

The impact of Facebook experience on consumers' behavioral Brand engagement

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Abstract

Purpose – The aim of the present study is twofold. First, it measures Facebook users' experience in a holistic way by taking into account the various dimensions of Facebook experience (i.e. entertainment, flow, escapism, challenge, learning, socializing and *communitas*); second, it tests the effects of these dimensions in relation to consumers' brand engagement on Facebook.

Design/methodology/approach – Two online surveys were conducted using self-administered questionnaires. Respondents were recruited through the snowball sampling technique.

Findings – The findings suggest that the different experiential elements of Facebook usage have varying effects on the two brand engagement factors (consuming and contributing) on Facebook. Specifically, the passive element (consuming) is positively influenced by the dimensions of flow and *communitas* (i.e. feelings of belongingness), while escapism is found to be a negative predictor. The active element of engagement (contributing) is positively affected by dimensions such as entertainment, flow, socializing and *communitas*.

Practical implications – Brand managers should design Facebook pages for their brands that entertain and immerse consumers, while enabling them to socialize and bond with others to increase levels of consumers' engagement with brands on Facebook. However, brand managers should be cautious regarding the fantasy experience (escapism) offered by their Facebook pages, as this can distract consumers from the content of the brand page.

Originality/value – To date, most studies on Facebook usage have been conducted under the uses and gratifications framework, while the various elements that comprise Facebook users' experience have not received sufficient attention in previous conceptualizations of Facebook experience. In addition, the present study enhances the research by examining consumers' brand engagement on Facebook as a potential consequence of the various Facebook experience dimensions.

Keywords Facebook, Customer experience, Experiential marketing, Social networking sites, Experience marketing

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The emergence of social media has dramatically changed the everyday lives of millions of individuals, as well as the ways businesses market their products and services. Marketers can use social media to better communicate with their customers (Mangold and Faulds, 2009), to

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enhance brand awareness (Langaro *et al.*, 2015), to positively influence consumers' brand evaluations (Beukeboom *et al.*, 2015), to foster their relationships with consumers (Laroche *et al.*, 2013) and to increase firms' revenues and profits (Kumar *et al.*, 2016). Hence, it has become imperative for businesses to incorporate these powerful new channels of communication into their promotional mixes (Bond, 2010). However, social media works differently from traditional marketing communication and promotional tools. In fact, social media have shifted the power from businesses, marketers and brands to consumers (Azar *et al.*, 2016) who produce (Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2016), consume and share brand-related content (Kietzmann *et al.*, 2011), and in this way create their own interactive experiences.

The experience marketing paradigm suggests that modern consumers seek extraordinary experiences (McCole, 2004) that are pleasant, creative, social (Schmitt, 1999) and absorbing (Holbrook, 2000). Moreover, researchers have suggested that consumption experiences are multi-dimensional constructs (Schmitt, 1999; Brakus *et al.*, 2009) composed of dimensions such as hedonism, flow, escapism, challenge, learning, socializing and communitas (Triantafyllidou and Siomkos, 2014). Although academic research on social media marketing has been growing rapidly, there is a lack of studies regarding the social media experience lived by the consumer. To date, most studies have tried to explain user social media behavior based on user motivation, as well as uses and gratification theory (Xu *et al.*, 2012; Quan-Haase and Young, 2010; Heinonen, 2011; Shao and Ross, 2015), while the "felt experience" of social media users has been largely ignored by researchers (Hart *et al.*, 2008). However, it should be borne in mind that understanding experiences is a difficult task due to their subjective nature, which requires researchers to delve into consumers' fantasies, feelings (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982) and cognitive and behavioral responses from consumption activities. Hence, the present study aims to apply the consumption experience paradigm to social media usage by consumers.

Despite the potential of social media and its increasing use by companies, it seems that consumers remain fairly resistant to the social media efforts of companies (Heinonen, 2011) and are "reluctant to internalize the value that firms are creating" through social media (Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2015, p. 43). Among the key challenges that companies face in regard to their social media marketing efforts is fully engaging consumers with their brand pages (Hodis *et al.*, 2015). Thus, appropriate strategies should be developed by companies to create and enhance customer engagement (Dimitriu and Guesalaga, 2017). Recently, researchers have acknowledged the role of interactive experiences for the creation of online engagement (Brodie *et al.*, 2013), and have begun to point out the need for businesses to design and deliver exceptional online consumer experiences through their social media platforms to actively engage them (Heller Baird and Parasnis, 2011). According to Shao and Ross (2015), companies can take advantage of the strong capabilities of social media by designing multi-dimensional customer experiences through their brand pages.

Regardless of the importance of experiences for consumer engagement online, the impact of social media consumption experience on consumers' engagement remains under-researched. To the authors' knowledge, only three extant studies have tested the impact of social media experience dimensions (i.e. entertainment, escapism, flow, learning and socializing) on consumers' engagement with a brand's social media page (Smith, 2013; Hall-Phillips *et al.*, 2016; Zhang *et al.*, 2017). Hence, more research is needed to shed light on the effects of the different dimensions that comprise online social media experience on the various types of consumer engagement with brands' social media pages.

Based on the preceding analysis, the aim of the present study is twofold. First, it measures social media experience (Facebook experience) in a holistic way by considering the

most important dimensions of such experience; second, it ascertains the relative impact of the different Facebook experience dimensions on the various facets of consumer engagement with brand pages on Facebook, and identifies the most pertinent ones. Facebook was chosen as the focus in this study because it is the most popular social media platform among users worldwide (Tsai and Men, 2017). It is also the favored platform among firms (Ashley and Tuten, 2015; Thao *et al.*, 2017); indeed, according to Leung and Tanford (2016), Facebook is used more extensively by companies for marketing and communication purposes compared to other social media. Moreover, it has received the most scholarly attention within the marketing field compared to other social media (Alves *et al.*, 2016). It should also be noted that although the present study focuses on Facebook, several aspects of the theoretical framework are built by drawing from literature about social media in general.

Facebook consumption experiences

Almost 15 years have elapsed since Pine and Gilmore (1998) introduced the concept of the experiential economy. During this time, considerable research efforts have been devoted to understanding the nature and content of experiences. Consumer experiences are the “dynamic sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses” (Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2013, p. 36) that arise when consumers interact with products, services, brands and the (online and offline) retail environment. Thus, consumer experiences are triggered by consumers (Carù and Cova, 2007) and encompass a wide range of consumption activities that are not strictly related to the consumers’ interaction with the retail environment. One of the most important characteristics of experiences is their multi-dimensional nature. Experiences are composed of many different dimensions (Schmitt, 1999; Brakus *et al.*, 2009). According to Triantafyllidou and Siomkos (2014), experiences consist of seven dimensions, namely, hedonism, flow, escapism, challenge, learning, socializing and *communitas*. Specifically, the dimension of hedonism refers to the positive feelings of pleasure, excitement and enjoyment that are elicited in consumers, while the flow dimension is related to consumers’ overall focus, attention and absorption. The escapist dimension entails consumers’ fantasies and imagination of living in a different world and playing alternative roles through consumption. Learning experience captures consumers’ acquisition of new knowledge as they engage in consumption activities, and the challenge dimension is associated with the feelings of risk and adventure that are elicited in consumers from consumption activities. Nonetheless, consumption experiences are inherently social and allow consumers to:

- socialize and develop new relationships with other consumers; and
- experience feelings of *communitas* and belonging with their significant others.

Social media platforms such as Facebook can be regarded as a fertile area for the study of consumer experiences, since most of the aforementioned dimensions of experiences can be induced by Facebook usage. For example, *hedonism* (herein entertainment) is evident in social media usage (Bright *et al.*, 2015). Consumers’ hedonic or entertainment experiences are related to the fun, pleasure, excitement and enjoyment that they feel (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Pine and Gilmore, 1998) when interacting with products, services, brands, etc. For many users, Facebook has been regarded as a highly entertaining space (Reinecke *et al.*, 2014) in which feelings of fun, playfulness, enjoyment and excitement arise from activities such as browsing photos, checking other users’ profiles and interacting with friends (Hart *et al.*, 2008).

