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Role of Brand Jealousy in Brand Communities on Social Networking Media

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to examine the role of brand jealousy in brand communities. The brand jealousy and the brand love are proposed as the antecedents of the brand communities. The s.wom which connotes the forwarding content of engagement on these platforms is proposed as the outcome associated with these activities. Tie-strength and Homophile are propsoed as the moderators in the relationship between brand communities and S.wom. A conceptual model is proposed and major implication areas and proposed methodology is suggested.

Keywords: Brand Jealousy, Brand Community, S.woms

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I. INTRODUCTION

As the word "Jealousy" connote an unhealthy and negative emotion which may be associated with extreme possession(Belk, 1988) and love, however previous literature suggests that jealousy is not an emotion, instead it may be regarded as feelings and thoughts and activities related to romantic risk or threat(White, 1981). The recent marketing literature identifies "Brand Jealousy" as a significant predictor for active engagement and purchase intention(Sarkar & Sreejesh, 2014). The existing studies have found Brand love as a critical antecedent of active engagement (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010) and is closely associated with jealousy(Eugene W. Mathes, 1981). However, the recent literature suggests that brand love alone is not the sufficient marker for the engagement with the brands, as consumers might love more than one brand and demonstrate multi-brand loyalty(see Oliver, 1999) , but love and jealousy together are better predictors for engagement and purchase intentions(Sarkar & Sreejesh, 2014). Brand Love associates and strengthens consumer-brand relationships(see Fournier, 1998; Batra, Ahuvia and Bagozzi, 2012), but the role of jealousy in enhancing the dyadic relationship remains ignored in the marketing literature. Brand Prominence which considers the repeated thoughts in the mind of an individual act as heuristics and cues to recall brand related thoughts and engagement with the community groups.

The association of individuals in the community groups is also marked by similar behavior which includes jealousy, envy(see Schembri and Latimer, 2016), while some glimpses of forming "we" attitude has been discussed using ODT theory to examine the need for assimilation and distinctiveness in romantic relationships(see Slotter, Duffy and Gardner, 2014). But the marketing literature could not bring out clearly the role of "Brand Jealousy" and their association with brand communities. So the present study attempts to examine the role of "Brand Jealousy" in formation of closed community groups. The studies in community literature have identified the set of engagement dimensions and their focus as to why certain individuals engage in these closed groups(Baldus, Voorhees, & Calantone, 2015; Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2016). However, they could not investigate jealousy towards a brand as one of the predictors for engagement with the community. Therefore, it becomes pertinent to conceptually propose the stated relationship. Thus, this would help in advancing the literature in community and explore the relatively newer construct.

II. BRAND JEALOUSY AND BRAND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

"Jealousy is the outcome of threat perceived due to anticipated separation from the romantically desired attachment partner(Sarkar and Sreejesh, 2014, pp.25)". "Romantic jealousy may be defined as a complex of thoughts, feelings, and actions that follow threats to self-esteem and or threats to the existence or quality of the relationship when those threats are generated by the perception of a real or potential romantic attraction between one's partner and a (perhaps imaginary) rival(White, 1981,pp.296)". The jealousy may result in anger, guilt and hurt(Gergen & Gergen, 1988). It may vary from an individual to individual and various situations(White, 1981). Previous studies have analyzed the negative outcomes associated with the concept, except a few which analyzed the positive relations such as purchase intentions, active engagement with the brand(Sarkar & Sreejesh, 2014). The existence of anger, jealousy in closed community groups(see Schembri and Latimer, 2016) may provide useful insights for the managers for forming such avenues. The study associates prominence and jealousy together as significant predictors of positive outcomes such as Brand Evangelism. So similar outcomes will help in advancing literature on "Brand Jealousy".

