



Investigating the Roles of Social Influences in Consumers' Responses to Online Social Network Ads: A Case of Thailand

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Received: 27 April 2020; Revised: 15 May 2020; Accepted: 16 June 2020

Published online: 25 June 2020

Abstract

A rapid growth of online social network (OSN) has caught the attention of many marketers in finding the new ways to harness it from their advertising. This research proposes a conceptual framework to examine the effects of social factors on group intentions towards OSN's advertising. The model of this study is developed from synthesizing the models used in the previous relevant research studies. The major objective of this research is to examine the factors influencing group intention and the effects of advertising characteristics on consumers' responses toward OSN's advertising. Structured questionnaire was used to collect the data from 400 respondents using multi-stage sampling undertaken at major public areas in Bangkok. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was employed to test hypotheses in the model through AMOS 23.0. Most hypotheses were statistically significant and supported. Group intention was found to be influenced by social identity and attitude, whilst perceived Ad relevance and perceived Ad value both significantly affect consumers' responses to OSN's advertising. This study provides insights into online social networking and advertising literature. In terms of practical implication, marketers should make sure that their advertising messages are relevant and valuable for their targeted audiences in order to instill a positive consumers' responses from advertising.

Keywords: Online Social Network, Social Influences, Online Advertising

I. INTRODUCTION

Online social networks (OSNs) provide the interface for creating and conducting social relationships and connections. Social media technology also allows much potential of social communication and interaction (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009). There is, thus, an overwhelming commercialization of online social networks. Virtually, every company advertises their products and services on online social networks (Calisir, 2003; Lim et al., 2010). When compared with the traditional way of advertising, this online platform gives marketers greater control and flexibility over their advertising content. Social media technology consists of tools to support content sharing and social networking (Dawson, 2007; O' Reilly, 2005). Many companies can enhance their advertising effectiveness by taking benefit of online media technology (Calisir, 2003; Lim et al., 2010). Hence, there is much interest in investigating the factors underlying the effectiveness of online social network advertising (Hannah, Jeongmin, and Sung Eun, 2020).

One of the reasons that people use online social networks is to connect with other people and show their profile to the public (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). Their Self-worth is also increased when people interact on online social networks because communities of their interest are strongly associated with people's identity (Soares and Pinho, 2014). Additionally, social influence variables are found to have an important influence on people's participation in online social networks. Members of communities or social groups usually share the same interests. Social factors can thus have important marketing implications (Soares et al., 2012). Past empirical research (e.g., Shen et al., 2010; Dholakia et al., 2004) revealed that individual behavior is influenced by social identity, group norm, and subjective norm.

According to Hsu and Lu (2004), attitude has long been found to be an important factor in many models investigating the drivers of people's behavioral intention. The growing popularity of online social networking communities draws the attention of scholars and managers to find how to make the most of this trend. Nonetheless, little academic research include attitude into online social networking community models. To make both theoretical and practical contribution, this study investigates how group norm, social identity, and attitudes of members of online communities can influence their perceptions of and behavioral responses to advertising.

II. OBJECTIVES

- 1) To examine the effects of social factors, group norm, and attitudes on group intention.
- 2) To study the influence of group intention on perceptions of and behavioral responses to online social network advertising.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Social Influence Variables

1. Social Identity

Theoretically speaking, social identity is associated with social psychology (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Hannah et al., 2020). It shows the perception of "Who we are" in the group setting. Social identity is the part of the self that is defined by one's group memberships. People usually want to maintain a positive social identity by keeping their group's favorable social standing over that of other groups. Social identity is found to affect intergroup behavior (Ray et al., 2008; Onorato and Turner, 2004). There are three components of social identity: affective, cognitive and evaluative (Ellemers et al., 1999). The affective dimension relates to group loyalty and emotional



attachment, whilst cognitive component pertains to self-awareness of online social network membership and a self-categorization part. Evaluative dimension involves collective self-esteem and an individual's group-base (Dholakia et al., 2004). Previous research studies (e.g., Chatzisarantis et al., 2009) found social identity to be a significant predictor of individual behavior. For instance, customers' media selection was influenced by their social identity (Treppe and Kramer, 2007).

