



Lebanese American University Repository (LAUR)

Post-print version/Author Accepted Manuscript

Publication metadata

Title: Examining the dilution of the consumer-brand relationship on Facebook: the saturation issue

Author(s): Ramadan, Zahy B., Farah, Maya F. and Mrad, Mona

Journal: Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal

DOI/Link: <https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-07-2016-0064>

How to cite this post-print from LAUR:

Ramadan, Z. (2017). Examining the dilution of the consumer-brand relationship on Facebook: the saturation issue. Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal. Doi:

<https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-07-2016-0064/Handle>: <http://hdl.handle.net/10725/9821>

C 2017

This Open Access post-print is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-No Derivatives (CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0)



This paper is posted at LAU Repository

For more information, please contact: archives@lau.edu.lb

Examining the Dilution of the Consumer-Brand Relationship on Facebook: The Saturation Issue

Structured Abstract

Purpose

Brands have been progressively using social networking sites, namely Facebook, as part of their integrated marketing communication strategy to engage their consumers, and ultimately build long-term relationships with them. Nonetheless, as social networking sites monetize their platforms through increasingly broadcasting indirect brand endorsements on members' newsfeed, a disengagement is likely to ensue from consumers. Indeed, with the overuse of 'engagement ads' by brands, saturation related to information overload is expected to be reached leading to the dilution of the consumer-brand relationship. The purpose of this study is to fill a gap in the literature which has predominantly focused on the positive side of social networking sites, and hence still lacks a thorough understanding of the potential risks brands face when using Facebook. Accordingly, this research examines the different risks brands would be facing from saturated consumers on social networking sites such as Facebook.

Approach

A qualitative study was conducted, with a total of 40 respondents using face-to-face semi-structured interviews over two stages. While the first stage of the study focused on examining the saturation risk and its potential negative effects, the second one explored these risks specifically on the consumer-brand relationship on Facebook. The findings from both stages were used to discuss the overall dilution of consumers' relationship with brands on Facebook due to the saturation effect. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, then coded for analysis using NVivo 8.

Findings

Consumers follow so many brands on social media that they can lose track of what brands they are passively endorsing. Moreover, these brands are overloading their followers with passively-endorsed brand messages, which are negatively affecting consumers' experience on Facebook, as well as the relationship with these brands. This overall dilution of the consumer-brand relationship on Facebook was hence found to be affecting interaction, similarity with friends,

the system quality of the social networking site, as well as information quality. Furthermore, this dilution was found to be affecting brand likability, brand trust and brand association.

Originality

The negative implications are still scarcely examined in the literature where social media engagement is predominantly discussed through a positive lens. Hence, this study has the peculiarity of discussing the risks that companies would face with Facebook's engagement model along with their implications on the consumer-brand relationship.

Keywords: *Saturation; Information Overload; Consumer-Brand Relationship; Online Communities; Social Media*

Introduction

Not all friends are created emotionally equal. Similarly, not all 'likes' are created socially equal (Eisingerich et al., 2015). Brands are currently engaged in the fight for attention from consumers across the various available social platforms (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). The so-called Facebook 'engagement ads' are using the likes of followers not just as an endorsement for their ad relevancy, but also as a dissemination tool based on followers who can act as a passive marketing medium within social networks (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

Social networking sites, particularly Facebook, monetize their platforms through passive word-of-mouth (WOM). These are derived from consumers' 'likes' of brands' pages that the social network markets as a brand association and endorsement (Fisher, 2015). Indeed, considering individual consumers as being a marketing medium for brands makes sense for those who are strongly associated with their brands. However, for brands that become 'liked' on a lower emotional level, this process may destabilize the social networks' ecosystem. Indeed, brands are posting stories on behalf of their followers to their friends' list in order to extend the brand's reach (Labrecque, 2014). With this current overused monetization practice, it is expected that risks and concerns related to saturation and the dilution of the overall consumer-brand relationship would arise, affecting the social networking site and brands alike.

Consumers' saturation is one key expected risk drawing on the increasing rate of brand news posting that social networking sites are facilitating. Furthermore, members of these networks

are not actively aware about the amount of brand messages the social network is broadcasting on their behalf (Labrecque, 2014). In addition, brand messages that are posted through engagement ads are based on the assumption that members have a positive relationship with the brand at all times, a premise that may not always be true (Langner et al., 2014), hence its likelihood to further reduce the relevancy of these posted messages.

The risks that social media, namely social networking sites, present on brand-consumer relationships can be sizeable. The financial implications for companies are substantial; recent studies reviewed by Sponder (2012) show that the value of each member in brands' social pages is determined to be up to several hundreds of US dollars. This would have massive financial implications for brands if members were to start leaving the online brand community in large numbers. Accordingly, this paper argues that the same platform that led social networking sites to their success, represents also a considerable risk to companies and their brands. Nevertheless, and to the best of the researcher's knowledge, the related negative implications are still largely unexamined in the literature where social media engagement is predominantly discussed through a positive lens. Accordingly, this study explores and discusses, through qualitative research, the risks that companies would face by using Facebook's engagement platform and related implications.

Literature Review

Social media has become more commonly used by brands as an integrated marketing communication tool that connects and establishes a strong brand relationship with customers (Mukherjee and Balmer, 2007-8; Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Indeed, the brand relationship literature has revealed that people have the tendency to form relationships with brands the same way they do with other people (Fournier, 1998; Hayes et al., 2006; Zayer and Neier, 2011). Moreover, the self-brand connection formed between a person and a brand helps the consumer to express his/her identity (Aaker, 1996). This sought after connection by brands is believed to further develop the consumer's social capital (Escalas and Bettman, 2005), especially in an online context (Ellison et al., 2007; Qualman, 2010). In fact, brands' presence online and on social media is becoming crucial for the development of the consumer-brand relationship and the ensuing word-of-mouth (Lim and Melewar, 2011; Shin et al., 2014).

Nonetheless, social media, one of the biggest turning points in consumer-brand relationship building (Tuten and Solomon, 2012; Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou, 2013; Zaglia, 2013),

needs to be cautiously evaluated in regards to the potential risks it presents on brands. Indeed, through the hyper-production and hyper-distribution of online information in the fast-moving pace of social media, people are becoming increasingly overwhelmed and therefore limited in their ability to process information (Shenk, 2003; Zeng et al., 2010; Leskovec, 2011; Yates and Paquette, 2011; Hiltz and Plotnick, 2013; Rodriguez et al., 2014; Dunbar, 2016). This state of consumer saturation and the risks that it poses on the consumer-brand relationship are yet to be examined in the literature.

