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## THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN CONTRIBUTING TO LIFESTYLE BRAND-RELATED CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this research is to analyze the differences in users' intentions to like, share, and comment on lifestyle brand-related content on social media based on the social capital focus. In this paper, social capital is conceptualized as a positive outcome of users' interaction on social media, focusing on bonding and bridging dimensions of social capital. However, to examine the differences in intentions to like, share, and comment between social media users with a bridging focus and with a bonding focus, social capital is analyzed as a cause of social media engagement in terms of liking, sharing, and commenting on brand-related content on social media. There was carried out a survey of social media users by using questionnaires. Factor analysis and a one-way ANOVA test were used on a data set of 415 effective responses. The respondents were divided into two groups based on their social capital focus. The results of factor analysis identified the factors as conceptualized in the literature. The results of the one-way ANOVA test indicated the existence of significant differences in intentions to like, share, and comment on lifestyle brand-related content depending on the social media users' social capital focus. Social media users with a bridging focus showed stronger intentions to like, share, and comment on lifestyle brand-related content compared to social media users with a bonding focus. The findings of this research study may help social media marketing managers successfully design and implement effective lifestyle brand-related content depending on the users' social capital focus.*

*Keywords: like, share, comment, lifestyle brand-related content, social capital*

*JEL codes: M31*

### Introduction

Social media have grown in popularity over the recent years (Utz and Muscanell, 2015) due to their significant impact on the way that companies and brands communicate, strengthen, and enhance their relationships with consumers to increase customer engagement (Ashley and Tuten, 2014;



Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014; Alhabash *et al.*, 2015; Lamberton and Stephen, 2016). On the other hand, social media widespread use is because they provide the opportunity for social media users to engage in online interaction and to create and sustain social relationships (Ajayi and Adinlewa, 2020) by creating connections with closer friends and relatives (connections with strong ties) or connections with acquaintances or people only met once (weak ties) (Ellison *et al.*, 2007).

Social capital can be explained as the positive effect of interaction among participants in a social network (Helliwell and Putnam, 2004; Ellison *et al.*, 2007). Social capital has two dimensions i.e., bonding social capital (strong social ties of trust and support with closer friends or relatives) and bridging social capital (weak social ties among users on social media across social or geographical distances) (Putnam, 2000; Ellison *et al.*, 2007; Ciboh, 2016).

Regarding social media user's behavior and in terms of the level of engagement with brands, there are different activities social media users can be involved in, such as passive consumption of information, contributing activities which include liking, sharing, and commenting, and the highest level of engagement that refers to the creation of brand-related content (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011; Tuten, 2014; Schivinski *et al.*, 2016; de Vries *et al.*, 2017; Ashley and Cao *et al.*, 2021). According to Ellison *et al.* (2007), social capital is an intrinsic (Cheshire, 2007) psychological benefit from users' involvement in online activity (e.g., like, share and comment) that may affect users' online behavior (Fu *et al.*, 2017). However, social capital can be analyzed not only as a result but also as a motive for social media users' activities (Wang *et al.*, 2016; Fu *et al.*, 2017; Lee, 2021).

Our study focuses on analyzing brand-related contributing activities of social media users and the role of social capital focus (bridging and bonding focus) in explaining the intentions of social media users to like, share, and comment on brand-related content. We try to understand the differences in intentions to contribute to branded content on social media depending on the social capital focus through the lens of social capital theory and brand-engagement theory. The brand engagement theory is used in this study for exploring different contributing activities whereas the social capital framework is used for exploring the reasons for social media users' brand-related contributing behavior.

Although the research on customer engagement in the social media context has been continually growing (Tsai and Men, 2013; Schivinski *et al.*, 2016; Tafesse, 2016; Carlson *et al.*, 2018), still, there is a lack of empirical studies on customer engagement behavior with social media brand-related content (Dolan *et al.*, 2019; Schivinski *et al.*, 2021) and particularly on customer contributing behavior on social media brand-related content (Fu *et al.*, 2017; Yesiloglu *et al.*, 2021; Ciunova-Shuleska *et al.*, 2022). According to Syrdal and Briggs (2018) the branded content individuals' consumption while utilizing social media, rather than the brand itself, is the focal object of engagement on social media. Additionally, based on the findings that the participation of users on social media is influenced by content strategy (Thongmak, 2015), we examine customer engagement with brand-related content on social media as a behavioral activity (Schivinski *et al.*, 2016), with a particular focus on contributing activities to the lifestyle-brand-related content on social media.