2. *Group Norms*

Group norm is described as an agreement among members for their shared goals, values, beliefs and expectations (Shen et al., 2010). This study focuses on a group benefit norm which is defined as something of very important issue to the group such as the community's survival. This specific type of group norm can create an agreement among members about good community behaviors. It may require members to be responsible for community development. Past empirical studies (e.g., Dholakia, Bagozzi, and Pearo 2004). found that when group benefit norm is strong, members recognize that they share a common goal and can lead to a group intention.

B. *Attitude Towards Using Social Networks*

Attitude can be identified as the evaluation of individuals that affect a behavior and user intentions (Ajzen, 1991). Several research studies indicated that attitudes toward using website have positive influences on behavioral intention including purchase intentions, intentions to recommend online products, and intentions to return to the website (Jarvenpaa and Todd, 1997; Balabanis and Vassileiou, 1999; Korzaan, 2003; Yoh et al., 2003). Attitudes is considered to be a key factor influencing behavioral intention in the

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), a most popular technology adoption model. Furthermore, many researchers assert that attitude is a direct determinants of behavioral intention (e.g., Shim and Drake, 1990; Balabanis and Vassileiou, 1999). Consequently, it is worth examining the role of attitude of group intention in using online social network.

C. *Group Intention*

Group Intention refers to members' commitment to take part in group activities. That is, members will adopt beliefs, values and attitudes of others in terms of their congruence criteria (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2002). In the context of e-commerce, it is argued that users in online community will develop a common attitude through their communications and interaction; for instance, whether they will take part in certain online group activities (Shen et al., 2010). Group intention will be dependent on the social characteristics of communities. This study will examine the effects of group intention on members' willingness to accept and evaluate advertising in communities.

D. *Advertising Related Factors*

1. *Perceived Ad Relevance and Perceived Ad Value*

Ad relevance is a topic of interest of most Internet advertising researchers due to the fact that it gives great potential to deliver highly targeted message (Campbell and Wright, 2008). it can thus increase Internet advertising effectiveness. Perceived ad relevance is also often used as a key construct in marketing sponsorship research (Shih, 2009). For instance, how it can influence consumers' media acceptance. Advertising value represents the overall worth of advertising customers perceive they will receive. That is, how much the

information in the advertising can benefit them (Ducoffe, 1996). In the Internet advertising research, customers value the advertising that is relevant to them. Regarding this research context, when the members of the online communities possessing a distinct group intention perceive that advertising can

benefit their online communities, they are more likely to favorably evaluate the advertising.

E. Hypothesis Development

The current study develops the conceptual model by adapting the model from Zeng et. al. (2010). Making the it even more complete, the attitude factor is included in the model.

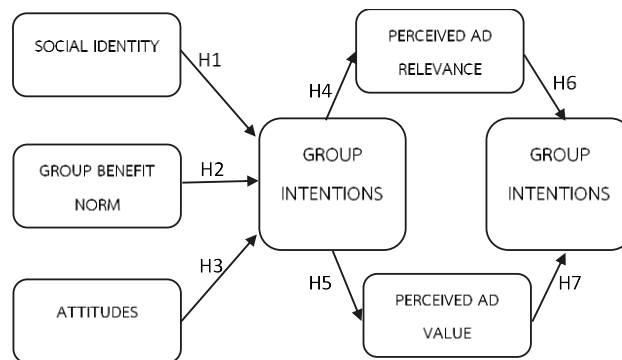


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

1. Social Factors, Attitudes, and Group Intention

Based on Bagozzi and Dholakia's (2002)'s work, social identify can have an impact on group intentions. In particular, the stronger the social identity of the community members, the greater the group intention in terms of community advertising. In addition to social identity, Bagozzi and Dholakia's (2002) also found that group norm is a significant predictor of group intention. Lastly, attitude has long been concluded to be a key antecedent of consumers' intention and usage. Given the supporting evidence from prior empirical studies, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Social identity has a positive impact on group intention to accept in online social network advertisements

