Catching COBRAs

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3 Explaining COBRAs

Quantifying motivations for brand-related social media use

3.1 Abstract

With social media use increasingly prevalent and influential, marketers face the challenge of encouraging consumers’ online brand-related activities (COBRAs). This requires an integrated and complete understanding of COBRAs and their associated motivations. The present study was designed to shed light on (a) the importance of motivations in explaining COBRAs and (b) the motivational patterns that govern consumers’ consuming, contributing, and creating of brand-related content. A survey \( N = 4,151 \) was conducted among members of several brand pages on a large social networking site. Results show that, depending on the COBRA, motivations explain more than half of the variance in consumers’ brand-related social media use: motivations gain predictive power as COBRAs become more active. With regard to the motivation structures underlying COBRAs, this study demonstrates that that all brand-related activity on social media is primarily motivated by information and entertainment. Implications for marketing theory and practice are discussed.

3.2 Introduction

The growth of social media has established a new dynamic in marketing. Numerous social media platforms provide consumers with a wide variety of ways to engage with brands. For instance, they can read reviews of a Philips electric shaver on Epinions, discuss the latest episode of Mad Men on Facebook or create Absolut Wodka advertisements and upload them to the brand’s YouTube channel. Consumers’ online brand-related activities (hereafter: COBRAs; Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011) have been demonstrated to significantly influence other consumers’ purchase behavior (Prendergast, Ko, & Siu Yin, 2010), brand perceptions (Campbell, Pitt, Parent, & Berthon, 2011), brand loyalty (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinliu, 2010), and brand engagement (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006). Advertisers who wish to tap into social media’s potential thus face the challenge of inspiring and facilitating consumers’ engagement in COBRAs (Muñiz & Schau, 2011; Parent, Plangger, & Bal, 2011).

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To strategically affect COBRAs to their advantage, it is important that marketers have a proper understanding of the driving forces behind COBRAs (Chen, Fay, & Wang, 2011; Chu & Kim, 2011). Specifically, they must be aware of the motivations that are at the core of different brand-related activities (Kietzmann, Silvestre, McCarthy, & Pitt, 2012; Porter, Donthu, MacElroy, & Wydra, 2011). For instance, online brand community participation may be motivated differently than creating consumer-generated advertisements. As a result, stimulating brand community participation may require a different strategy than that of stimulating the creation of consumer-generated advertisements.

Within a social media context, much of the existing motivation research is limited in scope and design. Separate contributions have examined the motivations of isolated activities such as posting reviews (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004), participating in online brand communities (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006) and creating consumer-generated advertisements (Berthon, Pitt, & Campbell, 2008). Few studies have investigated the motivations of individual activities within a single study. One exception is chapter 2 (Muntinga et al., 2011), which simultaneously examines consumers’ motivations for engaging in different COBRAs. However, while insightful, this qualitative research design does not allow for determining the predictive value of motivations for COBRAs, and the motivational patterns underlying different COBRAs.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to quantify the motivations for COBRAs. In doing so, it sheds light on (a) the importance of motivations in explaining COBRAs and (b) the motivational patterns that govern different COBRAs. After reporting results from a large-scale quantitative survey distributed over the members of various brand fan pages on a large social networking site, the paper moves on to discuss how this study’s findings contribute to a better understanding of COBRAs. The paper concludes by outlining how marketing practitioners can use this paper’s findings to facilitate COBRAs.

### 3.3 Background

#### 3.3.1 Three COBRA types

The COBRA typology was developed in response to the lack of a concept that adequately captures the diversity of consumer behavior on social media. It provides a single unifying framework to categorize all brand-related activity on social media. A passive-to-active continuum of three types of online consumer activities pertaining to brand-related content, the COBRA typology includes three types of brand-related behavior on social media: consuming, contributing, and creating (Muntinga et al., 2011).
Consuming brand-related content
Consuming covers all activities that are associated with a minimum level of online brand-related activeness. Consuming denotes relatively passive activities that involve participating without actively contributing or creating brand-related content. Examples are consulting product reviews, reading brand-related discussions on forums, and viewing brand-related videos (e.g. Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Hennig-Thurau & Walsh, 2003).

