The role of culture in consumer-generated content engagement

A cross-cultural examination of 'liking', commenting, sharing, and creating posts about brands on Facebook

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Pitiporn Kitirattarkarn

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Table of Contents

1

General Introduction and Dissertation Outline

Introduction

Billions of items of user-generated content (UGC) have been shared on the Internet, and a huge amount of this includes information about a brand or a product (Christodoulides, Jevons, & Bonhomme, 2012). Many thousands of pictures of a Starbucks cup can be seen on Instagram, and thousands of Facebook posts about Nike sneakers have been shared by consumers across the globe – all evidence of how much consumer-generated content is becoming part of our everyday life. By definition, consumer-generated content or brand-related UGC (Br-UGC) includes any non-sponsored item about a brand or a product that is voluntarily created by a user and is shared with his or her online network (Christodoulides et al., 2012). This definition includes user reviews of a specific product or service on Facebook, or user videos discussing a brand posted on YouTube.

As consumers are not paid to generate content about a product or a brand they use, Br-UGC is considered highly authentic (Boachie, 2018). Beyond the company's influence, consumers talk openly about the product and share their experiences with their peers. The authenticity of Br-UGC is very influential for consumers, especially when they need confirmation for their purchase decision (Gallegos, 2017). According to the Nielsen Global Survey across 60 countries worldwide (Nielsen, 2015), 83 percent of global consumers indicated that recommendations and experiences regarding brands, products, or services were the most trusted form of brand information. Notably, more than half of social networking site (SNS) users depend heavily on Br-UGC for product information (Statista, 2017), and about 40 percent of today's consumers consult four to seven different sources of UGC in order to gain information about the product they intend to buy (DiPalma, 2018).

The power of Br-UGC and its increased relevance thanks to SNSs have drawn a lot of attention to the role of Br-UGC both among researchers and practitioners, and studies have begun to explore its consequences. For instance, studies have shown that Br-UGC influences how consumers perceive the usefulness and credibility of content (Kim & Cheong, & Kim, 2015), affects their intention to talk about a brand, as well as to purchase a product (Kim & Johnson, 2016).

While the number of studies on Br-UGC is rising, their findings have to date been based solely on single-country samples, and mostly on Western populations (e.g., Kim & Johnson, 2016; Kim & Lee, 2017; Sung, Kim, & Choi, 2018). This creates a critical research gap considering that individual behavior and communication styles differ as a result of cultural values (Hofstede, 1983; Hofstede, 2001; Schwartz, 2006). More importantly, assumptions about Br-UGC in one culture do not always carry over to other cultures. This leads to questions (1) whether the

findings found in Western samples are also applicable in other societies, especially in Eastern cultures, and in particular (2) how consumers' decisions to publish their own content or respond to Br-UGC differ across cultures.

Consumer Engagement with Brand-Related User Generated Content

When people use SNSs, they not only view content posted by others but also respond to it, and sometimes publish and share their own content online. In this dissertation, the concept of consumer engagement with Br-UGC, therefore, refers both to consumers' creation of Br-UGC and their responses to it. We adopt the consumers' online brand-related activities (COBRAs) typology developed by Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit (2011) to fully understand consumers' engagement with Br-UGC. The typology classifies consumer engagement with brand-related content according to levels of participation including consumption, contribution, and creation, with each level of engagement reflecting different degrees of activeness of participation (for an overview, see Muntinga et al., 2011). For instance, consumers who simply 'like' Br-UGC of others on Facebook (*contribution*) are less active compared to consumers who create and publish brand-related content on their Facebook timeline (*creation*).

While the COBRA typology considers consumer engagement with brand-related content in general, the approach can provide a general interpretation of consumer engagement with content about brands regardless of who publishes the content. Considering that consumers do not always respond the same way to content posted by brands as they do to that posted by consumers (Shan & King, 2015), this dissertation specifically examines consumer engagement with content published by consumers. As consumers sometimes participate passively in SNS activities and sometimes actively, the focus of this dissertation is not only on why and how consumers respond to Br-UGC ('like', comment, share), but also on what factors influence consumers' decision to create and publish their own content online. By employing the COBRA typology, we will be able to thoroughly investigate consumer engagement with Br-UGC covering all activities on SNSs including consuming, 'liking', commenting on, sharing, and posting Br-UGC.

The Role of Culture: Collectivism and Individualism

The main focus of this dissertation is on the influence of culture on engagement with Br-UGC. The cultural dimension collectivism-individualism is chosen as the primary theoretical basis to examine this. This cultural dimension distinguishes how individuals in different societies define themselves and how they relate to one another (House et al., 2004; Schwartz, 2006), especially how they develop relationships and communicate with others (Hofstede, 1983). Furthermore, cross-cultural scholars have been able to use it to objectively assess distinctions of culture in various fields, among the marketing communications (de Mooij, 2013) and advertising research (Okazaki & Mueller, 2007).

At the personal level, people in individualistic societies focus on 'I'-consciousness and self-actualization (Hofstede, 1983). They are autonomous and independent from their social groups, and usually value their personal goals over the goals of their in-groups. In contrast, people in collectivistic cultures believe in 'We'- consciousness, and their identity is based on the social norm of the group to which they belong (Hofstede, 1983). They place their priority on the goals of in-groups.

The distinction of cultural collectivism-individualism has been found in both individuals' social relationships (Hofstede, 2001), and their communication styles (Gudykunst et al., 1997). People in collectivistic cultures tend to emphasize intimate social relationships and deep involvement with each other (Hofstede, 2001). They tend to form and maintain deep lifelong relationships with a limited number of people from groups that satisfy certain social conditions (Triandis, 1989). In contrast, people in individualistic cultures are highly individualized and disintegrated, and their involvement with others is comparatively low (Hofstede, 2001). They tend to freely create new relationships and easily join or leave a wide range of social groups (Triandis, 1989).

Regarding communication styles, cultures can be distinguished by the degree of context (high vs low) in their communication systems (Hall, 1977). While low-context direct communication is predominantly used in individualistic cultures, high-context indirect and visual oriented communication is most common in collectivistic cultures (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hofstede, 2001). In high-context collectivistic cultures, information is transmitted through visuals or symbols, and by the associations attached to these (Hall, 1977). However, in low-context individualistic cultures, interpersonal communication is more explicit and non-personal (Hall, 1977; Kim, Pan, & Park, 1998).

As the cultural dimension collectivism-individualism can be used to explicate individuals' values, social relationships, and communication styles, I employed this cultural dimension to investigate how culture plays a role in consumer engagement with Br-UGC. General insights on these three aspects will be applied in this dissertation, in particular, to interpret differences in consumers across collectivistic and individualistic cultures. This cultural construct will help to understand how a society to which consumers belong influences their personal *motivations* and *social relationships* when engaging with Br-UGC. Moreover, it will enable us to examine how culture impacts the *characteristics of Br-UGC* when consumers engage with others online.

Determinants of Consumer Engagement with Br-UGC across Cultures

In order to fully examine consumer engagement with Br-UGC across cultures, this dissertation focuses on the three-way relationship between the user, the network, and the content. Specifically, the study examines three possible determinants of consumer engagement with Br-UGC: the consumers' motivations, their social relationships (source-receiver relationships), and content characteristics.

Motivations. Motivations are the incentives that drive people to select and use particular media and media content (Rubin, 2002). Users' motivations to adopt media or use it can be explained by their psychological needs and the gratifications they seek (Rubin, 1994). In particular, SNSs provide a platform for active users to generate content, where they can present their views and share interests with others in their network (Huang & Park, 2013). Previous studies have identified several types of gratification that can motivate online brand-related activities. These include entertainment, integration and social interaction, personal identity development, obtaining and sharing information, remuneration, and empowerment (e.g., Knoll & Proksch, 2015; Muntinga et al., 2011; Poch & Martin, 2015). However, to date, most studies have focused on a single country, which limits the validity and applicability of their findings to other cultures. In particular, individuals' desire for using SNSs can differ depending on the social environment and culture where they grew up, acquiring the fundamental values and norms that shape their behaviors (de Mooij, 2018). Accordingly, the motivation to use SNSs and to engage in Br-UGC could differ across cultures. This led me to ask the following research question:

RQ1: How do motivations for engaging with brand-related content differ between consumers from individualistic and collectivistic cultures?

Social Relationships. Second, I investigate how social relationships with a source of Br-UGC and with content recipients impact one's decision to engage with Br-UGC. Considering that social connectivity and relationships are the core of SNSs, social relationships within SNSs are considered highly important for understanding Br-UGC engagement. As has been seen, the perceived intensity of the relationship between the content creator and the receiver influences consumers' intention to respond to the content (Kim et al., 2015) and to evaluate it (Cho, Huh, & Faber 2014). In particular, information received from a close connection such as close friends or family is more likely to lead to referral than information from a distant relation such as a company or a brand (Shan & King, 2015). While we have learned that having a close relationship positively affects consumers' evaluation of, and engagement with, product information, the nature and the effects of social relationships on SNSs can be different from culture to culture (Cho & Park, 2013). Notably, studies have shown that social relationships within a society reflect the prevailing norms for the individual's role within that society (Chu & Choi, 2011; Tsai & Men, 2014). Nevertheless, a specific examination of brand-related SNS use, especially Br-UGC engagement, across cultures is still limited. Hence, this dissertation will examine how consumers' relationships with a source affect their engagement with Br-UGC.

RQ2: How do social relationships with a source affect consumers' engagement with Br-UGC across cultures?

The presence of different audience groups, especially on SNSs, has been found to affect how individuals present themselves and disclose information (Marwick & boyd, 2014; Vitak, 2012). When users are aware of their audience, they appear to actively consider the opinions of others, leading them to change their behavior in order to impress others (e.g., Hamilton & Lind, 2016). Cross-cultural research has further suggested that the diversity of an audience also influences how individuals in different cultures manage their online self-presentation and disclosure (Lee-Won et al., 2014; Rui & Stefanone, 2013). Particularly, when an audience is present, users in individualistic societies are encouraged to manifest themselves and present a positive image to diverse groups of people (Lee-Won et al., 2014). In contrast, users in collectivistic societies tend to maintain self-esteem when they disclose information online, to avoid possible negative reactions from different social groups (Rui & Stefanone, 2013). While cultural differences in information disclosure have been found in studies of computer-mediated communication, we still do not know how the SNS audience influences consumers' creation of brand-related content across cultures. This leads to the following research question:

RQ3: How does users' audience impact their creation of brand-related content across cultures?

Content Characteristics. Finally, given that users communicate and interact with others by exchanging content, the characteristics of the content they create or share will tend to reflect their communication style "the way an individual interacts to signal how literal meaning should be taken, interpreted, or understood" (Norton, 1978, p. 99). Previous studies have shown that characteristics of brand content are the main factors that influence consumer engagement with brands online (e.g., Araujo, Neijens, & Vliegenthart, 2015; Jung et al., 2016). For instance, informativeness and entertainment within content can significantly increase consumers' affective responses and intention to rely on the content (Kim & Johnson, 2016).

In addition, studies have shown that cultural individualism and collectivism also play a role in how consumers engage with different types of brand information (Men & Tsai, 2012; Pae et al., 2013). For instance, in an individualistic low-context culture, marketing communication tends to be more explicit and straightforward, with more product-related information and discounts. In contrast, in collectivistic high-context cultures, implicit and indirect messages emphasizing enjoyment and sense of belonging are typically used to cultivate consumer engagement and strengthen consumer-brand relationships (Men & Tsai, 2012). Three content characteristics have been previously examined: namely, *informativeness*, *entertainment*, and *sociability*. These three characteristics are considered important when consumers evaluate a product or content about a product. In addition, they have been found to be key factors, increasing participation in brand communities (Jung et al., 2016) and sharing brand information (Lovett et al., 2013).

While we have learned that characteristics of brand-related content influence engagement with the content, we do not know whether different characteristics will have the same effect on (1) consumers' response towards content published by consumers as well as on (2) consumers' creation of brand-related content. Additionally, we do not know how culture plays a role in these two contexts. This leads me to the following research questions:

RQ4: How do content characteristics (informativeness, entertainment, sociability) affect consumers' responses towards Br-UGC across cultures?

RQ5: To what extent do culture and users' audience affect the creation of informative, entertaining, and social Br-UGC?

Outline of the Dissertation

To answer these research questions, this dissertation presents three studies. **Chapter 2** begins by exploring cultural differences in consumers' motivations for all types of consumer engagement with user-generated content about brands on Facebook. **Chapter 3** focuses on consumers' contributions to Br-UGC. It specifically investigates the cultural influence on the effects of social relationships with a source and content characteristics on 'liking', commenting, and sharing Br-UGC. **Chapter 4** examines cultural influence on consumers' creation of brand-related content, and how social relationships with the audience play a role in this process. In addition, we explore whether and to what extent cultural differences influence the creation of different types of Br-UGC. The dissertation concludes with a general discussion of the findings **(Chapter 5)**. Figure 1 gives an overview of the dissertation and shows how the three chapters relate to each other.

Chapter 2: Motivations for consumer-generated content engagement across cultures

Considering the very limited knowledge on how motivations associated with consumer engagement with Br-UGC vary across different cultures, I adopted a qualitative research design and conducted in-depth interviews with 40 Facebook users living in South Korea, Thailand, the Netherlands, and the United States. The qualitative study reported in Chapter 2 explores cultural differences in consumers' motivations for engaging in brand-related activities on Facebook, in particular consuming, contributing to, and creating brand-related content. The in-depth interviews reveal differences and similarities in motivations for consumers' online brand-related activities on Facebook across cultures.

Chapter 3: Source relationships, content characteristics, and consumer-generated content engagement across cultures

Chapter 3 reports on the effects of social relationships and content characteristics (informativeness, entertainment, sociability) on consumers' contributions to Br-UGC ('liking', commenting, sharing) on Facebook. By means of an online experiment using representative Facebook users from South Korea, Thailand, the Netherlands, and the United States (N = 812), this study extends existing survey design studies by specifically examining the role of culture in the effects of content characteristics and relationships with the content's creator on 'liking', commenting, and sharing Br-UGC on Facebook.

Chapter 4: Audience relationships and consumer-generated content across cultures

In Chapter 4, I examined how culture affects consumers' creation of brand-related content on Facebook. In this study, the degree of audience diversity within an individual's network is examined as a possible predictor of the creation of brand-related content. An online survey using representative samples from the four countries (N = 802) showed that culture plays a significant role in how people develop social relationships on SNSs, which impacts the intensity of their SNS use, and subsequently the creation of brand-related content. In addition, the results illustrate the potential influence of culture on the creation of informative, entertaining, and social brand-related content. These findings extend previous studies on online information disclosure and self-presentation in a cross-cultural setting.
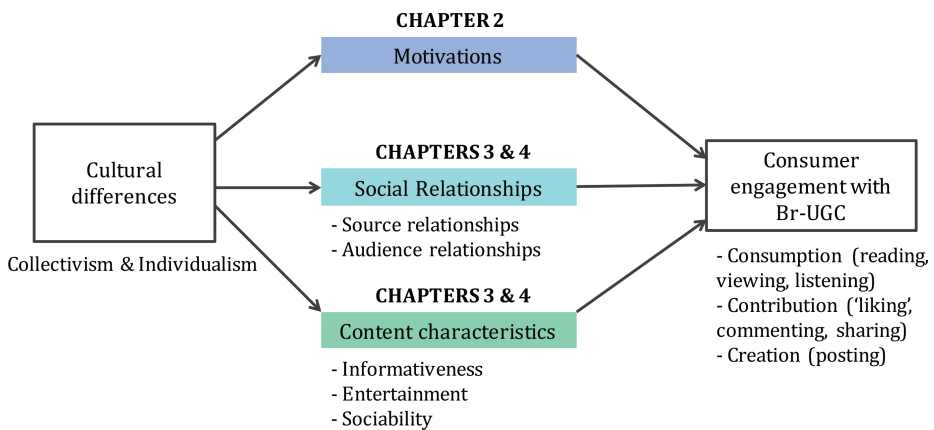
Figure 1: An Overview of the Dissertation

Methodological Approach

Country Selection. To date, most studies have focused on a cultural comparison between an individualistic country such as the United States and a collectivistic country in East Asia such as China, Japan, or South Korea (e.g., Barker & Ota, 2011; Park, Jun, & Lee, 2015; Tsai & Men, 2014). Although these two-country comparisons can provide rich insights into cultural differences at the national level, it would not be appropriate to generalize from the two countries studied (Cadogan, 2010). This dissertation investigates cultural influences across two collectivistic countries (South Korea and Thailand) and two individualistic countries (the United

States, the Netherlands). Examining other individualistic societies in Europe and collectivistic societies in Asia would contribute even more to research on cultural influence and brand engagement online.

These specific four countries were included for a variety of reasons. First, according to cross-cultural literature, these countries are considered either highly collectivistic or highly individualistic and thus potentially represent collectivistic and individualistic societies (e.g., House et al., 2004; Lewis, 2010). Second, individuals in the four countries have a high level of SNS usage, with more than 65 percent using social media (Statista, 2019). Specifically, social media penetration in South Korea and Thailand has increased dramatically in recent years due to the penetration of mobile connectivity in their markets (Statista, 2019). Thus, it is promising to investigate consumer engagement with brands on Facebook across these four countries, considering their comparatively high levels of SNS usage. Finally, having two collectivistic countries and two individualistic countries allows us to delve deeper into what may be country-specific consumer behaviors, as well as what may be common values within the two collectivistic countries and two individualistic countries.

Selection of Social Media Platform. Facebook was chosen as the platform for examining Br-UGC and consumer engagement for three primary reasons. First, by focusing on the Facebook platform, we are able to capture various forms of Br-UGC (e.g., consumer reviews, product/brand related experiences, complaints) in one place, allowing us to compare different Br-UGC engagement activities (e.g., 'liking', status updating, photo sharing) across cultures. Second, at the time the three studies were conducted, Facebook remained the top SNS worldwide with over 1.8 billion active users (Mansfield, 2016), and it has been successful in the four countries, as evidenced by a high level of Facebook usage (We Are Social, 2016). Finally, since Facebook officially permitted the promotion of sponsored content in 2016, Facebook has become a primary content distributor for many global companies worldwide (Herrman, 2016). Many consumers have migrated away from commercial websites and moved towards Facebook to provide product information (DeMers, 2015). Consequently, Facebook is considered a highly relevant platform for investigating Br-UGC across South Korea, Thailand, the Netherlands, and the United States.

Mixed Method Design. In order to provide more breadth and depth insights into the influence of culture on Br-UGC engagement, I adopted a mixed method research design to examine this topic. First, a qualitative study approach was employed to explore why consumers 'like', comment on, share, and post content related

to brands on Facebook (**RQ1**). Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 40 Facebook users in the participant's local language, and in the participant's country.

Next, I conducted an experimental study in order to examine how culture moderates the influence of social relationships (with a source) and content characteristics on consumer engagement with Br-UGC (**RQ2 & RQ4**). To create the experimental conditions, texts and visuals of Facebook posts were created based on actual posts on Facebook. Finally, a survey was conducted in order to investigate the effect of SNS audiences on the creation of (informative, entertaining, social) Br-UGC across cultures (**RQ3 & RQ5**).

For the online experiment and survey, I used an online panel to collect the data. Over 800 Facebook users from South Korea, Thailand, the Netherlands, and the United States participated in our study. This sample is considered representative with respect to age and gender of SNS users living in the selected countries. The results also contribute to cross-cultural literature, which generally bases its findings on student samples (e.g., Lee-Won et al., 2014; Kim, Sohn, & Choi, 2011). While this approach is common in cross-cultural studies because it is easy to recruit students and affordable, students are more homogeneous in age and education level than representative samples, both within as well as across countries (Arnett, 2008). Various studies have shown that we cannot generalize from student samples to the general public, and making assumptions based only on convenient student samples can be problematic (Hanel & Vione, 2016). By using a large and representative sample, the dissertation aims to contribute meaningful insights into what factors influence consumer engagement with Br-UGC across cultures.

Equivalency of Measures. All the questionnaires and measures were translated using a translation/back-translation procedure to ensure cross-cultural content equivalency (Craig & Douglas, 2005). In addition, to ensure that the measures employed in the study are cross-culturally invariant (Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998), I conducted confirmatory factor analyses and checked whether items fit the variable (equal form invariance) and also whether the unstandardized factor loadings of each variable were approximately equal (equal factor loadings) across collectivistic and individualistic samples (Kline, 2011). Furthermore, Cronbach's alphas were computed to assess the applicability and reliability of the measures in each sample. All the measures employed in this dissertation demonstrated good reliability ranging from .77 to .93.

2

Motivations for Consumer-Generated Content Engagement across Cultures[1]

Abstract

Given the increased relevance of social networking sites (SNSs) for consumers around the globe, companies face the challenge of understanding motivations underlying consumers' interactions with online brand-related content. Cross-cultural research on consumer motivations for online brand-related activities on SNSs, however, is limited. The present study explored, via in-depth interviews, reasons why Facebook users from individualistic (the Netherlands, the United States) and collectivistic (South Korea, Thailand) cultures engage with brand-related content. The findings provide in-depth insights, in particular with regards to collectivistic consumers, to the varied interpretations of the motivations for COBRAs identified in previous literature. We also identified a new motivation specifically for collectivistic cultures: the desire to share an intention to purchase or try a product. Moreover, while collectivistic motivations were driven by the wish to express a sense of belonging to the social group, individualistic cultures appear to engage with brands mainly for obtaining advantages for themselves.

Keywords: culture; individualism; collectivism; brand; motivation; Facebook; SNSs

The emergence of social networking sites (SNSs) has put consumers in the driver's seat. They choose when, where, and how brands can communicate with them. Considering that SNSs enable consumers to create and interact with content, including *brand-related content* (content related to commercial brands that represents products, services, or places, Br-C), consumers have also recognized their power to influence Br-C (Arnhold, 2010). Given the increased relevance of SNSs for consumers, brand managers face the challenge of understanding why consumers across the globe create and interact with Br-C on SNSs.

Several scholars have studied consumers' motivations for engaging in consumers' online brand-related activities. Earlier research has explored why consumers view user-generated online advertising (Cheong & Morrison, 2008; Knoll & Proksch, 2015), 'like' or follow brand pages (Jung, Shim, Jin, & Khang, 2016; Lin & Lu, 2011; Tsai & Men, 2013), pass along brand messages (Araujo, Neijens, & Vliegenthart, 2015; Yuki, 2015) or video advertisement (Hayes & King, 2014), discuss brand information (Tsai, 2013), and create Br-C (Berthon, Pitt, & Campbell, 2008; Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011; Poch & Martin, 2015).

This stream of research, however, has largely focused on single-country samples, and primarily on Western populations. This creates a critical gap in the literature because assumptions articulated about brand-related use of SNSs in one culture do not necessarily carry over to other cultures, considering that motivations for SNS use generally reflect prevalent cultural values of the culture (Barker & Ota, 2011; Chu, Windels, & Kamal, 2016; Kim, Sohn, & Choi, 2011). To the best of our knowledge, there is only one cross-cultural study exploring this subject, confirming that culture does have an influence on brand-related SNSs use (Tsai & Men, 2014, see below). While extremely important, the findings of the study call for further research considering that (1) the SNSs involved in the study were different in each country (Facebook brand pages from the United States, Renren and Sina Weibo from China), and therefore different SNS features may confound the influence of culture, and (2) the study focused only on consumers' motivations for using brand pages, thus it needs further in-depth investigation into how culture affects motivations for other consumers' online brand-related activities (COBRAs).

Given the limited knowledge on how motivations associated with COBRAs vary across different cultures, we adopt a qualitative research design and conduct in-depth interviews with consumers in the Netherlands, the United States, South Korea, and Thailand. These four countries were chosen to explore this phenomenon in a qualitative manner for primarily four reasons. Firstly, their national cultures are generally considered collectivistic (South Korea and Thailand) or individualistic (the Netherlands, United States) according to cross-cultural research (Hofstede,

2001; Lewis, 2010). Secondly, a previous cross-cultural study suggests that social media usage (in general), and in particular related to purchase decisions across these countries, is different as a result of culture-related motives (Goodrich & de Mooij, 2014, see below). Thirdly, these four countries have high levels of SNSs usage (We Are Social, 2016), thus allowing for an investigation of COBRAs within a somewhat mature setting when it comes to SNSs usage. Finally, we have explicitly selected two collectivistic and two individualistic national cultures as a way to delve deeper into what may be country-specific consumer behavior, or what may be common within two countries sharing similar individualistic and/or collectivistic cultural values.

In this study, we explore why consumers across individualistic and collectivistic cultures consume, contribute to or create Br-C and, more specifically, how consumers in these cultures position these activities in relation to their individual values and social orientation. From a practical point of view, the role of cultural differences in consumers' engagement with Br-C poses serious challenges for global and multinational companies (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). The findings derived from the present study should provide an understanding of how to interact with consumers across cultures and assist practitioners in making cultural adjustments when promoting Br-C on SNSs.

Background

Cultural Individualism and Collectivism

The cultural individualism/collectivism distinction holds important knowledge about consumer behavior including how they function and communicate in a society (Roland, 1991). While individualistic persons, such as those from North and Western Europe, and North America, focus on the self as a unique entity, collectivistic individuals, such as those from Asia, focus on the self as a member of a group (Triandis, 2001). Individualistic individuals are motivated by their own preferences, needs, and rights and give priority to their personal goals. In contrast, the identity of collectivistic individuals is based on a collective social norm with family and friends being important factors. Along these lines, the independent and interdependent individuals' conceptualization (self-construal) and values have been found to mediate the influence of individualism/collectivism on communication styles (Gudykunst et al., 1997). These communication styles are related to Hall's notion (1977) that cultures can be distinguished with regard to the degree of context (high vs low) in their communication systems. While low-

context direct communication is used predominantly in individualistic cultures, high-context indirect and visual oriented communication is used predominantly in collectivistic cultures (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hofstede, 2001). As a result of intimate relationships among high-context collectivistic people, they are deeply involved with each other and their inner feelings are kept under strong self-control (Hall, 1977). In contrast, low-context individualistic people are highly individualized and disintegrated, thus involvement with others is relatively little, and the communication between people is more explicit and non-personal (Hall, 1977; Kim, Pan, & Park, 1998).

