

Study of Structural Relationship between the Value Proposition of Facebook Brand Fan Pages and Commitment and Engagement

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Abstract

Objectives: This study inquired into the effect of functional, emotional and symbolic values on brand commitment and engagement in order to find out values pursued by brand fan page users. **Methods/Statistical Analysis:** In order to select a brand fan page for this study, a brand that has and evenly provides experience in the three types of dimensions, functional, emotional and symbolic values was selected. Subscribers of Sony brand fan page were requested to answer to a questionnaire. A total of 182 were coded and used in the final analysis. AMOS7.0 was used for the final analysis. **Findings:** As a study result, the functional value of Facebook brand fan page user did not have an influence on brand commitment. However, emotional and symbolic values had a positive impact on brand commitment. Accordingly, in order to establish an effective strategy for Facebook marketing communication, it is necessary to place the importance on the roles of emotional and symbolic values. Lastly, it was proved that brand commitment formed through emotional and symbolic values has a positive impact on engagement. With regard to establishing a marketing strategy through communities present in SNS, if engagement is increased through brand commitment through emotional and symbolic values, rather than functional values, it can successfully contribute to the formation of a long-term relationship between a brand and consumers. **Improvements/Applications:** This study is meaningful what types of value proposition are there that form brand commitment and engagement in building the consumer-brand relationship amid an increase in researches related to brands.

Keywords: Brand Commitment, Brand Fan Page, Engagement, Facebook, SNS

1. Introduction

The media environment, which is currently undergoing rapid changes, has opened various channels for companies to approach consumers. In particular, Social Networking Service (SNS), a new media form showing a significant growth, is an online platform which enables information sharing based on networking between acquaintances. SNS provides an environment where consumers can freely talk about products and became a channel for firms to provide tailored information to their consumers. Among many SNS, Facebook which was first used as a venue for users to post daily logs has now become a channel for communication between users. People always have their smartphone at their side and not only

obtain various information, but always connect with their acquaintances via SNS. Moreover, a mobile environment which can be realized through smartphones has made SNS into an influential social platform. Brand fan page operated by Facebook is known to play a very crucial role in understanding the formation of relationships between users and how messages concerning brands are spread via Facebook¹.

The function of Facebook's fan page (or business page) is the biggest feature that differentiates Facebook with other SNS. According to a study that analyzed the value of Facebook as an advertising medium, customers who became fans by clicking 'like' on a firm's brand fan page play the role of spreading its brand image. The charm of Facebook as an advertising medium is that

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the proliferation of information between people occurs voluntarily through countless connections among them. Facebook users access newsfeed instead of their wall when logging into Facebook via a computer or mobile phone².

In this way, firms are maintaining and developing their relationships with consumers through their fan page, but it is necessary to identify what kind of values and benefits do consumers pursue from the perspectives of firms' abilities and motivation for efficient and effective communication with them. Accordingly, this study aims to structurally identify how values pursued by Facebook's brand fan pages affect brand commitment and engagement.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis

2.1 Facebook and Value Proposition

The biggest reason for firms using Facebook as a relationship-building channel is that becoming fans of its brand fan pages is very intuitive and easy. All consumers need to do is click 'like' button on a relevant page which enables them to receive the brand's information provided by the company in real-time. Accordingly, firms are stimulating users' spontaneous responses through various events and ads.

The biggest merit of marketing communication using Facebook is newsfeed function. If a fan responds to a certain brand's post, the same information appears on his/her friends' newsfeed. Therefore, users clicking 'like' or responding to a certain post by leaving 'comment' is the key point of Facebook's brand fan pages. Brand community participants play the role of consumer agency, which provides important brand information to other consumers, and maintain a community relationship of mutually providing a broad range of social benefits.

In other words, fans of a specific brand are very valuable customers for it, indicating that the influence of status messages exposed to them is highly influential. Accordingly, many companies have created their brand fan page on Facebook to communicate with Facebook users.

What would the users of Facebook's brand fan pages preferentially pursue in brands? Although this is the most important factor which companies need to be considered when establishing their brand fan page marketing strategy, there are not many studies on this issue. Values pursued

by users are revealed through "value proposition", and a brand's value proposition is manifested in the three types of dimensions: Functional value, emotional value and symbolic value. Also, in order to be an effective value proposition, it is claimed that consumers decide to purchase when a positive relationship between a brand and customers is formed through value proposition³.

First, the most general form of value proposition is functional value, which is based on the features of a product that gives functional usefulness to customers. Such value is usually directly related to direct functions and functions that are implemented by a product or service. Functional value has a direct impact on customers' purchase decision or use experience. If a brand can govern important functional benefits, it can govern its product line. However, it has to get obsessed with the supposition that differentiation will gradually disappear and become easy to copy, and consumers will be rational in their purchasing choices.

