Proposing a Model to Link Content-Type, Emotion, and Consumer Engagement Behavior

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Abstract. This study proposed a conceptual model that predicts the role of emotion as a variable mediating the relationship between content type and consumer engagement behavior on social media. Research that has investigated the results of research on content types with consumer engagement behavior, especially in social media, has been significantly developed nowadays. However, only a few studies have been conducted to assess the mediating impact of emotions on content type and consumer behavior. This study uses the basic Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) theory to conceptualize and operationalize the research construct. This conceptual model is new in the social media literature that examines the relationship between consumer engagement, emotion, and content type simultaneously. This model also predicts engagement behavior mediated by social media users' emotions after consuming brand-generated content.

Keywords: Social Media · Engagement Behavior · Content-Type · Emotional State · E-Commerce

1 Introduction

Marketing practitioners have invested heavily in social media to build online engagement [1]. Social media allows brands to communicate directly with their consumers to get their attention, but many brands find it difficult to engage their followers through the marketing content they create [2]. Engagement is one of the barometers in measuring the success or failure of marketing efforts on social media. Engagement is an important study for marketers in the era of Web 2.0 because engagement drives product sales [3], helps build an emotional connection to brands and ultimately loyalty [4], as well as a source of information transmission and social sharing [5, 6], which leads to the company's financial performance [7].

Previous research indicates findings that prove that the right content has a positive impact on the formation of consumer behavior on social media, especially on engagement behavior that involves emotions. The study results have shown that the types of social media content have different effects on the level of engagement of social media users. The amount of content is important for brands to consider because it impacts the resulting engagement behavior.

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The emergence of studies examining the field of online brands and consumer engagement behavior has an impact on the variety of results obtained [8]. The importance of seeking effective content to grow consumer engagement on social media is clarified by the findings from research that prove the relationship between high engagement and revenue performance and company product sales. A study on 346 companies worldwide in the 2010–2015 period that used Facebook as a marketing tool showed that the number of positive comments received by companies had a significant and positive effect on revenue [7].

Another study showed that conversations on Twitter, Facebook, blogs, forums, and consumer review sites positively affect sales [10]. Research in the field of social media marketing content has proven the role of content in shaping brand experience and consumer engagement [11–17]. Kujur and Singh [18] have investigated the relationship between emotion and engagement. Soares et al. [9] examined the relationship between emotional content and engagement. The results of this previous study show that very diverse factors shape consumer engagement behavior. Furthermore, if explored further, the findings from this previous study still show inconsistent results regarding the influence of content, emotion, experience, and engagement, so it becomes an opportunity for further research.

Consumer Engagement Behavior

The concept of engagement is rooted in psychology and organizational behavior theory [19]. Based on a psychological perspective, Kahn [19] defines engagement as the self-expression of a person's physical, cognitive, and emotional aspects as long as he holds a particular role. In marketing, engagement is generally described as fulfilling the relationship between consumers and companies. The concept of engagement has been considered successful in explaining consumer behavior that cannot be explained by traditional consumer behavior concepts, such as why a consumer wants to advise other consumers about a particular company or product or why consumers choose to recommend certain products. Consumer engagement can explain consumer behavior motivation that generally exceeds purchases [20].

Conceptualization and definitions of engagement from various sciences show the similarity of the concept of this construct, namely the concept of physical, emotional, or cognitive engagement [21]. Social psychology describes engagement as an initiative and response to social stimuli [22]. In the marketing literature, engagement has been known by various terms, for example, customer engagement [23], customer engagement behavior [20], customer brand engagement [24], consumer engagement [25], and engagement [26]. Most of these opinions have a common view regarding the concept of engagement, which can be seen as a psychological process by which consumers move towards brand loyalty [21], as well as a state of sustained emotional, cognitive, and behavioral activation [27]. The engagement has received significant attention from researchers focusing on specific behavioral dimensions. This concept can clearly define consumer engagement motivation as a manifestation of their behavior towards an object, in this case, a brand [20].

