# Consumers' Online Brand-Related Activities on Facebook as a Competitive E-Commerce Channel

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**Abstract**

The theme of online brand building is relevant and valuable to understand due to its constantly evolving nature and potential to increase brand competitiveness or e-commerce. This includes the issue of consumers' online brand-related activities, motives and impacts on the brand, which require adaptable research. Our motivation is to confirm recent exploratory findings and advance knowledge in the field. The aim of the study was therefore to assess the significance of the effects of trajectories of selected motivations and consumers' online brand-related activities (COBRAs) and subsequently assess the significance of the effects of the trajectories of these activities against the impact on the brand in the form of word of mouth. We conducted the research on Facebook in Slovakia using a questionnaire with 401 valid responses. We used Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Partial Least Square-Path Modeling to assess the results. This investigation resulted in the identification of statistically significant motive trajectories and COBRAs (5 out of 12 trajectories of effects) and subsequently COBRAs and the impact on the brand in the form of word of mouth (3 out of 3 trajectories of effects). These findings in our research setting verified the exploratory findings of Piehler et al. (2019) and thus serve as the next level of understanding for this issue. The findings improve future brand building strategies and competitiveness on social networks through better informed managerial or e-commerce decisions. This is one of the first confirmatory studies, and the limitations and future research opportunities are discussed in the conclusion.

## 1  INTRODUCTION

The increasing focus on consumer engagement highlights the significance of consumer interaction with brand content on social media. This type of engagement is crucial for a brand's online communication strategy, as it helps maintain and improve their competitiveness. Understanding consumer motivations behind engagement with brand-related content on social media is a key factor in enhancing a brand's online competitiveness. The framework of these online activities has recently been grouped under the construct of COBRA – consumers' online brand-related activities - and that distinguishes three levels of these activities according to the necessary degree of consumer involvement in their implementation. Each higher level of this activity is more difficult to achieve, and therefore, it is necessary to address this issue at the academic and application levels, so that this knowledge can be used by brand managers in creating a future strategy. This study offers benefits especially in the analysis of consumers' motives, which are certain precursors to the implementation of some of the activities of the COBRA concept.

As social media continues to play a significant role in shaping brand perception, it is important to understand the drivers behind consumers' engagement with brand content on these platforms. Recently, there has been a growing body of research exploring the COBRA framework, which categorizes the level of consumer involvement in online brand interactions. However, there is still a gap in the literature regarding the specific motives behind these COBRA activities, and this remains an important area for future research. For example, a study by Lourenço et al. (2022) found that brand loyalty and entertainment motivation were positively related to consumers' online brand-related activities, and also that social identification and self-expression motivations were also important drivers of engagement. However, there is still a gap in the research regarding the motivations behind COBRA and their impact on brand reputation, making it an important area for further exploration. The previous research has largely relied on insights from the U&G theory known for more than 50 years. This theory also discusses why people use particular types of media and their motivations for doing so. And it is precisely this factor of motivations that, in our study, stands as a precursor to COBRA activities. Beyond this level, however, the study also provides a view of COBRA activities as a precursor to offline impact on the brand in the form of word of mouth. Knowing which motives or activities are relevant and which are not in order to achieve a set goal is valuable knowledge in marketing practice. However, in previous research, only a small number of studies have addressed the specifics of all three levels of activities, as for a long time, two of them have been classified as one. However, nowadays, we already know that the stage connecting content contribution and content creation is no longer comprehensive enough. Similarly, at the level of motives, only a small number of studies consider up to four identified motives.

The main motivation for this study was the findings of Piehler et al. (2019), who were the first to explore contexts and setting in this study, but their results are logically at an exploratory level, which, even on the basis of their reasoning, need to be confirmed in other settings to deepen the related knowledge base on motives and COBRAs. We observe a significant research gap in exploring the connection between motivations and activities on social media platforms and brand competitiveness. These are dominantly investigated in the context of performance indicators, but the trajectories operating behind these primary metrics are far from scientifically well researched. Moreover, the market we are studying in this concept has, so to speak, no research evidence on which researchers and practitioners can rely. Our analysis focuses on confirmation regarding the social network Facebook, which was also the platform investigated in the above study and is the most prevalent platform in the market we studied. The main objective of this study is to assess the significance of the effects of the trajectories of selected motivations and brand-related consumer activities and subsequently to assess the significance of the effects of the trajectories of these activities and the impact on the brand in the form of word of mouth.

## 2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Current research on motivations towards consumers' brand-related activities (COBRAs) has largely been concerned with the well-known U&G Uses and gratification theory following the research of Katz (1959) and Katz et al. (1973). It focused on exploring individual media and worked with the fundamental assumption that an active and engaged audience is essential. Recent studies have shown the importance of understanding consumers' online brand-related activities in the context of brand building and competitiveness. For instance, a study by Chen & Xu (2022) explores its impact on brand engagement via content, finding that consumers' online brand-related activities are positively correlated to brand engagement. Similarly, a study by Meire et al. (2022) examines the relationship between consumers' online brand-related

