

ARTICLE

Social Media Shopping as a Driver for Brand Trust and Brand Commitment

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ABSTRACT

Globalization and developments in digital technology paved the way for online communication, mobile penetration, and social media. Digital platforms and particularly social media have become popular sources of news and online interaction. Literature review so far reveals more than one billion social media users exist globally and use social media for shopping purposes. Hence, social media has become one of the most popular tools companies using for brand relationship building activities. The effect of social media on building customer commitment needs to be explored. This article aims to identify social media use among Turkish 18-40 years old in building commitment towards their favorite brands.

1. Introduction

Brand marketers continuously identify and deploy more creative tools and skills to make products and brands more accessible and appealing to their target audiences. Particularly the perks of social media and on line marketing have been effective platforms for this endeavour. Social media marketing enabled brands to create their brand profiles and introducing online customer service, product information, and special offers resulted in increased sales^[7].

Literature review so far reveals more than one billion social media users exist globally and use social media for

shopping purposes^[1,2]. This fact alone has paved the way for in information acquisition, online brand engagement, new usage patterns, lifestyles, and experiences of consumers^[3-5]. Consequently, social media has become one of the most popular tools companies using for brand relationship building activities. In short, social media can be defined as an online application program, platform, or mass media tool that facilitates interaction, collaboration, or content sharing between users in general^[6]. The effect of social media on building customer commitment needs to be explored. Studies have reported over one billion social media users globally in the last decade^[1,2], which have

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contributed to the transformations observed in information acquisition, online brand engagement, usage, lifestyles, and experiences of consumers^[3-5].

One of the common channels of communication that companies have recently applied in their marketing activities is social media. Social media can be defined as an online application program, platform, or mass media tool that facilitates interaction, collaboration, or content sharing between users in general^[6]. The effect of social media on consumer behavior includes a wide spectrum of activities ranging from informing, sharing ideas and attitudes to acquire awareness and understanding, and visualize post-purchase behavior without purchasing^[8].

A McKinsey report of 2007 and^[9,10] suggested that social media marketing activities are significant parts of branding actions for businesses .

As the Internet and social media have become popular sources of news and online interaction, this article aims to identify social media use among Turkish 18-40 years old in building commitment towards their favorite brands. A literature review has revealed gaps that can be filled with further studies and will highlight current findings in social media marketing and its use and applications in Turkey. This part will be followed by the definition and correlation of brand commitment to social media marketing as scanned in the literature. Finally, the findings of secondary data will identify the gaps in how this study approached to fill in some of these gaps.

2. Literature Review

Social media sites have become enablers for users to create content and exchange opinions^[8]. Through social media companies and brands have managed to have meaningful dialogues with customers which allowed them to build one-to-one relationships^[11-14].

In the globalized world of today although traditional marketing methods are losing their effectiveness because consumers are captured and intrigued predominantly through mobile communication platforms. Hence, key strategies companies deploy to promote the brand is word of mouth and so social media is the way to do it^[15].

Engaging content on social media enables customers to keep in touch with brands which builds brand trust and loyalty which are indispensable for brand commitment.

2.1 Social Media Marketing

Particularly in developing countries Internet and social media have become important sources of information^[16]. Nearly half of the population in Turkey, adults claim that social media platforms are their primary source of daily

information. Furthermore, Alcott and Gentzkow argue that social media and the internet give access to consumers without editorial oversight Needless to mention, the developments experienced in communication technologies have a direct impact on lifestyles^[17].

^[18] in the early days of social media, in 1999, argued social media offers the following perks to consumers: empowerment, more information on brands, easier access to brands, convenient shopping, finally opportunity to build one-to-one relationships.

^[19] argued that social media communication has some distinctive characteristics such as participatory, collaborative, personal, and is based on online communities. This fact led the way to firms to engage their customers and build sustainable relationships. Consequently, social media serves as a powerful tool to mediate the firm- consumer brand engagement practices.

