

## **Systematic literature Review: The relationship between brand content on social media and behavioral engagement – Antecedents and consequences**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

Social media have become a crucial component for brand communication. Nowadays, all brands can create and operate a brand page to communicate and interact with their audience. Shao (2009), Muntinga et al. (2011), and Dolan et al (2016) suggest a typology of use for social media that classifies the consumer's online brand-related activities (COBRA) according to their level of behavioral engagement. This article aims to analyze, through a systematic literature review, the relationship between content on brand pages, user behavioral engagement, their antecedents, and consequences. 40 research papers have been analyzed before in order for this paper is to gather a comprehensive picture of the current state of knowledge on this topic by creating a synthesis of well-established research of both contents on social media and behavioral engagement while also taking into account some newer information.

**Keywords:** Content, brand, behavioral engagement, social media, systematic literature review.

# **Analyse de la relation entre le contenu de marque sur les médias sociaux, l'engagement comportemental des utilisateurs et ses conséquences - Revue de littérature systématique**

## **RESUME**

Les médias sociaux deviennent de plus en plus importants pour la communication des marques. Shao (2009), Muntinga et al. (2011), et Dolan et al (2016), proposent une typologie d'utilisation pour les médias sociaux qui classe les activités de marque en ligne des consommateurs (COBRA) en fonction de leur niveau d'engagement comportemental. Dans cette perspective, cet article propose d'analyser à travers une revue de littérature systématique, la relation entre le contenu sur les pages de marques, l'engagement comportemental des utilisateurs et ses conséquences. L'objectif est d'identifier les recherches précédentes relatives à l'engagement comportemental des utilisateurs en relation avec le contenu, et voir comment ces résultats peuvent être interprétés ensemble pour créer une consolidation objective de l'engagement comportemental, ses antécédents ainsi que ses conséquences.

**Mots clés :** Contenu, engagement comportemental, médias sociaux, revue de littérature systématique, marque.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Social networks occupy an important role for brand communication, today all brands can create and operate a brand page on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or LinkedIn, in order to communicate and interact with their audience, these brand pages allow to create strong links with customers (Jahn and Kunz, 2012). In response to these brand communication activities, consumers adopt several different behaviors. Shao (2009), Muntinga et al (2011), and Dolan et al (2016), suggest a social media usage typology that classifies consumers' online brand activities (COBRA) according to their level of behavioral engagement. They put forward three levels of activities, consumption, contribution, and creation. Each level includes sub-activities.

Past research on the topic lacks an integrative and systematic conceptualization of these concepts and their antecedents and consequences. The absence of an established idea of what these concepts are hinders the development of reliable measures for them, especially in the case of the relationship between content and behavioral engagement. Moreover, the relationships between these constructs and other ones, as well as their antecedents, are difficult to elaborate in terms of stimulating hypotheses; therefore limiting our advances in this topic. Consequently,

one cannot set up a basis for further developments in this promising field and offer insightful conclusions for managerial purposes. Hence, in the present article, the aims are to understand what research has been conducted on content marketing, behavioral engagement, or consumer's online brand related-activities.

Based on these aims and considering the gaps in the literature, we define our specific research question: In the context of content strategy on brand pages, **what are the antecedents of behavioral engagement? And what are its consequences?** In this perspective, this article proposes to analyze, through a systematic literature review, the relationship between content on brand pages, the user's behavioral engagement, and its consequences. This literature review aims to identify previous research on user behavioral engagement with brand pages content, and to see how these results can be interpreted together to create an objective consolidation of behavioral engagement, its antecedents, and consequences.

To establish this systematic literature review, we began with a preliminary literature search of previous work on user behavioral engagement on brand pages. This initial search helped us to understand what has already been done, and to identify aspects that merit further investigation. Next, we established inclusion and exclusion criteria, using the following search string: "Brand page engagement, behavioral engagement, consumer online brand-related activities - Cobra, participation in online communities, interactions with brand, content strategy". The keywords were selected after reading key articles in the field of social media engagement. This chain was applied to three databases: Science Direct, Scopus, and Web of science.

