What Keeps Me Engaging? A Study of Consumers' Continuous Social Media Brand Engagement Practices

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Abstract

Purpose – This study examines some pertinent individual-level factors and consequences of consumers' continuous social media brand engagement (SMBE) practices. Further, it examines the moderating effect of other-efficacy to deepen our understanding.

Methodology – Online survey data collected from 785 respondents, through a convenience sampling technique on Facebook, was analysed through structural equation modelling with AMOS 23.0.

Findings – The findings suggest that compatibility with lifestyle, perceived information quality, and escapism, *significantly drive* consumers' continuous engagement with brands on social media. However, perceived enjoyment does not. Other-efficacy duly moderates consumers' continuous SMBE practices. While continuous SMBE significantly drives consumer-based brand equity, it does not have any significant relationship with consumers' subjective wellbeing.

Research limitations/implications – This study reports robust findings on the effects of individual-level factors that drive consumers' continuous SMBE practices. However, the study only focused on Facebook brand pages. This is a limitation for generalizability of results because the research did not take a holistic view of all types of social media.

Practical implications – The research suggests a need for managers to project their brands and share relevant and stimulating information throughout their continuous SMBE with consumers to build strong consumer-brand relationships. Managers should also engage consumers with interesting social media messages as well as both informative and transformative creative strategies to excite them. This will further give consumers a reason to continuously interact with the brand on social media platforms.

Originality –This study is one of the very few works to tease out pertinent factors that drive consumers' continuous SMBE practices. The paper integrates the consumer-level factors and moderating effects of Other-efficacy through the lens of Social Cognitive Theory and Uses and Gratification Theory, to make a significant contribution to the SMBE literature.

Keywords: Social Media Brand Engagement; Human-Computer Interactions; Consumer-Based Brand Equity; Subjective Wellbeing

Introduction

The growth and usage of social networking sites (SNSs) has increased significantly in recent times. The average daily time spent on social media significantly increased from 54 minutes to 65 minutes in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic (Statista, 2021). This creates an opportunity for firms to enhance their competitive advantage through social media brand engagement (SMBE). SMBE is the utilization of social media functionalities to disseminate a firm's brand related information in the form of posts to consumers (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2021; Unnava and Aravindakshan, 2021). We aim to increase the understanding of consumers' continuous SMBE practices which can enhance firms' competitive advantage. Based on Osei-Frimpong and McLean (2018, p. 12), we define continuous social media brand engagement (SMBE) as *the consumer's repetitive "connection, creation and communication of the brand's story between the firm and consumers (both existing and prospects)" for at least six months, "using brand or brand-related language, images and meanings via the firm's social networking site resulting from motivational drivers".*

Due to several challenges associated with continuous SMBE (Gómez *et al.*, 2019), consumers can and often discontinue active participation or become dormant in branded communities. Some of the challenges include continuous SMBE practices forcing consumers to pay excessive attention to overwhelming volumes of information. This can lead to physical and psychological stress from communication, information, and system feature overload (Lee *et al.*, 2016). Additionally, such overload may induce fatigue and dissatisfaction among members in social media brand communities (Kaur *et al.*, 2021; Zhang *et al.*, 2016). Despite the challenges, continuous SMBE practices present enormous benefits for the firm, particularly, influencing consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) (Carlson *et al.*, 2018; Machado *et al.*, 2019), and likely individual outcomes such as informing purchase decisions and subjective wellbeing (Karikari *et al.*, 2017; Valkenburg and Peter, 2007). As a result, prior studies have called for work to explore factors that drive consumers' continuous SMBE. For example, Hajli *et al.* (2015) called for research on the factors that encourage continuous participation in online brand communities. Further, Carlson *et al.* (2018) and Dwivedi *et al.* (2021) called for more research to deepen understanding of the drivers of customer brand engagement behaviors on social media. More recently, Osei-Frimpong *et al.* (2022) pointed out a need to examine what drives consumers' continuous participation in SMBE, and most importantly, to explore interesting outcomes such as consumer-based brand equity (CBBE), and subjective wellbeing. In

responding to these calls, we question what drives consumers' continuous engagement with brands on social media platforms.

This study draws on the principles of the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT). These overarching theories are appropriate, as SCT (Bandura, 2001) and UGT (McQuail, 1983) provide new insights into psychosocial, individual-level motivations and objectives. In general, SMBE behaviors may be reliant on individual factors (e.g., ability, needs satisfaction for escapism, enjoyment, lifestyle compatibility) and social or environmental factors (e.g., other-efficacy, perceived information quality) (Boateng *et al.*, 2016; Chiu *et al.*, 2006; Khan, 2017). For instance, escapism and perceived enjoyment are linked to UGT in providing gratification of escaping the real world (McLean *et al.*, 2022) and enjoying the virtual environment through their active interactions with brands and other participants. While these are often examined in relation to individuals' social media interactions, could these factors drive their continuous SMBE behaviors? Further, lifestyle compatibility is considered a very important factor in defining consumers' behavior toward social media adoption and use (Bianchi and Andrews, 2018). These individual level factors are not well explored in the context of SMBE practices (see Table I), hence, this study takes a quantitative approach to examine how they drive consumers' continuous SMBE practices.

Further, while SMBE is largely behavioral on the part of the individual, the firm's ability to share interesting and important messages to reinforce such continuous interactions is critical (Kumar *et al.*, 2016). While most studies have mainly focused on some individual level factors, this study takes a different perspective to ascertain the moderating effects of other-efficacy (Yim *et al.*, 2012) from the firm generated content perspective. Other-efficacy is a person's belief in another person's or firm's capability to perform a specific task (Hepler *et al.*, 2021; Lent and Lopez, 2002). Admittedly, the effect of other-efficacy, particularly, from the perspective of firm-generated content on online SMBE has received little attention (Osei-Frimpong and McLean, 2018). This presents an opportunity to further understand the dynamics in relation to how other-efficacy could reinforce consumers continuous SMBE practices.

The first objective of this study is to examine the impact of individual factors (compatibility with lifestyle, perceived information quality, perceived enjoyment, and escapism) on their continuous SMBE practices. Secondly, we assess the relative impact of continuous SMBE on outcomes such as consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) and subjective wellbeing. Finally, we investigate the moderation effects of other-efficacy in continuous SMBE practices.

This research makes four important contributions to the current social media and technology in human behavior literature through the lens of SCT and UGT. First, this study makes a significant attempt to increase the understanding of individual level gratifications that drive their continuous SMBE practices. This is largely unexplored in extant literature. Second, this study extends on Osei-Frimpong and McLean (2018) by shedding light on the moderating effects of other-efficacy on continuous SMBE practices. It demonstrates the theoretical and practical importance of other-efficacy by stirring up the dynamics of consumers' continuous engagement with brands on social media platforms. Third, this study examines specific consequences (CBBE and Subjective wellbeing) of continuous SMBE practices which have not received enough attention in literature. Contrary to works that have reported significant relationship between social media use and subjective wellbeing (e.g., Karikari *et al.*, 2017), this study contends that consumers' continuous SMBE practices does not improve or otherwise their subjective wellbeing. Fourth, and more profoundly, this study introduces the concept of escapism to explain why consumers continue to follow and interact with brands on such platforms. Hence, we extend the concept of escapism to the context of SMBE by establishing its relevance. Given the limited attention in literature, this study also answers calls for further research into SMBE practices (Carlson *et al.*, 2018; Dwivedi *et al.*, 2021; Ngai *et al.*, 2015), and presents interesting insights into the continuous participation of consumers in such practices.

Following sections present the theoretical background of the study leading to the development of hypotheses. The research methodology is described, followed with the analysis and findings. The paper concludes with sections highlighting discussion of results, study implications, and limitations and future research directions.

