Social media and consumer engagement: a review and research agenda

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Abstract

Purpose – In "Social media's slippery slope: challenges, opportunities and future research directions", Schultz and Peltier (2013) asked "whether or how social media can be used to leverage consumer engagement into highly profitable relationships for both parties". The purpose of this article is to continue this discussion by reviewing recent literature on consumer engagement and proposing a framework for future research.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper reviews the marketing literature on social media, paying particular attention to consumer engagement, which was identified as a primary area of concern in Schultz and Peltier (2013).

Findings – A significant amount of research has been conducted on consumer engagement since 2010. Lack of consensus on the definition of the construct has led to fragmentation in the discipline, however. As a result, research related to consumer engagement is often not identified as such, making it difficult for academics and practitioners to stay abreast of developments in this area.

Originality/value – This critical review provides marketing academics and practitioners insights into the antecedents and consequences of consumer engagement and offers a conceptual framework for future research.

Keywords Social media marketing, Marketing communications, Brand management, Measurement, Consumer loyalty, Online branding

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

Schultz and Peltier (2013) published an article in the *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing* titled "Social Media's Slippery Slope: challenges, Opportunities and Future Research Directions". The authors noted that while marketers have dramatically increased their creation and usage of social media platforms, a relatively small portion have seen corresponding increases in consumer-brand engagement. They suggested that rather than utilize social media communication technology to enhance short-term revenue *vis-à-vis* sales promotions, marketers need to use these evolving technologies to create long-lasting engagement.

Recent large-scale commercial studies provide evidence that consumer engagement continues to be a problem for social media users. For example, IBM's CMO Insights Global C-Suite Study found that few companies engage with customers via social media and most have failed to "exploit the opportunities arising from the data explosion and advanced analytics" (IBM, 2014, p. 4). Moreover, a TrackMaven's (2016) study found that while social media content per brand rose by 35 per cent across varied platforms from 2014 to 2015, content engagement actually decreased by 17 per cent over that same time period. Even social media vendors who purportedly measure engagement have been unable to prove whether, or the degree to which, engagement correlates to metrics like loyalty or sales (Elliott, 2014). So while almost nine in ten US companies with at least 100 employees have a social media presence for marketing purposes, how this translates into customer value remains a mystery (eMarketer, 2015).
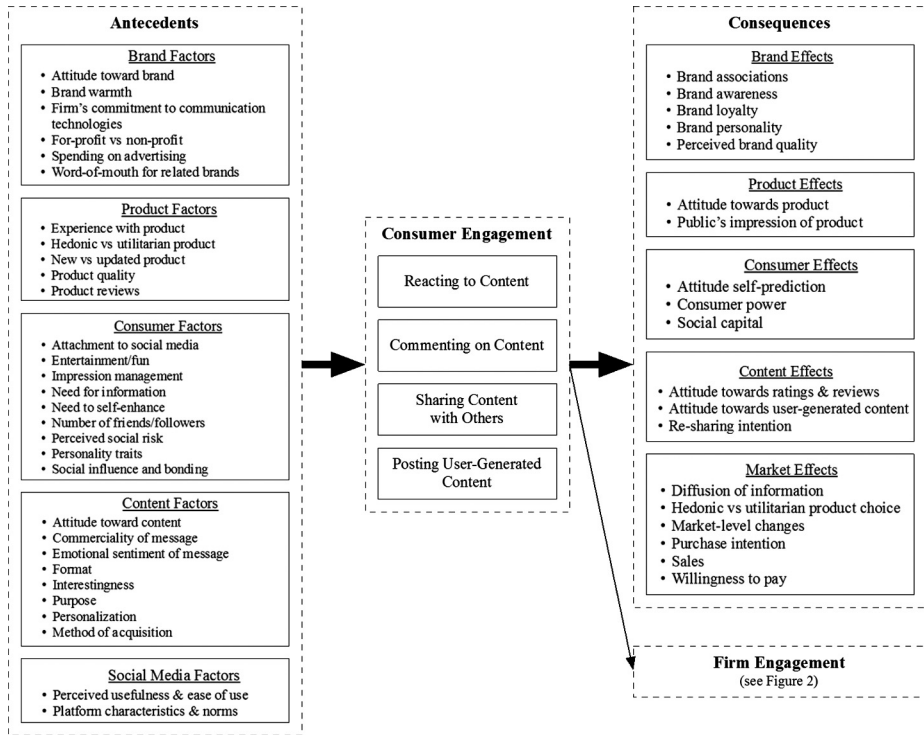
A number of factors contribute to this engagement gap. First, social media is a relatively new marketing phenomenon, and there is thus a naiveté for how engagement should be created, tracked and measured (Barger and Labrecque; 2013; Schivinski *et al.*, 2016). Second, with its many platforms and varied formats, social media has become a fragmented medium, making it difficult for companies to track and coordinate their efforts (King *et al.*, 2014; Straker *et al.*, 2015). This fragmentation, along with content saturation across channels, has placed greater cognitive demands on consumers, forcing them to either ignore content or become more selective in what they view and process (IBM, 2014). Lastly, in their search for short-term sales gains, marketers over-rely on social media to deliver sales promotions to consumers, and this continues to have a negative effect on brand equity (Schultz and Block, 2014).