activities and brand loyalty, finding that consumers' online brand-related activities have a positive impact on brand loyalty. Or, a study by Xu et al. (2022) looks at the influence of consumers' online brand-related activities on brand image, discovering that consumers' online brand-related activities have a link to enhanced brand image. A recent study by Lourenço et al. (2022) found that consumers engage with brand content on social media for various reasons, including entertainment, information seeking, self-expression, and relationship building. The study highlights the importance of considering the brand's online reputation, trust, and brand loyalty in exploring consumer behavior on social media. Another study by Chapman and Dilmperi (2022) found that consumers' online brand-related activities positively impact brand competitiveness by shaping image, reputation, and creating word-of-mouth opportunities. These findings highlight the need for further research to understand consumers' motivations and behaviors on social media and their effect on brand competitiveness. These studies indicate that exploring consumers' online brand-related activities is critical in understanding the impact they have on brand building and competitiveness. According to Ruggiero (2000), the use of such media is selective; moreover, it is motivated by rational thinking about the individual's personal needs and theirexpectation of fulfilling those needs. This fulfillment should happen precisely through a specific type of media and content. This assumption has logically led to an academic investigation of consumers' motives for using particular media. This approach is also present in the issue of social media, which are as much a medium as any other. The specificity here, however, is that they require some form of active consumer participation (Muntinga et al., 2011). This participation in our research context takes the form of the aforementioned consumers' brand-related activities and has been clearly described by Muntinga et al. (2011). They refer to the first level of activity as low-engagement content consumption (passively watching photos and videos, reading conversational threads, reading reviews, etc.), content contribution as mid-engagement (rating products, commenting on posts, conversing in online communities, etc.), and content creation as high-engagement (publishing user-generated content in the form of videos and images, writing blogs, etc.).

As such, four categories of motivations have been specified that have the potential to play a significant role in this issue. Dolan et al. (2017) and Schivinski (2021) present these four categories as (1) information motivation, (2) entertainment motivation, (3) social interaction, and (4) remuneration motivation. According to Azar et al. (2016), the information motive is consumers' search for information related to products or services or other relevant information related to the brand, e.g., in the form of reviews. This need is embedded in the very nature of how social media work (Foster et al., 2010; Lin & Lu, 2011), but it is also a driver of virtual communities (Zaglia, 2013). Pletikosa Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) observed a higher rate of "likes" for posts with informative content, as well as posting comments under such content, which we classify as a content contribution activity. Pöyry et al. (2013) observed the effect of this motive on content browsing rates, which we categorize as content consumption. In addition to the mentioned studies, other authors have also studied this motive (De Vries & Carlson, 2014; Dolan et al., 2016; Kang et al., 2014; Luarn et al., 2015; Yoshida et al., 2018; Buzeta et al., 2020; Gerrath & Biraglia, 2021). The results of Dessart &Veloutsou (2021) recently revealed that less active Facebook users could also be positively influenced by the information motive when building a brand community on Facebook. They consider it an important predictor of brand loyalty.

The entertainment motive is understood by Tsai and Men (2013) as relaxation, escape and pleasure. For these reasons, people often use social networking platforms, as observed by Cheung et al. (2011), Lin & Lu (2011) Kang et al. (2014). They want to be part of virtual communities (Zaglia 2013) and contribute content in those communities (Park et al. 2009). The

empirical relationship between these motives and the rate of following brand pages on social networks was observed by De Vries & Carlson (2014). Pöyry et al. (2013) observed this phenomenon in relation to brand content following activity, which Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles (2013) broadened to include observed effects on increased commenting and content sharing. This motive has also been analyzed in other recent studies, such as Yoshida et al. (2018), Buzeta et al. (2020), or Gerrath & Biraglia (2021).

Social interaction is understood by Dolan et al. (2016) as the basis for the functioning of social networks, and in the form of motivation, it is the driving force of mutual communication on these platforms (Kang et al., 2014; Luarn et al., 2015; Košičiarová et al., 2021). According to Davis et al. (2014), this is how consumers strengthen their social identity, build connections, and, most importantly, share their experiences with a brand. Social interaction as a motive is highly predicted to increase the rate of consuming, contributing and creating brand-related content(Jahn & Kunz, 2012). Recent studies confirming the above associations include Azar et al. (2016), Tsai & Men (2017), Simon & Tossan (2018), Yoshida et al. (2018) and Buzeta et al. (2020). An interesting perspective on this motivation and co-creation as a purposeful interaction between users and the brand has also been explored by Sarasvuo et al. (2022).

Remuneration as motivation is understood by Azar et al. (2016) and Davis et al. (2014) as motivation based on economic incentives that cause consumers to engage in brand-related activities (Kang et al., 2014). Of all the motivations, this has been the least studied so far, but the studies that do mention it include Luarn et al. (2015) and Dolan et al. (2016). Two studies in the context of remuneration motivation discuss the results related to rewarding posts, where they observed a positive effect on post commenting, i.e., COBRA activity of content contribution (Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Buzeta et al., 2020).

Muntinga et al. (2011) understand consumers' online brand-related activities (COBRAs) as a behavioral construct. Its role is to unify a framework of reasoning about such activities. At the basic level, it includes three levels of activities. The lowest level of engagement is represented by content consumption activity, where we talk about the passive perception of brand-related content without further interaction with it. Early studies discussing this activity include Dholakia et al. (2004) and Muniz and O'Guinn (2001). Here, we include both brand-generated and user-generated content related to the brand (Muntinga et al., 2011). This involves participation without actively creating or contributing to content, for example, watching a video posted by a brand (Schivinski 2021; Miklosik et al., 2022). The second level of activities is about the interaction between the users themselves (P2P) and the content (P2C). Early studies discussing this activity include Dellarocas et al. (2007) or Chevalier & Mayzlin (2006). Recent studies that consider content sharing specifically as a content contribution activity include Shi et al. (2014) and Belk (2014). At this stage, a moderate level of engagement with the content is present in the form of discussions in the comments below the post or in its sharing (Schivinski 2021). The third level of COBRA activities requires the highest level of engagement, which is, of course, the most difficult to achieve. This is the actual creation of brand-related content. According to Füller et al. (2006), this is a crucial factor of co-creation and, according to Pires et al. (2006) and Tiu Wright et al. (2006), the resulting consumer empowerment. More recently, the term user-generated content (UGC) was also introduced in this context (Hautz et al., 2014; Bruhn et al., 2012; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). It is the most valuable activity that, by its very nature, has the potential to automatically stimulate previous levels of activity (Muntinga et al., 2011). Schivinski (2021) refers to the creation of brand-related content as the highest level of online activity to which a brand can aspire.

