

[Original Article]

## Facebook Me Right: Needs-Based Segmentation of Facebook Brand Page Users

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### Abstract

In the era of social media, marketers have struggled to understand and serve participants' diverse and multifaceted needs in a novel form of online brand community in the social-networking sites such as Facebook. Thus, this study identifies different groups of participants affiliated with Facebook brand pages based on their needs for brand connection. The need-based segments are validated by comparing results across foodservice and consumer goods. Results of cluster analysis reveal three distinct segments (i.e., residents, lurkers, and peepers) based on participants' functional, experiential, and incentive needs. Results of multivariate analysis of variance illustrate significant differences in relational tendencies for a brand of interest among these three groups. The three groups are profiled based on participants' engagement level. Findings of this study are expected to help marketers better understand the needs of diverse participants in their SNS-embedded brand community so they can develop tailored communication strategies for targeted groups.

*Keywords: online brand community, online social networking, Facebook, user gratification*

### I. Introduction

Over the past decade, an increasing number of companies have been expanding their social presence in social networking sites (SNS), as evidenced by the number of active Fortune 500 brand accounts on LinkedIn (93%), Twitter (78%), Facebook (74%), and YouTube (64%) in 2015 (Barnes, Lescault, & Homes, 2015). The online social networking (OSN) platform has offered a venue for a noble form of web-based online brand community, which enables consumers to share and obtain brand-related information and interact with a company and other customers. A previous study demonstrated that consumers' perceptions of experiential and functional benefits in the SNS-embedded brand community enhance consumer-brand relationships, which increases positive word of mouth and willingness to pay price premiums (Lee & Cho,

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2014; Park & Kim, 2014).

Despite the prevalent use of the SNS-embedded brand community as a major strategic venue for brand communication, few researchers have identified distinct groups of participants of the SNS-embedded brand community. Lyu and Lim (2014) identified different types of participants affiliated with Facebook brand pages, ranging from brand admirers to complainers, but their motivations for brand connection remain unexplored. Indeed, such diversity among participants has challenged marketers to appropriately communicate in the SNS-embedded brand community (Dolan, Conduit, Fahy, & Goodman, 2016; Zaglia, 2013). Given the diversity of participants in a virtual brand community, Kozinets (1999) suggested using fragmentation-based segmentation, which is based on various behavioral and attitudinal tendencies and helps reveal detailed and dynamic aspects of virtual community members. Kozinets (1999) asserted that this approach enables marketers to develop effective strategies for different groups of participants in a virtual community.

This study aims to identify needs-based consumer segments in the SNS-embedded brand community. According to the use and gratification theory, gratification of needs leads consumers to repeat their media experiences (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). Previous studies verified the effectiveness of the use and gratification theory in identifying consumers' motivations for participating in variety of Internet-mediated environments (e.g., Kwak, 2012; Stafford, 2008). In this study, identification of needs-based consumers segments is expected to help marketers to develop effective communication strategies and satisfy targeted audiences' needs in the SNS-embedded community.

This study focuses on the SNS-embedded brand community dynamics via Facebook brand pages. Facebook is currently a major OSN platform; more than 1.49 billion users used Facebook on a regular basis as of August 2015 (Statista.com). Each Facebook page serves as a community venue. Many brands cultivate brand community on their Facebook pages in order to facilitate direct and interactive communication with their customers. A Facebook brand page functions as a platform for building a brand community comprised of "a distinctive subgroup of society that self-selects on the basis of a shared commitment to a particular product class, brand, or consumption activity" (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995, p. 43). Facebook's broad popularity as an platform for online social networking helps marketers connect and build relationships with millions of customers; therefore, Facebook brand pages have become strategically important to marketers (Kang, Tang, & Fiore, 2015).

In this study, we validate the identified need-based segments on Facebook brand pages by comparing results across different sectors (i.e., products vs. services). We selected brands related to consumer goods (e.g., Walmart) and foodservice (e.g., Pizza Hut) because their levels of service and product involvement differ. While consumer goods companies deliver finished goods to consumers, foodservice companies are engaged in the entire process of preparing and serving food items to consumers (Dopson & Hayes, 2016). Both sectors use Facebook brand pages and other social media platforms as important strategic venues. As of 2015, 95% of specialty retailers operated Facebook brand pages (Barnes *et al.*, 2015), and almost 90% of restaurant owners considered social media to be an important marketing tool (National Restaurant Association, 2014). Thus, comparing the identified consumer segments and their behavioral and attitudinal tendencies across these two sectors is expected to demonstrate the effectiveness of the needs-based consumer segments in the SNS-embedded community.

## II. Literature Review

### 1. The Role of the SNS-Embedded Brand Community in Relationship Marketing

While most conventional brand communities in the pre-social media era tend to be initiated and managed by consumers, Facebook brand pages have been cultivated by companies as their brand community in which they exercise relatively strong control over the creation and distribution of direct communications with customers. Currently, marketers share various narratives on Facebook, including not only informational messages regarding their sales and marketing but also conversational messages irrelevant to their businesses (e.g., “Happy Veterans Day!”) (Kwok & Yu, 2013). In addition, they allow customers to interact with a company and other customers by sharing brand experiences on their brand pages.

