

An integrated model of social media brand engagement

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Abstract

Despite the increasing use of social media sites to engage consumers, the consumer brand engagement construct is still in its infancy. This study aims to contribute to existing social media research by proposing and empirically testing a model in which social media brand involvement and social media brand communication are the main precursors and brand relationship quality is a relevant outcome of social media brand engagement. The findings show that the influence of social media brand involvement on social media brand engagement is stronger than the influence of social media brand communication. The latter is due to the co-creation of users and firms. Furthermore, interaction and attention are the most relevant components of social media brand engagement, followed by enthusiasm, identification, and absorption. Social media brand engagement is a useful tool for companies to gain competitive advantages. Thus, the findings could help firms better manage their social media tools in the context of social media communication.

1. Introduction

The number of worldwide social media users is expected to reach a third of the world's population (i.e., more than three billion monthly active social media users) by 2021; this increasing number of user accounts is accompanied by a growth in user engagement, as Internet users spend on average 135 minutes per day on social networks (Statista, 2018a). Social media accounted for almost 35 percent of global digital ad spending in 2017, compared with 23 percent in 2013 (Statista, 2018b). The leading social media site is Facebook, with more than 2.2 billion monthly active users worldwide as of April 2018, followed by YouTube (1.6 billion) and WhatsApp (1.5 billion) (Statista, 2018c).

Since the 1990s, marketing has moved from focusing on customer transactions to adopting a relationship-based approach, as the aim of many companies is to develop positive relationships with customers and ensure customer satisfaction and loyalty (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). More recently, the objective of organizations has moved from relationship marketing to engaging customers, as satisfying customers is not enough to ensure their loyalty and profitability (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). Companies increasingly rely on social media sites to engage with consumers (So, King, & Sparks, 2014). Batra and Keller (2016) distinguish three different types of social media platforms that enable consumers to engage with companies/brands: online communities and forums, blogs, and social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. Consumers use social media mainly for socialization, entertainment, self-status seeking, and information seeking (Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009).

Social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter have become key tools for social media advertising through sponsored/ promoted tweets on Twitter (Twitter users are paid to post brand-related content tweets on their pages; Anghelcev, 2015), banner advertisements and brand communities on Facebook and LinkedIn, and video advertisements on YouTube that can evoke engagement (Boerman & Kruikemeier, 2016). The use of sponsored tweets has raised some ethical concerns (Kim & Song, 2018): this type of promotion is often deemed as hidden and deceptive advertising (e.g., Cain, 2011; Kuhn, Hume, & Love, 2010) because the format of sponsored tweets is similar to that of unpaid tweets (Kim & Song, 2018) and consumers hardly notice the 'promoted-by' label (Boerman & Kruikemeier, 2016). Consequently, they do not activate their cognitive mechanisms against persuasion (Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998).

Consumer engagement through social media has received increasing attention in the last several years from both practitioners and academics, among other reasons, because of its potential influence on consumer behavior (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010). However, the construct is still at a relatively early stage of understanding (France, Merrilees, & Miller, 2016). This study aims to shed some light on the research area by proposing and empirically testing an integrated model of social media brand engagement that included social media brand involvement and social media brand communication as antecedents and brand relationship quality as a consequence. The purpose is to analyze the variation of social media users who are followers of the Facebook page of a particular brand. This model is relevant for both researchers and practitioners: since 2005, interest in the consumer engagement field of research in marketing has exploded (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, & Ilić, 2011); however, most of the studies are conceptual (Vivek, Beatty, Dalela, & Morgan, 2014). Thus, a further understanding of the determinants and consequences at the conceptual and empirical levels is imperative. Furthermore, most of the companies pursue consumer engagement because of its impact on corporate performance, including sales, profits, competitive advantages, product development, and referrals and recommendations for brands and products (Brodie et al., 2011). Consequently, this study is relevant to firms because it highlights the antecedents and outputs of social media brand engagement.

The structure of this study is as follows: we first discuss the theories on the topic and justify our hypotheses. This is followed by the research methodology, after which we report how we analyzed the data and the findings. Finally, we compare our results with those of previous studies, discuss the implications and limitations, and provide avenues for further research.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses

2.1 Social media and branding

Social media is a "group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Although social media is often defined as a combination of Web 2.0 and user-generated content (Sinclair & Vogus, 2011; Thevenot, 2007), Web 2.0 refers to a platform in which content is continuously developed by users in a collaborative way, and user-generated content refers to all the

different ways people produce content and use social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Laroche, Habibi, Richard, & Sankaranarayanan, 2012).

Social media is characterized as being interactive and participative (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Leung, Bai, & Erdem, 2017; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Ye, Barreda, Okumus, & Nusair, in press). It has facilitated online interaction and engagement and changed the way people interact and communicate with each other and with companies and brands (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). It directly connects companies and brands with consumers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Laroche et al., 2012) in a bidirectional way. Consumers are not only receivers of content but also active creators of brand information (Thevenot, 2007) and brand value (Merz, Yi, & Vargo, 2009) and influencers. Therefore, power has shifted from brands to consumers (Tsai & Men, 2013), with brand owners no longer having full control over the content of their brand messages (Fournier & Avery, 2011). This switch leads to several challenges and opportunities for companies.

Social media implies opportunities for brand building (Correa, Hinsley, & De Zúñiga, 2010; Merz et al., 2009), brand equity creation, including brand image and brand loyalty (Laroche et al., 2012; Leung et al., 2017; Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000), and brand management (Godey et al., 2016; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Users are now relying more than ever before on online reviewers (Dijkmans, Kerkhof, & Beukeboom, 2015); thus, brand reviews are an important source of information that can influence brand preferences and purchase intentions (Morra, Ceruti, Chierici, & Di Gregorio, 2018). Furthermore, scholars acknowledge challenges such as measuring the influence of social media marketing activities on brand success (Schultz & Peltier, 2013), dealing with the increasing amount of customers' brand information (Harrigan, Evers, Miles, & Daly, 2017), and identifying mechanisms of improving the brand pages to engage consumers and improve consumer–brand relationships (De Vries & Carlson, 2014).

2.2 Social media brand engagement

Social media facilitates brand engagement, understood as the level of interaction and connections between consumers and the brand (Hanna et al., 2011; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Tsai & Men, 2013; Vivek et al., 2014; Ye et al., in press). Thus, companies use social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter to engage with consumers (So et al., 2014). Despite the increasing interest and body of research on consumer engagement within the marketing domain, there is no widely agreed-on definition of the construct.

