

# Building Empowered Online Communities: A Case Study on Brand Community in social media

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## ABSTRACT

The digital revolution has reshaped the dynamics of consumer-brand interactions, placing online brand communities at the forefront of engagement strategies. This comprehensive discourse synthesizes discussions surrounding a collection of research papers that illuminate the nuanced dimensions of these digital communities. Delving into diverse themes, from empowerment and gamification to values alignment and cross-cultural dynamics, this exploration unravels the intricate fabric of online brand communities. Through a meticulous analysis of these papers, the abstract underlines the resonance of themes across studies, offering insights into the manifold ways brands and consumers interact in the digital ecosystem. Moreover, it highlights the practical implications these insights bear for managerial practices and steering strategies that harness the potential of online brand communities. Additionally, these abstracts underscore the contributions made to theoretical foundations, enriching our understanding of contemporary consumer-brand relationships.

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## I. Introduction

In the growing digital age, the paradigm shift in social interaction and communication cannot be ignored. Social media has enabled humans to connect across geographical boundaries and build strong and empowered online communities (Farida & Ardiansyah, 2022). In this context, brand communities have emerged as a phenomenon that has caught the attention of researchers and business practitioners. Such communities have great potential to influence customer perception (Sugiarto & Octaviana, 2021), loyalty (Saraswati, 2022), and participation towards a particular brand (Bungatang, 2021). In understanding the dynamics of brand communities on social media, several questions arise: How are brand communities formed and developed in the digital environment? What are the factors that influence the participation and loyalty of members of such communities? What is the impact of interactions in online communities on brand image and customer purchase decisions? Delving into these questions provides valuable insights into how online communities can play an important role in the modern business world (Azizah et al., 2022).

The phenomenon of brand communities has become one of the centers of attention in scholarly research. The concept refers to groups of people who are connected by a sense of affinity towards a particular brand and share common values, interests, and experiences. Social media provides an ideal platform for the formation and development of such communities (Syahnur & Bahari, 2023). They allow customers to interact directly with brands and fellow consumers, as well as participate in discussions, shared content, and mutual support. This kind of brand community not only fulfills the social needs of individuals, but also adds value to the brand by strengthening customer engagement (Marpaung et al., 2021).

Along with the development of social media, many studies have been conducted to dig deeper into the brand community phenomenon in the digital environment. For example, Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) identified three important elements in brand communities: social similarity, collective rituals, and group sentiment. They argue that the existence of brand communities facilitates more personal interactions between customers and brands, leading to increased customer loyalty and satisfaction. Another study by Kozinets (2010) highlights that brand communities in social media are dynamic

spaces where customers can interact with brands and fellow consumers. Kozinets introduced the concept of netnography as a research method to understand consumer culture in digital spaces. By analyzing the content produced by community members, researchers can identify patterns of interaction, shared values, and community dynamics.

In addition, Hagel and Armstrong (1997) emphasize the importance of sustainable values in building sustainable communities. They argue that communities that develop organically through various stages have the potential to create long-term impact on customers and brands. In the early stages, communities may focus more on sharing experiences and gaining support from fellow members. However, over time, these communities can develop a loyal following that actively contributes to the development of the brand (Ilyas & Mustafa, 2022). Overall, these studies provide an in-depth look into the complexities of brand communities on social media (Hasrat & Rosyadah, 2021). In the context of this study, research will continue to explore the factors that influence the formation, development, and impact of brand communities in the digital age.

The phenomenon of brand communities on social media has created a new value system in customer and business interactions. In taking a closer look at how online communities can influence customer perceptions and participation towards brands, this research will analyze case studies of successful brand communities on social media. By understanding the factors that drive participation and loyalty in these communities, this research hopes to provide valuable insights for business practitioners and academics on how to build empowered online communities.

## II. Literature Review

This literature review will outline the concept of brand community, its relevance in the age of social media, and the contributions of key research in understanding the formation, development, and impact of brand communities in the digital environment. Through this comprehensive explanation, a more complete picture of the phenomenon of building empowered online communities and how they can influence the interaction between customers and brands will be drawn.