We view customer-brand interactions in the SNS-embedded brand community as an innovative form of relationship marketing in the social media era. Relationship marketing involves acquiring new customers, and maintaining and growing customer relationships (Berry, 1983). Berry (1995) accentuated the importance of strengthening relationships with customers after the initial acquisition stage and converting them to a more valuable status. Nowadays, the SNS-embedded brand community plays an important role in building, maintaining, and enhancing consumer-brand relationships. For example, a study by Kang *et al.* (2015) demonstrated that Facebook brand page participation enhanced customers’ relationships with a particular restaurant through brand trust and brand commitment. The authors claimed that the consumer-brand relationship is strengthened by active interaction and perceived mutual benefits in a community setting. Meanwhile, Amezcua and Quintanilla (2016) warned marketers about the rapid and intense nature of consumers’ negative electronic word of mouth through the SNS-embedded brand community, which harms consumer-brand relationships.

In the context of virtual communities, Kozinets (1999) highlighted the shift in focus of relationship marketing efforts from actual sales to shared experiences and identities. While loyalty-based segmentation focuses on customers’ behavioral loyalty by measuring, for example, switching behaviors and retention, fragmentation-based segmentation identifies multifaceted clusters of customers based on various behavioral and attitudinal tendencies (Kozinets, 1999). This approach is useful in understanding the diversity of participants in a virtual brand community. For example, Kozinets (1999) identified four distinct groups of participants in a virtual brand community based on level of self-centrality and strength of social ties. These groups exhibit divergent behavioral and attitudinal tendencies for a brand and a virtual brand community. This micro-level approach to participant segmentation enables marketers to identify new customer groups and develop effective strategies for differentiation (Kozinets, 1999) that could boost the effectiveness of relationship marketing strategies by customizing them to the needs of each customer segment. Thus, the fragmentation-based approach should help marketers develop solid relationships with their customers by providing customized value to distinct groups of participants in the SNS-embedded brand community.

### 2. Use and Gratification Approach

This study adopts Kozinets’s proposed fragmentation-based approach to online segmentation to identify multifaceted needs-based clusters of consumers. We postulate that consumers participate in the SNS-embedded brand community to fulfill specific needs. Rooted in studies that identify audiences of traditional media such as TV and radio, the use and gratification approach has been applied intensively to innovative media (Huang, 2008). Recent studies employed the use and gratification theory to identify consumers’ motivations in a variety of Internet-related

contexts such as Internet access (Stafford, 2008), online marketing communication (Kwak, 2012), a mobile app (Pang, 2016), and social media usage (e.g., Whiting & Williams, 2013). Previous studies revealed diverse motives for Internet-based media usage. For example, Whiting and Williams (2013) uncovered ten motives for the use of social media in general, including maintaining a social presence, seeking information, passing time, and entertainment etc. Recently, Shao, Ross and Grace (2015) developed a motivation-based typology of general Facebook users. While they classified general Facebook users, we focus on the need-based segmentation of participants affiliated with brand pages on Facebook.

To understand why consumers affiliate with Facebook brand pages, we examine four motivations commonly investigated in previous studies (Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005; Lim & Kumar, 2017; Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011) information, entertainment, social gratification, and incentives. Participants of the SNS-embedded brand community desire to learn about a brand and its products and to be informed about promotions such as sales. Indeed, previous studies demonstrated that information is the most important reason why consumers utilize Internet-based communication (e.g., Eisenbeiss, Blechschmidt, Backhaus, & Freund, 2012; Ko *et al.*, 2005; Stafford, Stafford, & Schkade, 2004). The entertainment motive reflects hedonic benefits that participants desire from the SNS-embedded brand community. Entertainment is found to be a significant motive for use of the Internet-based media in the extant literature (e.g., Hausman & Siekpe, 2009; Ko *et al.*, 2005; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Whiting & Williams, 2013). This result is consistent with the popularity of “branded entertainment,” (Sung, Kim, Kwon, & Moon, 2010, p. 442) wherein brand messages and entertainment are intertwined. Social gratification refers to participants’ sense of social presence and interaction. Stafford *et al.*(2004) highlighted social gratification in consumers’ use of Internet communication characterized by interactivity and social networking. Indeed, connecting with other like-minded individuals is a significant driver of consumers’ community participation (de la Pena & Quintanilla, 2015; McKenna & Bargh, 1999) and responses to advertising in the context of online social networking (Pinho & Soares, 2015). Incentive seeking pertains to monetary rewards offered by a company. Since the SNS-embedded brand community serves both business and communication purposes, Lim and Kumar (2017) also identified incentive seeking as a distinct motive that leads consumers to participate in the SNS-embedded brand community.

### III. Methods

#### 1. Data Collection

The data were collected via a self-administered online survey. We drew our sample from a consumer panel in the United States managed by a market research company that specializes in online consumer surveys. Target respondents had been members of at least one foodservice or consumer goods brand’s Facebook page for the past six months. The survey explained that being a member of a brand’s page on Facebook meant that a respondent had clicked the “Like” button on a certain brand’s page. Respondents were asked to write the name of one specific brand. We coded the brand as belonging to either the consumer goods or foodservice sector. Examples of brands include Walmart, Target, and Gap for consumer goods, and Pizza Hut, Dunkin Donuts, and Wendy’s for foodservice. A total of 555 usable responses were included in the main data analysis (foodservice,  $n = 188$ ; consumer goods,  $n = 367$ ).

