

Social media usage and impulse buying tendency in Uganda: The mediating effect of brand community

Kintu Gerald Joseph¹, Arinaitwe Enid²

¹Mountain of the Moon University Uganda, ²Bugema University Uganda

Abstract: The study investigated the relationship between social media usage and impulse buying tendencies with a mediating effect of brand community. With increased competition among traders, it is becoming costly to create a market niche as well as influence buying patterns among consumers. Using structural equation modeling, responses from a sample of 312 clients of Airtel telecommunication company Uganda under a Whatsapp community group known as team Airtel were analyzed. The study findings revealed that social media interactions influence people to join brand communities. The findings also discovered that brand community positively influences impulse buying tendencies among consumers. Additionally study findings have shown that brand community plays a positive mediating role on the causal relationship between social media and impulse buying tendencies among consumers. However findings from the study indicate that there is no relationship between social media and impulse buying. Social media influences impulse buying tendencies through brand communities.

Keywords: Social media, brand community, impulse buying tendency.

1. INTRODUCTION

Background

With increased competition among traders and a high cost of advertising, many companies are searching for innovative means of influencing consumption behaviors among consumers [3]. Impulse buying by clients is one such behavior companies have turned to in order to expand volume sales [17]. The conditioning of consumers to buy commodities even when unplanned is referred to as impulse buying [20]. Impulse buying is considered a pervasive phenomenon which is influenced by lifestyles of people [1]. It is argued that rational choices made by a consumer are mainly satisfied in transparent situations and often such choices are dishonored in non-transparent situations. Shopping stores have majorly relied on in-house mechanisms like merchandise display to influence impulse buying tendencies of clients [3]. It has been observed by [22] that the emerging trend of high volumes of merchandise sold from shopping stores is as a result of improvement in the technological landscape where people are purchasing goods and services online [22]. Because of this emerging phenomenon, most decisions by consumers are rarely made at shopping stores which renders mechanisms of display and word of mouth ineffective tools of influencing impulse buying tendencies. Therefore there is a need by shopping stores to devise alternative means to influence tendencies to buy impulsively than just using displays of merchandise at shopping premises. This paper attempts to unpack the relation between social media usage and impulse buying tendency mediated by brand community.

2. THEORETICAL AND LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the two factor theory, impulse buying behavior is a consequence of a consumer's immediate reaction to stimuli which is external that is often charged [13]. An impulse buying incident exhibited by a buyer indicates a change in consumer's intention to buy a particular product before and after being exposed to stimuli. From the position of the theory, it is conceptualized that the more an individual interacts on social media; he is stimulated by what he sees when posted by others in the brand community that he impulsively purchases such products that are sold on and off line platforms

Social media usage and brand community

Social media relates to ‘a group of Internet-based applications that are created on technological foundations that allow the exchange of content [8]. Having the feeling of being socially connected is a key element of one’s psychological sense of belonging to a community [18]. According to [15], the creation and joining of communities to satisfy the need of belongingness, being socially associated and accepted is driven by social media interactions. It has however been argued by [18] that the feeling of belonging to a social media community will become weaker with time because of the lack of physical-presence and proximity to the social media community.

H1: Social media usage positively influences joining a brand community.

Social media and impulse buying tendency

Of all the sources of information, the internet has undeniably turned out to be the most sought for source of information (1). Whenever an affiliated group of people interact on social media platforms, they tend to share mainly positive information about themselves which is self-satisfying. It has been found out that such self-esteem lowers a person’s self-control [23]. Due to the need to continue posting positive information, there is a tendency to indulge in impulse buying behavior [9]. However, some studies like [2] have noted that days of influencing impulse buying through social media has ended due to a new era of rigorous planning.

H2: There is a significant relationship between social media usage and impulse buying tendency.

Brand community and impulse buying tendency

Impulsive consumers tend to showcase an emotional attachment to a product brand [14]. This kind of behavior is exacerbated by materialism where a person is influenced impulsively by a need of being defined by materials and brands they own and the community of a product they are attached to [12]. Such cases may force people to tailor their expenditure patterns in a community towards elevating a social status which influences aimless expenditures [4]. Some studies like [11: 13] observe that brand communities impact on impulse buying of consumers due to a desire to attain status in a community while [2] observes it is due to the desire of fitting so as not to be rejected in the community.

