

The role of social media engagement in building relationship quality and brand performance in higher education marketing

Role of social media engagement

Received 22 August 2022
Revised 9 January 2023
Accepted 9 January 2023

Bee Lian Song

School of Marketing and Management,

*Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and
School of Management and Marketing, Taylor's University, Subang Jaya, Malaysia*

Kim Lian Lee

School of Management and Marketing, Taylor's University, Subang Jaya, Malaysia

Chee Yoong Liew

*Faculty of Business and Management, UCSI University,
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and*

Muthaloo Subramaniam

*Faculty of Business, Management and Information Technology,
Asia Metropolitan University, Johor, Malaysia*

Abstract

Purpose – Social media engagement is widely used by the higher education institutions (HEIs) to improve brand performance through brand image and brand loyalty. This study focusses on the effect of social media engagement on relationship quality and brand performance in the higher education marketing (HEM) context. Social media engagement dimensions comprising social interaction, sharing of information, surveillance and information quantity are tested as antecedents to relationship quality. Relationship quality is examined as antecedents to brand image and brand loyalty.

Design/methodology/approach – Data are obtained through survey questionnaire from 410 undergraduate and postgraduate students from six HEIs in Malaysia. Structural equation modelling was applied for data analysis.

Findings – The findings of this study reveal that social interaction, sharing of information, surveillance and information quantity have positive effect on relationship quality. Relationship quality has significant positive influence on brand image and brand loyalty, respectively.

Originality/value – The study contributes to the extension of social exchange theory through the development of an integrative framework of social media engagement (exchange) needed for improving relationship quality (relational responses) and brand performance (behavioural outcomes) in the HEM.

Keywords Social media engagement, Relationship quality, Brand loyalty, Brand image, Brand performance, Higher education marketing

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Establishing a strong brand and strengthening the brand performance are critical success for organisational long-term growth. Brand performance is a relative measure of brand success

Funding: This research was funded by an internal grant from Taylor's University (Grant Number: TIRGS-ERFS/1/2019/SMK/001).



(Ehrenberg *et al.*, 2004). Brand performance is measured through customer-based metrics of brand image (Keller and Lehmann, 2003) and brand loyalty (Munoz and Kumar, 2004). Higher education institutions (HEIs) are prioritising on building distinct global brand recognition to achieve the desired brand performance. The HEIs have leveraged on traditional media to dynamic social media platforms to recruit students, build relationship with students and create positive brand image and student loyalty (Maresova *et al.*, 2020; Clark *et al.*, 2016). The increasing popularity of social media has influenced HEIs in utilising several most popular social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest and Flickr. As of February 2021, Facebook had the highest adoption rate of 73.06% (total 10,076 institutions) by HEIs in the world (uniRank, 2021). Social media is a cost-effective avenue, and efficient to reach large and targeted population (Lund, 2019).

Social media engagement involves the process from consuming the content through interacting with the interface to cognitively immersed in the content and then participation behaviour such as discussion and sharing of content. Social media engagement can facilitate more effective interaction and connections between the HEIs and its potential and existing students (Kumar and Nanda, 2018), which help build relationship quality (Clark *et al.*, 2016). HEIs easily shared information, promote programmes or events, obtained online feedback and created online communities through social media engagement. Despite increasing attention given on social media engagement, the HEIs are facing various challenges in its implementation to build relationship quality and brand performance. The increasing operations costs, marketing expenditures and market complexity (Pavlov and Katsamakos, 2020) have led to the HEIs' crucial understanding and need to effectively engage students through social media platforms to build brand image and brand loyalty. However, the understanding on how effective is social media engagement strategies remain underexplored in the higher education marketing (HEM) context (Peruta and Shields, 2017). HEIs were lacked of focus on relationship quality as a solution to build students' loyalty (Snijders *et al.*, 2018). Also, how HEIs have utilised social media effectively to improve brand image remain ambiguous (Qi and Mackie, 2014).

Previous research studies have explored the social media engagement in HEM in the aspect of relationship quality (Clark *et al.*, 2016), relationship development and communication (Lund, 2019), strategy development (Kumar and Nanda, 2018) and content strategy (Demirer, 2017). Rutter *et al.* (2016) stressed that future research should explore the social media engagement effectiveness on branding performance in the HEM context. Past studies (i.e. Molinillo *et al.*, 2019; Song and Liew, 2018) in different research areas have proven that brand image and brand loyalty are the dimensions of brand performance. Hence, we conduct this study to address the research gap by emphasizing on the HEI students' perspective on the important dimensions of social media engagement that effect relationship quality, and brand image and brand loyalty in HEM. The main objectives of the present study are: 1) to examine the effect of social interaction, sharing of information, surveillance and information quantity of social media engagement on relationship quality in HEM, 2) to examine the effect of relationship quality on brand image and brand loyalty in HEM.

