How to transform consumers into fans of your brand
Benedikt Jahn Werner Kunz

Article information:
To cite this document:
Benedikt Jahn Werner Kunz, (2012), "How to transform consumers into fans of your brand", Journal of Service Management, Vol. 23 Iss 3 pp. 344 - 361
Permanent link to this document:
http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09564231211248444

Downloaded on: 21 October 2014, At: 16:02 (PT)
References: this document contains references to 68 other documents.
To copy this document: permissions@emeraldinsight.com
The fulltext of this document has been downloaded 3904 times since 2012*

Users who downloaded this article also downloaded:

For Authors
If you would like to write for this, or any other Emerald publication, then please use our Emerald for Authors service information about how to choose which publication to write for and submission guidelines are available for all. Please visit www.emeraldinsight.com/authors for more information.

About Emerald www.emeraldinsight.com
Emerald is a global publisher linking research and practice to the benefit of society. The company manages a portfolio of more than 290 journals and over 2,350 books and book series volumes, as well as providing an extensive range of online products and additional customer resources and services.
Emerald is both COUNTER 4 and TRANSFER compliant. The organization is a partner of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and also works with Portico and the LOCKSS initiative for digital archive preservation.
*Related content and download information correct at time of download.
How to transform consumers into fans of your brand

Benedikt Jahn
Institute of Marketing, Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Munich, Germany, and
Werner Kunz
College of Management, University of Massachusetts, Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Abstract

Purpose – Brand fan pages on social networks have become very popular online services. However, empirical research on fan pages is still in its infancy. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of fan pages on the customer-brand relationship and what motivates users to participate.

Design/methodology/approach – For this a framework was developed based on classical concepts of use and gratification theory, customer engagement, and involvement theory. The model is tested using a multi-step approach of qualitative and quantitative methods.

Findings – The paper can show a significant influence from online service usage behavior on the fan page on the customer-brand relationship. Furthermore, the paper identifies different values such as functional and hedonic content as drivers of fan-page participation.

Research limitations/implications – The results are limited by the used data set, which is not representative for all industries and is cross-sectional. Further research could build up a database over a longitudinal time frame in different industries. The results are interesting for theory and practice. They confirm the positive effect of integration and engagement in general and show that fan pages are more than just tools to connect brand fans. They are also instruments for gaining new fans.

Originality/value – The present study is the first study that not only shows the effect of fan pages on customer behavior, but also analyses the motives for participation and the crucial constructs to manage them successfully.

Keywords Online services, Brand page, Engagement, Facebook, Customer-brand relationship, Motivation, Consumer behaviour, Brands

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The ways people exchange information and how individuals communicate with each other have changed dramatically over the last years (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). Social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube are becoming more and more important in business communication. The changes brought by the new online services have also transformed our relationships to each other and to companies and organizations. Traditionally, companies have tried to reach and build up relationships with customers through marketing activities like reward programs, public relations, and direct marketing. In this world, customers were passive “receivers” of relationship activities as well as brand messages and the company had control over the brand development process (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Libai et al., 2010). Today, customers can increasingly integrate and act as co-creators and multipliers of brand messages, which enables enormous viral effects and creates opportunities for word-of-mouth marketing (Kozinets et al., 2010; Libai et al., 2010). Thus, both customer and company
participate actively in a “conversation” about the brand (Deighton and Kornfeld, 2009; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010).

Social media offer users a variety of online services to communicate with others, which results in a completely new communication style. Customers are now empowered to get in contact with each other, as well as engage and participate actively in brand communication. Social networking sites like Facebook offer companies several options to contact and communicate with their customers (fans). Fan pages are an important online service for brand communication. They can be used by organizations, businesses, brands, public figures, or causes to integrate and interact with their customer base (Dholakia et al., 2004). They offer companies a service to communicate and interact with their customers as well as deliver a variety of interesting content (Borle et al., 2012). In marketing communication today fan pages have significant relevance for businesses.

