THE STUDY ON ANTECEDENTS OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Dr B.Anjan Kumar

Assistant Professor
Department of Business Management,
Keshav Memorial Institute of Management

Abstract : It is understood in the recent years, the advent of social media has transformed the landscape of marketing by offering new business opportunities and engaging the customers in different ways. Customer engagement using social media marketing has become an important contemporary marketing strategy. This research claims to identify the antecedents that contribute to marketers that engage the customers using social media platforms, exploring the factors that influence consumer interactions and brand relationships. Social media facilitate and form a bridge between the firms and customers and create a one-to-one interactive bonding. This influenced the researcher to find the antecedents that drive customer engagement in social media platforms. This study enables to understand to explore the influence of social media platform and content that the users connect upon and engage to re-visit. Customer engagement will also establish considerable value for organizations that has a direct impact on firms' performance. Contributing a thorough study on antecedents of social media marketing that has an influence on customer engagement found to be relevant. So the researcher attempts to explore various aspects related to the contemporary issues of social media and customer engagement in the current study.

IndexTerms - **Antecedents,** *Customer engagement, Social media, Social Media Marketing*

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media is considered as the modern marketing tool for promoting the products and services by constituting the social media channles that build relationship between the consumers and firms brands(Hsu, 2012). In the age of digital connections, it's crucial for businesses to explore the factors that drive customer interactions on social media platforms. As social media platforms continue to evolve, understanding the factors influencing consumer interactions becomes paramount for businesses seeking to cultivate enduring relationships in the digital realm. This research aims to uncover the key elements that contribute to customer engagement, such as the quality of content, the authenticity of the brand, features of the platforms used, and the trust customers place in businesses. As per the study conducted internationally, social media engagement for firms is very high. As per the study on customer engagement by Forbes in 2020, 49% of the world's population uses social media representing(Forbes2020). With the evolution of high end technologies, there is an increased access to digital and social media platforms to customers as a means of directly expressing opinions and interaction with the companies social media channels(Paruthi and Kaur 2017)

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to identify the key antecedents that drive customer engagement in social media marketing. There is a huge impact of the quality of the content that attracts and engages the customers with the firms who assess the brands authenticity. Further the researcher explores to find the different antecedents of social media platform features that enable customer engagement. A

contextual approach is made in this study on the different ways businesses try to engage with customers on social media and make a long term one-to-one relationship and build business.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer engagement is a relatively new concept in the marketing literature. It is defined as the level of interaction and involvement that customers have with a brand. Customer engagement can be measured in a variety of ways, such as the number of likes, comments, and shares that a customer makes on social media, the amount of time that a customer spends on a company's website, or the number of times that a customer purchases from a company.

3.1 Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing includes the use of social media platforms to link with the target customers, build brand awareness, and promote products or services. It involves various strategies such as content creation, influencer marketing, and community engagement. In Business-2-Consumer(B2C) channels social media marketing is very common that engages the broadcaster sending messages to a specific target segment and collaborate in virtual communities(Weber,2009 & Hanna et al., 2011).

3.2 Customer Engagement

Van Doorn et al. (2010) defined customer engagement as the behavioral manifestation of customers towards a brand or a firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers, including word-of-mouth activities, recommendations, helping other customers, blogging and writing reviews. Customer engagement refers to the depth of the relationship between a brand and its audience. In the context of social media, engagement includes likes, comments, shares, and other interactive behaviors that indicate a customer's involvement with the brand. The key element to customer engagement is knowledge exchange, so information and communication technologies provide immense opportunities to organizations to exchange knowledge and engage with customers (Vivek, 2009).

4. KEY ANTECEDENTS THAT DRIVE CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ARE AS FOLLOWS

Social Media Marketing (SMM) has emerged as a dynamic force shaping customer engagement in the digital age. The influence of SMM on customer engagement is multifaceted, encompassing various strategies and tactics that leverage the interactive nature of social media platforms.

4.1 Content Quality as a Catalyst

High-quality content serves as the backbone of effective SMM. The content disseminated through social media channels is not merely a promotional tool; it is a medium for storytelling, education, and entertainment. Compelling visuals, informative articles, and engaging multimedia contribute to capturing the audience's attention and sparking meaningful interactions. Therefore, multimedia content has the potential to be engaging for users because of its direct impact on various senses (Coyle and Thorson, 2001).

Quality content initiates a dialogue, prompting users to like, comment, and share. A novel content evokes greater amount of unique message cues and external stimuli (Tokunaga, 2013). This interactive engagement serves as a catalyst for building a community around a brand. Users are not passive recipients but active participants in a conversation, contributing to the co-creation of brand narratives.

4.2 Building Brand Authenticity

One of the most significant impacts of SMM on customer engagement lies in its ability to foster brand authenticity. Social media platforms provide a transparent space where brands can showcase their values, culture, and behind-the-scenes glimpses. Authenticity resonates with modern consumers who seek genuine connections with the brands they support. Customer

engagement is supposed to be definitely related to a number of relationship factors such as satisfaction, trust, affective commitment and brand loyalty (Brodie et al., 2011). The measurement of the impact of engagement on the perceptions and attitudes towards the brand will help managers to better design and implement their social media strategies.

Through SMM, brands can share user-generated content, highlight testimonials, and communicate openly about challenges and successes. This transparency builds trust, a crucial component of sustained customer engagement. When customers perceive a brand as authentic, they are more likely to actively engage with its content, participate in discussions, and become loyal advocates.