This research has two main contributions. In theoretical contribution, the social exchange theory (SET) is applied to explore consumers' evaluation on the role of social media engagement in influencing relationship quality, brand image and brand loyalty towards the HEIs. Therefore, this study is expected to develop an integrative framework of social media engagement (exchange) needed for improving relationship quality (relational responses) and brand performance (behavioural outcomes) in the HEM. In practical contribution, the findings provided valuable information to the HEIs on effective social media engagement strategies focussing on building relationship quality and brand performance.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1 Social exchange theory (SET)

The SET analyses an economic approach and social relationship situations to study the benefits gained in an exchange relationship that are expected to be provided by others (Homans, 1958), in which may contribute in economic and social implications. Individuals expect reciprocal benefits from one another on the assumption that the exchange would benefit from both parties (Bierstedt and Blau, 1965). SET consists of two main contexts of exchange – content and process (Zoller and Muldoon, 2019). The content of the exchange involves “what” related to the various resources that are exchanged between parties. The process of exchange involves “how” related to the way relevant parties can obtain benefits from each other. A series of successful reciprocal exchanges may transform an economic exchange relationship into a high-quality social exchange relationship (relational responses) and behavioural outcomes (behavioural responses) (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2017).

SET can be applied to explain the relationship between social media engagement, relationship quality and brand performance in HEM research. The maintenance of social media engagement relies on the expected reciprocal benefits of SET that are exchange between social media community. Social interaction, surveillance and information quantity are forms of social exchange, while sharing of information is the knowledge exchange. From the exchanges, the relational responses formed is relationship quality (Clark *et al.*, 2016) that is proposed to contribute to consumer behavioural responses, such as brand image (Chen, 2015) and brand loyalty (Snijders *et al.*, 2020) towards the HEIs.

SET has been applied in past research studies in higher education (Sharabi, 2013; Clark *et al.*, 2016), mobile social networks (Abedi *et al.*, 2019) and telecom mobile (Alkhoms and Alnsour, 2013) to explore the relationship between social media engagement and relationship quality. It is suggested to extend the SET by including and testing the consumer behavioural responses as the outcome to the exchange and relational responses in the HEM research context (Clark *et al.*, 2016). Hence, in this study, brand performance dimensions comprising brand loyalty and brand image are selected as the behavioural outcomes of customers for the extended SET.

2.2 Social interaction

The interaction between social media communities such as reviews or blogs are shared from similar goals, value or beliefs as form of social media engagement. The usage of social media interactively leads to fostering relationships between prospective and current students and the HEI's brand (Rutter *et al.*, 2016). Prospective students feel valuable as they are given attention by the HEI, and this contributed to better image they have on the HEI (Salem, 2020).

HEIs responded to the interactions between users or reply to the question posted by the user at the social media platform have fostering better engagement and relationship building with the users, as well as potential students (Rutter *et al.*, 2016). Strong online brand communities with quality interactions will enhance brand image and brand loyalty (Anaya-Sánchez *et al.*, 2020). Students provided negative comments on their HEI at social media had negatively affected their relationship quality with the HEI (Papademetriou *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, we hypothesise that:

H1. Social interaction has a significant positive effect on relationship quality in HEM.

2.3 Sharing of information

Creating and sharing content online have dominant roles in social media. Barwise and Meehan (2010) asserted that HEIs can build high-quality relationships with their students by sharing latest information with their students via social media. Prospective students utilised

social media to predominantly seeking information from the HEI and contributed to followers closely linked to the HEI's brand (Rutter *et al.*, 2016). Students shared information on their HEI's development and performance, academic activities, personal opinions and academic issues on social media (Gok, 2016; Tayo *et al.*, 2019). Students who share academic information on social media have created a culture of engagement amongst students and lecturers or HEIs, which improved their relationship quality (Bashir *et al.*, 2021).

Clark *et al.* (2016) stressed that HEIs that have multiple social media platforms but lagging in posting information or providing irrelevant, uninteresting or inaccurate information will cause poor relationship quality with their students. Tayo *et al.* (2019) highlighted that social media engagement involving sharing of negative information such as accessing inappropriate content, online harassment and cyber bullying can create intense pressure towards the relationship between the parties involved. Thus, the below hypothesis is put forward:

H2. Sharing of information has a significant positive effect on relationship quality in HEM.

2.4 Surveillance

Surveillance refers to individual's motive in seeking information or to self-educate through the use of media (Whiting and Williams, 2013). Surveillance involves updating with current happenings and acquires understanding of issues. Customers believed that their interactions are beneficial when they acquired high quality information (Gummerus *et al.*, 2012). Information at social media creates new opportunities for engagement and surveillance (Humphreys and Wilken, 2014). Tokunaga (2015) reported that there is a connection between low-quality relationships associated and low satisfaction level of customers through online surveillance.

For successful social media marketing and enhance relationship building with the students, HEIs must share quality information to meet the need or requirement of the students (Irfan *et al.*, 2018). Relationship quality building with existing students is strengthened through exposure given on student's real life experiences at the campus. Therefore, we propose the below hypothesis:

H3. Surveillance has a significant positive effect on relationship quality in HEM.

