The Study of Antecedents of Consumer Engagement and Purchase Intention in Social Commerce

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is how social commerce engages consumers and encourages them to purchase. By proposing the concepts of consumer engagement as different ways to provide a deep and meaningful experience, this study develops a model that explores the antecedents of consumer engagement and its role in explaining a consumer to purchase in social commerce. For this, this study surveys 352 consumers using social commerce in Korea and analyzes the data using AMOS 24. In the results, first, interactivity, sociability, social ties, and social identity among all of the sub-factors of consumer engagement increases consumer engagement. Second, consumer engagement increases their purchase intention. Finally, interactivity and social identity among the antecedents of consumer engagement increase consumers’ purchase intention through their consumer engagement. The findings contribute to research on social commerce by paying scholarly attention to meaningful engagement characterized by consumer engagement.

KEYWORDS

Consumer Engagement, Purchase Intention, Sociability, Social Commerce

1. INTRODUCTION

Recent developments in web technologies and the advent of social media concepts and tools have resulted in new developments that impact e-commerce. This development is possible and encouraging. Consumers must be actively involved in buying and selling products and services in online markets and communities (Huang & Benyoucef, 2015). This new phenomenon is also known as social commerce (Hajli, 2014), where e-commerce uses social media tools and Web 2.0 technologies. Social commerce has a significant impact on social interaction between business processes and consumers (Spaulding, 2010). In fact, in this environment, consumers can be exposed to more social and collaborative online shopping experiences to gather aggregated information to better understand purchasing and support more accurate shopping decisions (Dennison et al., 2009). Online merchants can help them to better serve their customers by identifying consumer behavior, preferences, and expectations (Constantinides et al., 2008). Unlike traditional e-commerce, which focuses on improving the efficiency of online shopping, social commerce offers a rich social, interactive and collaborative online shopping experience.

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(Yang et al., 2015). In this way, e-commerce can be used to create new business opportunities (Yang et al., 2015), increase consumer participation (Guo & Barnes, 2011; Sadovykh et al., 2015), support product, and brand development (Huang et al., 2012).

Research on social media and Web 2.0 related to the context of e-commerce (Hajli, 2014) and to their impacts on consumers (Kim & Park, 2013) including their attitudes (Hassanein & Head, 2007), levels of satisfaction (Bai et al., 2008), and shopping behaviors (Seckler et al., 2015) emphasize the importance of designing quality social commerce websites (Hernández et al., 2009). In fact, website design has a significant impact on consumer interaction with social commerce (Cebi, 2013). Consumer purchase intentions, in particular, are heavily influenced by the quality of the social commerce website design (Curty & Zhang, 2013).

The quality of the social commerce website design that creates a memorable and lasting consumption experience has been emphasized (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Recently, social commerce combined with information technology (IT) has strengthened its function. Today’s new and cutting-edge IT typically provides a much more immersive experience that encourages consumer experience and increases demand for goods and services (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). In this situation, social commerce companies around the world actively developed and provided a variety of information services (IS) that provide consumers with information and enjoyment and ultimately enhance their own experience.

Researchers emphasize that IS should not rely solely on a pleasurable user experience based on deep involvement. Rather, individuals must make a way to find meaningful relationships between their own interests and system use (Nuttavuthist, 2014). Thus, meaningful participation of users in interaction with IS has been presented as a major determinant of continued use of the system (Chen et al., 2015). Nonetheless, the systematic and rigorous approach to developing research structures that reflect meaningful participation is lacking in the IS literature, despite increasing academic and practical interest in meaningful participation. Since 2005 the term “engagement” has been increasingly used in the broader academic marketing literature. However, despite this increasing use, scholarly inquiry into defining the term, or examining how the term differs from similar relational terms, including “participation” and “involvement,” has been limited. The Marketing Science Institute’s 2010–2012 Research Priorities (MSI — Marketing Science Institute, 2010) emphasize the need for further research addressing the consumer/customer engagement concept. Within the broader priority area of “Understanding Customer Experience and Behavior,” the MSI identifies “customer engagement” as a key research area contributing to enhanced academic insight into consumer behavior in complex, interactive and/or co-creative environments. Further, the 2010 Journal of Service Research Special Issue, which includes a number of papers addressing “customer engagement,” directly responds to this MSI Research Priority.

However, despite the increasing usage of these terms, marketing scholars have paid relatively little attention to the theoretical development of the “engagement” concept, and of “consumer engagement” in social commerce. To use social commerce, people have to go through a little cumbersome process of connecting to the wireless Internet and downloading social commerce applications and data. This makes consumers more immersed in social commerce. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the experiences of social commerce in today’s high-tech and experienced consumer world. The study examined consumer engagement based on technological supply and user demand, with the consumer engagement provided by social commerce. An individual’s assessment of IS may also be influenced by a number of factors, such as social norms (Koo et al., 2015) or perceptions such as trust of technology (Walczuch et al., 2007). Therefore, the purpose of this study examines how technological supply and user demand influence consumer engagement which affects his or her purchase intention in social commerce.
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