Regarding social capital, a stream of research has explored the social capital outcomes of social media use (Ellison *et al.*, 2007, Raza *et al.*, 2016; Vanden Abeele *et al.*, 2018). However, only a few studies have investigated the impact of social capital on social media use (Lin and Lu, 2011). The study of You and Hon (2019) examined the difference between the social influence of both strong and weak ties on individuals' participation intentions regarding collective actions, whereas the study of Lee (2021) examined the relationship between a person's social media capital measured through a number of social ties on Facebook and Twitter, and civic engagement. Moreover, the study of Wang *et al.* (2016) examined the influence of perceived strength of social network ties on social network users' engagement in eWOM. Nevertheless, no other study has investigated social capital as a cause of social media brand-related activities and particularly not as a cause of brand-related contributing activities. Fu *et al.* (2017) analyzed brand-related sharing intention and social capital as a moderator in the relationships between different incentives and sharing intention. Our study examines intentions to like, share, and comment separately, instead of analyzing overall contributing activities (Azar *et al.*, 2016; de Vries *et al.*, 2017; Palamidovska-Sterjadovska and Ciunova-Shuleska, 2020) or only one type of contributing activity (Fu *et al.*, 2017) to lifestyle brand-related content, thus enriching the existing body of research about social media brand-related content and about brand-related contributing activities. The starting point and main logic for analyzing the lifestyle brand-related content on social media lie in viewing brands as means of self-expression (Chernev *et al.*, 2011) and that many companies (re)position their products on how the products fit into a consumer's lifestyle

instead of focusing on functional attributes (Chernev *et al.*, 2011). As lifestyle branding requires consistency across all consumer touchpoints (Saviolo and Marazza, 2013; Pérez del Castillo *et al.*, 2020) including social media which offer a great opportunity for building a brand identity and image (Bilgin, 2018), our study focuses on lifestyle brand-related content on social media. In other words, based on the identified gaps in the scope of previous studies on this topic, this study addresses those gaps by conducting an empirical study about social capital as a cause of brand-related contributing activities (liking, sharing, and commenting) with a specific focus on lifestyle brand-related content on social media. Thus, the present study used social capital and social media brand-engagement theories to explore the role of social capital focus (bridging/bonding) in determining the social media users' intentions to like, share and comment on lifestyle brand-related content.

This paper offers multiple contributions to the field of social media brand-related engagement. First, it examines contributing activities (liking, sharing, and commenting, separately) instead of customer engagement activities or overall contributing activities on social media, thus enhancing the limited research about the liking, sharing, and commenting as moderately engaging activities on social media (de Vries *et al.*, 2017). Secondly, based on the suggestions by Thongmak (2015) and Syrdal and Briggs (2018) this study centers on brand-related content rather than on the brand with a particular focus on lifestyle brand-related content. So far, only a few studies have analyzed the role of the content type in social media contributing activities (de Vries *et al.*, 2017) but none is specifically focused on the lifestyle brand-related content. Thirdly, this study posits that the level of social capital focus (bridging/bonding) determines the intentions to lifestyle brand-related contributing activities of social media users, by analyzing the social capital as a cause of contributing activities on social media rather than as an outcome.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: first, the literature review and hypotheses are presented followed by methodology, and results and discussions. Conclusions and implications are discussed at the end of the paper.

## Literature Review

This paper discusses the engagement patterns of social media users with different social capital focus. Users' engagement is conceptualized and operationalized in terms of intentions to contribute to brand-related content, i.e., intentions to like, share, and comment on lifestyle brand-related content on social media. The research is based on the study of Fu *et al.* (2017) who analyzed social capital as a cause, instead of an outcome of social media users' activities. Namely, they suggested that "Facebook users' intention to share may be influenced by their social capital focus" (Fu *et al.*, 2017, p. 27). Social capital is analyzed through two dimensions i.e., bridging social capital which comes from weak social ties and bonding social capital which is driven by strong social ties (Putnam, 2000).

