

A Study of the Impact of Micro-Blog Marketing on Consumers' Brand Loyalty

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Abstract

Micro-blog marketing has developed rapidly in our country, its commercial value is getting more and more attention by the enterprises. This paper regards the enterprise micro-blog marketing as the research context, placing the authenticity, the professional, the humanity, the brand trust and brand loyalty into a frame, setting up a theory model, putting forward the research hypothesis. In the end, this paper makes some conclusions and puts forward some suggestions on enterprise micro-blog marketing through the empirical analysis.

Key words: Micro-blog marketing; Brand trust; Brand loyalty

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INTRODUCTION

When social media users develop to a certain size, its economic value is gradually revealed. By the end of 2012, the number of China's micro-blog user is 309000000. In the context, more and more enterprises pay attention to the micro-blog which bears communication about enterprise image and customer relationship. Hsu, Liu and Lee (2010)

put forward two main reasons enterprises running micro-blog. One is building the social networking between brand and customers, so that the enterprises can influence the purchase decision the customers make. The other one is supervising public opinion and the enterprises can response to users' praise or criticism by micro-blog account.

In this paper, the problem to be discussed is how to use the micro-blog marketing to enhance consumer brand loyalty and how brand trust works as intermediary variables.

1. THEORETICAL MODEL AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

1.1 Extraction Micro-blog Marketing Factor

The development of the society brings a lot of information and products, but the masses' attention is limited. Therefore, enterprises need to think how to focus public attention and influence their consumption behavior. Through extensive literature reading and summarizing results of previous studies, this paper proposes several marketing factors influencing consumer brand loyalty in order to give the enterprise some practical advices about micro-blog marketing.

Interpersonal trust model tells us that interpersonal trust includes the honesty, the friendliness and the professional. Honesty refers to the members of the community have confidence in the other members' honesty and credit. Wang Dong (2011) pointed out the integrity of members of the community has a significant contribution to the interpersonal trust. Sarel also showed that the information sources with high credibility had a more positive impact on the audiences' brand attitude and purchase intention. By summarizing results of previous studies and combining contents of this article, this paper regards the authenticity of micro-blog content as a factor that influences consumer brand trust and brand loyalty.

Fu Shundong (2003) pointed out that the causes of cognitive trust were interest, ability, integrity and social similarity. The ability mentioned here is not the general ability, but the technical knowledge and professional skills related to occupation or business content (Cantrell, 1984). An empirical study by a Japanese scholar showed that the professional information had a greater impact on advertising. Therefore, this paper regards the professional of micro-blog content as a factor that influences consumer brand trust.

In addition, Yang Guang (2012) put forward a new factor—humanistic character. Humanized micro-blog likes a friend, helping building relationships between consumers and brand and then consumers come to understand and trust the brand. This paper will also draw on this factor as the antecedents of consumer trust in the brand.

In the marketing field, many scholars research the relationship between trust and loyalty. All of them think that brand trust plays a huge role in the process of consumer brand loyalty. Sirdesh much (2002) pointed out that trust directly affect customer loyalty. Chaudhuri (2001) confirmed that there was a significant positive correlation between the brand trust and brand loyalty. In the field of cosmetics, Jin Yufang (2005) found that brand trust is the antecedents of brand loyalty. Accordingly, this article will also treat brand trust as antecedents of brand loyalty to research.

1.2 Theoretical Model

According to the foregoing, this article will examine how micro-blog marketing influence consumer brand loyalty and how brand trust play its role in the process of micro-blogging marketing effecting brand loyalty. Combined with interpersonal trust model as well as the previous model, this paper presents a theoretical framework as shown.

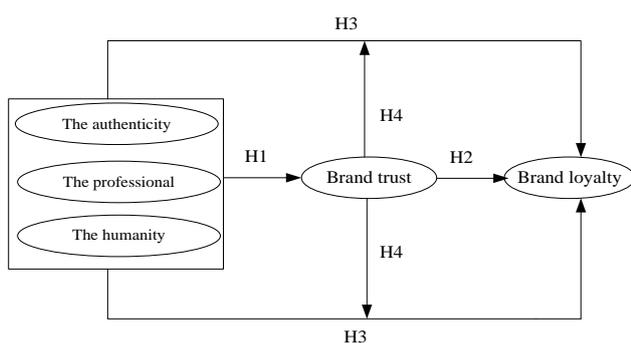


Figure 1
Theoretical Models and Research Hypothesis

1.3 Research Hypothesis

Based on above, we propose the following assumption:

(1) The authenticity, the professional, the humanity of micro-blog content and brand trust.