Responding to calls (Azar *et al.*, 2016; Niedermeier *et al.*, 2016), in this invited paper, we dig deeper into the meaning of consumer engagement on social media. We do so by defining consumer engagement and categorizing the antecedents and consequences of consumer engagement in the social media world. As part of this categorization, we focus on both consumer factors and firm factors as precursors and outcomes of social media engagement. Our engagement framework is shown in Figure 1. We conclude by offering a research agenda for developing a better understanding of how consumers and companies co-create engagement.

Defining consumer engagement
One of the key conclusions from Schultz and Peltier (2013) was that consumer engagement is an elusive construct and that researchers and marketers needed to better define, conceptualize and operationalize this measure of relationship strength. Broadly, Schultz and Peltier (2013) contend that engagement may be viewed in light of varied relational constructs, including brand loyalty, relationship marketing, concentric marketing, marketing orientation, customer relationship management and social networks. Integrating these relational constructs into a consumer context, Hollebeek *et al.* (2014) define consumer-brand engagement as "a consumer's positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interactions" (p. 154).

Figure 1.
Antecedents and consequences of consumer engagement on social media

Recognizing the existence of precursors and outcomes of brand engagement and after an extensive review of the engagement literature, Calder *et al.* (2016) extend Brodie *et al.* (2011)'s definition of brand engagement to a:

> […] psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/object, under a specific set of context-dependent conditions, and exists as a dynamic, iterative process in which other relational concepts are antecedents and/or consequences (p. 40).

Because of the interactive and co-creative nature of social media, antecedents and consequences of brand engagement may be viewed in light of key social media usage metrics such as expressions of agreement, ratings, comments and shares (Barger and Labrecque, 2013). Potential relational outcomes of engaged social media usage include increased consumer satisfaction, loyalty, retention, customer lifetime value, share-of-wallet and profitability (Cummins *et al.*, 2014).

To help provide structure for research on consumer engagement, we offer a conceptual framework (Figure 1). We operationalize consumer engagement as a set of measurable actions that consumers take on social media in response to brand-related content: reacting to content (e.g. likes, hearts, +1s, 1 to 5 star ratings), commenting on content (e.g. Facebook comments, Twitter replies), sharing content with others (e.g. Facebook shares, Twitter retweets) and posting user-generated content (UGC) (e.g. product reviews, Facebook posts about brands). The reasons

consumers engage with content are listed under "Antecedents" in Figure 1, and these are further categorized into brand, product, consumer, content and social media factors. The possible outcomes of consumer engagement are listed under "Consequences", and these are further categorized into effects on brands, products, consumers, content and markets. Within each type of antecedent/consequence are bullet lists of factors/effects that have been investigated in the literature. In the following two sections we review the literature on these antecedents and consequences, respectively.

Antecedents of consumer engagement
Our review of the literature revealed five categories of antecedents to consumer engagement: brand factors, product factors, consumer factors, content factors and social media factors. We consider the literature pertaining to each of these in turn.

Brand factors
Six factors related to brands have been investigated in terms of their effects on consumer engagement: brand attitude, brand warmth, for-profit vs non-profit status, word-of-mouth for related brands, spending on traditional advertising and a firm's commitment to communication technologies.

With respect to brand attitude, Huang *et al.* (2013) demonstrated that the likelihood of a consumer sharing a viral video was linked to not only the consumer's attitude toward the video but also the consumer's attitude toward the brand. Moreover, the impact of attitude toward the brand had a significant impact on sharing. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Anderson and Simester (2014) showed that brand attitude may affect the likelihood of consumers posting negative product reviews without ever having purchased the product they are reviewing.

