

# WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME? PERCEIVED VALUE OF MARKETING ACTIVITIES AS A DRIVER OF CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT ON SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

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*Social network sites (SNSs), social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram that allow users to connect and interact with other users including brands, are transforming the way companies, both big and small, communicate and market to consumers. However, marketers indicate they lack the necessary understanding to successfully use SNSs as a marketing tool. The purpose of this study was to create a classification of SNS marketing activities and empirically test the role of perceived value (instrumental, experiential, and social value) as drivers of online consumer brand engagement with marketing activities. Results indicate marketing activities differentially effect instrumental, social, and experiential value perceptions. In turn, the type of perceived value influences engagement with the brand. This study furthers marketers' understanding of consumer responses to SNSs and provides a foundation from which effective social network strategies to maximize engagement and return on investment can be deployed by organizations.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Social media is a paradigm-changing tool that has completely revolutionized the marketing field, creating both opportunities and challenges for brands around the world. Today more than 4.2 billion people are active social media users, representing more than 53% of the world's population (WeAreSocial, 2021) compared to just 42% in 2019 (Moshin, 2019). In the U.S. alone, almost 73% of adults engage with some form of social media on a regular basis, averaging more than two hours a day on these sites (WeAreSocial, 2021). Attracted by rising numbers of consumers using social media and the interactive nature of the medium, marketers quickly gravitated to social media as a place to engage consumers (Gillin, 2009). However, while over 90% of marketers are utilizing social media as a marketing communications tool, most of them have limited social media marketing experience (Stelzner, 2018).

The unprecedented rate of social media adoption and evolution of these platforms into marketing tools has meant the technology and practice of marketing on social media has often outpaced academic research on the topic. As a

result, there is limited empirically-based guidance for marketers in terms of effective social media strategy. Consequently, many marketers do not feel confident their efforts on social media are producing worthwhile results and are struggling with understanding how to measure social media return on investment (ROI). In 2018, for example, only 44% of marketers said they knew how to measure ROI of social media activities, 90% of marketers wondered what tactics were most effective on social media, and 89% of marketers wanted to understand the best way to create engagement on social media (Stelzner, 2018). A 2021 survey of small businesses confirms that businesses are still challenged by social media today (Wess, 2021); 93% of businesses surveyed continue to struggle with their social media strategy, with over half believing their social media efforts generate little to no return on investment (Wess, 2021). In an industry report published in 2021, marketers still say their number one question about social media involves how to use social media effectively to drive sales and leads (Stelzner, 2021). This is further evidenced by Statista (2021) findings that strategy design, assessing effectiveness, and analyzing data are the three primary challenges of social media marketing of surveyed marketers.

Social network sites (SNSs) are social media platforms that enable users to build and maintain relationships by connecting and interacting with other SNS users, resulting in a network of social connections (Ellison, 2007). SNSs such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and TikTok are of particular interest to marketers, as they have attracted billions of users since their introduction. Sites such as these offer marketers effective and efficient strategies for targeting, attracting, interacting, and selling to customers. However, the effectiveness of a brand's marketing strategy in terms of goal-oriented outcomes (engagement, purchase intention, etc.) on SNSs depends, at least in part, on the content marketing activities a firm chooses to utilize and the perceived value these activities provide consumers (Evans, 2008; Baird and Parasnis, 2011). Few empirical studies have examined or attempted to compare the effectiveness of different marketing activities used on SNSs. Consumer engagement with brand content on SNSs has been shown to build relationships and increase brand loyalty (Leckie, Nyadzayo, and Johnson, 2016). Additionally, every major SNS has now reworked algorithms to favor content with high online engagement (Tien, 2018). Effective SNS strategies not only generate online brand engagement, but also increase purchase intentions (Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie, 2014) and brand usage intention (Erdogmus and Tatar, 2015). As such, more empirical studies are needed to investigate the relationship between SNS marketing activities and online consumer brand engagement (Graffigna and Gambetti, 2015; Leckie et al., 2016).

The purpose of this study is to address gaps in the literature by proposing and testing a theoretical model to examine how consumers perceive and react to various types of marketing content strategies on SNSs, and how the perceived value of these content strategies drives online consumer brand engagement. To that end, the authors undertake a content analysis to classify and define the content marketing activities that marketers are utilizing on SNSs. This study then proposes that marketing activities on SNSs must provide some form of value to consumers before they will engage with the product or brand. That value can be tangible or intangible, and

manifests as instrumental value, experiential value, and/or social value.

## 2. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

*2.1 Social Media and Social Network Sites.* Social media take on numerous forms, including social networks, content sharing sites, blogs (publishing sites), collaborative projects (crowdsourcing sites), and virtual communities (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). These platforms enable individuals to search out, connect with, and build relationships on personal levels, as well as with the larger social communities (Ellison, 2007; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). SNSs, specifically, are defined as "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections, as well as those made by others within the system" (Boyd and Ellison, 2008, p. 211).

The participatory and communal nature of social networks makes them profoundly different from traditional media and is responsible for the transformation of individuals from passive content consumers to active content producers (Constantinides, 2014). As Cvijikj and Michahelles (2011) point out, social networks are playing a transformational role in marketing. Recognizing this transformation, many businesses have and continue turning to social media as a major, if not primary, means of communicating with consumers (Baird and Parasnis, 2011; Tsiotsou, 2015).

*2.2 Uses and Gratification Theory.* Uses and Gratification Theory (U&G) centers on "the social and psychological origins of needs, which generate expectations of the mass media and other sources, and lead to different patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in need gratifications and other consequences" (Katz, Blumerler, and Gurevitch, 1973, p. 510). U&G theory as applied in this study focuses, therefore, on how and why individuals use media (SNSs), along with other resources to satisfy needs and to achieve goals. U&G theory postulates that users do not just passively consume media, but

rather view media usage as a purposeful, goal-oriented activity (Katz et al., 1973; Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit, 2011). Therefore, users actively seek out and select media and media content that provides specific benefits to the individual user (Katz, et al., 1973; Severin and Tankard, 1997). While other theories investigate the impact of media on users, U&G theory seeks to understand how and why people use media (Katz et al., 1973; Muntinga et al., 2011).

U&G theory facilitates understanding the motivations that drive media usage, referred to as gratifications sought (Katz et al., 1973). The categories of sought gratifications are information, entertainment, social integration, personal identity, remuneration (incentives), and empowerment (opportunity to have a voice & share opinions) (Muntinga et al., 2011). Thus, gratifications are the motivations that drive users' selection and usage of specific media and media content. Users select the media and media content they perceive to have the potential to provide a specific benefit (fulfill a specific need). This benefit is viewed as the perceived value of the media and/or media content to the user and is viewed as a motivational driver in this research.

