Consumers' Brand Ownership and Engagement with Brand-related Social Media Content

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Abstract: Online social networks have become an important element of consumers' daily communication patterns. As a result of online social networks' immense popularity, marketing communication scholars have started focusing on brand-related activities on social media to provide insights and future directors for marketers about the existing and potential trends. As consumers spend more time on social media, engagement with brand-related social media contents intensifies. The current study aims to explore how brand ownership impacts on content consumption, contribution and creation patterns of Instagram users. The study also explores how these patterns influences uses and gratifications Instagram users derive from involving in content-related practices. Findings revealed brand ownership determined content consumption, content contribution and content creation on Instagram. The ß coefficients indicate the highest relationship between brand ownership and content creation (ß= ,462, t=5.569, p=,000), followed by the relation between brand ownership and content contribution (ß= ,444, t=8.081, p=,000) and content consumption (ß= ,296, t=4.504, p=,000). Contributions and implications of the research and findings are discussed at the last part of the study.
Keywords: brand ownership, social media content, COBRA typology, uses and gratifications, Instagram

1. Introduction

The introduction of high-speed Internet services has led to the rapid emergence of online social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. These online social networks offer Internet users to produce, contribute and consumer various contents related to brands, products and services. These developments can be interpreted within the participatory culture perspective of Jenkins (2015), who argues that a participatory culture is a culture with relatively low barriers to user/member contributions, where they feel social connection with one another at a certain degree.

As a result of online social networks' immense popularity, marketing communication scholars have started focusing on brand-related activities on social media to provide insights and future directors for marketers about the existing and potential trends. As Vilanueva et al. (2008) argue, such interactions can result with

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higher impacts on behaviors of consumers when compared to traditional forms of marketing and advertising.

The present study aims to reveal how brand ownership impacts on content consumption, contribution and creation practices of Instagram users. The study additionally explores how such patterns are interrelated with main components of uses and gratifications (U&G) approach.

The main reason behind choosing Instagram users as main target of the current study is that it is among the most widely used online social networks in the world. According to a study conducted by Pew Research Center (2018), Facebook is the most widely used online social network in the United States, which is followed by Instagram (32%). According to a report published by We Are Social (2018), Turkey is among the countries where social media is intensely used. Facebook is the most popular online social network with 43 million Turkish users, while Instagram ranks second with 37 million users (48% of the overall Turkey's population) by October 2018. Thus, Instagram stands as one of the most useful platforms where researchers can explore users' brand-related activities on online social networks. In line, this study explores such activities' relationship with brand ownership, and the gratifications users obtain from brand-related engagement in terms of consumption, contribution and creation.

2. Literature review

2.1. Brand ownership

In psychology literature, ownership is defined as an individual's possessive attitude about a material or immaterial object that she does not actually own (Pierce et al., 2001). The ownership feeling may develop towards both tangible and intangible objects and may arise from legal or non-legal ownership (Pierce et al., 2003). In other words, an individual can develop psychological proximate towards an object without actually owning it (Pierce et al., 2003). Other literature suggests (Belk, 1988; Richins, 1994) objects that individuals feel as their own become part of their self-concept. They function as a type of self-expression that represents the self-image of the individual. Psychological ownership notion is considered with the brands in this study. In marketing literature, a brand is defined as "a name, term, sign, symbol or design or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors" (Kotler, 1997, p. 443). Chang et al. (2015) explain brand ownership as "a psychological state in which people feel possessive of a brand and as if they have control over the brand" (p. 595). Individuals as consumers treat brands as their objects since they feel that they own the brand "by having a connection with and an emotional investment in it" (Chang et al., 2015, p. 595).