However, empirical research on fan pages and its role for the customer-brand relationship is in its infancy. Making use of the opportunities provided by fan pages on social networking sites requires a thorough understanding of why consumers are attracted to them and how customer integration and engagement on these platforms influence their relationships to the brands and their offline behaviors. Therefore, the present study investigates how brand fan pages affect the customer-brand relationship. In particular, we consider the following research questions:

RQ1. What effects has fan page participation on customer loyalty?

RQ2. Which constructs are central for the management of fan pages?

RQ3. What are the drivers of successful brand fan pages?

We begin with a brief overview of the literature regarding social media, brand communities, and fan pages. We then develop our framework that describes how fan pages can contribute to brand loyalty of the customer and how fan-page participation is influenced by various consumer values. Further, we describe the methodology of our study and show the results of our analyses. Finally, we discuss managerial implications, limitations of the study, and further research suggestions.

Research background
Although there have been several calls for more research on social media services (Hoffman and Novak, 2009; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; van den Bulte, 2010; Kunz and Hogreve, 2011) and there exists a huge demand from the business world, the empirical research is limited. Because social media is still a relatively new research field, we introduce various central concepts we use in our study before presenting our research.

Central concepts
Social media can be described as “a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Some of the most prominent forms of social media are social networking sites like Facebook or LinkedIn. Social networking sites are defined as:

[...] web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection,
and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd and Ellison, 2007, p. 211).

Users with profiles interlinked in this manner are called “friends”. These profiles can include anything from favorite food and movies to relationship status and especially preference for particular brands, organizations, or celebrities. For example, users can post information about themselves, post links of web sites they like, comment on postings of their friends, post pictures, and accept invitations for events; they also can receive invitations to become fans of particular brands, organizations, or celebrities (Raacke and Bonds-Raacke, 2008).

Facebook offers companies several services for contacting and communicating with their customers. Fan pages are an especially interesting tool for companies to use. But what does it mean to become a “fan” of a brand-related page? In general, a fan can be anything from a devotee to an enthusiast of a particular object. Typical characteristics of fans are self-identification as fan, emotional engagement, cultural competence, auxiliary consumption, and co-production (Kozinets et al., 2010). The internet has made it possible to overcome geographical restrictions and to build fan communities world-wide. In practice, users become fans of a Facebook fan page by pressing the “like-button,” which indicates to their social network that they like this brand; this preference is then added to their profiles. The new content of this fan page is automatically posted to their personal Facebook news feed, and they can post comments on the fan page, get in contact with the company, forward offers from this page as well as interact with other fans.

Especially for the consumer motivation to use brand fan pages exist to our knowledge till now no empirical study. But regarding the motivation to use social networking sites and participating in brand communities empirical results are already published, which is related to our research focus.

Research on social networking sites
A central topic in studies towards social networking sites is the motivation, why people use these platforms. For instance, Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) found two main reasons for this: social connections (i.e. keeping in touch with friends) and information sharing (e.g. events or gossip). In a similar fashion, Foster et al. (2010) found one of the main motivations for participating in social networking sites is the perceived information value from the community and the connection to friends. Many studies also show that entertainment plays an important role as shared and consumed content on social networking sites (Sheldon, 2008; LaRose et al., 2001).

Ellison et al. (2007) presented a more differentiated perspective on the social connection. In a study with undergraduate students, they showed that Facebook develops social capital in that participating is useful for strengthening friend relationships (i.e. bonding social capital), expanding an individual’s network (i.e. bridging social capital), and keeping in contact with past relationships (i.e. maintaining social capital).

Additionally, Tufekci (2008) found that many activities on social networking sites can also be conceptualized as forms of self-presentation. Users present themselves by adjusting their profiles, linking to particular friends, displaying their likes and dislikes, and joining groups. This motivation for social networking usage is supported by several other studies (Dholakia et al., 2004; Bolar, 2009; Acquisti and Gross, 2006). In particular, Peluchette and Karl (2009) shows that Facebook users employ their postings consciously to portray images about themselves.
Considering the existing research on social networking sites, we believe there are three main motivation areas for consumers’ using social networking sites. The first is a relationship area, where the focus of the individual is to stay connected and interact with others and participate in a social (online) life. The second area is content acquisition and distribution based on the individuals’ interests. This content can be functional as well as hedonic. Finally, the third area is self-presentation, which is related to the social context but also serves more the purpose of self-assurance and personal identity.

