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RESEARCH ARTICLE

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON BRAND EQUITY

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ABSTRACT

Due to the unprecedented growth of internet, a booming trend in the marketing arena (Social Media Marketing) has been revisited in this research paper. Social media marketing has attracted the attention of the industry as well as researchers due to its enormous reach and acceptance throughout the length and breadth of globe. The attempt of this research paper shall be to analyze the impact of social media marketing on brand equity.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a powerful networking force connecting people from every corner of the world. It reinforces the process of socialization by being instant, cheap, and easy to use having enormous reach (Miller, Fabian, & Lin, 2009). Global social media users have passed 2 billion mark, which roughly amounts to about 29% of the world's population (Kemp, 2015). While traditional media allows for vertical flow of content from powerful conglomerates to isolated consumers, social media has allowed information to flow horizontally between consumers (Rosen, 2006). The main principle of social media is the democratization of content when the same users create and share information. User generated content is open to comments and criticism, easily accessible to other users, that differentiates it from traditional marketing media. Social media is usage of web based and mobile technologies to create and share information and knowledge without any geographical, social, political or demographical boundaries through public interaction in a participatory and collaborative way. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) Define social media as "a group of internet based applications that build on the

ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user generated content." Social media employ mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co- create, discuss, and modify user-generated content (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). (Garnyte & Perez, 2009) argue that social media is a world-wide-web tool which enables users to become active creators of the content, to communicate with each other actively, create and exchange various information. Social media comprise both the conduits and the content disseminated through interactions between individuals and organizations (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011).

Social media encompasses a wide range of online, word-of-mouth forums including blogs, company sponsored discussion boards and chat rooms, consumer-to-consumer e-mail, consumer product or service ratings websites and forums, Internet discussion boards and forums, moblogs (sites containing digital audio, images, movies, or photographs), and social networking websites, to name a few (Mangold & Fauld, 2009). There are literally hundreds of different social media platforms (e.g., social networking, text messaging, shared photos, podcasts, streaming videos, wikis, blogs and discussion groups). Social media include, social networks,

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blogs and micro blogs, content sharing websites (images and videos), wikis, forums, social bookmarking etc. (Baruah, 2012). There exists a rich and diverse ecology of social media sites, which vary in terms of their scope and functionality. The average social media user spends 2 hours and 25 minutes per day using social media. Facebook continues to dominate the global social media landscape with about 1.366 billion active users followed by youtube (Mander, 2015). Facebook is the most preferred social media platform, out of all the people who use internet 71% socialize through Facebook (Pew Research, 2014). Emergence of social media platforms (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) have fundamentally altered the marketing landscape. It has provided ample space for business organizations to maintain a successful, long lasting and value added relationship with their customers. It also allows consumers to create and exchange user generated content (UGC), enabling them to connect with the firm as well as other consumers. Social media marketing makes use of social media applications as an extension to fulfill the traditional marketing. Marketing activities via online applications that allow the production of information and are being collaborated among users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). While most marketing plans include the now mandatory elements of YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, few of today's marketers operate within a systematic approach to understanding and managing their company's social media strategy.

As an integrated marketing medium, social media marketing activities effectively enhance value equity by providing novel value to customers that traditional marketing media do not usually provide. The brand's social media platforms offers venues for customers to engage insincere and friendly communications with the brand and other users, so the brand's intended actions on the social communication scene positively affect relationship equity and brand equity swell (Kim & Ko, 2012). Social media marketing and brand equity are positively and significantly correlated, social media marketing helps organizations in building positive customer relationships, improving brand image. The building blocks of Social media have positive effect on brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality (Tresna & Wijaya, 2015). Consumers, identify social media as a more trustworthy source of Information compared to the traditional marketing communication tools this allows organizations to integrate social media marketing into their marketing mix not only to communicate with customer but to get the feedback also (Karamian, Nadoushan, & Nadoushan, 2015). There is a statistically significant impact of the dimensions of social media marketing on the brand equity, therefore companies need to focus more on social media marketing and increase its share in marketing mix activities that will in return help companies to generate huge revenues from enhanced brand equity (Abu-Rumman & Alhadid, 2014). (Bruhn, Schoenmueller, & Schafer, 2012) Presented that social media communications strongly influence brand image, firm-created social media communication has an important impact on functional brand image, while user-generated social media communication exerts a major influence on hedonic brand image. (Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012) Presented that advantageous campaigns on social media are the most significant drivers of brand loyalty followed by relevancy of

the content, popularity of the content among friends, and appearing on different social media platforms and providing applications. Based on the results, they suggested that companies that want to run effective social media campaigns should take into consideration the benefits, values, advantages they offer to the consumers in their campaigns, what makes the consumers more likely to become loyal to their brands. Further, companies must work on creating more engaging, participative, interesting applications, games, contents on social media to draw their customers' interest.

