

The influence of social media marketing activities on customer loyalty: A study of e-commerce industry

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ABSTRACT

Web 2.0, focusing on user involvement and cooperation, is vital for online marketing. To succeed in such a cutthroat industry, every online business must place a premium on earning and retaining clients' trust and loyalty in the digital realm. The study's objective is to ascertain whether or not electronic consumer loyalty and online trust are enhanced by social media marketing. The results of the poll, which included 596 individuals, showed that social media marketing tools had a significant effect on consumers' faith in and commitment to businesses through digital channels. The results of this study will hopefully add to what has been applied to social media marketing for online businesses.

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1. Introduction

The modern marketing literature offers extensive studies of factors influencing consumers' final purchasing decisions. Salem (2018) defined it as the steps a customer takes after realizing they have a need: they look for solutions online, narrow their choices by weighing pros and disadvantages, and ultimately make a purchase. As a result, the buying process may be seen as a sequence of customer actions. It involves several factors, including what, when, where to buy, how to pay for it, and how much money to spend. Consumers' opinions of a business and its products or services will heavily influence their final purchasing decisions. Consumers' propensity to purchase is heavily influenced by their prior exposure to the brand and the level of satisfaction achieved by the item bought. In addition, advertisers may encourage purchases by creating campaigns that resonate with target audiences. Online media outlets for conveying a company's product and influencing customers' purchasing choices have proliferated in recent years. The development of a variety of ICTs has led to the emergence of such avenues (Manco-Chavez *et al.*, 2020)

Previous research focused on social media marketing activities demonstrated that creating meaningful relationships with consumers via digital channels is a cutting-edge method of publicizing a brand and reaching large numbers of people (Khoa, 2022; McClure & Seock, 2020). Some social media sites have appeared in recent years due to the rapid development of communication technology, prompting marketers to use them for easily engaging, talking, and working with their clients (Casper Ferm & Thaichon, 2021). Businesses have been given a huge boost in their ability to connect with customers and reinforce their brand thanks to the explosion of the Internet and information resources (Reveilhac & Blanchard, 2022). It is

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possible to exchange and broadcast a vast amount of information digitally via various web-based technologies that are part of social media platforms (Voorveld *et al.*, 2018). Multiple terminologies, such as "Web 2.0," "social networking communications," "social networking tools," "social networking sites," and "blogs," have been suggested in the past to represent the meaning of social media sites (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020).

Due to its importance in influencing customer purchasing behavior, the use of social media for discussing and marketing new or current goods or services has seen explosive development in recent years (Khoa *et al.*, 2021). Since the rise of internet media accessible through mobile devices, viewership of conventional forms of media has declined (Chatterjee *et al.*, 2021). Social media platforms are often used by customers in their quest to learn vital information about a company, as stated by Kar and Kushwaha (2021). Using a social networking site to learn about a company has become the norm as smartphones and other mobile devices have increased. In addition, they may be relied on to help marketers learn more about their target demographics to tailor their campaigns to individual customers better. Because of these benefits, more and more firms are putting their resources into promoting their offerings online in the hopes of swaying customers to make a purchase. Even while there's been a lot written about social media marketing, not many studies have examined how it affects buyers' choices (Casper Ferm & Thaichon, 2021). Much of the previous empirical research on social media marketing activities only looked at how they influenced consumers' intentions to buy rather than electronic loyalty (e-loyalty).

Despite a substantial corpus of earlier research examining the direct consequences of such activities on consumer behavior, fewer studies have addressed the mechanisms via which particular features of social media marketing might affect a customer's decision to make a purchase. There's evidence that social media marketing may boost brand value by increasing consumer's trust in the brand (Ebrahim, 2019; Hafez, 2021). Social media marketing characteristics are associated with increased brand loyalty, confirmed by other researchers (Ebrahim, 2019). Trust in brands has been the focus of a great deal of research because of the potential influence it has on other factors. However, empirical studies have not yet succeeded in demonstrating whether or not brand trust mediates the connections between social media marketing features and customers' e-loyalty.

