Chapter 10
Customer Engagement:
From Social Shoppers to Social Learners and Collaborators

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ABSTRACT

This chapter focused on exploring the engagement in which consumers interact with each other while conducting online shopping activities, such as discovering products, sharing product information, and/or collaboratively making shopping decisions. At the core of the product/service offering, successful shopping models will be able to meet the needs of highly engaged shoppers. In order to develop sustainable shopping model for this group of shoppers, social support theory could explain the current phenomenon of the use of social media for shopping. The social media technologies facilitated collaborative learning and collaborative improvement on the sale of unconventional and innovative products. The chapter contributes in social commerce innovations and provides managerial implications for understanding the overall interactions of social commerce.

INTRODUCTION

In the fierce competition, technological advancement, product choices and well-informed customers on the social commerce, the ability to engage customers is considered a strategic tool to build a sustainable competitive advantage (Van Doorn et al., 2010; Brodie et al., 2013; Islam & Rahman, 2016) and has emerged. Customer engagement is portrayed as an approach to create, build and enhance customer relationships (Brodie et al., 2013).

Information is the most important aspect of any decision-making process, whether it is engaging the customers in browsing or force them to buy the product or service (Kumar & Kashyap, 2018). Since the availability of adequate information on a website (Close and Kinney, 2010; Shim et al., 2001) may convert the browsing into buying, the information related to company and product is important to customers (Kaur and Quareshi, 2015) and for customer support services. Moreover, it enables the shoppers to gather information about products without the necessity of placing the items of interest (Close and Kinney, 2010).

In the United States, the survey from the Pew Research Centre shows that the top seven social media sites are YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, LinkedIn and Twitter (Spisak, 2019). Social media in Malaysia has grown due to the ease of Internet connection in the city around Malaysia. The top 8 social media in Malaysia is Facebook, Whatsapp, Youtube, Twitter, Linkin, Pinterest, Instagram and Weibo (Social Media Marketing, 2019)

The objective of the chapter is to understand the use of social networking site to gain information and social support with learning being thrust at the central role at the preliminary phrase of a pre-shopping journey. The chapter also examine the quality contents in the social media that compels users to engage with the social networking sites.

BACKGROUND

Social support and Web site quality plays a critical role by positively influencing the user's intention to use social commerce and to continue using a social networking site. The two effects are found to be mediated by the quality of the relationship between the user and the social networking Web site. Digital shoppers are increasingly hitting the "buy" button on social media sites (Amato-Mccoy, 2018), and possess the ability to influence purchase decisions. Social media is also considered a large part of the product discovery and research phase of the shopping journey (Pandolph, 2018), shoppable content is becoming more popular, it's likely that social media will play an even larger role in e-commerce, with Facebook, the clear winner in social commerce, with its huge user base and wide-ranging demographics.

Three case studies in Malaysia have been selected. The hosts are actively providing shoppable contents for the users, who are shopping for information or their services.

USER ENGAGEMENT

A user engagement is 'a quality of user experience with technology' (O'Brien's, 2011). A broader definition of social media engagement is 'a quality of user experience with web-based technologies that enable users to interact with, create, and share content with individuals and organizations in their social networks' (McCay-Peet and Quan-Haase, 2016). Users are actively engaged in decisions about what information to share and with whom, rather than being simply passive consumers of content after a great shopping experience (Young and Quan-Haase, 2013).

ENGAGED HOST-USERS / FOLLOWERS: HARNESSING POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

Individuals are using digital platform to disseminate knowledge for survival over the long term. During the social learning process, the highly engaged followers/users will be contributing to the conversation post threads and the core group of highly engaged fans is more valuable than millions of disengaged followers/users, and they can have a huge impact on the marketing efforts (Ackroyd, 2018). In the experiential journey, the followers/users may discover a small, real, relevant and quality of audience contributing to the content of the engaged champion.

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