

Social media brand engagement in higher education: The role of brand experience

Le rôle de l'expérience de marque dans la création de l'engagement envers la marque : Secteur de l'enseignement supérieur

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Abstract

Today, as globalization has become the focal point of higher education, competition has become a central preoccupation for higher education institutions around the world. The intensification of competition in this sector requires the strengthening of brand prestige and the use of social network communication strategies to leverage the power of these tools to increase student engagement with their institutions. The literature on social media brand engagement is growing significantly, yet there is limited research studying the concept in the context of higher education.

In this article, we present a systematic literature review on the brand experience as the driver of social media brand engagement in the higher education sector and explore the utility of using social networks as a tool to engage students with their institutions by reviewing different models studying and analyzing this concept. This work could be a useful and informative tool for higher education institutions and researchers in this field to redefine their academic research efforts to study the concept of social media brand engagement in the higher education sector.

Keywords: Brand Engagement, Brand experience, Higher Education, User gratification theory, Social Media, Service-Dominant Logic.

Classification JEL : M3

Paper type : Theoretical Research

Introduction

Engaging consumers with brands has become a strategic objective of the marketing function of organizations. Consumer engagement is the new hot topic of strategic marketing and branding (Gambetti et al., 2016) and has received ample attention from both practitioners and academics alike (Brodie et al., 2019). Consumers get involved in interactive experiences with brands, leading to enduring and intimate relationships (Sashi, 2012). Notably, there is an ever-growing interest from marketers in the concept of student engagement and its outcomes for higher education institutions (Vuori, 2014). Historically, student engagement has been considered from the perspectives of learning (Taylor et al., 2011), academic experiences (Astin, 1984), student conduct (London et al., 2007), degree of effort to acquire knowledge (Northey et al., 2015), participation in the learning community (Zhao and Kuh, 2004), and the time and energy expended by students (Kuh, 2003). However, student commitment to a Higher Education Institution (HEI) has not yet been fully investigated according to Hollebeek et al.'s survey on consumer engagement in different contexts and nomological network models (2014).

With the rise of social media, the traditional roles of the seller and the customer have changed. Seller-customer relationships have evolved such that the former can now easily connect, share, and exchange information with their customers (Gambetti et al., 2015; Sashi, 2012). Customers can communicate directly with brands (Tsai and Men, 2013) under their own conditions and through the channels of their choice (Stone and Woodcock, 2013). As a result, new forms of customer-brand interaction have emerged, and customers have become a major factor in influencing different marketing outcomes, such as brand awareness, buying behavior, and post-purchase evaluation (Brodie et al., 2013; Gambetti et al., 2015; Sashi, 2012; Tsai and Men, 2013).

Social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter have become key tools for social media advertising through sponsored/promoted tweets on Twitter, banner advertisements and brand communities on Facebook and LinkedIn, and video advertisements on YouTube that can evoke engagement (Boreman & Kruikemeier, 2016). Even though a few attempts have been made in the past to explore the relationship between SNS brand experience and brand engagement in HEIs, these studies are few and remain inconclusive (Salgado & Vela, 2019). Likewise, studies explaining how HEIs leverage the power of customer-brand equity drivers to keep graduated students engaged with the institution appear to be extremely scarce. Additionally, the role of brand affect (emotions and feelings) as a mediator in service marketing, such as in HEIs, still needs to be empirically established, especially how it contributes to the customer (students) engagement with their respective HEI brand (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). Thus, this study aims to bridge these conceptual and empirical gaps in the literature by integrating customer and brand engagement perspectives into the customer-based brand equity model and providing valuable insights in this context.

The current article aims to expand on the existing studies on brand management that used the multi-dimensional construct of customer engagement (Dessart et al., 2015; So et al., 2014). In particular, Hollebeek et al. (2014) used the three dimensions of customer engagement, namely cognitive (e.g., interest in using the brand), affective (e.g., feeling about using the brand), and behavioral (e.g., behaviors related to the brand) engagements to examine the possible antecedents. This article reviews the literature that broadens the scope and conceptualization of the engagement concept and brand experience by extending it beyond the industrial context to the higher education sector.

