

## **ASSESSING VALIDITY AND INTERNAL CONSISTENCY OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING COMMUNICATION MEASUREMENT SCALES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Social media platforms are increasingly becoming important channels for disseminating effective and interactive brand-related communications between brand managers and consumers. Previous researchers have categorized social media brand-related contents into Firm-Created Contents (FCC) and User-Generated Contents (UGC). However, researchers are yet to consider delving into the differential functions of these contents as marketing communications. As such, this paper identifies four types of marketing communications on social media; advertising, sales promotion, interactive marketing and word-of-mouth and evaluates the validity and reliability of the scales for measuring social media marketing communications. The Content Validity Index (CVI) of both the items-level and the scale-level CVIs from the ratings of seven (7) experts revealed that the items in the scale proposed have good content validity. Furthermore, with the use of the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with Varimax rotation, it was revealed that from the 34 items used to measure the social media marketing communications, a total of 28 items were retained. Finally, the findings also demonstrate that all four scales of social media advertising, promotions, interactive marketing and word-of-mouth have acceptable values of reliability.

**Keywords:** Assessing Validity, Internal Consistency, Social Media, Marketing Communication, Measurement Scales

### **INTRODUCTION**

Several social media platforms such as *Facebook*, *YouTube*, *Twitter* and microblogs have recently become the main channel for disseminating marketing communications (Bruhn, Schoenmueller, & Schafer, 2012). Through fan pages on social media, brand managers are offered limitless opportunities for sharing and posting information in form of photos, videos, messages and comments about their brands and companies (De Vries et al., 2012). In fact, social media communication is outperforming the traditional media as a channel to reach out to

consumers because of its wide coverage and ubiquitous accessibility (Bruhn et al., 2012). Dholakia, Bagozzi and Pearo (2004) and Puchan (2015) added that social media is capable of influencing users' perceptions, behaviors and responses. In other words, social media, including *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *YouTube* are increasingly becoming a strategic channel for disseminating effective and interactive dialogic brand-related communications between brand managers and consumers (Schivinski, 2011; Tsai & Men, 2013; Hamid et al., 2013; Berthon, Pitt, McCarthy, & Kates, 2007; Foux, 2006).

Previous researchers have focused on studying the types of contents and communications that are disseminated on social media. For instance, social media has been studied as either firm-created contents (Bruhn et al., 2012; Khadim, Younis, Mahmood, & Khalid, 2015; Schivinski, 2011), users-generated contents (Bonhomme, Christodoulides, & Jevons, 2010; Christodoulides, Jevons, & Bonhomme, 2012), social media marketing efforts or activities (Ahmed & Zahid, 2014; Godey et al., 2016; Kim & Ko, 2012), electronic word of mouth (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Severi, Ling, & Nasermodeli, 2014), social media engagement (Zailskaite-jakste & Kuvykaite, 2012), or social media advertising (Hanaysha, 2016). However, researchers are yet to study the differential functions of these contents as marketing communications intensively (Yazdanparast, Joseph, & Muniz, 2016). Arguably, different marketing communication contents serve different purposes, and so far, the attention of previous researchers have focused mainly on the sources of the contents in lieu of the fundamental functions and purposes of the marketing communication contents on social media. Keller (2009) argued that advertising may have been the dominant type of marketing communications, but it is not the only marketing communications type. Also, it is hard to say if advertising is the most important, especially in the context of social media. Therefore, there is a knowledge gap in the calibration of social media contents as types of marketing communications such as social media advertising, social media sales promotion, social media interactive marketing and social media word-of-mouth (Avinash Kapoor & Chinmaya Kulshrestha, 2013).

