

Influence of consumer attitude toward online brand community on revisit intention and brand trust



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ABSTRACT

This study proposes to illustrate the relationships between perceived benefits in using online brand communities, attitudes, revisit intention, and brand trust, and it also assesses the moderating role of two types of online brand communities: marketer- and consumer-created communities. The research model is tested by regression analysis using a random sample of 242 respondents. The study finds that social and informational benefits have positive impacts on attitude, which, in turn, significantly influence revisit intention and brand trust. The moderating effect of the type of online community was significant in predicting the relationship between attitude and brand trust but not between attitude and revisit intention. The study concludes the importance of managing online brand communities through managerial implications.

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1. Introduction

Because the Internet greatly enhances people's ability to interact and communicate with each other, the online brand community has become the dominant venue in the marketplace through which to share individual information and experience with products and services, solve problems that consumers encounter, and interact with other consumers and company representatives (McWilliam, 2000). In particular, the dramatic rise of social media has triggered companies to build online brand communities. Consequently, brand communities established on social network sites have become pervasive in recent years. Along with the popularity of brand communities on social network sites, studies relating to this area have also increased in number.

Online brand communities are generally classified into marketer-created and consumer-created communities (Lee et al., 2011). As the online brand community is considered an important forum through which to interact with consumers, most companies have established marketer-created online brand communities for the purpose of building long-term relationships with consumers (Dholakia et al., 2004; Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). Due to the popularity online brand communities, empowered consumers also have built consumer-created online brand communities for information sharing (Jang et al., 2008). Though there are numerous studies on the online brand community, most have focused on how to build and manage

communities, but few have explored the differences in consumer behaviors exhibited with respect to different types of online brand community (Lee et al., 2011). Thus, this study was designed to investigate consumer perceptions, attitudes and behaviors at two major types of social network based brand communities: marketer-created and consumer-created brand communities.

As predictors of attitudes toward the online brand community, several consumer psychological and social factors have been studied. Shang et al. (2006) found that consumers' participation in the brand community depends on consumers' need for information. Bronner and Hoog (2010) suggested that consumers' experience-and-search determined decisions dictate their participation in an online brand community. Cova and Pace (2006) examined the premise that consumers who prefer consumer-created online brand communities tend to be influential participants in the social interaction within the brand community. Zhou (2011) stated that consumers' attitudes toward each type of online brand community depend on consumers' needs and benefits. Although studies identifying the predictors of consumers' attitudes toward different types of online brand communities have been rare, several studies have revealed that the online brand community provides consumers a venue primarily for social interaction and information exchange to satisfy their consumer needs (Anderson, 2005; Shang et al., 2006). The present study therefore focused on the consumers' social and informational benefits.

Researchers have found that individual interactions in the online brand community ultimately improve long-term relationships of brands and consumers (Algesheimer et al., 2005; McAlexander et al.,

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2002). As one decisive factor driving the long-term relationship, researchers have focused on consumer trust (Dwyer et al., 1987), and trust is particularly important in the online market due to its role in reducing consumers' perceived risk (Schlosser et al., 2006; Shankar et al., 2003); further, and most importantly it is critical in its potential as a factor in driving company sales and profits, and in compelling consumer loyalty (Schlosser et al., 2006; Shankar et al., 2003; Urban et al., 2009). In addition, revisit intention is a second important outcome variable of a customer's experience in the online brand community. Attracting consumers toward repeat behavior is considered an efficient marketing method to reduce costs, and is also considered an important driver of long-term relationships with consumers based on consumer satisfaction and loyalty (Um et al., 2006). Researchers have found that both consumer trust and revisit intention are influenced by consumer attitude (Huang and Hsu, 2009; Martin and Camarero, 2008; Um et al., 2006) and therefore this study also examined consumers' brand trust and revisit intention in the context of the online brand community.

The main purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between consumers' perception of benefits in using online brand communities, attitudes and revisit intention toward those communities, and brand trust. In order to investigate the effects of two types of online brand communities (marketer-created and consumer-created online brand communities), we examined the moderating effects of online brand community type, both on the relationship between attitude toward online brand community and revisit intention, as well as on the relationship between attitude toward online brand community and brand trust.