H3: There is a positive relationship between brand community and impulse buying tendency

Mediating effects of brand community on the relationship between social media use and impulse buying tendency

Social media can promote product brands by creating a community characterized by a product that is consumed (2). Functioning of brand communities influences consumption behaviors to an extent of consumers buying products aimlessly [21]. According to [7], brand attachment and commitment expressed in brand communities results into brand affection which creates a link between social interaction, urge and uncontrolled consumption behavior. The available literature for example [20] have tried partially to show how social media influences impulse buying tendency of consumers by narrowing the mediating effect to only branding. Additionally findings by [21] are limited to brand loyalty.

H4: There is a significant mediating effect on the relationship between social media usage and impulse buying tendency

3. METHODS

The study adopted an analytical research design to investigate the relationship among the variables under study by combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection.

Sample

The sample was derived from undergraduate students of Kyambogo University, Ndejje University and Makerere, University (Uganda) who subscribe to a brand group of Airtel telecommunications. The total population of students who subscribe to the group is 1,762 students. These students have a WhatsApp group in the respective universities known as – Team Airtel - where they share ideas about the products of Airtel. Specifically, there is a group known as Team Airtel Kyambogo (TAK) with 578 members, Team Airtel Makerere (TAM) with 949 members and Team Airtel Ndejje (TAN) with 235 members. This study considered team Airtel as the unit of inquiry and the members in the group were the unit of analysis. Team Airtel was considered as a basis for the sample since the paper is investigating the mediating effect of brand community. Out of 1,762 students, using cluster and simple random sampling, a sample size of 334 students was derived basing on Morgan & Krejcie (1970) table. Of the 334 students, 110 were from TAK, 180 were from TAM while

44 were from TAN. The coordinator for team Airtel and the brand manager for Airtel Uganda were purposely sampled to provide qualitative information.

Measurement

Social media usage was measured based on dimensions of information seeking, affiliation and personal fulfillment [16]. Brand community was measured based on dimensions developed by [36: 40: 47] which included consciousness of kind, shared rituals and moral responsibility. Impulse buying tendency was measured based on dimensions of affective and cognitive [19].

Data collection

A questionnaire was developed based on the measurement scale from passed research that was used to collect data. In the first phase, the first part of the questionnaire which consisted of the independent and mediating variable was supplied to students based on the numbers attached to the questionnaire corresponding to a particular number of a brand community member. The questionnaire was supplied and returned after one week. The researcher embarked on the second phase of supplying questionnaires on the dependent variable based on the numbers attached to each brand member of the community and these instruments were returned after two weeks. The questionnaire was distributed in two phases and this was meant to enhance reliability of results. In order to collect qualitative data, the researcher interviewed the group coordinators of team Airtel and the brand manager of Airtel Uganda.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic characteristics

Out of the 334 respondents who were supplied with questionnaires, 312 were returned. The results from the study indicated that by gender, girls were 158(50.2%) more than the boys who accounted for 154(49.8 %.) The findings also indicate that by representation of the university, the frequency was almost the same across with TAM accounting for 180(54%), TAK 110(33%) and TAN 109(13%). The results further indicate that most of the students were unemployed with a frequency of 214(68.6%) and employed accounted for a frequency of 97(31.1%) which is expected since most of them spend more of their time studying.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was also carried out to enrich reliability and validity of instruments whose results are shown in table 1. According to [10] for an item to be considered valid, its factor loading should be 0.5 and above. From the table 1, it can be observed that all items ranged from 0.5 to 0.9. It was also observed by [7] that for an instrument to be reliable, construct validity should at least be 0.6 while Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should at least be 0.5. From the table above, it can be observed that all variables achieved the minimum points for both CR and AVE. [10] noted that there should be discrimination in constructs measuring a variable and this is measured by discriminant validity criterion. Discriminant validity criterion requires the square of multiple correlations between constructs to be less than AVE. This was achieved for all constructs used in the study

Table 1: Confirmatory factor analysis

Item	Loading	CR	AVE	Cronbach
Social media usage				0.65
Affiliation	0.5-0.8	0.77	0.55	
Personal fulfillment	0.6-0.8	0.76	0.51	
Brand community				0.72
Consciousness	0.5-0.9	0.73	0.52	
Rituals & culture	0.8-0.9	0.75	0.65	
Impulse buying tendency				0.87
Affective	0.6-0.7	0.81	0.61	
Cognitive	0.7-0.9	0.74	0.71	