2.5 Information quantity

Information quantity refers to the quantity of comments, electronic word of mouth reviews and number of "like" (Song *et al.*, 2021). In the context social media engagement of HEIs, the information content influenced the number of comments, shares and likes, serve as important indicators for brand posts' popularity (Demirer, 2017). Furthermore, the quantity of information produced by user reviews impact the higher trust as dimension of relationship quality (Do-Hyung *et al.*, 2007).

Kapoor *et al.* (2018) posited that the interaction frequency in social media sites increased the level of trust in relationship quality between the related parties. Users of social media who engaged more on the amount of posts and comments, and frequency of tags and "likes" achieved more effective bonding social capital (Davis III *et al.*, 2015). Thus, we conjecture the following hypothesis.

H4. Information quantity has a significant positive effect on relationship quality in HEM.

2.6 Relationship quality

Relationship quality involves the evaluation by consumers on the strength of relationship with the business organisation (Crosby *et al.*, 1990). Hon and Grunig (1999) recommended

trust, satisfaction, control mutuality, exchange relationships, commitment and communal relationship as the relationship quality dimensions. [Ulag and Eggert \(2006\)](#) conceptualises relationship quality as commitment, satisfaction and trust. There are substantial studies that have recommended the relationship quality dimensions based on commitment, trust and satisfaction ([Hon and Grunig, 1999](#)). Therefore, this study emphasizes on four key dimensions of satisfaction, commitment, trust and control mutuality as students' evaluation on the relationship quality they have with their HEIs.

2.7 Brand image

Brand image is described as the perception and impression of the brand in the mind of customer ([Cho and Fiore, 2015](#)). A positive brand image can enhance the performance of the brand ([Ozturk et al., 2016](#)). To build a strong brand image, social media engagement on brand and usage experiences has greater efficiency.

According to [Bruhn et al. \(2012\)](#), brand image dimensions are brand benefits and attributes. Brand image can be measured in the perspective of hedonic brand image and functional brand image. Hedonic brand image refers to measurement of consumer's emotions or feelings towards the brand. Functional brand image involves measurement of performance of the brand in brand image. Students' with strong attachment strength and relationship with the HEIs will have better brand image perception towards the institution ([Dennis et al., 2016](#)). Therefore, we conjecture:

H5. Relationship quality has a significant positive effect on brand image in HEM.

2.8 Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty refers to consumer's commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future ([Zhang et al., 2016](#)). Quality of relationship between the parties involved is an important determinant of brand loyalty ([Leverin and Liljander, 2006](#)). In HEI context, brand loyalty is shown by the students' strong affection and support towards the university brand ([Chen, 2016](#)), demonstrated by the students' positive word-of-mouth evaluations to others, recommending the services to others and protecting the university virtues ([Latif et al., 2021](#)). Students' brand loyalty also involves their desires to continue relationship with the university by maintaining an on-going relationship with the existing HEI, and obtaining continuous or further education at the HEI ([Latif et al., 2021](#)).

Social media engagement had positively influenced relationship quality, and subsequently on brand performance outcome of brand loyalty ([Orhan and MacIrvine, 2020](#)). The more engaged customers in social media, the higher achievement of satisfaction, brand relationship quality and brand loyalty ([Orhan and MacIrvine, 2020](#)). Scholars (i.e. [Song and Liew, 2017](#); [Auruskeviciene et al., 2010](#)) have confirmed on the significant relationship between relationship quality and brand loyalty. The following hypothesis is put forward:

H6. Relationship quality has a significant positive effect on brand loyalty in HEM.

[Figure 1](#) presents the research model indicating four independent variables of social interaction, sharing of information, surveillance and information quantity towards the relationship quality. Subsequently, relationship quality is correlated to brand image and brand loyalty, respectively.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Sampling procedures and data collection

This study's target population comprises students aged above 18, who have experienced social media engagement at social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter,

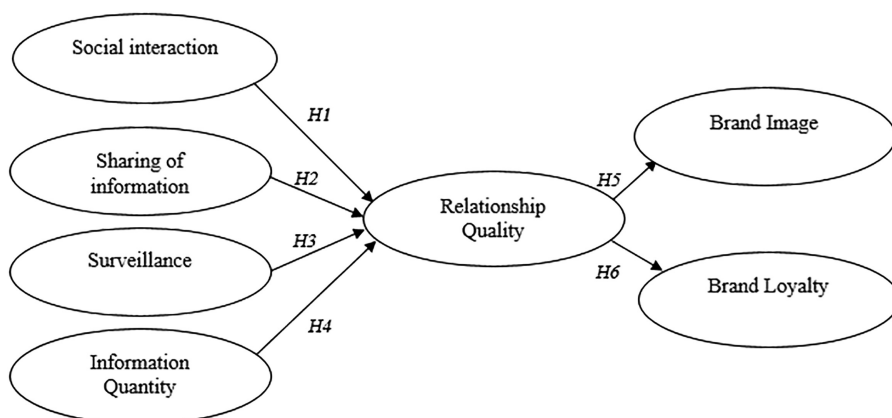


Figure 1.
Conceptual framework

YouTube, Flickr and LinkedIn, of the HEIs in Malaysia. According to [Hair et al. \(2017\)](#), the rule-of-thumb for determining sample size is based on 5 to 10 times the number of measuring items in the questionnaire. The measurement model consists of seven constructs with 29 measuring items. Therefore, the suggested sample size should be between 203 (7×29) and 290 (10×29). We have determined a sample size of 410 to fulfil the prerequisite for covariance-based SEM analysis.

