

DEVELOPMENT OF BRAND HATE THROUGH ELECTRONIC MARKETING

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Abstract

The internet has become one of the most important and influential aspects of human lives, which cannot simply be parted away. The virtual world, which is accessed through the internet, has changed the lives of people throughout the world. It has shaped people's opinions related to everything around them and most importantly, of consumer goods and services. These opinions can take form both in positive or negative emotional messages which show the type of consumer-brand relationship that exists. The consumer-brand relationship which has its two extremes, on the positive side of the spectrum is the emotion of Love and on the other end of the spectrum lies the emotion of Hate which is one of the most extreme negative forms of emotion. It is a similar emotion like other emotions that are built over time, but at times, can be a result of spontaneous reaction towards an event. The current conceptual study aims to explore how e-marketing and social media platforms participate in the development of brand hate in consumers. The study goes over various forms of online marketing tools to show how they aid in developing brand hate in consumers. The study concludes that online marketing and social media do aid in developing brand hate and other negative emotions towards a brand.

Keywords: Brand Hate, Negative Emotions, Online Marketing, Brand Relationship, Consumer-Brand Relationship

JEL Codes: D1, M30,31,37,39.

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1. Introduction

Consumers tend to feel an emotional bond towards a brand whose products or services they consume the most or wish to acquire. These emotions can be either of Love (positive) or Hate (Hate) depending on the consumers' feelings towards them. There at times are mixed emotions towards a brand in which a consumer might love and hate the brand at the same time (Tugrul and Taqi, 2018). Consumers' behavior is affected by these mixed emotions (Lunardo and Saintives, 2017; Watson and Spence, 2007). Nonetheless, when reviewing the literature on consumer behavior, there has been great emphasis on the positive aspect of the consumer-brand relationship (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Laros and Steenkamp, 2005; Richens, 1997), such as brand love (Albert et al., 2008; Batra et al., 2012; Rossiter, 2012), brand passion (Albert et al., 2013), brand devotion (Pichler and Hemetsberger, 2007). Whereas, the negative side of the consumer-brand relationship spectrum has not been given as much importance (Zarantonello et al., 2016). Brand Hate lays on the far extreme of the negative side of the consumer-brand relationship spectrum which needs to be emphasized due to the impact it can have not only on the brand itself but also on the consumer. It holds great importance for the marketers as it would enlighten them regarding marketing practices which could harm the brand (Hogg and Banister, 2001; Lee, Conroy, and Motion, 2009; Tugrul and Taqi, 2018). Prior studies which have studied the emotions from the psychological aspect have greatly emphasized how negative information delivered to the consumers has more significant impact than the positive information (Folkes and Kamins, 1999; Herr et al., 1991; Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy, 1990; Skowronski and Carlston, 1987). In the context of marketing, emotions which are the result of negative information are obtained through many different means, but the internet (e-marketing) is one of the greatest factors which plays a vital role in shaping consumers' behavior in today's technological world (Lodhi and Shoaib, 2017). There are many e-marketing tools and platforms available today through which marketers market their products and services to the consumers (Hooda and Aggarwal, 2012). Since the inception of the web, there have been many online platforms which have been introduced, survived, and vanished. As of today, there are well over 4.38 billion internet users throughout the world, out of which 3.48 billion are active users of social media (Smart Insights, 2019). Currently, there is a lack of research which looks into the extreme negative (brand hate) end of the consumer-brand relationship spectrum (Zarantonello et al., 2016; Tugrul and Taqi, 2018). Therefore, this conceptual study looks in the formation of brand hate as an extreme negative emotion through electronic marketing and social media platforms. The study also shadows upon the results for consumers' and brands which are the cause of brand hate emotion.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Brand Hate

Brand hate as a concept in marketing a relatively new concept (Taqi et al., 2019). It was first studied and conceptualized by Gregoire et al. (2009). Negative aspects of relationship among consumer and brand have recently come to the attention of marketing academia (Fournier and Alvarez, 2013; Park et al., 2013). Another set of literature which has pointed out the negative emotion which takes form in the shape of groups (Hollenbeck and Zinkhan, 2010), where consumers come together to form "hate groups" to show and share

with other consumers the hatred, negative emotions, and experiences towards the brands which they have (Krishnamurthy and Kucuk, 2009). According to Gregoire et al. (2009), hate is a desire in the form of revenge and avoidance towards the brand. They define revenge as "customers' need to punish and cause harm to firms for the damages they have caused", and avoidance as "customers' need to withdraw themselves from any interactions with the firm" (p. 19). Brand hate is defined as "an intense negative emotional affect toward the brand" (Bryson et al., 2013: p. 395); where Hegner et al. (2017) define it as "a more intense emotional response consumers have towards a brand than brand dislike" (p.3). Another form of negative emotions or feelings towards a brand is termed as brand dislike which is defined as "the negative judgement expressed by the consumer and/or implied in the choice not to buy" (Dalli et al., 2006: p. 87). Prior studies have found that in some instances when consumers feel that brand has damaged them in any way, they might turn against the brand and might harm, punish (desire for revenge) and/or stop any relations (desire for avoidance) with the brand (Gregorie et al., 2009). Moreover, a study carried out by Zarantonello et al. (2016) found three main factors which are linked with various negative behavioral outcomes that result in brand hate. These factors are corporate wrongdoings and violation of expectations which leads consumers to spread negative word-of-mouth, complaints, protests; and negative perceptions towards a brand resulting in patronage reduction/termination. Hegner et al. (2017) found the prior negative experience, symbolic incongruence, and ideological incompatibility to be determinants of brand hate, and brand avoidance, negative word-of-mouth, and brand retaliation are the outcomes of brand hates.