Contributing to brand-related content
The middle level of online brand-related activeness, contributing covers both consumer-to-content and consumer-to-consumer interactions about brands. Such moderately active behaviors include for instance participating in brand-related conversations on social networking sites, forwarding brand content, commenting on brand-related weblogs, and rating products/brands and other consumers’ brand-related contributions (e.g. Chu, 2011; Porter et al., 2011).

Creating brand-related content
Creating is the highest level of brand-related activeness on social media. Consumers who create brand-related content are actively producing and publishing the content that other consumers consume and contribute to. Examples include creating and uploading user-generated advertisements, writing brand-related articles, and posting product reviews (e.g. Campbell, Pitt, Parent, & Berthon, 2011; Füller, Muhlbacher, Matzler, & Jawecki, 2010; Moe & Trusov, 2011; Vanden Bergh, Lee, Quilliam, & Hove, 2011).

The present study uses this COBRA typology as an instrument for quantitatively investigating the motivations underlying different online brand-related activities. Using consuming, contributing and creating as the basic units of analysis enabled the investigation and comparison of the motivation patterns of different online brand-related activities within a single study. As such, the COBRA concept uniquely allows to assess how, for instance, consumers’ motivations for viewing brand-related videos on YouTube (consuming) relate to their motivations to discuss these videos with other consumers (contributing) and their motivations to create and upload their own brand-related videos to YouTube (creating).

3.3.2 COBRAs and motivations
Motivations are broadly recognized as the most important antecedents of consumer behavior (Dichter, 1964; Joinson, 2003). Within a social media marketing context, they can be understood as the forces that drive consumers’ selection and use of social media platforms and brand-related content (cf. Rubin, 2002). As such, motivations have been demonstrated to influence online consumer-to-consumer interactions (Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005), online brand community participation (Nambisan & Baron, 2009) and social media advertising forwarding (Chu, 2011; Ho & Dempsey,
Motivation is a key concept in the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) approach, which forms this study's theoretical basis.

U&G was developed to examine people’s motivations for using “traditional” media such as television, radio and newspapers (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974), but its theoretical assumptions and broader motivation categories have been found stable over all sorts of media, including the Internet and social media (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Nambisan & Baron, 2009). Accordingly, several researchers have recently adopted a U&G perspective to examine people’s motivations for using social media. For instance, Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) employ U&G to explain how and why people use the social networking sites MySpace and Facebook; Okazaki (2009) takes a U&G perspective to examine social influence in electronic word-of-mouth; Hollenbaugh (2011) adopts the approach to study people’s motivations for keeping personal journal blogs; Taylor, Lewis, and Strutton (2011) use it to examine consumers’ attitudes toward social media advertising; and Kwak (2012) is guided by U&G in his examination of why people use particular online media.

U&G proposes that motivations for media use depend on user activity levels. High activity media use is linked to more purposive motivations (e.g., information), while low activity media use is linked to passive motivations (e.g., relaxation or killing time). This idea that active and passive media use are driven by different motivations fits with the three levels of brand-related activeness of the COBRA typology (i.e., consuming, contributing, creating) and this article’s premise that these may be driven by different motivations (cf. Haridakis & Hanson, 2009; Rubin, 1983).

