Consumers' online brand related activities on WeChat: The role of social media marketing efforts

Abstract

Consumers are increasingly using social media to engage with brands through consuming, contributing, and creating messages. Yet, antecedents and consequences of consumers' online brand-related activities (COBRAs) are under-researched, resulting in theoretical deficiencies. Using a sample of WeChat users of high-end cosmetics brands in China, this study empirically tests the impact of social media marketing (SMM) efforts, including entertainment, customisation, interaction and trendiness, on consumers' consuming, contributing and creating behaviours on social media pages, which affect their on-going search behaviour (OSB) and repurchase intention in turn. Our findings reveal that entertainment and interaction are drivers of consumers' consuming, contributing and creating behaviours, whilst trendiness is useful in driving creating behaviour only. Notably, consuming and creating behaviours are useful in driving OSB and repurchase intention, while contributing behaviours are useful in driving on-going search behaviour only. Theoretical and managerial implications are discussed.

Keywords: Social media; COBRAs; on-going search behaviour

1. Introduction

Social media plays a considerable role in shaping consumers' behaviours, warranting brands to change their marketing communication strategies by allocating more resources on social media and less resources on traditional marketing activities (Bruhn et al., 2012). Social media marketing (SMM) has become one of the most important marketing strategies due to its interactive nature, and is useful in building consumer-brand relationship, driving consumers' loyalty in turn (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Valos et al., 2016). With the promising development of SMM, brands build relationships with consumers through collaborative interaction on social media platforms. For example, brands communicate brand-related information on Facebook brand pages, interacting with existing and potential customers to build strong and positive brand knowledge in their minds (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015).

Firm-initiated social media brand communication is useful in driving consumers' online brand-related activities (COBRAs), including their consuming, contributing and creating behaviours, which strengthen consumer-brand engagement (CBE) as well as referral intention in turn (Liu et al., 2019; Piehler et al., 2019). Despite its usefulness in engaging consumers, understanding about how to use SMM to communicate brand-related information and interact with consumers is yet to be explored, especially in the Chinese context. WeChat is the main SMM channel brands use in China for communicating product-related information, sharing news about the focal brands and discussing trendiness topics with consumers; activities that are useful in building a trustworthy brand image and brand loyalty (Gao & Feng, 2016). For example, Xiaomi, a leading smartphone brand in China, adopted fan-centric SMM strategies as their primary marketing strategy, by communicating entertaining and customised content, along with

discussion of current hot topics on its WeChat page, to build brand loyalty (Shih et al., 2014). In a similar fashion, hotels in China use their WeChat page to communicate entertaining and trendiness information, along with the facilitation of consumer-brand interaction, to strengthen the consumer-brand relationship in their brand-building process (Denizci Guillet et al., 2016).

The cosmetics market in China is growing fast. Retail sales of skincare products in China reached RMB 212.2 billion ($USD 30.9 billion) in 2018, with make-up products sales totalling RMB 42.8 billion ($USD 6.2 billion), representing year-on-year growth of 13.2% and 24.3%, respectively. High-end skincare-products account for a growing share of China's market, rising from 25.3% in 2013 to 32% in 2018 (HKTDC, 2019).

High-end cosmetics brands increasingly rely on SMM efforts in their brand building process (Godey et al., 2016). Marketers of high-end cosmetics brands initiate entertaining, personalised and trendiness information, along with two-way interactions on their social media pages, to drive consumer participation and thereby shaping their positive behaviours, including COBRAs and purchase intention (Kim & Ko, 2010; Liu et al., 2019; Shen & Bissell, 2013).

Despite the growing importance of COBRAs, scholarly attention has been focused on COBRAs featuring Facebook in Western countries (e.g. Muntinga et al., 2011; Piehler et al., 2019; Schivinski et al., 2016). As such, the association between SMM efforts and COBRAs, along with the influence on consumers' behavioural intention, is under-researched in the WeChat context, warranting empirical research in this area. Seeking to address this research gap, this study provides a theoretical framework (Figure 1) to examine the impact of SMM efforts on COBRAs, along with the associations between COBRAs and consumers' behavioural outcomes, including repurchase intention and on-going search behaviour in the Chinese WeChat context.