Research on brand communities
Since brand fan pages are organized around a single brand, product, or company, they can be seen as a special kind of brand community. Since the last decade, brand communities became very interested in branding research (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001; McAlexander et al., 2002; Algesheimer et al., 2005; Adjei et al., 2010).

Muniz and O’Guinn (2001, p. 412) defined a brand community as:

[...] specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand. It is specialized because at its center is a branded good or service. Like other communities, it is marked by shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility.

McAlexander et al. (2002) indicated four crucial relationships in a brand community: the relationships between the customer and the brand, between the customer and the firm, between the customer and the product in use, and among fellow customers.

Algesheimer et al. (2005), using survey data from a European auto club, showed that community identification leads to positive (i.e. community engagement and community loyalty) and negative (i.e. normative community pressure and reactance) consequences. Further, they showed an effect of membership continuance intentions to brand loyalty intentions. Woisetschläger et al. (2008) support their results. Additionally, they found two further reasons for consumer participation in brand communities: community satisfaction and degree of consumer influence within the community. Moreover, they showed an effect from community participation on word-of-mouth, brand image, and community loyalty. An effect on brand loyalty was not shown.

By means of data from an online community, Kim et al. (2008) showed that online community commitment is a driver on brand commitment. They also showed that online community participants possess stronger brand commitment than consumers who are not members of the community. Recently, Adjei et al. (2010) verified in a netnography and experimental approach that online brand communities are successful tools for increasing sales and showed that the sharing of information significantly moderates this effect.

Considering the existing work on brand communities, we can see community identification as a central influence for community participation (Bhattacharya et al., 1995). Previous work has shown that brand community engagement can affect membership loyalty, brand image, and word-of-mouth. Thus, community participation and membership can be seen as an important tool for a successful branding strategy.

Research on brand fan pages
Although very similar and sometimes used interchangeably, differences do exist between brand fan pages on social networking sites and traditional online brand communities. What fan pages differ from brand communities is the fact that they are
embedded in an organic grown and not brand-related network of social ties. Thus, members of a fan page are also connected within the social network site to so-called “friends” who might be not “fans” of the brand and are mostly real offline connections (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). Given this, fan-page membership can be used by the individual to show a peer group the own self-concept). In this sense fan page memberships become signals of a person’s self-identity.

Further fan pages are mainly company driven and used as an explicit brand communication and interaction channel. In a classical brand community the brand is the center of the community and the community is “based on a structured set of social relationships among admires of a brand” (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001, p. 412). In contrast, a fan page is supposed to be first of all a connection between the user and the brand. Thus, fan-page usage and engagement motivation might differ from traditional brand communities.

Despite the popularity in the business practice, we found only one empirical research study that considered fan pages in a branding context. Borle et al. (2012; Dholakia and Durham, 2010) examined the degree to which participating on a Facebook fan page affects customer behaviors. In a longitudinal study, conducted in cooperation with two restaurants, they showed an effect of membership on the fan page to behavioral loyalty, spending in the restaurants, and the restaurant category over all. The findings support the idea that Facebook fan pages are useful for deepening the relationship with customers. But it is still not clear what is happening inside of the “black box” fan page and what the crucial constructs are for managing fan pages. Therefore, we introduce in the next section a framework that shows a differentiated effect of fan pages from the usage motivation to brand loyalty.

**Theoretical framework**

Considering the concept of a brand fan page, we developed a framework based on classical concepts of uses and gratifications theory (Katz, 1959), customer engagement (van Doorn et al., 2010; Brodie et al., 2011), and involvement theory (Zaichkowsky, 1985). By this, we follow a basic approach, describing how fan-page behavior might influence consumers’ brand loyalty and what might influence the fan-page behavior itself. For this, we divide the process into three zones: gratification, participation, and customer-brand relationship. The basic idea of this framework is that, if the brand fan page satisfies particular needs of a user, this satisfaction should lead to a higher approach to the brand fan page, which should in turn lead to a higher brand loyalty (Figure 1).