The consumer-brand relationship in a social media environment

Brand association

Brands on social networking sites are closely integrated into the lives of consumers. This is mainly due to the nature of the social networking sites' platform where brand events (such as when people follow or associate themselves with a brand) and brand news can be instantly broadcasted on a person's newsfeed (Shih, 2009). This is done through passive word-of-mouth (WOM), which is considered to be a valuable marketing tool that builds brand advocacy especially through its viral effects on social networks (Iyengar et al., 2009). On Facebook, the biggest social networking site, members implicitly endorse brands when they add them to their profiles via the Facebook "like" function (Wallace et al., 2012). This function further integrates the social networking site with members' profiles, driving passive WOM as brands would act as representatives of those consumers who associated themselves with these brands. Indeed, the association of social media to consumers' social capital is what companies yearn for today (Putnam, 2001; Ellison et al., 2014). Consequently, this poses serious challenges to companies. To illustrate this risk, within the brand identity system, brands provide self-expressive benefits by providing a way for people to communicate their self-image (Aaker, 1996), and as such to project their desired self-image in that brand to other people (Walker, 2008). The brand thus becomes tied or closely related to the characteristics of the people who associated themselves with it (Sayre and Horne, 1996; Palmatier et al., 2006; Walker, 2008). On Facebook specifically, when a member 'likes' a brand, that brand appears on the member's profile page and hence becomes part of the consumer's identity (Wallace et al., 2012), allowing him/her to express his/her actual or ideal self (Ahuvia, 2005).

Brand likability

Brand liking, which is considered to be a key enhancer of consumer-brand relationships and an attitudinal measurement based on consumers' perceptions towards the brand that ultimately

leads to brand association (Anselmsson et al., 2008; Kuksov et al., 2013, Langner et al., 2014), is a central notion in several brand equity models (Aaker, 1991; Lassar et al., 1995). It is also a source for brand strength versus competing brands (Sirgy et al., 1997; Lau and Lee, 1999; Ye and Van Raaij, 2004). With mass production, where face-to-face contact becomes more difficult, consumers “*shift their liking from the personal characteristics of the producer to the abstract concept of the brand*”, emphasizing further the characteristic of viewing the brand as a person (Palmer, 1997, p. 319). With this, brand liking as a marketing tool “*seeks to build consumers’ positive attitude toward a brand based on the belief that it cares about them as individuals*” (Boutie, 1994, p. 4). This focuses on the human traits that compose the brand personality, which forms the basis of such consumer brand bonds and promotes feelings such as liking and trustworthiness that are similar in friendship roles (Aaker, 1996; Amine, 1998; Hayes, 1999; Hayes et al., 2006).

Brand trust

From a relationship marketing perspective, trust is essential to the quality of the relationship in a business-to business setting (Schurr and Ozanne, 1985; Dwyer et al., 1987; Moorman et al., 1992; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Palmatier et al., 2006; 2008), service setting (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Crosby et al., 1990; Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002; Johnson and Grayson, 2005), and consumer market setting whether online (Jevons and Gabbott, 2000; McKnight et al., 2002; Bart et al., 2005; Wu and Tsang, 2008) or offline (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Delgado and Munuera, 2001; Hess and Story, 2005). Trust is defined as “*a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of the intentions or behaviors of another*” (Rousseau et al. 1998, p. 395). It is considered to be the single most powerful relationship marketing tool available to a company (Berry, 1995). In an online setting, the engagement process itself is built on trust (Bowden, 2009), which includes feelings of confidence, integrity, pride, and passion in a brand (McEwen, 2004). With repeat customers, satisfaction is already assumed based on previous experiences that enhanced the level of trust that customers hold towards the brand (Bowden, 2009).

The degradation of consumers’ experience on social media - the saturation problem

The experience that consumers develop with brands is a key focus for companies that are looking to consolidate their competitive advantage (Petric, 2014). In an online context, consumers’ experience is primarily influenced by the perceived quality of the information (Lin and Lee, 2006; Wiertz and de Ruyter, 2007), the system or platform’s quality (Bharati and

Chaudhury, 2004), and the similarity between members (Algesheimer et al., 2005) and their interaction (Wiertz and de Ruyter, 2007). Nonetheless, consumers' experience on the social networking site would be undermined by a high incidence of saturation (Zeng et al., 2010; Rodriguez et al., 2014). As brands increase exponentially their posting and engagement efforts, annoyance factors generated from the social platform's services might affect the consumer-brand relationship that is being developed. One key annoyance factor would be consumers' saturation driven by information overload. The literature on saturation has been mainly developed from the information system literature and is yet to be researched in all its given aspects. While some studies have focused on information overload as a saturation factor in online communities affecting online members' participation (Jones et al., 2004; Lampe et al., 2014), consumer choice quality (Iyengar and Lepper, 2000; Schwartz, 2004; Saren, 2011), and consumer reaction (Shenk, 2003; Reutskaja et al., 2011), the saturation effect on brand relationship is yet to be fully researched given the lack of understanding in the marketing literature and the serious effect of saturation on consumers' experience in social networking sites.

Information overload

Information overload, viewed as turning the information from a currency to a "pollutant" (Shenk, 2003), has mainly increased through the advent of social media and online social networking sites (Zeng et al., 2010; Rodriguez et al., 2014). Information overload can be defined as being the inability of users to process the sheer amount of supplied information (McCormick, 1970; Meyer, 1998; Yates and Paquette, 2011). As per the law of diminishing returns, the glut of information will no longer add value, but instead will leave consumers more vulnerable and less cohesive (Shenk, 2003). Hence, information overload occurs with consumers who are provided with extensive amounts of information at a rate far higher than their cognitive abilities to process this information within a given time (Bettman, 1979; Schick et al., 1990; Leskovec, 2011; Hiltz and Plotnick, 2013; Rodriguez et al., 2014).

The problem of information overload can be traced back to the early literature in psychology in the field of clinical psychology (Meyer, 1998). Despite the increase in the psychologists' confidence in their own prognosis due to the availability of more information, a decrease in the quality of prognosis was also observed (Kelly and Fiske, 1951). While the threshold to information overload can vary from person to person (Henry, 1980), these findings show that people's information processing performance tends to be affected when reaching a certain limit by which decision efficacy would fall (Witte et al., 1972).

In the marketing literature, information overload refers to:

“The fact that there are finite limits to the ability of human beings to assimilate and process information during any given unit of time. Once these limits are surpassed, the system is said to be ‘overloaded’ and human performance (including decision making) becomes confused, less accurate, and less effective” (Jacoby, 1977, p. 569).

