The Impact of Brand Post Strategy and Social Media Engagement on Customer Loyalty

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ABSTRACT

In a dynamic social system in which consumerism as an ideology is highly valued by brands because of the variety of product being introduced by the minute. The only way to ensure recurring sales is by the way ensuring customer loyalty. With the use social media platforms, both small and big businesses have engaged audiences to drive customer loyalty. This is because of increase in the ease of accessibility of social media platforms proving to be an effective way to engage existing and potential customer proving it to be an effective tool to pay attention. This research is based on the strategies brand can use to engage customers on social media platforms specifically Facebook in Bengaluru, India. A brand's post strategy has an influence on the way a brand engages with the customers online. The same can be measured on three aspects: content type, posting time and media type. Subsequently, if a brand strategy for customer engagement is effective, it will eventually lead to loyalty. Thus, the aim of the study is assessing the influence of brand post strategy on social media engagement on Facebook and Instagram. The secondary aim of the study is to assess the impact of social media engagement on customer loyalty.

Keywords: Customer Engagement, Social Media and Social Media Engagement.

INTRODUCTION:

It is often said that the knowledge to understand the customer needs often lies with other customers. Knowledge building amongst customers can only take place with the presence of communication and interactions between them, which in the present day social context is predominantly related to online platforms. In the modern-day environment, brands have found it unsuccessful to engage students in a student's marketplace because of a lack of additional social catalysts. Such catalysts are the social media engagements. Social Media including a portfolio of online channels for distributing and participating in a variety of activities, show an integral way for brands to communicate with target audiences (Murdough, 2009). Irrespective of the goal, the information about the brand must be important to the consumer if the brand wishes to engage with the customer (Schmitt, 2012). The research revolves around developing a metric that companies can follow while curating social media posts. Social media posts are very different from Google ads which on the contrary can be analyzed through Google analytics. To aid companies to curate and post prints ads on social media and then measure their impact on customer loyalty is what the need lies now in. Researchers such as Martin and Todorov (2010) suggested that brand marketers should think about developing social media engagement opportunities to ensure that the customer is well connected with the brand. Customer loyalty in turn is a catalyst towards generating revenue for brands through advocating on behalf of the brands. But, this requires ensuring that the customers are fully satisfied with the offerings made on the social media platform.

The degree of customer loyalty measure through the emotional engagement and the commitment of the audience viewing or using the social media platform targeted will allow us to forecast the response in the form

loyalty that is purchase, follow or repurchase. Customer Engagement can be defined as a customer's level of cognitive, emotional and behavioral investment in a brand (Hollebeek, 2011b) and is argued to contain the attributes of confidence, integrity, pride, and passion in a brand (McEwen, 2004) Thus, the corporates need to understand the process by which the customers on social media spry to engage with the advertisements coming through. They can do the same by using this research to evaluate the social media post by considering their post strategy with respect to posting time and content type posted.

What companies need to understand here is that the medium of social media advertising is completely proliferated, which means that it has now become an ecosystem where the smartest company that is able to reach the target audience most effectively will thrive.

Thus, by strategically determining the social media posts strategy and managing the accounts on the platforms well, brands can view an exponential growth in customer loyalty. The answer to this simply, engaging posts on social media lead to customer loyalty.

The future application of this research is to help corporate by making them understand the process by which they can generate much larger pool of loyal customers through social media platforms.

LITERATURE OVERVIEW:

Ashley & Tuten (2014) focused their research on discovering the key social media tools that can be used by brands to relate itself to customer engagement with social media. It also showed that brands that used social media the most had the most followers. The most commonly used channels were social networks, microblogs and microsites followed by blogs. Research also helped in providing options to marketers to create an appealing message how these options will affect customer engagement (Koslow, 1989). Past research has suggested that brands should focus on maintaining a social presence across social channels with content that is fresh and frequent and includes incentives for consumer participation (Ling, 2004).

