

Chapter 14

What Motivates Online Shoppers to “Like” Brands’ Facebook Fan Pages?

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ABSTRACT

Brands’ Facebook fan pages have been frequently used as a marketing tool to reach to more individuals; however, Facebook users’ motivations to participate in those fan pages are still unclear. This paper investigates the motives that stimulate online shoppers to “like” brands’ Facebook fan pages. This study is interested in knowing if online shoppers’ proclivity to “like” brands’ Facebook fan pages is based on their hedonic or utilitarian motivations. The authors propose a model based on hedonic and utilitarian motivations and uses and gratifications theoretical framework. An online survey was conducted among college students who shopped online in Northwest Ohio (N=198). The findings show that utilitarian motivations have positive significant relationships with “liking” brands’ Facebook fan pages.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of new media and the growing popularity of social network sites (SNS) such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Google have a great impact on people’s lives (Xu, Ryan, Prybutok & Wen, 2012). There were 864 million daily active Facebook users in September, 2014 (Facebook, 2014). Organizations set up fan pages to reach Facebook users and cultivate consumer loyalty. In 2012, there were more than 1.5 million organization fan pages on Facebook and 20 million users “like” those Facebook fan pages (JeanJean, 2012).

The strength of the online social network sites as a marketing tool is that they are structured around users (Mislovem Marcon, Gummadi, Druschel & Bhattacharjee, 2007). This structure helps to utilize the interconnectedness of the users to reach to more customers with relatively less effort and low costs.

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Therefore, marketers increasingly show interests in using Facebook for their marketing. In 2013, 92% of marketers reported that they utilize Facebook as a marketing tool. (SocialMediaExaminer, 2013). Despite the potential and contribution of social networking sites to brands, few studies have investigated specifically the use of fan pages on Facebook (Wallace, Buil, de Chernatony & Hogan, 2014). As so many organizations utilize fan pages on Facebook, a theoretical framework is needed to help organizations to understand underlying reasons behind users’ motivations to participate in brands’ Facebook pages.

Many previous studies have investigated users’ participation motives in traditional brand communities. Muniz & O’guinn (2000) study traditional brand communities and they define it as specialized, non-geographically bound communities, based on a structured set of social relationships among customers of a brand. They state that brand community is marked by a shared consciousness, rituals and traditions and a sense of moral responsibility. However new online communities, including social networking sites, are more powerful. Through social networks sites users are capable of interacting with other users and with the organization itself, with relatively little effort. Consequently, users’ participation in brands’ social media pages can be classified into two groups in regards to their devotion to the brand: devoted and casual users. Devoted users are those who are more “committed” to the brand and visit the brand communities frequently. Furthermore, previous studies have explored consumption behavior from the utilitarian and hedonic dimensions. Utilitarian motivation is defined as goal-oriented and rational motivation, which is concerned with instrumental value and effectiveness of the consumption, while hedonic refers to seeking fun, play, enjoyment and experiences of the consumption (Babin, Darden & Griffin, 1994; Batra and Ahtola 1990; Voss, Spangenberg & Grohmann, 2003; Wertenbroch and Dhar 2000). The hedonic and utilitarian model has been used to explain consumption or usage behaviors, such as using the internet for information seeking, entertainment, socializing, and status seeking behavior (Cotte, Chowdhury, Ratneshwar & Ricci, 2006; Hartman, Shim, Barber & O’Brien, 2006; Maenpaa, Kanto, Kuusela & Paul, 2006). In the context of internet usage behavior, companies’ online communities represent an important research area, as they have been shown to have a positive effect on brand loyalty (Jang et al., 2008). Previous studies have emphasized the importance of the utilitarian value of online communities for users (Bateman, Gray & Butler, 2011; Casaló, Flavian, & Guinaliu, 2010; Sanchez-Franco & Rondan-Cataluña, 2010).

Facebook offers the tools to help organizations to create online communities that foster the relationship between the brand and individuals. Facebook fan pages are similar to users’ personal profiles, but are designed for organizations, and they are open to the public. Users can become fans or follow the brands’ fan pages on Facebook by “liking” the page. Due to the community attributes of Facebook fan pages, members are able to find other members who share their interest (Koh & Kim, 2003; Muñiz & O’Guinn, 2001) and are able to interact with them through “liking”, posting, commenting and sharing content. Many brands have been heavily using Facebook fan pages as a marketing communication tool; it is important to recruit fans for their Facebook page because fans are those that receive updates automatically from the page and traceable for the organizations. However, many marketers are still trying to search for the magic key to attract fans for their Facebook pages. This paper aims to investigate these motives of “liking” brands’ Facebook fan pages by developing a model based on hedonic and utilitarian motivations approach and uses and gratifications perspective to help organizations better understand the reasons behind their customers’ “liking” their brands’ Facebook fan pages and develop their Facebook page content strategies accordingly. The research questions are as follows:

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