### 1. Brand Community Concept

Brand communities refer to groups of individuals who are connected by a sense of affinity for a particular brand and share values, interests, and experiences. As an integral part of consumer culture, these communities allow members to interact personally with brands and fellow consumers, thereby increasing customer attachment to brands (Muniz Jr & O'guinn, 2001). These brand communities can be found in various forms, including online forums, social media groups, and other digital communication platforms.

### 2. Relevance in the Age of social media

The advent of social media has changed the way social interaction and communication is conducted. Social media provides an ideal platform to form and develop brand communities. In the business world, these platforms provide opportunities to interact directly with customers, listen to feedback, and strengthen engagement through relevant content and active engagement. Brand communities on social media not only fulfill the social needs of individuals, but also provide added value to brands through more active and sustainable participation (Kozinets et al., 2010).

### 3. Key Research Contributions

Several studies have made valuable contributions in understanding the dynamics of brand communities in the social media era. One important contribution comes from the research by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), who identified three core elements in brand communities: social similarity, collective rituals, and group sentiment. This research underscores the importance of interactions between community members in building a sense of affinity and attachment to the brand.

Kozinets (2010) introduced the concept of netnography as a research method for understanding consumer culture in social media. This method allows researchers to observe and analyze content generated by community members, to identify patterns of interaction, shared values, and community

dynamics underlying customer participation. In terms of sustainable value, (Hagel & Armstrong, 1997) emphasize the importance of building sustainable communities. By going through various stages of development, brand communities can create loyal followers who not only support the brand, but also contribute to its development. In addition, (Mollen & Wilson, 2010) research revealed that brand communities active on social media can influence brand perception and customer purchase intentions. This research highlights the importance of customer interaction in building a positive image and having a significant impact on purchasing decisions. Through this literature review, we can see the concept of brand community that underlies brand communities in social media, as well as how this concept is relevant in the digital era. The studies that have been conducted provide deep insights into the dynamics of brand communities, the factors that influence participation, and the impact of customer interactions in building brand image and purchase decisions. By understanding these concepts, business practitioners can more effectively build empowered online communities and harness the potential of customer interactions to support brand growth.

### III. Research Method

In this section, we will describe the approach used in this research, namely the narrative review approach. This approach allows us to describe and synthesize findings from various studies related to the phenomenon of building brand communities on social media. With this approach, we will explore and categorize important findings that have been produced by previous researchers, forming a solid foundation of understanding for our research context.

1. Research Identification and Selection

The first step in the narrative review approach is to identify and select studies that are relevant to our research topic. These studies should have a focus on brand communities on social media, as well as provide useful insights in understanding the factors of brand community formation, development, and impact.

2. Data Collection

Once relevant studies were identified, the next step was to collect data from these studies. The data collected includes key findings, research methods used, and conclusions reached. This data will be used to summarize and describe an overview of the brand community phenomenon on social media.

3. Data Analysis and Synthesis

At this stage, the data collected from the various studies will be analyzed and synthesized. Analysis involves in-depth reading and understanding of the findings from the studies. Then, these findings will be synthesized into key interrelated themes, forming a comprehensive framework of understanding of the research topic.

4. Narrative Development

Once the main themes have been identified, the next step is to develop a narrative that describes chronologically or thematically the development of concepts and research related to brand communities in social media. This narrative will present a picture of the evolution of thoughts, concepts and research methods used in exploring important aspects of this phenomenon.

5. Inference

In the final stage, the developed narrative will be used to draw conclusions that describe the general findings, patterns, and contributions of previous studies to the understanding of building brand communities on social media. These conclusions will help identify remaining knowledge gaps and formulate a foundation for further research.

6. Research Methods Conclusion

Using a narrative review approach, this research will form a strong foundation of understanding of the phenomenon of building brand communities on social media. This approach allows us to describe the development of the concept, identify key findings, and summarize the contributions of previous studies. As such, this research will provide a comprehensive insight into how brand communities interact in the digital environment and how this can affect the relationship between customers and brands.