Past usages of theories on brand communities has shown that consuming entertaining and informative content is an integral factor for participation in social media (Dholakia, 2004; Raacke and Bonds-Raacke, 2008) and at the same time providing information was seemed to have a stronger effect. The paper seeks to conceptualize the term Customer Brand Engagement (CBE) as an emerging concept and studies the deployment of the mode on different brands (Hollebeek, Glynn & Brode 2014). Fortis and Dholakia (2005) tried to portray that the level of functional engagement was positively associated with the social presence of the brand. Moreover, Sashi (2012) discusses opportunities offered by the internet which has been creating strong emotional bonds. The conceptual model for customer engagement offered in the paper provides the basis for developing customer engagement strategies. Achieving customer engagement requires facilitating customers' transition through several stages in the customer engagement cycle: connection, interaction, satisfaction, retention, commitment, advocacy, and engagement. The study conducted by Heldman, Schindelar and Weaver (2015) examines the various levels of engagement for communication of public health and scale the potential risk of embracing social communication. Moreover, social media marketing activities perceived by the customers have an influence on customer equity and subsequently purchase intention (Kim & Ko, 2012). The study is focused on luxury brands are based on five constructs which include entertainment, interaction etc.

The study conducted by Bowden (2008) focuses on the creation of loyalty through understanding the role of commitment, involvement and trust. Additionally, the study conducted by Pletikosa Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) shows the characteristics of Facebook posts by brands that lead to individual engagement. They measure the post in terms of media type, content type and posting type and forms the basis for social media marketing. Furthermore, the social media system has seen an active role by consumers in co-creating marketing content with their respective brands (Heller Baird & Parasnis, 2011). It also highlights the challenge faced by companies in terms of measuring social media content.

The model developed in the study uses customer loyalty to develop repeat purchases. It also highlights that loyalty does not always relate to commitment (Warrington and Shim 2000). Another way of developing customer loyalty is by creating relationships with customers. One way to do this by creating fan pages on social media platforms which can be followed by customers and they can post or comment on it (De Vries, Gensler & Leeflang, 2012). The research by Lim, Hwang, Kim & Biocca (2015) focuses on the communication and engagement of viewers on social TV and shows its positive influence on channel loyalty. The study also lists down the measures of social media engagement as functional, communal and emotional. Lastly, the study conducted by Mangold and Faulds (2009) emphasizes the communicating possibility between brands and consumers. It states that social media allows customers to talk to brands as well as enable communication amongst one another. Additionally, customer engagement can be used to capture customers based on the

behavioral activities and is used to build a better relationship with them (Gummerus, Liljander, Weman & Pihlstrom, 2012)

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION:

The scope of the of the terminologies that have been used is limited to the definitions defined as follows:

Customer Engagement:
It is the depth of the relationship a customer with a brand. Customer engagement is built and rebuilt with every brand interaction, whether that's making a purchase, reading a social media post or any exposure to a brand.

Social Media:
Primarily internet or cellular phone-based applications and tools to share information among people.
Forms of electronic communication (such as Web sites) through which people create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, etc. The platform chosen for the research is Facebook and Instagram.

Social Media Engagement:
Embracing the unique characteristics and functionalities of social media tools to attract customers and build digital communities is known as the process of social media engagement. and will be measured on Functional, Emotional and Behavioral engagement.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Quantitative method is used to understand the influence and relationship of the variables in the research. Therefore, the study uses a questionnaire, for collecting the data to provide answers to the statement of problem. The questionnaire is referred to from previous studies with similarity in the questions, but they were modified in accordance to the research.

Statement of Problem:
The companies would like to direct their social media posts towards increasing customer loyalty by assessing the degree of customer engagement. It is important for the companies to know the Communal, Emotional and Functional metrics on each social media post to in turn channelize their efforts and reduce their costs. Thus, after knowing the metrics their efforts would be directed to ensure the creation of posts that drive the most engagement in their target audience. Therefore, the following statement of problem shall be addressed through this research: Corporates to understand the category of posts on social media that can engage customers and drive consumer loyalty.

Selection of Variables:
The conceptual framework of the research is based on three variables which investigates the category of posts that a brand can post on Facebook and Instagram to engage its target audience. Subsequently, the influence of the engagement that will led to customer loyalty. The variables chosen are:
- Brand Post Strategy
- Social Media Engagement
- Customer Loyalty

Research Objectives:
The objectives of the research are statements that indicate the desired result of the research. The objective of the research is as follows:
- To assess the influence of brand's post category on social media engagement.
- To evaluate the influence of social media engagement and customer loyalty.
- To evaluate the influence of brand's post category and customer loyalty.

