Driving Brand Evangelism of Fast-Food Brands in Thailand: The Mediator Role of Online Brand Community Engagement

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Abstract

Fast-food brands in Thailand operate an online brand community, especially on Facebook, to build customer-brand relationships and create customers that go beyond brand loyalists. The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of brand interactivity and brand identification within social media on brand evangelism and how it is mediated by online brand community engagement for a fast-food brand in Thailand. This study targeted community members who had a fast-food brand customer and were members of an official fast-food brand fan page on Facebook for at least six months. The data from the study were 500 followers of fast-food brands on Facebook, and the data analysis used AMOS for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modelling (SEM). The results show that brand interactivity in each construct and brand identification have a considerably positive impact on the operation of fast-food brands in Thailand through social media like Facebook and are significant antecedents of online brand community engagement and brand evangelism. Furthermore, the role of online brand community engagement in mediating the positive impact on brand evangelism. The findings highlight brand interactivity as a crucial factor to drive business in the digital era by using brand content to effectively interact with customers and enhance customer benefits through brand interactions.

Keywords: Brand Interactivity; Brand Identification; Brand Evangelism; Online Brand Community Engagement

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Introduction

Businesses in Thailand and all over the world are using social media platforms more and more as their main ways to run and grow their businesses. Particularly, Facebook is the most widely used social media platform, and there are 54 million Facebook users in Thailand, which is the 8th highest number in the world. It is evident that social media platforms are becoming more accessible to people, so brands are using Facebook to expand their customer base. In addition, entrepreneurs must consider future trends, as the ease of access and use of social media platforms such as Facebook make competition even more fierce. This necessitates entrepreneurs developing the quality of their online community for their own brand on social media platforms and improving customer engagement in the online community with the brand's customers, also known as "online brand community engagement," which is often the first step and important to building a strong online brand community. Online brand community engagement has a significant impact and leads to the competitive advantage of a business in the digital age (Yasin et al., 2020). Customer engagement is a mental state associated with the customer relationship with the brand, and brand-customer interaction is the key to building engagement (Brodie et al., 2011). Therefore, brands develop tools to facilitate brand-customer interaction to strengthen their mental bond and engagement with customers. Brand interactivity within social media with customers can increase engagement in an online brand community, especially since brand interactions with customers are easier due to social media's expanding role. Hence, brand interactivity is crucial for communicating with customers in order to obtain the desired outcomes, such as purchase intention, positive word-of-mouth, customer engagement (Cheung et al., 2020), and brand evangelism, which are customer behaviors that are more than brand advocacy and brand defence (Park et al., 2006; Riivits-Arkonsuo et al., 2015).

As a result, brand competition on Facebook is intensifying. Brands are continuously modifying their interaction strategies and building engagement. The industry that stands out the most in terms of how it interacts with its customers is the fast-food industry. According to a report from the Ministry of Industry of Thailand. It is stated that the fast-food industry in Thailand has a market value of approximately $1 billion USD and an average annual growth rate of 5%. The fast-food restaurant industry is a highly competitive and expanding industry. It is evident from the expansion of franchises in other provinces, department stores, gas stations, the search for business partners, and the development of the delivery system and social media channels to boost company performance and expand the customer base. That makes the fast-food industry competitive in many aspects, including competing on Facebook. That is where brands can communicate with customers at any time without limitations, giving each brand a different form of communication to create interactions with their customers. To get the outcomes that brands want from brand-beneficial customer behavior, such as brand product purchases, brand engagement with the online community of brands, positive word-of-mouth, and building strong customer relationships that result in brand loyalty, brand love, and brand evangelism from customers.

Therefore, the author is interested in examining the factors that influence the online brand community engagement and brand evangelism of fast-food brands in Thailand. The emphasis will be on analyzing how brand interactivity and brand identification within social media affect brand evangelism and when it is mediated by online brand community engagement in the fast-food brand in Thailand. To use the research results to support the creation and planning of marketing strategies, as well as the development of customer interaction models that will help in the future growth and sustainability of the business.

Literature Review

Brand Interactivity within social media

Brand interactivity is defined as two-way communication between brands and customers (Cheung et al., 2020). It is regarded as crucial for ensuring customer satisfaction and positive customer experiences, including for establishing better brand relationships, and thereby the rapid development of social media has, as a result, made it easier for brands to interact with customers through social media. Previous research on brand interactivity literature (Cheung et al., 2020; Dessart et al., 2015; France et al., 2016) has identified the following five elements of brand interaction within social media: 1) entertainment interactivity, 2) Customization interactivity, 3) Interaction ease of use, 4) Cognitive information-transfer interaction, and 5) Cognitive up-to-date information interactivity.