Although there are sufficient theoretical frameworks on brand ownership, the number of empirical researches, especially on brand-related activities is limited. In one study, Bartsch et al. (2016), which explored identification with global brands on the relationship between customer orientations towards globality and global brand ownership, researchers found out a significant relationship between a positive attitude toward globality and customer identification with global brands. In their study examining ownership effects in consumers' brand extension

evaluations, Fu et al. (2007) revealed that one of the most essential characteristics in consumers' evaluation of brand extensions remains to be the image consistency and product similarity for brand owners. In another study, Chang et al. (2015) found out consumers with high levels of brand ownership has more negative post-acquisition brand attitudes with a country with which consumers strongly misidentify. As previous literature suggests, brand ownership stands as an important variable worth of analysis and there is more in-depth evidence about the impact of brand ownership with brand-related social media practices of users.

2.2. COBRA framework

User-generated content (UGC) has been one of the most widely used concepts since the advent of web 2.0 technologies (i.e. Skinner, 2018; Lukyanenko et al., 2015). Despite the world has entered into an era in which Internet of things (also characterized as web 4.0) is extensively discussed, user-engagement is still one of the most intensely debated topics in various contexts (i.e. Liu et al., 2017; Zeng et al., 2017; Ramirez et al., 2018). For instance, in the context of journalism, the study of Ramirez et al. (2018) found out that Internet users have a positive attitude towards user-generated news contents especially regarding special-interest topics, as it is believed UGC authors are passionate experts/authors. In another context, Liu et al. (2017) examined brand-related UGC on Twitter and reached the fact that products, services and promotions remained among dominant topics when consumers interact with brands on the social network. Thus, despite the web 2.0 era seems to come to an end, one of its main contributions (UGC) still remains to be an up-to-date topic for current and future trends related with the new information and communication technologies (ICTs).

In 2011, Muntinga et al. (2001) developed a COBRA typology of consumers' online brand-related activities. COBRA typology differs from the one suggested by Li and Bernoff (2008), which distinguished between six types of social media users: inactives, critics, joiners, spectators, collectors and creators. Rather, Muntinga et al. (2011) suggest a typology based on individual's behaviors rather than their roles. Researchers offered three dimensions related to consumer involvement with brand-related contents on social media; namely, content consumption, content contribution and content creation. The typology suggested by Muntinga et al. (2011) is adopted for the current study to assess consumers' engagement with brand-related social media contents.

Content consumption. Muntinga et al. (2011) suggests content consumption is the COBRA type with the lowest level of activeness. On Instagram, viewing other users' posts, reading user comments, watching Instagram TV (IGTV) and stories can be categorized as activities related to content consumption. Content consumption motivations are mainly deriving from obtaining information, entertainment and remuneration. Previous research suggests that obtaining information is mainly associated with reading product reviews on social media platforms (Schindler & Bickart, 2005). Entertainment motivation is treated as a broad concept that encompasses all the social media contents that provide a feeling of relaxation and enjoyment (Schindler & Bickart, 2005; Shao, 2009).

Remuneration is mainly related with receiving financial benefits by following value for money products and services online (Goldsmith & Horrowitz, 2006).

RQ1: How is brand ownership associated with users' content consumption practices on Instagram?

H1: There is a significant relationship between brand ownership and users' content consumption practices on Instagram.

Content contribution. Content contribution is related with participating in brand-related conversations and rating products and services. On Instagram, such activities are made available for users mainly with commenting and direct messaging (DM) features. Previous research suggests content contribution by social media users mainly derive from motivations related to personal identity, integration, social interaction and entertainment (boyd, 2008; Dholakia et al. 2004; Popp et al., 2008; Sangwan, 2005).

RQ2: How is brand ownership associated with users' content contribution practices on Instagram?

H2: There is a significant relationship between brand ownership and users' content contribution practices on Instagram.

Content creation. Content creation is the COBRA type with the highest level of activeness (Muntinga et al., 2011). On Instagram, publishing posts, re-sharing other users' posts with personal narratives, broadcasting live on Instagram Story and IGTV can be considered as content creation activities. Content creation derives from similar motivations with content contribution, namely socially interacting and integrating with other users and expressing one's self to others. An additional motivation is empowerment. Berthon et al. (2008) and Bronner and de Hogg (2010) suggest users are aware of their influence over other users and the collective power they obtain as virtual communities against product/service owners (Cova & Pace, 2006).

