Purchase Intention in Online Brand Communities: The Effect of Consumer Empowerment

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ÖZ

İletişim, yeni medya ve mobil uygulama teknolojilerindeki gelişmeler, tüketici deneyimini geliştirdi ve markalarla olan ilişkilerinde tüketicileri güçlendirdi. Bu çalışma, bu doğal ilerlemenin etkisini, satın alma niyetini, tüketici memnuniyetini ve markaya olan güveni dikkate alarak araştırmaktadır. Çalışmanın verileri, sosyal platformdaki birçok marka topluluğunun üyesi olan 312 Facebook kullanıcısından sağlanmıştır. Yapısal Eşitlik Modellemesi (SEM) kullanılarak gerçekleştirilen analiz, öncelikle tüketicinin güçlenmesi ve güven arasında, ikinci olarak da memnuniyet ve güven arasında anlamlı bir ilişki olduğunu göstermiştir. Memnuniyet ve güven, satın alma niyetiyle de önemli ölçüde bağlantılıdır. Bununla birlikte, sonuçlar tüketici güçlenmesi ve memnuniyeti arasında anlamlı bir ilişki göstermemiştir. Bu sonuçlar ve çıkarımları, yönetimsel öneriler ve gelecek araştırmalara yön gösterecektir.

***Anahtar Kelimeler:** Tüketicinin Güçlenmesi, Tüketici Memnuniyeti, Güven, Satın alma Niyeti*
***JEL Sınıflandırması:** M30, M31*

Çevrimiçi Marka Topluluklarında Satın Alma Niyeti: Tüketicinin Güçlenmesinin Etkisi

ABSTRACT

The developments in the technologies of communication, new media, and mobile applications evolved the consumer experience and empowered them in their relationships with the brands. This paper investigates the impact of this natural progression taking into consideration the purchase intention, consumer satisfaction and trust in the brand. The data for the study is collected from 312 Facebook users, members of many brand communities on the social platform. The analysis realized using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) showed significant relation-ship firstly between consumer empowerment and trust and secondly between satisfaction and trust. Satisfaction and trust are also significantly linked to purchase intention. However, the results showed no significant relation between empowerment and satisfaction. These results and their implications will pave the way for managerial recommendations and avenues for further research.

***Key Words:** Consumer Empowerment, Satisfaction, Trust, Purchase Intention*
***JEL Classification:** M30, M31*

INTRODUCTION

The user communities and social networks have reinforced the effect of Internet empowerment over the traditional sales channel (Labrecque et al., 2013). Researchers like Rezabakhshvd (2005) and Wathieu et al. (2002) indicated that this technological development provides consumers with new skills that give them more autonomy and control in their purchasing and consumption decisions, consequently

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a shift in the balance of power in favor of the consumer (Hsieh et al., 2022; Ellen and Mark, 1999).

In the early 2000's, Pruche (2013;12) pointed out that consumer empowerment is more specifically associated with the development of e-commerce. It allows access to information, facilitates the comparison of offers and makes the consumer more autonomous in his decision-making process (Pruche, 2013; 14). Despite the work of Hunter and Gurnefeld (2008) and Pruche, (2012) having clarified the role of empowerment in promoting consumer satisfaction or maintaining consumer trust (Akhavannasab et al., 2018; Midha, 2012; 207), little research has focused on the effect of empowerment on consumers' brand relation-ships in virtual platforms. According to Pruche et al. (2015) empowerment promoted by the Internet raises important questions for managers; it suggests a form of emancipation of consumers from the influence and control of brands in their decision-making.

The objective of this work is to address the effect of consumer empowerment on intention to purchase while highlighting the role of satisfaction and trust. The question is as follows: What is the effect of consumer empowerment in an online branding community on consumer? An empirical study was conducted among 312 Facebook users. First, we will present the conceptual framework of our research by identifying the concept of consumer empowerment, satisfaction, trust and purchase intention. The nature of the relationships between these different variables will be further clarified by reference to a theoretical base. Finally, we will present the research methodology and discuss the results.

I. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The emergence of the internet signaled the beginning of an era in which consumers play a significant role in the growth of businesses. Three crucial and valuable characteristics of the web; communication, conceptualization, and computation are involved in the business creation process (Winterich and Zhang; 2014). Consumers may simply and rapidly communicate with one another on the web, which also makes it easy for businesses to do so. The time it takes to comprehend the wants and needs of consumers is reduced by this new communication method. The envisioning of new products, new items and product attributes, is the second crucial role.

Alongside these changes, consumers are realizing that they no longer play a purely passive part in the production process (Belanche et al., 2019). Consumers now play a significant role in helping to build value through product innovation, not just at the time of the purchase. Customers are conscious of their influence in the marketplace.

Wathieu et al. (2002) and Harrison et al. (2006) argue that consumer empowerment accompanied the emergence of the internet to designate the perception of a gain in control and autonomy in decision-making, enabled by the acquisition of skills associated with the use of internet.

Thus, a consumer is better informed and more empowered to make the best consumer decisions (Del Bucchia et al., 2021; Pruche et al., 2015). To communicate

with current and potential customers, companies use several means, including online branding communities. Companies can increase consumer empowerment in online brand communities by providing transparent and accurate information about products and services, allowing for easy comparison shopping, and encouraging open communication between consumers and the company. Companies can also give the consumer a sense of control over the communication process by allowing them to give feedback, express their opinions and by giving them a sense of community by allowing them to interact with other consumers.

Indeed, businesses are beginning to recognize the importance of virtual communities used for marketing activities to maintain close relationships with consumers (Belanche et al., 2019; Palmer and Koenig-Lewis, 2009; 165). Consumer empowerment can play a significant role in determining purchase intention in online brand communities, and companies can take steps to increase consumer empowerment in order to drive sales and build customer loyalty. In this part, we will be interested in studying consumer empowerment and its impact on the relationship to the brand and on the purchase.Overall, the conceptual framework of the research on consumer empowerment can be defined as a multidimensional construct that encompasses the consumer empowerment, online branding community, satisfaction, trust and purchase intention. These dimensions interact and influence each other, creating a dynamic and complex concept of consumer empowerment. The framework helps to explain the process by which consumers can become empowered and exert influence over the marketplace through their consumption choices.

A. Consumer Empowerment

Empowerment is an English term involving the process of acquiring power and allowing an actor to take charge of the issues (professionally, economically, family, and social) that concern him. It is seen as a thoughtful individual capability that provides the opportunity to choose, decide and act to resolve any difficult situation (Zimmermann, 1995).

In marketing, empowerment reflects the ability of consumers to access, under-stand and share information (Deshpande, 2002; 229). Consumers are responsible for their consumer choices through direct access to a wide range of alternatives (Elliot, 2006). Consumer empowerment is more specifically associated with the development of e-commerce in the early 2000s, which, in addition to access to information, facilitates the comparison of offers and makes the consumer more autonomous in his decision-making process (Cyril et al., 2016; Pruche, 2013).

According to Anderson and Galinsky (2006), power enables consumers to process information, foster trust in decision-making (Brinol et al., 2007), and influence actual consumer behavior (Winterich and Zhang; 2014). Midha (2012) points out that consumer empowerment is a psychological construct linked to the individual's perception of the extent to which they can control the distribution and use of their personally identifiable information. The effect of consumer empowerment is manifested in the perception of greater autonomy in the purchasing decision-making process as a result of the improvement of the

consumer's ability to formulate and exercise choices that correspond to his personal expectations and needs (Pruche, 2013; 20).