Literature review

Social media has helped to transform business organizations from transactional relationship to a social relationship (Bashar, Ahmad, & Wasiq, 2012). It is the new paradigm in marketing that has provided ample space for business organizations to maintain a successful, long lasting and value added relationship with their customers. It allows an enterprise to connect with both existing and potential customers, engage with them and reinforce a sense of community around the business organization's products and services (Mangold & Faulgd, 2009). The high level of use and interaction of social media greatly influences the business environment which is thus exposed to a paradigm shift, where hierarchies fall apart and the communication and collaboration create wider and wider networks for the employees and all the partners of the organizations (Georgescu & Popescul, 2015). (Mckenna & Bargh, 1999) while studying social psychology among internet users concluded that there is an abundance of interaction going on out there in cyberspace, and it is having surprisingly strong effects on people's "real life". (Matthews, 2010) Commented that Social media is a revolutionary communications tool that has quickly changed the ways in which public relations is practiced, becoming an integral part of corporate communications for many companies and offering public relations practitioners' new options for every aspect of the corporate communications process, rather than traditional monologue communication social media has forced corporate communications to shift to a dialogue wherein both the corporate and the stakeholders have the power in a message. (Hoffman & Marek, 2010) Reviewed that effective social media strategies can put the brand to work for the customers by satisfying their needs to create, consume, connect and control in social web. Further, in a well-designed social media campaign, consumers are likely to spread viral videos, create additional brand related content, tweet about the brand and post their experiences on Facebook. (Miller & Lammas, 2010) While discussing social media and its implications for viral marketing argued that Web 2.0 social media is a potentially powerful medium for finding key consumer influencers, engaging them, and generating brand advocates. Further, by tapping into or creating their own online social networks, social media marketers can influence a brand community and potentially influence consumer behavior.(Constantinides, 2014) Proposed that marketers should realize that the future marketing paradigm will be based on openness, cooperation, co-creation and an honest commitment to listen to and help rather than control the customer. Further, Social Media is an agent of change and a source of opportunities for marketing strategists who will learn to operate in a new business

environment that places the customer again on the top of corporate priorities. (Balakrishnan, Dahnil, & Yi, 2014) Indicated that the online marketing communications, specifically, EWOM, online communities and online advertisement are effective in promoting brand loyalty and product purchase intention through company website and social media platforms. Further, these finding indicated that social media marketing medium has become an important marketing tool to reach emerging younger generation consumers and enables marketers to reach customers faster and more efficiently. Social media marketing complements brand equity building when it is effectively used in an integrated marketing portfolio of an organization (Babac, 2011). Beneficiary campaigns on social media are the most significant drivers of brand loyalty followed by brand appearing on different social media platforms, impact of word-of-mouth in marketing is non-negligible, especially in online environments (Menezes & Devi, 2016). The success of social media marketing is its ability to engage online users, and developing a strong relationship. With the use of electronic word of mouth via the social media context, companies can create and enhance brand equity of products and services and subsequently lead to attract customers (Severi, Ling, & Nasermodeli, 2014).

