IMPACT OF CUSTOMER BRAND RELATIONSHIP THROUGH FACEBOOK ON THE LEVEL OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract

In the last few years customer engagement has received a significant attention of researchers and marketers' because there is a rise in the awareness of customers as value recipient to value co-creator. Two hypotheses were developed i.e. 1) Customer Brand Relationship through facebook impacts on the level of customer engagement. 2) There is a gender difference on the variable of customer engagement on facebook. A survey was designed by taking ten different brands of cloths that have their web pages on online social media. A sample of 211 individuals was approached to measure the engagement status of 10 clothing brands through online social media. Customer Engagement Scale (CES; Justina Malciute, 2012) was used to measure the impact of customer brand relationship through Facebook on the level of Customer Engagement. Regression analysis was performed to measure the results. The results of the study suggest that customer brand relationship through facebook will impact the level of customer engagement. Moreover, no gender difference was found on the variable of customer engagement on facebook.

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Introduction

In the past few years the research and technology has shaped almost every aspect of life and business. Some are getting the benefits while some are facing challenges. Consumers are getting the benefits, as they are getting good products with more reasonable prices; the research and technology has increased the accessibility of the customers to products. Firms, organizations, institutions are facing challenges as the products life cycle is becoming shorter and there is stiff competition; so, managers need to modify the products quickly. Customer engagement and retention is a big challenge for organizations, as, marketing practices of firms are influenced dramatically due to social media emergence and conventional marketing practices are no more highly influential (Fournier & Avery, 2011; Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker, & Bloching, 2013). It is very crucial for firms now to update and understand the social media marketing (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2013). Social media awareness and engagement has augmented the marketing efforts, as social media connections are affecting the purchase decisions of the customers. So, the engagement of customers on online social media has opened a point of interest and concern for marketers (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010).

Businesses really are waking up to the fact that solid long-term customer relationships are the most valuable assets they have. To understand their customers, organizations are using more sophisticated and powerful technologies to solute the problems, building engagement while managing customer experience. Customer experiences drive the overall brand/firm success and failure through online social media connection (Aggarwal, 2004; Li et al., 2006).

Social media have changed the way of communication in a dramatic way. Through social media one can interact, share and augment the relationships with friends and family and others as well. Social media provides platform not only to receive content but also participate actively in content creation, development and dissemination

(Universal McCann, 2008). Both consumers and companies have adopted social networking sites (Lipsman, 2011). Through the adoption of social media, business can reach to global audience for brand building purposes (Singh & Cullinane, 2010). According to Lee (2009), facebook is the popular most social networking site among both consumers and companies. Facebook's mission is to "give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected" (Facebook, 2011). When on facebook a consumer "Like" the company's page, the company get opportunity to communicate to consumers who connect to brand by "Liking". When a consumer connects to brand through brand page, it gives the opportunity to consumers to post brand related stories, opinion and experiences (Singh & Cullinane, 2010). These postings by consumer will also be visible to consumer's own personal page and consumer's friend base provides extended brand awareness through word of mouth (Facebook Media Kit, 2011). According to ExactTarget's (2011) report on Facebook "liking" behavior, "64% of Facebook users "like" at least one company on Facebook".

Literature Review

Scholars have defined engagement as one dimensional (i.e., cognitive, affective, or behavioral) (Douglas & Hargadon, 2000; Marci, 2006; Heath, 2007; Mathwick & Ridgon, 2004; Wang, 2006; Rappaport, 2007), whereas others have defined it as two dimensional (i.e., cognitive and affective) (Mollen & Wilson, 2010; O'Brien & Toms, 2008). Some have even defined it as a multidimensional construct that includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions (Hollebeek, 2011; Patterson, Yu, & de Ruter, 2006), but have considered engagement with the company as "physical contact" and dismiss the possibilities that engagement can be applicable in a mediated space.

Engaging customers is now getting the key importance in building brand success, and customer engagement is now considering as nucleus while setting the strategies for brand management (Tripathi,

2009; Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010). One should not see engagement as a direct indicator of results of advertising; rather the goal should be the advertising engagement (Wang, 2006). The concept of customer engagement in market research is relatively new and it is establishing and so far it has been dealt with widely differing, therefore an understanding of the nature of engagement is both current and necessary (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010). By engaging the customers, firms can enjoy benefits and payoffs such as boost in purchase frequency, increase in sales, more profits, retention of potential customers, so increased market share through positive word of mouth (Tripathi, 2009). In today's global marketing challenging scenario, and while designing a new customer centric marketing approach to cope and manage with the constantly changing social and individual dynamics of postmodern consumer behaviors, the customer brand engagement plays a vital and key role in it (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010). Ahuja & Medury (2010) stress that marketing abilities to extol and engage customers will eventually decide that a customer enters into a good and strong relationship with the brand or organization.