Strong and weak social ties are both crucial for effective communication, but they both play different roles in information diffusion (Fu *et al.*, 2017). Although strong ties stimulate more intense and more frequent communication in closed groups (Lam and Mizerski, 2005), with weak ties the diffusion of information is more effective and brand information can be easily transmitted from a specific group to a broader market (Smith *et al.*, 2007). Furthermore, since strong ties are less sensitive to the amount of communication, bonding social capital has a lesser influence on the use of social media (Ajayi and Adinlewa, 2020). When it comes to social media, weaker ties can also be beneficial for users by allowing them to engage in certain relationship maintenance strategies (Utz and Muscanell, 2015).

People use social media to find, connect, reconnect, and communicate with new and old friends, family and relatives by creating and maintaining social relationships (Chennamaneni and Taneja, 2015; Chukwuere, 2020). Social media is used for gratifying socializing needs (de Vries *et al.*, 2017; Park *et al.*, 2009), i.e., communal incentives (Fu *et al.*, 2017; Palamidovska-Sterjadovska and Ciunova-Shuleska, 2020) as well as for presenting one's own identity (self-interest incentives) (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011; de Vries *et al.*, 2017). According to Papacharissi and Mendelson (2010), social media users seek social benefits on social media by staying connected to other people. Based on this, users are focused on building and maintaining social connections (Quan-Haase and Young, 2010) and they are concerned about their social media behavior in terms of expressing and presenting themselves (de Vries *et al.*, 2017). In this line, some users are more focused on their close

friends' opinions (bonding social capital), while others are more concerned with their distant friends (bridging social capital).

Social capital focus can be used as a basis for the identification of consumers' segments and for further adaptation of brand-related content strategy. Bridging focus users are more motivated by communal incentives, while those who have a bonding focus are more concerned about self-interest aspects (Fu *et al.*, 2017).

Additionally, our focus is on contributing activities on social media i.e., liking, sharing, and commenting on brand-related social media content, assuming differences in intentions to like, share and comment depending on the social capital focus. Namely, liking, sharing, and commenting are all contributing activities characterized by a moderate level of engagement (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011). However, they differ from each other based on the level of effort they require (Swani and Labrecque, 2020), whether the activity is reflective or reflexive, and the level of visibility. Namely, according to Swani *et al.* (2017) liking is a more reflexive process, whereas sharing and commenting are more reflective processes. Additionally, Swani and Labrecque (2020) claimed that sharing and commenting demand a higher level of effort compared to liking. Moreover, commenting on brand-related content includes co-creation activities (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011; Yesiloglu *et al.*, 2021). Lipsman *et al.* (2012) claimed that liking is less visible and less exposed to the general public compared to other engagement types as consumers do not expose their names and pictures on brands' pages. Commenting on the other side is more visible to the public as the customers expose their thoughts about a brand or a brand-related content besides their names on the brands' pages (Gummerus *et al.*, 2012, Kabadayi and Price, 2014). Sharing content through social media is perceived as a safer practice than commenting because when commenting on social media, social media users and their comments may become subject to criticism and provocative messages (Almgren and Olsson, 2016). Moreover, liking, sharing, and commenting are linked to social capital given that social interaction ties as social capital dimension is proved to be a strong predictor of sharing behavior on social media (Apuke and Omar, 2021), while many 'likes' on social media content indicates certain social influence (Lipsman *et al.*, 2012, Lee, 2017). According to Wang *et al.* (2016), the tie strength, as a dimension of social capital, can increase the interest of consumers in spreading product-related information, thus increasing their engagement in eWOM in social networks. Moreover, the findings of Fu *et al.* (2017) indicate that the brand-related content sharing intention of social media users is determined by social capital focus.

The group of users who are focused on maintaining strong social ties with their closest friends prefer to be less visible (Kabadayi and Price, 2014) and they are less interested in expressing their opinions publicly (Pedersen and Macafee, 2007). Therefore, they more often engage only in liking brand-related content which requires the lowest engagement effort (Swani and Labrecque, 2020). On the other hand, users who are focused on self-promotion in public are more prone to engage not only in liking but also in commenting on brand-related content to enhance their public presence (Underwood *et al.*, 2011). Commenting as an engagement activity allows users to express their opinions regarding brand-related content on social media (Kabadayi and Price, 2014). Similarly, sharing is a reflective engagement activity (Swani *et al.*, 2017) that is mostly driven by communal and self-interest incentives depending on the content type (Fu *et al.*, 2017).

