

Consumers' Ad Engagement in Social Media: Conceptualising a Holistic Model

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Abstract

Interactive nature of social media has transformed how consumers engage with advertisements. This conceptual paper examines the theoretical foundations of ad engagement and attempts to model consumers' engagement with social media advertising. The paper is guided by the question "*How do consumers engage with social media advertising?*" In addressing this question, we bring together disparate strands of engagement research and present a holistic model of consumers' ad engagement. Our analysis indicates that the effectiveness and value of SMA are determined by the engagement process. We advanced a conceptual model that presents ad engagement as a holistic experience of consumers when exposed to ads in social media. We have revealed that the S-D logic of marketing best underlies the ad engagement process theoretically. Moreover, our model posits that consumers' ad engagement is determined mainly by the attitude towards social media advertising and informational influence. Attitude is determined by perceived usefulness, perceived ease of access, irritation feelings, and entertainment value. The relationship between attitude and ad engagement is moderated by privacy concerns, ad experience, and willingness to co-create value. Ultimately ad engagement enhances co-advertising and the likelihood of actual purchase. The implications of the model to marketers and policymakers are also discussed. As a conceptual paper, this study is limited to extant theoretical and empirical literature in social media, consumer behavior, and engagement. Despite this limitation, the current paper contributes to ad engagement literature by integrating diverse engagement literature into a holistic conceptual model of ad engagement. Moreover, it uniquely amalgamates academics and experts' perspectives of engagement.

Keywords: *Ad engagement, Social media advertising, Consumer behaviour, Holistic model, Service-Dominant logic*

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1. Introduction

The complexity and dynamism of consumers have led marketers to constantly search for communication strategies that can effectively influence consumer behavior (Tropp & Beuthner, 2018; Fotis, 2015; Ho, 2014). For a long time, marketers have been reaching consumers by using traditional communication strategies to communicate with consumers. However, the recent trend shows the increasing incorporation of social media (SM) into marketing communication strategies to supplement the conventional media (Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi & Algharabat, 2017; Mishra & Tyagi, 2015; Natarajan, Balakrishnan, Balasubramanian & Manickavasagam, 2014). Marketers have found themselves with no option except to follow the trend because SM has transformed the communication process. SM and conventional media are different i.e, SM provides interactivity that is not available in other forms of media.

Interactivity has brought opportunities and challenges to marketers. As an opportunity, interactivity enhances consumers' engagement with social media advertising (SMA). This is useful to marketers in several ways; it provides wide reach for the ads and it is a good source of consumer intelligence. Moreover, engagement is useful as criteria for pricing and placing ads online, and enhancing its effectiveness in influencing behavior (Akarsu & Sever, 2019; Li, 2013; Chu, 2009; Hausman & Siekpe, 2008). Also, engagement with ads increases the likelihood of purchase by increasing the reach and visibility of ads to people with shared interests, hobbies, lifestyles, and demographics. Thus, interactivity has transformed SM users from mere consumers of ads to co-advertisers, as a result, ad engagement (AE) has become a strategic tool for building strong brands and influencing consumers' decision making (Voorveld, Noort, Muntinga & Bronner, 2018; Lee & Hong, 2016; Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010).

On the other hand, interactivity has brought many challenges to marketers. These include; managing viral negative publicity, particularly online users' backlash. Also, how to maintain humanistic relations with the growing number of SM users. Other challenges include; keeping up with fast-changing SM space and developing and executing effective social media strategy (Tropp & Beuthner, 2018; Van, 2018; Chiang, Wang & Lo, 2017; Lee & Hong, 2016; Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010). Without managing these challenges, marketers are likely to jeopardize their brands.

Furthermore, SM interactivity has transformed advertising from one way to multiple way communication. For instance, conventional media such as Radio, Newspapers, magazines, and Television provide one-way communication, whereby SM users only consume marketing information. However, social media enables multiple-way communication; between users and marketers as well as among users themselves. This is facilitated by Web 2.0 technology which enables users to generate and exchange content ubiquitously (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Web 2.0 allows users to interact by commenting, liking, sharing, viewing, and tagging friends with marketers' ads.

