as a springboard for future study in SNSs context.

Key words: Trust, perceived value, Customer Brand Engagement (CBE), Social Networking Site (SNSs), strategy for reinforcing, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, Social Networking Sites (SNSs) have experienced a robust growth and offers numerous advantages for human. A variety of features embedded in SNSs has changed the people to behave and allow them to stay connected online with their family and friends not only in offline world but online world (Ellahi and Bokhari, 2013). Apart from that, SNSs also has expanded the impacts to many industries in the world. Many international and local companies in Malaysia including the government and public sector companies have made extensive use of SNSs (Gummerus *et al.*, 2012). Companies use social media as part of their marketing tool to communicate with their consumers and enhance customer experience. Undeniably, social media has transformed the current business world to become more complicated (Shojaee and Azman, 2013). Also, company uses social media to distribute news and information about company's product and services to potential customer, managing customer's feedback and recruit new employees as well as rising brand awareness.

In SNSs, users with similar interest are gathered together on a platform such as brand page to express their thoughts and communicate with other users and companies. Through this new form of web service provided by the brand page, companies are able to manage, interact, communicate and exchange information with their brand community (Chauhan and Pillai, 2013; Lu and Hsiao, 2010), cultivate deep customer relationship and engage the users (Leung *et al.*, 2013). The popularity of users engage in company's SNSs platform has received much attentions from the scholar community (Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Sashi, 2012). Kumar *et al.* (2010) argued that contributions or values of consumers on company should be scrutinized from their engagement with company instead of solely assessed through their transaction with company.

Also, some researchers by Baird and Parasnis (2011), Reitz (2012), Huang (2013), Tsai and Men (2013) and Wirtz *et al.* (2013) have attempted to comprehend the underlying reasons why people engage in company's SNSs platform. However, there are relatively little attentions has been given to user's perceived value of

use through Facebook (Yang and Lin, 2014). Thus, understanding the actual value needed by consumers in SNSs is a first step to engage customers in SNSs (Baird and Parasnis, 2011). As previous literatures have addressed consumption value has the ability to indicate the customer's attitude and behavior (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001) because multiple consumption value is function of customer's choice (Sheth *et al.*, 1991), therefore, consumption value is critical in predicting customer's choice to engage in SNSs. In addition, consumption value is appropriate in studying the use of hedonic technologies (Turel *et al.*, 2010) such as SNSs (Hu *et al.*, 2011). In present study, Theory of Consumption Value (TCV) proposed by Sheth *et al.* (1991) has been employed to predict the CBE by assessing customer's perceived value, in case, perceived information quality and interactivity toward brand page.

Brand page in Facebook is virtual and intangible, therefore trust level between users and company can be very low since users perceived greater risks on Internet than physical environment (Hoffman *et al.*, 1999). In addition, more scammers are using social media such as Facebook to conduct online activities (Mazlinda, 2015) and continue to threaten users. In response, building a trust between company and its users is paramount for a brand page (Ou and Sia, 2010). Without trust as a basis, brand page would be fragile and cannot be lasted for long term (Yang and Lin, 2014). In order to motivate users to perform further actions in brand page, the perception risks of users is imperative to reduce (Simonian *et al.*, 2012) by nurturing trust among users (Ou and Sia, 2010). Previous study has found that different level of trust can affects the relationship between perceived value and online community engagement on SNSs (Yang and Lin, 2014). Hence, there is a need to study the moderation effect of trust on the relationship between perceived value and customer's engagement on SNSs.

In overall, the aims of this study are to identify the relationship between perceived value (interactivity and information quality) and CBE to investigate the moderating effect of trust on the relationship between perceived value and customer engagement in company's Facebook brand page. The remaining of this study is organized as follow. First, a brief of literature related to perceived value, CBE and trust is reviewed. Next, the research methodology and the data analysis techniques employed are presented. Lastly, the data is analyzed and the results are discussed.

Literature review

Perceived value: Perceived value refers as a customer's overall assessment towards company brand page based

on perceptions of what is received and what is given. Perceived value in this study consisted of perceived information quality and perceived interactivity. Namely, when the fans reach a company's brand page in Facebook, the fans will form a perception on company's brand page based on the consumption value which are functional and social value (Zeithaml, 1988).