RQ3: How is brand ownership associated with users' content creation practices on Instagram?

H3: There is a significant relationship between brand ownership and users' content creation practices on Instagram.

2.3. Uses and gratifications (U&G) approach

The U&G approach is one of the most well-grounded media paradigms that focus on why an individual chooses a medium and how she uses it (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974). The approach suggests that individuals are goal-oriented and they are aware of their needs in contrast to the traditional media frameworks, in which the audience is positioned as passive receptors. The U&G approach

considers receptors as active participants of the communication process, who chooses specific contents and mediums for their personal needs and demands.

Previous recent studies employed U&G approach to assess to relationship between new technologies and individuals from various perspectives (i.e. Kaye, 1998; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; LaRose, Mastro & Eastin, 2004; Chang, Lee, & kim, 2006; Bae et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2016; Quinn, 2016; Shade et al., 2015; Sarovic, 2005; Chou and Liu, 2016). These studies indicated that new media technologies and their services are relevant with the U&G paradigm, since new media characterize individuals as active and participative on individual and collective bases (Stafford, Stafford, & Schkade, 2004; Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004; Cheung et al., 2010).

Previous research also indicated that archiving, escaping, social interaction, self-expression and peeking are among the key U&G constructs within the context of social media use (Lee et al., 2015). Within the context of Instagram, archiving is associated with documenting one's favorite posts by storing them, while escaping is related to remaining away from social realities of the offline world. Self-expression is related to expressing one's own personality, while social interaction is about satisfying one's interactional needs. Lastly, peeking is associated with observing other people's lives through their posts, without the knowledge of the observed. In the current study, U&G constructs suggested by Lee et al. (2015) is taken into consideration while exploring their relationship with Instagram users' content consumption, contribution and creation practices.

RQ4: How are different uses and gratifications associated with COBRA typology?

H4: There is a significant relationship between dimensions of uses and gratifications and dimensions of COBRA typology.

3. Methodology

3.1. Measures

For the current study, brand ownership scale is adopted from Isaksen and Roper (2016). Scale on consumers' online brand-related activities on Instagram is developed by the researchers of the current study, in line with the theoretical framework and examples presented in the work of Muntinga et al. (2011). Examples of brand-related social media use, presented by Muntinga et al. (2011) is taken into consideration while developing consumption, contribution and creation-based brand related activities on Instagram. Based upon the results of confirmatory factor analysis, 7 items on "content creation" (i.e., "I use Instagram to publish brand-related posts"), 6 items on "content contribution" (i.e., "I use Instagram to engage in branded conversations"), and 3 items on "content consumption" (i.e., "I use Instagram to view brand related videos") are loaded.

Table 1. Measures of the study

N=299		Min	Max	μ	SD	Items	α
Brand ownership		1	5	3,82	,73	6	0,82
COBRA scale	Content consumption	1	5	3,57	,72	6	0,834
	Content contribution	1	5	3,18	,81	6	0,88
	Content creation	1	5	3,33	,56	7	0,88
Uses and graffications scale	Social interaction	1	5	3,41	,71	6	0,82
	Peeking	1	5	3,44	,75	4	0,7
	Archiving	1	5	3,81	,80	6	0,82
	Self-expression	1	5	3,32	,75	6	0,78
	Escaping	1	5	3,34	,79	6	0,82

Uses and gratifications scale is adopted from the study of Lee et al. (2015) that include 28 items in total. As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis, 6 items on "social interaction" (i.e., "I use Instagram to interact with a number of people"), 4 items on "peeking" (i.e., "I use Instagram to browse photos related to my interests"), 6 items on "archiving" (i.e., "I use Instagram to record daily events through photos"), 6 items on "self-expression" (i.e., "I use Instagram to provide my update") and 6 items on "escapism" (i.e., "I use Instagram to escape from reality") are loaded. All scaled questions were asked through the use of the 5-point Likert scale (1: Totally Disagree, 5: Totally Agree) except for questions on demographics. A cross-sectional design was employed that contains several self-report measures. Reliability estimates were obtained for each of the construct domains. Cronbach's α values range from 0.70 to 0.88 for each construct (See Table 1).