Information overload has been discussed widely in the marketing and information management literature, where it has been described as being an “annoyance” (Hutter et al., 2013), “data smog” (Shenk, 1997), “electronic junk” (Denning, 1982), “information glut” (Denning, 2006), “noise” (Klapp, 1986), “information flood” and “scarcity of information in an age of surplus information” (Bearchell, 1989; Kroeber-Riel, 1991; Meyer, 1998) and “spam” in the context of electronic mails (Mehta and Sividas, 1995; Zeltsin, 2004; Cukier et al., 2006). Annoyance is defined as the unpleasant emotional reaction to overexposure to information (Hutter et al., 2013). Similarly, data smog refers to the overwhelming volume of media that people come into contact with leading them to confusion and frustration (Shenk, 1997). While individuals tend to focus on omitting, queuing, or filtering information as effective ways of coping at high rates of information overload (Miller, 1956), they might leave the system that is generating this information overload leading to relationship dissolution with the brand (Sheridan and Ferrell, 1974; Fajer and Schouten, 1995; Hutter et al., 2013). Nonetheless, the distinction should be made that excess information supply does not imply an information overload as it is related to the perception of the recipient as well as to his processing ability (Meyer, 1998). Regardless of whether customers are overloaded with information based on either their perception or their ability to process it, information overload clearly saturates consumers’ cognitive and hence processing capabilities.

Saturation

This research defines saturation as being the growing state of consumers’ disengagement mood, driven by the high amount of information they are exposed to that exceeds their processing capacity. Since no prior studies discuss how consumers’ experience and the consumer-brand relationship are effected by saturation, this research paper further explores and examines this topic.

Methodology

Due to the limited literature on the saturation risks and effects on the consumer-brand relationship in a social networking environment, this study adopted an exploratory qualitative approach. This research was designed to be conducted in two stages using face-to-face semi-structured interviews: whereas the first stage examined the saturation risk and its potential effects, the second explored these risks specifically on the consumer-brand relationship on Facebook. The findings from both stages were used to discuss the overall dilution of consumers' relationship with brands on Facebook due to the saturation effect. As the focus of the study was clear in investigating the saturation and brand association subjects, semi-structured interviews were more adapted than fully unstructured ones to address the topics at hand.

The first stage was conducted in Lebanon with a sample of 31 Lebanese interviewees, consisting of thirteen females and eighteen males across different age brackets. The sample was recruited based on a convenience snowball sampling strategy where interviewees were asked to suggest other potential interviewees. The sample was pre-selected on the basis of current experience in Facebook. Indeed, the pre-selection criteria targeted people with brand-related experiences on Facebook. A theoretical sampling approach was implemented: face-to-face interviewing was conducted with 31 participants until data saturation was achieved and interviewees offered no further insight into the research. The interviews were recorded for later transcription and coding in NVivo. All interviewees were made aware of the recorder and all gave their consent to use it. In total, four versions of the interview questions were developed throughout the study. These versions were being developed as the respondents' feedback were focusing on topics such as online community feelings, brand similarities, brand liking and information overload.

The second stage of the exploratory research was conducted on the basis of the first one to further explore the identified saturation risks specifically on the consumer-brand relationship on Facebook. The same approach was used with semi-structured face-to-face interviews covering nine Lebanese interviewees. The disparity in the sample sizes for the two studies is due to the fact that data saturation was quickly achieved in the second stage as its focus was very limited and specific in exploring the effects of information overload on the consumer-brand relationship. NVivo was also used for coding. In both phases, the research was not confined to a specific brand.

This study followed Gibbs' (2007) qualitative reliability procedures to ensure the accuracy of the findings and their validity. For this, the transcripts were first checked for mistakes with the original voice recordings before being coded into NVivo. The definition and meanings of the codes were the same across the two stages of the qualitative study and were not changed to ensure consistency. The coded text was then rechecked with the voice recordings to ensure that no errors were made. Validity was conducted focusing on the inferences drawn from the data (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983 and Creswell and Miller, 2000) as follows:

- 1) Triangulation was carried out, whereby common themes and converging data around saturation were coded as such to drive the inferences on the saturation risks;
- 2) member checking was conducted with five selected members confirming the initial understanding from the interviews;
- 3) the study focused on exploring and **describing in detail** the personal experiences of each participant engaged in online communities as well as his or her feelings and reflections about it;
- 4) in regards to participants' collaboration and their involvement in this research, it was made possible through the key answers of the first ten participants that provided the base for the rest of the semi-structured interview questions.

The analysis of the qualitative data used verbatim quotations which established further credibility (Beck, 1993) and validity of the findings (Sandelowski, 2003). The anonymity of the respondents was respected as fictitious names were reported to protect the identity of the interviewees (Corden and Sainsbury, 2006).

Sample Profiling

In order to describe the two samples of this qualitative study, the following section presents the participants' main demographics including age and gender. It outlines as well the length of the participants' Facebook usage.

Age

The main two age brackets the participants fell into within the first qualitative research phase were 35 to 39 years old and 25 to 29 years old. The remaining age groups spanned over 18-24 (16%), 30 to 34 years (13%), and above 40 (6%). Participants who preferred not to disclose

their age were 13%. In the second qualitative research phase, the main age bracket of the participants was 30 to 34 (33%) followed by the 25 to 29 years-old category, and 18 to 24 both at 22%. The 35 to 39 and above 40 years-old categories accounted for 11% each (see Table 1). The average age in each of the two phases was 30 years.

INSERT HERE: Table 1: Participants' Age Brackets

Gender

In the first phase, males constituted 58% of the total participants, while females represented 42% of the sample. In the second research stage, the participants' gender was based on five females (55%) and four males (45%) (see Table 2).

INSERT HERE: Table 2: Participants' Gender

Length of Facebook Usage

Participants in both research phases have been using Facebook mainly for the past one to three years (see Table 3).

INSERT HERE: Table 3: Length of Facebook Usage

Discussion of Findings

The influence of information overload on consumers' Facebook experience

The data shows four main components emerging from the study on consumers' Facebook experience following the literature. These categories include (a) Facebook's platform quality, (b) brand information quality, and (c) similarity with other Facebook members and interaction. Platform or system quality covers the accuracy and efficiency of the information technology (IT) system (Bharati and Chaudhury, 2004). Information quality covers the success of the information in conveying the intended meaning (Lin and Lee, 2006). As for similarity with members and interaction, the factors focus on the communication interchange (Algesheimer et

al., 2005; Wiertz and de Ruyter, 2007). The following section explores these variables from the participants' perspectives under a saturation effect context.

Social networking site's system quality

Facebook is generally seen by the participants as having a supporting platform that is easy to use, functional, reliable, and flexible. System quality is considered as being the basic handling platform for online communities such as social networking sites. In line with the literature (e.g. Yates and Paquette, 2011), it has been emphasised by participants as being a very important factor affecting the interchange, which can be negatively perceived if information overload is not well managed. Other participants considered it as being fundamental to the success of the community as shown by the below statements:

"The data and information that we, users, are seeing have to be properly managed by the program and its infrastructure. With a poor system you can't have a proper interaction which would affect your view of the community or social network" (23-year-old female).

"If we take the example of Facebook, their system platform is in my opinion the most important factor in making people log in and interact everyday on it or just leave it. It's a fundamental point. I remember when Facebook was down and couldn't log into it, I started to actually hate it as it denied me access" (37-year-old male).