Brand equity has become an important topic in the business world, and its appropriate measures can address a number of marketing and brand managers' concerns. Brand equity refers to the incremental utility or value added to a product from its brand name. It is often believed to contribute to a company's long-term profitability. A number of definitions of brand equity have been proposed. (Shocker & Weitz, 1988) Refers to it as the "incremental cash flow resulting from the product with brand name versus that which would result without brand name." (Farquhar, 1989) Interprets brand equity as the value added to a product by virtue of its brand name. In a general sense, brand equity is defined in terms of the marketing effects uniquely attributable to the brand. That is, brand equity relates to the fact that different outcomes result from the marketing of a product or service because of its brand element, as compared to outcomes if that same product or service did not have that brand identification. Building brand equity is considered an important part of brand building (Keller, 1993). Both (Aaker, 1991) and (Keller, 1993) have defined brand equity from customers perspective. There have been numerous researches on brand equity wherein researchers have used the term Customer-based brand equity to refer to the term brand equity (Farquhar, 1989); (Sinha & Pappu, 1998); (Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, An Examination of Selected Marketing Mix Elements and Brand Equity, 2000); (Yoo & Donthu, 2001); (Washburn & Plank, 2002); (Netemeyer, et al., 2004). For our research we have also focused on customer-based perspective i.e. measurement of cognitive and behavioral brand equity at the individual consumer level through a consumer survey (Yoo & Donthu, 2001) because, it enables managers to consider specifically how their marketing programs improve the value of their brand (Keller, 1993). Customer-based brand equity has been defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand (Kamakura & Russell, 1991). A brand will have higher customer-based brand equity as brand awareness increases to a higher level, and as

consumers hold stronger, and more favorable and unique brand associations (Rajh, 2002).

(Shen & Bissell, 2013) Prove that companies can improve brand awareness and brand image through enhancing customer engagement on social networking sites, resulting in brand loyalty reinforcement. While being in social media can generate brand awareness, different social media platforms establish different brand associations, creating different effects on customer based brand equity (Pham & Gammoh, 2015).

Linking social media and brand equity: A proposed model

The literature related to social media marketing and brand equity does not provides consensus on relationship between these two variables, although the linkage has not been examined or evaluated. Brand equity has a clear and measured impact on customer value and value of firm (Aaker, 1991) (Aaker, 1992), the cause and effect linkage between social media marketing and brand equity is being proposed herein. Figure 1 depicts our proposed model which is the extension of the Aaker's model (Aaker, 1991). While discussing his model Aaker has proposed that brand equity provides value to both customer as well as the firm. Further the value to customer also leads to the value of firm. The dimensions of brand equity have been taken by the same model. Only one of the dimension of brand equity, i.e. brand trust has been taken from (Atilgan, Akinci, Aksoy, & Kaynak, 2009). In our proposed model we have added the antecedents to the dimensions of brand equity, i.e. Social media marketing. We suggest that brand equity can be created with the help of these Social media marketing activities.

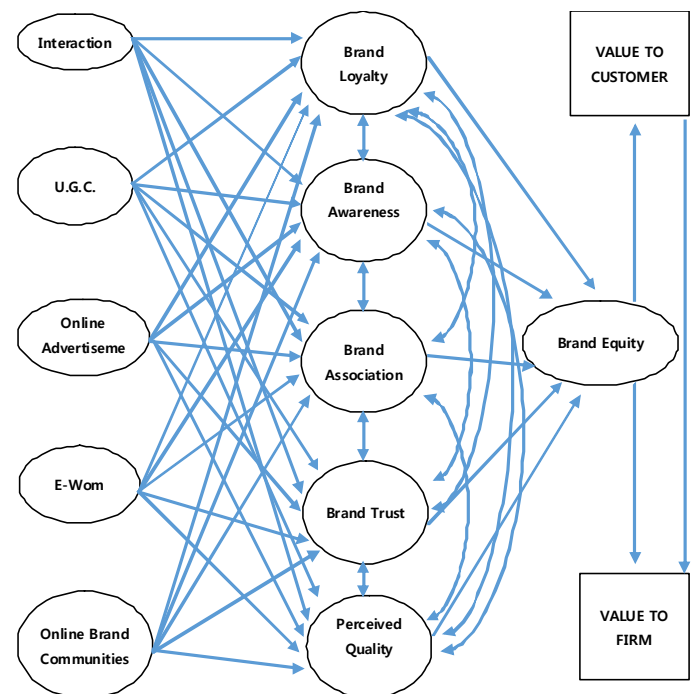


Figure 1. Proposed Model

Social media marketing has altogether changed the way customers connect with each other and with business organizations. While it is up to the firms to employ social

media in their marketing efforts, communication about brands continues to take place on social media, with or without permission of the firms in question (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). Scanning through the literature of social media marketing there are different dimension to measure social media marketing, for the purpose of this research we have selected the following dimensions of social media marketing as depicted in Figure 2.