3.2. Participants

The Internet-based survey instrument was pilot tested before the actual fieldwork online. A total of 257 respondents took part in the survey. Following the removal of submissions with missing data, 299 participants (57.2 % females and 42.8 % males) remained in the main analysis. All participants were aged 18 and older and the average age of the participants was 28. The data was compiled between September-November 2018.

4. Findings

To assess the relative predictive value of the independent variable, dependent variables of COBRA components (content consumption, content contribution and content creation) and brand ownership were entered into a linear regression analysis with the independent variable, brand ownership. Additionally, uses and gratifications (U&G) components (social interaction, peeking, archiving, self-expression and escaping) were entered into a linear regression analysis with the independent COBRA components. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed generally moderate correlations between the nine constructs. Pearson Product-moment correlations (with pair-wise exclusion of missing cases) revealed that the dependent variable and the all independent variables are positively correlated (Table 2).

Table 2. Correlation matrix (N=299)

		Archiving	Escaping	Social interaction	Self expression	Peeking	Content creation	Content contribution	Content consumption	Brand ownership
Archiving	Pearson Correlation	1	.360**	.357**	.522**	.328	.319**	.169**	.147**	.328
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.003	.011	.000
	N	299	299	299	299	299	299	299	299	299
Escaping	Pearson Correlation	.360**	1	.257**	.435**	.288**	.424	.226**	.226**	.288**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	299	299	299	299	299	299	299	299	299
Social interaction	Pearson Correlation	.357**	.257**	1	.335**	.181**	.320**	.127	.262**	.181**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.002	.000	.029	.000	.002
	N	299	299	299	299	299	299	299	299	299
Self-expression	Pearson Correlation	.522**	.435**	.335**	1	.368**	.301**	.204**	.256	.368**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	299	299	299	299	299	299	299	299	299
Peeking	Pearson Correlation	.314**	.310**	.285**	.163**	.154**	.228**	.162**	.085**	.154**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.005	.008	.000	.005	.144	.008
	N	299	299	299	299	299	299	299	299	299
Content creation	Pearson Correlation	.328**	.288**	.181**	.368**	1**	.563**	.553**	.307**	1**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.002	.000		.000	.000	.000	
	N	299	299	299	299	299	299	299	299	299
Content contribution	Pearson Correlation	.319**	.424**	.320**	.301**	.563**	1**	.499**	.425**	.563**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	299	299	299	299	299	299	299	299	299
Content consumption	Pearson Correlation	.169**	.226**	.127*	.204**	.169**	.226**	.127*	.204**	.162**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.000	.029	.000	.003	.000	.029	.000	.005
	N	299	299	299	299	299	299	299	299	299
Brand ownership	Pearson Correlation	.147*	.226**	.262**	.256**	.147*	.226**	.262**	.256**	.085
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.000	.000	.000	.011	.000	.000	.000	.144
	N	299	299	299	299	299	299	299	299	299

Findings revealed brand ownership determined content consumption, content contribution and content creation on Instagram. The ß coefficients indicate the highest relationship between brand ownership and content creation (ß= ,462, t=5.569, p=,000), followed by the relation between brand ownership and content contribution (ß= ,444, t=8.081, p=,000) and content consumption (ß= ,296, t=4.504, p=,000).