Additionally, various research studies used several elements to quantify social media marketing. Attention their analysis of this notion, Khoa *et al.* (2020) zeroed in on trendiness, electronic word of mouth, personalization, entertainment, and interaction. To evaluate the efficacy of social media marketing in the insurance industry, Sano (2015) focused on the following four factors: perceived risk, tenderness, interaction, and personalization. Jo (2013) also examined social media advertising from three angles: commercials, content, and occasions. In addition, Kim (2017) used availability, responsiveness, information, and timeliness as metrics for social media advertising. Moreover, Seo and Park (2018) analyzed the achievement of social media advertising by considering elements such as novelty, usability, perceived risk, customization, and fame. This article, however, hopes to make a substantial contribution to the current empirical literature on social media marketing by combining measures of informativeness, interaction, perceived relevance, and amusement to see how these affect e-loyalty among consumers in Vietnam. The results might provide light on the ways in which these features of social media marketing affect customers' tendency to remain loyal, particularly in online shopping.

This research discussed the study methods and evaluated the relevant literature. Then, the results, discussion, and theoretical and practical implications of the study are provided. Finally, suggestions for future studies and limitations of the current study are discussed.

2. Literature review

2.1. Social media marketing

Brand marketers now have a new platform on which to build communities and distribute user-generated content: social media (Xu & Pratt, 2018). By definition, social media encompasses any "Web 2.0 apps that enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media consists of SNSs that disseminate data via user profiles (Aji *et al.*, 2020). When compared to more traditional mediums like television, radio, and print, its capacity to reach the intended audience is far higher (Chu *et al.*, 2020).

Conventional marketing strategies and social media marketing are two separate concepts. When it comes to online advertising, social media marketing is a specialized niche (Godey *et al.*, 2016). The term "social media marketing" is defined differently depending on the researcher. As a result, there is no generally accepted definition of social media marketing. From a business perspective, social media marketing is the process of using various social media platforms to promote a product or service (Hung & Khoa, 2022). When it comes to advertising, social media marketing refers to sharing content on various social media sites to promote a business and its products. The relational perspective, on the other hand, emphasizes establishing and sustaining mutually beneficial connections with customers through social media channels of communication.

Four features of social media marketing was proposed in this study, including interactivity, entertainment, informativeness, perceived relevance (Alalwan, 2018; Hanaysha, 2022; Wang *et al.*, 2019). Among the many aspects of digital marketing, interactivity has been the focus of much study. According to research, "interactivity" refers to a company's propensity to facilitate online information sharing and exchange among its constituents (Jiang *et al.*, 2021). An essential aspect of any effective social media marketing strategy now is the production of content that users will want to share because it is interesting, fun, or useful to them (Hanaysha, 2022). Zhu and Chang (2016) defined perceived relevance as the extent to which a customer considers a targeted ad to be personally relevant or helpful in accomplishing the consumer's stated objectives and values. The

informativeness extent to which advertising are able to enlighten and persuade viewers to generate favorable impressions of the advertised products (Nik Najib *et al.*, 2016).

2.2. Stimuli - Organism - Response (SOR model)

According to Mehrabian and Russell (1974) to the Stimulus-Organization-Response (SOR) model of environmental psychology, stimuli stand in for the external environmental factor of the organism, the organization stands in for the psychological transformation mechanism by which the user internalizes the stimulation into information, and the response stands in for the user's representation of the information content of the relevant response behavior in response to the external stimulus.

To investigate the impact of user engagement on conventional e-commerce website purchases, Liu developed a model that included cognitive emotions as mediators and consumer intents as reactions to traditional e-commerce website stimulus. SOR theory was applied to the study of online environments (Lee & Min, 2021); the social media marketing features served as external stimuli, and the user's internal emotional state (such as online trust) served as the organism to determine the user's e-loyalty with the site. Figure 1 was proposed as the theoretical model.