Theoretical Framework

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

From a psychological communication perspective, UGT seeks to explain individuals' selection and use of media to clarify their psychological needs and motives for certain media-use practices to satisfy their intrinsic needs (Islam *et al.*, 2019). UGT emphasizes the active (rather than passive) and goal oriented role consumers play in searching out and using media messages to meet their needs or wants (Senkbeil and Ihme, 2017). Accordingly, UGT helps explain the needs fulfilment motives of consumers in continuously engaging with brands on social media

platforms (Osei-Frimpong *et al.*, 2022). The theory further explains how the background characteristics of media users relate to their social and psychological motives for using the media and the subsequent effects (York and Haridakis, 2021). These social and psychological needs include: self-status seeking, social interactions, information seeking, entertainment and convenience motivations (Khan, 2017). In line with these needs, Chua *et al.* (2020) categorize these socio-psychological gratifications into experienced-based and information-based. Based on this categorization, we consider escapism and perceived enjoyment as gratifications associated with pleasurable experience (experience-based gratifications), and perceived information quality as motivation connected with 'information utility' (information-based gratifications) derived from engaging in SMBE practices.

Individual participants' motivations in social media brand engagement are often goal-directed that requires an in-depth knowledge of the drivers and the reasons for engaging in these practices at the customer level (Osei-Frimpong *et al.*, 2020). Given this complexity, Palmgreen and Rayburn (1979, p. 177) stress a need to "integrate the roles played by gratifications and other factors into a general theory of media consumption". UGT explains how consumers deliberately choose a type of media to meet their needs and to enhance their knowledge, relaxation, social interactions, affection, or escape (Menon and Meghana, 2021). Given that gratifications predict online behavior and media interactions (Chua *et al.*, 2020), incorporating UGT as an underlying theory for this study is considered suitable to guide our understanding of consumers' continuous SMBE practices.

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

Similar to UGT, SCT provides a major framework for studying motivation for media consumption. While UGT is audience (consumer) centered, SCT discusses motivation and behavior in terms of the mutual causation between consumers, their environments, and behaviors (LaRose *et al.*, 2001). This gives us an important framework for investigating two-way interaction between consumers and their social media brand communities.

SCT has been emphasized in extant literature (Chiu *et al.*, 2006; Compeau *et al.*, 1999), to illustrate how cognitive human processes influence certain actions of interest (Bagozzi and Lee, 2002) and how these behavioral patterns are acquired and retained by individuals (Bandura, 1991). SCT is based on the assumption that humans' internal processes lead to their behavioral outcomes. Human behavior is typically driven by the social environment and by

self-influence (Schunk and DiBenedetto, 2020). Although the SCT offers a holistic perspective, it provides an accurate theory of causal relations with regard to adoption and technology use, especially regarding the environmental influence on our cognitive processes. In light of this, the individual's self-influence serve as the main driver of internal and external human behavior (Bandura, 1991).

While the expected results generate individual convictions and objectives, they are also influenced by social or external environmental considerations. Consumers will therefore be anchored on these premises to continue with SMBE practices. From an SCT perspective, consumers could thus become associated with SMBE practices by self-influence (e.g., conformity with lifestyle) and environmental or social factors (e.g., other-efficacy). This study examines the social and psychological needs or motives (e.g., perceived information quality, perceived enjoyment, escapism) that drive consumers' continuous SMBE practices. Effectively, SCT and UGT give prominence to the influence of personal/social factors, cognitive perceptions and motives on our actions or behaviors such as our continuous SBME practices.

Continuous Social Media Brand Engagement (SMBE)

SMBE is a form of consumer engagement attained through the participation in brand communities on firms' social networking sites (Habibi *et al.*, 2014; Islam *et al.*, 2018). By extension, continuous SMBE is conceptualised as the repetitive participation and use of brand information to engage with a firm, brand or other consumers through social media platforms. In this case, continuous SMBE alludes to the consumer's motivation to participate in interaction activities such as "sharing stories, photos, videos, liking and commenting on related materials" on the brand social media platform (Dolan *et al.*, 2019; Habibi *et al.*, 2014). In operationalizing continuous SMBE in this study, we follow Habibi *et al.* (2014) and Algesheimer *et al.* (2005) and adopt the behavioral approach of engaging with brands on such platforms. This in turn addresses the motives behind the continuous engagement with brands on social media platforms. Furthermore, the continuous engagement in this study is not limited to the frequency of visit to the brand's platform, but how long an individual has been following such brands on social media. According to Al‑Nabhani *et al.* (2022), consumers using a technological platform for at least six months is considered as continuous usage. While SMBE has received much attention in literature (e.g., Hollebeek *et al.*, 2020; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014), there is lack of understanding in relation to pertinent factors that drive consumers continuous

engagement (Osei-Frimpong *et al.*, 2022, see Table I).

Table 1 Stream of research on consumer social media brand engagement

| Reference	Construct	Research type	Antecedents	Moderators	Key findings
This study	Continuous social media brand engagement	Empirical (survey design)	Compatibility with lifestyle, Perceived information quality, Escapism and Perceived enjoyment	Other-efficacy	The results show that compatibility with lifestyle, perceived information quality, and escapism, influence consumers' continuous engagement with brands on social media. However, perceived enjoyment does not. Other-efficacy moderates consumers' continuous SMBE practices. While SMBE significantly influences consumer-based brand equity, it does not have any significant relationship on consumers' subjective wellbeing.
Osei-Frimpong et al. (2022)	Social media brand engagement	Empirical (survey design)	Perceived subjective homophily, critical mass, self-status seeking	Consumer values (personal, interpersonal, and fun dimensions of consumer values)	The findings suggest a significant influence of the socio-psychological gratification variables (perceived homophily, perceived critical mass, self-status seeking) on SMBE. The findings also indicate interpersonal and fun dimensions of consumer values duly moderate perceived homophily and perceived critical mass – SMBE association, whereas, personal dimension of consumer values only moderates self-status seeking – SMBE association. SMBE had no significant direct effect on brand purchase intention. However, brand trust mediates the relationship between SMBE and brand purchase intention.
Leckie et al. (2021)	Social media brand engagement	Empirical (online survey)	Social media involvement, self-brand congruence and firm image	N/A	Findings show that social media involvement, self-brand congruence and firm image are significant drivers of SMBE, while relationship age is not. SMBE subsequently impacts consumer satisfaction, brand trust and perceived value.
Osei-Frimpong et al. (2020)	Social media brand engagement	Empirical (survey design)	Consumer brand knowledge, Perceived social pressure, and brand trust	Perceived social relatedness	The findings reveal a significant relationship between the examined antecedents (brand knowledge, perceived social pressure and brand trust) and SMBE. Examination of the moderation role of PSR revealed significant interaction effects on the relationship between brand knowledge and SMBE, as well as perceived social pressure and SMBE. The findings also suggest a lack of interaction effect of PSR on the relationship between brand trust and SMBE.
Chahal et al. (2020)	Social media brand engagement	Empirical (survey design)	Social identity and tie-strength; service, product and price information, hedonic motives, and prior experience with SM; and personalized advertising, mass advertising, promotional offers, and price information.	N/A	The results support the concept of SM brand engagement as a multidimensional construct comprising (a) utilitarian, (b) hedonic, and (c) social dimensions. The researchers identified three antecedents of SMBE (a) social factors (social identity and tie-strength), (b) user-based factors (service, product and price information, hedonic motives, and prior experience with SM), and (c) firm-generated information (personalized advertising, mass advertising, promotional offers, and price information). Finally, SM brand engagement was positively related to brand equity
Machado et al. (2019)	Consumer-based brand equity; customer engagement		Brand gender (Masculine brand personality trait, and feminine brand personality trait)	N/A	Brand gender has an indirect effect on consumer-based brand equity through consumer engagement on brand Facebook pages and brand love.

