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## EFFECT OF BRAND SACRALIZATION ON PURCHASE INTENTION IN SOCIAL MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

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**Abstract** The purpose of this paper is to investigate the effect of brand sacralisation on the purchase intention among youngsters through social media environment. This paper identifies the intermediating roles of brand loyalty and brand attitude towards brand sacralisation. The study was conducted among youngsters from south part of Kerala. The data was gathered from 250 respondents having the age group between 15 to 30 years which includes both students and working category with the help of questionnaires. The variables that influence the brand sacralization phenomenon are social media interaction, brand attitude and brand loyalty to measure the purchase intention. Further, this study examined the gender perception. To verify this multiple linear regression analyses method used. The study found out that there is significant relation between brand sacralisation and purchase intention among youngsters. The authors also found out that there is a positive relation between brand attitude and brand loyalty to brand sacralisation. The study reveals that gender perceptions will significantly influence brand sacralisation. The study helps to provide a thorough understanding of gender perceptions towards brand sacralisation.

**Index Terms:** Social Media, Brand Sacralisation, Multiple Regression, Purchase Intention, Brand loyalty.

### I. INTRODUCTION

In the recent years' technology has advanced a lot. The cost of internet access has come down considerably and the availability and speed has also increased. The general availability of the internet has given individuals the opportunity to use social media, from email to Twitter and Facebook, and to interact without the need for physical meetings. The increase in usage of Mobile phones especially smartphones have increased the opportunities to access high speed data. Around 25% of the Indian population uses smartphones and almost all service providers in India provide 3G/4G data at competitive rates. The high concentration of internet users both broadband and mobile users opened new avenues in marketing. Online marketing through social media and other online mediums are getting very much popular and effective now-a-days.

Social media have provided new marketing opportunities for the manufacturers and service providers for engaging consumers in their social interaction on the internet. People use social media platforms, such as online communities, to generate content and to network with other users. Social media marketing refers to the process of gaining website traffic or attention through social media sites. Social media marketing programs usually center on efforts to create content that attracts attention and encourages readers to share it with their social networks. A corporate message spreads from user to user and presumably resonates because it appears to come from a trusted, third-party source, as opposed to the brand or company itself. The Corporates uses social media widely as a platform for creating awareness about their products/services and to get real time feedback regarding the products/services offered by them. A lot of corporates uses social media like Facebook, twitter, WhatsApp to provide support services to their customers. They uses social media widely to attract users to their products by directing them to their websites which allows online purchase of serve more specific details.

Sacralisation, as defined by Marshall (2010,p.66), refers to "a process by which a secular object is invested with the properties of sacred". Thus, brand sacredness demonstrates the emergence of sacred in a secular context such that an ordinary brand may be perceived as possessing certain spiritual/extraordinary properties in contrast to other brands in the eyes of some brand devotees. Brand sacralisation is the phenomenon where consumers (especially young) become an adherent of brands and consider brands as sacred entities.

Businesses see enormous opportunities and are eager to tap into the trend, whereas consumers are put back to the centre in the business world because of social media. Internet usage of youngsters in Kerala is considerably higher due to the social factors and educational advancement in the state. Social media marketing plays an important role in contemporary marketing, so this study will benefit both researcher in the field of social media marketing and business community.

This study specifically focuses on how gender perceptions influence the brand sacralisation. This paper specifically explores the effect of social media interaction brand loyalty and brand attitude on brand sacralisation and consequently its influence on purchase intention. The young mind sets represent a majority stake in final decision making and also represent a significant niche of online shoppers (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

## **II.LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Social Media**

The study made by Bhagawat and Goutham (2013) is in line with the study done by Jati and Mohanty (2012) where they assert the need for social networking sites in a business. They highlight that social technology is connecting people in ways to share information and other things to each other. From their study they found Facebook to be the leading social media networking site. They have also provided with statistical data which shows that social media sites are growing and providing facilities to people. Their reputation in short time is in lieu of their requirement in society for communication and also for business as well. Basher et al (2012) through an empirical research find out the effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool. The researcher finally found out that social media as a marketing tool will be effective only if it provides a concrete and timely information wanted by the consumers to bridge the gap between the consumer's expectation and what the consumers actually want. And recommended that today's business have to be transformed from a transactional relationship to a social relationship. Social media allows consumers to generate their own brand stories creating larger-scale brand interaction (Gensler et al.(2013).

