Consequences of Irritating Brand Behavior on Social Media: Examining Negative Consumer Sentiment

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Abstract

Previous studies commonly examined the positive aspects of consumer-brand relationships and positive reactions toward brands. Specifically, fewer researchers have explored negative consumer sentiment toward brands on social networking sites (SNSs). The current study attempts to fill this knowledge gap. It aims to explore the effect of firms' irritating brand behaviors on SNSs on consumers' anti-brand behaviors through their negative feelings i.e., perceived irritation and brand hate. This study used mixed-method research including qualitative interviews and a quantitative survey. The findings indicated that irritating brand behaviors on SNSs significantly develop consumers' negative sentiments including irritation and hateful feelings. Consequently, consumers engage in anti-brand behaviors i.e., brand avoidance and revenge behavior. The study encourages practitioners to design communication strategies on social media platforms in a way in which consumers' negative feelings are minimized.

Keywords: Brand Avoidance; Brand Hate; Brand Revenge; Communication Strategy; Perceived Irritation

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Introduction

In the digital era, firms progressively use social media marketing to connect to consumers and engage them anywhere and anytime (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). Social media or social networking sites (SNSs) are considered as web-based virtual tools that enable people to socialize and interact with each other (Ajiboye et al., 2019). One of the effectiveness of SNSs involve informativeness of these online platforms (Lee & Hong, 2016).

On the one hand, exposures to marketing messages generate consumers' favorable feelings as they serve as a channel to learn more regarding the brands and their offerings (Alwreikat & Rjoub, 2020). On the other hand, information overload and a high number of message repetitions can cause consumers to develop negative reactions towards the brand (Alwreikat & Rjoub, 2020; Rau et al., 2014; Thota, 2004). It is possible that non-emotional reactions may appear in response to such stimuli (Kavaliauskė & Simanavičiūtė, 2015), but this study focuses on emotional responses, particularly negative sentiment. According to Kohli et al. (2021), it is important for marketers to have a better understanding of how consumers integrate their negative feelings into brands' behavior as it can drive customer away.

Notably, negative feelings towards a brand can exist even though consumers have not bought the products or consumed the brand (Kavaliauskė & Simanavičiūtė, 2015; Romani et al., 2012). In particular, repetition and high frequency of exposure results in consumer irritation and annoyance (Thota, 2004, 2012; Tucker, 2014). Recent studies also stated that repetition of stimuli and undesirable experiences can induce an extreme negative affect, brand hate (Bryson et al., 2021; Tuhin, 2019). Prior literature described that emotions have an important role between specific stimuli and consumer behavior (Dalli et al., 2007; Kavaliauskė & Simanavičiūtė, 2015; Romani et al., 2012). Therefore, this study proposes that perceived irritation and hateful feelings triggered by repeatedly undesirable behaviors adopted by brands on SNSs might cause consumers to develop specific behaviors to release their emotions.

In response to their negative feelings and irritating brand behaviors (e.g. repetitive content, frequent placements, misleading messages), consumers might develop anti-brand behaviors (Tuhin, 2019; Yuan & Lei, 2017; Zarantonello et al., 2016) including brand avoidance and revenge behavior (Grégoire et al., 2009). According to Grégoire et al. (2009) and Kucuk (2021), a desire for avoidance is more passive, comparing to a desire for revenge. Consumers need to avoid a brand as they do not want to have negative experiences again (Berndt et al., 2019; Grégoire & Fisher, 2006). Additionally, consumers might adopt revenge behavior to express their hateful emotions towards a brand and punish the firm (Grappi et al., 2013; Zhang & Laroche, 2021) by spreading negative word-of-mouth (Kohli et al., 2021; Tuhin, 2019; Zarantonello et al., 2016) or complaining on public websites (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006; Grégoire et al., 2009; Kohli et al., 2021; Zhang & Laroche, 2021). Accordingly, outcomes of such anti-brand behaviors are negative for the brand (Tuhin 2019) and impact the sales in the short run (Awasthi & Mehta, 2020). It is important to note that avoidance and revenge behaviors do not independently exist. In other words, consumers can adopt both behaviors simultaneously (Grégoire et al., 2009). Therefore, the current research attempts to gain more understanding of how firms' irritating behaviors on social media result in both anti-brand behaviors through negative feelings.

Objectives of the study

This study aims to gain a greater understanding of firms' irritating brand behaviors on SNSs from customer perspective and to formulate a structural model to examine the relationships between irritating brand behaviors and negative brand perception and behaviors. Specifically, the objectives of the current study are as follows:

(1) to explore the effect of firms' irritating brand behaviors on SNSs on perceived irritation.
(2) to examine the effect of consumers' perceived irritation on brand avoidance.
(3) to investigate the effect of firms' irritating brand behavior on SNSs on brand hate.
(4) to study the effect of brand hate on revenge behavior.

Literature Review

Irritating brand behaviors on social media

Irritation has been extensively examined in advertising literature (Thota, 2012). Advertising stimuli can cause consumers' negative, impatient, and unpleasant feelings (Aaker & Bruzzone, 1985; Morimoto & Chang, 2006). In addition to advertising, this study embraces all forms of marketing communications on SNSs presented by firms. In this regard, irritating brand behaviors that brands adopt on social media platforms might include frequent placements in a short time, manipulative content, misleading messages, repetition messages, inauthentic or fake promises, pop-up ads, ad misplacements, forced exposures, and interruption ads in digital-video content (Alwreikat & Rjoub, 2020; Brechman et al., 2016; Campbell et al., 2017; Morimoto & Chang, 2006). Irritating brand behaviors can be regarded as spam which is "any commercial electronic communication from marketers that consumers did not ask for" (Morimoto & Chang, 2006, p. 9). Accordingly, the current research examines how consumers perceive brands in general to exhibit irritating behaviors. This study expects that such irritating behaviors on SNSs might cause consumers to develop specific reactions towards the firms or brands.

Negative sentiment towards brands

Sentiment or emotions are described as "mental states of readiness that arise from appraisals of events or one's own thoughts" (Bagozzi et al., 1999: 184). There are two conceptualizations when studying emotions (Kujur & Singh, 2018). The first approach provides a simpler account of emotions, suggesting that it is not necessary to distinguish emotions. This perspective refers to the valence based approach. The second approach focuses on summary dimensions such as positive and negative emotions. For instance, sixteen unique emotions based on Roseman's Appraisal Theory of Emotions (1991) were categorized into positive and negative emotions which can be experienced in any situation (Bagozzi et al., 1999). Consumer research in marketing prefers the latter approach, i.e., positive and negative emotions (Bagozzi et al, 1999; Kujur & Singh, 2018; Laros & Steenkamp, 2005). In this regard, this study focuses on negative sentiment towards brands as fewer studies have been conducted in this research area.