Dolan et al. 2019	Social media brand engagement	Empirical (Facebook Insights and NCapture)	Rational appeals (Informational and Remunerative Content) Emotional appeals (Entertaining and Relational Content)	N/A	Results reveal distinct effects of rational and emotional appeals on social media engagement behavior. Rational appeals in social media have a superior effect in terms of facilitating active and passive engagement among social media users, whereas emotional appeals facilitate passive rather than highly active engagement behavior, despite the social and interactive nature of the digital media landscape
Simon and Tossan (2018)	Customer engagement	Empirical (survey design)	Brand-consumer social sharing value (comprising of brand intimacy, brand individual recognition, brand influence, and brand community belonging), satisfaction, brand gratitude	N/A	The study conceptualizes and validates a scale for the construct brand-consumer social sharing value. The study further established that satisfaction and brand gratitude, seen as media-driven variables, mediate the impact of Brand-Consumer Social Sharing Value on virtual media engagement.
Osei-Frimpong and McLean (2018)	Social brand engagement	Empirical (survey design)	Social presence	Firm-generated content, consumer commitment	Firm-generated content and consumer commitment duly moderated the relationship between social presence and social brand engagement. The findings also indicate that SBE encourages consumers to increase their intention to use the brand as well as engage in electronic word of mouth.
Dokyun Lee et al. (2018)	Consumer engagement in social media	Empirical (qualitative content analysis)	Content engineering in social media	N/A	The findings show that content engineering in social media significantly affects user engagement which is operationalized by online data of "Likes" and comments for posts. The analysis further showed that persuasive content, such as emotional and philanthropic content, significantly impact engagement.
Khan (2017)	Social media engagement	Empirical (survey design)	Seeking information, giving information, self-status seeking, social interaction, relaxing entertainment (U&G)	N/A	Drawing from the U&G framework, consumers or users of social media have multiple motivations to use YouTube among different types of users.
Oh et al. (2017)	Consumer engagement behavior in social media	Empirical (web scraping)	Personal and interactive consumer engagement behaviors	N/A	There exists a significant positive correlation between consumer engagement behavior (CEB) and gross revenue. The findings show that CEB in social media significantly affects economic performance.
Phua et al. (2017)	Consumer brand engagement on social networking sites	Empirical (survey design)	Most frequently used social network site	Attention to social comparison, SNS trust, tie strength, and homophily	Based on the uses and gratifications theory (UGT), the study investigates how the frequent use of four SNS influences various brand community-related outcomes. The findings further suggest that attention to social comparison, SNS trust, tie strength, and homophily had a significant moderation effect on the relationship between frequent use of each SNS to follow brands, and brand community-related outcomes.

Continuous SMBE is motivated by the "triadic reciprocal" interaction of personal, behavioral, and social/environmental factors. These factors go beyond brand recognition, purchase and satisfaction (Osei-Frimpong and McLean, 2018), making it imperative to highlight what determines the level of customer involvement in SMBE (Vivek *et al.*, 2012). For example, SCT highlights the importance of individual beliefs in determining their propensity and ability to perform or participate in certain behaviors. Further, the literature indicates SMBE's reliance on customer needs, beliefs, motives and goals (Gensler *et al.*, 2013), which are often driven intrinsically or extrinsically depending on their needs satisfaction (Ferguson *et al.*, 2015). From the UGT perspective, consumers may find it gratifying to continuously participate in SMBE practices to know more about the brand to fulfil some personal motives. SMBE practices could also allow actors to utilize their abilities in performing certain tasks, and in this case, other-efficacy beliefs could reinforce consumers' individual-level factors in their continuous SMBE.

The literature indicates that the conceptualization of customer engagement goes beyond mere intervention to include behavioral and psychological dimensions (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014). For example, how do these personal and environmental factors affect the consumer's continuous SMBE practices from a socio-psychological point of view? Regarding behavioral aspects, do consumers participate mainly to gather information regarding the brand, or rather in anticipation of influencing consumer-based brand equity (CBBE), and further enhance their psychosocial developments such as subjective wellbeing? Consequently, the consumers' continuous SMBE practices could be argued not only to strengthen CBBE (Machado *et al.*, 2019), but also contribute significantly to their subjective wellbeing (Ellison *et al.*, 2007; Karikari *et al.*, 2017). Hence, given the prominence of SMBE in contemporary research and practice, it becomes exigent to understand the personal and psychosocial factors that drive consumers' continuous participation. Figure I of this study shows the proposed research model as discussed below.

Figure I: Research Model
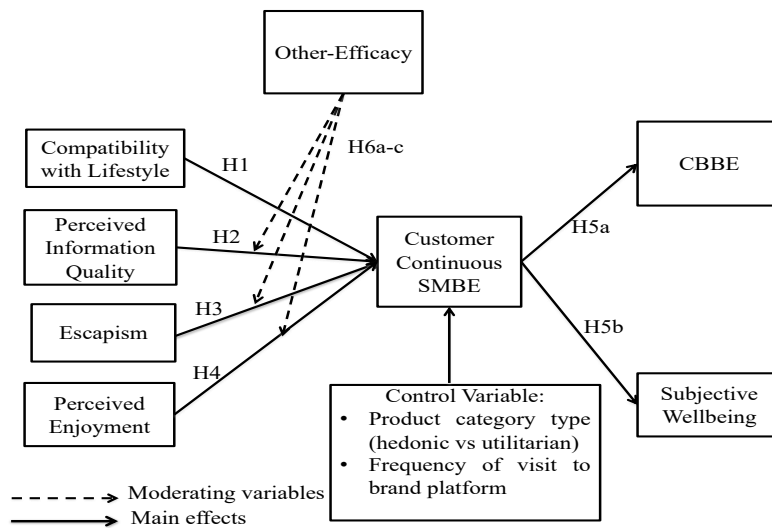
Hypothesized Model Development

Compatibility with Lifestyle and SMBE

Compatibility is defined as the "degree to which…technology fits the lifestyle and experiences of individuals" (Ozturk *et al.*, 2016, p. 1352). By extension, this study defines compatibility with lifestyle as the degree to which consumers perceive online SMBE practices to be consistent with their way of life, beliefs and norms. This concept is a factor that relates to an individual's values and beliefs as enshrined in the assumptions of SCT (Boateng *et al.*, 2016), suggesting that individuals perform certain behaviors once such practices conform to their lifestyle. In related studies, Bianchi and Andrews (2018) found a significant effect of compatibility on consumers attitude towards retail brand engagement on social media. Ozturk *et al.* (2016) contend that high levels of compatibility with the consumers' lifestyle drive their adoption and use of technology applications. Hence, it is argued that compatibility with lifestyle could serve as a precursor of continuous SMBE behaviors. Thus, this hypothesis is proposed:

> H_1: *Compatibility with lifestyle has a positive relationship with consumers' continuous online SMBE practices.*

Perceived Information Quality and SMBE

Nicolaou and McKnight (2006, p. 335) define perceived information quality as the "cognitive beliefs about the (un)favorable characteristics of the currency, accuracy, completeness, relevance, and reliability of the exchange information". Research shows that consumers' perceived information quality has a direct impact on consumers' satisfaction and intention to continue use of information (Gao *et al.*, 2015). Social media platforms provide avenues to share information between multiple actors (e.g., firm, existing and prospective consumers) to seek for clarification or further information about a brand (McLean and Osei-Frimpong, 2017). The UGT provides a framework based upon which we investigate the reasons behind the participatory behaviors of consumers. Khan (2017) found information seeking as a gratification variable that influence consumer's motives in SMBE practices. If consumers found information that is reliable and of good quality, they would likely be satisfied to use it (Martins *et al.*, 2019). In such instances, consumers' perceived information quality is likely to motivate them to continue in SMBE practices following their previous experience. Thus, this hypothesis is proposed:

> *H₂: Perceived information quality has a positive relationship with consumers' continuous online SMBE practices.*

Escapism and SMBE

Escapism is defined as an individual's "desire to escape the harsh realities and worries of life or relax after a hard day at work" (Chang *et al.*, 2018, p. 45). Escapism is considered a key motivator in social media and other technological applications usage, and in this instance, individuals tend to immerse themselves in such behaviors to avoid their everyday reality (Al‐Nabhani *et al.*, 2022; Mathwick *et al.*, 2001). Engaging in social media practices is relaxing, and often helps individuals to connect with others and feel a sense of belonging (Karikari *et al.*, 2017). Through such interaction, their escapism needs may be met resulting in satisfaction and increased motivation to continue with SMBE. Further, escapism is essentially linked to UGT where consumers' immersion in continuous SMBE practices tend to provide an instant gratification to move them from the realities of life (McLean *et al.*, 2022). Such gratifications could potentially drive consumers to continuously engage with brands and other participants on such social media platforms hence, this hypothesis is suggested:

H_3: *Escapism has a positive relationship with consumers' continuous online SMBE practices.*

