

Modeling the Relationship of Consumer Engagement and Brand Trust on Social Media Purchase Intention - A Confirmatory Factor Experimental Technique

Vipin Jain, Mredu Goyal, Manvinder Singh Pahwa



Abstract: *Today's marketing landscape is characterized by social media proliferation. This impels companies to adapt such advertising strategies that engage with the audience in their predominantly used medium. Appertaining to the cogitation, the empirical study endeavours to identify the relationship of consumer engagement and brand trust on purchase intention through advertisement on social media. Besides, it also aspires to explore the mediation effect of performance expectancy on brand trust and purchase intention. A model designed was tested using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). A structured questionnaire was prepared and administered to 542 respondents, selected by judgemental sampling method of which 482 were found valid and hence considered for model development. The conclusions of the research study suggests empirical implications for an effective advertising strategy on social media.*

Keywords: *Advertising Strategy, Structural Equation Modelling, Performance Expectancy, Trust, Purchase Intention.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The enfeebled traditional media techniques are consistently evoking organizations to swing towards the new media for spreading news about their organizations in an amusing and attractive format (Hanke, 2015). Subsequently, Social media has been developed as an inimitable imperative channel of digital marketing. It allows instant reach to worldwide customers (Nelson, 2018) as well as comforts marketers to advertise in a stress-free and profitable manner. This trend towards the new media has transposed the balance of power among the brand and consumer. The contemporary empowered consumers are able to create content which can be gobbled up by anyone on the globe via different social media channels like Blogs, Pinterest, Twitter or Facebook, etc. The sharing of consumers brand experiences on a public platform also shapes the insights of other consumers towards the brand. Thus, inactivity of the brand on social media as well as unavailability of brands viewpoint will make consumers to rely on third parties thus awarding them more credibility (Hollebeek, et al., 2014). Hence, if it is not part of

the dialogue then such brand's sustainability may become questionable.

The technique, place and time of brands engagement with customers have changed considerably. Consumers are now making their experiences and feedbacks socially available, about goods or services of companies and brands they used. The consumers has always trusted the referrals of their friends or knowns and the new media marketing has this advantage. Accordingly, modern net-savvy consumers, now turn towards their friends or peers reviews unlikely other traditional mediums which were endorsed by brand ambassadors, before making any purchase decisions.

Thus, the critical point of an effective marketing strategy for any brand is to mark their constant presence on the media where customers are spending most of their time.

Adaption of the brand marketing strategies in favour of the new trend will only help to succeed in this hyper-connected environment. Thus, it is vital to engage with the consumers on the platforms they are mostly active and that are various social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, etc. Therefore, an effective strategy augments a brand page in such a way that enhances consumer brand trust by functioning as an endorsement letters for them (Bhargava, 2006).

Individual and his environment is the focal point on social media marketing. Hence, an effective strategy is to focus on understanding when, where and how to engage with this target group. To penetrate in this loop of engagement, it is critical to develop brand trust. Consumer engagement through social media gives birth to dialogue. This dialogue generates brand trust among the consumers. Besides this the brand has an opportunity to fetch itself with the valuable feedback of its consumers on its actions and products through engagement. And these insights can be used effectively in formulating various strategies.

Thus, the whole strategies on social media revolves around the engagement of audience process. This shows that the brands are no longer concerned about awareness else the brand engagement is their priority and a new trend. Customer engagement is the ultimate goal and is the condition where customers at the highest level of emotional involvement which naturally results in commitment (Roberts & Alpert, 2010). This in turn results in purchase intention exhibiting brand advocacy and unconditional loyalty. It induces trust of consumers towards the brand and enhances their performance expectancy and helps in improving the bottom line of the company (Reichheld, 2006).

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Based on this contemplation, the researchers have developed a process model which is further tested by using an Structural Equation Modelling.

The study endeavours to identify the relationship among factors affecting consumer purchase intention through social media marketing and tries to explore the answers of the following **research questions**:

1. Is there any relationship of factors (engagement / performance expectancy / trust) influencing consumer purchase intent on social media?
2. Does engagement of consumer on social media affects their trust on brand?
3. Is there any mediating role of performance expectancy on trust in relation to purchase intention?

The following research objectives were derived on the basis of above questions.