Now a days, social media has increasingly recognized as main information source (Maurer and Wiegmann, 2011; Westerman *et al.*, 2014). Information is the core in website (Bhatti *et al.*, 2000) and it is important in motivating and attracting people to visit websites (Kim and Fesenmaier, 2008) as well as potentially attract users to become a fan in companie's brand page (Muk and Chung, 2014). Information quality defined as "consumer's perception of product and company information based on a set of judgment criteria that cover accuracy, relevance, helpfulness, up-to-datedness and unbiased measures" (Ou and Sia, 2010). Information quality is the key role for consumer to assess a company's website, negatively perceived on information quality such as insufficient information will precipitate consumers to hinder or mistrust the site (Ou and Sia, 2010).

Apart from that, SNSs is gradually changing the way of society and individual to consume and contribute to the creation of online information as well as expressing their thoughts, opinions and creations (Hays *et al.*, 2013). This kind of new communication technology has increased the possibilities for the manner of people to send and receive information (Westerman *et al.*, 2014). Social value is defined as "the perceived utility acquired from an alternative's association with one or more specific social groups. An alternative acquire social value through association with positively or negatively stereotyped demographic, socioeconomic and cultural-ethnic groups, social value is measured on a profile of choice imagery" (Sheth *et al.*, 1991). With the radical growth of SNSs in past decade, users now are able to express themselves, establish ties and develop and maintain social relationship via SNSs (Lin and Lu, 2011). Thus, as interactive nature of SNSs enable companies and consumers to communicate on each other, many companies have attracted by SNSs and employ it as marketing tool in their businesses (Tsai and Men, 2013; Sabate *et al.*, 2014).

Customer Brand Engagement (CBE): The topic of CBE has begun to draw a considerable attention among practitioners and scholars. Previous studies have attempted to apply the comprehensive and integrated

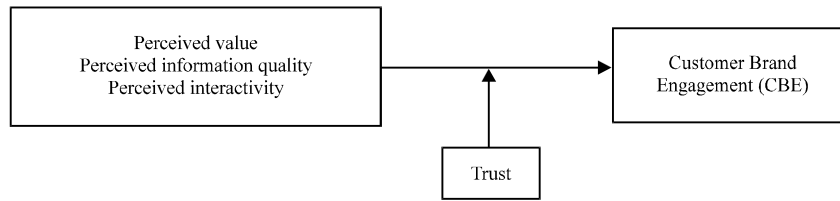


Fig. 1: Proposed conceptual framework

approach on CBE intent to understand consumer behavior in marketplace. Initially, CBE was defined as the behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm, beyond purchase and resulted from motivational drivers (Doom *et al.*, 2010). Although, Mollen and Wilson (2010) defined CBE by highlighting the concept of cognitive and affective which is “the cognitive and affective commitment to an active relationship with the brand as personified by website or other computer-mediated entities designed to communicate brand value”. However, there still have many studies are measuring the CBE from the aspect of customer’s behavior (Huang, 2013). Due the definition of CBE is vague and solely stressed on certain aspect in customer engagement, Brodie *et al.* (2011) has extended the CBE definition by combining cognitive and emotional dimensions with behavioral dimension. Following by Hollebeek (2011), the researcher has illustrated the definition of CBE as “the level of customer’s cognitive, emotional and behavioral investment in specific brand interactions”

Trust: Trust is essential in social activities and it involved uncertainty and dependency (Pavlou and Fygenson, 2006). Trust is defined as “the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party” (Mayer *et al.*, 1995). Trust is also defined as a general belief that another party can be trusted, based on the assumption that another party in the social exchange will behave in ethical and socially appropriate manner instead of take advantage (Gefen *et al.*, 2003). Trust played as a significant role in various economic activities, regardless with businesses conducted in offline world or online, it typically seems as more important in online activities than offline (Gefen *et al.*, 2003). In the social media sites context, Lin and Lu (2011) mentioned that trust have the ability to persuade users to continue visit the SNSs such as Facebook. Furthermore, Pentina *et al.* (2013) have found that trust can be transferred from a social media platform to the companie’s brand page and in turn encourage users to spread WOM. Chiu *et al.* (2012) have examined the relationship between perceived value,

customer satisfaction and trust. The researchers discovered that customers would satisfy if they have good perceived value on website and eventually they will trust the firm website.

Development of conceptual framework: The proposed conceptual framework is developed based on the extensive literature review, previous findings in empirical research and support from two underpinning theories including Theory of Consumption Value (TCV) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The proposed conceptual framework as shown in Fig. 1 encompasses three variables which are independent, dependent and moderating variables. In this study, independent variable refers to perceived value in which consisted of two dimensions: perceived information quality and perceived interactivity. CBE is viewed as dependent variable. Lastly, trust is treated as a moderator on the relationship between perceived value and CBE.