Flow experience can also be regarded as an important facet of social media usage, since many users tend to lose track of time and place when they consume social media (Wu and Wang, 2011). Flow is defined as “the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1977, p. 39). Moreover, flow is related to the feelings of immersion and absorption that are evoked in consumers when conducting certain activities. Banhawī *et al.* (2012) found that a main aspect of Facebook usage was the feelings of focused attention and absorption that arise therefrom. Moreover, they revealed that users often lose track of time when they engage with Facebook activities. As a result, flow constitutes an important dimension of the Facebook experience.

Another important element is the feeling of *escapism* that users seek to experience through social media usage (Xu *et al.*, 2012). Escapism refers to consumers’ fantasies of escaping the routine of everyday life (Woodruff, 1985), and of being in a different time and place or playing a different role (Oh *et al.*, 2007). Arguably, social media platforms such as Facebook are regarded by users as means by which to get away from everyday pressures and problems (Quan-Haase and Young, 2010) and to fantasize about being in a different time and place. A study by Wu (2009) found that escapism is a critical part of social media experiences. Moreover, Wu revealed that users often find themselves fantasizing about being in a different place and playing alternative roles during their interaction with social media. Thus, it is herein argued that escapism is a critical dimension of the Facebook experience.

Personal challenge has been regarded as another important dimension of the consumption experience. Personal challenge is related to the feelings of risk and adventure that are induced in consumers when they push their capabilities to the limit (Arnould and Price, 1993). Mikalef *et al.* (2013) pointed out that social media usage is related to the feelings of adventure elicited in users when they encounter novel and interesting online experiences. Social media can be characterized as platforms that activate users’ curiosity about others (Urista *et al.*, 2009). This curiosity, along with the joy of exploration, creates a sense of *personal challenge* in users of social media (Wu, 2009). The feeling of adventure and personal challenge is particularly evident in social media activities such as sharing content. As Kietzmann *et al.* (2012) argued, users are inclined to share content on social media due to intrinsic motivations such as a personal sense of challenge and accomplishment. Facebook as a social media platform can cultivate a sense of adventure, personal challenge and accomplishment in users, since it enables them to explore novel possibilities, such as finding new products and brands or participating in challenging contests, as well as posting and sharing their own content.

Social media consumption can also be regarded as a *learning* experience. Learning experiences are events with educational value (Pine and Gilmore, 1998) that enhance consumers’ knowledge (Hosany and Witham, 2010). The learning aspect is evident during the consumption of social media platforms such as Facebook. Through social media, users acquire information about the latest news (Lee and Ma, 2012), serious topics in which they are interested (Westerman *et al.*, 2014), events and happenings (Brandtzæg and Heim, 2009) and information regarding their friends (Wise *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, they consume social media to increase their knowledge capital by collecting information about products or services (Brandtzæg and Heim, 2009; Shao, 2009). Opinions, advice and knowledge from other users (Zhao *et al.*, 2012) further enhance the learning aspect of social media experiences.

Social media platforms are primarily built upon the social interactions between users. Heinonen (2011) examined the motivations for social media use and revealed that individuals enter the social media world to socialize with other new people, among other

reasons, as well as to enhance their bonding and sense of belonging with significant others. Hence, it is argued that social experiences on social media consist of two distinct facets: socializing and *communitas*. The socializing aspect of social media consumption is evident in studies regarding users' motivations. For example, [Brandtzaeg and Heim \(2009\)](#) found that a central motive for social media usage is social interaction with new people. Specifically, users report that through social media, they seek to create new relations, as well as to meet other users with similar interests. A study by [Joinson \(2008\)](#) also highlighted the socializing aspect of social media consumption, since many users mentioned that they use social media to make new contacts by talking to single individuals, finding new friends and joining groups. However, social media not only provides spaces in which individuals can meet and create new relationships ([Boyd and Ellison, 2007](#)), but also "enable[s] people to connect with friends, share interests/activities, build relationships, and collaborate with each other" ([Zhang, 2010](#) p. 225). According to [Smock et al. \(2011\)](#), social media users desire to keep in touch with their close friends and family but also to reconnect with their distant friends. [VanMeter et al. \(2015\)](#) found that "connecting" with friends through interacting and staying in touch with them is an important factor that contributes to consumers' attachment to social media. Moreover, social media platforms, as small, virtual communities, can cultivate a sense of belonging among users ([Zhang, 2010](#)) who feel part of the online community ([Park et al., 2009](#)). These feelings of connectedness closely resemble Turner's (1969) sense of "*communitas*", which refers to feelings of communion with friends and family, as well as feelings of linkages and belonging with them ([Arnould and Price, 1993](#)). The Facebook consumption experience can induce in users both aspects of social experiences – that is, feelings of belongingness ([Seidman, 2013](#)) and socializing with new people ([Shao and Ross, 2015](#)) – especially through membership in Facebook brand communities.

Based on the preceding analysis, this study will measure social media consumption experiences under a holistic perspective that takes into consideration the most important dimensions of these experiences. To this end, the scale of [Triantafyllidou and Siomkos \(2013, 2014\)](#) can be applied in the context of the social media platform Facebook, since the scale sufficiently captures the various elements of social media experiences.

Consumer brand engagement in social media

Social media platforms enable marketers to communicate with consumers to foster the latter's engagement with the brand ([Tsai and Men, 2013](#)). Consumer engagement can result in increased levels of satisfaction, loyalty, trust, affective commitment and word of mouth ([Vivek et al., 2012](#); [Brodie et al., 2013](#)), which in turn may lead to high organizational performance ([Hollebeek et al., 2014](#)). While there is a general consensus among researchers about the importance of consumer engagement for the success of a brand, there is considerable inconsistency in the way consumer engagement has been conceptualized ([Dessart et al., 2015](#)) and treated. Generally, it can be argued that there are three major tendencies in regard to the conceptualization of consumer engagement with online brand communities in social media.

The first suggests that engagement has cognitive and affective components that result from an active relationship that a consumer has with the brand in an online context ([Mollen and Wilson, 2010](#)). This notion suggests that engagement is "a mental state of being involved, and interested, and devoted attention to something" ([Pagani and Malacarne, 2017](#), p. 135), and can arise without an active behavior (e.g. online word of mouth) on behalf of the consumer ([Malthouse and Calder, 2011](#)). Moreover, according to [Malthouse and Calder \(2011\)](#), engagement is regarded as a second-order factor that is composed of lower-order

factors that represent different types of consumer experiences, such as stimulation/inspiration, social facilitation, temporal experience, self-esteem/civic-mindedness, intrinsic enjoyment, utilitarian experience, participation and community experience (Calder *et al.*, 2009; Mersey *et al.*, 2010). Under this experiential perspective of engagement (Pagani and Malacarne, 2017), online consumer activities (e.g. liking or sharing a brand's content in online social networks) are seen as consequences of engagement, and not part of the engagement construct (Malthouse and Calder, 2011; Syrdal and Briggs, 2016).

The second research approach, besides the cognitive and affective components, acknowledges the behavioral qualities of engagement. Following this perspective, Hollebeek *et al.* (2014) indicated that the cognitive dimension of engagement is related to consumers' thoughts about the brand, while the affective dimension reflects the way consumers feel in relation to the brand. Moreover, the behavioral dimension pertains to usage of the brand. Supporting the three-dimensional perspective, Brodie *et al.* (2013) suggested that online consumer engagement is a psychological state that evolves through cognitive, affective and behavioral processes such as learning (gaining knowledge around brands), sharing (information and experiences), advocating (recommending brands), socializing (develop attitudes toward the community) and co-developing products (contributing to the development of new products). Following Brodie's framework, Dessart *et al.* (2015) postulated that engagement with an online brand community manifests in three different ways: cognitive, affective and behavioral. Affective manifestations of engagement include consumers' feelings of enthusiasm and enjoyment, whereas cognitive manifestations include consumers' mental states of total attention and immersion experienced during interactions with the online brand community. Dessart *et al.* (2015) further revealed that behavioral engagement encompasses three activities of consumers – i.e. sharing, learning and endorsing. Sharing refers to activities of content provision, such as posting, commenting, sharing and replying, and learning includes actions of passive or active information-seeking by consumers. In addition, endorsing is expressed through users' actions such as liking, and suggesting or recommending that others follow or try specific brands.