CR= Construct reliability, AVE= Average variance extracted

Structural equations model

The main purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between social media usage and impulse buying tendency mediated by brand community with a specific focus on Uganda. To achieve this, structural equations modeling (SEM) technique was adopted for analysis. It can be observed from table 2 that the relationship between social media and brand community was found to be significant, brand community and impulse buying tendency was also significant but social media and impulse buying tendency was insignificant. Results from table 2 are further explained in figure 1 which shows the relationship between observed and latent variables. Among the three models tested, the model in figure 1 had a better fit as indicated in table 3. Two error terms e8 and e9 had a modification index of 143 which was high and it's expected that this was mainly due to the two items which measured a construct of shared rituals. Therefore it was considered to modify the model by correlating the two terms. Table 4 indicates the fitness of the model and by referring to [10] the data fits the hypothesized model.

Table 2: Regression results (SEM)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Significance
Brand	<---	Smedia	.500	.108	4.633	***	Supported
Impulse	<---	Brand	.500	.137	3.663	***	Supported
Impulse	<---	Smedia	-.104	.090	-1.159	.246	Not supported

Brand= Brand community, Smedia= Social media, Impulse= Impulse buying tendency

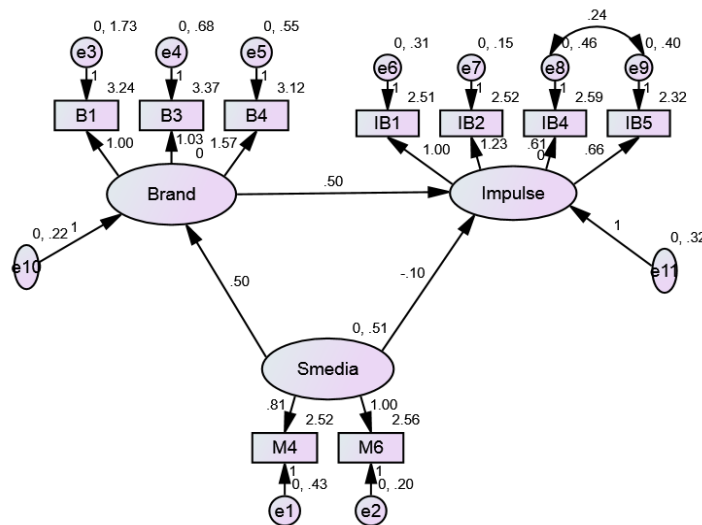


Figure 1: Structural equation model

Table 3: Model fit

Item	χ^2	χ^2/df	Pr.	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Cut off points	≥ 0.5	≤ 5	≥ 0.05	≥ 0.95	≥ 0.95	≥ 0.95	≥ 0.95	≤ 0.08
SEM results	42.55	1.85	0.08	0.95	0.97	0.96	0.97	0.05

Table 4: Mediation coefficients

Item	Social media	Brand community	Impulse buying tendency
Standardized direct effects			
Brand community	0.595	0.000	0.000
Impulse buying tendency	-0.216	0.482	0.000
Standardized indirect effects			
Brand community	0.000	0.000	0.000
Impulse buying tendency	0.290	0.000	0.000
Standardized total effects			
Brand community	0.595	0.000	0.000
Impulse buying tendency	0.164	0.482	0.000

Table 5: Confidence interval for mediation coefficients

Item	Social media	Brand community	Impulse buying tendency
Standardized direct effects			
Brand community	0.444 <> 0.723	0.000	0.000
Impulse buying tendency	-0.352 <> 0.073	0.263 <> 0.730	0.000
Standardized indirect effects			
Brand community	0.000	0.000	0.000
Impulse buying tendency	0.141 <> 0.491	0.000	0.000
Standardized total effects			
Brand community	0.444 <> 0.723	0.000	0.000
Impulse buying tendency	0.033 <> 0.285	0.263 <> 0.730	0.000

< > Stands for interval where by values on the right represent lower confidence bound while values on the right represent upper confidence bound at 95% confidence interval.