Bernritter *et al.* (2016) investigated how perceptions of a brand's warmth (vs competence) affect consumer intentions to publicly endorse the brand and its posts on social media. In general, consumers are more likely to endorse brands that are perceived to be warm, and this extends to non-profit brands, which are typically perceived as warmer than for-profit brands. In addition, for non-profit brands, the extent to which the brand is perceived as symbolic enhanced the effect of warmth on intention to endorse.

Borah and Tellis (2016) examined the effect of automobile recalls on online consumer engagement. Not surprisingly, news of an automobile recall led to an increase in negative posts on social media about the automobile model being recalled. More importantly, however, the news of the recall also led to an increase in negative posts about related automobile models, both for the affected brand in other segments and for other brands in the same segment.

Counterintuitively, traditional advertising may have an inhibiting effect on consumer engagement. Feng and Papatla (2011) modeled the relationship between spending on advertising in the automobile industry and online word of mouth, controlling for sales, customer satisfaction and a number of other factors. Across 32 automobile brands over a five-year period, they showed that an increase in advertising was associated with a decrease in online word of mouth, although they caution that more research is needed to determine if the relationship is causal.

A firm's commitment to communication technologies has emerged as an important organizational asset for capturing competitive advantages *vis-à-vis* multi-channel

initiatives and cross-platform metrics (Zahay *et al.*, 2014). This commitment requires an organizational vision for utilizing information and customer data, cross-functional cooperation and the sharing of customer data (Peltier *et al.*, 2013). Although not well studied in the social media literature, a firm's dedication to building rich social media strategies and tactics is expected to impact brand engagement (Pomirleanu *et al.*, 2013; Homburg *et al.*, 2015; Cummins *et al.*, 2016).

Product factors

Five product-related factors have been explored in terms of consumer engagement: hedonic vs utilitarian products, new vs updated products, extant product reviews, product quality and product experience.

Schulze *et al.* (2014) investigated the relationship between hedonic vs utilitarian products and online sharing. Whereas hedonic products benefit from "encouraging consumers to broadcast unsolicited viral marketing messages to their Facebook friends and offering small incentives to convince the receiver to try and use the product" (p. 13); such a strategy is ineffective for utilitarian products. Whether a product is new or simply redesigned may also influence engagement, though perhaps not in the expected direction. Feng and Papatla (2012) compared online discussions of two automobile models: the Chevy Impala (redesigned) and the Chevy Volt (newly introduced). Surprisingly, the redesigned Chevy Impala generated significantly more online discussion than the new Chevy Volt.

Within the context of book reviews, Hu and Li (2011) looked at the effect of extant product reviews on engagement behavior. Although having a number of reviews of a product is generally viewed as a positive, Hu and Li (2011) showed that high ratings often lead to future reviews with lower ratings. This is in part because of the fact that consumers are more likely to voice their views when these views differ from current opinions. Product quality also plays a role: Chen *et al.* (2011) found that consumers are more likely to post reviews when product quality is very low or very high.

Kähr *et al.* (2016) explored the reasons behind "consumer brand sabotage", which they define as "a deliberate form of hostile, aggressive behavior on the part of a consumer, designed to harm a brand" (p. 25). A key motivation for consumer brand sabotage is poor experience with a brand's product, which leads to feelings of anger, frustration, outrage and hatred. Kähr *et al.* (2016) point out the ease with which consumers can then use social media to cause significant harm to the brand.

Consumer factors

Why do consumers engage with brand-related content on social media? A number of reasons have been proposed, including entertainment (Son *et al.*, 2012; Rohm *et al.*, 2013; Azar *et al.*, 2016), information acquisition (Rohm *et al.*, 2013; Berger, 2014; Azar *et al.*, 2016), incentives and promotions (Rohm *et al.*, 2013; Schultz and Peltier, 2013; Azar *et al.*, 2016), social influence and bonding (Berger, 2014; Azar *et al.*, 2016) and impression management (Rohm *et al.*, 2013; Berger, 2014). Taking a lifecycle perspective on customer engagement, Shao and Ross (2015) consider how motivations for engagement may change over time. Initially, consumers join brand communities on social media primarily to socialize and acquire information. As the consumers become familiar with the community, entertainment becomes the

primary motivation for engagement. Later, entertainment becomes less important and engagement depends on the consumer's need for information about the brand and its products.