How consumers behave on the brand pages on social networking platforms can also result in other consequences for the brand, and it does not matter if it is a brand of a company, a person or, for example, a destination (Sucháček et al., 2018). And, these may go well beyond the reach of these platforms. According to Pöyry et al. (2013) and De Vries & Carlson (2014), one such impact may be to stimulate word of mouth about the brand. Consumers who communicate with a brand using COBRAs encounter many marketing messages. However, they also build a deeper relationship with the brand this way, helping to foster engagement with brand-related content, all for the purpose of improving brand awareness (Jahn & Kunz, 2012). Existing research discusses the positive impact of the activities of content consumption and content contribution on the impact on the brand in the form of word of mouth. Specifically, this was the study by Pöyry et al. (2013), where they demonstrated a strong relationship between consumption activity in the form of the content following and the level of willingness to recommend a brand further. Brand following intensity and engagement rates have been identified as important for word of mouth in the studies of de Vries and Carlson (2014) and Jahn and Kunz (2012).

## 3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE, METHODOLOGY AND DATA

This study has the ambition to advance the state of scientific knowledge on the subject. Its main objective is formulated as follows: to assess the significance of the effects of the trajectories of selected motivations and consumers' brand-related activities and then to assess the significance of the effects of the trajectories of these activities and the impact on the brand in the form of word of mouth. The research is focused on the social network platform Facebook in the conditions of the Slovak market. Based on the aforementioned objective, the research question was also formulated: is there a trajectory of significant relationships between the studied motives, activities and impact on the brand in the context of the social network Facebook? This question was the basis for the formulation of the following hypotheses:

H1: There is a significant relationship between consumer information motivation and selected brand-related COBRAs on the social network Facebook.

H2: There is a significant relationship between consumer entertainment motivation and selected brand-related COBRAs on the social network Facebook.

H3: There is a significant relationship between consumer motivation for social interaction and selected brand-related COBRAs on the social network Facebook.

H4: There is a significant relationship between consumer remuneration motivation and selected brand-related COBRAs on the social network Facebook.

H5: There is a significant relationship between selected brand-related COBRAs on the social network Facebook and brand-related Word of mouth.

These hypotheses were developed in light of existing research on this issue discussed in the previous section. The data with which we worked is of a primary character and was collected during the first six months of 2021. We collected a total of 547 responses, two of which were excluded on the basis of incorrect completion and another 144 of which were excluded on the basis of not meeting the conditions of the target research sample (we focused the study on the younger generation, so responses from respondents outside of these age groups were not considered). By exploring available data from social media (Statista 2020) and advertising tools (Hootsuite 2021), a target demographic representative profile of the respondent was created,

which was the first criterion. The second criterion was that respondents had to have an active account on the social network under study. The standardized questionnaire had a total of 34 questions (see appendix A) addressing motives and activities within the COBRA concept we studied on the social network. This sample was evaluated as suitable for this purpose mainly due to the significant similarity between our market and the one analyzed in the source study, in cultural, demographic and behavioral aspects. This allowed us to better compare and evaluate the results, as the knowledge base in this issue is not yet extensive. The particular questions were identified by Piehler et al. (2019) in their exploratory factor analysis (EFA) study of the aforementioned contexts in the conditions of the German market and the identical social network platform. Individual constructs were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale. This study is therefore derivative from the work of the aforementioned authors and adhered to their method of conducting research to the extent possible, however, taking into account that our study is now confirmatory, not exploratory. The studies by Munting et al. (2011), Men & Tsai (2013), and Azar et al. (2016) initially formulated factors discussing the measurement of brand-related content consumption, content contribution, and content creation. Further, for the factors of motives, there were Ko et al. (2005) for the information motive, Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) for the social interaction and remuneration motives, and Taylor et al. (2011) for the remuneration motive.

Tab. 1 – Research Sample. Source: own research

| Characteristics | Quantity (%) |
|---|---|
| Gender of respondents | |
| Male | 131 (32.7 %) |
| Female | 270 (67.3 %) |
| Age of respondents | |
| 18 - 24 years | 247 (61.6 %) |
| 25 – 34 years | 154 (38.4 %) |
| Number of active social media accounts | |
| 3 active accounts | 202 (50.4 %) |
| 4 active accounts | 114 (28.4 %) |
| 5 and more active accounts | 85 (21.2 %) |
| Number of brands actively followed on social networks | |
| 1 – 2 brands | 50 (12.4 %) |
| 3 – 5 brands | 66 (16.5 %) |
| 6 – 10 brands | 88 (21.9 %) |
| 11 – 15 brands | 58 (14.5 %) |
| 16 – 20 brands | 34 (8.5 %) |
| 21 – 30 brands | 23 (5.7 %) |
| 31 and more brands | 82 (20.4 %) |