Since brand-related content comprising lifestyle affairs (inspiring articles, practical wisdom, etc.) is valuable to friends (Fu *et al.*, 2017), it is expected for communal users who have a bridging social capital focus to have a stronger intention of contributing to lifestyle content (Fu *et al.*, 2017), i.e., liking, sharing, and commenting.

Based on all the above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Social media users with a bridging social capital focus have a stronger intention to like compared to users with a bonding focus

H2: Social media users with a bridging social capital focus have a stronger intention to share compared to users with a bonding focus

H3: Social media users with a bridging social capital focus have a stronger intention to comment compared to users with a bonding focus

## Methodology

### Context/Research Design

The research context of this study is the social media platforms used by individuals in the Republic of North Macedonia. According to Statista (2022) social media usage has been continuously increasing worldwide. In 2020 there were 3.6 billion users, and the projection is that the number of social media users will reach 4.41 billion in 2025. According to the State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia (2021), 85.2% of the population used social media. There is an increasing trend of social media users in the country, namely, the number of social media users in North Macedonia increased by 100 thousand (+9.1%) between 2020 and 2021 (Datareportal, 2021).

### Sampling

The initial sample consisted of 422 respondents. Seven questionnaires were removed from the data set because of incomplete data, leaving a total of 415 participants. The sample size is above the recommended minimum level of at least five times as many observations as the number of variables to be analyzed (Hair *et al.*, 2006). The sample profile is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics (N=415)

	N	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Women	276	66.5
Men	139	33.5
<i>Average age</i>	22.9 years	
<i>Household income</i>		
up to 15.000 den.	31	7.5
15.001 to 25.000 den.	69	16.6
25.001 to 40.000 den.	137	33.0
40.001 to 60.000 den.	88	21.2
above 60.000 den.	90	21.7
<i>Social media</i>		
Facebook	74	17.8
Instagram	307	74.0
Twitter	17	4.1
LinkedIn	8	1.9
Other	9	2.2
<i>Time spent daily on social media</i>		
up to 30 min.	114	27.5
up to one hour	97	23.4
up to two hours	83	20
up to three hours	56	13.5
up to four hours	23	5.5
more than four hours	42	10.1

Source: Authors' calculations

Most of the respondents are women (66.5%) with an average age of 22.9 years. Household monthly incomes mostly range from 25.001 to 40.000 den. (33.0%) with most of the respondents using Instagram (74.2%), mostly spending up to 30 min. per day on social media (27.5%), followed by those who spent "up to one hour" (23.4%) (see Table 1).

### *Data collection*

For the purpose of this research, an online survey was conducted where respondents were reached through snowballing sampling technique in the first half of 2020. Namely, the online survey was created using Google Forms and the link was sent via e-mail to a group of college students as the most active social media users (State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2021). A filter question assured that only active users of social media platforms (only those who use social media daily) would be contemplated. The respondents were kindly asked to resend the link to the other social media users, thus ensuring a sufficient number of respondents in the sample for further analysis.

### *Measures*

The questionnaire was designed to evaluate the possible influence of the level of social capital focus on the intentions to like, share, and comment on lifestyle brand-related content on social media (videos and photos, inspiring articles, popular music and movies, and practical wisdom). The survey instrument consisted of two parts. The first part gathered demographic data (age, gender, and household income level) and psychographic data (the most used social media and social media usage intensity). The second part included 14 five-point Likert statements ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” measuring intentions to like (4 items), share (4 items), and comment (4 items) lifestyle brand-related content on social media. Customers’ intentions to like, share, and comment on lifestyle brand-related content were developed based on the study of Muntinga *et al.* (2011), Schivinski *et al.* (2016), and Fu *et al.* (2017). Additionally, two statements were used for measuring social capital focus, taken from the out-group WoM scale used in a study of Lam *et al.* (2009). Based on the average level of agreement with the two statements about social capital focus (I1: I share information about new brands and products with people other than my close friends or family and I2: I like to provide people, other than my close friends or family, with information about new brands and products), the respondents were divided into two groups. According to Putnam (2000), there are two dimensions of social capital, namely, bridging social capital that comes from weak social ties and bonding social capital that comes from strong social ties. Hence, we named the two social capital focus types as bridging focus and bonding focus correspondingly, whereas the two different groups of respondents as social media users with bridging focus i.e., people concerned with their distant friends, and social media users with bonding focus i.e., people concerned with the opinion of their close friends.