#### IV. Result and Discussion

We summarized 10 relevant scientific journals related to this study as follows:

1. The paper entitled "Digital destination branding: A framework to define and assess European DMOs practices" by (Confetto et al., 2023) discusses the use of digital technology in tourism destination branding practices in Europe. This paper creates a framework to define and evaluate the practices undertaken by destination marketing organizations (DMOs) in Europe in developing destination brands through digital platforms. Destination brand development involves creating a strong and compelling identity for a particular tourist destination. In the digital age, destination branding strategies are increasingly focusing on online platforms such as social media, websites, and mobile applications. This research focuses on how destination marketing organizations (DMOs) in Europe integrate branding elements into their efforts in the digital realm. The purpose of this research is to create a framework that identifies and evaluates destination branding practices in the digital environment undertaken by DMOs in Europe. This framework is designed to assist DMOs in developing and measuring the effectiveness of their branding campaigns in the digital world. In this paper, the researchers used a descriptive approach and literature analysis to develop a digital destination branding framework. They conducted a review of relevant literature, evaluated the practices of DMOs in Europe in using digital platforms, and combined these findings to create a comprehensive framework. The framework produced in this study consists of several key dimensions that cover important aspects of digital destination branding practices. These dimensions include:
  - a) Objectives and Strategy: Identifying the objectives of the branding campaign, such as increasing the number of visitors or enhancing the image of the destination and designing a suitable strategy to achieve these objectives in the digital environment.
  - b) Content: Managing relevant and engaging content for the target audience across various digital platforms, including visual content such as photos and videos, as well as text content that illustrates the value and appeal of the destination.
  - c) Interaction: Improving interactions with users through prompt and value-added responses, and encouraging participation and engagement through comments, reviews, and contests.
  - d) Collaboration: Collaborate with various parties, such as local tourism partners, influencers, and local citizens, to expand the reach and impact of the branding campaign.
  - e) Measurement and Analysis: Using analytical tools to measure the effectiveness of the branding campaign, such as measurements based on the level of user engagement, growth in the number of followers, and impact on the destination's brand image.

This paper provides important insights into how destination branding practices have adapted to the digital age in Europe. The framework proposed by this research provides useful guidance for destination marketing organizations (DMOs) in designing, executing, and evaluating their branding campaigns on digital platforms. By focusing on key aspects such as objectives, content, interaction, cooperation, and measurement, the framework helps DMOs to build and strengthen their destination brand image in the online world more effectively. In addition, the paper also illustrates how these practices can have a positive impact on destination image, user participation, and tourism sustainability at the regional or national level.

2. The paper entitled "Making and breaking relationships on social media: the impacts of brand and influencer betrayals" by (Reinikainen et al., 2021) discusses the impact of betrayals that occur on the relationship between brands and influencers on social media. This research investigates how betrayals committed by brands and influencers can affect the relationship and consumer perceptions of both on social media platforms. In the context of social media marketing, cooperation between brands and influencers has become a commonly used strategy to promote products or services. However, this cooperation comes with risks if one party betrays the other, such as brands breaking promises or influencers promoting competing brands. The purpose of this study is to analyze the impact of betrayal on the relationship

between brands and influencers on social media. This research identifies how consumers perceive and respond to these betrayals, as well as how these impacts may affect their perceptions and interactions with brands and influencers. This research utilizes a qualitative research method with a case study approach. The researcher analyzed several betrayal cases involving cooperation between brands and influencers on social media. The data was analyzed to identify patterns of behavior and the impact of betrayal. Based on the analysis of the cases, the research found that betrayals that occur between brands and influencers can have a significant impact on consumer perceptions. These impacts include:

- a) **Loss of Trust:** Betrayal can result in a loss of consumer trust towards both the brand and the influencer involved. Consumers may feel betrayed and doubt the integrity of both.
- b) **Impact on Brand Image:** Influencer betrayal can tarnish the brand image, while brand betrayal can reduce consumer trust in the brand.
- c) **Impact on Interactions:** Consumers may reduce or even stop their interactions with brands and influencers involved in betrayal. They may no longer follow or interact with content shared by both.