The age structure of the sample followed the two identified age groups according to the previously mentioned criteria. In addition to these, we also identified the average age of the respondents, which was at the level of $\bar{x} = 28.13$ years. In the case of active accounts of the respondents, the value was $\bar{x} = 4.35$ accounts, and for actively followed brands $\bar{x} = 15.8$ brands. To achieve the goal, it was necessary to apply several methods of analytical data processing. In particular, we relied on the application of CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis) using ML (Maximum Likelihood Estimation). The above procedure was used because of the possibility of excluding items from the sample. These were those that interfered with the internal factor structure of the instrument, which depicts selected areas of attitudes and perceptions of issues concerning brand-related activities in terms of the social network Facebook. We implemented the AVE (Average Variance Extracted) and CR (Composite Reliability) metrics according to Fornell et al. (1981) and Hair et al. (2014). They have been applied to the description for the suitability of construction of the analyzed latent variables. The FL (Factor Loadings) metrics were used for manifest variables and their assessment for the CFA. Other metrics applied

include CFI (Comparative Fit Index), RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) or SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual). These metrics belong among the standard procedures for applying an analysis of this type. In the second step, the PLS PM (Partial Least Square - Path Modeling) method was used to describe the studied relationships of motives, activities, and consequences on the brand (Latan et al., 2017; Sanchez, 2013). The determination of the relationships has been divided into two parts, the first of which highlights the conditions and their fulfillment in order to apply PLS PM. This involved Reliability, FL and Eigenvalue (Sanchez, 2013). The mentioned analytical investigation was carried out with the R programming language version 4.0.2 and the IBM SPSS Statistic software version 26.

## 4  RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Prior to modeling the PLS PM equations, we evaluated CFA confirmatory factor analysis concerning the analysis of motives, activities, and consequences in the context of the social network Facebook. The analysis was conducted on a sample of 349 observations and at 377 degrees of freedom. The outcome of this analysis under the specified conditions was significant (p-value $\chi2 > 0{,}001$).

Tab. 2 – Confirmatory factor analysis for the COBRA model on the social network Facebook.
Source: own research

| Manifest Variables | Latent Variables | LF | CR | AVE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| FB_info_1 | Information (motive) | 0.854 | 0.906 | 0.763 |
| FB_info_2 | | 0.869 | | |
| FB_info_3 | | 0.897 | | |
| FB_ent_1 | Entertainment (motive) | 0.860 | 0.924 | 0.753 |
| FB_ent_2 | | 0.884 | | |
| FB_ent_3 | | 0.852 | | |
| FB_ent_4 | | 0.875 | | |
| FB_socInt_1 | Social interaction (motive) | 0.794 | 0.876 | 0.702 |
| FB_socInt_2 | | 0.853 | | |
| FB_socInt_3 | | 0.865 | | |
| FB_rem_1 | Remuneration (motive) | 0.883 | 0.919 | 0.790 |
| FB_rem_2 | | 0.904 | | |
| FB_rem_3 | | 0.881 | | |
| FB_cons_1 | Content consumption (activity) | 0.893 | 0.939 | 0.836 |
| FB_cons_2 | | 0.928 | | |
| FB_cons_3 | | 0.922 | | |
| FB_contrib_2 | Content contribution (activity) | 0.712 | 0.923 | 0.707 |
| FB_contrib_3 | | 0.886 | | |
| FB_contrib_4 | | 0.886 | | |
| FB_contrib_5 | | 0.836 | | |
| FB_contrib_6 | | 0.869 | | |
| FB_creat_1 | Content creation (activity) | 0.941 | 0.952 | 0.869 |
| FB_creat_2 | | 0.908 | | |
| FB_creat_3 | | 0.947 | | |
| FB_WOM_1 | Word of mouth (brand impact) | 0.854 | 0.943 | 0.735 |
| FB_WOM_2 | | 0.887 | | |
| FB_WOM_3 | | 0.882 | | |
| FB_WOM_4 | | 0.883 | | |
| FB_WOM_5 | | 0.855 | | |
| FB_WOM_6 | | 0.776 | | |

In Table 2, we see that all manifest variables (except FB_contrib_1 due to the low LF level <0.7) exhibit characteristics with acceptable outcomes. The same is the case for the AVE and CR characteristics, where all cases take a value greater than 0.7. In the case of the RMSEA and SRMR indicators, slight deviations were observed. Still, the comprehensive picture describing the conditions of application of the CFA allows us to talk about an acceptable level of deviations. Thus, we consider the data structure suitable for further analysis and application of

the regression model in the form of PLS PM equations. We worked with the bootstrap method at 500 iterations (bootstrap resamples), and a centroid weighting scheme was applied to the input data in the form of 30 manifest variables and 8 latent variables.

Tab. 3 – Confirmatory factor analysis for the COBRA model on the social network Facebook.
Source: own research

| Var | Mode | MVs | C.alpha | DG.rho | Eig.1st | Eig.2nd |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Info | A | 3 | 0.844 | 0.906 | 2.29 | 0.413 |
| Ent | A | 4 | 0.891 | 0.924 | 3.01 | 0.385 |
| SocInt | A | 3 | 0.788 | 0.876 | 2.11 | 0.528 |
| Rem | A | 3 | 0.867 | 0.919 | 2.37 | 0.349 |
| Cons | A | 3 | 0.902 | 0.939 | 2.51 | 0.297 |
| Contrib | A | 5 | 0.894 | 0.923 | 3.53 | 0.58 |
| Creat | A | 3 | 0.924 | 0.952 | 2.61 | 0.257 |
| WOM | A | 6 | 0.927 | 0.943 | 4.41 | 0.592 |

In Table 3, we discuss the primary outputs related to the structure of our model. For the Crombach α characteristic, we observed no value lower than 0.7; similarly, for the Doges ρ characteristic, no value lower than 0.8 was observed. The last pair of columns lists the characteristics of eigenvalues, which also exhibit acceptable values. We, therefore, proceeded in the analysis to test the examined effects, which were presented in the methodology section.