Content-Type

Research in the field of social media content has developed a content typology in the form of informative, entertaining, and transactional content [12, 28]. Recent studies have succeeded in classifying content by involving emotional, informational, and theme aspects of messages tailored to the brand [29]. Dolan et al. [15] revealed that social media users have different needs when deciding to use social media, some of which is the need for social interaction, entertainment needs, information seeking and sharing needs, and the desire for rewards or remuneration. The purpose of a company/brand having social media is to attract an audience by providing value or satisfaction through the content it creates [30]. Therefore, content needs to be well designed to create value for consumers and build a more substantial level of engagement [30]. Based on the results of previous research, social media content can be categorized into four main groups, namely: based on the level of information [12, 28]; entertainment [28, 31]; remuneration content [12, 15]; and relational [32]. In social media, users are highly motivated by the need to socialize when participating in groups with particular interests (Park et al., 2009). The benefits of socialization include getting support from other members, meeting new and exciting people, and developing a sense of belonging to the community [33].

Emotional State

Consumers have human characteristics that make them so complex as stimulus recipients. Based on the S-O-R model, organisms produce certain behaviors if they receive special stimulus conditions. This allows the organism to expect and predict a match between the stimuli it receives and the reactions it might give. Mehrabian and Russell [34] state that emotional responses can mediate the impact of situations on behavior, and consumer behavior can be described by three (3) elements: pleasure, arousal, and dominance. Pleasure refers to the degree to which the individual feels good, joyful, and happy about the situation. The pleasure was measured by an assessment of verbal reactions to the environment (happy as opposed to sad, pleasant as opposed to unpleasant, satisfied as opposed to dissatisfied, hopeful as opposed to hopeless, and relaxed as opposed to bored).

The Development of Conceptual Model and Study Propositions

Recent research that examines consumer engagement on social media focuses on the formation of engagement behavior, as done by [8]. Dhaoui & Webster [8] explain the concept of engagement behavior on social media and determine the elements of consumer engagement behavior on Facebook social media, namely endorsement, feedback, recommendation, conversation, and consensus. They argue that brand pages on Facebook are an ecosystem where consumers, brands, and other stakeholders influence each other on this platform. Research in this field has used mediating and control variables to explain the relationship between certain types of content and the formation of consumer engagement, but not many have examined the role of consumer emotions in their research.

Previous studies on the effect of social media content on the formation of engagement have not involved the user's emotional state in their research [35]. Previous research by Dolan et al. [15] has examined the relationship between messages on social media and consumer engagement behavior, which includes active and passive engagement using content analysis.

Cvijikj & Michaelles [12] argue that the power of the media is its ability to bring out the entire storyline of every brand and consumer action on their respective social media accounts, which in the end, can also be enjoyed by a wider network of friends. Consumers share their comments on a brand's post, which are then commented on and seen by other consumers. Another study on customer engagement behavior on social media platforms was conducted by Dhaoui and Webster [8], who examined the effect of brand engagement on consumer engagement behavior. They used 2740 company Facebook accounts using the FB Social Graph. The indicator used by Dhaoui and Webster [8] for the consumer engagement behavior variable is measured by follower behavior consisting of endorsement, recommendation, feedback, conversation, and consensus behavior given by consumers for posts submitted by companies using the moderating variables of message clarity and content posting time.

The position of this research is the development and modification of research conducted by [8, 15, 17] using the variable type of content as the independent variable and consumer engagement behavior as the dependent variable. The mediation variables used emotional state dimensions, namely arousal, pleasure, and dominance [34] which has been carried out by further research by Loureino et al. [36] and the concept of Schreiner et al. [35], which examines how certain types of content cause certain emotions. Also on consumers and ultimately is expected to have an impact on the response given. This study proposed a unique conceptual model which predicts the role of emotions in mediating the relationship between content type and consumer engagement behavior on social media. Predicting consumer engagement behavior in social media shown in Fig. 1.

The conceptual model proposed below explains that when consumers consume social media content, the emotions they feel may differ when viewing specific content types.