Social media platforms have become new communication channels to advertise product and brand promotions, promotions, and advertisements^[20]. In their research,^[10] have found that social media is at the center of today's business strategy and popularity of social media. Consumers' shared opinions and suggestions on products and brands are of great value and monitored by the companies very closely. To keep the level of attraction on social media trendiness is important for brands that require the introduction of the latest/current information on products for customers^[21]. Ding and Keh in their 2016 article argue that brands can transfer the uniqueness of their personality and position to the customers utilizing peer-to-peer communication on social media.

2.2 Social Media in Turkey

In Turkey similar to many countries Facebook dominates social media usage for both news and other purposes. Analytics firm SocialBakers indicated that back in 2011 Turkey was *already* home to nearly 30 million Facebook accounts, making it the fourth largest country in the world in terms of country-specific user numbers.

www.statista.com forecast that in 2025, the number of monthly active internet users is projected to reach 71.51 million individuals which is a nearly 30 % increase from 50 million users in 2020.

^[22] reports the following findings on the Turkish social media environment

- As of January 2020, there were 62.07 million internet users which increased 2.4 million compared to 2019 while internet penetration reached 74%.
- Social media users in Turkey topped 54 million which is an increase of 2.2 million versus a year

ago. Social media penetration over the entire population is at 64 % while over the social media users, it is 87%.

- Mobile communication is important to note as mobile connections in Turkey are almost 77.4 million which covers 92 % of the total population.
- Average Turkish consumer spends 7.2 hours on the internet daily of which nearly 3 hours are used for social media activities.

A study conducted by Bosphorus University and Egon Zehnder ^[23] about the digital marketing environment in Turkey revealed the following key points:

- E-commerce companies are at a more advanced state than the rest when it comes to analyzing data generated from social media conversations.
- Search Engine Marketing (SEM) and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) are still widely used
- Telecom operators play a leading role in the evolution of mobile marketing practices.
- SMS is still the most frequently used tool in the world of mobile marketing.

Although there is widespread consumption among Turkish users, they are still getting to know this digital world by exploring every aspect of social media. They use social media mostly to follow others to learn and to interact socially. ^[24] presented that Turkish social media users are clustered into the following groups according to user preferences and social media activities: social pioneers, content creators, engagers, and game lovers. Their studies further identified that social media is not used for original content creation but rather for consumption and participation. Social media and Internet use via smartphones seem to have a great share among all users. Statistical forecasts indicate that social media via mobile phones has the potential for a very high growth rate which presents huge opportunities for the future.

2.3 Brand Commitment

The second topic investigated in the literature review is brand commitment considering the context and purpose of the study. Social psychologists suggest a consumer's level of commitment depends on the psychological state that globally represents the experience of dependence on a relationship. Morgan and Hunt furthermore call both trust and commitment key variables 'that encourage this relationship process. However, there is a clear difference between brand loyalty and brand commitment as studies show that brand loyal consumers are likely to switch to another brand, whereas brand-committed consumers are not. Commitment has a direct relationship with loyalty.

Therefore, it can be said that commitment is related to trustworthiness in the long term to maintain consumers' willingness to purchase the brand. Satisfaction created in consumers' mind drive brand trust which drives consumer commitment. Hence, consumers will become less price sensitive leading to brand profitability ^[25].

Trust and satisfaction are very much related in essence. Word of mouth triggered by satisfied customers will be more positive and result in brand recommendation to their networks ^[26]. The power of word of mouth spreading about a brand in the social media environment is becoming a critical success factor for all brands.

3. Gaps in the Literature

Although much has been explored and identified concerning the evolution of social media in the literature, social media marketing brand loyalty, brand commitment as a derivative of social media engagement created by brands seems to be neglected specifically within the context of the social media marketing environment for brands in Turkey.

What makes consumers trust their brand? What is the role of social media catalyzing this process?

What sort of social media content and engagement lead to increase trust and commitment towards a brand are some of the questions that need to be investigated and answer.

3.1 Research Objective Based on the Gap Analysis

To identify social media use among the Turkish 18-40 years old population in building commitment towards their favorite brands.