## **1. LITERATURE REVIEW:**

The purpose of this literature review is to identify what previous research has uncovered related to both contents in brand pages and user behavioral engagement and how these results can be interpreted together as a whole to create an objective consolidation of the relationship of users, content and brand pages.

### **1.1 PROCEDURE:**

The method used in this research is a systematic literature review. The purpose of a systematic literature review is to guide further research into a topic, provide a summary of the current literature on a topic and to bring to light and compare conflicting evidence (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). The current review follows Tranfield et al. (2003) methodology for conducting the systematic review on the relationship between brand content on social media and behavioral

engagement which comprises planning the review, conducting the review, and reporting and disseminating. The planning and conducting phase of this literature review is built upon an established research objective and its research questions. As previously mentioned, this research aims to identify previous research on behavioral engagement with brand pages content, and to see how these results can be interpreted together to create an objective consolidation of behavioral engagement, its antecedents, and consequences. As there is no literature review combining behavioral engagement, its antecedents, and consequences, our goal is to provide a comprehensive picture of the current state of knowledge on this topic by creating a synthesis of well-established research on behavioral engagement.

Our objective through this systematic literature review is to identify previous research related to the behavioral engagement of users in social networks and more specifically brand pages, identify the set of the brand - user interactions, and see how these results can be interpreted together to create an objective consolidation.

## **1.2 INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA:**

It is necessary to establish a list of inclusion and exclusion criteria even before the results of primary studies are known. We began with a preliminary literature search of previous work on user engagement behavior on brand pages; this initial research helped us to understand what has already been done, and to identify aspects that deserve further investigation. Next, we established inclusion and exclusion criteria, using the following search string: "brand page engagement, behavioral engagement, consumer online brand-related activities - cobra, participation in online communities, interactions with brand, content strategy". The keywords were selected after reading key articles in the field of social media engagement. This chain was applied to three databases: Science Direct, Scopus, and Web of science. We included only research articles in English since the most relevant articles in the field of research are written in English and published in journals related to our theme such as Journal of Interactive Marketing, Journal of Brand Management, Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services. For behavioral engagement and brand community, we have included only articles published after 2010. The inclusion criteria defined for the online brand community category suggest that no articles published before the advent of social media should be included. The initial search in the three platforms returns a total of 300 titles. After the first screening of article titles and abstracts, researchers restrict our search to consider only articles within the category of marketing, management, and communication; eventually this restriction reduces the search

results. Next, researchers apply further inclusion and exclusion criteria in the second screening of titles and abstracts. After depuration, 40 relevant articles are retained.

The Journal of interactive Marketing published almost 13% of the papers. Journal of Business Research published almost 12% of the papers, Computers in Human Behavior and journal of brand Management published 11% of the papers.

Many papers employ a quantitative approach (85%). Only 15% of studies adopt a qualitative approach, predominantly using a literature review or semi-structured interviews to collect data. The sectors studied are banking, restaurants, fast food, airlines, cosmetics, fashion and mode, hotels and tourism, food and beverages. Some studies did not specify which brand pages were studied, while others chose to focus on the best brand pages on social networks based on Socialbakers or Interbrand, sites that classify brand pages according to the most popular and by sector of activity.

## **2. PROPOSAL OF THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL:**

The systematic literature review allowed us to deduce a conceptual model (see table 1), analyzing the relationship between brand content, and user behavioral engagement, its antecedents, and its consequences. Concerning behavioral engagement, we focused on the COBRA concept, a concept that provides a unifying framework around online consumer activity, COBRA antecedents were classified into three categories, content-oriented, relationship-oriented, and self-concept oriented. The behavioral engagement has consequences offline; namely brand trust, word of mouth, purchase intent, and brand equity.

