SALIENT FEATURES OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT, VISUAL PRESENTATION AND COPYWRITING FOR EFFECTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING: AN EXPLORATORY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

As internet-based marketing utilizes channels of social media to interact and attract prospective customers to make online purchase for apparels there is a need to ascertain the extent to which salient features of social media such as customer engagement, attractive visual presentation and copywriting that are capable of driving such purchase. A total of 128 usable questionnaires were included in this study. Distribution of online questionnaires was assisted where the online questionnaire link in Google document was emailed to the company's sales team who in turn blasted the online questionnaire via email to all of their online customers in their data base. A positive significant (0.01) high correlation of .709 for customer engagement and .711 were obtained for visual presentation with online purchase for apparels. In addition, a positive significant (0.01) modest correlation of .653was secured for copywriting and online purchase of apparels. The study affirms that online firms using social media marketing must ensure they engage their online customers through discussions, reviews, contest and comments to understand them better and to build relationship between their brand and customer's which has a positive impact on sales. Social media marketing too needs an exemplary visual presentation to explain abstract concepts and facilitates retention of information and maintain audience interest which ultimately has a positive impact on sale. Consequently, copywriting too performs an important role of convincing people about a product by transforming product features into benefits to convince readers into making a purchase.

Introduction

The Malaysian apparel retail industry is forecasted to further grow in the upcoming years. In 2016, online retailing for fashion wear garnered RM135.2 million in revenue and is expected to record an annual growth rate of 14.8% with a market volume totaling RM235 million in 2020 (Statista, 2016). Malaysian consumers are keen to use internet retailing because of the convenience of being able make price comparison of products and enjoy special deals that are commonly offered online. Manjur, R. (2016) postulated that Malaysian consumers are portraying a continually increasing pleasure for quicker service at their choice of location and over 60% of consumers in Malaysia were willing to pay for same-day delivery of online orders. Thus implying that online shopping has caught the attention of a sizable number of consumers' particularly in the fashion retail industry. The fashion retail industry has recognized the emergence of opportunities to grow their business into internet retailing or often termed as online shopping. Nielsen (2014) reiterated that apparel and fashion ranked as the second most bought product category after electronic products.

Previous studies on online purchase have focused primarily on factors such as trust, risks, product quality website design, features and environment impeding online purchase. As much as customer engagement, visual presentation and copywriting has been addressed in previous studies on online purchase, none has incorporated all these three factors in a single study. This study has narrowed down to include online purchase done through only TWO mainstream social media namely Facebook and Instagram. Hence, this study aims to examine the influence features such as customer engagement, visual presentation and copywriting has on online purchases done via the Facebook and Instagram and for apparels only among Malaysians.

With technological advancement businesses have incorporated the use of social media marketing (SMM) to heighten revenue and growth. According to Saravanakumar, M. & Sugantha Lakshmi, T. (2012), SMM being internet-based marketing utilizes channels of social media to interact and attract prospective customers using captions, posts, pictures or videos. SMM is becoming increasingly important to facilitate consumers' purchase decision mainly because they amplify word-of-mouth which is often construed as a trusted source of information (Karami, S & Naghibi, H.S., 2014).In addition, SMM techniques are capable of increasing brand awareness, sales, improve customer service, and implement marketing campaigns (Cox, S & Birchman, J.A, 2012). In short, social media has contributed to bring potential customers in and is a great platform for retail businesses promotion and marketing.

Online customer purchase entails acquiring goods or services through online platforms to satisfy an individual's desired needs and is ad-hoc, unstructured and highly dynamic in nature. The Internet has affected all stages of consumer decision making process from alternative search, gathering information, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision making process and payment process (Karami et al., 2014). Consumers are engaging virtual means to seek product related information rather than visiting stores. Websites provide information about products at a click and their interactive nature makes attribute comparisons possible, making online shopping more efficient. The flexibility of online channel via 24 hours access and control of product information eases consumer's decision making process (Poturak, M., 2014). However, among the drawbacks of online purchase is the inability of customer's to physically examine a product especially those with tactile product attributes (eg: fabric). As such apparels have experienced the highest return rate among items that are purchased online. With technological advancement, online channel has adopted product virtualization technologies such as 3-D rotation views and Virtual Try-on technologies to compensate for the lack of physical contact for products (Karami et al., 2013). However, features such as customer engagement, visual presentation and copywriting needs continuous, innate attention to optimize online technologies used.