The use of SNSs across individualistic and collectivistic cultures. Several cross-cultural researchers have pointed out that people use SNSs with different motivations that reflect their prevailing cultural values. For example, Kim et al. (2011) indicated that Americans tend to use SNSs for entertaining themselves primarily by finding new friends with similar interests, and making fewer efforts to maintain the relationships. South Koreans, however, seem to use SNSs for obtaining information and social support from existing social relationships, requiring deeper involvement. Fong and Burton (2008) have explored in their study how Chinese consumers encourage information sharing and exhibit higher reliance on personal sources of information while requesting product recommendations and information. Goodrich and De Mooij (2014) have also indicated that people in collectivistic cultures tend to use social media more often than individualistic cultures for sharing ideas, forming opinions, and guiding purchase decisions. In contrast, Americans tend to use SNSs to develop and present online identity highlighting their uniqueness (Chu et al., 2016). Furthermore, cultural individualism and collectivism have also been found to influence the relationship between people's self-consciousness and self-presentation on SNSs. Individualistic low-context SNS users tend to engage more in self-enhancement activities than collectivistic high-context SNS users (Lee-Won et al., 2014). Likewise, American Facebook users were found to engage in managing unwanted photo tagging to a greater extent than Asian Facebook users (Rui & Stefanone, 2013).

When it comes to cross-cultural research focusing specifically on brand-related SNSs use, Tsai and Men (2014) found that culture influenced consumers' motivations for using brand pages. As a result of intimate social ties stressed in collectivistic cultures, the connection between Chinese users and their preferred brands were closely bonded, thus these consumers were more likely to actively take part in a conversation about the brands on brand SNS pages. In contrast, the same study showed that the act of 'liking' brand pages by American consumers was mostly motivated by individualistic gains and self-expressive gestures to

demonstrate their personal interests, thus relationships with brand communities were more likely to be weak in the American individualistic culture. However, further investigation is needed to confirm if these differences are also applicable for the wide range of COBRAs.

Consumers' Online Brand-Related Activities (COBRAs)

In this study, we adopt the COBRAs typology developed by Muntinga et al. (2011) to explore how consumers in different cultures engage with Br-C on Facebook. This typology classifies brand-related activities according to levels of engagement, and proposes three dimensions. Firstly, *consuming* Br-C constitutes a relatively passive type of online participation and represents the lowest level of online brand-related engagement. People who consume Br-C, for example, read or watch Br-C posted by others. Secondly, *contributing* to Br-C involves a moderate level of engagement with online brand-related activities. People who contribute to Br-C 'like', share, or comments on Br-C, which includes user-to-content and user-to-user brand-related interactions. Lastly, *creating* Br-C represents the highest level of engagement for online brand-related activities. People who create Br-C, for example, post their experiences about products or services in a brand-related message, picture, or video.

 Motivations underlying consumers' engagement with brand-related content on SNSs. According to previous research on COBRAs (e.g. Knoll & Proksch, 2015; Poch & Martin, 2015), motivations for brand-related SNSs use can be summarized into six main categories: (1) *Information* refers to observing and staying updated about things, searching for advice or opinions, finding and collecting useful information when making a purchase decision; (2) *Entertainment* relates to relaxation, enjoyment, emotional release and relief; (3) *Empowerment* is associated with the intention to have an influence on others, and to change people's perception regarding a specific brand; (4) *Remuneration* is defined as a desire to obtain benefits or rewards such as economic incentives or work-related benefits; (5) *Personal identity* is concerned with finding reinforcement for personal values, and involves self-expression, identity management, and self-fulfillment, and (6) *Social integration* involves motivations related to gaining a sense of belonging, seeking support, affiliating with like-minded people, and showing in-group identifications.

 It is already known that the relevance of these six motivations varies according to the level of social media engagement. For example, people *consume* (e.g. view, watch) Br-C because of information, entertainment (Cheong & Morrison, 2008), and remuneration (Muntinga et al., 2011) motivations. And when it comes to higher levels of engagement with online Br-C, personal identity and social interaction motivations emerge for *contributing* to Br-C (e.g. Hayes & King, 2014; Yuki, 2015).

Regarding the *creation* of brand-related videos and content on SNSs (Berthon et al., 2008; Poch & Martin, 2015), entertainment, empowerment, personal identity, and remuneration are the motivations that influence such behavior.

While we have learned that motivations vary according to the level of engagement in the COBRAs, research exploring these activities and their motivations across cultures is scarce. Earlier findings for online brand-related activities in individualistic country samples still need to be validated for collectivistic cultures. The following research questions, therefore, are proposed: How do motivations for *consuming, contributing* to, and *creating* Br-C on Facebook differ between consumers from individualistic and collectivistic cultures?

Methodology

Participants and Recruitment Process
In this study, we interviewed consumers from individualistic (the Netherlands, the United States) and collectivistic (South Korea, Thailand) countries. A total of 10 interviews were completed per country, as this is considered sufficient to enable the development of a theme and for useful interpretation (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006), leading to a total of 40 participants.

A multiple snowball technique was employed by the interviewers to select participants. Firstly, each interviewer browsed her list for Facebook friends, and contacted one friend who met the criteria to participate in the study, namely whether: (s)he either contributed to ('liked', commented on, or shared) Br-C on their newsfeed, or created Br-C on their timeline in the two weeks before the interview was conducted. The intent of these criteria was to ensure that a participant would be able to remember why (s)he engaged with such Br-C. After completing the interview, each participant was asked to refer to another Facebook user who also met the criteria for this study. The process followed this procedure until reaching 10 participants in each country. There were a few times that the participant could not refer to another respondent. In these situations, each interviewer needed to look up at her friend list again and restarted the process. All participants were given remuneration of 22.50 euros for their participation.

The selection criteria for participation also ensured a wide range of age (21-60 years). The participants were on average 33.03 years old (SD = 12.46), 50% were female, and most (82.5%) held a bachelor degree or above. Participants from the four countries were comparable in terms of age, gender, and education, and were born, were nationals of, and resided in the countries in the scope of this study.

Interviewer Training

The interviewers were female bilinguals (Dutch-English, Korean-English, Thai-English) and one American female who completed a master's degree in Communication. All of them had hands-on experience of conducting an in-depth interview before. The first author was the Thai-English bilingual. Their ages ranged between 25 and 28. The interviewers were informed about the research questions and objectives of the project. The first author conducted in-depth interviews with the American, Dutch, and South Korean interviewers in order to familiarize them with the questionnaire and the interviewing process. After discussing and finalizing the interview materials, pilot interviews with Facebook users from the four countries were conducted. The pilot interviews conducted by the American, Dutch, and South Korean interviewers served as a training session guided by the first author. After the pilot interviews, the first author had a one-to-one meeting with the three interviewers to discuss issues, and to make sure participants clearly understood all the questions.

In-depth Interviews

All face-to-face interviews were conducted in the native language of the participants, in the country where the participants lived, between 1 June and 20 July 2016. Each of the in-depth interviews took approximately an hour. The interviewers were provided with a semi-structured interview guide that included an explanation of all interview steps and examples of consumers' liking, commenting, sharing, and posting activities. The interview was divided into two sub-sections, including general questions regarding Facebook usage (e.g. have you ever 'liked' Br-C on Facebook?) and individual's motivations for engaging in brand-related activities (e.g. why did you decide to 'like' this Br-C?). The first introductory section of the interview was designed to make participants familiar with the interview topic. The latter section allowed us to record and see various types of Br-C contributed and created by participants.

Before the start of the interviews, participants were informed about the aim of the study and their rights as a participant, and signed an informed consent form. During the interviews, participants were asked to access their Facebook account and go through their activity log, timeline, and newsfeed. We used ScreenFlow software to record the whole conversation as it helped us capture both a screen as well as participant's face and voice. We conducted initial interviews with Thai participants, and found that saturation occurred within 8-9 interviews. As these findings were sufficient to answer our research questions, we adopted this approach and applied to the other three countries.

Data Analysis

All 40 interviews were transcribed verbatim in the original language by the interviewers. The thirty interview transcriptions in Dutch, Korean, and Thai were translated into English by the interviewers and bilingual research assistants. The average length of the interview transcriptions was about 5,500-6,000 words.

The coding process was as follows. Firstly, open coding was conducted (Saldaña, 2013) with a software program designed for computer-assisted qualitative research (MAXQDA 2011). Before going through the interview scripts, the first author read summaries written by the interviewers in order to understand the main insights of each interview. Subsequently, the first author thoroughly read the transcripts line by line and identified labels (codes) that describe what motivations the respondents mentioned. For example, a phrase or sentence describing the influence of friends or family was attributed the specific code for the "personal relationship (sub) motivation" and was placed under the general code "social integration motivation". All the sub-motivations and the main motivations were labeled by the first author. Statements that represented more than one motivation were coded twice or more. In addition, all motivational statements were also coded corresponding to each level of COBRAs (consumption, contribution, creation). When we were uncertain of the motivation(s) included in a statement (e.g. unfamiliar brands, slang words), we used the screen capture recorded by ScreenFlow or consulted the interviewers to clarify and understand the context of conversations during the coding process.

After the first cycle of coding was completed, the first author did the second and third cycles following the coding process mentioned in the previous paragraphs, as some of the first cycle codes might be later subsumed by other codes, relabeled, or dropped altogether (Saldaña, 2013).

Internal Reliability and Validity

In line with recommendations for qualitative research (e.g. Guba, 1981; Van der Goot, Beentjes, & Van Selm, 2015), we used three procedures to ensure internal reliability and validity. Firstly, after the interviews, the interviewers provided interview summaries including key insights and screenshots of Br-C mentioned during the interviews so that the first author was able to interpret conversations correctly. Secondly, the first author had peer debriefing sessions with the three interviewers by randomly choosing some interview transcripts to discuss and reach agreement on each code and category applied. Finally, the first author did 'member checks' with four Thai participants in which they were asked to indicate whether the coding was misinterpreted. The first author's interpretations were correct and confirmed. In this regard, and considering checks with the interviewers for the other countries, the accuracy of coding across the other three countries was also considered to be consistent.

Results

In total, there were 1,881 codes with motivations for consumption of, contribution to, and creation of Br-C. These codes (sub-motivations) were applied to seven main motivations: information seeking, intention to try or purchase, entertainment, personal identity and presentation, remuneration, social integration, and empowerment. In Table 1, we summarized all major findings including the motivations found for each level of COBRAs, the definition of motivations, and some examples of quotes for each motivation.

Below, we focus on the differences in motivations that influenced participants from the four countries to consume, contribute to, and create Br-C, respectively.

Motivations for Consuming Brand-Related Content

Participants across the four countries provided motivations associated with *information seeking* and *entertainment* for consuming Br-C on Facebook in similar ways. For example, they view or read Br-C as to stay updated on trends, to seek useful information, or to pass time and entertaining themselves. However, some important differences emerged from the interviews when they explained the reasons why sometimes they did not make further contributions to a given Br-C.

The first key difference concerned perceptions of privacy, and one's own public image, which we labeled as a *personal identity and presentation* motivation. Several Dutch and American participants indicated that they chose not to post anything about themselves on their timeline as they didn't want to be known on the Internet with all their private things included. Moreover, some Dutch and American participants tended to think consciously how they wanted to be seen on Facebook and they did not want to become a spammer for brands that they happened to be involved with. For example, one Dutch participant (male, 28) said, "I don't need to be associated with a brand by posting a comment and I just don't want everyone to see that I'm reacting to it." One American interviewee (male, 40) stated, "I don't post a lot of branded stuff because I don't like to wear a lot of clothes that have a brand name across them."

Unlike the Dutch and American participants, South Korean and Thai participants expressed focus on avoiding arguments with their social groups. They indicated feeling sometimes uncomfortable to contribute to or create Br-C, as it would show their perspectives on a certain direction, which might not be the same as others'. For example, one Thai participant (male, 26) indicated that, "[If] I don't click 'like', the content is a controversial topic and I don't want to show my opinion and have an argument with friends who might have a different point of view." So, although both individualistic and collectivistic interviewees mentioned personal identity and presentation motivations, the underlying motives differed.

Table 1: Definition and Examples of Motivations Demonstrated in COBRAs.

Motivations	Definition	COBRA type	Examples of quotes
• Entertainment	The entertainment motivation covers gratifications that are related to passing time; being entertained by humorous content; or having good experiences and memories.	Consumption Contribution Creation	"I really enjoyed Schlitterbahn (a water park in Austin, Texas) and I just wanted to tell people where I was, this was where I had so much fun" (American female, 20). "Posting allows me to save my memories online. It almost feels like it is a photo book. I have access to it anytime I want" (South Korean male, 27).
• Empowerment	The empowerment motivation refers to people's desire to exert their influence or power on other people or brands by listing good/bad products/services; giving opinions regarding product/services; spreading the word towards brands.	Contribution Creation	"I took a picture to say that I ate it and it is costly. The price equals the cost of four meals. My intention was to blame but not to show-off" (Thai female, 28). "It's a larger conversation about what are the rules for Pokémon Go (a location-based augmented reality game) when it comes to what augmented reality is, and when it comes to ownership of something and in what world is that something not publicly owned" (American male, 37).
• Information seeking	The information motivation covers gratifications that are related to staying updated on relevant events; seeking advice and opinions; collecting useful/interesting information.	Consumption Contribution Creation	"If it has something to do with like getting something out of it, or like if it's one of my favorite coffee places that I obviously like. They said like we'd got this new seasonal. Come try it" (American female, 23). "It's more about information, promotion, trending and new stuff, for example, what's new on Central (a Thai department store). I would share" (Thai female, 34).
• Intention to try or purchase	The intention to try or purchase refers to people's desire gratification that is related to people's desire to try or purchase a product, or to visit a place. Subsequently, they want to express their desire to their friends or the public by creating or contributing to such Br-C.	Contribution Creation	"This post was about a coffee place. It is near my house. I think I would love to see and go there" (Thai male, 35). "So I actually thought I would like to buy them if I make some money in the future and that's why this post attracted me" (South Korean male, 35).

2

Table 1: Continued.

Motivations	Definition	COBRA type	Examples of quotes
• Personal identity and presentation	The personal identity and presentation motivation covers gratifications that are related to the self that people try to present to the public. It covers motivations that are related to people's personal interests and experiences; emotions and feelings; intention to present their (positive) image.	Contribution Creation	"Thai people like to show what they want to be such as a person buying high-quality brands, spending leisure time in high-end department stores, or having good and fancy foods by uploading pictures on Facebook" (Thai male, 26). "I want to show-off. To show my friends that I went there, I ate the foods there, the place that everyone talked about" (Thai female, 25).
• Remuneration	The remuneration motivation covers gratifications that are related to people's expectation to gain some kind of future rewards such as economic incentives, work-related benefits, and reciprocity.	Contribution Creation	"You can win this if you 'like' this. I won an 80 USD gift card from this restaurant that just opened up in the Arboretum (Austin, Texas), and all I did was commenting on their post" (American female, 23). "Those 'likes' are because I wanted free Wi-Fi at terraces in Barcelona" (Dutch male, 23).
• Social integration	The social integration motivation covers gratifications that are related to other people. It covers gratifications that are related to gaining a sense of belonging; connecting with friends, family, and society; seeking opinion/support; having a conversation with others; giving support to others; being helpful to others; socializing with friends.	Contribution Creation	"I 'liked' this post because it is the post of the guy who I know. Yeah, it's a brand but this was more on a personal level" (Dutch male, 28). "Many times, I met friends from their checking-ins. When I saw a checking-in nearby, I comment on their post to check if there is a chance for meeting up or a quick chat" (Thai female, 34).

Note. The definition of each motivation is adapted based on previous literature (Araujo et al., 2015; Berthon et al., 2008; Cheong & Morrison, 2008; Hayes & King, 2014; Jung et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2015; Knoll & Proksch, 2015; Lin & Lu, 2011; Muntinga et al., 2011; Poch & Martin, 2015; Tsai, 2013; Tsai & Men, 2013; Yuki, 2015

Motivations for Contributing to Brand-Related Content

Motivations for contributing to Br-C on Facebook could be summarized by the seven motivations mentioned in Table 1. While motivations were similar at a high level between participants across the four countries, interesting differences across cultures emerged for the different types of contribution ('liking', commenting, sharing).

Information seeking and entertainment: Sharing for saving content. Several South Korean and Thai participants, not Dutch and American participants, indicated that they shared *informative* or *entertaining* Br-C on their timeline as a way to save the content for themselves, so that they could read or watch the content again later. One Thai participant (male, 22) indicated that, "I like to share things on my wall so I can come back to read them later because I don't have time to read them now." Interestingly, some South Korean participants went a step further and shared the content only with themselves, by selecting the 'Only Me' option when posting to their timeline. For example, a South Korean participant (male, 23) indicated that, "People would say that my timeline is messy if I share everything. Therefore, I sometimes share content with 'Only Me' for saving purpose."

Purchase intention as a social activity. South Korean and Thai Participants commonly indicated the motivation of signaling their *purchase intention* (to their friends) when they 'liked', commented on, and shared Br-C. For instance, a South Korean interviewee (female, 24) stated that she made a comment referring to her friend after she saw a post by OST (a South Korean fashion brand) advertising friendship rings because, "I wish to have one with my friends." Some of these South Korean and Thai participants identified the Br-C they shared as their wish lists or shopping lists. For instance, one South Korean interviewee (male, 35) said that, "I actually thought I would like to buy them if I make some money in the future."

Although Dutch and American participants did not indicate their intention to purchase (with a focus on friends) when deciding to 'like' and share Br-C, they did suggest they would contribute a comment to explicitly indicate their desire to visit a location.

Personal identity and presentation: Emotional expression and impression management. South Korean and Thai participants indicated that they intended to express their feelings about the Br-C that touched them emotionally by 'liking', commenting, and sharing. For instance, a South Korean interviewee (male, 35) stated that he 'liked' a post by Apple (an American technology company) because, "It's more related to emotion. There's something that moves my heart. I think that there is more to it than just promoting products." However, Dutch and American participants did not give the same reasons for 'liking' Br-C, and only suggested

that emotional expression (positive or negative) was a reason to comment or share. For instance, an American interviewee (female, 20) said that, "I commented on this post because it really pissed me off, so it's an extreme reaction to something."

Social integration: Having a discussion and socializing with friends (versus others). While participants across the four countries indicated that they contributed to Br-C as a way to engage in conversations, their intended audience differed. Dutch and American participants tended to focus on the brand, or on the content without clearly indicating a focus on friends. For instance, one Dutch interviewee (male, 22) stated that, "I prefer to comment on others' posts to discover their perspectives, otherwise the conversation would remain within my social circle, and then the interaction would be much lower." However, South Korean and Thai participants indicated that they wanted to participate in conversations with friends. For example, one Thai participant (male, 22) commented on his friend's post because, "I saw that my friends were at Bar-B-Q Plaza (a Thai restaurant), but I couldn't go on that day. I asked them why you guys didn't tell me."

Empowering friends by tagging their name. Participants, except for Americans, indicated that they posted comments by tagging friends as a way to suggest a product, a restaurant, or something associated with an *empowerment* motivation. For instance, one South Korean interviewee (female, 22) asserted that "The photos of their foods look great and delicious, so I tagged a friend of mine." Moreover, we found that participants across the four countries did not always introduce their favorite brands to friends, but they may tag a certain friend in a comment when they thought that the content was important for him or her. For example, one Dutch interviewee (male, 23) stated that "there is a discount at a particular store. Though it's less interesting to me, I tagged my sister in case she hasn't seen it yet." When it comes to sharing Br-C, participants across the four countries indicated reasons related to the empowerment motivation.

Remuneration: Obtaining promotional and work-related benefits. Finally, both individualistic and collectivistic cultures indicated reasons related to *remuneration* as their motivation to contribute to Br-C as consumers. Dutch and South Korean participants, but not American and Thai participants, indicated that they 'liked' and shared Br-C as a company's employee or a business owner. Some of them indicated that Facebook had become a marketing platform and they did not merely use it to keep in touch with their inner circle. For instance, a Dutch participant (male, 34) 'liked' a post because, "I am an ambassador for it so then I like seeing it. It's actually indirectly a commercial thing."

Motivations for Creating Brand-Related Content

Participants across the four countries all provided reasons related to the six motivations, except information seeking, for their creation of Br-C. Regarding the *entertainment* motivation, South Korean and Thai interviewees perceived that Facebook was their own diary or photo book that they could record their daily life and could access anytime. They posted Br-C as a way to record what they had done each day as a part of their memories. For instance, a South Korean interviewee (female, 63) said that, "I uploaded pictures of the gifts my professor gave me to save it on Facebook. This will last possibly forever so I use Facebook as my diary." However, Dutch and American participants did not provide similar reasons.

We further found differences when participants provided reasons related to a *social integration* motivation. South Korean and Thai participants created something related to brands because they expected to have a conversation with someone who had the same opinion. For example, a Thai interviewee (female, 52) created a post about Starbucks (an American coffee company) that said, "I want to know if there is anyone who would think the same." However, American and Dutch participants did not give the same reasons for creating Br-C.

Discussion

The present study explores motivations underlying consumers' engagement with Br-C across individualistic (the Netherlands, the United States) and collectivistic (South Korea, Thailand) cultures. The results of the in-depth interviews provide several key findings that align with and also extend earlier research.

The first key finding of this study is that the six motivations for COBRAs found in countries with individualistic cultures (e.g. Knoll & Proksch, 2015; Muntinga et al., 2011) are also applicable in countries with collectivistic cultures. Notably, this study provides in-depth insights, in particular with regards to collectivistic consumers, to the varied interpretations of the motivations for COBRAs identified in previous literature. More specifically, with respect to the *entertainment* motivation, collectivistic interviewees not only indicated the desire for relaxation and emotional release, but they also mentioned the need to record their life-time memories by posting good experiences and life events. Additionally, we found insights related to the *social integration* motivation, which reflects the prevalent collectivistic cultural values – the emphasis of social relationships and interdependence (Kim et al., 2011; Triandis, 2001). The findings show that collectivistic interviewees appeared to give their support to others by 'liking' or

sharing a post of their friends or their favorite brands which extend the meaning of 'seeking support'. Moreover, Facebook has been used as a tool to meet friends offline or socialize with friends at a specific location.

The second key finding of this study is the new motivation that emerged more apparently among collectivistic cultures. More specifically, the *intention to try or purchase* motivation is found important for collectivistic countries as participants from South Korea and Thailand frequently indicate their purchase intention as a social activity. This finding is in line with earlier cross-cultural research on online consumer decision making (Goodrich & De Mooij, 2014) asserting that friends' opinions are found to be important for collectivistic consumers, especially when they need confirmation for their purchase decision process. However, the desire to purchase or try a product with friends was less prominent in interviews with individualistic participants. This finding may suggest that American and Dutch participants tend to be more independent and prefer to base their own purchase decision on personal taste and interests reflecting the desire to fulfill their individualistic gains (Tsai & Men, 2014). To better understand the causal relationships between cultural-related motives and purchase decisions, future studies could employ an experimental approach.

A third key finding of this study is that collectivistic participants' motivations for engaging with Br-C were driven by the wish to express a sense of belonging to their social group, and to express this in-group identification via Br-C activities on SNSs. Participants in collectivistic cultures contribute and create Br-C as a way to have conversations with friends, to gain emotional support from friends, and to indicate their intention to try a product with friends. This finding validates the study of Jung et al. (2016) who proposed that peer influence is the strongest determination of a favorable behavioral intention to engage with brands among collectivistic countries. Additionally, it extends the literature by demonstrating that peer influence prominently affects collectivistic consumers' motivations when engaging in all types of COBRAs. In contrast, individualistic participants often mention obtaining advantages for themselves when creating Br-C. When having discussions, they mention friends less often than collectivistic participants, and indicate more of a desire to have open discussions with others outside of their (close) social group. These findings support the previous cross-cultural social media motivations studies (Barker & Ota, 2011; Chu et al., 2016) which propose that while collectivistic users use SNSs for peer communication and show greater involvement with their existing contacts, individualistic users seek social compensation via SNSs and focus more on the extension of their networks with a large number of loose contacts.

A fourth key finding of this study is how participants perceive privacy and even the motivations for using SNSs differently across collectivistic and individualistic cultures. On the one hand, several collectivistic participants used their Facebook as their own private diary by storing Br-C visible for themselves only, because they are sensitive to contextual and relational factors. This finding supports the study of Park and Kang (2013) who argued that collectivistic consumers, especially Koreans, are under a lot of social pressure, and pay a lot of attention to how others perceive them. This seems to be in line with the more general observation that people in collectivistic high-context cultures are more likely to suppress their feelings and interests in interpersonal communication (Barker & Ota, 2011; Hall, 1977). On the other hand, individualistic participants only consuming Br-C suggested that they avoid presenting their personal interests on SNSs. This finding extends the results of cross-cultural research regarding online privacy concerns (Cho, Rivera-Sánchez, & Lim, 2009) by demonstrating that, when engaging with COBRAs, people in individualistic cultures tend to express a higher desire for privacy by avoiding associating themselves with brands on SNSs as they do not want to be seen on the Internet.

Finally, the results show interesting patterns that might not be directly attributed to the collectivism-individualism dimension of culture. Firstly, impression management and the influence of celebrities are particularly important for South Korean participants. Our findings show the wish of expressing an ideal image and gaining self-assurance, which seems to be suppressed while in face-to-face communication in South Korean high-context society (Park & Kang, 2013). Secondly, sharing a location to meet friends offline seems to be very important to Thai participants. Since Facebook has provided 'check-in' and 'location tag' functions that allow people to use the GPS function on their mobile devices to let others know exactly where they are, several Thai participants liked to use the Facebook checking-in function as a channel to socialize with friends. Finally, several Dutch participants seem to associate Facebook with a marketing platform. They often mention using it to promote their own brand or work, instead of for keeping in touch with their close social circle or for meeting new friends. This motivation reflects profit orientation – the objective of making money – in Dutch society (Lewis, 2010). For the American participants, we did not find any specific insight that is distinctively different from the findings mentioned above.

