

Building Relationship Quality and Brand Loyalty through Social Media Engagement in Higher Education Marketing

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In the era where promoting a brand has become priority of every industry to flourish and strengthening the brand has become the critical success for long-term growth. The growing competitive environment in the higher education sector has led to the need for higher education institutions to effectively manage their brands. Social media engagement has come in forefront to support it in recent times. This study aims to explore the effect of social media engagement on building relationship quality and brand loyalty in the higher education marketing. Social media engagement dimensions of social interaction, sharing of information and information quantity are examined as antecedents to relationship quality. Relationship qualities are placed as antecedents to brand loyalty. Data were collected through survey questionnaire from 402 undergraduate and postgraduate students from five top higher education institutions in Malaysia. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to analyze the data. Results show that social interaction, sharing of information and information quantity have significant direct effect on relationship quality. Relationship quality has positive effect on the brand loyalty. The contribution of this research is twofold. From a theoretical perspective, the social exchange theory (SET) is used to explain and conceptualize customer brand loyalty through the social media engagement and relationship quality paradigms. The SET was developed through the understanding of student engagement with university's social media sites contributed to reciprocate positive behavior and positively strengthen the relationship quality among them, as well as with the institutions. Brand loyalty was applied and examined as economic outcome for SET. In the practical perspective, the findings may assist higher education marketers in the development of effective social media engagement strategies to build relationship quality and brand loyalty. The higher education institutions have to develop a sustainable social media marketing strategy involves developing clear goals, setting objectives, meeting the needs of target audiences, analyze the market, setting content strategy, resources planning, strategy implementation and evaluate performance.

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