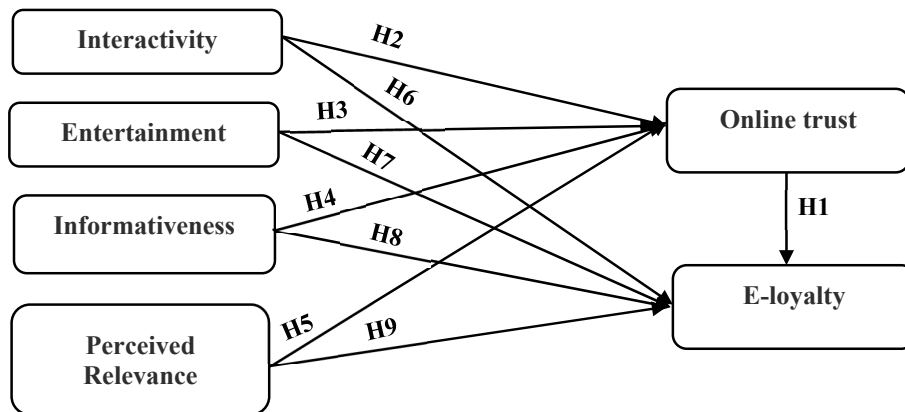


Fig. 1. Theoretical model

2.3. Online trust and E-loyalty

Shopping from the same vendors repeatedly does not always indicate brand loyalty, perhaps because this behavior is prompted by a dearth of attractive alternatives (Handarkho, 2020). A modern, theoretically sound method defines loyalty as the intersection of two factors: one behavioral and one attitude-based (Khoa & Nguyen, 2020). This final theory suggests that these two factors work hand in hand to create lasting loyalty. E-loyalty is now considered to be a part of the broader concept of website loyalty (also known as e-loyalty or website loyalty). With the advent of e-commerce comes a profound change in the power balance between purchasers and vendors (Al-dweeri *et al.*, 2019). It is crucial for new online companies to concentrate on creating a loyal client base and carefully analyzing the profitability of each customer group to avoid losing money due to the cheap switching costs for consumers (compared to the high expenditures for enterprises to recruit new e-customers).

The importance of trust in online purchases cannot be overstated when compared to more conventional methods of doing business (Reichheld *et al.*, 2000). This is because e-customers can't physically evaluate the goods or service before making a purchase, therefore a high degree of trust is necessary to minimize risk and ensure a smooth transaction (Lee & Min, 2021). In the absence of trust, consumers are more inclined to go elsewhere for their needs. In addition, it has been stated that the absence of human connection makes it more challenging for online businesses to establish credibility with their e-customers. It is believed that unlike conventional trust, which is founded on personal rapport between buyers and sellers, e-trust is mostly an intellectual phenomenon based on the perceived credibility of online businesses.

Reichheld and Schefter (2000) made some insightful observations on the connection between e-trust and e-loyalty, noting that to acquire the loyalty of clients, you must first gain their trust. That's been the case forever, but it's more so in the digital age. Customers are more likely to give sensitive information with a company they feel they can trust, which in turn facilitates the establishment of long-lasting, trusting connections between the company and its customers that are essential to generating and maintaining e-loyalty (Khoa, 2020). The positive and substantial relationship between online trust and e-loyalty has been established by a number of additional research as well (Boonlertvanich, 2019). The following hypothesis H1 is developed in light of the above debate.

H1. Online trust impacts positively on customer's e-loyalty in online shopping.