Practical Implications

The present study provides valuable managerial implications for global and multinational companies in three aspects. Firstly, we recommend that brand managers consider the consumers' sharing and posting Br-C activities as powerful engagement strategies because the Br-C that are shared and posted by one consumer is easily eye-catching and have a wide reach to other consumers. Based on the findings, the prominent factors that influence consumers across cultures to share and post Br-C are personal identity and presentation and social integration. Therefore, global marketers may need to prompt consumers to see (1) how their brands can bolster consumers' positive image and ideal identity construction, or (2) how brands can strengthen consumers' relationships with friends, or social groups, for example, by introducing online campaigns related to friendship (e.g. Share a Coke campaign) or social support (e.g. #LikeAGirl campaign by Always).

Secondly, we have learned that a sense of belonging and in-group identification seem to be very influential motivations in online Br-C engagement for collectivistic consumers, while obtaining advantages and achieving personal goals appear to influence individualistic consumers' engagement with Br-C. Based on these findings, SNS marketers could leverage these motivational patterns and employ a targeting Br-C strategy. For example, the Br-C advertised across individualistic consumers could stress rewarding outcomes (e.g. economic incentives, information usefulness), and the Br-C promoted across collectivistic consumers could emphasize benefits of social relations (e.g. values of friendship, social support).

Finally, we suggest that multinational managers consider brand-related location sharing as a tool for bridging the gap between online (COBRAs) and offline (consumers' purchasing behavior). According to the results, consumers across cultures have intentions to check-in at brand-related locations related to their desire to promote themselves and to provide detailed information regarding the specific locations. All of these consumer motivations are found to induce other consumers' intention to collect and discuss brand information or to purchase a product. Therefore, global brand managers should ensure that their company's important information is listed with location-based networking services (e.g. Google Places).

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

While this study makes important contributions, some limitations must be considered, and addressed in future research. Firstly, participants of the study were active Facebook users who had either contributed to or created Br-C at least once. While this allowed for a rich exploration of COBRA motivations, less active Facebook users, who only consumed Br-C were not interviewed. Future research should extend the findings of this study by also including these less active consumers who only consume Br-C because they might provide additional reasons for (not) engaging with Br-C on SNSs.

Secondly, the operationalization of culture was based on the country in which the participants were born and resided. While this practice, related to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, is frequently used in cross-cultural research (Lee & Yoo, 2012), tendencies toward individualism and collectivism within a person can possibly coexist (Oysterman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002), and individuals in the same culture may define their own identity differently (Schwartz, 1999). Therefore, to extend and validate our findings, future research should investigate the relationship of individuals' cultural values with country-level cultural values, and understand how it influences COBRA activities.

It is important to note that the objective of this qualitative study was to gain insights about the motivations for engaging with Br-C across cultures, and that our findings need, therefore, to be extended by future research adopting quantitative designs. Moreover, considering that our participants had a relatively high education level, future research should explore the role of education more closely. Especially high educated users within South Korea and Thailand, they might become more cosmopolitan and less interdependent to their traditional cultural values due to higher exposure to global media and marketing communication (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007).

Finally, our interpretation and discussion of the findings was mostly focused at the level of individualistic-collectivistic culture. This strategy might run the risk of underrepresenting country-specific interpretations. Our results already indicate some types of behavior or motivations that are country-specific, or do not happen fully across individualistic-collectivistic cultural lines. It cannot be excluded that other characteristics than 'culture' could account for other differences found between the countries. Future quantitative research that includes participants of different countries, and that includes measures of cultural values at the national and individual levels, is needed to disentangle the roles of culture and country-specific culture in consumers' engaging with Br-C in social networking sites.

3

Source Relationships, Content Characteristics, and Consumer-Generated Content Engagement across Cultures[2]

Abstract

Consumers across the globe increasingly engage with user generated content about brands on social networking sites (brand-related user generated content, Br-UGC). As online consumer behavior does not occur in a cultural void, the present study extends earlier research by explicitly examining how the collectivism-individualism dimension – both at the national and at the personal level - influences consumers' engagement ('liking', commenting, and sharing) with different types of Br-UGC created by different sources. Results based on a diverse sample of participants from South Korea, Thailand, the Netherlands, and the United States (N = 812) suggest that collectivism-individualism at the national level moderates the effects of content characteristics and social relationships on Br-UGC engagement. Moreover, consumers who hold the same values as others in their national culture are more comfortable sharing informative Br-UGC.

Keywords: culture; individualistic; collectivistic; brand; user-generated content; SNS

Online information about brands or products that is created voluntarily by consumers (brand-related user generated content: Br-UGC) has become a crucial source that other consumers use to evaluate products. It has been found to shape consumers' brand perceptions (Smith, Eileen, & Yongjian, 2012), to influence consumers' intention to discuss brand information (Kim & Johnson, 2016), and even their purchase intention (Kim, Gupta, & Koh, 2011). Considering that Br-UGC is highly influential for consumer attitudes and has been shown to be an important driver of online revenues (Boachie, 2018; Smith et al., 2012), it is imperative for marketers to understand the factors that influence consumers' engagement with Br-UGC.

Previous studies have shown that consumers' engagement with content about brands is highly influenced by the source-receiver relationship (e.g., Shan & King, 2015), as well as characteristics of the content (e.g., Araujo, Neijens, & Vliegenthart, 2015; Chow & Shi, 2015). In particular, the perceived intensity of the relationship with a source positively influences how messages created by brands are evaluated (Cho, Huh, &, Faber 2014; van Noort, Antheunis, & van Reijmersdal, 2012), and how willing consumers are to share the content (Kim, Cheong, & Kim, 2015). Moreover, different characteristics of content (informativeness, entertainment value, sociability) have been found to enhance consumers' intention to participate in brand communities (Jung et al., 2016), to pass along content (Chow & Shi, 2015), and to purchase a product online (Kim et al., 2011).

However, very little research has considered the role of cultural differences when investigating the impact of social relationships and content characteristics on consumers' engagement with Br-UGC. Previous studies have largely ignored the fact that consumers' engagement with content about brands does not occur in a cultural vacuum, although studies have found that individuals' desire for social integration and information seeking/giving differ depending on their culture or sociocultural system (Goodrich & de Mooij, 2014; Kitirattarkarn, Araujo, & Neijens, 2018). Moreover, when the role of culture in consumer behavior has been studied, cultural comparisons typically take place at the national level, and the analysis often stresses differences based on the country in which participants were born and reside, often relying on Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Lee & Yoo, 2012). Several researchers have recognized the limitations of this approach, suggesting that individuals in the same national culture may define their identity differently, and that tendencies towards collectivism-individualism can coexist in one individual (Traindis, 1996). Furthermore, considering the increasing relevance of globalization and a Global Consumer Culture (GCC), it is worth studying whether acculturation to GCC operates in the context of online brand engagement, and in

particular, the extent to which personal values might be more important than national cultural values when individuals engage with Br-UGC.

We will address these critical gaps in the literature by examining how personal and national collectivism-individualism influences the effects that content characteristics and social relationships with the content creator have on consumer engagement with Br-UGC. To address these gaps, this study draws from a sample of active Facebook users (N = 812) in South Korea (KR), Thailand (TH), the Netherlands (NL), and the United States (US). These countries were selected for three primary reasons. Firstly, their national cultures are considered either highly collectivistic (KR, TH) or highly individualistic (NL, US) according to cross-cultural research (e.g., Hofstede, 2001; Lewis, 2010). Secondly, it has been suggested that the different role of social media in consumer decisions across these four countries might be culturally related (Goodrich & de Mooij, 2014). Finally, all four countries have a high level of social networking site (SNS) usage (We Are Social, 2016), hence allowing us to investigate Br-UGC engagement within a comparatively mature setting in terms of SNS usage.

By addressing these gaps, this study makes several theoretical and practical contributions. First, from a theoretical perspective, the results provide valuable and novel insights into how the collectivism-individualism dimension influences consumer engagement with Br-UGC in general as well as how both social relationships and (informative, entertaining, social) characteristics of content influence engagement with Br-UGC. This provides crucial information for determining the extent to which earlier findings are generalizable beyond one country or national culture. Second, this study goes beyond traditional cross-cultural research designs – which primarily compare national cultures – and explicitly explores the role of collectivism-individualism both at the *national* and the *personal* levels. Third, from a practical perspective, our study will provide meaningful insights for multinational companies on how to keep consumers engaged with their brand. In particular, understanding whether and under which circumstances online consumers follow or challenge their national culture when engaging with Br-UGC will provide global marketers the ability to properly monitor, analyze and contextualize consumer engagement in SNSs and thereby, design effective culturally-aware yet personally meaningful social media campaigns.

In sum, this paper answers the following research question: How does personal and national collectivism-individualism impact the influences of social relationships and content characteristics on consumers' engagement with Br-UGC?

Theoretical Background

Consumer Engagement with Br-UGC

In this study, we analyze consumer engagement in the context of responses to user-generated content about brands on Facebook – the most powerful platform for marketers. In our study, engagement with Br-UGC includes consumers' responses to Br-UGC in the form of 'liking', making comments on, or sharing Br-UGC.

The Relationship between Content Characteristics and Br-UGC Engagement

Existing studies has indicated that functional, emotional, and social values of a product or content about a product are the main factors that influence consumer engagement with brands online (Jung et al., 2016; Lovett, Peres, & Shachar, 2013). In particular, brand-related content that is informative, useful, and entertaining has been found to affect consumers' affective responses and usage intention (Kim & Johnson, 2016). Additionally, given that consumers respond to brand-related content on SNSs mainly for companionship, to receive social support, and to present a positive identity (Lin & Lu, 2011), brand-related content containing elements of interactions and collaborations appears to help consumers develop their social identity and form social bonds with others in their network (Chow & Shi, 2015).

In this study, we adopt the three elements of the Customer Value Theory (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001: CVT) to investigate how different characteristics of Br-UGC affect consumers' engagement with the content. This study explores Br-UGC across the three CVT dimensions: (1) informative value, the extent to which the content provides product-related information including economic and performance aspects; (2) entertainment value, the extent to which the content contains elements of relaxation and enjoyment that provide the consumers an enhanced emotional value; and (3) social value, the extent to which the content emphasizes social interactivity and collaboration.

Building upon the CVT, researchers have indicated that the functional, emotional, and social values of a product, or content about a product, are key factors that influence consumers' intention to participate in brand communities (Jung et al., 2016) and to spread electronic word-of-mouth (Lovett et al., 2013: eWOM). Hence, we expect that these content characteristics contribute to consumer's engagement with Br-UGC:

H1: The more informative the Br-UGC, the higher the engagement with Br-UGC.
H2: The more entertaining the Br-UGC, the higher the engagement with Br-UGC.
H3: The more social the Br-UGC, the higher the engagement with Br-UGC.

The Role of Social Relationships in Consumers' Engagement with Br-UGC

As social connectivity and relationships are the core of SNSs, the emphasis of social relationships in SNSs is considered highly important for the examination of consumers' response to Br-UGC. Existing studies have demonstrated that tie strength is one of the focal social relationship-related variables that characterizes the nature of social relationships and impacts online brand-related communication (e.g., Chu & Kim, 2011; Lin & Lu, 2011). Granovetter (1973, p.1361) defined the strength of social ties as "the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy or mutual confiding, and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie." In reality, people normally maintain a wide range of relational ties in their online networks, ranging from strong ties to close friends and family members to weak ties with acquaintances and strangers.

Studies have indicated that the perceived intensity of the relationship between the content creator and the receiver influences how consumers evaluate the messages. For example, Cho et al. (2014) found that a viral advertisement sent by a friend was perceived as more informative, more entertaining, and less irritating than one sent by an unknown person, which ultimately generated a positive attitude toward the advertised brand.

In addition to influencing how the messages are evaluated, studies have found that tie strength directly influences consumers' online brand-related activities. For instance, it positively influences users' continued intention to use SNSs (Chu & Choi, 2011), encouraging them to pass along viral advertising (van Noort et al., 2012). Chu and Kim (2011) suggest that the extent to which consumers feel close to the source can have a considerable impact on their decision to share opinions on SNSs. Shan and King (2015) specifically found that information from a close friend was perceived as more influential in eWOM referral intention than information obtained from a weak-tie source (e.g., a brand). Thus, the following hypothesis can be proposed:

H4: Br-UGC posted by a strong tie has a more positive effect on consumers' engagement with the Br-UGC compared to Br-UGC posted by a weak tie.

Cultural Individualism and Collectivism

Culture is the rich complex of beliefs, practices, norms, and values that are prevalent in a society (Schwartz, 2006). These values are the cultural ideals of a given culture and tend to be its most central feature (Hofstede, 2001). In this study, we specifically focus on the cultural individualism-collectivism construct, as this dimension has served as a practical means to compare communication styles and content across cultures, particularly in advertising research (Lee & Yoo, 2012).

According to Triandis (1996; 2001), people in individualistic cultures, such as those from Northern and Western Europe and North America, are autonomous and independent from their social groups. Their personal goals are usually valued over the goals of their in-groups. As such, their behaviors are usually based on their own attitudes rather than the norms of their social groups. In contrast, people in collectivistic cultures, such as those from Asian countries, are interdependent within their in-groups or social groups. They generally behave according to the norms of their groups because their priority is placed on the goals of social groups.

When it comes to the communication context, people in individualistic cultures tend to engage in low-context communication that is straightforward, explicit, and direct (Hall, 1977). However, people from collectivistic cultures are more likely to have high-context communication, which is abstract, implicit, and indirect (Hofstede, 2001). This difference of high-context and low-context communication styles is also evident in content such as advertising messages (Pae, Samiee, & Tai, 2002) and eWOM (Men & Tsai, 2012).

It is also important to note that within every culture, whether collectivistic or individualistic, some people can be classified as "horizontal" (valuing equality) while others as "vertical" (valuing hierarchy). These distinctions are related to personal values such as self-direction and conformity (Singelis et al., 1995; Triandis, 1996). Even though, on the national level, countries in North America and Northern Europe are considered individualistic societies and countries in Asia are often defined as collectivistic, on the personal level, individuals in these countries might hold different degrees of collectivistic-individualistic values with respect to the horizontal and vertical dimensions (Singelis et al., 1995). In short, within the same national (collectivistic/individualistic) culture, it is likely that some individuals hold more individualistic values, while the others hold more collectivistic ones.

The role of national collectivism-individualism in the relationship between content characteristics and Br-UGC engagement. Although the three dimensions of brand-related content (informativeness, entertainment value, and sociability) have been found to influence consumers' engagement with online brand-related activities, it is unclear whether different characteristics will have the same effect on consumers' response towards Br-UGC across cultures. Cross-cultural research has taught us that the role of marketing communication varies across individualistic and collectivistic cultures. More specifically, Pae et al. (2013) found that in individualistic cultures, advertising must persuade and tend to be informative, relying on facts and the unique benefit of the advertised product, whereas in collectivistic cultures, the purpose of advertising is to build a relationship and

trust between seller and buyer. Advertising in Asian countries seems to utilize indirect messages, which employ appeals to emotion and harmony-seeking.

Studies of online communication have also confirmed that cultural variability in individualism and collectivism also plays a role in how consumers engage with different types of brand-related content. For example, Men and Tsai (2012) found that corporate posts on Facebook tended to provide information directly related to the company and its offering, while corporate posts on Renren (a Chinese SNS) were more likely to provide entertainment content and to promote users' socialization with the company. In other words, in collectivistic high-context culture, implicit and indirect messages emphasizing entertainment and socialization would typically be used to cultivate consumer engagement and relationships. However, in an individualistic low-context culture, marketing communication will be more explicit and straightforward, with more product-related information, discounts, and statements of corporate achievements.

As discussed, consumers in individualistic cultures or ones who are autonomous in their decision-making tend to place greater importance on efficacy and directness, leading them to base their decisions on a personal assessment of the informative value of the content. Therefore, we predict that,

H5: The effect of informative content on Br-UGC engagement is greater for people living in individualistic cultures than those living in collectivistic cultures.

In contrast, consumers in collectivistic cultures or those who emphasize the implicit meaning of communication tend to be influenced by the emotional value of a message when deciding whether to engage or not:

H6: The effect of entertaining content on Br-UGC engagement is greater for people living in collectivistic cultures than for those living in individualistic cultures.

Besides informative and entertaining content, the element of sociability in Br-UGC could also affect consumers' decision to engage with the content, especially in collectivistic cultures. Research on self-construal suggests that interdependent people or those from collectivistic societies appear to enjoy sociability when using social media, and are thus more likely to engage with social content than people from individualistic societies who tend to underscore the importance of independence and self-achievement (Chu, Windels, & Kamal, 2016). Men and Tsai (2012) support this notion, finding that Chinese collectivistic users value trust and the relationship with the company more than explicit product information. In such a context, Chinese companies were more likely to feature messages that address the consumers' social needs, emphasizing being personal and acting like a caring

friend when communicating with their consumers on brand pages compared to American companies. Thus, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H7: The effect of social content on Br-UGC engagement is greater for people living in collectivistic cultures than for those living in individualistic cultures.

The role of national collectivism-individualism in the relationship between tie strength and Br-UGC engagement. Although we have argued that people appear to have a positive attitude towards messages delivered by a strong-tie source, it is still unclear whether this effect will be the same for people from collectivistic and individualistic cultures as well as for people holding collectivistic and individualistic values.

The existing cross-cultural research on eWOM indicates that the impact of tie strength on SNS relationships differs from culture to culture, and these relationships reflect the prevailing norms for the individual's role within a specific cultural context. Notably, the concept of strong and weak tie strength is potentially related to cultural individualism and collectivism (Chu & Choi, 2011; Tsai & Men, 2014). Chu and Choi (2011) indicate that while people from individualistic cultures prefer to have a greater number of weak ties and larger networks that could help them exchange information and foster their social status, people from collectivistic cultures view relationships with friends as stronger and more influential in their SNS use. Moreover, consumers from collectivistic cultures tend to be more dependent on social media as they tended to rely heavily on personal networks (e.g., close friends, family) for brand-related information and social support. In contrast, consumers from individualistic cultures are less dependent on social media and preferred to consult a wider range of information sources (Tsai & Men, 2014).

Even though tie strength and Br-UGC engagement across cultures has not been explicitly investigated, drawing upon these findings we can assume that people in collectivistic cultures will be more likely to engage with Br-UGC from a strong-tie source compared to people in individualistic cultures. This premise is based on the focus on peer bonding among collectivistic people, who are more likely to emphasize intimate social relationships and to interact with like-minded people for social purposes (Liu, Ainsworth, & Baumeister, 2016). Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

H8: The effect of tie strength on Br-UGC engagement is greater for people living in collectivistic cultures than for those living in individualistic cultures.

The Role of Personal Collectivism-Individualism in Br-UGC Engagement
While previous cross-cultural studies have generally operationalized collectivism-individualism based on the country in which participants were born and reside,

individuals in the same country or with the same national culture might not hold the same cultural identity (Traindis, 1996). In addition, with the increase of globalization and acculturation, it is likely that consumers living in Asia or in developing countries might adapt their values toward those common in Western or developed countries, leading to GCC (Berry, 2008). There is also a possibility that some people might resist these global forces, especially those with a strong desire to preserve their national cultural values, leading them to maintain their original culture.

Besides having an effect at the national level, there are possibilities that the effect of content characteristics on Br-UGC engagement will differ across consumers holding collectivistic values and individualistic values at a personal level. Moreover, earlier studies indicate that the consistency of national culture and an individual's self-construal can have a stronger effect on their information processing and persuasion (Lee, Aaker, & Gardner, 2000). Lee et al. (2000) found that Americans with a dominant self-construal as "independent" placed more emphasis on promotion-focused information than Americans whose self-construal was less "independent", and Chinese with a dominant self-construal as "interdependent" put more emphasis on prevention-focused information than Chinese whose self-construal was less "interdependent". Nevertheless, the examination of how collectivism-individualism at a personal level on Br-UGC engagement is yet to be fully explored. Considering the lack of earlier literature, we propose the following research question to investigate this topic:

RQ: How does personal collectivism-individualism play a role in consumers' engagement with Br-UGC?

Figure 1 shows the conceptual model that illustrates the roles of personal and national collectivism-individualism in the relationships between content characteristics as well as tie strength and Br-UGC engagement.
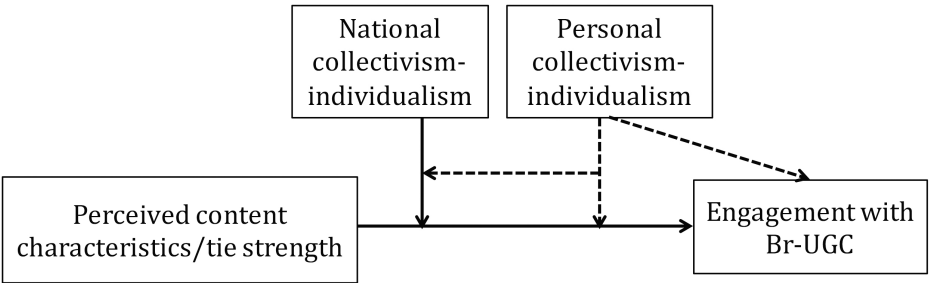
Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Consumers' Engagement with BR-UGC
Note: In the analysis, national collectivism-individualism = collectivistic culture, personal collectivism-individualism = collectivistic values. Dotted line represents a research question. Separate analyses were conducted for different independent variables (perceived content characteristics and tie strength) and dependent variables ('liking', commenting, and sharing Br-UGC).

Method

The experiment was conducted using a structured online questionnaire. Participants were randomly exposed to a brand-related post created by their Facebook friend (a stimulus in our study). In this section, we examined how tie strength and content characteristics affected the likelihood of engaging with a Facebook post. A 2x2x2 online experiment was conducted, with tie strength (strong/weak), content characteristics (informative/entertaining), and sociability of content (non-social/social) serving as between-subject factors. We asked participants' demographic information as well as personal collectivism-individualism. For KR, NL, and TH, the questionnaire was translated using a translation/back-translation procedure to ensure cross-cultural content equivalency.

Stimuli Development
We chose sportswear as the product category because fitness and healthy living tend to become a global trend that people value as part of their well-being. Thus, this product category would appeal to consumers across the world (Okazaki, Mueller, & Diehl, 2013), including our respondents. We chose sneakers as the product because they would be considered equally important to male and female consumers. To minimize country of origin bias in the research design, the German Adidas brand was chosen – since Germany was not a country involved in the study.

We designed informative and entertaining posts based on texts and visuals used in actual online brand-related posts. For informative content, we included practical information about the sneakers (e.g., specifications, discount information). For entertaining content, we included thank you messages for a birthday gift (the sneakers) in a post as it conveyed emotional connections between a poster and his/ her friends. Besides text, we added emoticons in captions as these are associated with emotional cues in the content (Araujo et al., 2015). We believed that a Graphics Interchange Format (.GIF) or an animated GIF would convey emotions better than just text or a still photo. Thus, instead of using a simple picture, we converted two similar pictures into an animated GIF and added it in the posts. For the element of sociability (e.g., interactivity with others), we employed the Facebook activity function by inserting the phrase "looking for opinion" in the posts and adding a question at the end of a caption. The examples of brand-related posts can be found in the Appendix.

To manipulate the tie strength, we randomly asked participants to indicate three names of either "people on Facebook that you are *very close to*" and "people on Facebook that you only know *very superficially*." Subsequently, one of those names was randomly selected to represent a source of a Facebook post. We presented the sentence "Thinking about [NAME], please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements."

Pre-test
We tested the manipulated Facebook posts using an online questionnaire. A multiple snowball technique was employed by the first author to recruit participants. The first author sent a survey link to Facebook friends via Facebook Messenger, a messaging platform on Facebook. To recruit more participants, participants who completed the survey were asked to send the survey link to their Facebook friends. Participants were American, Dutch, Korean, and Thai Facebook users older than 18 years. They were asked to indicate their opinion on three elements of the message: perceived informativeness, perceived entertainment value, and perceived sociability by completing 12 items on a seven-point Likert scale. Detailed information about the measures can be found in the following section. Participants took approximately ten minutes to complete the survey in their native language.

We conducted a preliminary analysis and found problems with both the Dutch (N = 37, 81.1% female) and Korean (N = 26, 73.1% female) samples. In the Dutch sample, the manipulated informative posts were not perceived as informative, and in the Korean sample, the manipulated entertaining posts were not perceived as entertaining. The mean scores of these two scales were below the midpoint. We assumed that this occurred because we only collected responses from high-

educated people (MSc and Ph.D. students). We revised both the manipulated informative and entertaining posts by consulting Dutch and Koreans who were active Facebook users, and conducted the second round of the pre-test with Dutch (N = 78, 52% female) and South Korean (N = 61, 62.5% female) Facebook users. In this round, we used an online panel from Qualtrics to collect both samples. We collected American responses (N = 106, 72.5% female) from the crowdsourcing platform Amazon Mechanical Turk. A multiple snowball technique was employed for a Thai sample (N = 78, 54% female) that now included participants of all educational levels. The same questionnaire used in the first round was employed in the second round of the pre-test. We found that the revised posts could be used as informative, entertaining and social posts (see Online Appendix). Figure 2 presents the process of stimuli development.
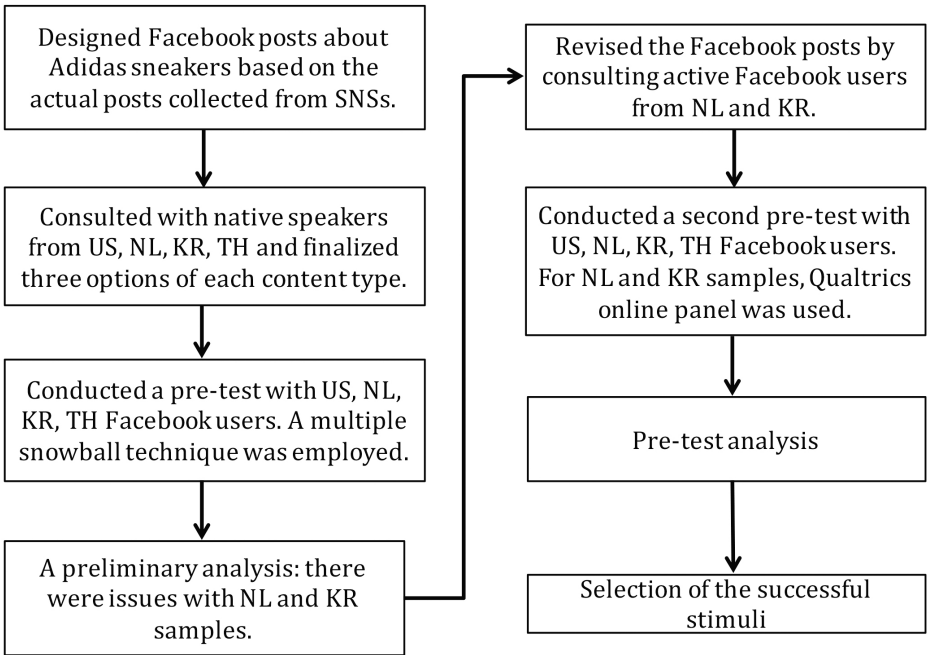
Figure 2: The Process of Stimuli Development

Participants and Manipulation Check

Regarding the main study, we used an online panel from Qualtrics to administer the 15-minute online survey. A total of 812 Facebook users living in KR, NL, TH, and US, all of whom had engaged with Br-UGC earlier, participated in the study. The participants were 49.3% female, 48% 18-34 years old, 35.4% 35-54 years old, and

16.6% older than 55. The samples were comparable in terms of age and gender across the four countries. Table 1 presents the distribution of demographic characteristics.