Perceived Enjoyment and SMBE

Recent research underscores the important role of perceived enjoyment in explaining consumer experiences with technology adoption and use (McLean *et al.*, 2018). Perceived enjoyment is defined as the "extent to which the activity of using a specific system is perceived to be enjoyable in its own right, aside from any performance consequences resulting from system use" (Venkatesh, 2000, p. 351). Social media platforms are classified as a "pleasure-oriented information system" that motivates consumers' participatory behaviors (Hussein and Hassan, 2017; Lin and Lu, 2011). The same could be argued in relation to their continuous SMBE practices. For example, Lin and Lu (2011) and Hussein and Hassan (2017) found that consumers' continued intention to use a social networking service was partly driven by their perceived enjoyment. In this instance, consumers may find it motivating, exciting and enjoying to feel belonging to a group that interacts with brands and at the same time benefit from shared experiences (Osei-Frimpong, 2019). Based on the principles of UGT, we argue that perceived enjoyment will likely drive consumers' continuous SMBE practices. Thus, this hypothesis is suggested:

H_4: *Perceived enjoyment has a positive relationship with consumers' continuous online SMBE practices.*

Consequences of SMBE

Consumers' continuous online SMBE practices is likely to result in some interactive brand experiences (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014), which could also build consumer based brand equity (CBBE) (Machado *et al.*, 2019). Continuous engagement with brands on social media platforms is likely to increase the consumers' knowledge of the brand (Yoo and Donthu, 2001), and further projects favorable and strong associations with the brand (Algharabat *et al.*, 2020). These are key attributes of brand equity which highlights the value consumers associate with brands. Here, CBBE is defined as "the value consumers associate with a brand, as reflected in the dimensions of brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty" (Pappu *et al.*, 2006, p. 698). In other words, CBBE defines the functional and symbolic value

consumers attach to a brand (Owusu-Frimpong *et al.*, 2014). According to Aaker (1996), consumer-brand relationship is dependent on their level of interactions with the brand. Hence, continuous SMBE will likely increase the emotional attachment consumers develop towards the brand, develop brand relationship and brand love, which are key blocks of CBBE (Carlson *et al.*, 2018; Chatzipanagiotou *et al.*, 2016). Hence, this study opines that consumer continuous interactions with brands on social media platforms are more likely to influence CBBE. Thus, this hypothesis is proposed:

H$_{5a}$: Consumers' continuous online SMBE practices has a significant positive relationship with CBBE.

Moreover, while consumers' continuous SMBE practices could enhance their brand relationship, such practices could also influence their subjective wellbeing (SWB). This study operationalises SWB as "a broad spectrum of feelings and emotions, such as satisfaction, happiness, and negative and positive affect, experienced by individuals using the Internet and social media platforms" (Kaur *et al.*, 2021, p. 1). Subjective wellbeing measures are based on the perceived satisfaction that individuals experience in their life and through some domain activities they perform (Chen *et al.*, 2016). In a computer-mediated communication platform, participants develop peer relationships with others, which is likely to enhance real-life friendship and possibly improve on users' wellbeing (Karikari *et al.*, 2017; Valkenburg and Peter, 2007). Effectively, Chang and Hsu (2016) note that the use of social media improves the users' quality of life as it provides avenue for entertaining, information seeking and self-presentation. Although, subjective wellbeing has been studied as a consequent of social media use (Chang and Hsu, 2016; Karikari *et al.*, 2017), attention has mainly been paid to interpersonal interactions and online friendship. However, a potential effect of SMBE on subjective wellbeing has not been established. The question remains, therefore, whether or not consumers' continuous SMBE practices could enhance their subjective wellbeing. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H$_{5b}$: Consumers' continuous online SMBE practices has a significant positive relationship with their subjective wellbeing.

Moderation effects of Other-Efficacy

In this study, other-efficacy beliefs is conceptualized as a consumer's perception about the firm's ability to perform a specific task that can affect participation and responses from the

consumer (Hepler *et al.*, 2021; Seiders *et al.*, 2015). While self-efficacy has widely been studied in technology adoption and use research, studies examining the effect of other-efficacy is limited in literature. According to Yim *et al.* (2012), given the interdependent relationships between participating actors (i.e., consumers and the firm or managers), it could be "problematic" if attention is solely given to the consumer's self-efficacy. Hence, consistent with SCT, Seiders *et al.* (2015) allude to a need to examine the role of provider or firm efficacy (other-efficacy) in better understanding the dynamics of consumer behaviors toward participating in social influencing activities. As a result, we ask that, could other-efficacy with focus on the firm's ability to manage such activities with creative contents change the dynamics of the relationship between these individual level factors and continuous SMBE practices?

While consumers' continuous SMBE is considered as a choice likely to be driven by personal factors (such as perceived enjoyment, escapism, perceived information quality), the onus is on firms to interact effectively with consumers regarding their products (Keller, 2016). Drawing from marketing communication practices that seek to attract consumers' attention (Anderson *et al.*, 2016), the quality and persuasiveness of messages shared on the brand's platform by the firm is critical, and this linked to its efficacy, could strengthen the relational associations between the individual-level factors and continuous SMBE. Hence, this study focuses on other-efficacy in relation to the firm's creative strategies to strengthen consumers' continuous SMBE practices. Thus, the following hypotheses are suggested:

> H_6: *Other-efficacy positively moderates the relationship between (a) perceived information quality, (b) escapism, and (c) perceived enjoyment, and consumers' continuous online SMBE practices.*

Methodology

This study took an online quantitative survey approach in collecting data from users following brands on Facebook. The selection of Facebook is based on it being considered as the "most ubiquitous example of social media" (Ferguson *et al.*, 2015, p. 305), commonly used by both consumers and firms. Employing convenience sampling technique, 1155 Facebook users in Ghana with experience in brand interactions on social networking platforms were recruited to participate in the study. The Ghanaian context was considered because it is argued that the trend of social media use in other countries may not be so different in Ghana, and Statista (2022) estimates that about 30% of Ghanaians are active on social media. Further, Ghanaians'

cultural orientation promotes some ideals that bring to light their sense of belongingness and regard for social inclusiveness (Osei-Frimpong *et al.*, 2019).

Following Lin and Lu (2011), we posted messages regarding the online structured questionnaire on Facebook. A link to the questionnaire with appropriate information was shared on some selected brand pages with permission. In order to avoid replications, respondents' identities were checked when questionnaires were received using their e-mail and Internet Protocol (IP) address. Exclusion and inclusion set of questions were asked to satisfy that, respondents had followed brands on Facebook platform for a minimum of six months. In this instance, two questions were asked: (1) do you follow brands on Facebook? (2) have you followed brands on social media for at least 6 months? Accordingly, surveying respondents in a cross sectional study who have been engaging with brands on social media for at least six months is considered adequate to rate their responses in a continuous usage context (Al‑Nabhani *et al.*, 2022). Respondents who answered "No" to either of the questions were not included in the research. The survey instrument was pre-tested drawn from a sample size of 25 before commissioning the main study. Following Osei-Frimpong *et al.* (2020), the pre-test helped finalize the questionnaire after a satisfactory content validity and reliability measures of the data.

Facebook users who continuously follow brands on their respective platforms were surveyed in the main study. Given the requirements for exclusion and inclusion, 794 of the 1155 respondents qualified to complete the final questionnaire. Following Machado *et al.* (2019), respondents were asked to identify the product/service categories they regularly follow on Facebook. The list was later categorized as hedonic and utilitarian. The literature questioned whether or not consumers' motives for following brands on social media could be controlled by the product being utilitarian brand (offer functional benefits) or hedonic brand (consumption produces enjoyment and pleasure) (Micu *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, in analyzing consumers' continuous SMBE, we used product type/category as control variable to ascertain whether or not the product type being followed on social media could serve as a factor for driving consumers to continuously engage. Overall, 785 valid questionnaires were included in the analysis after removing completed questionnaires with three or more missing values, which represents a response rate of 68%. The demographic details of the respondents are presented in Table II.