### **2.2 Social Media and Purchase Intention**

Anggraeni Permatasari observes in her research analyse the critical significance of social media in daily routines and its impact on consumers purchase intention. The result analyses the impact of social media towards consumers purchase intention. The research successfully identifies factors that impact repeat consumers purchase intention from social media context. Sujin Song & Myongjee Yoo through their research identifies the role of social media during the pre-purchasing stage. The study investigated about the five benefits of social media and its impact on purchasing decision. The result found out that out of five (Monetary, Hedonic, functional, social and psychological) three benefits have positive influence on purchasing decision and the other have indirect relation with purchase intention.

### **2.3 Brand Sacralisation and Purchase Intention**

Payel Das and Santanu Mandal in their study evaluate the influence of social media on brand sacralisation. The study is the first one to analyse the concept of brand sacralisation on purchase intention among young consumers through social media. The study resulted from the finding that a strong positive influence of social media interaction and social media usability on brand sacralization. Further, brand sacralisation is found to have a positive and significant influence on online PI and brand loyalty of young consumers. Juhi Gahlot Sarkar Abhigyan Sarkar Abhilash Ponnampalath through their research identifies the factors that make the youngsters to become devotees of brands. The findings of the study confirms that young consumer's find meanings and fulfillment in their lives in consumption objects, particularly in brands. This study has found significant similarities between religiosity and brand sacralisation. Based on the findings of this study, brand sacralisation is defined as the state when an individual considers a brand as sacred as religion in his/her life and perceives that the focal brand can provide all those experiences that religions provide. Brand sacredness as the extent of a brand being perceived of possessing extra ordinary and spiritual properties inspiring veneration that would make the brand distinct from other brands in the eyes of a group of brand devotees (Cheng Lu Wang, Juhi Gahlot Sarkar, Abhigyan Sarkar, 2019)

### **2.4 Social Media and Brand Loyalty**

Brand loyalty can be defined as behavioural and attitudinal response toward a brand revealed by a customer over time (Keller, 1993). Loyalty can be identified as relationally beneficial to both company and customer, as loyal consumers need not to seek out for new service providers (Yang and Peterson, 2004). In online brand community, customers reveal loyalty via their positive word of mouth and repeat purchase behaviour (Huret et al., 2011; Yang and Peterson, 2004). Social Media marketing has a significant effect on brand loyalty; brand consciousness and value consciousness mediate the relationship between social media marketing and brand loyalty (Ahmed Rageh Ismail, 2017).

### **2.5 Social Media and Brand Attitude**

Kotler et al defines brand attitude as a favourable and unfavourable personal evaluation, emotion feeling, and behaviour tendency that an individual keep. Brand attitude is a total or overall evaluation of consumers on a product that has a brand (Mitchell and Olson and Keller). A study conducted for analysing the effect of social media on brand attitude and purchase intention is an investigation on consumer's attitude towards brand and purchase intention which reveals that social media have significant impact on brand attitude. Further the study found out that brand attitude has a significant impact on purchase intention (Mehdi Abzari, Reza Abachian Ghassemi, Leila Nasrolahi Vosta, 2014).

### III. Objectives of the study

The study aims to investigate the role of social media interaction on brand sacralization and its influence on purchase intention among youngsters. The objectives intend to analyze are:

- To identify the effect of brand sacralisation on purchase intention in social media environment among youngsters in Kerala.
- To examine the role of gender perception about brand sacralisation.
- To find out the influence of brand attitude, brand loyalty and social media interaction towards brand sacralisation and purchase intention.