A complete review of the definitions of engagement is beyond the scope of this study. Brodie et al. (2011), Dessart, Veloutsou, and Morgan-Thomas (2015), Gambetti and Graffigna (2010), Harmeling, Moffett, Arnold, and Carlson (2017), Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie (2014), Kumar et al. (2010), Mollen and Wilson (2010), Pansari and Kumar (2017) and Sprott, Czellar, and Spangenberg (2009) all provide reviews of the engagement concept up to that point in time, respectively. This section aims to identify the main fields of research that have addressed this construct and to focus on the marketing approach to this term.

Engagement has been analyzed from different disciplinary perspectives including marketing, management, organizational behavior, education, sociology, psychology, information systems, and political science. While different terminology has been used to refer to different engagement subjects (e.g., customer engagement, consumer engagement, employee engagement) or different engagement objects (e.g., brand engagement, organizational engagement), all refer to a similar concept that is applied to different entities (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

The interest in this construct within the marketing discipline has developed mainly from 2005 (Brodie et al., 2011), given that it is a relational construct (Schultz & Peltier, 2013) that reflects the interactive nature of the consumer–brand relationship (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Three main approaches can be identified in the conceptualization of the engagement construct in the marketing literature. While some researchers (e.g., Sprott et al., 2009; Van Doorn et al., 2010) adopt a narrow approach and treat engagement as a unidimensional construct (cognitive, affective, or behavioral), some scholars (e.g., Mollen & Wilson, 2010) extend it by capturing two dimensions within the concept. The third approach includes studies (e.g., Brodie, Ilić, Jurić, & Hollebeek, 2013; Dessart et al., 2015; Hollebeek, 2011) that adopt a broader approach and treat engagement as a multidimensional construct (including cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions). For example, Hollebeek (2011, p. 6) defines customer brand engagement as “the level of a customer’s motivational, brand-related, and context-dependent state of mind characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activity in brand interactions.” Likewise, Brodie et al. (2011, p. 9), after analyzing the definitions of engagement in the marketing literature, recognize the multidimensional nature of the construct and also conclude that it is “a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, cocreative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g., a brand) in focal service relationships. It (...) exists as a dynamic, iterative process within service relationships that cocreate value.” Cognitive activities refer, for example, to the level of engrossment in and concentration on the brand, affective activities imply the positive feelings generated when the consumer interacts with the brand (Harmeling et al., 2017), and behavioral activities refer to manifestations that go beyond direct transactions (e.g., referrals, word of mouth, blogging, recommendations, writing reviews, providing customer ratings) (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014; Kumar et al., 2010; Van Doorn et al., 2010) that contribute to the company’s marketing functions (Harmeling et al., 2017).

For the purposes of this study, we adopt So et al. (2014) multidimensional approach to brand engagement that includes five components covering cognitive, affective, and behavioral activities: identification (the degree of a consumer’s belongingness to the brand), enthusiasm (the consumer’s excitement and interest in the brand), attention (the level of a consumer’s focus on and connection with the brand), absorption (the level of a consumer’s concentration, immersion, and engrossment in a brand), and interaction (the consumer’s participation with the brand or other consumers sharing and exchanging information). Thus, in our study social media brand engagement means a proactive and interactive relationship between the consumer and the brand’s social media platform, passion, and immersion in the brand’s social media platform.

Scholars acknowledge several antecedents of brand engagement, including involvement (Brodie et al., 2011, 2013; Harrigan et al., 2017; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan, 2012), commitment

(Lacey & Morgan, 2009; Van Doorn et al., 2010), trust (Van Doorn et al., 2010), brand attachment, and brand communication (Manser Payne, Peltier, & Barger, 2017), as well as consequences, as explained subsequently. The importance of brand engagement lies in its number of benefits. Engaging with consumers plays an important role in building brand loyalty (Barger, Peltier, & Schultz, 2016; Correa et al., 2010; Dijkmans et al., 2015; Harrigan et al., 2017; Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Vivek et al., 2012), brand evaluations (Harrigan et al., 2017), brand attachment (Brodie et al., 2011; Dijkmans et al., 2015), trust (Brodie et al., 2011; Dijkmans et al., 2015; Harrigan et al., 2017; Vivek et al., 2012), brand relationship quality (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005; Park & Kim, 2014; Pentina, Gammoh, Zhang, & Mallin, 2013), satisfaction (Brodie et al., 2011; Harrigan et al., 2017), involvement (Harrigan et al., 2017), and purchase intentions (Barger et al., 2016; Dijkmans et al., 2015), among others. The following sections aim to address a gap in the literature by focusing on two antecedents (social media brand involvement and social media brand communication) and one consequence (brand relationship quality) and their relationships to social media brand engagement.

2.3 Social media brand involvement

Involvement is widely recognized as an important component of consumer behavior (Coulter, Price, & Feick, 2003; De Vries & Carlson, 2014; Dwivedi, 2015; Zaichkowsky, 1985). Although a large number of definitions of involvement exist, researchers widely agree that involvement is related to personal relevance (e.g., Celsi & Olson, 1988; Mitchell, 1979; Park & Young, 1986; Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, 1986; Richins & Bloch, 1986; Zaichkowsky, 1985). In this line, Zaichkowsky (1985, p. 342) defines involvement as “a person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests.” Likewise, Celsi and Olson (1988, p. 211) add that “a consumer's level of involvement with an object, situation, or action is determined by the degree to which s/he perceives that concept to be personally relevant.” The conceptualization of involvement as personal relevance, that is adopted in our study, has been applied to different entities (e.g., product, brand, advertising message) because, as Zaichkowsky (1994, p. 59) recognizes, the meaning of involvement does not change across the objects as the reference is “being personally relevant to the stimulus object.” Applying the same argument to our study, we suggest that the meaning of involvement does not differ when using it at the social media level because the reference is the perceived relevance of the object (i.e., a brand's social media platform). Consequently, it encompasses the consideration of an entity (i.e., a brand's social media platform) as important, relevant, meaningful, and interesting to the consumer (Coulter et al., 2003; Dwivedi, 2015). This is in line with France et al. (2016) operationalization of brand involvement, which we adopt in this study.