Since SM interactivity has transformed users' engagement with ads, there is a need to understand the process and outcome of consumers' engagement with ads (Zarouali, Ponnet, Walrave & Poelsh, 2016). This conceptual paper attempts to fill the knowledge gap of consumers' ad engagement process in social media by addressing two objectives; first to examine theoretical foundations of engagement in social media and second to conceptualise a holistic model of the consumer engagement process.

We begin this paper by describing the methodology used, which is then followed by a theoretical examination of the engagement concept, then analysis and linkage of ad engagement with theoretical foundations of S-D logic. Moreover, we conceptualise a model based on relevant theories and empirical studies (summarised in figure 1). Finally, we conclude by discussing the implications of the proposed model to marketers and policymakers.

2. Methodology

This conceptual paper was developed out of the review of the literature and reflective analysis of the engagement concept to fill gaps in the literature. We reviewed about 60 papers for two months, February and March 2019. Broadly, literature came from a range of sources including the Journal of; marketing, Advertising, Information Systems, Information Technology and Management, Service Research, Computers in Human Behavior, Applied Social Psychology. Furthermore, Google Scholar, Proquest, and Research gate were the key databases used to extract research papers. In the first place, we gathered research papers relating to engagement, SM, and advertising by using key search words derived from the research question i.e. engagement, social media, advertising, Facebook advertising, consumer behavior, and privacy. Moreover, additional papers were obtained from the bibliography of important papers.

Research articles were selected based on clearly defined screening criteria. Research articles had to be; related to research questions, peer-reviewed, less than 10 years old, and conducted in SNS contexts. 132 papers were gathered, out of which 60 were found more relevant to the research question. Also, the majority of accepted papers were empirical and few (2) were conceptual. A thorough reading of at least 2 papers per day was done for one month. To keep ourselves on track, notes were taken during reading and were organized in a matrix developed in MS Excel, and at least five relevant quotes for each paper were gathered. Papers were categorised based on the topics and topical themes were then created. The themes included; Engagement in Marketing, Advertising engagement, S-D logic, and Theories. The engagement concept was analysed and reflection made from both theories and empirical papers. Eventually, a holistic model was developed. All articles were lawfully obtained from the Ratan Tata library at Delhi School of Economics and have been cited accordingly. Next, we discuss the major themes that came out of the literature review.

3. Engagement in Marketing Research

Engagement is a relatively new concept and has found its place in marketing literature remarkably since 2005 (Brodie et al., 2011; Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010). So far, the major engagement themes in marketing literature include consumer engagement, customer engagement, brand engagement, media engagement, and most recently, advertising engagement (Akarsu & Sever, 2019). Consumer engagement is the most common form of engagement in marketing literature. The term was initially defined by marketing practitioners like the Advertising Research Foundation (ARF), Nielsen Media Research, Forrester Consulting, and the American Association of Advertisers (Li, 2013). For instance, ARF defined it as “turning on a prospect to a brand idea enhanced by the surrounding context”. Also, Forrester Consulting defined it as “creating deep connections with customers that drive purchase decisions, interaction, and participation over time” (Li, 2013). The focus of these definitions is on how engagement can result to purchase decisions and build brand loyalty. At first, the academic community lagged in conceptualising this construct, however, later on, a stream of engagement research emerged.