The third tendency regarding the conceptualization of consumer engagement with brand communities in social media focuses on the behavioral responses of consumers. Studies adopting this behavioral perspective have supported the notion that engagement is related to consumers' "behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers" (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010, p. 254). According to Paine (2011), brand engagement on social media platforms refers to users' behaviors that move beyond simple actions such as viewing or reading. These actions could include liking, commenting on, replying to or sharing a post (Barger and Labrecque, 2013). Several researchers have developed models to measure consumers' online brand community engagement that address engagement based on the behavioral perspective. However, it should be noted that studies following the behavioral perspective can be categorized into two sub-streams. The first sub-stream is consumer-focused and evaluates consumers' responses through questionnaires, while the second is metrics-focused and assesses engagement using social media metrics and analytics (i.e. number of likes, shares, comments).

Regarding the first sub-stream, Muntinga *et al.* (2011) proposed COBRA (Consumers' Online Brand-Related Activities), a three-stage behavioral model for the measurement of online consumer engagement with a brand. The model begins with passive activities of content consumption (e.g. reading brand-related information, watching videos and downloading content), moves to actions of a moderate engagement level (e.g. participating in online surveys and online conversations about the brands, commenting on brand-related

content) and ends with active engagement behaviors by the consumer (posting reviews, creating and sharing videos and pictures about the brand on social media). Similarly, [Tsai and Men \(2013\)](#) suggested that consumer brand engagement on Facebook includes two broad categories of activities: consuming and contributing. Consuming activities are related to:

- viewing photos of brands' pages;
- reading brands' posts, user comments and reviews;
- watching videos posted on brands' pages; and
- liking or joining brands' Facebook pages.

Contributing refers to more active types of engagement, such as posting comments and questions, sharing posts, recommending brands' pages to friends and posting product-related content (e.g. videos, pictures).

Another way to measure consumers' online brand community engagement based on the behavioral perspective was suggested by [Lee et al. \(2011\)](#). Specifically, engagement was treated as a unidimensional but multi-attribute construct consisting of six items that assessed whether consumers intended to post about their experiences with the brand, participate in discussions, give advice to other consumers, say positive things about the brand, recommend the brand and refer to the brand through the online brand community. In a similar vein, [Gummerus et al. \(2012\)](#) argued that engagement in online brand communities is expressed by behaviors such as visiting the community, liking its content, commenting and reading news posted by the community.

Following a metrics-based approach, [Hoffman and Fodor \(2010\)](#) proposed a three-step framework for evaluating consumers' engagement in social media. The first step measures consumers' awareness (i.e. number of fans or members); the second calculates their level of engagement based on the number of likes and comments on posts received by users and the third refers to word-of-mouth solicitation by consumers (i.e. post shares). Another model was developed by [Barger and Labrecque \(2013\)](#), who suggested that measurement of consumers' engagement with social media of brands is based on three important aspects of users' behavior: expressing agreement, voicing opinion and sharing. For example, in the case of Facebook, expression of agreement could be measured based on the number of likes per post, while opinion expression could be estimated by calculating the average number of comments per post. In addition, the extent to which a consumer is more engaged and becomes an advocate of the brand's Facebook page could be measured based on the average number of shares a post receives.

In the present study, although it is acknowledged that the cognitive and affective components are important parts of engagement ([Dolan et al., 2016](#)), consumer engagement with the Facebook pages of brands is measured based on the behavioral perspective with a consumer focus. There are several reasons for this. First, the majority of engagement definitions imply that engagement has conative aspects ([Jiang et al., 2016](#)), and that active participation behavior is a prerequisite for engagement ([Wirtz et al., 2013](#); [Hall-Phillips et al., 2016](#)). Thus, it is argued that engagement is more about consumers' actions and behaviors than it is about thoughts and feelings, and thus, it should not be confused with other more psychological constructs, such as experience and value. Second, the behavioral perspective acknowledges the important ([Maslowska et al., 2016](#)) and value-creating role of consumers ([Beckers et al., 2017](#)). Third, behavioral manifestations of engagement are regarded as "non-purchase activities of substantive interest" ([Malthouse and Calder, 2011](#), p. 278) and incremental value ([Javornik and Mandelli, 2012](#)) for companies, as these engagement

behaviors can affect brand consumption, long-term quality and also other consumers (Maslowska *et al.*, 2016). Fourth, a critical number of researchers have adopted the behavioral perspective in regard to online consumer engagement (De Vries and Carlson, 2014; Dolan *et al.*, 2016; Schivinski *et al.*, 2016; Rossmann *et al.*, 2016; Barger *et al.*, 2016; Tsai and Men, 2017). Fifth, this perspective fits well in highly networked environments, as consumers often engage in non-purchase behaviors with brand-related content in social networks (Maslowska *et al.*, 2016) such as Facebook. Sixth, marketing managers tend to prefer measurable consumer engagement behaviors (Bolton, 2011) that can be quantified in a simple (Gummerus *et al.*, 2012) and quick way.

Facebook experience as an antecedent of consumers' behavioral brand engagement in Facebook

Before analyzing the relation between experience and engagement, it is worth highlighting the differences between the two concepts. In line with Hollebeek *et al.*'s (2014) argument, engagement and experience are seen here as representing two separate and distinct theoretical constructs. Engagement is a motivational construct (Brodie *et al.*, 2013) that requires an "active relationship" with the focal object (Dessart *et al.*, 2015), while experience does not "presume a motivational state" and can happen without an active connection with the object (Brakus *et al.*, 2009, p. 53). Moreover, according to Hollebeek *et al.* (2014), engagement is a process that evolves over time, while experiences are immediate responses to a stimulus. Thus, it can be argued that experience is distinct from engagement and antecedes it. Although customer engagement should be studied in conjunction with consumer experience (Malthouse and Calder, 2011), there is a lack of studies on the impact of users' experience during their interaction with social media on their behavioral engagement with a brand's social media page. Furthermore, the impact of social media consumption experience on consumers' engagement with a brand page remains under-researched.

In their conceptual framework, Madupu and Cooley (2010) highlighted the importance of consumers' informational, entertaining and social motives for their online brand engagement. The positive effect of the entertaining and learning benefits consumers acquire (through their interactions with online brand communities) on their engagement was also highlighted in a qualitative study by Dessart *et al.* (2015). In a study by Smith (2013), users who experienced feelings of entertainment during their interaction with a brand page on Facebook were found to be 3.2 times more likely to post a positive comment about the brand, and 4.3 times more likely to share brand content on Facebook, compared to users who did not experience feelings of pleasure and entertainment. Hall-Phillips *et al.* (2016), in examining the impact of social media site experiences on the engagement of consumers with the social media of social ventures, found that the experiential dimensions of escapism and learning led to increased levels of engagement. In another study, Zhang *et al.* (2017) revealed that members' engagement with five smartphone online brand communities was positively influenced by users' flow and social experiences with these online communities.

Hence, it is herein suggested that the various dimensions that comprise Facebook consumption experience (i.e. entertainment, flow, escapism, challenge, learning, socializing and *communitas*) will have an impact on consumers' behavioral engagement with a Facebook brand page. However, it should be noted that not all experience dimensions are expected to exert the same degree of influence, and in the same direction, on consumers' various behavioral engagement activities in social media. As Muntinga *et al.* (2011) showed, the entertaining aspect of social media usage affects engagement activities such as reading brand-related content and commenting about brands, while the social aspects influence only activities such as commenting. Based on the above, the present study aims to decompose the

effects of the social media consumption experience by distinguishing the impact of each experience dimension on consumers' brand engagement activities in social media. As a result, the following hypotheses are developed:

H1. The dimensions of (a) entertainment, (b) flow, (c) escapism, (d) socializing, (e) personal challenge, (f) learning and (g) *communitas* that comprise Facebook consumption experience of brand-related content will have a positive impact on consumers' various behavioral engagement activities with Facebook brand pages.