According to Romani et al. (2012) and Kavaliauskė and Simanavičiūtė (2015), the major sets of consumer negative emotions towards brands include dislike/disgust, anger, sadness, worry/fear, embarrassment, and discontent. Particularly, the anger emotion dimension contains annoyance and the disgust emotion aspect embraces hateful feelings. The current

study proposes that consumer annoyance or irritation and brand hate have an important role in the relationships between irritating brand behavior on social media and anti-brand behaviors.

Perceived irritation

Consumer irritation towards brand messages and activities is considered to be more negative than dislike (Aaker & Bruzzone, 1985; Alwreikat & Rjoub, 2020; Thota, 2012). In the current study, perceived irritation can be conceptualized as the consumer perception of "provoking annoying, causing displeasure, and momentary impatience" (Aaker & Bruzzone, 1985) caused by brands' actions and activities. Thota (2004) described that irritation is an outcome of individuals' frustration and annoyance and it is assimilated and retained in consumers' memory. Factors that explain irritation experienced by consumers include age, media such as television ads, products, repetition advertisement, and the similarity in the advertising strategy (Thota, 2004). Vishnoei and Joshi (2011) posited from their qualitative study that irritation can create a negative image for all the brands under the corporate umbrella.

Brand hate

Brand hate is regarded as the extreme negative affect towards a specific brand (Bryson et al., 2021) with the advanced form of brand dislike (Kohli et al., 2021). Although scholars agreed on examining the phenomenon of negative brand emotions like brand hate in recent decades (Tuhin, 2019), different point of views of its dimensions and levels exist. Based on the triangular theory of hate, Sternberg (2003) suggested three components of brand hate: disgust, anger/fear, and diminution. According to Fetscherin (2019), brand hate consists of disgust, contempt, and anger while Zhang and Laroche (2021) concluded that brand hate includes anger, sadness, and fear. In addition, according to Kucuk (2016), three levels of brand hate are cold, cool, and hot brand hate. Fetscherin (2019) identified five levels of brand hate: cool hate, simmering hate, burning hate, boiling hate, and hot hate, and the different types lead to different outcomes. In addition, antecedents of brand hate are company-related and consumer-related (Kucuk, 2016). This study posits that brand hate caused by company-related reason (i.e. repetition of irritating brand behaviors) might influence the stronger levels of brand hate. In this regard, burning hate, boiling hate, and hot hate (Fetscherin, 2019; Kucuk, 2016) are considered as the overall construct of brand hate in the current study.

Anti-brand behavior

According to Yuan and Lei (2017), anti-brand behavior is defined as the behavior that consumers reject or even revenge a particular brand. The decision not to support or retaliate against a brand is ranging from avoidance to revenge behavior such as public complaining, stop buying, boycotting, negative word-of-mouth both offline and online (Grégoire et al., 2009, 2011; Stricker, 2021; Yuan & Lei, 2017). As a result, anti-brand behaviors denote a strongly negative consumer-brand relationship (Johnson et al., 2011; Park et al., 2013). In this regard, this study classifies anti-brand behaviors in two major behaviors based on the degree of consumers' responses: brand avoidance and revenge behavior.

Brand avoidance

Brand avoidance behavior refers to the behavior that consumers' need to keep away or stay away from a brand (Berndt et al., 2019). In particular, the phenomenon whereby a consumer intends to reject a specific brand although it is available, accessible and affordable to purchase is characterized as brand avoidance (Berndt et al., 2019; Knittel et al., 2016). Therefore, brand avoidance can be considered as anti-choice (Hogg, 1998; Tuhin, 2019), anti-consumption (Lee et al., 2020), and intentional non-consumption (Berndt et al., 2019; Cherrier et al., 2011). According to Grégoire et al. (2009), customers desire to withdraw themselves

from interactions with brands is regarded as desire for avoidance. Consumers' brand avoidance on social media for the purpose of stopping seeing the brands' posts and movements include skipping the ad, blocking the brand's post or marketing messages, using "mute" feature, and unfollowing the brand's account/channel/page.

Revenge behavior

To a greater degree of anti-brand actions, consumers can adopt revenge or retaliation behavior. Revenge behavior refers to the behavior that consumers' need to "punish and cause harm to firms for the damages they have caused" (Grégoire et al., 2009, p. 19). Customers might seek retaliation against a certain brand on social media sites by disliking, reporting as spam, and replying negatively to the brand' posts (Stricker, 2021). They can spread negative word-of-mouth by sharing their reaction online or creating the hashtag for the purpose of making it go viral (Sakulsinlapakorn & Zhang, 2019; Shin et al., 2018; Stricker, 2021). Negative word-of-mouth is a consumer response to his or her negative emotions by spreading negative information about a brand (Tuhin, 2019). In addition, the development of anti-brand websites and anti-brand online communities are one form of boycotting towards brands (Awasthi & Mehta, 2020; Kucuk, 2008). Thus, this form of behavior is likely to be more aggressive and publicly visible.

Research framework and hypotheses

To understand how firms' irritating behavior on social media may result in consumers' anti-brand behaviors, this study proposes the following conceptual framework and hypotheses. Particularly, the model anticipates that irritating brand behaviors evoke consumers' negative feelings towards brands i.e. perceived irritation and brand hate, which in turn, impact anti-brand behaviors.
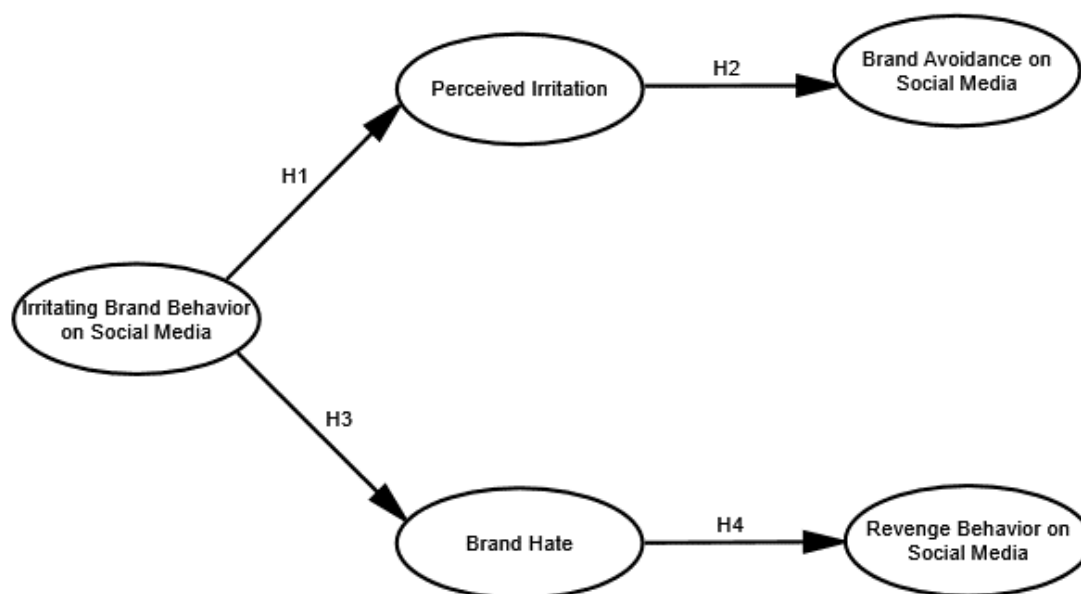