- 1) To determine the influence of social media advertising on purchase intent.
- 2) To examine the relation between consumer engagement and trust on brand.
- 3) To identify the mediating effect, if any, of performance expectancy of Facebook brand fan pages on trust in relation to consumer purchase intent.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

1) *Engagement on social media*

Social media provides a connect with peers and assists in effectively assessing the information. This contributes to the trust (Ferik, 2009) and ultimately result in developing strong relations among the company and customers. It provides various benefits to brands, like it augments the popularity (De, et al., 2012), spread e-WOM (Chen, et al., 2011), share insights and information (Lu & Hsiao, 2010) as well as engenders consumer support (Ali, 2011) (Ballantine & Stephenson, 2011). All these are possible through an effective engagement strategy. High engagement levels enhances the brand trust (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001) (Swaminathan, et al., 2007) (Linlin, et al., 2018) as users gradually start feeling themselves as a part of brand (Benson, et al., 2010) (Yoo, 2012). Thus, customer engagement is a key component of social media marketing strategy (Victor & J. W., 2016) The consequential hypothesis formulated is:

H₀₁: Consumer engagement is positively related to brand trust.

2) *Brand Trust*

Trust gained with consumer interaction on social networking websites helps to enhance brand profit (Angella Jiyoung Kim, 2010) (Tan Pei Kian, G. H., 2017) (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Consumer prefers to purchase with trusted online vendors as per their credibility and benevolence (Ba & Pavlou, 2002). Absence of trust forestall purchase intention as well as induces misunderstandings among them (Lee & Song, 2013) (Castaldo, et al., 2010). Hence, it is one of the most critical factor affecting purchase decision-making, as sharing information demands trust among messengers (Liu & Guo, 2017).

Hence, the proposed hypothesis is:

H₀₂: Trust on brand is positively related to customer purchase intent.

On immense review of literature revealed that their is

existence of interrelations between trust and performance expectancy (Lee & Song, 2013) (Guo & Barnes, 2007). Thus, there is same factor loadings of both trust as well as performance expectancy (Ba & Pavlou, 2002) (Mayer, et al., 2011) (Pavlou, 2003) (McLeod, et al., 2008).

Trust is a critical component for customer engagement and online purchase intention (Chahal & Rani, 2017) as it moderates the effect of consumer performance expectancy (Sanzo, et al., 2012) (Riemenschneider, 2009). Their is positive correlation between trust and perceived usefulness, besides trust upsurses certain attributes of it (David, et al., 2008). Hence, the following hypotheses is formed:

H₀₃: Trust on brand is positively related to performance expectancy of social media brand pages.

H₀₄: Performance expectancy of social media brand pages mediates the relation between trust and consumer purchase intent.

3) *Performance Expectancy (PE)*

Easier interconnectivity and participation is the blessings of Web 2.0 for its users (Mueller, et al., 2011). But the adoption of these new systems will be more progressive if the individuals perceive them as more fecund, functional, and saves their time as well as effort (Alalwan, et al., 2016) (Venkatesh, et al., 2012) (Venkatesh, et al., 2003) (Shareef, et al., 2017). The positive perception of social media users towards these ads results in dedicated involvement and favourable intentions (Chang, et al., 2015) (Rana, et al., 2016). One more research by (Kim, et al., 2016) supports the significance of Performance expectancy to both customers perception as well as their purchase intention. Accordingly, the hypothesis is :

H₀₅: Performance expectancy of social media brand pages will positively affects customer purchase intent.

III. EMPIRICAL STUDY

To achieve the purpose of the research, only Facebook is taken as a scope of study because, it is by far the leading social network in the world (Anon., 2017) and India has maximum number of Facebook users as of October 2018 (statista, 2018).

To validate the hypothesized relationships among the constructs, only the users of Facebook who were also following any brand page on the platform, were considered in the study. They were identified using judgmental sampling procedure from the entire Rajasthan, India. The review of literature assisted in formulation of a structured questionnaire on five-point Likert scale. The millennials were the targeted respondents as generation Y is reported as very tech-savvy and active on social media (EY, 2016) (Rauniar, et al., 2014) (Victor A. Barger, 2016) (Zhang, et al., 2014) (Balakrishnan & Manickavasagam, 2013) (Bolton, et al., 2013). 542 responses were received and 482 responses were found accurate for analysis after data cleaning.

Measurement model

A questionnaire was prepared after identifying various elements of social media advertisements impacting the consumer purchase intent and again comprehending it on the basis of review of literature.