The efforts among researchers had been to define, measure, and examine consumer engagement. Inspired by psychologists, Higgins & Scholar (2009) defined consumer engagement as “a state of being involved, occupied, fully absorbed or engrossed in some sustained attention”. This definition captures all three dimensions (Cognitive, Emotional, and

Behavioral) of the total experience of an engaged individual. Moreover, Vivek (2009) defined it as “The intensity of consumer’s participation and connection with the organization’s offerings and/or organized activities” He focused only on the behavior dimension, ignoring the cognitive and emotional dimensions. Scholars differ on the number of dimensions to use. For instance, the majority of scholars in consumer, customer, and media engagement have included all three dimensions; cognitive, emotion, and behaviour (Brodie et al, 2011; Calder, et al., 2008; Higgins & Scholer. 2009). Other scholars in Brand engagement and advertising engagement have focused on cognitive and emotion dimensions only (Bowden, 2011; Rappaport, 2007; Heath, 2007). At the same time cognitive and behavior dimensions have been crucial in consumer engagement (Abdul-Ghani, Hyde & Marshal, 2011), and behavior dimension in a virtual community and customer engagement (Wagner & Majchrzak, 2007). This reflects that engagement is context-specific and researchers have been conceptualising it based on the nature of the context under study.

Furthermore, Scholars like Van Doorn, Lemon, Mittal, Nass, Doreen, Pirner, and Verhoef (2010) underscored the need to understand how consumers may choose to engage. They proposed five dimensions of Consumer Engagement Behavior (CEB); valence, form or modality, scope, nature of its impact, and customer goals. Valance refers to how a consumer chooses to engage (i.e. word of mouth, recommendations to friends and colleagues, complaints, online reviews). Form or modality refers to forms of expressing engagement (i.e. participating in brand’s charity, investing their time and money for the brand). Van Doorn, et al (2010) argued firms to assess the scope of the engagement. It can be momentary or ongoing and firms have to plan and manage it. The other dimension is the impact; the firm needs to assess the immediacy, intensity, breadth, and longevity of the impact. Finally, the model proposed alignment of consumer goals with the firm's goals in the engagement process. Also, Gambetti & Graffigna (2010) stressed the need for brands to be innovative and creative to elicit a positive response from consumers. This argument is in line with the fact that consumers are innovative and dynamic. It is, therefore, necessary for firms to adopt an integrative approach that will consider media-related factors, consumer-related factors, and company-related factors in order to achieve competitive advantage through engagement. Gradually engagement research was extended to advertising.

3.1 Research Insights on Advertising Engagement

Research in AE is the most recent compared to other forms of engagement in marketing. Akarsu and Sever (2019) assessed the perspectives of academicians and practitioners to

define ad engagement. They uncovered dimensional differences whereas experts emphasize on behavior dimension, while the academics were more inclusive in their approach. Akarsu and Sever (2019) proposed AE be defined as “the process in which cognitive (attention, awareness, remembrance, etc.), emotional or behavioural (click, talk, share, etc.) state of mind is activated when a person is exposed to ad stimuli”. It means that engagement starts immediately when a person gets ad exposure, pays attention, and finally memorises the ad. Indicating that engagement is a continuous process beyond seeing an ad. Importantly, the definition includes the affective dimensions, which can either be positive (liking) or negative (disliking), its impact is reflected in terms of consumers’ behavior (share with others, clicks, word of mouth, etc).

Academics and experts have variably conceptualised engagement using three dimensions; cognitive, emotions, and behavior. Some have combined all three (Hollebeek, 2011; Mollen & Wilson, 2010; Higgins & Scholer, 2009; Calder, et al., 2008), others combined two (Abdul-Ghani, Hyde & Marshall, 2011; Heath, 2007) and in another context, only one dimension is used (Porter et al.2011; Wagner & Majchrzak, 2007). Amid this conceptual disarray, we have defined Ad engagement in social media as the behavioural experience of consumers when exposed to ad stimuli in social media. We have chosen the behavior dimension because of its multiplier effect on SMA (Calder et al., 2009). The class of behaviors that reflect engagement (or valence of engagement) in SM includes views, likes, sharing, commenting, clicks, and tagging (Voorveld, et al., 2018; Chiang, Wang & Lo, 2017). Engaging in any of the mentioned actions amplify the reach of the ad to all followers in the network. This is also crucial in increasing the effectiveness of ads in SM. Other engagement dimensions are important and have been incorporated in different stages of the conceptualised holistic ad engagement model.