Customer engagement is customer's expression of a brand or firm beyond purchase, stemming from motivational drivers such as online posts, comments and participation in online games or activities (Yamamoto, 2015). Social media has allowed greater exposure and engagement with customers and promotes brand existence through a two-way communication (Doyle, 2011). Engagement in social media can manifest in the form of "like" a brand and its products or by being a member of a brand's social media page, (Anastasia, 2012). Customers can become fans of these brand fan pages, and subsequently indicate that they like the brand post or comment on it (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012). Liking and commenting on brand posts reflects brand post popularity (De Vries et al., 2012). Users could write a comment about the brand and post or share a video about it (Anastasia, 2012). Interaction with firms and other consumers are pursued via e-mail, instant messaging, homepages, blogs, forums, online communities, newsgroups, chat rooms, hate sites, review sites, and social networking sites (Zernigah, K. & Sohail, K., 2012).

Customer engagement can be as simple as posting comments or giving votes or as complex as recommending content to other users based on common preferences, interests and lifestyle (Bashar, A, Ahmad, I. & Wasiq, M., 2012). Celebrity endorsements through social media have been successfully used to establish customer engagement, express their opinion and use their power of speech to the masses (Sinha, M. & Kanthy, B., 2015). Social media has the power to drive traffic to a company's website as it can reach a wider audience (Doyle, 2011). For example, a promotion on Instagram that uses tag and win method could reach more people and increase brand awareness after a person tags his friend in the photo posted. Internet users could also share information about a brand on their own social media page via a tag or hashtag a brand name or post something if they are satisfied (Wallsbeck, F.E. & Johansson,U., 2014). In short online tools can spread an intended message through online conversations and strengthens the power of consumer-to-consumer conversations in the marketplace (Doyle, 2011).

According to Reitz, A.R. (2012) customer engagement is the most important online process companies need to deliver to establish their competitive advantage and loyalty. To engage with customer's brands must be interesting and create a way to make potential customers interact with them. To this effect companies need to find out what their customers would like to hear, talk about, what customers find interesting, enjoyable, valuable and develop as well as post contents that fits those expectations to make customers feel more appreciated and eventually engage with the brand (Kaplan, A.M. & Haenlein, M., 2010). Redsicker (2014) postulated that "SMM is about making emotional connections through positive customer experiences, exceptional service and engaging conversations". Hence, brands should be active in the social media to show their existence and encourage more traffic. Technological changes have encouraged customers to interact with brands which consequently build brand awareness, increase involvement and engagement with customers that stimulates purchase (Mohr, I., 2013).

Online customer engagement can help build relationship between a brand and customer which will positively impact brand loyalty, brand identification and sales (Reitz, 2012). Businesses have utilized social networking sites to develop customer traffic to their physical locations and to build customer engagement by encouraging product reviews and discussions (Pentina, I. & Koh, A.C., 2012). Customers too seek a forum to deal with their multiple requests such as loyalty rewards, special offers, updates and additional information on products (Carter, J., 2014). Thus, engaging the use of social media is a good platform for businesses to promote their product. In the fashion industry customer engagement has provided companies with insights about their target market's needs or wants and enabled designers to develop an intimate and personal relationship with their consumers. Such a relationship creates a sense of belonging which in turn makes customers feel more appreciated when their favorite brands or designer communicates with them.

In SMM visual presentation is used to communicate and share information with others in visual forms, such as image, illustration, comics, video, physical objects, photographs, and maps to slides, overheads and computer generated presentations (Stoner, G.M., 2009). Visuals aids performs numerous functions namely convey what words alone cannot, explain abstract concepts, aid retention of information and maintain audience interest (Stoner, 2009). Image is usually the first thing that catches people's attention because it is easily interpreted than words and people tend to be more interested in good looking advertisement's and content (Wallsbeck & Johansson, 2014). Visual presentation of products in social media is an effective way of communicating directly with a target market (Lindahl, G. & Öhlund, M., 2013). Visual presentation is also inspiring because it offers ideas on product usage and improves social engagement (Manic, 2015). According to Mawhinney, J. (2016), visual content is 40 times more likely to get shared on social media than other types of content.