Table II: Characteristics of Respondents

Respondent Characteristics	Frequency (n)	%
Gender		
Male	394	50.2
Female	391	49.8
Age (in years)		
20 – 29	307	39.1
30 – 39	240	30.6
40 – 49	92	11.7
50 – 59	146	18.6
Education		
Senior High School	37	4.7
Higher National Diploma	59	7.5
Undergraduates	299	38.1
Professional Qualification (e.g., ACCA, CIM, etc.)	126	16.1
Bachelor's Degree	173	22.0
Post-graduate Qualification	91	11.6
Frequency of visit to brand social networking page		
Multiple times daily	335	42.7
Once daily	159	20.3
Multiple times weekly	151	19.2
Once weekly	75	9.6
At least once a month	65	8.3

Construct Measurement

The construct scales used in designing the questionnaire were adapted from the literature with appropriate wording changes to align with the context of this study. These were measured in a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 being strongly disagree to 5 being strongly agree. Details are provided in Table III:

Table III: Scale Items and Factor Loadings

Item	Factor loading	CR	AVE
Perceived Enjoyment (McLean *et al.*, 2018)		0.863	0.677
Engaging with brands on social media makes me happy	0.791		
The actual process of interacting with brands on social media is pleasant	0.831		
I have fun following brands on social media	0.845		
Perceived Information Quality (McLean and Osei-Frimpong, 2017)		0.912	0.776
The information provided on the social brand networking platform is complete and comprehensible	0.765		
The information provided on the social brand networking platform is current	0.839		
The social brand networking platform provided accurate information for my needs	0.927		
The information provided on the social brand networking platform is easily understandable	0.874		
Continuous Social Media Brand Engagement (Osei-Frimpong and McLean, 2018)		0.904	0.653
I continuously follow companies and their brands using social media	0.836		
I continuously participate in the brand activities on social media	0.854		
I continuously participate in the brand activities on social media to enable me share my experiences with others	0.818		

I continuously participate in the brand activities to enable me reach personal goals	0.833		
I continuously participate in the brand activities on social media due to the emotional attachment I have for the brand	0.689		
Escapism (Mathwick *et al.*, 2001)		**0.875**	**0.703**
Following brands on social media platforms gets me away from it all	0.813		
Participation in brand engagement activities on social media makes me feel like I am in another world	0.971		
I get so involved when I follow brands on social media that I forget everything else	0.710		
Other-Efficacy (Osei-Frimpong and McLean, 2018; Yim *et al.*, 2012)		**0.872**	**0.633**
I have confidence in the firm's ability to respond to my participation effectively	0.689		
The firm has excellent skills and ability in posting interesting messages on the brand's platform to enhance my participation	0.828		
The firm has excellent skills and ability in responding to my continuous participation on the brand's platform	0.906		
The firm's creative abilities demonstrated on the brand's platform has a strong motivation on my participation	0.742		
Subjective Wellbeing (Chen *et al.*, 2016; Kaur *et al.*, 2021)		**0.821**	**0.611**
The conditions of my online social life on brand social media platforms are excellent.	0.579		
At present, I am completely satisfied with my life on brand social media platforms	0.855		
So far, I have obtained important things I want from my social life on brand social media platforms	0.876		
I am satisfied with my online social life on brand social media platforms	0.623		
I feel happy about the personal aspects (achievements, personality, health, etc.) of my life on brand social media.	0.745		
Compatibility with Lifestyle (Boateng *et al.*, 2016)		**0.873**	**0.696**
Following brands on social media platforms fits my lifestyle	0.807		
Following brands on social media fit well with how I like to interact with brands	0.891		
Following brands on social media is compatible with most aspects of social interactions	0.802		
Consumer-Based Brand Equity (Machado *et al.*, 2019)		**0.802**	**0.506**
It makes sense to buy the products or use the services of the brand I follow instead of any other brand, even if they are the same	0.613		
Even if another brand has the same features as the brand I follow, I would prefer to buy the products or use the services of the brand I follow	0.640		
If there is another brand as good as the brand I follow, I prefer to buy the products or use the services of the brand I follow	0.812		
If another brand is not different from the brand I follow in any way, it seems smarter to purchase the products or use the services of the brand I follow	0.761		

Analysis and Results

After initial data screening, we performed exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in SPSS and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in AMOS 23. EFA was performed because the scale items required minor modifications to match the study context. It was done using principal Varimax

rotation and component analysis. The EFA analysis satisfied the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sampling adequacy test with 0.780, which exceeds the cut-off value of 0.6 and a p-value < .0001 for Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. There was no evidence of cross loading, and items loaded well on constructs as expected. In addition, by employing the maximum likelihood estimate in AMOS 23.0, a CFA was performed in order to prepare the data for model analysis. The results (factor loadings presented in Table III) indicate a reasonable fit to the data ($\chi^2_{(315)}$ = 682.201; χ^2/df = 2.166; p = .0001; GFI = .942; CFI = .976; RMSEA = .039).

In line with checking for convergent and discriminant validity of the data, Fornell and Larcker's (1981) guideline was observed. The analysis of the constructs' average variance extracted (AVE) indicated values above 0.5. In addition, the construct reliabilities of the measures were all above 0.7. The results suggest satisfactory convergent validity. Further, discriminant validity is supported given that the square root of the AVE values was greater than the correlations between constructs. The results are presented in Table IV.

Table IV: Validity and Construct Reliability Measures

	CR	AVE	SWB	PIQ	PE	ESC	CSMBE	CWL	OE	CBBE
Subjective Wellbeing (SWB)	0.821	0.611	0.782							
Perceived Information Quality (PIQ)	0.796	0.661	0.161	0.813						
Perceived Enjoyment (PE)	0.863	0.677	0.153	0.182	0.823					
Escapism (ESC)	0.875	0.703	0.141	0.082	0.091	0.838				
Continuous Social Media Brand Engagement (CSMBE)	0.904	0.653	0.098	0.142	0.104	0.231	0.808			
Compatibility with Lifestyle (CWL)	0.873	0.696	0.137	0.116	0.031	0.081	0.137	0.834		
Other-Efficacy (OE)	0.872	0.633	0.064	0.096	0.163	0.114	0.087	0.301	0.796	
Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE)	0.802	0.506	0.259	0.314	0.200	0.216	0.584	0.152	0.075	0.711

In addition, a precaution that was taken to minimize common method bias (CMB) was to reduce item ambiguity by mixing the order of the construct scale items throughout the questionnaire. A test was also conducted in AMOS by introducing a common latent factor to the CFA model by assigning it with all the items of the constructs included in the model. Analysis of the variance revealed an average variance explained of 0.54 with regard to the indicators of the principal constructs as compared to 0.11 in relation to the common latent factor, and in which case they were mainly insignificant. The insignificance of the common latent variance suggest CMB is unlikely to be present in the data (Ranaweera and

Jayawardhena, 2014). Further, the multicollinearity using variance inflation factor (VIF) was checked. With the highest value of 1.921 recorded among the variables, multicollinearity was not violated when compared to a cut-off point of 3 (Hair *et al.*, 2014). The data may therefore be considered valid and suitable for structural equation modelling estimation.