B. The Online Branding Community

Hagel and Armstrong (1997), define that virtual communities are groups of people with common interests and needs who come together online. They are also considered to be online social entities comprising existing and potential consumers who have the objective to facilitate the exchange of opinions and information about the products and services offered (Srinivasan et al., 2002). Pruche et al. (2015) point out that brand communities not only provide companies with an additional communication channel, but also enable them to connect with dedicated users. They provide easy access to information exchange and community participation without restriction of time or space, or to acquire useful information (Kozinets et al., 2021; Palmer and Koenig-Lewis, 2009; 171). According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), relational marketing refers to marketing activities designed to establish, develop, and maintain successful relationships. It is also identified as the maintenance and enhancement of the client relationship (Berry, 1995). For his part, (Gronroos, 1996) points out that relational marketing allows to identify, maintain, and increase relationships with consumers and other partners.

C. Satisfaction

Satisfaction is a psychological, post-purchase and relative condition. This concept can be explained from two perspectives: relational and transactional. According to Delafrooz et al. (2011), the first perspective considers satisfaction as a continuous global assessment of the company's or brand's ability to deliver the profits sought by the customer. While for Garbarino and Johnson (2015), the transactional perspective is a posterior and inherent state of a specific, time-bound transaction that can be defined as an immediate post-purchase appraisal judgment or an emotional reaction to the transaction with the most recent firm. In marketing, this concept has been studied in the context of business-consumer exchanges (Richard, 1993, 223).

Bloemer (2002) noted that satisfaction can be a process of comparing perceived performance with consumer expectations based on the paradigm of non-confirmation of expectations. It may be the result of a lived consumption experience. Satisfaction can be interpreted as a general assessment of consumers' experience with the website (Anderson and Srinivasan, 2003). It is considered pure emotion (Fournier and Glen, 1999; Arnould and Price, 2003), exclusive of any cognitive process, and even one emotion among others (Bagozzi et al., 1999). Several researchers have been interested in addressing online satisfaction. Anderson and Srinivasan (2003) identify as a sense of consumer satisfaction with an online consumer experience. It is also seen as an overall assessment of the site's ability to meet the needs and expectations of online users.

D. Trust

Gurviez and Korchia (2002), affirm that trust is as a psychological state affecting the intention of the behavior, which could result in a presumption, expectation (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002; Perrien et al., 1999) or a belief in the ex-

change partner (Sirieix and Dubois, 1999; Ganesan, 1994). Referring to literature, researchers such as (McKnight et al., 2002) identified two dominant conceptions of trust. The former is trust with cognitive expectation or emotional feeling, while the latter is a risk-taking behavior or willingness to engage in such behavior. Kim and Stoel (2017) consider trust to have three dimensions: goodwill (attention to the interests of others), competence (technical skills and expertise) and integrity (honoring commitments).

Online, trust has been addressed by several marketing researchers. According to Kim and Stoel (2017), it is expressed as the ability to provide secure transactions and strong privacy policies. It plays a major role in explaining the intent to purchase online (Liu et al., 2019; Yoon and Sung-Joon, 2002). Chouk and Perrien (2005) identify online trust as all positive expectations of the merchant's competence and expertise, the fulfillment of its commitments, the motivation to help the consumer in the event of a problem, and the attention paid to its interests. There are four relational features that can improve online customer trust: quality of communication, social presence, quality of support and virtual community (Toufaily et al., 2009; 202).

E. Purchase Intention

Fichbein and Ajzen (1975) identify purchase intention as a conative component between attitude and behavior. It is activated by desire or need. According to Garbarino abd Johnson (2015) the purchase intention is more than a desire and not a promise to buy. Online, it has been involved in e-commerce with the intention of recommending, purchasing, or repurchasing and revisiting the site (Chouk and Perrien, 2005). According to Ling et al. (2010), it refers to the situation in which a client is prepared to engage in an online transaction.

