ROLE OF CONSUMER-BRAND IDENTIFICATION IN BRAND ENGAGEMENT BEHAVIORS: A STUDY ON ONLINE BRAND COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT: Radical dynamism in web innovation and the advancement of web based life majorly affects the manner in which firms collaborate and assemble associations with their clients on the web. Interpersonal interaction destinations, for example, Facebook, enable firms to communicate legitimately with their clients through online brand networks (OBCs). This examination draws from the social effect, social character and social trade hypothesis to investigate social demonstrance as an outside and purchaser brand distinguishing proof as an interior power that impacts brand commitment on OBCs. The investigation investigates the effect of the social significance of extravagance marks explicitly and the degree to which purchasers by and by relate to the brand on explicit brand commitment practices; operationalised as interest and advancement dependent on the conduct part of brand commitment. An online poll was controlled to the fanatics of specific style architect dress brand pages on Facebook. The exact discoveries of the investigation reasoned that customers distinguish more with extravagance marks that are socially overwhelming so as to improve their social picture among others. In this way extravagance brand advertisers must concentrate on building up a solid brand character that matches the personality of objective clients.

Keywords: Social Demonstrance, Brand Engagement Behavior, Online Brand Communities, Consumer Brand Identification

1.INTRODUCTION:

Within the past few years, the phenomenon of social media on the Internet has drastically changed the way firms interact and build relationships with their customers. Social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook have allowed firms to interact directly with their customers through online brand communities (OBCs). These Facebook brand pages allow firms to showcase and promote their products, invite valuable feedback and evaluations from users and establish an interactive bond with their customers. Through these OBCs consumers are not only the recipients of target marketing, rather social media has allowed consumers to act as key players in the process of brand development and value creation by exerting influence on the

image of a brand through their product reviews, word of mouth (WOM) and experiences shared on such online communities (**Wang and Hajli, 2014).**

Building on the theoretical foundations of the social identity theory, social impact theory (SIT) and the social exchange theory **Simon et al. (2016)** proposed certain external and internal factors influencing users' engagement online. The study focused on the brand as being the focal attraction, driving consumer engagement behaviors through the social strength and noticeability of the brand and based on the extent to which consumers identified with the brand. They concluded from the findings that the social strength of the brand influenced engagement behaviors indirectly by impacting their personal drive.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Consumer Brand Engagement through Online Brand Communities (OBC)

2.1.1. Definitions and conceptualizations : Numerous specialists have endeavored to investigate the idea of customer commitment and characterized the develop in both the disconnected and online setting. In view of earlier investigate it has been reasoned that shopper commitment is a multi-dimensional idea and that there is irregularity and absence of consistency in the present writing with respect to the definition and dimensionality of this develop. Among the numerous specialists endeavoring to characterize buyer commitment, Sashi (2012. p. 267) investigated it by looking at specialist perspectives on the develop and characterized it as per the showcasing idea, as an idea that "centers around clients and their needs, means to give better esteem relative than contenders by creating, spreading, and reacting to knowledge in regards to client needs with regards to advertise direction, and tries to manufacture trust and responsibility involved with clients as recommended by relationship promoting."

2.1.2. Theories covering buyer brand commitment: Four of the ten central premises supporting the S-D rationale have been received by Brodie et al. (2011. p. 260) to characterize purchaser commitment as "a mental express that happens by temperance of intelligent, co-innovative client encounters with a central operator/object (e.g., a brand) in central administration connections. It happens under a particular arrangement of setting ward conditions producing contrasting CE levels; and exists as a dynamic, iterative procedure inside administration connections that co-make esteem. CE assumes a focal job in a nomological system overseeing administration connections in which other social ideas (e.g., contribution, faithfulness) are forerunners or potentially results in iterative CE forms. It is a multidimensional idea subject to a unique situation as well as partner explicit articulation of important psychological, passionate or potentially conduct measurements."

2.1.3. Research streams: The presentation of web 2.0 devices and advances has changed the manner in which merchants and clients communicate and construct connections. Advertisers are always creating techniques to draw in customers on brand networks by empowering underwriting by clients online as preferences, remarks, sharing of posts and item audits, as individuals who

effectively partake in exercises on Facebook brand pages will in general create more noteworthy duty towards the brand bringing about upgraded brand devotion (Zheng et al., 2015).