The questionnaire comprised of two sections. Firstly, consisted demographic details of the respondents in terms of their gender, educational qualifications and age as well as information if they are a follower of any company on Facebook or not.

The second section comprised of 16 statements related to all the four factors/constructs taken for the study. The responses were solicited on five-point likert scale depending upon the level of agreement (1 being “highly agree” to 5 being “highly disagree”).

The study derives three items relating to engagement from

(Victor A. Barger, 2016)(Linlin, et al., 2018)(Rauniar, et al., 2014). Three statements for trust were adapted from (Wang & Gulara Abdullayeva, 2011); another six statements for performance expectancy were modified from scale developed (Venkatesh, et al., 2012) and (Alalwan, 2018). The questions for purchase intension were derived and modified from (Venkatesh, et al., 2012)(Rauniar, et al., 2014)(Alalwan, 2018)(Mueller, et al., 2011)(Duffett, 2015).

Table I displays the development and summary of measurement scales.

Table I (Scale Development)

S.No.	Constructs	Statements	Sources	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Engagement	The content of different Facebook brand pages induces me to react (like or dislike or love or angry, etc.).	Review of Literature (Victor A. Barger, 2016)(Linlin, et al., 2018)(Rauniar, et al., 2014)	0.747
		The content about different brands shared by my friends on Facebook persuades me to react (like or dislike or love or angry, etc.) upon.		
		Content or advertisements of different brands on Facebook allures me to share it with my friends.		
		These brand pages encourages me to post user generated content (comments , mentions, reviews, posts, etc.) on Facebook.		
2	Trust	I trust the information (ratings or reviews) shared with me about the brand through my friends on Facebook.	(Wang & Gulara Abdullayeva, 2011)	0.819
		Brands show casing their content on Facebook News Feed are more credible.		
		A sense of loyalty is felt for the companies I know via Facebook.		
3	Performance Expectancy	Facebook brand pages supplies relevant product information like reviews, likes/ dislikes, etc. that assists in making purchase decision for any product.	(Alalwan, 2018)(Venkatesh, et al., 2012)	0.889
		Facebook brand pages are beneficial while considering any product for purchase decision as it allows me to refer the opinion of experts and friends (reviews).		
		Contents on Facebook brand pages are valuable source of up-to-date product information.		
		Facebook brand pages benefits me in better decision making as brand engagement reduces my risk.		
		It is interactive thus enables me to communicate by giving direct connection with the company.		

		Facebook brand pages allows me opinion exchange with others customers and friends.		
4	Purchase Intent	I will purchase the products promoted through Facebook advertising.	(Venkatesh, et al., 2012)(Duffett, 2015)(Rauniar, et al., 2014)(Alalwan, 2018)(Mueller, et al., 2011).	0.834
		I have high intention to purchase products promoted on brand pages through Facebook advertising.		
		I am more likely to become customer of companies promoted through Facebook advertising.		

Validity & Reliability Test

The convergent, discriminate validity and reliability of the examined constructs were tested using maximum likelihood estimation method as shown in Table II. The Composite Reliability (CR), The Average Variance Extracted

(AVE) & Maximum Shared Variance (MSV) were within the thresholds (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) confirming convergent validity (Hair, et al., 2010) and discriminate validity.

Table II (Reliability Analysis)

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	PEREXP	ENGAGE	PURTINT	TRUST
PEREXP	0.890	0.574	0.547	0.894	0.758			
ENGAGE	0.786	0.523	0.059	0.975	0.234***	0.723		
PURTINT	0.844	0.647	0.454	0.877	0.648***	0.220***	0.804	
TRUST	0.791	0.561	0.547	0.820	0.740***	0.242***	0.674***	0.749

After validation of the measurement model, ensuing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analyses were done, in order to test the hypotheses developed as well as to validate the theoretical model. The measurement model fit, the overall CMIN was 225.962 with Df = 93 and CMIN/Df = 2.430. The initial fit indices (GFI=0.955, IFI=0.974, AGFI=0.934, NFI=0.957, CFI=0.974, and RMSEA=0.048, RMR=0.030) of the measurement model were within their recommended level, and this depicts that the observed data adequately fits the measurement model (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Thus, it was considered apt for subsequent testing of the hypothesized paths.