Brand involvement and brand engagement are closely related, as both are relational variables that predict consumer behavior (Evrard & Aurier, 1996; France et al., 2016; Hollebeek et al., 2014); however, some conceptual distinctions exist: while the former is usually defined at the cognitive, affective, or motivational level or perceived relevance level (Vivek et al., 2012), the latter implies cognitive, affective, and behavioral components (Harrigan et al., 2017), a higher level of commitment (Vivek et al., 2012), and an interactive and proactive relationship between the consumer and the brand (Brodie et al., 2011; Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Merz et al., 2009).

As stated previously, several scholars have acknowledged the positive influence of involvement on consumer engagement (e.g., De Vries & Carlson, 2014; France et al., 2016; Harrigan et al., 2017; Hollebeek, 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2014; So et al., 2014; Vivek et al., 2012). Consequently, we propose the following:

H1. Social media brand involvement is positively related to social media brand engagement.

2.4 Social media brand communication

Brand communication has been recognized as one of the determinants of brand equity (Simon & Sullivan, 1993; Yoo et al., 2000). More recent studies (e.g., Laroche et al., 2012; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015) also acknowledge the impact of social media on brand equity; for example, Laroche et al. (2012) assess the effect of social media-based brand communities on brand loyalty, and Schivinski and Dabrowski (2015) investigate the influence of brand communication on brand equity through Facebook.

The emergence of social media has changed the communication paradigm (Morra et al., 2018), including consumers' patterns of media usage, the media they use to search for the information they need, and their role in the communication process: While traditionally consumers assumed a passive role as receivers of product and brand information through traditional mass media, they are now active participants in the communication process as active seekers of brand information (Batra & Keller, 2016) and as creators of brand content (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013; Thevenot, 2007) through social networks, blogs, and online communities and forums. Social media platforms ease communication between consumers, as well as between consumers and companies (Batra & Keller, 2016). Thus, companies are no longer the only generators of brand communication, nor do they have full control over brand communication (Bruhn, Schoenmueller, & Schäfer, 2012). The proactive role of consumers is illustrated by Kozinets et al. (2010) through their network coproduction model, in which the communication flows through the members of the network. This argument involves a distinction between user-generated social media communication and firmcreated social media communication (Bruhn et al., 2012; Okazaki & Taylor, 2013), which we adopt in this study to conceptualize and operationalize social media brand communication.

Manser, Peltier, and Barger (2017) propose an integrated marketing communications framework on the influence of non-personal touchpoints (the interaction between consumers and the brand is without personal encounter, e.g., traditional advertising media, social media, direct mail, catalogs) and personal touchpoints (consumers interact with the brand directly, either face-to-face or digitally, e.g., field salesforce, trade shows, in-store personnel, telephone) on brand engagement, adopting a holistic approach (omnichannel approach) to integrated marketing communications. Thus, they acknowledge the influence of social media communication on brand engagement. Previous studies in the organizational literature also recognize the role of communication as an antecedent of employee engagement (e.g., Guest, 2014; Karanges, Johnston, Beatson, & Lings, 2015; Welch, 2011). Considering these arguments, we propose the following:

H2. Social media brand communication is positively related to social media brand engagement.

2.5 Brand relationship quality

Research interest in the consumer–brand relationship has increased since the 1990s (Fetscherin & Heinrich, 2015). Fournier (1998) highly cited article established the theoretical basis to understand consumers' relationships with brands and identified six determinants of the quality, strength, and durability of brand relationships: love and passion, selfconnection, commitment, inter-dependence, intimacy, and brand partner quality. As Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi (2012) and Fetscherin and Heinrich (2015) acknowledge, brand relationship is the foundation of subsequent related theories and constructs such as brand attachment (Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010; Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005), brand love (Batra et al., 2012), self-brand connections (Escalas & Bettman, 2003), and brand passion (Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2012).

Brand relationship quality is understood as an assessment of the strength of the consumer's relationship with a brand (Hudson, Roth, Madden, & Hudson, 2015; Park & Kim, 2014; Smit, Bronner, & Tolboom, 2007). Specifically, this study follows Algesheimer et al. (2005, p. 23) work, which defines brand relationship quality as “the degree to which the consumer views the brand as a satisfactory partner in an ongoing relationship” and operationalizes it as a unidimensional construct. As they acknowledge, their conceptualization and operationalization of brand relationship quality are in line with previous studies on the anthropomorphism of brands and brand personality (the attribution of human characteristics to a brand) and with the conceptualization of consumer–brand identification (Algesheimer et al., 2005). By developing such relationships, consumers can benefit from the provision of functional and emotional meanings that the brands bring to their lives (Fournier, 1998; Hudson et al., 2015).

The importance of brand relationship lies in its predictability, as it leads to brand loyalty (Fournier, 1998; Park & Kim, 2014), positive word of mouth (Hudson et al., 2015), brand attachment (Hudson et al., 2015), and profits, among others. During the last years, companies have increased efforts to develop strong relationships with consumers through social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (Park et al., 2009; Park & Kim, 2014), as doing so helps them develop a competitive advantage (Bowden, 2009). Hudson et al. (2015), Pentina et al. (2013), and Smit et al. (2007) propose that the brand relationship quality will be higher if consumers engage with brands using social media. Given these theoretical arguments, we propose the following:

H3. Social media brand engagement is positively related to brand relationship quality.

The social media brand engagement model includes the preceding discussion on social media brand involvement, social media brand communication, and brand relationship quality (see Fig. 1):

