Community Marketing and Consumers' Purchase Intention—An Empirical Study Based on TAM Model

Yuan Liu

Wuhan Technology and Business University, Wuhan, 430000, Hubei, China

845800043@qq.com

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to investigate the correlation between community marketing (CM) and consumers' purchase intention (CPI), employing an empirical approach based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Data were collected via questionnaires from 500 social media users and analyzed using regression analysis and mediation effect testing. The findings reveal that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use significantly influence purchase intention. Moreover, external factors such as product information characteristics (PIC), community environment characteristics (CEC), community advertising information characteristics (CAIC), and consumer personal characteristics (CPC) also positively impact purchase intention. Furthermore, trust serves as an intermediary between perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and purchase intention. These results not only enhance the application of the TAM model in the realm of social media marketing but also offer practical insights for enterprises in formulating CM strategies.

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of social media and online community, community marketing (CM) has become the core of marketing strategy in the digital age. With the popularity of the Internet and the widespread use of mobile devices, consumers participate in social media platforms more and more frequently in their daily lives, which provides enterprises with opportunities to interact more directly and closely with potential customers. In this context, it is very important to understand consumers' acceptance of CM activities and its influence on purchase intention.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), a foundational framework elucidating individuals' adoption of novel technologies, has found extensive application in elucidating consumers' reception of digital offerings. TAM's exploration of users' perceived utility and ease of system operation furnishes a robust paradigm for comprehending users' uptake of innovative technologies [1-2]. Nevertheless, within the realm of social marketing, there remains a need for deeper investigation into how the TAM model elucidates consumers' embrace of marketing endeavors on social media platforms and its impact on purchase inclination.

This paper aims to explore the relationship between CM and consumers' purchase intention (CPI), and makes an empirical study based on TAM model. By investigating the perceived usefulness and ease of use of specific brand marketing activities on social media, this paper analyzes consumers' adoption attitudes and discusses how these attitudes affect their purchase intention. In addition, this study will also consider the moderating effect of individual characteristics on the relationship in TAM model, so as to deeply understand the reactions of different consumer groups to CM. The findings of this study are helpful for enterprises to better understand consumers' behavior patterns in social media environment and provide practical guidance for the formulation of brand marketing strategies. At the same time, for academic circles, this study will enrich the application of TAM model in the field of social media marketing and provide new ideas and directions for further research.

2. Research method

2.1. Sampling method and sample source

In this study, convenient sampling method was used to collect data in the form of online questionnaire. The sample sources include social media users, and the survey links are published through online social networking platforms to invite interested users to participate in the survey. The sample selection should be as diverse and representative as possible, covering respondents of different ages, genders, education levels and social media usage habits.

Data collection will be conducted through an online questionnaire [3]. The questionnaire will include two parts: one part is a survey of participants' personal information, including age, gender, education level, social media usage frequency, etc. The other part is about participants' perception, attitude and purchase intention of brand marketing activities on specific social media. The questionnaire design follows the theoretical framework of TAM model and combines the characteristics of CM to ensure the validity and applicability of the question.

2.2. Variable definition

CM refers to the marketing strategy of spreading brand information, promotional activities or product information to the target audience through social media platforms [4-5]. In this study, CM is regarded as an independent variable, which is measured by investigating participants' perception and participation in the marketing activities of specific brands on social media.

Purchase intention refers to the degree of consumers' inclination to buy a product or service. In this study, the purchase intention is regarded as a dependent variable, which is measured by investigating the participants' purchase tendency of a specific brand product or service [6].

Perceived usefulness refers to participants' subjective evaluation of the practicality of specific brand marketing activities on social media. In this study, perceived usefulness is taken as an independent variable and measured by investigating the usefulness of participants to CM activities.

Perceived ease of use refers to the participants' subjective feelings about the process of participating in a specific brand marketing activity, including the ease of operation and the convenience of use. In this study, perceived ease of use is taken as an independent variable, and it is measured by investigating participants' ease of use of CM activities [7-8].