"The main issue that social networking sites are facing today is managing the high number of information posted on their sites. If their servers and program don't handle properly the millions of posts, it will be passed on to the end user who is going to be super overwhelmed with tons of information, so it would definitely affect how people would view the social network in the future" (25-year-old male).

"First impression you take is if the server is slow or if things do not run properly I would directly lose interest and I would not log on again" (23-year-old female).

"If you're interested in a product, you reach this point where you need information on the community. You need to have simple, direct, easy steps to reach your goal" (39-year-old male).

The above quotes reflect that system quality is essential to consumers' experience in online brand communities. Indeed, a poor system quality can make the effect from information overload unbearable, leading members to ignore or quit the community.

Brand information quality

Interview results revealed that information quality is basically the most sought after category. Indeed, information quality is at the core of any online community. Information quality is defined in terms of the relevance and recency of the information to the members of a given community. This was evident in participants' statements. Examples of these are as per the following:

"Content is most important. It's not about the form. It has to be really interesting and relevant to the people you're targeting" (28-year-old female).

"People are becoming unforgivable. If these communities don't give them back what they're expecting in 2-3 trials, they would leave. They would not be looking at it anymore. It has to be good with good comments or they would leave. Other tech savvy people do have high expectations. If it's not interesting, after a few trials the members would leave" (28-year-old female).

Some participants stated that if the brand's information quality falls below their expectation then they would consider switching to other competing communities. With this respect, one participant indicated the following:

"If the information is not objective enough, then of course I would find a more objective source. If competitor brands offer me what I want, then I would switch" (age undisclosed, male).

Another participant stated that she always registers in competing brands' communities to compare information across as shown in the following statement:

"I always register in competing brands' communities to see what and how each side is talking. The picture is not always as rosy as they try to show it to you. You have to find the truth out for yourself. They don't give the full picture. Only part of it they want you to see. It might not be negative but not as rosy as you thought. As you start in a mode that you think everything is rosy. Based on experience you come to realise why they didn't talk about specific points. I'm sceptical about what they don't tell me" (37-year-old male).

Nonetheless, information overload has been stated as having a negative influence on the perceived quality of the information:

“There is so many information shared I consider 70% of that information to be trash. I wouldn’t bother to read all the information” (23-year-old female).

“Too many messages. I feel overwhelmed and not interested in that amount of info; you need something specific” (35-year-old female).

“Information is so abundant that people are losing interest in it. I feel it’s not relevant to me anymore. The quality is just not there anymore” (23-year-old female).

“It could be richer if brands are activating Facebook beyond broadcasting information. If it’s only information broadcasting, which might become overwhelming similar to the one they use through above the line advertising, then I will not be interested in the information” (36-year-old female).

Similarity with members and interaction

Similarity with members and interaction is considered by participants as a crucial factor for a good member experience. In this, these two elements (similarity with members and interaction) are closely related to providing a two-way communication with members. In online communities where members’ involvement is tangible, users’ experience will be better given the feel of closeness with the other members. This is reflected by the following statements:

“It’s not the brand that makes the brand. People make it. So I feel closer to some of the people inside the community” (27-year-old male).

“I feel close when I see a comment about a product that I feel the same on. I feel then a sort of connection. I feel close to these persons” (31-year-old male).

“You feel close to members discussing things with them you share. You feel close to them. You discuss the same things” (26-year-old male).

“They look at the brand the same way as I do. You feel other members similar than me” (27-year-old female).

Interaction was deemed to be important as well to forge the relationship with the brand as shown in the following statements:

“Interaction is very important; you chat, ask questions, post reviews, chat with certain people with certain specific background. You know they understand what you need” (37-year-old male).

“You feel you’re talking to the company directly; this is very important. It’s not found in lot of communities. Most of them just post messages. Through live chat you tend to become more interactive” (age not disclosed, male).

“It’s very important and basic that online communities involve their members as quickly and as personally as possible to keep them part of their brands” (23-year-old female).

Nonetheless, information overload was perceived as having a negative effect on the interaction process with other like-minded members of the online community:

“My level of interaction would be driven down by ridiculous messages, too many discussions or disputes that could be overwhelming” (23-year-old female).

“There are things that I don’t tolerate as being bullied by too many messages and bad language” (36-year-old female).

The influence of information overload on brand relationship

The results of the interviews show three categories emerging on the brand relationship in line with the literature: (1) brand likability and trust and (2) brand association. The following section explores these variables from a saturation effect context.

Brand likability and trust

As discussed in the previous section, information overload was identified as a key saturation variable that influences users’ Facebook experience (based on system quality, information quality, interaction and similarity with other members). Accordingly, exploring the influence from this variable on consumers’ relationships with brands becomes a crucial endeavour.

Depending on the level of saturation, brand pages that consumers follow are likely to affect the level of liking and trust that members would have for the brand as it covers brand and relationship perception. Companies managing their brand communities aim at getting closer to their customers and try to increase consumers’ sense of belonging and commitment to their online brand community. One participant stated:

“You feel it’s my community and they’re answering me. It’s more personal” (35-year-old female).

Participants also recognise the role of the brand in creating communities to interact with as per the following statements:

“Online communities organised by the company make you feel more positive about it because they are investing time and money to interact with their consumers” (34-year-old male).

“Brands know that the online experience is very important to their customers. They try their best to give a positive experience so that we like their brands more versus their competitors” (23-year-old female).

The ensued experience in the brand’s online community would directly affect the perception and feeling towards the brand itself. The overall experience of the online community and physical product would then interrelate as stated in the following statements:

“Giving somebody a bad user experience on your community is like giving a bad product” (30-year-old female).

“Somehow the community makes me more attached to the brand” (27-year-old male).

“When you have a really good experience in your interactions, you build affinities with the brand” (31-year-old male).

“The brand attracts you through engagement. If the online experience is good and the engagement is well done, I think you would start unconsciously to like that brand” (28-year-old female).

Based on the above consumers’ brand experiences on Facebook, brand liking seemed to be affected accordingly. As stated earlier, the fostered online experience would be seen as part of the overall brand offering and perception. This online experience drives the overall likability of the brand.

The study showed also that given a certain level of brand liking, brand trust would start to form based on genuine and honest information being shared in the online community. In some shared examples by participants, seeing some negative feedback properly handled in the online community by the brand would drive a sense of having a balanced feedback on that brand. An always positive information sharing would give the impression that the brand might be hiding something according to the following statements:

“The online community makes me trust this brand more because they’re answering you – it’s not a machine; it’s human communication” (25-year-old male).

“I trust them because they’re out there and people are talking about them. They’re not hiding and they’re showing it to people how they’re evolving” (28-year-old female).

“If honest information is being shared then yes, the online community makes you trust more the brand. If people as well are sharing information not just the company” (22-year-old male).

“If they show actual cases that happened with people and you can see some negative feedback and how they handled them, then you can trust them more” (25-year-old male).