2. Conceptual background and hypotheses development

2.1 Social media marketing (SMM) efforts

Social media is "a group of Internet-based applications that build on technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p.61). Brands increasingly communicate product-related information with consumers using social media because the interactive nature of social media platforms encourages consumer-brand interaction, which is useful in building consumer-brand relationship (Valos et al., 2016). Brands have utilised a combination of social media platforms to communicate with consumers, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube (Pham & Gammoh, 2015), to build strong and positive brand knowledge in consumers' minds (Algharabat et al., 2019). Given the important role SMM can play in brand building, scholars have discussed how SMM efforts can be used in various contexts, such as luxury brands (Godey et al., 2016; Kim & Ko, 2012), airlines (Seo & Park, 2018) and e-commerce (Yadav & Rahman, 2018).

Various SMM conceptualisations have emerged in the literature. Most scholars (e.g. Godey et al., 2016; Kim & Ko, 2012; Seo & Park, 2018) conceptualise SMM as a multidimensional construct, comprising entertainment, customisation, interaction, EWOM and trendiness.

However, Liu et al. (2019) more recently argued that SMM should comprise of four elements for the luxury-brand context, namely: entertainment, customisation, interaction and trendiness, which were proposed as critical drivers in driving COBRAs, including consumption, contribution and creation of content available on social media platforms. Liu et al. (2019) excluded EWOM, arguing that EWOM is a behavioural outcome of CBE in response to brands' SMM, which should be integrated into COBRAs to evaluate the brand's SMM performance. Given the focus of this study, we adopted Liu et al.'s (2019) SMM conceptualisation. The literature dealing with each of the four selected SMM efforts is discussed below.

Entertainment

Entertainment occurs when marketers create fun, playful experiences that use social-media platforms, such as games, photos, videos and contests, (Manthiou et al., 2013). Prior studies asserted the importance of entertainment in building the consumer-brand relationship, brand knowledge and purchase intention (Cheung et al., 2019; Seo & Park, 2018). Thus, marketers increasingly use entertaining content in their SMM strategies, aiming at build-ing consumers' awareness and loyalty intention (Barger et al., 2016; Gummerus et al., 2012).

Customisation

Customisation refers to the extent to which services are tailored to satisfy consumers' personal preferences (Godey et al., 2016). Social media technologies enable marketers to customise their messages and to maintain personal dialogue with consumers (Algharabat, 2017; Kim & Ko, 2012; Merrilees, 2016). Marketers offer personalised messages and services, incorporating customised marketing efforts to create value for a specific group of consumers to facilitate customisation (Zhu & Chen. 2015), which is useful in building the consumer-brand relationship (Dehghani & Tumer, 2015; Martin & Todorov, 2010).

Interaction

Interaction occurs when marketers offer opportunities for two-way communication and in-formation sharing on social-media platforms (Kim & Ko, 2012), allowing consumers to exchange their ideas with like-minded others about specific products or brands (Muntinga et al., 2011). Consumer-brand interaction can be enhanced by providing messages encouraging the sharing and dissemination of brand-related information amongst consumers (Manthiou et al., 2014), such as discussion of news, usage experiences and NPD for brands (Cheung et al., 2019; Godey et al., 2016). Consumer-brand interaction is useful in improving consumers' cognitive understanding of the product attributes and brand benefits (De Vries et al., 2012).

Trendiness

Trendiness is the extent to which a brand communicates the latest, up-to-date and trendy (i.e. current 'hot topics') brand information (Naaman et al., 2011). Trendy information includes updates of brand-related information and novel ideas about brands initiated by both marketers and consumers (Gallaugher & Ransbotham, 2010), which is useful in building consumers'

awareness (Cheung et al., 2019) as well as driving brand loyalty (Godey et al., 2016).

2.2 Consumers' online brand-related activities (COBRAs)

COBRAs as a concept was first introduced by Muntinga et al. (2011), being understood as consumers' motivation in relation to brand-related content on social media platforms. For example, consumers are engaged in COBRAs when they read brand-related content, commenting on products of focal brands and uploading contents on brands' social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube (Muntinga et al., 2011). Depending upon the continuum of usage types, COBRAs comprise of three types, namely consuming, contributing and creating behaviours. Consuming, contributing and creating are regarded as the minimum, medium and highest levels of online engagement behaviour, respectively (Muntinga et al., 2011; Piehler et al., 2019; Schivinski et al., 2016).