*2.3 Marketing Activities.* Marketing activities are company-generated content posted to SNSs to facilitate communication, create brand awareness, build relationships with customers, and/or convert recipients to customers (Cvijiki and Michahelles, 2011). Marketing activities can consist of many different forms of content, such as short, text-based messages, pictures/images, links, and/or videos (Cvijiki and Michahelles, 2011). In a content analysis of SNS marketing activities, designed to identify and classify SNS marketing activities utilized by companies, the authors identified 14 distinct marketing activities. These activities were then reduced into four aggregate dimensions: product branding activities, company branding activities, participatory activities, and sales promotion activities (see the methodology for a discussion of the content analysis). Product branding activities include content that conveys information, such as product features, product benefits, product demonstrations, and new product announcements. Company branding activities include content pertaining to non-

product information, such as company milestones, philanthropic involvement, and employee-related content, as well as community events. Participatory activities consist of polls, quizzes, contest, and sweepstakes. Sales promotion activities include exclusive offers, special pricing, special offers, coupons, and free trials/samples designed to incentivize consumers to make a purchase.

*2.4 Consumer Perceived Value.* Value, which is derived from consumers' evaluation that benefits obtained are greater than sacrifices made (Zeithaml, 1988), continues to grow in importance as consumers increasingly ask: "What's in it for me?" To be effective, marketers must design marketing activities that not only provide benefits to themselves, but to consumers as well (Holbrook, 1994). Thus, prior to deploying SNS strategies marketers must evaluate each activity in terms of the value it provides the customer.

The concept of value in digital communications has been examined by marketing scholars. A Facebook usage study postulates value as a key determinant in general SNS usage intention (Lee et al., 2014). Another online segmentation study concludes that the most active segments were those seeking to "socialize, minimize inconvenience, and maximize value" (Allred, Smith, and Swinyard, 2006, p.308). Evidence also indicates consumers are motivated to use SNSs because they perceive them as offering a variety of benefits or value (Lee et al., 2014; Tsai and Men, 2013; Muntinga et al., 2011). For instance, SNSs can provide information as well as entertainment, can aid in the development of interpersonal connections, and can even act as a platform to voice opinions. Recent U&G studies reinforce previous findings that users can acquire a variety of forms of value from their SNS interactions and identify general categories of value (gratifications) sought (Tsai and Men, 2013; Muntinga et al., 2011). As illustrated in Table 1, these various forms of value are grouped into categories representing three dimensions of consumer perceived value.

**TABLE 1:**  
**Classification of Value by Dimension**

<b>Value Dimension</b>	<b>Value Type (Gratification Sought)</b>	<b>Description</b>
Experiential	Entertainment/ Emotion	The relaxation, enjoyment, and emotional relief generated by temporarily escaping from daily routines.
Social	Social Integration	The sense of belonging, the supportive peer groups, and the enhanced interpersonal connections associated with media usage.
	Personal Identity	Concern with an individual's self-identity that involves self-expression, identity management, and self-fulfillment.
	Empowerment	Platform for consumers to voice their opinions, and demand improvements in products, services and corporate policies. Also, the use of social media to exert influence and enforce excellence.
Instrumental	Information	Includes search for advice, opinions and information exchange.
	Remuneration	Involves participation in online communities where users seek rewards and benefits (e.g., economic incentives such as coupons and promotions) that are constantly shared and distributed through online networks.

Assessment of value is subjective and unique to each individual. Consumers' perceptions of value are, therefore, context-dependent (Parasuraman, 1997; Zeithaml, 1988; Morar, 2013), indicating perceptions of value not only vary from individual to individual but from situation to situation, as well (Chen and Dubinsky, 2003) The value construct assumes a given marketing activity (company-generated content) provides a sought benefit or fulfills a desired function. Consumer perceived value is further operationalized as a multi-dimensional construct (Sanchez, Callarisa, Rodriguez, and Moliner, 2006; Sweeney and Soutar, 2001; Woodruff, 1997). The three dimensions representing consumer perceived value in this study are instrumental value, experiential value, and social value. Since consumer perceived value is subjective (Zeithaml, 1988), marketing activities can provide different types of value to different consumers (Katz et al., 1973). For instance, a new product announcement presented as a humorous video may provide instrumental value in that it furnishes information about the new product, as well as experiential value derived from an entertaining video (Lee et al., 2014). Therefore, while a given marketing activity may be more strongly

associated with one particular dimension of value, it has the potential to serve as a platform for other dimensions of consumer perceived value, as well.

Instrumental value is the utilitarian value provided by information and/or content that assists with goal-directed behaviors, such as purchase decisions (Mollen and Wilson, 2010); such is the case with product branding activities, company branding activities, and sales promotions activities. For example, product branding activities provide consumers with a wide variety of information that has the potential to influence consumer perceptions and behaviors towards the focal brand's product(s), including information about the how a product should be used, development of new product features, and introduction of new products to the market. Similarly, information about philanthropic involvement, awards, employees, and community events presented in company branding activities provides useful and practical information that may influence consumer perception and behavior towards the focal brand itself. Further, sales promotion activities are perceived as having utilitarian value as they provide economic incentives, such as coupons,

price discounts, exclusive benefits, and/or samples.

Experiential value is the value provided by the consumption experience that offers intrinsically satisfying pleasure to the senses, emotional satisfaction, mental play, or amusement and fantasies (adapted from Mollen and Wilson, 2010). Experiential value can be derived from both product branding activities and participatory activities. For instance, marketers can enhance the consumption experience by featuring a product being used in a novel way, sharing a teaser post of a new product launch, initiating a product-related contest or sweepstakes, or creating an online quiz. Entertaining content such as this, has the potential to enhance the user's mood and influence the consumption experience (Novak, Hoffman, and Yung, 2000).

Social value is the perceived enhancement of a person's self-concept or self-identity due to being associated with a brand and/or its products and services esteemed by the user's network connections (Lee, Yen, and Hsiao, 2014) and can be gained through product branding activities, company branding activities, and participatory activities. Product branding activities and company branding activities provide consumers with the opportunity to enhance one's self-identity and demonstrate inclusion in a brand's community by selectively acknowledging company and product posts that mirror and strengthen their image or gain approval from those within their social network (Spratt, Czellar, and Spangenberg, 2009). Furthermore, participatory activities, such as polls, questions, trivia, and contests, provide social value as they encourage users to interact with the brand and other community members, creating a sense of belonging and enhancing interpersonal connections (Muntinga et al., 2011).