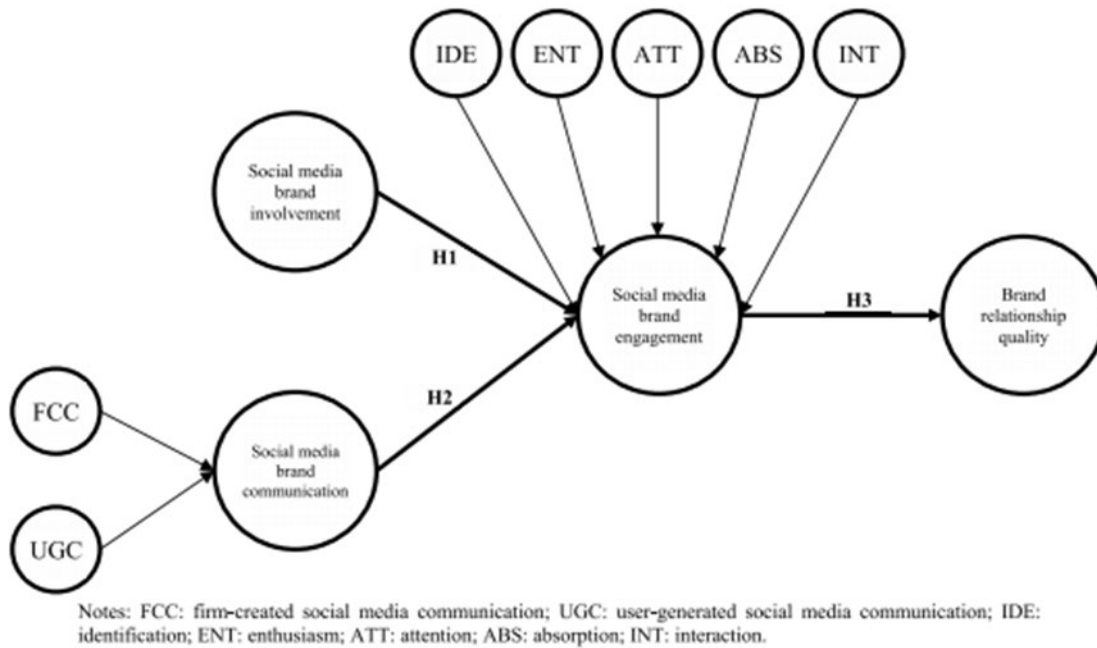


Fig. 1. Theoretical model.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Research design, data collection, and sampling

To test the model, we conducted a quantitative study and collected data from consumers who follow Iberia on Facebook. Airline companies are actively using social media platforms and thus are an appropriate industry for investigating social media brand engagement (Dijkmans et al., 2015). Iberia is one of the most relevant and oldest European airline companies. It belongs to International Airlines Group, which is the sixth largest airline group in the world and the third largest in Europe in terms of revenue (IAG, 2018). Iberia has an extensive social networking community of followers. It operates in six different languages with more than 20 social channels. Iberia is actively using online platforms and has won several awards as the fastest responding European airline. It is considered a leader in the commercial use of social media, with more than 1.7 million Facebook followers in Spain in 2018.

We used data from an online panel of Spanish consumers. The sampling frame of this study consisted of 2,000 individuals who follow Iberia's Facebook site. We used a systematic random sampling technique to select the units of the sample. Each respondent received an invitation to participate via email with a click-through survey link; 480 respondents completed the survey (response rate = 24%). After examining the data, we removed 70 cases because of incomplete responses. Thus, the final sample size was 410 usable cases.

Of the 410 respondents who participated in our study (followers of the Iberia Facebook page in Spain), 52.4% were women, and their ages ranged mainly from 25 to 44 years (50.8%). Most respondents were employees (63.7%), followed by self-employed, retired, and freelancers, among others. Regarding the

marital status, the majority were married or living as a couple (70.3%). Most also had studied at university (53.2%).

3.2 Measures

Existing scales were used in this study (see Table 1). We measured social media brand engagement with So et al. (2014) 25-item scale that includes five dimensions: identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction. We assessed social media brand involvement using France et al. (2016) five-item scale. To operationalize social media brand communication, we distinguished between two dimensions (firm-created social media communication and user-generated social media communication) and used the six items proposed by Bruhn et al. (2012). Finally, we used Algesheimer et al. (2005) three-item scale to measure brand relationship quality. All the constructs were measured on a seven-point Likert scale. Demographic questions appeared at the end of the survey.

Table 1
Measures.

Constructs/Dimensions	Items	Sources
Social media brand involvement (INV)	INV1. IB's FB page means a lot to me. INV2. IB's FB page is significant to me. INV3. For me personally, IB's FB page is important. INV4. I am interested in IB's FB page. INV5. I am involved with IB's FB page.	De Vries and Carlson (2014); France et al. (2016)
Social media brand communication (COM)	FCC FCC1. I am satisfied with IB's communications on its FB page. FCC2. The level of IB's communications on its FB page meets my expectations. FCC3. In comparison, IB's communications on its FB page perform well. UGC UGC1. I am satisfied with communications expressed by other users about IB on its FB page. UGC2. The level of communications expressed by other users about IB on its FB page meets my expectations. UGC3. In comparison, communications of users about IB on its FB page perform well.	Bruhn et al. (2012)
Social media brand engagement (ENG)	IDE IDE1. When someone criticizes IB's FB page, it feels like a personal insult. IDE2. When I talk about IB's FB page, I usually say "we" rather than "they". IDE3. IB's FB page successes are my successes. IDE4. When someone praises IB's FB page, it feels like a personal compliment. ENT ENT1. I am heavily into IB's FB page. ENT2. I am passionate about IB's FB page. ENT3. I am enthusiastic about IB's FB page. ENT4. I feel excited about IB's FB page. ENT5. I love IB's FB page. ATT ATT1. I like to learn more about IB's FB page. ATT2. I pay a lot of attention to IB's FB page. ATT3. Anything related to IB's FB page grabs my attention. ATT4. I concentrate a lot on IB's FB page. ATT5. I spend a lot of time thinking about IB's FB page. ABS ABS1. When I am interacting with IB's FB page, I forget everything else around me. ABS2. Time flies when I am interacting with IB's FB page. ABS3. When I am interacting with IB's FB page, I get carried away. ABS4. When I am interacting with IB's FB page, it is difficult to detach myself. ABS5. In my interaction with IB's FB page, I am immersed. ABS6. When I am interacting with IB's FB page intensely, I feel happy. INT INT1. I like to interact with IB's FB page community discussions. INT2. I enjoy interacting with like-minded others on IB's FB page. INT3. I like participating in IB's FB page community discussions. INT4. I enjoy exchanging ideas with other people in IB's FB page community. INT5. I often participate in activities of IB's FB page community.	Harrigan et al. (2017); So et al. (2014)
Brand relationship quality (BRQ)	BRQ BRQ1. IB says a lot about the kind of person I am. BRQ2. The IB brand's image and my self-image are similar in many respects. BRQ3. The IB brand plays an important role in my life.	Algesheimer et al. (2005); Park and Kim (2014); Pentina et al. (2013)

Notes: FCC: firm-created social media communication; UGC: user-generated social media communication; IDE: identification; ENT: enthusiasm; ATT: attention; ABS: absorption; INT: interaction; IB: Iberia; FB: Facebook.