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework

Irritating brand behaviors and customer irritation

Aaker and Bruzzone (1985) strongly proposed that irritation advertisements are less effective. High frequency of exposure results in irritation and discontent (Rau et al., 2014).

Basically, consumers need information from firms/brands. However, information overload is a cause of irritation in consumers and moderate amounts of information are less irritated (Thota, 2004). In particular, pop-up ads or interstitials, irrelevant ad, repetitive content or placement, and overly manipulative advertisement increase consumers' irritation towards a particular brand (Alwreikat & Rjoub, 2020; Thota, 2004, 2012). Based on these arguments, the study proposes the following hypothesis.

H1: Irritating brand behavior leads to an increase in perceived irritation.

Consumer irritation and brand avoidance

When consumers get irritated in response to brands' commercials and advertising, they have some options to deal with their irritation (Thota, 2012). They might take no action or take some actions to vent their irritation such as complaining to the firm. However, in whatever choices consumers make, irritation is experienced, assimilated and stay in consumers' memory (Thota, 2004). Thus, irritation experienced by consumers needs to be avoided in the future (Thota, 2004). Scholars indicated that the stronger levels of experienced negative feelings towards brands result in brand avoidance behavior (Kavaliauskė & Simanavičiūtė, 2015; Romani et al., 2012). The negative perceptions about the brand's marketing communication are characterized as advertising avoidance (Berndt et al., 2019). Accordingly, the current study proposes that consumers' perceived irritation influences their decisions to keep away from the brands to reduce their irritation (e.g. unfollowing brands, muting or blocking their posts).

H2: Perceived irritation leads to an increase in brand avoidance.

Irritating brand behaviors and brand hate

According to Kucuk (2016), and Zhang and Laroche (2021), antecedents of brand hate involve external company related reasons and internal consumer related reasons. Focusing on marketing communication strategies and behaviors adopted by firms on social media platforms, the current study particularly explores the external factor that can influence consumers' negative sentiment towards firms/brands. Bryson et al. (2021) indicated that repetition of stimuli experienced by consumers can trigger and strengthen a durable negative affect, brand hate. Park et al. (2013) and Tuhin (2019) also specified that undesirable experiences with a particular brand can stimulate negative emotions that cause consumers to hate that brand. Given firms' unwanted behavior and repetition of marketing messages on social media, the study proposes that such irritating brand behavior time after time can cause the extreme negative emotions towards a brand.

H3: Irritating brand behaviors leads to an increase in brand hate.

Brand hate and revenge behavior

According to Grappi et al. (2013) and Zhang and Laroche (2021), revenge against a brand is an expression of consumers' hateful feelings towards that brand. To release their negative emotions and punish the brand, consumers who have hatred for it can actively engage in many forms of anti-brand behaviors including revenge behavior (Grégoire et al., 2009; Tuhin, 2019; Zarantonello et al., 2016). Brand hate induces consumers to retaliate against a brand by spreading negative word-of-mouth (Kohli et al., 2021; Tuhin, 2019; Zarantonello et al., 2016; Zhang & Laroche, 2021). They might share their reactions both offline and online to alert people (Stricker, 2021). Notably, consumers are prone to share their negative experiences and feelings than positive ones (Tuhin, 2019). The complaint including third-party and public complaining is one consequence of brand hate (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006; Grégoire et al., 2009; Kohli et al., 2021; Zhang & Laroche, 2021). Other than private complaining to the firm,

consumers might desire revenge by contacting organizations such as consumer protection and legal agencies or pubic complaining through online platforms to punish the firm and damage brand's reputation (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006; Grégoire et al., 2009). Customers might adopt other negative behaviors that are publicly noticeable on SNSs by disliking, or replying negatively to the brand's posts (Stricker, 2021). Overall, the study hypothesizes that once consumers learn about brands' repeatedly irritating activities over time, their hateful emotions might stimulate them to perform revenge behavior to reveal their rejections.

H4: Brand hate leads to an increase in revenge behavior.

Research Methodology

Research design

The study employed the mixed-method research design. This approach combined qualitative and quantitative methods within the same study for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration (Johnson et al., 2007). Accordingly, the current study adopted sequential exploratory, one of typologies in mixed method researches, whereby qualitative study were conducted and analyzed followed by quantitative data collection and analysis, and both findings were integrated at the level of interpretation (Alavia et al., 2018). In this study, qualitative study was used to gain deep understanding of firms' irritating brand behavior on social media platforms from customer perspective. Qualitative results were subsequently used as measurement items in the quantitative research. Further, a quantitative study was conducted to test the research framework and hypotheses.

Qualitative study

Individual interviews were chosen because they can investigate much deeper into the interested issue and eradicate group influences (Churchill, 1995). The sampling technique used in this qualitative study was judgment or purposeful sampling (Marshall, 1996). The interviewees included twenty consumers who have experiences in using any social media platforms at least once a week in the past one year so that they could explain their feelings regarding brand behavior on SNSs. As suggested by Guest et al. (2006), the smallest acceptable sample for qualitative research is fifteen, thus twenty interviewees in the current study were sufficient for developing themes and meaningful interpretations.

Guided questions for semi-structured interviews were developed to gain the understandings of irritating brand activities and consumer responses. Although a set of questions were planned, a semi-structured interview allowed for open-ended discussions and interviewees were not asked in a specific order to gain a smooth interviewing (Babbie, 2010). The questions involved consumers' experience of social media usage, liking and disliking of brand activities on SNSs, irritation factors relating to brands, and their feelings and responses.