2.4. Social media marketing features and online trust

Customers' levels of confidence in a company's ability to deliver on their wishes and requirements while shopping online (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2018). Consumers have steadfast faith in a brand because they associate it with feelings of safety and reliability (Khoa & Nguyen, 2022). Consumers' faith in a brand may be bolstered by social media, which can then have a

direct impact on their actions and the decisions of online retailers (Lee & Min, 2021). Social media marketing includes a variety of value-added actions with the primary goals of informing, promoting, and establishing credibility in the digital marketplace (Dwivedi & McDonald, 2020). According to Tatar and Eren-Erdogmus (2016), there is a correlation between social media marketing and credibility in the digital sphere. Dwivedi and McDonald (2020) argued similarly, arguing that there is a positive correlation between online trust and social media communication. Customers are more likely to have faith in a brand if they are provided with credible brand-related information via social media platforms. Furthermore, social media marketing functions significantly impact customers' confidence in online businesses. For this reason, the following conjectures are proposed:

H₂: *Interactivity impacts positively on online trust in online shopping.*

H₃: *Entertainment impacts positively on online trust in online shopping.*

H₄: *Informativeness impacts positively on online trust in online shopping.*

H₅: *Perceived Relevance impacts positively on online trust in online shopping.*

2.5. Social media marketing features and e-loyalty

Ismail (2017) conducted research on the effect of social media marketing activities on brand loyalty and discovered a substantial relationship between them. When a brand incorporates popular and relevant content promoted across numerous platforms, Tatar and Eren-Erdogmus (2016) discovered that social media marketing has a considerable influence on loyalty. Social media marketing was proven to have a beneficial effect on brand loyalty. According to research by Rialti *et al.* (2017), consumers' involvement with and confidence in a brand's social media community has a direct impact on that brand's ability to inspire loyalty. Brand awareness and perception were studied by Bruhn *et al.* (2012), who contrasted the impact of conventional and social media. According to their findings, conventional media had a greater effect on brand awareness, while social media had a greater effect on brand image. Brand postings, which are one of the post qualities, are seen as a significant benefit of social networks and have a favorable effect on consumer social interaction (Hafez, 2021). As a result, the rest hypotheses of this research assumed:

H₆: *Interactivity impacts positively on customer's e-loyalty in online shopping.*

H₇: *Entertainment impacts positively on customer's e-loyalty in online shopping.*

H₈: *Informativeness impacts positively on customer's e-loyalty in online shopping.*

H₉: *Perceived Relevance impacts positively on customer's e-loyalty in online shopping.*

3. Research method

This article set out to analyze the effect of social media marketing features on online trust, which ultimately influences their propensity to make customers' e-loyalty. As a result, this study use a survey to gather information. 596 individuals, all regulars at various electronic commerce sites and social network users, took part. Since it is crucial to establish an appropriate sample strategy for data collecting in survey studies so that the required number of answers may be obtained, the purposive sampling methodology was used. This is due to the fact that it is the most commonly accepted method for gathering consumer data cheaply, especially in cases when the sample frame cannot be provided.

Existing studies' measuring items of components were altered for use in the survey developed for data gathering. First, four items, which measure online trust (OT), are adapted from Bhaskar *et al.* (2018). In addition, three items were used to assess consumers' e-loyalty (ELOY) in online shopping (Khoa & Nguyen, 2020). The 14-items used to evaluate social media marketing characteristics, were adapted from Alalwan (2018). Four items were used to evaluate the degree of interactivity (INT), and a similar number of items were used to gauge the level of entertainment (ENT). Finally, this research used 3 items to evaluate how perceived relevance (REL) is, and 3 to gauge how informativeness (INF) it is. All questions were measured using a five-point Likert scale, from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Explanatory and predictive studies were conducted using Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), and the software program SmartPLS 3.2.7 was utilized for data analysis (Hair Jr *et al.*, 2016).

There were 596 replies judged valid for analysis from the participants in this research. An examination of demographics revealed that men accounted for 53.7% of the population and females for 46.3%. In terms of age distribution, the data showed that 26% were under the age from 18 to 25, 26% were between the ages of 26 and 35, 24.8% were between the ages of 36 and 45, and just 23.2% were aged 46 and over. In addition, demographic data showed that 18.1% of respondents were students, 17.3% of respondents' occupation are lecturer; house wife, office worker, business owner; respectively, are 24.5%, 20.1%, 20.0%. Finally, the survey data showed that every respondent was active on social media and maintained at least one account on Facebook (34.1%), Instagram (24.8%), Tiktok (27.7%), and Zalo (13.4%). Table 1 shows the demographic information.