2. Literature review

2.1. The concept of customer brand engagement: theoretical foundations

Engagement has been analyzed from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, including

marketing, management, organizational behavior, education, sociology, psychology, information systems, and political science. It has also been discussed from different perspectives and in different contexts. In business, engagement is referred to as a contract. The current research aims to expand on the existing studies on brand management that used the multi-dimensional construct of customer engagement (Dessart et al., 2015; So et al., 2014). In particular, Hollebeek et al. (2014) used the three dimensions of customer engagement, namely, cognitive (e.g., interest in using integrated resort brand), affective (e.g., feeling about using integrated resort brand), and behavioral (e.g., behaviors related to integrated resort brand) engagements to examine the possible antecedents as an organizational activity with internal stakeholders, in marketing, "engagement has been discussed as the activity of the customer towards the company" (Kumar et al., 2010; Vivek et al. 2012 ; Brodie et al., 2011). Pansari & Kumar (2017) suggest that when a relationship is successful and has an emotional connection, then it progresses to the stage of engagement.

Customer engagement has been discussed in marketing in the recent past (Brodie et al., 2011); (Kumar et al., 2010); (Vivek et al., 2012) as a measure of the outcome of business activities. Similarly, researchers and practitioners have discussed some other customer-centric measures such as customer satisfaction, involvement, loyalty, trust, customer commitment and brand value to assess the effectiveness of the marketing activities of the firm.

In marketing, the study on engagement was first developed in the field of industrial marketing to examine the relations between suppliers and buyers. Commitment in this context reflects an organization's willingness to maintain a relationship with a partner, a tendency to resist change that can lead to short-term sacrifices (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Subsequently developed in marketing service and consumer behavior in the relational paradigm, it helps explain in particular the stability of preferences. When applied to brands, the commitment corresponds to an intention of stability of behavior (fixing in the choice of brand), to the will to maintain a lasting relationship with the brand; it constitutes a direct antecedent of loyalty behaviors. Two of its dimensions are mainly mobilized in the context of the brand: the cognitive (or calculated) dimension and the affective dimension. The normative dimension (moral rules that govern relationships), which is less well suited to informal relationships, is most often ignored (Bozzo et al., 2008).

The theory of engagement and trust (Morgan and Hunt, 1994) paved the way for relationship marketing. According to this theory, the main objective of companies is to establish positive relationships with customers by developing commitment and trust, this theory incorporates concepts of SET (Social Exchange Theory) and organizational behavior. According to Homans (1958), a social exchange is a voluntary exchange of resources between two or more actors. A social exchange relationship is based on the reciprocity norm (Bagozzi, 1995), "which postulates that if one exchange partner does something advantageous for another, a reciprocity obligation is generated for good faith behavior" (Omar & Khairudin, 2009, p. 199). This reciprocity may involve tangible resources, such as, the exchange of money, or it can be of a socio-emotional nature, such as the exchange of respect, trust, commitment or loyalty (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003). Exchanges may also happen between human entities (e.g., students) and non-human entities (e.g., institutions and their SNSs: social networking sites) (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997).

Since customers are defined to be those individuals who purchase products or services for personal consumption, students of HEIs are also customers and co-creators of HEIs brands (Elsharnouby, 2015). Thus, in this study, students are interchangeably referred to as customers to enhance the comprehension of marketing concepts examined in the study.

