BRAND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EVANGELISTIC BEHAVIOR: AN IN-

VESTIGATION IN ONLINE CONTEXT

A THESIS

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Abstract

Individuals co-exist in communities. With the proliferation of the internet and Web 2.0, like-minded individuals get more opportunities to interact despite geographical separation. Online-community platforms enable ideal meeting opportunities for like-minded individuals. The formation of such online communities also initiate discussions related to their preferred brands.

These closed community groups enable users to promote the brand and convert the non-users into the users and make them follow the brand. The extant literature identifies consumers' activities about promoting the brands fervently and freely with a strong desire to spreading positive information as evangelism. Identifying such influential consumers and finding them has been a challenge faced by marketers today. The present study explores the relationship between brand community engagement and brand evangelization.

The study examines brand prominence and brand identification as the antecedents of engagement with brand community(BC), whereas brand defense and resilience to negative information(brand resilience) found to be determined by the evangelistic tendencies of the consumers actively engaged with the online brand community. Our study is an attempt to extend the existing evangelism literature and investigate as to why certain individuals willingly engage in community platforms and promote certain brands.

The methodology involved empirical investigation, including brand community members on social networking sites. Partial least square using Structural Equation Modeling ((PLS-SEM)using Smart PLS 3) was used to test and validate the proposed relationships. The data confirmed the proposed antecedents(i.e., brand prominence and brand identification) for engagement with the BC. Additionally, brand evangelism was found to mediate the relationship between brand com-

munity engagement and brand defense and also between brand community engagement(BCE) and brand resilience. The marketers may use the insights provided by this study for the identification of consumer characteristics and engaging them with the brand communities. Also, a practitioner may effectively utilize brand evangelists on Social Networking Sites(SNS) to defend the brands.

Keywords: Brand Evangelism, Brand Community(BC), Brand Defense, Resilience to Negative Information(Brand Resilience), Brand Prominence, Brand Identification, Social Networking Sites(SNS).

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