Convenience sampling method was utilised to select the sample of 410 respondents who were existing undergraduate and postgraduate students at six HEIs located in Malaysia. The criteria requirement for the students to participate in the survey was they must have experienced social media engagement at the social media platforms of their respective institution within the past three months. Students were approached face-to-face by the researchers to complete the survey questionnaire on voluntary basis at their respective institution. Convenience sampling enables survey to be conducted fast and conveniently on the targeted respondents.

3.2 Measures

The measurements for each construct were developed by using and adapting existing scale items in the literature. All 29-item scale measurement were recorded using a six-point Likert scale between 1 (strongly disagree) and 6 (strongly agree). A Likert scale of six-point was deemed suitable to avoid responses at the neutral point. In order to ensure that the respondents are comprehension of the questionnaires, a pilot study was conducted on 30 undergraduate and postgraduate students.

3.3 Validity and reliability assessment

The validity of the measures is assessed using the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with the objective to exclude items with factor loading value of less 0.3. EFA is assessed through maximum likelihood extraction and Promax rotation, the findings generated seven dimensions with KMO score of 0.880 with significant at $p = 0.000$. The EFA result was above the minimum acceptance value of 0.6 ([Pallant, 2007](#)). As for the 29 items, the factor loading results were all above 0.3 shown that the measurement items have good construct validity and will be maintained for further analysis. [Table 1](#) presents the validity and reliability assessment results. Reliability assessment using Cronbach's alpha (CA) shown that all CA values were above the minimum acceptance level of 0.7 ([Hair et al., 2017](#)). The composite reliability (CR) values were

Construct (source)	Item	CR, AVE, CA	Factor loading	Role of social media engagement
Social Interaction (<i>Zhang et al., 2016; Voorveld et al., 2018</i>)	SI1	Frequently interacts with followers	0.895 (CR)	0.765
	SI2	Responds timely to inquiries or comments	0.682 (AVE)	0.830
	SI3	Encouraged conversation or opinion exchange with others	0.894 (CA)	0.884
	SI4	Encouraged better connection with the university/friends/others		0.820
Sharing of Information (<i>Patrakosol and Lee, 2013; Plume and Slade, 2018</i>)	SN1	Provides sufficient information	0.854 (CR)	0.676
	SN2	Provides up-to-date information		0.764
	SN3	Provides information at the right level of detail	0.540 (AVE)	0.754
	SN4	Enabled sharing information with others	0.851 (CA)	0.795
	SN5	Shared information that create interest		0.676
Surveillance (<i>Song and Liew, 2018</i>)	SV1	Provides good information on its services	0.804 (CR)	0.695
	SV2	Keep up-to-date information	0.506 (AVE)	0.726
	SV3	Provides information on latest promotions	0.802 (CA)	0.750
	SV4	Offered customised information search		0.673
Information Quantity (<i>Seo and Park 2018; Voorveld et al., 2018</i>)	IQ1	Posted a lot of information	0.828 (CR)	0.673
	IQ2	Posted information often received high number of comments	0.547 (AVE)	0.755
	IQ3	Posted information often received high number of "likes"	0.823 (CA)	0.827
	IQ4	Posted information often received high number of "shares"		0.694
Relationship Quality (<i>Clark et al., 2016</i>)	RQ1	Satisfied with the quality of relationship with university	0.889 (CR)	0.725
	RQ2	High level of trust towards university	0.668 (AVE)	0.823
	RQ3	Emotionally attached to university	0.889 (CA)	0.869
	RQ4	High quality relationship with university		0.844
Brand Image (<i>Chen, 2016; Cho and Fiore, 2015</i>)	BI1	University brand has positive reputation	0.825 (CR)	0.734
	BI2	University brand has good image	0.541 (AVE)	0.724
	BI3	University brand is prestigious		0.741
	BI4	University brand is perceived as high quality	0.824 (CA)	0.743
Brand Loyalty (<i>Chen, 2016</i>)	BL1	Strong affection with university brand	0.817 (CR)	0.730
	BL2	Support university brand	0.528 (AVE)	0.740
	BL3	Consider to continue pursue study at current university	0.815 (CA)	0.730
	BL4	Loyal to university brand		0.705

Table 1.
CFA, Cronbach's
alpha, CR and AVE
results

ranged from 0.804 to 0.895, which were also above the threshold level of 0.6 (*Bagozzi and Yi, 1988*). The average variance explained (AVE) values were between 0.506 and 0.682, and achieved above the benchmark limit of 0.5 (*Fornell and Larcker, 1981*).