The Structural Model Evaluation and Testing of Hypothesis

The next step includes testing of structural model so as to validate the conceptual model. About 0.07, 0.55, and 0.51 of variance were accounted for in trust, performance expectancy and purchase intent respectively as shown in Figure 1.

It can be observed that, the relation amongst trust and purchase intent ($\gamma=0.44$, $p < 0.001$) is significant (Table III

and Figure 1). Similarly, path from performance expectancy to purchase intent recorded ($\gamma=0.32$, $p < 0.001$). This implies that **brand trust and performance expectancy of social media brand pages significantly impacts the customer purchase intent.**

Another path from trust to performance expectancy ($\gamma=0.74$, $p < 0.001$), stating **significant impact of brand trust on performance expectancy of social media brand pages** (Table III and Figure 1).

The relation of Engagement on social media to trust ($\gamma=0.26$, $p < 0.001$) is also significant (Table III and Figure 1). Thus, **Social media Engagement have a significantly affects the brand trust.** Therefore, H_{01} , H_{02} , H_{03} and H_{05} could not be rejected.



Figure 1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis Diagram

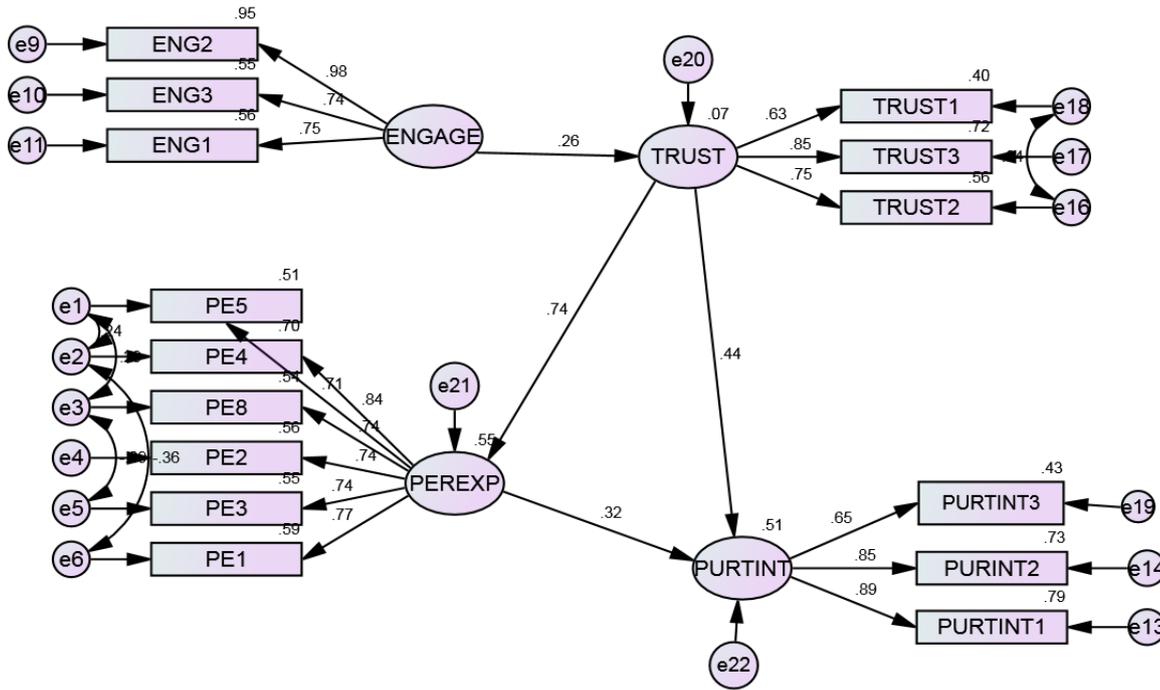


Table III (Model Regression Weights)