Researchers have also considered individual differences and personality traits as predictors of consumer engagement. At the most basic level, intention to engage on social media is associated with previous engagement on social media (Goldsmith *et al.*, 2013). Blazevic *et al.* (2014) went a step further and developed a one-factor, eight-item measure called "GOSIP" to ascertain individual differences in propensity to interact with others online. Predictive validity was demonstrated by statistically significant correlations between GOSIP and the posting activities of respondents. Relatedly, VanMeter *et al.* (2015) developed an 8-factor, 27-item measure of consumer attachment to social media ("ASM"). VanMeter *et al.* (2015) tested their measure in a brand context and showed that ASM predicts consumer engagement better than attitude toward social media alone. From a personality traits perspective, Kabadayi and Price (2014) found that extraversion and openness to experience are positively related to consumer engagement, whereas neuroticism is negatively related to consumer engagement. Previously, Pagani *et al.* (2013) had shown that the effect of extraversion on consumer engagement is partially mediated by social identity expressiveness.

Packard and Wooten (2013) examined consumer knowledge as a predictor of consumer engagement. Interestingly, they found that consumers who perceive deficiencies in their level of knowledge are prone to "compensatory self-enhancement"; that is, they are motivated to share their knowledge on social media to signal a higher level of knowledge. Eisingerich *et al.* (2015) extend research on self-enhancement by considering differences between online and in-person word-of-mouth. In general, consumers are less willing to engage in word-of-mouth on social media than in person because of the higher perceived social risk associated with online sharing. However, this risk is mitigated by need to self-enhance, which increases willingness to engage in online word-of-mouth.

Willingness to share is further impacted by the number of friends or followers a person has. Barasch and Berger (2014) compare sharing behaviors of consumers who are communicating with multiple people vs one other person. When sharing with multiple people, consumers are less likely to share content that may reflect negatively on themselves. However, when sharing with one other person, consumers focus on the value of the information to the recipient instead of the value to the sharer.

Content factors
The branded content with which consumers *may* engage clearly shapes the extent to which consumers *do* engage. In their study of viral video advertising, Huang *et al.* (2013) showed that attitude toward content is the primary factor that affects sharing behavior on social media. Similarly, Swani *et al.* (2013) found that consumers were more likely to engage with posts that were not overly commercial and that included emotional sentiments.

The format and purpose of the content also affects consumer engagement. de Vries *et al.* (2012) found that multisensory and interactive posts were more likely to generate engagement than posts that lacked multisensory and interactive elements.

Similarly, Kim *et al.* (2015) showed that posts with photos were most likely to receive likes, comments and shares. When they categorized the posts by marketing objective – that is, task-oriented (e.g. communicating a sales promotion), interaction-oriented (e.g. posting content not directly related to the brand) and self-oriented (e.g. posting information about the company) – they discovered that consumers were more likely to engage with task-oriented content than self-oriented content. No statistically significant difference was found between interaction- and self-oriented content.

Whether consumers engage with content on social media is affected by how entertaining, educational and interesting the content is. Analyzing the diffusion of YouTube videos, Liu-Thompkins and Rogerson (2012) found that entertaining and educational UGC are more likely to be shared and that production quality does not matter. Similarly, Berger and Iyengar (2013) showed that consumers are more likely to post about interesting products and brands. This is because of two factors:

(1) consumers have more time to construct messages when writing compared to speaking; and

(2) self-enhancement is a key motivation when posting about products and brands.

In a follow-up study, Chen and Berger (2016) report that the importance of interestingness depends on the means by which the information is acquired. Namely, consumers are more likely to share interesting content when they receive it from others, but they are less discerning when sharing content that they find themselves.

The extent to which the promotional cues used in online campaigns affect consumer engagement was investigated by Koch and Benlian (2015). They found that campaign content that uses a scarcity appeal is more likely to be shared by consumers than content that does not contain a scarcity appeal. However, when the campaign is also personalized, the effect of personalization on sharing behavior is negated by a scarcity appeal. In the case of scarcity, consumer engagement is driven by the value of the offer, whereas personalization drives consumer engagement through feelings of gratitude toward the marketer.

Social media factors
Surprisingly, few papers address social media itself as an antecedent to consumer engagement. One of the first to do so looked at how UGC differs by social media platform. Smith *et al.* (2012) reported that UGC on YouTube is most likely to contain consumer self-promotion, whereas on Twitter, the brand plays a more central role; UGC on Facebook lies somewhere between these two extremes. Using Davis' (1986) technology acceptance model, Pinho and Soares (2013) showed that perceived usefulness and ease of use lead to greater intention to engage on social networks. Later, Mortazavi *et al.* (2014) identified four attributes of social networks that promote engagement: social relationships, entertainment, information access and ease of use. Given the wide array of social media platforms in use today (Overdrive Interactive, 2016), our understanding of consumer engagement would benefit from further exploration of differences across social media platforms.