### **2.1 FROM BEHAVIORAL ENGAGEMENT TO CONSUMER'S ONLINE BRAND RELATED ACTIVITIES:**

In the context of brand related-content, engagement is a buzz phrase that remains a concept devoid of a clear delineation (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014; Rodgers & Thorson, 2018). Nevertheless, one generally accepted definition (Rodgers & Thorson, 2018) comes from Hollebeek (2011), who views engagement as the level of a consumer's 'cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in specific brand interactions. Notably, engagement is not limited to positive brand-related interactions; Hollebeek and Chen (2014) discuss how engagement behaviors can be positively as well as negatively valenced. The current study focuses on behavioral engagement for three reasons, and according to B. Schivinski et al. (2019); first executives generally tend to measure the effectiveness of their marketing communication

efforts not in terms of cognitive and emotional engagement but in terms of behavioral engagement such as uploads, 'likes,' shares, links, connects, subscribes, and the like (Ashley& Tuten, 2015). Second, consumers' brand-related behaviors are at the heart of social media's effectiveness as a marketing instrument (de Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012). What consumers do with brands on social media is visible to innumerable other consumers and thus effectively constitutes the public enactment of the brand – the touch points that brand managers can no longer control (Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins, & Wiertz, 2013). Third, the authenticity and credibility associated with these activities give consumers influence at the expense of marketers (Labrecque, Vor Dem Esche, Mathwick, Novak, & Hofacker, 2013). As a result, consumers' brand-related social media communications have a strong potential to shape brand perceptions (Christodoulides & Jevons, 2011) and behavior (Dhar & Chang, 2009). Marketers, therefore, aim to strategically inspire and cultivate consumers' voluntary interactions with brand-related content (de Vries et al., 2012).

Social media enable consumers to seamlessly shift from passive consumers to active contributors and creators of brand-related content (Muntinga et al., 2011; Schivinski et al., 2016). Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit's (2011) framework of COBRAs serves as an appropriate background to capture brand-related social media behavior. COBRAs are defined as a set of brand-related online activities on the part of the consumer that vary in the degree to which the consumer interacts with social media and engages in the consumption, contribution, and creation of media content (Schivinski et al., 2016, 66). Muntinga et al. (2011) developed the COBRAs framework in response to the lack of a concept that adequately captured the diversity of consumer behavior on social media. According to Keller (2016), such conceptual thinking about engagement 'provide[s] provision and insight'; a framework such as COBRAs recognizes 'how different customers may want different relationships with a brand' (p. 11). Reflecting these different relationships, the division between consuming, contributing, and creating takes the shape of an 'engagement pyramid'. At the top of the pyramid, a smaller group of consumers is highly behaviorally engaged; at the broad base of the pyramid, a relatively large group of consumers is not very much behaviorally engaged with the brand. As a result of this passive-to-active gradient, the COBRAs framework can help assess how different levels of brand-related behavior connect with a range of other factors, thus shedding light on the brand-related antecedents of consumers' behavioral engagement with brands on social media.

On the other hand, in order to provide a deeper understanding of the behaviors consumers' exhibit when they engage with social media, R. Dolan et al. (2016) proposes a typology of

consumer's behaviors. They propose a typology of different types of behavioral engagement that users exhibit in social media platforms. It demonstrates that social media engagement behavior consists of seven distinct types; co-creation, positive contribution, consumption, dormancy, detachment, negative contribution and, co-destruction. While co-creation, positive contribution, negative contribution and co-destruction represent active engagement behaviors that potentially impact other social media users, consumption, dormancy, and detachment are more passive forms of engagement. While the majority of current literature concerning customer's engagement has focused on positively valenced engagement (van Doorn et al., 2010), the engagement concept can be extended to capture negatively valenced engagement as well (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014).

According to previous research, Dolan et al (2016), also suggested that behavioral engagement may occur at varying levels, they position social media engagement behavior on a continuum of intensity, from low (passive) to high (active) activity (Muntinga et al., 2011). Additionally, the intensities of engagement vary in valence. Positively valenced engagement levels are low (consuming), medium (positive contribution), and high (co-creation). Negatively valenced engagement levels are low (detaching), medium (negative contribution) and high (co-destruction). A neutral, dormant state of engagement exists.

