Understanding Communication Through Social Media Marketing Activities and Its Influence on Purchase Intention

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of the communication science through social media which influences corporate trust how that drive affects purchase intention mediated on customer equity. Research has been conducted on social media toward purchase intention, nevertheless more research is needed to accommodate interactivity, formality and immediacy as communication factors in the social media which will be impacting toward purchase intention, mediated by customer's equity. This research is developing a multi-perspective approach of communication science and its implementation toward purchase intention mediated by customer's equity. The main implication of this research is that the communication science needs to be considered when designing the social media online communication. Both the communication and the management aspects should be implemented optimally as an effective marketing strategy to enhance the purchase intention. Future empirical research is needed to establish a rigorous finding on this subject.

Keywords: Communication Science, Brand Loyalty, Customer's Equity, Purchase İntention, Social Media Marketing

INTRODUCTION

In social media, as a mean of communication through the internet network enables a peer to peer, business to peer, business to business, and all levels of communication. This means of communication has now become a well-preferred channel for marketing purposes (Hassan, 2014). There are already a hundred and fifty million followers of Instagram (Costill, 2014). Following social networking websites which include Facebook and Twitter, Instagram, and other online communication platform had become a way of life. These social networking websites now no longer becomes the most effective way to increase networks however additionally, the platforms have offered a commercial channel to have interaction with potential clients (Blackman, 2009). Most Industries along with the Creative Industry, had been using social media to acquire potential clients and to increase their company's reputation and performance (Jadhav, Kamble & Patil, 2013). Social media gives large capability for what has been defined as a "mass-self communication" (Castells 2010), indicating the processing of information that makes use of the availability of the big data, derived from the big numbers of the customers to get the answer and prediction of demanding situations or problems. Social networks are monitored to find out trends, get aggressive information, to listen, and have interaction and communication and interactions with customers and stakeholders. There are some interesting statistics published by AdAge Agency Reports (Statista, 2019) which have shown that digital communication impact had accounted for an anticipated boom of around double from 2009 to 2018. To be exact from 25.6% in 2009 to 53.6% in 2018 of sales for U.S groups from all disciplines. This in part resulted from the impact of improved communication traffic and developing fan loyalty. Making it a motive of why entrepreneurs see this social media/virtual communication as a chosen mean of communication for their campaign (Statista, 2019).

Objectives

Despite the growing interest on digital communication, the aggregate expenses for digital advertising were still a small chunk of the advertising expenditure, by year 2018, it was only 21% of the advertising expenditure, and even in the following years it was expected to grow only to 27.8% in 2 years. This is only around one fourth of the total advertising expenses. This had ignited a problem statement, even though researchers such as Waluya, Iqkbal & Intradewa (2019), Foster & Grabowska (2020), and Sukamto, Hamidah & Fajrianthi (2019) shared the views that social media communication has an immediate impact on shopping selection. On the opposite hand, Bower (2001) argued that advertising including the social media communication has an effect to brand image and hence corporate trust. Furthermore, there is still limited research on the communication science aspect such as interactivity, formality and immediacy of the social media communication and how it is impacting corporate trust, and how these might impact purchase intention through customer's equity and brand loyalty. Currently the social media communication channel through social networking is enabling a new method of communication that is creating a borderless impact. There is no restrictions of geographical or cultural structures (Vikram & Taramani, 2018). This paper is blended conceptual research on communication science, with the implementation of the business and management aspects, focusing on developing a proposition on how the communication through social media is

impacting corporate trust and influence the purchase intention through customer's equity and brand loyalty.