Figure 1. The conceptual model
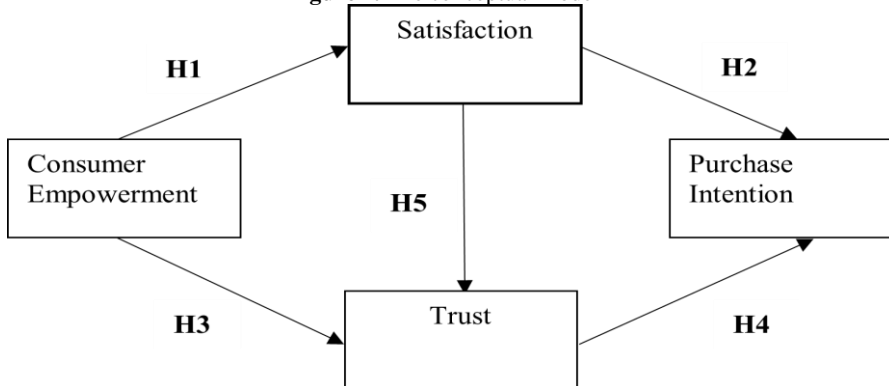
Source: Author's own model

II. RESEARCH MODEL

The conceptual model of our research studies the impact of consumer empowerment in an online branding community on intention to buy while highlighting the role of satisfaction and trust. The relationships are expressed by the following assumptions:

Several researchers have addressed the relationship between empowerment and satisfaction. Indeed, Pruche, (2012; 16) expressed that buyer with more power are more satisfied with their decision, resulting in greater satisfaction with the service provider on a website. To improve consumer satisfaction, the company needs to control how information is presented (Huffman et al., 1998). Hunter and Gurnefeld (2008) argue that better informed consumers should be able to make better choices by promoting greater satisfaction. This led us to propose the following hypothesis

H1: Psychological empowerment positively affects satisfaction

The relationship between satisfaction and purchase intent was addressed by several researchers. According to Jeong et al. (2003), satisfaction is an important factor in predicting online behavioral intentions. This relationship has been verified by several researchers such as (Khalifa and Liu, 2007; Alegre and Cladera, 2009; Raza et al., 2012), which emphasized that intention depends on several factors, including satisfaction and attitude. The assumption for this effect is as follows:

H2: Satisfaction has a positive effect on the purchase intention.

Deshpande (2002) argue that consumer empowerment is helping to improve consumers' ability to access, understand and share information and make transactions simpler. Empowerment gives consumers the ability to control their private information, which can create a competitive advantage, increase customer trust (VanDyke et al., 2007). Khong et al. (2013) indicate that consumer empowerment is a significant predictor of trust and reliability. However, when consumers feel powerless or lack sufficient power, trustworthy business relationships are impossible. The following hypothesis therefore follows:

H3: Consumer empowerment has a positive impact on the trust of Internet users.

By referring to the marketing literature, several researchers have shown the positive impact of consumer trust on their intention to buy online. Researchers like (McKnight et al., 2002; Jarvenpaa, 1999) have shown that trust positively influences customers' online purchasing intentions. Kim and Park (2017) explain the relationship between trust and intent to purchase on the Internet by the fact that consumers who have more trust in e-commerce sites are more likely to spread positive word of mouth and increase their purchases via these platforms. According to Hajli et al. (2015; 138) consumer trust in social networks increases their purchasing intent. Consumers who do not trust sellers in social media platforms are less willing to engage in internet shopping (Hajli et al., 2015). Based on this research, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4: Trust has a positive effect on purchase intention

There is controversy about the relationship between satisfaction and trust. On the one hand, researchers such as Allagui and Temessek (2005) have identified trust as a determinant of satisfaction. They explain this by the fact that the consumer who feels satisfied is the one who expresses a higher level of trust in the brand. On the other hand, researchers such as Garbarino and Johnson (2015) have pointed out that satisfaction is closely linked to trust. It can better predict future brand

performance and reduce transaction risks (Henning-Thurau et al., 2002). For their part, Lankton et al., (2010) point out that online trust will only be improved by satisfaction so the higher the satisfaction, the more trust this will foster. This leads us to the following hypothesis:

H5: Satisfaction has a positive effect on trust

III. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

The objective of this study is to analyze the impact of consumer empowerment on the consumer's purchase intention while highlighting the role of satisfaction and trust. In this section, we will provide an overview of sample, data collection, variable measurement, and results.