Two additional hypotheses were also added to the conceptual model regarding the possible effects Facebook usage frequency on the various dimensions of Facebook experience, as well as engagement activities with Facebook brand pages:

H2. Facebook usage frequency will have a positive impact on the dimensions of (a) entertainment, (b) flow, (c) escapism, (d) socializing, (e) personal challenge, (f) learning and (g) *communitas* that comprise Facebook consumption experience of brand-related content.

H3. Facebook usage frequency will have a positive impact on consumers' various behavioral engagement activities with Facebook brand pages.

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of this study.

Methodology

Measures

This study used the experience scale developed by Triantafyllidou and Siomkos (2013) to measure consumers' Facebook experience. This scale was modified to fit the Facebook experience. The experience scale comprises seven factors (entertainment, flow, escapism, personal challenge, learning, socializing and *communitas*) and includes 31 items. Respondents were asked to recall a recent experience with a brand's Facebook page, without reporting the brand's name or describing this experience. Responses were reported on five-point Likert scales ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree". Moreover, respondents indicated on five-point scales ranging from (1) "never" to (5) "very frequent" the frequency with which they engage in the following activities: visiting Facebook brand pages,

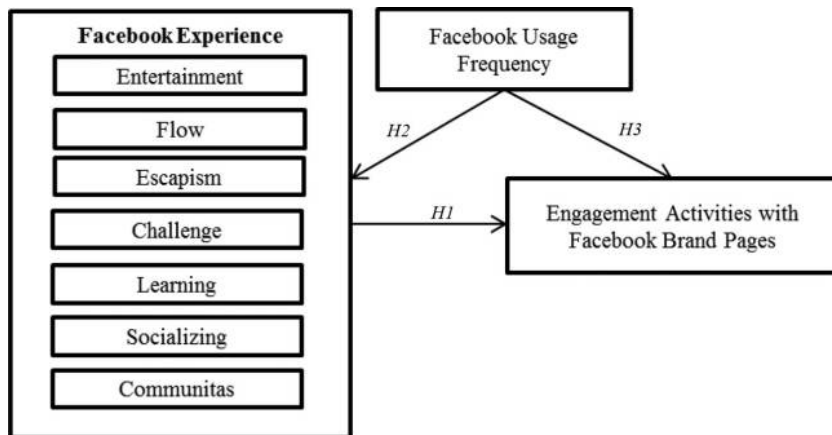


Figure 1. Conceptual model

reading content posted on Facebook brand pages, liking Facebook brand pages, liking posts on Facebook brand pages, writing positive comments about the content posted on Facebook brand pages, writing negative comments about the content posted on Facebook brand pages and sharing the content posted on Facebook brand pages. It should be noted that although the list of engagement activities is not exhaustive, it covers the most popular ones. Participants also reported the frequency of their internet and Facebook usage based on the following questions: "On average, about how much time per day do you spend on Internet [Facebook]?" Responses were (1) "one hour", (2) "one to three hours" and (3) "more than 4 hours". In addition, respondents reported the device (e.g. desktop/laptop, smartphone, tablet) they used most to access Facebook.

Data collection

To accomplish the study's objectives, two online surveys were conducted using the snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling entails a "chain referral approach" in which, in this case, subjects recruited their friends, family members and acquaintances using their social network contacts. The first survey took place from November 2015 to January 2016. The initial "seed" sampling units comprised 25 students of a marketing course at a technological education institute in a northwestern city in Greece. The seed students were asked (in class) to forward the online questionnaire to at least 20 Facebook peers, in exchange for extra credit. To ensure that the students had done as asked (i.e. to receive the extra credit), in the online questionnaire, their peers were asked to note the registry number of the student by whom they had been asked to complete the survey. Only if a student registry number appeared in 20 questionnaires would the student receive the extra credit. From the first survey, 500 questionnaires were returned, all of which were completed with no missing values. Thus, no questionnaires were discarded due to incomplete data. The second survey took place during July 2017 using the same questionnaire as the initial survey. Again, the snowball sampling technique was used. However, the recruitment procedure used for this sample differed from that of the first survey. Specifically, students of three marketing and communication courses received an email informing them about an online survey and asking them to forward the online questionnaire to their Facebook contacts without any restriction and without receiving extra credit for doing so. This survey resulted in 192 completed questionnaires. Both questionnaires were in Greek and were developed in Google Forms. There were no missing values since all questions had to be answered for the participant to submit the questionnaire. Moreover, since there was no evidence regarding how many times the questionnaire was forwarded by each student, the response rate cannot be calculated.

Data analysis

First, an exploratory factor analysis was performed on the initial sample (500 respondents) using the maximum likelihood method with Oblimin rotation to determine the dimensions that comprise consumers' brand engagement on Facebook. Maximum likelihood method was chosen in this case since this method is also used by default in AMOS for confirmatory factor analysis. Second, the measurement model was developed with all the constructs of the theoretical model, including the new engagement scale that resulted from the factor analysis. Third, the fitness of the measurement model was assessed in the initial sample to examine the convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs. In addition, to cross-validate the new engagement scale, as well as the experience scale, the fitness of the measurement model was reassessed for the second sample. Fourth, hypothesis testing was conducted through the evaluation of the structural model for the initial sample, which included the causal relationships between constructs.

Results

Table I shows the demographic characteristics of the two samples. Regarding the first sample, a total of 500 respondents answered the questionnaire. The majority of respondents were female (63.8 per cent), single (84.4 per cent), aged between 18 and 25 (69.6 per cent), unemployed (51.2 per cent), university students (49.2 per cent) and

Variable	(%) first sample (N = 500)	(%) second sample (N = 197)
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	36.2	38.5
Female	63.8	61.5
<i>Age</i>		
18-25 years	69.6	40.6
26-35 years	23.0	25.5
36-45 years	5.0	18.2
46-55 years	1.6	10.9
Over 56 years	0.8	4.7
<i>Education</i>		
Secondary education	14.6	21.4
University students	49.2	26.6
Bachelor	32.0	38.0
Master	3.4	12.0
PhD	0.8	2.1
<i>Internet usage frequency</i>		
Less than 1 h	7.6	10.7
2 to 3 h	32.8	31.5
4 to 5 h	31.2	31.0
More than 5 h	28.4	26.9
<i>Marital status</i>		
Single	84.4	65.1
Married	66.0	28.6
Divorced	7.0	6.3
Other	5.0	0
<i>Occupation</i>		
Unemployed	51.2	30.7
Private sector employee	28.6	53.1
Public sector employee	3.0	13.0
Student	11.0	1.0
Retired	6.2	2.1
<i>Monthly personal income</i>		
0-500 euros	69.6	46.9
501-750 euros	14.0	13.5
751-1,000 euros	9.0	14.6
1,001-2,000 euros	5.8	19.3
More than 2,001 euros	1.6	5.7
<i>Facebook usage frequency</i>		
Less than 1 h	19.8	27.9
2 to 3 h	40.0	39.1
4 to 5 h	23.4	18.8
More than 5 h	16.8	14.2

Table I.
Characteristics of the
samples

earning up to 500 euros per month (69.6 per cent). Moreover, 64.0 per cent of respondents used the internet for 2-5 h per day, while 28.4 per cent can be characterized as heavy internet users since they were online more than 6 h per day. Regarding Facebook, most participants used the platform for 2-3 h per day (40.0 per cent). Facebook was usually accessed through their smartphones (55.4 per cent), followed by computers (39.2 per cent).

The second sample consisted of 197 respondents. Similar to the first sample, most of the respondents were female (61.5 per cent), single (65.1 per cent), aged between 18 and 25 (40.6 per cent) and earning up to 500 euros per month (46.9 per cent). However, the second sample differed from the initial one since the majority of respondents were private-sector employees (53.1 per cent), while only a small percentage were students (26.6 per cent). Similar internet and Facebook usage patterns were found in the second sample.

Exploratory factor analysis

To explore the dimensionality of the consumers' brand engagement on Facebook (the second research objective), an analysis was conducted in two phases. First, factor analysis was conducted using maximum likelihood method of extraction and Oblimin rotation to identify the factor structure of the seven-item engagement construct. The results of the factor analysis are shown in Table II.