Also, it can decrease flexibility in strategies and hinder brands from expanding. To overcome such limitations, it is necessary to go beyond product attributes and expand value proposition to include not only functional value but also emotional and symbolic value. Emotional value adds richness and depth to the brand. In order to know what emotional value is and how it is connected to the brand, the focus of survey should be placed on emotions.

What kind of emotions do consumers feel when they buy or use the brand? What kind of emotions arises when functional value is obtained? In most cases, functional value is an emotion related to a feeling. The last type of value that needs to be included in value proposition is symbolic value. In⁴ states that "we are what we have", which is an expression that best describes consumer behavior. That is, brand and product can be used as symbols for expressing one's self-concept. Therefore, a brand gives a benefit of self-expression by offering ways to deliver one's image to others. Of course, one person plays multiple roles⁴.

2.2 Brand Commitment and Engagement

Brand commitment is a useful concept for explaining the relationship between consumers and a brand, which refers to a commitment to maintain a long-term relationship with a brand based on emotional attachment to it^{5,6} suggested a comprehensive, qualitative dimension concerning the consumer-brand relationship, and stated

that commitment is a concept that includes the behavioral aspect of consistently buying from a particular brand even when there is an alternative and the attitudinal aspect of emotionally committing to it. A discussion was raised regarding the need for separate use of the concept of commitment and that of loyalty⁶.

By emphasizing the attitudinal aspect of brand commitment, i.e. the degree of being only choice among various brands, it was argued that it should be separated from the behavioral aspect of loyalty, which is represented by repurchasing a brand over time. In other words, loyalty was a widely used concept in the consumer-brand relationship, but brand commitment is a concept that reflects the attitudinal aspect of loyalty and an intention to build a long-term relationship with a brand; forming a strong bonding with a brand can be considered a matter of course in terms of relation building between brand and consumers. In this way, consumers who are strongly committed to a particular brand do not easily change their attitude even when they are exposed to competing brands' various marketing and communication stimuli⁷. This is because a strong attitude is already formed through strong confidence by committing to the brand⁸.

Engagement started to receive attention from academia and industry when the relationship between consumers and media was first studied and proposed by^{9,10}. In particular, interest in engagement heightened when new types of experience media and long tail media¹¹, which share and spread messages participated and committed through various channels such as SNS and digital signage, were introduced. Engagement is a concept that embraces various elements including involvement, interest, preference and relevance¹².

According to¹³, engagement is a preliminary element of message involvement, and when consumers recognize a relation between brand message and context, involvement in the ad message increases. Studies on engagement have been actively carried out in studies associated with new media.

As a result of examining the effect of smartphone users' engagement in an application on an advertising effect, the effect was greater in a group with a higher level with engagement in comparison to that of a lower level, and in terms of gender effect, males were more committed to app engagement and influenced the ad effect than females¹⁴. As a result of an empirical analysis of effect of twitter users' commitment to information on engagement, it had a positive impact¹⁵. In a study related to digital signage and engagement, it was revealed that a group with

high engagement in digital signage was more positive towards ad awareness, ad interest, ad information and ad playfulness than a group with low engagement. Also, in terms of ad memory effect, ad recall and recognition were higher in the group with high engagement in digital signage than in the group with low engagement^{16,17}.

Based on such previous studies, this study established hypotheses as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Functional, emotional and symbolic values will affect brand commitment.

Hypothesis 2: Brand commitment formed through value proposition will affect engagement.

3. Study Method

3.1 Selecting a Brand Fan Page

In order to select a brand fan page for this study, a brand that has and evenly provides experience in the three types of dimensions, functional, emotional and symbolic values was selected. After an expert interview, a fan page of Sony digital cameras, which are loved by and receive attention from college students, on Facebook was selected ([www.facebook.com / Sony Pictures KR](http://www.facebook.com/SonyPicturesKR)). Subscribers of Sony brand fan page were requested to answer to a questionnaire. A total of 212 subscribers participated in the online survey, and except for invalid responses, 182 were coded and used in the final analysis. AMOS7.0 was used for the final analysis, and a difference in influence between routes was statistically verified.

3.2 Measuring Variables

Functional value is directly related to functions that are performed by a product or service that is based on its features that give functional usefulness to customers. In case a conceptual definition of emotional value gives a positive feeling to consumers when they buy or use a particular brand, it is providing an emotional benefit to them. Symbolic value refers to perceived ego which an individual subjectively or objectively has, and a perception of a realistic image of oneself.

As to functional and emotional value measurement, five questions used by³ were revised and measured using a 5-point Likert scale. Also, in the case of symbolic value, this study used five questions associated with self-connection among the six types of qualitative dimension of consumer-brand relationship claimed by⁶ (2998) with a 5-point Likert scale.

Brand commitment is a “behavioral will to continue to maintain a relationship with a brand” and was measured by using questions used by⁶. Also, engagement was measured with questions on how much consumers have concentrated on, understand and are committed to Facebook brand fan page made by¹² and a total of five questions were devised and measured using a 5-point Likert scale.