The questionnaire is pretested as Igalens and Roussel (2009) point out, the questionnaire can only take place after ascertaining the facial validity of its contents. A total of 27 participants had the opportunity to visit the chosen brands Facebook pages and mention «likes» for the social network and then answer the online questionnaire sent to them by private message. It is distributed to 425 members of the online branding communities from different sectors of which 312 responses have been collected. It noted that the sampling method used is snowball. The following table presents the different characteristics of the sample:

Table 1. The characteristics of the sample

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Age	Under 20	73	23.3%
	Between 20 and 29 years	168	53.8%
	Between 30 and 39 years	43	13.8%
	Between 40 and 49 years	11	3.7%
	Between 50 and 59 years	13	4.1%
	Over 60 years	4	1.3%
Gender	Man	125	40.1%
	Woman	187	59.9%
Socioprofessional Category	Students/High School	234	75%
	Unemployed	7	2.3%
	Retired	11	3.5%
	Housewife	5	1.6%
	Employee/Executive	55	17.6%

To measure empowerment, we referred to the Spreitzer (1995) which is constructed of three dimensions (competence, autonomy, impact). Each dimension consists of three items. To measure satisfaction on an online social network, we refer to the Ha and Stoel (2012) scale of three items. Chouk and Perrien (2005) allowed us to measure trust. This scale is composed of three dimensions (credibility, goodwill, integrity). The credibility dimension consists of 5 items; goodwill consists of four items and three items for integrity. The online consumer's intent to purchase was measured by the Moon and Kim (2001) scale, which consists of four items.

First, we began with an exploratory analysis (PCA) to reduce the information in a set of observable variables to a reduced set of components (Fornell

and Larcker, 1981). Subsequently, we carried out a confirmatory analysis which makes it possible to test the convergent and discriminating validity of the measurement scales. We ended with the structural equation method to test the research hypotheses SPSS is used for exploratory analysis and AMOS for confirmatory analysis.

A. Scales

The table below illustrates the results of exploratory and confirmatory analysis of the measurement scales.

Table 2. Treatment of measurement scales

Scale	Purification		Factors	Reliability	Validity	
	ACP	**AFC**			**Convergent**	**Discriminant**
Empowerment	**KMO**=0.726 **Bartlett**=0.000 **Variance explained**=68.596%	**X²/ddl** =2.236 **GFI =** 0.955 **AGFI =** 0.896 **RMSEA** =0.088 (9 items)	**Competence**	α= 0.794 ρ= 0.759	**ρvc**=0.613	Discriminant Validity is verified
			Autonomy	α = 0.743 ρ= 0.623	**ρvc**=0.461	
			Impact	α = 0.670 ρ=0.798	**ρvc**=0.664	
Satisfaction	**KMO**=0.693 **Bartlett**=0.000 **Variance explained**=77.055%			α = 0.850 ρ=0.857	**ρvc**=0.670	-
Trust	**KMO**=0.828 **Bartlett**=0.000 **Variance explained**=63.189%	**X²/ddl** =0.692 **GFI =** 0.995 **AGFI =** 0.984 **RMSEA** =0.000 (6 items)	**Integrity-** **Goodwill**	α =0.835 ρ =0.673	**ρvc**=0.509	Discriminant Validity is verified
			Credibility	α =0.777 ρ =0.794	**ρvc**=0.494	
Purchase Intent	**KMO**=0.664 **Bartlett**=0.000 **Variance explained**=60.355%			α =0.671 ρ =0.672	**ρvc**=0.406	

Consumer empowerment: the KMO (0.726) and the Bartlett test (X^2=1063.530, ddl=36, p=0.000) result in an average predisposition of the data to be factored. So the conditions of factoring variables are checked. The null hypothesis that there is no significant correlation in the data matrix is rejected. A PCA extracts three factors that account for 68.596% of the total variance.