Consequences of consumer engagement

Our review of the literature revealed five categories of consequences of consumer engagement on social media: brand effects, product effects, consumer effects, content effects and market effects. We consider the literature pertaining to each of these in turn.

Brand effects

Schivinski and Dabrowski (2015) analyzed the effects of firm-created and user-generated social media communication on brands. Whereas firm-created posts only had a statistically significant effect on brand awareness/associations, UGC had statistically significant effects on brand awareness/associations, brand loyalty and perceived brand quality, highlighting the importance of consumer engagement for brand outcomes. Brand personality and UGC were examined by Hamilton *et al.* (2014). They found that the presence of dis preferred markers (e.g. "I'll be honest", "I don't want to be mean, but") in UGC resulted in the brand's personality being perceived as more credible and likable.

Product effects

Consumer engagement and attitudes toward products were the subject of four studies. Purnawirawan *et al.* (2012) showed that engagement in the form of reviews leads to an impression of how the public views a product, and this impression affects attitude toward the product. Previously, Chakravarty *et al.* (2010) had found that reviews can be highly persuasive for infrequent purchasers, particularly if the reviews are negative. Interestingly, when product reviews contain figurative language, attitudes toward hedonic, but not utilitarian, products tend to be higher (Kronrod and Danziger, 2013). Purnawirawan *et al.* (2015) looked at consumer engagement in the form of sets of product reviews. When none or only a few of the reviews in a set were negative, product attitudes were influenced the most. In addition, influence on attitude was greater for unfamiliar brands than familiar brands.

Consumer effects

What effect does consumer engagement have on other consumers? He and Bond (2013) investigated the effect on forecasts of consumption enjoyment. They found that engagement in the form of reviews was most likely to result in potential purchasers adjusting their forecasts. In a similar vein, Moore (2015) looked at two types of explanations consumers use in online reviews: action explanations (e.g. "I chose this product because") and reaction explanations (e.g. "I love this product because"). She found that attitude self-prediction increases when action explanations are used for utilitarian products and when reaction explanations are used for hedonic products.

Pinho (2013) developed a 4-factor, 25-item measure of online social capital called "e-SOCAPIT". He did not test the effect of consumer engagement on online social capital, but, presumably, engagement would lead to an increase in social capital for the consumer. Consumer power is another likely outcome of customer engagement, particularly when engagement activities are considered in aggregate (Labrecque *et al.*, 2013).

Content effects

A number of studies have shown that consumer engagement shapes attitude toward content and likelihood of re-sharing content. Lepkowska-White (2013) found that consumers had the most positive attitudes towards recommendations from other consumers, recommendations from third-party recommendation systems (vs seller recommendation systems) and search and experience goods (vs credence products). In their investigation of why positive online reviews tend to be valued less than negative reviews, Chen and Lurie (2013) showed that consumers often attribute positive reviews to the reviewers, whereas they attribute negative reviews to the product experience. Lee and Ma (2012) suggest that how consumers perceive reviews can further be influenced by individual differences, such as consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence (Bearden *et al.*, 1989). With respect to ratings, He and Bond (2015) found that consumers are more tolerant of dispersion of ratings for taste-dissimilar product domains (e.g. music) than taste-similar product domains (e.g. flash drives). The level of affiliation with the brand may also affect perceptions of UGC. For example, Ertimur and Gilly (2012) found that unsolicited consumer-generated advertisements were perceived as authentic but not credible, whereas consumer-generated advertisements submitted to brand-sponsored contests were perceived as credible but not authentic. Similarly, Seraj (2012) reported that the perceived value of content depended on the extent to which it was co-created with professionals and enthusiasts.

With respect to likelihood of re-sharing content, Purnawirawan *et al.* (2015) conducted a meta-analysis of online review valence. They found that the strongest influence of review valence is on consumer intention to engage in electronic word-of-mouth for the product being reviewed; that is, the more positive the set of reviews, the more likely the reader will recommend the product to others. Similarly, Baker *et al.* (2016) showed that positive word-of-mouth has the strongest effect on retransmission intentions.