H2: Group norms has a positive impact on group intention to accept online social network advertisements

H3: Attitude toward using social network has a positive impact on group intention to accept advertising in online social networks

2. Advertising related Factors

Conceivably, the stronger the alignment between advertising content and the consumers, the greater the connection between advertisers and consumers. it can be postulated that perceived advertising relevancy may affect the online communities' members to accept advertising. Regarding this research context, when the members of the online communities possessing a distinct group intention perceive that advertising can benefit their online communities, they are more likely to favorably evaluate the advertising. As such, two hypotheses about Ad relevance and Ad value can be posited as follows:



- H5. Group intention to accept advertising in online social network communities has a positive impact on perceived advertisement relevance on community sites.
- H6. Group intention to accept advertising in online social network communities has a positive impact on perceived advertisement value on community sites.

3. Behavioral Intentions to Accept Advertising in Online Communities

There is a consensus among advertising researchers that there is an association between advertising message relevance and its effectiveness. The greater the degree of relevance of advertising message to the media context, the greater the likelihood that the message will positively affect consumers' attitudes and their behavioral responses (Hannah et. al, 2020). Furthermore, advertising scholars assert that when consumers find the advertising containing useful information, they are more likely to respond to it (Robinson et al., 2007). Given these logics, the following hypotheses are proposed.

- H7. Perceived advertisement value has a positive impact on response towards online social network advertisements.
- H8. Perceived advertisement relevance has a positive impact on response towards online social network advertisements.

IV. METHODS

This study employs multi-stage sampling. Firstly, the purposive sampling is used to select participants who are Thai aged 18 years old and above, and have experiences using online social network. Secondly, it utilizes convenience sampling in the form of mall intercept whereby participants are intercepted in major shopping malls and public spaces in Bangkok. The sample size of this study was 400 which is considered to be appropriate when taking into account the number of observed variables or indicators in the model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). This number also deems appropriate when consider the ones used in the other similar research (e.g., Shen et al., 2010; Bagozzi and Dholakia's, 2002).

A. Survey Instruments

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section asked about the personal information, whilst the second part asked about the key constructs. Information regarding key constructs and their corresponding scales was obtained by searching the relevant literature; therefore, all constructs were measured using existing scales from literature with some adjustments. Three constructs employed in this study were measured as follows:

Table 1 Sources of Constructs

| Variables | Items | Sources |
|------------------------|-------|------------------------------------|
| Social identity | 6 | Dholakia et al. (2004) |
| Group norm | 4 | Zeng et al. (2009) |
| Attitude | 3 | Davis et al. (1989) |
| Group Intention | 3 | Zeng et al. (2009) |
| Perceived AD Relevance | 3 | Zeng et al. (2009) |
| Perceived AD Value | 3 | Zeng et al. (2009) |
| Responses to OSN's AD | 3 | (Ducoffe, 1995; Zeng et al., 2009) |

V. RESULTS

A. Initial Analysis

Items are primarily checked for kurtosis and skewness, and also the presence of outliers and normality. Histograms and box plots are appropriate in order to get a holistic picture of each variable across a range of scores (1-5) which are visually examined. Furthermore, the skewness and kurtosis of variables are investigated. Skewness is a characteristic of symmetry distribution of about the mean; meanwhile, kurtosis is the level of the highest point in the histogram (Malhotra et al., 2002). Of 400 respondents, 208 are female while most respondents fall into the age range of 25 to 34 years old. 38% of them earned an average income of baht 30,000 to 45,000. As much as 65% of them hold a bachelor degree. All of the respondents live in Thailand, while 48.3% are in Bangkok and Vicinity.