Table 1
Demographic information

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	320	53.7
	Female	276	46.3
Age	18 - 25	155	26.0
	26 - 35	155	26.0
	36 - 45	148	24.8
	> 45	138	23.2
Occupation	Student	108	18.1
	Lecturer	103	17.3
	House wife	146	24.5
	Office worker	120	20.1
	Business Owner	119	20.0
Social network	Facebook	203	34.1
	Instagram	148	24.8
	Tiktok	165	27.7
	Zalo	80	13.4

4. Result

All of the data demonstrate that the measuring model satisfies all of the criteria that are often required. It is possible to use the saturated model's SRMR (SRMR = 0.067) as a quality indicator since it is less than 0.08 (Henseler *et al.*, 2015).

Research findings showed that the Cronbach's alpha coefficients (CA) are higher than 0.7. All outer loading are higher than 0.708. The model meets the requirement of construct reliability, as shown by the fact that both of the composite reliability measures (CR) presented in Table 1 are larger than 0.7. In addition, the Average Variance Extracted values (AVE) are more than 0.5 (Table 1), indicating that the composites are not unidimensional, and hence obtain convergent validity as latent variables. Finally, the HTMT drops below 0.85, indicating that all of the variables are discriminant (Table 2).

Table 2
Result of Measurement model

Construct	CA	CR	AVE	Outer loading	HTMT value				
					ELOY	ENT	INF	INT	OT
ELOY	0.751	0.858	0.668	[0.784-0.835]					
ENT	0.87	0.911	0.719	[0.834-0.855]	0.749				
INF	0.878	0.925	0.804	[0.88-0.914]	0.73	0.438			
INT	0.864	0.908	0.713	[0.799-0.914]	0.803	0.429	0.646		
OT	0.91	0.937	0.788	[0.878-0.92]	0.785	0.577	0.577	0.523	
REL	0.923	0.951	0.866	[0.924-0.941]	0.846	0.486	0.505	0.462	0.576

The R^2 values and the magnitude and significance of the structural relationship coefficients were analyzed to evaluate the structural model. Bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) generates bootstrap of standardized regression coefficients (Hair Jr *et al.*, 2016). The whole set of beta coefficients are supported in Table 3.

Table 3
Result of Structural model

Relationships	Hypothesis	Beta	t-value	VIF	f ²	Result
OT → ELOY	H1	0.162	3.935	1.816	0.055	Supported
INT → OT	H2	0.134	2.71	1.565	0.021	Supported
ENT → OT	H3	0.268	5.765	1.333	0.098	Supported
INF → OT	H4	0.222	4.462	1.638	0.055	Supported
REL → OT	H5	0.255	5.006	1.439	0.082	Supported
INT → ELOY	H6	0.28	6.678	1.598	0.186	Supported
ENT → ELOY	H7	0.222	5.176	1.463	0.127	Supported
INF → ELOY	H8	0.101	2.386	1.727	0.023	Supported
REL → ELOY	H9	0.363	10.66	1.558	0.351	Supported

$$R^2_{OT} = 0.449; R^2_{ELOY} = 0.736$$

$$Q^2_{OT} = 0.349; Q^2_{ELOY} = 0.484$$

In Table 3, electronic loyalty is explained by the suggested model at 73.6% ($R^2_{ELOY} = 0.736$), while online trust is explained by the model at 44.9% ($R^2_{OT} = 0.449$). It has been discovered that electronic loyalty is more explained by customer's online trust and social media marketing features. Moreover, perceived relevance has a large effect size on electronic loyalty ($f^2 = 0.351 > 0.35$); interactivity has a medium effect size on electronic loyalty ($f^2 = 0.186 > 0.15$). Predictive significance for a given dependent construct (E-loyalty and Online trust) in the structural model is shown by Q^2 values greater than zero for a designated reflecting endogenous latent variable ($Q^2_{OT} = 0.349$; $Q^2_{ELOY} = 0.484$).