networks have taken a more primary role in the minds of the marketers. The effectiveness of the social media marketing through eWOM is such that a message on social media has 20 times higher reach than marketing events and 30 times that of media appearances (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009). Consumers are more likely to be influenced by eWOM than by traditional advertising media (Goldsmith & Horowitz, 2006). E-wom can positively enhance brand awareness and brand

Table 1. Variables of Social Media Marketing used in different researches

E-WOM (word of mouth)	(Gruen, Osmonbekov, & Czaplowski, 2006); (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009); (Kim & Ko, 2012); (Balakrishnan, Dahnil, & Yi, 2014).
User Generated Content (U.G.C.)	(Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014);(Christodoulides, Jevons, & Bonhomme, 2012).
Online Advertisement	(Soares & Pinho, 2014); (Balakrishnan, Dahnil, & Yi, 2014).
Interaction	(Davis F. D., 1986); (Soares, Pinho, & Nobre, 2012); (Kim & Ko, 2012); (Abu-Rumman & Alhadid, 2014).
Online Brand Communities	(Jang, Olfman, Ko, Koh, & Kim, 2008);(Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013);(Abu-Rumman & Alhadid, 2014); (Balakrishnan, Dahnil, & Yi, 2014).

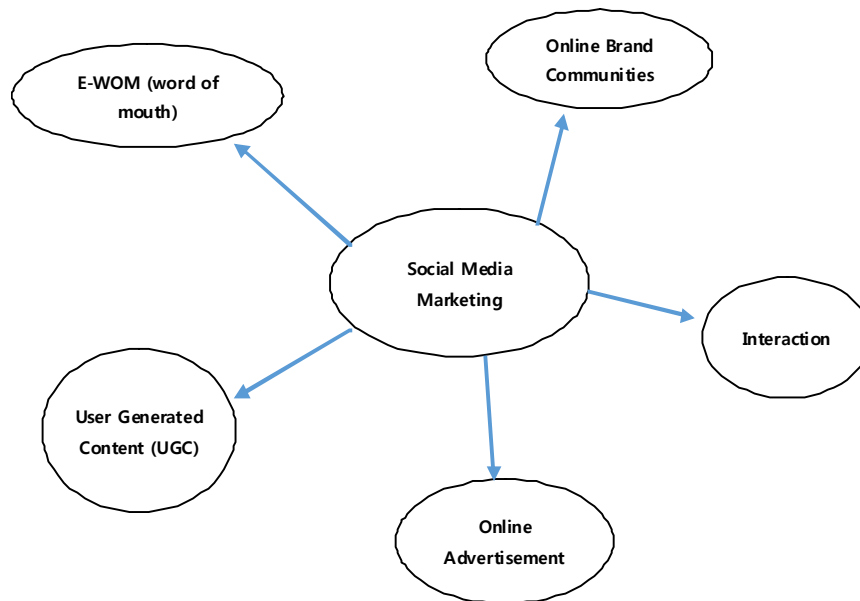


Fig. 2 Source: Author's own compilation

E-WOM

Word-of-mouth communication strategies are effective because they combine the benefits of significantly lower costs and fast delivery through technology, such as the Internet. It has become increasingly important for companies to utilize electronic word of mouth (eWOM) in their marketing campaigns for desired product sales. E-WOM is defined as exchange of information, ideas, perceptions etc through different online Medias. The WOM has greater reported impact on brand choice than advertising or personal search (East, Hammond, Lomaxa, & Robinson, 2005). In recent years, online social networks and social media platforms have further helped the spread of eWOM due to the combination of unprecedented scale, the possibilities to control and monitor eWOM operation, and unique properties of online interaction (Dellarocas, 2003). (Kumar, Bhaskaran, Mirchandani, & Shah, 2013) Reported that with over 80% of global consumers across geo-demographic barriers actively influencing preferences and purchase decisions through online social networks and word of mouth (WOM), social media such as blogs, forums, and user

association (Ha, 2004), (Page & Lepkowska-White, 2002), (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, & Chowdury, 2009). (Srinivasan, Anderson, & Ponnayolu, 2002) Established the positive relationship between brand loyalty and word of mouth. According to (Urban, 2005), (Glenn, 2007) electronic word of mouth could influence the consumer towards the brand image and perception.