### 3.3.3 Six motivations for COBRAs

Research has found a variety of motivations to drive consumers’ brand-related social media use. These motivations can be classified into six broad motivation categories: information, entertainment, personal identity, integration and social interaction, empowerment, and remuneration (Muntinga et al., 2011; cf. Malthouse & Calder, 2010; McQuail, 1983). These categories can be described as follows:

**Information**

This motivation type stands for motivations such as staying informed and updated about one’s brand-related social environment, learning and profiting from other consumers’ knowledge, making well-considered buying decisions and getting inspired (e.g., Haridakis & Hanson, 2009; Hennig-Thurau & Walsh, 2003; Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009). Examples include reading about parties Bacardi organizes on the brand’s Facebook page, having a problem with a BMW solved with assistance of other consumers, or consulting consumer reviews of the Yamaha hi-fi set one considers to buy on Epinions.com.
Entertainment
Entertainment represents enjoyment, unwinding from everyday life through relaxation, and filling time because of boredom (e.g., Bronner & De Hoog, 2011; Taylor et al., 2011; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). Consumers can for instance engage in conversations about Mad Men on the series’ Facebook page to kill time, or create a viral video about Doritos to escape daily routines.

Personal identity
This motivation type covers motivations that are self-related and identity-related such as using brand-related content to provide other consumers and/or peers with an image of their personality and to show off, to express and shape one’s identity or personality and to gain self-assurance by receiving other consumers’ recognition (e.g., Gangadharbatla, 2008; Marwick & boyd, 2010; Mehdizadeh, 2010). As an example, a consumer may create and upload brand-related pictures to a social networking site to impress others by association with the brand or to participate in an online brand community because the brand is an important part of his or her life.

Integration and social interaction
Integration and social interaction refers to motivations such as meeting like-minded others and conversing with them about brands, gaining a sense of belonging by bonding with others around a common passion, and helping others (e.g., Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Daugherty, Eastin, & Bright, 2008; Haridakis & Hanson, 2009; Okazaki, 2009). For instance, consumers may contribute to a weblog dedicated to Nintendo to induce a sense of belonging to a group of brand-enthusiasts, or to answer all sorts of brand-related questions.

Empowerment
Empowerment denotes consumers consuming, contributing or creating brand-related content on social media platforms to influence other consumers, companies or brands (e.g., Berthon et al., 2008; Füller et al., 2010; Porter et al., 2011). For instance, someone can post writings about IKEA on a weblog because he or she wants to convince others about the brand, or create brand-related videos to force a financial company to provide excellent service.

Remuneration
When consumers engage in COBRAs on social media because they expect to gain any kind of reward, such motivations are covered by the remuneration motivation. Examples include playing a branded video game that is part of an interactive advertising campaign because there is a skiing trip to be won, or selling Coca Cola paraphernalia via Coca Cola’s fan page on a social networking site (e.g., Nov, 2007; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2003).
3.3.4 Different COBRAs, different motivations?

The motivation categories and the COBRA types previously described cover the full spectrum of motivations and the full spectrum of brand-related social media uses. They form this paper’s foundation and enable us to examine the motivations of a specific COBRA type while also taking the motivations for other COBRA types into account. So far, only qualitative research has been conducted to simultaneously unearth the motivations of isolated COBRAs (Muntinga et al., 2011). Although usually rich and insightful, qualitative research has typical shortcomings that can be resolved by quantitative research – and vice versa. Qualitative research has been successful revealing COBRA motivations previously unknown; but quantitative research is best fitted to shed light on and draw conclusions about (a) the predictive value of motivations for different COBRAs and (b) the motivation patterns that drive different COBRAs.

3.4 Research method

3.4.1 Survey data collection on a social networking site

To examine the research question, an online survey was distributed on a social networking site (SNS). SNSs “have become the key feature of the social media landscape” (Hutton & Fosdick, 2011, p. 1) and are commonly regarded as the number one social media tool for marketing and advertising (Moran & Gossieaux, 2011). The survey was designed around the Dutch SNS Hyves (www.hyves.nl). With 11.6 million user profiles and 5 million unique visitors per month, Hyves is the second largest SNS in the Netherlands, after Facebook (Oosterveer, 2012). Hyves counts numerous brand pages, many of which show lively activity. This activity typically displays all three COBRA types: brand page users can consume, contribute to and create brand-related content. This feature makes SNSs in general and Hyves in particular an interesting venue for distributing the survey.