B. The measurement mode

The measurement of the proposed model was assessed based on reliability, content validity, convergent validity and discriminant validity of latent

constructs. Both Cronbach's α and composite reliability were employed to assess reliability of the constructs in which their threshold levels are 0.70 (Hair et al., 2010). This study ensures the content validity by taking all measures directly from previous research which has been tested and used in some previous studies. Thus, this questionnaire was constructed with an acceptable content validity. Convergent validity was assessed by average variance extracted (AVE), whilst discriminant validity was assessed by using the Fornell-Larker criterion. According to the Fornell and Larcker (1981), the levels of square root of the AVE for each construct should be greater than the correlation involving the constructs. The acceptable levels for AVE is 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010). The values for Cronbach's α , composite reliability and AVE shown in table 2 are greater than the threshold levels indicated before; therefore, reliability and convergent validity of the model are established. Discriminant validity is also confirmed because all the values of square root of the AVEs for each construct are greater than the correlation between constructs (see Table 3).



Table 2 Construct Assessment

| Constructs | Loading | Means (SD) | α | CR. | AVE. |
|----------------------|---------|-------------|----------|-------|-------|
| Social Identity | | | 0.865 | 0.873 | 0.530 |
| SI1 | 0.700 | 4.16 (0.72) | | | |
| SI2 | 0.737 | 4.12 (0.79) | | | |
| SI3 | 0.748 | 4.11 (0.77) | | | |
| SI4 | 0.807 | 3.99 (0.93) | | | |
| SI5 | 0.724 | 3.94 (0.95) | | | |
| SI6 | 0.644 | 3.93 (0.96) | | | |
| Group Norm | | | 0.905 | 0.871 | 0.704 |
| GN1 | 0.825 | 4.10 (0.88) | | | |
| GN2 | 0.841 | 4.20 (0.92) | | | |
| GN3 | 0.845 | 4.14 (0.90) | | | |
| GN4 | 0.845 | 4.18 (0.89) | | | |
| Attitudes | | | 0.871 | 0.905 | 0.708 |
| ATT1 | 0.827 | 3.86 (1.07) | | | |
| ATT2 | 0.882 | 4.06 (0.87) | | | |
| ATT3 | 0.814 | 4.14 (0.88) | | | |
| Group Intention | | | 0.880 | 0.879 | 0.725 |
| GI1 | 0.799 | 3.82(1.14) | | | |
| GI2 | 0.908 | 3.90(1.10) | | | |
| GI3 | 0.843 | 3.78(1.14) | | | |
| Ad Relevance | | | 0.863 | 0.895 | 0.697 |
| ADR1 | 0.682 | 3.62 (1.12) | | | |
| ADR2 | 0.646 | 3.56 (1.16) | | | |
| ADR3 | 0.768 | 3.33 (1.04) | | | |
| Ad Value | | | 0.889 | 0.903 | 0.740 |
| ADV1 | 0.817 | 3.51 (1.18) | | | |
| ADV2 | 0.929 | 3.43 (1.21) | | | |
| ADV3 | 0.831 | 3.68 (1.17) | | | |
| Responses Towards Ad | | | 0.899 | 0.887 | 0.756 |
| RTA1 | 0.869 | 3.72 (1.22) | | | |
| RTA2 | 0.926 | 3.44 (1.22) | | | |
| RTA3 | 0.810 | 3.24 (1.21) | | | |

Table 3 Square Roots of AVEs and Correlation Matrix (Discriminant Validity)

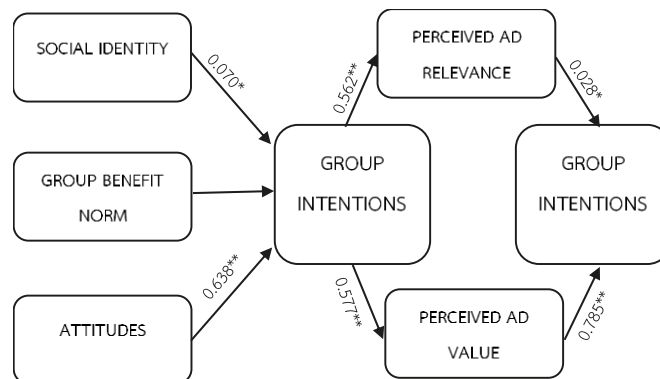
| Constructs | Correlation Matrix | | | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | SI | GN | ATT | GI | PAR | PAV | RTA |
| Social Identity | 0.728 | | | | | | |
| Group Norm | 0.425 | 0.839 | | | | | |
| Attitude | 0.181 | 0.219 | 0.842 | | | | |
| Group Intention | 0.182 | 0.163 | 0.412 | 0.851 | | | |
| Perceived Ad Relevance | 0.127 | 0.133 | 0.227 | 0.574 | 0.835 | | |
| Perceived Ad Value | 0.141 | 0.104 | 0.174 | 0.362 | 0.406 | 0.860 | |
| Responses Towards Ad | 0.068 | 0.058 | 0.107 | 0.250 | 0.374 | 0.366 | 0.870 |