In the literature of marketing customer engagement is a new phenomenon which is recently receiving high focus and considerable attention by both researchers and marketers. Customer engagement is an extended concept of relationship marketing. The core motivation behind this increasing interest and thought is to find the impact on the performance of firm created by engaged customers (Bijmolt et al., 2010). Brodie et al. (2011) described corporate performance is enhanced by customer engagement through word of mouth about the offerings i.e. brands (services and products), co-creating value and experiences and involving in new products/service development. Van Doorn et al. (2011) highlighted customer engagement as behavior of customers that go beyond purchase & transaction.

The conceptual domain of customer engagement have been developed by exploratory studies which in the main illustrate the recently growing surface of relationship marketing (e.g. Vivek, 2009;

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Van Doorn et al, 2010; Bijmolt et al, 2010; Brodie et al, 2011a; Brodie et al, 2011b). In the literature of relationship marketing it is a new logic, viewing consumers for the value creation route of organization as endogenous tools, so, needs to engage consumers actively in the process. Today, customer engagement is concerned with complex, evolving customers living in a postmodern, increasingly connected, multi-tasking society (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010). Wang (2006) presents engagement as a way of breaking through the advertisement clutter. Customers tend to avoid many advertisements and therefore engagement initiated by the contextual relevance may help advertisements escape the clutter. Wang (2006) goes on and identify that drivers of engagement may differ by demographic, product category, medium, and genres within media. Advertisement effectiveness is increased by its content and context, and it is overblown if engagement is achieved at the social level and even personal levels with the customers.

Tripathi (2009) emphasize the importance of engagement in the digital perspective, website providers are finding it ever more difficult to clutch on the visitors in an effort to sell or communicate with them. The evolving field of interactive and digital media, such as the internet, is providing companies with new opportunities to generate higher customer engagement with online advertisements (Wang, 2006). Social network usage by consumers provide company managers with the opportunity to modify associations with customers from two to three way communication, that customers not only with one another but also with the firm could be engage through meaningful relationship (Porter et al, 2011). Harris & Dennis (2011) talk about the concept of social commerce, which is the utilization of social technologies to connect, understand, listen and engage the customers in order to perk up the shopping experience. Rapid advances in technologies are also motivating and helping the use of digital media technology (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010). Most of the managers now a days believe that customer engagement through online networks can craft significant value, but financial risk is also evident with it.

They stress that there is no room for errors while making and executing a strategy for customer engagement (Porter et al, 2011).

In the online community context, members' basic needs are often rooted in the association among fellow community members that share mutual awe for a certain brand and firm (Porter et al, 2011). When customers add friends, network with one another and create fan communities online a, highest degree of engagement starts to appear. By having a look on the digital context, it is evident that customer engagement is evident by posting comments, bookmarking, subscribing, emailing and through publishing and networking (Ahuja & Medury, 2010). By understanding when and how customers' profile information (e.g. name and demographic) and social connections data will be displayed and accessed through their online behaviors, policy makers can develop promising regulations that help consumers and brands interact in a mutual manner and establish a long-term relationship (Chu & Kim, 2011).

Nurturing and sustaining customer engagement on social networks requires considerable effort. Such engagement behavior creates both short term and future value to firm, such as, repeat purchasing, a short term financial benefit and positive image of firm and brand through positive word of mouth will create future value (Porter et al, 2011). While interacting with customers, the organization treat and take customer as assets to the firm, by the process of incorporating a proper feedback and co-creating learn about them, and try to develop intimacy level with them (Ahuja & Medury, 2010).

Porter et al (2011) identify three major, interconnected bases of value that surface through customer engagement in the online environment. Firstly, participatory value that the advantage correlated with a firm's efforts to prop up participation in an online network, so constitutes a framework for financial and relational value both. Efforts to encourage cooperation from social network members are the results of the associated benefits due to relational value, which leads to

sustained levels of member engagement. Both relational and participatory values surface the means of organization to extort value (Financial) from a virtual society. The sale of products, content and advertising placements are the major sources of financial value.

