



Brand Resonance Behavior among Online Brand Community

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ABSTRACT

Brand commitment studies had gained considerable attention in today's marketing practices. Sustaining the brand competitive advantages become challenging especially in the context of digital marketing. Development of Web 2.0 that enables interactive communication had offered a new mechanism for owner of the brand to strengthen the bond among their admirers and users via online brand community. Attitude and behavior of online brand community members can be crucial to overall brand competitive advantage. This is because brand image and reputation can be praised or tarnished just by one click from the members. Hence, owner of the brand should understand how online brand community commitment could affect overall brand performance. This study attempts to examine how brand trust and brand community commitment among online brand community will affect their brand resonance behavior namely brand referral and intention to purchase new product of the brand in the future. The study among 167 members of online brand community indicate that brand trust and brand community commitment play a significant roles in determining brand community behavior such as brand referral and intention to purchase new product. Discussion and recommendation for future research direction also were discussed in this article.

Keywords: Online Brand Community, Brand Resonance Behavior, Brand Loyalty

JEL Classifications: M31, M37

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, social media becomes one of the popular tools for communication among practitioners especially in disseminating information on organization, products and services. It is recorded more and more organizations had benefited from usage of social media as a tool of communication to their stakeholders especially consumers. In line with the development of Web 2.0, communication through online is no longer a one-way communication (Mangold and Flauds, 2009). Social media today (Web 2.0 based) such as Facebook, Blogs, Instagram and many more enable more interactive, two-way communication between organization (owner of the brand) with consumers as well as between consumers and consumers. As a result, most organizations have their own online brand community either from organization or consumers'- initiated brand communities.

Despite the growing important of online brand community and/or social media as new tool for integrated marketing communication, little focus had been done to understand contribution of online brand community to overall brand success, especially when

consumers or members of community becomes more engage and committed towards certain brand. In essence, social media contributes to favorable brand resonance behavior among consumers. Previous studies attempted to examine the predictors and consequences of brand community commitment among cosmetics, software, travel, food and restaurants, luxury fashion, computer hardware and software, theme park and mobile phone online communities (Merisavo and Raulas, 2004; Casalo et al., 2010b; Cheung et al., 2008; Kim et al., 2008; Carlson et al., 2008; Hur et al., 2011; Thompson and Sinha, 2008). The mixed results from previous studies suggested the urgency of the study to broaden the study into new context and sample with additional predictors and consequences (Casalo et al., 2010b; Cheung et al., 2008; Kim et al., 2008). Based on the previous literatures, the predictors identified such as trust (Casalo et al., 2011; Fuller et al., 2008; Hur et al., 2011) perceived usefulness (Casalo et al., 2011; 2010b), identification (Casalo et al., 2010b; Fuller et al., 2008; Carlson et al., 2008) and participation (Shang et al., 2006; Thompson and Sinha, 2008; Madupu and Cooley, 2010). Among the highlighted outcomes are brand loyalty (Merisavo and Raulas, 2004; Jang et al., 2008; Madupu and Cooley, 2010; Stokburger-

Sauer; 2010), brand recommendation (Madupu and Cooley, 2010; Casalo et al., 2010), word-of mouth (Kim et al., 2008; Carlson et al., 2008; Hur et al., 2011), intention to purchase/repurchase (Casalo et al., 2010a, 2010b; Kim and Ko, 2012; Kim et al., 2008; Hur et al., 2011) and new product/innovation related adoption (Thompson and Sinha, 2008; Fuller et al., 2008).

Based on the previous researches, researchers are at an agreement that brand community commitment will lead to several brand resonance behavior such as brand loyalty, brand recommendation and brand satisfaction. This is consistent with Muniz and O'Quinn (2001) that suggested brand community will affect all those four major brand equity dimensions, namely; perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand awareness and brand association. This study, however, attempts to extend the knowledge and integrate whether brand community activities and behaviors also could influence brand referral and intention to purchase new product of the brand in the future. As previous studies predominantly discussed on users/admirers' behavior of their current product usage, this study attempts to investigate users/admirers' attitude and behavior towards future product adoption on particular brand. Underpinned by trust-commitment theory (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), this study also integrate trust to brand community and brand community commitment in the overall model. This study could benefit the new product manager to manipulate the power of online brand community commitment to facilitate the new product adoption and spreading positive recommendation (i.e., brand referral).

