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Leveraging Parasocial Interaction to Drive the Bandwagon Effect in Online Retail

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Keywords

parasocial interaction

bandwagon effect

vicarious expression

social networking site

parasocial relationship theory

Abstract

Purpose: The primary objective of this study is to examine the role of parasocial interactions in generating the bandwagon effect. It is necessary to note that the bandwagon effect plays a crucial role in shaping the demand for brands, making it a principal area of interest for marketers.

Design/methodology/approach: This study investigates the influence of parasocial interaction (PSI) between the viewers and tech YouTubers in generating the bandwagon effect by incorporating the lens of parasocial relationship theory. Furthermore, the authors collected responses from 488 social media users who followed at least one tech YouTuber influencer and one brand fan page on a social media platform when considering the online retail sector. The authors analysed the obtained data using partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software.

Findings: The results revealed that PSI is positively influencing vicarious expression (VE) and social networking site (SNS)-based electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Furthermore, VE also positively impacted the attitude toward the product category and the bandwagon effects.

Practical implications: The results of this study have direct managerial implications for PSI with tech YouTubers that can effectively redirect viewers to SNS brand fan pages, generating more user traffic for social media pages. It is particularly beneficial for newly launched brands with limited brand identification to leverage the authenticity and trustworthiness of tech YouTubers.

Originality: This study becomes essential as it offers valuable insights into the usability of PSI shared by viewers with YouTube-based tech influencers and its potential to be leveraged for the vicarious expression of products and associated brands through YouTube videos.
Keywords: parasocial interaction; bandwagon effect; vicarious expression; social networking site; parasocial relationship theory

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