### IV. Hypotheses Formulation and Conceptual Model

#### H1: Social Media Interaction positively influences Brand sacralization

Social media is defined as social interaction using online social media tools; these could be blogs, microblogs such as Twitter, social sharing services such as YouTube, text messaging, discussion forums, collaborative editing tools such as wikis and virtual worlds and social networking services such as Facebook (Bertot et al., 2012). Social media aims to directly connect people into one environment (Correia and Medina, 2014). Social media is digital content and networking interactions that are developed by people that can be used between people (Moncrief et al., 2015). The use of social media is growing among individuals (Goodhue et al., 2012), and because of this, it is common to find that individuals and organisations have a social media account (Glacet et al., 2014). Social media has changed the way people communicate and share information (Correia and Medina, 2014). Though youngsters are more interested to share their positive views regarding brands that may lead people to be more brand conscious and make them brand devotees.

#### H2: Brand attitude and Brand Loyalty positively influences brand sacralisation of young consumers.

Marshall (2010, p.66) defines sacralization as “a process by which a secular object is invested with the properties of sacred”. According to Marshall (2010) though always esteemed as rational and meticulously conscious species, human beings do display certain behaviours that are devoid of ‘intention-based’ explanations and the true awareness behind such behaviours remains unexplained. Marshall describes sacralisation as one such manifestation of human behaviour which is not bounded by human rationality. Sacralisation is a phenomenon which is rapidly growing in the consumption domain (Belk, 1988; Pimentel and Reynold, 2004; Pichler and Hemetsberger, 2007). Brand loyalty is related to the customer’s level of attachment to a specific brand Liuetal (2012). This study measures brand loyalty as the overall attitudinal loyalty. It includes consumers’ commitment and attachment to the brand they love and their intention to buy the loved brand.

#### H4: Brand sacralisation has a positive influence on purchase Intention.

Brand sacredness as the extent of a brand being perceived of possessing extra ordinary and spiritual properties inspiring veneration that would make the brand distinct from other brands in the eyes of a group of brand devotees (Cheng Lu Wang, Jui Gahlot Sarkar, Abhigyan Sarkar, 2019). Brand devotion makes people purchase of certain brands regularly and it will lead people to sacrifice their self-interest for purchasing a brand. This study measures the significant relation between brand sacralisation and purchase intention. As per the opinion collected it clearly leads to the finding that brand devotion makes people to buy particular brands.

#### H5: Significant positive relation between gender perceptions and brand sacralisation

The gender perspective looks at the impact of gender on people's opportunities, social roles and interactions. Successful implementation of the policy, programme and project goals of international and national organizations is directly affected by the impact of gender and, in turn, influences the process of social development. From this study the researchers could identify the significant role of gender about brand sacralisation. The viewpoints are different among men and women in connection with brand consciousness while having an intention to purchase.

### V. Research Methodology

#### 5.1 Sample

The study was conducted among youngsters from south part of Kerala. The respondents were chosen as to represent brand community members and frequent online shoppers. The data was gathered from 250 respondents having the age group between 15 to 30 years which includes both students and working category, who spent most of the time in one or several social media exchanging information about brands with the help of questionnaires. The youngsters are chosen as the target sample as they possess more influence in final product purchase decision nowadays. The data are gathered through simple random sampling technique. The responses are analysed through factor and multiple regressions analysis. Among the total responses, male category represented 54.8 percent with female being 45.2 percent. The survey questionnaire that was used to collect the primary data for this study has been developed based on the literature review in order to obtain all the objectives for this study. The questionnaire consisted of several parts that included demographic information and a five point Likert scale ranges from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree.

## VI. Results and Discussion

### 6.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Out of 250 respondents, there were 137 males and 113 were females. Moreover, majority of the respondents are aged between 25-30 years old. Total 168 respondents are working category and 82 are in the non working category (see table I).

Gender	Category	Age
Male 137	Working 168	15-20 91
Female 113	NonWorking 82	21-25 103
		26-30 56

Table 6.1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

### 6.2 Reliability

All the data obtained were analysed to determine the reliability of the data for the study by using reliability analysis. This study has found Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.761 (see table II) which is considered valid and reliable for the study (Neuman, 2007; Sekaran, 2000).

