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Social Media Involvement of Consumers and Brand Usage Intent: A Review on Theory of Co-Creation

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ABSTRACT

Social media usage is an essential element to penetrate business opportunities in the present context. Many organizations use social media strategies to optimize the competitiveness of the business model. The penetration of social media usage in different countries and even industries within them vary significantly as to how they use social media to improve brand usage intent. This study aims to review the theoretical and empirical notions of consumer's brand related social media involvement activities using the co-creational theory. Limited studies exist to holistically conclude how different communities and markets involve in social media to engage with its consumers for favorable brand usage patterns. Meanwhile, some empirical studies highlight the role of different brand related evaluations as mediating and moderating variables between the consumer involvement and the brand usage intent. This study examined the concept of co-creation to explain the theoretical association rationalizing how consumer involvement of social media connects to brand related behaviors and intentions. Paper presents a comprehensive literature review and theoretical discussion as the main research instrument to present the reviewed content. Additionally, study presents the managerial perspectives on co-creation in marketing related applications connecting the role of social media in businesses. Finally, paper concludes the future research directions in line with the empirical evidence.

Keywords: Brand Usage Intent, Consumer, Social Media Involvement, Theory of Co-creation

INTRODUCTION

Social media has a great impact on individuals and organisations in current economy. Organisations are increasingly using social media to advertise and engage with consumers (Kao, Yang, Wu , & Cheng, 2016) globally. Around the globe, 88 percent of firms in various sectors such as media, IT and telecommunication, travel and leisure, FMCG and retail (Jain, Kamboj, Kumar, & Rahman, 2018) are using a diverse social media platforms like weblogs, social blogs and networks, microblogs, wikis, podcasts, photo and video sharing, online rating and social bookmarking (Laroche, Chankon, & Lianxi, 1996) for promotions. Among them, social networks, blogs and media sharing sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube (Nisar & Whitehead, 2016) are more popular. The usage of social media by consumers are also increasing at a rate of 9% (Data Reportal, 2019) globally and social media like Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, FB messenger, WeChat and

Instagram platforms claims to have more than 1 billion active user's monthly (Data Reportal, 2019).

Many scholars argue that consumer engagement in social media potentially increases consumer satisfaction, loyalty, retention, customer lifetime value, the share of wallet and profitability (Cummins, Peltier, Schibrowsky, & Nill, 2014). In addition, activities such as blogging and sharing instructional videos and product photos on social media platforms, aid to generate the content, communicate it, outreach and referral to increase web traffic, awareness and popularity of brands (Kim & Ko, 2010)

Social media tools and technology is based on web 2.0 with varied and rich ecology (Ngai, Tao, & Moon, 2015) and such tools and technologies serve different purposes and scope targeting varied consumer groups. The nature of social media itself support firms to run focused promotional campaigns targeting its audience effectively (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011). Considering Sri Lanka, our active social media users are 6.2 million with a 30% market penetration and an annual growth rate of 3.3% (Kemp, 2017) followed by 1.10 million Instagram users and 182.5 thousand Twitter accounts.

According to previous research (Harmeling, Moffett, Arnold, & Carlson, 2016) online consumer engagement will not necessarily be exclusive to a certain brand by the consumer. It may refer to engaging with different brands in the same category or in general a more engaged consumer in social media. However, it has been a growing concern for firms to increase the engagement of its consumers (IBM, 2016; TrackMaven, 2016) as many researchers are unclear about how a firm can facilitate and encourage consumers to engage with their digital platforms, despite its high importance (Kao, Yang, Wu , & Cheng, 2016). In fact, firm's social media presence has increased by 35 percent while the consumer engagement has declined by 17percent during 2014-

Table 1: Facebook Activity by Users Globally – 2019

Facebook page reach benchmarks	Average monthly change in page likes	Average post reach Vs. page likes	Average organic reach Vs. page likes	Percentage of pages using paid media	Average paid reach Vs. total reach
Q-O-Q change	+0.13%	7.11%	5.34%	26.7%	28%
Facebook engagement benchmarks	Average engagement rate for facebook page posts (all types of post, all types of page*)	Average engagement rate for facebook page video posts (all types of page*)	Average engagement rate for facebook page photo posts (all types of page*)	Average engagement rate for facebook page link posts (all types of page*)	Average engagement rate for facebook page status posts (all types of page*)
Q-O-Q change	3.42%	6.04%	4.36%	2.78%	1.66%

Source: (Kemp, 2017)

