

Social Media Marketing and Relationship Quality: Zain Jordan customers' perspective

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine whether social media marketing can affect relationship quality from customers perspective. In a review of the literature, it is clear that to date the conceptual foundations of social media marketing and its affect on relationship quality has not yet been fully developed. In response, this study will try to provide a deeper academic understanding by extending the knowledge of both social media and relationship quality theory and practice. Thus, the proposed model contributes to existing literature by empirically investigating the association between its derived components — social media use, trust, satisfaction, commitment and relationship quality— applied to the Zain customers in Jordan. Importantly, this also provides managers in services dealing with young generation, relevant information and recommendations to assist in improving their social-media marketing programs. Data was collected by self administered questionnaire from random samples drawn from the population of Zain customers using Facebook. The constructs were developed by using measurement scales adopted from prior studies. The instrument in this study was evaluated for reliability and validity. Data were analyzed using SPSS. The results in this study indicate that social media have influence on customer's relationship quality. The main recommendations of the study is maintaining the relationship with the customers permanently by enhancing three factors: trust, satisfaction and commitment, this study has several limitations and also indicates directions for further research.

Keywords: Relationship Quality Social Media, Facebook, Jordan

1. Introduction

In recent years, the use of the Internet as a means of interpersonal communication has grown and changed dramatically. The world's Internet users increased significantly. The growing number of Internet users, as an online two-way communication tool, has emerged and became important in today's life.

The way that people communicate, search for and exchange information with each other have changed noticeably over the last years (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2010). Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube are becoming increasingly important for marketing. The new online services made changes that have transformed relationship between users (Benedikt and Werner, 2012).

Nowadays, customers can act as co-creators, this allows for a huge viral outcomes and creates opportunities for word-of-mouth marketing (Libai *et al.*, 2010). So, both company and customer became more involved in the conversation about the brand (Deighton and Kornfeld, 2009; Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2002).

During the last few years social media has become one of the most exciting topics. Facebook has been considered the second most frequently visited website on the internet. Facebook offers companies several options to interact and communicate with their customers. Fan pages, for example are an important online service for communication. They can be used by companies, businesses, brands to integrate and interact with their customers (Dholakia *et al.*, 2004). Nowadays, fan pages on social networking sites have important relevance for companies in marketing communication.

Despite their relative newness; social media applications are being widely used by Jordanian Internet users. Marketers are of this fact; they are now taking advantage of social media to design their marketing communications. This kind of communication is expected to build and enhance customer relationship quality. In this context, studying how social marketing impacts relationship quality with customers is a relatively new leaving it an interesting issue that needs to be researched.

1.1 Social media

Social media refers to activities, practices ,and behaviors between communities of people who gather and share online information and opinions using conversational media (Safako & Brake, 2009). Conversational media are

Web-based applications that make it possible to create and transmit content in the form of words, pictures, videos. Based on Weinberg (2009) social media relates to the sharing of information, experiences, and perspectives throughout community-oriented websites.

Social media are new web technologies which have made it easy for everyone to create and distribute their own content (Zarella, 2010). Social media is characterized by participation, openness, conversation, community, and connectedness (Mayfield, 2008).

Two concepts are directly linked with the social media term, these two concepts are Web 2.0 and User Generated Content (UGC) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Web 2.0 is a describing a new way of utilization of the World Wide Web by software developers and end-users were the content is continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative manner. User Generated Content (UGC) is the sum of all ways in which people make use of social media.

1.2 Social media marketing

Marketing activities aim taken at building and maintaining desirable exchange relationships with target audiences invalidating a product, service or other object (Kotler,2008).

Companies have made marketing expenses to increase their presence there (Boyd, Ellison 2008). In order to succeed; companies need to adapt their marketing strategies with the right communication and promotion tools.

Recently, Social media became more effective, because they served the needs of the customer. Social media became increasingly popular over the last years, and because of this popularity, the traditional Media have experienced decline in marketing . Traditional media like newspapers or TV are one way technologies and static broadcast technologies, approaches to social media marketing are different. Nevertheless, in order for companies to achieve a coherent and successful strategy, they should strive to integrate their message across all social media channels (Zarella, 2010) .While with traditional marketing communication, companies were able to talk to the customers, social media has made it possible for customers talking to each other (Mangold, Faulds 2009). People are spending most of their time on the internet especially on social networking sites (Todi, 2008), which gives the companies great opportunity to shift from traditional media (TV, radio) into more effective online social media.