Active involvement and transparency of the company would be crucial in its online community to drive brand trust as per the following statements:

“You’re encouraged to go to companies who are more involved in their online community to give you more a trust factor about their products” (age not disclosed, male).

“Nobody would go online publicly just to mess around. Everybody would then notice it and talk negatively about it. When companies are really involved, the online community makes you trust this brand more” (age not disclosed, male).

Nonetheless, participants stated that in some instances information overload generated from Facebook’s engagement ads featuring “liked” brands from fellow members on the social networking site would indirectly affect their views on the brand itself from a likability and trust perspective. This negative effect can further affect the relationship between the members of the social networking site and the brand’s representatives such as the physical store’s staff as demonstrated in the following statement:

“The Facebook community is putting a lot of pressure on me. On the brand, I feel being repelled from them. Even for somebody you love, if you receive from them a lot of messages, you will either decrease the frequency of logging into Facebook, or do the extra effort in hiding each endorsed brand. In some instances, if you go to the brand’s retail store and see the staff you feel a personal feeling that they are the ones who are sending you a lot of messages - it makes you look down at them” (35-year-old female).

“You just can’t keep on liking really a brand if you feel they’re spamming you. They are the ones who should look after me and be considerate in the number of messages they send me” (25-year-old male).

“Any brand or any person even who treats you badly will affect your view on them and the amount of trust you give them. If they annoy me with way too many messages I will

view them as focusing extremely on the money and next transaction they need from me, and so will definitely trust them less” (age not disclosed, male).

The Facebook community itself is seen as the main contributor to saturation which will have a negative effect on members’ relationship with the endorsed brands:

“If they spam you with messages, they shell you, I become annoyed and log off. Unconsciously I see Facebook being annoying and see these brands the same” (18-year-old male).

Clearly, from the previous discussion, consumers’ Facebook experience influences their engagement and involvement within the community as well as their relationship with the brand. Thus, the level of information overload can negatively influence the brand’s likability and trust.

Brand association

In addition to the saturation factor that has been shown to be a key negative influencer on consumers’ Facebook experience, brand likability and brand trust, consumers’ association with brands on the social networking site was also deemed to be at risk. Consumers’ association with brands over Facebook was one key element on how members represented themselves on the social network:

“Facebook is not only a way to stay in touch with people. It’s a way of having people getting introduced to you without being introduced to you. You don’t know all these people. It’s very difficult sometime to portray an image of who you are without physically doing it. When you’re associated with a brand with certain values, people associate the same values to you” (35-year-old female).

“It puts me in the feel of the brand image. These brands take me into their lifestyle, I become a different person. These brands would help me become this stylish elegant woman” (28-year-old female).

“Nutella is the child in me, McQueen is the woman, Seat is the adventure. Each brand represents something in me. When I like something I show it. It’s like a picture. You show your preferences which emanate from your own personality. When you post your picture, it’s you. You have in mind a specific idea. In my subconscious a picture, an idea that this brand would give it to me. It’s you, it’s your character. It reflects your personality” (23-year-old female).

The brand should also have similar values and a personality that members would feel close to as per the following participants' statements:

"I like these brands – they make you feel you're a member of their brand. Not an outsider. You feel in the family. You feel belonging to the brand" (35-year-old female).

"For me to like a brand, it has to show me that I fit and not at odds with it" (31-year-old female).

"I feel proud of brands I use. It completes me, similar to me. I adapt to them sometimes as well. Brands become part of life" (36-year-old female).

Nonetheless, respondents were aware that this relationship and close association with brands is not endless:

"With age the interest changes. Every 10 years you have a different interest. In my thirties I feel a different look targeted at my age. The brands are there, their image is there, but the image of the person changes and try to look for what is customized in the different phases of my life" (35-year-old female).

Moreover, some respondents were concerned about the image confusion they might be broadcasting about themselves due to the many brands they came to follow without tallying them regularly:

"Brand association is overwhelming; we follow too many brands that you're confused which brand represents you. For example, in cars, I have associated myself to many cars so I don't know with which to stick with" (25-year-old male).

"My perspective on social networking in following brands is very unique. My brother for example likes many competing brands (Nike, Adidas, and Reebok). How can you like all these three? I only follow specific brands which I like and when their values are in line with mine" (27-year-old male).

In fact, participants stated that the more brands their friends were following, the more messages they themselves start receiving by these brands as part of Facebook's engagement ads. Furthermore, the more they felt overloaded with brand messages, the more they became disposed to unfollow and to disassociate themselves with the brand as part of an avoidance feeling (Grégoire et al., 2009) to reduce the amount of broadcasted information. Some of them even mentioned they would leave the social networking site altogether:

“Most people now like brands just because Facebook showed them their friends like it too. It’s bubbled and fake” (age not disclosed, male).

“As my friends are following and associating themselves with more and more brands, I start receiving tons of new posted information on these brands. I have to now either block my friends or leave Facebook” (28-year-old-male).

“I noticed that the more I like brands on Facebook, the more overwhelming my newsfeed is with their posts. It’s really unbearable. It’s been a while since I followed a new brand. I actually started to unfollow the ones who are posting the most messages” (23-year-old-female).

Based on the above, members of the social networking site saw a genuine interest by associating themselves with particular brands that they thought represented their ideals and values to other fellow members. A rising problem though was the growing number of followed brands. Indeed, consumers might be (1) broadcasting a confusing representation of themselves which might be seen by their friends as non-relevant and overloading information, (2) passively endorsing many brands through Facebook’s engagement ads which might push their friends to block or unfriend them, and (3) feeling the need to disassociate themselves with these brands to reduce the information overload on their own newsfeed.

Implications

The development of social media and its use as a consumer-brand relationship venue has been growing in both scope and influence (Ellison et al., 2014; Shin et al., 2014), thereby indicating the significant contribution of this study in examining the risks pertaining to the saturation effect accompanying this change. The findings addressed a gap in the literature in relation to the different risks brands would be facing from saturated consumers on social networking sites such as Facebook. The analysis revealed that most of the respondents interviewed concurred on the risks of information overload that would affect the main components of consumers’ experience on Facebook and of brand relationship. Furthermore, the saturation effect was shown to be also affecting indirectly the different components of the relationship and experience of consumers on Facebook as depicted in Figure 1.

