

Development of Conceptual Model for Social Media Characteristics and Consumers' Purchase Intention

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Introduction

Social media marketing is an evolving topic in the marketing field. During the past decade, the fast pace of web-based technology led to a drastic change in the way we do marketing. The rapid evolution of the internet and specifically the social media has offered consumers countless new opportunities to search and share information about products and services from the desk itself with less effort rather going out to field (Khatib,2016). Earlier days, consumers were waiting for companies to push messages toward them but now directly seeking information on social media. In this manner, under the web-based technology, social media as everybody knows and familiars with their use have already become part of daily routine of most people, it would majorly impact on inducing consumers' purchase intention. As social media is penetrating rapidly into the society, organizations are ever more adapting them as a partner of their promotional and brand enriching activities (Gallaugher&Ransbotham, 2010). Even though Social Media is being recognized as a powerful bondage between consumers and organizations, a small number of organizations feel comfortable in the adaptation of this new phenomenon (Kaplan &Haenlein, 2010; Bartlett, 2010; Hackworth & Kunz, 2011) because the influence of social media on consumers' purchase intention is still unclear among them. Thus it is essential to emphasize the influence of social media on consumers' purchase and business success (Smith, 2011). Even though only a small number of organizations feel comfortable in the adaptation of this new phenomenon (Kaplan &Haenlein, 2010; Bartlett, 2010; Hackworth & Kunz, 2010).

Recent studies consider social media as a newly emerging promotional tool (Berinato&Clark, 2010) that upsurges marketing communication successfully (Dholakia & Durham, 2010; Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki&Wilner, 2010;

Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels, 2009), and very few emphasis on how firms may benefit from them (Dong-Hun, 2010). To the best of our knowledge, there is a lack of studies examining the impact of social media on consumers' purchase intention. Taprial and Kanwar (2012) stated five properties that are more powerful and distinguish the social media from traditional media. They are accessibility, speed, interactivity, longevity and reach. Pjero and Kercini (2015) had researched by focusing on social media and its influence on consumer behavior, observed that information about products and services offered in the virtual world could positively impact on consumers' purchase intentions. At present, more good responses on the products or services, the more attractiveness for consumer purchasing come from social media platforms. Most of the top brands and services noticed it and started to focus on social media marketing. Given the growing number of Internet users, the factors of social media that influence the purchase intention of customers need to be explored (Kaplan&Haenlein, 2010). Social networking sites of brands assist in making better decisions than before purchasing goods and services (Wang & Chang, 2013). Considering this gap, the present study mainly focuses on analyzing the past studies to prepare the future research on consumers' purchase intention with social media. In the current scenario of marketing, in order to do the promotional activities effectively, it is very appropriate to develop propositions and a new model to make firms to get very much understanding of the importance of social media in terms of building consumers' purchase intention. Because, the higher the purchase intention, the higher a consumer's readiness to purchase a product (Husnain, Qureshi, Fatima&Akhtar, 2016).

The problem statement of this study is "What are the characteristics of Social media influence on consumers' purchase intention?" The research objective is to diagnose the future propositions for the association between social media and consumers' purchase intention.

Main Objective of the study

- To understand the impact of social media on consumers' purchase intention

Sub-objective of the study

- To understand the various characteristics of social media and their impact on consumers purchase intention

Literature Review with Conceptual Model

Social media as a group of Internet-based applications that build on an ideological and technological foundation of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Parr (2010) defined that the

social media as the use of electronic and internet tools to share and discussing information and experiences with other interested communities in more efficient ways. Social media can put the consumers in the central role of the business activities and provides a new aspect of tools for the interaction of consumers. Businesses have to think that how the social media has affected consumer buying behavior. In order to do the promotional activities, the emergence of the social media helps to make customers aware of products and to take their buying decision easier. Therefore, the consumers' purchase intention can be easily changed. Purchase intention can measure the probability of a consumer's product purchasing (Dodds, Monroe & Grewal, 1991; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000). A recent survey seeks out that Web 2.0 benefits businesses to increase consumers' satisfaction 50 percent (Bughin & Chui, 2010). There is 69 percent of companies adopting Web 2.0 have gained assessable business profits (Quarterly, 2009).

Nowadays, consumers actively receive information about products and services by consulting others through online social media platforms. They search for others' valuable comments again and again before making a purchase. Furthermore, Stelzner (2011) writes that social media signifies marketing opportunities which can connect firms directly with their consumers and he also found that 90% of marketers indicated that social media was important for their business, 33% of marketers are forming metrics to measure social media as part of their return on investment (ROI). According to Scarborough and Norman (2016), 44 percent of entrepreneurs use social media to communicate with current and potential customers. This figure is still going up as more people search for information on social media. A study conducted by Kim and Ko (2012) also indicated that 70 percent of consumers browsed social media in order to get appropriate purchasing information and out of them, there was 49 percent made purchase decision according to what they got from these social media platforms. The association between social media and consumers' decision-making states that social media affect advertising attitudes, brand attitudes, and purchasing intentions of the consumer (Khatib, 2016). Purchase intention is an indicator for evaluating consumer behavior (Ahmad, 2016).