Main stream media channels have faced many challenges and are facing down turn in their profits levels (Palmer and Lewis, 2009). This is directly partially linked to the rise of social media in marketing and brand management. As a result of economic pressure, companies have tightened their budgets and shifted to online channels. The social media marketing empowers individuals and companies to promote their websites, products or services through online social channels and to communicate with a much larger community that may not have been available via traditional advertising channels (Weinberg, 2009).

Mangold and Faulds (2009) indicated that customers engaged with a product, service are more likely to communicate through social media. Customers are more likely to talk about companies and products when they feel they know a lot about them. Weber (2009) clarifies that the objective of new marketing is community and engagement. They avoid traditional media like print advertisements by turning the page, etc. social media marketing objective is to get customers invite companies to deliver them the message instead of forcing messages to them.

1.3 Marketing through Facebook

Facebook is one of the leading and rapidly growing online networks. With over billion users, Facebook becomes an important marketing place for marketers these days. Facebook enables companies to use many services for contacting and communicating with their customers. One of the interesting tool for companies is customers Fan pages. Typical characteristics of fans are self identification as fan, emotional engagement, cultural competence, auxiliary consumption, and co-production (Kozinets *et al.*, 2010). The internet has made it possible to overcome geographical restrictions and to build fan communities worldwide. Practically, users become fans of a Facebook fan page by pressing the "like-button," which indicates that they like this brand; this preference is then added to their profiles.

By creating a Facebook page, company creates a common platform for their customers, friends or partners to engage them in conversation arena within company and product. On the fan page, company can put all its information, introduce product, and encourage customers for providing comments and feedbacks . Facebook itself posted five guiding principles of Marketing on Facebook (Facebook, 2013). They are: developing a strategy that is social, creating consistent and an authentic brand voice, create content that people like and are ready to pass each other, building relationships by staying in touch with them and rewarding through deals and promotions, and evaluating feedbacks and comments, and knowing what your costumers like most.

1.4 Relationship Marketing

Relationship marketing (RM) is important to global business because it creates added value for customers and thus reduces the assumed sacrifices for the buyer leaving customers less price sensitive and more loyal (Gummesson, 1994; Nelson, 2007).

RM aim at building mutually satisfying long-term relations with key parties – customers, suppliers, distributors – in order to attract and retain them (Patrick *et al*, 2007). RM can be defined as a set of marketing activities that attract, maintain, and enhance customer mutually beneficial relationships, emphasizing retaining existing customers (Kim and Cha, 2002).

This is consistent with basic purpose of a business according to (Drucker, 1964) which is create and keep customers and not just to sell products. Thus, the rational for relationship marketing is to increase customer loyalty and customer retention and maintaining a continuous relationship with customers.

1.5 Relationship Quality

Relationship Quality is a central concept in the field of Relationship Marketing . Relationship quality is essential for evaluating relationship strength and the degree of customer satisfaction relative to their needs and expectations (Crosby *et al*, 1990; Smith, 1998). However, the term ‘Relationship Quality’ has been used frequently in buyer–seller literature by few practitioners and scholars share a common definition and measure. (Julie, 2006)

Effective exchange can finally produce an enduring buyer-seller relationship (Crosby *et al*, 1990). In some service contexts, customers may feel higher uncertainty and risk in a transaction (Li and Ho, 2008). Whereas, good relationship quality could reduce service risk by increasing customers’ reliability and willingness to develop long-term relationships (Crosby *et al*, 1990; Li and Ho, 2008). In other words, higher quality of relationship creates association and fosters long-term stability where both parties can gain mutual benefits (Singh, 2008).

Several dimensions have been used to measure relationship quality within marketing research. Crosby *et al*, (1990) suggested that relationship quality is a high-order construct and should contain at least two dimensions: trust and satisfaction. However, Hennig-Thuraru and Klee (1997), Leuthesser (1997), Dorsch *et al*. (1998), Beloucif *et al*. (2004), Wang *et al*. (2005), and Palmatier *et al*. (2006) added a third dimension of relationship commitment to the earlier two dimensions of relationship quality (trust and satisfaction).

In line with these previous literature , this study focuses on customer satisfaction, trust, and commitment as key characteristics for measuring relationship quality. The significance of relationship satisfaction, trust and commitment can be joined together as an overall indicator of the higher-order construct of relationship quality. The assumption is that better relationship quality is accompanied by satisfaction, trust, and commitment, although these three dimensions are distinct, customers tend to view and evaluate them collectively (Ruben, 2007; Nelson, 2007; Julie,2006).Thus, trust, satisfaction, and commitment are closely interconnected in the concept of relationship quality (Yang & Wu, 2008). This study assumes relationship quality as a higher order construct consisting of three distinct yet related components: trust, satisfaction and commitment.