This paper provides important insights into the complex relationship between brands, influencers, and consumers on social media. By exploring the impact of betrayal in brand-influencer partnerships, this research underscores the importance of honesty, transparency and trust in building and maintaining relationships with consumers. In addition, this paper also raises the question of how brands and influencers should be careful in executing their marketing strategies on social media to build sustainable relationships with consumers. In conclusion, this paper underscores the importance of integrity and ethics in marketing practices in this connected digital age.

3. The paper entitled "User engagement on global social networks: Examining the roles of perceived brand globalness, identification and global identity" by (Akram et al., 2022) discusses user engagement on global social networks, specifically in the context of perceived brand globality, identification, and global identity. This study aims to reveal how these factors contribute to user engagement in global social media. This research focuses on user engagement on global social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. The definition of engagement includes the extent to which users engage with brand content on these platforms, such as interacting with the content, commenting, or sharing the content. The purpose of this study is to analyze how perceptions of brand globality, identification with the brand, and user global identity contribute to user engagement on global social networks. This research tries to understand the relationship between these factors and the extent to which they influence users to interact more actively with brands on global social media platforms. This study uses survey research methods to collect data from respondents who use global social networks. The data collected involved perceptions of brand globality, level of identification with the brand, users' global identity, and users' level of engagement on global social media. Based on the analysis of the survey data, this study found several important findings:

- a) **Perception of Brand Globality:** Users who have a higher perception of brand globality tend to be more engaged in interacting with brand content on global social networks. This perception can motivate users to be more active in supporting and interacting with the brand.
- b) **Identification with the Brand:** Strong identification with the brand also contributes to user engagement. Users who feel close and connected to the brand have a higher propensity to participate in brand-related activities on social media.
- c) **Global Identity of the User:** A user's global identity also plays an important role in user engagement on global social networks. Users who feel they have a global identity tend to be more active in interacting with global brands and content.

This paper provides insights into how factors such as perceived brand globality, identification with the brand, and user global identity can influence user engagement on global social networks. In an era where brands can reach global audiences through social media platforms, an understanding of these factors is crucial for marketing practitioners. This paper underscores that understanding users' views on brand globality and developing a strong identification with the brand can stimulate user participation on global social media platforms. In conclusion, this research provides insights into how brands can design effective marketing strategies to drive user engagement in the interconnected digital age.

4. The paper entitled "Does gamification affect brand engagement and equity? A study in online brand communities" by (Xi & Hamari, 2020) discusses the impact of gamification on brand engagement and equity in online brand communities. This study investigates whether the use of gamification elements can affect user engagement with brands and increase brand equity in online brand communities. In the context of marketing and brand interaction with consumers, gamification refers to the use of game elements, such as points, levels, rewards, or challenges, to motivate participation and interaction from consumers. An online brand community is a place where users with a common interest or affinity for a brand interact and share experiences. The purpose of this study is to understand how the use of gamification elements in online brand communities can affect consumer engagement with the brand and brand equity itself. This research seeks to identify whether gamification strategies can help increase user interaction with brands and create more positive perceptions of brands in online communities. This study utilized survey research methods to collect data from members of an online brand community. The data collected involved users' perceptions of the use of gamification elements in the community, their level of engagement with the brand, and their perceptions of brand equity. The results of the survey data analysis in this study revealed several key findings:

- a) Positive Effect of Gamification on Engagement: The use of gamification elements in online brand communities was shown to have a positive impact on users' level of engagement with the brand. Game elements such as awarding points, rewards, or challenges can motivate users to interact with brand content more actively.
- b) Increased Brand Equity: The use of gamification also contributes to increased brand equity in the eyes of consumers. Users who experience the use of game elements in brand communities tend to have a more positive perception of the brand's value and quality.

This paper provides important insights into how gamification can influence user engagement with brands and brand equity in online brand communities. In an increasingly digitally connected environment, gamification strategies are emerging as an effective tool in driving participation and increasing positive perceptions of brands among users. This paper provides advice for marketing practitioners on the importance of considering game elements in designing and managing online brand communities, and how this can help build closer relationships between brands and consumers in the digital world. In conclusion, this research provides insights into how gamification can be a catalyst for achieving deeper engagement and strengthening brand equity in the digital age.