Tab. 4 – PLS PM model of content consumption activity effects on the social network Facebook. Source: own research

| DV: | Content Consumption | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Estimate | Std. Error | t value | Pr(>\|t\|) |
| Intercept | 0.0000 | 0.0436 | 0.0000 | 1.0000 |
| Information | 0.0794 | 0.0583 | 1.3600 | 0.1740 |
| Entertainment | 0.3930 | 0.0569 | 6.9000 | 0.0000 |
| Soc. interaction | 0.1770 | 0.0549 | 3.2200 | 0.0014 |
| Remuneration | 0.0622 | 0.0498 | 1.2500 | 0.2130 |

In the case of content consumption as the dependent variable, we observed a significant effect at the $\alpha < 0.05$ level only for entertainment and social interaction as motives for this brand-related activity on the social network Facebook. In both cases, this effect takes a positive direction. Thus, with a higher level of entertainment or social interaction motive, we can expect a higher level of brand-related content consumption in terms of the social network Facebook.

Tab. 5 – PLS PM model of content contribution activity effects on the social network Facebook. Source: own research

| DV: | Content Contribution | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Estimate | Std. Error | t value | Pr(>\|t\|) |
| Intercept | 0.0000 | 0.0458 | 0.0000 | 1.0000 |
| Information | -0.0787 | 0.0613 | -1.2800 | 0.2000 |
| Entertainment | 0.0293 | 0.0599 | 0.4890 | 0.6250 |
| Soc. interaction | 0.1870 | 0.0577 | 3.2300 | 0.0013 |
| Remuneration | 0.4410 | 0.0524 | 8.4100 | 0.0000 |

The other dependent variable was content contribution activity (Table 5). Also, we observed two significant motives at the $\alpha < 0.05$ level for this one. In this case, these were the social interaction and remuneration motives. Again, in both cases, the effect was positive; hence, it is expected that a higher level of remuneration or social interaction motive would also lead to a higher level of brand-related content contribution activity on the social network Facebook.

Tab. 6 – PLS PM model of content creation activity effects on the social network Facebook.
Source: own research

| DV: | Content Creation | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Estimate | Std. Error | t value | Pr(>\|t\|) |

| Intercept | 0.0000 | 0.0473 | 0.0000 | 1.0000 |
| Information | -0.0536 | 0.0633 | -0.8460 | 0.3980 |
| Entertainment | 0.0630 | 0.0619 | 1.0200 | 0.3090 |
| Soc. interaction | 0.0244 | 0.0597 | 0.4100 | 0.6820 |
| Remuneration | 0.4630 | 0.0541 | 8.5600 | 0.0000 |

The third dependent variable was content creation activity (Table 6). In this case, only a single motive appeared to be significant at the α < 0.05 level, and that is remuneration. But, again, the direction of the effect was positive. Thus, with a higher level of remuneration motive, a higher level of activity in the form of brand-related content creation on Facebook could be expected.

Tab. 7 – PLS PM model of impact on brand effects - word of mouth on the social network Facebook. Source: own research

| DV: | Word of Mouth | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Estimate | Std. Error | t value | Pr(>\|t\|) |
| Intercept | 0.0000 | 0.0505 | 0.0000 | 1.00000 |
| Consumption | 0.2910 | 0.0559 | 5.2200 | 0.00000 |
| Contribution | -0.2360 | 0.0825 | -2.8700 | 0.00440 |
| Creation | 0.2930 | 0.0792 | 3.6900 | 0.00026 |

To achieve the objective of our research, it was also necessary to analyze the effects at the level of activity trajectory against the impact on the brand in the form of word of mouth as a dependent variable (Table 7). At a significance level of α < 0.05, all three activities of content consumption, content contribution and content creation proved to be significant. However, only for content contribution, a negative effect has been shown. Thus, higher content consumption and creation levels can be expected to facilitate higher levels of brand-related word of mouth and vice versa. On the other hand, with higher levels of content contribution, lower users' willingness for word of mouth can be expected. Possible reasons for this observation are presented in the discussion.

Tab. 8 – Bootstrap - β coefficients. Source: own research

| Path | Original | Mean.Boot | Std.Error | perc.025 | perc.975 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| INFO → CONSUMTION | 0.0794 | 0.082 | 0.0627 | -0.0354 | 0.1975 |
| INFO → CONTRIBUTION | -0.0787 | -0.074 | 0.0595 | -0.1907 | 0.0536 |
| INFO → CREATION | -0.0536 | -0.0473 | 0.0599 | -0.1688 | 0.0657 |
| ENT → CONSUMPTION | 0.3932 | 0.3964 | 0.0647 | 0.2555 | 0.5211 |
| ENT → CONTRIBUTION | 0.0293 | 0.0269 | 0.0583 | -0.0876 | 0.1372 |
| ENT → CREATION | 0.063 | 0.0614 | 0.06 | -0.0528 | 0.1745 |
| SOC_IN → CONSUMPTION | 0.1767 | 0.1743 | 0.0626 | 0.0572 | 0.3136 |
| SOC_IN → CONTRIBUTION | 0.1866 | 0.1892 | 0.0619 | 0.0682 | 0.3116 |
| SOC_IN → CREATION | 0.0244 | 0.0266 | 0.0574 | -0.0872 | 0.1351 |
| REM → CONSUMPTION | 0.0622 | 0.0645 | 0.0526 | -0.0399 | 0.1615 |
| REM → CONTRIBUTION | 0.4406 | 0.4396 | 0.0537 | 0.3325 | 0.5412 |
| REM → CREATION | 0.4634 | 0.461 | 0.0549 | 0.3528 | 0.5685 |
| CONSUMPTION → WOM | 0.2914 | 0.2929 | 0.0548 | 0.1874 | 0.4046 |
| CONTRIBUTION → WOM | -0.2364 | -0.2379 | 0.0785 | -0.3932 | -0.084 |
| CREATION → WOM | 0.2925 | 0.2951 | 0.0756 | 0.1454 | 0.4385 |

Table 8 summarizes the Bootstrap output in the context of *β* coefficients. We can see that this is a positive impact in most cases, and its negative nature was manifested in only three cases. In addition, only one of them also reached statistical significance, and that was the activity of brand-related content contribution and impact on the brand in the form of word of mouth.