Harris & Dennis (2011) and Porter et al (2011) relate customer engagement to trust. Trust is central when customers purchase products online. Online communications, which have a peer perspective, create messages that are more believable (Harris & Dennis, 2011). To drive value from customers through online communities, trust is an influential and an essential element (Porter et al, 2011). Harris & Dennis (2011) present a hierarchy of trust. They mean that customers are likely to trust firstly "real" friends, secondly friends on Facebook, thirdly independent review pages and expert blogs, last in the hierarchy comes e-retailer sites. Trust is positively associated with social network users' overall behavior on their favorite sites. From a social networking perspective, trust serves as an important mean for customers to evaluate the source and value of information. Among social network users, trust willingness to rely on the connections of their 'friends' list is enhanced because of the connections' perceived the words as reliable and trustworthy (Chu & Kim, 2011).

To attain customer engagement, companies need to understand what customers needs exactly, then as per their resources and capacity constraints, think which and how these needs can be met through their offerings (Tripathi, 2009). Porter et al (2011) developed a process with three stages that firms can pursue in order to effectively promote and maintain engagement through online communities. Firstly, community members' needs must be identified. Secondly, the customer participation must be promoted, at the same time understanding that customers opt to engage through social media networks to connect and to help meet fundamental needs. Thirdly, as participation achieved, sustaining customer engagement through motivating members to cooperate with firm and with one another is

crucial for managers to be successful. Tripathi (2009) means the first step of building an enduring relationship with the customer is the customer satisfaction. The customer will stay with the company if he or she is continuously engaged. Customers will not buy a product just because the sufficient attractiveness of the brand. Even if the customer buys a product once, repeat purchase is no guarantee. For repetition to happen, keeping the customer engaged to the brand is necessary. The customer not only be satisfied with the purchase but also will promote and define the product to others (Tripathi, 2009).

To develop an internal organizational culture of engagement within the company is not an easy or overnight process. Before the customers get to be engaged, the managers of the company engaged first. Gambetti & Graffigna (2010) put forward that companies have not yet turned its attention to long-term engagement initiatives and strategic vision, the focus today is on tactical approaches and tools aimed at achieving short-term results. A more rigorous, strategic approach could help practitioners to get a broader theoretical understanding of the drivers and consequences of engagement, preventing engagement from being seen as just another new marketing trick to get customer attention and refresh the media market in the short term.

The following hypotheses were formulated:

H1. Customer Brand Relationship through facebook impacts on the level of customer engagement.
H2. There is a gender difference on the variable of customer engagement on facebook.

Methodology
Population

For our research population we consider all those who are using facebook and they like some brands on facebook and share

their thoughts and experiences regarding the brands with others through word of mouth on social media.

Sample

Convenient sampling technique was employed for sample collection. The sample of the study consisted of 211 participants (93 males & 119 females) form Karachi, Pakistan. The ages of the respondents were from 18 to 51 years. Respondents were students at different levels of education from Bachelors to Doctorate programs (see table 1). Respondents were users of different online social media platforms.

Measures

Demographic form include information such as age, gender, time spent on social media, and what media is in use along with Facebook.

Customer Engagement Scale (CES; Justina Malciute, 2012) was used to measure impact of customer brand relationship through Facebook on the level of Customer Engagement. The scale consists of 23-items to be rated on a 5-point Liket scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Reliability of the scale items were also checked through cronbach's alpha, value was 0.94.

Procedure

A survey questionnaire was designed online on Google document and sent to respondents through email. Respondents were requested to fill the questionnaire and take part in the survey. Instructions to complete this form were given by researcher and information on these forms was obtained through self-report method. Consent to participate in the research was taken from the participant beforehand. Participation was voluntary and the responses were

anonymous. Participants were informed about the purpose of research and confidentiality was assured.