Development of Hypothesis:
The hypothesis of the research is as follows:
H A01: There is no relationship between brand's post strategy and effective customer engagement.
H A1: There is a relationship between brand's post strategy and effective customer engagement.
H A2: There is a relationship between effective customer engagement and customer loyalty.

H 02: There is no relationship between effective customer engagement and customer loyalty.
H A2: There is a relationship between effective customer engagement and customer loyalty.
H 03: There is no relationship between brand's post strategy and customer loyalty
H A3: There is a relationship between brand's post strategy and customer loyalty.

Sample and Questionnaire Design:
The data collection was performed using a 5-point Linkers scale questionnaire and the questionnaire so constructed will provide qualitative data. The target population for the data were only limited to students of Christ (Deemed to be University). The mean age of the students is 18 -29 years old, and users were only restricted to Facebook and Instagram. The questionnaire ranged from 1 to 5, where 1 was Strongly Agree to 5 for Strongly Agree.
The sample size of the population was calculated based on the students in Christ (Deemed to be University) considering the confidence level as 95%. The sample size so estimated was 220. To measure brand post strategy, constructs were modified from Pletikosa Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013). Additionally, past research of Lim, Hwang, Kim and Biocca (2015) were used to develop the constructs for social media engagement and customer loyalty.

Conceptual Framework:
A theoretical framework is described as the structure needed to support a theory proposed in the hypothesis. The framework mentioned above is essential to introduce the research study and at the same time describe the statement of problem.
Thus, it can be symbolized as: (A => B), (B => C) & (A => C).

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the study undertaken
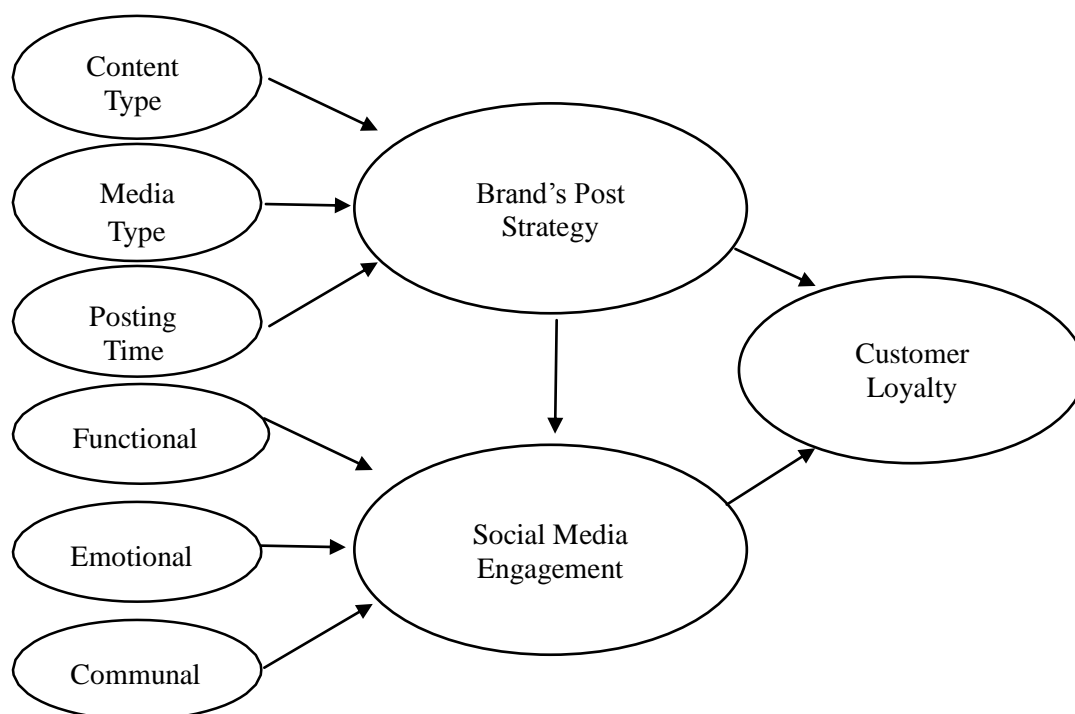
ANALYSIS:

IBM SPSS Statistics 23 is used to analyses the data that is collected using the method of primary data. The tool will help us understand the reliability, validity along with regression and correlation. The answers of questionnaire were input into SPSS to undertake further analysis. Initially the questionnaire was checked for reliability and then the data will be checked for validity.