Since the original items and questions were adapted from English and translated to Macedonian language, a reverse translation back to English was conducted to correct translation problems and misunderstandings. Based on the feedback generated from questionnaire pre-testing on a sample of nine respondents, the wording of the items was improved.

To minimize the potential risk of participation bias, we followed the suggestions from Podsakoff *et al.* (2003), and Chang *et al.* (2010) and several ex-ante activities were applied as a precaution. Namely, in the phase of designing the measurement instrument, we split the survey into consecutive “pages”, and we randomized the order of the pages and the survey items on each page. In the data collection process, respondents were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of the study. They were asked to answer the questions as honestly as possible, and no incentives were used to drive participation.

The data gathered were analyzed by performing factor analysis and a one-way ANOVA test.

## **Results**

### *Assessment of reliability and construct validity*

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with Principal axis factoring and Varimax rotation was used to assess construct validity and to identify the underlying factors of contributing activities, as conceptualized in the literature. Table 2 shows the factor structure after Varimax rotation.

Table 2: Factor analysis results, factor loadings (N=415)

No.	Items	Mean	SD	Factor		
				1	2	3
	<i>Intention to like lifestyle brand-related content</i>					
1	I intend to like interesting videos and photos related to the brands I follow.	3.711	1.231	.806		
2	I intend to like brand-related inspiring articles.	3.701	1.254	.836		
3	I intend to like brand-related popular music and movies.	3.701	1.205	.753		
4	I intend to like brand-related posts related to practical wisdom.	3.680	1.248	.748		
	<i>Intention to share lifestyle brand-related content</i>					
5	I intend to share interesting videos and photos.	3.190	1.259		.543	
6	I intend to share inspiring articles.	3.251	1.293		.632	
7	I intend to share popular music and movies.	3.345	1.349		.517	
8	I intend to share posts related to practical wisdom.	3.176	1.263		.676	
	<i>Intention to comment on lifestyle brand-related content</i>					
9	I intend to comment on interesting videos and photos.	3.147	1.302			.765
10	I intend to comment on inspiring articles.	3.130	1.305			.736
11	I intend to comment on popular music and movies.	3.234	1.315			.737
11	I intend to comment on posts related to practical wisdom.	3.152	1.318			.702

Source: Authors' calculations

As shown in Table 2, three factors were extracted in this study with 71.525% of variance explained i.e., intention to like lifestyle brand-related content (4 items), intention to share lifestyle brand-related content (4 items), and intention to comment on lifestyle brand-related content (4 items). All items were retained in the EFA model as no deletion was required. Standardized factor loadings exceeded the 0.5 thresholds as recommended by Hair *et al.* (2010), thus proving the construct validity.

The reliability of the scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The Cronbach's alpha of each construct was as follows: 0.917 (intention to like), 0.875 (intention to comment), 0.927 (intention to share) and 0.754 (social capital). All the values were above 0.7 and they exceed the threshold values recommended by Hair *et al.* (2010) indicating high internal reliability of the data collected.

After identifying the variables as conceptualized in the literature using EFA and assessing the construct validity and reliability of the scales, the differences in intentions to like, share, and comment on lifestyle brand-related content between social media users with bridging and social media users with a bonding focus were examined using the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

#### ANOVA results

The social capital focus differences on the three identified factors i.e., intentions were evaluated by the one-way ANOVA technique where a  $p < 0.001$  was considered significant. Since the respondents were asked to report their extent of focus on bridging social capital, respondents with a higher-than-average agreement with the statements (higher than 3.319) formed the group of social media users with bridging focus, whereas respondents with a lower-than-average level of agreement (lower than 3.319) formed the group of social media users with bonding focus.

Table 3: Descriptors

Statements	Social media users with bridging focus (N=192)		Social media users with a bonding focus (N=223)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<i>Intention to like lifestyle brand-related content</i>				
I intend to like interesting videos and photos related to the brands I follow.	4.438	0.749	3.085	1.222
I intend to like brand-related inspiring articles.	4.411	0.833	3.090	1.234
I intend to like brand-related popular music and movies.	4.354	0.892	3.139	1.156
I intend to like brand-related posts related to practical wisdom.	4.359	0.927	3.094	1.191
<i>Intention to share lifestyle brand-related content</i>				
I intend to share interesting videos and photos.	3.844	1.165	2.628	1.049
I intend to share inspiring articles.	3.974	1.155	2.628	1.061
I intend to share popular music and movies.	4.057	1.149	2.731	1.200
I intend to share posts related to practical wisdom.	3.781	1.204	2.655	1.066
<i>Intention to comment on lifestyle brand-related content</i>				
I intend to comment on interesting videos and photos.	3.839	1.211	2.552	1.064
I intend to comment on inspiring articles.	3.885	1.197	2.480	1.013
I intend to comment on popular music and movies.	3.979	1.189	2.592	1.057
I intend to comment on posts related to practical wisdom.	3.823	1.224	2.574	1.108