2.2. Social Demonstrance (SD)

2.2.1. Definitions and conceptualizations: According to the Social Impact Theory (SIT), Harton and Bullock (2007) characterized social effect as "the measure of social impact people (or social existences) have on each other and is a multiplicative capacity of solidarity (components that make an individual progressively influential or better ready to oppose influence, for example, mastery, physical engaging quality, or character), instantaneousness, and number. Promptness is characterized as closeness in social space. Number is the quantity of individuals doing the impacting or being affected, and is additionally a power work."

2.2.2. Theories covering SD: The core theory underlying the concepts of SD is the SIT which uses mathematical equations to determine the level of social impact that a social force may exert on an individual. Social impact is the result of social forces measured in terms of strength, number and closeness of the source of impact. SIT has been connected to the concept of SD in a study by **Simon et al. (2016)** in order to measure the social impact a brand has on consumer behavior, where SD symbolizes the strength of the social force i.e. the brand.

2.2.3. Research streams The rarity and high price of a consumer-object add to the SD of the brand; the level of difficulty faced in obtaining an object and its high price both signal high value and serve an important role in impressing others and drawing attention which is central to the value of luxury consumption **(Yi-Cheon et al., 2014).** Luxury brands trigger the desire to consume goods that affirm status and contribute to the self-concept or identity and therefore appeal more to those who wish to enhance their social image and who are conscious of the views and perceptions of others. SD has further been explored in a study by **Asamoah et al. (2011)** as a motive that drives consumer decision-making. Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, SD has been studied as a motive aimed at attaining belongingness to a social group and enhancing one's self-esteem. Findings of this study prove that SD is a strong motive driving consumer purchase behavior, regardless of culture or country.

2.3. Consumer Brand Identification (CBI)

2.3.1. Definitions and conceptualization: Drawing on Social Impact Theory (SIT), consumer-brand identification has been proposed as a personal force that influences consumer brand engagement. When consumers perceive their personal identity to overlap with the brand's identity they are more likely to build strong associations with brand pages (**Simon et al., 2016).** CBI has been defined by **Lam et al. (2010)** as a "customer's psychological state of perceiving, feeling, and valuing his or her belongingness with a brand." CBI is built upon the customer's association with the brand identity which helps creates band equity and as a result of strong self-identification with a brand, consumers are less likely to switch to a new brand thus creating loyalty and trust towards the brand.

2.3.2. Theories covering CBI: The SIT offers a psychological view of an individual's sense of who they are based on their belongingness to social groups. Being a member of a group offers a sense of pride and self-esteem which contributes to the social identity of an individual. Three mental processes have been proposed through which individuals evaluate whether one belongs to the in-group or out-group; first, social categorization to understand the members of a group, second, social identification which involves adopting the identity of the group one has categorized as belonging to and third, social comparison which involves comparing the group with others to evaluate the group.

2.3.3. Research streams: Research suggests that when consumers identify strongly with the brand or the company, this tends to reinforce trust and confidence in the brand, whereas, strong identification with the brand community reinforces the affective and emotional dimensions of the brand. Both forms of consumer identification positively influence consumer's attitude toward brand loyalty and encourages the spreading of positive WOM and promotion of products through referrals **(Marzocchi et al., 2013). Wirtz et al. (2013)** proposed a conceptual framework to better understand OBCs and consumer engagement and identify four key dimensions that define an OBC (brand orientation; core focus the brand or wider shared interests, internetuse; offline vs. online and funding). They further identify the drivers of engagement with OBCs, focusing on brand-related drivers and social drivers. Strong identification with the brand offers emotional and functional benefits and in effect encourages users to participate and associate themselves with the respective brand community. 2.4. Model Conceptualization and Hypotheses Development Brands play a significant role in the customer decision making process as the brand helps consumers communicate themselves and differentiate themselves from others. Moreover, the brand name offers greater guarantee and trust regarding the quality and performance of the product, therefore consumers enjoy the additional benefit of lower risks associated with purchase decisions **(Fischer et al., 2010)**. Hence, the brand in itself is a strong driver of consumer behaviors.

2.4. Hypotheses:

H1: The SD of a luxury brand will have a positive impact on participation of brand engagement behaviors.

H2: SD of a luxury brand will have a positive impact on consumer brand identification.