Given marketing activities on social network sites differently effect consumer perceived instrumental, experiential, and social value, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H<sub>1a</sub>: Product branding marketing activities are positively associated with instrumental value on social network sites.

H<sub>1b</sub>: Product branding marketing activities are positively associated with experiential value on social network sites.

H<sub>1c</sub>: Product branding marketing activities are positively associated with social value on social network sites.

H<sub>1d</sub>: Company branding marketing activities are positively associated with instrumental value on social network sites.

H<sub>1e</sub>: Company branding marketing activities are positively associated with social value on social network sites.

H<sub>1f</sub>: Participatory marketing activities are positively associated with experiential value on social network sites.

H<sub>1g</sub>: Participatory marketing activities are positively associated with social value on social network sites.

H<sub>1h</sub>: Sales promotion marketing activities are positively associated with instrumental value on social network sites.

*2.5 Online Consumer Brand Engagement.* The concept of engagement has been studied in a variety of disciplines, including organizational psychology (Dwivedi, 2015), education/e-learning (Fiore, Kim, and Lee 2005), and particularly in marketing (Leckie et al., 2016; Graffigna and Gambetti, 2015; Hollebeek, 2011). Since engagement involves developing and deepening of brand-customer relationships, this interest is a natural progression from studies of other consumer relationship concepts, such as consumer culture theory, service-dominant logic, and relationship marketing (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

The concept of engagement within the marketing discipline is still developing, and there is little consensus on what to call the concept or how to best define it. For instance, some define engagement as unidimensional (Spratt et al., 2009), while others conceptualize it as multi-dimensional (Hollebeek, 2011). Even those that conceptualize engagement as multi-dimensional do not necessarily agree on the number of dimensions or what those dimensions are (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, and Ilic, 2011; Abdul-Ghani, Hyde, and Marshall, 2010; Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel, 2009). Additionally, while academics focus on affective, cognitive, and behavioral components

of engagement, practitioners tend to focus almost exclusively on the behavioral outcomes of engagement such as purchase (Mollen and Wilson, 2010).

Most studies are conceptual and focus on developing engagement theory (Van Doorn, Lemon, Mittal, Nass, Pick, Pimer, and Verhoef, 2010; Dwivedi, 2015; Baldus, Voorhees, and Calantone, 2015; Hollebeek et al., 2014). Studies have attempted to identify and classify types of engagement (Muntinga et al., 2011), as well as levels of engagement (Jahn and Kunz, 2012). Still others have investigated the behavior outcomes of engagement, such as brand loyalty (Zheng, Cheung, Lee, and Liang, 2015) and purchase intention (Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt, and Füller, 2013). Consumer motivation for engaging with brands on social media (Hall-Phillips, Park, Chung, Anaza, and Rathod, 2016; Baird and Parasnis, 2011) and engagement with brand pages (Tsai and Men, 2013; Cvijiki and Michahelles, 2013) have also received attention, though limited.

This study examines engagement in an online context and thus focuses on online consumer brand engagement (OCBE). Adapting from Vivek et al. (2014), OCBE is conceptualized as positive online behavioral manifestations towards a brand in which consumers devote attention, participation, and interaction with the focal brand itself, as well as with others related to the focal brand in developing one's connection with the brand. The behavior manifestations include liking/disliking, sharing, commenting, uploading content, creating original content, reading others' comments, and purchasing (Khan, 2017) in response to a marketing activity.

The relationship between consumer perceived value and OCBE is supported by literature showing consumer perceived value plays an integral role in consumers' decisions to engage with brands on SNSs, and indicates consumers only engage in those activities perceived as having value or benefit (Baird and Parasnis, 2011). "To successfully exploit the potential of social media, companies need to design experiences that deliver tangible value in return for customer's time, attention, endorsement, and data" (Baird and Parasnis, 2011, p.31). In a general usage study of SNS users, Lee et al.

(2014) confirm that value is a key determinant of behavioral intent for SNS usage.

The influence of experiential value on engagement is also supported by research. For instance, Khan (2017) concludes entertainment value is the strongest predictor of content liking/disliking on the social platform YouTube. Further, positive, entertaining content on websites has been found to have the potential to enhance mood and influence users' behavior (Novak, Hoffman, and Yung, 2000). The resulting enhanced mood may lead the user to spend more time with the content (Novak et al., 2000), leading to greater engagement.

Furthermore, social value is an important driver related to media usage (Katz et al., 1973; Sheth, Newman, and Gross, 1991), as well as specifically to SNS usage (Boyd, 2008; Muntinga et al., 2011; Sprott et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2014). Katz et al. (1973) identify social utility as one of the four primary functions provided by media consumption for users. Specific to social networks, evidence suggests overall usage is motivated in part by impression management (Boyd, 2008) and identity expression (Bumgarner, 2007), while social identification significantly influences consumers' contributions to SNSs (Boyd, 2008). Thus, to manage one's image or express one's identity, consumers are selective in which brands they choose to engage with publicly on SNSs (Sprott et al., 2009; Hinson, Boateng, Renner, and Kosiba, 2019). In addition, users engage with brands as a means of building social bonds or seeking social approval (Muntinga et al., 2011). In short, they generally tend to engage with those brands that reflect and reinforce their image or garner social approval from network members.

Additionally, interactions with and about brands can aid in developing a sense of belonging, providing emotional support, and gaining recognition from others (Muntinga et al., 2011). A common brand creates a feeling of connection (Muntinga et al., 2011). Therefore, engaging with brand content *liked*, *shared*, *retweeted*, or otherwise endorsed by network members generates a sense that one is part of a distinct group and has the potential to strengthen social bonds (Hinson et al., 2019).

Based on this line of reasoning, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H<sub>2a</sub>: Consumer perceived instrumental value of marketing activities is positively associated with OCBE.
- H<sub>2b</sub>: Consumer perceived experiential value of marketing activities is positively associated with OCBE.
- H<sub>2c</sub>: Consumer perceived social value of marketing activities is positively associated with OCBE.

Figure 1 presents a model of all the proposed relationships to be tested in this study. In the following section, the methodology for measuring and testing the relationships proposed here is presented.