While the manipulation of tie strength worked as expected, the manipulated content characteristics did not work as intended across the four countries. American participants saw no significant difference in perceived informativeness between the manipulated informative and the manipulated entertaining posts. Similarly, South Korean respondents saw no significant difference in perceived entertainment value between the manipulated informative and the manipulated entertaining posts. We should note that several studies have shown that personalized messages manipulated by researchers do not automatically match how those messages are perceived (the degree to which consumers see a match between a message and themselves) (De Keyzer, Dens, & De Pelsmacker, 2015). De Keyzer et al. (2015) found that perceived personalized advertising messages appeared to be more relevant than the actual personalized advertising messages. In our study, it is likely that participants tended to subjectively evaluate the characteristics of the Br-UGC (our stimuli) based on their personal preferences and interests. Thus, in line with the previous research, we employed participants' perceptions towards the three content characteristics in the analysis as outlined below.

Table 1: Demographic Characterisitcs by Country

	US (%)	NL (%)	KR (%)	TH (%)
Gender				
Male	45.8	49	52.7	50
Female	54.2	51	46.8	50
Age				
18-34	39.4	41	41.8	40.9
35-54	40.9	39	41.3	40.4
55+	19.7	20	16.9	18.8
Education				
Below secondary school	19.7	0.5	-	0.5
Secondary school and above	30.5	15.5	14.9	16.8
Undergraduate and above	40.9	73	76.1	74.5
Master degree and above	8.9	11	9	8.2
Income[a]				
Below average	31.1	22.7	12.5	20.2
Average	26.5	22	19.4	31.7
Above average	42.4	55.3	68.1	48.1

Note: N = 812, US = the United States, NL = the Netherlands, KR = South Korea, TH = Thailand
[a]Participants answered their level of income on a scale, which 1 indicated the 'lowest income' and 10 the 'highest income'. The average income per month of US, NL, KR, and TH was USD 2,224, EUR 2,193, KRW 1,813,458, and THB 20,000 respectively (OECD, 2017).

Measures

Validated scales derived from previous studies were used to measure independent variables, dependent variables, moderators, and control variables. Factor analyses and Cronbach's alphas were computed to assess the applicability and reliability of the measures among participants in each sample. All the measures in our samples demonstrated good reliability ranging from .77 to .93 (see Appendix). Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations of the key variables for the collectivistic cultures (KR, TH) and individualistic cultures (NL, US) samples, as well as bivariate correlation coefficients.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables by National Culture and Bivariate Correlations of Variables

Variables	COL (N = 409)		IDV (N = 403)		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	M	SE	M	SE									
INF	4.52	1.29	4.12	1.70	1								
ENT	4.52	1.25	4.47	1.61	.74**	1							
SOC	4.71	1.14	4.73	1.23	.57**	.54**	1						
TIE	5.02	1.33	5.12	1.60	.37**	.37**	.27**	1					
LIKE	5.31	1.50	4.93	1.99	.58**	.64**	.38**	.47**	1				
COM	4.62	1.75	4.25	2.08	.55**	.59**	.42**	.54**	.68**	1			
SHARE	3.76	1.79	3.19	2.18	.59**	.51**	.43**	.33**	.47**	.60**	1		
PERSON	.05	1.82	.76	2.04	.06	.13**	.13**	.19**	.13**	.10**	.03	1	
NATION	-		-		.13**	.02	-.01	-.03	.11**	.10**	.14**	-.18**	1

Note: COL = collectivistic cultures; IDV: individualistic cultures; INF = perceived informativeness; ENT = perceived entertainment value; SOC = perceived sociability; TIE = perceived tie strength; LIKE = likelihood of 'liking'; COM = likelihood of commenting; SHARE = likelihood of sharing; PERSON = index of personal collectivism-individualism; NATION = national collectivism-individualism. National collectivism-individualism was included as a dichotomous variable in which 0 = individualistic cultures (NL, US), 1 = collectivistic cultures (KR, TH). **$p < .01$

Independent Variables

Characteristics of Br-UGC. Participants assessed the brand-related content on three constructs: informativeness, entertainment value (Edwards, Li, & Lee, 2002), and sociability (Chow & Shi, 2015) by completing 12 items on a seven-point Likert scale. Informativeness items included, "The Facebook post I saw was helpful, important, informative, and useful". Entertainment value items included, "The Facebook post

I saw was attractive, enjoyable, entertaining, and fun". Finally, sociability items included statements related to social presence (e.g., "The author was counting on getting a lot of responses"), interactivity (e.g., "There was a sense of human contact in the post"), and collaboration (e.g., "The author was asking for help from other users").

Tie strength. Participants evaluated the tie strength with the Facebook poster by completing eight items on a seven-point Likert scale. Six items were taken from a social tie strength scale (Shan & King, 2015): for example, "I am committed to maintaining my relationship with this person," "I feel very strongly linked to this person." We added two items: duration of being friends and social distance, as Gilbert and Karahalios (2009) have proposed that these factors strongly associate with tie strength.

Dependent Variables

Br-UGC engagement. Participants were asked to indicate how likely they would respond to the brand-related post on a seven-point scale (1 = Very unlikely, 7 = Very likely). The responses included: "I would 'like' this post," "I would comment on this post," "I would share this post with all of my Facebook friends."

Moderators

National collectivism-individualism. According to the collectivism-individualism dimension of Hofstede (2001), NL and US are individualistic countries with very high scores: 80 and 91, respectively. On the other hand, KR and TH are considered highly collectivistic societies, with low scores: 18 and 20, respectively. In the analysis, the country of the sample was coded as a dummy variable, where 0 = individualistic culture (NL, US), and 1 = collectivistic culture (KR, TH).

Personal collectivism-individualism. We employed the horizontal and vertical dimensions of the individualism-collectivism scale to measure each participant's collectivistic-individualistic values, as this scale has been validated and used to measure the extent of collectivism-individualism at the personal level (Singelis et al., 1995). Participants assessed 16 items on a seven-point Likert scale: (1) four items of horizontal individualism (HI) measure the extent people strive to be unique and do their own thing (uniqueness); (2) four items of vertical individualism (VI) assess the extent people want to be the best (achievement oriented); (3) four items of horizontal collectivism (HC) evaluate the extent people merge themselves with their in-groups (cooperativeness); and finally (4) four items of vertical collectivism (VC) measure to what extent people submit to the authorities of the in-group and are willing to sacrifice themselves for their in-group (dutifulness).

The scale indicates good reliability ranging from .79 to .86. In order to examine the degree of collectivism-individualism of each individual, we need an index or a composite figure, which summarizes collectivistic-individualistic values at the personal level.

To create the index, we computed means of HI, VI, HC, VC into an index of individuals' collectivistic-individualistic values: [(HC+VC) - (HI+VI)]. Negative values denote individualistic values, and positive values indicate that the respondent tends to be more collectivistic. Our index of personal collectivism-individualism showed notably strong correlations with the independent and dependent variables (see Table 3). Thus, the index appears to have a high degree of validity (Taras, Steel, & Kirkman, 2012).

Control Variables
Demographic information (gender, age, educational level, income), Facebook use intensity, brand attitude (Sengupta & Johar, 2002), brand familiarity (Zhou, Yang, & Hui, 2010), and personality traits: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and imagination (Donnellan et al., 2006) served as control variables in the study.

Table 3: Bivariate Correlations of HI, VI, HC, VC, Index, and Other variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
HI	1											
VI	.33**	1										
HC	.37**	.25**	1									
VC	.35**	.31**	.58**	1								
Informativeness	.15**	.34**	.26**	.35**	1							
Entertainment	.17**	.27**	.32**	.36**	.74**	1						
Social	.21**	.30**	.39**	.36**	.57**	.54**	1					
Tie	.20**	.15**	.32**	.37**	.37**	.37**	.27**	1				
Like	.17**	.22**	.26**	.36**	.58**	.64**	.38**	.47**	1			
Comment	.17**	.30**	.28**	.36**	.55**	.59**	.42**	.54**	.68**	1		
Share	.14**	.30**	.23**	.28**	.59**	.51**	.43**	.33**	.47**	.60**	1	
INDEX	-.28**	-.46**	.53**	.54**	.06	.13**	.13**	.19**	.13**	.10**	.03	1

Note: HI = horizontal individualism; VI = vertical individualism; HC = horizontal collectivism; VC = vertical collectivism; INDEX = index of personal collectivism-individualism

Analysis
To test our hypotheses, we conducted 12 separate analyses for four independent variables (perceived informativeness, entertainment value, and sociability of the

content, as well as perceived tie strength with a source) and three dependent variables (the tendency to 'like', comment on, and share Br-UGC). In these 12 models, personal and national collectivism-individualism served as moderators. A moderated moderation analysis using Hayes' approach (Hayes, 2013: Model 3) was employed to analyze our data.

Results

We examined whether different perceived content characteristics and perceived tie strength had a direct effect on consumers' engagement with Br-UGC, and in particular, how cultural collectivism-individualism at the personal and national levels influenced these associations.

The Effect of Perceived Content Characteristics on Consumers' Engagement with Br-UGC

Main effect. The first three hypotheses stated that informative, entertainment, and social values of the content made Br-UGC engagement more likely. As expected, people were more likely to engage with the Br-UGC, the more that they perceived that the content was informative (b_{like}=.55, $p < .001$; $b_{comment}$=.53, $p < .001$; b_{share}=.68, $p < .001$), entertaining (b_{like}=.67, $p < .001$; $b_{comment}$=.59, $p < .001$; b_{share}=.64, $p < .001$), and social (b_{like}=.44, $p < .001$; $b_{comment}$=.55, $p < .001$; b_{share}=.69, $p < .001$). Thus, the results supported H1, H2, and H3.

Moderating effect of national collectivism-individualism. With respect to 'liking', we did not find any difference between cultures (see Table 4). When it comes to commenting and sharing, several differences were found. Contrary to our hypotheses, however, when Br-UGC was perceived to be more entertaining, consumers living in individualistic cultures were more likely to share the content than those living in collectivistic cultures (b_{share} = -.19, $effect_{IDV}$ = .60, SE = .07, 95% confidence interval (CI) [.46, .74], $p < .001$; $effect_{COL}$ = .50, SE =.11, 95% CI [.29, .71], $p < .001$). Moreover, when the Br-UGC was perceived to have elements of social interactivity, consumers living in individualistic cultures were more likely to engage in both commenting ($b_{comment}$ = -.25, $effect_{IDV}$ = .45, SE = .08, 95% CI [.29, .60], $p < .001$; $effect_{COL}$ = .30, SE = .11, 95% CI [.09, .52], $p = .006$) and sharing (b_{share} = -.33, $effect_{IDV}$ = .64, SE = .09, 95% CI [.47, .81], $p < .001$; $effect_{COL}$ = .52, SE = .12, 95% CI [.27, .76], $p < .001$) than consumers from collectivistic cultures (see Tables 5, 6). Thus, our hypotheses (H5, H6, H7) were not supported.

The Effect of Tie Strength on Br-UGC Engagement

Main Eeffect. Our hypothesis (H4) stated that tie strength with a source would positively influence consumers' engagement with Br-UGC. The results supported H4 by demonstrating that when people were exposed to Br-UGC created by a strong-tie source, they were more likely to engage with such Br-UGC (b_{like} =.55, p < .001; $b_{comment}$ =.49, p < .001; b_{share} =.68, p < .001).

Moderating effect of national collectivism-individualism. The results also supported our hypothesis (H8) that people in collectivistic cultures were more likely to comment on Br-UGC created by strong-tie friends compared to those in individualistic cultures ($b_{comment}$ =.15, indirect effect$_{COL}$ =.61, SE =.09, 95% CI [.43, .80], p < .001; indirect effect$_{IDV}$ =.54, SE =.06, 95% CI [.42, .66], p < .001).

Table 4: Predictors of 'Liking' Br-UGC[1]

Variables	'Liking' Br-UGC							
	Informativeness		Entertainment value		Sociability		Tie strength	
	B	95% CI	B	95% CI	B	95% CI	B	95% CI
Constant	-.09	[-1.28, 1.10]	-.50	[-1.65, .64]	-1.50	[-2.83, -.18]	-1.35	[-2.70, .003]
NATION (COL)	.42	[-.22, 1.06]	.76*	[.11, 1.42]	1.26**	[.38, 2.14]	.36*	[-.41, 1.12]
Independent variable	.55***	[.45, .64]	.67***	[.58, .77]	.44***	[.31, .57]	.55***	[.36, .56]
Independent variable*NATION	-.07	[-.21, .64]	-.11	[-.24, .03]	-.22*	[-.40, -.04]	-.02	[-.16, .13]
PERSON (COL)	.21*	[.04, .38]	.12	[-.06, .30]	.44**	[.19, .69]	.08	[-.13, .28]
Independent variable*PERSON	-.03	[-.07, .007]	-.02	[-.05, .02]	-.08*	[-.13, -.03]	-.001	[-.04, .04]
Independent variable *NATION*PERSON	.01	[-.05, .07]	.004	[-.05, .06]	.06	[-.02, .15]	-.02	[-.08, .05]
R^2		.43		.47		.36		.37
F		28.11***		34.01***		21.05***		20.72***

[1]*Note: N* = 812, CI = confidence interval, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001. NATION = national collectivism-individualism; PERSON = index of personal collectivism-individualism. Given the length of the manuscript, we report the effects of control variables in the Online Appendix. We also conducted additional analyses to examine the effects of each dimension of horizontal and vertical collectivism and individualism. We created new models using each mean of these dimensions (instead of the index). In general, the explained variances of these new models (measured as Adjusted R^2) were almost the same or even lower than those of the current models. Considering the predictive validity of our index, we believe that the current analytical approach works best to address the main aims of our study.

Table 5: Predictors of Commenting BR-UGC[1]

Variables	Commenting on Br-UGC							
	Informativeness		Entertainment value		Sociability		Tie strength	
	B	95% CI	B	95% CI	B	95% CI	B	95% CI
Constant	-1.54	[-2.82, -.27]	-1.42	[-2.69, -.16]	-2.30	[-3.69, -.91]	-1.58	[-2.99, -.16]
NATION (COL)	.39	[-.30, 1,07]	.65	[-.06, 1.37]	1.56**	[.63, 2.49]	-.36	[-1.17, .44]
Independent variable	.53***	[.43, .63]	.59***	[.49, .70]	.55***	[.41, .69]	.49***	[.39, .59]
Independent variable*NATION	-.04	[-.19, .10]	-.06	[-.21, .09]	-.25**	[-.44, -.06]	.15*	[.001, .31]
PERSON (COL)	.10	[-.08, .28]	.10	[-.09, .30]	.25	[-.02, .51]	-.07	[-.28, .15]
Independent variable*PERSON	-.01	[-.05, .03]	-.02	[-.06, .02]	-.05	[-.10, .009]	.02	[-.02, .06]
Independent variable *NATION*PERSON	.02	[-.05, .03]	.02	[-.04, .09]	.05	[-.04, .14]	-.03	[-.10, .04]
R^2	.44		.45		.39		.40	
F	29.57***		30.84***		23.69***		23.52***	

Table 6: Predictors of Sharing BR-UGC[1]

Variables	Sharing Br-UGC							
	Informativeness		Entertainment value		Sociability		Tie strength	
	B	95% CI	B	95% CI	B	95% CI	B	95% CI
Constant	.39	[-1.01, 1.78]	-.07	[-1.53, 1.39]	-.23	[-1.79, 1.32]	1.57	[-.06, 3.20]
NATION (COL)	.53	[-.23, 1.28]	1.34**	[.51, 2.17]	1.98**	[.95, 3.02]	-.24	[-1.18, .70]
Independent variable	.68***	[.57, .79]	.64***	[.52, .76]	.69***	[.53, .85]	.68***	[.11, .36]
Independent variable*NATION	-.07	[-.23, .09]	-.19*	[-.37, -.02]	-.33**	[-.54, -.11]	.12	[-.04, .32]
PERSON (COL)	.04	[-.16, .24]	.05	[-.18, .28]	.07	[-.22, .37]	-.21	[-.46, .04]
Independent variable*PERSON	-.009	[-.05, .03]	-.02	[-.06, .03]	-.02	[-.08, .04]	.04	[-.006, .09]
Independent variable *NATION*PERSON	.07*	[.0004, .14]	.04	[-.04, .12]	.08	[-.01, .18]	-.02	[-.10, .07]
R^2	.40		.35		.33		.27	
F	25.13***		20.14***		18.28***		13.64***	

The Effect of Personal Collectivism-Individualism on Br-UGC Engagement

Regarding our RQ, we investigated whether personal collectivism-individualism influenced the likelihood of 'liking', commenting, and sharing Br-UGC. The results showed that personal collectivism-individualism directly affected consumers' engagement with Br-UGC. Specifically, personal collectivism-individualism positively affected the likelihood of 'liking' informative (b_{like} = .21, $p < .05$) and social (b_{like} = .44, $p < .05$) Br-UGC. We did not find a direct effect of personal collectivism-individualism on commenting and sharing Br-UGC.

Regarding a moderating effect, we found that consumers holding individualistic values were more likely to 'like' social Br-UGC content than those holding collectivistic values (b_{like} = -.08, effect$_{IDV}$ = .24, SE = .09, 95% CI [.07, .42], p = .007; effect$_{COL}$ = .21, SE = .07, 95% CI [.07, .35], p = .003). However, there was no moderating effect of personal collectivism-individualism on the impact of the type of content on commenting, as well as sharing Br-UGC, meaning that collectivistic as well as individualistic participants were as likely to comment on and share the Br-UGC. We also did not find a moderating effect of personal collectivism-individualism on tie strength and engagement with Br-UGC.

Moreover, the results of the PROCESS macro analysis showed a three-way interaction effect between informative content, national culture, and personal values on sharing Br-UGC (b = .07, p = .03). Notably, a simple slope analysis showed that the people who held collectivistic values and lived in collectivistic culture were more likely to share informative Br-UGC than the people who held individualistic values and lived in collectivistic culture.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to investigate how personal and national collectivism-individualism influences the impact of content characteristics and social relationships on consumers' engagement with Br-UGC. Based on responses of over 800 active Facebook users living in South Korea, Thailand, the Netherlands, and the United States, our results provide several insights that align with earlier research, as well as extending it.

The results contribute to the advertising and marketing literature by demonstrating that the perceived informativeness, entertainment value, and sociability of Br-UGC increase how likely consumers across cultures will not only share the content (Chow & Shi, 2015; Lovett et al., 2013), but also 'like' and comment on it. While previous studies that employed CVT focused on content

created by brands (not by consumers), our results extend the use of CVT to investigate consumers' engagement with brand-related content generated by another consumer (consumer-consumer relationships). In addition to showing the importance of content characteristics, the results indicate that the role of social relationships with the source is also crucial in how consumers engage with Br-UGC. Specifically, consumers from both collectivistic and individualistic cultures are more likely to respond to Br-UGC created by a person they know very well rather than an acquaintance. Our finding validates the positive effects of tie strength on how eWOM is evaluated across cultures (Shan & King, 2015), as well as the intention to share product reviews (Kim et al., 2015).

While the results confirm that informative, entertaining, and social Br-UGC created by strong tie source increases the likelihood of Br-UGC engagement across cultures, we found interesting results regarding the different levels of Br-UGC engagement. For instance, at the lowest level of engagement – 'liking Br-UGC' – no differences were found between consumers from different cultures. This can be explained by the fact that the 'like' function on Facebook is less public and less intrusive than commenting or sharing. 'Liking' might be the most comfortable way for consumers across cultures to safely express their personal preferences and interests. This finding adds to our understanding of how different online brand-related activities require different levels of consumer engagement.

Nonetheless, when it comes to higher levels of engagement, namely commenting and sharing, differences were found. Our results reveal that, contrary to our expectations, consumers from individualistic cultures indicated a higher likelihood of making a comment and sharing social Br-UGC than consumers from collectivistic cultures, regardless of who had created the content. However, the effect of having a strong tie with the creator on commenting was greater for consumers from collectivistic cultures than for those from individualistic cultures. Given that replying or commenting are among the strongest predictors of peer bonding (Liu et al., 2016), and since people engage in conversation with others in this way, this may imply that consumers from collectivistic cultures tend to prefer building and strengthening lifetime relationships, which reinforces the concept of peer bonding that is emphasized in collectivistic societies. These outcomes would suggest that engaging with social Br-UGC serves as a means for consumers in individualistic cultures to extend their networks, while engaging with Br-UGC created by strong-tie friends is a way for consumers in collectivistic cultures to strengthen social relationships with existing friends. Thus, reinforcing social relationships with existing friends (bonding social capital) tend to be more relevant to group-

oriented collectivistic cultures such as collectivistic cultures (Korean and Thai cultures in our study).

Moreover, in line with earlier cross-cultural consumer research, our results go one step further by investigating the extent to which individual characteristics, namely personal collectivism-individualism, have a moderating influence in the effect of content characteristics and tie strength on Br-UGC engagement. We did not find a significant difference between how collectivistic and individualistic participants comment on and share Br-UGC. However, the effect of both personal and national collectivism-individualism on Br-UGC engagement presents an interesting finding. Specifically, when Br-UGC is perceived as useful and helpful, collectivistic South Korean and Thai participants appear to share more Br-UGC than those who are more individualistic when the content is perceived as informative.

This three-way interaction effect could be explained in this way: When Br-UGC is perceived as highly informative, collectivistic individuals will decide whether to share this depending on the audience who will receive the content. As noted by self-disclosure studies (Leary & Kowalski, 1990), individuals who hold the same values as others in their networks tend to feel more connected and be more comfortable expressing their opinions. In addition, our findings emphasize the important role of national collectivism-individualism in how consumers engage with Br-UGC. Although people from the same culture hold different degrees of personal collectivism-individualism, when they engage with Br-UGC, they tend to comply closely with their national culture or the sociocultural system to which they belong. Even though our South Korean and Thai participants are Facebook users who have probably been exposed to global media and individualistic Western ways of thinking, their behavior still seems to essentially conform to the hierarchical order and highly contextualized context emphasized in South Korean and Thai societies (Lewis, 2001).

Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, this study illustrates how the elements of informativeness, entertainment value, and sociability appear to prompt consumers across cultures to engage with Br-UGC. Particularly, Br-UGC published by close friends or family on SNSs could serve as a credible consumer review, possibly generating a positive attitude about the brand, as well as encouraging the consumer to share the information (Cho et al., 2014). Thus, encouraging consumers to discuss

brands on SNSs can contribute to brand awareness and positive attitudes towards the brand.

The study also suggests that social relationships within networks are more influential for consumers from collectivistic cultures than for consumers from individualistic cultures. This implies that marketers should recognize that individuals from collectivistic cultures are more likely to agree with the opinions of their friends, and how they perceive a brand will tend to be significantly influenced by their friends. Thus, brands might want to consider emphasizing the benefits of social relations when marketing in collectivistic countries (e.g., values of friendship, social support). We further found that Br-UGC containing an element of sociability increases engagement among consumers from individualistic cultures more than it does among consumers from collectivistic cultures. This suggests that consumers from individualistic societies like to interact with their peers to express their opinions or help others. Hence, if a company can provide a channel or a social-related function for consumers, especially those from individualistic societies, where they can freely express ideas about a product or a brand and get their friends on SNSs involved, this would help the company generate content and spread the word about the brand.

Given that different online brand-related activities require different levels of consumer engagement with Br-UGC, we recommend that brand managers view consumers' commenting and sharing Br-UGC as powerful strategies to engage the consumers. In this way, Br-UGC that is shared and responded to by one consumer can reach a wide range of other consumers. More importantly, consumers appear to be expressing a desire for social interaction and integration when they comment on Br-UGC and share it (Kitirattarkarn et al., 2018). Thus, promoting social Br-UGC would encourage even more participation among users.

Moreover, when considering personal collectivism-individualism, marketers need to be aware that consumers are embedded in their national culture. This cultural embedding might overrule personal considerations and, as we have seen, affect how and when they express their preferences and interests on Facebook.

Limitations and Further Research

While our findings offer significant insights into cross-cultural advertising research, this study has a number of limitations which should be recognized and addressed. First, even though our study extends traditional cross-cultural research designs by comparing differences both between collectivistic-individualistic

national cultures and the degree of personal collectivism-individualism in the same research design, it must be noted that there are different ways of investigating differences at the personal level such as personality traits (Triandis, 2001) or the degree of autonomy, hierarchy, and mastery (Schwartz, 2006). Moreover, we did not consider participants' ethnic background, thus it is possible that people from individualistic countries who were raised in a collectivistic family (for example, Asian Americans or Mexican Americans) may hold more collectivistic values than the Americans on whom Hofstede based his classification. Second, it is worth noting that our results only represent Facebook users, and cannot be generalized to the general populations of these countries. In particular, our participants are well educated, especially in the case of the South Korean and Thai participants, thus this group might be more cosmopolitan and less dependent on traditional values due to higher exposure to global media and communication. Third, although we consulted extensively with Facebook users from the four countries before developing the stimulus materials, the manipulation of informative and entertaining content did not work as we had intended. As individual and subjective interpretations of content appear to be inevitable, more effective methods need to be developed to evaluate this. Finally, as our results are based on an online experiment, not on people's everyday lives, the issue of ecological validity needs to be mentioned. In addition, the stimuli used in the present study focused on a single product category and contained only positive Br-UGC. It remains to be seen whether the results would be the same for negative Br-UGC, as negative comments might also affect consumers' decision-making across cultures.