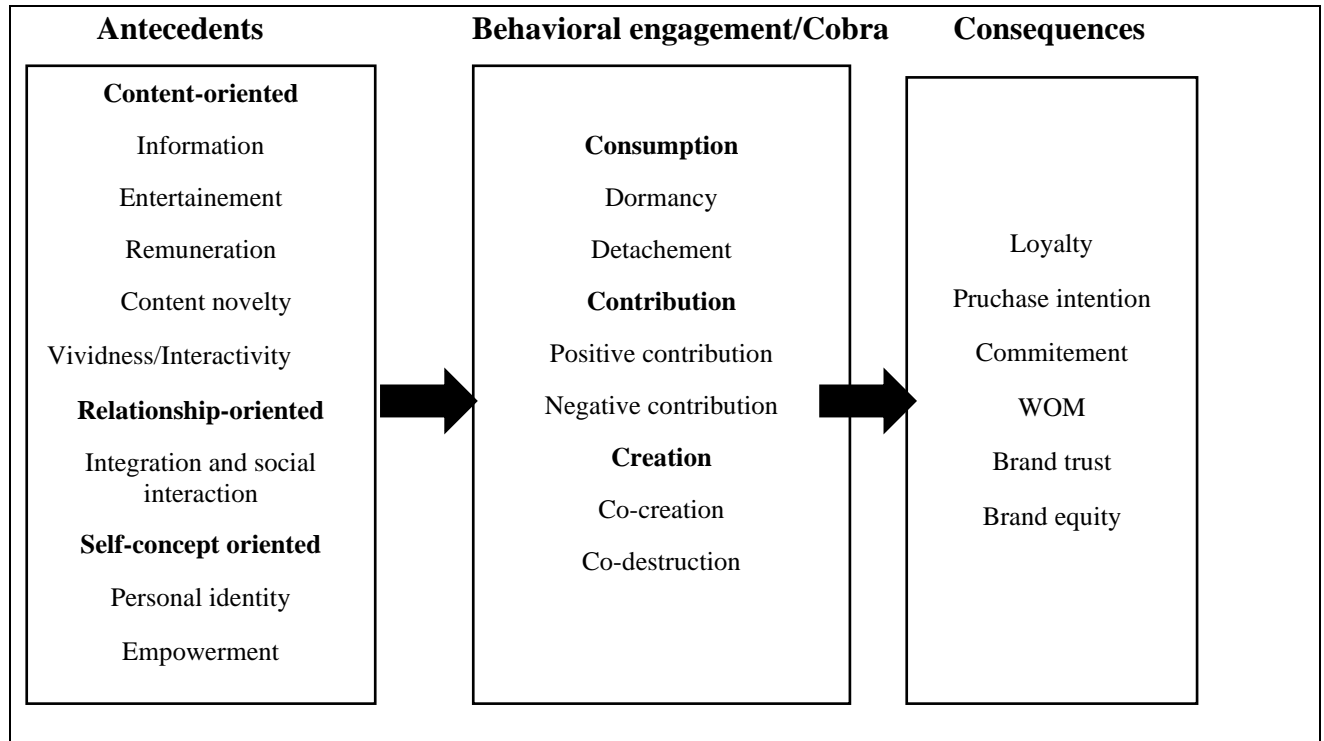


Table 1: Conceptual model, adapted from Muntinga et al (2011), Jahn et Kunz (2012), kujur (2018), Buzeta et al (2020)

## **2.2 DRIVERS OF BEHAVIORAL ENGAGEMENT:**

The most prominent drivers of behavioral engagement can be subsumed into three areas: a content-oriented area based on the information delivered by the media, entertainment content and remuneration content, media type and novelty of content, a relationship-oriented area based on social interaction with others, and a self-concept-oriented area based on particular needs of individuals such as achieving status or need for diversion and empowerment.