Even though researchers in the past have explored the determinants that predict students' engagement with the studies, education service provider (Hung & Yuen, 2010; Sim

et al., 2018) through SNSs and with university events (Altschwager et al., 2018), the concept of brand engagement of HEIs through the SNS remains scarcely explored. Often, satisfied HEIs students demonstrate their loyalty to the institute by displaying the brand engagement behaviors like positive WOM (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2001; Herold et al., 2016) even after graduating (Wilkins & Balakrishnan, 2013) which helps HEIs in attracting new students (Shurair & Pokharel, 2019). The significance of positive WOM from students has also been linked with the HEIs long-term relationship with all stakeholders (Iskhakova et al., 2017; Shahsavar & Sudzina, 2017). Previous literature that assessed students as customers majorly focused on the quality of education instead of marketing concepts (e.g. Abdullah et al., 2015; Shah et al., 2013), highlighting the need for HEIs to assess the brand engagement opportunities from the marketing perspective as a measure of loyalty of students and the intensity of the student-university relationship. The remainder of this study is as laid out. First, brand engagement and SNSs are discussed in general. It is followed by a specific discussion of SNSs and student engagement in the context of HEIs marketing. Next, the discussion leads to the development of the conceptual framework and its empirical results. Finally, the findings and implications are presented for marketing scholars and HEIs marketers.

2.2. Social media brand engagement

A brand page is a place where individuals who have created a profile that reveals their true identity, interact, in a personalized and instantaneous way, more or less frequently with the brand or with other people with common interests, by means of texts, images, videos in order to share their experience with the brand (actions, values, symbols, etc.). It is also a place of expression/reinforcement of one's (real or ideal) self (Hollenbeck and Kaikati, 2012). Given these specificities, consumer engagement with the brand via the brand page on social networks, has as its object both the brand (Consumer Brand Engagement - CBE) and the other fans of the brand page (social engagement).

Recently, a stream of research has developed that explicitly makes the brand the object of engagement via social networks. This has given rise to the notion of Consumer Brand Engagement (CBE), in other words, consumer engagement with the brand. Based on relatively exhaustive literature reviews in marketing and in various related disciplines (psychology, sociology, management, etc.) and focusing on consumer engagement, this paper examines the role of social networks in the development of consumer engagement. Focusing on the consumer, these works reflect three main views of commitment: 1) a psychological or motivational state (Mollen and Wilson, 2010; Vivek, Beatty and Morgan, 2012); 2) behavioral manifestations (Van Doorn et al, 2010) - a view shared by practitioners (Mollen and Wilson, 2010); and 3) a combination of cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions (Brodie et al, 2011; Dwivedi, 2015; Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie, 2014).

The third approach, the multidimensional approach, is the most widely shared by marketing authors (Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie, 2014). In that it is holistic, it also allows for an account of consumers' perceptions of brands: both utilitarian, hedonic and symbolic but also of all facets of consumer-brand interaction (Dwivedi, 2015). In this article, the three-dimensional perspective is adopted and Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie's definition is chosen: "Positive brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity during or in connection with consumer interactions with the brand" (2014, p. 154). It has the advantage of focusing on the notion of interaction, which lends itself well to social networks, and of considering a behavioral dimension, which is relevant for understanding brand engagement via these networks.

Going back to the seminal work on engagement in the relational brand approach, we conceptualize each of the dimensions as follows. The cognitive dimension refers to a calculated (or instrumental) motivation that reflects the fan's interest in pursuing the relationship with the

brand on the social network. This dimension reflects a self-interested commitment (expected benefits of the relationship) and is cognitive in nature as it results from a belief in the superiority of the brand (Bozzo et al, 2008). The affective dimension reflects the affective links that the fan has with the brand and the pleasure he/she takes in interacting with the brand. This dimension is linked to a hedonic motivation which is closely related to brand attachment (i.e. strong emotional link to the brand) (Lacoeuilhe, 2000; Thomson, MacInnis and Park, 2005). The affective dimension of commitment and attachment are sometimes confused in brand research (Fullerton, 2005). Finally, the behavioral dimension corresponds to the activities carried out by the consumer during his/her interaction with the brand on the social network; in other words, his/her participation in activities initiated by or related to the brand (Van Doorn et al., 2010; Vivek, Beatty and Morgan, 2012).