UGC

User generated content (UGC) is defined as media content (text, photos, videos etc.) that is created by the users to give a way out for their opinions and imaginations. UGC is published content that is "created outside of professional routines and practices (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). UGC is created, shared, and consumed by users and therefore is usually perceived as trustworthy and credible, it has the ability to influence consumers' attitudes and purchase behavior (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). UGC helps users to educate each other about products, services, issues, events, etc. UGC has transformed one-to-many traditional marketing into many-to-many

marketing. Consumers trust information created by other consumers more than the information created by marketers or advertisements (Cheong & Morrison, 2008) (MacKinnon, 2012). (Daugherty, Eastin, & Bright, 2008) Investigated consumer consumption and creation of UGC and the attitudinal factors that contribute to these actions and presented that the ability to develop brand relationships via social experiences through “user generated content” (UGC), and the means to deliver persuasive messages to consumers who experience or create UGC, represents the future of marketing. Further, the UGC market will expand greatly during the next decade as more users migrate toward consuming and creating UGC, as the data confirms the established relationship between attitude and behavior and indicate attitude serves as a mediating factor between the use and creation of UGC.

Online advertising

Social media have transformed the Internet from a platform for information, to a platform for influence. (Steinman & Hawkins, 2010) Stated, the viral feature of social media makes it fantastic for business environment. Advertisers have carried out their promotions through social media to take high attention and participation by consumers to maximize their brand exposure. (Hanna, Rohm, & Critternden, 2011) Reported that Social media platforms have begun to revolutionize the state of marketing, advertising, and promotions, further the unique aspects of social media and its immense popularity have revolutionized marketing practices such as advertising and promotion. Social media advertising is becoming a new advertising trend replacing traditional forms of advertising since more and more consumers tend to avoid traditional forms of advertising (Wright, Khanfar, Harrington, & Kizer, 2010).

The importance of social media is such that business organizations can’t overlook it in their marketing mix. (Kristen, 2009) Stated that social media is very important for marketing environment, he found that 60 percent of planners averaging at least 16 online leads per year use social media.

Interaction

In terms of communication structure, social media has led to a dramatic shift from mass communication to interactive digital communication. (Tiago & Verissimo, 2014) Pointed out that as marketing communications become increasingly integrated with the digital space, marketers can use social media to create digital linkages with customers. Thanks to the underlying interactivity of social media, it is a tremendous resource for enhancing corporate communication and stakeholder engagement (Vasquez & Velez, 2011). Social networking sites have changed the way people interact with other members and how customers make purchase decisions. Social networking sites enable greater interaction with the online community through broadcasting up-to-date, consumer relevant information (Fischer & Reuber, 2011).

Online Brand communities

An online community can be best described as a collection of private individuals clustered online with similar others to anchor themselves, support each other, and exchange information (Bressler & Grantham Sr., 2000). (Muniz Jr. & O’Guinn, 2001)define a brand community as a “specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a

Table 2. Variables of brand equity used in different researches

Brand Loyalty	(Aaker, 1991); (Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000); (Washburn & Plank, 2002); (Rajasekar & Nalina, 2008);(Buil, Chernatony, & Martinez, 2008)(Atilgan, Akinci, Aksoy, & Kaynak, 2009).
Brand Awareness	(Aaker, 1991); (Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000); (Washburn & Plank, 2002); (Pappu, Quester, & Cooksey, 2005); (Buil, Chernatony, & Martinez, 2008); (Davis, Golicic, & Marquard, 2009).
Brand Association	(Aaker, 1991); (Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000); (Washburn & Plank, 2002); (Pappu, Quester, & Cooksey, 2005); (Buil, Chernatony, & Martinez, 2008); (Atilgan, Akinci, Aksoy, & Kaynak, 2009).
Brand Trust	(Lassar, Mittal, & Sharma, 1995); (Erdem & Swait, 1998); (Lau & Lee, 1999); (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001); (Delgado-Ballester, 2004); (Atilgan, Akinci, Aksoy, & Kaynak, 2009).
Perceived Quality	(Aaker, 1991); (Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000); (Washburn & Plank, 2002); (Netemeyer, et al., 2004); (Buil, Chernatony, & Martinez, 2008); (Atilgan, Akinci, Aksoy, & Kaynak, 2009).