H3: Consumer-brand identification will have a positive impact on "participation" brand engagement behaviors for luxury brands.

H4: The SD of a luxury brand will have a positive impact on "promotion" brand engagement behaviors.

H5: Consumer-brand identification will have a positive impact on 'promotion' brand engagement behaviors for luxury brands.

2.5. Objectives:

1. The SD and CBI of a luxury brand will have a positive impact on participation of brand engagement behaviors.

2. SD of a luxury brand will have a positive impact on CBI.

3. The SD and CBI of a luxury brand will have a positive impact on Promotion of brand engagement behaviors.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study can be classified as correlation and regression study that tests seven hypotheses investigating the impact of SD of luxury brands on specific brand engagement behaviors i.e. participation and promotion and the indirect impact of this variable through consumer-brand identification. The unit of analysis under study is individuals who engage with luxury brand Facebook pages from whom data has been collected once over a period of 2 months.

3.1. Measurement and Operationalization of Variables

A questionnaire was used to measure all variables involved in the study by adopting items from previous research work. All questions were adopted using the Likert scale measuring responses on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Consumer brand engagement was disintegrated into two dimensions i.e. participation and promotion and was measured through these dimensions, which focuses on the behavioral aspect of the construct.

3.2. Population and Sample: The population consisted of Facebook users in India who had engaged with a luxury brand Facebook page. This study focuses on the luxury clothing industry and has defined luxury clothing as high-end custom-made designer wear. Seven top designers were selected from among the top ranking according to Facebook Fashion designer-India and their Facebook page members were targeted to form the sample of this study. Thus this study adopted the purposive sampling technique, more specifically judgment sampling where data was collected from specific groups of individuals who could provide the desired information and conformed to the set criteria.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure: The participants were contacted via a message on Facebook and provided with a personalized link to the online questionnaire. Two questions were posed to screen the participants to ascertain that they were Facebook members who had "Liked" at least one luxury brand page on Facebook from among the seven top fashion designers of India. Those answering none were screened out. Each participant was asked to insert the name of one luxury retail clothing brand he/ she had "Liked" on Facebook. After eliciting the target brand in this manner, a survey was presented to the respondent with items designed to measure the variables.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Normality Checks

The Shapiro-Wilk's test (P > 0.05) (Shapiro and Wilk, 1965; Razali and Wah, 2011) and a visual inspection of the histograms, normal Q-Q plots and box plots showed that the variables were approximately normally distributed (with no outliers), with a skewness of.078 (SE = 0.134) and kurtosis of −1.062 (SE = 0.267) for SD, a skewness of − .32 (SE = 0.134) and kurtosis of −1.859 (SE = 0.267) for CBI, a skewness of 0.324 (SE = 0.134) and kurtosis of −1.216 (SE = 0.267) for Participation and a skewness of 0.288 (SE = 0.134) and kurtosis of −1.10 (SE = 0.267) for Promotion (Cramer, 1998; Cramer and Howitt, 2004; Doane and Seward, 2011).

4.2. Measures Assessment (Reliability and Validity)

4.2.1. Reliability

Reliability was assessed through measuring Cronbach's alpha. Values can be seen in Table 1. The Cronbach's alpha of the items for each construct is above.700, a recommended cut-off value for satisfactory reliability (Nunnally, 1978). Therefore instrument reliability was found to be satisfactory.

Table-1		
variable	No.of items	Cronbach's alpha
Social demonstration	4	0.84
CB identification	7	0.89
participation	7	0.95
promotion	5	0.94

4.2.2. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

Individual CFA's were conducted for four latent constructs. The results of CFA were analyzed using the reference ranges as guided by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) like for $\chi2/df \leq 3$, and for normed fit index (NFI), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), and comparative fit index (CFI) ≥ 0.90 respectively and for root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) the reference range of < 0.08 was considered as cut off value. Four items for SD were assessed for reliability and validity. All standardized factor loadings of the latent constructs were significant and larger than 0.50 which is an indication of item reliability (Hair et al., 2012). For SD, $\chi2/df = 3.40$, GFI = 0.99, NFI = 0.99, CFI = 0.99 and RMSEA = 0.08. Seven items for CBI were subjected to CFA; one out of seven items was deleted based on lower factor loadings, and the final fit indices for CBI were $\chi2/df = 1.91$, GFI = 0.99, NFI = 0.99, CFI = 0.9, RMSEA = 0.05. Seven items for CB participation were subjected to CFA, and the final fit indices for CB participation were $\chi2/df = 2.30$, GFI = 0.95, NFI = 0.93, CFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.06, for CB promotion five items were subjected to CFA and the fit indices for CB promotion were $\chi2/df = 0.79$, GFI = 0.99, NFI = 0.99, CFI = 1.0, RMSEA = 0.00 (Table 1).