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The present study examines and extends the already documented relationship between brand jealousy, brand love and active engagement(see Sarkar and Sreejesh, 2014). However, the recent studies attempted to identify the importance of Brand Community Engagement by developing a scale of the same(Baldus et al., 2015; Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2015), but unfortunately both the studies could not clearly identify the role of "Brand Jealousy" as a possible alternative for consumer participation of individual in these community. Community engagement is "the consumer's intrinsic motivation to interact and cooperate with community members(Algesheimer, Dholakia and Herrmann, 2005, pp.21)". Brand Jealousy may trigger an individual's active engagement with the brands and the communities they are associated with. Many individuals in the community form the most devoted consumers and are extremely attached to their favored brands. However, not all the community participants possess those brands with them. With an urge to convert themselves into active purchasers of the brand, certain individual engage themselves in community activities. When individual observes that the brand he/she loves is purchased by someone else, which stimulate jealousy in the individual for not having the product/brand with them(see Sarkar and Sreejesh, 2014). For example, if someone being a travel enthusiast is a part of travel community and observe someone sharing their experience of visiting the place which he/she was dreaming to visit, trigger jealousy in that individual. Similar may be the case with other brands. However, the individual also continue to remain as a part of the community as it provide them with the key information, thus eliminates the risk and assist them in better decision making(in case of Travel community, it can lead to be better choice of destination). Repeated exposure to the desired information enhances the engagement with these groups and likely to enhance purchase intention for these products. This is consistent with the existing literature which suggests that repeated exposure to the brand related communication increases the value of that brand over time.

Jealousy thus, induces them to be a part of community group to provoke active engagement and trigger purchase intentions for that product. The repeated exposure to the favored brands in the community discussions reminds the individuals for not having the brand and enhances active engagement with the product followed by intentions to purchase them. As, community members and brand lovers demonstrate extreme loyalty for the preferred brands(see McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig, 2002; Batra, Ahuvia and Bagozzi, 2012), they are likely to engage themselves in these community groups.

Previous studies also suggests that if someone is more involved in the relationship is likely to be more jealous(White, 1981). To consider the efforts an individual invests in a relationship and to avoid the potential threats of terminating the relationship coping behaviors(such as association with BC) can reduce such threats(see White, 1981). Jealousy of not having a product with one self may result in seeking regular product information such as modifications, upgrades in the existing features, the reviews and ratings of the existing customers before making an actual purchase. The community groups form avenues, whereby the members share their experiences with the product, which is well supported and argued by others in the group. Previous literature examines that members of the community are considered as more credible source of information(see Kozinets, 2002). The exposure to the information/pictures related to their preferred brands evokes intentions to possess that brand with them. Driven by credible information, communities aggregate individuals who are followers of the brand. So, in order to purchase a product, jealous consumers associate themselves with seeking credible key information to save time and receive more credible opinions from other community members.

Based on above discussion it is hypothesized that:

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Hypothesis1: Brand Jealousy is positively related to Brand Community Engagement

*1.1 Brand Love:*Previous studies have found Brand love as a critical antecedent of active engagement (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010) and is closely associated with jealousy(Eugene W. Mathes, 1981). Brand love was identified as a critical motivator for their association with BC(Youcheng and Fesenmaier, 2003, pp.43). The existing literature also suggested that love for a brand resulted in disseminating positive WOM about the brands(Franzak, Makarem, & Jae, 2014). BC provide avenues for disseminating such information to larger audiences on their platforms. *Based on above discussion it is hypothesized that:*

Hypothesis2: Brand Love is positively related to Brand Community Engagement

*1.2 S.wom***"**s.WOM refers to the online exchange of information or experiences to help other users(Herrando, Jiménez-Martínez, & Martín-De Hoyos, 2017)". The individuals seek assistance based on recommendations received from these community groups. Previous studies have linked brand passion(as an engagement with community(Baldus et al., 2015) with S.wom(Herrando et al., 2017). Individuals on these platforms seek assistance from the fellow community members which often result in evangelizing the Tourist destination. Individuals utilize these community platforms to promote the destinations or may provide information to the desired audiences. The activities about communities on SN site helps to engage them in seeking assistance in the form of comments on the queries posted by them on community sites. Thus the following proposition becomes pertinent based on the above arguments:

Proposition3: Brand Community is positively related to S.wom.