INSERT HERE: Figure 1: Framework

From a practical perspective, this study demonstrates the risks that brands run into when they heavily try to engage their consumers' base on Facebook. These are significant findings as social media is considered to be the main platform that brands are predominantly using today for building the relationship with consumers (Tuten and Solomon, 2012; Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou, 2013; Zaglia, 2013). As saturation, manifested through information overload, takes place, consumers will be relating less with these brands on a likability, trust and association level. Hence, companies have to take into account the level of over-targeting and over-broadcasting brand messages and to rationalize their amount. As consumers might be saturated from different brands altogether, companies have to also consider distributing their relationship building efforts across many touchpoints versus focusing solely on social networking sites such as Facebook. The findings show as well that consumers' experience will also be hit whereby they will be less prone to interact, feel less similar with other members, and perceive the shared information of being lower in quality. The social networking site itself is found to be affected as well whereby negative perceptions are formed in regards to the platform's quality when consumers are saturated (Fajer and Schouten, 1995; Hutter et al., 2013). Accordingly, Facebook would also need to explore that risk as it would threaten the manageability, usability and perceived value of the system (Yates and Paquette, 2011) and lead consumers to search for alternative social networking sites to engage on (Hutter et al., 2013).

Conclusion and Future Research

Companies today are using social networking sites to support the creation and development of their brand communities (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010) to further engage and build a relationship with their consumer base (Brodie et al., 2011). Brands are currently taking advantage of their followers to expand their reach, something which is comparable to the traditional paid media mix (Labrecque, 2014). Social network members are hence used by brands as a positive marketing medium (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

This study's contribution in relation to highlighting the saturation issue on social networking sites, discussing the entailing dilution of consumers' relationship with brands on Facebook, as well as providing businesses and scholars alike with the related implications is highly needed to expand on the current scarce understanding in this field. Ideally, social networking sites should set a limit on the number of brand message broadcasting. The social networks' revenue

generating setting cannot survive saturation (Sponder, 2012) unless a threshold is set and brands' social messages are restricted. Accordingly, marketers and social networks alike need to understand the implications of the message-to-member ratio as well as to make members aware how brands are using their indirect endorsements with their friends. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that brands will decrease the broadcasting of their messages for the good of the social networking sites' members. With this, it is expected that social saturation will still grow **exponentially**, diluting the consumer-brand relationship.

This study is not free from limitations. In fact, the findings of the study were derived from an exploratory research design involving Lebanese respondents, which may raise some generalizability concerns. Indeed, the risks that social networks might pose on the brand-consumer relationship need to be further researched. Given the anticipated magnitude of the problem, future studies, whether exploratory or empirical, should consider developing further the saturation concept and its effect on brand relationship in different social media platforms as well as in different product categories and countries.

References

- Aaker, D. (1996), "Measuring Brand Equity across Products and Markets", *California Management Review*, Vol.38, No.3, pp.102–120.
- Aaker, D.A. (1991), *Managing Brand Equity*, The Free Press, New York, NY.
- Ahuvia, A.C. (2005), "Beyond the extended self: Loved objects and consumers' identity narratives", *Journal of consumer research*, Vol.32, No.1, pp.171-184.
- Algesheimer, R., Dholakia, U.M. & Herrmann, A. (2005), "The Social Influence of Brand Community: Evidence from European Car Clubs", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol.69, No.3, pp. 19-34.
- Amine, A. (1998), "Consumers' true brand loyalty: the central role of commitment", *Journal of strategic marketing*, Vol.6, No.4, pp.305-319.
- Anselmsson, J., Johansson, U., Maranon, A., and Persson, N. (2008), "The penetration of retailer brands and the impact on consumer prices—A study based on household expenditures for 35 grocery categories", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol.15, No.1, pp.42-51.
- Bart, Y., Shankar, V., Sultan, F. and Urban, G.L. (2005), "Are the drivers and role of online trust the same for all web sites and consumers? A large-scale exploratory empirical study", *Journal of marketing*, Vol.69, No.4, pp.133-152.

Bearchell, C.A. (1989), "Future trends and possibilities – coping with the information flood", *Marketing Journal*, pp.345-57.

Beck, C.T. (1993), "Qualitative research: the evaluation of its credibility, fittingness, and auditability", *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, Vol.15, No.2, pp.263.

Berry, L.L. (1995), "Relationship marketing of services - Growing interest, emerging perspectives", *Academy of Marketing Science. Journal*, Vol. 23, No.4, pp. 236.

Bettman, J.R. (1979), "Memory Factors in Consumer Choice: A Review", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol.43, No.2, pp. 37-53.

Bharati, P. and Chaudhury, A. (2004), "An empirical investigation of decision-making satisfaction in web-based decision support systems", *Decision support systems*, Vol.37, No.2, pp.187-197.

Boutie, P. (1994), "Who Will Save The Brands?", *Communication World*, Vol.11, No.7, pp.24–9

Bowden, J.L.H. (2009), "The process of customer engagement: A conceptual framework", *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, Vol.17, No.1, pp.63-74.

Brodie, R.J., Ilic, A., Juric, B., and Hollebeek, L. (2011), "Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community: An exploratory analysis", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol.66, No. 1, pp. 105-114.

Chaudhuri, A. and Holbrook, M.B. (2001), "The chain of effects from brand trust and brand affect to brand performance: the role of brand loyalty", *Journal of marketing*, Vol.65, No.2, pp.81-93.

Corden, A. and Sainsbury, R. (2006), *Using verbatim quotations in reporting qualitative social research: researchers' views*, University of York, York, UK.

Creswell, J.W. and Miller, D.L. (2000), "Determining validity in qualitative inquiry", *Theory into practice*, Vol.39, No.3, pp.124-130.

Crosby, L.A., Evans, K.R. and Cowles, D. (1990), 'Relationship quality in services selling: an interpersonal influence perspective', *The journal of marketing*, pp.68-81.

Cukier, W.L., Cody, S., and Nesselroth, E.J. (2006), "Genres of spam: Expectations and deceptions", In *System Sciences, 2006. HICSS'06. Proceedings of the 39th Annual Hawaii International Conference on*, 3, 51a-51a. IEEE.

Delgado-Ballester, E. and Luis Munuera-Alemán, J. (2001), "Brand trust in the context of consumer loyalty", *European Journal of marketing*, Vol.35, No.11/12, pp.1238-1258.

Denning, P.J. (1982), "ACM president's letter: electronic junk", *Communications of the ACM*, Vol.25, No.3, pp.163-165.

Denning, P.J. (2006), "Infoglut", *Communications of the ACM*, Vol.49, No.7, pp.15-19.

Dunbar RIM. (2016), "Do online social media cut through the constraints that limit the size of offline social networks?", *Royal Society open science*, 3: 150292. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rsos.150292>

Dwyer, F.R., Schurr, P.H. and Oh, S. (1987), "Developing buyer-seller relationships", *The Journal of marketing*, pp.11-27.

Eisingerich, A. B., Chun, H. H., Liu, Y., Jia, H. M., and Bell, S. J. (2015), "Why recommend a brand face-to-face but not on Facebook? How word-of-mouth on online social sites differs from traditional word-of-mouth", *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, Vol.25, No.1, pp.120-128.

Ellison, N.B., Steinfield, C. and Lampe, C. (2007), "The benefits of Facebook "friends:" Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites". *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Vol.12, No.4, pp.1143-1168.