2.2.1. User gratification theory

Many theories and models are used for understanding behavior in social media. Looking at the literature related to social media research we discovered that the Use and Gratification Theory (UGT) is one of the most widely used theories to explain consumer's motivation to engage in social networks. The main objective of the UGT is to clarify the causes for which people choose a specific type of media in order to improve the understanding of social and individual gratifications and also to explain the motivations of users when they interact with a media (Hossain, 2019). Chen ,Yang, and Tang (2013) show that entertainment, social need and the need for information have stronger effects on their attitudes towards the use of the online brand community, which supports the arguments of UGT. Gao and Feng (2016) who conducted research on microblogging and other SNSs in China, revealed that social interaction, entertainment and information-seeking factors significantly motivate the Customer engagement. Lee and Lee's (2014) studies on student engagement found that motivation to engage in SNSs was the enjoyment of the content posted and the maintenance of interpersonal relationships with other people in the SNSs. (Jayasingh,2019)

2.2.2. Service dominant logic (S-D Logic)

The work of the SD-logic or 'service dominant logic' (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) suggests an evolution in marketing concepts by emphasising an approach centred on the relationship in the exchange, integrating the role of networks of multiple players in the creation of value on the market. Wishing to go beyond a product-centred approach (G-D logic, Good Dominant Logic), this trend proposes that the notion of service, in the sense of 'rendering service', should be considered central, or in other words, the idea that exchanges are built around 'a process of doing something for someone' (Vargo and Lusch, 2009). In this context, product and service are not opposed, since what we can do can take the form of both a product and a service. The definition of the concept of service is therefore quite encompassing: 'the application of specialised skills (knowledge and know-how), through actions, processes and performance, for the benefit of another entity or for the entity itself' (Vargo and Lusch, 2009). This definition considers the company in a market extended to its stakeholders. The latter are full players in the process of creating value in the market. The emphasis is therefore placed on the notion of co-creation and the role of networks, as emphasised in the field of innovation. 'One of the distinctive features of S-D logic compared with G-D logic is that it considers consumers, employees and organisations as operating resources, endogenous to both exchanges and the creation of value (Vargo and Lusch, 2009). This vision renders obsolete the separation between supplier and customer and considers that both supplier and customer can be beneficiaries/producers of the exchange relationship and participate in the creation of value, and are embedded in a network of relationships. In this way, S-D logic makes it possible to understand exchange at both micro and macro levels, and to consider the historical, social and cultural context in order to understand market phenomena (Penaloza and Venkatesh, 2006). The

authors propose to renew the marketing concepts defined in their view since the 1800s and mainly used until the 1980s. From this period onwards, the marketing vocabulary evolved into a so-called transitional lexicon linked to the development of service marketing, relationship marketing and resource theory, while remaining firmly anchored in a product logic (G-D logic) (Vargo et Lusch, 2004 ; Vargo et al., 2008).

2.2.3. Student engagement

In higher education context, students are the customers who use the services provided by the higher education institution brand (Waqas et al., 2014). This means that the phenomenon of customer brand engagement can explain student engagement with the higher education institution brand. Student engagement with the HEI brand can be viewed from the perspective of relationship marketing theory and the service-dominant (S-D) logic.

The studies included in the SD-logic or 'service dominant logic' current (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) suggest an evolution of marketing concepts by putting forward an approach centered on the relationship in the exchange, integrating the role of networks of multiple actors in the creation of value on the market. Wishing to go beyond the framework of a product-centered approach (G-D logic, good dominant logic), this current proposes to consider as central the notion of service, in the sense of 'rendering service', or in other words, the idea that exchanges are built around "a process of doing something for someone" (Vargo and Lusch, 2009).