Furthermore, the rationale of our definition is based on the fact that various theoretical models show that cognitive and emotional (affective) variables predict consumer behavior. For instance, the Theory of Reasoned Action suggests that behavioural intention is an outcome of attitude and subjective norms (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). This proposition is also shared by the Technology Acceptance Model and the Theory of planned behavior. Both theories link behavior and attitude. Therefore, the three dimensions influence each other in such a way cognitive and affective dimensions are precursors of engagement behavior.

Several scholars have studied AE, for instance, Kim, et al., (2015) examined the relationship between magazines reading experience and engagement with ads. They confirmed a significant positive relationship of information, personal identification, and entertainment experience on ad engagement. The finding is vital as it highlights the antecedents of ad engagement in magazines. In another effort, Calder, et al., (2009) conducted an experimental study for the relationship between media engagement and advertising effectiveness. Their study is crucial in two ways; first, it found a significant relationship between online engagement and advertising effectiveness, and secondly, it advanced two types of online media engagement; personal engagement and interactive engagement. This tells us that engagement with the medium is an important predictor of ad engagement (Tropp & Beuthner, 2018). However, the study was limited to online news websites, which is different from SM. Media vehicles differ in nature, purpose, and usage, serving different segments of consumers. Thus, we argue that the impact of media engagement on ad engagement differs in different media vehicles. More importantly, media engagement should not be equated as advertising engagement; this is because the total experience on the medium and ad exposure differ (Voorveld, et al., 2018). While other scholars attempted to test relationships and explore the concept of engagement, much is needed to explain the ad engagement process in interactive SM. We explain this in the next section by drawing theoretical insights from S-D logic.

3.2 Social Media, S-D Logic and Engagement

Social media provides a medium (context) for marketers to communicate with consumers through the placement of ads on SM platforms. SM has been described as a group of internet-based applications, operating under technological and ideological foundations of web 2.0 that enables the creation and exchange of user-generated content [UGC] (Filo, Lock, Karg, 2015; kuhikar, 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009). As previously explained, interactivity that happens through the creation and exchange of UGC is the most important feature to marketers. Various SM exist; Facebook (social network), Twitter (micro-blog), Instagram (photo sharing), telegram, and Whatsapp (messaging apps), and LinkedIn (Duffett, 2017). They all enable users to generate content and share. UGC refers to publicly available media content generated by end-users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009). This includes brands' ads, people's stories, photos, videos, etc. Web 2.0 technology enables users to edit, comment, share, and like the content (Fotis, 2015; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009). This technology enables consumers to get immersed in ad triggered conversations. This results in a deep relationship between individuals and also individuals and brands. The dialogue or conversation about ads is

important for marketers as it helps in building strong brands and influencing consumer-buying decisions. This way SM has become an important medium for ad engagement.

The role of SM in AE can be explained theoretically by using Service-Dominant logic (S-D) for marketing (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). The logic represents a paradigm shift from Goods-Dominant logic (GD) to S-D logic. The central premise of new logic is service is the fundamental basis of any exchange. This means that economic exchange involves reciprocity or a mutual exchange of services. S-D logic has defined service as the application of competencies (Knowledge and Skills) for the benefit of another party (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). SM enables marketers to share ads, From S-D logic, this involves a mutual exchange of services (reciprocity) between advertisers and consumers. Advertisers provide competences by integrating different operant resources to design and share ads, similarly, by viewing ads, consumers exchange their competences (i.e. cognitive skills and medium navigation skills, etc). This exchange of competences stimulates cognitive, emotions, and behavior responses, which get consumers deeply engaged. Thus, AE is the exchange of service between advertisers and consumers in the SM context.