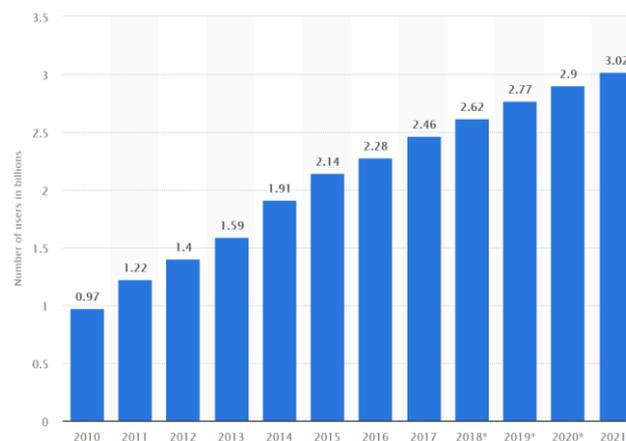
2.2. Electronic Marketing (e-Marketing)

Electronic marketing goes by terms such as online marketing or digital marketing; today, it is known as one of the most effective and efficient means of communicating with consumers. Traditional marketing still plays an important role, but due to technological advances, e-marketing has been prioritized by most of the businesses around the world. The increase in technology in the past decade has caused businesses throughout the world to spend more on e-marketing than compared to traditional marketing (Howard, 2011). E-marketing is conducted via the web (internet) on various platforms which are social media platforms, blogs, chat forums, and general forums (Javed, 2013). It can be defined as the marketing of goods and services through electronic tools (Meng, 2009). It is not only easy to target the consumers but allows to target a large number of consumers at the same time, and hence it is cost-effective. A study by Al and Al (2014) shows online shopping is easy to use, enjoyable and allows consumers to learn information regarding the goods and services such as product characteristics, features, and other consumers reviews right from the website. Another study carried out by Tayyab et al. (2012) found that consumers feel more comfortable and relaxed while browsing the products and services online. Statics show that as of 2018, about 82% of the U.S. population feels satisfied with online shopping due to a greater number of options and sellers (Statista, 2019c). This boom in e-marketing has brought changes in the cybernetics societies in a way that it has changed the consumers, society, and corporate sector into information hubs due to the information shared by them (Krishnamurthy and Sin, 2014).

As of today, there are various tools for carrying out online marketing, such as mobile marketing, social media networks, blogs, websites, search engines, e-mail and among others. Social media network platforms are known to be one of the most essential and

effective platforms when it comes to targeting consumers. Social media is defined as "websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking" (Dollarhide, 2019). According to Statista (2019a), in 2010 there were just 0.97 billion users of social media networks worldwide, and this number has changed to 2.77 billion in 2019, and it is expected to increase to 3.02 billion in 2021 (see Figure 1). These figures show the increase not just in the users but also the spread of technology throughout the world and the awareness of it.

Figure 1- Number of social media users worldwide - 2010 to 2021 (in billions)



Source: Statista, 2019a

Social networking sites which are most commonly used by users all over the world are Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, WeChat, Instagram, QQ, Skype, Viber, among others (Statista, 2019b). Nonetheless, other online sources such as blogs, brand communities, brand forums, search engines, vlogs, among others which are used today as online marketing tools. As there is a positive side of online marketing which allows ease of access to marketers to target a large number of consumers and in creative ways, yet, online marketing also holds the dark (negative) side to it.

Brand Hate as a Descendant of Electronic Marketing (e-Marketing). Electronic marketing, without a doubt, has saved companies around the world billions and brought ease to marketers. Nevertheless, it has a negative side to it as well. Online forums, blogs, social media networks and other forms of online platforms has given the freedom to users to share their experiences and thoughts regarding goods and services which they have consumed or which to consume. The internet has been stormed with information with literally any possible topic. Consumers have created communities for the brands, products, services, or product categories which they love hence, "brand love" (Ahuvia, 2005), and these consumers tend to show resistance towards negative information (Batra et al., 2012). Whereas, the consumers who have felt any negative experience or feelings towards a brand or product have established anti-brand communities or "hate groups" (Hollenbeck and Zinkhan, 2010). Some examples of anti-brand communities are KillerCoke, Anti-Apple Community, AppleHaters, Starbucked, ihatestarbucks, Anti-McDonald's, and others. Anti-branding can be described as an action taken by the consumer, where they reject the