### 3. Methodology

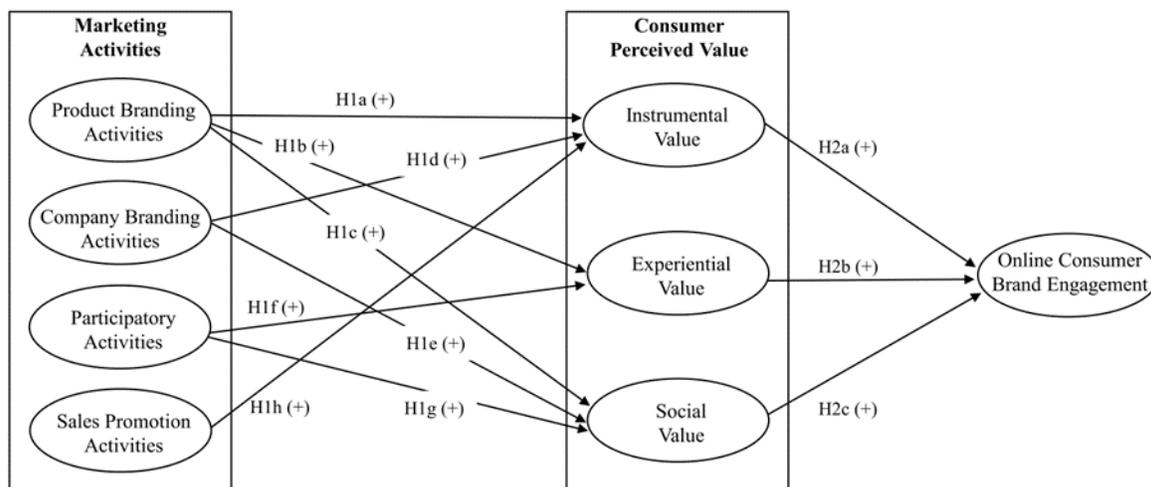
A mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2009) was used in this study. Specifically, an exploratory qualitative study identified marketing activities and provided the foundation for a quantitative theoretical study design.

*3.1 Qualitative Study.* A search of the term *marketing activities* yields innumerable articles referencing the term. Most of those articles do not, however, clearly define what a marketing activity is nor do they address the different

types of marketing activities. As a result, a qualitative study was conducted to identify and classify SNS marketing activities. The content analysis was conducted using brand pages on Facebook. Facebook is still the SNS used by more marketers than any other, at 93% (Osman, 2018). Additionally, other major SNSs have a narrower focus on content formats (Twitter is primarily short-form text and Instagram is still primarily image-driven), whereas Facebook has the broadest range of content posting abilities (including posts with text, photos, videos, polls, quizzes, links etc). Facebook allowed examination of the broadest range of content types and activities posted by marketers.

Extant literature (Cvijjiki and Michahelles, 2011) provided a preliminary list of marketing activities that was modified based on the initial review and analysis of SNS company-generated posts. The content analysis executed on 30 Facebook brand pages across two stages included large, national organizations, as well as smaller, local organizations with diverse product offerings to ensure activity categories are equally relevant across a variety of contexts (local business or brand, national business or brand, service providers, retailers, etc.) In the first stage, the content of ten brand pages' 100 most recent company-generated posts was analyzed and recorded. This process led to a

**FIGURE 1:**  
**Conceptual Model**



classification system of the overall content, rather than the specific topics of these posts. Then, a second analysis was conducted using the first 40 posts on an additional 20 brand pages to determine if any major categories had been overlooked or excluded, and to confirm the earlier classification system; this resulted in the review of approximately 1800 marketing activities in total. A panel of experts concluded saturation had been reached in specifying the brand page content (Hair, Page, and Brunsveld, 2020). As presented on Table 2, 14 marketing activity categories were identified, which were then reduced into four aggregate dimensions: product branding activities, company branding activities, participatory activities, and sales promotion activities.

*3.2 Quantitative Study. 3.2.1 Survey Instrument.* Constructs were measured using multi-item scales. The Marketing Activities scales are original to this study. These items were developed based on the 14 marketing activities and four dimensions identified in the qualitative study. Respondents indicated their experience and affect with these activities while

on SNSs. Each dimension of marketing activities (product branding, company branding, participatory, and sales promotions) was measured as its own construct. Scales for all other constructs were adapted from extant literature to the context of this study. Consumer perceived value was measured on three levels: instrumental value, experiential value, and social value. Items for instrumental and experiential value were adapted from Ducoffe (1996). Social value measures were adapted from Leckie et al. (2016) and Lee et al. (2014). Online consumer brand engagement (OCBE) was measured using items adapted from Muntinga et al. (2011) and Schlee and Harich (2013). All items were measured using graphic ratings scales (Hair et al., 2019) anchored with “Completely Disagree” (0) and “Completely Agree” (10). The questionnaire was designed to minimize common methods variance. Techniques included varying scale formats and question types, as well as the use of attention check items (Feldman and Lynch, 1988; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff, 2003). Respondents, after consenting to the study, were asked which

**TABLE 2:**  
**Classification of SNS Marketing Activities**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Activity Description</b>
Product Branding Activities	Product Announcements	New product launches, modifications, etc.
	Product Posts	Product features, benefits, usage
	Product Demos	Product in use – usually video
Corporate Branding Activities	Company Posts	Company milestones, philanthropic involvement, awards, etc.
	Recruitment	Employment-related posts
	Non-product Posts	Non-company, non-product related posts – information on relevant topics, community events, etc.
Participatory Activities	Question Posts/Polls	Posts requiring a response from SNS user
	Contests/Sweepstakes	Game of chance, no purchase required
	Trivia/Quizzes	Online quizzes, generally for entertainment purposes
Sales Promotion Activities	Sale Price Posts	Special price offer
	Special Offers	Incentive other than price: buy one-get one, special financing, free shipping, etc.
	Coupons	Percentage or dollar amount off product price
	Free Trials/Samples	Opportunity to test/try a product without further obligation
	Exclusive Benefits	Requires SNS user to like/follow/be a fan in order to receive special offer

SNSs they were members of, and then asked which SNS site they used *most* often. They were asked to answer the questions in the survey regarding their experience with marketing activities on their *most often used* SNS. See Appendix A for the specific items, loadings, and sources for each scale used in this study.

**3.2.2 Study Sample.** The questionnaire was pilot tested using a sample of active daily users of SNSs. The confirmatory composite analysis (CCA) procedure was followed to evaluate the measurement models, including the construct loadings, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2019; Hair et al., 2020), and out-of-sample prediction (Shmueli, et al., 2019). No major issues were identified.