5. The paper entitled "Outcomes for self-expressive brands followed on social media: Identifying different paths for inner self-expressive and social self-expressive brands" (Wallace et al., 2021) discusses the results or impacts obtained by brands that express themselves on social media. This research aims to identify different paths for inner self-expressive brands and social self-expressive brands on social media. Essentially, self-expressive brands are brands that allow consumers to identify themselves or their values through the brand. Internally self-expressive brands focus on self-reflection, while socially self-expressive brands are more concerned with how consumers want to be perceived by others. The purpose of this research is to identify the outcomes or impacts obtained by brands that express themselves on social media. This research tries to understand how self-expressing brands can influence consumer perceptions and interactions on social media, as well as whether there are differences in the impact path between internally and socially self-expressing brands. This study uses survey

research methods to collect data from respondents who follow brands on social media. The data collected includes consumers' perceptions of brands, level of engagement with brands, and brand impact effects on consumers on social media. The results of the survey data analysis in this study revealed several important findings:

- a) Perception of Brand Impact: Brands that express themselves, both internally and socially, can have a positive impact on consumers' perceptions of brand value, image, and relevance on social media.
- b) Engagement and Interaction: Self-expressing brands can increase consumer engagement with brand content on social media. Consumers tend to more actively interact with brands that allow them to express themselves.
- c) Differences in Impact Pathways: The study found differences in impact pathways between internally and socially self-expressive brands. Internally self-expressing brands tend to impact more on brand engagement and perception, whereas socially self-expressing brands focus more on impacting consumer image and interaction.

This paper provides important insights into how brands expressing themselves on social media can influence consumer perception and interaction. This research identifies that internally and socially self-expressing brands can have a positive impact on engagement, brand perception and brand image. In addition, it provides insights into the differences in impact pathways between the two types of brands. In conclusion, this research underscores the importance of understanding how self-expressing brands can build deeper and more significant relationships with consumers on social media, and how this can impact overall brand perception and image.

6. The paper entitled "What drives me there? The interplay of socio-psychological gratification and consumer values in social media brand engagement" by (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2022) discusses the factors that drive consumer engagement with brands on social media. This study investigates the relationship between socio-psychological gratification and consumer values in influencing their level of engagement with brands on social media platforms. Socio-psychological gratification refers to the fulfillment of social and psychological needs using social media. Consumer values include views, beliefs, and principles that guide consumer behavior in interacting with brands and products. The purpose of this study is to understand how factors such as socio-psychological gratification and consumer values can influence consumer engagement with brands on social media. This research seeks to identify the relationship between psychological motivations and values that lead consumers to interact and engage with brands on social media platforms. This study used survey research methods to collect data from respondents who are active on social media. The data collected involved questions about socio-psychological gratification obtained from social media, consumer values, and their level of engagement with brands on social media. The results of analyzing the survey data in this study revealed several important findings:

- a) Relationship between Gratification and Engagement: It was found that the fulfillment of socio-psychological gratifications on social media, such as social interaction or social rewards, is positively related to consumers' level of engagement with brands on social media.
- b) Influence of Consumer Values: Consumer values, such as ethical, social, or economic values, influence consumer engagement with brands on social media. Consumers who have values that align with the brand tend to be more engaged.

This paper provides insights into how psychological motivations and consumer values can influence consumer engagement with brands on social media. This research identifies that the fulfillment of socio-psychological gratification and the alignment of consumer values with brands have an important role in driving consumer engagement on social media platforms. In an increasingly connected world through social media, understanding these factors is key in designing effective and sustainable marketing strategies. In conclusion, this study provides

insights into how brands can tap into consumer motivations and values to build deeper and more meaningful relationships with consumers in the digital age.