2. Theoretical framework and literature review

2.1. Theory of reasoned action

The theory of reasoned action posits that one's actual behavior is predicted by the relative strength of the person's intention to perform the behavior, and that behavioral intention is predicted by both attitudes and subjective norms regarding the behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Additionally, attitudes with regard to a behavior follow both the beliefs a person holds about the behavior and his or her evaluations of these beliefs (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). The theory has been used as a model for the prediction of behavioral intention in various contexts and was also applied to this study in order to propose the relationships between consumers' perceptions, attitudes and behaviors in online brand communities. The evaluation component includes social and informational benefits that consumers expect to obtain through visiting an online community. The attitude component is the attitude toward online brand community that measures favorability or un-favorability toward either marketer-created online (MOC) or consumer-created online communities (COC).

Consumers' intention to act in the theory of reasoned action was measured in this study by intention to revisit the online community. Brand trust was another dependent variable used in this study as a consequence of a consumer's attitude toward online brand community (Fig. 1).

2.2. Online brand community benefits

The rise of social media use among consumers makes easy for customers to participate in online communities and build meaningful relationships with other customers and with the companies. People enjoy participating in community because they can obtain useful information (Porter et al., 2011), build productive relationships via interaction with other participants with a community (Dholakia and Bagozzi, 2004; Hars and Ou, 2002; McKenna and Bargh, 1999; Nambisan and Baron, 2009), and feel rewarded through communal acts such as helping others (Dholakia and Bagozzi, 2004; Porter et al., 2011). Building relationships and finding communal acts have more to do with others and are themselves, social benefits (Dholakia and Bagozzi, 2004). Accordingly, the benefits that consumers experience by means of participation of online brand community can be largely categorized into social and informational benefits.

2.2.1. Perceived social benefits

Perceived social benefits in this study refer to perceptions of: degree of emotional support, friendship, relationship building, social identity, and self-expression to other members of the online brand community (Chen et al., 2013). Many prior studies have revealed that online communities are places where people go to find emotional support, sense of belonging, and encouragement (Furlong, 1989; Hiltz and Wellman, 1997). Social relationships provide friendship and social support, create trust and increase credibility (Ridings and Gefen, 2004). Ridings and Gefen (2004) argue that people who perceive these social benefits are more likely to share content and to be engaged in interaction than would those who participate in a corporate or brand-founded online.

Chen et al. (2013) observed that consumers' social needs as a motivational factor do not have significant direct effects on attitudes toward peer-to-peer problem solving in the virtual community (P3VC), but as participants obtain more experience from P3VC use, their perceived social needs will have a stronger effect on attitudes toward the P3VC. Jin et al. (2010) discovered that members' perceived social benefits increase their affective commitment to the online community. Casaló et al. (2010) found that social benefits obtained from a firm-hosted online travel community have a positive effect on attitude toward participation in that community, thus significantly influencing the community members' level of participation, and in turn, considerably

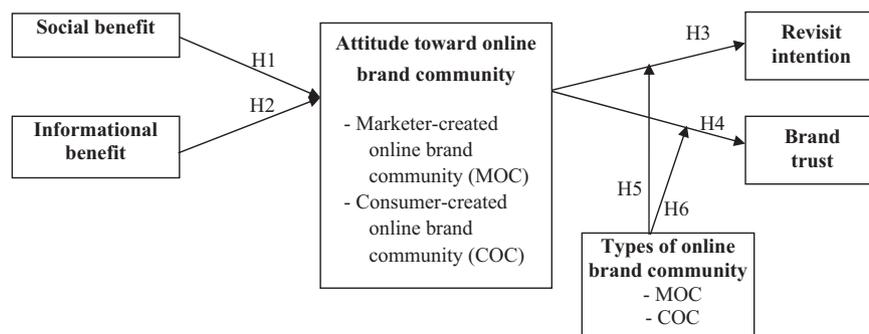


Fig. 1. Research model.

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