Statistical Analysis

Customer Engagement Scale (CES) was develop on Likert scale measuring 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree), and made online on Google documents, then data was tabulated on Microsoft Excel Sheet. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 17 was used for all statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics for demographic information and Linear Regression analysis was performed in order to the find out the impact of Customer Brand Relationship through facebook on the level of customer engagement. T-test was applied to test gender difference on the variable of customer engagement on facebook

Results

Table 1

Frequency table for respondents' demographic information

Demographic variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	93	44-1%
	Female	118	55.9%
Age	Less than 20 years	16	7.5%
	20-29	142	67%
	30-39	36	17%
	40-49	14	6%
	50-above	3	1.4%
Time spent on Facebook	Less than 30 Minutes	78	37%
	30 Mins-1 Hour	51	24.2%
	1 Hour-2 Hour	37	17.5%
	2 hour-3 hour	24	11.4%
	More than 3 Hour	15	7.1%
Other social media in use	Twitter	49	23.2%
	Linkedin	72	34.1%
	Google+	54	25.6%
	Orkut	2	0.9%
	YouTube	18	8.5%
	any other	3	1.4%

In our survey 56% respondents were females and 44% were males. Majority of the respondents (67%) were in the age bracket 20-29 years. 37% of the respondents were using facebook for less than 30 minutes and 24.2% respondents were using facebook for about one hour in a day. Other than facebook, Linkedin (34.1%) and twitter (23.2%) are the mostly used social networks.

Table 2

Analysis of Variance for Linear Regression with Customer Brand Relationship through Facebook as Predictor of Customer Engagement

Model	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	25994.861	1	25994.861	373.562	.000[a]
Residual	13917.303	200	69.587		
Total	39912.163	201			

Table 3

Coefficients for Linear Regression with Customer Brand Relationship through Facebook as Predictor of Customer Engagement

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	12.826	2.064		6.215	.000
	V25	2.338	.121	.807	19.328	.000

a.   Dependent Variable: Customer Engagement

Table 4

Summary of Linear Regression with Customer Brand Relationship through Facebook as Predictor of Customer Engagement

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
1	.807[a]	.651	.650

The results of regression analysis are showing that CBR as independent variable has an impact of CE (dependent variable). The value of R^2 is 0.651, showing that 65% of changes in dependent variable (CE) is due to customer brand relationship (IV). Significant value was less than 0.05 so we fail to reject our null hypothesis that *Customer*

Brand Relationship through facebook impacts on the level of customer engagement.

Table 5
The Mean Differences Male and Female on the Variable of Customer Engagement

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev	t	df	Sig.
Customer Engagement	Male	93	16.4624	4.73553	.285	200	.776
	Female	109	16.2661	4.99192			

The mean difference of gender (male, 16.46) & (female, 16.26) was not found to be significant, as the significant value is greater than 0.05. So, we fail to reject our null hypothesis that *there is a gender difference on the variable of customer engagement on facebook*.

Discussion

The study was conducted to measure the customer engagement through online social media (Facebook). Customer engagement is relatively a new concept, and the advancement in the social media has put immense pressures on the decision makers in the organizations. The understanding of social media interaction is critically necessary for the brand managers to better plan and executes the brand ideas. Through word of mouth on online social media, consumers are now in a position to take revenge. They can make the brands and they can destroy the brands. Two hypotheses were formulated i.e. First hypothesis (*H1)* was designed to check the impact of Customer Brand Relationship through facebook on the level of

customer engagement. The results of the hypothesis suggest an impact of CBR through Facebook. The findings of the study are in line with the previous researches, e.g. Justina Malciute (2012) & Amy Renee Reitz (2012) that online social media usage has a significant effect on the level of customer engagement. We measure the customer brand relationship through attitude of the customer to [specific] clothing brands and engagement as intend to buy & re-buy, positive words about the brand, recommend the brand to others & encourage the friends to buy specific brand. We fail to reject *H1* that *Customer Brand Relationship through facebook impacts on the level of customer engagement* as significant value was less than 0.05. R^2 value for the model was 0.651. Customer brand relationship through facebook has a positive impact on the customer engagement. With the advancement of technology customers are more relying on the communication on social media, and among the social media facebook is among on the top of the list. Through facebook customers not only stay in contact with each other but also share their positive and negative experiences with each other, that's how are impacting on the value of the brand.

Second hypothesis (*H2*) was about to measure the gender difference on the variable of customer engagement. Results showed that there is no significant gender difference on the variable of customer engagement through Facebook, as the significant value is greater than 0.05. So we fail to reject *H2*, that *there is a gender difference on the variable of customer engagement on facebook*. Both males and females are using the Facebook and showed the same type of behavior for customer engagement. In the survey respondents 93 (44.1%) were males and 109 (55.9%) were females.