The TCV explains that perceived value is the key factor to influence consumer choice behavior such as engaging in company’s brand page (Sheth *et al.*, 1991). In support, empirical studies found that perceived value is a key multidimensional determinant of behavioral intention in SNSs (Lee *et al.*, 2014) as well as continuance participation and engagement in Facebook (Jahn and Kunz, 2012; Debei *et al.*, 2013; Aladwani, 2014). Previous studies have argued the importance of perceived value on CBE, particularly, the influences of information quality and interactivity on CBE. Wang (2013) has found that information quality and relationship quality can motivate customers to engage in brand page. In addition, Muk and Chung (2014) claimed that informational content could enhance user’s attitude toward brand pages. Similarly, Sabate *et al.* (2014) found that informative content can lead to greatest level of engagement. Also, Lin and Lu (2011) highlighted that social interaction plays an important role in users continued use of brand page. Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

- H₁: Perceived value is significantly and positively related to CBE

Trust can be seen as a perceived behavioral control in this study as TPB postulated that perceived behavioral control can indicate the individual's intention to behave (Ajzen, 1991). Indeed, trust is resulted from high perceived value in website (Lin and Lu, 2011; Syn and Kim, 2013). This means that users have more resources and opportunities to engage in brand page, in other words, users have anticipated fewer impediments and obstacles when deciding to engage in brand page. As a double-edged sword, trust can persuades users to keep visiting the websites (Lin and Lu, 2011) and at the same time can drives away the users from brand page if there are privacy problem or spam appears in brand page (Baird and Parasnis, 2011). There are some evidences supported the significance of perceived value on CBE, including a recent investigation of Syn and Kim (2013), the researchers have found that users with trust tend to engage in online activities on the website. In addition, Yang and Lin (2014) found that the low-trust and high-trust people have different impacts on engagement after they perceived the value on website. Therefore, this study conjectures that trust could have moderating effects on the relationship between perceived value and CBE. Hence, a proposed hypothesis is formed as follows:

- H₂: Trust moderates the relationship between perceived value and CBE

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is a non-experimental research using correlational research. There are three variables in this research: independent variable, moderator and dependent variable. The relationships between variables in this study were examined. Thus, two hypotheses were tested which included the relationships between perceived values, trust and CBE. Quantitative research method was adopted in this research. Online questionnaire was distributed to the targeted respondents of this study the fans in a particular company's brand page on Facebook. Fans are chosen because they are easily to interact with companies and access the content posted by companies in their personal site (Sabate *et al.*, 2014). The sampling method used in this research is snowball sampling method (Cooper and Schindler, 2008). This sampling is appropriate for this research when the target populations are elusive and it is effective by using referral network (Cooper and Schindler, 2008; Lindlof and Taylor, 2002; Baltar and Brunet, 2012). According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), snowball sampling works well on social networks, including Facebook. Bhutta *et al.* (2015) asserted that snowball sampling is suitable for SNSs as it is used

intensively, dynamic and continues to growth. Furthermore, previous studies have applied snowball sampling method to recruit respondents from SNSs, including Facebook (Baltar and Brunet, 2012; Chen *et al.*, 2014).

In addition, the acceptable sample size for this study is determined by the statistical tool used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). SEM is a broad sample technique and relative simple model that requires a sample size >200 (Kline, 2011). Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) for Windows were employed to analyze the collected data. The analysis techniques include reliability test, two-step SEM approach (measurement model and structural model) and test of moderation effect were conducted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reliability test: Online questionnaire was sent and a total of 212 responses were collected. Based on the data collected, each construct's reliability was assessed by using internal consistency through Cronbach's alpha in SPSS. As shown in Table 1, the Cronbach's alpha values of all variables studied (perceived value, trust and CBE) were found above the minimum stipulated value of 0.70. Thus, the results are sufficient to approve the reliability of all constructs.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

First-order CFA: CFA using SEM was used to test unidimensionality of each construct, therefore construct validity can be established. The measurement items were further purified to improve the convergent validity. The model fit for each construct has shown in Table 2 and it showed that fit indices of all constructs are showing adequate model fit.