In addition, prior research has demonstrated that brand interactivity is a precursor to customer engagement (Read et al., 2019) and brand interactivity are essential for beginning to facilitate customer-brand engagement (France et al., 2016). When customers see an online brand community as effective in interacting with them and the customers themselves benefit from the process, through effective interactions, customers will spend more time with the online brand community and build a better relationship with the brand (Gómez et al., 2019). Moreover, customers will be more likely to engage in brand interactivity if they perceive that their participation will benefit others and customers will share brand 's information with friends, close friends, and family (Baldus et al., 2015). Customers who engage in this behavior typically have long-standing relationships with brands and value the brand social media interactions and community. The study by France et al. (2016) stated that brand interactivity is a crucial factor in enhancing customer engagement, including in online brand communities. According to Das (2016), also found that brand interactivity within social media has a positive impact on brand evangelism. Following a review of the relevant works, this research proposed in the following hypothesis:

H1: Brand interactivity positively influences online brand community engagement.

H4: Brand interactivity positively influences brand evangelism.

Brand Identification

Bergami and Bagozzi (2000) described an identification concept based on social identity theory and evaluated in relation to group member and organization as an indicator of the strong relationship between a brand and customers as expressed through extra-role behavior. This concept has been applied to brand context (Du et al., 2007). Therefore, customer identification with a brand is indicative of a positive customer relationship, which leads to positive customer behaviors. Brand identification is a set of brand elements whose purpose to relay the brand information, including the story, philosophy, objective, vision of the brand, that affect to customers perception. Brand identification is a key contributor to brand stability in the face of new and emerging competitors. According to Riorini and Widayati (2016) defined Brand identification as a customer psychological condition by predicting their feelings toward the brand. In a similar vein, Lam et al. (2010) highlighted brand identification as the mental state of customers in recognizing, feeling, or assessing themselves as being part of a brand.

There is a difference between customer-brand identification and customer-brand purchase because a customer who identifies with a brand becomes a customer who is physically and mentally committed to the success of the brand. Because these customers consider the

brand a part of themselves and their success (Asatryan & Oh, 2008) and will be willing to participate in and consent to brand-related activities at both offline and online events (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Furthermore, when customers identify a specific with brand, they will build emotional connection with the brand and showing their fondness for the brand (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2008) and engage in the more brand-related activities, such as word of mouth about the brand with others. And identification improve a positive perception of a brand through community engagement and also enhances online brand community association and engagement. According to Sharma et al. (2021) found the effectiveness of brand identification on online brand community engagement and brand evangelism and will increase proportionally if customer relationships are consistently engendered. The study of Dessart et al. (2015) found that brand identification influences customers to engage with a brand and its online community. Following a review of the relevant works, this research proposed in the following hypothesis:

H2: Brand identification positively influences online brand community engagement.

H5: Brand identification positively influences brand evangelism.

Online Brand Community Engagement

From research on brand community engagement is the intrinsic motivation of a customers to interact and cooperate with community members (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Sharma et al., 2021). And with the continuous and rapid development of existing technology, creating new social media platforms that facilitate interaction and engagement, which are essential for the survival of online communities (Wang et al., 2019). Social media platforms are unique because they facilitate participation and communication between brand customers and other members of the online community (Dessart et al., 2015, 2016). Consequently, the brand online community becomes a place where community members can take part in creating, exchanging, and sharing things that are helpful to each other (Chan et al., 2014). As a result, since 2006, there has been an increasing number of studies on brand community engagement in social media also known as Online brand community engagement (Munjal et al., 2019). Baldus et al. (2015) define Online brand community engagement as the compelling, intrinsic motivations to continue interacting with an online brand community. In the same way as Wirtz et al. (2013) the brand online community engagement as a positive influence on customer identification with the brand online community, and the customers intrinsic motivation to interact with other members of the online brand community. Previous research has suggested that Facebook is still a social platform that merits further research regarding online brand community engagement. Therefore, Facebook still remains the most important marketing channel for building customer engagement at the present time. Baldus et al. (2015) propose eleven dimensions of online brand community engagement: 1) Brand influence, 2) Brand passion, 3) Connecting, 4) Helping, 5) Like-minded discussion, 6) Rewards (hedonic), 7) Rewards (utilitarian), 8) Seeking assistance, 9) Self-expression, 10) Up-to-date information, and 11) Validation.