Qualtrics was used to collect the data for the final study. The survey was administered to adults screened based on social media use experience (Eastin and LaRose 2000; Khan, 2017) and demographic variables (Lin and Lu, 2011). Data (n=460) were reviewed and cleaned before analyzing. Incomplete responses, as well as those indicating straight-line responses, were removed resulting in a final usable sample size of 426. The sample was demographically diverse. Gender composition was comparable with 52.3% of respondents being female and 47.7% being male. Approximately 50% of respondents were 18-45 years of age and the other 50% over 45 years old. In addition, 76.8% of respondents had some college education, with 55.6% having completed an associate or higher degree. Finally, 59.2% of the sample population was employed, with 41.1% in full-time positions.

The sample varied in social network usage, as well. Seventy-four percent reported having an active social network account for more than three years. Eighty-two percent use Facebook more often than any other SNS. Almost 56% of respondents follow one or more brands on SNSs. Approximately 85% access their preferred SNS daily. With 61.7% logging on multiple times per day. Respondents most often logged on to SNSs during the early evening hours (24.7%), nighttime hours (20.4%), and mid-day (17.8%). Furthermore, 31.1% spent an average of 10 minutes or less

each time they logged on, while 18.37% spent 30 minutes to one hour.

**3.2.3 Data Analysis.** Given the primary focus on prediction and the exploratory nature of this study, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) using the SmartPLS 3 software (Ringle, Wende, and Becker, 2015) was used to analyze the data (Hair, Hollingsworth, Randolph, and Chong, 2017). PLS-SEM is nonparametric with fewer restrictive assumptions (Sarstedt, Ringle, Smith, Reams, and Hair, 2014), and can easily handle numerous constructs with multiple indicators (Legate et al., 2022; Haenlein and Kaplan, 2004).

## 4. Results

The measurement model, as shown in Figure 2, was assessed first (Hair, Sarstedt et al., 2019) using confirmatory composite analysis (CCA) (Hair et al., 2020; Hair, Risher, et al., 2019). Outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity were examined. Items not meeting recommended guidelines were eliminated. A minimum of three items per construct were retained to ensure construct validity. In the final model, Cronbach's alphas (CA) and composite reliabilities (CR) for all constructs exceed the minimum recommended threshold value of 0.70, while AVEs exceed the 0.50 recommended guideline, as summarized in Appendix A.

The Fornell-Larcker criterion was executed to evaluate discriminant validity. Each construct's AVE was higher than its squared interconstruct correlations with the other constructs in the model (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), confirming discriminant validity for the measurement model constructs. A review of cross loadings further confirmed discriminant validity of the theoretical measurement model constructs.

The structural model was then evaluated following the CCA process (Hair et al., 2020). Evaluation was based on the size and significance of the path coefficients, t-values, p-values, out-of-sample prediction. To obtain statistical significance, bootstrapping was executed using 10,000 bootstrap samples (Hair, Hult, et al., 2022). The hypothesized path

relationships between all constructs are positive and statistically significant, as indicated by p-values less than 0.05, with the exception of Product Branding to Social Value ( $H_{1c}$ ). Table 3 summarizes the assessment of these relationships.

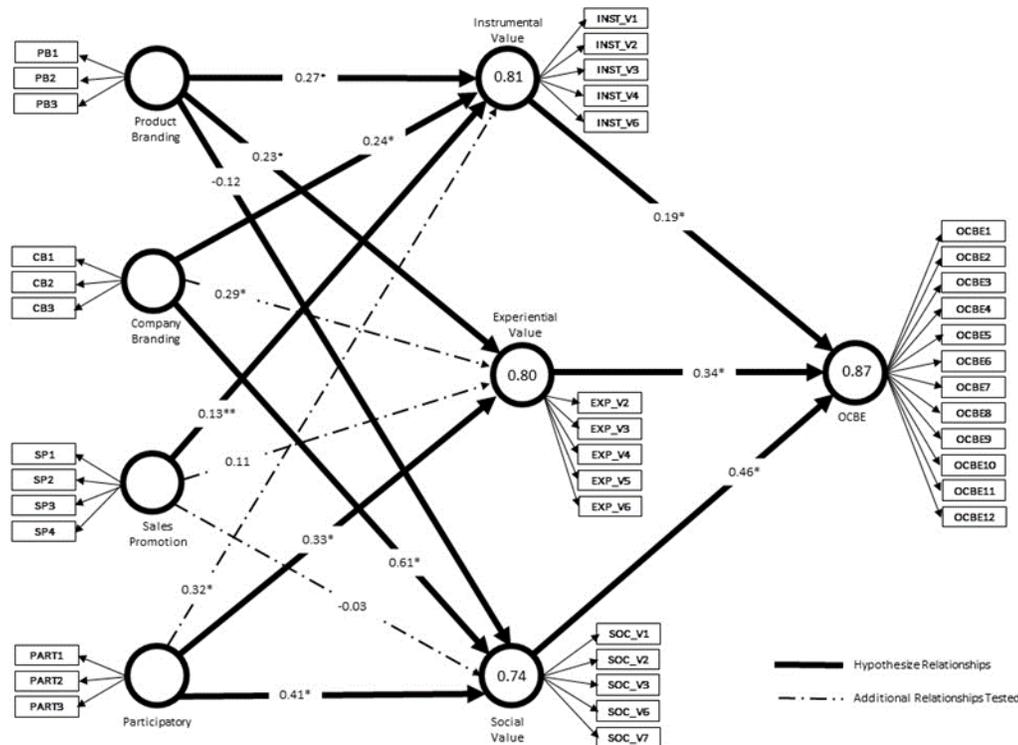
In addition to the hypothesized relationships between Marketing Activity categories and dimensions of Perceived Value, additional potential relationships were assessed following the guidelines of Sarstedt et al. (2020). The additional assessments included the relationships between Company Branding Activities and Experiential Value, Participatory Activities and Instrumental Value, and Sales Promotion and Experiential Value and Social Value. This assessment further clarified the findings and provided a more comprehensive understanding of the influence of Marketing Activities on Perceived Value, as illustrated in Figure 2.