According to experts, content validity is examined to determine the adequacy of items in measuring the conceptual representation of the construct they are measuring (Cheryl Burke Jarvis et al., 2003; Churchill Jr., 1979; Lewis, Weiner, Stanick, & Fischer, 2015; Mackenzie, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2011; Polit & Beck, 2006; Rubio, Berg-Weger, Tebb, Lee, & Rauch, 2003). However, Polit and Beck (2006) bemoaned that many scale development studies do not reveal how the content and face validity of new scales are obtained, especially how the content validity index and scale validity index are calculated. Therefore, this study validates the scale for measuring social media marketing communications and examines the content validity, face validity, factor analysis and internal consistency of the measurement scales.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Social Media Marketing Communications**

Social media marketing communications take different forms and serve different purposes for different consumers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Piskorski, 2011). For example, advertising is a

more creative and entertaining type of marketing communication and it is used to disseminate brand-related information, increase awareness and evoke brand purchase. On the contrary, sales promotion refers to offering price discounts, coupons or gifts to enhance product trails (Keller, 2009). Past studies have shown that consumers evaluate social media communications differently. Also, the essence of social media communication is reflected through the characteristics of the contents (Avinash Kapoor & Chinmaya Kulshrestha, 2013). However, a number of studies on social media communications have focused mainly on two types; Firm-Created Contents (FCC) and User-Generated Contents (UGC). This paper breaks down and categorizes several types of marketing communications based on the two tiers of social media communications; FCC and UGC, as follows.

### **Firm-Created Contents (FCC)**

FCC can be explained as types of social media communications that are posted on social media by brand owners to consumers who are followers or fans of their brand pages, accounts or channels on social media. These types of contents such as Facebook posts, Tweets and YouTube videos which are posted by brand owners on brand fan pages are perfect examples of FCC (Bruhn et al., 2012; & Zailskaite-jakste & Kuvykaite, 2013; Gensler et al., 2013). FCC represents a marketing strategy for creating brand awareness in form of recognition, recall and brand image on social media platforms by brand owners themselves (Sonnenburg, 2012). In addition, Bruhn et al. (2012) and Zailskaite-jakste & Kuvykaite (2013) asserted that FCCs are types of social media communications that avail companies and brand managers the opportunity to expand their brand awareness through the messages disseminated on social media. Furthermore, Malhotra, Malhotra and See (2013) argue that brand owners have embraced social media as one of the important platforms for engaging their consumers, sharing information and promoting their activities to their consumers. Consequently, social media such as Facebook have proven to be a key driver for consumer engagement, among other important functionalities of social media as an effective platform for marketing communications dissemination (Rohm, Kaltcheva & Milne, 2013). However, the contents that are posted on social media by brand owners can be categorized into different types of marketing communications, as these contents are deployed to serve different purposes (Keller, 2009). Research findings have also shown that marketing communications such as advertising, promotions and interactive marketing on social media have different implications on brand equity development (Buil, de Chernatony, & Martínez, 2013).

### **User-Generated Contents (UGC)**

Schivinski (2011) described UGC as all kinds of communication that are generated from and between consumers on social media. Fundamentally, UGCs are the types of contents that are created about a brand by some consumers for other consumers' consumption. This is possible because social media offers consumers the opportunity to publish and share self-generated contents between their multitude of friends and social media followers. The possibility of

generating and sharing contents about brands affirms the active and influential role of consumers in the realm of managing brands on social media pages (Zailskaite-jakste & Kuvykaite, 2012). The pervasiveness of social media as marketing communication channels has practically created room for consumers' voices to be heard about a brand. Consumers can now integrate their anecdotal comments, thoughts and perception of a brand into the brand stories beyond what the brand owners can ignore or prevent (Gensler et al., 2013). Consumers' comments about a brand can be in either negative (consumers' complaints) or in positive form (consumers' homage). However, both the negative and positive comments have implications on brand image (Gensler et al., 2013).