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According to the theoretical approach, the results obtained in this context among Internet users correspond well to the three dimensions described and measured by Pu et al. (2015).

The confirmatory factor analysis carried out on this scale shows an unsatisfactory quality of adjustment. A second confirmatory factorial analysis was carried out, led us to eliminate item 7 «I had an influence on the development of the choice of products of the brand that I made» because it has a low factorial contribution (0.1). We then proceed to analyze the error term change indices to improve the model fit indices. A third confirmatory factorial analysis was carried out and allowed us to eliminate item 6 «I do not rely on the opinion of Internet users to make my decisions regarding the purchase of the products of the brand» because it is strongly correlated with four errors of the items of empowerment. Similarly for item 1«I am confident in my ability to choose the product offer on the company's social network that meets my expectations» which is strongly correlated with two errors in items of this scale. After the elimination of these two items, another confirmatory factor analysis led us to add two relationships between the error terms of item 3 «I obtained the necessary information in order to evaluate the alternatives and to make the right choice of the offer of the brand» and 9 « I had a significant impact on the content of the offer of products of the brand that I made» as well as between item 3 and 4 «I made my choice of products of the brand independently without letting me be influenced by the advice of other Internet users» then that they are strongly correlated. The results of the respective model show a very good fit quality. The analysis of reliability and Rho of Jöreskog is good. The convergent validity as well as the discriminant validity is satisfactory.

The satisfaction: the KMO (0.693) and the Bartlett test (X^2= 430.484, ddl=3, p = 0.000) indicate a satisfactory predisposition of the data to be factored. A PCA extracts a single factor that accounts for 77.055% of the total variance. The confirmatory factorial analysis does not give adjustment indices because it is a well-identified model that consists of three items. The convergent validity 705ort he705 scale is good as it exceeds 0.5 (0.670). This scale indicates a very good internal consistency which is 0.857.

Trust: we ensured that there is a predisposition of the data to be factored KMO (0.828) and Bartlett's test (X^2=1589.069, ddl=66, p=0.000). A PCA extracts two factors that account for 56.12% of the total variance. Items 3 «I can count on this online company to complete my transactions according to the promised deadlines» and 9 «In case of problems, the social network page of the brand suggests that the company would be receptive» were eliminated respectively for low communality (0,34 et 0,4). After the elimination of these items, another PCA was performed on the remaining ten items which allow the improvement of the explained variance of (60.732%), item 12 «the promised service corresponds to the description presented on the social network of this company» was eliminated for low level of representation which is (0.448). The explained variance increased to 63.189% of the total information.

The trust scale does not follow normality, this is justified by a Mardia coefficient equal to 24,181 which is greater than 3 and also not significant (t=14,882 >1.96). Later the comparison of the two results that of maximum likelihood and boostrap, showed that the gap (<0.01) which shows the stability of the results. This stability on the different samples, which is derived by the bootstrap procedure (250), has allowed us to limit the interpretation according to the maximum likelihood. The confirmatory factor analysis carried out on this scale shows an unsatisfactory quality of adjustment.

The first confirmatory factorial analysis leads us to eliminate item 8 «In case of problems, I think it is easy to file a complaint» for a low factor contribution of 0.385. After the elimination of this item, we noticed that the indices of the quality of fit of the model remain unsatisfactory, so we proceed to analyze the indices of modification of the error terms. The second confirmatory factor analysis allowed us to eliminate two items: Item 6 «the company social network shows interest in solving my problems» because its error term is strongly correlated with the two dimensions of the scale and item 11 «The company social network meets its commitments in terms of transaction rates» because its error term is strongly correlated with the errors of the other four items. After removing these two items, a third confirmatory factor analysis allowed us to add a relationship between the error terms of item1 «I think this online company is very competent in its field of activity» and item 2 «the company's social network demonstrates that it is an expert in its field» because they have the highest correlation. The results of the respective model have a very good fit quality as shown in the Table 2. The internal coherence and the convergent validity of the two dimensions are satisfactory. As for discriminant validity, it is also validated since we found that the squared correlation coefficient between constructs is lower than the Rho of convergent validity [69].