Source: Authors' calculations

To test the significance of the developed hypotheses, we observe F-values and corresponding p-values (See Table 4). The presented results of the ANOVA test showed that at an alpha level of 0.001 there are significant differences between social media users with bridging focus and social media users with bonding focus on all three factors (12 items) ( $F_{1, 413} > 10.984$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) (See Table 4). More precisely, social media users with a bridging focus have a significantly stronger intention to like interesting brand-related videos and photos ( $F_{1, 413} = 177.645$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), inspiring articles ( $F_{1, 413} = 158.153$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), music and movies ( $F_{1, 413} = 140.250$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), as well as brand-related posts related to practical wisdom ( $F_{1, 413} = 142.328$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), compared to social media users with a bonding focus (H1) (See Table 4). Significant differences are also noticed when comparing the intention to share lifestyle brand-related content between social media users with a bridging and bonding focus, specifically referring to the intention to share interesting brand-related videos and photos ( $F_{1, 413} = 125.143$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), inspiring articles ( $F_{1, 413} = 152.907$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), music and movies ( $F_{1, 413} = 130.996$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), as well as brand-related posts related to practical wisdom ( $F_{1, 413} = 102.179$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) (H3) (See Table 4). Regarding commenting on brand-related content, those with a bridging focus have a significantly stronger intention to comment on interesting brand-related videos and photos ( $F_{1, 413} = 132.870$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), on inspiring articles ( $F_{1, 413} = 167.985$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), on music and movies ( $F_{1, 413} = 158.366$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), as well as on posts related to practical wisdom ( $F_{1, 413} = 119.001$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), compared to social media users with a bonding focus (H2) (See Table 4). Therefore, we can conclude that intentions to like, share, and comment on lifestyle brand-related content on social media vary according to the social capital focus, indicating that H1, H2, and H3 are confirmed.



Table 4: ANOVA test

Statements		df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<i>Intention to like lifestyle brand-related content</i>					
I intend to like interesting videos and photos related to the brands I follow.	Between Groups	1	188.670	177.645	<0.001
	Within Groups	413	1.062		
I intend to like brand-related inspiring articles.	Between Groups	1	180.248	158.153	<0.001
	Within Groups	413	1.140		
I intend to like brand-related popular music and movies.	Between Groups	1	152.342	140.250	<0.001
	Within Groups	413	1.086		
I intend to like brand-related posts related to practical wisdom.	Between Groups	1	165.150	142.328	<0.001
	Within Groups	413	1.160		
<i>Intention to share lifestyle brand-related content</i>					
I intend to share interesting videos and photos.	Between Groups	1	152.541	125.143	<0.001
	Within Groups	413	1.219		
I intend to share inspiring articles.	Between Groups	1	186.960	152.907	<0.001
	Within Groups	413	1.223		
I intend to share popular music and movies.	Between Groups	1	181.499	130.996	<0.001
	Within Groups	413	1.386		
I intend to share posts related to practical wisdom.	Between Groups	1	130.934	102.179	<0.001
	Within Groups	413	1.281		
<i>Intention to comment on lifestyle brand-related content</i>					
I intend to comment on interesting videos and photos.	Between Groups	1	170.882	132.870	<0.001
	Within Groups	413	1.286		
I intend to comment on inspiring articles.	Between Groups	1	203.835	167.985	<0.001
	Within Groups	413	1.213		
I intend to comment on popular music and movies.	Between Groups	1	198.546	158.366	<0.001
	Within Groups	413	1.254		
I intend to comment on posts related to practical wisdom.	Between Groups	1	160.928	119.001	<0.001
	Within Groups	413	1.352		

Source: Authors' calculations

Social media users with a bridging focus show higher than the sample's average intentions to like (H1), share (H2), and comment (H3) on lifestyle brand-related content on social media (See Table 3). Compared to social media users with a bonding focus, social media users with a bridging focus show stronger intentions to like, share, and comment on lifestyle brand-related content on social media. In other words, those who focus on their distant friends (bridging focus) have stronger intentions to contribute to lifestyle brand-related content on social media compared to those who focus on their close friends (bonding focus).

