

# Customer Brand Engagement on Social Media Platforms in the Hospitality Industry

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## Abstract

*A great interest in the concept of customer engagement has emerged along with the rise of online social media during the past few years. However, due to a lack of scholarly interest and empirical support, the nature of customer engagement has remained rather vague and its presupposed capability to enhance customer relationships is still uncertain. The aim of this study is to bridge this gap by proposing a conceptual model of customer brand engagement in the context of online social media platforms and conducting an empirical analysis. Drawing on the overview of the academic literature and the results of a quantitative online consumer study, the paper delivers a thorough investigation of the concept and offers empirical evidence of its impact on the ultimate business performance. The most important findings of this study suggest that both customer brand relationships related factors and online social media platform related factors with special reference to Facebook Fan Page can influence the level of customer engagement, which in turn will influence the level of behavioral loyalty and the spread of word-of-mouth communication. Thus, this paper is an important contribution to academic marketing literature in the field of customer engagement, which still remains mostly conceptual or qualitative, and provides useful managerial insights for marketing practitioners.*

**Keywords:** Customer Engagement, Social Media, Brand Relationships, Behavioral Loyalty

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

“Engage or die” is the new marketing catchphrase, which emerged as a result of the rise of social media in the past few years [1]. The emergence of new media provides businesses with an opportunity to start a two-way digital conversation with the audiences and makes it almost effortless for an individual customer to talk back and also talk to each other [2]. The new media channels such as YouTube, Wikipedia, Facebook, Twitter or My Space gave a voice to the customers and made it possible for them to create and easily share their own web content. In other words, each individual has now the opportunity to become a media producer, an author, a reviewer, or engage in many other kinds of behaviors that can be consumed by others on the Internet. Thus, instead of generally being the ones who used to talk about brands the customers have now become the ones mostly marketing brands through the use of social media.

The businesses gradually came to realization that they have to change their way of looking at the customer, and the concept of engagement appeared to be the key to success. The rationale behind this assertion is the prevailing conception of customer engagement as a way to create deeper and more lasting customer brand relationships [3].

Research showed, that social media has emerged as a valuable tool widely employed by businesses and even 54% of executives of consumer goods companies participating in a recently conducted survey said that social media was central to their effort to engage consumers in 2011 [4].

The concept of engagement on social media platforms has also received criticism and is sometimes even referred to as an air of the early-dot-com hype, given that its effectiveness and consequences to the brand are still largely uncertain [5]. The social media buzz along with the dilemma of the newly emerged concept of customer engagement among the practitioners has also started attracting the interest of marketing scholars. Hence, making use of the new media opportunities requires a deeper knowledge of how customers engage with the different types of media and what it ultimately means for the brand. Any business owner will know that effectively engaging with customers is a vital factor when it comes to business success. Without customers, the businesses would have no purpose. Hence, it is so important to value customers. Proper communication and engagement is a must for any business, both large and small. Finding ways to communicate with customers on a personal level was very difficult in years gone by. However, technological advancements have made this far easier over recent years, enabling businesses to build a rapport with customers.

## 2. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

This paper proposes a value based view to analyze the motivation used in social media platforms to find out customer’s brand relationship with reference to Facebook ‘fan page’. The purpose of the study is to define and understand the potential outcomes of customer’s engagement on social media platforms and conducting an empirical analysis. It emphasizes to bridge the gap by proposing a conceptual model of customer’s brand engagement in the context of online social media platform.

### 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the research study are:

- To study the concept of Customer Engagement
- To find the drivers that engages the customer with brands on online social media platforms with reference to Facebook Fan Page
- To analyse the outcomes of such customer engagement

### 4. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Literature survey has been carried through secondary data collected through high impact scholar journals, websites and catalogues. Primary data have been collected related to demographic profile and social media from the sample size of 57 respondents through structured questionnaire.

The questionnaire was designed to achieve the aims of the research i.e. about customer engagement, social media, customer brand relationships, behavioral loyalty and word-of-mouth marketing. A simple random sampling technique was adopted to get the required information. The study is confined to the students pursuing their graduation and post-graduation from different colleges and also other professionals in Mathikere area, Bangalore.

The questionnaire was constructed in simple language and designed carefully based on the literature review and personal interviews were conducted through social media networks like Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter. The questions were constructed on demographic profile and other variable questions with 5 point Likert scale

Table 1 indicates that males are highly influenced on social media platforms like Facebook fan page and browse for long-time. This cross tabulation shows males are more influenced and engaged in social media platforms around 58.7% of males responses compared to females responses which is 14.3%.

ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Using SPSS tools Cronbachs Alpha test, Chi Square test, ANOVA test, the analysis has been carried out for checking the relationship between customer engagement and social media. Based on the data analysis a suitable suggestions and recommendations have been provided for competitive advantage and market sustainability.

### 5. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The analysis and findings of the primary data collected from the questionnaire are mentioned below:

**Table 1. Social media platform influence**

Gender		Social Media Platform Influence		Total
		Yes	No	
Male	Count	24	18	42
	% Within GENDER	57.1%	42.9%	100.0%
	% Influenced Within Social Media Platform	85.7%	62.1%	73.7%
	% of Total Male response	42.1%	31.6%	73.7%
Female	Count	4	11	15
	% Within GENDER	26.7%	73.3%	100.0%
	% Influenced Within Social Media platform	14.3%	37.9%	26.3%
	% of Total Female Response	7.0%	19.3%	26.3%

**Table 2. Correlation of influencing factors on customer brand engagement**

Enjoy Browsing	Pearson Correlation	1	.302*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.022
	N	57	57
Share Posts	Pearson Correlation	.302*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.022	
	N	57	57

### Hypothesis

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant importance of influencing factors on customers brand engagement

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant importance of influencing factors on customers brand engagement

Enjoy browsing and share posts have position rang on correlation i.e. 0.302 and have significant levels of 0.22 hence we can accept the alternative hypothesis & reject the null hypothesis.

### 6. CONCLUSION

According to this research, there is evidence that Facebook fan pages create a brand community for those who like the page. There is strong evidence that the amount of time an individual interacts with a Facebook fan page affects brand loyalty or the likelihood that an individual will purchase the product or service promoted by a fan page. The study's findings show strong support for the relationship between interaction with fan pages and affiliation with the brand. Further there is strong support for the likelihood of purchasing a brand just because the individual likes the brand on Facebook. Therefore, Facebook fan pages are the most effective communications tool for brands to effectively

reach their consumers. While a fan page can be used as an extension of communications techniques, future research on this topic, the survey should be distributed to a more diverse and random population of Facebook users.

In the future it would also be beneficial to conduct focus groups or one-to-one in-depth interviews to gain a deeper and more qualitative understanding for an individual's motivation to like and interact with a brand's Facebook Fan Page.

### 7. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study is carried out in only one area of Mathikeri division due to time constraint. Study can be extended to wider area.

The study would have been more robust if more customer brand relationship and customer relationship antecedents were considered.

Detailed interviews with the local community were not possible. That would have also pointed out more issues and area of concerns.

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