2015 period (TrackMaven, 2016) globally. Table 1 and Table 2 summarise key facts of user engagement statistics for Facebook globally and locally. Research on social consumer relationship management (SCRM) is a growing research field, yet there are zones that require additional investigation (Siriwardene & Dissanayake, 2018) globally. Consumer engagement studies on social media are important because, unlike traditional media, social media is highly interactive, is built on social linkages and often participation on social media is voluntary. Habitually, the engagement occurs unconsciously and

Table 2: Facebook engagement statistics by the ten most Facebook active companies in Sri Lanka

The most active brands in Facebook	Liked by consumers		Checked in status by consumers	
	No in total	Liked as a % of total social media users	No in total	checked in status updated as a % of total social media users
Dialog (Telecommunication)	2,765,431	46%	*	*
Mobitel (Telecommunication)	2,236,653	37%	3,705	0.06%
Ikman (online shopping)	940,303	16%	3,407	0.06%
ODEL (retail clothing)	883,430	15%	13,753	0.23%
Hutch Sri Lanka (Telecommunication)	880,765	15%	10,935	0.18%
Airtel Life (Telecommunication)	775,050	13%	*	*
Kapruka (online shopping)	742,373	12%	*	*
Seylan Bank (Financial services)	632,555	11%	*	*
Sri Lankan Air Lines (Airline)	625,123	10%	32,380	0.54%
Kelly Felder (retail clothing)	611,155	10%	2,535	0.04%

* data not available

Source: Facebook fan pages

unintentionally, yet it provides dynamic and distinctive connections between firms and consumers contrary to traditional media.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher collected articles from google scholar, Scopus and ScienceDirect databases using the search topics as ‘co-creation’, ‘theory of co-creation’, and ‘co-creation in service science’. Initially, 43 articles were selected, and some were omitted due to repetition, differences in publication language and non-relevance to the selected context. Articles published on the selected topic were searched for ‘anytime’ to see the most cited papers. In addition to that, the last five years' published articles were also considered to account for the most recent knowledge on the topic. The publication analyzed published full-text articles predominantly in management, marketing, branding, advertising and information technology journals. The findings of the study are presented below as theoretical, empirical and managerial implications.

THEORITCAL REVIEW ON SOCIAL MEDIA INVOLVEMENT AND BEHAVIOUR

The research conducted on this topic in other countries have explained this using service-dominant logic, consumer culture theory and the theory of co-creation (Maglio, Vargo, Caswell, & Spohrer, 2009; Payne, Storbacka, Frow, & Knox, 2009). Theory is co-creation is a recent development in management literature, which permits organizations to create value through integration of its activities and processes. Co-creation is collaborative process of producing value with the support of all parties involved in the supply chain process. Originated as a branch of co-production, however, there are still some disparities in the literature to distinguish between the co-creation and co-production (Gronroos & Voima, 2013; Cova, Ezan, & Fuschillo, 2013). Among all, a majority of recent developments in service theory is grounded in the co-creation model. Findings of such research suggest that the inter-relationship between openness and co-creation needs academic investigation (Ramirez & Garcia-Penalvo , 2018). It was also supported by (Randhawa, Wilden, & Hohberger, 2016) highlighting that in theoretical studies examining multiple faces of openness, (Huizingh, 2011) internal and external environment characteristics are in need of investigation by future researchers. Hence, it is argued in this research that the existing theories that are available to explain co-creation lack conceptual clarity and require further academic investigation.

The main ideas of consumer engagement, brand trust, service quality, and brand relationship are well-researched in the literature. In the literature, prominent studies on consumer-based brand engagement research exist using service-dominant logic, consumer culture theory (Holbrook & O’Shaughnessy, 1988; Belk , Wallendorf , & Sherry, 1989), and the theory of co-creation (Maglio, Vargo, Caswell, & Spohrer, 2009; Payne, Storbacka, Frow, & Knox, 2009). The consumer culture theory emphasises that the activity of consumption is highly symbolic and cultural with subjective meanings to the consumption situation. Researchers such as (Arnould, 2005; Penaloza & Venkatesh, 2006), used consumer culture theory (CCT) to explain the co-creational perspective of consumption. Also, other perspectives of co-creational research came from innovation studies (von Hippel, 1986; von Hippel, 2005; Chesbrough, 2006), emphasizing collaborative and open processes for consumer innovation. Another significant contribution was based on (Alavi, Ahuja, & Medury, 2012) who tried to integrate IT into this area for relationship marketing, while the use of technological platforms for consumer engagement (Jonsson, Westergren, & Holmstrom, 2008; Zwass, 2010), and open innovation platforms (Westergren, 2011) were other notable contributions in the co-creation literature. In addition, (Kao, Yang, Wu , & Cheng, 2016) introduced a five-stage IEPAR model to help firms to effectively use social media to co-create using internet-based co-creation model (Fuller, 2010) and collective action theory (Hargrave & Van De Ven, 2006). Such sub-research fields in marketing includes business marketing (Liu, 2006; Cova & Dalli, 2009; Cova & Salle, 2008), experiential marketing (Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007; Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008) communication (Muniz & Schau, 2011), and branding (Payne, Storbacka, Frow, & Knox, 2009; Merz, He, & Vargo, 2009).

