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Drivers of Social Commerce Through Brand Engagement

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Abstract

Social commerce is an important issue and a new area to explore in today's business world. To be successful at social commerce requires a strong brand engagement on the side of the consumers and well-crafted brand marketing strategies on social media channels. Here in this study, S-O-R model is utilized to come up with a model explaining how social commerce stimuli affect consumers' cognition, affection and activation (engagement) with brands, and thereafter lead to brand trust and purchase intention on social media. The social commerce stimuli includes sales campaigns, personalization, interactivity, consumer generated content and reviews. If tested, the results of the study are believed to guide brand managers and social commerce managers in creating right marketing stimuli for success in social commerce. Additionally, the results of the study are believed to add to the newly forming literature on social commerce, online brand engagement, relationship marketing, and online purchase intention.

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Keywords: Social commerce, online brand engagement, relationship marketing, and online purchase intention.

1. Introduction

Today, social media, defined as “activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media (Safko and Brake, 2009, p.6)” is an effective brand marketing tool, and is positively related to brand equity and brand-related consumer outcomes (Hassan, 2014; Andzulis, Panagopolous, and Rapp, 2012; Hennig

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Thurau et. al, 2010). By using social media, firms can conduct two- way communication, offer campaigns, reviews, and other relevant content to consumers, connect, interact and engage with them, and build better relationships and create value (De Valck, Van Bruggen, Wierengan, 2009; Long, 2011; Gillin, 2009).

Recent years had also witnessed the importance of social media as a platform for making the sale alongside building and conveying an image for the brands. For some firms, social media moved past the stage of engaging and communicating with consumers to the stage of generating revenues (Wang and Zhang, 2012; Barnes, 2014). Research shows that nearly 40 % of social media users had purchased a product after sharing or favoring it on social media sites. The increasing presence of big brands on social media sites also proves that these sites are experiencing growth in social media commerce, defined as using social media interaction and user contributions advice to assist online buying and selling (Pelet and Papadopolou, 2013; Liang et al., 2011).

Social commerce enables firms to sell to consumers from social media platforms such as Facebook pages, Instagram accounts (Shadkam and O'Hara, 2013). Social commerce is a more social form of electronic commerce, where the role of consumer is much participatory than ever before (Liang ve Turban, 2011). Therefore, impact of additional dimensions should be researched for understanding social commerce as different from electronic commerce. Thus, this paper focuses on social commerce, its dimensions and its consumer behavior consequences. More specifically, the aim of this paper is to understand which dimensions of social commerce are key in creating brand engagement, through which consumer outcomes of brand trust, and purchase intentions towards brands are achieved. Social commerce is a new area of exploration; therefore it is important to direct more academic attention to better understand the phenomenon (Liang and Turban, 2011; Zhang et al., 2014). This model proposal is believed to add to the extant literature on social commerce, online brand engagement, relationship marketing, and online purchase intention.

2. Stimulus-Organism-Response Model as the Theoretical Base of the Model

Past research have used the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) model as a theoretical framework to understand which features of online shopping environment influence the psychological processes of cognition, affection, and activation that lead to consumer responses (e.g., Jiang et al., 2010; Eroğlu et al., 2003; Animesh et al., 2011; Parboleah et al., 2009). Following their path, this research tries to identify which social commerce stimuli create positive consumer relationship and behavior outcomes through affecting consumers' cognitive and affective systems.

The (S-O-R) model posits that environmental and brand-related stimuli act as cues that shape individual's cognitive and affective reactions, which in return affect their responses (Mehrabian and Russell, 1975). Stimuli are related to marketing program that is offered to support the brand, including product, advertising, salesperson attentiveness, store atmospherics etc. The organism, on the other hand, refers to consumer's cognitive and affective state of mind, including her feelings and thoughts. The responses, on the other hand, include variables such as trust, commitment, purchase intention, loyalty etc. (Jacoby, 2002).

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