Consumers' consumption on social media platforms occurs when consumers read, view or watch brand-related information on a platform without active contribution or creation of user-generated contents, with this being regarded as the minimum level of online engagement behaviour (Schivinski et al., 2016). Contribution represents consumers' medium-level online engagement behaviour, including liking, commenting and sharing brand-related information on social media platforms (Piehler et al., 2019). Finally, creation represents consumers' highest level of online engagement behaviour, and is characterised by uploading, publishing and posting content on social media pages of both consumers and the focal brand (Muntinga et al., 2011). The three aforementioned COBRAs reflect the level of consumer-brand engagement (Simon & Tossan, 2018), and are considered to be effective in creating positive brand and business outcomes, such as commitment, satisfaction, brand loyalty, purchase intention and positive referrals (Gensler et al., 2013; Kang et al., 2014; Mishra, 2019; Muntinga et al., 2011; Piehler et al., 2019; Schivinski et al., 2016).

Prior research asserts that COBRAs are inextricably linked with consumers' motivation in enjoying entertainment, interaction and useful information available on social media platforms (Dolan et al., 2016; Muntinga et al., 2011; Piehler et al., 2019). Thus, it is logical to posit the associations between the aforementioned SMM efforts with COBRAs.

First, SMM with entertaining content creates playful experiences, motivating consumers to enjoy pleasure, fun and relaxation on social media brand pages (Pöyry et al., 2013; Tsai & Men, 2017). Entertaining content is useful in encouraging consumers to visit the social media brand pages and consuming brand-related content, such as watching the interesting videos, viewing the amusing pictures and reading funny posts (Liu et al., 2019). Similarly, information to be considered as entertaining is more likely to motivate consumers to contribute to social media brand pages, including sharing and recommending the entertaining information to their peers (Gensler et al., 2013; Tsai & Men, 2013), in turn driving consumers' creating behaviour on social media brand pages (Piehler et al., 2019). Thus, we hypothesise:

H1: Entertaining SMM has a positive effect on consumers' (a) consuming, (b) contributing

and (c) creating behaviours on social media brand pages.

Second, customised content on social media platforms is perceived to be personalised, which is useful for consumers to search for their needed information (Godey et al., 2016). Schulze et al. (2015) argue that consumers are more willing to browse relevant information that is available on social-media platforms. Indeed, when brands provide customised information according to consumers' preferences, this positively influences consumers' intention to share the brand-related information with their peers, as well as posting and uploading their favourite information on social media brand pages (Liu et al., 2019). Thus, we hypothesise:

H2: Customised SMM has a positive effect on consumers' (a) consuming, (b) contributing and (c) creating behaviours on social media brand pages.

Third, consumer-brand interaction is a significant motivator for the development of online engagement behaviour (Yadav & Rahman, 2018). In the social media context, interactive brand posts are useful in attracting consumers' attention, which stimulate consumers' intention to read and share the interactive brand posts in turn (Simon & Tossan, 2018). Additionally, when consumers are highly involved with the interactive brand posts, they are more willing to upload and post their opinions or ideas on the social media brand pages of their interested brands, resulting in creation of user-generated content (Liu et al., 2019). Thus, we hypothesise:

H3: Interactive SMM has a positive effect on consumers' (a) consuming, (b) contributing and (c) creating behaviours on social media brand pages.

Lastly, trendiness information available on social media brand pages is perceived to be useful, which drives consumers' intention to read and share in turn (Liu et al., 2019). Prior studies have concluded that consumers prefer reading trendiness information on social media platforms, including current trends, brand-related news and other hot topics related to their interested products (Algharabat, 2017; Cheung et al., 2019; Kim & Ko, 2012), which drives the number of reads and views on the social media brand pages (Liu et al., 2019). Seeking to contribute to the social media brand communities, consumers are willing to share the trendiness information with their peers and like-minded users on social media platforms (Mishra, 2019; Ramadan et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2012). Engaged consumers are also willing to upload fashionable, iconic and stylish information about their interested brands on social media brand pages (Ramadan et al., 2018), resulting in creation behaviour in social media brand communities (Liu et al., 2019). Thus, we hypothesise:

H4: Trendiness SMM has a positive effect on consumers' (a) consuming, (b) contributing and (c) creating behaviours on social media brand pages.