3.2 Hypotheses

H1: Social media use is correlated with brand interaction with consumers;

H2: Social Media use is correlated with personalized brand communication;

H3: Accurate brand info on social media is correlated with brand trust;

H4: Brand trust is correlated with direct shopping from social media;

H5: Brand trust and direct shopping on social media are correlated with brand commitment;

3.3 Testing the Above-mentioned Hypotheses will Help Verify below Proposed Conceptual Model

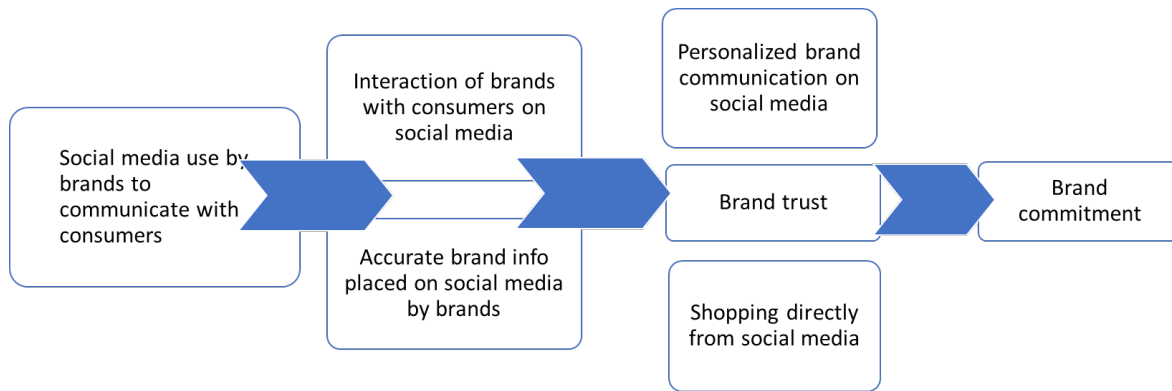


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

4. Research Methodology

First secondary data collection on the topics of social media and social media marketing as related to brand commitment were collected and analyzed. Based on the learnings of the secondary data collection and identification of gaps in the current knowledge a survey questionnaire was created which led to the second stage, primary data collection. A quantitative method was applied. Survey questionnaires were distributed through email exchanges among social media users between the ages of 18-40 years old in Turkey during June 2018 because literature review showed that this age group engages the most on SM with brands and shopping. Convenience and snowball sampling was used to identify the subjects due to funds available and timing of the project. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions and 5 points Likert scale questions. A total of 200 subjects were contacted and 171 valid answers and surveys were tabulated. 200 have been identified as the target number based on previous studies and based on access to target audience.

To analyze data statistically, it was recorded in SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for Windows Version 20.0 program. To analyze the data, frequency T-test, correlation, the chi-square, and Anova statistics were run. Significance level was measured as $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0, 01$.

The data analysis process is based on the objectives and hypotheses listed below.

5. Research Results

5.1 Cronbach’s Reliability Analysis

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach’s Alpha	N of Items
0.864	31

5.2 Frequency Analyses

Frequency analyses Tables 1-14 show that nearly 90 % of respondents use social media at least once a day and more. 67.4 % of participants have at least a college degree and the split between genders is nearly 50-50.

Table 2. Age

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1 time	90	52.3	52.3
2-3 times	44	25.6	77.9
Many times	20	11.6	89.5
Very often	10	5.8	95.3
0 times	5	2.9	98.3
If I have time	3	1.7	100
Total	172	100	

Table 3. Education

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Highschool	29	16.9	16.9
Associate Degree	10	5.8	22.7
College Degree	116	67.4	90.1
Post Graduate	17	9.9	100
Total	172	100	

Table 4. Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Female	85	49.4	49.4
Male	87	50.6	100
Total	172	100	

In terms of reasons for using social media about Tables 4-5 show that 70 % of respondents use social media for shopping purposes and for being informed.