Today, HEIs should not only think about providing better services but also about developing relationships with their students to engage them with the institution. Based on the relational transcendence of S-D logic, student's behavior depends on their interactive experiences with other stakeholders, such as, the administrative and academic staff of a higher education institution (Vivek et al., 2014). Student engagement can be defined as "a psychological and motivational state composed of cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions, based on student's interactive experiences with the HEI brand". This definition is similar to the definitions proposed by Bowden (2009), Van Doorn et al. (2010), Brodie et al. (2013), and Hollebeek et al. (2014). Conduit et al., (2016) define engagement as "the willingness of a student to be involved in the institution's life. Recent studies have considered student engagement as a cognitive, affective and behavioral construct (Conduit et al., 2016; Fredricks et al., 2004; Lam et al., 2014). The cognitive dimension of student engagement is manifested through a process related to thinking, their level of concentration, and mental activity regarding their academic experiences in an HEI (Northey et al., 2015; Scott & Craig-Lees, 2010). Cognitive engagement can be measured by assessing students' activities, which reflect their mental concentration and approach to the learning experience (Lam et al., 2014).

The affective dimension of student engagement manifests positive emotions towards the institution's brand (Northey et al., 2015). It is related to their attitude towards the higher education institution. Factors, such as, sense of affiliation, identification and commitment to the HEI reflect the affective dimension of student engagement (Lam et al., 2014; London et al., 2016), sense of comfort, belonging and motivation are the key elements in creating positive emotions in students (Northey et al., 2015) that result in affective engagement.

The behavioral dimension encompasses the student's desire to invest energy and time in tasks or activities (Conduit et al., 2016) such as class attendance, participation in classes, extracurricular activities, and homework completion are manifestations of students' behavioral engagement (Lam et al., 2014; London et al., 2007).

2.3. Brand experience

The increasing importance of brand experience in the context of engagement is attributed to the service-dominant logic (S-D logic) as a new marketing perspective (Mohd-Ramly & Omar, 2017). Previous marketing literature has established the central role of experience in shaping

satisfaction, relationship quality, behavioral intention, attitude and brand equity (Barnes et al., 2014).

In the context of marketing, experience is referred to as "*the creation of a perception in the minds of customers as a result of interaction with the brand*" (Potdar et al., 2018) and as the total perception or subjective response resulting from service delivery (Lewis & Chambers, 2000). Marketers are advised to create a sense of attachment with customers by orchestrating holistic experiences. In essence, a brand and its marketing activities play a vital role in influencing the mindset of customers regarding their knowledge and attitude.

2.3.1. Sensory brand experience

In a virtual environment, such as, Facebook, experiences are created through internet-connected media that enable multi-sensory interactions between customers and brands (Fiore et al., 2005). The virtual customer experience is interpreted as a visual representation of the physical experience. It is argued that these customer experiences do influence their online engagement behavior on SNSs brand (Hsu et al., 2012).

Multiple brand cues create a brand experience, such as colors, melodies, logos, slogans, characters and stories associated with the brand (Morgan-Thomas & Veloutson 2013; Nysveen et al., 2013). In particular, brands that employ rich content and interactivity on their SNSs, enhance the online experience, which leads to increased customer engagement (Tafesse, 2016). In the higher education context, the interaction and socialization that happens between customers and the brand (student and the higher education institution) community also defines the sensory experience for customers, it allows students, who follow social media SNSs to have a sensory experience related to HEIs (higher education institutions) when they interact with the SNSs and other stakeholders of the HEI (Farhat et al.2020).

2.3.2. Intellectual brand experience

Intellectual experience, also known as cognitive experience, involves the cognition and problem solving stimulated in customer's mind towards brands. Intellectual brand experience refers to the cognitive experiences that customers get from products and services that lead them to actively connect with the brand and share information about the brand. (for example: curiosity, positive thinking). The brand's ability to create an intellectual experience encourages consumers to create new perspectives on the previous experience with the brand, and to seek more information (Schmitt, 1999). In the context of social media, it may be a matter of looking for information related to the brand, its activities and its offers. Similarly, when higher education institution social media SNSs share online speakers and educational content with their audience, this includes the intellectual experience that students receive through the institution's SNSs.