Qualitative interview analysis and findings

Responses collected from individual interviews were analyzed using content analysis recommended by Marshall and Rossman (2006). This study applied content analysis for qualitative data analysis as it is suitable for the initial investigations on data and for the reporting of common issues mentioned in the data of what are the concerns of consumers about irritating brand behaviors. The analytic process included organizing and immersing in the data, followed by generating and coding the data, writing analytic memos, searching for alternative interpretations, and reporting. For the coding development, the study employed the predetermined (a priori) codes. Specifically, the deductive content analysis was used. It started

with prepared categories and theoretical framework (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This study considered three main categories of code that the analysis is based on: brand behaviors on SNSs, emotional responses, behavioral responses, and also the sub-codes namely, desirable brand behaviors on SNSs, unwanted brand behaviors on SNSs, perceived irritation, brand hate, brand avoidance, and brand revenge. In this study, the content analysis concentrated analysis on the latent content of data, the underlying meaning of the content, rather than the manifest analysis approach (Vaismoradi et al., 2013) as the unit of analysis in the current research was communications and social interactions.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 consumers (9 male and 11 female) within two months. Participants ranged from 20 to 57. All participants indicated that they engaged in at least one social platform (i.e., Line, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok) every day. Identified liking of brands' behaviors on SNSs included using humor in social media activities, providing interesting and useful information about the products, and using participants' favourite celebrities or influencers in brand communication. The findings relating to irritating brands' behaviors are explained as follows.

Firms' irritating brand behaviors on social media platforms
Undesirable brands' activities on social media identified by interviewees included sending the same messages/ads through social media repeatedly (e.g. more than three times), providing the ads that are not relevant to participants' interests repeatedly, offering fake promises or fake sponsored content, providing repetitive sponsored reviews. For the specific platform such as YouTube, participants indicated that offering unskippable ads, providing pop-up ads, and offering longer ads were considered as irritating brand behaviors on this platform.

> Brands with ads that keep showing up endlessly just make me remember them in a bad way (Female, 40).
> I'm tired of ads that are not in my area of interests, but if they are, then it's okay (Male, 33).
> It's always with the repetitive reviews; with this the brand doesn't look credible (Female, 28).
> I'm tired of the ads algorithm that just keep showing the same stuff that I searched for once (Male, 57).
> I don't like the kind of brands that gives false information like exaggerated beauty product claims or wrong application methods (Female, 42).
> Tired of fake beauty product reviews (Female, 26).

These quotations suggested detailed irritating behaviors adopted by brands at present.

Emotional responses
Based on the interviews, although some interviewees (2) had no emotional reactions to brands' irritating behavior, the majority expressed the negative feelings when experienced undesirable activities on SNSs. The following comments illustrated these points:

> I'm not annoyed. I like that they are what I'm interested in so I just watch it, that's all (Female, 30).
> Annoying and insincere. The influencer was paid to just say something good (Female, 38).
> If I can't skip ads when I'm watching Youtube videos then I will get upset. Hate that (Female, 25).
> I don't watch any of them. And especially if it doesn't let me skip then I will get really pissed off. Like I got real mad when there are times when I already refreshed the video and the ad was still playing (Male, 25).
> It's especially annoying when I'm playing some Youtube music while taking a shower then the ad jumped in. Since I'm unable to come out and skip, it runs for a long damn time (Female, 45).

The findings were consistent with Bagozzi et al. (1999) in that they indicated that different people can have different emotions or no emotion to the same object or event. The current study highlighted negative emotional responses as they might have negative impact on brands/firms.

Behavioral responses

When experienced negative feelings caused by the brand's behaviors on social platforms, most interviewees desired to avoid that ad/brand or did not want to interact with the brand by skipping the ad, hiding the ad, hiding the brand's post and clicking mute button. Some participants blocked all ads by subscribing the premium packages when watching videos.

> Well, I'm annoyed when ads just keep popping up but I'm not mad. I just hide them (Male, 43).
> Those pop ups on Youtube are annoying to the point that I'm willing to pay for premium (Female, 38).

To an extreme degree, some interviewees adopted revenge behaviors to show their frustration and rejection to the brand.

> If an ad shows up for, like 2-3 times then I will start to get annoyed and just scroll away. But what I don't like is when I'm watching IG stories and they basically pop up at every single 'dot', that's when I report spam (Female, 21).
> I just keep seeing the old same ads on Twitter, had no choice but to block or mute them (Female, 28).

The findings of irritating brand behaviors, emotional responses, and anti-brand behaviors developed from qualitative interviews were discussed with three academics from different universities to ensure face validity. Table 1 concludes the items derived from in-depth interviews through expert validation.

Table 1: Qualitative Study Findings

Irritating brand behaviors on SNSs	Emotional responses		Behavioral responses	
	Perceived irritation	**Brand hate**	**Brand avoidance**	**Brand revenge**
- Sending the same messages/ads through social media repeatedly (e.g. more than three times) - Providing the ads that are not relevant to participants' interests repeatedly - Offering fake promises or fake sponsored content - Providing repetitive sponsored reviews - Offering unskippable ads on social media e.g. YouTube and Facebook - Providing pop-up ads on YouTube - Offering longer ads on YouTube	- Annoying - Boring - Irritating - Disliking - Untrustworthy	- Upset - Hate - Mad	- Skipping the ad - Hiding the ad/ the brand's post - Clicking mute button - Subscribing the premium packages for ad-free viewing	- Clicking angry emoji to the brand's post on Facebook - Reporting as spam - Replying negatively to the brand's posts - Speaking negatively to friends and family about the brand in person and via chat

Additionally, all three experts were requested to link the findings from the qualitative interviews with the initial measures from the literature review. Since there were three experts, inter-judge reliability, i.e. the degree of agreement among independent judges, was considered to determine whether different examiners categorized the same passages and items into the same categories (Latham & Saari, 1984). It was found that there was no disagreement among experts in judging the measures derived from qualitative findings and literature review. The final results were used in subsequent quantitative study.

For the triangulation check in this qualitative study, the current research applied data source triangulation and investigator triangulation. The diversity in twenty participants' demographic profiles in terms of age, gender, and background presented various perspectives of consumers exhibited data source triangulation (Patton, 1999). The study also employed investigator triangulation by having three business and marketing scholars from different universities to provide multiple judgments for qualitative findings (Huettman, 1993).

Quantitative study

The study adopted a quantitative survey to test research hypotheses. A questionnaire was the instrument used in this survey. The population, sample, data collection, measurement items, and data analysis techniques are explained as follows:

Population and research sample

The target population and unit of analysis for this study was the consumers who use social media in Thailand. The sampling technique was purposing sampling. This technique was used as it concentrates on individuals who have certain characteristics such as knowledge and experience that can contribute to the relevant research (Etikan et al., 2016). The respondents were Thai customers who have experience in using any social media sites at least once a week within the past 6 months. Based on the purposive samples, a convenience non-probability sampling method was employed. Notably, according to Datareportal.com (2021), there are 55.00 million social media users in Thailand, 78.7% of total population, as of January 2021. The number of social media users increased by 3 million or 5.8% from the previous year (2020). The most-used social media platforms in Thailand were YouTube, Facebook, Line, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, respectively. Thus, many Thai brands try to build customer relationships and create brand communities on these leading platforms.