5. Discussion

Since the rise of modern communication technologies, an increasing number of companies have turned to social media as a means of engaging with customers and distributing their messages. At first, social networking was seen as nothing more than a way to keep in touch with old friends and family. In today's world, thanks to social media, we can instantly reach a large audience and share our thoughts, feelings, and emotions with them (Dwivedi & McDonald, 2020). Because of the convenience of online information sharing, social interaction, and content creation, social media have attracted billions of users worldwide over the last decade. Moreover, social media makes it possible to join a number of online communities full of individuals and companies that have similar interests (Erkan & Evans, 2016).

This research result pointed out that social media marketing features have a positive impact on online trust and electronic loyalty; moreover, the impact of online trust on the customer's e-loyalty was confirmed in this study. The result was presented in Fig. 2.

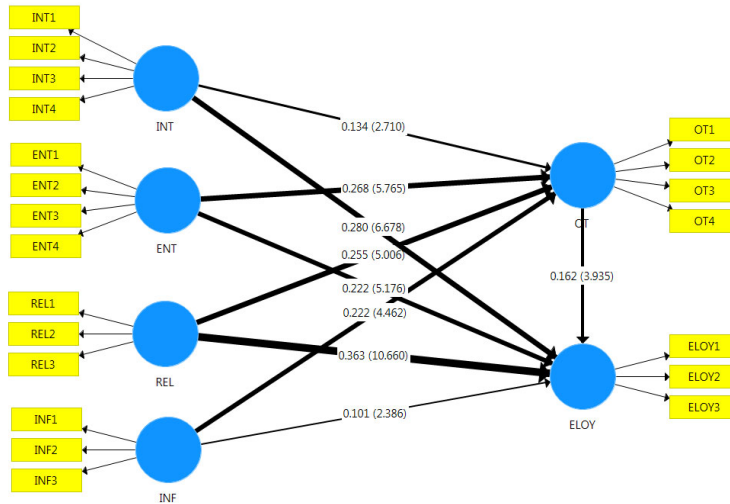


Fig. 2. Research result modelist model

Hypothesis H1 was supported, which online trust impacts positively on e-loyalty (Beta = 0.162 > 0, t-value = 3.935, p-value = 0.000). When consumers have faith in an online business, they are more likely to make purchases (Anaya-Sánchez *et al.*, 2020). Customer trust in a service setting minimizes their anxiety and exposure, but these benefits are intangible (Khoa, 2020). Several studies, on the banking sector and on the opposite of online clothing purchasing, have revealed that trust is positively correlated with loyalty (Khoa, 2020; Minh Ha & Bui Thanh, 2019).

The social media marketing features affect positively on the online trust. In which, entertainment has the strongest impact on online trust (Beta = 0.268 > 0, t-value = 5.765, p-value = 0.000). The second and third impact factors are the perceived relevance (Beta = 0.255 > 0, t-value = 5.006, p-value = 0.000), and informativeness (Beta = 0.222 > 0, t-value = 4.462, p-value = 0.000). Lastly, Interactivity also has a positive influence on online trust (Beta = 0.134 > 0, t-value = 2.71, p-value = 0.007). Consequently, the hypotheses from H2 to H5 are accepted. The relevance of social media marketing and relationship quality (commitment, trust, and satisfaction) in e-commerce has been shown by prior studies (Yadav & Rahman, 2017). Authors agree that online trust, and contentment make up the trifecta of relationship quality, and hence that it is a complete assessment of relationships (Hajli *et al.*, 2017). Sharma and Klein (2020) used Facebook to show that social media marketing assists businesses improve their interactions with consumers of fashion brands. Online shoppers must have complete faith in the things they purchase since they cannot examine the goods before purchase (Haque & Mazumder, 2020). Moreover, a customer's faith in a business is influenced by the company's social media marketing in relation to social commerce.