brand and do not consume any product or service provided by the brand (Dessart et al., 2016). Whereas, Brand hate refers to "an intense negative emotional affect toward the brand" (Bryson et al., 2013: p.395). When consumers looking for information regarding a product or service are faced with negative information available online, it causes them to establish negative view regarding the brand which might cause them to write negative information or take negative actions against the brand. Negative word-of-mouth plays a vital role in online marketing. When most influential online community members speak negative of a brand, the rest of the herd (members) follows (Holt, 2002). Another aspect which has led people to hate brands is the intense use of advertisement and marketing material on websites, forums, mobile applications, and social media networks. Following are comments of consumers posted online on various online platforms which make the connection between online marketing and brand hate, and how brand hate is developed through online marketing.

"If all my friends stop using it, I might delete it," says Cameron. He is a user of Twitter: "I just hate the amount of ads on Facebook. It's become unusable." (Consumer comment, The Guardian , 2018)

The comment above shows that the consumer is only holding on the usage of Facebook due to his friends; otherwise, he would stop using it as he hates the amount of advertisement.

"I go on social media to see and know what my friends are doing. I don't want to see ads clutter my news feed. If I'm interested in a product or service, I know where to look. Social media is a place for us to connect with our friends, not be attacked by advertisements" (Consumer comment, VisualFizz , 2018)

Another comment by a consumer is showing how advertisement on social media impacts their view on social media. It shows that intense advertisement towards consumers can cause consumers to turn against the brand or product and act against them by speaking ill of them either online or in person.

Another user expresses how advertisement makes them feel bad about what they cannot buy or do not need. And that advertisement follows us everywhere we go.

"I think the reason people hate ads is because there are just too many of them. Everywhere we go, everything we do is bombarded with ads for services and goods we don't need, don't want and probably can't afford." (Consumer comment, StartWithWhy Blog, 2010)

Internet is full of such negative comments from the consumers who have started to hate a brand due to mass advertisement marketing intelligence tools and automation marketing. Such tools allow marketers to follow internet users to see what they do online and which products they are interested in. This has caused negative feedback from users due to privacy issues. Recently, Facebook faced such problem where data of 87 million users was used for marketing political campaigns (Winder, 2019). This caused a large sum of users to close their social media accounts. Bloomberg statistics showed that well over half of adult Facebook users from the U.S. have updated their privacy settings on the social media network and that over 42 per cent users have temporarily closed their accounts, and about 26 per cent have completed deleted the Facebook app from their smartphones. The act of

deleting the app and encouraging others (negative word-of-mouth, complaints) to close or delete the account is because of the Hate towards the brand, and it is due to the corporate wrongdoings, and violation of expectations. This type of action is regarded as patronage reduction/termination (Zarantonello et al., 2016).

3. Discussion

E-marketing has led the marketers to easy access to the data of consumers throughout the world. It has brought the consumers to their doorsteps to directly market their products and services and build a relationship with them. But along with it, it has made consumers more informative, smarter, and has awakened the consumers to act against the brands. Consumers are no more willing to accept information which marketers push towards them; instead, they rely on other consumers (Gershoff et al., 2006). Marketers have used different tools for online marketing which have caused consumers to hate marketing and brands due to the mass advertisement, which follows them on each website or social media network they open.

Along with that, consumers have even gone to the extent where they would pay to have the advertisement removed from the online services they use. As of today, most mobile applications and other services offer an ad-free premium version of their services at a specific price. This has happened before with radio and television advertisement, and now it is an online advertisement. Brand hate in consumers has started to spread more than ever before due to access to mass information available online on websites, social media, forums, brand communities and other forms of platforms (Johnson et al., 2011). Online platforms (online websites, social media networks etc.) on the internet should allow the consumers to choose whether if they want to see advertisements or not and must give them a choice of advertisement which they would like to see and how often.

4. Conclusions

The current study contributes to the literature of feelings of Hate towards a brand (Zarantonello et al., 2016). It demonstrates the development of negative feelings and emotions which turn into Hate towards a brand is explicitly formed through e-marketing and social media platforms. Prior studies have shown that Hate towards a brand has a significant impact on consumer behavior. Nonetheless, to the author's knowledge, there is no study which conceptualizes the development of brand hate through electronic marketing and social media platforms. Though, limited research has been done on brand hate as a negative outcome of consumer-brand relationship (Zarantonello et al., 2016; Fournier and Alvarez, 2013; Part et al., 2013; Bryson et al., 2013; Krishnamurthy and Kucuk, 2009). This study supplements the literature by proposing the development of brand hate in consumers from information which consumers access on the internet through various websites, forums, brand communities, and social media networks. Moreover, the study also contributes to the literature of emotions by showing how mass advertisement targeting consumers causes them to develop negative emotions and feelings resulting in brand hate by conceptualizing the development of brand hate from electronic marketing. For future studies, it is recommended to carry out an empirical study on the current topic

and explore different aspects of brand hate emotion which are triggered through online marketing.

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