Similarly, Malhotra et al. (2013) also noted that Facebook or fan brand pages on Facebook are examples of platforms where consumers can embrace interactivity with other consumers. Consumers' engagements on social media, which are often in the form of likes, comments, posts, tweets and shares, among others allow consumers to form a sort of an endless dialogue about a brand, where everyone has the freedom to express their thoughts and perception of a brand. These forms of interactivity, engagements and interactions serve as a source of information to other consumers, allow brand owners to gain feedbacks and ultimately expose the consumers' mindset and their perception of the brand (Kabadayi & Price, 2014). Additionally, UGCs are delicate inevitable scenarios on social media platforms that are both challenging and at the same time an important part of the social media marketing strategy, depending on how they are managed by brand owners (Champoux, Durgee, & McGlynn, 2012). The review of past studies revealed that word-of-mouth has become the most important surrogate for discussing UGC among other typologies, which include online reviews, WOM and blogging (Chen et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2012).

## **METHOD**

This paper reports the initial findings of the multi-stage method of item development, following the Churchill (1979) approach. These series of stages started with the conceptualization of several types of marketing communications such as social media advertising, social media promotions and social media interactive marketing as types of FCC, while social media word-of-mouth is adopted to represent UGC. This was followed by generating a sample of items for measuring social media marketing communications from previous studies. Among the dimensions of FCC, 12 items were adopted from Bronner and Neijens (2006) and Buil, de Chernatony, et al. (2013) for measuring social media advertising. Seven (7) items were adopted from Yoo, Donthu and Lee (2000), Keller (2009) and Buil, de Chernatony, et al. (2013) to measure social media promotions. Finally for FCC, 8 items were adopted from Keller (2009) and Kim & Ko (2012) for measuring social media interactive marketing. As for UGC, 9 items were adopted from Jalilv and Samiei (2012), Eisingerich, Chun, Liu, Jia and Bell (2014) for measuring social media word-of-mouth. Subsequently, a semi-structured interview was conducted among 10 users of social media to clarify the definitions of the variables and concepts understudied in

this research and also to generate additional items for measuring the concepts based on the understanding of the informants (DeVellis, 2003). This stage resulted in deleting 4 items that informants considered not relevant, hence 8 items were used to measure social media advertising.

Subsequently, this paper focuses on the validity and reliability stage by reporting the findings of the content validity, face validity and internal consistency of the social media marketing communication scales. The content validity and face validity of the items and the scale developed are examined by calculating the CVI of both the items-level and the scale-level CVIs from the ratings of seven (7) experts (Polit & Beck, 2006). The item-level CVI involves the validity of the items while the scale-level CVI signifies the validity of the scale. For this purpose, seven (7) experts in the disciplines of Marketing, Communication and Research Methodology were recruited. According to Polit and Beck (2006), calculating CVI from the ratings of 7 experts is appropriate because more than 10 experts is considered unnecessary. The experts were provided the objectives of the research and the conceptual definitions of the measured variables. The experts were requested to rate the relevance and clarity of the items with regards to the construct under which the items were placed. The experts were provided a 4-point scale using the following labels: 1 = “not relevant”, 2 = “somewhat relevant”, 3 = “quite relevant” and 4 = “highly relevant”. Finally, the experts were provided two types of comment boxes to provide additional comments on the items and on the overall scale. Furthermore, to examine the internal consistency of the scale, a survey was conducted among a convenient sample of 200. 151 usable responses were obtained and analyzed using SPSS. The respondents in this study are social media-using staff and postgraduate students of the Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). The scale that was used to record respondents’ agreement or disagreement to the statements in the survey is based on the following values of 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-not sure, 4-agree and 5-strongly agree.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Content Validity Index (CVI) for Items and Scales**

The item-level CVI is calculated by converting both 1= “not relevant” and 2 = “somewhat relevant” ratings to 0 and 3 “quite relevant” and 4 “highly relevant” to 1. Thus, every 1 and 2 ratings from the experts are counted as 0 and every 3 and 4 ratings are counted as 1. The total number of items rated relevant is divided by the total number of raters (7 in the case of this research). According to Polit and Beck (2006), an acceptable Item-Level CVI for raters more than six is 0.83. The results of the Item-Level CVI calculations were used for deleting items that were rated not relevant. Table 2 shows the results of the Item-Level CVI. The results showed that majority of the items scored 0.85 and above. The items that scored lower than 0.85 were deleted from the scales. Following this procedure, no item was deleted, which is an indication that the items are relevant for measuring the variables they are measuring.