2.3 On-going search behaviour (OSB)

On-going search behaviour (OSB) refers to customers' external search behaviour that occurs on a relatively regular basis, but which is not associated with the solving of a recognised and immediate purchase problem (Bloch et al., 1986). Empirical research has demonstrated the

associations between consumers' intrinsic motivation with OSB (Beatty & Smith, 1987; Cheung et al., 2018; Schmidt & Spreng, 1996), suggesting that when consumers are interested in specific brands or products, they are willing to exert considerable cognitive efforts in searching for brand-related information (McColl-Kennedy & Fetter, 2001). Arguably, the three COBRA dimensions reflect consumers' interest in engaging with the focal brands (Liu et al., 2019), being inextricably linked with consumers' behavioural intention (Piehler et al., 2019). In other words, highly engaged consumers are active in participating online brand-related activities, being motivated to be involved in searching for brand-related information on an on-going basis in order to interact with brands and other like-minded users continuously (Bloch et al., 2009; Cheung et al., 2018). Thus, we hypothesise:

H5a: Consumption has a positive effect on OSB.

H5b: Contribution has a positive effect on OSB.

H5c: Creation has a positive effect on OSB.

2.4 Repurchase intention

Repurchase intention represents consumers' loyalty behaviour, as reflected as their intention to buy the same product from the same firm on more than one occasion (Hellier et al., 2003). Prior studies have confirmed the link between consumers' engagement with brands on social media and repurchase intention (Carlson et al., 2018). In other words, highly engaged consumers are involved in reading and watching brand-related information, having positive brand knowledge in their minds (Algharabat et al., 2019). In a similar fashion, highly engaged consumers are motivated to share and upload their comments on the products and services of the focal brand on social media, driving loyalty intention through the process of consumer-brand interaction (Piehler et al., 2019). Therefore, it is logical to link COBRAs with consumers' repurchase intention. Thus, we hypothesise:

H6a: Consumption has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

H6b: Contribution has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

H6c: Creation has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

3. Methodology

We used a self-administered, online survey in Chinese to collect the data. The survey featured 7-point, Likert-type scales (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), using items adopted from previous studies (See Table 1). For SMM efforts, 12 items adapted from Kim and Ko (2012) measured entertainment, customisation, interaction and trendiness. Six items adapted from Simon and Tossan (2018) measured three COBRAs (consuming, contribution and creating). Three Wu et al. (2014) items measured repurchase intention. Lastly, five items from McColl-Kennedy and Fetter (2001) were adapted to measure OSB.

The survey was promoted on WeChat by the research team along with an email sent to an extended network of Chinese contacts. We received 433 usable responses. Respondents were Chinese, who were over 18 years old and social-media users, with experience in using the focal

product, which is a high-end cosmetic. The sample comprised 24% male (76% female) respondents, with ages ranging from 18 to over 66 (mean = 26-30 years) and the majority aged between 18 and 40 (78%). Respondents were typically engaged in full-time employment. Additionally, all respondents (100%) owned the focal product at the time of data collection. For brand stimuli, most respondents nominated Dior (27.7%) as their most familiar high-end cosmetic brand, followed by Chanel (27.5%) and Lancôme (10.6%), with the remainder being Armani (10.2%), Estée Lauder (9.0%), Shiseido (6.2%) and Givenchy (6.0%).

Regarding social-media usage, all respondents were experienced WeChat users. Respondents reported regular WeChat usage, with about two-thirds of respondents (62.1%) signed into WeChat all the time, 11.8% accessing WeChat 6-10 times a day and 10.2% using WeChat 2-5 times per day on average. In sum, respondents were heavy WeChat users, thus deemed suitable for addressing the data requirements for testing the hypotheses of the model.