2.3.3. Behavioral experience

The behavioral dimension of the brand experience refers to the physical activity involved in consuming the brand. Behavioral brand experience is also seen as the result of marketing acts that provide a physical experience and enrich the customer's life by offering them a physical experience. Ong et al., (2018) reported that behavioral experience of a brand drives significantly brand engagement behavior (word of mouth). In the context of higher education, the behavioral experience happens when students navigate the institution's SNSs and use the information provided on that SNSs. (for example: announcing the date of important events...)

2.3.4. Affective brand experience

By emotion, we mean a mental state of readiness that results from cognitive appraisals of events or thoughts; has a phenomenological tone; is accompanied by physiological processes; is often expressed physically (e.g. gestures, posture, facial features); and may give rise to specific

actions to assert or manage the emotion, depending on its nature and meaning for the person experiencing it. (Beig et al., 2018).

The line of difference between an emotion and a mood is often difficult to draw, but it often conventionally involves conceiving of a mood as being of longer duration (from a few hours to several days) and less intense than an emotion. However, there are exceptions to this interpretation. Yet another distinction between emotions and moods is that the former are generally intentional (i.e. they have an object or referent), whereas moods are generally unintentional and global or diffuse (Frijda 1993). Furthermore, moods are not as directly linked to explicit actions as emotions are.

Finally, attitudes are also often seen as examples of affect, with the same measures sometimes being used for both emotions and attitudes (for example, the semantic differential items pleasant-displeasing, happy-unhappy or interested-bored). However, some authors take a narrower view of attitudes and define them as evaluative judgements (measured, for example, by positive or negative reactions) rather than emotional states. (Yu et al., 2019)

In the context of our research; higher education; The affective dimension includes students' mood, emotion, feeling and attitudes towards the content generated on their institution's social network page.

3. Conceptual model and hypothesis development

3.1. Brand experience

The brand experience HEI is a multidimensional construct made up of four dimensions, namely the sensory, intellectual, affective and behavioural dimensions (Brakus et al., 2009). The sensory dimension involves stimulating the sensory organs through sight, hearing and touch (Tafesse, 2016). The intellectual dimension involves cognitive stimulation, reflection, the elaboration of brand-related information and curiosity (Brakus et al., 2009). The affective dimension refers to the activation of feelings and emotions when interacting with an object (Nysveen et al., 2016). Finally, the behavioural dimension refers to specific physiological actions and reactions during interaction with the brand (Brakus et al., 2009). Following seminal studies on the concept of brand experience (Brakus et al., 2009; Nysveen et al., 2013), brand experience SEA is considered as a second-order concept nested within four first-order dimensions. Marketing actions can stimulate experiences that influence customer-related outcomes, such as customer engagement (Bolton, 2011).

Engagement and experience are sometimes used interchangeably; however, they are two different constructs. It turns out that customer engagement has a significant relationship with experiences. For example, Calder et al (2009) considered engagement to be a second-order construct based on first-order experience concepts. Similarly, Ewing (2009) considers that engagement results from motivating experiences.

In the context of social networks, several studies have shown that experiences in this context lead to consumer engagement with the brands followed on these networks (Triantafyllidou & Siomkos, 2018). Merrilees (2016) argues that brand experience leads to customer engagement for hedonic and functional brands. Similarly, Malthouse and Calder, (2011) argue that engagement should be studied in conjunction with experience as it is always based on immersive experiences. Mollen and Wilson, (2010) also recognise the importance of immersive and purposeful experiences in engagement. In the context of e-learning, Herrington et al, (2003) consider student experience as an antecedent of engagement. Other studies have also argued that there is a strong link between experience and engagement (Calder et al., 2018; Eisingerich et al., 2019; Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). We therefore ask the following question: How does

the online brand experience impact students' engagement with their institution via social networks?