2. Methodology

2.1 Hypotheses

The study focuses on four main hypotheses:

H1: Social media use will positively affect trust at a significance level ($\alpha < 0.05$).

H2: Social media use will positively affect customer satisfaction at a significance level ($\alpha < 0.05$).

H3: Social media use will positively affect customer commitment at a significance level ($\alpha < 0.05$).

H4 : Social media use will positively affect relationship quality at a significance level ($\alpha < 0.05$).

2.2 Questionnaire

These considerations make using a questionnaire one of the most effective data collection tool for this study The aim of this questionnaire is to collect data, In the proposed theoretical model , there are four variables: social media use, trust, satisfaction and commitment, and four hypotheses and, accordingly, the survey questions captured all these four variables to further test these hypotheses.

2.3 Sampling Framework

The study sample consisted of customers who are on fans of Zain Jordan page on Facebook. A purposive sampling method was used to consciously select customers who meet the criteria of having used Facebook. A total number of 524 questionnaires were sent electronically to respondents. Of the 524 questionnaires sent over a period of 3 weeks period, 407 surveys were returned. Twenty surveys had more than 25% of the items unanswered, resulting in an effective sample of 387 usable completed questionnaires. This represented an effective response rate of 77.0%.

3. Discussion of results

This section presents the results of the data analysis and the testing of the research hypotheses.

3.1 Sample characteristics

Obtained data shows that 58.1% of the respondents are males, while 41.9% of them are females. Also, 0.8% of the sample are 18 or under, and 49.6% of the sample belong to 18-23 age group. Also 32.8% of the sample they belong to age group 24-29, while 12.4% they belong to age group 30-34, in addition to 2.8% of the sample their ages 41-46 years. Besides 1.6% of the sample their ages +47. According to the survey results the majority people using social media are on the teenagers group who are familiar with internet and social media. In addition, the results shows that 16% of the sample their education high school, while 7.2% of the sample their education is diploma, and 64.6% of the sample they have undergraduate degree, and 12.1% of the sample they have postgraduate degree.

3.2 What Social Media applications

Social media has various applications, such as micro blogging, blogs, social networking sites and etc. the researchers listed six common social media forms and asked respondents to tick, which ones they used. 96.90% of respondents ticked the box of Facebook, which indicates that Facebook is the most popular social networking website in the sample customers. Social media sharing (Youtube) and Twitter second and third place, which achieved 62.79% and 37.98%, respectively. And 17.83 % of respondents are using LinkedIn. Only 6.72% of respondents ticked blogs, which indicates that blogs are not popular among users .

3.3 Time spent on Facebook

According to the study results 30.5% of the sample, customers use the social media application (Facebook) on a daily basis, and 61.5% of the sample they use the media application frequently. Also 6.5% of the sample they have they use the Facebook irregularly. Finally, 1.6% of the sample use facebook rarely, see the table (4.3).

3.4 Purpose for using Facebook

94.27% of respondents use Facebook to keep in contact with family and friends. The second main common purpose is to discover and share new music , books, films and other entertainment (47.66%). The third purpose is for fun which is to play games (44.27%). Since the objective of this study is to explore the impacts of social media in the e-commerce environment, thus we should pay more attention on the following two purposes. One is for Shopping and seeing advertisements (34.64%), and another is to find information and share feedback about brand and product (38.54%). These two purposes are ranked at the third and fourth place, respectively. It indicates that Facebook is playing an important role in enabling customers to participate in the business area. As shown customers use social media to generate business related content or doing business.

3.5 How often do you see news from Zain on your Facebook Newsfeed?

From the table (4.5) there is 17.6% of the sample respondents see news from Zain every day, and 13.2% of the users see the news on facebook news newsfeed every week. Also 26.4% of the sample respondents sees the news every month. finally, 42.9% of the sample they are never see the news.

3.6 Interacting with Zain on Facebook

According to survey results, the customers interact with Zain page on Facebook such as comment on activity, like post on the fan page and share contents. There is 16.5% of the sample interact with Zain page on Facebook every day, and 8.8% of respondents interact with Zain on Facebook every week. Also 19.9% of the sample interact with Zain the facebook month, finally, 54.8% of the sample interact with Zain on Facebook. See table (4.6)

4. Key Findings

The results showed that social media use have a significant influence on relationship quality perceived by respondents in the sample .

The study findings showed that the hypothesis H1,H2,H3 and H4 are fully supported: trust, which relates to the customers' willingness to rely on the Zain company to provide E-marketing services for conducting various company activities and transactions; satisfaction which relates to the customers' positive emotional state resulting from utilizing services that are provided by the Zain page on Facebook ; and commitment which relates to the customers' future intention to return indicating that the relationship exists over time to predict the continuity of the relationship with the Zain company on its Facebook page.