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No. of Items
.761	.743	16

Table 6.2: Reliability Analysis

### 6.3 Factor Analysis

To evaluate the dimensionality of the brand sacralization towards purchase intention, factor analysis were performed using the principal factor/component (PF) method, followed by the varimax rotation. Table III and IV show the results of the factor analysis test for the variables. The KMO value which is a measure of sampling adequacy was found to be 0.781, suggesting that the factor analysis had proceeded correctly and that sample was adequate. The results of the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were also significant, is 0.000, meaning that factors that form the variable is adequate.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sample Adequacy	.781	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	761.599
	Df	78
	Sig.	.000

Table 6.3: KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

## Component

Items	Std. Loadings
I participate actively on online discussion forums regarding a brand.	.754
I always focus on effective use of social media for getting and spreading information.	.717
Engaging brand related activities with other fans are a part of my formal routine	.613
Social media offer a customized information search	.614
The brand would help me in establishing a distinctive image	.610
The brand would accurately symbolize my achievements	.455
I think the brand will help me become the type of person I want to be.	.635
I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter with a brand	.710
I feel connected with a brand like I feel connected with God	.502
I emotionally involved with brands that I prefer	.775
I consider my preferred brands are sacred entities	.527
I am passionate about certain brand	.761
When I go shopping I don't even notice competing brands	.517
If my store is out of my brand, I will postpone buying or go to another store	.554
I would like to recommend the brand to my friends and relatives	.630
I value the brand so much that I am always afraid of losing it	.557

Table.6.4: Output of Factor Analysis

### 6.5 Multiple Regressions

Multiple regression analysis has been performed for the purpose of hypothesis testing. It is meant to determine the factors that might significantly affected brand sacralization and purchase intention. Table V indicates how much of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the model. In this research, the value is .719.

Model	R	R Square	R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.899	.719	.672	.559

Table 6.5: Model Summary

Since it is necessary to assess the statistical significance of result test of ANOVA is essential. This tests the null hypothesis. The model in this research reaches statistical significance (sig. = .000), which means  $p < .0005$ .

## VII. FINDINGS

The significance level of all the variables where greater than 0.05 ( $P < 0.05$ ). Thus all the hypotheses are accepted which means that, social media interaction does have significant impact on brand sacralization. The study found out that there is significant relation between brand sacralisation and purchase intention among youngsters in southern part of Kerala. The researchers also found out that there is a positive relation between brand attitude and brand loyalty to brand sacralisation. The study reveals that gender perceptions will significantly influence brand sacralisation.

## VIII. Limitations and Scope of future research

In spite of having some useful findings this study suffers with some limitations. In this study the researchers studied about the generalized concept of brand sacralisation. This study focused only the southern part of Kerala that will not be enough to make generalizations about the influence of brand sacralisation on the purchase intention of youngsters. As research studies in the field of brand sacralisation are scarce, this study has drawn many concepts from related fields of literature.

There is scope for further research into the factors that influences the youngsters to become brand devotees. This study focuses only the youngsters having age group between 15 to 30 years, there is scope for future research by using other generations and other categories of respondents. Further study can be carried about the types of products having more sacralisation among customers. This can be conducted in a broader perspective that covers the entire state. Moreover further study can be in such a way that the strategies companies are using to make customers to become brand devotees.

## IX. Managerial Implications and Conclusion

From the study we could find out that some of the consumers are more brand loyal as compared to brand sacralization when they think about a brand. Hence firms should try to develop more strategies to make them more sacralized towards the brand. Through this study firms can focus on promotional campaigns and advertisements focusing on positioning their brands as sacred entities in the young mindsets. This paper contributes more ideas about brand sacredness and its influence on the purchase intention. Previous researches consider brand loyalty is created among consumers through brand sacralization. But this study will help the firms to understand that brand sacralisation is created through brand loyalty. This study intends to provide a better understanding about the role of brand loyalty and brand attitude towards brand sacralisation.

Studying about the effect of brand sacralisation on purchase intention is a relevant aspect. With the help of the study companies can make more effective strategies to make customers to be more brands conscious. Overall result of the study indicated that three variables are effective in promoting brand sacralisation and purchase intention.

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