Research on the Influence of Social Media Information on Consumers' Purchase Intention

Yanqun Qin

School of Management, Shanghai University, No.99 Road, China

Abstract. In addition to the channels of information, the information itself will also affect the intention of consumers to purchase. This paper extends para-social interaction (PSI) theory to the social media environment, and studies the influence of the information itself through it. Through the data analysis, we found that openness and interactivity of information have a positive impact on the purchase intention of consumers, but interactivity of information has a direct negative impact on consumers' purchase intention. The result has great significance on the theory and strategy of marketing.

1 Introduction

Advancement and innovation of technology promotes the continuous development of Web 2.0 technology, promoting the establishment and improvement of social network, making social media arises at the historic moment. The way that people communicate, collaborate, and linked to others also changed, and more and more marketers, media professionals, scholars and enterprises have gradually realized that social media have a major role on consumers. Social media allows us to liberate from the traditional books, newspapers, television, radio and outdoor billboards and other "push media", of course, this does not mean "push media" has been nothing, but their impact is gradually reduced . Social media can be seen as a 'pull media', which makes direct interaction possible. Companies and consumers can communicate or share information with each other, so there is a higher autonomy and relevance. This paper introduces the theory of para-social interaction in the social media environment, to carry out the impact of social media information on consumer purchase intention. Study will extend the theory of para-social interaction from traditional mass media to social media, widening the scope of the theory, providing new perspectives for the social media marketing theory. Through the study of social media information to identify the positive factors on consumer purchase intention, and that factors how to affect consumers' attitudes and behaviors, to put forward feasible proposals for social media marketing strategy, which has great significance on theory and application, based on the relevant theories and models, as well as its marketing strengths, weaknesses and prospects for developments. Basis of relevant theories

2 Basis of relevant theories

Social media in the "What is Social Media" is considered to give the user a great space to participate in the new online media. It is a medium of exchange of information, ideas and opinions between people, has a very high participation degree, high interaction, and breaks the media by changing the traditional physical media internet to personal media internet and entirely dividing the audiences and communicators, so that audiences and media became a truly organic integration. In this context, social media is translated from "Social Media". Although social media is a new concept in our country, appearing in recent years, but more and more experts and scholars recognize its important role. Currently, social media is to occupy the mainstream position in the Internet .Alexa's statistics show that half of the top ten large sites are social media sites.

2.1 Para-social Interaction Theory

Para-social interaction theory has different translations in Chinese. It was proposed firstly by American psychologist Horton and Whol in the article "Psychiatry magazine" in 1956. Horton and Whol defined para-social interaction as a unilateral relationship that is similar to the relationship between the media personalities and the audience in the real world, and it is not easy to develop bilaterally. Horton and Wohl believes that media figures have initiatives on the development of this relationship, they can use their own image or remarks to influence the audience perception of their relationship. But for the development of this relationship, the audience is relatively passive, they can only continue or stop watch a program to control the relationship between the media personalities.

Para-social interaction theory has the following three characteristics: unidirectional, indirect, similarity. Unidirectional means that media personalities always release information, audiences can only receive information from beginning to end; indirect means the occurrence of para-social interaction is based on various

media as relations intermediary. These intermediaries may be a conventional television, film, radio, telephone but can also be new media, such as micro-channel, microblogging, forums, communities, and so on; similarity means para-social interaction relationship and real relationships are very similar. Their roots are nature of reliance on others, and they look forward to gain certain satisfy from others.

2.2 Six Degrees of Separation Theory

Six degrees of separation theory was firstly proposed by the American social psychologist Milgram in the 1960s, "The interval between you and anyone who is a stranger will not more than six, that is, you will be able to recognize any up to six individual."

Microsoft researchers have applied this theory to social media, Jurc Lskovcc and Eric Horvitz randomly selected messages of a month on Microsoft's MSN. By filtrating and comparing more than 300 million communications information form 240 million MSN users, the results largely proved the theory. 48% users can associate with each other less than 6 times, and 78% of users can associate with each other less than 7 times. According to the theory of six degrees of separation, interrelated relationship network of social media audience ultimately form a large social relationship network. In this network, any point may associate with strange point, if the firm release information at any point, the information would have the possibility to be passed to every consumer.

2.3 Strong Ties and Weak Ties Theory

American sociologist Granovetter believes that the Interpersonal networks can be classified as two networks, strong ties and weak ties. Strong relationship refers to the Interpersonal network has more homogeneities and more closely relations, and this close relationship mainly sustains by emotional factors. Weak relationship refers to the Interpersonal network has greater qualitative differences. In weak ties, there are extensive Individuals, so it's impossible to have an close relationship and obviously emotional maintain.