Tab. 9 – Bootstrap – R2. Source: own research

| DV | Original | Mean.Boot | Std.Error | perc.025 | perc.975 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CONSUMPTION | 0.347 | 0.361 | 0.0401 | 0.2839 | 0.445 |
| CONTRIBUTION | 0.278 | 0.287 | 0.0407 | 0.2074 | 0.365 |
| CREATION | 0.229 | 0.237 | 0.0437 | 0.1526 | 0.322 |
| WOM | 0.118 | 0.127 | 0.0298 | 0.0731 | 0.196 |

We also summarized the bootstrap characteristic output in the context of the R2 coefficient. When evaluating the coefficient of determination, the only dependent variable that exceeds the threshold value (0.3) is the content consumption (CONSUMPTION), with an R2 value approximately equal to 0.347. The other R2 values are below this threshold.

Five research hypotheses were formulated in the case of the analyzed social network Facebook, which we present with arguments for assessing their statistical significance. Moreover, the results of the empirical investigation are shown in the following figure in the form of a visual representation of the significance of the addressed COBRA concept trajectories in terms of the social network Facebook. In the case of the relationship of motives to brand-related activities, five of them were confirmed as significant (12 in total). In the case of the relationship of activities to word of mouth, all three were found to be significant.
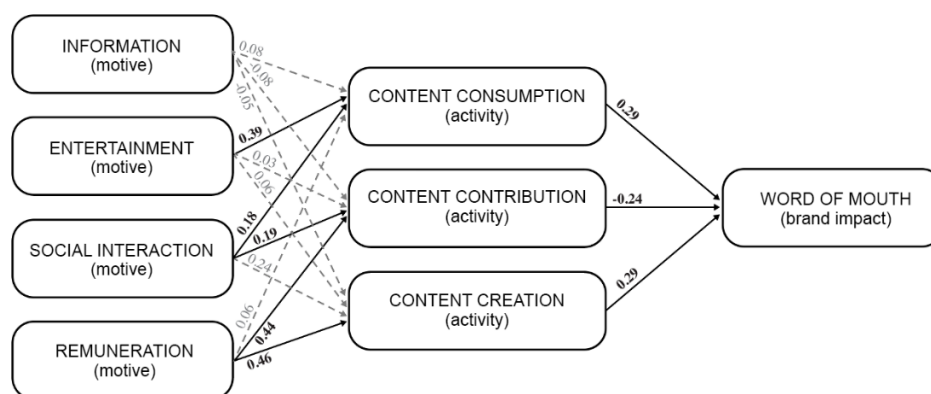


Fig. 1 – The outline of the researched results of the COBRA analysis on the social network Facebook. Source: own research

The analyzed information motive on the social network Facebook did not prove to be significant in any of the trajectories. Based on this finding, we conclude that there is no significant relationship trajectory with the selected brand-related COBRA activities on the social network Facebook. Thus, we reject Hypothesis H1 and do not accept the claim about the significance of the selected trajectory of the information motive. For the second analyzed entertainment motive, the significance of the relationship trajectory towards content consumption was identified as a brand-related activity COBRA. We conclude that such a significant trajectory exists, and we accept Hypothesis H2 about the significance of the selected entertainment motive trajectory. The third motive was social interaction, which reached significance on two trajectories, and these were in relation to brand-related content consumption and content contribution COBRAs. We, therefore, state that there is a significant trajectory and accept Hypothesis H3 about the social interaction motive. The fourth analyzed motive was remuneration. After analyzing selected trajectories, two of them proved to be significant. Therefore, we state that there exists such a significant relationship trajectory with selected brand-related COBRA activities on the social network Facebook. Thus, we accept Hypothesis H4 with a statement about the significance of the selected remuneration motive trajectory on the social network Facebook. The last hypothesis related to the social network Facebook dealt with the trajectories of effects between COBRA activities and offline impact on the brand in the form of word of mouth. In this case, all trajectories proved to be significant. Therefore, we accept hypothesis H5 about the existence of a significant relationship trajectory between the selected COBRA activities and word of mouth.

In terms of the social network Facebook, our confirmatory analysis did not reveal any significant relationships of the information motive with any of the three COBRA activities. This is confirmed by the findings of Piehler et al. (2019), who similarly identified no significant relationship. De Vries et al. (2012) reached a similar conclusion with an unconfirmed effect on the number of likes and comments, i.e., the activity of brand content contribution. However, the results are not in line with the findings of studies by Jahn & Kunz (2012) and Pöyry et al. (2013). This inconsistency may be because the aforementioned studies did not work with the concept of all four motivations. The studies analyzed functional value in one case and utilitarian motivation in the other, which combines a broader spectrum than the information motive in this analysis. This may be caused by the fact that users usually do not consider a brand's page on Facebook as a primary source of the necessary information. In most cases, they consult their websites or the information and opinions of other consumers in communities that are not under the brand's control, for example, review platforms or retailer sites (Heureka, Alza, Amazon, etc.).