The research sample was determined on the basis of the ratio of samples per measurement items as 10 to 1 (Hair et al., 2010). Based on literature review and qualitative study, there are 27 observable items (Table 2), thus the minimum sample size in this study would be 270. According to Hoelter (1983), sample sizes of 200 respondents provide an adequate statistical power for structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis. Nevertheless, the researcher planned to distribute the questionnaires to 400 consumers at a minimum to deal with incomplete survey responses and respondent refusal to participate in the survey.

Measurement items

All constructs were adapted from prior research. It is important to note that the additional items of irritating brand behavior and anti-brand behavior were also derived from qualitative interview with consumers. All measures used a five-point Likert-type scale rating from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The study adopted the Item Objective Congruence (IOC) measure to assess the content validity of instruments for all items of the proposed constructs. The content experts in this study consisted of five marketing academics. Furthermore, a pretest with 30 consumers was conducted to ensure face validity and modify the questionnaire.

Table 2: Measurement of Variables

Variables	Measurement items	Sources
Irritating brand behaviors	IBB1 The brand promote its products/services through social media platforms too repeatedly.	Alwreikat & Rjoub, 2020; Brechman et al., 2016; Morimoto & Chang, 2006; Qualitative interviews
	IBB2 The brand repeatedly sends the same messages through social media platforms.	Alwreikat & Rjoub, 2020; Qualitative interviews
	IBB3 The brand posts repetitive content or placements or provides the same ads on social media from time to time.	Alwreikat & Rjoub, 2020; Brechman et al., 2016; Qualitative interviews
	IBB4 The brand provides pop-up ads on social media from time to time.	Alwreikat & Rjoub, 2020; Brechman et al., 2016; Qualitative interviews
	IBB5 The brand offers fake sponsored content or fake influencers or fake promises or overly manipulative content or exaggerated reviews on social media.	Morimoto & Chang, 2006; Qualitative interviews
	IBB6 The brand offers the ads that are not relevant to my interests from time to time.	Qualitative interviews
	IBB7 The brand offers unskippable ads and force me to watch through them.	Campbell, et al., 2017; Morimoto & Chang, 2006; Qualitative interviews
	IBB8 The brand provides repetitive sponsored reviews on social media.	Qualitative interviews
	IBB9 The brand offers longer ads on social media.	Qualitative interviews
Perceived irritation	IRR1 I consider the repetitive brand's messages/ads on social media as annoying.	Alwreikat & Rjoub, 2020; Qualitative interviews
	IRR2 I consider the repetitive brand's messages/ads on social media as irritating.	Alwreikat & Rjoub, 2020; Qualitative interviews
	IRR3 I find the brand's behaviors (e.g. providing pop-up ads or unskippable ads or longer ads or irrelevant ads, posting repetitive content or placements, offering fake sponsored content or fake promises or overly manipulative content) on social media as annoying.	Alwreikat & Rjoub, 2020; Qualitative interviews
	IRR4 I find the brand's behaviors on social media (e.g. providing pop-up ads or unskippable ads or longer ads or irrelevant ads, posting repetitive content or placements, offering fake sponsored content or fake promises or overly manipulative content) as irritating.	Alwreikat & Rjoub, 2020; Qualitative interviews

Table 2: Measurement of Variables (Cont.)

Variables	Measurement items	Sources
	IRR5 I find the brand's behaviors on social media (e.g. offering fake sponsored content or fake promises or overly manipulative content or exaggerated reviews or sponsored reviews) as untrustworthy and boring.	Qualitative interviews
Brand hate	BHA1 I am disgusted by the brand (adopting those irritating behaviors).	Ali et al., 2020
	BHA2 I do not tolerate the brand (adopting those irritating behaviors).	Ali et al., 2020
	BHA3 I don't want anything to do with the brand (adopting those irritating behaviors).	Qualitative interviews
	BHA4 I hate the brand (adopting those irritating behaviors).	Ali et al., 2020 and qualitative interviews
Brand avoidance	AVO1 I don't want to see such brand's activities on social media.	Thota, 2004
	AVO2 I don't want to interact with the brand (adopting those irritating behaviors) on social media.	Thota, 2004
	AVO3 I made some decisions to keep away from the brand (e.g. skipping the ad, hiding the ad, blocking the brand's post, using "mute" feature, or unfollowing the brand's account/channel/page or subscribing the premium packages for ad-free viewing).	Stricker, 2021; Qualitative interviews
Revenge behavior	BRV1 I am likely to spread negative word-of-mouth about the brand (adopting those irritating behaviors).	Kohli et al., 2021; Tuhin 2019
	BRV2 I am likely to speak negatively to my friends, relatives, and acquaintances about the brand (adopting those irritating behaviors).	Qualitative interviews
	BRV3 I am likely to complain the brand (adopting those irritating behaviors) on public websites.	Grégoire et al., 2009; Kohli et al., 2021; Zhang & Laroche, 2021
	BRV4 I am likely to click disliking/angry to the brand's posts.	Qualitative interviews
	BRV5 I am likely to reply negatively to the brand's posts.	Stricker, 2021; Qualitative interviews
	BRV6 I am likely to report the brand's posts as spam.	Stricker, 2021; Qualitative interviews

Data collection

To collect data, paper-based and online surveys via Google Forms were conducted. Over the period of the study, a total of 518 questionnaires was collected. A total of 12 responses were not usable because some of paper-based questionnaires were not complete and showing repetitive patterns (6) and some responses did not pass the screening question (6). Therefore, the final sample used for data analysis was 506. Accordingly, the study adopted Levene's test

of homogeneity of variance (Levene, 1960) to examine whether responses from two sources of survey had the same distribution. The findings indicated that the Lavene's test was non-significant at a confidence level of 99% (p-value >.01). Consequently, the equal variance was assumed across the two groups of participants' responses to the research questions. Therefore, the different sources of survey (paper and online surveys) were not a concern in this study.

Descriptive analysis was done to obtain information regarding the respondents' demographic profiles. The average age was 36.66 years. Most of them were female (67.19%) and had monthly income between 10,000 and 20,000 baht (22.33%) 20,001 and 40,000 baht (22.33%). The majority of the respondents was well educated, with 44.07 percent of the respondents completing a Bachelor's degree and 34.39 percent having a Master's degree. In terms of respondents' occupation, most of them were government officials (27.86%), students (27.86%) and employees (20.55%). Line application was the most popular platform (98.22%), followed by Facebook (94.66%), YouTube (90.71%), and Instagram (77.47%). The majority of respondents (90.12%) used SNSs every day.