Understanding the social media characteristics is crucial for both individuals and companies to compete in the market. If consumers have a good understanding of social media skills and perception of social media characteristics, they will make their life easier. When companies are employing social media, as part of their marketing strategy, they understand that the characteristics of social media will survive by competing in the current market. Ahmad (2016) has done a research to test the role of social media as information providing sources in the healthcare industry in Saudi Arabia. He identified that usability characteristics (connectedness, openness, speed, accessibility, and participation) of social media

play a vital role as to search information by potential buyer and the finding of that research was that social media had direct influences on every stage of the consumer decision-making process as well as influencing general opinions and attitude formation. This finding is consisting with previous literature (e.g., Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Khatib (2016) had found out that social media appears to affect consumer behavior of users positively. Therefore, it is indispensable for online marketers to pursue social media factors which have a positive effect on consumer purchase intention.

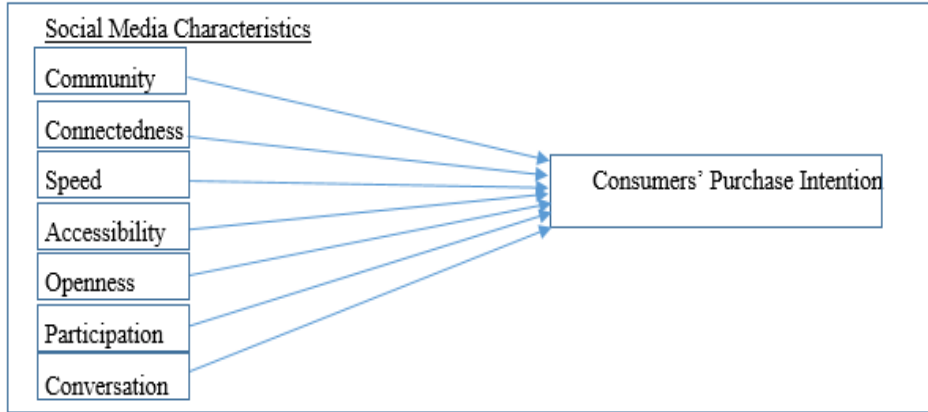
Ahmad (2016) proposed and examined a five-factor model that impacts purchasing behaviors. These factors comprise the independent variables of social media usability viz. connectedness, openness, speed, accessibility, and participation, whereas the dependent variable is purchasing behavior. Mayfield (2008) and Chen (2014) pointed out five fundamental characteristics that shared by almost all social media platforms: community, connectedness, speed, accessibility, openness, participation and conversation.

Table 01: Constructs and Past Studies

Variable	Measures	Sources
Social media	<i>Community</i> : online or virtual group formed by people who share the common interests.	Mayfield (2008); Teo, Chan, Wei, and Zhang (2013); Chen (2014)
	<i>Connectedness</i> : integration of online resources and people through sharing and making use of links.	Mayfield (2008); Riedl, Köbler, Goswami, and Krcmar (2013); Chen (2014); Ahmad (2016)
	<i>Accessibility</i> : No special skills are needed, and slight efforts are needed to access social media	Khatib (2016), Mayfield (2008), Chen (2014); Han (2014)
	<i>Openness</i> : Encourages feedback and participation without constraints and no barriers to make use of and share content.	Mayfield (2008); Chen (2014); Taprial and Kanwar (2012); Ahmad (2016); Khatib (2016); Davis (1989); Yoo & Donthu (2000); Wathne, Roos, Von and Krogh (1996);
	<i>Speed</i> : the degree to which how fast the content is available and accessible to users.	Mayfield (2008); Taprial, Varinder, Kanwar and Priya (2012); Chen (2014); Ahmad (2016)
	<i>Participation</i> : Two or more interested parties voluntarily interact with each other on social media making contributions and feedbacks	(Kaplan, Andreas, Michael Haenlein (2010); Mayfield, 2008; Taprial et al. (2012). Burgoon, Bonito, Bengtsson, Ramirez, Dunbar, and Miczo (2000), Chen (2014)
	<i>Conversation</i> : The ideal form of interactivity where two-way communication exists in social media.	Kaplan et al. (2010); Mayfield (2008), Chen (2014), Taprial and Kanwar (2012); Han (2014)

Purchase Intention	The probability of willingness to buy products or services in future	Liu(2013), Kim, Kim & Johnson (2010), Kim, Park, Lee, Knight, Xu, Jeon and Moon (2010).
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As a result, the proposed model would be as follow:



Research Propositions

Spanner (2007) stated that two characteristics of social media namely, community and connectedness which signify the sociability function of social media. People who are in the community which has similar interests would be willing to have attention and discussions as well as trust among community members (Yang, Mai & Ben-Ur, 2011). A study on online ties or connectedness suggested that product-related risks have a moderating impact on consumers' perceived value on purchasing (Riedl, Kobler, Goswami, & Krcmar, 2013). The social web among communities has had an impact on peoples' ability to acquire and share correct information about products or services available in the market both before making a purchasing decision and after purchasing (Khatib, 2016). Interactivity is linked to web site quality. Playfulness, connectedness and shared communication are online interactivity dimensions which were proven as essential factors to improve purchase intention and to make customers loyalty on brands (Chen & Yen, 2004). Community is being represented as a vital source to gather information about products by consumers and community members quickly and accurately to enhance their purchasing decision (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Concerning the characteristic of social media connectedness which has the positive effect on buyer trust on purchasing decision (Mayfield, 2008). Based on the above discussion the following proposition is developed.

Proposition 1: The community and connectedness features of social media have an impact on consumers' purchase intention

The technology acceptance model (TAM) has been continuously studied and expanded by many researchers in order to measure the user acceptance and usage

of technology and thus its influence on their behavioral intentions. One of the conclusions in the TAM model is that even if potential users perceive the given system or technology is useful, it will be moderated by their belief if they think the system or technology is too problematic to use and performance benefits of usage are outweighed by the effort of using the system or technology (Davis, 1989). In the case of social media, it is reasonable to be inspired by the TAM model and therefore employs some concepts from it. Social media, as a new form of internet technology and communication tool, does require users to basic knowledge about internet and computer technology. Three characteristics of social media that are speed, accessibility, and openness (Taprial& Kanwar, 2012); (Mayfield, 2008). These three characteristics can be categorized under the construct perceived ease of use in the TAM model.

The speed of using social media has a significant positive influence on buyers' trust on social media, and consequently, it leads to a positive effect on consumers' purchasing behavior (Taprial and Kanwar, 2012); (Ahmad,2016). According to Mayfield (2008); Taprial, and Kanwar (2012); Ahmad, (2016); Khatib (2016) consumers trust on purchasing will be enhanced due to the accessibility of social media and information available on social media. (Kim & Lim, 2011); (Yoo&Donthu, 2000) found out that convenience of use or accessibility of social media is one of the important reasons to choose online shopping mall as well as impacts on consumer attitudes and behaviors on purchasing. Regarding the social media openness, the positive influence of openness on buyer trust is supported with statistical significance. However, openness helps users to create trust on social media (Mayfield, 2008); (Ahmad, 2016). So based on these facts, the following proposition is proposed:

Proposition 2: The social media characteristics of speed, accessibility, and openness have an impact on consumers' purchase intention

Even though the sociability is the most appealing characteristics of social media, it will not be effective unless people participate and involve with other participants in the platform. A finding stated that participants' perceived values from persistence participation on social media positively affect persistent participation intentions and behavior in purchasing (Al-Debei, Al-Lozi, &Papazafeiropoulou, 2013). Burgoon et al. (2000) and Mayfield (2008) indicated that consumers' participation on social media platforms viz. searching for information and sharing, chatting, commenting, etc. has a significant influence on consumers' trust on them. From the above discussion, the following proposition is developed.

Proposition 3: There is an influence of participation characteristic of social media on consumers' purchase intention

Conversation on social media platforms is stated as online word of mouth which is more effective in spreading information as it is documented in the form of written words and people can find the required information about products or services according to their wish. Kamtarin (2012) showed that there is a positive effect existing between online WOM and purchase intention. There is a finding that causes and effect relationship between social media (Web 2.0) experience and consumers' purchase intention has been highlighted in the Foresee Results Report (2011) which scrutinized particularly the social networking and interaction orientation variables which are to be expected to impact online consumers' purchase intention and purchasing behavior. Lee (2012) and Khatib (2016) argued that interactivity on social media enhances loyalty, repurchase intention, and brand preference and he continued that interaction leads to build and maintain the relationship and feedback loop as conversations are more lively and two-way. Based on the above reviews, the following proposition is proposed

Proposition 4: There is an influence of Conversation characteristic of social media on consumers' purchase intention.

Conclusions

Based on the past literature referred, four propositions were proposed, and the future researchers would test these. The research conceptualization model incorporates direct variables from the literature of social media and purchase intention. The researchers have carefully identified the dimensions under the two variables viz. social media and consumers' purchase intention. Certainly, this integrative proposed framework will improve future researchers to conduct studies on the area of social media marketing in terms of consumers' purchase intention since social media as an unconventional means of the promotional way it plays a vital role for marketers to survive in the competitive marketplace in the contemporary business world. Empirical testing is essential in order to validate the proposed research model and to examine the relative importance of dimensions and antecedents. The relative importance of characteristics of social media with purchase intention could be exciting area and well-intentioned for further more future investigations.

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