The results indicate all four dimensions of Marketing Activities are positively and significantly related to Instrumental Value. Participatory Activities ( $\beta=0.32, p<0.00$ ) have the strongest path coefficient with Instrumental Value, followed by Product Branding Activities ( $\beta=0.27, p<0.00$ ), Company Branding Activities ( $\beta=0.24, p<0.00$ ), and Sales Promotion Activities ( $\beta=0.13, p=0.03$ ). However, only Participatory Activities ( $\beta=0.33$ ), Company Branding ( $\beta=0.29$ ), and Product Branding Activities ( $\beta=0.23$ ) are positively and significantly ( $p<0.00$ ) related to Experiential Value. While Sales Promotion Activities ( $\beta=0.11$ ) did have a positive relationship with Experiential Value, it was neither meaningful nor significant ( $p=0.06$ ). Lastly, Participatory Activities ( $\beta=0.41$ ) and Company Branding Activities ( $\beta=0.61$ ) have a positive relationship with Social Value and are statistically significant ( $p<0.00$ ). Neither Product Branding Activities ( $\beta=-0.12$ ) or Sales Promotion Activities ( $\beta=-0.03$ ) have positive

**TABLE 3:**  
**Summary of Construct Relationships**

	Hypothesized Relationships	Path Coefficients	T Statistics	P Values	Supported
$H_{1a}$	Product Branding -> Instrumental Value	0.27	5.03	0.00	Yes
$H_{1b}$	Product Branding -> Experiential Value	0.23	3.89	0.00	Yes
$H_{1c}$	Product Branding -> Social Value	-0.12	1.83	0.07	No
$H_{1d}$	Company Branding -> Instrumental Value	0.24	4.56	0.00	Yes
$H_{1e}$	Company Branding -> Social Value	0.61	9.92	0.00	Yes
$H_{1f}$	Participatory -> Experiential Value	0.33	5.89	0.00	Yes
$H_{1g}$	Participatory -> Social Value	0.41	5.69	0.00	Yes
$H_{1h}$	Sales Promotion -> Instrumental Value	0.13	2.16	0.03	Yes
$H_{2a}$	Instrumental Value -> OCBE	0.19	3.42	0.00	Yes
$H_{2b}$	Experiential Value -> OCBE	0.34	6.38	0.00	Yes
$H_{2c}$	Social Value -> OCBE	0.46	10.46	0.00	Yes
<hr/> <b>Additional Tested Relationships</b> <hr/>					
	Company Branding -> Experiential Value	0.29	5.71	0.00	Yes
	Participatory -> Instrumental Value	0.32	5.37	0.00	Yes
	Sales Promotion -> Experiential Value	0.11	1.86	0.06	No
	Sales Promotion -> Social Value	-0.03	0.40	0.69	No

**FIGURE 2:**  
**Theoretical Structural Model with Results**



Shown: path coefficient, R<sup>2</sup>, and p-value (\*statistically significant at p< 0.00 \*\*statistically significant at p<0.05)

relationships with Social Value nor are they statistically significant (p=0.07 and p=0.69 respectively).

Next, the influence of each dimension of Consumer Perceived Value on OCBE was examined. The relationship between each was significant (p<0.00) and meaningful. Specifically, Social Value (β=0.38) has the strongest relationship with OCBE, followed closely by Experiential Value (β=0.37), with Instrumental Value (β=0.22) having the weakest relationship with OCBE. Results for all tested relationships are summarized in Table 3.

The model's predictive capability was initially evaluated based on the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>), f<sup>2</sup> effect size, and predictive relevance (Q<sup>2</sup>). First, the R<sup>2</sup> is a measure of the in-sample prediction by the exogenous constructs on the endogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2022). The impact of Marketing

Activities on each dimension of Consumer Perceived Value is significant and meaningful, as Marketing Activities explain 80% of the variance on Experiential Value, 81% on Instrumental Value, and 74% on Social Value. The impact of the dimensions of Consumer Perceived Value (Instrumental, Experiential, and Social) on OCBE is also significant and meaningful, as it explains 87% of the variance of OCBE.

Next, the f<sup>2</sup> effect sizes and Q<sup>2</sup> values were evaluated using the Hair et al. (2019) guidelines. For most relationships, the minimum effect size is small, while others are moderate to large. The Q<sup>2</sup> values measure predictive relevance (external validity) of the structural model using a blindfolding procedure. All endogenous variables have Q<sup>2</sup> values above zero, thus indicating meaningful predictive relevance.

The final analytical procedure was to execute PLSpredict to assess out-of-sample prediction (Shmueli, et al., 2019). In-sample prediction is assessed with the R<sup>2</sup> metric obtained by using the entire dataset to predict the data for the dependent variables that has already been used to obtain an optimal statistical solution. In contrast, out-of-sample prediction requires estimating the model on an initial training sample that excludes the cases to be predicted, and afterward evaluating prediction on the hold out sample data (Hair and Sarstedt, 2021). The out-of-sample prediction for this theoretical model was somewhat low but meaningful (Hair, Hult, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2022).

**5. Discussion**

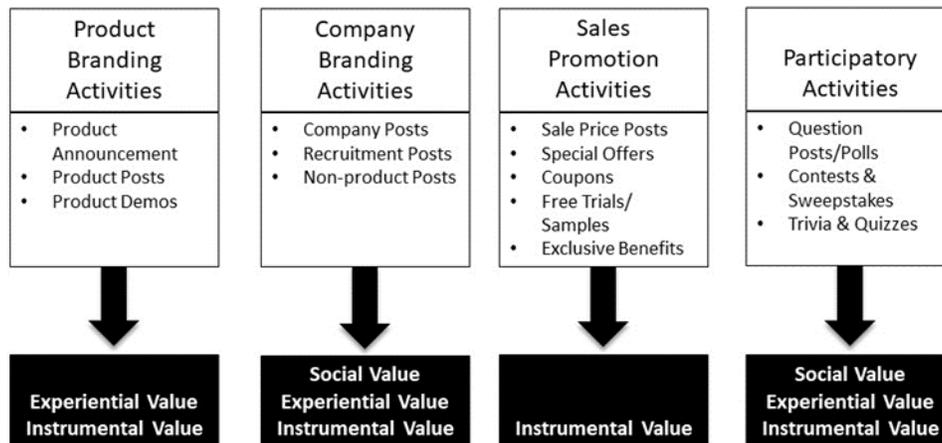
The initial step in this study involved exploring how marketing activities on social media sites should be classified. Four dimensions of company-generated marketing activities were identified: Product Branding, Company Branding, Participatory, and Sales Promotion activities. Unlike previous classifications of SNS content that organized by content type or creative execution, for example images vs. videos, etc., this study classifies marketing activities based on the underlying marketing goal for each dimension.

Potential relationships between SNS marketing activities and consumers' perceived value of such activities were also examined. In early

research, Katz et al. (1973) proposed that marketing activities provide different types of value to different consumers. The study not only supports, but also furthers that proposition as it identifies what types of value (instrumental value, experiential value, and social value) are associated with each category of marketing activities, as illustrated in Figure 3. These findings indicate a marketing activity may serve as a single platform for one, two or all three dimensions of consumer perceived value, and support U&G theory that media and media content have the ability to provide multiple forms of value to users (Katz et al. 1973).