Ellison, N. B., Vitak, J., Gray, R., and Lampe, C. (2014), "Cultivating Social Resources on Social Network Sites: Facebook Relationship Maintenance Behaviors and their Role in Social Capital Processes", *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Vol.19, No.4, pp.855–870.

Escalas, J.E. and Bettman, J.R. (2005), "Self-construal, reference groups, and brand meaning", *Journal of consumer research*, Vol.32, No.3, pp.378-389.

Fajer, M.T., and Schouten, J. (1995), "Breakdown and dissolution in consumer-product relationships", *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol.22, No.1, pp.663-663.

Fisher, E. (2015), "'You Media': audiencing as marketing in social media", *Media, Culture & Society*, Vol.37, No.1, pp.50-67.

Fournier, S. (1998), "Consumers and their brands: developing relationship theory in consumer research", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 24 No. 3, pp. 343 – 373.

Gibbs, G. (2007), *Analysing Qualitative Data*. London: Sage, Part of the Qualitative Research Kit, ed. Flick, U.

Grégoire, Y., Tripp, T.M. and Legoux, R. (2009), "When customer love turns into lasting hate: the effects of relationship strength and time on customer revenge and avoidance", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol.73, No.6, pp.18-32.

Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (1983), *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (2nd ed.), New York: Routledge.

Hayes, J.B. (1999), *Antecedents and consequences of brand personality* (Doctoral dissertation, Mississippi State University, College of Business and Industry).

Hayes, J.B., Alford, B.L., Silver, L., and York, R.P. (2006), "Looks matter in developing consumer-brand relationships", *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, Vol.15, No.5, pp.306-315

Henry, W.A. (1980) "The effect of information-processing ability on processing accuracy", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol.7, No.1, pp.42-48.

Hess, J. and Story, J. (2005), "Trust-based commitment: multidimensional consumer-brand relationships", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol.22, No.6, pp.313-322.

Hiltz, S.R. and Plotnick, L. (2013), "Dealing with information overload when using social media for emergency management: emerging solutions", In *Proceedings of the 10th international ISCRAM conference*, pp.823-827.

Hollebeek, L. D., Glynn, M. S., and Brodie, R. J. (2014), "Consumer brand engagement in social media: Conceptualization, scale development and validation", *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, Vol.28, No.2, pp.149-165.

Hutter, K., Hautz, J., Dennhardt, S., and Füller, J. (2013), "The impact of user interactions in social media on brand awareness and purchase intention: The case of MINI on Facebook", *The Journal of Product and Brand Management*, Vol. 22, No. 5, pp. 342-351.

Iyengar, R., Han, S. and Gupta, S., (2009), "Do friends influence purchases in a social network?", *Harvard Business School Marketing Unit Working Paper*, (09-123).

Iyengar, S. S., and Lepper, M.R. (2000), "When choice is demotivating: Can one desire too much of a good thing?", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol.79, No.6, pp.995.

Jacoby, J. (1977), "Information Load and Decision Quality: Some Contested Issues", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol.14, No.4, pp.569-573.

Jevons, C. and Gabbott, M. (2000), "Trust, brand equity and brand reality in internet business relationships: an interdisciplinary approach", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol.16, No.6, pp.619-634.

Johnson, D. and Grayson, K. (2005), "Cognitive and affective trust in service relationships", *Journal of Business research*, Vol.58, No.4, pp.500-507.

Jones, Q., Ravid, G., and Rafaeli, S. (2004), "Information overload and the message dynamics of online interaction spaces: A theoretical model and empirical exploration", *Information Systems Research*, Vol.15, No.2, pp.194-210.

Kaplan, A.M. and Haenlein, M. (2010), "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media", *Business Horizons*, Vol.53, No.1, pp. 59–68.

Kelly, E.L. and Fiske, D.W. (1951). The prediction of performance in clinical psychology.

Klapp, O.E., (1986), *Overload and boredom: Essays on the quality of life in the information society*, Greenwood Publishing Group Inc.

Kroeber-Reil, W. (1991), "In der informationsflut überleben. Umfang, Wirkung und Bewältigung der steigenden informationsüberflutung", *Technologie and Management*, Vol.2, pp.14-19.

- Kuksov, D., Shachar, R., and Wang, K. (2013), "Advertising and Consumers' Communications," *Marketing Science*, Vol. 32, No. 2, pp. 294–309.
- Labrecque, L. I. (2014), "Fostering consumer–brand relationships in social media environments: The role of parasocial interaction", *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, Vol.28, No.2, pp.134-148.
- Lampe, C., Zube, P., Lee, J., Park, C. H., and Johnston, E. (2014), "Crowdsourcing civility: A natural experiment examining the effects of distributed moderation in online forums", *Government Information Quarterly*, Vol.31, No.2, pp.317-326.
- Langner, T., Bruns, D., Fischer, A., and Rossiter, J. R. (2014), "Falling in love with brands: a dynamic analysis of the trajectories of brand love", *Marketing Letters*, pp.1-12.
- Lassar, W., Mittal, B. and Sharma, A. (1995), "Measuring customer-based brand equity", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol.12, No.4, pp.11 – 20.
- Lau, G.T. and Lee, S.H. (1999), "Consumers' trust in a brand and the link to brand loyalty", *Journal of Market Focused Management*, Vol.4, No.4, pp.341 – 370.
- Leskovec, J. (2011), "Social media analytics: tracking, modeling and predicting the flow of information through networks", In *Proceedings of the 20th international conference companion on World wide web* pp. 277-278. ACM.
- Lim, L.L. and Melewar, T.C. (2011), "Digital and virtual world research on brands and marketing development", *Journal of Brand Management*, Vol.19, No.1, pp.1-3.
- Lin, H.F. and Lee, G.G. (2006), "Determinants of success for online communities: an empirical study", *Behaviour & Information Technology*, Vol.25, No.6, pp.479-488.
- Mangold, W. G. and Faulds, D. J. (2009), "Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix", *Business Horizons*, Vol. 52, No. 4, pp. 357-365
- McCormick, E. (1970), *Human Factors Engineering*, Wiley: New York
- McEwen, W.J. (2004), "Getting emotional about brands", *Gallup Management Journal*, pp.1-4.
- McKnight, D.H., Choudhury, V. and Kacmar, C. (2002), "Developing and validating trust measures for e-commerce: An integrative typology", *Information systems research*, Vol.13, No.3, pp.334-359.
- Mehta, R. and Sivadas, E. (1995), "Direct Marketing on the Internet: An Empirical Assessment of Consumer Attitudes", *Journal of Direct Marketing*, Vol.9 No.3, pp.21 -31.
- Meyer, J.A. (1998), "Information overload in marketing management", *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, Vol.16, No.3, pp.200-209.
- Miller, G.A. (1956), "The magical number seven, plus or minus two: some limits on our capacity for processing information", *Psychological Review*, Vol.63, No.2, pp.81-97.