Common method bias assessment
One common way to check common method bias is to apply Harman's single factor test. According to Podsakoff et al. (2003), all indicators are loaded into one common factor and the total variance for a single factor should be below 50%. The test revealed the total variance explained by a single factor in this study was 41.09%, suggesting that common method bias was not an issue.

Harman's single factor was also tested using confirmatory factor analysis for accurate results by comparing the fit indices between single factor (i.e., the factor that might capture the common method variance) and multi-factor hypothesized models (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012). Accordingly, the multi-factor model (χ^2/d.f. = 3.06; CFI = 0.87; GFI = 0.94; and RMSEA = 0.07) performed much better compared to the single-factor model (χ^2/d.f. = 10.47; CFI = 0.76; GFI = 0.67; and RMSEA = 0.14), which confirms the non-existence of common method bias (Malhotra et al., 2006). Finally, the additional approach for common method bias assessment; i.e., unmeasured latent method construct was utilized to yield robust results. According to Lindell and Whitney (2001), this approach suggests performing the measurement model with a common latent factor (CLF), and all equally constrained measurable items are loaded into it. Accordingly, two measurement models (with and without common latent factor) should be statistically different to prove the non-existence of common method bias. The result of the chi-squared estimation (Δ in χ^2/1 d.f = 439.63) exhibited that both models were significantly different from each other (P-value < 0.05). Therefore, common method bias did not exist in the present data set.

Research Findings

Measurement model analysis

This study performed Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to test the measurement model via AMOS. CFA was used to examine how well the theoretical specification of the five factors (a priori) matched the actual data. The convergent validity and discriminant validity would be subsequently tested for the prespecified constructs including items from literature review and qualitative interviews. According to a CFA item-deletion process, three observable items (IBB3, IBB5 and IRR5) were deleted due to their low squared multiple correlations (<

0.50) (Bagozzi and Yi, 2012). The results of the final CFA model of 23 measurable items indicated the good fit (χ2/df = 2.90, GFI = 0.90, CFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.06).

Table 3: Measurement Validity and Reliability

Constructs	Factor Loading	t-value	AVE	CR	Cronbach's alpha
Irritating brand behaviors			0.53	0.89	0.89
IBB1	0.72***	13.49			
IBB2	0.73***	18.95			
IBB4	0.70***	16.65			
IBB6	0.70***	14.34			
IBB7	0.72***	12.92			
IBB8	0.79***	15.93			
IBB9	0.71***	13.49			
Perceived irritation			0.57	0.84	0.87
IRR1	0.81***	15.07			
IRR2	0.80***	25.74			
IRR3	0.69***	15.00			
IRR4	0.72***	15.07			
Brand hate			0.76	0.93	0.92
BHA1	0.89***	26.72			
BHA2	0.84***	25.19			
BHA3	0.88***	26.29			
BHA4	0.87***	25.19			
Brand avoidance			0.69	0.87	0.85
AVO1	0.91***	16.49			
AVO2	0.88***	27.39			
AVO3	0.69***	16.49			
Revenge behavior			0.66	0.92	0.92
BRV1	0.79***	16.46			
BRV2	0.76***	28.00			
BRV3	0.91***	22.74			
BRV4	0.83***	20.73			
BRV5	0.86***	21.98			
BRV6	0.71***	16.46			

Note: *** P-value < 0.001; Model fit indices: χ²/df = 2.90, GFI = 0.90, CFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.06; IBB3, IBB5 and IRR5 were deleted due to their low squared multiple correlations.

Measurement reliability and validity were assessed as follows. The values of Cronbach's alpha, and Composite Reliability (CR) were measured to evaluate the reliability of each construct in the measurement model (Hair et al., 2010). As shown in Table 3, all Composite Reliability (CR) and the Cronbach's alpha values were above the recommended value of 0.70. Thus, reliability requirements were fulfilled. Further, all standardized factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVEs) values were calculated to evaluate convergent validity (Hair et al., 2010). Accordingly, the factor loadings must exceed 0.50 and significant (Kline, 2005). Table 3 shows that the loadings were in the range of 0.69 and 0.91

and significant (P-value < 0.001), presenting convergent validity. Additionally, the values of AVE were greater than the minimum acceptable values of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010). Therefore, the convergent validity of the measurement model was adequate.

To test for discriminant validity, the chi-square difference test on two constructs was utilized (Zait & Bertea, 2011). This approach gives valid results and is appropriate in the confirmatory stage of research (Zait & Bertea, 2011). If the chi-square difference test results are significant, discriminant validity exists. Accordingly, the study created two models (Model 0: no correlation and Model 1: free correlation) and performed the analysis between two variables. As illustrated in Table 4, the results showed that all difference tests were significant (P-value < 0.05). Therefore, discriminant validity was not an issue in this study. To summarize, these data support the measurement model's reliability and validity.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity Assessment

Constructs	Model 0: No correlation		Model 1: Free correlation		Δ in χ2	Δ in d.f.
	χ2	d.f.	χ2	d.f.		
IBB - IRR	617.30	41	296.27	40	321.03**	1
IBB - AVO	335.46	33	190.10	32	145.36**	1
IBB – BRV	318.47	63	296.30	62	22.17**	1
IBB – BHA	345.61	43	228.77	42	116.84**	1
IRR – AVO	286.64	13	94.01	12	192.63**	1
IRR – BRV	198.72	33	157.44	32	41.28**	1
IRR – BHA	234.21	19	68.83	18	165.38**	1
AVO – BRV	236.56	26	144.69	25	91.87**	1
AVO – BHA	523.52	14	56.86	13	466.66**	1
BRV – BHA	282.06	34	149.30	33	132.76**	1

Note: **P-value < 0.05; IBB = Irritating brand behavior on social media; IRR = Perceived irritation; AVO = Brand avoidance, BHA = Brand hate, BRV = Brand revenge

Structural model analysis

Next, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via AMOS was used to verify research hypotheses. The overall fit indices for the proposed structural model were $\chi^2/df = 2.96$, GFI = 0.90, CFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.06. The indices indicate that the model fits the data well. The data analysis showed a positive and significant effect of irritating brand behavior on perceived irritation ($\beta = 0.92$, P-value =.000) as presented in Figure 2. Thus, H1 was supported. Perceived irritation had a significant positive influence on brand avoidance on social media ($\beta = 0.69$, P-value =.000), confirming H2. The analysis also showed that irritating brand behavior on social media had a significant relationship with brand hate ($\beta = 0.57$, P-value =.000), supporting H3. Finally, brand hate positively affected revenge behavior on social media ($\beta = 0.54$, P-value =.000). Therefore, H4 was supported. Table 5 concludes hypothesized model results.