Based on the preceding discussion, the objectives of this study are:

- i. To examine the direct relationship between brand trust, brand community commitment on brand referral.
- ii. To determine the direct relationship between brand trust and brand community commitment on intention to purchase new product.
- iii. To investigate indirect effect of the relationship between brand trust, brand community commitment on brand referral.
- iv. To investigate indirect effect of relationship between brand trust and brand community commitment on intention to purchase new product.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Online community is defined as an aggregation of people who share a common interest and communicate through electronic mailing lists, chat rooms, Internet user groups or any other computer-mediated mechanism (Kim et al., 2008). Stokburger-Sauer (2010) defined brand community as a group of users and admirers of the brand who engage jointly in group actions to accomplish collective goals and/or to express mutual sentiments and commitments. This is consistent with Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) who refer brand community as "a specialized, non-geographical bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of the brand (p.412)." Taken these definitions into account, hence, this article defines online brand communities as a social relationship among users and admirers of the brand to accomplish collective goals and/or to express mutual sentiments and commitments via online.

2.1. Intention to Purchase New Product

Adoption is defined as the mental process through which an individual passes from first hearing about an innovation to final adoption (Rogers, 1983). In this definition, final adoption means that the consumer decides to make full and regular use of the product. New products, especially technology needs a special or superior to make it be noticeable to the public. As such, this study hopes that brand community (as an opinion leader) could facilitated the adoption by examining the intention to purchase of new product based on the attitude and behavior (such as brand trust and commitment) formed from the brand community activities. As brand community typically created to facilitate members to discuss, share, comment and suggest on current product/brand usage, therefore this study focus on intention rather than actual behavior. This is because, according to Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), intention is the best predictors for actual behavior. As previous literatures predominantly highlighted the effect of brand community commitment on brand loyalty aspect such a brand satisfaction, brand repurchase, brand recommendation and little is understood on how brand community commitment could influence adoption of the new products as well as brand referral. This is because brand community recognize as opinion leader for specific product category for potential consumers who seek for information for a new product (Sohn, 2005; Fournier and Lee, 2009). Thus, brand community commitment also believed not only to sustain the brand loyalty but could be leveraged for adoption of new product (Thompson and Sinha, 2008) and brand referral behavior (Shaari and Ahmad, 2016).

2.2. Brand Referral

Chatterjee (2011) propose that highly committed members (i.e., high in share-of-post) in online brand community tend to be more knowledgeable, loyal to the brand and passively react to competing brand. Hence, these members tend to be more engaged and willing to recommend and higher in term of brand referral to other members. Consistent with Becerra and Badrinarayanan (2013), Shaari and Ahmad (2016) refer brand recommendation behavior as brand evangelism behavior. Brand evangelism behavior is refers to the user of the brand or product that volunteers their time and resources recommending the use of that product or brand (Collins and Murphy, 2009).

2.3. Brand Trust

Brand trust refers to willingness of the average consumers to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its state function (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Brand trust received considerable attention in business-to-business context mainly to establish long-term marketing relationship, stable transactions and committed relationships (McDonald, 1981). According to Doney and Cannon (1997), trust involves the element of "calculative process" whereby, people tends to commit to the relationship based on cost versus benefit evaluation. Fuller et al. (2008) added that brand trust is reflecting on how consumer believed that brand is delivering the brand promise accordingly. The higher the tendency the brand to keeps it promise, the more customers loyal to the brand. In the context of this study, it is postulated, the more customer trust toward the brand, the higher their brand commitment and the higher their tendencies to recommend the brand to other and adopt new product of that particular brand.

2.4. Brand Community Commitment

Brand community commitment refers to the extent of member psychological attachment to an online community and their belief in the value of the relationship (Kim et al., 2008). Kim et al. (2008) argued that concept of commitment is need urgently be employed in the online environment as customers more Internet-dependent for information and purchases. Everything included the brand switching could be done as a simple as one click. Thus warrant organization to have deeper understanding on how commitment is develop and how it affects consumers' behavioral intention especially in online context.

Based on the antecedents and consequences highlighted above, this study attempt to simultaneously link the relationship between brand trust, brand referral and intention to adopt new product. This study also attempts to examine the mediating effect of brand community commitment of hypothesized relationship.