## 2. Data Analysis

We used four stages of data analysis to identify distinct groups of Facebook brand page participants. First, we performed a factor analysis as part of an assumption check to select motivation factors that were not highly correlated with each other. Using these factors, we performed a cluster analysis in the second stage, adopting hierarchical and nonhierarchical (i.e., the K-means algorithm) clustering methods, which are complementary (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Specifically, we used a hierarchical technique to identify the appropriate number of clusters, and a nonhierarchical technique to cluster the respondents. Third, we used multiple discriminant analysis and MANOVA to measure the reliability and validity of the identified clusters. Multiple discriminant analysis identifies the best set of variables for discriminating clusters, thus showing the degree of internal consistency (reliability) of the cluster solution. We used this technique to determine whether the motivation factors used in the cluster analysis discriminate clusters well. MANOVA assesses validity by demonstrating that the identified clusters yield different perceptions or behaviors that are theoretically related to the set of clustering variables (Aldenderfer & Blashfield, 1984). We tested differences in respondents' relational tendencies, such as brand advocacy, brand preference, brand love, and affective loyalty among clusters. Park, MacInnis and Priester (2009) contended that consumers with high levels of brand attachment consider the brand to be part of them and exhibit relational tendencies such as brand loyalty, repeatedly buying from the brand, paying a higher price, and promoting the brand to others. Thus, we speculated that consumers in different segments have distinct relational tendencies. Lastly, we used chi-square tests and ANOVA to profile clusters based on respondents' socio-demographic characteristics and levels of engagement in brand page activities. In addition to the four stages of data analysis, we performed a series of independent t-tests to investigate sector-specific (i.e., foodservice vs. consumer goods) differences in motivations, relational tendencies, and profiles for each cluster.

## 3. Measures

We adapted all measures for the four motivation factors (information, entertainment, social presence, and incentives) from extant studies. (Please see the Appendix for specific measurement items and references.) We also measured relational tendencies (i.e., brand advocacy, brand preference, brand love and affective loyalty) to assess differences between groups of participants. All items were measured using a 7-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

In addition, we collected participants' socio-demographic information such as age, gender, education, and household income and measured their levels of engagement in brand page activities such as frequency of visiting a brand page, reading a brand's postings on their news feeds, and posting on a brand page in order to build profiles for the identified groups of participants.

# IV. Results

## 1. Factor Analysis to Identify Clustering Variables

We used factor analysis to assess four motivation factors and found that three factors explain 77.5% and 77.4% of the variance for the foodservice and consumer goods sectors, respectively. Four questions related to the first factor, functional benefits, measured whether the information on foodservice or consumer goods Facebook brand pages is valuable, useful, detailed, and helps customers accomplish their tasks. The second factor, experiential benefits, involves both social gratification and entertainment motives. Nine questions related to this factor assessed whether

customers enjoy conversational interactions and social aspects of the Facebook brand pages, and whether they join Facebook brand pages to relax, be entertained, and play. The last factor, incentives, was measured using three items that assessed whether customers joined Facebook brand pages in order to access rewards or incentives such as coupons.

## 2. Cluster Analysis for Segmentation of The SNS-Embedded Brand Community Participants

We used univariate and multivariate detection to examine outliers in the sample group based on Mahalanobis  $D^2$ . We detected no outlying cases in the foodservice and consumer goods data. All measures of motivation factors were based on 7-point scales, thus, standardization was not required. Factor analysis minimized the effect of multicollinearity; all VIF scores for the three motivation factors were below 3 for both sectors (Hair *et al.*, 2010).

We then used cluster analysis to identify the needs-based segments. The results of hierarchical cluster analysis using Ward's method and squared Euclidean distance suggest a three-cluster solution for both the foodservice and consumer goods sectors. Likewise, the results of nonhierarchical cluster analysis show three clusters of foodservice and consumer goods brand page participants based on similarities in their motivations for participating in a Facebook brand page. Table 1 presents the mean values of the three motivational factors for each cluster. Characteristics of each cluster are similar between the foodservice and consumer goods data. Mean scores for the first cluster, *residents*, are the highest among the three clusters for all three motivation factors: functional benefits (mean = 6.21 and 6.19 for foodservice and consumer goods, respectively), experiential benefits (mean = 5.46 and 5.57), and incentives (mean = 6.32 and 5.85). Mean scores for the second cluster, *lurkers*, are moderate and lower than means for residents for all three motivation factors: functional benefits (mean = 5.15 and 4.88 for foodservice and consumer goods, respectively), experiential benefits (mean = 3.84 and 3.24), and incentives (mean = 3.83 and 4.84). Those in the third cluster, *peepers*, appear to focus heavily on functional benefits and not much on incentives: functional benefits (mean = 4.85 and 4.89 for foodservice and consumer goods, respectively), experiential benefits (mean = 2.19 and 2.98), and incentives (mean = 1.75 and 2.09). Mean scores for the motivations of functional benefits, experiential benefits, and