Another fundamental premise of S-D logic is that customers are co-creators of value and the nature of value creation is interactivity (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). The value is co-created when there is an intersection of activities of providers and beneficiaries (or joint application of operant resources among firms and customers). Value creation is an interactive and collaborative effort, which requires consumers' willingness to take part in the engagement process. Lack of willingness implies that there will be no/partial exchange and thus no engagement; A person may have a positive attitude about an ad but lacking willingness to apply his/ her competences in the exchange process. Thus, logically consumers' willingness to interact and collaborate is likely to moderate the influence of attitude on engagement.

Also, S-D logic states that value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary (Vargo, & Lusch, 2010). Value is experiential (phenomenological) and can only be determined by the beneficiary when using it, in a given context. This premise matches the psychologist's conceptualisation of engagement as "the holistic experience" (Csikszentmihalyi as cited in Chang & Zhu, 2012). This conceptualisation implies that advertising value is unique and experienced differently by consumers, who have different stock of past SMA experiences. That may influence consumers' engagement with ads and willingness to co-create value. Thus, positive and negative past experiences are important in

moderating consumer's engagement. It is in the interest of marketers that AE produces positive experiences that will guarantee future engagement. On the other hand, negative experiences are important as they provide marketers with a warning through consumer intelligence and sometimes can be catastrophic to the brand. This explains why some companies are cautious about engagement strategies in social media (Akarsu & Sever, 2019).

Furthermore, SM provides a unique opportunity for co-advertising. This is possible through the use of SM features including; like, sharing, status, tagging, commenting, liking, hashtag, forwarding, reposting, and direct messages. These functions facilitate deep consumer engagement that results in extensive outreach of ads. For instance, when consumers like or comment on the ad, it will reach all people on their SM network through notifications. This not only amplifies the reach (to people who were not initially targeted) but also is a form of free advertising (Zimmerman & Ng, 2017). Consequently, AE leads to co-advertising. Therefore, an ad must stimulate consumers' cognition, emotions, and behaviour to be more effective.

3.3 Insights from the Theory of Reasoned Action

Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) has been widely used to explain consumer behaviour in offline and online contexts (Ting, Cyril & Thurasamy, 2015; Peslak, Ceccucci & Sendall, 2012; Willis, 2008). Importantly, TRA is a powerful model in predicting consumer intentions and reactions towards ads on social media (Lee & Hong, 2016). Thus we have used TRA to model ad engagement in SM. TRA posits that intention to behave is a product of attitudinal beliefs and subjective norms (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Concerning AE, the theory implies that the attitude of consumers towards SMA influences engagement behavior. According to Peslak, et al (2012), attitude represents feelings (i.e. emotions), similarly, the tri-component attitude model describes three components of attitude; cognitive, affective, and connate (behavior). Certainly, cognitive and emotional dimensions of engagement as suggested by psychologists are important predictors of behavior. Thus, we modeled that consumers attitude determines how consumers engage with ads.

3.4 Technology Acceptance Model

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) provides cognitive constructs that are useful in the SM context. TAM explains users' decisions to accept technology systems as a function of Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU). Both constructs directly

influence attitude, which in turn affects the behavior (Porter & Donthu, 2006; Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). PU and PEOU reflect cognitive elements of the engagement construct. The two constructs are vital to breaking ad clutter since consumers are daily exposed to thousands of ads. Thus, ads must be highly useful (relevant) and easy to access to explain and predict users' engagement with ads. We, therefore, expanded the TRA model to incorporate PU and PEOU as antecedents of attitude. We argue that consumers engage with ads that are useful (relevant) and easy to access in meeting informational needs for purchase decision making.