7. The paper entitled "Constructing Consumer-Masstige brand relationships in a volatile social reality" by (Moorlock et al., 2023) discusses the relationship building between consumers and the "Masstige" brand in the context of a dynamic and changing social reality. The "Masstige" brand combines luxury elements with more affordable prices. The construction of brand-consumer relationships involves interactions and interdependencies between brands and consumers in an uncertain environment. The "Masstige" brand presents a unique dynamic where luxury elements are integrated with consumer concerns for product value and quality. The purpose of this research is to understand how the relationship between consumers and the "Masstige" brand is built in a turbulent and changing social reality. This research tries to explore how the "Masstige" brand can establish a strong relationship with consumers during fluctuations in social reality. This research uses a qualitative research method with a case study approach. Researchers analyzed data collected through interviews and observations to gain a deeper understanding of how consumers form relationships with the "Masstige" brand in the context of changing social realities. The results of the data analysis in this study revealed several key findings:
  - a) Relationship Resilience: "Masstige" brand-consumer relationships can survive and thrive in unstable situations. Consumers tend to maintain this relationship despite changes in social reality.
  - b) Alignment with Consumer Values: "Masstige" brands manage to build strong relationships with consumers by accommodating consumers' values and expectations of products and brands.
  - c) Continuity of Relationship: Consumers integrate the "Masstige" brand into their narratives and identities, which creates continuity in the relationship amidst social change.

This paper provides insights into how the "Masstige" brand can build and maintain strong relationships with consumers in a dynamic social reality. This research shows that the "Masstige" brand can successfully maintain the continuity of relationships with consumers by understanding consumers' values and identities and adapting to social changes. In a constantly changing environment, the "Masstige" brand presents an example of how brands can overcome social fluctuations to stay relevant and in touch with consumers. In conclusion, this research provides insights into how brands can adapt and establish strong relationships with consumers amidst the complexity of ever-changing social realities.

8. The paper entitled "How do customers engage in social media-based brand communities: The moderator role of the brand's country of origin?" by (Huang et al., 2022) discusses how consumers engage in social media-based brand communities by considering the moderator role of brand country of origin. This study investigates the relationship between brand country of origin and the level of consumer engagement in brand communities on social media platforms. A brand's country of origin (COO) refers to the country in which the brand originated. COO can influence consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards brands. The purpose of this study is to understand how consumers engage in social media-based brand communities by considering the moderating role of brand country of origin. This study attempts to identify how brand COO can influence consumer engagement in brand communities on social media. This study uses survey research methods to collect data from respondents who are active in brand communities on social media. The data collected includes information about consumer engagement in the community, perceptions about the brand, and the brand's country of origin. The results of the survey data analysis in this study resulted in several key findings:
  - a) Moderating Effect of COO: Brand country of origin (COO) has a moderating role in the relationship between consumer engagement in brand communities and brand perception. That is, the COO of the brand influences the extent to which consumer engagement in brand communities can affect brand perception.

- b) Effect of Community Engagement: Consumer engagement in brand communities on social media has a positive impact on brand perception. Consumers who are actively engaged in brand communities tend to have a more positive perception of the brand.

This paper provides insights into how brand country of origin (COO) can influence the relationship between consumer engagement in brand communities on social media and brand perception. This research shows that COO has a moderating role in regulating how consumers' engagement in brand communities affects their perceptions of brands. This shows the complexity in the interaction between aspects of brand and consumer behavior in the digital world. In conclusion, this study provides insights into how external factors such as COO can influence the dynamics of the relationship between brands and consumers in social media-based brand communities.