All authors who have made significant contributions to the co-creation literature agree that the social forces, actors, and institutions affect value co-creation, whilst their participation in the process of signification, domination and legitimation in the social structure affect the mutual satisfaction of the co-creation process (Galvagno & Dalli, 2014). However, consumer's involvement in the co-creation process could be viewed as 'exploitation' or 'working consumers' which is not properly compensated (Cova & Dalli, 2009), so that involving consumers for co-creation has being criticised as being manipulation (Zwick, Bonsu, & Darmody, 2008; Bonsu & Darmody, 2008).

Theory of co-creation was introduced by (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000), by introducing the shifting roles in the marketplace. Accordingly, the traditional demand and supply conditions are vastly challenged by the market players in an economy through interaction and collaboration that exist among the suppliers and customers. It occurs through both upward and downwards supply chain relationships while improving consumption and usage experiences (Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007; Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008) and stimulating product and service innovation (Sawhney, Verona, & Prandelli, 2005). In current economy, value is deemed to be assigned in the process of product development, while it is delivered in actual exchange process (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). According to the theory of co-creation, the organization, suppliers and the consumers work in hand-in-hand in the value creation process. Hence, it challenges the traditional business models and the execution of strategy of an organization, as it allows them to perform different activities in the value chain. Often, in service businesses, the production and consumption of the service occurs simultaneously, hence, co-creation has become an inherent characteristic due to its nature of operations compared to production operations (Solomon, Surprenant, Czepiel, & Gutman, 1985; Bitner, Brown, & Meuter, 2000) which is also discussed in "service science as an emerging interdisciplinary field of inquiry that focusses on fundamental science, models, theories, and applications to drive service innovation, competition, and wellbeing through co-creation of value" (Ostrom, et al., 2010).

Co-creation has also impact studies in consumer culture which (Holbrook & O'Shaughnessy, 1988; Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry, 1989), explains that consumption as a highly symbolic and cultural activity in which consumers give products and services subjective meanings. Accordingly, the symbolic and cultural value created by consumers become the most significant reason for the attractiveness of the consumers (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Research conducted by (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Penaloza & Venkatesh, 2006), also has strong evidence to support the co-creation hypothesis based on consumer culture theory (CCT).

Other studies of co-creation have covered in the field of innovation emphasizing on collaboration and integration of activities by organizations (von Hippel, 1986; von Hippel, 2005; Chesbrough, 2006). Previously published studies fall on several areas such as the customer relationship management (Alavi, Ahuja, & Medury, 2012), platforms for consumer engagement using technology (Jonsson, Westergren, & Holmstrom, 2008; Zwass, 2010), and open business innovation platforms (Westergren, 2011). Such previous studies have themed them as business marketing (Liu, 2006; Cova & Salle, 2008), experiential marketing (Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007; Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008), communication (Muniz & Schau, 2011), and branding (Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008)

EMPERICAL REVIEW OF CO-CREATION

As suggested by (Kao, Yang, Wu, & Cheng, 2016) factors affecting consumer participation in co-creation on social media is a possible avenue for further study. The research conducted by (Tuskej & Podnar, 2018) found that consumer-brand identification influences consumers' active CBE on social media. However, consumer-brand engagement was established to be a multidimensional construct (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Ilic, 2011; Hollebeek, 2011; Vivek, 2011) at different circumstances it can take part as an antecedent or a consequence of brand identity (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013; Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014). Therefore, it is not very clear in the literature, how these varied circumstances impact on the brand engagement. Therefore, further researchers are encouraged to test which forms and/or dimensions of consumer-brand engagement influence consumer-brand identification and which can be defined as its consequences (Tuskej & Podnar, 2018). Also, further research is granted on mediating and moderating the impact of some other variables such as instance culture, communities type, brand type, differences in social networking platforms features and facilities or functionality, structure and culture (Laroche M. , Habibi, Richard, & Sankaranarayanan, 2012; Jain, Kamboj, Kumar, & Rahman, 2018) moderating effects such as brand involvement, interaction experience and customers' interactivity (Bruhn, Schnebelen, & Schafer, 2014) interaction propensity (Wiertz & de Ruyter, 2007; Jain, Kamboj, Kumar, & Rahman, 2018) on the impact of co-creation on CBE.