3.5 Ducoffe Advertising Value Model

Ducoffe (1995) advanced a model of advertising value to measure the effectiveness of advertising. He proposed that usefulness or the value of advertising is determined by three elements; informativeness, irritation, and entertainment. This model has been successfully used in advertising studies by many scholars (Dehghani, Niaki, Ramezani & Sali, 2016; Natarajan, et al., 2014; Hausman & Siekpe, 2008). Other than informativeness, which is well reflected in PU of the TAM model, Ducoffe's model adds two new variables that have not been addressed by Venkatesh & Davis (2000) TAM model; irritation and entertainment. The utility of an ad depends on whether it is entertaining or it is perceived to be irritative (Ducoffe, 1995). Implying that ads command a positive or negative attitude when either of the two emotional feelings is evoked. When entertained, consumers develop a positive attitude, while irritative ads lead to a negative attitude (Hausman & Siekpe, 2008; Ducoffe 1995). Both experiences are likely to trigger either positive or negative engagement behaviors. When an ad is perceived as disturbing, annoying, unwanted, or confusing, a negative response is triggered. This may include ignoring the ad or even blocking ads (Kabir, Parvin, Weitenberner & Becker, 2006). On the other hand, funny or entertaining ads help to develop a favourable attitude which leads to positive engagement (Dehghani, et al., 2016; Parissa & Maria, 2005). The extent to which ad commands referral engagement activities depends on how entertaining the ad is. In practice, entertaining ads are very engaging and often go viral in SM, which provides free advertising to marketers. Based on this discussion, we further expanded the TRA model to include entertainment and Irritation as antecedents of attitude to SMA.

3.6 Social Influence Insights

As discussed earlier, TRA proposes that behavior is not only influenced by attitude but also by social factors, namely subjective norms, which is defined as "perceived social pressure to perform or not perform an action" (Tarkiainen & Sundqvist, 2005). It is the pressure to

conform to the expectations of others (Burnkrant & Cousineau as cited in Chu, 2009). TRA explains that pressure comes from specific referents who dictate whether or not one should perform a particular behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). We argue that normative pressure is not relevant in SMA because significant others (referents) are not part of the engagement equation, as explained by S-D logic that engagement takes place when there is an exchange between two parties. SM provides an interface between an ad and a consumer, for this reason, the subjective norm is less influential. Despite this, social pressure is inherent in SM in the form of informational social influence (Peslak, et al., 2012; Chu, 2009). This is defined as the tendency to accept information from others as a basis for decisions (Bearden, Netemeyer & Teel, as cited in Chu, 2009). For instance, in purchase decisions, consumers tend to accept others' information to reduce uncertainty (because they don't have perfect information). Likewise, Online informational cues (i.e. star ratings, sales volume, discounts, and reviews) influence purchase decisions through the internalisation process (Lee & Hong, 2016; Yi-Fen Chen, 2008). Again, studies have confirmed that pressure (social circle incentive) from others (friends in SM networks) influences students' intention to use SNS (Peslak, et al., 2012; Lee, 2008). Reflecting on SMA, there exist informational cues such as the number of likes, views, comments, tags, and the frequency at which the ad is shared. These cues are effective when they come from friends in the social network. Consequently, consumers imitate the engagement behavior of their friends based on the cues. With this view, we argue that informational social influence impacts consumers' engagement with ads on SM.

3.7 Privacy Concerns

Privacy issues have become of great interest to SM practitioners, researchers, and users globally. Legally and morally consumers have the right to be left alone (Warren and Brandeis, 1890 cited in Xie, Teo & Wan, 2006), this is known as the right to privacy. That has become a concern because SM collects a large amount of information about consumers under the pretext of providing personalised services. Consumers' information is also tracked online by using unique identification numbers that bypass SM privacy settings (Baker, Gentry & Rittenburg, 2005). The practice has been widely criticised by experts, scholars, and the public as violating the consumer's right to privacy (Chang & Heo, 2014). Marketers have been using collected information to target consumers with personalised ads, and many studies have shown that consumers perceive this as privacy infringement, horrific, and awful (Soares & Pinho, 2013; Goldfarb & Tucker, 2011).