The uses and gratification (U&G) theory, proposed by Katz (1959), has been found useful for application to new media like the internet, online communities, social networking, and blogs (Raacke and Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Sheldon, 2008; Chung and Austria, 2010; Ko et al., 2005; Ruggiero, 2000; Song et al., 2004). U&G theory tries to explain why individuals have different media-usage patterns. According to U&G theory, people use media to satisfy various needs and to achieve their goals. The most prominent needs can be subsumed into three areas: a content-oriented area based on the information delivered by the media, a relationship-oriented area based on social interaction with others, and a self-oriented area based on particular needs of individuals such as achieving status or need for diversion. With the second concept, consumer engagement, we want to differentiate the usage pattern of a fan page. The concept has its origin in organizational psychology and can be defined as “persistent, positive,
affective-motivational state of fulfillment” (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 417). Consumer engagement can be seen as special form of the widely discussed concept of customer engagement in the service research community (Brodie et al., 2011; Libai et al., 2010; van Doorn et al., 2010; Verhoef et al., 2010). Following this understanding, customer behavior goes “beyond transaction, and may be specifically defined as a customer’s behavioral manifestation that has a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers” (van Doorn et al., 2010, p. 254).

Transferring the engagement construct to the context of a fan page, we define fan-page engagement as an interactive and integrative participation in the fan-page community and would differentiate this from the solely usage intensity of a member. We do not expect these constructs to be independent from each other and would assume that fan-page usage leads to fan-page engagement. For instance, it is possible that a person is using a fan page on a regular basis (e.g. receiving gratis coupons from the fan page) without becoming highly engaged with the fan page. We therefore propose the following hypotheses:

**H1.** Brand fan-page usage intensity influences brand fan-page engagement positively.

To explain the fan-page usage behavior, we use the three gratification areas of U&G theory introduced above, and we apply them according to the context of the fan pages. In the content area, we differentiate between the functional and hedonic values that are delivered (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). This is supported by previous empirical studies in the social media field, where several researchers have found that information (Raacke and Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Foster et al., 2010) and entertainment (Sheldon, 2008; Dholakia et al., 2004; LaRose et al., 2001) play important roles for social media users. Based on this we propose the following:

**H2a.** Higher functional value of the fan-page content leads to higher fan-page usage intensity.
H2b. Higher hedonic value of the fan-page content leads to higher fan-page usage intensity.

In the relationship area, we see two main kinds of relationships where an interaction could be of value for a fan-page user: the interaction with other users, and the interaction with the brand or company behind the brand. This is supported by social networking motive literature, which found growing, maintaining, and broadening relationships to others as major motivations for using a social networking site (Sheldon, 2008; Ellison et al., 2007; Dholakia et al., 2009). Furthermore, literature concerning brand relationship shows that consumers tend to invest in a relationship to a brand (Fournier, 1998; Algesheimer et al., 2005). Based on this we propose an effect on usage and engagement:

H3a. Higher social interaction value leads to higher fan-page usage intensity.
H3b. Higher brand interaction value leads to higher fan-page usage intensity.
H3c. Higher social interaction value leads to higher fan-page engagement.
H3d. Higher brand interaction value leads to higher fan-page engagement.

Finally, consumers can decide to participate in a fan page because they expect an impact on their image or status. In this case, consumers defer values for their own personal identities by being members of a brand fan page. Similar Algesheimer et al. (2005) argued that group participation can be seen as an expression of personal values. Further, Peluchette and Karl (2009) showed that Facebook users use their profiles and postings consciously to portray images about themselves. Thus, fan pages can serve the purpose to portray the own self-concept. Based on this we propose the following:

H4. Higher self-concept value of the fan-page membership leads to higher fan-page engagement.