In future, researchers can validate and extend our work in at least three ways. First, as studies using Hofstede's dimensions have found cultural changes in national collectivism-individualism (Taras et al., 2012), societies identified in the past as the most individualistic might not necessarily be the most individualistic. To validate our study's results, future cross-cultural research could consider replicating this study by looking more closely at the role of personal values related to individuals' personality traits or ethnic background, and investigate how these personal values affect engagement with Br-UGC. Second, future research may need to investigate other product categories, as consumers' motivations for engaging with brands can differ as a result of different product categories. Finally, our findings could be further substantiated by using actual behavioral data on SNSs (e.g., by tracking consumers' responses to brand-related content).

Appendix

Table 7: Summary of the Key Measure Reliability

Construct and measurement items	US M	US SD	NL M	NL SD	KR M	KR SD	TH M	TH SD	ALL M	ALL SD
Facebook use intensity	5.77	1.26	4.48	1.24	4.30	1.36	5.21	1.03	4.94	1.36
Facebook is a part of my everyday activity.										
I am proud to tell people I'm on Facebook.										
Facebook have become part of my daily routine.										
I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto Facebook for a while.										
I feel I am part of a Facebook community.										
I would be sorry if Facebook shuts down.										
Cronbach's alpha (α)	**.93**		**.88**		**.93**		**.93**		**.92**	
Tie strength	5.66	1.38	4.56	1.62	4.74	1.39	5.34	1.13	5.08	1.45
I am committed to maintain my relationship with this person.										
I want our relationship to last for a long time.										
I feel very strongly linked to this person.										
I would not feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future.										
I am oriented toward continuing this relationship long term.										
The relationship with this person is important to me.										
I have become Friend with this person on Facebook long time ago.										
This person and I have the same social class background.										
Cronbach's alpha (α)	**.85**		**.91**		**.92**		**.90**		**.90**	
Perceived informativeness	4.76	1.65	3.48	1.50	4.41	1.38	4.72	1.11	4.35	1.51
'The Facebook post I just saw was…'										
Helpful										
Important										
Informative										
Useful										
Cronbach's alpha (α)	**.94**		**.90**		**.94**		**.92**		**.93**	

Table 7: Continued.

Construct and measurement items	US		NL		KR		TH		ALL	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Perceived entertainment value	4.97	1.58	3.96	1.47	4.37	1.40	4.67	0.98	4.50	1.42
'The Facebook post I just saw was...'										
Attractive										
Enjoyable										
Entertaining										
Fun										
Cronbach's alpha (α)	**.94**		**.91**		**.95**		**.91**		**.93**	
Perceived sociability	5.09	1.26	4.39	1.08	4.62	1.12	4.92	1.06	4.76	1.16
The author is counting on getting a lot of responses.										
The author is asking for help from other users.										
The author is expressing his/her idea to other users.										
There is a sense of human contact in this post.										
Cronbach's alpha (α)	**.76**		**.63**		**.80**		**.84**		**.77**	
Brand attitude	5.78	1.02	5.13	1.11	5.42	1.02	5.99	0.76	5.58	1.04
I think the brand Adidas is a very good brand.										
I think the brand Adidas is very useful.										
My opinion of the brand Adidas is very favorable.										
Cronbach's alpha (α)	**.88**		**.85**		**.94**		**.90**		**.90**	
Brand familiarity	5.46	1.27	4.92	1.24	5.46	0.98	5.78	0.86	5.41	1.14
The brand Adidas is very familiar to me.										
I'm very knowledgeable about Adidas.										
I have seen many advertisements about Adidas.										
Cronbach's alpha (α)	**.86**		**.82**		**.77**		**.83**		**.83**	

3

Table 7: Continued.

Construct and measurement items	US		NL		KR		TH		ALL	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Collectivistic-Individualistic values										
Horizontal individualism	5.87	0.97	5.42	0.94	5.52	0.88	5.68	0.82	5.63	0.92
I would rather depend on myself than others.										
I rely on myself most of the time. I rarely rely on others.										
I often do my own thing.										
My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me.										
Cronbach's alpha (α)	.81		.79		.82		.80		.80	
Vertical individualism	4.63	1.34	4.10	1.14	4.93	0.94	4.88	1.11	4.64	1.19
It is important for me to do my job better than the others.										
Winning is everything.										
Competition is the law of nature.										
When another person does better than I do, I get tense and aroused.										
Cronbach's alpha (α)	.80		.75		.79		.82		.79	
Horizontal collectivism	5.76	0.95	5.15	0.99	5.03	0.96	5.33	0.86	5.32	0.98
If a co-worker gets a prize, I would feel proud.										
The well-being of my coworkers is important to me.										
To me, pleasure is spending time with others.										
I feel good when I cooperate with others.										
Cronbach's alpha (α)	.81		.80		.84		.82		.83	
Vertical collectivism	5.75	0.94	4.88	1.20	4.90	1.16	5.93	0.87	5.37	1.15
Parents and children must stay together as much as possible.										
It is my duty to take care of my family, even when I have to sacrifice what I want.										
Family members should stick together, no matter what sacrifices are required.										
It is important to me that I respect the decision made by my groups.										
Cronbach's alpha (α)	.78		.85		.86		.87		.86	

Note: US = American sample, NL = Dutch sample, KR = South Korean sample, TH = Thai sample, ALL = four composite sample

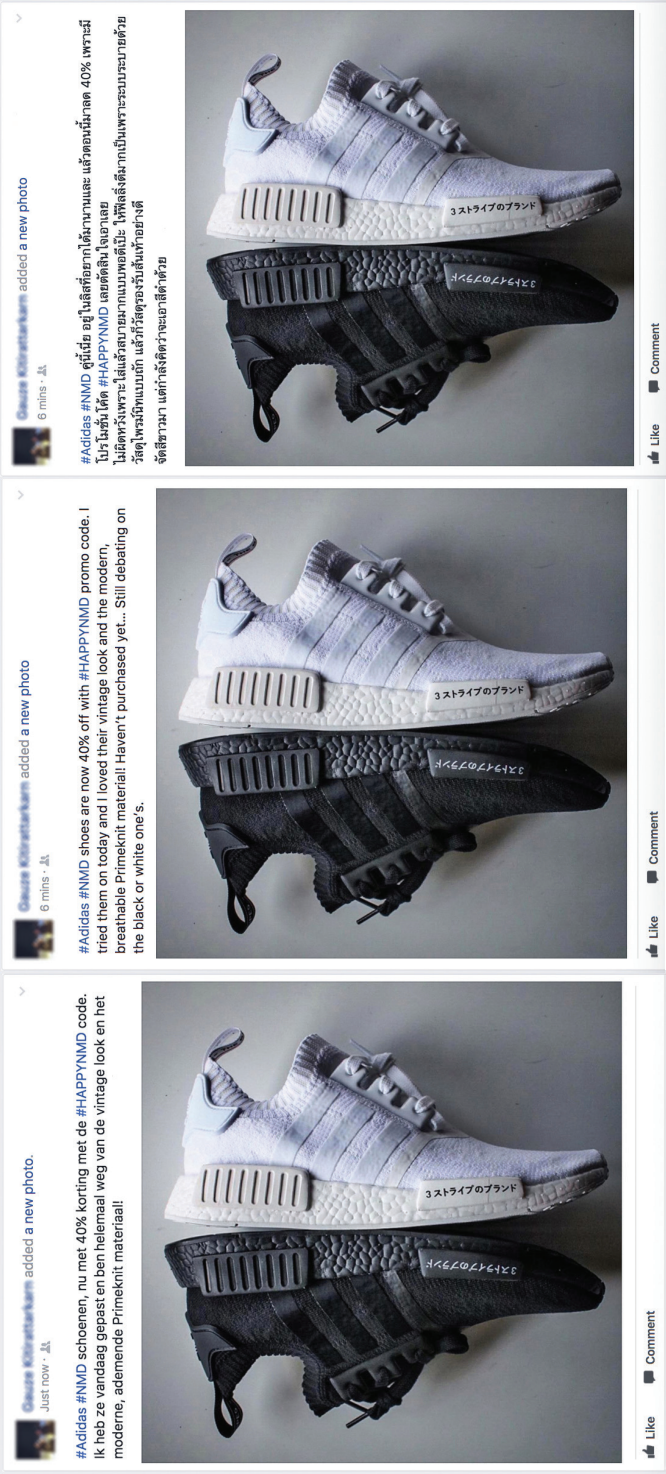**Figure 3:** Examples of Informative Brand-Related Posts

Figure 4: Examples of Entertaining Brand-Related Posts

Source, Content, and Consumer-Generated Content Engagement across Cultures

4

Audience Relationships and Consumer-Generated Content across Cultures[3]

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate cultural influence on the creation of brand-related posts by Facebook users, with a particular focus on the mediating roles of the diversity of user audiences, as well as the intensity of Facebook use. The online survey was conducted with a representative sample of respondents from South Korea, Thailand, the Netherlands, and the United States (N = 802). The findings show that cultural differences play a role for social relationships between a user and his/her audiences on SNSs with consequences for the creation of brand posts. Specifically, as a result of audience diversity, Facebook users in individualistic cultures create brand-related content more frequently, partly as a consequence of their higher Facebook use, compared to users in collectivistic cultures.

Keywords: user-generated content; social relationships; audience; SNSs; Facebook; culture

Brand-related user generated content (Br-UGC) has become a major source of product information, and more than half of the users of social networking sites (SNSs) rely on Br-UGC when making purchase decisions (Statista, 2017). In general, one of the main reasons that consumers create content and share this with people on SNSs is to maintain and form their relationships, and this is also true of content about brands (see Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011; Kitirattarkarn, Araujo, & Neijens, 2018). Given the power of Br-UGC and consumers' desire to interact with others, marketers need to understand the underlying factors and processes that contribute to Br-UGC and the extent to which social relationships among SNS users affect their creation of brand-related content.

Several studies have drawn attention to the importance of social relationships – gratifications that are related to interactions with other people (Muntinga et al., 2011) – in how consumers engage with brands online. Notably, the desire for social relationships (e.g., gaining a sense of belonging, connecting with like-minded people, socializing with others) appears to influence consumers' intention to use brand pages (Lin & Lu, 2011), to share brand-related content (Dubois, Bonezzi, & De Angelis, 2016), to generate content about brands (Chen, 2017), and to purchase a product (Elwalda, Lü, & Ali, 2016). However, this stream of research has two limitations.

First, while these studies have found that social relationships between brands and consumers positively influence the intention of consumers to engage in brand pages (Lin & Lu, 2011) and pass along a viral campaign (van Noort, Antheunis, & van Reijmersdal, 2012), we do not understand how these social relationships between consumers themselves affect their creation of brand-related content. In particular, while we know that engagement with brand-related content can be influenced by different content characteristics (e.g., informative, entertaining, social) (Jung et al., 2016; Kitirattarkarn, Araujo, & Neijens, 2019; Lovett, Peres, & Shachar, 2013), little is known about what drives consumers to create different types of brand-related content in the first place. In addition, how social relationships among consumers affect the creation of different types of Br-UGC.

Second, and more importantly, most research has focused on single-country samples, and primarily on Western consumers. Previous cross-cultural studies have found that the role of social relationships in creating brand-related content appears to vary greatly across cultures (e.g., Cho & Park, 2013; Ji et al., 2010). In particular, consumers' desire for showing in-group identification appears to differ between cultures (Barker & Ota, 2011; Kim, Sohn, & Choi, 2011; Kitirattarkarn et al., 2018). Therefore, the findings about the effect of social relationships on

brand-related content engagement in one culture do not necessarily carry over to other cultures.

We will address these two research gaps in the literature by investigating the relationships between users and their "audiences" (e.g., SNS friends) when they create brand-related content. Previous research has shown that people face a challenge balancing the expectations of different social spheres when they disclose personal information online (Marwick & boyd, 2014; Vitak, 2012). So, we will specifically investigate the role of audience diversity – the diversity in a social network which covers different social spheres (e.g., family, close friends, acquaintances, strangers) – when creating Br-UGC. With respect to cultural differences, we focus on the collectivism-individualism dimension as it is an important construct for objectively assessing distinctions of relationships between an individual and his/her fellows (Hofstede, 1983). The degree of audience diversity has been found to affect how users in collectivistic and individualistic cultures engage in positive self-presentation (Lee-Won, Shim, & Park, 2014), in particular how they actively and strategically present themselves online (Rui & Stefanone, 2013).

Based on a proportionally representative sample of active Facebook users (N = 802) across collectivistic and individualistic cultures, our study aims to make several theoretical and practical contributions. From a theoretical perspective, this study is among the first cross-cultural studies that considers the role of social relationships when examining brand-related content creation on SNSs. The results from four countries (South Korea, Thailand, the Netherlands, the United States) add to the studies on social relationships that have generally been restricted to a single country (e.g., Chu & Kim, 2011; Kim, Cheong, & Kim, 2015). Moreover, we contribute to research on online information disclosure (e.g., Beam et al., 2017; Vitak, 2012) by examining the mediating role of audience diversity. The results illustrate the underlying process behind the creation of brand-related posts on Facebook. From a practical perspective, by focusing on consumer-consumer relationships, our study provides significant insights into what factors stimulate users to create Br-UGC. This will provide global marketers a better understanding of how the audiences within an individual's network influence Br-UGC across cultures. Finally, we will illustrate how cultural differences influence the creation of different types of content: informative, entertaining, and social.

Theoretical Background

Cultural Individualism and Collectivism

Culture is a complex construct that describes the common beliefs, practices, norms, and values of a group of human beings (Schwartz, 2006). These common values serve as the most central aspect that individuals within such a group (e.g., a nation) hold and distinguish themselves from another (Hofstede, 2001). This study specifically focuses on the individualism-collectivism construct as it holds important knowledge about consumer behavior, including how consumers assess relationships between individuals (Hofstede, 1983) and communication with others (Gudykunst et al., 1997).

According to cross-cultural studies (e.g., Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Triandis, 2001), individualistic cultures, such as countries in North and Western Europe, and North America, are composed primarily of independent and self-oriented individuals who value personal happiness and the pursuit of private goals. Individuals with individualistic values are motivated by their own preferences, needs, and rights. Their social relationships tend to be more loose and flexible (Hofstede, 2001). In contrast, collectivistic cultures, such as countries in Asia, are generally composed of interdependent and group-oriented people who identify the self according to membership in a group. Individuals with collectivistic values appear to base their identity on collective social norms, with family and friends being important factors (Hofstede, 2001). The social relationships between individuals in collectivistic societies appear to be more tight, which leads to a high level of loyalty among in-group members (Cho & Park, 2013).

Cultural Differences in Brand-Related SNS Use

Existing studies on SNS usage reveal that users from collectivistic cultures (e.g., China, South Korea) spend more time on SNSs than users from individualistic cultures (e.g., the United States), which suggests the prominent role of SNSs in collectivistic societies (Chu & Choi, 2011; Ji et al., 2010). Tsai and Men (2014) have also suggested that consumers from collectivistic cultures are more dependent on social media, as they tend to rely heavily on personal networks (e.g., close friends, family) for information and social support. In contrast, consumers from individualistic cultures were found to be less dependent on social media and preferred to consult a wider range of information sources. Goodrich and de Mooij (2014) investigated how consumers in different cultures depend on social media when making a purchase decision. They found that consumers from individualistic cultures (Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States) are less likely to use

social media for purchase decisions, but more likely to consult a wider range of information sources including other media channels (Lam, Lee, & Mizerski, 2009). In contrast, consumers from collectivistic cultures (e.g., China, South Korea, Thailand) tend to rely heavily on personal connections on social media to form an opinion, rather than referring to other sources of information (Goodrich & de Mooij, 2014; Kitirattarkarn et al., 2018).

Considering what we have learned from the previous cross-cultural studies, the emphasis of social relationships on SNSs appears to significantly explain differences in consumers' online brand-related activities across cultures. In this study, we specifically consider the role of social relationships between consumers and their audiences in Br-UGC and examine whether this impacts the influence of culture on the intensity of SNS use and the creation of brand-related content.

The Effect of Audiences on the Creation of Br-UGC

Several studies in psychology, self-presentation, and impression management assert that being aware of a specific audience can cause a change in behavior. For instance, Zajonc (1965) found that the presence of an audience increases arousal and subsequently affects an individual's performance in various ways depending on the task and context. Bond (1982) argues that self-presentation theory explains the effect an audience has on behavior. People try to maintain a public image and consider how others evaluate their self-presentation. Tennie, Frith, and Frith (2010) describe the effect of having an audience as a form of impression management, with people wanting to maintain a good reputation and positive image in the eyes of others. Moreover, a recent study has revealed that when an audience is present, individuals appear to actively consider the opinions of others, leading them to attempt to impress others' opinion (Hamilton & Lind, 2016).

On SNSs, the audience can be defined as all the members of the user's online network who are able to view their information and interact with the user online (Rui & Stefanone, 2013). SNS users have increasingly diverse social networks, including family members, close friends, acquaintances, and sometimes even strangers. The diversity of the audience makes self-presentation more challenging, as an individual feels different expectations of his or her ideal self in different social contexts (Marwick & boyd, 2010; Marwick & boyd, 2014; Vitak, 2012).

Audience Diversity and Br-UGC. Research has shown that having diverse audiences in one's network increases online tension as people may have difficulties in determining how to present themselves to different audience members (Binder, Howes, & Sutcliffe, 2009). Furthermore, studies have shown that, when the audience in a user's network is diverse, they tend to avoid disclosing unwanted

information and appear to construct their presentation strategically, leading to a lower likelihood of information disclosure (Child & Westerman, 2013). Hogan (2010) showed that, with the desire to receive the benefits from social interactions online, people tend to balance their concerns about disclosing information to a wider audience. By doing so, people appear to simply create content that is normatively acceptable to every audience member – content without "nudity, violence, political extremism, or racial epithets" (Hogan, 2010, p. 383).

In line with Hogan (2010), research shows that audience diversity positively influences general information disclosure, for instance, the frequency of updating wall posts (Rui & Stefanone, 2013), sharing online news (Beam et al., 2017), and personal information (Vitak, 2012) on Facebook. Specifically, Rui and Stefanone (2013) found that, given the need for social relationships, many Facebook users use an effective self-presentation tactic of disclosing a lot of benign information. Moreover, Beam et al. (2017) suggest that a more diverse audience appears to provide people with a larger platform for sharing information and engaging in discussions about information that is relevant to their lives. Instead of avoiding online disclosure, people tend to manage their audiences consciously, disclosing more information to their SNS friends in order to build social support (Vitak, 2012).

When it comes to brand-related information disclosure on SNSs, several scholars have found that consumers engage with brands to identify with their in-group and, at the same time, to enhance their self-presentation (e.g., Park & Kang, 2013; Smith, Fischer, & Yongjian, 2012). These consumers often mention products they possess and brands as part of an effort to maintain and develop their self-concept and relationships with others (Sung, Kim, & Choi, 2018). Park and Kang (2013) also suggest that online consumers present themselves strategically and prefer brand-related posts that make them feel special by getting attention and that they continuously strive to sustain such a positive identity.

Although the role of audience diversity in Br-UGC has hardly been discussed, the previous studies suggest that people who have a more diverse audience are more likely to participate intensively in Facebook activities (e.g., sharing, posting). This makes us expect that these people generate and publish content (about brands) more frequently than people with less diverse audiences. According to Hogan (2010), brand-related content in our study will be considered inoffensive and likely acceptable to all kinds of audiences. In addition, as Facebook is often used as a platform to construct or promote an individuals' self-presentation, people tend to prefer posting positive or neutral content about brands rather than negative content (Smith et al., 2012).

4

Therefore, we predict that when an individual has a more diverse audience in their network, they will tend to participate in Facebook activities more intensely, in order to enhance their self-presentation and develop social relationships with their Facebook friends. Consequently, the intensity of Facebook use will positively affect the frequency of uncontroversial content creation or Br-UGC. This leads us to the following hypotheses:

H1: The higher a user's audience diversity, the more intense their Facebook use.

H2: The more intense a user's Facebook use, the more they will create brand-related content.

Cultural Differences in SNS Audiences

Since social relationships differ between collectivistic and individualistic cultures (Hofstede, 2001), the degree of audience diversity within an individual's network will also tend to differ across cultures. Cross-cultural studies have found that since intimate relationships and deep involvement are emphasized in collectivistic cultures, networks of social relationships tend to be less diverse in these cultures compared to individualistic ones (Götzenbrucker & Köhl, 2014). Specifically, relationships among Thais showed lower diversity and were more peer-group dominated, while relationships among Austrians were more individualized and varied. Similarly, Cho and Park (2013) found that, in South Korea's collectivistic society, users tend to primarily have SNS friends who are also close or familiar offline friends. Consequently, they reinforce their tight and close relationships by having a limited number of friends on SNSs. In contrast, American users prefer to have many people with a wide range of interests in their network, and prefer to engage all people at different levels of social relationships in order to exchange or discuss information (Cho & Park, 2013; Chu & Choi, 2011). Based on these findings, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H3: Consumers living in individualistic cultures have more diverse audiences in their network than those in collectivistic cultures.

Cultural Influence in Factors Underlying the Creation of Br-UGC

Although very limited attention has been given to cultural influence on Br-UGC, a qualitative study noted that consumers' motivations for creating brand-related content differ as a result of cultural collectivism-individualism (Kitirattarkarn et al., 2018). For instance, when it comes to the motivations for posting content related to brands on SNSs, consumers from collectivistic cultures (e.g., South Korea, Thailand) indicated that they generate content in order to have a conversation with like-minded friends and to get support. In contrast, consumers from individualistic

cultures (e.g., the Netherlands, the United States) said they want to have open discussions with others outside of their (close) social group. Since culture and norms in one's social network have a critical influence on communication processes (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013), we expect that the previous qualitative findings about differences in consumers' desire for social integration can be explained by their culture.

More specifically, cross-cultural research suggests that the diversity of the audience influences how individuals in different culture manage their online self-presentation and disclosure (Lee-Won et al., 2014; Rui & Stefanone, 2013). Particularly, Lee-Won et al. (2014) found that users in individualistic societies engage in positive self-presentation (e.g., photo sharing, status updates) because, in their culture, they are encouraged to manifest and enhance themselves regardless of the level of intimacy with their audience. In contrast, users from collectivistic cultures engage in positive self-presentation to maintain self-acceptance, concerned that the content does not contradict the expectations of different groups in their network. To avoid possible negative reactions, SNS users especially from collectivistic cultures tend to consciously manage their self-presentation by controlling who can view and access the content they post on Facebook (Rui & Stefanone, 2013).

Based on the preceding discussions, we can conclude that consumers from individualistic cultures engage intensively in Facebook activities (e.g., posting brand-related content) as a means of exchanging information about products as well as presenting a positive image to wider groups of people. By doing so, consumers from individualistic cultures can increase their social status and present their own unique image. Consumers from collectivistic cultures, on the other hand, are more likely to participate in SNSs to supplement their offline interactions (Barker & Ota, 2011) and to gain emotional or social support (Xu-Priour, Truong, & Klink, 2014). Specifically, when engaging in brand communication online, they appear to value friendship first and trust existing offline friends rather than wanting to consult a wider audience for factual information about a product (Goodrich & de Mooij, 2014). Based on this, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H4: The effect of culture on the frequency of Br-UGC is mediated by audience diversity and intensity of Facebook use.

To illustrate the effect of culture on Br-UGC via audience diversity and Facebook use intensity, we propose the following conceptual model (see Figure 1).
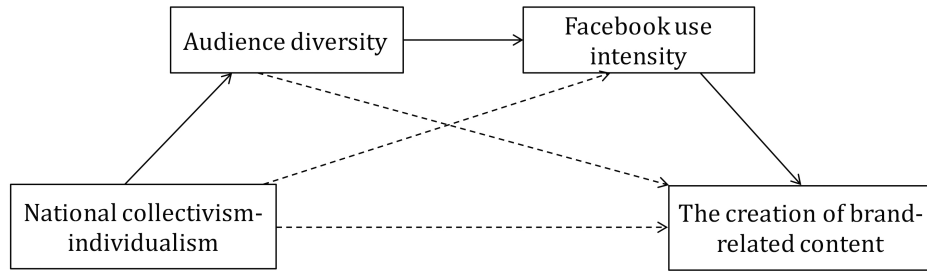
Figure 1: Conceptual Model: Effect of Culture on BR-UGC via Audience Diversity and Intensity of Facebook Use
Note: In the analysis, national collectivism-individualism = individualistic culture

Different Effects for Different Types of Br-UGC
Besides audience diversity affecting the frequency that users create brand-related content, we also expect audience diversity to affect the types of Br-UGC users create. Studies on audience diversity have suggested that users' intention to communicate with different types of an audience is associated with the characteristics of the content they share online (Marwick & boyd, 2010; Vitak, 2012). In other words, it is likely that people present a specific type of content for a specific audience.

In order to thoroughly investigate the creation of Br-UGC, we additionally distinguish between brand-related content that is informative, entertaining, and social. Drawing upon previous research, informative, entertaining, and social values of a product or content about a product are key drivers of consumer engagement with brands. These values have been found to affect consumers' intention to participate in brand communities (Jung et al., 2016), to share electronic word-of-mouth (Chow & Shi, 2015; Lovett et al., 2013), and to make a comment on brand post on Facebook (Kitirattarkarn et al., 2019). Considering the lack of literature on audience relationships and the creation of different content characteristics across cultures, we propose the following research question to explore this topic:

RQ1: To what extent does audience diversity affect the creation of informative, entertaining, and social Br-UGC across cultures?

Method

Participants and Procedure
To test the hypotheses of this study, we recruited online consumers from two collectivistic national cultures (South Korea, Thailand) and two individualistic

ones (the Netherlands, the United States). These four countries were chosen because cross-cultural research (e.g., Hofstede, 2001) has identified their national cultures as highly collectivistic (South Korea, Thailand) or highly individualistic (the Netherlands, the United States). In addition, it has been suggested that consumers across these four countries use social media for purchase decisions differently for cultural reasons (see Goodrich & de Mooij, 2014; Kitirattarkarn et al., 2018).