Moorman, C., Zaltman, G. and Deshpande, R. (1992), "Relationships between providers and users of market research: The dynamics of trust within and between organizations", *Journal of marketing research*, Vol.29, No.3, p.314.

Morgan, R.M. and Hunt, S.D. (1994), "The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing", *The journal of marketing*, pp.20-38.

Morgan-Thomas, A. and Veloutsou, C. (2013), "Beyond technology acceptance: Brand relationships and online brand experience", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol.66, No.1, pp.21-27.

Mukherjee, A. and Balmer, J.M. (2007), "Preface: New frontiers and perspectives in corporate brand management: in search of a theory", *International Studies of Management & Organization*, Vol.37, No.4, pp.3-19.

Palmatier, R., Dant, R., Grewal, D. and Evans, K. (2006), "Factors influencing the effectiveness of relationship marketing: a meta-analysis", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 70, No. 2, pp. 136-153.

Palmatier, R.W., Scheer, L.K., Evans, K.R. and Arnold, T.J. (2008), "Achieving relationship marketing effectiveness in business-to-business exchanges", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol.36, No.2, pp.174-190.

Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A. and Berry, L.L. (1985), "A conceptual model of service quality and its implications for future research", *the Journal of Marketing*, pp.41-50.

Palmer, A. (1997), "Defining relationship marketing: an international perspective", *Management Decision*, Vol.35, No.4, pp.319-321.

Petric, G. (2014), "Perceived Quality of Conversations in Online Communities: Conceptual Framework, Scale Development, and Empirical Validation", *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, Vol. 17 No. 2, pp.82-90.

Putnam, R. (2001), "Social capital: Measurement and consequences", *Canadian Journal of Policy Research*, Vol.2, No.1, pp.41-51.

Qualman, E. (2010), *Socialnomics: How Social Media Transforms the Way We Live and Do Business*, John Wiley & Sons: New York.

Reutskaja, E., Nagel, R., Camerer, C. F., and Rangel, A. (2011), "Search dynamics in consumer choice under time pressure: An eye-tracking study", *The American Economic Review*, Vol.101, No.2, pp.900-926.

Rodriguez, M.G., Gummadi, K. and Schoelkopf, B. (2014), "Quantifying information overload in social media and its impact on social contagions". *arXiv preprint arXiv:1403.6838*.

Rousseau, D.M., Sitkin, S.B., Burt, R.S. and Camerer, C. (1998), "Not so different after all: A cross-discipline view of trust", *Academy of management review*, Vol.23, No.3, pp.393-404.

- Sandelowski, M. (2003), "Tables or tableaux? The challenges of writing and reading mixed methods studies", *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research*, pp.321-350.
- Saren, M. (2011), "Marketing Empowerment and Exclusion in the Information Age", *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, Vol.29, No.1, pp.39-48.
- Sayre, S. and Horne, D. (1996), "I shop, therefore I am: The role of possessions for self-definition", *Advances in consumer research*, Vol.23, No.23, pp.323-328.
- Schick, A.G., Gordon, L.A. and Haka, S. (1990), "Information overload: A temporal approach", *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, Vol.15, No.3, pp.199-220.
- Schurr, P.H. and Ozanne, J.L. (1985), "Influences on exchange processes: Buyers' preconceptions of a seller's trustworthiness and bargaining toughness", *Journal of consumer research*, Vol.11, No.4, pp.939-953.
- Schwartz, B. (2004), *The Paradox of Choice*. New York. HarperCollins.
- Shenk, D. (1997), "Data Smog: Surviving the Info Glut", *Technology Review*, Vol.100, No.4, pp.18-26.
- Shenk, D. (2003), "Information Overload Concept", *Encyclopedia of International Media and Communications*, Vol.2, No.1, pp. 395-405
- Sheridan, T.B. and Ferrell, W.R. (1974), *Man-machine systems: Information, control and decision models of human performance*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Shih, C.C. (2009), *The Facebook era: Tapping Online Social Networks to Build Better Products, Reach New Audiences, and Sell More Stuff*, Penguin: Boston.
- Shin, D., Song, J.H. and Biswas, A. (2014), "Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) generation in new media platforms: The role of regulatory focus and collective dissonance", *Marketing letters*, Vol.25, No.2, pp.153-165.
- Sirdeshmukh, D., Singh, J. and Sabol, B. (2002), "Consumer trust, value, and loyalty in relational exchanges", *Journal of marketing*, Vol.66, No.1, pp.15-37.
- Sirgy, J., Grewal, D., Mangleburg, T.F., Park, J-O., Chon, K-S., Claiborne, C.B., Johar, J.S. and Berkman, H. (1997), "Assessing the predictive validity of two methods of measuring self-image congruence", *Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol.25, No.3, pp.229 – 241.
- Sponder, M. (2012), *Social Media Analytics: Effective Tools for Building, Interpreting, and Using Metrics*, McGraw-Hill Education.
- Tuten, T., and Solomon, M. (2012), *Social Media Marketing*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Walker, R. (2008), *I'm with the Brand*, Constable: London.

Wallace, E., Buil, I. and De Chernatony, L., (2012), "Facebook 'friendship' and brand advocacy", *The Journal of Brand Management*, Vol.20 No.2, pp.128-146.

Wiertz, C. and de Ruyter, K. (2007), "Beyond the call of duty: Why customers contribute to firm-hosted commercial online communities", *Organization studies*, Vol.28, No.3, pp.347-376.

Witte, E., Joost, N. and Thimm, A.L. (1972), "Field research on complex decision-making processes-the phase theorem", *International Studies of Management & Organization*, Vol.2, No.2, pp.156-182.

Wu, J.J. and Tsang, A.S. (2008), "Factors affecting members' trust belief and behaviour intention in virtual communities", *Behaviour & Information Technology*, Vol.27, No.2, pp.115-125.

Yates, D. and Paquette, S. (2011), "Emergency knowledge management and social media technologies: A case study of the 2010 Haitian earthquake", *International journal of information management*, Vol.31, No.1, pp.6-13.

Ye, G. and Van Raaij, W.F. (2004), "Brand equity: Extending brand awareness and liking with signal detection theory", *Journal of Marketing Communications*, Vol.10 No.2, pp.95-114.

Zaglia, M.E. (2013), "Brand communities embedded in social networks", *Journal of business research*, Vol.66, No.2, pp.216-223.

Zayer, L. and Neier, S. (2011), "An exploration of men's brand relationships", *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, Vol.14, No.1, pp.83-104.

Zeltsin, Z. (2004), "General Overview of Spam and Technical Measures to Mitigate the Problem" ITU-T SG 17 Interim Rapporteur Meeting November.

Zeng, D., Chen, H., Lusch, R. and Li, S.H. (2010), "Social media analytics and intelligence", *IEEE Intelligent Systems*, Vol.25, No.6, pp.13-16.