3.3 Data analysis

We performed partial least squares (PLS) using SmartPLS 3.2.7 software (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015) to analyze the scale's accuracy and the structural model. PLS is variance-based structural equation modeling often used in different factor conceptions (Chin, 2010; Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2012, 2016a, b; Nitzl & Chin, 2017; Rigdon, 2016; Rigdon, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2017; Sarstedt, Hair, Ringle, Thiele, &

Gudergan, 2016). We used this technique because of (1) the complexity of the research model, which has two levels of dimensionality (first- and second-order concepts); (2) the application of a twostage approach for modeling the multidimensional concepts; (3) the differences between common factor analysis and composite analysis; (4) the use of an explanatory and predictive technique; (5) the explicit definition of latent variables (composites); and (6) the estimation of models with measures Mode A (reflective design approximation) and Mode B (formative design approximation).

Our model included both unidimensional constructs (i.e., social media brand involvement and brand relationship quality) and multidimensional constructs (i.e., social media brand communication and social media brand engagement). We employed a hierarchical latent variable model in this study; specifically, we used a reflective-formative-type model (Becker, Klein, & Wetzels, 2012). The measures for the dimensions (first-order constructs) were reflective, while the measures for the two main constructs (higher-order constructs) were formative. Thus, this research proposes a second-order model in which social media brand communication is formatively measured with two dimensions (firm-created social media communication and user-generated social media communication) and social media brand engagement is formatively measured with five dimensions (identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction).

Specifically, social media brand communication and social media brand involvement influence social media brand engagement, and the latter has an impact on brand relationship quality. Thus, this research presents a composite measurement model with a reflective design approximation (Mode A, the arrows point from a construct to the indicators) for social media brand involvement and brand relationship quality and a formative design approximation (Mode B, the arrows point from the indicators to the construct) for social media brand communication and social media brand engagement. These two concepts include a list of dimensions that capture different aspects. A composite measurement means that the construct is made up of the items that generate a new entity from the elements. We designed the measurement model on the basis of the nature of the constructs (Henseler, 2017). According to Henseler (2017), constructs should be measured using common factor models, while the design of artifacts should be measured by composites.

3.4 Common method variance

Common method biases can occur when measures of both the independent and dependent variables are obtained from the same source; thus, we analyzed whether common method variance (CMV) had “a substantial impact on the observed relationships between predictor and criterion variables” (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003, p. 897). We addressed this issue using different procedural techniques, as Podsakoff et al. (2003) recommend. We avoided item ambiguity and double-barreled questions by pilot testing the questionnaire, we kept the questions simple and specific, we guaranteed anonymity to all respondents, and we indicated that there were no right or wrong answers. In addition, we used a statistical technique to analyze the potential impact of CMV: Harman's single-factor test recommended by Podsakoff and Organ (1986). The test involved conducting an exploratory factor analysis of all the variables in the study. The output showed seven factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1, with the first factor explaining 41.24% of the total variance, indicating no major threat of CMV in our study.

4. Results

4.1 Measurement model

First, the fit of the model was the starting point for the model assessment. We used the saturated model to determine the model fit (Henseler, Hubona, & Ray, 2016) that was tested with the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). The value obtained was below the cutoff value of 0.08, which is adequate for PLS path models (Henseler, Hubona, & Ray, 2016a; Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Second, we tested the psychometric properties of the reflective scales estimated in Mode A from the first-stage model. The reliability was achieved in several and non-exclusive ways: rho (all values were higher than 0.7; Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015), composite reliability (CR) (all values were higher than 0.8; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), Cronbach's alpha (α) (all values were higher than 0.7; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Raykov & Marcoulides, 2019), and average variance extracted (AVE) (factor loadings were above 0.5; Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The significance of the loadings was achieved through the procedure of bootstrapping resampling (10,000 subsamples). All the indicators were significant with a 99% confidence level (Gefen & Straub, 2005) (see Table 2).

Finally, we verified the discriminant validity using Fornell and Larcker (1981) test and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). In line with the level proposed by Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2016), all the HTMT values were lower than 0.9 (see Table 3).

Table 2
Measurement model evaluation.