We used an online panel from Qualtrics to collect the data. A total of 802 active Facebook users living in the four chosen countries participated in the study. The participants were 50.5% female, 40.6% 18-34 years old, 40.3% 35-54 years old, and 19.1% older than 55. The groups were comparable in terms of age and gender across the four countries. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics across these four countries.

Table 1: Demographic Characterisitcs by Country

	US (%) (N=203)	NL (%) (N=200)	KR (%) (N=195)	TH (%) (N=204)
Gender				
Male	45.8	49	53.3	50
Female	54.2	51	46.7	50
Age				
18-34	39.4	41	41.5	40.7
35-54	40.9	39	41	40.2
55+	19.7	20	17.4	19.7
Education				
Below secondary school	19.7	0.5	-	0.5
Secondary school and above	30.5	15.5	14.9	16.1
Undergraduate and above	40.9	73	75.9	75
Master degree and above	8.9	11	9.2	8.4
Income[a]				
Below average	31.1	34	11.8	19.5
Average	26.6	22	19.5	31.4
Above average	42.3	44	68.7	49.1

Note: N = 802, US = United States, NL = Netherlands, KR = South Korea, TH = Thailand
[a]Participants answered their level of income on a scale, which 1 indicated the 'lowest income' and 10 the 'highest income'. The average income per month of American, Dutch, South Korean, and Thai people was USD 2,224, EUR 2,193, KRW 1,813,458, and THB 20,000 respectively (OECD, 2017).

Measures

National collectivism-individualism. In the analysis, we computed the country of the sample to a dummy variable: code 1 for individualistic cultures (the Netherlands and the United States), code 0 for collectivistic cultures (South Korea and Thailand).

Audience diversity. The measure of audience diversity focused on the diversity of people from different contexts within each user's network. We adopted this approach from previous studies (Beam et al., 2017; Vitak, 2012). Participants were asked to estimate the percentage of people in their Facebook friend list from six different categories within their Facebook friend list namely: family, close friends, classmates/colleagues or coworkers, people known from hobbies/religion or other organizations, acquaintances, and strangers. These categories were based on previous studies (Beam et al., 2017; McCarty et al., 2001) and adapted to the current study. To measure audience diversity, we calculated Simpson's D, a measure that has been employed in quantifying audience diversity using propositions (see Beam et al., 2017). With the six categories, the measure ranged from 0 denoting no diversity to 0.83 representing the most diversity (M = .63, SD = .18).

Intensity of Facebook use. This measure focused on the extent to which participants actively engage in Facebook activities and are emotionally connected to Facebook as part of their daily life (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Participants indicated their intensity of Facebook use by completing 6 items on a 7-point Likert scale (M = 4.96, SD = 1.34). The items included, for instance, "Facebook is part of my everyday activity," "I feel I am part of the Facebook community" (Cronbach's alpha (α) = .92).

Brand-related content creation. We measured the frequency users created brand-related content by asking participants to indicate how often they generally posted content related to brands on Facebook on a seven-point scale (1 = never, 7 = at least daily, M = 2.88, SD = 1.65).

Informative, entertaining, and social characteristics of Br-UGC. We additionally measured three dependent variables: the extent of informative, entertaining, and social characteristics of Br-UGC. Participants who had previously posted content about brands on Facebook (N = 641) were asked to indicate to what extent the post(s) they created were informative and entertaining. We presented the sentence, "Generally, the brand-related posts I created on my timeline were…" Participants then completed 8 items on a 7-point Likert scale (Edwards, Li, & Lee, 2002). Informativeness items (α = .93; M = 4.97, SD = 1.23) included "helpful", "important", "informative", and "useful". Entertainment value items (α = .91; M = 4.95, SD = 1.15) included "attractive", "enjoyable", "entertaining", and "fun". To measure social content, we presented the sentence, "When I created brand-related content in

general,…" Participants evaluated four items on a 7-point Likert scale (Chow & Shi 2015). The items (α = .82; M = 4.70, SD = 1.30) included statements related to social presence (e.g., "I counted on getting a lot of responses"), interactivity (e.g., "I showed a sense of human contact in the post"), and collaboration (e.g., "I asked for help from other users").

Control variables. Apart from demographic information (gender, age, educational level, income), we controlled for extraversion, as several studies have associated this personality trait with the usage of SNSs for socializing (Jackson & Wang, 2013). Specifically, people with introverted or extroverted personalities consider the effect of audiences differently (Uziel, 2007). For instance, when people believe that others are observing them, extroverts with high self-esteem tend to present themselves in a "positive-self-assured" way, whereas introverts with low self-esteem tend to place themselves in a "negative apprehensive" way (Uziel, 2007). We used a validated scale to measure extraversion (Donnellan et al., 2006; α = .63; M = 4.08, SD = 1.08).

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations of the key variables as well as all bivariate correlation coefficients. All the measures in our samples demonstrated good reliability (see Appendix).

Results

To test our hypotheses, we conducted a serial mediation analysis using Hayes' PROCESS model 6 with 5,000 bootstrap samples (Hayes, 2018; see Figure 1). We standardized all data before the analyses to place all variables on a common scale (Gelman, 2008). The frequency of brand-related content creation was the dependent variable; national collectivism-individualism was the independent variable; audience diversity (M_1) and intensity of Facebook use (M_2) served as mediators. Table 3 presents an overview of the analysis.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables by National Culture and Bivariate Correlations of Variables

	COL (N = 399)		IDV (N = 403)		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	M	SE	M	SE								
NATION	-		-		1							
CREATE	2.40	1.48	3.38	1.72	.30**	1						
INF	4.90	1.15	4.96	1.33	.02	.41**	1					
ENT	4.84	1.14	5.12	1.16	.12**	.38**	.60*	1				
SOC	4.89	1.23	4.59	1.35	-.11**	.34**	.57**	.52**	1			
DIVERSITY	0.60	0.20	0.66	0.16	.16**	.15**	.09*	.09*	.06	1		
FB_USE	4.71	1.29	5.15	1.41	.16**	.35**	.40**	.40**	.36**	.19**	1	
EXTRAV	3.95	0.96	4.18	1.19	.10**	.20**	.21**	.18**	.22**	.04	.18**	1

Note: COL = collectivistic cultures; IDV = individualistic cultures; NATION = national collectivism-individualism; CREATE = the frequency of brand-related content creation; INF = the creation of informative post; ENT = the creation of entertaining post; SOC = the creation of social post; DIVERSITY = audience diversity; FB_USE = Facebook use intensity; EXTRAV = Extraversion. National collectivism-individualism was included as a dichotomous variable in which 1 = individualistic cultures (the Netherlands, the United States), 0 = collectivistic cultures (South Korea, Thailand). $^{**}p < .01$, *p < .05

Table 3: Mediating Effect of Culture on fFrequency of BR-UGC

Variables	Frequency of Br-UGC	
	B	95% CI
Mediator Variable 1 (Diversity)		
Constant	.001	[-.08, .08]
NATION (IDV)	.12***	[.05, .19]
Mediator Variable 2 (Facebook use)		
Constant	.006	[-.01, .13]
NATION (IDV)	.06	[-.05, .34]
DIVERSITY	.18***	[.11, .25]
Dependent Variable Model		
Constant	.01	[-.06, .08]
NATION (IDV)	.19***	[.12, .25]
DIVERSITY	.03	[-.03, .10]
FB_USE	.28***	[.22, .35]
GENDER	-.08**	[-.14, -.02]
AGE	-.07*	[-.12, -.02]
EDUCATION	-.08*	[-.15, -.01]
INCOME	.17***	[.10, .24]
EXTRAVERT	.10**	[.04, .16]
R^2	.21	
F	25.61***	

Note: N = 802; Mediator Variable 1 = audience diversity; Mediator Variable 2 = Facebook use intensity; NATION (IDV) = national individualism; DIVERSITY = audience diversity; FB_USE = Facebook use intensity; EXTRAVERT = Extraversion; PROCESS model 6 of Hayes with 5,000 bootstrap samples. $^{***}p < .001$,$^{**}p < .01$, *p < .05.

Overview of Main Effects

The first hypothesis predicted that the more diverse the audiences of SNS users, the more intense their Facebook use would be. As expected, the results showed that the degree of audience diversity positively affected the intensity of Facebook use (b = .18, p < .001). Thus, H1 was supported. Furthermore, our results showed that the intensity of Facebook use positively influenced the frequency of Br-UGC (b = .28, p < .001). Thus, H2 was also supported. The results also supported H3, which stated that consumers living in individualistic cultures would have more diverse audiences in their network compared to consumers in collectivistic cultures (b = .12, p = .001).

Culture, Audience Diversity, Facebook Use Intensity, and Br-UGC

As presented in Table 2, national culture was positively correlated with the frequency of Br-UGC, suggesting that participants from individualistic cultures tend to create brand-related content more frequently than those from collectivistic cultures. H4 predicted that the effect of national culture on the frequency of brand-related content creation would be mediated by audience diversity and consequently intensity of Facebook use. The results indicated a significant indirect effect via both audience diversity and Facebook use intensity (indirect effect = .006, p < .05, SE = .002, 95% confidence interval (CI) [.002, .01]; direct effect = .19, p < .001, SE = .03, 95% CI [.12, .25]; total effect = .22, p < .001, SE = .04, 95% CI [.15, .28]). Participants from individualistic cultures created content about brands more frequently on Facebook than participants from collectivistic cultures, with this effect being mediated by the diversity of their Facebook friend list and consequently Facebook use intensity, with both mediators having a positive effect. The single mediators between national culture and frequency of Br-UCG creation, were not significant: indirect effect$_{M1}$ (audience diversity) = .004, p > .05, SE = .004, 95% CI [-.004, .01]) and indirect effect$_{M2}$ (Facebook use intensity) = .02, p > .05, SE = .01, 95% CI [-.003, .04]).

Although the results supported H4, as shown in Figure 2, audience diversity and Facebook use intensity did not fully mediate the effect of national culture on Br-UGC as the direct effect of national culture on the frequency of Br-UGC was significant (b = .12, p = .001).
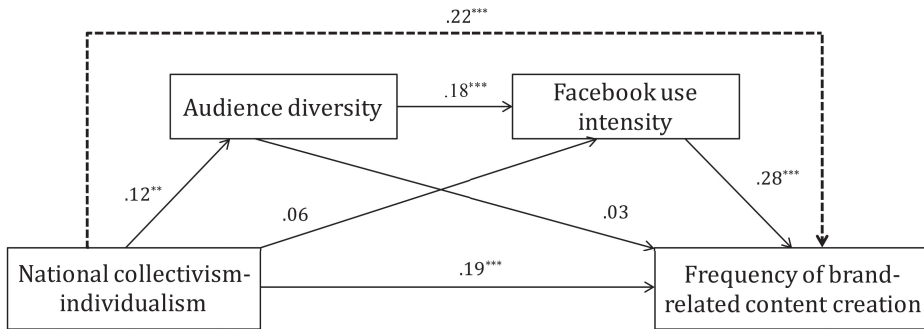
Figure 2: Mediating Effect of National Culture on Frequency of Br-UGC via Audience Diversity and Facebook Use Intensity
Note. Path values are standardized coefficients. Solid and dotted lines represent direct and total effect, respectively. 5,000 bootstrap.

The Relationships between Culture, Audience Diversity, and the Creation of Informative, Entertaining, and Social Br-UGC

In examining RQ1, the bivariate correlations between culture, audience diversity, and the creation of informative, entertaining, and social Br-UGC (see Table 2) showed that, in line with previous analysis, (individualistic) culture was positively related with the degree of audience diversity ($r = .16$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, (individualistic) culture was positively related with the creation of entertaining brand-related content ($r = .12$, $p < .01$), negatively related with the creation of social content ($r = -.11$, $p < .01$), and was not related to the creation of entertaining content. We also found that audience diversity was positively related with the creation of informative brand-related content ($r = .09$, $p < .05$), entertaining content ($r = .09$, $p < .05$), and not with social content.

Next, we further examined the extent to which the creation of informative, entertaining, and social brand-related content was affected by culture and audience diversity. A mediation analysis was conducted using Hayes' PROCESS model 4 with 5,000 bootstrap samples. Culture served as an independent variable, and audience diversity served as a mediator. Besides the control variables indicated in the previous section, we additionally controlled for the intensity of Facebook use and frequency of brand-related content creation, as these variables were highly correlated with the creation of informative, entertaining, and social brand-related content. By doing so, we were able to specifically investigate the role of audience diversity for the creation of different types of Br-UGC.

Table 4: Analyses of Cultural Influence on Different BR-UGC[1]

	Informative Br-UGC		Entertaining Br-UGC		Social Br-UGC	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Constant	.03	.06	-06	.06	.25	.06
DIVERSITY	.007	.04	-.003	.04	.05	.04
NATION (IDV)	-.23**	.08	-.06	.08	-.60***	.08
GENDER	-.02	.04	.002	.04	-.06	.04
AGE	.03	.03	-.08**	.03	-.06*	.03
EDUCATION	-.08*	.04	-.01	.04	-.07	.04
INCOME	-.05	.04	-.03	.04	-.05	.04
EXTRAVERT	.14***	.04	.10**	.04	.15***	.04
FB_USE	.24***	.04	.25***	.04	.28***	.04
CREATE	.31***	.04	.30***	.04	.24***	.04
R^2	.24		.21		.25	
F	21.65***		19.08***		23.46***	

Note: $N = 641$, PROCESS model 4 of Hayes with 5,000 bootstrap samples. ***$p < .001$,**$p < .01$, *$p < .05$.

As can be seen in Table 4, audience diversity did not mediate the effect of culture on the creation of different types of Br-UGC. The findings further showed that culture significantly affected the creation of informative and social content. In particular, participants from collectivistic cultures appeared to create informative ($b = -.23$, $p = .002$) and social ($b = -.60$, $p < .001$) brand-related content more than participants from individualistic cultures did. In other words, users from individualistic cultures frequently create brand posts, but compared to the posts of users in collectivistic cultures, these are less informative and social.

Discussion

Based on the responses of over 800 Facebook users living in South Korea, Thailand, the Netherlands, and the United States, we are able to validate and extend the research on online social relationships beyond the context of general SNS use (Ellison et al., 2011; Liu, Ainsworth, & Baumeister, 2016) to the more specific context of consumers creating brand-related content on Facebook. More importantly, the findings explain the underlying processes of consumers' creation of Br-UGC with an emphasis on cultural differences. The key findings and directions for further research are discussed below.

First, in line with previous studies on an audience and SNS use (Beam et al., 2017; Vitak, 2012), we found a positive effect of audience diversity on brand-related content creation. Our findings show that having a more diverse network encourages people to become more active in engaging in SNS activities (e.g., posting), which leads to a higher frequency of brand-related content creation. Furthermore, as it has increasingly become common for consumers to present a positive image on Facebook by posting Br-UGC (Smith et al., 2012), the study results imply that increased diversity in online social networks probably stimulates consumers to actively do this, especially by creating informative posts (e.g., by emphasizing the product's benefits) and entertaining and amusing posts (Yuki, 2015). Future research could extend these results by examining the relationships between audience diversity, self-presentation, and they affect the creation of Br-UGC.

Second, our study illustrates the differences between how consumers in collectivistic and individualistic cultures develop their online relationships. This extends previous cross-cultural research on information disclosure and self-presentation (Gudykunst et al., 1997; Lee-Won et al., 2014; Rui & Stefanone, 2013) by showing that audience diversity and intensity of Facebook use partially mediate the effect of national culture on the frequency of Br-UGC. The outcomes specifically suggest that the loose and flexible relationships emphasized in individualistic cultures tend to promote social interactions between a user and their diverse audience, making them more active in SNS activities, and leading to more creation of Br-UGC. This underlying process helps to explain how SNS users in individualistic cultures take advantage of the diversity in their network to expand their social circles and to connect with wider groups of people partly by creating brand-related information (Liu et al., 2016). However, people in collectivistic cultures might prefer to have a more closely-knit network with their current connections (Chu & Choi, 2011), probably because they tend to be more concerned about how they should behave to satisfy the expectations and preferences of different communities (Lee-Won et al., 2014). Hence, as presented in our study, people in collectivistic cultures are less likely to have a diverse network and less likely to post personal information to everyone on Facebook, leading to a lower Facebook use and, a lower frequency of Br-UGC.

Finally, the findings about different content characteristics provide additional insights into the role of culture, which extend the understanding of online brand-consumer communication (Men & Tsai, 2012). We can see that online consumers from different cultures adopt different communication style. Specifically, users from collectivistic cultures appear to generate brand-related posts that contain elements of informativeness and sociability more than users from

individualistic cultures. This may imply that users from collectivistic cultures cultivate relationships with their Facebook friends by sharing their experiences with brands, giving helpful information or recommendations, and possibly to strengthen the connection with their network. Consumers living in individualistic cultures, however, might prefer to simply endorse a brand as part of their self-presentation, with less emphasis on providing detailed information or maintaining their relationships.

Practical Implications

The findings from this study yield important insights for managing online marketing strategies. First, social relationships in an individuals' network are crucial for consumer engagement with brands online. In particular, the diversity of the audience serves as one of the significant factors that drives consumers across cultures to publish content about brands on Facebook.

Nevertheless, global marketers need to keep in mind that, depending on their culture, people have different ways of developing their relationships, and consequently have different online communication behaviors, including when creating Br-UGC. As consumers in collectivistic cultures value a sense of connectedness and focus on maintaining their relationships (Xu-Priour et al., 2014), a specific SNS platform that allows users to easily limit their audiences or determine who receives a given content might make it easier for them to comfortably share their experiences about brands as well as to interact with their close contacts. (Examples of this are WeChat in China, Line in Thailand and Japan, and Kakao Talk in South Korea.) Marketers who operate in global markets, especially collectivistic societies, may need to consider also promoting campaigns on these local platforms to effectively engage the consumers.

In addition, as we have seen, consumers in collectivistic cultures appear to value informativeness and sociability in brand-related messages when creating brand-related content. This would suggest that indirectly advertised messages which emphasize the social aspect will work more successfully for consumers in collectivistic cultures than for consumers in individualistic ones. As a result, online marketers should consider including social elements in their advertised messages (e.g., socializing with friends) when targeting collectivistic consumers.

Limitations and Further Research

This study has some limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, even though we expected that relationships between consumers and their audiences would explain cultural differences in Br-UGC, there might be other factors than audience diversity that should be taken into account. As previous literature has suggested, tie strength, trust, and interpersonal influence (e.g., normative influences) can be focal predictors that characterize the nature of social relationships and influence user-generated content (Chu & Kim, 2011) especially across cultures (Chu & Choi, 2011). To extend our results, future research could investigate the influence of these social-related variables on Br-UGC.

Second, this study only considered three characteristics (informativeness, entertainment, sociability) when investigating different types of Br-UGC. Previous research focusing on message characteristics, however, has indicated that the elements of traceability (Araujo, Neijens, & Vliegenthart, 2015) and interactivity (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012) also stimulate consumers' sharing and 'liking'. Furthermore, Br-UGC can be either positive or negative, and both kinds of brand-related content have been found to influence consumers' brand perceptions and purchase intention (Christodoulides, Michaelidou, & Argyriou, 2012). Therefore, to validate and extend our study's results, future research should investigate how traceability, interactivity, and valence affect consumers' creation of brand-related messages across cultures.

In addition, while our study offers initial insights into how cultural differences influence the creation of different types of brand-related content, we still do not know the underlying mechanism of these differences. Future research could perform a content analysis of the Br-UGC and apply qualitative interviewing in order to understand why consumers in one culture create a certain type of brand-related posts more than consumers in another culture.

Finally, previous studies have noted that people with diverse audiences on Facebook manage their different audiences strategically by posting information visible to themselves only (Vitak et al., 2012) or employing Facebook friend lists to segregate their audiences (Marwick & boyd, 2010). Future research should look at the strategies consumers pursue to deal with audience diversity and investigate whether consumers consciously and carefully share the content with a specific audience.

Appendix

Table 5: Summary of the Key Measure Reliability

Construct and measurement items	US		NL		KR		TH		ALL	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Facebook use intensity	5.79	1.24	4.51	1.27	4.25	1.35	5.15	1.05	4.93	1.37
Facebook is a part of my everyday activity.										
I am proud to tell people I'm on Facebook.										
Facebook have become part of my daily routine.										
I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto Facebook for a while.										
I feel I am part of a Facebook community.										
I would be sorry if Facebook shuts down.										
Cronbach's alpha (α)	.93		.88		.92		.88		.92	
Informative content creation	5.46	1.17	4.40	1.27	4.72	1.12	5.20	1.13	4.93	1.25
'Generally, brand-related posts I created on my timeline were ...'										
Helpful										
Important										
Informative										
Useful										
Cronbach's alpha (α)	.92		.90		.93		.93		.93	
Entertaining content creation	5.50	1.14	4.69	1.03	4.70	1.23	5.07	0.92	5.00	1.16
'Generally, brand-related posts I created on my timeline were ...'										
Attractive										
Enjoyable										
Entertaining										
Fun										
Cronbach's alpha (α)	.92		.92		.94		.91		.93	

4

Table 5: Continued.

Construct and measurement items	US		NL		KR		TH		ALL	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Social content creation	5.06	1.29	4.08	1.22	4.78	1.33	5.08	1.02	4.72	1.31
'When I created brand-related content in general,...'										
I count on getting a lot of responses.										
I ask for help from other users.										
I express my idea to other users.										
I ask for help from other users.										
Cronbach's alpha (α)	.85		.75		.86		.86		.84	

Note: US = American sample, NL = Dutch sample, KR = South Korean sample, TH = Thai sample, ALL = four composite sample
To ensure that the measures employed in the study are cross-culturally invariant (Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998), we conducted confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) and checked whether items fit the variable and also whether the unstandardized factor loadings of each variable were likely equal across collectivistic and individualistic samples (Kline, 2011).

Audience Relationships and Consumer-Generated Content across Cultures

4

5

Conclusions and Discussion

Main Conclusions

How does culture influence engagement with brand-related user generated content (Br-UGC) on Facebook? Based on the studies presented in this dissertation, the key findings regarding cultural similarities and differences can be summarized according to four aspects: motivations, relationships with the source of a post, the composition of a user's audience, and the content characteristics of a post.

Cultural Similarities and Differences in Motivations for Engaging with Br-UGC

Why do consumers across collectivistic and individualistic cultures engage with Br-UGC on Facebook? In other words, what motivates different levels of engagement among Facebook users: viewing, 'liking', sharing and commenting on posts about brands, and creating posts about brands? My qualitative study identified seven main motivations for Br-UGC engagement: information seeking, entertainment, personal identity and presentation, remuneration, social integration, empowerment, and intention to try or purchase. Table 1 summarizes these motivations according to the level of Br-UGC engagement with the definition included.

Table 1: Definition of Motivations Demonstrated in Different Levels of Br-UGC Engagement.

Motivations	Definition	Levels of Engagement
• Entertainment	Gratifications that are related to passing time; being entertained by humorous content; or having good experiences and memories.	Consumption Contribution Creation
• Empowerment	Gratifications that are related to individual's desire to exert their influence or power on other people or brands by listing good/bad products/services; giving opinions regarding product/services; spreading the word towards brands.	Contribution Creation
• Information seeking	Gratifications that are related to staying updated on relevant events; seeking advice and opinions; collecting useful/interesting information.	Consumption Contribution Creation
• Intention to try or purchase	Gratification that is related to people's desire to try or purchase a product, or to visit a place. Subsequently, they want to express their desire to their friends or the public by creating or contributing to such Br-C.	Contribution Creation
• Personal identity and presentation	Gratifications that are related to the self that people try to present to the public. It covers motivations that are related to people's personal interests and experiences; emotions and feelings; intention to present their (positive) image.	Contribution Creation

Table 1: Continued.

Motivations	Definition	Levels of Engagement
• Remuneration	Gratifications that are related to people's expectation to gain some kind of future rewards such as economic incentives, work-related benefits, and reciprocity.	Contribution Creation
• Social integration	Gratifications that are related to other people. It covers gratifications that are related to gaining a sense of belonging; connecting with friends, family, and society; seeking opinion/support; having a conversation with others; giving support to others; being helpful to others; socializing with friends.	Contribution Creation

Note. This table is adapted based on the Table 1 presented in Chapter 2.

These findings validate and extend previous research by showing that the motivations found in samples from Western countries (e.g., Muntinga et al., 2011; Poch & Martin, 2015; Yuki, 2015) are also applicable in this cross-cultural study. In other words, these motivations influence Facebook users to engage not only with content created by brands but also that created by consumers, and these motivations apply to both collectivistic and individualistic cultures. Interestingly, the intention to try or purchase a product is a new motivation that emerged from this study primarily among participants from collectivistic cultures. People in collectivistic societies tend to signal their purchase intention to their friends when they 'like', comment on, and share content about brands.

While consumers' motivations for Br-UGC engagement are rather similar across cultures at the aggregate level, *cultural differences* emerged when people explained specific reasons (called sub-motivations in the study) why they only consumed or became more active in engaging with Br-UGC by commenting, sharing, or posting (for an overview, see Table 2).

First, at the lowest level of content engagement – consuming Br-UGC – participants from different cultures indicated different reasons why they only viewed Br-UGC without making further contributions. This first key difference concerns individuals' privacy and public image, which was labeled as a *personal identity and presentation* motivation. Notably, some participants from individualistic cultures chose not to post about brands because they did not want to expose their private information on the Internet. Participants from collectivistic cultures chose not to actively engage with Br-UGC because they wanted to avoid arguments with their social groups. In their opinion, creating or contributing to content about brands might reflect an idea which sometimes differs from that of others in their social group.

Second, when it comes to a higher level of engagement – contributing to Br-UGC – cultural differences were found when participants across cultures shared *informative* or *entertaining* Br-UGC. Although Facebook provides the same features for every user (across the globe), the qualitative findings show that the act of sharing Br-UGC differs between cultures. More specifically, while participants from individualistic cultures often shared Br-UGC because of the usefulness of the content or for the sake of enjoyment, many participants from collectivistic cultures sometimes shared Br-UGC as a way of saving the content privately for themselves, so that they could come back to read it again later. In their opinion, sharing everything on their Facebook timeline might annoy other people, so privately sharing was the way to save the content for themselves.