Reliability Tests:
To measure the reliability of the data, Cronbach's Alpha which measures the internal consistency of the data. The purpose of the reliability is to check whether the questionnaire is used is reliable or not.

Table 1: It shows the Cronbach's Alpha of the N items in the data

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.879	18

From the above table, it can be inferred that the Cronbach's Alpha is 0.879 which is a very good score. Any value lying between $0.9 > a > 0.8$ is considered to have good internal consistency. Since the value is 0.879, this means that the questionnaire is reliable and has good internal consistency.

Validity Tests:

To check the validity of the data, factor analysis will be conducted. Factor Analysis observes variables that have similar patterns and then respectively put them into constructs based on their association. The method used to conduct the analysis is Principal Component Analysis. Additionally, the variables that do not fall into the components are not considered. All the questions that have value less than 0.5 will be rejected from the component.

Table 2: It shows the Rotation Method of Analysis applied to the data

	Component				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Q1	.778	.123	.064	.102	.047
Q2	.750	.265	.169	.049	-.127
Q3	.415	.236	.185	-.382	.355
Q4	.668	.189	.373	.203	-.124
Q5	.370	.160	.666	.075	-.123
Q6	.682	.017	.206	-.016	.192
Q7	.565	.192	.117	.564	-.055
Q8	.572	.244	.093	.573	-.041
Q9	.071	.144	.525	-.227	.489
Q10	-.072	.133	.054	.147	.846
Q11	.073	.144	.226	.202	.159
Q12	.178	.134	.738	.155	.100
Q13	.182	.038	.622	.237	.367
Q14	.169	.708	.358	.043	-.194
Q15	.150	.718	.456	.057	-.169
Q16	.168	.726	.023	.040	.257
Q17	.138	.799	.173	.046	.229
Q18	.140	.662	-.167	.270	.131

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

Thus, from the above Principal Component Analysis, we can conclude the following:

Table 3: It shows the distribution of questions in the component matrix

Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4	Component 5
Q1	Q14	Q9	-	-
Q2	Q15	Q11	-	-
Q4	Q16	Q12	-	-
Q6	Q17	Q13	-	-
Q7	Q18		-	-
Q8			-	-

Where,
component 1 = Social Media Engagement, component 2 = Brand Post Strategy and component 3 = Customer Loyalty

From the above component matrix, it can be inferred that the following questions are not valid for the research as their values are not more than 0.5 in the components:

- Q3
- Q5
- Q10

Moreover, the components also match the conceptual framework already made before in research design. Additionally, there exists a pattern in the constructs of all the components essentially in components 1, 2 and 3. Thus, for further analysis we will only consider the frequency and data of the questions in component 1, 2 and 3 as the data is valid the afore mentioned components.

CORRELATION:

To accept or reject the hypothesis proposed earlier, a Pearson product-moment correlation is conducted. A Pearson correlation coefficient is a measure of the strength of a linear association between two variables and is denoted by r. Since, the study conducted uses Likert scale questionnaire and scale variables, a Pearson's correlation is conducted.

- OBJ1: To assess the influence of brand's post category on social media engagement.

Table 4: It shows the correlation between SME and BPS

		CE	BPS
Pearson Correlation	SME	1.000	.781
	BPS	.781	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	SME	.	.000
	BPS	.000	.
N	SME	220	220
	BPS	220	220

A value of 0.781 of the Pearson's coefficient r, in the Pearson's analysis shows that the correlation between the variables is positive and is significant (p = 0.00) and hence we can reject the null hypothesis and accept the following:

HA1: There is a relationship between brand's post strategy and effective customer engagement.

- OBJ2: To evaluate the influence of social media engagement and customer loyalty.