4. Results

4.1 Demographic profile of the respondent

Table 2 shows the respondents' demographic profile. From the total 410 respondents, 230 were female (56%) and 180 were male (44%) respondents. Majority respondents of 36% were between age category of 21 and 25. In education level, the respondents were undergraduate (65%) and postgraduate (35%) students. Majority respondents of 35% have accessed social media sites of the HEI between 7 and 9 times within a week.

4.2 Structural paths and hypotheses tests

SEM analysis was performed using SPSS AMOS version 26 to assess the conceptual model and perform hypotheses testing. The structural model has achieved an overall good fit, supported by the fitness indices. The chi-square value was 877.958 and χ^2/df was 2.405. RMSEA value is 0.059, which meets the minimum requirement level of 0.08 (Hooper *et al.*, 2008). All incremental fit values achieved were above 0.9, with IFI of 0.912, CFI of 0.912 and TLI of 0.902. Table 3 presents the hypotheses results.

Demographics	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>	
Female	56%
Male	44%
Total	100%
<i>Age</i>	
18–20	20%
21–25	36%
26–30	33%
31–35	8%
36–40	2%
41 and above	1%
Total	100%
<i>Education level</i>	
Undergraduate	65%
Postgraduate	35%
Total	100%
<i>Frequency of accessing social media sites of the HEIs within a week (number of times)</i>	
1–3	21%
4–6	33%
7–9	35%
More than 10	11%
Total	100%

Table 2.
Respondents'
demographic profile

H	Path	Estimate	<i>p</i> values	Result
H1	Social Interaction → Relationship Quality	0.265	***	Supported
H2	Sharing of Information → Relationship Quality	0.319	***	Supported
H3	Surveillance → Relationship Quality	0.184	0.006	Supported
H4	Information Quantity → Relationship Quality	0.335	***	Supported
H5	Relationship Quality → Brand Image	0.527	***	Supported
H6	Relationship Quality → Brand Loyalty	0.303	***	Supported

Note(s): *** $p < 0.001$

Table 3.
Hypotheses results

The study found that all six hypotheses have been supported empirically. Hypothesis H1 indicates that social interaction has a significant positive effect on relationship quality with significant $p < 0.001$ and $\beta = 0.265$. H2 is supported with $\beta = 0.319$, $p < 0.001$, confirming that sharing of information has a significant positive effect on relationship quality. Subsequently, H3, yield a significant result confirming that the surveillance has a significant positive effect on relationship quality with $\beta = 0.184$, $p = 0.006$. H4 is accepted with $p < 0.001$ and $\beta = 0.335$, proving that information quantity has a significant positive effect on relationship quality. For the relationship between relationship quality and brand image, recorded $\beta = 0.527$, $p < 0.001$ which indicate significant relationship between the constructs, and H5 is supported. Lastly, H6 is also significant at $\beta = 0.303$, $p < 0.001$, confirming relationship quality has a positive significant effect on brand loyalty. The squared multiple correlations for the relationship quality construct is 0.376, brand image construct is 0.381 and brand loyalty construct is 0.187. Figure 2 presents the structural model.

5. Discussion

Overall, the findings conclude that all the social media engagement dimensions have positively influenced relationship quality, which leads to brand image and brand loyalty. Information quantity had the highest correlation coefficient value compared to social interaction, sharing of information and surveillance constructs. The HEIs have managed to provide necessary amounts of information that are substantial to the students to build their presence in social media. Furthermore, the information posted were effective in engaging the social media users to provide more comments, higher “shares” and expression of “likes” to the

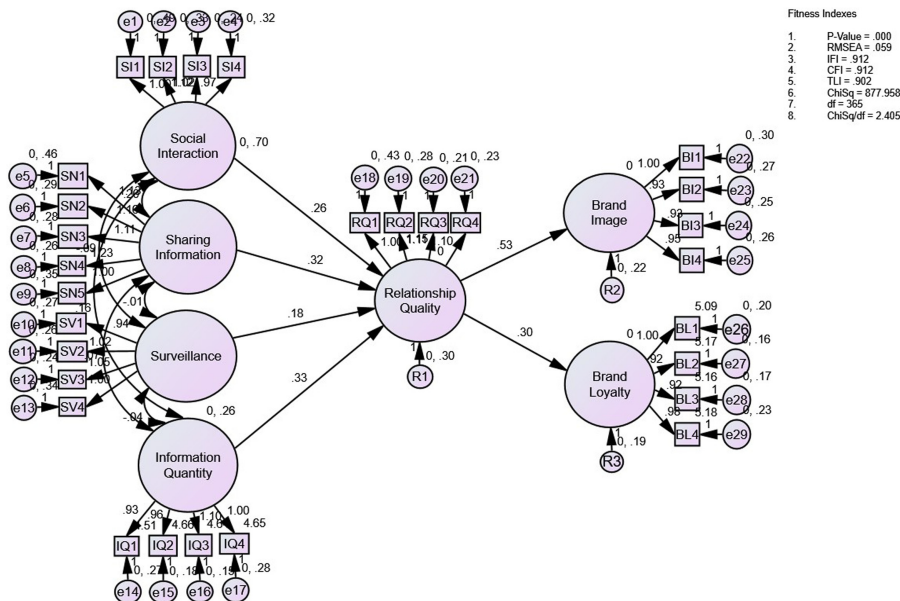


Figure 2. Structural model

content. HEIs can further improve information quantity through having more activities or events involving important stakeholders, and timely posting of the information at various social media platforms. The high frequency of information posting at social media will create excitement for users, stimulate users to react through posting comments, share with others and “likes”, users will be more engaged and relationship strengthening between the users themselves, as well as with the institutions (Orhan and MacIrvine, 2020).