Structural Model Estimation Results

With the use of SEM with AMOS 23, the full model estimation was performed in line with the various hypotheses formulated in this study. The fit indices of the model estimation are within the acceptable range: $\chi^2_{(262)} = 538.235$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.054$, GFI = .949, AGFI = .937, CFI = .977, TLI = .974, RMSEA = .037, PCLOSE = .885. Details of the model estimation results are presented in Table V below:

Table V: SEM estimation results

Paths	Standardized coefficients		
	β	t-value	R^2
Compatibility with Lifestyle →CSMBE (H1)	.135**	2.404	0.110
Perceived Information Quality → CSMBE (H2)	.145**	3.216	
Escapism → CSMBE (H3)	.250***	5.728	
Perceived Enjoyment → CSMBE (H4)	.084ns	0.956	
CSMBE → CBBE (H5a)	.500***	9.996	0.250
CSMBE → Subjective Wellbeing (H5b)	.079ns	0.740	0.006
Control variable			
Product category type→ CSMBE	.044ns	1.169	
Frequency of visit to brand platform→ CSMBE	.090**	2.676	

***$\rho < 0.001$, **$\rho < 0.05$, ns – non-significant; β – Standardized Path Coefficient*

Results

We controlled for product category type (hedonic vs utilitarian) and frequency of visit to the brand platform. While product category type (β = .044, p > 0.05) did not have significant relationship on continuous SMBE, frequency of visit to the brand platform has a significant positive relationship on continuous SMBE (β = .090, p < 0.05). From Table V, the results also indicate a significant positive relationship between compatibility with lifestyle and consumers' continuous SMBE practices (β = .135, p < 0.05), which would therefore support hypothesis H1. This indicates that consumers consider following brands on social media as something that

is inherent and aligns with their lifestyle. Perceived information quality also drives consumers to continuous SMBE practices given the significant relationship established in the findings (β = .145, p < 0.05), and thus supports hypothesis H2. In addition, while escapism significantly drives consumers' continuous SMBE (β = .250, p < 0.001), perceived enjoyment does not drive consumers to continuously engage with brands on social media (β = .084, p > 0.05), hence, while hypothesis H3 is supported, hypothesis H4 is rejected. The results suggest that while consumers engage with brands on social media in order to take their minds off real-life issues and therefore, immerse themselves in continuous SMBE practices, perceived enjoyment does not significantly drive such practices. Regarding the potential consequences of continuous SMBE practices, the results indicate a strong relationship between continuous SMBE and CBBE (β = .500, p > 0.001), and thus support hypothesis H5a. This suggests that consumers' continuous SMBE practices are more likely to develop strong brand relationships and brand love, which may reflect in tightening their brand association and consequently improve on their perception of brand value. Conversely, consumers' continuous SMBE practices do not significantly influence participants' subjective wellbeing (β = .079, p > 0.05), hence, rejecting hypothesis H5b.

Interaction Effects of Other-Efficacy

This study proposed the potential interaction effect of other-efficacy on consumers' continuous SMBE practices (hypotheses H6a, H6b, and H6c). Hence, the interaction effect was hierarchically examined in SEM using AMOS 23 in line with Xanthopoulou *et al.'s* (2007) procedure. Accordingly, following previous studies (cf., McLean and Osei-Frimpong, 2017; Ranaweera and Jayawardhena, 2014), extra variables were generated in SPSS leading to the testing of the interactive effects, which resulted in the creation of the following interactive terms: 'perceived information quality X Other-efficacy; 'Escapism X Other-efficacy; and 'Perceived Enjoyment X Other-efficacy'. To assess the moderation or interaction effects, we regressed the dependent variable (SMBE) on the independent variables (perceived information quality, Escapism, and Perceived Enjoyment), the interactive terms, and the moderator (Other-efficacy). The moderation results are presented in Table VI.

Table VI: Results of moderated SEM interactions: dependent variable (Continuous Social Media Brand Engagement)

Path	γ	t-value	β	R^2

|	γ	t	β	R^2
Model 1: Perceived Information Quality				
Perceived Information Quality → Continuous Social Media Brand Engagement	.145	4.869	.184***	.110
Other-Efficacy → Continuous Social Media Brand Engagement	.157	5.831	.252***	
Perceived Information Quality X Other-Efficacy → Continuous Social Media Brand Engagement (H6a)	.052	2.731	.108**	
Model fit indices: $\chi^2_{(307)}$ = 818.013, p = 0.001, GFI = .931, AGFI = .915, CFI = .967, RMSEA = .046				
Model 2: Escapism				
Escapism → Continuous Social Media Brand Engagement	.236	4.907	.378***	.117
Other-Efficacy → Continuous Social Media Brand Engagement	.122	2.211	.168**	
Escapism X Other-Efficacy → Continuous Social Media Brand Engagement (H6b)	.055	2.372	.102**	
Model fit indices: $\chi^2_{(307)}$ = 865.349, p < 0.001, GFI = .927, AGFI = .910, CFI = .964, RMSEA = .048				
Model 3: Perceived Enjoyment				
Perceived Enjoyment → Continuous Social Media Brand Engagement	.286	4.028	.257***	.124
Other-Efficacy → Continuous Social Media Brand Engagement	.142	1.974	.176**	
Perceived Enjoyment X Other-Efficacy → Continuous Social Media Brand Engagement (H6c)	.048	2.539	.100**	
Model fit indices: $\chi^2_{(307)}$ = 864.016, p < 0.001, GFI = .928, AGFI = .912, CFI = .966, RMSEA = .047				

***$\rho < 0.001$, **$\rho < 0.05$; γ – Unstandardized Path Coefficient; β – Standardized Path Coefficient*

From Table VI (Model 1), it is observed that Other-efficacy significantly reinforced the significant positive relationship between perceived information quality and SMBE, thus supporting hypothesis H6a. With 11.0% of the explained variance, Other-efficacy induced a much stronger relationship between perceived information quality and SMBE. This indicates that as consumers seek more information about their preferred brands on social media platforms, the ability of the firm to post interesting messages strengthens the association between perceived information quality and SMBE, as illustrated in Figure II.

Figure II: Moderation effect of Other-Efficacy (OE) on Perceived Information Quality (PIQ) and Continuous Social Media Brand Engagement (SMBE)
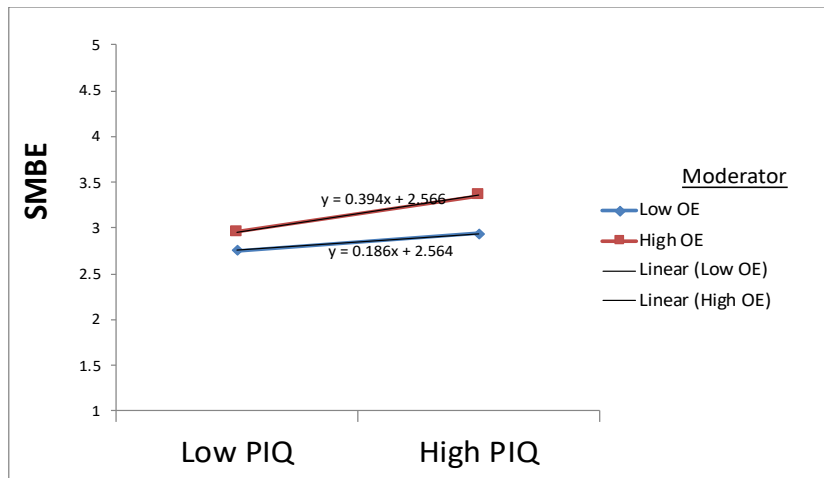
Again, in Table VI (Model 2), Other-efficacy significantly moderated the positive relationship between Escapism and SMBE, suggesting that with 11.7% explained variance, higher Other-efficacy reinforces the relationship, hence, hypothesis H6b was supported. The effects are also illustrated in the slope in Figure III.

Figure III: Moderation effect of Other-Efficacy (OE) on Escapism (ESC) and Continuous Social Media Brand Engagement (SMBE)
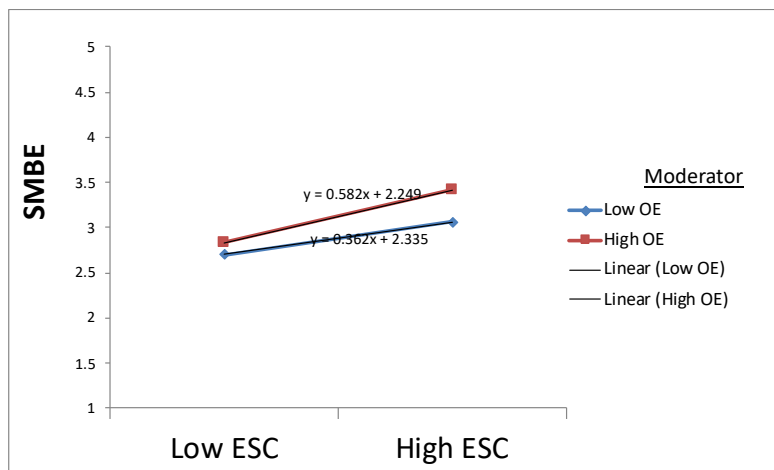
Also, in Table VI (Model 3), Other-efficacy significantly induced a positive moderation effect of Perceived Enjoyment on SMBE, and thus supports hypothesis H6c. Although perceived enjoyment had no significant effect on SMBE when the model was estimated without the moderating variable in Table IV. Table VI (model 3) indicates, however, that with 12.4% of the explained variance, high Other-efficacy levels have caused a significant impact on the relationship between perceived enjoyment and SMBE. The positive slope in Figure IV illustrates the effects.