Analyzing the entertainment motive, we identified only one positive significant relationship and that was for brand-related content consumption. Our findings are supported by those of Piehler et al. (2019), who similarly identify this particular trajectory as significant. The non-significant effect on the other two activity types may be due to the very definition of the entertainment motive, which refers to escape, amusement, or pleasure. All of these elements generally do not require highly interactive user behavior. These needs can be sufficiently fulfilled by the consumption of entertaining brand-related content. In this sense, consumers' behavior of commenting, sharing, or 'liking' entertainment content is not a manifestation of their desire to satisfy their entertainment needs but rather reflects the needs for social interaction. They perform these activities to interact and communicate their self-knowledge and improve their social identity by gaining attention from others. This effect has been confirmed in several other studies (De Vries & Carlson, 2014; Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Pöyry et al., 2013). Moreover, the insignificance of this motive concerning contribution was also confirmed in the study by de Vries et al. (2012). However, our result contradicts the finding of Pletikos Cvijikj & Michahelles (2013), who observed such an effect. They used a different coding of motives, and in their definitions, both the fun motive and the social interaction motive showed elements of the social interaction motive. Thus, we emphasize that it is important to distinguish between entertainment and social interaction motivations, because the effects of these motivations on selected types of COBRA activities differ. This study again contributes to the literature by demonstrating that entertainment motivation is not relevant in creating a type of COBRA.

Social interaction lies at the very heart of social networks, allowing consumers to communicate their concepts, strengthen their social identities, build connections, share brand experiences and exchange knowledge (Durda & Ključnikov, 2019). Thus, motivation in social interaction should increase the rate of all three COBRA activities. This was largely supported by our analysis of the social network Facebook, where we identified two significant trajectories to the activities of content consumption and content contribution. We did not identify a significant relationship to content creation activity. This may be due to the very nature of this social network, where it is much easier to share something from another platform than to create it directly there. We also found a parallel to this finding in the study by Buzet et al. (2020). We consider this to be some form of possible hidden content creation activity. The significance of this motive as a whole is also supported by many other studies (Piehler et al., 2019; Davis et al., 2014; De Vries & Carlson, 2014; Dolan et al., 2016; Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Kang et al., 2014; Luarn et al., 2015), where this effect is significant. Therefore, as expected, social interaction

motivation has a significant relationship to COBRA activities, and it is the strongest motivation ever from a global perspective on the results of this paper.

The remuneration motive was found to be significant on the social network Facebook in the case of COBRA activities of contribution and creation but not in the case of consumption. The probable reason for that is that brand content appealing to the remuneration motive requires, logically, some form of more active consumer participation. A remuneration or some form of economic incentive must inevitably require some form of contribution or content creation, as these have a subsequent impact on overall engagement in the environment of the social network Facebook. Rewarding consumers just for consuming content has no added value for the brand, and there is no control over it. For example, a study by Pletikosa, Cvijikj & Michahelles (2013) identified a positive remuneration effect on the number of comments related to brand content. Luarn et al. (2015) confirmed this in relation to giving "likes". The results also support the finding of Piehler et al. (2019), who confirmed the significance of the remuneration motive for content contribution and content creation. In the case of the social network Facebook, which has the lowest average engagement rate among the networks studied, it is therefore logical that remuneration motives were among the strongest motives to encourage COBRA activities, as, without this, consumer motivation is naturally low.

The second set of relationships analyzed was the effects of COBRA activities on word of mouth as an offline impact on the brand. In the case of the social network Facebook, we confirmed all three trajectories as significant, but one of them was negatively oriented. The outcome is partially supported by the studies of Piehler et al. (2019), Jahn & Kunz (2012), and de Vries & Carlson (2014), who found a positive effect of the intensity of following brand page (consumption behavior) on brand loyalty as an offline impact on the brand, which includes the WOM that we study. However, the results do not support each other in the case of content contribution, which was indicated as a positive correlation in the above studies, but negative in the case of our study. This may be due to the fact that we focused only on WOM and the above studies on the broader concept of brand loyalty, which encompasses much more besides the aforementioned WOM. We explain our negative correlation by suggesting that content contribution, e.g., in the form of comments, may be seen by consumers as a form of WOM, so they are no longer motivated to talk about the brand outside of this platform. The importance of content consumption in relation to willingness to recommend a brand was also confirmed by Pöyry et al. (2013), but no longer in the case of participation, which they understood as the activities of content contribution and content creation. The probable reason is the different coding of the activities. In contrast, Kang et al. (2014) were able to identify the positive effects of active participation (contributing and creating) on brand trust and brand loyalty. Again, there is a slightly different conception of activities present here, as this study did not work with content consumption activities.

Our identification of content creation as an important antecedent of WOM may be based on the fact that if a consumer puts effort into creating a piece of content, they are more likely to want their friends or acquaintances to know about it, and thus are more likely to disseminate WOM in order to enhance their social status as an opinion leader or subject matter expert. The specification of such effects of the trajectories is one of the important implications for managers, who can also make better-informed marketing decisions based on this knowledge. We view these trajectories as a natural extension of the managerial implications identified by Siano et al. (2022). They emphasize the importance of managerial knowledge of the patterns operating in the background, whether evolutionary or motivational in nature. An implication is the extension of the identified managerial skillset needed to orchestrate a brand now and in the future by Riedmeier & Kreuzer (2022), where the knowledge we have identified enhances the