The findings also indicate that the HEIs are efficient in sharing sufficient and latest information, as well as beneficial social media platforms to encourage sharing of information by its users. Hence, the HEIs have to share diverse amounts of information that are specifically targeting these two different groups of prospective and current students on social media platforms. The results show that social interaction was also the main source of effective social media engagement, whereby the students stay connected with each other for better and long-term relations with HEIs. HEIs have to be more responsive to the users’ posts and encourage stimulation of chain interaction between the users to improve relationships and brand performance.

To enhance surveillance, the HEIs need to prioritise on the content communication on new courses offered and latest promotions at social media. Valuable information supported with evidence such as pictures or videos will improve trust and build better relationship with the social media users. Relationship quality had positive influence on brand image and brand loyalty, respectively, which revealed that the students believe their institutions have managed well their relationships through social media engagement. Hence, the HEIs should be responsible for communicating well its identity, managing quality relationships with stakeholders, present good brand image and build brand loyalty through social media engagement. Social media marketing strategies focussing on building strong engagement should be planned appropriately, targeting different segment of social media users. The allocation of substantial resources and formation of specific team are needed to drive social media engagement strategies.

6. Conclusion

Our research have extended SET through the development of an integrative framework of social media engagement (exchange) needed for improving relationship quality (relational responses) and brand performance (behavioural outcomes) in the HEM. As for the limitations in the present study, this investigation comprised sample of students from selected six HEIs in Malaysia. Subsequent research should explore samples from different countries for comparative of the findings. The present study investigated the role of social media engagement in building relationship quality and brand performance. Further research should consider other mediating variables related to social media users’ attitudes.

References

- Abedi, E., Ghorbanzadeh, D. and Rahehagh, A. (2019), “Influence of eWOM information on consumers’ behavioral intentions in mobile social networks: evidence of Iran”, *Journal of Advances in Management Research*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 84-109.
- Alkhoms, A. and Alnsour, M.S. (2013), “Social media marketing and relationship quality: Zain Jordan customers’ perspective”, *European Journal of Business and Management*, Vol. 5 No. 25, pp. 111-117.
- Anaya-Sánchez, R., Aguilar-Illescas, R., Molinillo, S. and Martínez-López, F.J. (2020), “Trust and loyalty in online brand communities”, *Spanish Journal of Marketing - ESIC*, Vol. 24 No. 2, pp. 177-191.

- Auruskeviene, V., Salciuviene, L. and Skudiene, V. (2010), "The relationship quality effect on customer loyalty", *Pecunia*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 23-36.
- Bagozzi, R. and Yi, Y. (1988), "On the evaluation of structural equation models", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Sciences*, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 74-94.
- Barwise, P. and Meehan, S. (2010), "The one thing you must get right when building a brand", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 88 No. 12, pp. 80-84.
- Bashir, I., Malik, A. and Mahmood, K. (2021), "Social media use and information-sharing behaviour of university students", *IFLA Journal*, Vol. 47 No. 4, pp. 481-492.
- Bierstedt, R. and Blau, P. (1965), "Exchange and power in social life", *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 30 No. 5, pp. 789-790.
- Bruhn, M., Schoenmueller, V. and Schäfer, D.B. (2012), "Are social media replacing traditional media in terms of brand equity creation?", *Management Research Review*, Vol. 35 No. 9, pp. 770-790.
- Chen, Y.C. (2015), "A study of the interrelationships among service recovery, relationship quality, and brand image in higher education industries", *Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, Vol. 24 No. 1, pp. 81-89.
- Chen, C.T. (2016), "The investigation on brand image of university education and students' word-of-mouth behaviour", *Higher Education Studies*, Vol. 6 No. 4, pp. 23-33.
- Cho, E. and Fiore, A.M. (2015), "Conceptualization of a holistic brand image measure for fashion-related brands", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 32 No. 4, pp. 255-265.
- Clark, M., Fine, M.B. and Scheuer, C.L. (2016), "Relationship quality in higher education marketing: the role of social media engagement", *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, Vol. 27 No. 1, pp. 40-58.
- Cropanzano, R., Anthony, E.L., Daniels, S.R. and Hall, A.L. (2017), "Social exchange theory: a critical review with theoretical remedies", *Academy of Management Annals*, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 1-38.
- Crosby, L.A., Evans, K.R. and Cowles, D. (1990), "Relationship quality in services selling: an interpersonal influence perspective", *The Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 54 No. 3, pp. 68-81.
- Davis III, C.H.F., Deil-Amen, R., Rios-Aguilar, C. and Canche, M.S.G. (2015), "Social media, higher education, and community colleges: a research synthesis and implications for the study of two-year institutions", *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, Vol. 39 No. 5, pp. 409-422.
- Demirer, D. (2017), "The role of content strategy in social media on brand post's popularity: a case of higher education institutions in Turkey", *European Journal of Social Sciences Education and Research*, Vol. 11 No. 2, pp. 134-143.
- Dennis, C., Papagiannidis, S., Alamanos, E. and Bourlakis, M. (2016), "The role of brand attachment strength in higher education", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 69 No. 8, pp. 3049-3057.
- Do-Hyung, P., Jumin, P. and Ingoo, H. (2007), "The effect of on-line consumer reviews on consumer purchasing intention: the moderating role of involvement", *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, Vol. 11 No. 4, pp. 125-148.
- Ehrenberg, A.S., Uncles, M.D. and Goodhardt, G.J. (2004), "Understanding brand performance measures: using Dirichlet benchmarks", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 57 No. 12, pp. 1307-1325.
- Fornell, C. and Larcker, D.F. (1981), "Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 39-50.
- Gok, T. (2016), "The effects of social networking sites on students' studying and habits", *International Journal of Research in Education and Science*, Vol. 2 No. 1, pp. 85-93.
- Gummerus, J., Liljander, V., Weman, E. and Pihlstrom, M. (2012), "Customer engagement in a Facebook brand community", *Management Research Review*, Vol. 35 No. 9, pp. 857-877.