3.4.2 Respondents and procedure

Recruitment of respondents was realized by soliciting the members of several brand pages on Hyves. From a list of brand pages provided by Hyves (each roughly between 1,000 and 500,000 members), only those were used that (a) showed recent activity, (b) were clearly and verifiably consumer-initiated rather than company-initiated, and (c) concerned actual product brands. Profiles of service brands, television shows, political parties, sports clubs and celebrities were excluded. An online survey was created and the administrators of twenty randomly selected brand pages were approached to distribute the survey link to their pages’ members. The administrators of nine brand pages (of nine different brands) agreed to do so. In addition, for each of the nine brand pages banner advertisements were created that contained the survey.
link and targeted at the pages’ members using Hyves’ advertising planning system. As an incentive to take part in the survey, respondents were offered the prospect of winning a €25 ($31) “Goldmembership,” which grants access to information that is withheld from “regular” users. Ultimately, 4,151 questionnaires were completed (respondents aged between 16 and 67, \( M_{\text{age}} = 22.96, SD = 8.54, 55.9\% \) female).

### 3.4.3 COBRA measurement

Consumers’ online brand-related activities (COBRAs) formed this study’s dependent variable. For each of the three individual COBRA types (consuming, contributing, and creating) it was investigated which motivations best explained that specific behavior. COBRAs were measured by successively presenting respondents three single-item statements corresponding with consuming, contributing, or creating. All respondents scored all three statements (five-point Likert scales, never - very frequently). For consuming brand-related content the statement was: “On Hyves, I read weblogs, articles, or forum threads about X, study consumer reviews about X, and/or view videos, pictures, or photos about X” \((M = 2.65, SD = 1.10);\) for contributing to brand-related content, the statement was: “On Hyves, I comment on weblogs, videos, images or forums about X” \((M = 1.78, SD = 1.07);\) for creating brand-related content, the statement was “On Hyves, I create weblogs, reviews, videos, music, pictures, or articles about X \((M = 1.28, SD = .72).\) After indicating how often they consumed brand-related content on Hyves, respondents were first presented a list of motivations before moving on to the next COBRA question. Thus, all respondents indicated their motivations for all three COBRA types.

### 3.4.4 Motivation measurement

The instrument for measuring motivations was developed on the basis of Muntinga et al.’s (2011) qualitatively obtained classification of COBRA motivations. It consisted of 30 items, each corresponding to the six distinguished motivation types (i.e., information, integration and social interaction, personal identity, entertainment, empowerment and remuneration). For each COBRA type, respondents were asked to indicate whether a motivation applied to them (1 = yes, 0 = no). Cronbach’s alphas were used to assess internal consistencies of the motivation scales (Kuder-Richardson 20 method for binary data (Cronbach, 1990; see also Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000)) and explorative factor analysis (Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation) was performed per COBRA type to assess the consistency and dimensionality of the motivation scales. The motivation instrument was demonstrated to be satisfactorily reliable over all three COBRA types (all motivation scales Cronbach’s alpha ≥ .60; see Bagozzi, 1994, p. 18; DeVellis, 2003, p. 95; Malhotra & Birks, 2007, p. 358), except for the remuneration motivation (Cronbach’s alpha = .43 for consuming; .49 for contributing; and .56 for creating). In the analyses a single
item was therefore used to measure this motivation (“because it offers me some kind of reward”). For the other motivation scales, factor analyses used for extracting the critical underlying factors showed that all scales were one-dimensional (see Table 3.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
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<th>Contributing</th>
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<td>Information</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>.69</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal identity</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integration and social interaction</td>
<td>.65</td>
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<td>.39</td>
<td>.69</td>
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<td>.45</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Entertainment</td>
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<td>.64</td>
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<td>.64</td>
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<td>.48</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>.66</td>
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<td>.50</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.58</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remuneration</td>
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Table 3.1 Factor loadings and Cronbach’s alphas per COBRA type.

Note: factor analysis performed was a Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation; * scale not sufficiently reliable (Cronbach’s alpha < .60).

Finally, several questions on demographic variables (age, sex, and level of education) were added to the questionnaire as control variables.

