Chapter 16

Facebook Experience Is Different: An Empirical Study in Indian Context

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ABSTRACT

Though the concept of experience was propounded decades ago, the terms such as Customer Experience Management, Brand Experience etc. have started gaining currency only recently. Renewed focus on the concept is the result of positive impacts of brand experience as evidenced by researches. Emergence of Social Media has provided the organizations with supplementary platforms to enhance customer experiences. The experiences of customers with various social media platforms may rub on to their experiences with the brands being promoted through these. Accordingly, present research studies the experience of select social media platforms in Indian context. Result revealed that the experience of Facebook was significantly favorable in comparison to the rest three platforms; however, a scope of improvement is evident. Result is important for platform developers as it helps them to improve their platforms and for Marketing managers as it guides them to associate their brands with the more favourable platforms in order to reap concomitant benefits.

INTRODUCTION

Bifurcation between buying and consumption of products and services brought to the fore various mental activities associated with the act of consumption. Though, the need to focus on multisensory experiences related to consumption had become evident decades back (Alderson, 1957; Boyd & Levy, 1963), yet the subjective aspects of consumption were sacrificed on the altar of logical and bounded rationality till very late (Olshavsky & Granbois, 1979; Sheth, 1979; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Termed as “experiential view” by Holbrook & Hirschman (1982), these conscious and subjective aspects of consumption...
tion essentially explore the emotional responses of the consumers inherent in the act of consumption (Holbrook et al., 1982). Consumers attribute certain symbolic (Levy, 1959), syntactic (structure and style of message content), hedonic, psychotemporal, psychobiological meanings to the products they consume and these attributed subjective meanings facilitate researchers and marketers to explore the multisensory relationships in consumer behavior (Levy, 1959; Holbrook et al., 1982). Researches on customer’s brand experiences and the antecedent impact of positive experiences on brand attitude, brand loyalty, brand commitment, brand performance, brand satisfaction, brand trust and brand attachment has led the focus of marketers on managing and enhancing Customers’ Experience. All this has resulted in the incorporation of the terms like Experience Marketing, Experiential Marketing, Customer Experience Management, Experience Economy and Brand Experience in marketing glossary.

Dawn of era of digital economy is another factor, which has necessitated the study of brand experience (Chui, Manyika, Bughin, Dobbs, Sarrazin, Sands & Westergen, 2012). Digitization, by leveraging the power of Internet, has paved way for new business models, in which business communications, interactions and transactions between Consumers and marketers are carried over web (Kalakota & Robinson, 2001), facilitated by new media channels in the form of Social Media or Web 2.0 (Edelman, 2010). Absence of temporal and geographic boundaries in virtual experiences warrants for ongoing, real time analysis of customers’ expectations, experiences (Kalakota et al., 2001) and effective handling of web experience, as inept web experiences can severely influence online as well as offline reputation of the firm (Constantinides, 2004). Web 2.0 has led to the emergence of new influencers in consumer decision journey such as strong online advocacy and discussions in brand communities (Edelman, 2010).

Social media’s propagation and acceptance among masses across the globe is unprecedented (Stanley, 2009; Hughes, 2010; Nielsen, 2012; Vehr, 2012). Level of realism provided by an experience leads to more enduring attitudes towards the experience. Characteristics such as “telepresence” and “flow experience” have enabled Internet to exhibit a higher level of realism even in comparison to television. Researchers have indicated that enhanced interactivity and vividness of digital media leads to stronger perceptions of simulated experience (Schiffman, Kanuk & Kumar, 2010). This has prompted the organizations to use Social media platforms for variety of marketing purposes (Stelzner, 2012; Stelzner, 2013). Moreover, as per the Congruity theory of attitudes, changes in the evaluations of a source and a concept can be linked together by an associative assertion (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955). Hence, the experiences of customers with various social media platforms may rub on to their experiences with the products and services being promoted through these platforms.

Accordingly, present chapter is an attempt in this direction as to comprehend the customers’ experience in relation to four popular social media platforms viz. Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn and Twitter in the Indian context. This comprehension of brand experience of given social media platforms will help marketers to devise effective marketing strategies to enhance the experience of these platforms for customers and in turn will help them to derive more value from these platforms. These media channels though not in entire control of manufacturers and retailers (Edelman, 2010), but can be utilized by organizations as the supplementary platforms to influence and enhance customer experiences. The objectives, which study attempts to explore, are to assess Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn and Twitter’s experience, to assess Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn and Twitter’s sensory experience, to assess Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn and Twitter’s affective experience, to assess Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn and Twitter’s behavioral experience and to assess Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn and Twitter’s intellectual experience.