The factor analysis resulted in two factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1.0, which explained 67.65 per cent of the variance in the engagement scale. All items had factor loadings above 0.5. Based on the pattern matrix, the first factor was named "consuming" and included four items, which were visiting, reading content on, liking and liking posts on brands' Facebook pages. The second item was termed "contributing", and included three items that reflected more active engagement activities of consumers, such as posting positive or negative comments on brand pages, and sharing brand-related content. The two-factor structure was used for the subsequent analysis.

Measurement model

The measurement model, which consisted of nine latent variables (seven constructs for experience and two for engagement) with 37 indicators (31 for experience and 7 for engagement) and one single-item variable (Facebook usage), was first evaluated based on

Factor/item	Factor loading	Variance explained	Cumulative variance explained
<i>Factor 1: Consuming</i>		55.73%	55.73%
Like Facebook pages of brands	0.88		
Like posts on Facebook pages of brands	0.86		
Visit Facebook pages of brands	0.83		
Read content posted on Facebook pages of brands	0.81		
<i>Factor 2: Contributing</i>		11.92%	67.65%
Write positive comments about the content posted on Facebook pages of brands	0.86		
Write negative comments about the content posted on Facebook pages of brands	0.76		
Share the content posted on Facebook pages of brands	0.59		

Table II.
Factor analysis of
consumers' brand
engagement on
Facebook

the initial sample ($N = 500$). The goodness-of-fit measures suggested a good fit of the data ($\chi^2 = 1,430.87$, $p = 0.000$, $\chi^2/df = 2.18$, Comparative Fit index [CFI] = 0.937, Tucker–Lewis index [TLI] = 0.928) since the CFI and TLI values exceeded the 0.90 criterion proposed by Byrne (2010). The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) value was smaller (at 0.049) than the 0.06 threshold suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999). However, the item of the communitas factor (“I felt closer to friends and family”) was removed from the experience scale, as its standardized loading was 0.472 and did not exceed the critical value of 0.50 (Janssens *et al.*, 2008). Next, the modification indices were then inspected to detect any cross-loadings and item residual (error) correlations. Two pairs of item residuals were identified that had a modification index above 10 (Byrne, 2010). The first pair was for residuals of the items “I felt I was having the ideal experience” and “I met people with similar interests”, and the second for residuals of items “I felt I was having the ideal experience” and “I enjoyed the experience for its own sake”. Thus, following the recommendation of Landis *et al.* (2009), the item from the entertainment factor “I felt I was having the ideal experience” was eliminated from the model due to the covariance of its residual with the other two items. The remaining modification indices values were lower than 10. After removing this item, the goodness-of-fit measures for the revised measurement model were reassessed. Based on the findings, the model showed a satisfactory fit ($\chi^2 = 1,295.65$, $p = 0.000$, $\chi^2/df = 2.23$, CFI = 0.939, TLI = 0.930, RMSEA = 0.50).

The re-specified measurement model was reevaluated based on the second sample ($N = 197$). Although the size of the second sample was small, the model exhibited adequate fit ($\chi^2 = 1,123.02$, $p = 0.000$, $\chi^2/df = 1.94$, CFI = 0.910, TLI = 0.900). The RMSEA value (0.069) exceeded the cutoff value of 0.06 proposed by Hu and Bentler (1999), but was less than 0.07 (Steiger, 2007), and can thus be considered acceptable.

Experience scale validation

The experience scale was evaluated for its internal reliability, convergent and discriminant validity in both samples. Tables III and IV show the results of this evaluation for both samples.

For the initial sample, all standardized coefficients of the 29 experience and seven engagement indicators were significant (critical ratios >1.96 , $p = 0.000$), and exceeded the 0.50 threshold (Janssens *et al.*, 2008). The experience scale showed adequate internal reliability, since the Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for the seven experience factors ranged from 0.748 to 0.905 (Table III), exceeding the 0.70 criterion suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). The average variance extracted (AVE) values for all experience factors ranged from 0.503 to 0.712, and were greater than the 0.50 threshold proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981), indicating convergent validity. The validity was further confirmed by the fact that the composite reliabilities of all experience factors ranged from 0.736 to 0.907 – above the 0.70 acceptable value (Hair *et al.*, 1998). Hence, the Facebook experience scale showed satisfactory levels of convergent validity.

The discriminant validity of the Facebook experience scale was assessed by comparing the AVE value of each dimension with the square of the correlation between the examined factor and the rest of the factors of the experience scale (Table IV). Based on the results, the discriminant validity of the experience scale was established since the AVE of each factor was larger than the square of the correlation between the examined factor and the rest of the factors of the experience scale.

A similar assessment of the internal consistency and the convergent and discriminant validity of the experience scale was conducted on the data from the second sample. The results were very similar to those from the initial sample. Specifically, the values of the

Table III.
Descriptive statistics, reliability and validity measures and standardized factor loadings of Facebook experience factors

Factors/items	Mean	SD	Standardized factor loadings
<i>Entertainment [AVE = 0.503 (0.598), CR = 0.856 (0.898), a = 0.849 (0.893)]</i>			
I experienced joy	2.57 (2.55)	0.82 (0.83)	0.65 (0.65)
The experience was fun	3.02 (3.08)	0.85 (0.93)	0.80 (0.84)
The experience gave me a good feeling	2.79 (2.86)	0.81 (0.89)	0.82 (0.88)
I felt cheerful during the experience	2.79 (2.83)	0.82 (1.00)	0.75 (0.80)
It was pleasant just being there	2.78 (2.78)	0.89 (0.92)	0.64 (0.77)
I enjoyed the experience for its own sake	2.78 (2.78)	0.91 (1.00)	0.56 (0.67)
<i>Flow [AVE = 0.639 (0.672), CR = 0.898 (0.910), a = 0.899 (0.928)]</i>			
I was totally immersed in the experience	2.21 (2.26)	1.02 (1.02)	0.74 (0.77)
I was totally absorbed in the experience	1.98 (2.10)	1.03 (1.01)	0.774 (0.80)
My total focus and attention was on the experience	2.04 (2.13)	0.91 (0.92)	0.77 (0.86)
I felt deeply all that happened	2.01 (2.13)	0.95 (1.01)	0.79 (0.85)
I was thinking of nothing but what was happening at that moment	1.88 (2.09)	0.88 (0.96)	0.82 (0.82)
<i>Escapism [AVE = 0.648 (0.733), CR = 0.878 (0.916), a = 0.895 (0.926)]</i>			
I felt that I was living in a different time and place	2.03 (2.07)	0.95 (0.94)	0.64 (0.75)
I felt that I was in a different world	1.92 (2.00)	0.90 (0.96)	0.72 (0.79)
The experience let me imagine being someone else	1.69 (1.85)	0.79 (0.90)	0.92 (0.95)
I felt I played a different character here	1.74 (1.88)	0.85 (0.90)	0.90 (0.92)
<i>Challenge [AVE = 0.534 (0.626), CR = 0.850 (0.890), a = 0.857 (0.886)]</i>			
I felt a sense of adventure and risk	1.88 (1.97)	0.85 (0.91)	0.69 (0.64)
I felt personally challenged	2.33 (2.19)	1.09 (1.11)	0.68 (0.74)
I felt an adrenalin rush	1.78 (1.81)	0.86 (0.89)	0.83 (0.89)
I felt that my skills were appreciated by others	2.13 (2.18)	1.00 (1.10)	0.70 (0.82)
During the experience I tested my limits	1.90 (1.91)	0.90 (0.96)	0.78 (0.85)
<i>Learning [AVE = 0.589 (0.657), CR = 0.811 (0.852), a = 0.809 (0.879)]</i>			
The experience was highly educational to me	3.03 (3.05)	1.04 (1.18)	0.80 (0.87)
The experience had made me more knowledgeable	3.31 (3.21)	1.03 (1.09)	0.76 (0.83)
It stimulated my curiosity to learn new things	2.39 (2.48)	0.97 (1.09)	0.74 (0.83)
<i>Socializing (AVE = 0.712 (0.740), CR = 0.907 (0.920), a = 0.905 (0.916)]</i>			
I met new people	2.78 (2.74)	1.15 (1.17)	0.89 (0.90)
I met people with similar interests	2.84 (2.87)	1.10 (1.16)	0.91 (0.91)
I made new friends	2.89 (2.85)	1.15 (1.15)	0.80 (0.85)
I talked to new and varied people	2.70 (2.67)	1.09 (1.12)	0.78 (0.78)
<i>Communitas [AVE = 0.583 (0.685), CR = 0.736 (0.813), a = 0.748 (0.826)]</i>			
I was satisfied with being part of a team	2.32 (2.35)	0.89 (0.95)	0.79 (0.86)
I felt in harmony with others	2.55 (2.67)	1.01 (1.14)	0.74 (0.79)