Evidently, in the context of brand engagement in the online community, there is an intrinsic incentive for customers to interact with and collaborate with community members and to share useful brand content with close friends, family members, or other individuals they believe can benefit from the brand content (Martínez-López et al., 2021). The brand online community is also a place where brand-related information and messages can be rapidly and widely disseminated (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Hence the more engaged customers are, the more likely it is that they will be able to share and actively assist others with brand-related

issues in online brand community. Which can be identified is the brand evangelism behavior exhibited by customers with long-term and strong brand relationships (Nyadzayo et al., 2020). And previous research has provided evidence that online brand community engagement influences brand evangelism. According to Harmeling et al. (2017), engagement can make customers feel like they own the brand, which can make them want to protect the brand from competitors. This is the behavior of customers called brand evangelism. This fact confirms Sharma et al. (2021) point that online brand community engagement influences customers brand evangelism in social media. Following a review of the relevant works, this research proposed in the following hypothesis:

H3: Online brand community engagement positively brand evangelism

Brand Evangelism

According to prior research on brand evangelism, it is a concept regarding customer-brand relationships (Becerra & Badrinarayanan, 2013; Scarpi, 2010) and frequently manifests as positive word-of-mouth, brand advocacy, and brand defense among customers (Park et al., 2006; Riivits-Arkonsuo et al., 2015). From the literature review from this study, we can further define brand evangelism as a customer behavior that supports and spreads positive information about the brand to other customers and the purchase of the brand products (Hsu, 2018; Lee & Hsieh, 2016). Additionally, Becerra and Badrinarayanan (2013) define brand evangelism as the active behavioral and vocal endorsement of a brand, such as buying the brand product, spreading positive word of mouth about the brand, and attempting to persuade others to support a focal brand disparaging competing brands. In addition, brand evangelism is the behavior of customers who assist in influencing other brand customers and use their own resources, such as their own social media space, to enthusiastically promote the brand (Kumar & Nayak, 2018). Customers who have a strong relationship with a brand are more active in spreading positive brand-related information and are more willing to dedicate themselves to the brand than other customers. And persuade non-brand customers in various ways to draw attention to their preferred brand (Anggraini, 2018), including these customers are more committed to purchasing from their favorite brands than regular customers. Moreover, brand evangelism also develops and refines their positive attitude towards the brand.

According to Riorini and Widayati (2016), the following describes the behavior of brand evangelism: 1) purchase intentions refers to a customers are determined to purchase brands' products, 2) Positive brand referral refers to a customers who provides and recommends good information about the brand products and services to other customers, which differs substantially from the salesperson recommendations and 3) Oppositional brand referrals refer to customers tend to avoid recommending products and services from brands that they dislike (Schmitt, 2013). Even if they are of the same product or service type (Park et al., 2013).

Research Methodology

Conceptual Model

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between brand interactivity, brand identification within social media and brand evangelism of fast-food brands in Thailand when mediated by online brand community engagement. Based on the paper objectives and hypotheses, the following conceptual model was analyzed:
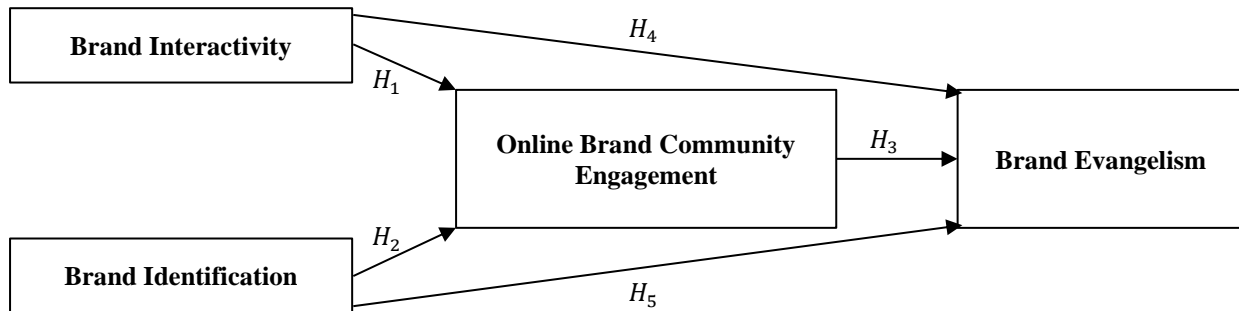
Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Data collection and sample