Table 3. Findings of the regression analyses

Independent variable	Dependent variable	B	SE	t	Sig	F	Adj. R^2
Brand ownership	Content consumption	,296	,066	4.504	,000	20.284	,61
	Content contribution	,444	,055	8.081	,000	65.295	,177
	Content creation	,462	,083	5.569	,000	31.009	,091
Content consumption	Archiving	,321	,055	5.802	,000	33.658	,099
	Escaping	,435	,054	8.063	,000	65,012	,177
	Social interaction	,366	,063	5.820	,000	33.871	,099
	Social expression	,323	,059	5.442	,000	29.618	,088
	Peeking	,244	,061	4.030	,000	16.243	,049
Content contribution	Archiving	,230	,038	5.986	,000	35.832	,105
	Escaping	,206	,040	5.176	,000	26.793	,080
	Social interaction	,145	,045	3.178	,000	10.099	,030
	Social expression	,274	,040	6.815	,000	46.448	,132
	Peeking	,115	,042	2.685	,000	7.209	,024
Content creation	Archiving	,230	,037	5.986	,000	35.832	,105
	Escaping	,206	,040	5.176	,000	26.793	,080
	Social interaction	,145	,045	3.178	,000	10.099	,030
	Social expression	,274	,040	6.815	,000	46.448	,132

	Peeking	,115	,043	2.685	,000	7.209	,020

Additionally, archiving, escaping, social interaction, social expression and peeking are determined by content consumption, content contribution and content creation. The highest relationship exists between content consumption and escaping (ß= ,435, t=8.063, p=,000), followed by the relationship between content consumption and social interaction (ß= ,366, t=5.820, p=,000) and content consumption and archiving (ß= ,321, t=5.802, p=,000). Content creation and content contribution also moderately explain components of U&G (See Table 3).

The current study aimed to reveal the relationships between brand ownership and COBRA components. It also aimed to explore how COBRA dimensions were related with main components of U&G approach. Findings indicate that higher levels of brand ownership positively impact on content consumption, contribution and creation patterns of Instagram users. This situation indicates the importance of brands' presence on online social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, where they can encourage user to participate and engage in content-related activities through various marketing strategies.

An interesting finding has been related with content consumption and U&G components. As the U&G approach is one of the most well-grounded theories of media studies, one could theoretically assume that it is mostly related with the "content consumption" component of the COBRA framework, as the approach has historically dealt with direct and indirect effects of and relations derive from media usage on receptors. This situation is supported by the findings of our study, as they revealed how content consumption on Instagram is especially related with archiving, escaping, social interaction and social expression.

5. Discussion

As statistical evidence proves, spending time on Instagram has become one of the most common activities among smartphone users (We Are Social, 2020). One of the fastest growing online social networks that challenge the dominance of Facebook, Instagram is popular among Internet users for various reasons such as its filtering, story, direct messaging, liking and commenting options. Another main reason behind Instagram's popularity is related with the brand and celebrity cultures, in which users can get involved thanks to the service's interactive features.

By conducting a survey over 299 active Instagram users in Turkey, this study sheds light on how brand ownership is related with users' brand-related social media contents. Findings of the study reveal that the brand ownership has a significant relationship with users' content consumption, contribution and creation processes. Content creation and content contribution have stronger relationships with brand ownership, which prove Instagram users are beyond passive receptors of brand-related contents on the platform. This result is no coincidence when one considers the interactive nature of online social networking services.

Interestingly, content consumption has the strongest relationships with escaping, social interaction and archiving. In terms of escaping and social interaction, one could estimate that Instagram users utilize from this platform as a

way to escape from the routine of their daily lives by engaging in interactions with other users that hold similar interests. The strong relationship of content consumption with archiving indicates individuals also use Instagram as a tool that documents their favorite visual moments, which they can keep private and access at desired times.

Overall, this research offers useful hints for marketing communication academics and professionals -that aim to discover the enormous branding potential of this rising marketing communication service. To make the most out of this process, developers should be seeking for ways to make Instagram and similar services more interactive. Additionally, marketers and brand managers should acknowledge the power of SNS users, and develop strategies to satisfy consumers' demands and increase the consumer-brand interactions in an effective manner.

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