### 3.5 Results

Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the contributions of the different motivations in explaining consuming, contributing, and creating brand-related content. Three analyses were performed, one for each COBRA type. For each analysis a COBRA was entered in the equation as dependent variable and the six motivations types were included as independent variables. The demographic variables age, sex and education were entered to control for any influence they may have had on COBRAs. Bivariate correlations between the demographic variables and the motivations were all smaller than .10. Results of the regression analyses are displayed in Table 3.2.
Table 3.2 Summary of linear regression and variance explained for control variables and motivations per COBRA type (standardized regression coefficients (\(b^*\)) reported).

Note: for all figures mentioned \(p < .01\). Insignificant \(b^*\)-values are indicated as \(ns\); numbers between parentheses indicate a motivation’s position in order of importance for a COBRA type; * Result is considered negligible considering this study’s large sample.

### 3.5.1 Explaining consuming brand-related content

The regression analysis that was performed to shed light on how motivations predict the consuming COBRA type shows that 28% of the variance in consuming brand-related content can be explained by demographics and the six motivations. The control variables age, sex and education have significant influence, but this influence is very small considering the large sample. The motivations information (\(b^* = .29\)), entertainment (\(b^* = .20\)), integration and social interaction (\(b^* = .10\)), and personal identity (\(b^* = .08\)) significantly predict consuming, although the effect of the latter is negligible considering the large sample. The motivations empowerment and remuneration are no significant predictors of consuming.

These findings suggest that consumers who consume brand-related content on social media do so primarily for purposes of information and entertainment, followed by integration and social interaction.
3.5.2 Explaining contributing to brand-related content

Results of the regression analysis show that 46% of the variance in the COBRA type contributing to brand-related content is explained by demographics and the six motivations. Age is no significant predictor of contributing, and while sex and education are significant predictors, their influence is negligible considering the large sample.

The motivations information ($b^* = .36$), entertainment ($b^* = .31$), personal identity ($b^* = .10$) and integration and social interaction ($b^* = .07$) are significant predictors of contributing. Again, note that the effect of the latter is negligible considering the large sample. Similar to consuming, the influence of the empowerment and remuneration motivations is not statistically significant.

These results suggest that consumers who contribute to brand-related content on social media do so primarily for purposes of information and entertainment, followed by personal identity.

3.5.3 Explaining creating brand-related content

Results of the regression analysis show that 53% of the variance in the creating COBRA type can be explained by demographics and the six motivations. Only the control variable sex is a significant predictor of creating, but its influence is, similar to the consuming and contributing COBRA types, very small. The motivations information ($b^* = .40$), entertainment ($b^* = .30$), personal identity ($b^* = .17$), and empowerment ($b^* = -.10$) are significant predictors of creating brand-related content. The influence of integration and social interaction ($b^* = .09$) and remuneration ($b^* = -.05$) are also significant but, similar to contributing, very small considering the large sample.

These findings suggest that – similar to consuming and contributing – consumers who create brand-related content on social media are most prominently motivated by information and entertainment, followed by personal identity and empowerment.

3.6 Conclusion and discussion

The present study contributes to the existing literature by providing advertising academics and practitioners an integrated understanding of the motivations that govern consumers’ online brand-related activities (COBRAs). It is demonstrated that (1) motivations play an important role in explaining COBRAs: the six motivations taken from chapter 2 explain up to half of the variance in COBRAs; (2) motivations explain more variance in active than in passive COBRAs: for consuming, motivations explain 28% of the variance, while for contributing and creating, motivations respectively explain 46% and 53% of the variance; (3) there are important
similarities between COBRAs with regard to their motivation patterns: information and entertainment are shown to be the basic motivations underlying COBRAs. After the “primary” motivations information and entertainment come “secondary” motivations, but results show only minor differences between COBRAs with regard to these motivations’ relative importance. In the following sections these findings are discussed in light of this study’s theoretical framework, Uses and Gratifications (U&G).