1.3 Moderation Of Tie-Strength:"The strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie (Granovetter, 1973)". The study examines the importance of "Tie-Strength" in **augmenting CBC triadic relationships**. Further, strong ties helps in augmenting and promoting brand information, the importance of weak ties was also marked as a means of providing novel information which strong ties could not(Gilbert & Karahalios, 2009). **Prior studies confirmed that weaker ties lead to share lesser information and support and also lead to fewer less intimate exchanges compared to strong ties**(Haythornthwaite, 2002)**. However, the extant literature also marks the importance of weak ties in acting like bridges and propagating WOM referrals**(Brown & Reingen, 1987)**.**Stronger is the tie, greater is the interpersonal influence(de Valck, van Bruggen, & Wierenga, 2009). The ease of availability of strong ties enables higher interaction resulting in transfer of information compared to weak ties(Brown & Reingen, 1987). Strong ties are more voluntarily available on multiple channels compared to weak ties which enhances their diversification(Gilbert & Karahalios, 2009) and hence likelihood of promoting key information. Strong ties are supposed to be more reliable source of information and hence were more prominent than weak ties and supplement flow of in key content(Brown & Reingen, 1987). Also, stronger ties are associated with higher emotional content, have more frequent interaction and involve instrumental and reciprocity in exchanges(Haythornthwaite, 2002)**.** So, based on above discussions, the following proposition becomes apparent:

Proposition4: "Tie-Strength" moderates the relationship between "Brand Community" and "WOM".

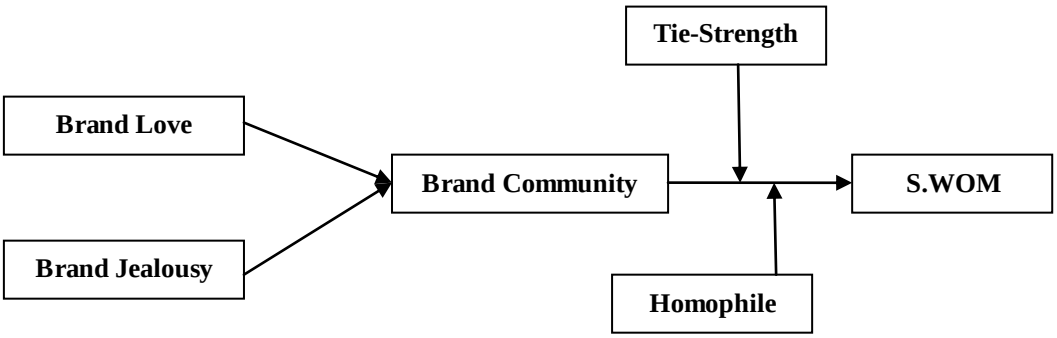
1.4 Moderation Of Homophile:"Homophile is the degree to which pair of individuals are similar in terms of certain attributes, such as age, sex, education, and social status **(Rogers 1983)". "Homophily refers to the degree of similarity among SNS network connections based on their beliefs, values, social status, and interests**(McPherson, Smith-lovin, & Cook, 2001)**".Homophile ties are considered as more**

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influential(Rogers 1983), and hence trigger flow of referrals(Brown & Reingen, 1987)**.** Most of the effective communication between the individual is often a result of homophily existing between the two(Hoffmann, Probst, & Christinck, 2007).

Proposition5: "Homophile" moderates the relationship between "Brand Community" and "WOM".

II. Conceptual Model:



III. Proposed Methodology

Data Collection: The study anticipates surveys for collection of data by adapting the already established scales from the existing literature. The online questionnaire may be sent to the target audiences.

Analysis of data: The proposed methodology will involve empirical investigation including brand community members on social networking sites. Structural models would be used to test and validate the proposed relationships.

1V. Discussion

The study seeks to evaluate the role of brand jealousy and brand love in engagement with the community platforms. The previous studies have determined their role in active engagement and purchase intention. The present study has proposed a conceptual model to examine their role in promoting the promotional and forwarding content on these community platforms. The study also integrates the role of tie-strength and homophile to examine the similarity and likeminded individuals on these platforms. This is proposed to have substantial impact on the the forwarding tendencies of individuals in the closed community groups. The present study anticipates structural equation models to test the proposed relationships. The major implication areas include community platforms prevailing on social networking medium.

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