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Figure IV: Moderation effect of Other-Efficacy (OE) on Perceived Enjoyment (PE) and Continuous Social Media Brand Engagement (SMBE)
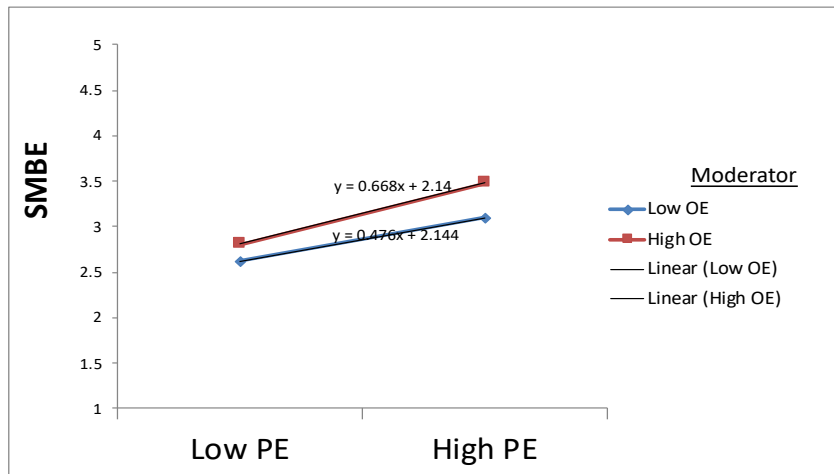
Discussion

This study empirically examined the drivers and consequences of consumers' continuous online SMBE practices. It therefore, offers an integrated SMBE framework that incorporates consumers' individual-level drivers (escapism, perceived enjoyment, compatibility with lifestyle), and perceived information quality, SCT, UGT. The findings reported establish the effects of escapism, compatibility with lifestyle, and perceived information quality on consumers' continuous SMBE practices. Furthermore, the examination of Other-efficacy's moderation effects confirms Osei-Frimpong and McLean (2018), and establishes the relative importance of other-efficacy in driving consumers' participation from SCT's perspective.

The findings indicate significant positive relationships among compatibility with lifestyle, escapism, perceived information quality and consumers' continuous SMBE practices. These findings suggest that consumers' quest in seeking for reliable and quality information relating to a particular brand of interest is gratifying, which is more likely to draw them to the brand's social media page. Furthermore, while consumers may find these practices as something that is compatible with their lifestyles, they also immerse themselves in SMBE practices to escape from realities of life. The results lend support to previous studies (e.g., Chang *et al.*, 2018), and here, we extend these behaviors to online SMBE. In relation to perceived information quality, the findings suggest that consumers' quest in seeking quality information from their peers and firm influence their behaviors to some extent in continuous SMBE.

More surprising is the lack of support on the proposed positive relationship between perceived enjoyment and consumers' continuous SMBE practices. While social media use has been considered as pleasurable and fun or "pleasure-oriented information system" (Hussein and Hassan, 2017; Lin and Lu, 2011), it was expected that this could as well drive consumers' continuous SMBE practices. However, this was not established in our findings. Hence, it could be argued that, although consumers may find themselves immersed in SMBE practices, it may not necessarily be because of some enjoyment they may derive in the process. This finding is in line with Bianchi and Andrews (2018), who reported an insignificant relationship between enjoyment and attitude towards engaging with retail brands through social media. We argue that there could be more intrinsic factors that drive consumers adoption and use other than perceived enjoyment. Thus, perceived enjoyment does not drive consumers' continuous SMBE practices.

This study also established the positive relationship between escapism and consumers' continuous SMBE practices. While escapism is considered inherently gratifying, the nature of its relationship with consumers' continuous SMBE practices has not been established in the extant literature. This finding asserts that escapism demonstrates the absorption of consumers in online search experience and social interactions with brands. In this instance, while SMBE is not necessarily limited to brand interactions, the search experience coupled with shared experiences from other participants is more likely to generate interest that helps participants to temporarily separate them from unsatisfactory social realities (Labrecque *et al.*, 2011). This study, therefore, argues that escapism is an inherent gratification factor that drives consumers' continuous SMBE practices. Hence, we extend the concept of escapism to the context of SMBE by establishing its relevance, and by extension contributes to the SMBE literature.

The interaction effects of other-efficacy on the paths examined presented some interesting outcomes. As expected, the relationships of perceived information quality, escapism, and perceived enjoyment with continuous SMBE are strengthened by the firm's (other-) efficacy as reported in our findings. This suggests that the creative strategies of the firm through the kind of messages they post on their pages are able to generate interest and attention that stirs up the desire of individuals to continuously participate in such practices. Effectively, such messages from the firm provide more information to participants on such platforms to satisfy consumers who seek to gain more knowledge on the brand (Kumar *et al.*, 2016; Osei-Frimpong and McLean, 2018). Further, such interesting messages are able to ignite some interest and

curiosity that increases consumers' desire to immerse deeply in SMBE practices. It could be argued that while consumers participate in SMBE practices as an avenue for escaping from the realities of life and quality information seeking, the messages firms share on such platforms are particularly important to reinforce these effects. This suggests that the creative and interesting messages or contents shared by the firm on their brand platforms have the tendency of deeply engaging the minds of the participants so as to lure them to immerse themselves in such practices. Of particular interest is the interaction effect reported with regard to perceived enjoyment. Perceived enjoyment, when examined without the introduction of the moderating variable (other-efficacy), had no significant relationship with continuous SMBE. However, the introduction of other-efficacy resulted in a significant positive relationship between perceived enjoyment and continuous SMBE. This suggests that participants of SMBE practices find the interaction with the firm through the kind of messages posted very enjoying, pleasurable, and fun.

This study also established the potential consequences of consumers' continuous SMBE practices, and the findings suggest a strong association between SMBE and CBBE. It could be argued that continuous SMBE practices are likely to build and enhance brand knowledge, brand love, brand relationship and attachment (Machado *et al.*, 2019; Pappu *et al.*, 2006). Hence, in support of Machado *et al.* (2019), this study extends on the SMBE literature and posits that consumers' continuous SMBE practices enhance the brand equity consumers assign to their preferred brands resulting in CBBE. On the other hand, there was no significant relationship between consumers' continuous SMBE practices and their subjective wellbeing. This study contradicts previous works that have reported a significant association between social media use and subjective wellbeing (e.g., Karikari *et al.*, 2017). While social media use generally provides avenues for individuals to make friends and feel a sense of belonging, these could not be directly attributed to their engagement with brands. Thus, the dynamics of simply following friends, 'commenting and liking' on personal pages could be different from their involvement in SMBE platforms, and hence, the kind of fulfilment participants experience or derive may not be the same. Hence, contrary to works that have reported significant relationship between social media use and subjective wellbeing, this study posits that consumers' continuous SMBE practices does not improve or otherwise their subjective wellbeing.

Theoretical Implications

This study makes a number of important contributions to the current social media marketing and technology in human behavior literature through the lens of SCT and UGT. First, this study significantly increases the understanding of individual level gratifications that drive consumers' continuous SMBE practices. The findings highlight the use of SCT and UGT in understanding what drives this continuous practice. For example, in relation to SCT, an individual's view on social practices consistent with their lifestyle, values and beliefs elicit behaviors and attitudes toward their engagement or involvement in such practices (Boateng *et al.*, 2016). Whereas UGT expounds the relative gratifications or motives in driving consumers' continuous SMBE. This is largely unexplored in extant literature. Hence, we integrate individual level factors from UGT (perceived enjoyment, escapism, perceived information quality), and SCT (compatibility with lifestyle, other-efficacy), to conceptualize continuous SMBE practices. Hence, this research contributes to the literature by bringing to light the relative effects of these individual-level factors on SMBE practices in the lens of SCT and UGT.