### **2.2.1 CONTENT-ORIENTED:**

Informative content is expected to attract users to the page and lead to higher levels of post engagement (De Vries et al., 2012; Hansson et al., 2013). As a result of that assumption, Ashley and Tuten (2015) have found that most branded post on social media appears to follow a functional/informational creative strategy. The usefulness of a post also increases the possibility of users to press the like button for a post (Chin et al., 2015), to choose a different reaction (Tian et al., 2017), to share the post with their friends (Schultz, 2017) or comment the post to ask for more information or to express their approval (or disapproval) to the information provided (Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013).

Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) have tried to explain the goals and motivations of individuals for engagement with different forms of content. Prior studies reveal that the consumption of entertaining and informative content is considered to be essential factors for participating in corporate brand pages (Chang and Hsu, 2016; Dolan et al., 2016; Lei et al., 2017; De Vries et al., 2017; Tanttu, 2017). Even Muntinga et al. (2011) report that entrainment and information-seeking drive online engagement over brand related activities in the form of consumption, creation and contribution. Searching for and receiving information about a brand is one of the main gratifications of consumer participation in online brand communities (Muntinga et al., 2011; Raacke & Bonds- Raacke, 2008). The desire to seek information directly from brands is a motivating factor for consumers to use social media (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004; Lin & Lu, 2011; Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009).

The entertainment construct of UGT refers to the extent to which social media content is fun and entertaining to media users (Eighmey & McCord, 1998). The value of entertaining media is embedded in its ability to fulfill user needs for escapism, hedonistic pleasure, aesthetic enjoyment, and emotional release (McQuail, 1983). The concept of entertainment has been discussed extensively in the literature, with empirical evidence demonstrating that an entertaining advertisement leads to positive attitudes toward the advertisement (Taylor et al.,

2011). Entertaining advertisements are said to cause users to consume, create or contribute to brand-related content online (Muntinga et al., 2011). Through the application of UGT in the context of online brand communities, authors have shown that consuming entertaining content is an important factor for participation (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008). The entertainment value of a social media platform can be an important reason that consumers adopt (Dholakia et al., 2004). Jahn et al. (2012) found that entertainment affects positively brand page engagement.

The level of remuneration offered to the consumer through social media content has been studied as a driver of consumer decisions to contribute to online communities (Muntinga et al., 2011). Consumers engage in social media use as they expect to gain some kind of rewards such as an economic incentive, job-related benefit, or personal wants (Muntinga et al., 2011).

This type of content is expected to gratify users' needs for remuneration and rewards within social media (Dolan et al., 2016). Kang et al., 2014 revealed that functional and monetary benefits are not influential factors in encouraging active member participation on restaurant Facebook pages. It could be interpreted that a Facebook fan page is not a primary outlet for consumer seeking product information (functional benefits) and promotions and sales offers (monetary benefits). As indicated in previous studies, consumers mainly rely on personal experience, official brand web sites, and the referrals of family and friends when seeking functional benefits (Hwang and Cho, 2005).

One way of enhancing the salience of brand posts is to include vivid brand post characteristics. Vividness reflects the richness of a brand post's formal features; in other words, it is the extent to which a brand post stimulates the different senses (Steuer 1992). Vividness can be achieved by the inclusion of dynamic animations, (contrasting) colors, or pictures (Cho 1999; Drèze and Hussherr 2003; Fortin and Dholakia 2005; Goldfarb and Tucker 2011; Goodrich 2011). The degree of vividness can differ in the way that it stimulates multiple senses (Coyle and Thorson 2001). For example, a video is more vivid than a picture because the former stimulates not only sight but also hearing. Moreover, higher degrees of vividness appear to be most effective at enhancing attitudes toward a website (Coyle and Thorson 2001; Fortin and Dholakia 2005). Therefore, multimedia content has the potential to be engaging for users because of its direct impact on various senses (Coyle and Thorson, 2001). According to previous studies, a high degree of vividness appears to be most effective in enhancing attitudes toward a website (Coyle and Thorson, 2001; Fortin and Dholakia, 2005) and increasing click-through rates (Lohtia et al., 2003, 2007). The click-through rate can be regarded as engagement behavior.