The reality has shown how the social media communication had gone through the speed of technological advances. Nevertheless, in addition to its technological advantage, the message in the social communication itself is an important aspect for communication and business practitioners. This study is dedicated to integrating findings from communication science to be incorporated to the previous research in corporate social media marketing. The content of the message from the perspective of marketing communication plays a significant role toward how a customer might react and responds to the message source, which is the corporation. Since language is used as a vehicle, then the linguistic structural features of the language to be used in the social media communication, become attributes of the message. This is seen through for example, how formal the language is, and what kind of vocabulary is used. These aspects of communications are deemed to influence customers' reaction in several ways. Based on the literature of communication science research, the text messages have many structural features. For example, this includes punctuation marks, symbols, abbreviation types, fonts, colors, and sizes used. The way this message is designed will impact the message recipients. It is affected by both cognitive and emotional traits, which can affect how the message is further processed (Lang, 2000). As a result, corporate social media of the corporation cannot sustainably attract and retain customers without strategically managing the characteristics of these message structures.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of three key social media message attributes, which are interactivity, formalism, and immediacy on corporate trust and brand loyalty, further toward customer equity which mediates customer buying intent.   In summary, this study looks at whether the structural characteristics of messages used by businesses on social media can affect a company's credibility, shown through corporate trust and ultimately impact the brand loyalty and the purchase intent mediated by customer equity. This study provides administrative implications by proposing effective communication styles to build lasting corporate trust and buying motivation through a good relationship with customer. Given the lack of literature on the relationship between message attributes and corporate trust, and how this affects buying intent through customer equity and brand loyalty, the results of this study are aiming at closing this literature gaps. In addition, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play an important role in the global economy through innovation and job creation (Zainal & Naim, 2020). Hence this topic could help to promote the social media as a low cost possible mean of advertising SME's product to further support a sustainable society.

METHOD

Research is conducted through three types of research approaches. It is known as deductive, inductive, and abductive (Saunders, Lewish, and Thornhill, 2007). According to Bryman and Bell (2007), the deductive approach is appropriately used to analyze and explore existing

theories and summarize new and valuable information. To answer the research question and filling up the gap in this area of social media communication, the deductive research approach is still considered to be the most appropriate research approach (Bryman and Bell, 2007). This research is using the deductive direct approach starting from the theory, in this paper will start with a conceptual analysis of theories.

The study is conducted through a deep content analysis and extensive literature review, through the direct method of exploring existing theories. The fact findings are in a multiple perspectives view covering the area of Communication Science and Business and Management areas. The content analysis is conducted to develop propositions which will be presented in a Research Model format.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Major arguments and Propositions

In this part the analysis is conducted based on the previous research, literatures and scientific papers in the area of communication science specifically in the social media communication and through the business and management perspectives. Literature review and content analysis are conducted to develop propositions and research model. The propositions are presented at the end of each section discussions, and the research model is presented at the end of this section. Social media are referring to all forms of online communication and global and local content sharing (Richter & Koch, 2007). Generation Y is the biggest user of social media in the form of Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, etc (Werenowska & Rzepka, 2020). The social media consumer activity could be in two different categories, it could be in the form of consumption or contribution (Schlosser, 2005; Shao, 2009).

According to a study, Generation Y, prefer to simply search for content consumed via social media (Pempek, Yermolayeva, and Calvert, 2009). In the area of social media marketing, it is often seen as a low-cost marketing through social networking sites (SNS), accompanied by word-of-mouth marketing (Trusov, Bucklin, and Pauwels, 2009). According to Canhoto (2016), companies will benefit from implementing social media in their marketing plans as social media creates a wider range of variables and generates a broader and more detailed customer segment that attracts a more accurate and specific target audience. A key perceived advantage of social media is that customers are self-segmented by joining particular online communities of interest. Nevertheless, more research is needed to understand the communication science aspect of this digital communication.

Interactivity

In the research of the science of communication, interactivity is one of the structural features found in the transmitted message (Lang, Borse, Wise, David, 2002). There are a wide range of phenomena, such as the depth of reaction and whether communication is mediated which is discussed through the interactivity. For this research it is only focusing to people-to-people interaction through information technology. This is believed to be a higher level of interactivity than human to system interaction (Van Dijk, 2006). According to the e-business literature,

customer relationship management (CRM) is the integration of technology and business processes, the goal of which is to meet customer needs during a particular dialogue (Bose, 2002). Customer interaction is one of the most important CRM processes, and many companies struggle to use information technology to implement new media and interact with their customers in a cost-effective and ubiquitous way. In fact, the notable difference between traditional mass media (newspapers, radio, television, etc.) and new media is the "interactivity" (Livingstone, 1999). According to Downes and McMillan, both-ways directionality is improved if the communication is bidirectional and the communication timing remains flexible enough to meet the requirements of communication (Downes, E.J.; McMillan, 2000). Also note that interactivity is related to the process of building relationships between customers, companies, and their brands, which can impact branding. Lindstrom and Andersen (2001) posited that at the heart of the relationship is trust, which is especially important in most sales transactions (Hawes, J.M.; Mast, KE; Swan, 1989). This study focuses on corporate trust, as measured by perceived or actual relationships between businesses and customers. Psychology and marketing studies show how trust develops as relationships are more bi-directional and using social and personal approach (Delgado, Ballester, 2004). Social communication that fosters relationships also fosters trust. This is especially true for relationships based on communication over a computer Järvenpää, Leidner, 1998.