After considering the value and fan-page behavior, we want to motivate the expected relationship to branding. We would assume that the participation in the community has a positive effect for the user and the company (Rosenbaum, 2008). The central concept for relationship marketing is brand loyalty (de Ruyter et al., 1998). Oliver (1999, p. 34) defines loyalty as:

[...] a deeply held commitment to rebuy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchase, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior.

This definition stresses the importance of two important components: an attitudinal (i.e. commitment) and a behavioral (i.e. purchase, patronage) component of loyalty. This is consistent with Dick and Basu (1994), who also sees “relative attitude” and “repeat patronage” as central parts of loyalty relationships and many other conceptualizations (Bloemer and Kasper, 1995).

On the one hand, fan-page users that show high usage intensity, get in regular contact with the brand, which in turn should have an effect on their brand relationship and should increase their likelihood for repurchase, word-of-mouth, or their general commitment to the brand. On the other side, brands with high fan-page engagement
already have developed a strong relationship to the fan-page community. This emotional bond is also associated with the object of the fan page, the brand. Thus, we assume that an increase in brand loyalty is based on fan-page engagement.

This relationship is also supported by the involvement theory. Involvement can be defined as “a person’s perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests” (Zaichkowsky, 1985, p. 342). Fan-page usage and engagement are indicators for a high involvement with the brand. Prior studies have shown a relationship between involvement and product or brand loyalty (Quester and Ai, 2003; Olsen, 2007). Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

H5a. Fan-page usage intensity influences brand loyalty positively.
H5b. Fan-page engagement influences brand loyalty positively.

Methodology
To test our framework, we applied a multi-step approach incorporating a series of qualitative and quantitative analyses. First, we conducted a netnographic analysis (Kozinets, 2002) to understand members’ motives for usage and participation in a fan-page community. For this, we analyzed all user-generated posts during one year on active fan pages of different automobile brands (i.e. Audi: 821,175 fans; Volkswagen: 365,900 fans; Mazda: 66,717 fans). Overall, we categorized 661 different posts from the three fan pages (i.e. photos, videos included; Audi: 198 posts; Volkswagen: 227 posts; Mazda: 236 posts). We identified five main categories as usage motives: self-presentation, relationship to the brand, interaction with the brand, information, fun and entertainment, as well as social interaction. These results support our proposed value system in our proposed model.

In a second step, we used two focus groups with six active fan-page users to ensure that the found motives are really relevant for fan-page usage and engagement. The participants were asked for their motives, their participation behavior, and the potential changes in their relationship to the brand and the brand behavior since they became members of the fan page. The results confirmed the value system of the netnographic analysis. Moreover, the discussion showed that fan pages are mainly used passively, while some fans are really engaged with the fan pages. Some of the participants reported an effect of the fan page on their actual brand relationship.

In a third step, we executed a survey on Facebook to test our framework in a field environment. For the data collection, we invited members of different brand fan pages (e.g. Coca Cola, BMW, Red Bull, Starbucks, McDonalds, Abercrombie & Fitch, Weight Watchers, Lufthansa, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Barack Obama, GameStar, FC Bayern Munich) to participate in an online survey by posting the survey link on the fan page. The incorporated fan pages represent a wide mix of product, service, organizational and personality fan pages. Through the survey, we obtained a sample of 523 fully completed questionnaires of brand fan-page members. Gender is distributed evenly in the sample (51.7 percent female, 48.3 percent male). Age of fan-page members in the sample follows a normal curve of distribution. Average age of the respondents was 28.6. All participants were frequent fan-page users (more than 80 percent use their fan pages at least once a week) and active Facebook members (76 percent use Facebook longer than 20 minutes a day).
Measurement
For the constructs of our framework, we generated multi-item scales on the basis of previous measures, the qualitative pre-studies, and the theoretical foundation (a complete list of all items is presented in the Appendix, Table AI). The measurement of hedonic and functional value is based on a scale from Voss et al. (2003). Brand interaction value describes the value that is derived from the communication with the brand and is measured based on communication component of the web-interactivity scale (Song and Zinkhan, 2008). For the social interaction value we adapted the social component of the social networking sites gratification system of Barker (Barker, 2009). Measurement of the self-concept value is adapted from the social value component of customer value system from Sweeney and Soutar (2001). It can be defined as utility derived from the fan page’s ability to enhance social self-concept. The scale for measurement engagement is developed based on the conceptualization of the construct of van Doorn et al. (2010) focusing on elements like community participation, identification, and integration. Brand loyalty is reflected by attitudinal and behavioral components (Oliver, 1999; Dick and Basu, 1994). The attitudinal component is indicated by brand commitment, understood as “enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship” (Moorman et al., 1992, p. 316) and measured through identification, interaction, and support. The behavioral component is measured by word-of-mouth and purchase behavior (Johnson et al., 2006). Finally as controlling construct, we also measured brand attitude perceived as good, positive, likeable, and favorable (Coulter, 1998; Day and Stafford, 1997; Stafford, 1996; Escalas and Stern, 2003).