The aim of this study was to examine the influence of brand social media implementation, focusing on building customer engagement through brand interactivity within social media that affects brand outcomes, including online brand community engagement and brand evangelism of fast-food brands in Thailand, where there is intense competition among various brands in the fast-food industry, especially in competition on Facebook channels. This study collected data via a self-administered online questionnaire from a sample of Thai fast-food customers with experience in consumption who use Facebook and have been members of an official fast-food brand fan page on Facebook for at least 6 months. The respondents were presented with a listing of 10 fast-food brands in Thailand, including KFC, McDonald, Burger King, and Texas Chicken, as well as "Other." and data were collected between March 2022 and April 2022. In this study, the sample size was calculated using the method of Hair et al. (2010), use at least 10 – 20 units per 1 parameter to be estimated and used non-probability sampling and convenience sampling to choose the respondents.

The data was collected by distributing the questionnaire to gather the opinions of the respondents in an online community of fast-food lovers on Facebook (Unofficial Group) through the admin of the group to group members, which is the center of a large number of samples. A total of 560 respondent questionnaires were received, and all respondents were Thai people over the age of 18 and select 500 questionnaires that were completely filled out and valid. And in this study, no non-monetary incentives (reward points) were offered to the respondents by fast-food brands by the author. The results of the data collection show that the majority of the sample is male (68%), and most of the age range is 21–30 years (58%). The sample is mostly students and college students (58%), with an average monthly income of 10,000–30,000 Thai baht (61%) and eating fast food 5–6 times a week (36%).

Questionnaire design and measurement

Aside from demographic questions and screening questions, the online questionnaire used a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) used measurement items adopted from a prior study that were relevant to these variables. For brand interactivity within social media, 19 items covering five elements (EIT, CII, IEU, CIT, and CUI) were adapted Kim and Ko (2010) and Cheung et al. (2020). Brand identification, 6 items were adapted from Becerra and Badrinarayanan (2013). Online brand community engagement, 42 items covering eleven elements (BDF, BNP, CON, HEP, LMD, RWH, RWU, SEK, SEP, UTD, and VID) were adapted from Baldus et al. (2015) and brand evangelism, 9 items covering three elements (BPI, PBR, and OBR) were adapted from Riorini and Widayati (2016).

Data Analysis

Initially, variables were examined for normality and multicollinearity in order to facilitate using structural equation modelling (SEM) to test hypotheses. The data analysis revealed that the skewness (–.478 to –.197) and kurtosis (–1.104 to –.992) values ranged between –2 and 2. Consequently, the collected data show a normal distribution (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Then, using the correlation matrix and the variance inflation factor, to show the absence of perfect multicollinearity. Additionally, for all variables, the tolerance values have been greater than .10 and ranged from .543 to .834 and the VIF values were less than 10 and ranged from 1.199 to 1.842 (Stevens, 2012). Consequently, it confirmed that this study multicollinearity was not a problem.

Structural equation modelling (SEM) is the final step of statistical analysis. The SEM is consisting of two parts: the measurement model and the structural model. First, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to empirically test measurement models to highlight convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability. Second, the SEM is used in order to test the hypotheses that have been proposed within the structural model (Hair et al., 2010).

Research Findings

Table 1: Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Construct	Items	Convergent Validity	Reliability		
		Factor Loading	CR	AVE	α
Brand Interactivity (BIT)	Entertainment interactivity (EIT)		.873	.698	.865
	BIT01:	.809			
	BIT02:	.849			
	BIT03:	.848			
	Customization interactivity (CII)		.879	.708	.876
	BIT04:	.814			
	BIT05:	.880			
	BIT06:	.829			
	Interactive ease of use (IEU)		.848	.651	.818
	BIT07:	.866			
	BIT08:	.837			
	BIT09:	.709			
	Cognitive information-transfer interaction (CIT)		.732	.579	.722
	BIT12:	.729			
	BIT13:	.791			
	Cognitive up-to-date information interactivity (CUI)		.817	.690	.785
	BIT14:	.845			
	BIT15:	.817			
Brand Identification (BID)	Brand Identification (BID)		.923	.667	.920
	BID01:	.827			
	BID02:	.820			
	BID03:	.854			
	BID04:	.819			
	BID05:	.766			
	BID06:	.814			

Table 1: Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) (Cont.)