Wild, F. (2016) advocated that a strong visual content should have an awesome topic, best content type, attractive and effective design. This ensures that viewers will see, enjoy and share the visual content as they perceive the presentation to be at par with their knowledge level to sustain their interest (Stoner, 2009). Images that are relevant would encourage viewers to spend more time looking at them (Mawhinney, 2016). Wild (2016) in her study uncovered that an average image gets 128% more repost than videos. Facebook posts with images experiences 2.3 times more customer engagement than those without images (Mawhinney, 2016). Incorporating a video as a visual content increases the likelihood of consumers purchasing a product by 64% (Wild, 2016). As such it is imperative that every brand have their own visual identity to showcase their product to customers (Augustini, M., 2014)

To date many businesses are using SMM as a strategy to promote their product through creative visual presentations to increase sales (Wallsbeck & Johansson, 2014). Apparel web sites offer colorful fonts, more visual product information and a variety of product presentations such as larger views, back and side views, and close-ups of the products (Ha, Y., Kwon, W.S. & Lennon, S.J., 2007). Such illustrations help to complement and strengthen the message (Wild, 2016). Quality of the visual content too is important to draw customer's attention especially when a brand wants to get more

followers on Instagram (Ladd, A.D., 2010). Visitors too may stay longer if a message is presented via compelling visuals (Manic, 2015). According to McCormick, H & Livett, C. (2012), effective product viewing should include refining, viewing, movement and garment information to assist customers to choose apparel. In short online apparel presentation provides information to simulate a traditional in-store shopping experience since consumers are unable to try the apparel first.

Consequently, content writing is aimed at creating contents that markets well and copywriting is the secret to good content writing. Content writing helps businesses to create valuable content to enlighten customers about their brand through blogs or websites. The aim of copywriting is to sell the real worth of a brand, products and services because it is attractive and can grab audience's attention. To date copywriting has evolved around the web content to connect with potential customers and sell effectively as it reveals the greatness of a brand (Smith, A., 2014).

Copywriting entails what is being written in promotional materials such as advertisements, websites, catalogues, sales letter and brochures aimed at getting potential customers to take specific actions. As such identifying a precise target audience of a business is important to ensure that copywriting is effective (Olah, G., 2012). Good copywriting should not be offensive, use polite and courteous language to drive customers into taking distinctive actions such as product order, signing up for mailing list or referring a friend to your business and convince the customer to make a purchase (Bly, R.W., 2005). Many businesses today have used copywriting in social media such as Facebook to market their product.

Good copywriting has an attention-getting headline to grab reader's attention to get them to read what is written through humor, intrigue, mystery, questions or provocative statement (Olah, 2012). As this is the first impression where the readers sees or hears, it must be impressive and attractive. Headline's does perform other tasks such as selection of audience, deliver complete messages and draw reader's attention to the body copy by arousing their curiosity (Bly, 2005). The use of sub-headlines in bold and capitalized fonts are also encouraged to get reader's attention (Olah, 2012). It may help grab reader's attention to important sections of copywriting as it breaks the information to make it easier to read. Another important consideration in copywriting is to convince people about the business's products or service by transforming product features into benefits to convince reader's why they should buy the product. The ultimate is to persuade customers into making a final sale (Bly, 2005).

Following the established frame of thought the proposed conceptual model is depicted in Figure 1 with the objective of exploring the salient features of customer engagement, visual presentation and copywriting that may accelerate customer's online purchase for apparels.
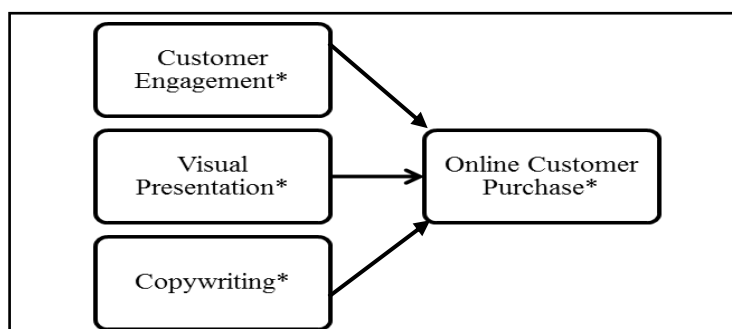

Figure 1: Conceptual Diagram (Adapted from: Anastasia, M. (2012), Wallsbeck & Johansson (2014), Bly (2005) and Beese (2011))

Methods

A six point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree or strongly disagree was utilized. Questionnaire for the study was transformed electronically by using Google Document as the online survey method was used for data collection. A pre-test of the questionnaire was done among apparel shoppers who were familiar with social media and online purchase. The target population were online customers in a

selected company's database between 19 - 23 December 2016. As there were a total of 170 online customers over the period for data collection, a census was taken. Distribution of online questionnaires was assisted where by the company's sales team where the online questionnaire link in Google document was emailed to them who in turn blasted the online questionnaire via email to all of their online customers in their data base. A total of 128 usable questionnaires were used for analysis. The Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables in the study showed good internal consistency with online customer purchase (.881), customer engagement (.927), visual presentation (.944) with copywriting attaining .947.