2.5. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development

Based on the preceding discussion, the following Figure 1 summarized the propose model of the study:

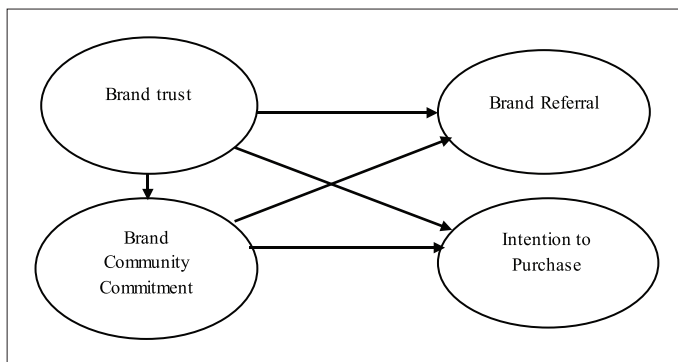
Hence, it is hypothesized that:

- H1: Brand trust has a significant relationship on brand referral
- H2: Brand trust has a significant relationship on brand community commitment
- H3: Brand community commitment has a significant relationship on brand referral
- H4: Brand community commitment mediate the relationship between brand community commitment and brand referral
- H5: Brand trust has a significant relationship on intention to purchase new product
- H6: Brand community commitment has a significant relationship on intention to purchase new product
- H7: Brand community commitment mediate the relationship between brand trust and intention to purchase new product.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study is cross-sectional study and based on non-contrived setting. A self-administered questionnaires were distributed to respondents through mall intercept. Initially, the data collection was set to be based on online data collection. However, permission

Figure 1: Propose model



from selected online brand communities' administrators was not granted during the preliminary meeting. As a result, researchers decide to employ mall intercept as proposed by the online brand communities' administrators. Six shopping malls in Kedah, Penang and Perak were approached. The selection of such shopping malls is because of its major attraction for local community. As there is no systematic number of members of each brand community and are unknown, thus, the sample selection is based on Green (1991) rule of thumb, a sample size for examining relationship should be larger than 50. Green suggest that $N > 50 + 8m$ (where m is the number of IVs). This study consists of two independent variables, thus adequate sample size should be 66 $[50 + 8(2)]$. In considering a low response rate for mall intercept survey (Homik and Ellis, 1988), 300 questionnaires were distributed in six major shopping malls in Taiping, Kulim, Sungai Petani, Penang and Alor Setar. Respondents were randomly selected during their checkout from the shopping mall. Every 10th shoppers were approached. Screening procedures i.e., only respondents identified as members in any online brand community were selected. However, based on data screening, only 167 responses were usable. Hence, percentage of usable is 55.7%. The percentage of usable rate is consider acceptable that is consistent with Hornik and Ellis (1988), that response rate for mall intercept is lower than other survey methods. The remaining data could not be further analyzed due to too many missing values and unanswered.

The questionnaire consisted of several sections mainly to gain information regarding consumers' belief, attitude and behavior towards their online brand community. The first part detailing members' demographic profiles including; gender, ethnicity, income and education attainment mainly in dichotomous scale. The second part comprises the measurement for brand trust, brand community commitment, brand referral and intention to purchase new product of the brand. The measure for online brand community commitment and brand trust were adapted from Hur et al. (2011) with 4 items and three items respectively. Brand referral measurement were adopted from Becerra and Badrinarayanan (2013) with 5 items. Measure on intention to purchase new product was adapted from Casalo et al. (2010b). All measurements are in 5-point Likert scale. This study employed SPSS 22.0 and SmartPLS 2.0 for data analysis.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' profile of this study is presented as in Table 1. Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents were female (62.9%) and from generation Y (aged between 16 and 25 years old) (59.3%). In term of ethnicity, majority of the respondents were Malays (72.5%) followed by Chinese (19.8%), Indian (6%) and other ethnic from Sabah and Sarawak (1.8%). Most of the respondents were degree holders (37.7%) and diploma holders (33.5%). More than half of the respondents were students (55.7%), followed by private sector employees (34.1%), government servants (6.6%) and self-employed (3.6%). Majority of the respondents earned <RM1000 specifically for students, followed by RM1001 to RM2000 (38.3%) and RM2001 to RM3000 (16.2%). Another 10.8% of the respondents have more than RM3000 monthly income.

Table 1: Respondent's profile

Category	Frequency (%)
Gender	
Male	62 (37.1)
Female	105 (62.9)
Age (years)	
16-25	99 (59.3)
26-35	45 (26.9)
36-45	23 (13.8)
46-55	-
Above 55	-
Ethnicity	
Malay	121 (72.5)
Chinese	33 (19.3)
Indian	10 (6.0)
Other	3 (1.8)
Academic attainment	
Certificate	44 (26.3)
Diploma	56 (33.5)
Degree	63 (37.7)
Post-graduate	3 (1.8)
Other	1 (0.6)
Occupation	
Government servant	11 (6.6)
Private worker	57 (34.1)
Self-employed	6 (3.6)
Student	93 (55.7)
Other	-
Income	
<RM1000	58 (34.7)
RM1001-RM2000	64 (38.3)
RM2001-RM3000	27 (16.2)
RM3001-RM4000	9 (5.4)
RM4001-RM5000	4 (2.4)
Above RM5000	5 (3.0)

4.1. Validity and Reliability

Validation of measurement was assessed through measurement model while the hypotheses were tested using structural model. Validation of measure included convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability that measure the goodness of the items and they will be assessed before testing the hypotheses. Reliability of all the constructs were observed through composite reliability. Two items of brand referral were dropped due to low loading value. Other constructs were remained as proposed. The Table 2 summarized the result where all value above the acceptable value (0.6) (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988) after deleting two items.