3 Study decign

3.1 Openness of Information

In para-social interaction theory, the para-social interaction is similar to the friendship between friends. Message' senders send relevant information to users to make users establishing a sense of intimacy and trust on senders. In this article, the para-social interaction is that senders abandon her / his / its originally remote or virtual character for users, to disclose information about themselves to the audience. If users feel they obtained information about the senders of the various aspects, along with it of para-social interaction emotion was established. During the course of para-social interaction, users are eager to understand all aspects of the message and private information of senders, as though it were the real world relationships. In communication, the key to establish para-social interaction emotion is to send out

the suitable message, such as openness of information: the information is timely issuance and can be easily access and use; information including all details users want to know; information may relate to intimate details of the sender. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1a: openness of information is positively correlated with para-social interaction emotion.

3.2 Interaction of Information

Interactive network environment are seen as an important feature in a lot of literature, but there is not a consensus definition. Some researchers define interaction based on technical factors, such as the ability to provide feedback, the speed of website. In this paper, interaction is only related with the information itself. Message that make users feel sender is listening and responding, that is, users realized that he is communicate with sender, is seen as interaction of information in this article. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1b: interaction of information is positively correlated with para-social interaction emotion.

3.3 Consumers' Purchase Intention

Schiffma and Kanuk consider consumers' willingness is a measure of the possibility of buying a product. Zhixian Zhu noted that consumers' willingness is to buy certain commodity suiting their needs, is a prelude to buying behavior and reflects consumers' psychology. Consumers' willingness is an important mental activity before purchase decision, directly affecting the final buying behavior to a large extent. Previous studies demonstrated that, in general, formed consumers' can ultimately translate into purchasing behavior. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1c: para-social interaction emotion is positively correlated with Consumers' Purchase Intention.

3.4 Para-social Interaction Emotion

Prior to the establishment of real-life relationships between the sender and the user, relationships between the two is para-social interaction, recipients establish intimate feelings and trust on sender is para-social interaction emotion. Para-social interaction emotion and real relationships are similar. The current studies of para-social interaction support this view. For example, in a variety of social media, when the sender send information through the microblogging, Renren, WeChat and other social networking platform to share their experiences, emotions and feelings, it's the same as that in real life. Interested in sent information lead to the generation of para-social interaction emotion; and then those who with para-social interaction emotion would like to prove a close relationship with the sender by focusing on information, increasing participation, buying or recommending related products and so on. Details information and constant feedback improve the persuasiveness and credibility of the information, it can

also increase the trust of the audience, and directly impact attitudes and behavior of the audience. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2a: Openness of information is positively correlated with Consumers' Purchase Intention.

H2b: Interaction of information is positively correlated with Consumers' Purchase Intention.

3.5 Construction of the Model

This paper discusses the impact of social media information on Consumers' Purchase Intention, and the ultimate aim is to identify factors affecting consumer purchase intention. All Things Considered, there were many factors, but in this article, we limit the choice of content in social media information itself. So the openness and interaction of information described above are two very important factors. Based para-social interaction theory, the model constructed in this paper is shown here.

Figure 1. Model
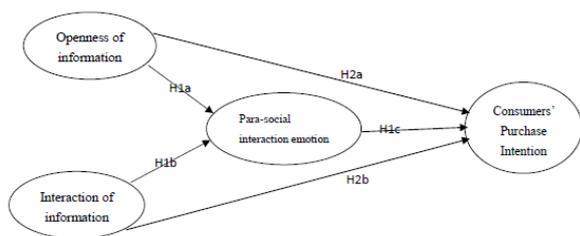
Before testees fill out the questionnaire, testees will be asked whether to surf the Internet, whether to use the social platforms. Those whose answer is no don't participate in questionnaires.

4 Hypothesis testing analysis

Table 1. the correlation coefficient and its significance of openness of information and consumer's purchase intention

Items		openness of information	para-social interaction emotion	Consumers' Purchase Intention
openness of information	Correlation	1	—	—
	Significant	—	—	—
para-social interaction emotion	Correlation	0.370(**)	1	—
	Significant	0.000	—	—
Consumers' Purchase Intention	Correlation	0.120(**)	0.790(**)	1
	Significant	0.000	0.000	—

** : Significant correlation at the 0.01 level (bilateral)

We can see from table 4.5, the correlation coefficient of openness of information and para-social interaction emotion is 0.370, and its correlation is positive significant, the data show openness of information has a greater positive on para-social interaction emotion. The correlation coefficient of openness of information and Consumers' Purchase Intention is 0.120, the data show openness of information has a positive impact on Consumers' Purchase Intention, and the impact is

significant. The correlation para-social interaction emotion and Consumers' Purchase Intention is up to 0.790, the data show para-social interaction emotion has a greater positive on Consumers' Purchase Intention.