Combining the research results of foreign scholars and interpersonal trust model, this paper extracted three

influence factors: the authenticity of micro-blog content, the professional of micro-blog content, the humanity of micro-blog content and put forward three assumptions as follows:

H1a: The authenticity of micro-blog content has a significant impact on the consumer brand trust.

H1b: The professional of micro-blog content has a significant impact on the consumer brand trust.

H1c: The humanity of micro-blog content has a significant impact on the consumer brand trust.

(2) Brand trust and brand loyalty.

A large number of studies show that, brand trust and brand loyalty are always relevant. For example, Holbroo pointed out that brand trust and brand loyalty had a significant positive correlation. Reichheld confirmed trust has the greatest influence in the process of establishing and maintaining customer loyalty. According to the literature, this paper put forward assumption as follows:

H2: Customer brand trust has a significant impact on customer brand loyalty.

(3) The authenticity, the professional, the humanity of micro-blog content and brand loyalty.

The ultimate goal of micro-blog marketing is promoting the brand image and expanding sales, so the influence factors of the traditional marketing applies equally here. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3a: The authenticity of micro-blog content has a significant impact on the consumer brand loyalty.

H3b: The professional of micro-blog content has a significant impact on the consumer brand loyalty.

H3c: The humanity of micro-blog content has a significant impact on the consumer brand loyalty.

(4) The authenticity, the professional, the humanity of micro-blog content, brand trust and brand loyalty.

Geok believed that brand trust indeed had a significant positive impact on brand loyalty. On the other hand, Geok pointed out that honesty, professionalism will effect brand loyalty only through brand trust. Based on this, we put forward the following hypothesis:

H4a: Brand trust plays an intermediary role in the process of the authenticity effecting brand loyalty.

H4b: Brand trust plays an intermediary role in the process of the professional effecting brand loyalty.

H4c: Brand trust plays an intermediary role in the process of the humanity effecting brand loyalty.

2. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

2.1 Reliability Analysis and Validity Analysis

This article will use the CITC and Cronbach α coefficient to test the homogeneity of the gauge, to eliminate substandard indexes. When the CITC coefficient is less than 0.5, it indicates that the homogeneity of the items and the whole scale is relatively low, so the items should be eliminated; If Alpha if Item Delete coefficient was

significantly higher than Cronbach α coefficient, it shows that the homogeneity of this item with other items is not high, so this item should be removed.

Using SPSS19.0 to calculate the data, the results of each dimension are shown in the following table and it can be seen from the table:

Table 1
CITC Coefficient and Reliability Analysis

Factor	Index	Item	CITC	Alpha if item Delete	Cronbach Alpha
AUT	AUT1	Information is true, reliable	0.531	0.659	0.727
	AUT2	Honoring commitments	0.607	0.609	
	AUT3	The micro-blog fans will not provide false information	0.561	0.640	
	AUT4#	The explanation about product is sincere	0.377	0.742	
PRO	PRO1	Providing professional information about the brand	0.600	0.697	0.767
	PRO2	Fans discuss the problems with professional knowledge	0.508	0.754	
	PRO3	Solving my problems on the products	0.566	0.712	
	PRO4	Telling difference between this brand and other similar products	0.619	0.686	
HUM	HUM1	Like a person with feelings	0.714	0.747	0.846
	HUM2	Like a friend or teacher	0.660	0.802	
	HUM3	I like these enterprises which open micro-blog more	0.772	0.814	
	HUM4	Focusing on hot issues, and giving insightful comments	0.591	0.843	
TRU	TRU1#	Achieving the function claimed in micro-blog marketing	0.623	0.901	0.896
	TRU2	Products are full of good quality and good credibility	0.806	0.859	
	TRU3	The brand has strength to maintain the high quality	0.774	0.866	
	TRU4	Products advertised by micro-blog can always reach my expectation	0.797	0.863	
	TRU5	Enterprises will appear for the problems with its products	0.745	0.873	
LOY	LOY1#	Participating in the enterprise brand, providing advice	0.461	0.869	0.853
	LOY2	Recommending this brand to relatives and friends	0.787	0.789	
	LOY3	Willing to try the new products of this brand	0.812	0.782	
	LOY4	Willing to choose the brand to buy next purchase	0.642	0.830	
	LOY5	Only willing to pay attention to the brand	0.636	0.831	

Table 2
KMO and Bartlett

KMO and Bartlett			
	KMO		0.757
Bartlett		Approximate chi-square	1280.155
		df	300
		Sig.	0.000

Using SPSS19.0 to calculate the data, we get the results shown in the following table, so we can say it meets the basic conditions of exploring factor analysis.