All measures were rated on seven-point Likert scales (anchored by “I fully disagree” vs “I fully agree”). The measures were pretested in an offline pretest with 35 college students and an online pretest with 106 fan-page members of different fan pages, and they showed a high reliability in the analysis. The reliability results of the constructs are shown in Table AI and indicate acceptable psychometric properties for all constructs. Discriminant validity is proved by using Fornell-Larcker criteria (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) (the Appendix, Table AII).

Results of the core model
We tested the proposed hypotheses using a structural equation model. The fit statistics indicate an adequate fit of the proposed model (i.e. $\chi^2$/df = 2.99; CFI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.062). The results of the model estimation are shown in Figure 2.

The multiple squared correlations for brand loyalty are 0.28, which is reasonable considering that online fan pages are not the online influence factor for the consumer-brand relationship. All coefficients of our proposed processing model (except two) were highly significant ($p < 0.001$). We have not found a significant effect from the social interaction value to fan-page usage. This might be because social interaction mainly focuses on elements related to membership exchange. By means of passive consumption of a media, social interaction value can hardly be gained. The effect from brand interaction value on fan-page engagement is just significant on the 0.01 level.

Additionally, we tested several alternative model specifications to ensure the validity of our framework. First, considering our framework, one might argue that the proposed effects are an artifact of a general positive attitude towards the considered brand. We would also assume an influence of brand attitude on the constructs of the framework, but the general relationship within the framework should be not affected.
Therefore, we integrated brand attitude as a controlling variable for all fan-page participation constructs (usage and engagement) and brand loyalty. All coefficients of the structural model were still significant ($p < 0.05$) and none of the path coefficients changed the direction. Second, we additionally tested for the effect of the personal identity value on fan-page usage and for the effect of hedonic and functional value on fan-page engagement. All turned out as not significant ($p > 0.05$). Thus, we can show according to U&G theory that different motivations affect fan-page behavior differently.

**Discussion**
In our study, we analyzed the role of fan pages as a new online service for the customer-brand relationship, detected fan-page engagement as an important driver for the consumer-brand relationship, and identified various influential factors for successful brand fan pages. Considering these results, we can infer multiple implications for the management of fan pages.

First of all, we can conclude that fan pages are an excellent tool for companies today: they have measurable effects on the customer-brand relationship. Brand managers should embrace this new channel and understand how to work with it in a contemporary fashion. Setting up a brand fan page and generating traffic data (e.g. visits, page impressions, etc.) is not enough to improve customer relationships. The goal of a brand fan-page strategy is to completely engage, integrate, and immerse users in a vivid and active community. Besides that, the company needs to give users realistic reasons to engage in a fan-page community and foster the “we”-sense on the fan page. Relationship building based on real values for the consumer should be in the focus for the company because service companies can have many interaction points with the consumer,
and there are a lot of opportunities to foster this interaction and build up a meaningful community.

