

Chapter 5

The Effects of Consumer Social Media Marketing Experiences on Brand Affect and Brand Equity

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ABSTRACT

A limited number of studies have shown that social media marketing activities positively contribute to brand performance. In this chapter, therefore, a conceptual framework elucidating how consumer social media marketing experiences lead to more favorable brand affect, and in turn, enhanced brand equity is proposed. Importantly, perceived social media marketing activities are identified as a key moderator influencing the effects of consumer social media marketing experiences on brand equity. Repeated measures ANOVA and regression analyses were conducted to test the proposed model in a study consisting of three phases. The results provide support for (a) the main effects of consumer social media marketing experiences on brand affect and brand equity, (b) the mediating effect of brand affect, and (c) the moderating effect of perceived social media marketing activities. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the theoretical and managerial implications of the research findings, and recommendations for future studies.

INTRODUCTION

Effective social media management is one of the central interests and demands of today's business world (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The current consumer trend toward increasingly frequent social media usage provides new opportunities, but also challenges. This growing popularity of

social media requires the traditional communication medium to be revised according to the new market conditions and customer expectations (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Hensel & Deis, 2010; Qualman, 2013). The two main factors in this context are customers' desire for direct two-way direct communication when engaging with brands (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), and companies' ability

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to exploit social media's facilitation of immediate and low cost access to target consumers through a variety of channels (Luke, 2009). By incorporating social media in their existing marketing strategies, firms can reach their branding, customer service and relationship management objectives (Tuten & Solomon, 2013). Research has demonstrated that social media provide a range of advantages to firms, such as better customer relations and enhanced customer equity (Trainor, Andzulis, Rapp, & Agnihotri, 2013; Kim & Ko, 2012). Specifically, social media marketing activities have positive impacts on brands in terms of awareness, attitude, loyalty and equity (Erdoğan & Çiçek, 2012; Kim & Ko, 2012; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). In spite of these potential benefits, a systematic understanding of how social media marketing activities affect brand equity remains elusive.

In the current competitive marketing environment, brand equity is one of the keystones of a firm's long term success. It has a significant effect on consumer responses to branding strategies and supporting marketing programs (Keller, 1993). According to the brand value chain, marketing activities associated with target-oriented programs influence what customer think and feel about the brand (Keller & Lehmann, 2003). If the firm has a strong brand value, its customers are likely to have repurchase intentions and be more willing to generate and spread positive word-of-mouth (Vogel, Evanschitzky, & Ramaseshan, 2008). From a broader perspective, positive brand equity may create opportunities for higher revenues, lower costs, and greater profits (Keller, 1993). These positive effects of brand equity demonstrate the returns of marketing investments in brand value development (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Therefore, brand equity is as a key strategic asset that firms should monitor to maximize long-term brand performance. Although researchers have devoted a considerable amount of attention to brand equity concept, marketing activities that can create equity need to be further investigated (Faircloth, Capella, & Alford, 2001). For instance, brand experiences

preserved in the minds of customers have the potential to trigger the creation of brand value process and lead to successful market performance in the long run (Keller & Lehmann, 2003). Thus, profitable brand management requires building consistent and distinctive customer brand experiences, which takes into account the impacts of all marketing mix elements (Mosley, 2007). Prior research revealed that customer experience has a significant and positive influence on brand equity (Biedenbach & Marell, 2010; Sheng & Teo, 2012). In addition, the interaction between brands and customer experiences has also an emotional dimension. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of enlightening the emotional aspects of consumption experiences in the study of consumer behavior (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). It has been shown the favorable customer experiences may lead to emotional responses and interactions, providing opportunities for creating brand value (Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007). However, only recently a limited number of studies explore the relationship between customer experiences and brands (Verhoef et al., 2009).

As discussed previously, there have been a limited number of studies which examine how brand equity is impacted by social media marketing activities and consumer experiences. Moreover, two factors are treated as independent in these studies. In contrast, the current study embraces a holistic approach, examining the impact of consumer social media marketing experiences on brand equity with an emphasis on understanding the role played by perceived social media marketing activities. Additionally, considering the emotional aspect of experiences, the relationship among consumer social media marketing experiences, affect elicited by brands and brand equity is explored.

In the following section, the literature review and hypotheses derived from prior studies are presented. The methodology section which follows provides the details of the sample and the procedure of data collection, the measurements

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