Path		Unstandardized Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Standardized Estimates
TRUST	<--- ENGAGE	.174	.030	5.864	***	.265
PEREXP	<--- TRUST	.687	.051	13.460	***	.745
PURTINT	<--- TRUST	.497	.077	6.435	***	.442
PURTINT	<--- PEREXP	.389	.079	4.894	***	.319
PE5	<--- PEREXP	1.000				.715
PE4	<--- PEREXP	1.076	.050	21.648	***	.836
PE8	<--- PEREXP	.959	.048	19.975	***	.735
PE2	<--- PEREXP	1.023	.059	17.349	***	.745
PE3	<--- PEREXP	.946	.055	17.175	***	.744
PE1	<--- PEREXP	1.114	.064	17.417	***	.767
ENG2	<--- ENGAGE	1.000				.977
ENG3	<--- ENGAGE	.727	.036	20.207	***	.739
ENG1	<--- ENGAGE	.660	.032	20.429	***	.746
PURTINT1	<--- PURTINT	1.000				.888
PURINT2	<--- PURTINT	.959	.039	24.336	***	.852
TRUST2	<--- TRUST	1.000				.751
TRUST3	<--- TRUST	1.205	.067	17.960	***	.846
TRUST1	<--- TRUST	.726	.041	17.775	***	.629
PURTINT3	<--- PURTINT	.700	.040	17.615	***	.653

4.4 Testing of Mediating Effect of Performance Expectancy in Relation of Trust to Purchase Intent

The model fitness is realized (CMIN /DF 1.465, P= .233, RMSEA =.027 RMR= .012, GFI = .998, AGFI = .988, NFI = .998, RFI = .993, IFI = .999, CFI = .999), and all the standardized path coefficients are statistically significant (Figure 1). As the first criterion of Baron and Kenny's is met, therefore, the mediation test can be applied.

In order to test the role of mediation, a two-step process was followed. The first step determines inter-relationship amongst independent (Trust) and dependent (Purchase Intent) construct. The r^2 is 0.58, which is a good relation criteria and is statistically significant as $p > .001$ as per Table IV and Figure 2.

Figure 2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis Diagram with no Mediation

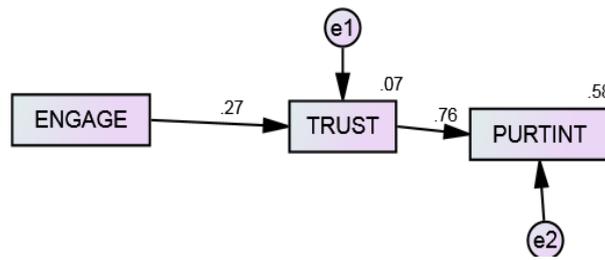


Table IV (Regression Weights of Trust on Purchase intent with no mediations)

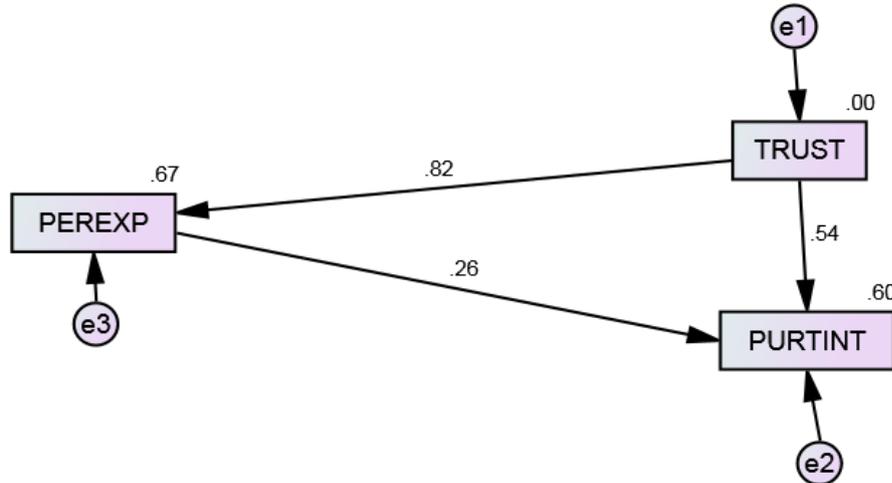
Path	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	r ²
PURTINT <--- TRUST	0.875	.030	29.101	***	0.577

Further, the relation was tested in presence of mediator.

For this purpose, bias-corrected bootstrap method was used to generate 2,000 bootstrap samples at 95 percent confidence interval (Hayes & Andrew, 2013). A model was created in which the role of trust in performance expectancy (mediation) was revealed significant as the p-value was 0.001 at point estimate of 0.787. Similarly, the role of performance expectancy mediation in purchase intent was also established significant (p-value is 0.001) (point estimate 0.317). Besides, the role of trust in purchase intent was found significant

(p-value 0.001) (point estimate 0.626) as shown in Table V and Figure 3. The bias corrected lower and upper confidence intervals are 0.159 and 0.331 (with no zero in between) which depicts that **performance expectancy mediates the relationship between trust and purchase intent**. The total effect of 0.875 is significant (p-value 0.001) as well as direct effect of 0.626 (p-value 0.001) is also significant. The standardized indirect effect was also established significant (with p-value 0.001) at point estimate 0.271.