There are some limitations of the present study. Data was collected through convenient sampling process through online survey from Karachi; therefore, the generalizability of the finding is limited. Most of the respondents took part in the survey were students and majority of the respondents were under the age of 20-

29 (67%). Questionnaire was spread to many of the respondents; we destroyed some of the data because of the inappropriate information from the respondents. We use 211 respondents response for this study. Further investigations should include other cities of Pakistan with more number of respondents.

This research has implication for both the academics and practitioners, as customer engagement has importance for both. For academics, the better understanding of the concept for theory development and for the practioners better understanding of the concept for better strategy and customer relationship. The finding of this research is giving guidelines to marketers to shape and augment the communication with customers. The better understanding and knowledge of the customers who 'like' the brand on facebook will help the marketers to strengthen the brand by engaging them in brand related communication on social media. Through social media customers can interact, share and augment the relationships with friends, family and others as well.

Conclusion

To conclude, the results of the study showed that customer brand engagement through facebook has an impact on customer engagement, because the customer brand engagement through facebook is creating the brand awareness and it will ultimately turn into loyalty and repurchase intention. Through facebook customers are not only like the brands but they are also spreading his/her experiences and views about the liked brands and creating an impact on the overall success and failure of the brand. There is no gender difference on the variable of customer engagement through facebook. Both males and females are showing the same kind of behavior while engaging through online social media platform. This study can serve as a starting point for further research, which would further study the consequences of customer engagement and its effects on the performance of brands and organizations in Pakistan.

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Questionnaire

Customer Brand Engagement on online Social Media Platforms

Dear Participant

I am a marketing student at Institute of Business Management, Karachi. Following survey is the part of my research paper focusing on the brands in the context of social media. The questionnaire should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. This survey is anonymous and your response will be used for purpose of this research only.

Thank You in advance.

Kind Regards,

Muhammad Adnan

Screening Question
1. **Do you have a Facebook account?**
   o   Yes
   o   No

2. **Gender**
   o   Male
   o   Female

3. **Age**
   o   Less than 20 years
   o   20-29
   o   30-39
   o   40-49
   o   50-above

4. **Time spent of facebook**
   o   Less than 30 Minutes
   o   30 Mins-1 Hour
   o   1 Hour-2 Hour
   o   2 hour-3 hour
   o   More than 3 Hour

5. **What other social media you are using**
   o   Twitter
   o   Linkedin
   o   MySpace
   o   Google+
   o   Hi5
   o   Tagged
   o   Orkut
   o   Tumblr
   o   Youtube
   o   Any other (Please specify) _____

Customer Brand Relationship:

3. Which of the following brand(s) is your favorite (on facebook)?
- o Alkaram
- o GulAhmed
- o Sana Safinaz
- o Nishat Linen
- o Asim Jofa
- o Cambridge
- o Levi's
- o Bonanza
- o Stonage
- o Breakout
- o Other (Please specify) _____

4. The following questions concern your attitude towards [selected brand].

How much do you agree with the following statements?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				**Strongly Agree**

In general I have a strong interest in [selected brand]
o   o   o   o   o

[Selected brand] is very important to me
o   o   o   o   o

[Selected brand] matters a lot to me
o   o   o   o   o

I get bored when other people talk to me about [selected brand]
o   o   o   o   o

[Selected brand] is relevant to me
o   o   o   o   o

Overall I am satisfied with [selected brand]
o   o   o   o   o

[Selected brand] exceeds my expectations
o   o   o   o   o

The performance of [selected brand] is very close to the ideal brand in the product category
o   o   o   o   o

I am very loyal to [selected brand]
o   o   o   o

I am willing to make small sacrifices in order to keep using the products of [selected brand]
o   o   o   o

I would be willing to postpone my purchase if the products of [selected brand] were temporarily unavailable
o   o   o   o   o

I would stick with [selected brand] even if it would let me down once or twice
o   o   o   o   o

I am so happy with [selected brand] that I no longer feel the need to watch out for other alternatives
  ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

I am likely to be using [selected brand] one year from now
  ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

I trust [selected brand]
  ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

I rely on [selected brand]
  ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

[Selected brand] is an honest brand
  ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

[Selected brand] is safe to use
  ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

Consequences (Engagement)

How much do you agree with the following statements?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				**Strongly Agree**

I will buy [selected brand] the next time I buy clothing
  ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

I intend to keep purchasing [selected brand]
  ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

I say positive things about [selected brand] to other people
  ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

I often recommend [selected brand] to others
  ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

I encourage friends to buy [selected brand]
  ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

Thanks again for your participation.