Additionally, for the calculation of Scale-Level CVI, Polit and Beck (2006) suggested using the average of the Item-Level CVI for calculating Scale-Level CVI. Thus, Scale-Level CVI is

calculated by the mean of every item rated relevant divided by the total number of items. An acceptable Scale-Level CVI according to Polit and Beck (2006) is 0.90. The results presented in Table 2 show that all the scales have Scale-Level CVIs more than 0.90, indicating a content validity of the overall scales. Additionally, to examine the face validity, the 7 experts were requested to comment and make suggestions on how to improve the clarity of the items by suggesting better synonyms to certain technical words, so as to eradicate ambiguous wordings. This prompted some re-wording and paraphrasing of the wordings in the scales, which helped improve the clarity of the scales.

Table 2: Item-Level and Scale-Level CVIs for Social Media Marketing Communications

Items	Experts							Item-Level CVI
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<b>Social Media Advertising</b>								
The advertisement on social media offers me something new	4	4	1	3	4	4	3	7/7=1.00
The advertisement on social media gives me useful information	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	7/7=1.00
The advertisement on social media gives me credible information	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	7/7=1.00
The advertisements on social media are creative	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	7/7=1.00
The advertisements on social media are original	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	7/7=1.00
The advertisements on social media are different from that of competing brands	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	7/7=1.00
The advertisements on social media helped me in forming an opinion	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	7/7=1.00
I am persuaded by advertising campaigns on social media	4	4	4	3	4	3	3	7/7=1.00
Scale-Level CVI	1	1	0.87	1	1	1	1	S-CVI/Ave = 6.87/7 = 0.98
<b>Social Media Promotions</b>								
Price deals are frequently made on social media	4	4	4	3	4	4	2	6/7=0.85
Sales incentives are given on social media	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	7/7=1.00
Product-trials are announced on social media	4	4	4	3	4	4	2	6/7=0.85
Promotion information are announced on social media	4	4	4	3	4	4	2	6/7=0.85
Gifts are offered on social media	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	7/7=1.00
Discounts are offered on social media	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	7/7=1.00
Coupons are offered on social media	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	7/7=1.00
Service deals are given on social media	4	4	4	3	4	4	2	6/7=0.85
I don't believe the sales deals offered on social media	4	4	4	3	4	4	1	6/7=0.85

Scale-Level CVI	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	S-CVI/Ave = 6.5/7 = 0.92
<b>Social Media Interactive Marketing</b>								
Brand Fan pages on social media help brands to contact customers	4	4	4	3	4	4	1	6/7=0.85
Through social media, I have direct contact with brands	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	7/7=1.00
Social media is used to raise awareness	4	4	4	3	4	4	1	6/7=0.85
Social media is used to improve brand images	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	7/7=1.00
Social media is used to evoke sales of brands	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	7/7=1.00
Social media can be used to link the website of brands	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	7/7=1.00
I can exchange my opinion about brands with other customers on social media	4	4	4	3	4	4	2	6/7=0.85
Social media platforms can be used to share information about brands	4	4	4	3	4	4	2	6/7=0.85
Scale-Level CVI	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	S-CVI/Ave = 6.5/7 = 0.92
<b>Social Media Word-of-Mouth</b>								
I often read other consumers' reviews on social media	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	7/7=1.00
I often consult other consumers' reviews on social media	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	7/7=1.00
I often gather information from other consumers' reviews on social media	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	7/7=1.00
Consumers' reviews on social media help me make decisions	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	7/7=1.00
After consulting consumers' reviews of brand X on social media, I am confident about the brand.	4	4	4	3	4	4	2	6/7=0.85
Both positive and negative comments are posted by consumers on social media	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	7/7=1.00
I am encouraged to buy brand X by what social media friends are saying about it	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	7/7=1.00
Brand X is recommended to me on social media	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	7/7=1.00
I am a fan of the brand X on social media	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	7/7=1.00
Scale-Level CVI	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.85	S-CVI/Ave = 6.67/7 = 0.97

**Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)**

EFA was conducted in this study to validate the items in the proposed scales. This procedure allowed the data to statistically load on factors that were related in any initial or priori assumptions that guided the development of the scale (Field, 2009). According to Pallant (2013), there are two prerequisite issues that are considered important when conducting a factor analysis. The first is the sample size, which needs to be more than 150 before considering a factor analysis, therefore, a sample size of 151 is considered adequate for factor analysis. The second issue is the inter-correlation between the items before considering a factor analysis. With regards to the inter-correlation between items, Pallant (2013) added that this is ensured using both Bartlett’s test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy. According to Hair et al. (2010), the KMO value of 0.90 is marvelous, 0.80 is meritorious, 0.70 is middling, 0.60 is mediocre; 0.50 is acceptable but miserable; and below 0.50 is unacceptable. To play safe, Hair et al., (2010) suggest that KMO values must exceed 0.50 to be deemed fit for factor analysis, otherwise the researcher would either need to collect more data and/or include more variables (Kaiser, 1974). In addition, the result of Bartlett’s test of sphericity must be significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) before proceeding with factor analysis. For determining the adequacy of sample size, the KMO and Bartlett tests were first applied. The result presented in Table 3 indicates that the KMO value for the Social Media Marketing Communications is 0.881, indicating a meritorious level of sample adequacy (Hair *et al.*, 2010), and thus factor analysis was deemed to be appropriate for this data. Furthermore, the output of Bartlett’s test in this study can be represented with following equation ( $\chi^2 = 2532.674$ ; DF= 378;  $P < 0.05$ ), which confirms the existence of some relationship between the dimensions of social media marketing communications namely; Social Media Advertising, Social Media Promotions, Social Media Interactive Marketing and Social Media Word-of-Mouth.

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett’s Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.881
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2532.674
	Df	378
	Sig.	.000

After confirming the necessary criteria for conducting factor analysis, a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Vimax rotation was performed on the Social Media Marketing Communications variable. Applying the latent root criterion, only the factors that accounted for the variance of at least a single variable were considered for retention (Hair et al., 2010). From the 34 items that measured the social media marketing communication variables, a total 28 items have a factor loading above 0.50 as presented in Table 5. The result reveals that one (1) “I don’t believe the sales deals offered on social media” was deleted from the social media promotion sales due to low loading below 0.50. Similarly, two (2) items; “I can exchange my opinion about brands with other customers on social media” and “Social media platforms can be used to share information about brands” were deleted from the social media interactive marketing scale because of low loadings below 0.50. Finally, one (1) item; “I often read other consumers’ review

on social media” was deleted due to low loading below 0.50 from the social media word-of-mouth scale.

Table 4: Factor Loadings for Social Media Marketing Communication Scales

Items	Components			
	SM	SMP	SMIM	SMWOM
The advertisement on social media offers me something new	.636			
The advertisement on social media gives me useful information	.739			
The advertisement on social media gives me credible information	.693			
The advertisements on social media are creative	.759			
The advertisements on social media are original	.611			
The advertisements on social media are different from that of competing brands	.643			
The advertisements on social media helped me in forming an opinion	.646			
I am persuaded by advertising campaigns on social media	.679			
Price deals are frequently made on social media		.761		
Sales incentives are given on social media		.783		
Product trials are announced on social media		.679		
Promotion information are announced on social media		.577		
Gifts are offered on social media		.629		
Discounts are offered on social media		.684		
Coupons are offered on social media		.689		
Service deals are given on social media		.535		
Brand Fan pages on social media help brands to contact customers			.799	
Through social media, I have direct contact with brands			.667	
Social media is used to raise awareness			.718	
Social media is used to improve brand images			.774	
Social media is used to evoke sales of brands			.657	
I often consult other consumers’ reviews on social media				.748
I often gather information from other consumers’ reviews on social media				.765
Consumers’ reviews on social media helps me make decisions				.768
After consulting consumers’ reviews of brand X on social media, I am confident about the brand				.788
Both positive and negative comments are posted by consumers on social media				.663
I am encouraged to buy brand X by what social media friends are saying about it				.677
Brand X is recommended to me on social media				.632