4. Results

The analysis used PLS-SEM, using SmartPLS v.3.2.8 (Ringle et al., 2015). We used the 5,000-bootstrap procedure to analyse the data in two stages: the measurement (outer) model and structural (inner) model (Hair et al., 2017).

4.1 Outer model results

For the measurement model, all item loadings were > .806 and significant ($p < .001$), and the results confirmed a satisfactory level of internal consistency for Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (see Table 1). The convergent validity of the model was assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with all AVE scores greater than the recommended .50 threshold. Discriminant validity was satisfied using the Fornell-Larcker (1981) criterion, with the square roots of AVE larger than the corresponding correlations.

4.2 Inner (structural) model results

The hypotheses were assessed using the inner (structural) model results, by examining the *t*-values, standardised coefficient beta values and coefficient of determination (R^2 value). The results support twelve of the eighteen hypotheses. Regarding the relationship between SMM efforts and COBRAs, the impact of entertainment on consumption (β = .461, p = .000), contribution (β = .516, p = .000) and creation (β = .216, p = .003) was positive and significant. Thus, H1a, H1b and H1c are supported. The impact of interaction on consumption (β = .252, p = .007), contribution (β = .176, p = .038) and creation (β = .370, p = .000) was positive and significant, supporting H3a, H3b and H3c. Regarding the influence of trendiness, it had positive and significant impact on creation (β = .257, p = .003) only, as the effects of trendiness on consumption (β = .007, p = .917) and contribution (β = -.080, p = .197) were non-significant. Thus, H4c was supported, but H4a and H4b were not supported. Surprisingly, the impact of customisation on consumption (β = -.002, p = .984), contribution (β = .116, p = .247) and creation (β = .098, p = .156) were non-significant, with H2a, H2b and H2c not supported.

We also examined the impact of COBRAs on OSB and repurchase intention. The impact of consumption on OSB (β = .143, *p* = .030) and repurchase intention (β = .300, *p* = .000) was positive and significant, supporting H5a and H6a. The impact of creation on OSB (β = .543, *p* = .000) and repurchase intention (β = .466, *p* = .000) was positive and significant, supporting H5c and H6c. Contribution had significant impact on OSB (β = .155, *p* = .024), supporting H5b. However, the impact of contribution on repurchase intention was non-significant (β = .042, *p* = .523), thus H6b was not supported.

We checked the R^2 values to assess explanatory power of the conceptual model (see Figure 1), with R^2 >.10 being the recommended criterion benchmark (Chin, 1998). Regarding COBRAs, the R^2 values were as follows: consumption (R^2 = .475), contribution (R^2 = .505), creation (R^2 = .776), repurchase intention (R^2 = .533) and OSB (R^2 = .588), along with an AVA (average variance accounted for) = .575. This suggests that the exogenous variables explain a meaningful proportion of the variation in the endogenous variables.