Online Brand Community Engagement (OBE)	Brand Influence (BIF)		.797	.663	.827
	OBE01:	.781			
	OBE02:	.846			
	Brand Passion (BPN)		.752	.602	.746
	OBE06:	.775			
	OBE08:	.778			
	Connecting (CON)		.804	.672	.789
	OBE10:	.845			
	OBE11:	.793			
	Helping (HEP)		.800	.668	.787
	OBE14:	.799			
	OBE15:	.835			
	Like-minded Discussion (LMD)		.811	.588	.745
	OBE16:	.748			
	OBE17:	.785			
	OBE18:	.768			
	Rewards: Hedonic (RWH)		.811	.683	.799
	OBE20:	.822			
	OBE21:	.831			
	Rewards: Utilitarian (RWU)		.727	.571	.754
	OBE25:	.739			
	OBE26:	.772			
	Seeking Assistance (SEK)		.821	.605	.804
	OBE27:	.730			
	OBE28:	.768			
	OBE29:	.831			
	Self-expression (SEP)		.838	.634	.821
	OBE31:	.739			
	OBE32:	.795			
	OBE33:	.851			
	Up-to-date Information (UTD)		.754	.605	.751
	OBE36:	.787			
	OBE37:	.768			
	Validation (VLD)		.766	.621	.782
	OBE41:	.772			
	OBE42:	.804			
Brand Evangelism (BEV)	Brand Purchase Intention (BPI)		.827	.614	.823
	BEV01:	.758			
	BEV02:	.814			
	BEV03	.779			
	Positive Brand Referrals (PBR)		.758	.610	.737
	BEV06:	.798			
	BEV07:	.764			
	Oppositional Brand Referrals (OBR)		.731	.576	.787
	BEV08:	.785			
	BEV09:	.732			

Notes: CR = composite reliability, AVE = average variance extracted.

Firstly, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to evaluate all of the theoretical framework item constructs as well as the reliability and validity of the measurement instruments in order to determine the unidimensionality of each factor. The constructs validity and reliability were also approved at this stage. According to a set of statistical tests, as shown in Table 1, the results of the CFA indicate the measurement model offers a good fit to the data.

In terms of convergent validity, all observed variables had factor loading values that exceeded the criteria .50 and the values of composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE), observably, the CR ranged from .727 to .923, satisfying the criteria of .70, the AVE ranged from .571 to .698, thus exceeding the criteria of .50 (Hair et al., 2010) by calculating using the Fornell and Larcker (1981). And Cronbach coefficient alphas ranged from .722 to .920 exceeded the required level of .70 (Zikmund et al., 2013). It demonstrates that the analysis results can be relied upon to an extremely high degree.

Additionally, the discriminant validity should be analyzed to verify that every model construct is clearly distinct and demonstrates an interesting topic that the other model constructs cannot. As shown in Table 2, the square root AVE of every model exceeded the correlation, ranging from .784 to .816. Consequently, this study confirmed discriminant validity.

Table 2: Discriminant Validity

	BIT	BID	OBE	BEV
BIT	.816[a]			
BID	.389[***]	.811[a]		
OBE	.653[***]	.344[***]	.792[a]	
BEV	.600[***]	.402[***]	.674[***]	.784[a]

Notes: *a Square root of AVE, *p is significant at level .5, **p is significant at level .01, ***p is significant at level .001*

The final part shows the model goodness of fit was confirmed. The results of the analysis revealed the data, and the proposed measurement model are compatible ($\chi 2/df = 1.333$, GFI = .904, CFI = .978, RMSEA = .026 and sRMR = .053). All the model fit indicators, chi-square to degree of freedom threshold was less than 5, the range is acceptable (Hair et al., 2010), GFI and CFI based on Kline (2010), were above the cut-off point of 0.9, RMSEA and sRMR with all scores less than the recommended .08 threshold (Hair et al., 2010; Byrne, 2010). Consequently, all of the fit indices reached levels that were considered acceptable.