The results of the study conducted by Luarn and al, (2015) showed that the vividness of information may significantly influence the online engagement of users (Coyle and Thorson, 2001; Fortin and Dholakia, 2005; Van Der Heide *et al.*, 2012). They propose that posts with a high level of vividness provide numerous elements, enabling users to experience resonance, and encouraging them to express their opinions. However, posts with a high level of vividness received few likes compared with posts featuring a combination of status and photos, which represent a medium level of vividness.

Another way of enhancing the salience of a brand post is interactivity. Interactivity is defined as “the degree to which two or more communication parties can act on each other, on the communication medium, and on the messages and the degree to which such influences are synchronized” (Liu and Shrum 2002, p. 54). Interactivity is characterized by two-way communication between companies and customers, as well as between customers themselves; put differently, it characterizes many-to-many communication (Goldfarb and Tucker 2011; Hoffman and Novak 1996). According to Liu and Shrum, 2002 interaction can be defined as the degree to which two or more communication parties can act on each other, on the communication medium and on the messages, and the degree to which such actions are synchronized. Luran et al., 2015 found that interactivity exerts a strong effect on the level of online engagement.

### **2.2.2 RELATIONSHIP-ORIENTED**

Consumer needs for integration and social interaction and their desire for social benefits have been identified as key motivations for users to access the internet (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004). Motivations for social media use include gaining a sense of belonging, connecting with friends, family and society, seeking support, and substituting real-life partnership (Muntinga et al., 2011). Users find the internet a comfortable place to reveal their feelings, share views and experiences, and to let their family and friends know about their latest information (Leung, 2009). Socializing involves motivations such as gaining peer support, meeting interesting people, belonging to a community and staying in touch with friends (Park et al., 2009). The above discussion illustrates that UGT provides a framework through which we understand the motivations of individuals seeking a specific type of media. In a social media context, users are not passive in their media selection or their use of specific media. Social media is constructed to enable customer interaction and engagement.

According to Muntinga et al., 2011; the integration and social interaction motivation covers various media gratifications that are related to other people. Examples of sub-motivations are

gaining a sense of belonging; connecting with friends, family and society; seeking support/emotional support; and substituting real-life companionship.

### **2.2.3 SELF CONCEPT ORIENTED:**

Social identity refers to the inter group behaviors by which media users identify themselves on the basis of group status, preferences, habit, etc. in a group. This typical behavior also includes the identification of emotional and evaluative significance in the group (Cheung et al., 2011; Eisenbeiss et al., 2012). Social media users can feel the sense of belongingness in online community when they consider themselves as active members of the group. According to Tsai and Men (2013), the process of identifying oneself with brand social network sites community is interdependent with consumer-brand engagement. Brand communities such as brand pages on Facebook help consumers to socialize themselves not only with a brand representative but also with other users who share similar brand preferences. This process leads to various activities such as liking the brand or corporate page to get useful and entertaining information, to read reviews of community members and to comment or give opinions. As the community members share similar preferences toward a particular brand, they tend to develop a group attitude, follow norms of the group and sustain the dynamics of the group, which is possible through active participation in community interactions and activities. According to Davis et al., (2014) they found that for some participants social media present new opportunities to consumers to realize their personal potential through brand- related activities. In this regard, some consumers take a very active role, encouraged by a network-oriented medium, Consumers value the ability to express themselves and share their ideas through brand interactions. This enhances feelings of self-worth and makes the experiences valuable.

According to Muntinga et al, 2011 the empowerment motivation refers to people using social media to exert their influence or power on other people or companies. Wang and Fesenmaier (2003), for instance, found that ‘enforcing service excellence’ is a driver of participation in online travel communities. The empowerment motivation appears only in COBRA literature. Berthon *et al.* (2008) and Bronner and De Hoog (2011) show that consumers are very much aware of their influence over other people and the collective power that they, through virtual brand communities, may exert over product owners (Cova & Pace 2006). The idea that one can change other people’s perceptions, get them to buy a product or get a company to change course is an important motivator for them to create COBRAs.