The values of CR and AVEs can be seen in Table 2.

Table-2:CFA Results	
Construct items	Factor loadings
Social demonstrance α=0.84 χ2/df=2.30, GFI=0.99, NFI=0.99, CFI=0.99, RMSEA=0.08	
SD1	0.83
SD2	0.83
SD3	0.84
SD4	0.58
Consumer brand identification α=0.90 χ2/df=1.91, GFI=0.99, NFI=0.99, CFI=0.9, RMSEA=0.05	
CBI1	Deleted
CBI2	0.85
CBI3	0.62
CBI4	0.76
CBI5	0.91
CBI6	0.86
CBI7	0.84
Participation α=0.94 χ2/df=2.30, GFI=0.95, NFI=0.93, CFI=0.94, RMSEA=0.06	
CBPAR1	

CBPAR2	
CBPAR3	
CBPAR4	
CBPAR5	
CBPAR6	
CBPAR7	
Promotion α=0.94 χ2/df=0.79, GFI=0.99, NFI=0.99, CFI=1.0, RMSEA=0.00	
CBPRO1	0.86
CBPRO2	0.83
CBPRO3	0.93
CBPRO4	0.83
CBPRO5	0.81

N.B: α: Cronbach's alpha, GFI: Goodness of fit index, NFI: Normed fit index, CFI: Comparative fit index, RMSEA: Root mean square error of approximation, CFA: Confirmatory factor analysis.

4.3. Descriptive of Demographics

Of a total sample of 332, the majority of the respondents were within the age bracket of 26-35 years (67.8%), 22.6% within 19-25 years age bracket, 6.3% less than 18 years and 3.3% within the age bracket of 36-55 years. Majority of the respondents were females (71.1%) and 28.9% were male. Furthermore, more than 50% (54.8%) of the respondents were located in Mumbai, 31.9% in Hyderabad and 13.3% were located in other non-specified locations. Frequency details of age, gender and location can be seen in Table 3.

Table-3: Descriptive of demographics (N=332)			
Demographic	Frequency	%age	Cumulative %age
Age			
<18	21	6.3	6.3
19-25	75	22.6	28.9
26-35	225	67.8	96.7
36-55	11	3.3	100
>56	-	-	-
Total	332	100	
Gender			
Male	96	28.9	28.9
Female	236	71.1	100
Total	332	100	-
Location			
Mumbai	182	54.8	54.8
Delhi	-	-	54.8
Hyderabad	106	31.9	86.7
Other	44	13.3	100
Total	332	100	-

4.4. Descriptive of Study Variables

The descriptive statistics, including the minimum value, the maximum value, the mean value, the standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis and correlation for each construct are listed in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive of study variables (N=332)											
	constructs	min	max	mean	SD	Skewness	kurtosis	1	2	3	4
1	Social	4.00	20.00	11.68	4.58	0.07	-1.06	1	0.79**	0.78**	0.67**

	demostrance									
2	CBI	7.00	32.00	20.98	7.32	-0.32	-0.85	-	1	0.81**	0.70**
3	Participation	7.00	35.00	18.24	9.03	0.32	-1.21	-	-	1	0.89**
4	Promotion	5.00	25.00	13.22	6.54	0.28	-1.10	-	-	-	1

**P<0.01

4.5. Hypothesis Testing

4.5.1. The SD and CBI of a luxury brand will have a positive impact on participation of brand engagement behaviors.

First, for external social forces, the impact of SD on consumer brand participation behaviour is significant and positive ($\beta = 0.39$, $P < 0.001$), in support of **H1**. Moreover, for internal forces, CBI value of the brand also positively influences consumer brand participation behaviour significantly ($\beta = 0.49$, $P < 0.001$), thus supporting **H3**. R^2 value shows that 71% of the variance in participation behaviors is explained by SD and consumer brand engagement (Table 5).

