



# Exploring Drivers and Outcomes of Lurking Engagement and Posting Engagement in Social Media-Based Brand Communities: Case of Hedonic vs. Utilitarian Brands

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## ABSTRACT

Social media-based brand communities (SMBBC) offer valuable opportunities for brands to build customer engagement (CE). Hitherto brands lack the knowledge of the forms of engagement in SMBBC that drive brand loyalty, effectiveness of investment in SMBBC, and the expected returns on the investment. Hence, the main objective of the study is to determine the drivers of CE in SMBBC, identify how they relate to two forms of engagement behaviors: lurking and posting, and their influence on resulting brand loyalty. PLS-SEM analysis of 229 fans of brands on Facebook established that significant differences exist between the drivers for lurking and posting engagement by hedonic and utilitarian brands type. Lurking engagement emerged as a significant and a stronger type of engagement behavior for brand loyalty than posting engagement. The study furnishes valuable insights on lurking and posting engagement and the variation in these engagement forms by hedonic and utilitarian brands in SMBBC.

**Keywords:** *Lurking Engagement, Posting Engagement, Hedonic vs. Utilitarian Brands, Social Media Based Brand Communities*

## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

1. Lurking engagement is equally valuable for brand loyalty contrary to the common belief. Lurking engagement is valuable for hedonic brands in SMBBC.
2. Entertainment needs are positively linked with hedonic brands lurking engagement in SMBBC.
3. Identification and information need significantly affect the posting engagement of utilitarian brands.

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## Research Objectives

The current study aims to comprehend the underlying motivations of the SMBBC engagement: lurking engagement and posting engagement from the perspective of Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) (Katz, Haas, & Gurevitch, 1973). Drawing encouragement from the recent calls for such studies (Fernandes & Castro, 2020; Itani, El Haddad, & Kalra, 2020), this study compares the impact and intensity of SMBBC engagement and the contributing drivers for brand type i.e. hedonic vs. utilitarian product types. Specifically, the study aims to determine if lurking engagement explains brand-related outcomes compared to posting engagement in SMBBC.

## Methodology

A total of 229 responses were collected, mainly from two types of broad range of brands: hedonic and utilitarian who were the members social media brand community of a brand that they favored. In line with UGT, the responses were collected for the concepts: identification needs, social needs, economic benefits, information needs, and economic benefits as the main motivations for engagement types: lurking and posting. Finally, it was assessed if these relationships explained brand loyalty of customers for hedonic vs. utilitarian brands.

## Results

Multigroup Analysis (MGA) established the significant nature of differences in motivations of fans of brand pages. Specifically, economic benefits are important for fans in search hedonic value in demonstrating lurking engagement compared to fans who seek utilitarian value. Entertainment is also a main driving motivation for lurking engagement for hedonic value seeking customers compared utilitarian value seeking fans. Interestingly, identification appeared as a significant factor that drives posting engagement for fans seeking utilitarian value. Likewise, information needs of utilitarian value seeking fans is a significant motivation for posting engagement.

## Findings

Lurking engagement is equally important for both types of brands, namely hedonic and utilitarian in creating social media engagement. Contrary to earlier findings, the study identified that lurking engagement is highly valuable in building brand-related outcomes such as loyalty amongst the fans of brands in social media based brand communities.

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### Author's Biography



**Dr. Kashif Farhat**, holds a PhD in Marketing from Universiti Utara Malaysia. He has been associated with Mohammad Ali Jinnah University Karachi, Pakistan as a full-time faculty member for over 7 years. His research interests include social media engagement, customer engagement, holistic digital engagement, and brand advocacy. His research studies have been published in many the top-tiered marketing and business journals.

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