Second-order CFA: The second-order CFA model using SEM was assessed by target coefficient to determine

Table 1: Reliability of each construct

Variables	Cronbach's alpha
Perceived value	0.784
Trust	0.893
CBE	0.869

Table 2: Model fit for each construct

Variables	Perceived information quality	Perceived interactivity	Trust	CBE
χ^2/df	2.801	2.228	2.439	2.022
GFI	0.975	0.969	0.954	0.887
AGFI	0.925	0.921	0.902	0.845
NFI	0.933	0.960	0.951	0.885
CFI	0.955	0.977	0.970	0.937
RMSEA	0.092	0.076	0.083	0.070

Table 3: Result of testing H₁

Hypothesis	Link in the model	Standardized estimate	CR	Results
H ₁	Perceived value -CBE	0.61	5.928**	Supported

**p<0.001

whether a higher-order factor model is appropriate for perceived value (perceived information quality and perceived interactivity) and CBE. The fit indices for second-order model of perceived value were $\chi^2/df = 2.091$, GFI = 0.922, AGFI = 0.878, NFI = 0.891, CFI = 0.939, RMSEA = 0.072, showing a good model data fit. The target coefficient was significant at $p < 0.01$.

Testing hypothesis: The proposed structural model consists of two hypotheses. H₁ is represented by perceived value w-CBE; H₂ is represented by the moderation effect of trust on the relationship between perceived value and CBE. Structural model tests were conducted to examine the relationship between variables. Specifically, path analysis was performed to test the relationship between perceived value and CBE. On the other hand, moderation analysis was conducted to determine the moderation effect of trust on the relationship between perceived value and CBE.

Path analysis: Path analysis was conducted to test the H₁. As shown in Fig. 1, exogenous construct is perceived value, endogenous construct is CBE and moderator is trust. The goodness-of-fit indices showed that this model fitted the data adequately ($\chi^2/df = 2.911$, GFI = 0.966, AGFI = 0.910, NFI = 0.954, CFI = 0.969, RMSEA = 0.095). The model that fitted the thresholds for the path model was satisfactory. Therefore, the proposed conceptual framework was supported by this structural model. In testing the hypothesized model, the results are presented in Table 3, the value of standardized estimate for the relationships between perceived value and CBE was 0.61. Based on the path analysis, the result presented a positive and significant relationship ($\alpha = 0.614$, CR = 5.928, $p < 0.01$). This indicated that the perceived value is significantly related to CBE. Thus, H₁ is supported.

Test of moderation effect: Moderation analysis using SEM was conducted to examine H₂. Moderating effect of trust on the relationship between perceived value and CBE is shown in Fig. 1. Following the guideline to test a moderator proposed by Hair *et al.* (2010), two datasets (low trust group and high trust group) have created and two models (constraint and unconstraint model) have developed in each dataset.

As shown in Table 4, the difference in Chi-Squared ($\Delta\chi^2$) between constraint and unconstraint model of the

Table 4: Moderation test

Variable	Constrained model	Unconstrained model	χ^2 difference	Result on moderation
Low trust				
χ^2	51.121	27.756	24.365	Significant
df	2.0000	1.0000	1.0000	
High trust				
χ^2	27.756	0.0000	27.756	Significant
df	1.0000	0.0000	1.0000	

Table 5: Comparison between low trust and high trust group

Moderator group	Standardized estimate	p-value	Results
Low trust	0.281	0.146	Not significant at 0.05
High trust	0.614	0.000	Significant at 0.05

low trust group and high trust group were presented. This result indicated that the moderation effect was significant as the difference of $\Delta\chi^2$ was above 3.82 with $df = 1$. Thus, the results revealed that consumer's trust toward brand page has the moderation effect on the relationship between perceived value and CBE.

Once the moderation effect is established, next is to determine types of moderation effect (full moderation or partial moderation). The standardized parameter estimates and its significance for both datasets (low trust and high trust group) in unconstrained model were examined. From the Table 5, it showed that the effect of perceived value on CBE is more pronounced in "high trust group" compare to "low trust group". Therefore, the results can be concluded that trust is fully moderate the relationship between perceived value and CBE.

Key findings: Path analysis used SEM was conducted to test the hypotheses posited above. First hypothesis (H₁) proposed that perceived value encourages customers to engage in company's Facebook brand page. As shown in Table 3, the relationship between perceived value and CBE was found to be positively significant. Thus, it can be concluded that this result provides support for H₁. The finding has matched with the theory applied in this study which is TCV. Particularly, perceived information quality and perceived interactivity are found to have significant impact on CBE. This finding supports the fundamental basics of TCV which is the consumer's engagement in brand page depends on functional value and social value.

Based on the finding, perceived information quality and perceived interactivity able to predict the fan's engagement in Facebook brand page. In detail, the results indicated that perceived information quality is the most significant contributor to customer engagement. This reflects that perceived information quality is the stronger indicator for fans when engaging in brand page. This result aligned with previous study conducted by Jahn and Kunz (2012) in that quality of information is an important

driver for attracting fans or consumers to brand page. Similarly, Wang (2013) found that high information quality in company's brand page encourages consumers to continue engage in brand page. In particular, updated, completeness and usefulness of information are essential for a company's brand page. Additionally, Sabate *et al.* (2014) found that richness of content in brand page may persuade fans to engage in terms of participation. In contrary, inaccurate, irrelevant, outdated and incomplete information about company and product or service can drive away the fans from brand page as they are dissatisfied and unpleasant (Kim and Fesenmaier, 2008). Therefore, based on the finding in present study, high information quality provided by companies in brand page is effective in encouraging fans to engage with them.