Figure 3 Confirmatory Factor Analysis Diagram with Mediation



As the p value of the Two-Tailed Significance(BC) test is 0.001, so it is also significant. This evidences presence of significant mediation (Table VI), which fulfils two basic assumptions of mediation. The type of mediation is partial mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986) as the effect is still significant after the presence of mediation (p value is 0.001)

(Table V) although the relation or beta is reduced from 0.76 to 0.54. Thus, the hypothesis H₀₄ is not rejected and this implies that, **Performance Expectancy of Brand Pages partially mediates the inter-relationship amongst trust and purchase intent**.

Table V (Relation of identified variables after mediation)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
TRUST	<---	ENGAGE	.161	.023	6.884	***	
PEREXP	<---	TRUST	.787	.022	35.775	***	
PURTINT	<---	TRUST	.626	.051	12.227	***	
PURTINT	<---	PEREXP	.317	.053	5.945	***	

Table VI (Indirect Effects - Two Tailed Significance (BC))

	ENGAGE	TRUST	PEREXP
TRUST
PEREXP	.001
PURTINT	.001	.001	...

IV. CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The current study borrows construct from the Unified Theory Of Acceptance And Use Of Technology (UTAUT) model (Venkatesh, et al., 2012) and integrates them with the relation of Trust and Engagement on social media. It then tests this integrated model and examines the relations of these factors that affect the purchase intentions on social media.

Previous researches has tended to overlook the mediating role of performance expectancy although they tried to establish intense, profound, devoted and significant relationships (Hajli, 2014) and a close link (David, et al., 2008) between a brand and its customers. As deliberated by (Alalwan, 2018) and (Shareef, et al., 2017), marketing strategies on social media should be targeted towards gaining attention of customers. Accordingly, extensive review of literature leads the study to identify three main factors (engagement, trust, and performance expectancy) as strategic predictors of the purchase intention.

The paradigm deliberated by the researchers offer new insights for both research and managerial implications. Firstly, Push marketing does not work on social media else engagement is the key policy (Hanke, 2015) (Alalwan, 2018). Hence, effective content creation and steady interaction (such as Conducting Facebook Live Chat) with consumers will entice them. Secondly, enriched engagement helps to upsurge the brand trust (Chahal & Rani, 2017) (Angella Jiyoun Kim, 2010) which invigorates the performance expectancy of these brand pages on social media (David, et al., 2008). Lastly, the study established a positive partial mediating relation of performance expectancy of brand pages in relation of brand trust and consumer social media purchase intention. This means that brand trust has a direct relation with purchase intention and more trust increases performance expectancy of Facebook brand pages, which directly effects again purchase intention. Thus marketers must design strategies so as to increase the trust, performance expectancy and finally contributes toward bottom line.

Social media interactivity is the main source of performance expectancy of consumers. Accordingly, by leveraging this interactivity i.e. by conducting opinion polls or live demos or crowdsourcing or involving large numbers of people to generate ideas, or asking to suggest improvements through

adding recommendation box will not only increase performance expectancy but also enrich their trust towards the brand.

Hence, the brand pages shall deliver an unswerving quality of experience to consumers. To conclude, marketers should design strategies that first convert the customers to brand enthusiasts and then brand trusty and finally brand envoys.

V. LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE OF FUTURE STUDY

Although the study inference the key relations of factors affecting social media marketing strategies, the study still presents some limitations. Certain personality traits (tech-enthusiasm, concern for privacy, creativity of the message) and demographic factors (income level, educational level, occupation, etc.) are not deliberated in the research. Thus, it mindfulness to such aspects would be worthwhile for the future studies. Qualitative methods and techniques like content analysis, sentiment analysis providing an extensive view about the customer's attitude, engagement, and behavior towards these ads. This research has not studied social media advertisements over numerous other social media channels (i.e. YouTube, Twitter and Pinterest, etc.) future studies may take other specific or all of these platforms in account and gather data from their members. Thus, analysis of different channels, its nature and exploring how these factors acts inversely in different platforms, is a future scope of study.

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