Table 5: Regression analysis of consumer brand participation w.r.t social demonstrance and consumer brand identification (N=332)

variables	B	S.E	β	T	R^2	F	Durbin Watson	VIF
constant	-3.72	0.81		-4.55	0.71	409.96**	2.04	2.66
Social demonstrance	0.77	0.09	0.39	8.17**				
CB identification	0.61	0.05	0.49	10.37**				

**P<0.001

4.5.2. SD of a luxury brand will have a positive impact on CBI: Further, SD of brand has a significant positive impact on consumerbrand identification ($\beta = 0.79$, $P < 0.001$), thus supporting **H2**. R^2 value shows that 62% of the variance in CBI is explained by SD (Table 6).

Table 6: Regression analysis of consumer brand identification w.r.t social demonstrance (N=332)

variables	B	S.E	β	T	R^2	F	Durbin Watson	VIF
constant	6.2	0.67	-	9.24	0.62	547.78**	1.15	1.00
Social demonstrance	1.2	0.05	0.79	23.4**				

**P<0.001

4.5.2. The SD and CBI of a luxury brand will have a positive impact on Promotion of brand engagement behaviors.

for external social forces, the impact of SD on consumer brand promotion behaviour is significant and positive ($\beta = 0.32$, $P < 0.001$), in support of **H4**. Moreover, for internal forces, CBI value of the brand also positively influences consumer brand promotion behaviour significantly ($\beta = 0.45$, $P < 0.001$), thus supporting **H5**. R^2 value shows that 53% of the variance in promotion behaviors is explained by SD and consumer brand engagement (Table 7).

Table 7: Regression analysis of consumer brand promotion w.r.t social demonstrance and consumer brand identification (N=332)

variables	B	S.E	β	T	R^2	F	Durbin Watson	VIF
constant	-0.64	0.75		-0.85	0.53	192.16**	2.11	2.66
Social demonstrance	0.45	0.08	0.32	5.23**				
CB identification	0.40	0.05	0.45	7.44**				

**P<0.001

5. FINDINGS:

The results of the study provide interesting conclusions regarding the impact of external and internal factors on specific brand engagement behaviors for luxury brands on Facebook. The findings suggest that the SD of luxury brands does in fact have a direct positive impact on both the participation (β = 0.39, P < 0.01) and promotion (β = 0.32, P < 0.01) engagement behavior of users online. Previously SD proved to only have an indirect impact on general engagement through consumer brand engagement. This suggests that luxury brand purchasers do indeed consider how socially important a brand is and engage more with brands that are socially more prominent and noticeable. Moreover, consumer brand engagement appears to predominantly influence consumer brand engagement for luxury brands. The findings suggest a stronger positive impact on both participation (β = 0.49, P < 0.01) and promotion (β = 0.45, P < 0.01) as compared to SD. This supports prior findings that suggest that when consumers identify with the brand image they incorporate those brands into their self-concept by engaging with them online in order to endorse their belongingness to the brand community. Furthermore, SD for luxury brands also has a significantly strong positive impact on CBI (β = 0.79, P < 0.01). Also a positive impact on participation (β = 0.39, P < 0.01) and promotion (β = 0.32, P < 0.01) engagement behaviors through the mediating effect of CBI which suggests that consumers seek to identify more with socially significant brands as they enhance their self-image and therefore engage with OBCs for luxury brands.

6. CONCLUSION:

Overall, this study concludes that both SD and consumer brand engagement have a significant impact on both types of engagement behaviors. The results of this study have implications that help online brand marketers to encourage the meaningful engagement of consumers in a brand community on Facebook. With regard to external social forces, marketers need to emphasize the social significance and essence of the brand. This can be done by creating a strong brand personality that highlights the brand's values and differentiates it from other similar brands. This will enhance the brands notice ability and will provide opportunities that highlight the brand's unique selling proposition. Regarding internal personal forces, marketers must highlight the core values of the brand in order to clearly present the identity and image of the brand to consumers and must encourage opportunities that allow consumers to develop a personal relationship with the brand. This will help facilitate personal identification with the brand. Further, marketers must explore the identity and personality of its target market and develop a socially strong brand image and personality that matches the identity of its target market. This will help enhance CBI and encourage greater engagement with the brand through OBCs.

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