-
- Hair, J.F., Hult, G.T.M., Ringle, C.M. and Sarstedt, M. (2017), *A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)*, 2nd ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Homans, G.C. (1958), "Social behavior as exchange", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 63 No. 6, pp. 597-606.
- Hon, L. and Grunig, J. (1999), "Guidelines for measuring relationships in public relations", available at: http://www/instituteforpr.org/index.php/IPR/research_single/guidelines_measuring_relationships/ (accessed 14 July 2022).
- Hooper, D., Coughlan, J. and Mullen, M. (2008), "Structural equation modelling: guidelines for determining model fit", *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 53-60.
- Humphreys, L. and Wilken, R. (2014), "Social media, small businesses, and the control of information:", *Information, Communication and Society*, Vol. 18 No. 3, pp. 295-309.
- Irfan, A., Rasli, A., Sulaiman, Z., Sami, A. and Qureshi, M.I. (2018), "Use of social media sites by Malaysian universities and its impact on university ranking", *International Journal of Engineering and Technology*, Vol. 7 No. 4.28, pp. 67-71.
- Kapoor, K.K., Tamilmani, K., Rana, N.P., Patil, P., Dwivedi, Y.K. and Nerur, S. (2018), "Advances in social media research: past, present and future", *Information System Frontier*, Vol. 20 No. 3, pp. 531-558.
- Keller, K.L. and Lehmann, D.R. (2003), "How do brands create value?", *Marketing Management*, Vol. 12 No. 3, pp. 26-31.
- Kumar, V. and Nanda, P. (2018), "Social media in higher education: a framework for continuous engagement", *International Journal of Information and Communication Technology Education*, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 109-120.
- Latif, K.F., Bunce, L. and Ahmad, M.S. (2021), "How can universities improve student loyalty? The roles of university social responsibility, service quality, and "customer" satisfaction and trust", *International Journal of Educational Management*, Vol. 35 No. 4, pp. 815-829.
- Leverin, A. and Liljander, V. (2006), "Does relationship marketing improve customer relationship satisfaction and loyalty?", *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, Vol. 24 No. 4, pp. 232-251.
- Lund, B. (2019), "Universities engaging social media users: an investigation of quantitative relationships between universities' Facebook followers/interactions and university attributes", *Journal of Higher Education Marketing*, Vol. 29 No. 2, pp. 251-267.
- Maresova, P., Hruska, J. and Kuca, K. (2020), "Social media university branding", *Education Sciences*, Vol. 10 No. 3, pp. 74-88.
- Molinillo, S., Ekinci, Y. and Japutra, A. (2019), "A consumer-based brand performance model for assessing brand success", *International Journal of Market Research*, Vol. 61 No. 1, pp. 93-110.
- Munoz, T. and Kumar, S. (2004), "Brand metrics: gauging and linking brands with business performance", *Journal of Brand Management*, Vol. 11 No. 5, pp. 381-387.
- Orhan, M.A. and MacIrvine, C. (2020), "Examining digital brand experiences as a predictor of brand relationship quality and loyalty", *International Journal of Marketing Communication and New Media*, Vol. 8 No. 15, pp. 45-64.
- Ozturk, A.B., Bilgihan, A., Nusair, K. and Okumus, F. (2016), "What keeps the mobile hotel booking users loyal? Investigating the roles of self-efficacy, compatibility, perceived ease of use, and perceived convenience", *International Journal of Information Management*, Vol. 36 No. 6, pp. 1350-1359.
- Pallant, J. (2007), *SPSS Survival Manual*, Open University Press, Maidenhead.
- Papademetriou, C., Anastasiadou, S., Konteos, G. and Papalexandris, S. (2022), "COVID-19 pandemic: the impact of the social media technology on higher education", *Education Sciences*, Vol. 12, p. 261.