Intent to purchase: the KMO is (0.664) and the Bartlett sphericity test (X^2= 142.878, ddl = 6, p = 0.000) indicate a satisfactory factorial solution of the data to be factored. The null hypothesis stating that there is no significant correlation in the data matrix is then eliminated. The purchase intent scale is not sufficiently internally consistent (0.448). A first PCA extracts a single factor that accounts for 46.375% of the total variance. Item 3 was eliminated for low-level communities (0.092). After this item was removed, a new analysis was conducted. The last PCA performed on the remaining three items allows the value of the percentage of variance explained to be improved (60.355%). All items designed to measure this variable have factorial contributions greater than 0.7. The confirmatory factorial analysis of the intent to purchase does not give adjustment indices because it is a fairly identified model that is composed of three items.

Finally, we performed an analysis of the overall measurement model to ensure that it was adjusted properly. As shown in the table below, the adjustment indices are quite satisfactory, although some are far from the acceptable limit. The GFI, AGFI, TLI and CFI values are well below 0.9 due to the complexity of our model. However, our model is parsimonious, since the normalized chi-squared has a low value (2.175), which is in line with the most stringent conditions and the

value of BIC and CAIC is much lower than that of the saturated model and other values are within the standards

Table 3. Global Measurement Model Adjustment Indices

Absolute indices				Incremental indices					
X^2	GFI	AGFI	DPR	RMSEA	TLI	CFI	X^2/ddl	BIC	CAIC
1.729.933 ddl=250 p = .000	0 729	0 620	0.08	0.06	0.729	0.762	2.175	2.306.015 Ms 2.002.028	2407015 Ms 2.353.028

The table 3 shows that the structural model has a good fit as the indices generated exceed the thresholds generally adopted in the research

B: Structural Model

Table 4 below shows that all hypothetical relationships are verified except for hypothesis H1.

Table 4. The direct effects of the structural model

Assumptions	Causal links	Structural Standardized links	CR	P	Significance
H1	Satisfaction <— Empowerment	0.203	1.575	0.115	Not significant
H2	intention <— satisfaction	0.691	5.024	***	Significant
H3	trust <— empowerment	1.085	9.014	***	Significant
H4	trust <— satisfaction	0.334	3.846	***	Significant
H5	intention <— trust	-0.692	-4228	***	Significant

IV. DISCUSSION

In the marketing world, several researchers have pointed out that empowerment strengthens the effect of satisfaction, including Ramani and Kumar (2008). Pu et al. (2015) explain this by the fact that the feeling of satisfaction that results from empowerment is due to the mechanism of psychological appropriation that promotes an internal attribution «the decision belongs to me» therefore the feeling of satisfaction increases. However, in this context, consumer empowerment has no significant effect on satisfaction. This is explained by the subjectivity of the responses collected from the users interviewed who are members of the online branding community. It is explained by the fact that the personal effectiveness of these Internet users in carrying out certain tasks such as co-creating services with this company, the ability to influence other members by giving their opinions regarding the purchase of some products or to give criticisms regarding the content of the online community do not necessarily express their satisfaction. Moreover, the freedom of choice and sense of control that express the members of this community do not necessarily lead to their satisfaction.