Table 1. The mean value of motivations

	Residents ( <i>n</i> = 72, 38%)	Lurkers ( <i>n</i> = 80, 43%)	Peepers ( <i>n</i> = 36, 19%)	<i>F</i> -ratio
	Mean (SD)			
Foodservice ( <i>n</i> = 188)				
Functional benefits	6.21 (0.78) <sup>a</sup>	5.15 (1.03) <sup>b</sup>	4.85 (1.44) <sup>b</sup>	28.68 <sup>***</sup>
Experiential benefits	5.46 (1.42) <sup>a</sup>	3.84 (1.07) <sup>b</sup>	2.19 (0.92) <sup>c</sup>	94.88 <sup>***</sup>
Incentives	6.32 (0.75) <sup>a</sup>	3.83 (1.22) <sup>b</sup>	1.75 (0.96) <sup>c</sup>	266.33 <sup>***</sup>
	Residents ( <i>n</i> = 129, 35%)	Lurkers ( <i>n</i> = 143, 39%)	Peepers ( <i>n</i> = 95, 26%)	<i>F</i> -ratio
	Mean (SD)			
Consumer goods ( <i>n</i> = 367)				
Functional benefits	6.19 (0.71) <sup>a</sup>	4.88 (0.95) <sup>b</sup>	4.89 (1.54) <sup>b</sup>	62.32 <sup>***</sup>
Experiential benefits	5.57 (0.82) <sup>a</sup>	3.24 (1.08) <sup>b</sup>	2.98 (1.48) <sup>b</sup>	199.63 <sup>***</sup>
Incentives	5.85 (0.90) <sup>a</sup>	4.84 (0.94) <sup>b</sup>	2.09 (0.92) <sup>c</sup>	472.81 <sup>***</sup>

Note: The mean scores with different letters are significantly different from one another at  $p < .05$  or less. All items were measured on 7-point Likert scales. <sup>\*\*\*</sup>  $p < .001$

incentives differ significantly among all three clusters in both the foodservice and consumer goods sectors.

We performed an independent *t*-test to compare each cluster's mean value of motivation factors between foodservice and consumer goods participants (Table 2). Lurkers' needs for brand OSN differ between the foodservice and consumer goods groups for all three motivational factors. Lurkers affiliated with foodservice brand pages were strongly motivated by functional benefits and experiential benefits and less motivated by incentives than those affiliated with consumer goods brand pages. Furthermore, residents (peepers) affiliated with foodservice brand pages were significantly more (less) gratified by incentives (experiential benefits) than those affiliated with consumer goods brand pages.

**Table 2.** Comparison of motivations between foodservice and consumer goods

Motivation	Residents			Lurkers			Peepers		
	Foodservice ( <i>n</i> = 72)	Consumer goods ( <i>n</i> = 129)	<i>t</i> -value	Foodservice ( <i>n</i> = 80)	Consumer goods ( <i>n</i> = 143)	<i>t</i> -value	Foodservice ( <i>n</i> = 36)	Consumer goods ( <i>n</i> = 95)	<i>t</i> -value
	Mean ± SD			Mean ± SD			Mean ± SD		
Functional benefits	6.21 ± 0.78	6.19 ± 0.71	-0.22	5.15 ± 1.03	4.88 ± 0.95	-1.98*	4.85 ± 1.44	4.89 ± 1.54	0.16
Experiential benefits	5.46 ± 1.42	5.57 ± 0.82	0.61	3.84 ± 1.07	3.24 ± 1.08	-4.01***	2.19 ± .92	2.98 ± 1.48	3.64***
Incentives	6.32 ± 0.75	5.85 ± 0.90	-3.77***	3.83 ± 1.22	4.84 ± 0.94	6.89***	1.75 ± 0.96	2.09 ± 0.92	1.86

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . All items were measured on 7-point Likert scales.

### 3. Reliability: Multiple Discriminant Analysis

The results of the multiple discriminant analysis show that all motivational factors contribute to distinguishing clusters (Tables 3 and 4). The classification matrix reveals that 95.2% and 94.8% of the foodservice and consumer goods cases, respectively, are classified correctly. This substantially high classification accuracy provides strong evidence of the internal consistency (reliability) of the cluster solution.

**Table 3.** Results of multiple discriminant analysis

Discriminant function	Percent of variance		Eigenvalue	Canonical correlation	Wilks lambda	Chi-square	<i>p</i> -value
	Function	Cumulative					
Foodservice							
1	99.5	99.5	5.80	0.92	0.14	358.58	< .001
2	0.5	100.0	0.03	0.18	0.97	5.79	.055
Consumer goods							
1	87.1	87.1	3.35	0.88	0.15	679.03	< .001
2	12.9	100.0	0.49	0.58	0.67	145.63	< .001

**Table 4.** Results of classification

Actual group	No. of cases	Predicted group membership		
		Residents	Lurkers	Peepers
<b>Foodservice<sup>1</sup></b>				
Residents	72	71 98.6%	1 1.4%	0 0.0%
Lurkers	80	2 2.5%	74 92.5%	4 5.0%
Peepers	36	0 0.0%	2 5.6%	34 94.4%
<b>Consumer goods<sup>2</sup></b>				
Residents	129	122 94.6%	4 3.1%	3 2.3%
Lurkers	143	4 2.8%	136 95.1%	3 2.1%
Peepers	95	0 0.0%	5 5.3%	90 94.7%

<sup>1</sup> 95.2% of cross-validated grouped cases correctly classified.