Table 5: Hypothesized Model Results

Research Hypotheses	Path Coefficient
H1: IBB → IRR (+)	0.92***
H2: IRR → AVO (+)	0.69***
H3: IBB → BHA (+)	0.57***
H4: BHA → BRV (+)	0.54***

Note: *** P-value < 0.001; IBB = Irritating brand behavior on social media; IRR = Perceived irritation; AVO = Brand avoidance, BHA = Brand hate; BRV = Brand revenge
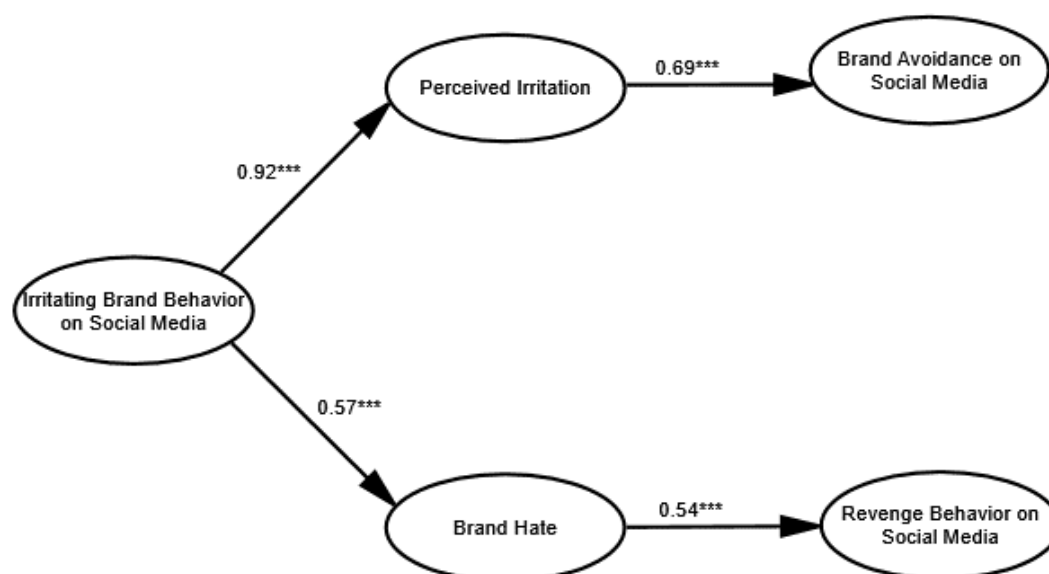
Figure 2: Structural Model Results
Note: *** P-value < 0.001

Mediation test

To assess the mediating role of consumer irritation and brand hate in the proposed framework, the study adopted mediation test using bootstrapping method (Hayes, 2017) with 5000 number of bootstrap samples on a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval. From Table 6, the findings revealed the significant indirect effect of irritating brand behavior on brand avoidance through perceived irritation (β = 0.47, P-value = .00) since there was no zero between the lower bound confidence interval (0.31) and the upper bound (0.69). To assess the type of mediation, the significance of the direct effect was evaluated.   In this regard, the direct effect of irritating brand behavior on brand avoidance was positive and significant (β = 0.23, P-value =.01). Therefore, perceived irritation partially mediated the relationship between irritating brand behavior and brand avoidance. Using the same approach, an indirect effect of irritating brand behavior on revenge behavior through brand hate was also tested and found significant (β = 0.40, P-value = .00, confidence interval = 0.29 - 0.53), however, the direct effect of irritating brand behavior on brand revenge was insignificant (β = -.06, P-value =.41), as shown in Table 6. Hence, brand hate was the full mediator between irritating brand behavior on social media and brand revenge.

Table 6: Mediation Test Using Bootstrapping Method

Structural relationship	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval		Mediation Type
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
IBB → IRR → AVO	0.23**	0.47**	0.31	0.69	Partial mediation
IBB → BHA → BRV	-.06	0.40**	0.29	0.53	Full mediation

Note: ** P-value < 0.05; IBB = Irritating brand behavior on social media; IRR = Perceived irritation; AVO = Brand avoidance, BHA = Brand hate; BRV = Brand revenge

Discussions

Survey results based on SEM indicated that irritating brand behavior significantly affected perceived irritation and brand hate. Brands' behaviors such as providing pop-up ads or unskippable ads or longer ads or irrelevant ads, posting repetitive content or placements, offering fake promises or overly manipulative content could lead to negative emotions towards the brands including irritation and hate. Specifically, such behaviors strengthen respondents' irritation comparing to hateful feelings. The findings were consistent with past studies (Alwreikat & Rjoub, 2020; Thota, 2012) indicating that message repetition and related behaviors result in consumer irritation. It is important to note that such brands' activities can even produce an extreme negative affect, brand hate. The findings confirmed prior research (Bryson et al., 2021; Park et al., 2013; Tuhin, 2019) in that repetition and undesirable experiences with a brand can increase negative emotions that cause consumers to hate that brand.

In addition, this study indicated that perceived irritation and hate feelings generated by undesirable brands' behaviors on social media caused consumers to develop specific behaviors i.e brand avoidance ($\beta = 0.69$, P-value =.000) and revenge behavior ($\beta = 0.54$, P-value =.000) to relieve their negative emotions. According to the findings, this study confirmed that consumers can adopt both anti-brand behaviors concurrently (Grégoire et al., 2009). Notably, avoidance behavior is more passive, comparing to revenge behavior (Kucuk, 2021). The results supported the qualitative findings of Berndt et al. (2019) in that consumers avoid a brand as they do not want to have unfavorable experiences again. Specifically, for the purpose of stopping seeing the brands' posts and movements on social media, consumers desire to skip the ad, block the brand's post, use "mute" feature, and unfollow the brand's account/channel/page. However, in whatever choices consumers make, irritation can stay in consumers' memory (Thota, 2004) and result in desiring for no interaction with brands adopting those irritating behaviors on social media (Grégoire et al., 2009).