3.6.1 The importance of motivations and the role of brand-related activeness

Demonstrating that consumers’ intrinsic motivations are strong predictors of their brand-related social media use, this study confirms U&G’s principal foundation that motivations are key to understanding people’s media use (Katz et al., 1974; see also Kietzmann et al., 2012; Porter et al., 2012). The six motivations taken into account explain up to half the behavioral variance. Notably, the predictive value of motivations depends on the COBRA type: motivations explain more variance as COBRAs become more active. The variance in creating that is explained by motivations is almost twice the variance in consuming that is explained by motivations. Thus, active brand-related social media use is more purposefully than passive brand-related social media use; more directed towards satisfying needs (i.e., intrinsically motivated) than passive brand-related social media use. This idea that the extent to which an activity is driven by needs depends on the “activeness” of that activity is a valuable contribution to the U&G literature.

In terms of U&G, this finding that COBRAs that demand high user activeness are especially performed to satisfy certain needs implies that when creating brand-related content provides the intended need satisfaction, there is a very good chance that a consumer will perform it again. When a consumer does not obtain the need satisfaction sought from creating, he or she will not likely perform it again. Conversely, by demonstrating that relatively passive COBRAs are less prominently intrinsically motivated, it is shown that passive media use is not as purposefully and goal-directed as active media use. In U&G terms, then, when consuming brand-related content does not satisfy a need, this does not inevitably cause a consumer to never perform it again. Rather, extrinsic factors (i.e., extrinsic motivations) such as time constraints and deadlines, media availability, threats, discounts, media multitasking, the type of product, or perhaps the brand itself can stimulate a consumer to continue to perform it (cf. Bogart, 1965).
3.6.2 Information and entertainment as basic motivations for COBRAs

This study reveals that consumers engage in consuming, contributing and creating brand-related primarily for purposes of satisfying needs for information and entertainment. Whether consumers read the reviews posted by other consumers, engage in online conversations about a brand, or upload user-generated brand-related content, they do so primarily to be informed and entertained. That is, to get information about brands and products (i.e., prizes, specs, offerings), to survey their brand-related social environment and to gain knowledge; and to unwind from everyday life, pass time or simply seek enjoyment. Information and entertainment can thus be considered the basic motivations underlying all of consumers’ online brand-related activities.

The importance of the information and entertainment motivations for COBRAs is confirmed by findings from prior U&G studies. Information and entertainment have been demonstrated to be fundamental drivers of watching television (Haridakis, 2002; Rubin, 1983), viewing advertisements (Ko et al., 2005; Smit & Neijens, 2000; Taylor et al., 2011), using the Internet (Hoffman & Novak, 1996; Stafford & Stafford, 2001), and generic social media use (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009; Park et al., 2009; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). This suggests that brand-related social media use is not fundamentally different from other (social) media uses. New media environments, such as recently the Internet and social media, can introduce new, specific need satisfaction and, hence, new motivations (cf. Chaffee & Metzger, 2001; Ruggiero, 2000), but the basic motivations underlying media use are stable over all sorts of media. Brand-related social media use is focused on a highly specific type of content that comes with two new motivations (i.e., empowerment and remuneration; see chapter 2), but it is otherwise motivationally very much like any other media use. As Ainscough (1996) states, “At the end of the day those people who visit an Internet site are still people and still subject to the same motivations…and the same desires as people looking at your TV commercial” (p. 47).

3.6.3 Minor differences in motivation patterns

This study was initiated to shed light on the predictive value of motivations and the motivation patterns of different COBRAs. Based on U&G, it was proposed that motivations for COBRAs would depend on activity levels: relatively active COBRAs would be motivated differently than relatively passive COBRAs (cf. Haridakis & Hanson, 2009; Rubin, 2002). However, this idea that active and passive brand-related social media use is governed by different (patterns of) motivations is not entirely supported by the data. As outlined earlier, all COBRAs are primarily driven by information and entertainment. The “secondary” motivations personal identity, integration and social interaction, empowerment, and remuneration come into play after information and entertainment. However, although significant, in several
instances the predictive value of these motivations is very low considering the large sample and, moreover, findings only show minor differences between the motivation patterns of COBRAs (see Table 3.2).