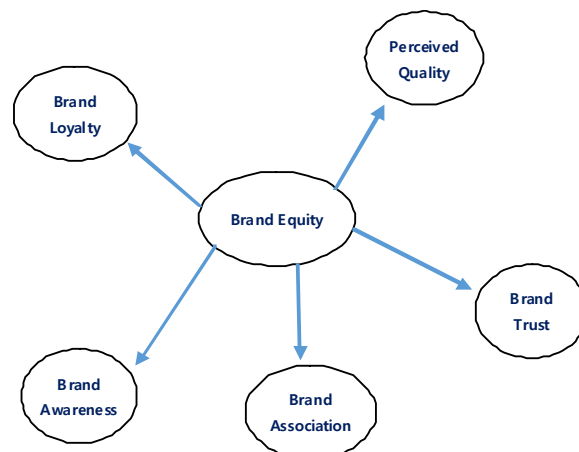


Fig. 3 Source: (Atilgan, Akinci, Aksoy, & Kaynak, 2009)

brand, With the advancement of technology, the previously geographically bounded concept of brand communities is now transcending geography. (Abrahamsen & Hartmann, 2006) Define online brand community as "a brand community, which uses computer systems as the central tool for mediating interaction between members online communities allow businesses to engage with customers through a combination of community interactions and expert content. (Hagel III & Armstrong, 1997) Stated that, "those businesses that capitalize on organizing virtual communities will be richly rewarded with both peerless customer loyalty and impressive economic returns. Previous researches have also verified the impact of brand communities towards brand loyalty (Amine & Sitz, 2004); (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005); (Kim, Choi, Qualls, & Han, 2008).

Building brand equity is considered as an important part of brand building (Keller, 1998). The broad meaning attached to the term "brand equity" is similar to the definition provided by (Farquhar, 1989) as "the value endowed by the brand to the product". In context to the literature there are different dimensions of brand equity and for the purpose of our research we have selected few important of these as the following as shown in Figure 3.

Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty describe the characteristic of consumers, who have a strong commitment to a brand; because they view a brand as being more satisfactory than the alternatives ones and this evaluation is rein forced through repeated use. The concept of Brand loyalty was first introduced by (Copeland, 1923). Afterwards different meaning and definitions were assigned to it. (Aaker, 1996) Defines brand loyalty as encompassing the comparison of the brand with other brands offering similar benefits. (Wood, 2000) States that brand loyalty is one of the most important component of brand equity which explains that the brand value for a company is determined by the degree of brand loyalty, as this implies a guarantee of future cash flows. Moreover, it is noteworthy to mention that brand loyalty is both one of the dimensions of brand equity and is affected by brand equity (Aaker, 1991). A deeply held commitment to rebuy a preferred product or service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same-brand set purchasing despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior (Oliver, 1997)

Brand Awareness

It is defined as ability of consumer to identify a brand in different situations/circumstances. Brand awareness comprises of brand recognition and brand recall. When consumers are exposed to a brand, the result is brand awareness. Therefore, the first step in building brand equity is building brand awareness. Brand awareness "relates to the likelihood that a brand name will come to mind and the ease with which it does so" (Keller, 1993). It is based on both brand recognition and recall (Aaker, 1991) (Keller, 1993). The studies regarding brand awareness are mostly focused on its effect on brand choice. For example, (Hoyer & Brown, 1990) found that participants with. No brand awareness tended to select the high

quality brand on the final choice significantly more often than those with brand awareness. (Holden, 1993) Probed the import anceofbrand awareness in brand choice, and his qualitative research indicates that brand awareness appears to be operating as acue to brand retrieval.

Brand Association

Any contact or experience a consumer has with a brand can create, change, or reinforce certain favorable or unfavorable associations, in order for associations to have a positive effect on brand equity, they must be unique, strong, and favorable (Keller, 2003). Brand associations are defined as "anything linked in memory to a brand" (Aaker, 1991), such as product at tributes (Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000), brand name (Zinkhan & Prenshaw, 1994), and relative price (Aaker, 1996). (Keller, 1993) Discussed this construct under brand image and classifies these associations into three major categories: attributes, benefits, and attitudes. According to (Keller, 1993), "customer-based brand equity occurs when the consumer is aware of the brand and holds some favorable, strong, and unique brand associations in memory".