Further, from our empirical results, we see that valuable content, both hedonic and functional, on the fan page itself is one of the most important drivers for attracting users to fan pages. Brand fan pages must deliver interesting, entertaining, and innovative content to its fans. Exclusive content, sweepstakes, online events, and contests are some of the means brand fan pages can use to achieve this. Another value driver is based on interaction among fan-page members and between customers and the brand itself. Companies should therefore support as much interactivity as possible. Online events or community games can trigger discussions about relevant topics. Beyond consumer interactivity, companies must scan fan pages and be attentive to the happenings in their fan-page communities. Fan pages are interactive channels. If the company is not (inter)active, their brand fan pages will not be successful. Beside the interaction between the brand and the consumer it is very important to moderate the ongoing fan interaction. This implies new challenges for customer services (Van Bruggen et al., 2010). While in the past they had to deal with one customer at a time (Kantsperger and Kunz, 2005), today they need to participate in a community on a public site visible for everyone. They must answer questions immediately and communicate proactively, even more so when comments are negative (Kunz et al., 2012; Senecal and Nantel, 2004; Rao et al., 2011).

These implications show that successful social media management is strongly related to the interactive relationship capabilities of a company. Our research verifies how strongly modern social media management is shaped by the service-dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Social media inherently implies a customer and relational-oriented view. If the brand fan page does not deliver value for the community members on a regular basis, they will abandon the page. Maybe the statistics of “likes” or “followers” is still high, but real consumer engagement will go down. The company alone cannot deliver value or an experience on a brand page. They need the community and the community (hopefully) needs the company.

Limitations and further research

We believe our study has interesting implications, but we are aware about its limitations. Although our fan-page sample represents a wide area of different industries (i.e. over 40 different pages of goods, service, organization, or celebrity brands), they are not representative for all fan pages existing on social networking sites. More research is needed to understand the roles fan pages play in specific industries. Future research could focus on the difference between manufacturing industries and dominantly service industries, the differences between more hedonic or functional brands, or the difference between company brands and human brands. Further, our study did not observe personal traits (e.g. novelty seeking, extraversion or self-esteem) which could influence the effects illustrated in our framework. The data for this study are cross-sectional. Further research could build up a database over a longitudinal time frame with a constant panel sample to observe the dynamics of fan-page members’ behavior over time.

Beyond our study further research is needed to understand the meaning of fan pages and, indeed, social media in general for customer relationship management. Research might study also the effect of observed behavior of fan-page members on their Facebook friends who are not fans but can follow what their friends are doing. Also the impact
of new technological possibilities like mobile application (Kleijnen et al., 2009) as well as
the limitations of online experiences (Picard, 2010) needs to be researched in more detail.
Additionally, further study is needed for the effects of negative word-of-mouth on social
media platforms. It might also be interesting and important to look for best practices for
managing negative or defaming comments on fan pages and other social media
platforms.

Conclusion
The mixture of social and commercial aspects makes brand fan pages unique.
Our study has shown the high potential of brand fan pages for the customer-brand
relationship as well as for relationship building. Ideally, fans would see brands as real
“friends” in their social networks, which play an important part in their everyday lives.
In this case, brand communication is no longer automatically perceived as disturbing
advertising but as interesting and reasonable conversation among friends.

If companies better understand the reasons for fan-page usage and engagement, they
can use this to interact with, integrate, and engage their customers as well as transform
them from ordinary users to real “fans” of their brands. Our study is a first step to
understand brand fan pages; but there remains a broad field of discovery for a deeper
understanding of this new social media channel as an effective relationship-building
tool.

References
privacy on the Facebook”, International Workshop on Privacy Enhancing Technologies,

brand communities on customer purchase behavior”, Journal of the Academy of Marketing

community: evidence from European car clubs”, Journal of Marketing, Vol. 69 No. 3,
pp. 19-34.

Barker, V. (2009), “Older adolescents’ motivations for social network site use: the influence
of gender, group identity, and collective self-esteem”, CyberPsychology & Behavior, Vol. 12,

investigation of its correlates among art museum members”, Journal of Marketing, Vol. 59,
pp. 46-57.


of Facebook fan page participation on customer behavior”, Marketing Science, pp. 1-36
(under review).


(The Appendix follows overleaf.)

**About the authors**

Benedikt Jahn is a PhD Student at the Institute of Marketing at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich and is also currently completing his Master of Business Research. His research interests are in the area of social media marketing, especially on brand communication on fan pages on social networking sites.