Personal identity, which stands for motivations relating to self and identity such as self-presentation and self-expression, is the third-important motivator for contributing and creating, but the fourth-important motivator for consuming. Integration and social interaction, which stands for motivations relating to identification with others and seeking a basis for conversation, is the third-important motivator for consuming, the fourth for consuming, and the fifth for creating. While results with regard to personal identity and integration and social interaction do not show important differences, a more clear motivation pattern is shown for the empowerment and remuneration motivations. These were introduced in chapter 2 as motivations specific to brand-related social media use and are reaffirmed by this study.

Empowerment, which stands for engaging in COBRAs to persuade other consumers and/or companies, does not play a significant role in consuming and contributing, but is a relatively important (fourth) predictor for creating. This result is in line with chapter 2’s finding that empowerment is only relevant for creating and studies into the motivations behind the creation of consumer-generated advertisements (Berthon et al., 2008) and online co-creation (Füller et al., 2010). Interestingly, empowerment exerts negative influence on creating brand-related content. Speculating on the cause of this negative influence, this may indicate that the less empowered consumers feel, the more brand-related content they create. Feeling empowered on its own account does not induce a consumer to create brand-related content. In this view, “consumer empowerment” is the normal situation in online brand communities (Schau, Muñiz, & Arnould, 2009): empowered as they are by the very nature of the social media phenomenon, consumers do not feel inclined to exert their power on each and every occasion. Rather, only when something (usually negative, such as a bad product or service experience) happens that makes a consumer experience a lack of empowerment, will he or she go online and write a negative review or upload a critical video in order to vent their negativism and warn other consumers. Consider, for instance, the song United Breaks Guitars. This song was composed, performed, and uploaded to YouTube by Dave Carroll after an incident in which United Airlines was responsible for the damaging of his guitar, but refused to take responsibility for it. Carroll had tried to settle the incident in a private manner, but when his request remained unanswered, he vented his frustration – his “unempowerment” – by composing and uploading this modern protest song. Such a relationship between negatively valenced electronic word-of-mouth – essentially a form of COBRAs – and empowerment has been demonstrated previously by Bronner and De Hoog (2011) and Willemsen, Neijens, and Bronner (2012).

Similar to the empowerment motivation, the remuneration motivation was introduced in chapter 2. While previously demonstrated a predictor of consuming, it is, in this study, only demonstrated a significant predictor of creating. Albeit a very
weak and, given this study’s large sample, negligible predictor, this difference may have a methodological cause. All three COBRA types (consuming, contributing, and creating) are to some extent driven by extrinsic forces, but these extrinsic motivators differ with respect to the COBRA type. So-called referral programs for instance are usually focused on active rather than passive COBRAs: their rationale is based on the premise that when offered some kind of reward or enticement, consumers may recommend brands, products, and services to other consumers by creating and distributing brand-related content (e.g., Verlegh, Ryu, Tuk, & Feick, 2013). It is, however, also common practice among marketers to offer consumers the likes of a monetary price, a product or a holiday – usually as a part of a marketing campaign – when they play a branded game, “like” a brand, or view an advertisement. These are examples of consuming brand-related content. While both of these extrinsic driving forces (reward versus price/product/holiday) conceptually reside under the remuneration motivation, the remuneration measurement consisted only of the item “because it offers me some kind of reward.” Stated this way, this item may have only appealed to consumers who created content as a part of a referral program, while it did not appeal to consumers who consumed brand-related content. As a result, this study may have only yielded results on remuneration for creating, and not for consuming.