-
- Patrakosol, B. and Lee, S.M. (2013), "Information richness on service business websites", *Service Business*, Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 329-346.
- Pavlov, O.V. and Katsamakos, E. (2020), "Will colleges survive the storm of declining enrollments? A computational model", *PLoS One*, Vol. 15 No. 8, pp. 1-29.
- Peruta, A. and Shields, A.B. (2017), "Social media in higher education: understanding how colleges and universities use Facebook", *Journal of Higher Education Marketing*, Vol. 27 No. 1, pp. 131-143.
- Plume, C.J. and Slade, E.L. (2018), "Sharing of sponsored advertisements on social media: a uses and gratifications perspective", *Information Systems Frontiers*, Vol. 20 No. 3, pp. 471-483.
- Qi, B. and Mackie, L. (2014), "Utilising social media technology to raise brand awareness in higher education", *Proceedings of the 10th International Conference on Web Information Systems and Technologies*, Vol. 2, pp. 400-405.
- Rutter, R., Ropper, S. and Lettice, F. (2016), "Social media interaction, the university brand and recruitment performance", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 69 No. 8, pp. 3096-3104.
- Salem, O. (2020), "Social media marketing in higher education institutions", *SEA-Practical Application of Science*, Vol. 8 No. 23, pp. 191-196.
- Seo, E.J. and Park, J.W. (2018), "A study on the effects of social media marketing activities on brand equity and customer response in the airline industry", *Journal of Air Transport Management*, Vol. 66 No. 1, pp. 36-41.
- Sharabi, M. (2013), "Managing and improving service quality in higher education", *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*, Vol. 5 No. 3, pp. 309-320.
- Snijders, I., Rikers, R.M.J.P., Wijnia, L. and Loyens, S.M.M. (2018), "Relationship quality time: the validation of a relationship quality scale in higher education", *Higher Education Research and Development*, Vol. 37 No. 2, pp. 404-417.
- Snijders, I., Wijnia, L., Remy, M.J.P., Rikers, R.M.J.P. and Loyens, S.M.M. (2020), "Building bridges in higher education: student-faculty relationship quality, student engagement, and student loyalty", *International Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 100 No. 2, pp. 1-14.
- Song, B.L. and Liew, C.Y. (2017), "The effectiveness of strategic relationship marketing: exploring relationship quality towards customer loyalty", *International Business Research*, Vol. 10 No. 12, pp. 159-166.
- Song, B.L. and Liew, C.Y. (2018), "Customer engagement in social media and tourism brand performance implications", *Turkish Online Journal of Design, Art and Communication*, Vol. 8 No. Special Issue, pp. 1186-1194.
- Song, B.L., Liew, C.Y., Sia, J.Y. and Gopal, K. (2021), "Electronic word-of-mouth in travel social networking sites and young consumers' purchase intentions: an extended information adoption model", *Young Consumers*, Vol. 22 No. 4, pp. 521-538.
- Tayo, S.S., Adebola, S.T. and Yahya, D.O. (2019), "Social media: usage and influence on undergraduate studies in Nigerian universities", *International Journal of Education and Development Using Information and Communication Technology*, Vol. 15 No. 3, pp. 53-56.
- Tokunaga, R. (2015), "Perspectives on internet addiction, problematic internet use, and deficient self-regulation: contributions of communication research", *Annals of the International Communication Association*, Vol. 39 No. 1, pp. 131-161.
- Uлага, W. and Eggert, A. (2006), "Relationship value and relationship quality: broadening the nomological network of business-to-business relationships", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 40 Nos 3/4, pp. 311-327.
- UniRank (2021), "Colleges and universities on Facebook: 2021 Facebook university rankings", available at: <https://www.4icu.org/facebook/> (accessed 29 July 2022).
- Voorveld, H.A.M., Noort, G.V., Muntinga, D.G. and Bronner, F. (2018), "Engagement with social media and social media advertising: the differentiating role of platform type", *Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 47 No. 1, pp. 38-54.

- Whiting, A. and Williams, D. (2013), "Why people use social media: a uses and gratifications approach", *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, Vol. 16 No. 4, pp. 362-369.
- Zhang, K.Z., Benyoucef, M. and Zhao, S.J. (2016), "Building brand loyalty in social commerce: the case of brand microblogs", *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 14-25.
- Zoller, Y.J. and Muldoon, J. (2019), "Illuminating the principles of social exchange theory with Hawthorne studies", *Journal of Management History*, Vol. 25 No. 1, pp. 47-66.

Corresponding author

Bee Lian Song can be contacted at: song.beelian@apu.edu.my

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm

Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com