The first research question thus will be as follows: Will corporate trust be affected by firm's efforts to engage in interactive communications via social media with its customers?

The proposition will be that the higher (lower) of a firm engaging in an interactive communication with its customer will results into a higher (lower) Corporate Trust

Formality
Linguistic Formality Variation in language occur when ideas are expressed in different ways. It usually happens when you aim at a different audience (Bell, 1997). The use of formal languages includes a deliberate and explicit demonstration of respect for the recipient by establishing seriousness and politeness, Wierzbicka, 2009. On the contrary, the use of informal language (such as slang or less elegant vocabulary) is the recipient's desire for a closer relationship, even if it lacks seriousness and, to some extent, has less respect for the recipient. This can be shown (this depends on how informal it is) from how the language is used. For this reason, if the speaker intends to promote a smooth social relationship, the formal language is chosen (Reach, G.N.; Hill, 1983). For example, a CEO letter study concludes that CEOs who use formal languages are considered competent and credible because they evoke confidence and trust between shareholders and potential investors (Hyland, 1998). Similarly, formal languages affect consumers who seek to mitigate risk and build trust in decision making (Sheth; Parvatlyar, 1995. Given that little is known about linguistic formality and corporate credibility, the following hypothesis and research questions are suggested:

The second research question which arise would be as follows: Will corporate trust be affected by how formally perceived the messages via social media?

The proposition will be that the higher (lower) the messages via social media are perceived to be more formal (informal or casual) than when they are perceived to be informal (formal) then it will be impacting into a higher (lower) Corporate trust

Immediacy

Immediacy measures the psychological distance between the speaker and the audience. This is to enhance the mutual intimacy and nonverbal interaction of Melavian, 1968. Gunawardena and Zittle suggest that immediacy can be communicated nonverbally through clues such as physical accessibility and facial expressions. Gunawardena and Zittle (1997) posited that examples of immediacy include smiles, gestures, and eye contact (Argyle, 2013). Canon also argue that social interactions can create trust, which can lead to increased customer buying intent (Canon, 1997). In the context of social media, you can use the immediacy of private conversations to close your personal distance, or use emotional lexicons (also known as emoticons) to express emotions and facial expressions (Walther & D'Addario, 2001). The message that promotes immediacy is not business-oriented in nature and is intended to be more interesting than the other serious messages. It is generally known that the enjoyment of information systems by users has a positive effect on trust (Kim, 2007). Immediacy is impacting to the trust of the company, as personal friendship and the closeness of the customer to the company and its employees can enhance the loyalty of the brand and strengthen such relationships (Barnes, 1997). This can be assumed to affect corporate trust.

The arising third research question would be: Will corporate trust be affected by the level of immediacy in the firm's messages via social media?

Hence, the proposition would be: The higher (lower) the immediacy in the messages via social media will influence a higher (lower) Corporate trust

Corporate Trust

In the online context McKnight et al. (2002) found that consumers' trust in a vendor could result in a secure willingness to depend on the vendor. Furthermore, a common finding across numerous studies in offline (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Delgado and Munuera, 1999) and online contexts (Jansen et al., 2009; Laroche et al., 2012) support the positive effect of trust on loyalty, indicating that trust is a central determinant of brand loyalty. Trust will lead toward the first impression of brand loyalty (Luo, 2002; Leone, Rao, Keller, Luo, McAlister & Srivastava, 2006).

The fourth research question would be: What is the impact of corporate trust toward brand loyalty?

Hence, this leads to the fourth propositions, that corporate trust is impacting toward Brand Loyalty:

The higher the corporate trust will lead toward a higher Brand Loyalty.