We deduce the following hypotheses:

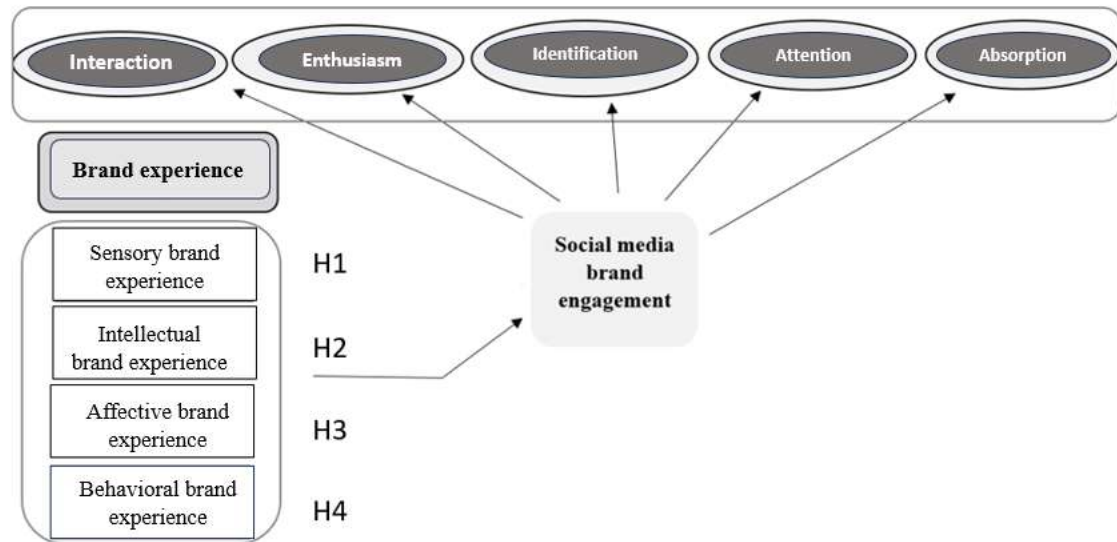
H1: The sensory brand experience increases student's social media brand engagement.

H2: The intellectual brand experience increases students' social media brand engagement.

H3: The affective brand experience increases students' social media brand engagement.

H4: Behavioral brand experience increases student social media brand engagement.

Figure 1: Research framework



Source: Authors

4. Conclusion

Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have become the main source of information and play a central role in the lives of higher education students (Galan et al., 2015). As the interest of HEIs in SNSs tools is increasing, it has also been realized that the potential of SNSs in higher education strategies is still understudied (Galan et al., 2015). In this regard, engaging students through SNSs is a growing practice amongst HEIs that sense the intense demand for adopting new tools towards engagement between students and HEIs brands. Particularly, in today's environment where SNSs have influenced every aspect of life, leveraging the potential of SNSs to engage stakeholders provides a competitive edge to higher education institutes.

Social media is an emerging area in marketing and higher education that is becoming increasingly important. Social media can have many beneficial effects for marketers, such as, increased exposure, increasing traffic, improving search engine rankings, reducing marketing costs and increasing sales (Stelzner, 2011), in the case of our study, improving the relationship between students and their institution. This research contributes to the consumer engagement literature in the sector of higher education. First, responding to the call for further research (Dessart et al., 2016; Hollebeek et al., 2014, 2016) this article contributes to the underexplored phenomenon of student brand engagement. Second, this article also enhances the understanding of multidimensional engagement theory (Brodie et al., 2011) and the role of brand experience in creating social media brand engagement.

The future research will demonstrate the role of brand experience in driving of social media brand engagement in Morocco's HEI. Considerable interest seems to have intrigued researchers in measuring member-brand communication on SNSs and its link to co-creation (Zheng et al., 2015) and its role in building customer relationships (Casaló et al., 2010; Shen et al., 2010).

While brands have traditionally relied on traditional modes of communication to connect with their target customers, SNSs have also enabled HEIs and students to connect, communicate and exchange information.

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