2.2 Hypothesis Testing

The following table 2 shows the fitting parameters of structural equation model. It can be seen from the table

the GFI and NFI have not reached the critical value of 0.9, but their measured values are above 0.8, so the difference is not great. Measured value of RMSEA is 0.083, achieving the requirement of less than 0.1. Therefore, the degree of fitting of the overall model in this study is acceptable.

Table 3
Fitting Parameters

Parameters	GFI	RMSEA	CFI	NFI	PNFI	CMIN/DF
Fair value	>0.9	<0.1	>0.9	>0.9	>0.5	<5
Measured values	0.809	0.083	0.903	0.814	0.660	1.669

2.2.1 Significant Validation Results

According to relevant data from the structure equation, the paper finally draws the conclusion about research

hypothesis. As can be seen from the table, except for H3b, H1a, H1b, H1c, H3a, H3c, H2 are all established, which have been supported by the sample data.

Table 4
Conclusion about Research Hypothesis

Relationship	Path coefficient	Significant level	Hypothesis	Conclusion
TRU<---AUT	.274	0.000	H1a	significant
TRU<---PRO	.100	0.000	H1b	significant
TRU<---HUM	.447	0.000	H1c	significant
LOY<---AUT	.426	0.020	H3a	significant
LOY<---PRO	.260	0.204	H3b	insignificant
LOY<---HUM	.359	0.001	H3c	significant
LOY<---TRU	.435	0.000	H2	significant

note: * P<0.05; ** P<0.01; *** P<0.001.

2.2.2 Verification Results of the Intermediary Role

We can see from the table above the authenticity of micro-blog content, the professional of micro-blog content and the humanity of micro-blog content have significant effects on brand trust and also brand trust has a significant influence on brand loyalty. But the effect the professional of micro-blog content on brand loyalty is not significant, so we can

know that brand trust plays a full intermediary role in the process of the professional of micro-blog content effecting brand loyalty according to the theory proposed by Hou Taijie and Wen Zhonglin. Based on the same theory, we can judge that brand trust plays part intermediary roles in the effect of the authenticity and the humanity on brand loyalty. The result is showing as follows in the table.

Table 5
The Mediating Role of Brand Trust

Intermediary variable	Independent variables	Dependent variable	Mediating effects
Brand trust	The authenticity	Brand loyalty	Part
	The professional	Brand loyalty	Full
	The humanity	Brand loyalty	Part

CONCLUSIONS

The empirical results show that the authenticity of micro-blog content, the professional of micro-blog content and the humanity of micro-blog content all have significant effects on brand trust, so the enterprises can improve their marketing methods and strengthen the consumer brand trust from the three aspects. Because of the importance of the professional, the enterprise needs to establish a special team in charge of micro-blog marketing and require the team members to have certain professional knowledge. Micro-blog is an important approach to consumer understanding products, services and cultural of the enterprise, which requires companies to take appropriate measures in micro-blog marketing process. Compared to the number, the quality of the micro-blog contents is more important. Various forms of information issued by the

enterprise must ensure the reading value and spread value.

From the conclusion of the study, we can see that the humanity of micro-blog content has the greatest impact on brand trust, so the enterprises have to play the role of humanity in the use of micro-blog. The most obvious characteristic for micro-blog is that micro-blog can be like a personal, reflecting the humane attitude. When the audience contact with the enterprise in micro-blog, they feel that the enterprise is no longer cold, but a man of feeling. So the enterprise should avoid the official tone in the micro-blog and build your own as a favored human by consumers. To achieve this goal, the enterprises must continue to invest a lot of feelings in the process of micro-blog marketing. For example, enterprises could be a relative or friend, telling fans some warm words, reminding the weather, caring about the fans initiatively.

The positive effect of brand trust on brand loyalty has been verified in many articles, in addition, this paper shows that brand trust plays part intermediary roles in the effect of the authenticity and the humanity on brand loyalty and brand trust plays a full intermediary role in the process of the professional of micro-blog content effecting brand loyalty. Therefore, the enterprises can not ignore the importance of brand trust in the process of micro-blog marketing. By micro-blog marketing, the enterprises often can establish emotional trust, which is more stability and permanence. In the process of brand trust construction, the enterprises should strengthen interaction with consumers and strengthen brand image in the minds of the consumers and meet the needs of consumers in the emotional actively. In addition, the enterprise can also help consumers identify the potential psychological needs through the micro-blog, so that consumers feel that they are respected and understood. The enterprise could enhance consumer brand loyalty in this way.

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