SMA (Social Media Advertising), SMP (Social Media Promotion), SMIM (Social Media Interactive Marketing), SMWOM (Social Media Word-of-Mouth)

**Internal Consistency**

Cronbach’s Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the items of the social media marketing communication scales (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). The acceptable value of Cronbach’s Alpha in this study is 0.70, according to the argument proffered by Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson and Tatham (2010). The results presented in Table 3 show that the Cronbach’s Alpha for Social Media Advertising, Social Media Promotions, Social Media Interactive Marketing and Social Media Word-of-Mouth are 0.887, 0.880, 0.841 and 0.895 respectively, which indicate an acceptable internal consistency for the items.

Table 3.14: *Summary of Reliability Tests*

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>	<b>Cronbach’s Alpha</b>	<b>Number of Items Dropped</b>	<b>Number of Items Retained</b>
Social Media Advertising	8	.887	None	8
Social Media Promotions	8	.880	1	8
Social Media Interactive Marketing	7	.850	2	5
Social Media Word of Mouth	9	.895	2	7

**DISCUSSIONS**

The social media marketing communications presented in this study focus on the two categories of social media communications, namely FCC and UGC. FCC includes social media advertising, social media promotion and social media interactive marketing. Meanwhile, UGC is represented by social media word-of-mouth. The scale for measuring social media advertising focuses on consumers’ attitudes and experiences towards any form of contents that are posted or shared on either fan pages or general social media walls (Chi, 2011). The scale also explores the importance of social media advertising in providing useful and credible information to consumers and improving the awareness of advertised brands as an important brand communication tool that can be used to promote ideas, products or services (Keller, 2009; Chi, 2011; Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). The social media promotion scale entails items that measure the importance and implication of coupon, discount, product trial and giveaways that are posted on social media for consumers (Buil, de Chernatony, et al., 2013; Chandon, Wansink, & Laurent, 2000). Additionally, the scale for measuring social media interactive marketing focuses on the interactive activities and communications that are deployed to enable brands and consumers to connect, communicate, and interact virtually (Schultz & Peltier, 2013; Davis, Piven, & Breazeale, 2014). The scale also inquires how these activities can be used to evoke sales of brands (Chi, 2011). Finally, the social media word-of-mouth scale focuses on contents such as reviews, comments and evaluations that are posted on social media pages (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009; Eisingerich, Chun, Liu, Jia, & Bell, 2014; Smith et al., 2012). The primary

purpose of these scales is to measure the function and importance of the several types of brand-related contents that are posted and disseminated by both brand managers and brand consumers on social media platforms. Furthermore, these scales can be used to determine the effectiveness of social media marketing communications and activities of brand managers, especially with regards to developing and managing brand equity and consumers' engagements.

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study show that the social media marketing communication scales have appropriate content and demonstrate validity and an acceptable level of internal consistencies of all four scales of social media advertising, promotions, interactive marketing and word-of-mouth. However, because these scales are still undergoing development, further validation, most especially by assessing their psychometric properties through CFA using SEM, is still ongoing. The scales highlight the differential functions of the brand-related contents that are disseminated on social media platforms. The implication of validating these scales is that they offer new perspectives to brand managers on how to determine the effectiveness of their social media marketing efforts with regards to the successful development of brand equity through social media communications.

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