<sup>2</sup> 94.8% of cross-validated grouped cases correctly classified.

#### 4. Validity: MANOVA

As shown in Table 5, the MANOVA results reveal significant differences in relational tendencies among the three clusters. We estimated separate MANOVA models for foodservice and consumer goods data using brand advocacy, brand preference, brand love, and affective loyalty as the dependent variables and cluster membership as the independent variable. The MANOVA models are statistically significant for both the foodservice and consumer goods data (Pillai's Trace, Wilks' Lambda, and Hotelling's Trace:  $p < .001$  for both sectors). The individual univariate  $F$ -statistics reveal significant differences in participants' brand advocacy, brand preference, brand love,

**Table 5.** Results of MANOVA

Foodservice ( $n = 188$ )	Residents ( $n = 72$ )	Lurkers ( $n = 80$ )	Peepers ( $n = 36$ )	$F$ -ratio
	Mean (SD)			
Brand advocacy	6.08 (1.07) <sup>a</sup>	5.08 (1.31) <sup>b</sup>	5.06 (1.36) <sup>b</sup>	14.86 <sup>***</sup>
Brand preference	5.93 (1.17) <sup>a</sup>	4.91 (1.45) <sup>b</sup>	4.53 (1.49) <sup>b</sup>	16.81 <sup>***</sup>
Brand love	5.91 (0.78) <sup>a</sup>	5.13 (1.26) <sup>b</sup>	4.85 (1.29) <sup>b</sup>	14.46 <sup>***</sup>
Affective loyalty	6.38 (0.79) <sup>a</sup>	5.83 (1.06) <sup>b</sup>	5.70 (1.20) <sup>b</sup>	7.94 <sup>***</sup>
Consumer goods ( $n = 367$ )	Residents ( $n = 129$ )	Lurkers ( $n = 143$ )	Peepers ( $n = 95$ )	$F$ -ratio
	Mean (SD)			
Brand advocacy	5.89 (1.04) <sup>a</sup>	4.66 (1.22) <sup>b</sup>	4.69 (1.74) <sup>b</sup>	35.89 <sup>***</sup>
Brand preference	5.70 (0.95) <sup>a</sup>	4.06 (1.26) <sup>b</sup>	4.43 (1.71) <sup>b</sup>	57.14 <sup>***</sup>
Brand love	5.55 (0.97) <sup>a</sup>	4.43 (1.22) <sup>b</sup>	4.44 (1.65) <sup>b</sup>	32.77 <sup>***</sup>
Affective loyalty	6.17 (0.86) <sup>a</sup>	5.38 (1.21) <sup>b</sup>	5.45 (1.62) <sup>b</sup>	16.32 <sup>***</sup>

Note: The mean scores with different letters are significantly different from one another at  $p < .05$  or less. All items were measured on 7-point Likert scales. <sup>\*\*\*</sup>  $p < .001$

**Table 6.** Comparison of relational tendencies between the foodservice and consumer goods sectors

Relational tendency	Residents			Lurkers			Peepers		
	Foodservice (n = 72)	Consumer goods (n = 129)	t-value	Foodservice (n=80)	Consumer goods (n = 143)	t-value	Foodservice (n = 36)	Consumer goods (n = 95)	t-value
	Mean ± SD			Mean ± SD			Mean ± SD		
Brand advocacy	6.08 ± 1.07	5.89 ± 1.04	-1.24	5.08 ± 1.31	4.66 ± 1.22	-.239 <sup>†</sup>	5.06 ± 1.36	4.69 ± 1.74	-1.17
Brand preference	5.93 ± 1.17	5.70 ± 0.95	-1.57	4.91 ± 1.45	4.06 ± 1.26	-.457 <sup>***</sup>	4.53 ± 1.49	4.43 ± 1.71	-0.31
Brand love	5.91 ± 0.78	5.55 ± 0.97	-2.69 <sup>**</sup>	5.13 ± 1.26	4.43 ± 1.22	-.407 <sup>***</sup>	4.85 ± 1.29	4.44 ± 1.65	-1.34
Affective loyalty	6.38 ± 0.79	6.17 ± 0.86	-1.72	5.83 ± 1.06	5.38 ± 1.21	-.283 <sup>**</sup>	5.70 ± 1.20	5.45 ± 1.62	-0.97

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .05$ ; <sup>\*\*</sup>  $p < .01$ ; <sup>\*\*\*</sup>  $p < .001$ . All items were measured on 7-point Likert scales

and affective loyalty among the three clusters of participants in both sectors. Regardless of sector, residents were significantly more likely to advocate, prefer, love, and be loyal to the brands than lurkers and peepers. The results validate the three identified clusters by demonstrating significant differences in relational tendencies among them.