Table 2: Cultural Similarities and Differences in Motivations for Br-UGC Engagement

Br-UGC Engagement	Cultural Influence on Motivations	
	Similarities	Differences
Consuming	Information seeking, entertainment	Personal identity and presentation IDV: Privacy concerns. COL: Argument avoidance.
'Liking'	Seven motivations	Remuneration IDV: Work-related benefits. Social integration COL: Giving support.
Commenting	Seven motivations	Social integration IDV: Out-group conversations COL: In-group conversations Intention to try or purchase IDV: I want to try a product. COL: I want to try a product with friends.
Sharing	Seven motivations	Information seeking and entertainment IDV: Saving content for only myself. COL: Sharing content with everyone. Social integration IDV: Having discussions with out-group. COL: Giving support to in-group.
Posting	Six motivations except information seeking	Entertainment IDV: Having a pleasant time. COL: Privately recording diary, making a personal photo book. Social integration COL: Showing a location for social gathering.

Note. COL = Collectivistic cultures; IDV = Individualistic cultures

Third, another cultural difference was found when participants across cultures created their own Br-UGC. This concerns individuals' desire to interact with others and present their own image, which were labeled as *social integration* and *personal identity and presentation* motivations, respectively. In collectivistic cultures, friends tended to be the most influential factor that influenced their creation of brand posts. Participants indicated that, by publishing content about brands, they were able to strengthen relationships with existing friends or gain/ provide emotional support from/to in-group friends. In contrast, in individualistic cultures, participants tended to be motivated by personal gains and focused on extending their networks when creating brand posts. When posting content about brands, they seemed to indicate the desire to express their own decision or personal taste and interests, placing less emphasis on friends, and encouraging an open discussion with others outside of their close groups.

These findings align with and extend research on social media use by showing that consumers' motivations for engaging with brand-related content online differ as a result of cultural factors. Notably, this seems not only to be true when consumers engage with content created by brands but also when they engage with content created by consumers. Consumers from individualistic cultures, who value their uniqueness and independence (Chu, Windels, & Kamal 2016; Tsai & Men, 2014), engage with Br-UGC in order to develop and present their online identity or to gain personal benefits. On the other hand, consumers from collectivistic cultures, who emphasize group orientation and interdependence (Kim, Sohn, Choi, 2011; Xu-Priour, Truong, & Klink, 2014), tend to provide/seek social support or maintain relationships with close contacts when engaging with Br-UGC. The study specifically shows that, for people in collectivistic cultures, social norms and the emphasis of in-group relationships appear to influence their decisions to engage with content about brands online – both passively and actively.

While this qualitative study allows for a rich exploration of motivations for Br-UGC engagement across cultures, future quantitative research using large and representative samples is needed to generalize the findings. Future studies could also investigate the degree to which these motivations influence consumers' decision to engage with Br-UGC, and whether this depends on culture.

The Role of Culture in the Effect of Source Relationships on Br-UGC Engagement

How does the relationship between SNS users and the source of a brand post affect their responses to Br-UGC, and how does this vary across cultures? My experimental study shows that the strength of a tie with a source positively

influences engagement with Br-UGC. In particular, consumers are more likely to engage with Br-UGC published by a person they are close to and know very well (e.g., close friends, family) compared to someone they know superficially (e.g., acquaintances). These findings are consistent for all types of Br-UGC engagement: 'liking', commenting, and sharing.

While the intensity of the relationship between a consumer and a content creator positively affects consumers to engage with Br-UGC in both individualistic and collectivistic cultures, the likelihood they will engage with the posts differs as a result of *cultural differences*. Specifically, having a strong tie with a poster has a greater effect on the *commenting* activity for consumers from collectivistic cultures than for those from individualistic ones. This means that, despite the fact that social connections with others are important in both types of cultures, the effect of these connections is stronger for consumers in collectivistic cultures than for consumers in individualistic ones. Table 3 summarizes how culture influences the effect of source relationships on different levels of Br-UGC engagement.

Table 3: The Role of Culture in the Effect of Source Relationships on Br-UGC Engagement

Br-UGC Engagement	Cultural Influence on Source Relationships	
	Similarities	Differences
'Liking'	Strong ties positively affected 'liking' Br-UGC.	No significant difference was found.
Commenting	Strong ties positively affected commenting on Br-UGC.	Consumers from COL were more likely to comment on content from close friends/family than consumers from IDV.
Sharing	Strong ties positively affected sharing Br-UGC.	No significant difference was found.

The results extend existing cross-cultural studies on SNS use (e.g., Kim, Sohn, Choi, 2011; Barker & Ota, 2011; Liu, Ainsworth, & Baumeister, 2016) as well as validating the qualitative findings presented above. This suggests that while having discussions with a larger network is often seen in individualistic cultures, consumers in collectivistic cultures tend to prefer strengthening lifetime relationships in order to reinforce the existing connections with offline friends. Specifically, considering that commenting is one of the strongest predictors of relationship bonding (Liu et al. 2016), these results add to our understanding that consumers in collectivistic cultures are more likely to use commenting to engage in a conversation with close friends than consumers in individualistic cultures. These

findings emphasize the importance of close relations among people in collectivistic cultures not only in the context of SNS use (Chu & Choi, 2011) but also in the more specific context of brand-related SNS use.

The Role of Culture in the Effect of Audience Relationships on Br-UGC Engagement

How does a user's audience affect their creating brand posts on Facebook across cultures? The results of my survey study show that the degree of audience diversity (the diversity in a social network which can include family, close friends, acquaintances, and even strangers) positively affects the intensity of Facebook use and consequently the creation of brand posts. People with a more diverse network are more likely to actively engage in Facebook activities (e.g., posting), which leads to a higher frequency of brand-related content creation.

With respect to the *influence of culture*, we found that culture affects the degree of diversity of one's audience (see Table 4). Differences in audience diversity also partly explain how consumers in different cultures use Facebook for developing and maintaining social relationships. Consumers in individualistic cultures have a more diverse audience than those living in collectivistic cultures. Consequently, a more diverse network tends to associate with the activeness and the frequency of engaging in Facebook activities (e.g., posting content about brands). More importantly, the creation of brand posts has become a means for consumers in these cultures to exchange information about products with wider groups of people. However, consumers from collectivistic cultures tend to have a less diverse network and are less likely to post personal information to all their contacts on Facebook, causing lower Facebook use and consequently less brand-related content creation.

Table 4: The Role of Culture in the Effect of Audience Relationships on Br-UGC Engagement

Br-UGC Engagement	Cultural Influence on Audience Relationships	
	Similarities	Differences
Posting	N/A	Consumers from IDV appeared to have a more diverse audience than consumers from COL.

By showing that culture explains differences in the degree of audience diversity online, and also causes differences in the amount of brand-related content consumers create, the study extends the research on the effect of audience on self-presentation and information disclosure (Lee-Won et al., 2014; Rui & Stefanone, 2013). While

the results indicate that audience diversity and intensity of Facebook use underlie the effect of culture on the creation of brand posts, a direct effect of culture on the creation of brand posts was also found. This means that there might be other factors than audience diversity that explain cultural differences in brand-related content creation. Future research could investigate other social-related variables, such as the strength of the ties, trust, and interpersonal influence (i.e., normative influences), all of which have been found to be focal determinants of online social relationships, and potentially influence user-generated content (Chu & Kim, 2011) across cultures (Chu & Choi, 2011; see also Chapter 3 of this dissertation).

The Role of Culture in Consumer Engagement with Different Content Characteristics

Lastly, how do content characteristics affect consumer engagement with Br-UGC across cultures? Based on the findings of my study, the informative characteristics of Br-UGC (e.g., usefulness, helpfulness), entertaining ones (e.g., enjoyment, fun), and social ones (e.g., social presence, interactivity, collaboration) significantly affect consumers' responses to the content. More specifically, Br-UGC that is considered highly informative, entertaining, and contains more elements of sociability, appears to increase consumer engagement with the content. These outcomes were found for all types of contribution to Br-UGC ('like', comment, share). Even though these three content characteristics are important for both individualistic and collectivistic cultures, their effects on content engagement differ between cultures.

Surprisingly, consumers from individualistic cultures indicate a higher likelihood of *sharing* and making a *comment* on social Br-UGC than consumers from collectivistic cultures. While these findings might appear to contradict previous studies on consumer engagement with a corporate SNS page (Men & Tsai, 2012), when it comes to the creation of brand-related posts, the posts consumers from individualistic cultures generate tend to contain fewer elements of sociability compared to those created by consumers from collectivistic cultures. This leads to the conclusion that while consumers from collectivistic cultures indicate a lower likelihood of sharing and commenting on social Br-UGC, when actually posting their own content, they appear to include more social elements than consumers from individualistic cultures (See Table 5).

These findings could be explained by *cultural differences* in online communication between consumers from collectivistic cultures and individualistic ones, which in turn affect their engagement with Br-UGC. As individuality and uniqueness are emphasized in individualistic cultures (Triandis, 1989), responding

to social Br-UGC might enable consumers in these cultures to participate in open discussions with others and present a unique image to people outside their close social groups (e.g., weak tie friends). Sharing and commenting on social brand-related content tends to reflect their desire to extend their network and to exchange brand information, while placing less emphasis on maintaining their relationships. In contrast, consumers in collectivistic cultures appear to strengthen relationships with existing friends (e.g., strong tie friends) by actively take part in sharing their experiences with brands or giving helpful information or recommendations. These findings extend cross-cultural research on brand-consumer relationships (Men & Tsai, 2012) by showing that consumers in collectivistic cultures prefer to use social Br-UGC to emphasize social presence and social support. When posting content about brands on Facebook, consumers in collectivistic cultures tend to include an element of sociability in order to create interactivity and strengthen relationships with their close relations.

Table 5: The Role of Culture in Content Characteristics and Br-UGC Engagement

Br-UGC Engagement	Cultural Influence on Content Characteristics	
	Similarities	Differences
'Liking'	Perceived content informativeness, entertainment, and sociability positively affected 'liking' Br-UGC.	No significant difference was found.
Commenting	Perceived content informativeness, entertainment, and sociability positively affected commenting on Br-UGC.	Consumers from IDV were more likely to comment on social content than consumers from COL.
Sharing	Perceived content informativeness, entertainment, and sociability positively affected sharing Br-UGC.	Consumers from IDV were more likely to share entertaining and social content than consumers from COL.
Posting	N/A	Consumers from COL were more likely to create informative and social content than consumers from IDV.

While this study makes several contributions to the literature on brand information and UGC, investigating other characteristics of content and content valence would help to more thoroughly understand content characteristics and consumer engagement with Br-UGC. As has been previously found, elements of traceability such as hashtags (Araujo et al., 2015) and interactivity of content such

as links to a website (De Vries et al., 2012) also stimulate consumers' responses to brand-related content on SNSs. Furthermore, valence of the content (either positive or negative) has been found to influence consumers' brand perceptions and purchase intention (Christodoulides, Michaelidou, & Argyriou, 2012). Considering that communication styles preferred in one culture are not always the same in other cultures (Hall, 1977; Hofstede, 2001), in order to extend the study's results and thoroughly understand the role of content characteristics, future cross-cultural research should investigate whether and how traceability, interactivity, and valence affect consumer engagement with Br-UGC.

Practical Contributions

The insights into cultural influence on Br-UGC engagement that have been presented in this dissertation have implications for companies and brands that operate in different markets. Particularly, the results provide practitioners with an understanding of why consumers engage with content about brands, what factors influence their decision to do so, and to what extent their behaviors differ across cultures.

First, the study showed that consumers actively engage and expose themselves in brand-related conversations online (e.g., commenting, sharing, posting) for a variety of reasons: to obtain or provide brand information or benefits, entertain themselves, develop social relationships with others, and enhance their personal identity. These motivations appear to be valid for consumers from both collectivistic and individualistic cultures. Given these similarities, global marketers should consider including not only information about product benefits (information seeking motivation), but also elements of humor or attractiveness (entertainment motivation), as well as connectedness (social integration motivation) in their advertising messages. In addition, marketers should ensure that their brand can enhance consumers' positive image (personal identity and presentation motivation), for instance by positioning themselves as a brand associated with innovation, sophistication, friendliness, or altruism.

Second, the underlying motives mentioned above are also reflected in how consumers respond to specific content characteristics of brand posts. Consumers tend to 'like', comment, and share useful and enjoyable brand messages that contain elements of social interactions with others. Furthermore, consumers' relationships with a source also influence their engagement with brand posts. Brand-related messages posted by a close SNS friend stimulate consumer's response. Given that

this mechanism is found across cultures, marketers should encourage online consumers to create posts about positive experiences after they use a product, and publicly share them on SNSs. As consumers do not always create and share positive Br-UGC, companies should keep an eye on what consumers say about their brand online, how other consumers interact to Br-UGC, and assess what they can improve or how they can increase consumers' satisfaction.

Third, it is crucially important to recognize that despite the similarities, the underlying factors of consumer engagement with Br-UGC differ as a result of culture. In particular, social aspects concerning consumers' motivations, their relationships with others in a network, and content characteristics are the key factor that differentiates Br-UGC engagement among consumers in collectivistic and individualistic cultures. Individuals from collectivistic cultures are more likely to comply with their friends' opinions, and how they engage with brands will be highly influenced by their friends or close social groups. Thus, marketers who operate in collectivistic markets need to recognize that a sense of belonging and group-orientation appear to be core values among collectivistic consumers. Therefore, social relations (e.g., the value of togetherness and friendship) should be emphasized more when promoting campaigns or advertising messages in these markets.

When considering the social relationships with SNS audiences, consumers from individualistic societies are more likely to interact with people from diverse groups to express opinions and exchange product information. When creating content or engaging in conversation about brands on SNSs, consumers in these cultures appear to focus on fulfilling their personal interests and expanding their network, while placing less emphasis on maintaining close relationships. Therefore, if a company can provide a function or a channel where consumers can freely express ideas about a product and get people with diverse interests or from different groups on SNSs involved, this would help the company generate authentic content and widely spread the word about the brand.

To sum up, while online consumers seem to create and engage with brand-related content in the same way, they tend to comply with their cultural norms when engaging in conversations about brands. The insights from this dissertation regarding the cultural differences in Br-UGC engagement suggest that global marketers should be aware when designing online marketing campaigns or promoting social media content in different markets, and in particular, that they should consider adapting their marketing strategies to the local market (Berthon et al., 2012).

5

Limitations of the Dissertation and Suggestions for Future Research

Although this dissertation makes several contributions to the literature on both UGC and consumers' online brand-related activities, it is important to consider some limitations when interpreting the findings.

First, cross-cultural scholars have suggested that research using data across larger numbers of countries (e.g., at least twenty) is preferable in order to provide meaningful and generalizable conclusions about consumer behavior across cultures (Cadogan, 2010). Nevertheless, considering the limitations of resources and time, this dissertation moves beyond previous cross-cultural studies which have generally been based on comparisons between two countries; here, the influence of cultural differences was investigated across two collectivistic and two individualistic countries, with samples representative of each country. With two countries representing each culture, however, it is important to note that the interpretation and discussions of the findings were mostly focused on comparisons between the two cultures at the national level. Although some country-specific findings were reported (see Chapter 2), this strategy might run the risk of underrepresenting country-specific differences. Furthermore, it is certainly possible that other characteristics than 'national culture' could account for the differences found. Therefore, in order to extend and validate the results of this dissertation, further research should include more countries for each culture and look into how other cultural-related variables (e.g., self-construal, high/low-context communication) affect consumers' engagement with Br-UGC.

Second, as cross-cultural researchers have argued, individuals in the same culture might not always define their cultural identity exactly the same (Campbell, 2000; Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002). For instance, some Dutch people might be more collectivistic than others in the Netherlands, or some Koreans may be more individualistic than other Koreans. This dissertation has already addressed this by investigating the influence of culture at both personal and national levels. The study broadens our understanding that individuals tend to comply closely to their national culture when sharing content about brands (see Chapter 3 for more details). However, it remains to be seen how personal values play a role when individuals consume (e.g., read, view) or create content about brands on SNSs. It is possible that some people might actually resist their national cultural values (or actively try to preserve them), leading them to challenge their original culture (or actively maintain it) (Cleveland, Laroache, & Takahashi, 2015); in order to validate

and extend the findings of this dissertation, future research should closely explore the role of personal collectivism-individualism in Br-UGC engagement.

Third, this research focused on users who are active on Facebook, ones who had either created or responded to Br-UGC. This made it possible to examine how individuals create Br-UGC and respond to it; however, inactive Facebook users who only view or read Br-UGC were not specifically studied. It has been noted that some individuals use SNSs passively, only observing what others are doing without contributing any personal information online (Chen et al., 2016). Moreover, as this study found, some people use Facebook to store information about brands, publishing content visible only to themselves. Using actual behavioral data on SNSs (e.g., by tracking consumers' consumption of and interactions to Br-UGC) could provide additional insights into why users passively or privately engage with Br-UGC online, and whether and how their engagement differs between cultures.

In addition, due to the Cambridge Analytica privacy scandal and the implementation of privacy laws, Facebook use has decreased in several countries especially in Europe. About four million users have discontinued their daily activities on Facebook (Edwards, 2018). These recent developments might prompt Facebook users to be more aware of their privacy and less likely to engage in SNS activities (Newcomb, 2018). As it has been presented that consumers in individualistic countries seem to avoid presenting their personal interests online as a result of privacy concerns (Cho, Rivera-Sánchez, & Lim, 2009; see also Chapter 2 of this dissertation), future research could examine whether and to what extent culture influences individuals' online privacy concerns and how this affects their creating and responding to brand-related content on SNSs.

Finally, it is crucial to note that all the studies focused on Facebook. While this approach allows for a thorough investigation of consumer engagement with Br-UGC on one platform, it makes it difficult to generalize the findings beyond Facebook. This is unfortunate since an increasing amount of Br-UGC is appearing on other social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat), a development that has been considered promising for business (Merckel, 2017). Previous studies have also suggested that users generate content about brands and engage with it differently on different SNS platforms (e.g., YouTube, Twitter) (Smith, Fischer, & Yongjian, 2012; Voorveld et al., 2018). Further investigating consumer engagement with Br-UGC on other SNS platforms would add valuable knowledge and novel insights into practice and research on Br-UGC.

5

Overall Conclusion

This dissertation has investigated the role of culture in consumers' consumption of, contribution to, and creation of Br-UGC with the emphasis on consumers' motivations, their social relationships, and the characteristics of content consumers create and engage with on Facebook. Based on findings from the three studies, we have learned that cultural differences in how people define themselves, how they regard social relationships, and which communication styles they prefer not only influence their SNS use, but also brand-related SNS use, in particular engagement with Br-UGC. Although consumers from both collectivistic and individualistic cultures mentioned similar reasons for engaging with Br-UGC, their underlying motivations differ as a result of their cultural values. More specifically, complying with peer and group norms tends to be the most important driver of Br-UGC engagement for consumers in collectivistic societies, whereas being able to fulfill individual needs and follow their own interests and preferences is the main driver for consumers in individualistic societies to engage with Br-UGC for. Furthermore, even though social relationships with others are important in both individualistic and collectivistic cultures, the nature of these relationships and the degree of relationship intensity between a sender and an audience are not the same across cultures. These differences do affect how consumers create and engage with brand posts online. While developing new relationships with others is a prominent motivation in individualistic cultures, strengthening relationships with close contacts is more emphasized in collectivistic cultures, and the influence of close relationships on Br-UGC engagement is more pronounced in collectivistic than individualistic societies. Lastly, the cultural differences in social relationships online are also reflected in the characteristics of Br-UGC with which consumers in different cultures engage. While informative, entertaining, and social characteristics influence consumer engagement with Br-UGC in both individualistic and collectivistic cultures, regardless of the intensity of the relationship, the effect of social Br-UGC on consumers' responses is greater for consumers in individualistic cultures than for those in collectivistic cultures.

To sum up, this dissertation argues that even though the underlying factors behind engaging with Br-UGC, and consumers' motivations to do so, appear to be similar across cultures, differences in cultural collectivism-individualism still exist and do have an effect on consumer engagement with Br-UGC. The evidence of cultural differences that has been presented in this dissertation helps to emphasize that Br-UGC engagement on SNSs does not occur in a cultural void. In particular, we should be aware that 1) consumers' motivations for engaging with Br-UGC are not

always the same between consumers in individualistic Western and collectivistic Eastern societies, 2) how consumers use Br-UGC to develop and maintain social relationships with others differs between cultures, and 3) the effect of Br-UGC characteristics on consumers' decision to engage with the Br-UGC also differs between cultures.

5

Summary

English Summary

With the convenient use of social networking sites (SNSs) for consumers around the world, consumer-generated content has become part of our everyday life. This authentic content about brands created by consumers (or brand related user-generated content: Br-UGC) is very influential in consumers' decision making. Nevertheless, consumers in different cultures do not necessarily respond or interact with Br-UGC in the same way considering that individual motivations, social relationships, and communication styles are influenced by the sociocultural system to which they belong. Therefore, the aim of this dissertation is to investigate the determinant factors of Br-UGC engagement on SNSs, and specifically how the acts of 'liking', commenting, sharing, and posting content about brands on Facebook differ across cultures.

Based on consumers' responses of over 800 Facebook users living in two Eastern collectivistic cultures (South Korea, Thailand) and Western individualistic (the Netherlands and the United States), main conclusions about cultural influence on Br-UGC engagement can be drawn in four aspects: (1) motivations, (2) source relationships, (3) audience relationships, and (4) content characteristics of Br-UGC.

Cultural Influence on Consumers' Motivations for Br-UGC Engagement
Based on a qualitative study, seven motivations for engaging with Br-UGC can be identified: information seeking, entertainment, personal identity and presentation, remuneration, social integration, empowerment, and intention to try or purchase. While the first six motivations have been found in previous studies, the intention to try or purchase a product is a new motivation that emerged from this study primarily among Korean and Thai collectivistic consumers. Particularly, when consumers in these cultures 'like', comment on, and share content about brands, they tend to signal their purchase intention to their friends. Another apparent cultural difference emerged when consumers create and publish their own content. The difference concerns individuals' desire to interact with other (social integration motivation) and enhance their self-image (personal identity and presentation motivation). For Korean and Thai collectivistic consumers, friends tend to be the most influential determinant that influences their creation of brand posts. In their opinion, publishing content about brands allows them to strengthen relationships with existing friends or gain/provide emotional support from/to in-group friends. In contrast, for Dutch and American individualistic consumers, the desire to express their own decision or personal taste and interests tends to be more prominent. These findings are particularly important to online marketers

who operate in different markets considering that the underlying motivations for engaging with Br-UGC differ as a result of culture. Specifically, the motivation concerning social integration appears to be the key factor that differentiates Br-UGC engagement among consumers in collectivistic and individualistic cultures.

Cultural Influence on Source Relationships and Br-UGC Engagement

My experimental study shows that, in both cultures, the strength of a tie with a source positively affects 'liking', commenting, and sharing Br-UGC on Facebook. However, the likelihood of engagement differs as a result of cultural differences. Specifically, consumers in collectivistic cultures are more likely to comment on Br-UGC created by close friends and family than consumers in individualistic cultures. This suggests that consumers in collectivistic cultures tend to make a comment on other's post in order to connect with their close relations, however, consumers in individualistic cultures are more likely to connect with a wider network in order to have discussions with a larger group. This provides support to the focus of group-orientation that is more emphasized in Korean and Thai advertising campaigns or messages.

Cultural Influence on Audience Relationships and Br-UGC Engagement

Source relationships not only influence the likelihood of Br-UGC engagement, but our audiences on a SNS also affect the creation of brand posts. Based on the survey study, it shows that, in both cultures, the diversity in a SNS (which can include family, close friends, acquaintances, and even strangers) positively affects the intensity of SNS use and consequently the creation of brand-related posts. When it comes to cultural differences, culture does affect the degree of diversity of one's audience. Users in individualistic cultures have a more diverse audience than those living in collectivistic cultures. Consequently, a more diverse network leads to the activeness and the frequency of engaging in SNS activities (e.g., brand posts creation). Specifically, on the one hand, the creation of brand posts has become a means for consumers in individualistic cultures to exchange product-related information with a variety of people. On the other hand, consumers from collectivistic cultures prefer to have a less diverse network and are less likely to post personal information to all their contacts on SNSs, leading to lower SNS use and consequently less brand posts creation. The findings add to our understanding that a company who operates in Western market should provide a function or a channel where consumers can freely share their experiences about a product and get people with diverse interests involved. This would facilitate the company to

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increase authentic content generated by real consumers and widely spread the word about the brand.

Cultural Influence on Consumer Engagement with Different Content Characteristics

Based on my online experiment, brand posts that are considered highly helpful, entertaining, and contains more elements of sociability, appears to increase engagement ('like', comment, share) with the posts. When it comes to cultural influence, consumers from individualistic cultures indicate a higher likelihood of sharing and making a comment on social Br-UGC than consumers from collectivistic cultures. Nevertheless, the posts consumers from individualistic cultures create appear to contain fewer elements of sociability compared to the posts created by consumers from collectivistic cultures. The results support the notion that, for consumers in individualistic cultures, sharing and commenting on social brand-related posts tends to reflect their desire to extend their network and to exchange information about products, while placing less emphasis on maintaining their relationships. In contrast, consumers in collectivistic cultures actively take part in sharing their experiences with brands or giving helpful information or recommendations in order to strengthen relationships with existing friends.

Nederlandse Samenvatting

Gezien het gebruiksgemak van social networking sites (SNSs) is content gemaakt door consumenten een deel van ons alledaagse leven geworden. Dit type content over merken gemaakt door consumenten ('Brand related User-Generated Content: Br-UGC) heeft een grote invloed op het beslissingsproces van consumenten. Echter, consumenten uit verschillende culturen reageren of engageren zich niet noodzakelijkerwijs op dezelfde manier met Br-UGC, aangezien individuele motieven, sociale relaties en communicatiestijlen worden beïnvloed door het socioculturele systeem waartoe consumenten behoren. Om die reden is het doel van deze dissertatie het onderzoeken van de factoren die Br-UGC engagement op SNSs beïnvloeden, waarbij er specifiek gekeken wordt naar hoe de handelingen 'leuk vinden' (liking), reageren op (comments), delen (sharing) en posten van content over merken op Facebook verschillen tussen culturen.