Table 2. the correlation coefficient and its significance of interaction of information and consumer's purchase intention

Items		interaction of information	para-social interaction emotion	Consumers' Purchase Intention
interaction of information	Correlation	1	—	—
	Significant	—	—	—
para-social interaction emotion	Correlation	0.430(**)	1	—
	Significant	0.000	—	—
Consumers' Purchase Intention	Correlation	-0.070	0.790(**)	1
	Significant	0.057	0.000	—

** : Significant correlation at the 0.01 level (bilateral)

We can see from table 4.6, the correlation coefficient of interaction of information and para-social interaction emotion is 0.430, and its correlation is positive significant, the data show interaction of information has a greater positive on para-social interaction emotion. The correlation coefficient of interaction of information and Consumers' Purchase Intention is -0.070, the data show interaction of information has a negative impact on Consumers' Purchase Intention, and the impact is not significant.

Based on survey data analysis, openness and interaction of information has a significant positive correlation on para-social interaction emotion, analysis results also show that para-social interaction emotion was positively related to Consumers' Purchase Intention. Three hypothesis of para-social interaction: H1a, H1b and H1c have been verified.

Openness and interaction of Information has direct influence on Consumers' Purchase Intention, and there is indirect impact through para-social interaction emotion as an intervening variable. Openness of information' direct impact on Consumers' Purchase Intention is path .12. Openness of Information' direct influence on Consumers' Purchase Intention isn't positive correlation, it's path -.07. Based on the above data, H2a has been verified, but the analysis of the data do not support H2b.

From the above data analysis, we can see that social media information has a significant positive impact on Consumers' Purchase Intention, especially the form of para-social interaction emotion has a very important impact on Consumers' Purchase Intention. Because the indirect effects of openness and interaction of information on Consumers' Purchase Intention is significantly greater than the direct impact, and information's indirect effect Consumers' Purchase Intention use para-social interaction emotion as an intervening variable. In the current era of information explosion, simple information issuance is hard to move consumers, so that only by making consumers generate para-social interaction emotion, making them think they are also a part of it, focusing on information and even

providing information, can it bring long-term positive impact for product or company. In this study, the key to generate para-social interaction emotion, the most important is to issue what audience interested in and effective social media information. Openness and interaction of information are worthy of our attention.

Mentioned above, between any two strangers are not spaced more than six, so we can issue information to a wider audience and broader coverage. But in the current era of Web.2.0, social media platform provides us with a convenient interrelated platform, we can regard these platforms and the audience of the platforms as space between strangers. And fifth question in questionnaire, testees use which platform pay an attention to brands also shows that social media platform is a very important factor. The relationship of these platforms are not black or white, but may produce a synergistic effect. Most marketers are concerned about how to let more audience access to information, compared to choose a single platform to find a wider audience, selecting a number of social media platforms to send information is more convenient, and the effect will be more noteworthy. No matter how big the base of a platform, it's less than superposition of many platforms. In addition, there is not a social media platforms whose audiences that is far more than other platforms.

Indirect effects of openness and interaction of information on Consumers' Purchase Intention was significantly greater than the direct impact. Its indirect impact use para-social interaction emotion as an intervening variable, and their relationship based on the emotion. So the indirect effects of openness and interaction of information on c Consumers' Purchase Intention can be seen as strong relationship, and a direct impact of openness and interaction of information on Consumers' Purchase Intention can be seen as weak relationship. Thus, the establishment of para-social interaction emotion is especially important.

In summary, the marketers can use appropriate para-social interaction theory, integrating strong ties, weak ties theory, six degrees of separation theory and so on, issuing effective information in social media platforms as many as possible, such as information with openness and interaction can generate a positive impact on Consumers' Purchase Intention to a large extent. In addition to the concern about social media information, social platforms can't be ignored.

5 Conclusions

We can see form the results of this study that para-social interaction has a positive impact on Consumers' Purchase Intention. There two dependent variable and independent variable in above study model. Analysis of research data verify the most of hypothesis: First, openness and interaction of information is positively correlated to para-social interaction emotion, and para-social interaction emotion is also positively correlated to Consumers' Purchase Intention. Second, openness of information is positively correlated para-social

interaction emotion, but interaction of information is negatively correlated para-social interaction emotion. Third, openness of information and Consumers' Purchase Intention may be directly positive relationship, it can also be a positive correlation by using para-social interaction emotion as an intervening variable. While positive relationship between interaction of information and Consumers' Purchase Intention may be directly positive relationship can only use para-social interaction emotion as an intervening variable. In general, para-social interaction emotion is helpful for the form of Consumers' Purchase Intention. In the social media environment, social media platforms are convenient available resources for marketers, and marketers can design information content itself and the way to issue to generate para-social interaction emotion.

Results of this study has a positive meaning on marketing in social media environment, but there are still some deficiencies and limitations during the course of the study. This article did not study the relationship between openness of information and interaction of information. For example, the highly interactive nature of information may involve openness of information, in addition to help enhance the interactivity level, may leading to improve openness. Mutual influence between openness of Information and interaction of Information also worth our inquiry. The accuracy of the data is one of the key factors in the study, so future research will pay more attention on the accuracy of the data. Besides using questionnaire, future research might select data already on the social platforms directly to collected real data under non-experimental conditions.

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