According to the results, the main findings suggests that there is a relationship between social media marketing use and the quality of an interaction. Therefore, it could be said that interactions over Social networks, Content communities are most likely to strengthen the relationships with the company and build trust, satisfaction and commitment. Meaning that social media could be valuable channel for enhancing consumer's relationship with company.

fan pages on Facebook enriches the customers experience and positively affect relationships with customers, this result is consistent with(Benedikt, Werner,2012) who found that fan-page engagement is an important driver for achieving relationship quality, the researcher concluded that social media especially Facebook are an excellent tool for companies today: managers should embrace this new channel and understand how to work with it in a contemporary fashion. Relationship building based on real values for the customer should be in the focus for the company because service companies can have many interaction points with the customer, and there are a lot of opportunities to foster this interaction and build up a meaningful community.

Further, from the empirical results, the valuable content on the Zain page on facebook is one of the most important drivers for attracting users to fan pages. Zain page on Facebook must deliver interesting, entertaining, and innovative content to its fans. Another value is based on interaction among fan-page and between customers and the company itself. zain page is interactive channel. If the company is not interactive, their fan pages will not be successful. Beside the interaction between the company and the customer it's very important to moderate the ongoing fan interaction.

The findings of this study provides strategic insights into achieving high levels of relationship quality between it and their customers who are utilizing fan page on Facebook. According to analysis the results show that it is important to integrate the use of social media into the company's marketing communication mix, as proposed by Mangold and Faulds (2009).

Quality of relations can be achieved by meeting the expectations, taking into account the interests of its customers, providing information about its services continuously, clarifying and supporting the right decision for its customers , fulfilling its commitments to its customers, continuing to provide high quality services, producing excellent service quality, providing up-to-date information for the Zain's services and products, providing competent information and solving conflict situations in a professional way.

Second, this study reveals the current quality of relationship in terms of customers' satisfaction, trust and commitment that may be used in customer relationship management that allows obtaining information on how to attract a customer in a possibly more efficient way and develop good mutual relationship with it. Of course, the obtained study will be of great expedience to the Zain, wherein the study was carried out for better understanding of the current customers' satisfaction, trust and commitment and activities to be performed to improve present showings and make them perfect.

5. Conclusion

The objective of this study is to investigate the generated influences of using Facebook on the customer relationship. To identify the concept of customer relationship quality, model approach has been adopted. The element of relationship quality was used and selected the customer relationship part as the starting point of this research. The customer relationship element is composed of three parts: trust, satisfaction and commitment. By considering the social media impacts, the researcher constructed a new customer relationship model based on these components.

Researcher not only explored the direct impacts of social media on relationship quality, but also investigated the relationship between social media and these three components. Based on the broad literature review, four hypotheses were proposed about their relationships and constructed the research model. Further, a quantitative research has been conducted to evaluate the assumed study model. Survey strategy, questionnaire technique and SPSS software have been used in the empirical study stage.

According to the empirical findings of data analysis, all of the four hypotheses were supported. In this study, It indicates if that companies use more social media, the customer's trust, satisfaction and commitment will be increased. Based on the above discussion, social media application should positively related to trust. Thus, social media use is related with customer relationship.

Overall, social media is directly associated with customer relationship within marketing content. Therefore, companies should carefully develop their customer relationship quality strategy with the use of social media.

6. Limitations future research

Some limitations should be kept in mind while drawing conclusions from this study. First of all, only Zain customers on Facebook has been used as a sampling frame, while there are many other social media not included in this study. Although Facebook was chosen through valid reasoning, drawing accurate conclusions about the effect of social media on customer relationship quality toward service provider may require investigating other social media as well. A similar research including several types of social media could be a suggestion for further research. Second, social media are assumed to have other effects beside those on trust, satisfaction and commitment only.

Furthermore, demographics were not taking into consideration, considering these factors in future researches can reveal their influences more clearly.

Third, the sample size is relatively small compared to the population. Therefore, to increase generalization and accuracy of the study findings future studies should attempt a larger sample size to include participants from all regions and all companies in Jordan.

Also, the research sample was only drawn from customers in the Jordanian telecommunication sector; so further studies should be done in other industries to provide more valuable findings about the study.

Finally, This study is quantitative in nature, which approached from the customer's point of view. A qualitative study might be very useful. Furthermore, cultural factors should be taken in account, as cultural differences are expected to impact customers believes about social media.

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