Convergent validity is addressed through measurement model (Coltman et al., 2008). It was evaluated using average variance extracted (AVE) as suggested by Fornell and Larcker, (1981). Following Chin (1998)'s recommendation, all latent constructs is above 0.50 (Table 2). Discriminant validity also following suggestion of Fornell and Larcker (1981). This was accomplished by comparing squared correlation of the paired construct with the AVEs of each construct. To achieve adequate discriminant validity, the square root of the AVE should be greater than the correlation among the latent constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Based on Table 3, all values of square root of AVE is greater than the value of correlation of latent construct thus suggest adequate discriminant validity.

Table 2: Construct and measurement items

Construct	Items	Loading	AVE	CR
Brand trust	BII1	0.810238	0.679513	0.864041
	BII2	0.803441		
	BII3	0.858216		
Brand community commitment	BIV1	0.709768	0.640145	0.876284
	BIV2	0.850013		
	BIV3	0.833015		
	BIV4	0.800235		
Brand referral	BVI1	0.877725	0.736287	0.892896
	BVI2	0.914721		
	BVI3	0.775722		
Intention to purchase	BV1	0.871086	0.783381	0.935262
	BV2	0.914326		
	BV3	0.914211		
	BV4	0.838428		

AVE: Average variance extracted, CR: Composite reliability

Table 3: Discriminant validity

Variables	Brand community commitment	Brand referral	Brand trust	Intention to purchase
Brand community commitment	0.800091			
Brand referral	0.585085	0.858072		
Brand trust	0.552726	0.485628	0.824326	
Intention to purchase	0.538475	0.470547	0.394127	0.885088

The data was analyzed using SmartPLS 2.0 and SPSS 22.0. The result is shown as in the following Figure 2 and Table 4. Based on the proposed model, there are five proposed direct relationships and two indirect relationships with dealing with mediation effect of brand community commitment on brand referral and intention to purchase new product. Hypothesis 1 predicted that brand trust is positively relate to brand referral. Table 4 revealed that brand trust significantly affect brand referral ($\beta = 0.233$, $t = 2.905$, $P < 0.05$). Hypothesis 2 proposed that brand trust would significantly affect brand community commitment. Table 4 showed that brand trust significantly affect brand community commitment ($\beta = 0.553$, $t = 9.431$, $P < 0.01$). Hypothesis 3 regarding the relationship between brand community commitment and brand referral. Based on the result ($\beta = 0.456$, $t = 5.424$, $P < 0.01$), brand community commitment has a significant positive relationship with brand referral. Hence, H1, H2 and H3 were supported. Overall, brand trust and brand community commitment explain 40% of variance in brand referral.

Consistent with expectation, the higher the trust of the members towards the brand community the higher their commitment towards online brand community and the higher propensity to them to engage in brand referral. Using this sample, members who have favorable attitude towards brand community will recommend the brand to others and had a higher tendencies to leave positive comments on the communities' site. This result concurs with the previous findings of Hur et al. (2011). Becerra and Badrinarayanan (2013) also suggested that the higher the feeling of attachment of members