Gebaseerd op de antwoorden van meer dan 800 Facebookgebruikers uit twee Oosterse collectivistische culturen (Zuid-Korea, Thailand) en Westerse individualistische (Nederland en de Verenigde Staten), kunnen conclusies over culturele invloed op Br-UGC engagement getrokken worden verdeeld over vier aspecten: (1) motieven, (2) bronrelaties, (3) publieksrelaties, en (4) content eigenschappen van Br-UGC.

Culturele invloed op consumentenmotieven voor Br-UGC engagement
Gebaseerd op een kwalitatieve studie kunnen zeven motieven worden onderscheiden voor het engageren met Br-UGC: zoeken naar informatie, entertainment, persoonlijke identiteit en presentatie, beloning, sociale integratie, empowerment, en de intentie om uit te proberen of te kopen. Hoewel de eerste zes motieven zijn aangetoond in eerdere studies, is de intentie om uit te proberen of te kopen een nieuw motief die uit deze studie naar voren is gekomen onder voornamelijk Koreaanse en Thaise collectivistische consumenten. Het is met name wanneer deze consumenten content over merken 'leuk vinden', erop reageren of delen dat ze hun intentie om te kopen kenbaar maken tegenover hun vrienden. Een ander duidelijk cultureel verschil komt naar voren als consumenten eigen content creëren en posten. Het verschil betreft hier het verlangen van individuen om te interacteren met anderen (sociale integratie motief) en om hun zelfbeeld te verbeteren (persoonlijke identiteit en presentatie motief). Voor Koreaanse en Thaise collectivistische consumenten zijn vrienden de meest belangrijke factor die het maken van merkgerelateerde berichten beïnvloedt. Ze zijn van mening dat het posten van merkgerelateerde content het mogelijk maakt om de relaties

met hun bestaande vrienden te versterken of emotionele steun te bieden aan/ te verkrijgen van hun vrienden. Daartegenover staat dat voor Nederlandse en Amerikaanse individualistische consumenten het verlangen om hun eigen beslissingen of persoonlijke smaak en interesses uit te drukken meer prominent is. Deze bevindingen zijn met name van belang voor online marketeers die in verschillende markten opereren, gezien het feit dat de onderliggende motieven voor het engageren met Br-UGC verschillen per cultuur. Met name het motief betreffende sociale integratie lijkt de sleutelfactor te zijn die het verschil maakt in engagement met Br-UGC tussen gebruikers uit collectivistische en individualistische culturen.

Culturele invloed op bronrelaties en Br-UGC engagement
De experimentele studie toont aan dat in beide culturen de sterkte van een band met een bron het 'leuk vinden', reageren op en delen van Br-UGC op Facebook positief beïnvloedt. Echter, de waarschijnlijkheid van engagement verschilt als een resultaat van culturele verschillen. Met name consumenten uit collectivistische culturen zijn meer geneigd te reageren op Br-UGC gemaakt door goede vrienden en familie dan consumenten uit individualistische culturen. Dit suggereert dat consumenten uit collectivistische culturen op iemands bericht reageren om zo contact te maken met hun goede relaties. Consumenten uit individualistische culturen, daarentegen, zijn meer geneigd contact te maken met een breder netwerk om zo te kunnen discussiëren met een grotere groep. Dit ondersteunt de focus op groepsoriëntatie waar in Koreaanse en Thaise advertentiecampagnes en berichten meer de nadruk op wordt gelegd.

Culturele invloed op publieksrelaties en Br-UGC engagement
Bronrelaties beïnvloeden niet alleen de waarschijnlijkheid van Br-UGC engagement, maar ook het 'publiek' op een SNS (vrienden op Facebook bijvoorbeeld) beïnvloedt het maken van merkberichten. Uit de survey studie komt naar voren dat in beide culturen de diversiteit van iemands netwerk op een SNS (dit kan familie zijn, goede vrienden, kennissen en zelfs vreemden) de intensiteit van SNS gebruik positief beïnvloedt en daarmee de creatie van merkgerelateerde berichten. Als het aankomt op culturele verschillen beïnvloedt cultuur de mate van diversiteit van het publiek van een gebruiker. Gebruikers uit individualistische culturen hebben een diverser publiek dan gebruikers uit collectivistische culturen. Een meer divers netwerk beïnvloedt de activiteit en de frequentie van SNS activiteiten (bijvoorbeeld het maken van merkgerelateerde berichten). Enerzijds is de creatie van merkgerelateerde berichten voor consumenten uit individualistische culturen een middel geworden om productgerelateerde informatie uit te wisselen met

verschillende groepen mensen. Anderzijds geven consumenten uit collectivistische culturen de voorkeur aan een minder divers netwerk en zijn zij minder geneigd persoonlijke informatie voor al hun contacten op SNSs te posten, hetgeen leidt tot minder SNS gebruik en daarmee tot minder merkgerelateerde berichten. Deze bevindingen dragen bij tot ons inzicht dat een bedrijf dat opereert in een Westerse markt een functie of kanaal moet aanbieden waar consumenten openlijk hun ervaringen met een product kunnen delen en waar mensen met verschillende interesses samenkomen. Dit zal het bedrijf in staat stellen om de content gemaakt door echte consumenten uit te breiden en hun naamsbekendheid te vergroten.

Culturele invloed op consumentenengagement met verschillende content karakteristieken

Gebaseerd op het online experiment lijken merkberichten die gezien worden als behulpzaam, vermakelijk en meer 'social' het engagement ('vind ik leuk', opmerkingen maken, delen) met de berichten te vergroten. Wat betreft culturele invloed geven consumenten uit individualistische culturen aan dat ze meer geneigd zijn sociale Br-UGC te delen of erop te reageren dan consumenten uit collectivistische culturen. Desalniettemin lijken in vergelijking berichten gemaakt door consumenten uit individualistische culturen minder 'sociale' elementen te bevatten dan berichten gemaakt door consumenten uit collectivistische culturen. De resultaten ondersteunen de notie dat voor consumenten uit individualistische culturen het delen en reageren op sociale (merkgerelateerde) berichten hun wens uitdrukt om hun netwerk te vergroten en informatie over producten uit te wisselen, terwijl ze minder nadruk leggen op het onderhouden van hun bestaande relaties. Daarentegen nemen consumenten uit collectivistische culturen actief deel aan het delen van hun ervaringen met merken, het geven van behulpzame informatie of aanbevelingen om zo hun relaties met bestaande vrienden te versterken.

Summary

บทสรุป

เว็บไซต์สังคมออนไลน์ได้กลายเป็นสื่อที่เข้าถึงง่ายสำหรับผู้บริโภคทั่วโลก ส่งผลให้ผู้บริโภคจากทั่ว
ทุกมุมโลกสามารถสร้างและเผยแพร่ประสบการณ์การใช้สินค้าของตัวเองบนโลกออนไลน์ได้อย่าง
รวดเร็ว และข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการดังกล่าว (Brand-Related User-Generated Content:
Br-UGC) ได้เข้ามาเป็นส่วนหนึ่งในชีวิตประจำวันของพวกเรา ยิ่งไปกว่านั้น ข้อมูลเหล่านี้ยังส่ง
ผลกระทบต่อกระบวนการการตัดสินใจซื้อสินค้าของเราด้วย แต่อย่างไรก็ตาม ผู้บริโภคที่อาศัยอยู่
ในแต่ละวัฒนธรรมต่างก็มีแรงจูงใจ แนวคิดด้านการติดต่อสัมพันธ์กับบุคคลอื่น และรูปแบบในการ
สื่อสารที่แตกต่างกัน ซึ่งสิ่งเหล่านี้อาจได้รับผลกระทบมาจากคุณค่าทางวัฒนธรรมที่กลุ่มผู้บริโภค
เหล่านั้นยึดถือเป็นหลักในการดำเนินชีวิต จึงมีความเป็นไปได้ว่าผู้บริโภคจากทั่วทุกมุมโลกอาจจะ
ตอบสนองต่อโพสหรือเนื้อหาที่เกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการในรูปแบบที่แตกต่างกัน ดังนั้น จุดประสงค์
หลักของวิทยานิพนธ์เล่มนี้คือ การศึกษาปัจจัยที่ส่งผลกระทบต่อการมีส่วนร่วมต่อโพสหรือเนื้อหาที่
เกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการบนเว็บไซต์สังคมออนไลน์ โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่ง ผลกระทบของวัฒนธรรม
ต่อพฤติกรรมผู้บริโภคในการกดไลค์ การสร้างคอมเมนท์ การเผยแพร่ และการผลิตเนื้อหาที่เกี่ยว
กับสินค้าและบริการ รวมถึงความแตกต่างทางด้านพฤติกรรมที่เกิดจากวัฒนธรรมที่แตกต่างกัน

จากผลการศึกษากลุ่มตัวอย่างผู้บริโภคที่ใช้เฟสบุ๊คกว่า 800 คน จากวัฒนธรรมแบบรวมกลุ่ม
(Collectivistic culture) ทางตะวันออก 2 วัฒนธรรม (ประเทศเกาหลีใต้ และ ประเทศไทย) และ
วัฒนธรรมแบบปัจเจก (Individualistic culture) ทางตะวันตก 2 วัฒนธรรม (ประเทศเนเธอร์แลนด์
และประเทศสหรัฐอเมริกา) สามารถสรุปประเด็นหลักที่เกี่ยวข้องกับผลกระทบของวัฒนธรรมต่อ
พฤติกรรมการมีส่วนร่วมกับโพสหรือเนื้อหาที่เกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการ ได้ 4 แง่มุม ดังนี้
1. แรงจูงใจที่ส่งผลต่อการมีส่วนร่วมกับโพสหรือเนื้อหาที่เกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการ
2. ความสัมพันธ์กับผู้สร้างโพสที่เกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการ
3. ความสัมพันธ์กับผู้รับสาร
4. รูปแบบลักษณะเนื้อหาของโพสที่เกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการ

- ผลกระทบของวัฒนธรรมต่อแรงจูงใจในการมีส่วนร่วมกับโพสหรือเนื้อหาที่เกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือ
  บริการ

จากการศึกษาวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพผ่านการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกพบว่า แรงจูงใจในการมีส่วนร่วมหรือตอบ
สนองต่อโพสหรือเนื้อหาที่เกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการ สามารถจำแนกได้ 7 ประเภท ได้แก่ แรงจูงใจ
ในการได้รับข้อมูลที่เป็นประโยชน์ แรงจูงใจในการได้รับความบันเทิง แรงจูงใจในการนำเสนอ
ภาพลักษณ์ แรงจูงใจในการได้รับผลประโยชน์หรือสิ่งตอบแทน แรงจูงใจในการเข้าร่วมสังคม แรง
จูงใจในการเปลี่ยนแปลงหรือมีอิทธิพลต่อความคิดของคนอื่น และแรงจูงใจในการซื้อหรือทดลอง
ใช้สินค้าและบริการ ซึ่งแรงจูงใจ 6 ประเภทแรกที่ได้กล่าวไปข้างต้นเป็นแรงจูงใจที่ได้ถูกพบใน
งานวิจัยที่ผ่านมา ในงานวิจัยชิ้นนี้แรงจูงใจในการซื้อหรือทดลองใช้สินค้าและบริการ เป็นแรง
จูงใจใหม่ที่ไม่เคยถูกค้นพบมาก่อน และถูกค้นพบในงานวิจัยชิ้นนี้จากการสัมภาษณ์ผู้บริโภคคน
ไทย และคนเกาหลีใต้ หรือจากวัฒนธรรมแบบรวมกลุ่ม จะเห็นได้ชัดเมื่อผู้บริโภคชาวเกาหลีใต้ และ
ผู้บริโภคชาวไทยกดไลค์ สร้างคอมเมนท์ และเผยแพร่โพสหรือเนื้อหาที่เกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการ
บนเว็บไซต์สังคมออนไลน์ กลุ่มผู้บริโภคเหล่านี้มีแนวโน้มที่จะแสดงให้เห็นถึงแรงจูงใจในการอยาก
ทดลองหรือซื้อสินค้าและบริการกับเพื่อนของเขา อีกหนึ่งความแตกต่างทางด้านวัฒนธรรมที่เห็น
ได้ชัดในงานวิจัยชิ้นนี้พบได้จากพฤติกรรมการสร้าง และผลิตโพสหรือเนื้อหาที่เกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือ
บริการ ความแตกต่างนี้เกี่ยวโยงกับแรงจูงใจที่เกี่ยวกับการติดต่อปฏิสัมพันธ์กับบุคคลอื่น และแรง
จูงใจที่เกี่ยวกับการสร้างภาพลักษณ์บนโลกออนไลน์ โดยจะเห็นได้ว่าผู้บริโภคชาวเกาหลีใต้ และ
ชาวไทยที่มาจากวัฒนธรรมแบบรวมกลุ่มให้ความสำคัญกับเพื่อนเป็นอย่างมาก ซึ่งกลุ่มเพื่อนมีผล
กระทบต่อการตัดสินใจในการผลิต และสร้างโพสที่เกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการ แต่ในทางกลับกัน ผู้
บริโภคชาวดัตช์ และชาวอเมริกันจะให้ความสำคัญกับการแสดงออกทางรสนิยม และความชอบ
ส่วนตัว ผลจากงานวิจัยดังที่กล่าวข้างต้นถือว่าเป็นประโยชน์ต่อนักการตลาดออนไลน์ที่ต้องการ
ทำการตลาดในหลากหลายประเทศ หลากหลายวัฒนธรรม เพราะวัฒนธรรมเป็นสิ่งที่อธิบายความ
แตกต่างทางด้านแรงจูงใจที่ส่งผลต่อการมีส่วนร่วมกับโพสที่เกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการ โดยแรง
จูงใจที่เกี่ยวกับการติดต่อปฏิสัมพันธ์กับบุคคลอื่นเป็นแรงจูงใจที่แยกให้เห็นความแตกต่างที่ชัดเจน
เมื่อเปรียบเทียบพฤติกรรมผู้บริโภคระหว่างสองวัฒนธรรม

- ผลกระทบของวัฒนธรรมต่อความสัมพันธ์กับผู้สร้างโพส และการมีส่วนร่วมกับโพสหรือเนื้อหา
  ที่เกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการ

จากผลการทดลองพบว่า แม้ในสองวัฒนธรรมที่แตกต่างกัน พันธะความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างเจ้าของโพส
กับผู้บริโภคส่งผลต่อพฤติกรรมการกดไลค์ การสร้างคอมเมนท์ และการเผยแพร่เนื้อหาที่เกี่ยวกับ
สินค้าหรือบริการบนเฟสบุ๊ค แต่อย่างไรก็ตาม ขนาดของผลกระทบของพันธะความสัมพันธ์ต่อแนว
โน้มในการมีส่วนร่วมกับเนื้อหาที่เกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการมีความแตกต่างกันระหว่างวัฒนธรรม จะ
เห็นได้ว่าผู้บริโภคจากวัฒนธรรมแบบรวมกลุ่มมีแนวโน้มที่จะสร้างคอมเมนท์บนโพสของเพื่อนสนิท
มากกว่าเมื่อเทียบกับผู้บริโภคที่มาจากวัฒนธรรมแบบปัจเจก จากผลการทดลองนี้สามารถอธิบาย
ได้ว่าผู้บริโภคจากวัฒนธรรมแบบรวมกลุ่มสร้างคอมเมนท์โต้ตอบกับเพื่อนเพื่อที่จะติดต่อปฏิสัมพันธ์
กับกลุ่มคนที่สนิทที่รู้จักกันดีอยู่แล้ว ตรงกันข้ามกับผู้บริโภคจากวัฒนธรรมแบบปัจเจกที่มีแนวโน้ม
จะชอบติดต่อกับบุคคลภายนอกเพื่อแลกเปลี่ยนความคิดเห็น หรือประสบการณ์การใช้สินค้า ผลการ
ศึกษาวิจัยนี้สนับสนุนกลยุทธ์การเน้นย้ำเรื่องความสำคัญของการรวมกลุ่มในวงการโฆษณาของ
ประเทศเกาหลีใต้ และประเทศไทย

Summary

- ผลกระทบของวัฒนธรรมต่อความสัมพันธ์กับผู้รับสาร และการผลิตหรือการสร้างโพสต์ที่มีเนื้อหา
  เกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการ

ไม่เพียงแค่บทบาทของผู้สร้างโพสต์ที่ส่งผลกระทบต่อการมีส่วนร่วมกับเนื้อหาที่เกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือ
บริการเท่านั้น กลุ่มผู้รับสารหรือผู้ที่สามารถเข้าถึงโพสต์ที่เกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการก็ส่งผลต่อการมี
ส่วนร่วมกับโพสต์ดังกล่าวด้วยเช่นกัน ผลการศึกษาจากการทำแบบสำรวจกลุ่มผู้บริโภคผู้ใช้เฟสบุ๊ค
พบว่า ความหลากหลายของกลุ่มผู้รับสารในเว็บไซต์สังคมออนไลน์ของผู้บริโภคแต่ละบุคคล (เช่น
เพื่อนสนิท ครอบครัว คนที่ไม่สนิทสนมคุ้นเคย หรือคนแปลกหน้า) ส่งผลกระทบต่อพฤติกรรมใน
เรื่องความถี่ในการใช้เว็บไซต์สังคมออนไลน์ และส่งผลต่อเนื่องไปถึงแนวโน้มในการสร้างหรือ
ผลิตโพสต์เกี่ยวกับสินค้า และบริการของผู้บริโภคเอง และเมื่อพิจารณาถึงความแตกต่างทางด้าน
วัฒนธรรมนั้น วัฒนธรรมเป็นปัจจัยหนึ่งที่ส่งผลต่อความหลากหลายของกลุ่มผู้รับสารในเว็บไซต์
สังคมออนไลน์ จากผลการวิจัยพบว่ากลุ่มผู้รับสารของผู้บริโภคที่มาจากวัฒนธรรมแบบปัจเจกมี
ความหลากหลายมากกว่ากลุ่มผู้รับสารของผู้บริโภคที่มาจากวัฒนธรรมแบบรวมกลุ่ม ซึ่งความ
หลากหลายที่มีมากกว่านี้ส่งผลให้ผู้บริโภคที่มาจากวัฒนธรรมแบบปัจเจกมีความกระตือรือร้นใน
การใช้เว็บไซต์สังคมออนไลน์มากกว่า และส่งผลให้เกิดพฤติกรรมการสร้างโพสต์เกี่ยวกับสินค้า
และบริการที่บ่อยครั้งมากกว่าตามไปด้วย จากผลดังกล่าวสามารถตีความได้ว่า การสร้างหรือผลิต
เนื้อหาที่เกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการถือเป็นเครื่องมือสำหรับผู้บริโภคที่มาจากวัฒนธรรมแบบปัจเจก
ในการแลกเปลี่ยนข้อมูลหรือประสบการณ์ที่เกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการ ทำให้พวกเขาได้ติดต่อกับ
กลุ่มคนที่หลากหลาย แต่สำหรับผู้บริโภคที่มาจากวัฒนธรรมแบบรวมกลุ่มแล้ว พวกเขามีแนวโน้ม
ที่จะอยากติดต่อกับกลุ่มคนในวงแคบกว่า ซึ่งหากกลุ่มผู้รับสารมีความแตกต่างหลากหลายมาก
พวกเขามีแนวโน้มที่จะเปิดเผยข้อมูลส่วนตัวน้อยลง ซึ่งอาจก่อให้เกิดผลกระทบต่อพฤติกรรมการ
สร้างหรือผลิตข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการที่น้อยลงไปด้วย ผลจากการศึกษาวิจัยในครั้งนี้เอื้อ
ประโยชน์ต่อนักการตลาดออนไลน์ โดยเฉพาะผู้ที่ทำการตลาดในประเทศทางฝั่งตะวันตก หรือจาก
วัฒนธรรมแบบปัจเจก สิ่งที่ต้องคำนึงถึงในการทำกลยุทธ์การสื่อสารออนไลน์คือเรื่องของประโยชน์
การใช้สอยที่ผู้บริโภคจะได้รับจากช่องทางการสื่อสาร การเผยแพร่ข้อมูลควรจะที่เปิดโอกาสให้
ผู้บริโภคสามารถแสดงความคิดเห็นได้อย่างเต็มที่ และแลกเปลี่ยนความคิดเห็นกับกลุ่มคนที่หลาก
หลาย ซึ่งคุณสมบัติดังกล่าวจะช่วยกระตุ้นการสร้างข้อมูลที่เป็นจริงจากผู้บริโภคที่ใช้สินค้าจริงๆ
และจะช่วยกระจายข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับสินค้าและบริการไปสู่กลุ่มคนในวงกว้างได้มากขึ้น และรวดเร็วขึ้น

- ผลกระทบของวัฒนธรรมต่อการมีส่วนร่วมกับเนื้อหาที่เกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการในรูปแบบต่างๆ

จากผลการทดลองพบว่า โพสต์หรือเนื้อหาที่เกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการที่ให้ข้อมูลที่เป็นประโยชน์ ให้
ความบันเทิง และคุณสมบัติที่ส่งเสริมการสร้างปฏิสัมพันธ์ เป็นโพสต์ที่ช่วยส่งเสริมการมีส่วนร่วมของ
ผู้บริโภคต่อโพสต์ดังกล่าว ไม่ว่าจะเป็นการกดไลค์ การสร้างคอมเมนต์ และการเผยแพร่ เมื่อพิจารณา
ถึงผลกระทบของวัฒนธรรมที่มีต่อการมีส่วนร่วมต่อโพสต์ทั้งสามประเภท ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ผู้บริโภค
ชาวอเมริกัน และชาวดัตช์ที่มาจากวัฒนธรรมแบบปัจเจกมีแนวโน้มที่จะสร้างคอมเมนต์ และเผย
แพร่โพสต์ที่มีคุณสมบัติของการเสริมสร้างปฏิสัมพันธ์มากกว่าผู้บริโภคชาวเกาหลีใต้ และชาวไทย
ที่มาจากวัฒนธรรมแบบรวมกลุ่ม แต่อย่างไรก็ตามเมื่อมองที่พฤติกรรมการสร้างโพสต์ ผู้บริโภค
จากวัฒนธรรมแบบปัจเจกจะเน้นเนื้อหาการส่งเสริมปฏิสัมพันธ์ในโพสต์น้อยกว่าเมื่อเปรียบเทียบ
กับผู้บริโภคจากวัฒนธรรมแบบรวมกลุ่ม ผลที่ได้จากงานวิจัยครั้งนี้สนับสนุนแนวคิดที่ว่า สำหรับผู้

120

บริโภคจากวัฒนธรรมแบบปัจเจกแล้ว พฤติกรรมการเผยแพร่หรือการสร้างคอมเมนท์บนโพสของ
คนอื่นที่มีเนื้อหาเน้นการสร้างปฏิสัมพันธ์สะท้อนถึงความต้องการในการขยายเครือข่ายเพื่อที่จะก่อ
ให้เกิดการแลกเปลี่ยนความคิดเห็น ประสบการณ์จากการใช้สินค้าหรือบริการ โดยที่ไม่ได้ให้ความ
สำคัญในเรื่องของการรักษาพันธะความสัมพันธ์มากนัก ซึ่งต่างกับผู้บริโภคที่มาจากวัฒนธรรมแบบ
รวมกลุ่ม การสร้างโพสที่มีเนื้อหาเกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการของพวกเขามีจุดประสงค์เพื่อที่จะบอก
เล่าประสบการณ์ หรือให้ข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับสินค้าหรือบริการที่เป็นประโยชน์ต่อเพื่อนของเขา ทั้งนี้เพื่อ
กระชับความสัมพันธ์กับเพื่อน หรือบุคคลที่เป็นที่รู้จักกันมาก่อนแล้ว

S

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Appendices

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Gauze (Pitipon) Kitirattarkarn was born on 8 July 1988 in Bangkok, Thailand. She obtained her Bachelor's degree in Communication Arts at Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. In 2010, she started her career in advertising at Hakuhodo Bangkok, a Japanese advertising agency, where she was an account planner for Japanese clients, including Toyota and Canon. Later in 2011, she moved to Lowe IPG Thailand where she worked as an account executive. One of the campaigns she involved won 2011 Bronze Cannes Lions Award.

After two years of working experiences, Gauze received a full scholarship for her master and doctoral degrees. In 2012, she decided to pursue her higher education and went to live abroad for the first time in her life. Gauze was admitted to the Master program in Advertising at the University of Texas at Austin, United States. Her master thesis about cultural differences in consumer behavior ignited her curiosity to study more on this topic. Later in November 2015, Gauze was offered a PhD position at the Amsterdam School of Communication Research (ASCoR), University of Amsterdam. She started with her 3-year PhD project on cultural influence on consumer-generated content engagement on Facebook. During her PhD project, she visited dr. Wanhsiu Sunny Tsai at the School of Communication, University of Miami, United States. Her work has been published in top-tier journals in the field of communication and advertising (e.g., European Journal of Communication, Journal of Advertising). Moreover, her work has been nominated for best student paper award of the annual conference of the European Advertising Association (EAA).

After her PhD project, Gauze moved back to Bangkok and started working as a lecturer at the Department of Communication Arts, Bangkok University. Here, she teaches several courses ranging from Consumer Behavior, International Advertising, and Digital Content Creation. Furthermore, she is involved in a new international program called Innovative Media Production at Bangkok University.

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Even though the underlying factors behind engaging with Br-UGC, and consumers' motivations to do so, appear to be similar across cultures, differences in cultural collectivism-individualism still exist and do have an effect on consumer engagement with Br-UGC. The evidence of cultural differences that has been presented in this dissertation helps to emphasize that Br-UGC engagement on SNSs does not occur in a cultural void. In particular, we should be aware that 1) consumers' motivations for engaging with Br-UGC are not always the same between consumers in individualistic Western and collectivistic Eastern societies, 2) how consumers use Br-UGC to develop and maintain social relationships with others differs between cultures, and 3) the effect of Br-UGC characteristics on consumers' decision to engage with the Br-UGC also differs between cultures.