The results further indicate selected marketing activities are more closely associated with some dimensions of consumer perceived value than others. First, company branding activities were most strongly associated with social value, followed by experiential value, suggesting SNS users are interested in and enjoy learning more about companies than simply the products or brands they offer. Moreover, social value is derived for SNS users in the form of potentially enhancing one's image or standing within their social network by liking, commenting, reacting, or sharing company brand activities for a brand desired by others within the same network. Perhaps the "behind-the-scenes" activities often present in company branding activities make consumers feel more aligned or part-of the organization, thus reinforcing the connection for the consumer. This content may also provide

**FIGURE 3:  
Consumer Perceived Value of Marketing Activity Dimensions**



novelty or enjoyment by allowing an interesting look into the workings of the organization, beyond just what the company is selling, thus reinforcing the experiential value of this type of content, as well.

Product branding activities were most strongly associated with instrumental value, followed closely by experiential value. This implies SNS users are receptive to receiving information and learning about products on SNSs. Presentation of product branding activities should, therefore, depict the product and product information in a creative, entertaining manner to maximize perceived experiential value. Interestingly, product branding activities were not related to social value.

Participatory marketing activities were positively associated with all three dimensions of perceived value and the strongest relationship was with social value. Participatory activities include polls, quizzes, contests, and user feedback. Such activities can be used to enhance consumer self-concept and manage their public image, as well as to create a sense of community with like-minded others. Moreover, including methods for followers to easily share these activities on their own timelines (i.e., results of a quiz) may help enhance the perceived social value of such activities.

Sales promotion activities were positively associated with instrumental value, but not related to experiential value or social value. This is not surprising as sales promotion activities provide information and incentives that encourage goal-directed behaviors, such as purchase decisions. While past research finds special offers and discounts is one of the primary motivators for users to *follow* a brand (La Montagne, 2015), our research suggests too much of this kind of content may lead to lower engagement than other types of marketing activities. Therefore, sales promotion should be supplemented with content that focuses on creating an entertaining user experience or building relationships with users.

Our findings indicate managers can utilize the marketing activities classification scheme to identify activities positively associated with the desired value, i.e., Social, Experiential, or

Instrumental. Additionally, within each activity, managers should design content that provides multiple sources of value to consumers. For example, Blendtec famously posted YouTube videos demonstrating the power of the company's blenders (product demonstration, a product branding activity) by blending unlikely items (i.e., an iPad) on camera in a popular series called "Will it Blend?" This represents a product-branding activity that is likely to provide both experiential and instrumental value, thus increasing the overall perceived value of the activity.

The relationship between consumer perceived value and online consumer brand engagement was also examined. Engagement is an important metric in social media practice, not only for the effect engagement has on outcome behaviors, but because of changes to the SNS platforms themselves. Indeed, Facebook, Instagram (Tien, 2018), Youtube (Mazereeuw, 2017), and Twitter (Oremus, 2017) all have algorithms that favor engagement, meaning that content without high consumer engagement is unlikely to be placed in user newsfeeds, making it nearly impossible for organizations to achieve marketing objectives. Given that 47% of marketers on Facebook, 64% on Instagram, and 61% on YouTube report that they will increase organic content activities on these major platforms in the coming year (Stelzner, 2021), it is even more critical that organizations understand how to increase the algorithm-driving engagement of followers on these major SNS platforms to meet their marketing objectives.

Our findings suggest the perceived value of company-generated marketing activities on SNSs is a meaningful driver of online consumer brand engagement (OCBE). Indeed, all three consumer perceived value dimensions have a meaningful influence on OCBE, but the three dimensions of perceived value exhibit a differential effect on engagement. Previous research indicates instrumental value is the primary motivator for engaging with brands online (Baird and Parasnis, 2011). This study found that of the three types of value, instrumental value has the weakest (although still significant and positive) relationship with engagement. Social value, previously untested in the literature, has a somewhat greater

influence on online consumer brand engagement than experiential and instrumental value in the SNS context. These differences could be due to the fact that the Baird and Parasnis (2011) study investigated general online usage that could include company websites and online review sites, and not specifically consumer SNS usage. It would be expected that individuals using these types of online resources would place a greater emphasis on instrumental value, since they are likely actively seeking information on brands, products, or product features and benefits. An alternative explanation may center on the participatory and communal nature of SNSs. Users join SNSs for the purpose of connecting and interacting with others (Tsotsou, 2015). As social connectivity is a primary reason users participate in SNSs (Chi, 2011), engaging with marketing activities perceived as having social value provides an opportunity to build and improve social bonds, increase interactions, and manage one's corporate image (Muntinga et al., 2011; Sprott et al., 2009). Companies might focus on building communities on their SNS platforms by rewarding and recognizing those consumers who are contributing and engaging on social media. This type of recognition is likely to be valuable to consumers seeking affiliation with the brand or brand's followers.

Our findings also suggest implications for the types of content most likely to result in engagement. While all dimensions of perceived value had a positive relationship with engagement, users are not engaging with marketing activities on SNSs for purely informational purposes. They are also seeking the social and entertainment benefits provided. As a result, applying a one-size fits all approach to content and/or focusing primarily on a company's products will do little to grow consumer engagement. Given that company branding activities and participatory activities have the strongest relationship with social value perception, which in turn has the strongest relationship to engagement, company branding content that uses interactive/participatory content, such as polls, questions, surveys, contests, and even featuring user-generated content, should produce the most likely route to engagement on SNSs.

## 6. Limitations and Future Research

As with all studies, the findings of this study have their limitations. First, the impact of demographic variables was not examined. Thus, potential demographic differences should be explored in future research, as they likely influence user behavior on social media (Lin and Lu, 2011). Next, while most respondents indicated they use more than one SNS on a regular basis, a high proportion of the survey respondents (82%) used Facebook as their primary social network platform. Therefore, the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other social networks is questionable. However, Facebook is the largest social network site in the world and used by 93% of marketers (Osman, 2018), and 54% of marketers still claim that Facebook is their most important marketing SNS platform (Stelzner, 2021). Additionally, Facebook has long been a leader in the industry, and other SNSs have followed its approach to paid advertising, targeting, content forms, etc. Future research should include additional major social network sites to see if marketing activities on different platforms have the same relationship with value and engagement, particularly as platforms evolve and new content types become available. Finally, this research focused solely on consumer perceived value as a driver of engagement. Future research could be expanded to include investigating additional antecedents, such as social network influence, brand trust, and brand passion. The addition of other constructs that serve as outcomes of engagement, particularly purchase intentions, are yet another avenue for future study.