Brand Loyalty

There are some concepts of customer equity mentioned in many references (Berger and Nasr, 1998; Blattberg et al., 2001; Kim and Ko, 2012; Rust et al., 2004). In general the previous research is defining customer equity as the total discounted customer lifetime value, which consists of factors such as brand loyalty. Blattberg et al. (2001) is also proposing that customer retention and customer lifetime value as the underlying concepts of customer value. The definition of customer retention itself is pictured as the behavior of a customer behavior in continuing to purchase a product or service over a period of time (Blattberg et al., 2001). The customer lifetime value is describing repeated purchase probabilities without considering attitude factors (Berger and Nasr, 1998). Therefore, many academic studies measure customer value in terms of number of purchases and volume of purchases over a period of time (Kim and Ko, 2011; Rust et al., 2004). The relationship between brand loyalty and customer value in terms of the number of purchases and the number of purchases is also clarified in the literature. For example, Assael (1992) suggested that brand loyalty leads to long-term, consistent brand purchases. Similarly, Dick and Basu (1994) identified repeated patronage as an important indicator of brand loyalty. Keller (2003) and Keller & Kotler (2016) posited in their research that loyalty is happening when favorable attitudes for a brand are manifested in repeat buying behaviors, which is considerably in turn will contribute to customer equity.

The fifth major research question then will be on how brand loyalty is impacting toward customer equity (value equity, brand equity and relationship equity). The minor research questions can be attributed to each of the value, brand and relationship equity.

Hence the fifth major proposition is: The higher (lower) Brand loyalty will influence a higher (lower) customer equity. The minor proposition would be:
The higher (lower) Brand loyalty will influence a higher (lower) value equity
The higher (lower) Brand loyalty will influence a higher (lower) brand equity
The higher (lower) Brand loyalty will influence a higher (lower) relationship equity

Customer Equity (value equity, relationship equity, and brand equity)

Today's marketing strategies are shifting companies from being product oriented to being customer oriented. This is furthermore showing that customer equity is a significant aspect as a point of decision making which is of a great value in most companies. Customers are further defined as tangible assets and other financial assets that a company needs to focus on, maintain, and maximize (Kim & Ko, 2011). Based on previous research by Drèze and Bonfrer (2008), Customer Equity can be seen as the sum of customer`s lifetime values. This is considered as the most important factor of the long-term values of the corporations. Rust, Lemon & Zeithaml (2004) further explained, that this simply means that customer`s life value outcomes can be seen from the occurrence of the categorical purchase and normal purchase amount through the company`s influence. There are three main types of customer equity drivers: value equity, relationship equity, and brand equity. (Rust, Lemon, Zeitham, 2004). Together, these three

types allow businesses to increase total customer value (Hyun, 2009). Corporate trust serves as an important driver of customer fairness. Value Equity According to Vogel, Evanschitzky and Ramaseshan (2008), value equity as a whole describes the concept of a customer who objectively assesses the usefulness of a brand based on opinions about what has been abandoned and established. The term "value" is a very important factor for customers as it is related to the decision to purchase a company's products or services because it is influenced by the customer's perception of the value the company provides (Rust et). al., 2004). Fairness of Value Strongly influenced by price, quality and convenience (Lemon et al., 2010), the previous author further shows that the first factor, price, is a customer-provided aspect that affects the company. Quality is the tangible and intangible aspect of a product or service, and convenience represents a means that helps reduce customer costs, including time and effort. Wallace and Kanji (1999) found that the link between perceived value and customer satisfaction is important because customer satisfaction tends to increase as value increases.