Considering the methodological approaches to studying the topic, various limitations exist in those studies. For example, the study conducted by (Kao, Yang, Wu , & Cheng, 2016) has adopted the expert interview method as the data collection instrument. The researcher used experts' interviews, yet their suggestions were based on their own experiences within their industrial context. Hence, they do not represent a broader view of the service sector that this research is aiming to cover. Further, it was based on a case study approach and the selected case study was based in Taiwan. The use of a single case study is insufficient to demonstrate the proposed model's validity. Also, similar methodological limitations have been identified in the research conducted by (Tuskej & Podnar, 2018; Jain, Kamboj, Kumar, & Rahman, 2018) that they collected data from different product and corporate brands for a sample size based on one country. Also, (Jain, Kamboj, Kumar, & Rahman, 2018) conducted their research on cross-sectional data, which they suggest that could be improved with longitudinal data for future studies. Therefore, they suggest that the addressing the methodological limitations would help to generalise the outcomes of the findings in future studies. This, therefore, creates an empirical gap further verifying that the aforesaid research is essential in order to study this topic.

MANAGERIAL EXPLANATION ON CO-CREATION.

Digital transformation is a significant disruptor in many industries. Yet, growing concerns arise in terms of effectiveness of use of the technology for transformation. Considering many business firms, the current level of adoption is limited to the creation of digital platform using various platforms and updating some content from time to time. However, sooner or later, industry and many firms will feel pressure largely by global and regional players, with the disruption due to system challenges. Therefore, Sri Lankan firms must have a broader focus in developing their digital transformation strategy to engage with consumers. Disruption must be viewed as an opportunity than a threat, as the necessary skills and resources are readily available most often.

Firms depend heavily on user generated content for rich data to understand consumers and decision making in many industries ranging from banks to bakers, from large (e.g., J.P. Morgan) to small (e.g., water bottles) brands. More than 75 percent companies use social media analytics for volume and valence of UGC to monitor brand health (Markets and Markets, 2017). Recent developments in marketing philosophies highlights the importance of relationship marketing practices within organisations. It is based on the formation and continuation of long-lasting relationships for the benefits of both firm and the consumer through mutual understanding, trust and the relationship. The success of a firm is measured by the long-lived customer satisfaction and loyalty for firms' sustainability. Relationships are not built overnight with no efforts. It requires all parts of the organisation to work together to create value through innovation, efficient operations, and customer support through outside linkages than focusing on their internal links. Like in consortiums, designing a strong strategy focusing on external associations through coalitions and relationships with other supply chain members are the key to success. A fundamental reason or shifting towards relationship marketing comes from Kotler's views that cost of attracting one new customer is five times more than the cost of retaining the current relationships (Roseann, Rich, & Stanton, 2008). That relationship is fundamental to understand the customer needs and wants and to find out how a firm can fulfil it according to the expectations of the consumer. Facilitating to build a free relationship helps both parties to mutually understand this and find a way to achieve it together. With newer technologies, many firms are witnessing a new era of relationship marketing to be engaged with the consumers 24/7 through social media and mobile marketing.

CONCLUSION

This paper aims to explain the dynamic nature of the relationship among consumer involvement, brand usage intent and the consumer engagement using co-creation theory in which organizations, suppliers and the consumers work in hand-in-hand in the value creation process, development and exchange. Consumer engagement in social media - a distinctive concept than involvement - potentially increase the consumer satisfaction, loyalty, retention, customer life time value, share of wallet and profitability which is the key concept under this study. However, limited studies exist on how different markets are affected by social media engagement especially covering developing nations. This paper attempted to cover a comprehensive literature review and theoretical discussion as the main research instrument to present the reviewed content. Additionally, study presents the managerial perspectives on co-creation in marketing related applications connecting the role of social media in businesses. Finally, paper concludes the future research directions in line with the empirical evidence.

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