



Social media marketing activities and brand loyalty: A Conceptual and Theoretical Review

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Abstract: the aim of this conceptual paper is to present an overview of the concept of social media marketing activities (SMMA) and its relationship with brand loyalty. This study addresses this gap and provides a contribution through an analysis of conceptual researches. Therefore, this paper begins first by presenting the origin of social media and the development of social media theories and behavioral theories over time. Second, it illustrates a literature review of social media marketing activities. Third, this paper will present an overview about brand loyalty and its different levels. The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive and systematic overview of the research on the relationship between social media marketing activities and brand loyalty.

Keywords: Theories, Social Media, Social Media Marketing Activities, Brand Loyalty and Consumer Behavior.

I. Introduction

Media scholars have debated the idea of audience action in media consumption. While the study of film and television guided themselves to the belief of an audience of 'viewers' or 'consumers', new media content tends regarding the idea of an audience of 'users' (Livingston, 2004). Previously, media has been created and delivered by a few number of media producers and its content was extremely controlled through exclusive and regularly political professional industries (Cha et al., 2007). With the transfer into Web 2.0 applications, the media industry experienced a huge paradigm shift in both media production and transmission: "Viewers, empowered by these latest technologies, dominating a space at the intersection between new and old media, are requesting the right to engage within culture" (Jenkins, 2006). The outcome of this demand for engagement is a plot for many people to create and generate media content by themselves, opening the door for various opinions, or user-generated content (Deuze, 2007).

To understand the changes of online participation nowadays, we must conceptualize the idea and place where traditional media theory meets with new media concepts. The talent to employ traditional media theory to the new media platform is mainly understood by the surveillance that there is an "focusing on consistency of the message's content we consume and the nature of the cultural environment in which we live" even if the transfer technology of the media changes (Shanahan and Morgan, 1999). This concept proposes that although though the media consumed may change, the fundamental content and intentions behind our media use are consistent over time and through different media. This happened in the past as the messages content in films were inspired by literature and again television did the same thing by redesigning

radio programming. Past scholars suggest that any changes in media is basically “new bottles for old wine” (McLuhan, 1964).

This paper is important as it will provide the reader with insights into the conceptual framework of SMMA and brand loyalty as a marketing strategy. Accordingly, firms can apply more efficient strategies in order to satisfy the customer's needs and maximize sales. In addition, this paper makes an important contribution by reviewing the literature on the historical development of SMMA which include the four main factors; interaction, entertainment, customization and trendiness. Additionally, it identifies the concept of brand loyalty including its four dimensions. The main objectives of this research is (RO1) to critically review prior studies to identify the main theories about social media and its relation with brand loyalty that explain its impact on consumer behavior; (RO2) to recognize the development and definitions of SMMA and brand loyalty.

Theoretical Background

This section will review the theoretical background. It discusses four main types of theories: theories related to traditional communication, to social media, to social media and behavior and finally theories related to consumer behavior.

1. Traditional Communication Theories:

1.1 Uses and Gratifications

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) discusses how people actively seek out specific media content for special reasons and intentional goals (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). UGT provides an active audience member who has the intention to test and analyze media to achieve particular results (Wang, Fink, & Cai, 2008). UGT represents a functional shift of communications studies, from investigating not only what media did to people, but even to what people are capable to do with media.

UGT initially generates from the needs and motivation theory, which proposes that consumers act in parallel with a certain personal hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1970). Studies of communications theories rapidly received this notion and wanted to establish typologies of needs for media consumption. Many versions of these typologies exist, and recommend a range of categories of persistent media consumption that people may involve in.

1.2 Cultivation Analysis

Cultivation Analysis created as a reaction to the universal television culture that was already well established in the 1970s. As a part of a greater study, regular evaluations of television programming and the “conceptions of social reality that viewing cultivates in audiences” are evaluated (Gerbner and Gross, 1976). Their initial idea is that mass communication cultivates certain beliefs about reality that are shared and held in mutual among mass communication viewers. Later, the same researcher notes, “most of what we know, or think we know, we have never personally experienced,” suggesting that we “know” things because of the stories seen and heard in the media (Gerbner, 1998). Cultivation research in the internet era demands the consideration of cable and satellite networks, the use of digital video recording devices, and the internet. While the packaging of the content may change, the essential frameworks around television consumption remain. Cultivation Analysis perceives media as a trans-missional process in which media are sending messages across time and space, with a normal perspective media are perceived as representative of society's shared beliefs. This process is further elaborated through the assumptions of Cultivation Analysis.