Brand Equity According to Rush et al (2000), brand equity is, by definition, a subjective assessment of a customer's choices and views of an organization and its offerings. The importance of brand equity is where customers can have emotional attachments, such as the company's image and reputation. This is related to the fact that brands are the best way to distinguish their corporate image from other brands (Zitrone et al., 2001). As a brand becomes stronger, companies can use it as a great support to promote new or existing products. This would enable the company to survive disasters and protect themselves from other competitors (McAlister, 2007). Rather, the use of brand equity helps customers stay, buy again, and even influence their willingness to recommend the brand to others. Brand equity consists of driving factors such as customer brand awareness, customer attitudes towards the brand, and customer awareness of brand ethics. Brand expansion efforts have begun to create accurate brand fairness. This expressed fairness is a concept that enhances the market value of a particular company or brand. It was created by the company as a consumer brand asset and represents economic value to the company. (Rost et al., 2000). Relationship equity based on the previous research is identifying that a customer has a tendency to be loyal to a brand by assessing the value of the brand not only based on the objective and subjective assessment to the brand (Aravindakshan, Rust, Lemon & Zeithaml, 2004). This specific equity is used to focus on creating connections of a special relationship between the company and the customer. As customers buy more, they reduce costs at a rate. The lifetime increase in value to customers underscores the company's commitment to relationship marketing (Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler 2017). Factors that may help improve the fairness of relationships include loyalty programs, special awareness and treatment, affinity or interest programs, community and information-creating programs. However, some consumer products or services that make no difference may be more useful. (Zeithaml, 2001). Another important factor that can increase the fairness of a relationship is special treatment and awareness, and a well-organized community program. (Zeithaml, 2017)

Purchase Intention
As the name clearly suggests, the purchase intention is seen as a combination of both consumers` interest and the resulting possibility toward purchasing a product. The customers

should be able to identify the value of the product and then it would spark the interest to purchase. Purchase intention is considered important because based on previous research it is highly correlated with the actual purchase behavior (Bai; Law, Wen, 2008). In another research the finding shows that favorable brand relationships affect the purchase decisions of customers (Esch; Langner; Schmitt; Geus, 2006). Furthermore, the Value and Brand Equity relates to purchasing intention because of its brand recognition, awareness, and emotional senses related to the product. This leads to customer interest in buying the brand. Finally, the fairness of the relationship emphasized the loyalty of the brand. Another research shows that if the customers show loyalty to a particular brand, then they may have a better buying intent (Holehonnur et al.2009). Therefore all the three aspects of customer equity has an influence toward purchase intention.

Hence the sixth major research question is: How does Customer Equity is impacting toward Purchase Intention.

Hence the sixth major proposition is: The higher (lower) Customer Equity is impacting toward a higher (lower) Purchase Intention. This is translated into the minor proposition as follows:
The higher (lower) Value Equity is impacting toward a higher (lower) Purchase Intention
The higher (lower) Brand Equity is impacting toward a higher (lower) Purchase Intention
The higher (lower) Relationship Equity is impacting toward a higher (lower) Purchase Intention

Research Model Development

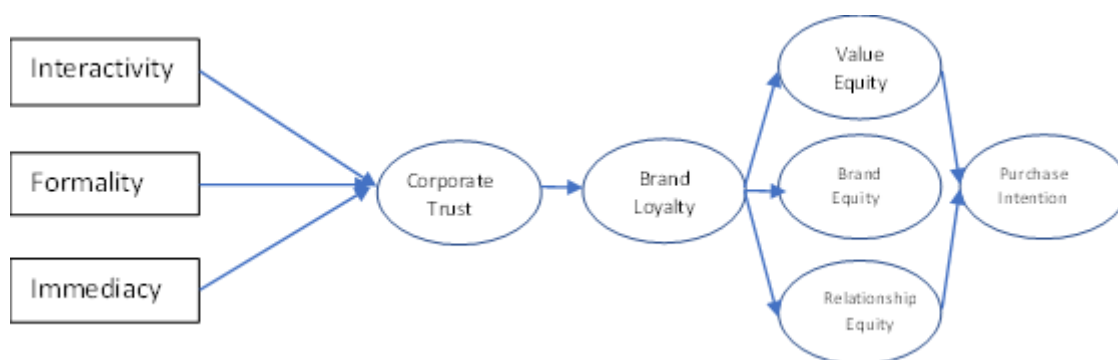Based on the above arguments and propositions the author developed a research model as follows:

Figure 1
Research Model

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The Implication of the Study
The findings of this study have both theoretical and managerial implications.