Constructs/Dimensions	Items	Factor loadings (t bootstrap)	Cronbach's α	rho	CR	AVE	
Social media brand involvement (INV)	INV1. IB's FB page means a lot to me.	0.756*** (30.543)	0.858	0.865	0.898	0.638	
	INV2. IB's FB page is significant to me.	0.833*** (49.525)					
	INV3. For me personally, IB's FB page is important.	0.863*** (56.896)					
	INV4. I am interested in IB's FB page.	0.756*** (29.947)					
	INV5. I am involved with IB's FB page.	0.781*** (28.025)					
Social media brand communication (COM)	FCC1. I am satisfied with IB's communications on its FB page.	0.953*** (175.096)	0.914	0.918	0.946	0.854	
	FCC2. The level of IB's communications on its FB page meets my expectations.	0.904*** (71.691)					
	FCC3. In comparison, IB's communications on its FB page perform well.	0.915*** (89.107)					
	UGC	UGC1. I am satisfied with communications expressed by other users about IB on its FB page.	0.908*** (87.852)	0.839	0.849	0.904	0.758
		UGC2. The level of communications expressed by other users about IB on its FB page meets my expectations.	0.897*** (79.132)				
		UGC3. In comparison, communications of users about IB on its FB page perform well.	0.803*** (36.973)				
Social media brand engagement (ENG)	IDE1. When someone criticizes IB's FB page, it feels like a personal insult.	0.966*** (194.784)	0.957	0.961	0.969	0.887	
	IDE2. When I talk about IB's FB page, I usually say "we" rather than "they".	0.960*** (183.522)					
	IDE3. IB's FB page successes are my successes.	0.927*** (112.070)					
	IDE4. When someone praises IB's FB page, it feels like a personal compliment.	0.912*** (95.096)					
	ENT	ENT1. I am heavily into IB's FB page.	0.911*** (99.504)	0.899	0.911	0.925	0.713
		ENT2. I am passionate about IB's FB page.	0.891*** (60.173)				
		ENT3. I am enthusiastic about IB's FB page.	0.798*** (36.701)				
		ENT4. I feel excited about IB's FB page.	0.791*** (35.020)				
		ENT5. I love IB's FB page.	0.825*** (37.099)				
	ATT	ATT1. I like to learn more about IB's FB page.	0.872*** (58.276)	0.848	0.855	0.892	0.623
		ATT2. I pay a lot of attention to IB's FB page.	0.805*** (35.344)				
		ATT3. Anything related to IB's FB page grabs my attention.	0.755*** (27.006)				
		ATT4. I concentrate a lot on IB's FB page.	0.720*** (21.941)				
		ATT5. I spend a lot of time thinking about IB's FB page.	0.785*** (34.290)				
	ABS	ABS1. When I am interacting with IB's FB page, I forget everything else around me.	0.872*** (59.869)	0.875	0.888	0.906	0.620
		ABS2. Time flies when I am interacting with IB's FB page.	0.828*** (39.464)				
		ABS3. When I am interacting with IB's FB page, I get carried away.	0.806*** (32.934)				
		ABS4. When I am interacting with IB's FB page, it is difficult to detach myself.	0.646*** (14.482)				
		ABS5. In my interaction with IB's FB page, I am immersed.	0.761*** (26.606)				
		ABS6. When I am interacting with IB's FB page intensely, I feel happy.	0.790*** (38.572)				
INT	INT1. I like to interact with IB's FB page community discussions.	0.833*** (28.660)	0.845	0.847	0.888	0.614	
	INT2. I enjoy interacting with like-minded others on IB's FB page.	0.791*** (23.715)					
	INT3. I like participating in IB's FB page community discussions.	0.810*** (25.583)					
	INT4. I enjoy exchanging ideas with other people in IB's FB page community.	0.766*** (34.375)					
	INT5. I often participate in activities of IB's FB page community.	0.712*** (27.748)					
Brand relationship quality (BRQ)	BRQ1. IB says a lot about the kind of person I am.	0.896*** (79.429)	0.842	0.864	0.904	0.758	
	BRQ2. The IB brand's image and my self-image are similar in many respects.	0.850*** (48.709)					
	BRQ3. The IB brand plays an important role in my life.	0.866*** (52.768)					

Notes: FCC: firm-created social media communication; UGC: user-generated social media communication; IDE: identification; ENT: enthusiasm; ATT: attention; ABS: absorption; INT: interaction; IB: Iberia; FB: Facebook; CR: composite reliability; AVE: average variance extracted; *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 3
Measurement model. Discriminant validity.

Fornell-Larcker									
	ABS	ATT	BRQ	ENT	FCC	IDE	INT	INV	UGC
ABS	0.787								
ATT	0.538	0.789							
BRQ	0.479	0.611	0.871						
ENT	0.474	0.667	0.539	0.845					
FCC	0.446	0.452	0.586	0.433	0.924				
IDE	0.316	0.602	0.502	0.482	0.399	0.942			
INT	0.564	0.614	0.616	0.556	0.567	0.503	0.783		
INV	0.522	0.619	0.648	0.562	0.694	0.471	0.722	0.799	
UGC	0.435	0.574	0.709	0.511	0.545	0.454	0.599	0.620	0.871

Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT)									
	ABS	ATT	BRQ	ENT	FCC	IDE	INT	INV	UGC
ABS									
ATT	0.607								
BRQ	0.546	0.704							
ENT	0.536	0.740	0.609						
FCC	0.491	0.502	0.667	0.471					
IDE	0.343	0.665	0.550	0.516	0.425				
INT	0.653	0.699	0.688	0.622	0.618	0.549			
INV	0.590	0.704	0.755	0.632	0.784	0.514	0.822		
UGC	0.500	0.667	0.829	0.583	0.624	0.506	0.691	0.730	

Notes: ABS: absorption; ATT: attention; BRQ: brand relationship quality; ENT: enthusiasm; FCC: firm-created social media communication; IDE: identification; INT: interaction; INV: involvement; UGC: user-generated social media communication; Fornell-Larcker: the diagonal elements (bold) are the square root of the variance shared between the constructs and their measures (average variance extracted); off-diagonal: the correlation between constructs.

4.2 Structural model

After assessing the measuring instrument and evaluating its validity and reliability, we estimated the structural model from the second-stage proposal. We determine the significance of the estimated structural path coefficients by using bootstrapping (10,000 resamples) to generate t-statistics and confidence intervals. Again, the test of model fit for the estimated and saturated model provides evidence of external validity (Henseler et al., 2016a). We tested the variance inflation factor on formative constructs with values below 3.3, providing no evidence of multicollinearity (Petter, Straub, & Rai, 2007).

The R² value represents the point of departure and the explained variance of the dependent concepts. The adjusted R² value helps in the explanatory power of a model across different data sets (Henseler et al., 2016a). The model explains 63.6% (63.4% adjusted R²) of variance in social media brand engagement: 38.5% (0.762 × 0.505) of social media brand involvement, and 25.1% (0.720 × 0.349) of social media brand communication; and 48.9% (48.8% adjusted R²) of variance in brand relationship quality. R² values are between high (below 0.75) and moderate effect (below 0.5) (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011; Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins, & Kuppelwieser, 2014).

We used the size of f² to quantify the significant effects. The f² values are above the cutoff value of 0.02. Specifically, there is a medium effect (values between 0.15 and 0.35) between social media brand involvement and social media brand engagement (0.320), a medium effect between social media brand communication and social media brand engagement (0.153), and a large effect (> 0.35) between social media brand engagement and brand relationship quality (0.597) (Cohen, 1992).

Table 4 includes the evaluation of the path coefficients and their significance level using t-value. Bootstrapping (10,000 samples) provides t-values and confidence intervals that allow the evaluation of the significance of the statistical relationships (Roldán & Sánchez-Franco, 2012). The results show that there is a positive and significant influence of social media brand involvement on social media brand engagement, in support of H1 ($\beta = 0.505$, $p < 0.001$, $t = 9.322$). Social media brand communication has a positive and significant influence on social brand engagement, in support of H2 ($\beta = 0.349$, $p < 0.001$, $t = 6.727$). Finally, there is a positive and significant influence of social media brand engagement on brand relationship quality, in support of H3 ($\beta = 0.700$, $p < 0.001$, $t = 30.373$). Both the variables social media brand involvement and social media brand communication act as significant predictors of social media brand engagement, and the latter is a significant determinant of brand relationship quality. In addition, the confidence intervals assessed the statistical significance through bootstrapping. As we did not include the 0 value in the confidence interval, the proposed hypotheses were also accepted by using the percentile method (Henseler et al., 2016a) (See Table 4).