Social media and brand communities

One of the main goals of the study was to find out the influence of social media on impulse buying tendency by clients who join brand communities. As indicated in the regression results of table 2, it is shown that social media (media) has a positive significant causal effect on people joining brand communities estimated with a coefficient of 0.50. This implies that for every unit increase in time spent interacting on social media platforms, there is 50% likelihood to join brand communities. This result is in line with earlier studies which explained that the creation and joining of communities to satisfy the need of belongingness and being socially associated is driven by social media interactions [2: 19: 28]. From an interview with the coordinator of team Airtel, it was noted that most of the students joined the community mainly due to the interactions and bonding they had from the main platform which brings together all students attending classes of economics. He however observed that one unbecoming behavior in the group is that some members are not active. He asserts that such members don't contribute to discussions and they don't come for meetings. This confirms earlier studies for example [15] which observed that some people join groups for purposes of being defined by the group. Such groups of people can join communities but when they have no commitment to the group. From an interview with the brand manager Airtel, it was noted that the community of clients at Makerere is growing mainly because students at university account for a high percentage of people in the country who spend more time on social media. Therefore from these findings, it is argued that the more time an individual spends on social media, the high likelihood of being attached to a community of people online.

Social media and impulse buying tendency

The study also assessed the relationship between social media and impulse buying tendency. As indicated in table 2 above, the relationship between social media and impulse buying tendency is negative and insignificant meaning the hypothesis wasn't supported. Therefore social media usage has no influence on impulse buying tendency. This finding is in line a study by [2] who noted that the days of influencing impulse buying through social media has ended due to a new

era of rigorous planning by clients on purchasing patterns. From an interview with the coordinator of team Airtel it was observed that a lot of information on social media is not filtered therefore most information is considered false. Therefore irrespective of the time spent on social media, rarely do people base on such information to buy or not to buy a commodity unless such information has been proved to be correct and official from a company.

Brand community and impulse buying tendency

The study sought to find out the relationship between brand community and impulse buying tendency. As indicated in table 3, this hypothesis was significant therefore supported. The result indicates a coefficient of 0.5 causal effect of brand community on impulse buying tendency. This means that whenever an individual joins and participates in a brand community it results into a 50% tendency to buy items impulsively due to group influence. This is in line with studies by [4], [11] who observed that due to a need of being defined by status, materials and brands they own and community of products they are attached to, people tend to purchase due to group influence. From an interview with a coordinator of the community, it was observed that within the group, there is peer pressure and behavioral influence which tends to sway purchasing patterns of students. A case in point is where students change phones just to show status. Therefore, some consumers buy products out of peer pressure from communities they are attached to.

Mediating effect of brand community on the relationship between social media and impulse buying tendency

The study sought to find out the mediating effect of brand community on the relationship between social media and impulse buying tendency. As indicated in table 4, brand community has a significant mediating effect on the relationship between social media usage and impulse buying tendency. The effect is estimated with a magnitude of 0.29 and as observed in table 4, it is significant with a confidence bound of $0.141 < 0.491$. This means that a unit increase in social media usage through brand communities has a 29% increase in impulse buying tendencies among consumers. According to [6] and [20], increased use of social media allows people to express brand attachment and commitment which results into brand affection. Brand affection creates a link between urge and uncontrolled consumption tendencies [5].

5. CONCLUSIONS

The study indicated that social media positively influences joining of brand communities. It was discovered that the more time people within brand communities spend on social media interacting it enhances participation within a product community. It was also discovered that social media usage has no binding influence on impulse buying tendencies of consumers. Based on the findings, businesses should alongside in-store marketing, position promotion of products through brand communities as a driver to influencing consumer behavior and also as a root to accelerating revenue growth. To achieve this, companies need to create communities of clients. However communities need to be vibrant and this can be realized through insistent interactions among clients and also with companies. Social media can be used to promote vibrancy within communities of brand which eventually promotes affection to the brand.

Limitations and areas of further research

The study was only based on a sample of students with an average age of 23 years who are expected to easily bond since they spend more time together at colleges. It is not known whether people of old age who are clients of shopping stores can be influenced through social media to join and participate in brand communities. Therefore further research can be done using a sample of old and middle aged groups to investigate about their urge to participate in product communities. The study was carried out among students who are highly dependents. So there consumption decisions are constrained with limited finances but also may care less about expenditure patterns since money spent is not from their sweat. There is a need to consider working groups who are expected to behave slightly different since they are income earners.