Notes: Values for the second-validation sample are reported in the parentheses; Abbreviations: AVE, average variance extracted; CR, composite reliability; a, Cronbach's alpha

standardized factor loadings of the 30 experience items were all significant (critical ratios >1.96, $p = 0.000$), and ranged from 0.635 to 0.952 (exceeding the 0.50 cutoff value). The internal reliability of the seven experience scales was also satisfactory, since Cronbach's alpha values were all above the 0.70 threshold, ranging from 0.826 to 0.928. For the second sample, the AVE values of the seven factors ranged from 0.598 to 0.740 and were above the 0.50 criterion, while composite reliabilities also exceeded the 0.70 cutoff value (from 0.813 to 0.920), providing evidence of convergent validity. In addition, the experience scale showed

Table IV.
Discriminant validity
of the Facebook
experience scale

Experience dimensions	Entertainment	Flow	Escapism	Challenge	Socializing	Learning	Communitas
Entertainment	<i>0.503 (0.598)</i>	0.319 (0.457)	0.162 (0.271)	0.214 (0.256)	0.113 (0.398)	0.226 (0.293)	0.327 (0.437)
Flow	0.319 (0.457)	<i>0.639 (0.672)</i>	0.496 (0.561)	0.285 (0.398)	0.047 (0.232)	0.344 (0.344)	0.219 (0.438)
Escapism	0.162 (0.271)	0.496 (0.561)	<i>0.648 (0.733)</i>	0.454 (0.484)	0.081 (0.135)	0.375 (0.375)	0.289 (0.343)
Challenge	0.214 (0.256)	0.285 (0.398)	0.454 (0.484)	<i>0.712 (0.626)</i>	0.187 (0.256)	0.242 (0.250)	0.237 (0.456)
Socializing	0.113 (0.398)	0.047 (0.232)	0.081 (0.135)	0.187 (0.256)	<i>0.534 (0.740)</i>	0.147 (0.309)	0.237 (0.423)
Learning	0.226 (0.293)	0.089 (0.183)	0.073 (0.166)	0.242 (0.250)	0.147 (0.309)	<i>0.583 (0.657)</i>	0.464 (0.643)
Communitas	0.327 (0.437)	0.219 (0.438)	0.289 (0.343)	0.237 (0.456)	0.237 (0.423)	0.464 (0.643)	<i>0.589 (0.685)</i>

Note: Values for the second-validation sample are reported in the parentheses

discriminant validity, as none of the squared correlations between an examined factor and the other factors was larger than the AVE of the factor.

Engagement scale validation

In a similar vein, the internal reliability and convergent and discriminant validity of the developed engagement scale was assessed for both the initial and the second sample (Table V). For the first sample, all standardized factor loadings for the seven items of the engagement scale were significant (critical ratios >1.96 , $p = 0.000$) and above 0.674, thus exceeding the critical value of 0.50. In addition, the Cronbach's alpha value for the "consuming" factor was 0.909 and for "contributing" was 0.772 (Table V). Thus, based on the reliability coefficient estimates, the two engagement factors were acceptably reliable.

The AVE value for "consuming" was 0.641 and for "contributing" was 0.627; both are greater than 0.50, indicating convergent validity. Moreover, the composite reliability for "consuming" was 0.874 and for "contributing" 0.833, again surpassing the 0.70 value. Based on the above, the construct of consumers' brand engagement on Facebook exhibited satisfactory convergent validity. In addition, the discriminant validity of the engagement scale was adequate as the AVE of each factor was greater than the square of the correlation between the "consuming" and "contributing" factors (square of correlation: 0.514). Hence, it can be argued that consumers' brand engagement on Facebook is a two-dimensional construct composed of two factors, namely, consuming and contributing. This two-dimensional structure was found to be reliable and valid.

To cross-validate the new engagement scale, its reliability and validity (convergent and discriminant) were reassessed on the data from the second sample. Results are presented in parentheses in Table V. Standardized factor loadings were significant and above 0.603 for the items of the engagement scale. Moreover, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the "consuming" (0.922) and "contributing" (0.714) factors were larger than the cutoff criterion of 0.70, indicating good internal reliability. Convergent validity was also found to be adequate in the second sample, since the AVE values for the two factors were 0.713 and 0.502, and the composite reliability values were 0.907 and 0.749, for the consuming and contributing factors, respectively. Discriminant validity was also confirmed, as the squared correlation of the two factors was 0.375 and smaller than

Factors/items	Mean	SD	Standardized factor loadings
<i>Consuming</i> [AVE = 0.641 (0.713), CR = 0.874 (0.907), $\alpha = 0.909$ (0.922)]			
Visit Facebook pages of brands	2.71 (2.65)	1.04 (1.06)	0.67 (0.73)
Read content posted on Facebook pages of brands	2.70 (2.60)	1.04 (1.07)	0.69 (0.73)
Like Facebook pages of brands	2.69 (2.61)	1.08 (1.21)	0.83 (0.93)
Like posts on Facebook pages of brands	2.43 (2.48)	1.08 (1.19)	0.97 (0.96)
<i>Contributing</i> [AVE = 0.627 (0.502), CR = 0.833 ($\alpha = 0.772$)]			
Write negative comments about the content posted on Facebook pages of brands	1.48 (1.80)	0.77 (1.02)	0.72 (0.60)
Write positive comments about the content posted on Facebook pages of brands	1.75 (1.48)	0.94 (0.79)	0.91 (0.80)
Share the content posted on Facebook pages of brands	1.93 (1.86)	0.98 (1.06)	0.73 (0.71)

Notes: Values for the second-validation sample are reported in the parentheses; Abbreviations: AVE, average variance extracted; CR, composite reliability; α , Cronbach's alpha

Table V.
Descriptive statistics,
reliability and
validity measures
and standardized
factor loadings of
consumers' Brand
engagement on
Facebook factors

the AVE values of the factors. The cross-validation results in a different data set provided further support for the reliability and validity of the engagement scale.

Hypotheses testing – structural model

To examine the effect of the different experience dimensions on the two brand engagement factors, structural equation analysis was employed in the initial sample, since the goodness-of-fit measures of the measurement model were satisfactory for both samples. It should be noted that the structural model tested the relationships between all Facebook experience dimensions and the two dimensions that comprise the engagement scale, as well as the relationships between Facebook usage frequency and Facebook experience and engagement dimensions.

The overall chi-square statistic of the structural model was significant ($\chi^2 = 1.157.6, p = 0.000, \chi^2/df = 1.97$). The values of the model's goodness-of-fit indices exceeded the 0.90 criterion (CFI = 0.952, TLI = 0.943). Moreover, the RMSEA value was less than the 0.07 cutoff criterion (RMSEA = 0.44). Based on the above results, it can be suggested that the structural model showed a good fit to the data. To ensure that the relationships found in model were not caused by common method bias, a second model was developed that included a common latent factor. This factor was related to all observed variables of the model, and these regression paths were constrained to be equal. Moreover, the variance of the common latent factor was set to 1. The common method variance is estimated as the square of the unstandardized loading of the common latent factor of each path (which is the same across all paths) (Eichhorn, 2014). The square of the unstandardized factor loading of the common latent factor across all paths was below the 0.50 threshold [$(0.20)^2 = 0.04$], suggesting that common method variance was not a problem in the present study.

Hypothesis testing was based on the significance of the standardized estimates of the path coefficients between the variables of the model, which are shown in Table VI.