## 7. Conclusion

Recognizing that SNSs have and will continue to transform the way companies communicate and market to consumers, companies must incorporate an effective social network strategy as part of their overall marketing efforts. An effective SNS strategy enables businesses to create sustained engagement with their customers, which can ultimately lead to highly desired outcomes, such as building and improving consumer-brand relationships, increasing brand loyalty, fostering positive word-of-mouth, and increasing purchase intentions. In addition to the many benefits to

the organization provided by engagement, algorithms changes on social media platforms mean that without engagement, organic reach for companies is severely restricted. Without an understanding of engagement, an organization's efforts on social media are not likely to be cost effective or result in a successful outcome for the organization. Deploying marketing activities that incorporate more than one form of value (social value, experiential value, and instrumental value) will help manage consumers' perception of value and help consumers answer the question, "What's in it for me?"

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**APPENDIX A:  
Confirmatory Composite Analysis Summary**

Construct	CA	CR	AVE	Indicator	Loading	Mean	Std Dev	
Company Branding Activities	0.85	0.91	0.77	CB1	I get interesting information about companies on (most used SNS).	0.894	6.49	3.164
				CB2	I learn about job openings and career opportunities from company advertisements on (most used SNS).	0.861	5.24	3.364
				CB3	I feel a sense of obligation to let others know about company-related information that is beneficial to them such as a change in company management or ownership, an upcoming event sponsored by a company, etc.	0.881	5.38	3.347
Participatory Activities	0.89	0.93	0.82	PART1	It's exciting to enter contests and sweepstakes promoted on (most used SNS).	0.928	6.08	3.454
				PART2	More companies should post contest and sweepstakes on (most used SNS).	0.879	6.01	3.390
				PART3	Responding to questions/polls posted by companies about their products and other topics on (most used SNS) enables me to let my opinions be known.	0.910	6.16	3.396
Product Branding Activities	0.89	0.93	0.82	PB1	Viewing brand content posted on (most used SNS) is a good way to pass time.	0.888	6.31	3.249
				PB2	I learn about new products on (most used SNS).	0.900	6.73	3.221
				PB3	Brand content is a practical way for me to learn about brands and products.	0.932	6.67	3.130
Sales Promotion Activities	0.90	0.93	0.78	SP1	It's exciting to find good deals for brands that I like on (most used SNS).	0.888	6.73	3.239
				SP2	An offer for a free sample or free trial posted to (most used SNS) is an exciting way to try a new product I am interested in.	0.888	7.11	3.312
				SP3	Learning about product sales and special offers on (most used SNS) is of interest to me.	0.870	6.52	3.164
				SP4	I look for free samples or free trials available on (most used SNS) for brands/products that I am interested in, but unfamiliar with.	0.876	5.74	3.490
Experiential Value	0.97	0.98	0.90	EXP_V2	It's exciting to view company-generated brand content for products that are relevant to me.	0.911	6.53	3.102
				EXP_V3	Viewing brand content on (most used SNS) is fun.	0.962	6.14	3.200
				EXP_V4	I often find brand content to be entertaining.	0.954	6.18	3.226
				EXP_V5	Viewing brand content on (most used SNS) is an enjoyable way to pass the time.	0.953	5.90	3.353
				EXP_V6	Brand content posted by companies on (most used SNS) is an exciting way to learn about companies and their products.	0.962	6.39	3.299
<i>*All items adapted from Ducoffe, 1996.</i>								
Instrumental Value	0.97	0.98	0.90	INST_V1	Brand content posted by companies is useful.	0.95	6.70	3.06
				INST_V2	Brand content posted by companies is valuable.	0.96	6.63	3.01
				INST_V3	Brand content posted by companies on (most used SNS) helps me with purchase decisions.	0.95	6.19	3.15
				INST_V4	Brand content post to (most used SNS) is a good source of product information.	0.96	6.52	3.12
				INST_V6	Brand posts are a convenient source of product information on (most used SNS).	0.93	6.57	3.13
<i>*All items adapted from Ducoffe, 1996.</i>								

**APPENDIX A:  
Confirmatory Composite Analysis Summary (Continued)**

Construct	CA	CR	AVE	Indicator	Loading	Mean	Std Dev				
Social Value	0.95	0.96	0.83	SOC_V1	Liking or sharing posts about certain brands on (most used SNS) can enhance my image.	0.81	6.47	3.23			
				SOC_V2	Brands that people interact with on (most used SNS) reflect their personality.	0.94	4.93	3.34			
				SOC_V3	I share company-generated posts about brands that I feel are valued by others in my network on (most used SNS).	0.90	5.84	3.16			
				SOC_V6	I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same products and brands recommended by others in my social network.	0.95	5.11	3.34			
				SOC_V7	I feel appreciated when companies ask for feedback from consumers about their brands and products.	0.94	4.93	3.38			
				*Items 1-3 adapted from adapted from Leckie, Nyadzayo, & Johnson, 2016; Items 6 adapted from Lee, Yen, & Hsiao, 2014; Item 7 created new for this study							
				Online Consumer Brand Engagement	0.98	0.98	0.79	OCBE1	I watch brand-generated videos about products I find interesting.	0.89	5.51
OCBE2	I view pictures/photos about products and brands that are relevant to me.	0.89	5.73					3.30			
OCBE3	I read company posts, users' comments, or product reviews for brands and products that are relevant to me.	0.93	5.65					3.40			
OCBE4	If a brand is of interest to me, I will "like" or become a fan/follower" of the brand.	0.93	5.66					3.40			
OCBE5	I click on brand content that appears on (most used SNS).	0.87	4.95					3.53			
OCBE6	I post comments to brand advertisements that appear on my feed given the brand is one I am interested in.	0.83	4.67					3.54			
OCBE7	I answer questions posted by others about brands if the brand is relevant to me.	0.89	5.28					3.53			
OCBE8	I share brand posts with others in my network.	0.91	6.12					3.39			
OCBE9	I recommend brands to others in my network.	0.90	6.41					3.24			
OCBE10	I upload pictures, videos, or other content about brands to my page or account.	0.90	6.49					3.30			
OCBE11	I upload pictures, videos, or other brand-related content to a brand's page.	0.85	6.62					3.35			
OCBE12	I post reviews about products, brands, and companies on (most used SNS).	0.90	6.18					3.28			
*Items 1-4, 6-11 adapted from Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011; Items 5 and 7 adapted from Schlee & Harich, 2013											