Second, while most works have given prominence to the effects of user-generated content as a driver of consumers' SMBE practices (e.g., Gensler *et al.*, 2013), the effects of Other-efficacy has received less attention. This study, therefore, builds on Osei-Frimpong and McLean (2018) by examining the moderating effects on these pertinent individual-level factors on SMBE. We provide interesting insights into the critical role of other-efficacy in SMBE practices and contribute significantly to the literature. Firm (other-) efficacy demonstrates the perceived capabilities and credibility of the firm (Seiders *et al.*, 2015), which also reflects in the creative skills and abilities of the firm in driving participants' interest, curiosity and attention to their social media pages. Hence, this study contributes to SCT and SMBE literature. Thus, in support of the SCT's "triadic reciprocal" interaction of personal, behavioral, and social/environmental factors (Bandura, 2001), we establish the moderating effect of other-efficacy in SMBE. Thus, accordingly, other-efficacy changes or reinforces the dynamics in the consumer's continuous SMBE practices. Hence, this study theorizes that whereas perceived enjoyment does not contribute or drive consumers' continuous SMBE practice, the activities of other actors on such platforms (in this case, the firm or brand managers) are more inclined to stir up the interest to facilitate greater participation. Hence, extending on Kumar *et al.* (2016), this study contends that other-efficacy in the form of firm-generated contents play a critical role in reinforcing consumers' continuous SMBE practices. Further, this study builds on strong theoretical

foundations and presents an integrated framework that provides new insights into the dynamics of consumers' continuous SMBE practices.

Third, this study examines specific consequences of continuous SMBE practices which have not received enough attention in literature. In affirming Brodie *et al.* (2013) and Machado *et al.* (2019), this study confirms the relative association between continuous SMBE and CBBE. This study contributes to the consumer-based brand equity literature taking into account brand activities on social media platforms by reechoing the important role of continuous SMBE practices in building customer attachment to respective brands. However, while consumers' subjective wellbeing has been examined in the context of regular social media interactions with others, this has not been studied in the context of continuous SMBE on such platforms. Contrary to works that have reported significant relationship between social media use and subjective wellbeing (e.g., Karikari *et al.*, 2017), this study contends that consumers' continuous SMBE practices does not improve or otherwise their subjective wellbeing.

Fourth, and more profoundly, this study introduces the concept of escapism to explain why consumers continue to follow and interact with brands on such platforms. Hence, we extend the concept of escapism to the context of SMBE by establishing its relevance. The general assertion is that SMBE goes beyond just interacting with brands, as participants also get the opportunity to chat with others and benefit from shared experiences. Effectively, this study responds to calls for further research in social media practices (Carlson *et al.*, 2018; Dwivedi *et al.*, 2021; Ngai *et al.*, 2015), and here, we present interesting insights into consumers' continuous SMBE practices. This research therefore, sheds light on an important area of inquiry in social media research which is unexplored in the existing literature. We provide a strong theoretical perspective to further our understanding of SMBE practices and contribute significantly to social media research.

Managerial Implications

This study provides empirical evidence that can be used by managers to improve on their social media strategies and contribute to the firm's performance. The findings suggest that consumers' quest for quality information about brands draw them to their preferred brand pages on social media. In this case, social media should be considered as an essential channel of communication (Chu and Kim, 2011), which provides avenues for multi-actor interactions and

where participants seek to gain up-to-date information regarding their preferred brands. In view of this, managers should pay particular attention to managing their brands on such platforms and be mindful of addressing issues relating to brand experiences and as well be proactive in their information sharing. In addition, managers should make their platforms more interactive and interesting in order to win consumers' attention and increase their desire for full immersion. This is critical as consumers seek to escape from the realities of life, they might want something that could engage them in a meaningful way.

The findings also established the moderation role of other-efficacy on SMBE. Of particular importance is the role of other-efficacy in enhancing the relationship between perceived enjoyment and consumers' continuous SMBE practices. This suggest that while other-efficacy is important, this capability on the part of the firm could generate interest, pleasure, fun, and enjoyment on such platforms (Osei-Frimpong and McLean, 2018). In a cultural environment like the Ghanaian context where consumers tend to relate well with the firm's ability to post interesting content, managers should engage consumers with absorbing messages, adopting both informative and transformative creative strategies. This will excite consumers and give them a reason to continuously interact with the brand on such platforms. Consumers' continuous SMBE practices is much strengthened by other-efficacy and hence, as part of the firm's social media strategy, such platforms should be managed to balance information sharing, and create a virtual social environment to allow for consumers' active participation.

While there are calls for managers to follow innovative approaches in managing their brand platforms (e.g., Osei-Frimpong and McLean, 2018), consumers do need to be urged to share appropriate and objective information based on their experiences to improve customer trust in order to generate positive consumer-brand relationships. Essentially, managers should continue to project their brands and share relevant and stimulating information throughout their continuous engagement with consumers to build strong consumer-brand relationships (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006) that reinforce CBBE (Machado *et al.*, 2019). In establishing and strengthening customers' strong brand associations, brand managers should continuously stir up the engagement processes on social media platforms by posting more interesting and captivating contents (be it text messages or multimedia) that resonate well with participants' interest. Enhancing CBBE would lead to repurchase behaviors and given the consumer-brand bond, consumers' will be more willing to share positive experiences with others. Managers must put in the effort to attract and retain participants on their social media platforms and

contribute in promoting and creating the firm's offerings. Such creative practices could prevent instances where customers often discontinue active participation or become dormant in branded communities.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

While this study reports robust findings, there are some limitations that need to be considered. First, the study mainly focused on individual-level factors that could drive consumers' continuous SMBE practices from the perspective of social cognitive theory and uses and gratifications theory. It did not take into account other social and environmental factors that could also drive behaviors relating to their continuous SMBE. Future research could extend on our work by examining other potentially important factors taking into account the influences of other participating consumers or individuals, which also present some psychosocial factors. Also, this study operationalized continuous SMBE as having followed a brand on social media for at least six months (Al‑Nabhani *et al.*, 2022), future studies could employ a longitudinal approach and examine such behaviors at different time intervals. It will also be interesting to consider varying participants based on the frequency of engagement or participation on such platforms. Here, frequency of visit or participation frequency could serve as a moderating variable to examine potential changes in the dynamics of continuous SMBE practices.

Also, taking into account the non-significant relationship between perceived enjoyment and continuous SMBE, further work is encouraged in this endeavor to clarify the non-significant direct relationship reported in this present study. Further, this study did not clearly examine and compare different product categories (utilitarian and hedonic). While we reported a non-significant relationship between product category type (as control variable) and continuous SMBE, future research could focus on specific brands or compare such effects or dynamics with different brand categories through experimental research. In this instance, future research should clearly define and create scenarios or conditions that project either hedonic or utilitarian products and examine how they play out in relation to driving customer engagement on such product platforms. It will also be important to understand the mediating role of factors such as brand love, attitude toward social media use, brand trust etc. Such mediating variables between the factors examined in this study could also present some interesting dynamics in furthering our understanding of what keeps consumers on brand platforms in their continuous involvement in SMBE practices. Also, future works could expand on our conceptualization

and focus on platform dynamics such as interactivity among actors, nature of information (be it informational or transformational), etc.

Additionally, we established the role of other-efficacy (in relation to firm's skills and abilities) in moderating continuous SMBE. Future research should open out the dimension of other-efficacy to establish the role of different media types such as images, videos, text, links, and opinion polls in order to aid managers in their social media strategies. Additionally, the study only focused on Facebook brand pages, which could be a limitation, as we did not take a holistic view of social media. While we acknowledge that the dynamics on other social media handles (e.g., Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube etc.) could differ, future research should examine and test our model on different social media platforms and where possible compare any potential differences in a comparative study.

The study is also limited to Ghanaian social media consumers or users. While we report some interesting findings, future research could test our conceptualization in other countries (or geographical locations), and/or conduct comparative research involving multiple countries. Again, the non-probabilistic convenience sampling technique adopted in selecting respondents in this research could introduce some level of bias in our findings. However, while this technique is not alien in quantitative research, we treat the findings with caution and rather encourage future research to test our model in other contexts using probability-sampling technique to ascertain our findings.

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