Theoretical Implication

The main contribution of this research is to integrate the communication science aspects to the business and management perspective of the social media marketing activities. The communication science is covered through the analysis of interactivity, formality and immediacy in building corporate trust through the social media marketing activities. The corporate trust will be impacting toward brand loyalty and influence the customer equity and purchase intention. This research on social media marketing is conducted both through the communication science and business management lenses. This study attempts to fill the gap of integrating communication science and management by emphasizing the importance of social media marketing activities by using diverse perspectives. Finally, the wealth of information covered in this study may be used in future research to gain further insight into the minds of customers and businesses. Management impact from a business perspective, based on conclusions, purchasing intent is known to be influenced by three variables that are part of customer equity: brand equity, relationship equity, and value equity. This customer equity is the result of brand loyalty that comes from the trust of the company. The corporate trust is influenced by the way the interactivity, formality and immediacy of the communication from the corporation.

Companies can use all these variables to optimize social media marketing and maximize the revenue through a higher purchase intention. Starting with the fact that social media marketing (SMMA) activities is influenced by the way the company's communicate, the creative body considers that introducing social media to current and potential clients is an effective marketing communications policy. This should be used by small businesses due to its relatively low cost and high impact manner. Therefore, exposure to social media communication will be a solution for SMEs to promote their products. It could be one of the solutions for sustainable business. Godey, et. al (2016) in his research mentioned that the company do not need to worry, because it is never too late to use social media as part of the online marketing purpose.

Based on this conceptual task, the focus should be on designing good interactivity, formality, and immediacy to increase corporate trust, brand loyalty, and customer equity. Content analysis reveals that personalization influence buying intent. This makes it clear that managers need to not only focus on interactive marketing, but also pay more attention to adapting the form of communication to the target group. The deductive theoretical approach of this conceptual paper also suggests that managers need to think about how their branding affects followers and consumers and build trust. The science of communication in terms of interactivity, formality and immediacy must match the needs of the target customer. Even without a direct reference to sales, brand visualization plays an important role in Y Generation's mind. In order for the brand to stand out from the crowd, the communication should be focused on attracting target customers. The path to focus on your target customers is supported by employee involvement on social media. This is possible if the employee's loyalty is high. The employee's loyalty in the previous research by Yunus, Emre Dede & Merve Kocoglu Sazkaya (2018) is showing a positive effect on professional responsibility, obedience, and honesty in the profession. Survey defines employee loyalty as employee attachment to an organization, which will be impacting organizational goals, objectives, and values. With a high employee loyalty and high personal belief in the organization, they strive and have a great desire to remain as members of the organization in the future. When employees are loyal, they are more motivated to act, work and

innovate towards the company's goals. For this reason, social media should be used by loyal employees of the company to support the brand's image. This has the potential to be a good study in the future.

Limitation of the study

Limitations need to be pointed out for this particular study. First, this is a conceptual study, it focuses only on communication science and its impact on brand loyalty, customer equity, and purchase intention. Second, this study does not measure the mediating effect of the variables, including the customer's equity, brand loyalty, and corporate trust toward purchase intent. The authors of the future study are strongly encouraged to investigate this topic further.

RECOMMENDATION

We also encourage to maximize brand equity in a variety of ways, including building brand loyalty and corporate trust through a well-designed communication model with interactivity, formality, and immediacy. In the future, brand equity may also be considered through employee advocacy. These are the people behind the brand that play a major role in building brand equity. Employees need to be more actively involved in sharing and creating social media content on behalf of their brands. In addition, most of the brand's success is based on word-of-mouth and nominations from friends, family and colleagues.

The importance of social media is becoming more significant by its ability to create a specific community. Maximizing a relationship equity then should be enhanced through the way the corporate communicates to the targeted community. All the communication format whether in stories, replying to instant messaging, and following up with the consumers through all the social media platforms will make a difference as we are taking a good care on the communication science matter such as the interactivity, formality and immediacy.

Giving consumers the best quality and best deals can increase their likelihood of buying. The pleasant experience would be a word of mouth through the social media. Another thing we can do to maximize value is to provide a speedy service, this would improve immediacy as one of the important aspects in communication. In addition, social and green impact associated with social media is another feature that brands need to show, to earn the trust of consumers and showing that the company care about the social issues and trends in the most appropriate way of communicating. This would be a great future research which will further support the sustainable business.

Conclusion should state concisely the most important propositions of the paper as well as the author's views of the practical implications of the results.

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