Additionally, the current research indicated that consumers adopt revenge behavior to express their hateful emotions towards a brand. Such behavior can be considered as punishing that brand (Grappi et al., 2013; Zhang & Laroche, 2021) by spreading negative word-of-mouth or speak negatively to friends, relatives, and acquaintances (Kohli et al., 2021; Tuhin, 2019; Zarantonello et al., 2016) or complaining in the public websites (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006; Grégoire et al., 2009; Kohli et al., 2021; Zhang & Laroche, 2021) or clicking disliking and replying negatively to the brand' posts or reporting the brand's posts as spam (Qualitative interviews; Stricker, 2021). Remarkably, brand hate fully mediated the relationship between irritating brand behavior and brand revenge. According to Berkowitz (2000), negative feelings can have more power on the human brain than positive ones. When emotions are higher in intensity, people will get rid of them. The present study suggested that extreme negative emotions, when evoked by undesirable brands' activities can motivate consumers to show stronger negative responses i.e., brand revenge. Such consumer revenge behavior could damage brand's reputation and consequently deter future customers (Mdakane et al., 2012).

Theoretical Contributions

In the related marketing literature, previous studies mostly examined positive aspects of consumer-brand relationships and positive reactions towards brands (Berndt et al., 2019; Kavaliauskė & Simanavičiūtė, 2015). Put alternatively, fewer researches have explored negative consumer sentiment towards brands. In particular, with the rise of social media marketing adoption, the outcomes of two key negative emotions such as consumer irritation

and brand hate possibly caused by brands' online communications are rarely explored. The current study attempts to fill this knowledge gap. In addition, the study gains insights in the concept of irritating brand behaviors on SNSs and their outcomes using the mixed-methods research design. Interestingly, the new items derived from qualitative interviews were added to measure irritating brands' behaviors. Some examples include: "The brand offers the ads that are not relevant to my interests from time to time"; "The brand provides repetitive sponsored reviews on social media"; and "The brand offers longer ads on social media". The proposed framework could be an essential step for future examination of the consumers' diverse views and feelings towards the brand in the digital era. Overall, the findings of the study could significantly contribute to consumer-brand relationships and digital marketing literature.

Managerial Implications

Based on the study's results, irritating brand behaviors significantly develop consumers' negative sentiment including irritation and hateful feelings. As a result, consumers engage in anti-brand behaviors i.e., brand avoidance and revenge behavior. For managerial contributions, the study encourages practitioners to design communication strategies on social media platforms in a way in which consumers' negative feelings are minimized. With reference to the mean values of irritating brands' behavior items, the item of "The brand offers unskippable ads and forces me to watch through them" had the highest average score (4.41). It is important to note that measurable items derived from qualitative interviews also exhibited higher average score. The items include offering fake sponsored content or fake promises or overly manipulative content or exaggerated reviews on social media, providing longer ads on social media, offering the ads that are not relevant to consumers' interests, and providing repetitive sponsored reviews on SNSs. These items were ranging from 4.06 to 4.33, reflecting consumers' negative perception toward those brands' activities. To illustrate, an interviewee indicated that:

> If an ad shows up one time then it's whatever, but if it comes up too many times then I start to get annoyed. From that point I will start to notice the brand and will avoid clicking it. However, if it's a brand that I'm okay with then it's cool that they're presenting the kind of info that I'm interested in (Male, 20).

Although consumers can install ad blockers and social network platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have developed the tools or features to enable users to hide ads, report ads, remove from lists, customize, and manage their ad preferences, based on the study findings, many brand activities still create negative feelings toward the brand. Therefore, to prevent such negative emotions, marketers should carefully apply the promotional strategies on social media. For instance, brands should avoid promoting using longer unskippable ads, provide useful, honest, and truthful content, avoid intrusive advertising i.e., promote ads or provide banners/pop-up ads during the video, and select the appropriate reviewers and influencers for promoted ads on SNSs. Audience targeting strategy is also important to avoid undesirable engagement. Firms should target proper audiences and ensure that they do have interest in the firms' offerings. To manage message repetition, the qualitative findings suggested that repeating a message three times was acceptable. However, the optimal number of repetitions for a specific target audience should be explored.

Conclusion

SNSs provide opportunities for companies to connect with consumers and influence customer behaviors. Provision of marketing information can generate consumers' favorable

feelings (Alwreikat & Rjoub, 2020). However, message repetitions and brands' communications can cause consumers to develop negative emotions towards the brand (Alwreikat & Rjoub, 2020; Rau et al., 2014; Thota, 2004). Although non-emotional reactions might appear in response to such brands' behaviors (Kavaliauskė & Simanavičiūtė, 2015), the current study focuses on the negative emotional responses. The mediation test confirmed that firms' irritating behaviors on social media resulted in anti-brand behaviors i.e., brand avoidance and brand revenge through negative feelings, perceive irritation and brand hate. Specifically, individuals who frequently perceive brands exhibiting irritating behaviors are likely to be those who are irritated by those brands and have a strong dislike for them. Consequently, individuals who find these behaviors irritating are more likely to avoid brands that engage in such behaviors. Similarly, individuals who hate brands with irritating behaviors are likely to seek revenge against those brands online. In particular, outcomes of the negative emotional responses caused by the brands adopting irritating behaviors on social platforms are significantly negative for the brand. These findings highlighted the importance of understanding the consumers' feelings towards brands in the new media age.

Limitations and Directions of Future Research

Like all empirical research, the current study has some limitations, which in turn provide future research directions. First, since the total sample is limited to only respondents in Thailand, there is an opportunity to test the proposed model in diverse cultures in future research. Second, this study examined perceived irritation and brand hate as consequences of negative brands' behaviour; however, further studies can investigate some moderators such as information expectancy, brand interactivity, and brand forgiveness which can offer better insights for the diverse effects of brands' undesirable activities on consumer emotional responses. Third, other factors that could have influenced levels of perceived irritation and brand hate could be the internal factors of individuals. Kucuk (2016), and Zhang and Laroche (2021) proposed that antecedents of brand hate involve external company related reasons and internal consumer related reasons. Thus, other than brands/firms' behaviors, internal factors might be relevant. For instance, psychological influences such as personality traits, self-concept, learning and reinforcement might also contribute to the levels of perceived irritation and hateful emotions. Fourth, the findings of this study indicated that overall irritating brand behaviors had a greater effect on consumer irritation than on brand hate. Accordingly, specific irritating brand behaviors might generate consumers' negative feelings differently based on the internal factors of individual consumers. Therefore, the different effects of specific irritating brand behaviors on perceived irritation and brand hate should be further explored. Additionally, it would be interesting to study how specific brands, products, services, and companies are perceived as a result of the irritating behaviors on social media. Further research could examine such issues through comparing and contrasting to see if it yields different results and insights. Finally, since this study confirms that irritating brand behavior on social media leads to consumers' negative sentiments i.e., perceived irritation and hateful feelings, identifying certain social platforms and customer segments in additional research could achieve proper communication strategies.

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