Hypothesis Testing

The results were confirmed using structural equation modeling (SEM). The model estimation results showed that brand interactivity positively influences online brand community engagement ($\beta =.70$), brand evangelism ($\beta =.18$). And brand identification positively influences online brand community engagement ($\beta =.09$), brand evangelism ($\beta =.18$). Moreover, online brand community engagement positively influences brand evangelism ($\beta =.49$). Consequently, all hypotheses were completely supported. As a result, the overall model can explain 55 percent of the variance in online brand community engagement and 53 percent of the variance in brand evangelism, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Hypothesis Testing

				β	p	Status
H1	BIT	→	OBE	.70	***	Supported
H2	BID	→	OBE	.09	*	Supported
H3	OBE	→	BEV	.49	***	Supported
H4	BIT	→	BEV	.18	***	Supported
H5	BID	→	BEV	.18	**	Supported

Notes: *p is significant at level .5, **p is significant at level .01, ***p is significant at level .001*

The next phase was demonstrating the effects of the mediating role of online brand community engagement, which indicates that effects between relationships could be mediated. Especially, the authors used structural equation modeling (SEM) for the mediation analysis (Demming et al., 2017). The findings revealed H4: the indirect effect of BIT on BEV was found to be significant and was mediated by OBE. And H5: the indirect effect of BID on BEV was also found to be significant and was mediated by OBE. According to the findings shown in Table 4, it was confirmed that OBE has a partially mediated impact between BIT, BID and BEV (Zhao, 2010).

Table 4: Direct and Indirect Effects

			Direct Effect (DE)	Indirect Effect (IE)	Total Effect (TE)
BIT	→	OBE	.70	-	.70
BID	→	OBE	.09	-	.09
OBE	→	BEV	.49	-	.49
BIT	→	BEV	.18	.34	.52
BID	→	BEV	.18	.05	.23

Discussions

According to the results of the paper, brand interactivity and brand identification have been found to positively influence online brand community engagement. While all the factors mentioned influenced brand evangelism for fast-food brands in Thailand (Cheung et al., 2020; Das, 2016; Dessart et al., 2015; Islam & Rahman, 2017; Mehran et al., 2020). And brands that use Facebook as the main channel to communicate with customers can also apply the results of this research.

The results of this research are consistent with the study of many previous studies. because the results of previous studies have shown the advantages of using communication channels on social media platforms. This means good communication or effective of brands on social media interactions with customers can improve relationships between customers and brand advantages. According to the results, Hypothesis 1 states that brand interactivity has a positive influence on online brand community engagement. In line with Cheung et al. (2020) statement, brand interactivity on social media directly influences customer-brand engagement on social media and also encourages customer intent to repurchase brand products. Read et al. (2019) further highlighted brand interactivity on social media is one of the key factors in the digital age that engages customers with a brand and its online community, and good brand interactivity that is beneficial to customers also helps motivate them to be aware of the brand. In line with Nyadzayo et al. (2020), the level of enthusiasm and positive feeling towards a brand and its online community arises from how brands interact with customers through their

own social media channels, such as a Facebook fan page. Brand interactivity in the brand own online community also helps customers connect with other customers and spend more time with the brand. This makes the brand online community more than just a communication and merchandising channel.

Furthermore, Hypothesis 2 demonstrates that brand identification influences online brand community engagement positively. This finding is consistent with previous research. According to Sharma et al. (2021), customer-brand identification is a measure of the strength of the relationship and engagement customers have with the brand, brand community, and brand online community. In line with Mehran et al. (2020), customers brand identification in the context of restaurants has a positive impact on brand evangelism, which is a key success factor for enhancing the stability of the restaurant business, which is a type of business that is highly competitive in all areas of the world. This fact confirms Dessart et al. (2015) point that brand identification is one of the keys to getting customers to engage with a brand and its online community. Brand identification is also responsible for other things that make businesses successful, like word-of-mouth repurchase intentions and customers satisfaction with the brand. This demonstrates customer-brand identification is an important factor in developing a relationship between customers and brands to create stronger brand engagement that also includes engagement with the brand community and online community. Which is consistent with the finding of Nyadzayo et al. (2020) that brands develop relationships with customers to the extent that customers feel one with the brand.

Additionally, the findings reveal that Hypothesis 3 online brand community engagement influence brand evangelism. This supports the study findings on this topic of previous studies. Sharma et al. (2021) Explore the online brand community engagement and trends in brand evangelism on social media. According to the findings of the study, online brand community engagement with customers can create huge business opportunities, and the engagement of customers in a brand online community will encourage them to have a longer relationship with the brand and create customers brand loyalty, brand trust, brand commitment, and brand evangelism. For this reason, Sharma emphasizes that brands that operate on social media should always ensure that their online community is active and has the facilities and support for customers to share experiences, information, and ideas with them. These things brands receive from customers will help them improve their interactions with them better and more easily. This directly impacts the efficacy of the online brand community engagement that encourages customers who really are members of the online brand community to engage in brand evangelism. According to Islam and Rahman (2017), if customers are already engaged in the online brand community of brands, there will be enough knowledge and understanding of the brand products and services that they can be an important force for the brand in helping solve problems and providing support to other customers on behalf of the brand. And these customers are also defending their favorite brands from negative word-of-mouth and creating an impression of their favorite brand among other customers.