Similar to how social media marketing aid businesses (in this case, in the leather sector), they assist to strengthen customer loyalty to the brand (Casper Ferm & Thaichon, 2021; Nobar *et al.*, 2020). This research result reconfirmed these conclusions. Hypotheses H6, H7, H8, and H9 were supported by the statistical result. Entertainment (Beta = 0.222 > 0, t-value = 5.176, p-value = 0.000), perceived relevance (Beta = 0.363 > 0, t-value = 10.66, p-value = 0.000), informativeness (Beta = 0.101 > 0, t-value = 2.386, p-value = 0.016), Interactivity (Beta = 0.28 > 0, t-value = 6.678, p-value = 0.000) impact significantly positively on the electronic loyalty. Businesses are using the power of social media in order to better understand and serve their consumers, who are then more likely to exhibit positive behavioral reactions to the online shop as a result of the positive impressions left on them. Customer confidence may be boosted if they have a positive impression of the marketing tactics

used in the online environment. Empirical evidence supports the claim that marketing campaigns centered on social media platforms may increase electronic loyalty (Casper Ferm & Thaichon, 2021). Consumers' tastes, purchases, and brand loyalty are all influenced by the brands they interact with online because of the experiences they have there (Ebrahim, 2019).

6. Conclusion

This research found that in Vietnam's e-commerce setting, customers' e-loyalty and online trust were higher when social media marketing features (interactivity, informativeness, entertainment, perceived relevance) were present. As a result, businesses in Vietnam's e-commerce sector may boost customer e-loyalty by using social media marketing and relationship quality criteria through online trust. The results of this research might have a significant beneficial effect on the growth of Vietnamese online shopping companies by enhancing customer loyalty and online trust.

The results of the survey show where improvements may be made to the level of service offered to clients, which should increase levels of satisfaction and, therefore, loyalty. According to the existing literature, a company's long-term success depends more on providing value to its customers than on acquiring them. Accordingly, our study contributes to the literature by emphasizing the importance of electronic loyalty in the digital realm. In addition, the majority of respondents believed that they provide helpful suggestions to companies through their online profiles. In contrast to the first assertion, people do not agree as strongly with the other statements that they promote and suggest firms to friends and family. Customers that demonstrate behavioral loyalty have said they follow firms online out of curiosity, rather than obligation. People who have been following a business on social media are more likely to buy from that business. The loyalty agreement metrics suggest that customers are more likely to show actions indicative of loyalty rather than only attitudes about a brand. These findings have been reinforced by the regression analysis. Customers who enjoy the service they get from an online store are more likely to return after trying out competing options. The findings show that consumers place greater trust in information that comes straight from an official profile than they do in the opinions of random users. However, the general public does not believe that businesses never fib or deliver anything but truthful information. But it was unexpected to learn that people saw company websites as more reliable sources of information than recommendations from friends and family.

Based on the results of this research, it seems that interacting with customers through social media has become less of a hassle as a result of technical developments. In addition to luring in new customers, businesses are also using social media to retain their current clientele. Customer loyalty cycles provide a clear framework for understanding the interplay between a web store's many touchpoints and the actions of its patrons. Among the many factors that influence the success of a transaction between a buyer and a seller, it was found that online trust, which has an effect on customer loyalty, is the most crucial. With the help of the Internet, companies can now stay competitive by providing their services around the clock. Quantitative studies of customer loyalty reveal that users actively engage with brand sites through their own social networking accounts. People use social media mostly to keep in touch with friends and family, but they also use it to learn about what their favorite companies have to offer.

There are significant caveats to this research that can't be ignored. To begin, social media marketing features were treated as a higher-level concept in this investigation. However, some characteristics of social media marketing; such as word-of-mouth, customization, lack off in this study. These features might be studied in the future to enrich theory and management practice. Since brand authenticity is gaining popularity in the modern day, future research may focus on the brand's credibility in an online setting.

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