Table 5: It shows the correlation between CL and SME

		CL	CE
Pearson Correlation	CL	1.000	.556
	SME	.556	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	CL	.	.000
	SME	.000	.
N	CL	220	220
	SME	220	220

A value of 0.556 of the Pearson's coefficient r, in the Pearson's analysis shows that the correlation between the variables is positive and is significant (p = 0.00) and hence we can reject the null hypothesis and accept the following

H A2: There is a relationship between effective customer engagement and customer loyalty.

- OBJ3: To evaluate the influence of brand's post category and customer loyalty.

Table 6: It shows the correlation between CL and BPS

		CL	BPS
Pearson Correlation	CL	1.000	.635
	BPS	.635	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	CL	.	.000
	BPS	.000	.
N	CL	220	220
	BPS	220	220

A value of 0.635 of the Pearson's coefficient r, in the Pearson's analysis shows that the correlation between the variables is positive and is significant (p = 0.00) and hence we can reject the null hypothesis and accept the following:

H A3: There is a relationship between brand's post strategy and customer loyalty

REGRESSION:

In order to determine the strength, the relationship between dependent and independent variable and the extent of such a relationship, it is important to conduct a regression analysis. In simple linear regression, a single independent variable is used to predict a dependent variable. The value of regression is depicted by R square. Since, the study conducted uses Likert scale questionnaire and scale variables, a linear regression is conducted.

H A1: There is a relationship between brand's post strategy and effective social media engagement.

Table 7: It shows the Model Summary between Social Media Engagement and Brand Post Strategy

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.781[a]	.609	.608	.489785788000000

a. Predictors: (Constant), BPS

The above table shows the model summary for the relationship between Social Media Engagement and Brand Post Strategy. The R value (correlation) is 0.781 which indicates a high degree of correlation. The R Square value (regression) shows the extent to which the variation in SME can be explained by BPS. The value is 60.9% which shows a good degree of impact of BPS on SME.

H A2: There is a relationship between effective social media and customer loyalty

Table 8: It shows the Model Summary between CL and SME

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.556[a]	.309	.306	.516196043000000

a. Predictors: (Constant), SME

The above table shows the model summary for the relationship between Customer Loyalty and Social Media Engagement. The R value (correlation) is 0.556 which indicates a high degree of correlation. The R Square value (regression) shows the extent to which the variation in CL can be explained by SME. The value is 30.9% which shows a moderate degree of impact of SME on CL.

H A3: There is a relationship between brand's post strategy and customer loyalty

Table 1:It shows the Model Summary between BPS and CL

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.635[a]	.403	.400	.479737213000000

a. Predictors: (Constant), BPS

The above table shows the model summary for the relationship between BPS and CL. The R value (correlation) is 0.635 which indicates a high degree of correlation. The R Square value (regression) shows the extent to which the variation in CL can be explained by BPS. The value is 40.3% which shows a moderate degree of impact of BPS on CL.

CONCLUSION:

From the above analysis it can be concluded that the questionnaire is reliable (Cronbach's Alpha is 0.879) and furthermore can be extended towards further study. Subsequently, the factor analysis conducted shows the constructs within which the items lie and helps to determine the pattern between the patterns to classify them into three components, Social Media Engagement, Brand Post Strategy and Customer Loyalty. As mentioned before Social Media Engagement is measured in terms of three factors which are functional, emotional and communal. Brand post strategy is measured based on content type, posting time and media type. Lastly, customer loyalty is measured based on commitment and loyalty.

Thus, further analysis includes the correlation and regression analysis to measure the influence of the objectives

mentioned above in the respect of three variables.

To prove that the category of post has an impact on customer engagement on Facebook and Instagram and subsequently on customer loyalty, it is important to conduct the bi-variate analysis. This is stud is not limited to any brand and can be extended as base for any brand. Moreover, the study only incorporates Facebook and Instagram as social media platforms and can be conducted on others as well. Moreover, the study later can also be used as reference to study the impact of both social media engagement and brand post strategy, together on customer loyalty. From the above correlation analysis, it can be shown that there is a relationship between all the three variables and hence forth all the alternate hypotheses are adopted. For future implications, corporates with the help of this study can understand the category of posts and engage a social media user the most and subsequently, types of engagement that would lead to loyalty.

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