Table 1: Outer model results

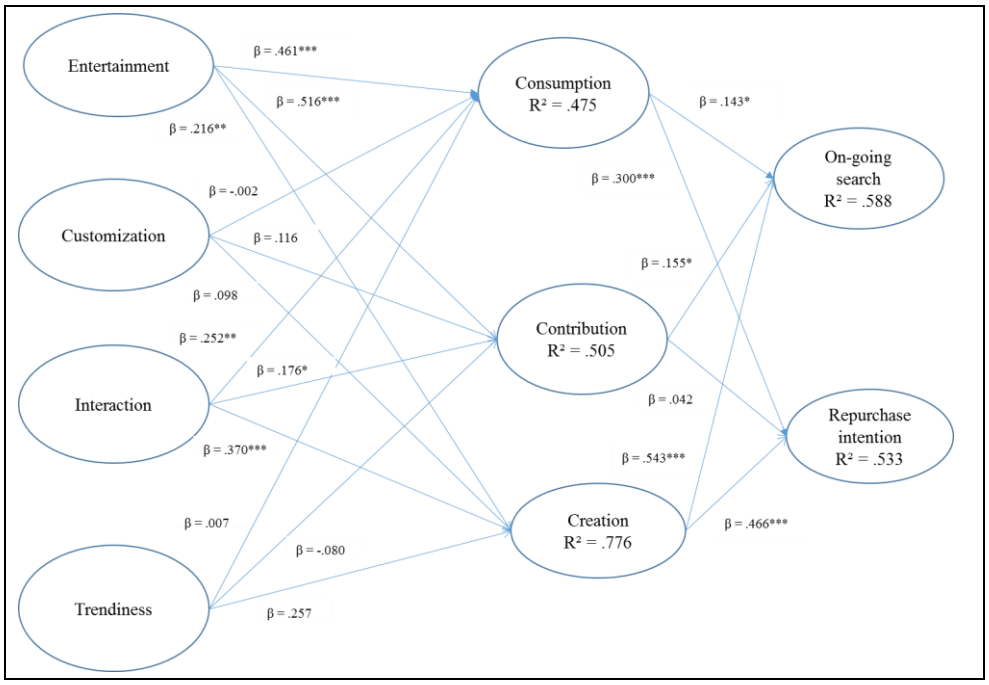
Construct	Loading	*t*-value	*Alpha*	Composite reliability
Entertainment			**.941**	**.962**
The content found in Brand X's social media seems interesting.	.933	83.90		
It is exciting to use Brand X's social media.	.955	145.40		
It is fun to collect information on products through Brand X's social media.	.949	143.25		
Customisation			**.924**	**.952**
It is possible to search for customised information on Brand X's social media.	.923	87.31		
Brand X's social media provide customised services.	.935	120.13		
Brand X's social media provide lively feed information I am interested in.	.938	117.72		

Table 1: Outer model results (continued)

Construct	Loading	*t*-value	*Alpha*	Composite reliability
Interaction			**.931**	**.956**
It is easy to convey my opinion through Brand X's social media.	.945	127.89		
It is easy to convey my opinions or conversation with other users through Brand X's social media.	.937	100.48		
It is possible to have two-way interaction through Brand X's social media.	.929	93.58		
Trendiness			**.932**	**.957**
Content found on Brand X's social media are up-to-date.	.938	114.91		

Using Brand X's social media is very trendy.	.936	113.51		
The content on Brand X's social media is the newest information.	.940	125.81		
COBRAs – Consumption			**.891**	**.948**
I would like to visit the WeChat page of Brand X.	.945	104.74		
I would like to read content posted by Brand X on WeChat.	.954	156.48		
COBRAs – Contribution			**.929**	**.966**
I would like to share content posted by Brand X on WeChat page	.966	198.85		
I would like to comment on content posted by Brand X on WeChat page	.967	185.85		
COBRAs – Creation			**.897**	**.951**
I would like to write reviews on Brand X's WeChat page	.950	135.18		
I would like to upload posts on Brand X's WeChat page	.954	155.54		
Repurchase Intention			**.911**	**.944**
The probability that I will use Brand X again is high	.897	65.10		
I consider myself a loyal customer of Brand X	.931	107.21		
If I had to do it over again, I would choose Brand X	.934	126.57		
On-going search behaviour (OSB)			**.914**	**.936**
I am interested in browsing catalogs, advertisements and articles about high-end cosmetic products	.869	58.39		
I am interested in visiting stores, just to look around or get information, rather than to make a specific purchase	.806	29.99		
I would like to discuss high-end cosmetic products with salespeople	.850	55.34		
I would be interested in reading information about how high-end cosmetic products can be used	.903	86.45		
I have compared attributes and characteristics among brands that provide high-end cosmetic products	.884	66.70		

Figure 1 Conceptual model results



5. Theoretical implications

Scholars have acknowledged the role of SMM in shaping consumers' behaviour, including empirical studies to understand how to use SMM in the brand-building process (Godey et al., 2016; Kim & Ko, 2012; Seo & Park, 2018). Notwithstanding, the impact of distinct effects of various SMM efforts on consumers' online engagement behaviour have been underexplored. This study has a number of theoretical contributions in addressing the aforementioned theoretical deficiencies. First, we provide theoretical insights in SMM by investigating how the various SMM efforts (i.e. entertainment, customisation, interaction and trendiness) contribute to COBRAs (i.e. consumption, contribution and creation of brand-related content). Specifically, the findings of this study shed new light on the drivers and outcomes of COBRAs by linking various SMM efforts with all three COBRAs.