Notes: Square roots of average variance extracted (AVEs) shown on diagonal while off-diagonals are inter-construct correlations.

C. Structural Model

The structural equation model was conducted to test hypotheses in the model. At first, the model did not fit with the collected data. Having removed one construct with low factor loadings, the model fit indices were improved. The new fit indices of the structural model were acceptable ($\chi^2/df = 2.928$, CFI = 0.923, TLI = 0.941, RMSEA = 0.046, and SRMR = 0.051) (Hair, 2010). According to the path coefficients found from structural

equation model, most of them are found to statistically significant (see Figure 2). Social identity ($b = 0.070$) and attitudes ($b = 0.638$) significantly affect group intention, while there is insignificant result for group norm. Group intention is associated with both perceived Ad relevance ($b = 0.562$) and perceived Ad value ($b = 0.377$) while perceived Ad relevance ($b = 0.028$) and perceived Ad value ($b = 0.785$) significantly lead to consumers' favorable responses toward OSN's advertising.



Note *The results are significant at the 0.05 level. **The results are highly significant at the 0.001 level.

Figure 2 Structural Model Results

VI. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

A. Discussions

The results of this research are consistent with major research in the stream of online social network marketing literature (Hannah et al., 2020; Shen et al., 2010). Through the survey of Thai consumers, it is found that attitudes and social identity influence members' group intention, which can result greater positive responses to advertising. With regard to social factor dimensions, group norm was not found to have any impact on group intentions. This finding is interesting in

the sense that it is not in line with the similar research conducted in the western countries. Based on the review of relevant theory, it is found that people sometime have different goals, values, beliefs and expectations (Hannah et al., 2020). They want to stand out from other people in their society. It also usually happens in every society that some members are selfish and do not want to belong to the group (Shen et al., 2010). All other results from the model are consistent with the ones from previous research. The findings of those research studies are relatively



universal. Dholakia *et al.*, (2004) found positive relationship between collective self-esteem and individual's group-base. Ajzen (1991) asserted the positive association between attitudes and group intention. Additionally, Zeng *et al.* (2009) revealed that Ad relevance and Ad value significantly lead to favorable consumers' responses from advertising.

B. Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study provides insights into online social networking and advertising literature. It investigated underlying factors to consumers' responses to online social network advertising. Although there was some research ever studied the roles of social factors and group intention of consumers' behavioral responses to advertising, few studies integrate the attitude as an antecedent of group intention into their models.

The results showed that consumers' acceptance of advertising was shaped by their social identity. In terms of practical contribution, marketers should appreciate the role played by their social identity. They should find the ways to create a robust group identity or to build a sense of belonging. In order to instill a positive consumers' responses from advertising, marketers should make sure that their advertising messages are relevant and valuable for their targeted audiences.

C. Future Research

The current study collected the information only from Bangkok; therefore, the result can not represent the behaviors and attitudes of people in Thailand as a

whole. It is recommended for the future researchers to gather the information from people living in the other parts of Thailand with various age groups. Moreover, future researchers may consider adding more variables that influence group intentions such as trust, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, and perceived behavioral control (e.g., Lin, 2011; Lee *et al.*, 2012; Song *et al.*, 2008).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research is partially supported by Mahidol University International College My special thanks are extended to my colleagues of my department who provided some insights that greatly assisted the research.

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