We then performed an independent *t*-test to investigate sector differences in relational tendencies for each cluster. As shown in Table 6, lurkers affiliated with foodservice brand pages had significantly higher mean values for brand advocacy, preference, love, and affective loyalty than those affiliated with consumer goods brand pages. Residents affiliated with brand pages in the foodservice sector also showed significantly higher brand love than those in the consumer goods sector. The results show no significant differences between the two sectors for peepers.

## 5. Profiles: Socio-Demographic Characteristics and Levels of Engagement

We also examined the socio-demographic characteristics and levels of engagement in brand page activities to develop profiles for each cluster. We found no significant differences related to age, gender, household income, or education among the three clusters in either sector. Average ages of participants were 41 years (range: 18 to 70 years) for foodservice brand pages and 43 years (range: 18 to 81 years) for consumer goods brand pages. Our sample included more female participants ( $n_{\text{foodservice}} = 127$ ,  $n_{\text{consumer goods}} = 268$ ) than male participants ( $n_{\text{foodservice}} = 61$ ,  $n_{\text{consumer goods}} = 99$ ). Participants' household incomes (below \$20,000 ~ \$150,000 or more) and education levels (less than high school ~ postgraduate) were widely distributed.

The ANOVA results reveal significant differences between residents and the other two clusters in terms of the SNS-embedded brand community engagement. As shown in Table 7, in both the foodservice and consumer goods sectors, residents visited a brand's page, read the brand's posts on their news feeds, and posted on the brand's Facebook page significantly more often than lurkers and peepers. We found no significant differences between lurkers and peepers. We also performed an independent *t*-test to compare sector-level differences related to each cluster's the SNS-embedded brand community engagement. The results show no significant differences between the two sectors for each cluster.

**Table 7.** Levels of engagement in brand page activities

	Residents ( <i>n</i> = 72)	Lurkers ( <i>n</i> = 80)	Peepers ( <i>n</i> = 36)	<i>F</i> -ratio
	Mean (SD)			
Foodservice ( <i>n</i> =188)				
Frequency of visiting a brand's page	4.72 (1.43) <sup>a</sup>	3.61 (1.34) <sup>b</sup>	3.28 (1.47) <sup>b</sup>	17.50 <sup>***</sup>
Frequency of reading a brand's postings on their news feed	4.61 (1.53) <sup>a</sup>	3.53 (1.27) <sup>b</sup>	3.08 (1.44) <sup>b</sup>	17.93 <sup>***</sup>
Frequency of posting on a brand's page	3.64 (2.00) <sup>a</sup>	2.14 (1.20) <sup>b</sup>	1.72 (.97) <sup>b</sup>	26.24 <sup>***</sup>
Consumer goods ( <i>n</i> = 367)				
Frequency of visiting a brand's page	4.84 (1.42) <sup>a</sup>	3.48 (1.36) <sup>b</sup>	3.54 (1.68) <sup>b</sup>	35.08 <sup>***</sup>
Frequency of reading a brand's postings on their news feed	4.81 (1.44) <sup>a</sup>	3.52 (1.44) <sup>b</sup>	3.44 (1.68) <sup>b</sup>	32.05 <sup>***</sup>
Frequency of posting on a brand's page	3.74 (1.77) <sup>a</sup>	1.99 (1.24) <sup>b</sup>	1.91 (1.17) <sup>b</sup>	65.63 <sup>***</sup>

Note: The mean scores with different letters are significantly different from one another at  $p < .05$  or less. All items were measured on 7-point Likert scales. <sup>\*\*\*</sup>  $p < .001$

## V. Discussion

The literature supports the positive impact of brand community on consumer-brand relationships. For example, members of a brand community feel connected with other consumers (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006) and a sense of belonging to the brand (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005). However, few have studied consumers' motivations to participate in a new form of brand community embedded in the online social networking platform. Findings from this study contribute to the literature on brand communities by identifying distinct needs-based segments of participants in the SNS-embedded brand community. Cluster analyses based on three motivation factors (i.e., functional benefits, experiential benefits, and incentives) classified participants into three clusters: residents, lurkers, and peepers. Our findings reveal that participant engagement levels in brand page activities, such as frequency of visiting, reading the brand's posts on their news feeds, and posting on the brand's page, predict customers' cluster classifications better than their socio-demographic profiles. Findings from this study support the effectiveness of fragmentation-based segmentation (Kozinets, 1999) for Facebook brand page participants.

Members of the first group, residents, frequently visit a brand's page and read a brand's postings, and sometimes post on a brand's page. Residents engage in these activities to obtain useful and detailed information (functional benefits), to be entertained and interact with other people (experiential benefits), and to receive rewards or free samples (incentives). Residents are equivalent to "insiders" in Kozinets's study (1999, p. 255) who seek enjoyment and social connection and exhibit high levels of brand perceptions and behaviors. The nature of this group's brand online social networking is relational.

The second group, lurkers, who sometimes visit a brand's page and read a brand's postings, and barely post on a brand's page, also are motivated by all three factors, but their motivation scores are lower than those of residents.