Figure 2: Structural model

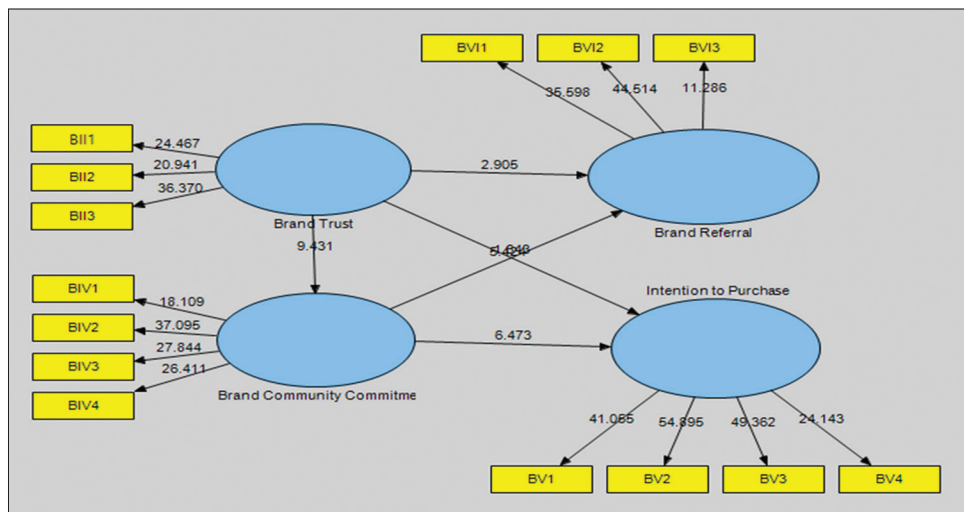


Table 4: Structural model assessment with mediator

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std. Beta	Standard error	t-value	Decision
H1	Brand trust → brand referral	0.233604	0.080406	2.905305	Supported
H2	Brand trust → brand community commitment	0.552726	0.05861	9.430515	Supported
H3	Brand community commitment → brand referral	0.455966	0.08406	5.424323	Supported
H4	Brand trust → brand community Commitment → brand referral	0.2522	0.0539	4.6813	Supported
H5	Brand trust → intention to purchase	0.138948	0.08456	1.643193	Not supported
H6	Brand community commitment → intention to purchase	0.461674	0.071328	6.472514	Supported
H7	Brand trust → brand community commitment → intention to purchase	0.2553	0.0480	5.3146	Supported

towards their brand community, the higher the tendency for them to engage in positive brand referral. The results also suggest that brand trust would affect brand referral behavior such as tell positive things about brand and recommend the brand to others. Online brand community is considered as space for information sharing and exchange among members. Anyone can post and comments on the online community. As a result, members’ trust to the community becomes crucial not only for providing positive comments but also commit to constructive complaint (Hur et al., 2011).

Hypothesis 5 tests whether brand trust among online brand community would influence their intention to purchase new product of the brand in the future. Surprisingly, the result revealed that brand trust statistically not significantly affect intention to purchase new product. Using this sample, brand trust found to be insignificant on intention to purchase new product of the brand. Plausible explanation for such insignificant relationship is due to that the tenure of the respondents involved in this study. Based on further analysis, about 17% of the respondents found to have more than 3 years’ experience with the brand community while almost 83% would have <3 years involvement in the brand community. Mullin et al. (2007) highlighted that the number of year involvement could justify the level of trust and commitment. Previous literature also stated that duration of relationship as a major contribution in building brand affection and brand trust (Albert et al., 2009) and subsequently influenced brand satisfaction.

This study also attempts to test either members’ commitment towards their online brand community would ensure brand loyalty

by examining future purchase of new product from the respective brand (Hypothesis 6). The result revealed that brand community commitment have a direct significant relationship with intention to purchase new product of the brand in the future. Hence, the result is supported and consistence with the findings of Kim and Ko (2012) and Ho and Wang (2015).

This study also attempts to examine the indirect effect of brand community commitment on brand referral (H4) and intention to purchase new product (H7). This study found support that brand community commitment mediate the relationship between brand trust on brand referral and intention to purchase new product. This is consistent with the findings of Ho and Wang (2015) and confirmed the suggestion of Doorn et al. (2010) on the importance of customer engagement (such as brand community) as future research directions.

5. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

In conclusion, this study contributes to extend the knowledge in online brand community’s belief, attitude and behavior. Using the sample at hand, this study concluded that brand trust and brand community commitment play a crucial role in determining brand referral behavior and intention to purchase new product. In order to ensure survival of the brand that closely related to brand resonance behavior (such as brand referral and intention to purchase), management should establish a strong brand trust

among the members. However, brand trust alone is not strong enough to facilitate future product adoption among online brand community members. Among other, administrator of the online brand communities should organize more activities that could strengthen the bond between members and the brand mainly to enrich their brand community commitment. This is because, brand trust that reinforced by high level of brand community commitment could facilitate both brand referral and intention to purchase new product of the brand in the future.

As an initial study, this study limit in term of number of sample and selection of respondents. Future study should focus on larger number of respondents and various setting. As this study did not specifically focus on specific brand community, future study should be directed to understand how members of specific brand community behave in their online community. Preceding discussion also highlight the important of duration in relationship plays a crucial role in the online brand community. As such future study should consider the effect of duration of relationship in the future study of online brand community.

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