With the revolutionary advantages of a collaborative, communal, empowering, and democratizing communication process (Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit 2011; Men and Tsai 2012), social media have fundamentally changed how organizations and brands communicate worldwide. Consumers are no longer passive message receivers. Instead, they are active agents in initiating conversations with brands, in building connections, and in generating electronic word-of-mouth in online communities. According to Buzeta et al (2020), empowerment drives all the three brand-related activities, namely consumption, contribution, and creation.

### **2.3 CONSEQUENCES OF BEHAVIORAL ENGAGEMENT:**

The analysis of our literature review revealed that behavioral engagement has several consequences on the brand-user relationship, some studies Jahn and Kunz (2012), De Vries and Carlson (2014), Aditya Shankar Mishra (2019) found that behavioral engagement affects brand loyalty. Others studies such as A. Dabbous and Barakat (2020), Aditya Shankar Mishra (2019), Kang et al. (2014) affirmed the positive impact of behavioral engagement on brand equity, Piehler et al (2019) revealed in their studies that behavioral engagement and in particular COBRAs affect the brand-user relationship in the offline context through word of mouth.

Trust is a fundamental principle of interpersonal exchange and is developed gradually through repeated interactions (Gefen, 2000). Brand trust is defined as consumers' secure belief that a brand will perform as expected upon consumption (Ha and Perks, 2005). Through continuous positive contact with a brand, consumers become confident that the brand can consistently meet or exceed their expectations (Deighton, 1992). Active participation in an online community can facilitate consumer-brand communication as well as information exchange among consumers, and accordingly contributes to the generation of brand trust (Flavián and Guinalú, 2006).

Bortree (2011) states in his study the higher the rate of interactions or engagement with an organization, the stronger will be the relationship with the customers. Visual contents related to an organization on its social network pages draw the attention of social media users and engage them with its interactive features in the content. The frequent and healthy exchange or interactions with content on social media brings both the parties closer and fosters a lasting relationship. Clavio and Walsh (2014) state that Facebook leads to more interactive experiences with its high-quality visuals than Twitter, which enhances effective relationship building.

Kujur (2018) revealed that deeper engagement levels gradually influence the users' attitude, which further leads to the personal involvement and positive WOM with their friends and

relatives. In addition, the respondents who were actively engaged in interpersonal interactions with brand pages perceived a better relationship with the company.

Rico Piehler (2019) found that word of mouth may seem weak but is reasonable, considering that brand pages are only one of many factors (e.g. product and service experiences, offline brand communication) that influence offline brand-related outcomes such as word of mouth which increases when people consume content on brand pages. Contributing and creating behaviors have no significant effects. This evidence that consuming behavior seems most effective for influencing this offline brand-related outcome implies that traditional one-way communication mechanisms can explain the effect of social media communication on brand pages. The study of Rico Piehler (2019) results are generally in line with the findings of Pöyry et al. (2013) who reveals a positive effect of browsing (i.e. consuming) on referral intentions (i.e. word of mouth) but are not able to identify a significant effect of participating (i.e. contributing and creating).

## CONCLUSION

Social media have become more and more important due to their immense reach. Social networking sites such as Facebook have a particularly prominent role. Shao (2009) and Muntinga et al. (2011) propose a usage typology for social media that categorizes consumers' online brand-related activities (COBRAs) according to their level of brand-related activeness. Consuming behavior represents a low level, such that it is characterized by consuming brand-generated or user-generated brand-related content, without actively contributing or creating content. Through this systematic literature review, we focused on the relationship between content and user on social networks, through the establishment of inclusion and exclusion criteria, we focused on 40 studies from 2010, these studies allowed us to propose a conceptual model, which moreover should be tested through a meta-analysis.

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