How Does a Social Network Site Fan Page Influence Purchase Intention of Online Shoppers: A Qualitative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This research revisited how fan pages in the social network site created by online merchants affects the purchase intention of online shoppers using qualitative research methods. Through fine-tuning the research model developed by Jahn and Kunz (2012) which is grounded on the Uses and Gratifications Theory, the authors conducted a qualitative study through interviewing consumers who participated in fan pages. Based on their responses in the interviews, the authors reconfirmed that content-oriented needs and social interaction value of relationship-oriented needs had positive impacts on fan page usage intensity and fan page engagement, respectively. Plus, the authors discovered that content-oriented needs had a positive impact on fan page engagement. The theoretical contributions, managerial implications of this study are also discussed.

Keywords: Content-oriented Needs, Interviews, Qualitative Methods, Relationship-oriented Needs, Self-Oriented Needs, Social Media, Social Network Sites, Uses and Gratification Theory

INTRODUCTION

Social networking sites, SNSs, are becoming an important marketing media nowadays (Yan, 2011). It is commonly believed that the use of SNSs can enhance the two-way communication between users and firms, and facilitate communications through a bottom-up approach in an online community (Hart, 2010). These activities in SNS help a firm to promote its service and product and enhance its sales. In recent years, researchers predicted that more people would adopt SNS in the near future (Trusov et al., 2010), and more money would be invested to development new functions for SNSs (Kozinets et al., 2010).

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Recognizing the trend of the exponential growth of SNS users, firms have started to develop their marketing campaigns using SNSs. Many firms create their fan page in SNSs, which is a designated Web page in SNSs providing information related to the firms or their products concerned, with a view to develop their brand. These firms hoped that the information provided in their fan pages can generate an awareness and interests of their services, products and brands from their consumers, which will increase their purchase intention. In other words, firms are using their fan pages as an advertising tool and as a brand building channel for their products, which can help them to develop their positive Word-of-Mouth in the cyber world (Green, 2008). Thus, these fan pages in SNSs are acting as a cost effective marketing tool for firms to perform sustainable customer relationship management with their online consumers, which can boost up the sales volume through enhancing the purchase intention of consumers.

Even though more and more studies have been conducted by marketing and information systems researchers in recent years with a view to probe into the relationship between the use of SNSs as a media for online advertising and consumer behavior (Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Kozinets et al., 2010; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Yan, 2011), scant research has been conducted on investigating how the use of fan page in SNSs can affect the purchase intention of consumers through qualitative analysis. We are in the view that the use of qualitative analysis can provide more insights for researchers and practitioners in understanding and interpreting the social interaction within the fan pages (Johnson & Christensen, 2008), which eventually leads to the purchase intention. As a result, we conducted this qualitative study to address the issue. We developed our research model by refining the theoretical framework proposed by Jahn and Kunz (2012), which they used their framework to investigate how social interactions in fan pages affect purchase intention based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, 1959; Katz et al., 1973).

We believe that the result of this study have both theoretical contributions and managerial implications to SNS research. First, our result can fill the research gap in SNS research, and help marketing and information systems researchers to gain a better understanding on how the consumer interaction in fan pages affect purchase intention. In managerial perspectives, our result can help firms to better manage their fan pages, and increase the purchase intention of their consumers.

This article is developed as follows. First, we present our literature review in virtual communities and brand communities, online purchase, and the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which are the building blocks of our model. Then, we present our model, our research methodology and data collection, and our data analysis. Afterwards, we discuss our results and report the theoretical contributions and managerial implications, as well as the limitations of this study, and the future directions of this area of research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Review in Social Media Research

In recent years, we see the rapid development of the Web 2.0 technologies, which paves way for the development of various social media applications. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media is “a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content”. There are several types of applications classified as social media applications, which SNS is one of them (Constantinides & Fountain, 2007). Many consumers use these applications to communicate with firms and brands which they would like to make purchase decision of their products or services. Such communications co-create the value of the products and services concerned, and resulting in viral effects and Word-of-Mouth marketing in the cyber world (Kozinets et al., 2010; Libai et
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Walter O. Einstein and John H. Humphreys (2002). *Managing the Human Side of Information Technology: Challenges and Solutions* (pp. 1-34). [www.igi-global.com/chapter/changing-face-leadership/26027?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/changing-face-leadership/26027?camid=4v1a)