Werner Kunz is an Assistant Professor of Marketing at the University of Massachusetts in Boston. He received his Doctorate from Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich. His research interests are in social media, consumer networks, innovation, and service marketing. He has published in various marketing and service research journals, for instance, the *International Journal of Research in Marketing*. Werner Kunz is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: werner.kunz@umb.de

To purchase reprints of this article please e-mail: reprints@emeraldinsight.com
Or visit our web site for further details: www.emeraldinsight.com/reprints
## Appendix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>α&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>EFA&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>CR&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>AVE&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>SRMR&lt;sup&gt;e&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>CFI&lt;sup&gt;f&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Functional value</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content of the fan page is helpful for me</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content of the fan page is useful for me</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content of the fan page is functional for me</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content of the fan page is practical for me</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hedonic value</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content of the fan page is fun</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content of the fan page is exciting</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content of the fan page is pleasant</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content of the fan page is entertaining</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social interaction value</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can meet people like me on this fan page</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can meet new people like me on this fan page</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can find out about people like me on this fan page</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can interact with people like me on this fan page</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brand interaction value</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can interact with the brand on this fan page</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can communicate with the brand on this fan page</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can give feedback to the brand on this fan page</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can get answers from the brand on this fan page</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-concept value</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[…] I can make a good impression on others</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[…] I can improve the way I am perceived</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[…] I can present others who I am</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[…] I can present others who I want to be</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fan-page usage intensity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I frequently use (e.g. watching/reading) this fan page</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often use (e.g. watching/reading) this fan page</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I regularly use (e.g. watching/reading) this fan page</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fan-page engagement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am an integrated member of this fan-page community</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am an engaged member of this fan-page community</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am an active member of this fan-page community</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a participating member of this fan-page community</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am an interacting member of this fan-page community</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brand attitude</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my opinion this brand is good</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my opinion this brand is positive</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like this brand</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think favorably about this brand</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brand commitment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I am part of a community around this brand</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am an active supporter of this brand</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I interact with this brand</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word-of-mouth</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I recommend this brand to other people</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I introduce this brand to other people</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I say positive things about this brand to other people</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purchase</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I intend to remain loyal to this brand in the future</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will not stop buying/supporting this brand</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think of myself as a loyal consumer/supporter of this brand</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table AI.
Scale items and reliability measurement

**Notes:**
- <sup>a</sup>Cronbach’s α
- <sup>b</sup>exploratory factor analysis
- <sup>c</sup>composite reliability
- <sup>d</sup>average variance extracted
- <sup>e</sup>standardized root mean residual
- <sup>f</sup>comparative fit index
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Functional value</th>
<th>Hedonic value</th>
<th>Social interaction value</th>
<th>Brand interaction value</th>
<th>Self-concept value</th>
<th>Usage intensity</th>
<th>Fan-page engagement</th>
<th>Brand attitude</th>
<th>Brand commitment</th>
<th>Brand word-of-mouth</th>
<th>Brand purchase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functional value</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonic value</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social interaction</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand interaction</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-concept value</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usage intensity</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fan-page engagement</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attitude</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand commitment</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word-of-mouth</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand purchase</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Italic numbers on the diagonal show the square root of the AVE, numbers below the diagonal represent construct correlation.
This article has been cited by:


2. Robert Davis, Inna Piven, Michael Breazeale. 2014. Conceptualizing the brand in social media community: The five sources model. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 21, 468-481. [CrossRef]


12. Ronald E. Goldsmith, Margherita Pagani, Xiaojing Lu. 2013. Social network activity and contributing to an online review site. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing* 7:2, 100-118. [Abstract] [Full Text] [PDF]

13. Huanhuan Cao, Jinhu Jiang, Lih-Bin Oh, Hao Li, Xiuwu Liao, Zhiwu Chen. 2013. A Maslow's hierarchy of needs analysis of social networking services continuance. *Journal of Service Management* 24:2, 170-190. [Abstract] [Full Text] [PDF]