Market effects

Consumer engagement in aggregate can have significant market-level effects (Langley *et al.*, 2014; Dolbec and Fischer, 2015). Investigating effects on sales, Ludwig *et al.* (2013) found that the language used in UGC has a significant effect on conversion rate. Tang *et al.* (2014) looked at the difference between mixed-neutral UGC, which has an equal number of positive and negative statements and indifferent-neutral UGC, which contains neither positive nor negative statements. Although one might think neutral UGC would not have an effect on perceptions of reviews, mixed-neutral UGC turned out to amplify the effects of other positive and negative UGC, whereas indifferent-neutral UGC attenuated these effects. With respect to automobile recalls, Borah and Tellis (2016) observed that the negative effect of a recall on sales was amplified by social media by approximately 4.5 times.

Perhaps not surprisingly, credible reviews lead to higher purchase intentions (Jiménez and Mendoza, 2013). What makes a review credible differs for search products vs experience products; however, reviews for search products are more credible if they provide detailed information about the product, whereas reviews for experience products are considered more credible if the reviewer agrees with the review (Jiménez and Mendoza, 2013). The language of the review also affects product choice (Kronrod

and Danziger, 2013); when product reviews contained figurative language, consumers were more likely to choose hedonic products over utilitarian products. Illustrating the importance of reviews in general, de Langhe *et al.* (2016) showed that consumers rely heavily on average ratings of products to arrive at purchase decisions, despite a "substantial disconnect between the objective quality information that online user ratings actually convey and the extent to which consumers trust them as indicators of objective quality" (p. 817).

Baker *et al.* (2016) studied the valence, channel and social tie strength of consumer engagement. Negative word-of-mouth had the strongest effect on purchase intention, although purchase intention was also influenced by the strength of the social tie between the communicator and the recipient. The format of the online word-of-mouth plays a role as well; specifically, the presence of photos in posts results in higher product interest and higher purchase intention for both search products and experience-hedonic products (Lin *et al.*, 2012).

UGC in the form of reviews can affect consumers' willingness-to-pay. In their study of dis preferred markers (discussed previously under "Brand Effects"), Hamilton *et al.* (2014) found that the presence of dis preferred markers in UGC increased willingness to pay for a product. Wu and Wu (2016) argue that willingness-to-pay varies across individuals and even within an individual depending on preferences for uncertainty. They offer a framework for quantifying willingness-to-pay based on consumers' preferences for different review statistics.

Beyond consumer engagement: firm engagement

Schultz and Peltier (2013) noted that consumer engagement on social media is more than pushing communications out to consumers in hopes that they will engage with the brand's content. Indeed, brands that are highly successful on social media realize this: a recent analysis of twenty of the largest brands on Twitter revealed that only 7 per cent of brand tweets were push communications directed at all of the brands' followers; the overwhelming majority – 93 per cent – were interactions with individuals (Kerns, 2016). This pattern held across industries, from electronics to grocers. Unfortunately, most brands are still focused on push communications. Socialbakers (2015) reports that in 2015, US brands responded to only 18 per cent of customer questions on Twitter, ignoring the remaining 82 per cent.

In the same way that brands hope that consumers will engage with brand-related content, consumers hope that firms will engage with UGC. When firms do this, we call it "firm engagement" (Figure 2). (We avoid the term "brand engagement" because that term is typically used in the literature to mean "consumer engagement"). The ways firms can engage with UGC are similar to the ways consumers can engage with brand-related content. For example, brands can react to user-generated comment with likes, hearts and +1s, thereby acknowledging consumers and letting them know that they have been heard. Similarly, brands can respond to consumer content by commenting on Facebook or replying on Twitter, thereby providing customer support or simply interacting with consumers to increase brand loyalty. Lastly, brands can share the best UGC with the brand's followers, providing more content for consumers to engage with and rewarding the
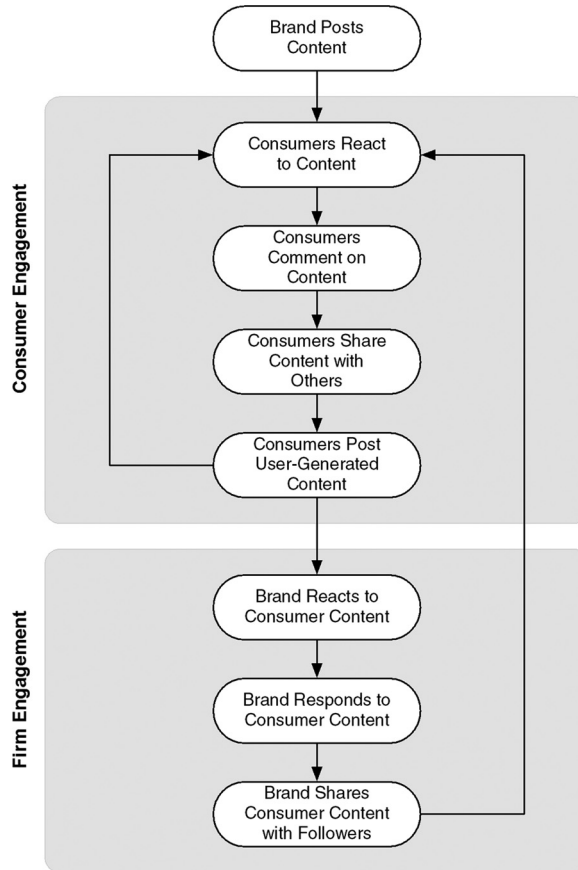
Figure 2.
Consumer
engagement and firm
engagement on social
media