REFERENCES

- [1] Badgaiyan, A. J., & Verma, A. (2014). *Intrinsic factors affecting impulsive buying behaviour—Evidence from India. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 21(4), 537–549.* doi:10.1016/j.jretconser.2014.04.003
- [2] Banjo, S. and Germano, S. (2014), “The end of the impulse shopper – the web has made consumers more intentional, smarter”, *Wall Street Journal*, 25 November, available at: <http://on.wsj.com/1vh4mjq> (accessed 6 June 2016).
- [3] Bellini, S., Cardinali, M. G., & Grandi, B. (2017). *A structural equation model of impulse buying behaviour in grocery retailing. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 36, 164–171.* doi:10.1016/j.jretconser.2017.02.001

- [4] Dittmar, H., & Bond, R. (2010). I want it and I want it now: Using a temporal discounting paradigm to examine predictors of consumer impulsivity. *British Journal of Psychology*, (London, England : 1953), 101(Pt 4), 751-776. doi:10.1348/000712609X484658
- [5] Flight, R. L., Rountree, M. M., & Beatty, S. E. (2012). Feeling the urge: Affect in impulsive and compulsive buying. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 20(4), 453-466.
- [6] Fornell, C & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Structural equations models with unobservable and measurement error: algebra and statistics. *Journal of marketing research*, 18(3), 382-388
- [7] Goh, K.-Y., Heng, C.-S., & Lin, Z. (2013). Social media brand community and consumer behavior: Quantifying the relative impact of user-and marketer-generated content. *Information Systems Research*, 24(1), 88-107. doi:10.1287/isre.1120.0469
- [8] Gonzales, A. L., & Hancock, J. T. (2011). Mirror, mirror on my Facebook wall: Effects of Facebook exposure on self-esteem. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*. 14(1), 79-83.
- [9] Hair, J. F., Anderson, R. E. & Black, W. C (1998). *Multivariate data analysis* (5th ed.), Prentice Hall, New Jersey.
- [10] Herzberg, F., Mausner, B., & Snyderman, B. B. (1993). *The motivation to work*. New Brunswick, N.J., U.S.A: Transaction Publishers.
- [11] Hoch, S. J., & Loewenstein, G. F. (1991). *Time-Inconsistent Preferences and Consumer Self-Control*. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17(4), 492. doi:10.1086/208573
- [12] Husnain M., Qureshi I., Fatima T. & Akhtar, W. (2016): The Impact of Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Online Impulse Buying Behavior: The Moderating role of Big 5 Personality Traits. *Journal of Accounting & Marketing* 5:190
- [13] Japutra, A., Ekinci, Y., & Simkin, L. (2017). *Self-congruence, brand attachment and compulsive buying*. *Journal of Business Research*. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.08.024
- [14] Jibril, A. B., Kwarteng, M. A., Chovancova, M., & Pilik, M. (2019). *The impact of social media on consumer-brand loyalty: A mediating role of online based-brand community*. *Cogent Business & Management*, 6(1). doi:10.1080/23311975.2019.1673640
- [15] Kaye, B. K. (2010). *Going to the Blogs: Toward the Development of a Uses and Gratifications Measurement Scale for Blogs*. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 18(4), 194-210. doi:10.1080/15456870.2010.505904
- [16] Langaro, D., Rita, P., & de Fátima Salgueiro, M. (2015). *Do social networking sites contribute for building brands? Evaluating the impact of users' participation on brand awareness and brand attitude*. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 24(2), 146-168. doi:10.1080/13527266.2015.1036100
- [17] Laroche, M., Habibi, M. R., Richard, M.-O., & Sankaranarayanan, R. (2012). The effects of social media based brand communities on brand community markers, value creation practices, brand trust and brand loyalty. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28 (5), 1755-1767. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2012.04.016
- [18] Mittal, S., Chawla, D., & Sondhi, N. (2016). *Impulse buying tendencies among Indian consumers: scale development and validation*. *Journal of Indian Business Research*, 8(3), 205-226. doi:10.1108/jibr-09-2015-0101
- [19] Ozer, L., & Gultekin, B. (2015). *Pre- and post-purchase stage in impulse buying: The role of mood and satisfaction*. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 22, 71-76. doi:10.1016/j.jretconser.2014.10.004
- [20] Šeinauskienė, B., Maščinskienė, J., & Jucaitytė, I. (2015). *The Relationship of Happiness, Impulse Buying and Brand Loyalty*. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 213, 687-693. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.11.487
- [21] Silveria, P., & Marreiros, C. (2014). Shopper marketing: a literature review. *Int. Rev. Manag. Mark.* 4 (1), 90-97.
- [22] Wilcox, K. & Stephen, A. T. (2013). Are close friends the enemy? Online social networks, self-esteem, and self-control. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40(1), 90-103.