Lurkers are comparable to “devotees” in Kozinets’s study (1999, p. 254) who are motivated by consumption activity (e.g., product information and coupons), not social connection. Findings from this study show clear distinctions between lurkers in the foodservice and consumer goods sectors. Lurkers affiliated with foodservice brand pages are motivated more by experiential benefits and have stronger brand relationships than those affiliated with consumer goods brand pages. In other words, lurkers affiliated with foodservice brand pages engage in more relational and less instrumental brand online social networking than those affiliated with consumer goods brand pages. The difference between foodservice and consumer goods lurkers can be explained by the different levels of service and product involvement in each sector. Kinard and Capella’s study (2006) shows that customers are more likely to enjoy relational benefits, become loyal, spread positive word of mouth, and be satisfied with service providers when service is delivered via face-to-face personal interaction. In this study, those affiliated with foodservice brand pages likely experienced highly personalized face-to-face interactions (e.g., asking about ingredients or specifying cooking preferences), given the highly customized nature of foodservice. On the other hand, those affiliated with consumer goods brand pages likely experienced relatively impersonal interactions in the consumer goods environment, given the general lack of product customization possibilities. Thus, lurkers affiliated with foodservice brand pages exhibit stronger relational tendencies than lurkers affiliated with consumer goods brand pages. While this study did not separate consumer goods into different sub-industries, it should be noted that further analyses of a specific industry may yield diverse results. For instance, face-to-face interactions tend to occur more often in fashion retailers compared to big-box retailers, thus the characteristics of the lurkers may vary accordingly.

The last group, peepers, who infrequently visit a brand’s page or read a brand’s postings, and post on a brand’s page very rarely, appear to participate in brand pages mainly to obtain brand information. Peepers are similar to “tourists” in Kozinets’s study (1999, p. 254). These participants focus mainly on information seeking through the SNS-embedded brand community. In general, the nature of brand online social networking for this group is instrumental and individualistic.

### **1. Managerial Implications**

Findings from this study provide insightful guidelines to marketers for their SNS-embedded brand community. In general, it appears that participants affiliated with brand pages on Facebook primarily seek useful and valuable brand information. This finding suggests that marketers should use the SNS-embedded brand community as an important communication channel to update and share brand information with their customers. However, marketers need to be aware that informational content alone does not elicit consumers’ active engagement in the SNS-embedded brand community, and thus does not build consumer-brand relationships (Dolan *et al.*, 2016).

Given distinct needs for brand connection among different segments, marketers should develop customized communication strategies for specific segments. For example, marketers need to satisfy the diverse needs of residents who seek not only functional benefits, but also experiential benefits and incentives. Marketers can reinforce this segment’s the SNS-embedded brand community by cultivating a sense of community and promoting an entertaining and pleasant atmosphere. Furthermore, marketers can keep residents engaged by providing value-added benefits. According to Berry (1995), there are three levels of relationship marketing: (a) providing tangible rewards such as monetary incentives to maintain customer loyalty; (b) facilitating social bonding between a company and customers; and (c) providing value-added benefits to solve customers’ problems, which maintains and strengthens established

relationships between a company and its customers. After the first two levels are satisfied, residents may require motivation beyond the three identified factors to reach the third level. For example, fashion retailers may act as counselors by providing styling suggestions to customers that are unsure of what to wear for certain events or situations. As Seo and Burns (2012) stressed the importance of direct communication between apparel companies and customers (probably residents), we suggest marketers to develop a direct communication channel to react to residents more actively.

In addition, findings from this study suggest that marketers should develop conversion strategies for lurkers and peepers. In particular, compared to lurkers affiliated with consumer goods brand pages, lurkers affiliated with foodservice brand pages are more likely to be converted into residents because they are motivated more by experiential benefits and have higher relational tendencies. Thus, restaurant marketers need to develop strategies to encourage these participants to engage more in the SNS-embedded brand community and feel stronger social and emotional attachments to the brand and fellow participants. Some useful strategies include offering participation incentives to increase engagement and encouraging visitors to review their brands to increase interaction (Membrillo, 2016).

We must mention that even though we found different relational tendencies among the three clusters and two sectors, the overall scores (average scores above 4, which is neutral) show that in general, participants advocate, prefer, love, and are loyal to the brands. These results are in line with previous studies showing that consumers' participation in the SNS-embedded brand community positively influences consumer-brand relationships (Park & Kim, 2014). We suggest that Facebook brand pages are useful marketing tools, even though the degree of effect can differ by cluster and sector. Therefore, marketers first must recognize the positive impacts of having brand pages, and then apply customized strategies to maximize the proportion of residents.

## VI. Limitations and Conclusions

This study has some limitations that must be noted. First, we profiled participants based on socio-demographic information and levels of engagement in the SNS-embedded brand community. Considering Katz *et al.*'s (1973) suggestion that psychological dispositions, sociological factors, and environmental conditions jointly determine mass media usage, researchers should consider various factors to develop detailed profiles of participants. Easy-to-measure brand-related behaviors (e.g., past shopping/dining experiences) would be useful in this regard.

Another limitation is that we compared the consumer goods and foodservice sectors, which both fall under the umbrella of the retail industry. Although the two sectors deliver different service levels and product types, some researchers may claim that distinctions between the two sectors are weakening (Reesman, 2015). For example, grocery stores not only sell finished products, but also prepare foods to order on premise. Likewise, some restaurants sell their signature products (e.g., sauces) in retail contexts. Thus, it would be interesting to identify Facebook brand pages by more specific sectors or different industries.