Regarding *H1*, the results suggest that the engagement factor of “consuming” brand-related content on Facebook was significantly ($p < 0.05$) positively related to the experience dimensions of flow ($\beta = 0.163$) and communitas ($\beta = 0.306$). By comparing the beta coefficients of the significant antecedents, it can be concluded that the most pertinent positive predictor of the “consuming” engagement factor was that of communitas. On the contrary, the dimension of escapism proved to be a significant ($p < 0.05$) negative antecedent of the “consuming” aspect of consumers’ brand engagement on Facebook ($\beta = -0.207$).

Regarding the impact of the different experience dimensions on the “contributing” element of engagement, the results suggest that entertainment ($\beta = 0.163$), flow ($\beta = 0.170$), socializing ($\beta = 0.143$) and communitas ($\beta = 0.305$) were found to be significant ($p < 0.05$) positive triggers of the “contributing” factor. Comparing the standardized coefficients of the significant predictors, it can be argued that, again, the element of communitas was the most influential experience dimension. None of the Facebook experience dimensions significantly negatively influenced the “contributing” factor of engagement with brands’ Facebook pages. Based on the above, *H1b* and *H1g* were accepted, whereas *H1c*, *H1e* and *H1f* were rejected. Moreover, *H1a* and *H1d* were partially accepted, but only for the contributing factor.

Facebook usage frequency was significantly ($p < 0.05$) positively related to the experience dimensions of entertainment ($\beta = 0.232$), flow ($\beta = 0.190$), socializing ($\beta = 0.155$), personal challenge ($\beta = 0.129$) and communitas ($\beta = 0.128$). A comparison of the significant standardized coefficients indicates that Facebook usage exerts a greater influence on the feelings of entertainment and flow induced by a brand page on Facebook than on the feelings of socializing, challenge and communitas. Thus, *H4a*, *H4b*, *H4d*, *H4e*

Relationship	Standardized direct effects	Critical ratios	<i>p</i> -value
Facebook Usage → Entertainment	0.232	4.890	0.000*
Facebook Usage → Flow	0.190	4.005	0.000*
Facebook Usage → Escapism	0.064	1.383	0.167
Facebook Usage → Socializing	0.155	3.484	0.000*
Facebook Usage → Challenge	0.129	2.656	0.008*
Facebook Usage → Learning	0.091	1.869	0.062
Facebook Usage → Communitas	0.129	2.562	0.010*
Facebook Usage → Consuming	0.085	1.840	0.066
Facebook Usage → Contributing	0.043	0.881	0.379
Entertainment → Consuming	0.055	0.797	0.425
Flow → Consuming	0.163	2.002	0.045*
Escapism → Consuming	-0.207	-2.284	0.022*
Socializing → Consuming	0.056	1.012	0.311
Challenge → Consuming	-0.046	-0.520	0.603
Learning → Consuming	0.023	0.299	0.765
Communitas → Consuming	0.306	2.698	0.007*
Entertainment → Contributing	0.163	2.222	0.026*
Flow → Contributing	0.170	1.985	0.047*
Escapism → Contributing	-0.118	-1.244	0.213
Socializing → Contributing	0.143	2.444	0.015*
Challenge → Contributing	-0.064	-0.661	0.509
Learning → Contributing	-0.115	-1.344	0.179
Communitas → Contributing	0.305	2.573	0.010*

Note: *Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table VI.
Effects of experience
dimensions on
engagement factors

and *H4g* were accepted, whereas *H4c* and *H4f* were rejected. In addition, *H5* was rejected as Facebook usage frequency did not significantly impact either of the two engagement dimensions.

Conclusions and managerial implications

Social media platforms are not just another communication option that marketers can use to send one-way messages to target consumers. When consumers visit a brand's social media platform(s), they not only passively receive brand messages, but consume and live a particular experience as they interact with the online brand-related content. It is herein suggested that the experience felt by consumers online during social media consumption is a key feature that differentiates social media from other traditional, as well as online, communication channels (e.g. Web 1.0 tools) and that the experiential aspects of social media consumption are important drivers of consumers' brand engagement on social media.

The purpose of this study was twofold: First, to measure Facebook experience by adopting a holistic framework that takes into consideration the most important elements comprising such experiences; and second, to identify the impact of the different experience dimensions on consumers' brand engagement on the social media platform Facebook.

The present study contributes to research on social media in several ways. First, it enriches understanding of the various qualities of the Facebook consumption experience. The findings indicate that Facebook experience is a multi-dimensional scale that consists of seven factors: entertainment, flow, escapism, learning, challenge, socializing and communitas. Moreover, the intensity of the majority of Facebook experience dimensions is related to the frequency of Facebook usage. In other words, the more time a consumer

spends on Facebook, the more likely they will be to experience intense feelings of entertainment, flow, socializing, personal challenge and *communitas* while interacting with brand pages on Facebook.

Contrary to our expectations, Facebook usage was regarded by consumers as an ordinary experience. Hence, it can be suggested that Facebook experiences can be characterized as performance experiences that have expected, ordinary and mundane outcomes (Lanier and Rader, 2015). This ordinariness found in the Facebook experience can be attributed to the phenomenon of Facebook fatigue, which refers to the boredom that users often feel after using Facebook for many years.

Based on the respondents' answers, the Facebook experience induced feelings of learning, socializing and entertainment to a moderate extent. In other words, Facebook proved to be an activity that mainly helps users to:

- increase their knowledge capital;
- meet new people with similar interests; and
- pass their time in a pleasant and exciting way.

On the contrary, Facebook experience did not evoke feelings of flow, challenge, escapism and *communitas* to consumers. In other words, Facebook usage was not able to immerse consumers, help them fantasize about being in another world or experience a sense of adventure. These findings contradict a study by Mauri *et al.* (2011), in which Facebook use was found to lead participants to experience a flow state.

Moreover, a critical aspect of the social nature of Facebook experience is challenged by the present study. Although it was expected that when consumers use Facebook they experience a sense of belonging and feel as though they part of an online "team" with similar interests, the findings did not support this claim. Thus, Facebook was found to be primarily used for its "networking" features, through which users can connect with new people (Boyd and Ellison, 2007).

The aforementioned low-intensity levels of flow and *communitas* experienced by consumers could be attributed to the low involvement respondents had with the brands encountered on Facebook. In general, consumers' involvement with the Facebook marketing efforts of brands is low (Hodis *et al.*, 2015), as most users primarily use Facebook to interact with others, and less to interact with brand-related content – which, most of the time, is perceived as a distraction (Hansson *et al.*, 2013). On the contrary, when consumers' involvement with a brand is high, or when consumers are community members of high-involvement emotional brands (e.g. Apple, Harley-Davidson, Mini) (Langner *et al.*, 2013), their interest in brand-related content on Facebook will be also high (Füller *et al.*, 2008), which in turn could affect the level of flow and *communitas* experienced by these consumers. According to Muntinga *et al.* (2012), consumer involvement with a brand plays a significant role in the way consumers experience and interact with brand-related content in social media. Thus, the mediating effects of brand involvement on the relationship between experience and engagement represent an issue that requires further attention from researchers.

Second, this study provides insights into the structure of consumers' behavioral brand engagement in social media. The analysis showed that behavioral brand engagement with brand Facebook pages is a two-factor construct comprising two elements: consuming and contributing. These factors capture not only the content but also the strength of engagement. This two-factor structure was validated in two different data sets, and exhibited satisfactory reliability and validity. On one hand, the consuming factor represents

the passive element of engagement, which includes activities such as visiting or liking brand pages on Facebook, as well as reading or liking content posted on brands' Facebook pages. On the other, the contributing factor reflects more intense/active behavioral expressions of brand engagement on Facebook, such as posting negative or positive comments or sharing content posted on brand pages. It should also be noted that the findings are consistent with those of [Tsai and Men's \(2013\)](#) study, in which consumers' brand engagement in social media was treated as a two-dimensional construct comprising similar factors.

Third, important evidence regarding which Facebook experience dimensions influence consumers' engagement with the Facebook pages of brands were revealed. [Table VII](#) shows the experience dimensions that impact, either positively or negatively, each of the engagement factors.