3.6.4 Practical implications

Results of this chapter provide social media marketing practitioners with several insights that may help them to strategically inspire and facilitate consumers’ online brand-related activities (COBRAs) to their advantage and create a successful social media strategy. It is demonstrated that consumers engage in COBRAs to satisfy certain needs and that these needs are very important predictors of COBRA. For marketers, this implies that they should make efforts to understand and, subsequently, facilitate these needs; because when a COBRA fails to meet the need it was initiated for, it is very likely that it will be quickly abandoned and not performed again.

Given the dominance of the information and entertainment motivations throughout all COBRAs, advertisers must ensure that consuming, contributing, and creating brand-related content on social media are both highly informative and entertaining. For instance: marketers need to make sure that product reviews on Yelp contain relevant brand-related information (e.g., where to buy a brand, how to customize it, how other people use the brand), that branded videos on YouTube are imbued with both informative and entertaining content, and that consumers experience the activity of creating a fake advertisement and publishing it on Facebook is experienced as entertaining (e.g., fun, exciting, relaxing, and joyful). Without providing consumers with useful information and making the behavioral experience entertaining, it is unlikely that brand-related pictures will be looked at and forwarded, discussions will be started about a brand, and brand-related videos will be created and uploaded.
All brand-related activity should satisfy consumers' information and entertainment needs before anything else, but satisfying other needs may also stimulate COBRAs. Facilitating the satisfaction of personal identity, integration and social interaction needs can further stimulate COBRAs. For instance, an application that allows for users to engage in social interaction (conversations) or social identity formation (integration, that is, the "need to belong") can encourage a consumer's consumption of brand-related content; and allowing consumers to present themselves to others, express themselves, and work on their skills and hence gain self-assurance may facilitate their participation in virtual brand communities and their creation of advertisements.

As a recent example, Jonathan Friedman, a creative Doritos consumer, created the Doritos Super Bowl commercial *Man's Best Friend* as part of Doritos' annual “Crash the Super Bowl” contest. His creation topped USA Today's Ad Meter as 2012's most effective Super Bowl commercial. It is likely that Jonathan meant to satisfy certain needs by creating this ad. Perhaps he wanted to impress other people, maybe there was an element of self-expression, and surely he must have been entertained by the act. Also, since he received much praise for the ad, he must have gained self-assurance. As much of his needs were probably met by creating this award-winning ad, it seems a matter of time before Jonathan submits another commercial to a brand-initiated contest. Would the world be hearing more of him when he had not experienced the act as entertaining and when his creation did not receive as much praise as it did? Based on this research one must conclude: not very likely.

### 3.6.5 Limitations and directions for future research

This study's findings and limitations suggest several directions for future research. While it is demonstrated that, depending on the activity, intrinsic motivations explain a large portion of variance in consumers' online brand-related activities, much variance in all COBRA types continues to remain unexplained. Social media marketing researchers may want to step forward and fill in these blanks in literature. In particular, they may choose to focus on two extrinsic factors: the brand itself and consumer characteristics.

One extrinsic factor that may explain additional variance is the brand itself. Consumers may engage in more or less consuming, contributing, or creating activities depending on the characteristics of the brands around which their activities revolve. Because understanding a particular brand's capacity to stimulate particular COBRAs would be essential to any brand's social media strategy, it would be interesting for future research to investigate the characteristics of brands with which consumers engage on social media. Chapter 4 therefore provides a first examination of these characteristics, based on the concepts of brand personality and brand relationship quality.
Another factor that may explain additional variance in COBRAs are consumers themselves. This research demonstrates that the role of demographics, although very small, differs between COBRA types. For instance, age plays a role in consuming but not in contributing and creating; and education does not play a role in creating, but is a significant factor in consuming and contributing. These findings give rise to the idea that consumers’ characteristics may influence their brand-related social media use. Previous research on generic, not brand-related social media use finds that different personality characteristics influence people's social media use (e.g., Correa, Willard Hinsley, & De Zúñiga, 2010). However, no research provides an understanding of whether and how consumers' personality characteristics influence their COBRAs – and how these may relate to their motivations. Chapter 5 therefore investigates how three types of influential consumers create brand-related content, and what motivates them to do so.