Data misuse has been on the rise in SM. For instance, Facebook has had serious security glitches in 2010, the largest data breach (Cambridge Analytica) in 2018, and data sharing with Facebook partners in pursuit of high profits (Baty, 2018; Chang & Heo, 2014; Baker, et al., 2005). Consequently, users became reluctant to share personal information and Facebook lost strategic advertising clients due to privacy breaches (Baty, 2018). Moreover, SM users have been associating ads with data theft, this has imparted users with fear of clicking ads (Goldfarb & Tucker, 2011). Despite this, there is no significant change in the usage of SM particularly Facebook. This is partly because either consumer are unaware of data misuse or unwilling to lose a large network of friends built over a long time or sometimes lack alternative platforms given the monopoly of the SM industry (Nyoni & Velempini, 2017).

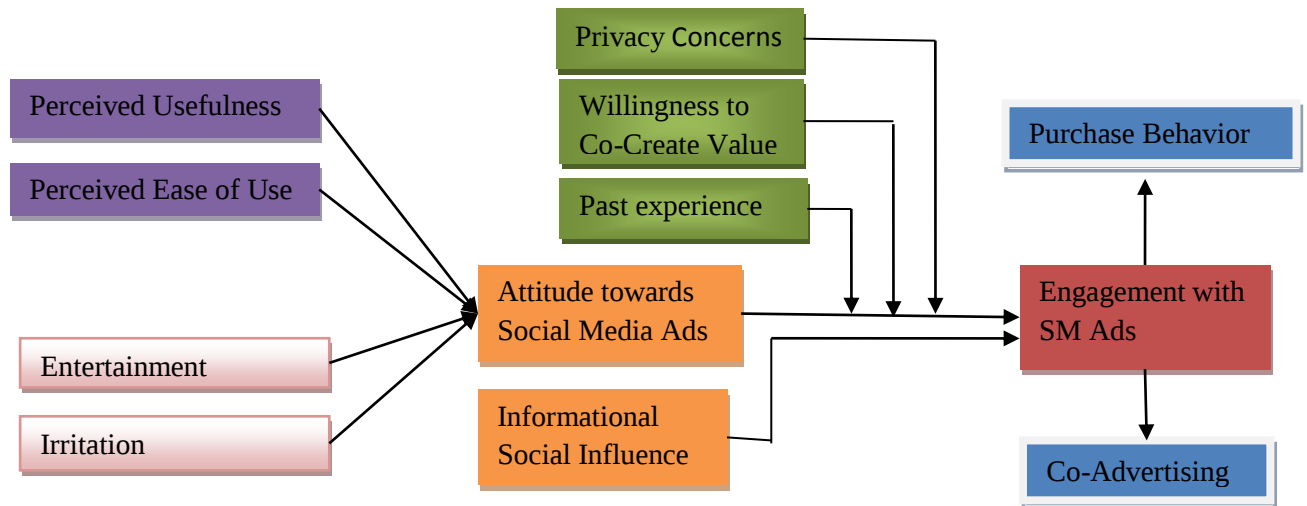
Furthermore, Privacy Concerns (PC) affect behavior. For instance, PC negatively influence consumers' use of online services (Bélanger & Crossler, 2011), purchase behavior (Zarouali, et., 2016; Tsai, et al., 2011; Bélanger & Crossler, 2011), and information disclosure (Doorn & Hoekstra, 2013; Jiang, Heng, & Choi, 2013). Other studies have also shown moderation effects of privacy concerns on the influence of PU of web services and purchase behavior (Tan, Qin, Kim & Hsu, 2012). Also, consumers tend to engage less with SNS when they perceive high privacy risk (Staddon, Huffaker, Brown & Sedley, 2012). These findings suggest that privacy can influence behavior directly and through moderation. Consumers with high privacy concerns not only develop an unfavourable attitude but also tend to protect themselves by avoiding SM services. Following this discussion, we argue that privacy concerns moderates the influence of attitude on AE and directly impact AE behavior.