4.3 Community Building and User-generated Content (UGC)

SMM facilitates the creation of communities around brands. Social media platforms enable users to connect not only with the brand but also with each other, forming a virtual community of like-minded individuals. Brands can cultivate this sense of community by encouraging discussions, organizing events, and actively participating in conversations.

An understanding of psychological aspects of customer engagement supports practitioners' assessment of customer segments on which to focus when designing strategies and content for social media that provide the opportunity to become more customer centric with user-generated content(Hoffman and Novak, 2011; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Schamari and Schaefers, 2015). User-generated content (UGC) is a powerful tool in community building. When customers contribute content—such as reviews, testimonials, or creative expressions—they become active participants in the brand narrative. This not only strengthens the bond between the brand and its customers but also extends the reach as users share their experiences with their networks.

4.4 Measuring Engagement Metrics

Some researchers suggest that social media engagement is a new metric for gauging direct or correlative effects on firm performance (Ashley and Tuten 2015; Brodie et al. 2011). The impact of SMM on customer engagement can be quantified through various metrics. Likes, comments, shares, click-through rates, and conversion rates provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of social media campaigns. Analyzing these metrics allows brands to refine their strategies, tailor content to audience preferences, and continuously optimize for better engagement.

In essence, SMM transforms customer engagement from a one-way communication channel to a dynamic, interactive experience. The influence of SMM lies not only in disseminating information but also in cultivating relationships, fostering authenticity, and building communities that actively engage with and contribute to the brand story. As social media platforms continue to evolve, the influence of SMM on customer engagement remains a central aspect of contemporary marketing strategies.

4.5 Customer Trust

The brand's ability to consistently deliver on promises and maintain a cohesive image. Social networking sites offer possibilities for this participation that develop trust, goodwill and commitment to form relations between individuals and brands, regardless of whether those same individuals acquire them (Vivek et al., 2012). The dependability of the brand in meeting customer expectations and providing quality products or services and brand's ability to address customer concerns promptly and effectively will build customer trust

These antecedents collectively contribute to the overall engagement levels on social media platforms. The research aims to explore the nuanced relationships between these factors and customer engagement, providing insights that can guide businesses in refining their social media marketing strategies for optimal audience interaction and loyalty.

5. DIFFERENT WAYS TO ENGAGE CUSTOMERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Businesses can employ various strategies to engage with customers on social media, fostering meaningful interactions and building lasting relationships. Here are several effective ways.

5.1 Quality Content: The challenge for companies is to attract peoples attention to brand posts and persuade them to view the content. Create and share high-quality, relevant content that resonates with your target audience((Hollebeek, 2013). This includes blog posts, articles, images, videos, and infographics.

Storytelling: Share compelling stories about your brand, its values, and behind-the-scenes glimpses. Storytelling helps humanize the brand and connect with customers on a personal level.

5.2 Community Building: Establish online communities or groups related to your industry or products. This provides a space for customers to connect, share experiences, and engage with the brand. Customer engagement, as intrinsic motivation, implies that consumers are driven by desires to interact and cooperate with "community members"(Algesheimer et al. 2005) or participate in "an online brand community"(Baldus et al. 2015). They facilitate and Encourage discussions within the community. Pose questions, seek feedback, and actively participate in conversations to foster a sense of belonging among members.

5.3 Customer Service and Support: Use social media as a customer service channel. Respond promptly to inquiries, comments, and concerns. Providing timely and helpful responses enhances customer satisfaction and trust. It is realized by the marketers that the understanding of how the customers engage and participate with social media platforms is important for developing communication strategies and establish emotional bonds and build satisfaction (Gambetti and Graffigna, 2010; Hollebeek, 2011a; Jahn and Kunz, 2012; Keller, 2001; Porter et al., 2011)

5.4 Engagement Campaigns: Run contests, quizzes, or giveaways to encourage customer participation. This not only generates excitement but also increases brand visibility and user engagement. Something companies might explore is to have an expert in social media, with enough authority to influence senior management in the company. This position may be strategic in developing competence, but also commitment through an articulate strategy on social media and a communication campaign.

5.5 Influencer Collaborations: Collaborate with influencers in your industry or niche to reach a broader audience. Influencers can help promote products, share experiences, and generate authentic content that resonates with their followers. This is another very important finding, because it highlights the relevance of customers as social influencers for supplier companies, and the importance of organizational factors as means to translate customer engagement into social media usage by the sales organization(Guesalaga, R. (2016).

5.6 Social Media Advertising: Brand experience can be evoked by indirect communication activities (e.g. advertising) outside the focal interactive context (Brakus et al., 2009), Utilize targeted advertising on social media platforms to reach specific demographics. Tailor your ads to the interests and preferences of your target audience for better engagement. Advertise exclusive promotions and discounts on social media to incentivize customer engagement and drive sales. Many firms shifted promotional resources from traditional media and began using digital platforms to directly interact with customers (Paruthi and Kaur 2017)

6. CONCLUSION

This research contributes to the understanding of customer engagement in social media marketing by identifying key antecedents. The analysis highlights the significance of content quality, brand authenticity, social media platform features, and customer trust in driving meaningful interactions. Businesses can leverage these insights to tailor their social media strategies and create more engaging and authentic brand experiences. In conclusion, understanding the antecedents of customer engagement through social media marketing is crucial for businesses seeking to establish and maintain strong connections with their audience. By focusing

on content quality, brand authenticity, platform features, and customer trust, companies can develop effective strategies that resonate with their target audience, leading to increased engagement and long-term brand loyalty.

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