Table 5. I use social media for shopping online

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	33	19.2
	2	62	55.2
	3	27	70.9
	4	24	84.9
	5	26	100
Total	172	100	

Table 6. I use social media to be informed

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	30	17.4
	2	53	30.8
	3	32	66.9
	4	29	83.7
	5	28	100
Total	172	100	

Tables 6-7 indicate that 83.7 % of respondents prefer receiving brand info on social media and 81.4 % of them find this information accurate and trustworthy.

Table 7. I Prefer social media for receiving brand info to other channels

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	56	32.6
	2	58	66.3
	3	30	83.7
	4	17	93.6
	5	11	100
Total	172	100	

Table 8. I find brands' info on social media accurate and trustworthy

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	43	25
	2	48	52.9
	3	49	81.4
	4	23	94.8
	5	9	100
Total	172	100	

As displayed in Tables 8-9, 87.8 % of participants indicated that social media communication makes them realize their needs as a consumer while 83.7 % think that social media helps them differentiate between brands.

Table 9. Social media communication makes me realize my needs as a consumer

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	40	23.3
	2	74	66.3
	3	37	87.8
	4	12	94.8
	5	9	100
Total	172	100	

Table 10. Information on social media helps me differentiate between brands

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	43	25
	2	67	64
	3	34	83.7
	4	22	96.5
	5	6	100
Total	172	100	

Table 11. social media reminds me to shop online more often

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	37	21.5
	2	73	64
	3	29	80.8
	4	24	94.8
	5	9	100
Total	172	100	

Table 12. In the future I would like to shop directly from social media

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	40	23.3
	2	62	59.3
	3	34	79.1
	4	22	91.9
	5	14	100
Total	172	100	

Tables 11-12 illustrate the preference of participants in terms of shopping directly on social media, almost 91.9 % feel so. In addition, 94.8 % appreciate social media reminding them to shop more online.

Table 13. I feel valued when I receive brand info from social media

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	37	21.5	21.5
2	49	28.5	50
3	38	22.1	72.1
4	29	16.9	89
5	19	11	100
Total	172	100	

Table 14. I feel more committed to a brand when I receive personalized messages via social media

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	41	23.8	23.8
2	41	23.8	47.7
3	41	23.8	71.5
4	26	15.1	86.6
5	23	13.4	100
Total	172	100	

Tables 13-14 indicate that 72.1 % of respondents feel valued when they receive info from social media and 71.5 % of them feel committed to a brand when they receive personalized messages on social media.

Table 15. I intend to use social media indefinitely for brand relationship purposes

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	43	25	25
2	57	33.1	58.1
3	32	18.6	76.7
4	26	15.1	91.9
5	14	8.1	100
Total	172	100	

Finally, 76.7 % of respondents indicated that they intend to use social media to build brand relationships in the future as illustrated in Table 14.

5.3 Correlation Analyses

To look at the correlations between different variables, a bivariate correlation analysis was conducted.

Table 16. Reach of brand rep on social media and trustworthiness

		I find Brands SM info trustworthy	I trust a brand more if I can reach brand reps on SM	I feel more committed to a brand when I receive personalized messages via SM
I find Brands SM info trustworthy	Pearson Correlation	1	.663**	.559**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0	0
	N	172	172	172
I trust a brand more if I can reach brand reps on SM	Pearson Correlation	.663**	1	.701**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0		0
	N	172	172	172
I feel more committed to a brand when I receive personalized messages via SM	Pearson Correlation	.559**	.701**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	
	N	172	172	172

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 16 shows that if consumers can reach brand representatives on social media, they find the brands more trustworthy and this correlation is 66 % and is significant at 0.000 significance level. Furthermore, consumers receiving personalized messages on social media and find the brand info trustworthy feel more committed to a brand (70 % correlation) and significance level of 0.000.

Below Table 17 gives more light on social media interaction and brand trust. Consumers who engage in social media with reactions also trust a brand more if they can reach a representative on social media. The correlation is an average of 51% not very strong but accepted with a significance level of 0.000.