On the basis of TAM model, the influencing factors of CPI in CM are considered, including the following four aspects [9-10]: product information characteristics (PIC), including product quality, use value, brand and after-sales guarantee. Community environment characteristics (CEC), including online interaction and the intensity of community relations; community advertising information characteristics (CAIC), including price promotion, advertising quality, and attractiveness; and consumer personal characteristics (CPC), including personal ability to pay and the length of time since joining the community.
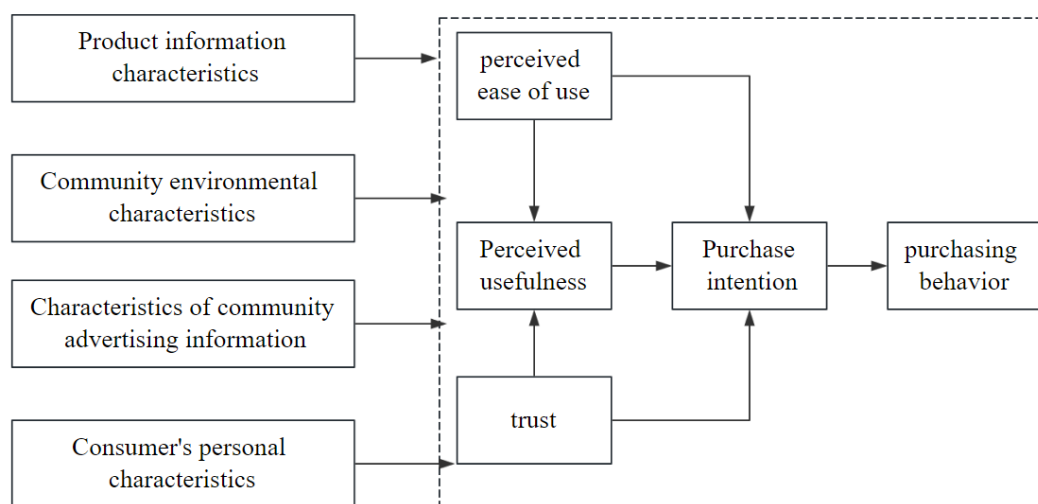

Figure 1Theoretical model of the influence of CM on CPI

Trust is regarded as an intermediary variable between TAM model and purchase intention, and its role is to play a regulatory role between perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use and purchase intention. As shown in Figure 1.

2.3. Research hypothesis

Based on the previous literature review and theoretical framework, this study puts forward the following assumptions:

1) There is a direct link between how useful people perceive something to be and their intention to purchase it. More specifically, when social media marketing efforts are seen as highly useful, it results in a stronger intention to buy among participants.

2) A positive relationship can be observed between the ease with which something is perceived to be used and the intention to purchase. Essentially, the smoother the experience with social media marketing activities, the more likely participants are to make a purchase.

3) It is evident that there is an interaction between perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use when it comes to influencing purchase intention. In simpler terms, the combined effect of these two factors further enhances the intention to purchase.

4) CPI has a positive influence on purchase intention. This means that the higher the CPI factors such as product quality, usage value, brand, and after-sales guarantees, the stronger the participants' desire to make a purchase.

5) The CEC has a positive impact on purchase intention. In other words, the better the CEC elements like online interaction and the strength of community relations, the more likely participants are to have a stronger intention to purchase.

6) The CAIC also positively affects purchase intention. This simply means that when the characteristics of price promotions, advertising quality, attractiveness, and other community advertising information are superior, it strengthens the participants' intention to purchase.

7) CPC have a positive impact on purchase intention. That is, the better the CPC, such as personal ability to pay and the length of time to join the community, the stronger the participants' willingness to buy.

8) Trust serves as a mediator between perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and purchase intention. In essence, trust moderates the relationship between the perceived usefulness and ease of use of social media marketing activities and purchase intention, subsequently influencing purchase intention.

3. Research results

3.1. Sample feature description

For this investigation, a collective of 500 individuals active on social media platforms took part in the survey. The gender split within this cohort was such that 48% identified as male, whereas 52% were female. The majority of those surveyed fell within the age bracket of 18 to 35 years. Additionally, the predominant educational attainment among them was a bachelor's degree or its equivalent. It was observed that these participants are quite engaged with social media, dedicating in excess of two hours daily to their online interactions on average.

3.2. Hypothetical verification result

The application of regression analysis has uncovered a robust association that is positively inclined between an individual's perceived value in a product or service and their likelihood to make a purchase, indicated by a beta coefficient measure of 0.345 and substantiated by a statistically significant p-value of less than 0.001. This outcome solidly endorses the initial hypothesis postulated. In a parallel finding, the same analytical approach has illustrated a prominent and positive connection between the ease of use perceived by consumers regarding a product or service and their propensity to engage in the buying process, denoted by a beta coefficient of 0.259 alongside a p-value also beneath 0.001, corroborating the second hypothesis.

Furthermore, an interaction term coefficient of 0.186 with a corresponding significance level below 0.05 points towards a meaningful interactional dynamic between perceived usefulness and ease of use when it comes to influencing the intent to purchase. This result effectively confirms the third hypothesis, signifying that the combined influence of these two parameters exerts a considerable effect on consumer purchasing behaviors. For an exhaustive elucidation of the data, please consult Table 1 for additional details.