Interestingly, these findings reveal that Hypotheses 4 online brand community engagement link between brand interactivity and brand evangelism. This is consistent with the findings of past studies. Barreda et al. (2015) demonstrated the effect of a good interaction through online brand community engagement processes with customers, such as interactions for rewarding benefits, interactions that can meet needs and help customers or other customer solve problems, quality interactions on the system side, and interactions with complete and up-to-date information. Customers will be more likely to spread this brand story in an online community or on their own personal social media accounts. Following the findings of Das

(2016), brand interactivity within social media has a significant influence on brand evangelism, which explains that customers who interact with brands through online brand community engagement processes are more inclined to brand evangelism than regular customers who only buy from the brand or do not interact with the brand on social media. According to Dennhardt (2013) increased brand value and brand evangelism are generated through brand interactivity with customers on social media. Furthermore, effective brand interactivity helps customers perceive the quality and sincerity of brands. It also helps to strengthen the brand image in the eyes of customers, develop a customer-brand relationship, and increase engagement with the online brand community. In the digital age, this is a critical factor of brand success operating on social media through brand interactivity.

Additionally, the findings also indicate that Hypotheses 5 online brand community engagement link between brand identification and brand evangelism. These findings are consistent with previous research. Especially if brands continue to develop good relationships with customers that lead to customer-brand identification, those customers will also be more likely to engage in more brand evangelism. In line with Riorini and Widayati (2016), who said, customers with brand identification will have positive brand referral and avoid recommending competitors of their favorite brands to other customers, friends, and family. That was created by establishing a customer community in which the band can provide community services. In line with Hsu (2018), Customers who identify with a brand are more likely to have an ongoing connection with it and become brand evangelists. As a result, customer-brand evangelism will increase among members of the online brand community, which is beneficial for encouraging participation in the online brand community.

Theoretical Contributions

This study has presented contributions to academic research on the findings about driving online brand community engagement and brand evangelism through brand interactivity and brand identification of fast-food brands in Thailand. Firstly, empirically test and confirm the relationship between brand identification, online brand community engagement, and brand evangelism using social identity theory. The findings provide evidence that brand identification can be beneficial in term driving online brand community engagement and brand evangelism for fast-food brands in Thailand (Becerra & Badrinarayanan, 2013; Mehran et al., 2020; Dessart et al., 2015). Furthermore, brand identification is also a crucial key contributor to brand stability in the face of new and emerging competitors for the fast-food brands in Thailand.

Second, this study presents a literature review to demonstrate that brand interactivity within social media can be advantageous and generate brand-beneficial outcomes. Especially in the fast-food brands in Thailand (Cheung et al., 2020; Read et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2019). According to the findings of this study, brand interactivity on Facebook is a process that encourages customers to engage with and spend more time with brands and online brand community. In addition, the effective implementation of brand interactivity processes and the constant improvement of brand interactions with customers can lead to a variety of positive brand outcomes. such as positive word-of-mouth and maintaining customer relationships that result in brand commitment, brand advocacy, brand evangelism, and growing the Facebook customer base (Das, 2016; France et al., 2016; Riorini & Widayati, 2016).

Finally, this study explores the mediating role and advances the literature on online brand community engagement, specifically by empirically revealing the effect of customer engagement in a more specific way and extending the connection between the two crucial marketing tools: online brand community engagement and brand evangelism. (Nyadzayo et al.,

2020; Martínez-López et al., 2021). The results highlight that online brand community engagement partially mediated the relationship between brand interactivity and brand identification to brand evangelism. Because online brand community engagement represents a stronger and more stable relationship between brands and customers, as a result, if fast-food brands in Thailand do not continuously and consistently maintain their online brand community engagement, it will result in less customer-relationship and brand evangelism (Sharma et al., 2021).