consumers who created the content with additional visibility. Starbucks Coffee is an example of a firm that does an excellent job of retweeting consumer content on Twitter to drive consumer engagement.

Firm engagement requires a listening and response process through which marketers themselves become engaged. Specifically, a firm's role in managing social communications may be either passive or active (Dholakia *et al.*, 2009). Passive engagement is more of a push communication approach in which messages are delivered via social media by a firm, with consumers providing the bulk of follow-up conversations. In contrast, active engagement takes place when the firm is involved in all stages of the communication process from delivery to response. Singh and Sonnenburg (2012) advocate for a change in the marketer's mindset from that of creating stories for audiences to consume to that of involving the audience in the co-creation of a brand narrative.

Very little has been published on firm engagement. Indeed, our review of the literature revealed only four papers on the topic. van Noort and Willemsen (2012) showed that attitude toward a brand is higher when the brand addresses negative posts

and uses a human voice. Coyle *et al.* (2012) looked at the content of brand responses, finding that attitude toward the brand is higher when the brand's response helps solve a problem rather than simply empathizes with the customer. Homburg *et al.* (2015) investigated the effect of firm engagement on consumer sentiment in online forums. They found that active firm engagement has a positive effect on consumer sentiment, though with diminishing returns. Lastly, Schamari and Schaefers (2015) studied the effect of firm engagement on consumer engagement, finding that firm engagement increases the engagement intentions of consumers. More research is needed in this area, but firm engagement holds promise for increasing consumer engagement on social media.

Noting the interplay between consumer engagement and firm engagement, we suggest that "social media engagement" should be defined as *a mutually beneficial process through which firms and consumers co-create brand-related content and social experiences on social media.* Only when marketers view their role on social media as more than simply supplying content in hopes that consumers will engage with that content will firms realize the true potential of social media marketing. Indeed, research is needed on how to best foster and maintain this symbiotic relationship between brands and consumers.

Conclusion and future research needs

Marketing scholars and practitioners are placing increasing emphasis on understanding how social media impacts buyer–seller relationships. Figure 1 outlines our framework for understanding the antecedents and consequences of consumer engagement on social media. In this paper, we began with commercial research noting that relatively few companies fully engage with customers on social media and how engagement translates into customer value (IBM, 2014; eMarketer, 2015; TrackMaven, 2016).

In Figure 1, we address the antecedents and consequences of consumer engagement with a firm's social media efforts. Five antecedents of social media engagement were identified, including brand, product, consumer, content and social media factors. Consumer engagement was presented in terms of four dimensions: reacting to content, commenting on content, sharing content and posting UGC. Lastly, engagement consequences were addressed in terms of brand, product, consumer, content and market effects. Given the lack of research in this area, we encourage the development of other comprehensive frameworks that will help conceptualize social media engagement, including conceptualizations within sub-areas (e.g. consumer factors, content factors, market effects).

As our analysis shows, social media as a field of inquiry is growing; yet much is unknown regarding effective means for creating engaged and profitable consumers. Most notably, our analysis reveals that "firm engagement" is an important business problem and scholarly challenge. From a business perspective, CMOs worldwide are concerned about a digital talent shortage, with 79 per cent placing high priority on finding staff capable of creating social media initiatives for engaging consumers (IBM, 2016). Given the dearth of research in this area and the growing business challenges, we strongly encourage investigations into how consumers and firms can co-create social media engagement. A better understanding of this looped process

has considerable practical and theoretical significance (Fulgoni, 2015; Precourt, 2016).