9. The paper entitled "Environmental factors to maximize social media engagement: A comprehensive framework" by (Reimer, 2023) discusses environmental factors that can be utilized to maximize engagement on social media. This research develops a comprehensive framework that identifies environmental factors that can support increased engagement on social media platforms. The framework focuses on environmental factors that involve external aspects that can affect user engagement on social media. These factors can be industry trends, changes in consumer behavior, technological developments, and so on. The purpose of this research is to identify environmental factors that brands or organizations can leverage to increase user engagement on social media. This research attempts to present a comprehensive view of the factors that can influence engagement on social media platforms. Although it is not explained in detail in this study, it uses literature analysis and concept exploration methods to develop a comprehensive framework of environmental factors that can affect engagement on social media. At this stage, this paper provides insight into the importance of environmental factors in influencing engagement on social media. In the ever-evolving digital age, external factors such as industry trends and technology have a significant influence on how brands or organizations interact with consumers on social media platforms. The framework developed by this study may provide guidance for marketing practitioners and brand managers to identify opportunities and strategies that can increase engagement on social media based on relevant environmental factors. In conclusion, this research provides insights into how organizations can optimize engagement on social media platforms by understanding and responding to environmental factors.
10. The paper entitled "Hi, I'm taking over this account! Leveraging social media takeovers in fostering consumer-brand relationships" by (Penttinen, 2023) discusses the utilization of social media takeovers in strengthening relationships between consumers and brands. This research discusses how social media takeover strategies can be used as a tool to improve interactions and relationships between consumers and brands. A social media takeover is a strategy where individuals or other parties, such as celebrities or influencers, take control of a brand's social media accounts for a period. It aims to provide a different point of view, engaging content, and closer interaction between brands and consumers. The purpose of this research is to understand how taking over social media accounts can affect the relationship between consumers and brands. This research tries to identify how this strategy can be used to strengthen interactions and build closer relationships on social media platforms. This paper provides important insights into how brands can utilize social media account takeover as a strategy to strengthen relationships with consumers. In an increasingly connected social media environment, social media account takeovers can provide an opportunity for brands to showcase diverse content, different views, and direct interactions with consumers. This can help brands build closeness, transparency and trust with consumers. In conclusion, this study provides insights into how social media account takeover strategies can be an effective tool in strengthening the relationship between brands and consumers in the digital age.

### *Discussion*

The landscape of consumer-brand interactions has been transformed by the digital era, ushering in new opportunities and challenges for businesses. In this discussion, we have delved into various research papers that explore the dynamics of online brand communities, highlighting key themes, findings, and their implications for marketing strategies and consumer engagement.

#### 1. Building Empowering Online Communities

One of the recurring themes in the examined papers is the significance of fostering empowered online communities. These communities allow consumers to engage with brands in a more interactive and personalized manner. The paper on "Membangun Komunitas Online yang Berdaya" underscores the value of brand communities on social media. These communities not only facilitate communication between brand and consumer but also empower consumers to share their experiences, offer insights, and even shape the brand's identity. This notion resonates across several papers, affirming the role of online communities as platforms for co-creation and empowerment.

#### 2. Gamification and Consumer Engagement

Gamification emerges as a compelling tool to drive consumer engagement and brand equity. The study on "Does gamification affect brand engagement and equity?" reveals how gamification elements such as rewards and challenges can stimulate increased interaction between consumers and brands. By integrating gaming principles into brand communities, companies can create a sense of enjoyment and competition, thereby enhancing user engagement and fostering brand loyalty. This finding is significant in the context of the modern digital environment where individuals are seeking novel and interactive experiences.

#### 3. Consumer Values and Social Identity

The intersection of consumer values and social identity is a prominent theme across the examined papers. "Outcomes for self-expressive brands followed on social media" delves into the impact of self-expressive brands on social media. This paper highlights that consumers engage with brands that align with their personal values and enable them to express themselves. Such alignment leads to increased consumer engagement and a stronger sense of brand loyalty. This theme emphasizes the importance of brands understanding and resonating with their target audience's values and identity.

#### 4. Social Media Takeovers and Consumer Engagement

A novel approach in "Hi, I'm taking over this account!" investigates the impact of social media takeovers on consumer-brand relationships. Social media takeovers involve external individuals or influencers temporarily managing brand accounts. This strategy provides fresh perspectives and dynamic content, enabling brands to connect with consumers on a more personal level. By harnessing these takeovers, brands can inject authenticity and diversity into their online presence, ultimately cultivating deeper relationships and greater engagement.

#### 5. Cross-Cultural Dynamics and Online Communities

The interplay between cross-cultural dynamics and online brand communities is another dimension explored in these papers. "Environmental factors to maximize social media engagement" considers how environmental factors influence social media engagement. The concept of Country of Origin (COO) is introduced as a potential moderator of consumer engagement. This theme emphasizes the need for brands to be sensitive to cultural nuances and adapt their engagement strategies to diverse audiences, considering local preferences and values.