Table 1 Regression analysis

relationship	β coefficient	standard error	T value	P value
The relationship between perceived usefulness and purchase intention	0.345	0.062	5.565	< 0.001
Relationship between perceived ease of use and purchase intention	0.259	0.054	4.796	< 0.001
The Influence of Interaction on Purchase Intention	0.186	0.082	2.268	< 0.05

3.3. Analysis results of external influencing factors

The thorough regression analysis conducted has indicated that the CPI exerts a substantial and positive effect on the intention to make purchases, as represented by a coefficient of 0.312 and a p-value less than 0.001, which is highly statistically significant. Similarly, the CEC is shown to positively impact the inclination to purchase, with its aggregate regression coefficient standing at 0.198 and a p-value below 0.01, signifying a considerable level of statistical significance.

In addition, the CAIC also plays a significant role, fostering a positive influence on the propensity to engage in purchasing behavior, evidenced by an overall regression coefficient of 0.225 and a p-value under 0.001, denoting robust statistical support. Moreover, personal attributes of consumers themselves are contributors that significantly inform their intent to purchase, as reflected by the cumulative regression coefficient of 0.167 and a p-value beneath 0.05, indicating a reliable level of significance. For an enhanced breakdown and clearer understanding of these findings, please see Table 2 for further elucidation.

Table 2 Regression analysis of external influencing factors

influencing factor	β coefficient	standard error	T value	P value
CPI	0.312	0.048	6.500	< 0.001
CEC	0.198	0.062	3.210	< 0.01
CAIC	0.225	0.055	4.091	< 0.001
CPC	0.167	0.073	2.286	< 0.05

3.4. Intermediary effect test

After conducting a mediation effect test, we found that trust acts as a partial mediator between perceived usefulness and purchase intention, exhibiting a significant indirect effect of 0.105 (p < 0.001). Similarly, trust also mediates the relationship between perceived ease of use and purchase intention, with a notable indirect effect of 0.081 (p < 0.001). For a comprehensive overview of these findings, please refer to Table 3.

Table 3 Intermediary effect test

mediator variable	Indirect effect	standard error	95% CI (confidence interval)	P value
Perceived usefulness → willingness to buy	0.105	0.032	[0.067, 0.158]	< 0.001
Perceived ease of use → willingness to buy	0.081	0.025	[0.049, 0.126]	< 0.001

4. Discussion and analysis

This study deepens the application of TAM model in the field of social media marketing, verifies the important influence of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use on purchase intention, and discusses the mechanism of external influencing factors and intermediary variables, enriching relevant theories. According to the research results, enterprises can strengthen the practical and easy-to-use design of CM activities, improve the CPI, CPI and CPI, as well as the satisfaction of consumers' personal characteristics, thus promoting the formation of CPI.

Although this study has achieved some research results, there are still some limitations. This study adopts the convenient sampling method to obtain samples, which may have sample selection bias and fail to fully represent the entire audience. In this study, questionnaire survey was used to collect data, which may lead to self-reporting bias and information distortion. The study only pays attention to some factors in the TAM model, and does not consider other factors that may affect the purchase intention, such as emotional factors.

Future research can further explore the above limitations and carry out in-depth research in the following aspects: adopting more diverse sample sources to improve the representativeness of research results; Combining field observation and in-depth interviews, we can deeply understand consumers' behavioral motives and feelings; Consider other factors that may affect the purchase intention, such as emotional factors and cultural differences.

5. Conclusion

Utilizing empirical research grounded in the TAM model, this study delves into the intricate relationship between CM and CPI, while simultaneously analyzing the intricate mechanisms of external influencing factors and intermediary variables. The findings reveal a notable positive correlation between consumers' perceived usefulness and ease of use of social media marketing activities, and their intention to purchase. Notably, external factors, including CPI, along with consumers' personal characteristics, exert a significant positive influence on purchase intention. Furthermore, the mediation effect test outcomes indicate that trust serves as a partial intermediary between perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and purchase intention, thereby further amplifying its impact on purchase decisions. These results not only broaden the application of the TAM model in the realm of social media marketing, but also provide practical insights for businesses in devising effective CM strategies. However, it's worth acknowledging that this study is not without its limitations. For instance, the sample source and the scope of the research are constrained. Future studies could delve deeper into these areas and expand their focus to enhance our understanding of the intricate relationship between CM and CPI.

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