The dimension of "communitas", which refers to feelings of team belongingness that are elicited in consumers as they interact with Facebook pages, was found to be the most important promoter of engagement as it affected both engagement factors in a positive way. Similarly, consumers' immersion in a brand's Facebook page positively influenced both forms of brand engagement on Facebook. Entertainment, which reflects the positive emotions of pleasure and joy that consumers derive from Facebook usage, as well as socializing experience, which refers to the process by which consumers initiate friendships on Facebook with others, proved to be important positive drivers of the active element of brand engagement on Facebook. In other words, consumers will visit a brand page, read its content and press the "like" button as long as the page immerses them and enhances their bonds with others. In addition, consumers will engage more actively with a brand page by commenting on or sharing content if the page is entertaining, evokes immersion and helps them meet like-minded consumers and feel as though they are part of a team.

Fourth, not all experience dimensions had an impact on brand engagement, and those dimensions that exerted influence were not always positive predictors of engagement. Based on the findings, the dimensions of challenge and learning did not exert any influence on either engagement factor. Interestingly, escapism was found to be a negative antecedent of the "consuming" factor of consumers' engagement with brand pages on Facebook. Thus, the dimension of escapism acts as a "saboteur" of passive engagement forms (i.e. visiting, liking and reading content on Facebook brand pages). It seems that consumers might not be inclined to interact even in simple ways with a brand page that causes them to imagine being in a different time and place or playing an alternative role. This finding can be attributed to a number of reasons:

- escapism felt by users might divert their attention away from the brand content of the page;
- users might not desire a brand page to induce their daydreaming, since they might feel distracted from their goals regarding the brand; and
- users might perceive the feelings of escapism as a negative state caused by the brand content on Facebook.

Valence of impact	Brand engagement on Facebook	
	Consuming	Contributing
Positive	Flow Communitas	Entertainment flow socialization communitas
Negative	Escapism	N.S.

Table VII.
Summary of the
study's findings

Thus, consumers become apathetic or disinterested in the content of the brand's Facebook page.

The study's findings have important managerial implications for marketers who wish to increase consumers' brand engagement in social media platforms such as Facebook. Facebook brand managers wishing to provide exceptional experiences to their online supporters should begin by evaluating the experience they offer through their brand pages on Facebook. This evaluation will help map the strengths and weaknesses of the experience. In the results of the present study, brand pages on Facebook received low scores regarding their experiential performance on the majority of experience dimensions. As noted above, this might have been due to the low level of involvement consumers had with the brands they encountered on Facebook. If this is the case, brand managers of these low-involvement products are strongly advised to create content that has emotional appeal, and animations that grab consumers' attention. Moreover, as this study found that Facebook usage frequency is related to most of the Facebook experience dimensions, it is proposed that Facebook managers should target "heavy Facebook users", who will be more likely to have intense experiences during their interactions with brand pages or content on Facebook, and in turn actively engage with the brands.

As the study showed, the key to effectively nurturing Facebook brand engagement lies in the experience lived by consumers as they interact with Facebook pages. Hence, by cultivating a unique Facebook experience through the appropriate orchestration of specific experience dimensions, marketers can increase consumers' brand engagement on Facebook. First, marketers should recognize the impact of the experience dimensions on consumers' engagement and design the experiences they offer on Facebook accordingly, so as to benefit from dimensions that exert a positive influence, while simultaneously trying to reduce the negative effects of certain experience dimensions on engagement. However, which experience dimensions to manipulate depends on the forms of engagement that marketers wish to increase, since it was found that passive engagement forms are influenced by somewhat different experience dimensions compared to more active engagement forms.

More specifically, for passive engagement forms, such as visiting and liking brand pages and reading and liking brand-related content, marketers should place emphasis on the *communitas* dimension. Such emphasis should be prioritized for two reasons:

- (1) *communitas* was found to be the most important trigger of passive, as well as active, engagement; and
- (2) Facebook pages were found to be "poor" in "*communitas*" qualities.

Thus, social media marketers need to focus on connecting with their Facebook fans by making them feel as though they are important parts of the brand community. Encouraging consumers to share their ideas or concerns on the brand page and engage in conversations with other consumers might increase their feelings of *communitas* and belonging to the brand community. As flow was found to be another important dimension of Facebook experience, marketers should design their pages in such a way as to immerse consumers and involve them deeply by offering captivating and interesting content. In this way, they can grab consumers' attention. The aforementioned activities could induce consumers not only to click the "like" button or to read a comment, but also to engage more actively with the Facebook brand page by commenting or sharing content.

However, other important experiential strategies could be used to motivate consumers to contribute brand-related content to the brands' pages on Facebook. One of these strategies should be related to the provision of entertainment via the brand's Facebook page, as it was found that the dimension of entertainment is a positive driver of the contribution factor.

Brand pages should provide entertaining and exciting content through which consumers can relax and have fun. According to [Ashley and Tuten \(2015\)](#), branded entertainment in social media could take the form of “advergaming”. This branded entertainment strategy could contribute directly to consumers’ engagement by increasing feelings of pleasure, as well as indirectly by influencing users’ immersion and communitas experience, which in turn will lead to higher active engagement ([Ashley and Tuten, 2015](#)). Another social media strategy that could be used by marketers is the “networking strategy”, which aims to help consumers connect with other consumers with whom they share a passion for the brand. Fostering consumer-to-consumer interactions should be the primary objective of this networking strategy, which could be implemented by prompting consumers to share their brand experiences and engage in conversations with others on the brand’s Facebook page. Moreover, marketers could add social games to their brand page, offering consumers the ability to compete with other consumers. In this way, the socializing aspect of Facebook experience will increase, leading to active engagement forms such as commenting on or sharing brand-related content.

Nonetheless, social media marketers should be cautious when implementing experiential strategies so as not to elicit in consumers feelings of escapism. As noted above, escapist experiences could undermine consumers’ brand engagement on Facebook. For example, marketers should be cautious when using role-playing games or activities that might trigger consumers’ imagination.

Limitations and future research suggestions

A main limitation of the present study is related to the convenience nature of the samples, since there was an overrepresentation of young (up to 36 years old) and female participants. Hence, the results should be interpreted with caution since a more balanced sample in terms of gender and age might have produced different findings. In addition, the use of an online panel sample could help researchers deal with the issue of representativeness. However, it should also be noted that the demographics of the study’s sample is in line with the characteristics of Greek Facebook users, who are mostly young females ([Belenioti, 2014](#)). Furthermore, due to the online nature of the survey, it was not possible to determine whether the same person answered the questionnaire more than once.

A second shortcoming of this study stems from the way experience was measured. Specifically, respondents were asked to recall and rate a recent experience they had had on Facebook based on a set of predefined items. Thus, the findings could be biased due to memory limitations arising when consumers recalled their Facebook experience. Future research could collect data by conducting a real-time experiment and observing the actual behavior of consumers while interacting with brand-related content on Facebook. In addition, other qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, could provide more insights regarding the event that caused the experience, as well as other critical aspects of Facebook consumption experience that were not investigated by the present study.

In this study, respondents reported moderate to low intensity levels for all the experience dimensions that could be attributed to the low involvement of consumers with the brand communities on Facebook. Thus, it would be interesting to investigate social media experiences of consumers that arise from their interactions with strong brand communities in which community members will be more motivated to live intense experiences by communicating and connecting with other members, coordinating brand-related events and co-designing brand content.

As noted above, consumers rated their brand engagement on Facebook through a list of basic activities, such as visiting and liking brand pages; reading, liking and sharing

brand-related content, as well as commenting on brand pages. Future research could develop a measurement instrument that takes into consideration more behavioral aspects of consumers' brand engagement on Facebook, such as watching videos, participating in surveys and sharing ideas through comments. In addition, the present study did not focus on a particular brand page, but rather examined consumers' engagement with Facebook brand pages in general. Examining differences in the engagement of consumers across different product categories could yield fruitful insights about which products or brands perform most effectively in the social media arena.

Moreover, this study focused on Facebook, without investigating other social media platforms. Thus, a comparison of the consumption experience and brand engagement across different types of social media could yield fruitful insights about the differences in experience of users of different social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.). Moreover, it could reveal which experience dimension most impacts consumers' engagement with each social media platform, and whether these dimensions vary across the different platforms.

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