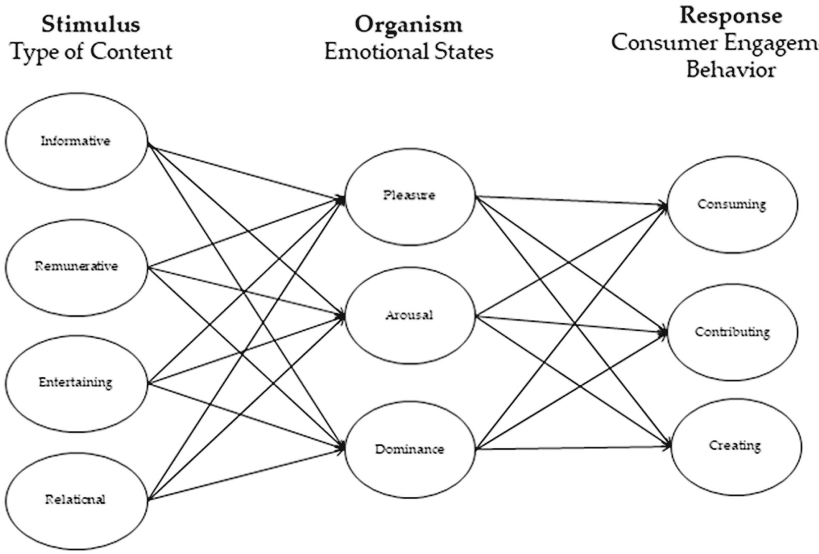

Fig. 1. Predicting consumer engagement behavior in social media

Emotions generated after consuming certain types of content may impact their engagement behavior with brands on social media, including consuming, contributing, and creating activities. The types of content generally created by brands on their social media are categorized into informative, remunerative, entertaining, and relational content. Consumers might feel emotions, including pleasure, arousal, and dominance. Meanwhile, consumer engagement behavior is generated after consumers consume content and are moved by their emotions. Based on the description of the theoretical basis in Fig. 1, this study develops the research hypothesis as follows:

H1: Content type (i.e., information, remunerative, entertaining, relational) has a positive relationship with emotion (i.e., pleasure, arousal, dominance)
H2: Emotion (i.e., pleasure, arousal, dominance) has a positive relationship with consumer engagement behavior (i.e., consuming, contributing, creating)
H3: Emotion (i.e., pleasure, arousal, dominance) mediates the relationship between Content type (i.e., information, remunerative, entertaining, relational) and Content type (i.e., information, remunerative, entertaining, relational).

2 Conclusion

This study takes the initiative to consider the concepts of content type and engagement involving emotion between both constructs. This perspective can be well understood from work [35, 36] which defines that emotion can be roles as meditation to strengthen the relationship between stimuli and response. Applying these concepts in the context of social media, emotion is recognized as a feeling of pleasure, arousal, or dominance from consumers that is obtained when consumers consume content made by brand-generated content. When consumers find enjoyable consumption experiences to be co-creative and interactive, such experiences further provide a kind of interface to consumers, where they respond to consume, constitute or create content. Therefore, this study has proposed a unique conceptual model that predicts consumer engagement behavior triggered by pleasurable consumption experiences of social media content and evoked emotions.

3 Contribution and Future Research

This study contributes to the engagement literature on social media by examining the type of content on consumer engagement behavior mediated by emotions based on SOR theory. This study also provides a predictive model for proposing the role of emotions in mediating the relationship between content type and consumer engagement behavior on social media, which is still few researched. This new perspective on emotion use brings new insights into previous studies [15, 25, 26] that have studied the notion of engagement in their studies. Last, previous research in the field of consumer engagement behavior, particularly on informative, remunerative, entertaining, relational content types, and consumer engagement behavior [15–17], has rarely examined emotions in models at the same time. This study discusses predicting consumer engagement behavior triggered by the type of content that evokes emotions in consumers. Because this study is conceptual, further research is required to validate the proposed model and study proposition. In addition, future work is being done to develop scales for content types, emotions, and consumer engagement behavior on social media.

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