



Social Capital in Social Media and Its Effect on Brand Attachment and Purchase Intention

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Characteristics of social media interaction have been transformed from actions that are silent, isolated and invisible to noisy, public, and unmanageable (Patterson, 2012). The impact of interaction of both between the brand and consumer, and among consumers, have grown tremendously in social media as it encourages consumer engagement not only for personal connection but also for information search and share of opinions (e.g., product reviews) (Chu and Kim, 2011). As a result, social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) has become the main platform of consumer socialization as well as marketing communications.

In brand's social media communities, such as Facebook pages, users (consumers) build social network, and make purchase based on the "recommendation from friends (Chu & Kim, 2011). While a society consists of like-minded network of people governed by their own norms and values (Chu & Kim, 2011), social media communities/pages also present characteristics that qualify as a society, rather than a mere information source. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate if the company's social community (i.e. Facebook page), and the network of users act toward the betterment of the brand with their own set of norms and values which has positive impact on brand attachment purchase intention toward the brand.

Social capital, Brand Attachment and Purchase Intention

Social capital has been defined as the mutual benefit features or the linkage of group membership in the group (Merlo et al., 2006 & Jones and Taylor, 2012). Researchers consider social capital as an important measurement for the function of societies and information sharing in different types of groups and communities (Huvila et al., 2010) with main premise that explains the economic outcomes' value from the social network (Jones and Taylor, 2012). Social capital theory theoretically explains the value of relationship between a retail company and a customer as "mutual benefit features," and emphasizes the relationship, network and information flows by highlighting the importance of social interaction and various inputs from diverse resources (Merlo et al., 2006 & Jones and Taylor, 2012). Therefore, this study hypothesizes a positive relationship between established social capital within the Facebook brand page and consumers' connection with the brand.

Park et al. (2010) defined the brand attachment as the strength of the connection between the brand and the self, and explained that the connection is the "rich and accessible network" with involvement of thought and feeling about the brand and the relationship of the brand with self. Based on social capital theory, this study investigates if the established social capital within a brand's Facebook page yield positive relational (i.e. brand attachment) and financial outcome (i.e. purchase intention). First, this study investigates the development and formulation of social capital within the brand's Facebook page by testing the relationship between various social media behaviors and social capital. Second, the relationship among social capital, brand attachment and purchase intention is examined.

Analysis An online survey was conducted from a sample of young consumers at a large Southern university. Out of 230 data collected, 212 usable data was obtained

Factor analysis for Social Capital, Brand Attachment and Purchase Intention From the 11 social capital items, principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation produced three factors (i.e., Community Importance, Emotional Relation, and People Importance). These factors displayed high reliabilities with Cronbach's alpha scores ranging from 0.807 to 0.92. From the 8 brand attachment items, principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation produced two factors (i.e., Connection and Thoughts and Feelings). These factors displayed relatively high reliabilities with Cronbach's alpha scores ranging from 0.818 to 0.841. From the 10 purchase intention items, principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation produced two factors (i.e., Brand Loyal and Website Purchasing). These factors displayed high reliabilities with Cronbach's alpha scores ranging from 0.820 to 0.898.

Social Community Behavior and Social Capital There is a significant difference in the level of social capital between those who visit the brand's Facebook page often and those who do not. However, level of social capital did not differ between those who spend more or less time on the community page. Further, social capital level did not differ whether or not they use Facebook as a communication tool or if they visited Facebook brand page for promotions.

Multiple Regression for Social Capital, Brand Attachment and Purchase Intention People Importance factor is the most powerful predictor for both brand attachment and purchase intention.

Table 1. Regression Analysis

Variable/factor	Brand Attachment Connection	Brand Attachment Thoughts & Feelings	Purchase Intention Brand Loyal	Purchase Intention Website Purchasing
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
Social Capital – Community Importance	-0.081	0.051	0.105	-0.071
Social Capital – Emotional Relation	0.004	0.345	-0.182	0.030
Social Capital – People Importance	0.455**	-0.135**	0.199*	0.143
r	.432 ^a	.317 ^a	.213 ^a	.143 ^a
Adjusted r ²	0.174	0.087	0.031	0.006

**p < 0.01; *p < 0.05

Discussion This study demonstrate that if social media community can play a role as a society in predicting consumers' brand attachment and purchase intention from the social capital factors. The study will give implications to the retailers in terms of predicting the impact of network ties in the community for the brand attachment and purchase intention. And, the result of this study can imply to further researches on social media and consumer purchasing behavior in the future.

References available upon request