Ninety-eight percent (98%) of the respondents were females with 48% in the 30 to 35 age group. A majority (74%) were working women who lived in Selangor, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya (38%) with a monthly income of more than RM 4,000 (33%). Most of the respondents engaged in online shopping for apparels once or more in a month (55%) and prefer buying online through social media and company's website (80%). Reason being most of them are working women and had limited time to shop offline at the apparels boutique. A majority of too preferred to make their purchase through the Instagram (66%).

Result and Discussion

Among the elements of online customer purchase "social media has influenced my purchase intention" obtained the highest mean of 5.39 (Table 1). The inception of social media marketing has encouraged customers to interact with brands to build brand awareness, increase involvement and engagement that ultimately would stimulate purchase (Mohr, 2013). In fact, more consumers are engaging the use of virtual means to seek product related information and make product comparison which has made their online shopping more efficient.

Table 1. Elements of Online Customer Purchase for Apparels (n=128)

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Var.	Ranking
Social media has influence my purchase intention.	**5.39**	**.786**	**.618**	**1**
Social media has induced trial purchase of apparel from the online firm.	5.18	.864	.747	4
I would like to purchase from the online firm's website because of their social media post.	5.17	.861	.742	5
I would likely engage in repeat purchase from the online firm via their website.	5.28	.887	.786	2
I would recommend others to purchase from the online firm via website.	5.21	.848	.719	3
Overall Mean	5.25	.849	.722	

Among the customer engagement elements displayed in Table 2, the statement "Technological changes from conventional platform (TV/radio/newspaper) to social media (Facebook/Instagram) have encouraged customers to interact with the online firm" has attained the highest mean of 5.47. There seem to be an agreement among most of the respondents that technological changes had induced interaction between themselves and online apparel retailers. Mohr (2013) attested that technological advancement have encouraged customers to interact with brands which in turn builds brand awareness, increases customer's involvement and engagement. Social media has the power to drive traffic to a company's website hence allowing greater exposure and engagement with customers and promotes brand existence through a two-way communication (Doyle, 2011). Thus, engaging the use of social media is a good platform for businesses to promote their product as it can be achieved through online posts, comments and participation in online games (Yamamoto, 2015). In the fashion industry customer engagement has provided companies with insights about their target market's needs or wants and enabled designers to develop an intimate and personal relationship with their consumers. Such a relationship creates a sense of belonging which in turn makes customers feel more appreciated when their favorite brands or designer communicates with them.

Table 2. Elements of Customer Engagement (n=128)

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Var.	Ranking
The online firm customer engagement via social media makes me feel appreciated.	5.10	.831	.690	6
Customer engagement via social media with the online firm creates a sense of trust.	5.15	.814	.663	5
Engagement via social media can create loyalty towards the online firm's brand.	5.34	.768	.590	4
Being active in social media encourages customer interaction with the online firm.	5.38	.765	.585	3
Technological changes from conventional platform (TV/radio/newspaper) to social media (Facebook/Instagram) have encouraged customers to interact with the online firm.	**5.47**	**.675**	**.456**	**1**
Customer engagement through social media can create a good relationship with the online firm.	5.42	.694	.482	2
The online firm encourages potential customers to make product review via social media.	4.91	.980	.961	7
The online firm encourages potential customers to have product discussions via social media.	4.87	.983	.966	8
Overall Mean	5.21	.814	.674	

Elements of visual presentation are displayed in Table 3 where the measure "Online firm uses Shariah-compliant visual identity to showcase apparels to customers" attained the highest mean value of 5.46. This implied respondents' agreement that the online firm had showcased their identity through social media platforms. Augustini (2014) advocated that brand needs to have two essential ingredients, firstly a visual identity to showcase to customers and secondly engage in continuous improvement based on the latest trends so as to give customers a good experience. Visual presentation of products can adopt numerous visual concepts namely illustrations, comics, videos and images as an effective way to communicate with their target market (Manic, 2015; Lindahl & Öhlund, 2013).

Among the measures representing copywriting in Table 4, the statement "Caption in online firm's social media post uses courteous language." reported the highest mean value of 5.42. Henceforth implying most of the respondents agreed that the firm's social media posts have used courteous language. Good copywriting should not offend other people, be polite and use courteous language as it helps to drive customers into taking distinctive actions such as product order, signing up for mailing list or referring a friend to your business and convince the customer to make a purchase (Bly, 2005). Many businesses today have used copywriting in social media such as Facebook to convince people about the business's products by transforming product features into benefits to convince reader's why they should buy the product. The ultimate is to persuade customers into making a final sale (Bly, 2005).