Table 4
Structural model.

	Hypothesized path	Estimate	T-value	Contrast	R ² /R ² adjusted	F ²	Mean	5%	95%
H1	INV → ENG	0.505***	9.322	Do not reject	63.6%/63.4%	0.320	0.504	0.373	0.623
H2	COM → ENG	0.349***	6.727	Do not reject		0.153	0.353	0.235	0.475
H3	ENG → BRQ	0.700***	30.373	Do not reject	48.9%/48.8%	0.959	0.703	0.647	0.755

Notes: INV: social media brand involvement; COM: social media brand communication; ENG: social media brand engagement; BRQ: brand relationship quality; t (0.05; 4999) = 1.645*; t (0.01; 4999) = 2.327**; t (0.001; 4999) = 3.092***; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001.

Moreover, the results confirm that both dimensions proposed for social media brand communication formation contribute positively and significantly. In order of importance, user-generated social media communication is the first dimension ($\beta = 0.669$, $p < 0.001$), followed by firm-created social media communication ($\beta = 0.463$, $p < 0.001$). The five components contribute in a positive manner to social media brand engagement's formation, interaction ($\beta = 0.517$, $p < 0.001$), and attention ($\beta = 0.260$, $p < 0.001$), followed by enthusiasm ($\beta = 0.166$, $p < 0.001$), identification ($\beta = 0.137$, $p < 0.001$), and absorption ($\beta = 0.133$, $p < 0.01$).

We also assessed the model by examining the cross-validated redundancy index (Q²) for the dependent variables. Values higher than 0 suggest that the model shows predictive relevance. Specifically, strong predictive relevance is confirmed with values greater than 0.35 (Q² social media brand engagement = 0.597; Q² brand relationship quality = 0.500) (Hair, Hollingsworth, Randolph, & Chong, 2017). SmartPLS software version 3.2.7 provides cross-validated prediction errors and prediction error summary statistics such as the root mean square error (RMSE) and the mean absolute error (MAE) for constructs and indicators. In accordance with Felipe, Roldán, and Leal-Rodríguez's recommendations (2017), the RMSE and MAE values for the PLS model are lower than those for the linear regression model, and the Q² values for the PLS model are higher than those for the linear regression model (see Table 5).

Table 5
PLS predict assessment.

Variable Prediction Summary									
	Q ²								
ENG	0.597								
BRQ	0.500								
Indicator Prediction Summary									
	PLS			LM			PLS-LM		
	RMSE	MAE	Q ²	RMSE	MAE	Q ²	RMSE	MAE	Q ²
ABS	0.844	0.659	0.291	0.850	0.668	0.279	-0.006	-0.009	0.011
ATT	0.733	0.568	0.465	0.766	0.589	0.415	-0.033	-0.020	0.050
BRQ1	0.830	0.633	0.541	0.906	0.694	0.453	-0.075	-0.060	0.087
BRQ2	0.841	0.660	0.361	0.860	0.673	0.333	-0.018	-0.012	0.028
BRQ3	0.818	0.652	0.382	0.839	0.671	0.350	-0.021	-0.018	0.032
ENT	0.812	0.649	0.344	0.814	0.649	0.339	-0.002	-0.000	0.004
IDE	0.862	0.677	0.259	0.865	0.683	0.255	-0.002	-0.005	0.004
INT	0.672	0.509	0.550	0.673	0.511	0.548	-0.001	-0.002	0.001

Notes: ABS: absorption; ATT: attention; BRQ: brand relationship quality; ENG: social media brand engagement; ENT: enthusiasm; IDE: identification; INT: interaction.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The arrival of social media has introduced new channels of brand communication and the application of online tools to engage with consumers. In the airline industry, most, if not all, companies are actively using social media and thus are appropriate for the analysis of consumer engagement (Dijkmans et al., 2015). This study contributes to the general understanding of social media brand engagement by analyzing their principal antecedents—social media brand involvement (France et al., 2016) and social media brand communication (Bruhn et al., 2012; So et al., 2014; Uzunoglu & Kip, 2014)—and important consequences such as brand relationship quality (Pentina et al., 2013). Thus, this research fills an existing gap in the area of social media brand engagement and its role in the airline industry by focusing on an airline's followers on Facebook (Dijkmans et al., 2015; Jeng, 2016; So et al., 2014).

The results highlight the relevant role of engagement in the context of social media by showing support for the positive effects on brand relationship quality. In particular, the model explains 63.3% of variance in social media brand engagement and 48.9% of variance in brand relationship quality. These results reveal the role of engagement as a crucial variable when explaining brand relationship quality. By analyzing the perceptions of consumers who follow Iberia on Facebook, we find the positive and significant effect of social media brand involvement and social media brand communication on social media brand engagement.

By examining these connections, this study has several relevant theoretical and practical implications. First, this research provides further insights for the study of social media and brand engagement. Furthermore, this research adds knowledge to the study of the drivers and outcomes linked to brand engagement in the social media context, contributing to the lack of research in this context (Bruhn et al., 2012; France et al., 2016; Pentina et al., 2013). This study proposes a new perspective in conceptualizing social media brand engagement, identifying several antecedents. Specifically, the proposed model conceptualizes two contributors to social media brand engagement. Individuals who follow an airline's Facebook page perceive social media brand engagement as a result of social media brand involvement and social media brand

communication. A quantitative approach using structural equation modeling supports both hypotheses. On the one hand, the positive effect of social media brand involvement on social media brand engagement received support in line with previous studies (e.g., De Vries & Carlson, 2014; France et al., 2016). The results show that consumers who are highly involved with a brand's social media platform will spend more time writing comments related to their favorite brands on social media platforms, thus stimulating engagement with those brands (Bruhn et al., 2012). On the other hand, we tested the positive influence of social media brand communication on social media brand engagement following the work of Bruhn et al. (2012). The results suggest that the increase in social media brand engagement through social media brand involvement and social media communications leads to important implications for companies' brand communication activities in the social media context.