The result of this research also revealed that perceived Interactivity could predict fan's engagement in brand page. Previous researches have consistently highlighted perceived interactivity has influence on fan's engagement in brand page (Jahn and Kunz, 2012; Reitz, 2012). In detail, Jahn and Kunz (2012) pinpointed that the brand page is an interactive channel and company needs to engage with fans. Hence, the creation of social object in brand page is crucial as it can triggers the discussion among fans and liven up the atmosphere in brand page (Sabate *et al.*, 2014). Based on the finding, fans are engaged in brand page when company shares information about them and goods or services to fans as well as other fans shared their stories or experiences. Apart from that, brand page is a platform for companies to communicate with their fans (Maurer and Wiegmann, 2011) and the interaction between fans and company should be two-way and responsive (Mollen and Wilson, 2010). In brand page, fans are allowed to post some messages related to service (e.g. complaint, experience, compliment and suggestion) or enquiries about service in brand page. Therefore, companies should respond to these posts immediately, proactively and courtly (Jahn and Kunz, 2012) in order to establish a good relationship with fans. Through the interactions, the relationship can be nurtured and eventually persuaded fans to engage in brand page (Wang, 2013).

The hypothesized model proposed that trust moderates the relationship between perceived value and CBE (H_2). Based on the moderation analysis results present in Table 5, trust was found to be fully moderated the relationship between perceived value and CBE. This finding is concurred with the study of Yang and Lin (2014) which trust can moderates the relationship between perceived value and CBE. This finding showed that the engagement of fans in brand page can be altered by trust.

CONCLUSION

In detail, the result revealed that trust can fully moderates the relationship between perceived value and CBE. This showed that fans will engage in brand page when they have high trust toward company brand page and vice versa. Based on the fans selected in this study, they trust to company brand page because the company able to give them a sense of security and safety. Apart from that, a well-managed brand page also can increases fan's trust toward the company's brand page (Ou and Sia, 2010; Lee *et al.*, 2014). Fans will trust to company's brand page when they have good perceived value and satisfy on brand page (Chiu *et al.*, 2012).

LIMITATIONS

There are limitations that can influence the generalizability of this research. For instance, the study only focused on fans engagement in Facebook. Thus, the results of this study might not able to generalize to other SNSs platform. Hence, further study could extend the range of CBE studied to other popular social media such as Google+, Instagram and Twitter. Besides, the sampling technique employed in this study is snowball sampling method which is one the sampling techniques in non-probability sampling. Therefore, the findings might not be explained to population studied and in turn influence the generalization towards the brand pages on Facebook (Sekaran and Roger, 2010). Therefore, future researchers may consider quantitative method to obtain data. Hence, future researchers can understand and clarify the phenomena of fan's engagement in Facebook page (Hair *et al.*, 2006). For example, researchers can use interview method to understand and look insight the consumer's engagement in Facebook.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study have theoretical implications for academics. As some literature gaps were identified and discussed, the findings of this study are able to shed light to existing body of knowledge. Through the confirmation of proposed conceptual framework, this studr has confirmed that TCV as an antecedent to predict CBE. Specifically, perceived information quality and perceived interactivity influence fan's engagement in Facebook. Similar to the trust, previous study has recommended future researchers to examine the role of trust between the relationship of perceived value and CBE (Yang and Lin, 2014). Eventually, this study has found that trust fully moderates the relationship between

perceived value and CBE. Taken together, this study has contributed some of the knowledge related to perceived value and CBE.

The use of SNSs among companies is exploding rapidly. Therefore, this study is essential for companies who adopt SNSs, especially Facebook. This study provides valuable insights to practitioners and aids them in managing their SNSs platform especially on Facebook in order to motivate the fan's engagement in Facebook and sustain a successful brand page. As the results suggest that perceived information quality and interactivity have impacts on customer's engagement as well as trust moderates fans to engage in brand page, practitioners might able to review their brand page on Facebook based on the findings of this study for the sake of delivering the actual values desired by fans and nurturing trust among fans. In case, efforts have to be put into creating high quality content and interacting with fans continuously. Eventually, they will continue to engage in brand page.

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