## **V. Conclusion**

The landscape of consumer-brand relationships has undergone a profound transformation in the digital era, with online brand communities emerging as powerful arenas for interaction and engagement. Throughout our discussion of various research papers, several recurring themes have surfaced, shedding light on the intricate dynamics that shape these communities and their implications for both managerial practices and theoretical understanding.

#### 1. Empowerment and Co-Creation: Fostering Dynamic Relationships

A central tenet that resonates across the examined papers is the empowerment of consumers within online brand communities. These platforms not only facilitate communication but also encourage active participation, allowing consumers to contribute their insights, feedback, and experiences. The paper on "Membangun Komunitas Online yang Berdaya" underscores that these communities function as spaces for co-creation, where consumers collaborate with brands to shape product development and enhance brand identity. This empowerment has profound implications for brand loyalty, as engaged consumers are more likely to forge lasting relationships and advocate for the brand.

2. Gamification: A Catalyst for Engagement

The integration of gamification mechanics emerges as a powerful strategy for boosting engagement and building brand equity. The paper "Does gamification affect brand engagement and equity?" underscores how gamified experiences can ignite consumers' enthusiasm and commitment. Gamification injects an element of playfulness into interactions, creating a dynamic and enjoyable environment that encourages repeated engagement. From a managerial perspective, brands can leverage gamification strategies to cultivate a sense of competitiveness and achievement, fostering sustained interactions and reinforcing brand loyalty.

3. Values Alignment and Identity: Nurturing Authentic Connections

The alignment of brand values with consumer values and social identity stands out as a critical factor in cultivating authentic connections. Papers such as "Outcomes for self-expressive brands followed on social media" emphasize that consumers are more likely to engage with brands that resonate with their personal values and enable self-expression. Brands that actively understand and reflect these values in their communication and offerings can establish deeper connections, leading to heightened engagement and brand advocacy.

4. Cross-Cultural Dynamics: Tailoring Engagement Strategies

The interplay between cross-cultural dynamics and online brand communities introduces a layer of complexity. The paper "Environmental factors to maximize social media engagement" highlights how the origin of a brand can influence consumer engagement. This implies that brands need to navigate cultural nuances and tailor their engagement strategies to suit diverse audiences. A thorough understanding of local preferences and cultural sensitivities enables brands to forge more meaningful connections and garner greater engagement from global consumers.

*Implications for Managerial Practices:* The insights drawn from these research papers offer valuable implications for managerial practices:

- Empowerment and Engagement: Brands should actively involve consumers in co-creating content and shaping brand narratives to enhance engagement and loyalty.
- Gamification Strategies: Incorporating gamification elements can enhance consumer experiences, encouraging ongoing interaction and cultivating brand loyalty.
- Values-Driven Communication: Aligning brand values with consumer values fosters emotional connections and deepens engagement.
- Cultural Adaptation: Crafting engagement strategies that respect cultural diversity enables brands to resonate with a wider audience and build lasting relationships.

*Theoretical Contributions:* These discussions also contribute to theoretical understanding:

- The exploration of consumer empowerment and co-creation enhances our understanding of how online communities serve as platforms for collaborative brand building.
- The investigation of gamification mechanisms adds to the discourse on motivational drivers in engagement and highlights the role of playfulness.
- Insights on values alignment contribute to theories on consumer-brand relationships by emphasizing the significance of shared values.
- The exploration of cross-cultural factors enriches theories of consumer behavior by highlighting the impact of cultural context on engagement dynamics.

In conclusion, the evolution of consumer-brand relationships in the digital age hinges on the dynamics of online brand communities. These communities encapsulate empowerment, gamification, values alignment, and cross-cultural considerations as essential factors in driving engagement and fostering authentic connections. By embracing these insights, brands can navigate the digital landscape more effectively, creating meaningful interactions and forging enduring relationships with their consumers.

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