1.3 Media Ecology Theory

Media Ecology Theory (MET), it's aiming to understand the social impact of technology and communication (McLuhan, 1964). MET declares that media act directly to shape and organize culture. Media ecology, or the study of how media and communication processes has an impact on human perception, feeling, understanding, and value, is dedicated around communication studies (Parameswaran, 2008). McLuhan (1964) elaborates the influence of technologies including clocks, radios, television, movies, and games. He concentrated on defining the relationship between technology and members of a specific culture. He states that electronic media has revolutionized society, and society rapidly become dependent on these communication technologies. McLuhan suggests that it is almost impossible to find a society unaffected by electronic media.

As society has developed, its technology has also developed. From the first books published to the internet, society has been influenced by, and in turn influenced, media. The rules of media set forth by MET – enhancement, obsolescence, retrieval and reversal – show how technology affects communication through the evolution of new technology. MET focuses on the idea that society cannot neglect the influence of technology and that technology will forever remain central to almost every action in modern life.

The influence of media technology on society is the key concept of MET, supported by three main assumptions: media is introduced into every act and action in society, media determines our perceptions and organizes our experiences, and media bonds the world together (Parameswaran, 2008). As a result, we have the ability to receive information promptly.

2. Social Media Theories

2.1 Theory applied to New Media

While the abovementioned theories are rooted in traditional communication theory, it is important to understand where they fit or misalign among new media phenomenon. Media Ecology can assist us to understand why people continue to interact online, despite somewhat of a lack of control over their public and private boundaries. McLuhan (1964) notes that society rapidly became reliant on electronic media – such as social networking websites – for many reasons such as efficiency and ease. Technology has frequently progressed overtime – obliging people to adapt – and social networking sites are no different. As society becomes increasingly comfortable and dependent on new media platforms for communication, researchers request to understand how other offline elements of traditional communication theory and daily life may be shifted online.

2.2 Social Media Engagement Theory

According to the traditional business model, an organization's main goal is to create a tangible product or service and protect the organization from competitors by creating an organizational boundary. Pine and Gilmore (1999) challenge this belief by changing the value proposition to add the user experience for deriving value. Through social media, users modify, share, and reuse content, ignoring the creators' original meaning or purpose. Lessig (2008) proposes that remixing content is a generational change in how users communicate. Today users can provide unique perspectives on what they believe personally meaningful. Social media is valuable because it not only fulfils the needs and interests of users, but also supports an interactive audience for advertising and market intelligence to a company.

Originally built as a model of interaction between a user and organization, the model is extended to highlight the social interactions among users that are supported by the social media platform provided by a company. According to Prahalad and Ramaswamy's (2004) studies by applying a socio-technical systems perspective to first address why individual experience influences engagement and subsequently usage.

3. Social Media and Behavioral Theories:

3.1 Social Networking Theory (SNT)

A social network is a social system made up of a collection of actors (such as individuals or organizations) and the dyadic relationships between these actors," according to Stanley Wasserman, Rudy Professor of Statistics, Psychology and Sociology at Indiana University" (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). In other words, a social network is known by this definition as the framework generated when a group of people or organizations interact with one another in some way. "A Social Network is a network of social interactions and personal relationships, or a dedicated website or other application that allows users to communicate with each other by posting information, comments, messages, images, etc..." according to the Oxford dictionary (Oxford Dictionary, 2012).

Traditionally, social networks have been examined by introducing them into one or another theoretical structure, as it were. Balance Theory, graph theory, social comparison theory and, recently, the Social Identity Theory are the most important of these concepts. Complex Network Theory is also important.

3.1.1 Balance theory

In social networking research, this theory is used to determine the motivational effects of interpersonal contact between, or positive feelings for another person, in creating or modifying the attitude of the first person about an object. Another person, organization, product, service or other can be this object (Heider, 1958).

3.1.2 Graph theory

Graph theory is used in Social Networking analysis to elicit the ways in which information spreads within the network (Newman, 2010). This theory is not related to the process of graphing relationships on a relational plane, but describes relationships between 'nodes' (e.g. Users) and their 'connections' (e.g. communication) which represent the links between nodes.

3.1.3 Social Comparison theory

It is used in social networking to analyze the types of comparisons made by individuals to evaluate the accuracy of their self-analysis in terms of opinions, abilities and other characteristics (Schachter, 1959). The theory postulates that users appraise their 'worth' (social or personal) by comparing themselves to others and thus valuating themselves.