Also, researchers may question whether our sample size is large enough to guarantee substantial segmentation. Unfortunately, there is no generally accepted rule of thumb about minimum sample sizes for cluster analysis. Even though Formann (1984) recommended a sample size of  $2^n$ , where  $n$  is the number of clustering variables without an

outlier, a larger sample likely would increase representation of all relevant groups within a population (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Future studies with larger samples are required to eliminate representation issues.

In conclusion, we segmented Facebook brand page participants based on motivations for participation and profiled how they are heterogeneous or homogeneous to help marketers understand a complex and diverse group of brand page users. Facebook brand page participants are homogeneous in that they have positive brand relational tendencies, are mostly female and in their early 40s, on average. However, they are heterogeneous in that they have different needs, and participants with different motivations have different levels of attachment to the brands. Moreover, the type of product/service does not have a big influence on Facebook brand page participation. However, participants affiliated with pages for more service-oriented brands (i.e., foodservice) with active interaction are more likely to build brand-customer relationships than those affiliated with pages for more product-oriented brands (i.e., consumer goods) with less interaction.

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## Appendix. Measurement Items

Constructs	References	Measurement items
Information <sup>a</sup>	Dholakia, Blazevic, Wiertz & Algesheimer (2009)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The information provided by {the brand}'s Facebook Page is valuable.</li> <li>2. The information provided by {the brand}'s Facebook Page is useful.</li> <li>3. The {the brand}'s Facebook Page provide information at an appropriate level of detail.</li> <li>4. In {the brand}'s Facebook Page, there are good features that help me to accomplish my tasks.</li> </ol>
Entertainment <sup>a</sup>	Sung, Kim, Kwon, & Moon (2010)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I join {the brand}'s Facebook Page to relax.</li> <li>2. I join {the brand}'s Facebook Page to pass the time when bored.</li> <li>3. I join {the brand}'s Facebook Page to be entertained.</li> <li>4. I join {the brand}'s Facebook Page because it's enjoyable.</li> <li>5. I join {the brand}'s Facebook Page to play.</li> </ol>
Social presence <sup>a</sup>	Dholakia, Blazevic, Wiertz & Algesheimer (2009)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The social aspects of {the brand}'s Facebook Page are important to me.</li> <li>2. In {the brand}'s Facebook Page, I get to know other people who are interested in the brand.</li> <li>3. I enjoy the conversational interactions in {the brand}'s Facebook Page.</li> <li>4. I enjoy communicating with other members of {the brand}'s Facebook Page.</li> </ol>
Incentives <sup>a</sup>	Sung, Kim, Kwon, & Moon (2010)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I join {the brand}'s Facebook Page to get a reward for my continued participation.</li> <li>2. I join {the brand}'s Facebook Page because the brand's Facebook Page offers incentives such as coupons, promotional deals or free samples.</li> <li>3. I join {the brand}'s Facebook Page because the brand's Facebook Page gives me loyalty incentives for my continued participation.</li> </ol>
Brand advocacy <sup>a</sup>	Gremler & Gwinner (2000)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I encourage friends and relatives to do business with {the brand}.</li> <li>2. I recommend {the brand} whenever anyone seeks my advice.</li> <li>3. When the topic of brands comes up in conversations, I go out of my way to recommend {the brand}.</li> <li>4. I have actually recommended {the brand} to my friends.</li> </ol>
Brand preference <sup>a</sup>	Carlson, Suter & Brown (2008)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I will visit {the brand} even if other brands are lower priced.</li> <li>2. I will continue to do business with {the brand} even if its price increases somewhat.</li> <li>3. I will pay a higher than competitors charge for the benefits I currently receive from {the brand}.</li> <li>4. I will consider {the brand} as my first choice for the same product category.</li> </ol>
Brand love <sup>a</sup>	Kim (2007)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. {the brand} is totally awesome.</li> <li>2. {the brand} makes me happy.</li> <li>3. I have no particular feelings about {the brand}.</li> <li>4. I love {the brand}.</li> <li>5. I am passionate about {the brand}.</li> <li>6. I'm very attached to {the brand}.</li> </ol>
Affective loyalty <sup>a</sup>	Harris & Goode (2004)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I have a positive attitude to {the brand}.</li> <li>2. I like {the brand}'s offerings.</li> <li>3. I like the features of {the brand}' services and offers.</li> <li>4. I like the performance and services of {the brand}.</li> </ol>

Frequency of visiting a brand page <sup>b</sup>		How often do you visit {the brand}'s Facebook page?
Frequency of reading a brand's postings on News Feed <sup>b</sup>	Sung, Kim, Kwon, & Moon (2010)	How often do you see {the brand}'s postings in your News Feed on Facebook?
Frequency of posting <sup>b</sup>		How often do you post something (e.g., texts, photos) on {the brand}'s Facebook page?

<sup>a</sup> Measured on a 7-point Likert type scale; 1 Strongly disagree - 7 Strongly agree.

<sup>b</sup> Measured on a 7-point Likert type scale; 1 Never - 7 Very frequently.

<sup>c</sup> The item is reverse scored.