4. Research Result

4.1 Validity Test

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to statistically verify the credibility and discriminant validity of each variable comprised of multiple items: VARIMAX rotational method was used, which is a useful orthogonal rotation method in identifying the characteristics of factors based on an assumption that each of them is independent. The minimum eigenvalue, a basis of factor selection, was set at ‘1’. As the result of exploratory factor analysis, all factors were above 0.7, thus adequately securing convergent validity operationalization has as a construct.

Construct validity is related to the degree of conformity between latent factors and measurement variables and unidimensionality in measurement items; evaluated with convergent and discriminant validity; and generally tested through a confirmatory factor analysis. First, in order to test convergent validity, a statistical significance of standardized factor loading was verified, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were checked whether they exceed 0.5 (reference value). Also, following such convergent validity test, to verify discriminant validity, a squared correlation between constructs, of which each of them is paired with AVE value, was compared. As a result of primary confirmatory factor analysis, the indices of the model created in this study did not fulfill the standards. In detail, as a result of evaluating the model’s suitability using an absolute fit index, its goodness of fit was $\chi^2 = 1072.01$ (df = 656, $p = 0.00$), CFI = 0.848, NFI = 0.701, AGFI = 0.735, RMSEA = 0.05, and RMR = 0.09. Except RMSEA index, most of indices failed to reach acceptable levels. Accordingly, model modification was performed using a modification index. After several rounds of modifications, the model’s goodness of fit reached satisfactory levels with $\chi^2 = 811.87$ (df = 590, $p = 0.00$), CFI = 0.904, NFI = 0.838, AGFI = 0.865, RMSEA = 0.04, and RMR = 0.54. Also, as the result of confirmatory factor analysis, t value of factor loading for measurement

items for independent, mediating and dependent variables was statistically significant ($p < .01$), and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value also exceeded the reference value of 0.5. Lastly, the AVE values of constructs were greater than the squared correlation of each pair of construct, and a correlation that shows the relationship between constructs was smaller than 1 and the confidence interval was also smaller than 1, showing all the latent factors included in this study have convergent and discriminant validity.

4.2 Hypothesis Verification

This study aimed to examine how functional, emotional and symbolic values, the values pursued by Facebook brand fan page users, affect brand commitment and engagement and form relationships with them through a structural equation model.

As shown in Table 1, functional value has no influence on brand commitment: its influence level was 0.16 ($p > .05$). However, emotional value was influential in brand commitment: its influence level was statistically significant with 0.39 ($p < .05$). The effect of symbolic value on brand commitment was also statistically significant with 0.72 ($p < .01$).

The impacts of emotional and symbolic values on brand commitment were 0.39 ($p < .05$) vs. 0.72 ($p < .01$), showing symbolic value has a greater influence on brand commitment than emotional value, and there was a statistically significant difference between the two.

Lastly, brand commitment was expected to have a positive impact on engagement. As the study result, the influence level of brand commitment on engagement was significant with 0.54 ($p < .01$).

Table 1. Result of path

Path	Estimate	S.E.	t
Functional → Brand Commitment	0.16	0.15	1.32
Emotional → Brand Commitment	0.39	0.12	3.84*
Symbolic → Brand Commitment	0.72	0.17	6.15**
Brand Commitment → Engagement	0.54	0.08	4.86**

$P < .05^*$, $p < .01^{**}$

5. Conclusion

This study inquired into the effect of functional, emotional and symbolic values on brand commitment and engagement in order to find out values pursued by brand fan page users.

As a study result, the functional value of Facebook brand fan page user did not have an influence on brand commitment, indicating that committing to a brand based on only functional value is impossible as functional differences between products are becoming less and less apparent. However, emotional and symbolic values had a positive impact on brand commitment. Accordingly, in order to establish an effective strategy for Facebook marketing communication, it is necessary to place the importance on the roles of emotional and symbolic values. In particular, in respect to IT products that target people in their 20s, it is essential to build a long-term brand-consumer relationship through an integration of functional and emotional or symbolic values. In particular, because IT products such as digital cameras and smartphones of today explain and manifest self-conception between a brand and its products, communicating through the expressions of emotional and symbolic values is needed.

Lastly, it was proved that brand commitment formed through emotional and symbolic values has a positive impact on engagement. With regard to establishing a marketing strategy through communities present in SNS, if engagement is increased through brand commitment through emotional and symbolic values, rather than functional values, it can successfully contribute to the formation of a long-term relationship between a brand and consumers.

This study is meaningful in terms of empirically verifying what types of value proposition are there that form brand commitment and engagement in building the consumer-brand relationship amid an increase in researches related to brands. In terms of building a consumer-brand relationship through a relation with value proposition and influence factors, brand management based on a marketing communication strategy implemented at a working level can become a barometer in systematically and diversely creating, maintaining and developing brands.

6. References

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