3.8 Model Summary

As a result of the above discussion, we have devised a holistic model (Summarised in Figure 1) that incorporates technology-related factors, Ad related factors, Social related Factors, and consumer-related factors. We have extended TRA by modeling consumers' behavior to engage with ads as the outcome of attitude to SMA and informational social influence. The relationship is moderated by consumers' privacy concerns, willingness to co-create, and Ad experience. Moreover, attitude towards social media ads is influenced by four antecedents; PU, PEOU, Entertainment, and Irritation. Additionally, AE results in co-advertising and increases the likelihood of actual purchase. This expanded model captures total engagement experience (cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions) as proposed by organisational psychologists. Thus, it is a holistic model of consumers' engagement with ads in SM. This

model has important implications for theory, marketers, and policymakers in government and SM platforms. These implications are discussed next, in our conclusion.

Figure 1. A holistic model of consumer ad engagement in social media.



4. Conclusion

The objective of this conceptual paper was to advance advertising engagement literature by firstly, examining theoretical foundations of Ad Engagement in SM, and secondly, to conceptualise a holistic model for consumer engagement with SMA. We found that; firstly, the AE concept has its theoretical foundations in the service-dominant logic of marketing, AE takes place when there is a mutual exchange of services (skills) between marketers and users. Moreover, the advertising value is experiential and uniquely determined by consumers during the engagement process. Secondly, we advanced a conceptual model proposing that consumers develop a positive attitude on ads when SMA is; perceived to be useful, easy to access, entertaining, and less irritating. Moreover, privacy concerns, willingness to co-create, and SMA experience moderate the relationship between attitude and AE. We have also proposed that informational social pressure impacts consumers AE. Finally, AE results in co-advertising and actual purchase.

In the next part, we explain the contribution of this paper, in terms of theoretical contribution, marketing, and policy implications.

4.1 Theoretical Contribution

The theoretical contribution of this paper is the understanding that the value of SMA is determined through the engagement process. This is in contrast with the Duccofe model which suggests that advertising value is determined by informativeness, entertainment, and irritation variables, which are antecedents of attitude to SMA. Our study has also contributed the theoretical rationale of consumers' AE process in interactive media and a holistic model as summarised in Figure 1 "A holistic model of consumer ad engagement in social media". This model heeds the call by other scholars such as Zarouali, et al. (2016), who called for the need to better understand how consumers interact with marketing communications in SM platforms. The unique interactivity of social media facilitates AE and increases the likelihood of purchase. As discussed in the previous section, the model brings together technology-related factors, Ad related factors, Social related Factors, and consumer-related factors in explaining consumer engagement.

4.2 Marketing Implication

Engagement is critical for the effectiveness of advertisements in social media. The model implies the following to marketers:

- Engagement is necessary to increase the effectiveness of SMA. Marketers need to focus on creating and sustaining ad engagement.
- Marketers should design strategies to boost consumer participation (interactive engagement) through dialogues, discussions, and recommendations. This is vital for co-advertising, a form of free marketing opportunity for marketers. Moreover, engaged consumers maximise the reach of ads through referencing to friends in SNS.
- When designing a SM strategy, advertisers should seriously consider the privacy track records of the SM platforms, particularly about data safety. This is critical because misuse of data creates privacy concerns that reduce the effectiveness of SMA. Therefore, advertisers should avoid platforms with data privacy problems.
- Advertisers should create SM engagement teams that maintain humanistic communications with consumers. This will maximise consumers' ad experience, increase willingness to engage with ads, increase the likelihood of purchase, and create brand-loyal customers.

4.3 Policy Implications

The policy implications of the model are at two levels; the government and SM platforms.

- *Firstly*, the government needs to make online content policies or laws that address misinformation, protect consumers' privacy, and strengthen online data protection regulations beyond the permissible minimum consent requirements. The latter is necessary for protecting need driven users, who easily accept privacy terms without due consideration of its implications. Global governments should regulate and oversee policies governing social media companies to avoid misuse of ever-increasing monopolistic data powers.
- *Secondly*, SM companies need to be more transparent and make simple privacy policies that are user friendly. Transparency in privacy practices will enhance users' trust and boost engagement with SMA.

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