

Antecedents and Consequences of Online Brand Community Participation

Vibhas Amawate

Indian Institute of Management, Shillong, India

Abstract

Communities have been created by humans right from the time of the start of civilization on this earth. Initially, communities were created due to their commonality of origin, nonphysical characteristics (age, family situation, profession, etc.), habits, interests, values, and culture. The next phase of community development involved realigning human relationships based on satisfying functional and emotional needs. This phase considered the commercial aspect of engaging community members. Currently, most communities are formed and developed by combining the commonality of values, culture, and habits with the needs of the individual. The communities are now both commercial and non-commercial in nature. Brand communities are focused on creating a commonality of values, culture, and habits and need satisfaction, with the brand playing the role of a facilitator. The proliferation and mutation of brand communities are led by online platforms like social networking sites (SNSs). Facebook had 50 million users in a year and Twitter in nine months (Abraham and Zaman, 2014). Communities expanding via these networks cannot be ignored.

Online brand communities (OBCs), created on the internet, have seen phenomenal growth due to the rapid adoption of the internet as a medium for sharing information and views. OBCs are defined as "consumer groups of varying sizes that meet and interact for the sake of achieving personal as well as shared goals of their members" (Dholakia et al., 2004). The internet and social media technologies (i.e., Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Pinterest) have evolved based on users' needs and engaged more masses. Due to the easy accessibility of the internet, customers find it easy to create and share information about brands and products on SNSs and thus create value (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008; Muniz & Schau, 2011; Yadav, 2015). OBCs have attracted the attention of both customers and companies. Customers have changed their position from passive communication receivers to co-creators of value (Sashi, 2012; Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Lee et al., 2011a, 2011b). Thus, for the sustainability of OBCs, the participation of their members is necessary (Nambisan & Baron, 2007). Companies have

15th International Conference on Modern Research in Management, Economics and Accounting



17 - 19 March 2023

Berlin, Germany

been trying to understand, define, and build customer engagement to facilitate value co-creation and thus build a relationship with customers (Sashi, 2012; Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Lee et al., 2011a, 2011b).

Participation by community members is associated with outcomes like high brand loyalty (Hur et al., 2011). Increasing levels of consumers' online brand engagement (CBE) using online platforms is expected to attain superior organisational performance. The organisational outcomes include things like sales growth, cost reductions, increased revenue and profitability, brand referrals, brand salience, enhanced consumer contributions to collaborative product development processes, and enhanced co-creative experiences (Bijmolt et al., 2010; Nambisan & Baron, 2007; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Sawhney et al., 2005). Consequently, CBE has been considered a key new metric for measuring brand performance (Bowden, 2009; Kumar et al., 2010). Despite its significance, the field of CBE is still an emerging research field that requires scholarly attention (Kang et al., 2014). This field is still in its infancy, and much needs to be explored yet (Kamboj & Rahman, 2017). Most marketing research addressing "engagement" studies has been predominantly exploratory (i.e., Kamboj and Rahman, 2017), thus generating a lack of empirical research in this area to date (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Bolton, 2011; Verhoef et al., 2010).

It has also been acknowledged in the literature that focused empirical research on the antecedents and consequences of customer engagement in OBC is lacking, and that more emphasis is needed to conduct more work in this field (Ramadani & Grguri-Rashiti, 2017; Tsai & Men, 2012; Bruhn et al., 2014; Casaló et al., 2007, 2008, 2010a, 2010b; Gebauer et al., 2013; Madupu In an analysis of articles published during 2001–2016 in five reputed journals, namely, the Journal of Business Research, the Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Computers in Human Behaviour, Internet Research, and the International Journal of Research in Marketing, it was found that out of the 113 articles selected, the majority of studies on CBE using OBC had been conducted in the USA, China, Taiwan, Korea, and Germany, respectively (Kamboj & Rahman, 2017).

Keywords: Online Brand Community, Drivers, Brand Oriented Outcomes