Our results confirm Piehler et al.'s (2019) findings, who found that interaction plays a considerable role in driving COBRAs, and Pöyry et al.'s (2013), who found that hedonic motivation resulted from entertainment is a critical driver in strengthening consumers' intention to browse and participate on social media brand pages. Trendiness help strengthen consumers' intention to create content only, partially supporting Ramadan et al.'s (2018) findings, who found that trendiness information is useful in encouraging consumers, especially passionate owners, to create and share their brand experience with like-minded users on social media platforms. However, we found that trendiness was not useful in building consumers' intention to consume and contribute on social media platforms, which contrasts with Liu et al. (2019), who asserted that trendiness is useful in encouraging consumers to consume and contribute on social media brand communities. Furthermore, the non-significant relationships between customisation and COBRAs confirm the findings of Liu et al. (2019), who were not a-ble to identify the impact

of customised content on social media brand pages on consumers' intention to consume, contribute and create brand-related content. However, the non-significant relationship between customisation and COBRAs dimensions is in contrast to a number of prior studies (e.g. Fiore et al., 2005; Merrilees, 2016; Simon & Tossan, 2018), who show that customised and personalised content on social media brand pages are useful in driving consumers' intention to visit and share their brand experience on social media brand pages. Our findings contribute to the literature by revealing that customisation is not a useful driver of creating COBRAs.

Second, we confirm on-going search behaviour and repurchase intention as COBRA consequences. Our findings represent one of the first studies to examine the distinct effects of COBRAs, namely consumption, contribution and creation, on on-going search behaviour and repurchase intention. The results of this study confirmed the majority findings of the previous studies. Our findings revealed that consumption and creation had significant positive impacts on consumers' behavioural intention, as reflected by OSB and repurchase intention, confirming the findings of De Vires & Carlson (2014) and Piehler et al. (2019) regarding the positive impact of consumers' consumption and creation of brand-related content on social media platforms is useful in driving consumers' loyalty behaviour. However, contribution had positive impact on OSB only, and the relationship between contribution and repurchase intention is weak and non-significant. This is in contrast to previous studies (e.g. Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Cvijikj et al., 2013) regarding the importance of contribution in driving consumers' behavioural intention. Overall, this study contributes to the marketing literature by showing that COBRAs dimensions, except for plays an important role in driving consumers' intention to repurchase and engage in OSB.

6. Managerial implications

From the managerial point of view, this study suggests SMM strategies are worth using by high-end cosmetic brands in China. In particular, our findings suggest the benefit of utilising entertaining, interactive and trendiness content in SMM to strengthen consumers' intention to engage in online (WeChat) brand-related activities, including consuming, contributing and creating brand-related content. Marketers are recommended to create posts with photos, videos and animation that are perceived to be fun and enjoyable, satisfying consumers' needs for pleasure and fun, in turn stimulating their intention to consume, contribute and create content on high-end cosmetic brands' WeChat pages. Additionally, marketers should encourage discussion and participation to facilitate consumer-brand interaction on WeChat pages to drive COBRAs. Furthermore, marketers are also recommended to communicate brand-related news and current hot topics to strengthen consumers' intention to create content on WeChat pages.

Our findings also suggest the importance of COBRAs in driving consumers' on-going search behaviour and repurchase intention. Thus, marketers are recommended to measure consumers' consuming, contributing and creating behaviour by checking the number of visits, read, view, share, comment, upload and post on WeChat pages, in order to shape favourable consumer behaviour outcomes.

7. Limitations and future research directions

Despite providing meaningful implications, this study has a number of limitations, suggesting opportunities for further research. First, this study includes WeChat in China only. Future research should replicate this study in other contexts, such as other social media channels in different countries. Second, this study only considers repurchase intention and on-going search behaviour as COBRA consequences. Thus, future research could examine the distinct effects of COBRAs on other brand-related outcomes, such as brand commitment and brand knowledge. Third, this study is cross-sectional in nature, limiting generalisability. Future longitudinal research is suggested to examine the antecedents and consequences of COBRAs over time in order to enhance the generalisability of our research model.

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