Table 17. on social media interaction and brand trust

		I react to SM about brands	I trust a brand more if I can reach brand reps on SM
I react to SM about brands	Pearson Correlation	1	.512**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0
	N	172	172
I trust a brand more if I can reach brand reps on SM	Pearson Correlation	.512**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	
	N	172	172

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There is a 72.8 % correlation between those who trust a brand representative on social media and consumers feeling valued when they receive brand info on social media. The significance is within the acceptable range of 0.000.

Table 19 indicates that consumers' preference of social media for shopping online is correlated to consumers trusting brands when they can reach brand reps on social media. The correlation is 68.8 % with a significance of 0.000.

Table 20 sheds light on the research results concerning correlations between the variables of Brand info trustworthiness on social media, social media brand engagement, brand commitment, and brand trust when access to the company resp is available on social media. As per the correlations

outlined in the table all of them are above 50 % and with a significance level of 0.000. We can claim that if consumers' brand info is shared on social media trustworthy, are more willing to engage online. Especially if they receive personalized messages from brands on social media and can easily access brand reps on social media, they trust a brand more and they are more committed to a brand.

Table 18. those who trust a brand representative on social media and consumers feeling valued when they receive brand info on social media

		I feel valued when I receive brand info from SM	I trust a brand more if I can reach brand reps on SM
I feel valued when I receive brand info from SM	Pearson Correlation	1	.728**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0
	N	172	172
I trust a brand more if I can reach brand reps on SM	Pearson Correlation	.728**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	
	N	172	172

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 19. consumers trusting brands when they can reach brand reps on social media.

		I trust a brand more if I can reach brand reps on SM	SM reminds me to shop online more often	SM for shopping online
I trust a brand more if I can reach brand reps on SM	Pearson Correlation	1	.638**	.504**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0	0
	N	172	172	172
SM reminds me to shop online more often	Pearson Correlation	.638**	1	.513**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0		0
	N	172	172	172
SM for shopping online	Pearson Correlation	.504**	.513**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	
	N	172	172	172

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 20. Brand info trustworthiness on social media, social media brand engagement, brand commitment, and brand trust when access to the company reps is available on social media

		I find Brands SM info trustworthy	I react to SM about brands	I feel more committed to a brand when I receive personalized messages via SM
I find Brands SM info trustworthy	Pearson Correlation	1	.578**	.559**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0	0
	N	172	172	172
I react to SM about brands	Pearson Correlation	.578**	1	.586**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0		0
	N	172	172	172
I feel more committed to a brand when I receive personalized messages via SM	Pearson Correlation	.559**	.586**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	
	N	172	172	172
I trust a brand more if I can reach brand reps on SM	Pearson Correlation	.663**	.512**	.701**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0
	N	172	172	172

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

6. Implications for Further Research

The study was conducted in 2018 and was limited to a sample size of 200. A boost of a sample can be tried in future efforts.

Subjects were mainly limited to urban Turkey in Central Anatolia and Istanbul and more comprehensive coverage could reveal some differences.

Brand loyalty was purposely left out of the research. Once the brand trust drivers are identified then these can be further tested for brand loyalty and perhaps with regression analysis.

The study was limited to consumers using social media for shopping purposes. Types of engagements and brands' marketing activities on social media are not analyzed and should be investigated thoroughly in future studies to pro-

vide more functional and operational recommendations to marketers.

7. Conclusions

Social media has become one of the most popular tools companies using for brand relationship building activities. In this article, the effect of social media on building customer commitment needs was explored. This article aimed to identify social media use among Turkish 18-40 years old population how it affects their commitment towards their favorite brands.

The quantitative study revealed that most social media users appreciate being in contact with their favorite brands on social media and enjoy receiving personal messages and offers from their brands through social me-

dia. Consumers also find the information shared by their favorite brands on social media accurate and reliable and are willing to purchase their favorite brands directly from social media in the future. Consumers who receive info and messages and can easily access their favorite brands' representatives directly on social media indicate that they trust their brands more and hence they are more committed to these brands than others.

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