Table 3. Elements of Visual Presentation (n=128)

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Var.	Rnking
Visual content theme used the online firm's social media is enjoyable.	5.23	.786	.618	9
Visual content theme used the online firm's social media motivates me to share.	5.03	.972	.944	10
I prefer info graphic type of visual presentation used in	5.27	.791	.625	8

Variable	Mean	Std.Dev.	Var.	Ranking
online firm's social media post.				
I prefer info images type of visual presentation used in online firm's social media post.	5.40	.787	.620	3
I prefer video based visual presentation used in online firm's social media post.	5.03	1.019	1.038	10
The use of visual in firm's social media post helps to understand the message.	5.31	.771	.594	7
Online firm's visual presentation in social media helped to draw my attention.	5.39	.766	.586	4
Images in online firm's post stands out in terms of good picture quality.	5.38	.721	.520	5
Images in online firm's post stands out in terms of bright colours.	5.34	.766	.587	6
Online firm used Shariah-compliant visual identity to showcase apparels to customers.	**5.46**	**.752**	**.565**	**1**
Online firm consistently improves their visual identity to reflect the latest market trends.	5.41	.693	.481	2
Overall Mean	5.30	.802	.653	

Table 4. Elements of Copywriting (n=128)

Variable	Mean	Std.Dev.	Var.	Ranking
To attract and hold social media users attention, online firm uses headlines in social media posts to deliver a complete message.	5.15	.774	.600	9
Online firm uses headlines in social media post that arouses reader's curiosity.	5.19	.801	.642	8
To attract and hold social media users attention, Firm X uses headlines in social media posts that uses capital letter.	4.87	.934	.872	11
Online firm always put their customer needs or benefits first.	5.20	.784	.615	7
Online firm highlights their unique selling point (Shariah-Compliant Wear) through social media posts.	5.34	.796	.634	3
Captions in online firm's social media posts are divided into few sections (i.e: headline, body, call-to-action).	5.23	.808	.653	5
Caption in online firm social media post is straight to the point.	5.22	.793	.629	6
Caption in online firm social media post is customer friendly.	5.30	.714	.510	4
Caption in online firm's social media post is conversational in style.	5.05	.904	.817	10
Caption in online firm's social media post uses courteous language.	**5.42**	**.694**	**.482**	**1**
Online firm's social media communication has convinced customer's to purchase.	5.36	.781	.610	2
Overall Mean	5.21	.799	.642	

Table 5 depicts results of the correlation analysis between customer engagement, visual presentation, copywriting and online purchase of apparels were significant at 0.01 level of significance. A positive high correlation .709 for customer engagement and .711 were obtained for visual presentation with online purchase for apparels. In addition a positive modest correlation of .653was secured for copywriting and online purchase of apparels (Cohen and Holliday 1998). According to Reitz (2012) customer engagement is the most important online process that companies need to deliver to develop their competitive advantage and customer loyalty. The presence of online engagement helps to build relationship between a brand and customer which ultimately has a positive impact on sales (Mohr,

2013, Reiz, 2012). Visual presentation on the other hand explains abstract concepts and what words alone cannot explain. More so visual aid facilitates the retention of information and maintains audience interest (Stoner, 2009). According to Wild (2016), when visual content is enhanced by incorporating a video the likelihood of consumer's purchase of a product increases by 64%. This is understandable as online apparel presentation provides information to simulate a traditional in-store experience as consumers are unable to try the apparel first prior to their purchase. Consequently copywriting too performs an important role of convincing people about a product by transforming product features into benefits to convince readers into making a purchase (Bly, 2005).

Table 5. Correlation analysis for Customer Engagement, Visual Presentation, Copywriting and Online Purchase for Apparels (n=128)

		Purchase	Customer Engagement	Visual Presentation	Copywriting
Purchase	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	128			
Customer Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.709**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	128	128		
Visual Presentation	Pearson Correlation	.711**	.846**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	128	128	128	
Copywriting	Pearson Correlation	.653**	.790**	.835**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	128	128	128	128

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

Conclusion

To sum as more apparel based firms enlarge the use of social media marketing to reach out to their customers, there is an absolute need to be distinctive virtually. Getting customer's engaged through constant online interaction is important as much as attractive visual presentation and copywriting captures the attention of existing and would be customers to draw them to the company's Facebook, Instagram and alike to remain competitive and secure their sustainability.

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