3.1.4 The Social Identity Approach

It is the application of both Social Identity theory and Self-Categorization theory to the study of social networks. The former theory is used to evaluate individual networking behaviours on the basis of perceived status as a result of membership in a social group that is considered 'relevant' (Haslam, 2001) to the individual, and the legitimacy and openness of the intergroup environment (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). The latter theory is used in social networking analysis to study how individuals 'variably and fluidly' change their characterization of themselves as a function of "categorization processes in social perception and interaction which speaks to issues of individual identity as much as group phenomenon" (Oakes, Haslam and Turner,

1994). Further, **complex network analysis** is used in social networking evaluation to evaluate the manner in which content spreads between members of the network. According to the theory, information spreads in one of two ways, that is, conserved spread and non-conserved spread (Newman, Barabási and Watts, 2006). In the former, the sum total of the content being disseminated throughout the network remains constant as it is spread. In the latter, the content either grows or shrinks as it moves through the network.

4. Behavioral Theories

4.1 Brand Attachment Theory

Psychology considers Bowlby's (1982) research to be the source of the theory of attachment, which describes 'attachment' as the 'relationship that is developed between infants and their caregivers'. As indicated by Hazan and Shaver (1994) and Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), humans tend to develop and uphold emotional bonds with some brands and end such bonds with particular others. Later on, the theory extended from person-to-person relationship to that with corporate or brands (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Japutra, Ekinici, and Simkin (2014) associated brand attachment to a sense of security experienced by a person with regard to a brand. Sikkil (2013), Ghose and Lowengart (2013), Heilbrunn (2001) and Lacoëuilhe (1997) pronounce brand attachment as consumers' long-term inclination to a brand. Schmitt (2012) considered brand attachment as an expression of consumers' connectedness with the brand.

4.2 Theory of Reasoned Action

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) is a well-known social psychological model developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). This model assumed individuals are rational and systematically make use of information available for them. The individual will consider the implications of their actions before deciding to engage or not engage in each behavior (Hansen et al, 2004; Yousafzai et al, 2010).

II. Literature Review

In this section, the researchers seek to critically review prior studies regarding SMMA and brand loyalty development and definitions and the main dimensions of SMMA and brand loyalty.

Social Media Marketing Activities

The remarkable growth of interactive digital technology has an impact on almost every phase of consumers' daily lives over the past two decades. This new interactive revolution has developed from significant achievements in the information superhighway (Arens, 2004), known as the Internet, which lately exceeded 3 bn users (Internet World Stats, 2015). Thus, a large number of young Internet users also exploit of one or more platforms of online social media (Barenblatt, 2015). Social media has become an essential part of life in the modern-day era, particularly among young consumers (teenagers and adolescents) recognized as Generation Z (also referred to as iGeneration, Plurals and Generation Next) who have enthusiastically embraced this new online platform (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2009; MacKenzie *et al.*, 2012; James & Levin, 2015).

Social media marketing is defined as "*a form of online advertising that uses the cultural setting of social context, involving social networks (e.g., Youtube, Myspace and Facebook), virtual worlds (e.g., Second Life, There, and Kaneva), social news sites (e.g., Digg and del.icio.us), and social opinion-sharing sites (e.g., Eopinions), to match branding and communication objectives*" (Tuten, 2008, p. 19). Social media marketing activities are a subcategory of online marketing activities that embrace traditional Web-based promotion strategies, like e-mail newsletters and online advertising campaigns (Barefoot and Szabo 2010, p.13). Social

media, in a way, switches consumers into marketers and advertisers, who create, change, and share online information about brands, products, and services.

The research of Kim & Ko (2012) indicate that the social media marketing campaigns embrace four major elements; entertainment, interaction, trendiness and customization, and that these four factors will generate major impacts on customers' brand loyalty and purchase intentions. Table (1) represents the four social media marketing activities with their conceptual definitions:

Table (1): SMMA Dimensions and Conceptual Definitions

SMMA Dimensions	Conceptual Definitions
<i>Entertainment</i>	is the outcome of the fun and play evolving from the social media experience (Agichtein et al., 2008)
<i>Interaction</i>	in social media platforms transforms the way communication between a brand and its followers works (Gallaughier & Ransbotham, 2010; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)
<i>Trendiness</i>	is the power of social media to create and spread trendy information through four sub-motivations: surveillance, knowledge, pre-purchase information and inspiration (Muntinga et al. 2011).
<i>Customization</i>	Is the degree to which social media channels offer customized information search and a customized service (Godey et al. 2016, p. 5835).