Managerial Implications

In addition to the research contributions, the findings of this study had important practical implications. The findings provide valuable information with a framework for brands and marketers looking to drive their business on Facebook to respond to the needs of customers quickly, completely, and efficiently. Because in the digital era, popularity on Facebook is generating a large number of online brand community followers. Consequently, fast-food brands in Thailand on Facebook have different patterns of interaction. However, they all have one thing in common is a consistency in communicating with their consumers. This is a process that reflects the brand's sincerity and value at the same time. And a single communication can create a positive phenomenon for brands. This will lead customers or non-brand customers to word-of-mouth or sharing of brand information on social media and give customers the opportunity to express their opinions through interactions with brands in an online community to create more engagement and brand evangelism.

Additionally, the mediating effects of online brand community engagement is an essential tool for enhancing brand performance in the digital era, which in turn contributes to improved customer-brand communication. This fact confirms Cheung et al. (2020) finding that brand interactivity with customers through social media channels is an essential part of creating positive brand outcomes. This study also assists brands in understanding and reconfiguring their engagement processes as well as developing new communication strategies for interacting with fast-food brand customers whose behavior on Facebook is constantly changing. Accordingly, fast-food brands in Thailand should consider building online brand community engagement, not just letting customers come in to get up-to-date news or receive special promotions on brand Facebook. Especially for brands and brand managers who intend to establish brand identification from customers on an online brand community by managing a strategic plan, they need to focus on creating an environment to engage customers to participate in activities the brand creates. Brands and brand managers should always ensure their strategy and online brand community administrator have provided the facilities and support for customers on their online brand community. Including paying attention to customers comments and posts requesting or helping, exchanging opinions and interests, and sharing opinions and ideas with the brand or other members.

Conclusion

This study aims to understand and empirically investigate customer behavior in brand evangelism. By integrating knowledge about brand interactivity and brand identification in Facebook, marketers can use the data and results from this study as a tool to drive business and predict and control customer behavior. The paper also increased online brand community engagement as a mediator variable between brand interactivity, brand identification, and brand evangelism among customers of fast-food brands in Thailand. The conceptual framework in this study can be used as a tool to present marketers with guidelines for the management and

use of an online brand community on social media platforms and to create strategies to drive customer behavior to get the outcomes the brand wants, such as brand evangelism.

The conclusions of this study found that brand interactivity and brand identification on Facebook have a significant and positive influence on online brand community engagement and brand evangelism. This study also revealed online brand community engagement has a partially mediated impact between brand interactivity, brand identification and brand evangelism. This resulted in the confirmation of all 5 research hypotheses, and the structural model showed a strong relationship between the variables, indicating that online brand community engagement and brand evangelism are efficient predictors of customer behaviors in online brand community. The analysis also showed that both men and women had scores on all variables.

Business competition, not even the fast-food industry, is becoming more competitive every year. In this era, business competition on Facebook and other social media platforms has played a very important role. Due to the changing behavior of customers because social media is becoming an important part of our lives today. This allows entrepreneurs and marketers to see the importance and opportunity of starting to develop their own brands and communities to become stronger and more competitive on social media. And many businesses are starting to develop their own online brand communities as a primary channel for engaging with customers and driving their own company. That has led marketers to turn to the unique features of social media platforms to create strategies to drive customers behavior through activities and brand interaction on the brand own social media. As in this research, brand interactivity on social media and brand identification are essential to building an online brand community and driving customer-brand evangelism.

The activities that brand create on their own online brand communities can often be seen in a simple activity format, but they are very effective and effective for the brand. That is the consistency of brand interactivity within social media that are two-way communication between brands and customers, which is essential to marketing in the digital age. Brands use the distinctive features of each existing social media platform to create a unique experience while facilitating communication with customers in the most efficient and effective way by using brand interactivity to be creating their interactive stories through their own brand variety of content, such as entertainment content, up-to-date news content, and content that was viral at the time, brands boost positive awareness and build strong brand relationships. This is also beneficial for encouraging participation in the online brand community. Because, now, it is impossible to deny that constant customer-brand interactivity, which can meet customers' needs and generate a plethora of brand advantages.

Limitations and Directions of Future Research

A study of the driver factors in online brand community engagement and brand evangelism: a case study of fast-food brands in Thailand is the only study of the population following fast-food brands on Facebook. Therefore, there are different demographics on different social media platforms that should be studied to compare the results. This will be beneficial to the development of marketing strategies in communication across all social media platforms because nowadays social media is undergoing continuous and fast development, allowing brands to create more than one channel of communication on social media with customers with different communication styles across all platforms. A study of the factors influencing online brand community engagement and brand evangelism, such as community identification and customer interactivity, because there are still issues that require additional research.

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