Second, this research provides new insights into the study of brand involvement as a unidimensional concept based on France et al. (2016) study, which we adapted to the social media context. It was relevant to identify the elements that determine social media brand involvement that need to be taken into consideration when managers develop their social media strategy.

Third, this paper adds insights by including the co-creation value in the formation of social media brand communication. We found that social media brand communication was formed by the influence of firm-created social media communication and user-generated social media communication. In terms of the co-creation value, our study confirms theoretical arguments by Bruhn et al. (2012), who propose that brand communications benefits derive from companies and consumers' social media contribution. Brand managers can significantly improve the effectiveness of their brand engagement by enhancing the social media communications generated by their firms and users (Uzunoglu & Kip, 2014). We analyzed the concept of social media brand communication using a multidimensional approach. Contributions to social media brand communication are derived to a greater extent from user-generated content and also from firm-created content. They have a positive influence on social media brand engagement, in line with previous studies (e.g., Bruhn et al., 2012; France et al., 2016). User-generated content plays a more important role in driving social media brand communication and, consequently, in driving social media brand engagement. This paper consolidates the introduction of new channels of social media communication due to the emergence of social media platforms.

Fourth, this study contributes to the definition and measurement of social media brand engagement by validating So et al. (2014) scale, which comprises five dimensions (identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction). The empirical application of this scale brings new insights to social media brand engagement's measurement in marketing. Measuring a latent concept such as social media brand engagement with formative nature represents an additional contribution. Specifically, this scale provides a useful tool to collect insights into psychological and behavioral connections with brands. The findings suggest that interaction and attention are key dimensions of social media brand engagement, in line with previous studies (So et al., 2014).

Fifth, this study sheds more light on the influence of social media brand engagement on brand relationship quality. This research analyzes this relationship to investigate how users of Facebook identify the

engagement of their connection with those sites as well as their influence on the quality of the consumer-brand relationship. This study contributes to extant literature by applying the relationship between engagement and quality to the context of social media. In the online world, brands represent an identity created by both marketers and consumers. This result is in line with previous studies that suggest that higher levels of engagement involve stronger paths (Algesheimer et al., 2005). The link between both concepts indicates that when consumers engage with a brand's social media platform, they may perceive a higher brand relationship quality. We proposed this relationship given researchers' recommendations to investigate other factors that may influence the strength of brand relationship quality (Pentina et al., 2013). The results of the current study corroborate this proposal, considering social media brand engagement a relevant determinant of brand relationship quality in the airline context.

Sixth, we conceptualized brand relationship quality following previous studies (e.g., Algesheimer et al., 2005). We confirmed that the strength of the relationship between the consumer and the brand determines brand relationship quality (Pentina et al., 2013).

Finally, we proposed and tested a model that examines composites (social media brand communication and social media brand engagement). Specifically, the model developed adopts a two-stage approach that represents a current and accurate measurement method. The tools provided by PLS path modeling are adequate for composites and serve as an alternative to CB-SEM models (Henseler et al., 2016a).

6. Practical implications

Several practical implications can be drawn from the research findings. This study provides a valuable tool for community and marketing managers of airline companies to engage effectively with their Facebook users. Consequently, relevant recommendations are proposed. Such insights will help managers improve their marketing programs to achieve their objectives.

A greater understanding of social media communication should be considered. Consumers who decide to follow Iberia's Facebook page are exposed to content produced by the firm and other consumers, such as responses to the posts, questions, and complaints. Content generated by companies usually has a positive tone. However, many consumers post negative messages about the brand on social media. Thus, brand communication represents a key factor not only in the content generated by the company but also in the content created by the users, due to the cocreation content. Social media is a useful channel to provide a quick response to the consumers contributing positively to service evaluation. To add value to the brand, community and marketing managers should work on online dialogues that enhance trust, proximity, and familiarity, mainly when consumers post negative messages. The effectiveness of the firm's efforts in communicating with online users may improve the perception of the corporate brand image.

Marketing managers should also take into consideration the role of social media brand involvement. When consumers are involved with a brand's social media platform, their participation on social media will increase. Thus, firms should increase their learning and comprehension of the brand values to achieve positive brand outcomes.

In addition, airline managers should consider further clarifying the elements that influence the formation of social media brand engagement. First, to build strong consumer brand engagement, marketing managers should create a unique and clear identity to differentiate their brand from those of competitors to strengthen the brand identification. This is advisable, as many individuals join social network pages that have similar personality features to them (Pentina et al., 2013). Second, feelings of passion or energy should be highlighted to enhance the enthusiasm for the brand and, consequently, consumers' participation in online chats. To achieve that goal, delivering e-newsletters with attractive news could be considered. Third, attracting consumers' attention is important for managers. This can be achieved by showing the firm's culture and uploading videos. Fourth, companies should focus on increasing participation on their Facebook pages, such as by sharing particular emotions or adding entertaining posts. Fifth, social interaction and co-creation values generate a strong influence on engagement. On the one hand, companies should provide opportunities for consumer interaction, promoting attractive reward campaigns to encourage participation, such as free trips or incentives, discounts, or giveaways. On the other hand, activities that promote the development of new ideas for products or services between the firm and users should be enhanced. All these actions could lead consumers to increase their engagement with the brand.

As a result of these recommendations, brand relationship quality will be enhanced. Consequently, the strength of the relationship with a brand reflects the important role of the brand in users' lives.

7. Limitations and further research

This study offers relevant contributions to community and marketing managers for handling social media brand engagement. However, several limitations need to be considered for future research. First, this research is limited to one airline, Iberia. Future research could extend this survey to other airline companies from different countries and even to other industries. Second, this research focuses on one social media platform, Facebook. Future studies could examine additional platforms such as Twitter and Instagram. Third, our study is limited to social media users who are already followers of Iberia's Facebook page. Further research could investigate non-followers and compare the two groups. Fourth, the drivers of social media brand engagement were limited to social media brand involvement and social media brand communication. Additional relationships could be considered for further study, such as credibility (Jeng, 2016), social interactivity (Ye et al., in press), and social media marketing efforts (Godey et al., 2016). In addition, the outcomes were limited to brand relationship quality. Other variables such as loyalty (Dwivedi, 2015; Harrigan et al., 2017) and trust (Laroche et al., 2012) could be investigated.

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