Brand Loyalty

Copeland (1923) mentions this concept for the first time in history and since that day over 200 definitions have been added in academic context and the number of definitions is an indicator of how significant the brand loyalty is in marketing theory. Since, for centuries, loyal consumers have been the main targets of marketing specialists (Knox & Walker, 2001:111). Aaker (1984) suggests that brand loyalty should be assessed as one of the main concepts in marketing strategy. Aaker (1984) describes brand loyalty as a value. Upon the fact, there have been some arguments; however, there is a general agreement on the importance of brand loyalty (Wernerfelt, 1991:229). The American Marketing Association defines brand loyalty as “the practice of constantly buying the goods of the same manufacturer instead of visiting other brands, or the degree of purchasing a particular product, which belongs to the same producer (Moisesescu & Bertoncelj, 2010:138).

The literature review illustrates that although loyalty has been defined in several ways, there are two main approaches: behavioral and attitudinal (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Dick & Basu, 1994; Zeithaml, 2000). The first approach considers loyalty as behavioral (Ehrenberg et al., 1990; Kahn et al., 1986), supposing that constant purchasing can capture the loyalty of a buyer towards the brand of interest. Behavioral loyalty is

explained as frequent transactions, this approach, however, cannot differentiate between true loyalty and fake loyalty. Researchers who have studied the two-dimensional approach indicate that concentrating on behavior alone (i.e., repeated purchases) cannot acquire the reasons behind the purchases (Nyadzayo & Khajehzadeh, 2016). On the other hand, the attitude of consumers towards a precise brand is known as attitudinal loyalty. Numerous studies indicate that attitudinal loyalty involves commitment and intention to purchase the brand (Srivastava & Kaul, 2016; Yoshida, Heere, & Gordon, 2015).

Oliver (1997) defines brand loyalty as a “*deeply held commitment to rebuy or patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior*”. Oliver (1999) studies brand loyalty in four different dimensions: cognitive loyalty, emotional loyalty, conative loyalty and behavioral loyalty. According to Oliver (1997) the levels of brand loyalty demonstrates the learning process, which underlines the relation between attitude and behavior. Because Oliver (1997) indicates that attitudinal loyalty develops in three stages: cognitive, affective and the conative (Back and Park, 2003:422). Table (2) represents the four dimensions of loyalty and their conceptual definitions:

Table (2): Brand Loyalty Dimensions and Conceptual Definitions

Brand Loyalty Dimensions	Conceptual Definitions
<i>Cognitive Loyalty</i>	Cognitive loyalty generates from the comparison between the qualities and the cost of the product (Oliver, 1999:35).
<i>Affective Loyalty</i>	Reflects the consumer's feelings or emotional reactions (Oliver, 1999).
<i>Conative Loyalty (behavioral intention)</i>	A state of loyalty that indicates a strong intention and commitment to purchase” (Oliver, 1997, p. 393).
<i>Behavioral Loyalty</i>	The rate of repeated purchases the customer makes (Jacoby and Kyner, 1973).

III. Conclusion

This research paper aim is to achieve three main objectives; (RO1)to critically review prior studies to identify the main theories about social media and its relation with brand loyalty that explain its impact on consumer behavior; (RO2) to recognize the development and definitions of SMMA and brand loyalty

After reviewing prior studies and literature, the researchers discussedfirst, the four main types of theories: theories related to traditional communication, to social media, to social media and behavior and finally theories related to consumer behavior. Second, the development and definitions of SMMA and brand loyalty. Third, the main dimensions of each variable with their conceptual definitions.

Finally, Social media are transforming the way companies, both big and small, communicate and market to consumers (Constantinides, 2014). Many businesses recognize the need for incorporating a social networking strategy as part of their overall marketing efforts. This strategy involves the use of social network sites as a mean of promoting and communicating marketing activities to consumers, also to attract and build relationships with consumers, and increase sales (Nobre and Silva, 2014).

Recommendations for Future Research

Brands that do not engage themselves with social media marketing activities will often be left behind with the rising of the global competition and borderless markets, and international organization adopting those activities grow stronger (Altman, 2007). The effectiveness of marketing activities on social media depend on the marketing activities a firm chooses to utilize and the perceived tangible as well as intangible value these activities provide to consumers (Evans, 2008; Baird and Parasnis, 2011). Thus, studying consumption values can be of high importance for researchers to investigate the relationship of consumption values (functional, social, epistemic, emotional and conditional values) with SMMA and brand loyalty.

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