Researchers like Pu et al. (2015) have shown that online satisfaction is a determinant of the intention to purchase on the internet. As part of our research, we have validated this hypothesis. The empirical results of our research have led us to consider that Internet users who belong to the online community, who think of making online orders or purchasing operations are generally those who are satisfied with the services provided by the company or by the community. Therefore, knowing the needs of consumers and how to provide better service will increase the opportunities to make purchasing decisions.

VanDyke et al. (2007) and Khong et al. (2013) said empowerment has a positive and significant effect on trust. The empirical results of our work confirmed what has been mentioned in previous work. This is explained by the fact that maintaining power by members of the online branding community will allow them to feel that they have more privacy with the company or with the brand itself. Indeed, the belief of these Internet users that they possess personal efficiency and that they are also actors in the community will help to foster the feeling of trust. On the other hand, the ability to influence other members and have more control in the community will increase trust. We can therefore conclude that when e-consumers become co-actors by collaborating with the company, share information about the brand or the community and give recommendations. As a result, it will provide consumers with greater reliability, simpler transactions, and a competitive advantage for the business.

Previous work has mentioned the positive relationship between online trust and the purchasing intention of Internet users. Among the researchers who verified this relationship we can mention McKnight et al. (2002), Delafrooz et al. (2011), Kim et al. (2008). Contrary to what has been verified in the literature, the empirical results show that the relationship is significant but in the opposite direction. We can explain this by the fact that internet users who express their purchase decisions via the online community are those who approve of their beliefs of trust and reliability towards the company. They also have positive expectations of the company that it will succeed in ensuring the delivery of the products in good condition and in accordance with what has been described on its social network page.

The empirical results of our research are consistent with the literature (Ribbink et al., 2004; Park and Stoel, 2005). These works emphasized that satisfaction acts positively and significantly on trust. In this context this is explained by the fact that members of the online community only express their feelings of trust in the brand if they are really satisfied. To do this, the company must make efforts to win the trust of the customers by protecting their private data, ensuring the delivery of the selected articles according to the description indicated on the page of the social network, respecting the delivery deadlines, and offering good quality products.

V. CONCLUSIONS

We conducted an empirical study of a sample of 312 users from an online branding community. The results of our work have confirmed what has been mentioned in previous work regarding the impact of satisfaction on intention to purchase, the impact of consumer empowerment on trust, the impact of trust on the intention to purchase and the effect of satisfaction on trust. However, we have verified that consumer empowerment has no significant effect on satisfaction. It would therefore be interesting for the company to consider efforts to ensure the satisfaction of their customers by meeting their needs, offer promotional offers, provide a better quality of products and services, update the content of information by putting up recent publications and new information regarding the new offers that

will be available in the online community. This will help to strengthen the capacity of members to be more active and to exercise more control.

For Liu and Mattila (2017), the increase in consumer autonomy and control provided by the internet was often considered as a threat by managers because it was associated with less influence on purchasing behavior and greater customer volatility. Based on the empirical results of this work, we have found that the purchasing or non-purchasing decisions that are expressed by e-consumers are the ones that will determine their trust in the company. When the company offers the opportunity for members of its virtual community to exercise their power by collaborating with it, sharing their ideas, participating in the creation of content, this will increase their belief in the credibility of the company. Indeed, the identification of the consequences that result from empowerment and their impact on the intention to purchase allows the company to determine the way in which will help e-consumers to make their purchasing decisions. In addition, the development of an online community of participatory consumers who are committed to the brand is a powerful marketing tool that will help build stronger relationships between consumers and that in turn increases trust and brand loyalty. Marketers are advised to develop a sense of power and personalized messages to improve click rates and online shopping.

As future research paths, we propose to test our theoretical model on a wider sample of Internet users, to treat the effect of empowerment on other variables such as online experience towards brand, fidelity and to introduce moderating or mediating variables between the different relationships of our theoretical model.

Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Beyanı
Makalenin tüm süreçlerinde Yönetim ve Ekonomi Dergisi'nin araştırma ve yayın etiği ilkelerine uygun olarak hareket edilmiştir.

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