decision-making competence of these managers. It is in those statistically significant trajectories that they can expect the greatest potential for achieving the stated marketing objective, or, from the opposite perspective, they can choose the right mix of key performance indicators (KPIs) with respect to these trajectories, which they can also use to quantify the whole process. However, it is also important to properly understand the categorization of activities on these platforms and, along with this, to distinguish between the motivations for these activities, because, as our research has shown, the effects of these activities appear to be different and thus need to be approached differently as well. We also see considerable added value in the overlap of the studied trajectories to a specific outcome for the brand in the form of word of mouth, because if this phenomenon is exactly one of the goals in the brand marketing activities, the awareness of the existence of an effective trajectory to achieve this goal is a valuable intangible asset for managers as well as for brands. A steadily growing level of general consumer awareness is also discussed by Musova et al. (2021).This study aimed to assess the significance of the effects of the trajectories of selected motivations and brand-related consumer activities and subsequently to assess the significance of the effects of the trajectories of these activities and the impact on the brand in the form of word of mouth. The results of the study suggest that entertainment, social interaction, and remuneration motives have a significant impact on consumers' online brand-related activities. On the other hand, information seeking does not appear to have a significant effect. The findings are in line with the studies of Lourenço et al. (2022) and Chapman and Dilmperi (2022), which identify entertainment, self-expression, and relationship building as key drivers of consumer engagement with brand-related content on social media. Moreover, the study highlights the significant impact of consumers' online brand-related activities on word of mouth about a brand. This also aligns with the findings of Lourenço et al. (2022) and Chapman and Dilmperi (2022), which show the impact of consumers' online engagement with a brand on its image and reputation.

## 5 CONCLUSION

On the basis of the research carried out, the analytical processing, and the evaluation of the results, and also in the context of existing research, we consider that this objective has been fulfilled. Understanding what drives consumers to engage with a brand on social media is crucial for businesses in today's highly competitive market. This knowledge can enhance a brand's competitiveness by allowing them to tailor their marketing strategies to better appeal to their target audience and improve their online presence, ultimately impacting their image and reputation. Additionally, understanding what motivates social media engagement can provide valuable insights into consumer behavior and preferences, giving businesses a competitive edge over their competitors and inform market research. Furthermore, in the context of e-commerce, such understanding can improve a brand's competitiveness by helping them optimize their product offerings and marketing strategies to better resonate with consumers on social media. However, there is still room for deeper exploration of the above issue, and therefore, future research in this area should focus on further confirming the observed trajectory effects in other markets where other factors, e.g., cultural, also interfere. Equally important, however, is the verification of these trajectories across the other social networking platforms that equally shape this virtual ecosystem. Without such development of related research, achieving a more comprehensive picture with greater potential for generalizing the observed relationships will be impossible. To reiterate, this study is currently one of the first confirmatory steps addressing the exploratory findings of Piehler et al. (2019), where for the first time, not three but four categories of motives were analyzed against a three-level categorization of brand-related activities. Limitations of the research include its research sample's restriction to one market, which is logical in early confirmatory analyses, but the potential for generalization is not yet

global. This limiting factor is also referred to by Tsai & Men (2013), who emphasize the cultural influence on the contexts studied. We also understand it as a form of limitation that we only analyzed one brand impact (namely word of mouth). In contrast, for the other impacts, the examined trajectories could have looked slightly different. Last but not least, this study did not take into account the possible effects of other moderating variables (e.g., the market category in which the brand operates, the social status of consumers, engagement with different product categories, or the size of the brand's community itself).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## APPENDIX – I.: Questionnaire

**COBRAs on Facebook platform:** Always state your opinion on claims based on a specific brand that you actively follow on the Facebook social network.

- each question was based on Likert scale responses (besides demographic)
- (I do not agree - I rather disagree - I do not know - I rather agree - I agree)

1. What is your social status? (student-employed-self employed-unemployed-other)

2. How many social media platforms do you have active accounts on?

3. How many social media accounts of brands do you actively follow?

**Information motive**

4. [Brand]'s Facebook page helps me learn about things I don't know yet.

5. [BRAND]'s Facebook page is a good place to explore relevant information.

6. [BRAND]'s Facebook page helps me learn about things that are useful to me.

**Entertainment motive**

7. [BRAND]'s Facebook page has entertaining content and that's why I follow it.

8. [BRAND]'s Facebook page is clever and quite entertaining.

9. [BRAND]'s Facebook page isn't just about selling something – it's also a source of entertainment for me.

10. [BRAND]'s Facebook page is often and regularly entertaining.

**Social interaction motive**

11. I think the communication of like-minded people on the [BRAND] Facebook page is a good thing.

12. It's fun to interact with others on [BRAND]'s Facebook page.

13. I meet nice people on the [BRAND] Facebook page.

**Remuneration motive**

14. I receive incentives (e.g. coupons, discounts, etc.) from [BRAND]'s Facebook page.

15. I receive rewards from [BRAND]'s Facebook page.

16. [BRAND]'s Facebook page offers me advantages that no one else has.

**Content consumption**

17. I regularly read posts on [BRAND]'s Facebook page

18. I regularly look at pictures and photos on [BRAND]'s Facebook page

19. I regularly watch videos on [BRAND]'s Facebook page

**Content contribution**

20. I often "like" posts on [BRAND]'s Facebook page

21. I often "like" posts from other brand followers on [BRAND]'s Facebook page

| |
|---|
| 22. I often "comment" on posts on [BRAND]'s Facebook page. |
| 23. I often "comment" on the posts of other followers of the brand on the Facebook page of the brand [BRAND] |
| 24. I often "share" posts from [BRAND]'s Facebook page |
| 25. I often "share" the posts of other brand followers from [BRAND]'s Facebook page |
| **Content creation** |
| 26. I often write posts relevant to [BRAND]'s Facebook page |
| 27. I often upload images relevant to [BRAND]'s Facebook page |
| 28. I often upload videos relevant to [BRAND]'s Facebook page |
| **Word of mouth** |
| 29. I often talk about the brand [BRAND] with friends and acquaintances. |
| 30. I mention [BRAND] in a positive light in conversations with friends and acquaintances. |
| 31. In social situations, I speak favorably of the [BRAND] brand. |
| 32. I perceive the image of the brand [BRAND] positively. |
| 33. I trust [BRAND] to purchase and otherwise interact. |
| 34. I am loyal to [BRAND] and do not consider the competition when making a purchase decision. |