Our analysis of each of the five antecedents of consumer engagement shows a growing, yet limited, focus by social media scholars. In this regard, each factor deserves further research. For example, there are countless theories of consumer behavior that are relevant to understanding consumer engagement on social media, including but not limited to motivation, social, psychological and behavioral theories. Research examining content factors leading to social media engagement is especially needed given the rapid rise of social media messaging in the USA and abroad (TrackMaven, 2016). As new and different types of social media platforms emerge, research opportunities abound. These research opportunities include social media factors not only related to mobile usage but also in terms of the different types of social media platforms themselves (e.g. Facebook, Snapchat, Pinterest, Instagram) and how these varied messaging approaches drive consumer engagement. These and other antecedents offer rich opportunities for future research (Boateng and Okoe, 2015; Azar et al., 2016).

Consumer engagement is framed in our model in terms of reacting to, commenting on, sharing and posting UGC. Each of these would benefit from the integration of behavioral theories found in the consumer psychology and sociology literatures (Schivinski et al., 2016). Fruitful research endeavors would include developing theoretical frameworks and conducting micro-level studies. Given that each form of consumer engagement requires a different set of behaviors and possibly levels of commitment, research that outlines how these are impacted by the outlined antecedents of consumer engagement would be valuable.

The last aspect of our framework focuses on the consequences or outcomes of engaged consumers on social media. As our review notes, relatively little research has directly measured these engagement consequences, offering a wealth of research opportunities. Although research opportunities exist in all of the consequence dimensions (brand, product, consumer, content and market effects), research is especially warranted in "value-based" areas. Specifically, research investigating social media outcomes in the form of business and customer metrics such as lifetime value, share of wallet, return on investment, retention, attrition and other data-driven metrics has great potential for enhancing how companies design, implement and measure their social communication programs. How these outcome metrics impact and are impacted by the stage of the customer lifecycle (e.g. prospect, new customer, valued customer, lost customer) also has value. Lastly, and as noted earlier, how consumer engagement with a firm's social media efforts impacts future firm engagement strategies and tactics is both missing in the literature and has promise for enhancing key customer loyalty metrics.

In "Social Media's Slippery Slope", Schultz and Peltier (2013) asked the question of "whether or how social media can be used to leverage consumer engagement into highly profitable relationships for both parties" (p. 95). Although the social media engagement literature has grown since then, and more insight has been generated, this question continues to be an important one for practitioners and scholars alike (Barger and Labrecque, 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Chen and Berger, 2016; Niedermeier et al., 2016). In Table I, we identify some additional areas for future research.

Antecedents of consumer engagement on social media	Are there areas not noted in Figure 1 that impact consumer engagement? What effect will integrated marketing communications and omni-channel marketing have on consumer engagement? What is the role of customer-centric marketing in creating and nurturing consumer engagement? In what ways do varied social media platforms differentially impact consumer engagement? How is consumer engagement affected by market mavens and opinion leaders? What is the relationship between information seeking processes and consumer engagement? What effect do individual characteristics have on depth of engagement?
Consumer engagement	Are there dimensions of consumer engagement not noted in Figure 1 that are relevant in a social media context? How should consumer engagement be defined and operationalized and to what extent is this dependent on context? What are the psychological, social, emotional and behavioral aspects of consumer engagement? How are these related to platform, content, source and product/service offerings? What is the nature and scope of consumer commenting on social media, including quantity, sentiment and distribution over time (short- vs long-term)? What motivates first-time commenters and how is future commenting behavior affected by a consumer's first comment? What is the meaning behind commenting and sharing? When is each more likely to occur? How are these related to viral marketing? How does the consumer decision-making process impact information sharing and depth of sharing? What are the best ways for firms to be engaged and how does the level of firm engagement impact consumer engagement?
Consequences of consumer engagement on social media	Are there consequences of consumer engagement that are not noted in Figure 1? To what degree does the strength of consumer engagement impact profitability, brand loyalty, LTV, ROI and other performance measures? What are the psychological, social, attitudinal and behavioral consequences of various consumer engagement processes? What effect does consumer engagement have on product/service perceptions such as quality, satisfaction, attitudes, beliefs and net promoter score? To what extent does consumer engagement impact the quality and quantity of product reviews and consumers' perceptions of their role in information dissemination?
Comprehensive frameworks	A clear need exists for comprehensive frameworks related to all of the antecedents and consequences of consumer engagement on social media Researchers can provide greater clarity through underlying frameworks for the antecedents and consequences in Figure 1 and beyond Investigations of the direct and indirect effects suggested by the frameworks should be undertaken

Table I.
Additional areas for
future research

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