Brand Trust

Brand trust is conceptualized as, the confident expectations of the brand's reliability and intensions in situations entailing risk to the consumer. Trust is a cornerstone in terms of building a long-term business relationship and partnership. (Rotter, 1967) Defined the trust construct as a generalized expectancy held by an individual that the word of another can be relied upon. (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001) Defined brand trust as "the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function". In line with this definition, (Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Alemán, & Yagüe-Guillén, 2003) developed a brand trust scale. They found that brand trust is significantly correlated with measures of satisfaction and brand loyalty and further emphasized that it is the essence of the value that a strong brand provides for customers. Brand trust may also be evaluated as a consistency and credibility clue by customers. (Erdem, Swait, & Valenzuela, 2006) Tested the effect of brand credibility on consumers' brand choice. They stated that brand credibility "requires that consumers perceive the brand as having (1) the ability (expertise) and (2) willingness (trust worthiness) to deliver continuously what has been promised". In their signaling perspective, credibility is the primary determinant of customer-based brand equity, and it is the key element in brand equity formation and management (Erdem & Swait, 1998) (Erdem, Swait, & Valenzuela, 2006).

These two components of brand credibility are discussed under the dimensions of brand trust such as brand reliability competence or technical ability, brand intentions, and brand predictability (Delgado-Ballester, 2004) (Lau & Lee, 1999). Brand trust has been a component in different brand frameworks e.g.,(Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001); (Erdem & Swait, 1998); (Erdem, Swait, & Valenzuela, 2006).Such trust is important because it shows that the relationship between a consumer and a brand could go beyond satisfaction (Belaid & Behi, 2011).

Perceived Quality

Perceived quality is related to a consumer's judgment of a product or brand's overall superiority or excellence (Zeithaml, 1988). High perceived quality allows for consumers to be convinced about buying the brand; for differentiation of the brand from competition; and for the firm to charge a premium price and then extend the brand (Aaker, 1991). In the customer – based brand equity frameworks (Aaker, 1996); (Keller, 1993); (Dyson, Farr, & Hollis, 1996); (Farquhar, 1989); perceived quality is considered a primary dimension. The main reason that perceived quality is a primary dimension in brand equity models is that it has a strategic effect on brand equity, by reducing the perceived risk (Aaker, 1991); (Keller, 1993); (Erdem, Zhao, & Valenzuela, 2004);. It also creates a basis for brand differentiation and extension (Aaker, 1991) and offers a price premium advantage for firms (Keller, 1993); (Netemeyer, et al., 2004). Thus, there is a general consensus that perceived quality is among the fundamental constructs of brand equity. One of the most popular trend in the online marketing at present is the growth of social media and its acceptance by the consumers. Contrary to the assumption by some people in the industry that social media is a fad, this element (social media) has been rapidly integrated into marketing activities throughout the world. Social media marketing has likewise attracted researchers to explore and understand the building blocks of this interactive system as well as its application. Our research revolves around this concept and we try to establish the cause effect linkage of social media marketing on brand equity that finally leads to customer value and value to firm. The propose model will have implications for the marketers. Social media marketing is an essential antecedent for brand equity in today's age of Web 2.0 and co-creation. The synergetic effect of firm generated content (FGC) and user generated content (UGC) goes a long way in developing trust, brand attitude and customer involvement. Social media marketing has introduced a new chapter in value based marketing, strategically establishing social media activities around a product or service is a well know method of building brand equity. It is advisable that businesses do not ignore this opportunity and jump in to spread their consumer base right in time. This proposed model will lead to the value creation for business organizations and customers.

Conclusion

Past decade has seen unprecedented changes in global business environment particularly facilitated by the revolution in information and communication technologies. Developments in IT changed the strategy followed by firms to cope up with the novel changes in the business environment. This changed the way and sources of customer touch points and the way of customer attraction and retention. In this changed scenario those lagging behind will face high customer defection and ultimately exit from the market, unless they develop new customer channels and manage customer relations in virtual world also with an intention of value creation for business as well as customer. Keeping this in view this paper made an attempt to study the impact of social media marketing on brand equity and develop a framework for its descriptive understanding. The framework presented various components linking social media marketing and brand equity for conceptual

understanding and reference model for future research in this moderately available area of research. The model establishes the relationships based on literature survey and conceptual understanding and proposes a positive relationship between the use of social media marketing and value of firm through brand equity and customer value.

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