Social media users with a bridging focus have the strongest intention to like lifestyle brand-related content compared to their intentions to share and comment the same content on social media (See Table 3). This group of social media users is most likely to like lifestyle brand-related content referring to videos and photos. Also, they have a very strong intention to like lifestyle brand-related inspiring

articles, followed by the intention to like lifestyle brand-related posts about practical wisdom and the intention to like lifestyle brand-related music and movies. Social media users with a bridging focus are most willing to share and comment on lifestyle brand-related content about popular music and movies, compared to other types of lifestyle brand-related content. They are least willing to share brand-related content about practical wisdom compared to their intentions to like, share, and comment on other types of lifestyle brand-related content on social media.

Social media users with a bonding focus show a below-average level of agreement on all the statements indicating lower than the average intentions to like, share, and comment on lifestyle brand-related content on social media (See Table 3). This group of social media users has the strongest intention to like (particularly to like brand-related inspiring articles and brand-related practical wisdom posts) followed by the intention to share (particularly to share brand-related content that refers to popular music and videos). They have the slightest intention to comment on lifestyle inspiring articles related to the brands they follow in comparison with the intentions to like and share other types of lifestyle brand-related content on social media.

## Discussion

The influence of social capital focus on intentions to contribute to brand-related social media content is underexplored in social media brand engagement research. Most of the research studies focused on overall contributing activities, without examining liking, sharing, and commenting activities separately and without linking them to social capital as a cause of contributing activities on social media. Moreover, previous research has not focused on a particular brand-related content type. To fill this research void, the current study explored the effects of social capital focus on intentions to like, share, and comment on lifestyle brand-related content on social media.

The study empirically proved the significant differences in users' intentions to like, share, and comment on brand-related content on social media based on the social capital focus. The research results showed that social media users behave differently depending on their decision to invest in bridging or bonding social capital, specifically, those who invest in bridging social capital have stronger intentions to like, share and comment on lifestyle brand-related content on social media compared to those who invest in bonding social capital. This is in line with the findings of Fu *et al.* (2017) that social capital focus influences brand-related content sharing intention of social media users. Namely, those who invest in bridging social capital have the strongest intention to like lifestyle brand-related content. Among those who are willing to invest in bridging social capital, the intentions to share and comment on lifestyle brand-related content are approximately equally strong but weaker than the liking intention.

Those who invest in bonding social capital have the strongest intention to like lifestyle brand-related content, followed by the intention to share and the intention to comment on lifestyle content. Nevertheless, the intentions to like, share, and comment on lifestyle brand-related content among those who invest in bonding social capital are significantly lower compared to those who invest in bridging social capital on social media.

The findings that both social media users with bonding and bridging social capital focus have the strongest intention to like lifestyle brand-related content can be explained by the notion that liking activity demands the lowest effort compared to commenting and sharing (Swani and Labrecque, 2020). However, the significant differences in intentions to like, share, and comment on lifestyle brand-related content between users with different social capital focus, in favor of those with social capital bridging focus can be explained by the findings of Steinfield *et al.* (2012). Namely, they suggested that the social networking site usage is associated with generally greater increases in bridging social capital compared to bonding social capital leading to the conclusion that people are willing to engage with the branded content on social media to increase bridging capital rather than to increase bonding capital. Also, these findings are in line with the findings of Pedersen and Macafee (2007), Kabadayi and Price (2014) and Swani and Labrecque (2020) that social media users with a focus on maintaining strong social ties (bonding social capital focus) are more prone to liking activities instead to commenting given that they are not interested in self-promotion in public. Additionally, the findings are consistent with the findings of Underwood *et al.* (2011) that users interested in self-promotion in public are more likely to engage in commenting along with liking activities, whereas communal and self-interest incentives determine the sharing activities (Fu *et al.*, 2017).

## Conclusions and Implications

This study analyzes the social media users' intentions to contribute lifestyle brand-related content and the role of social capital focus in social media users' brand-related behavior. Our investigation is the first known by the authors to empirically examine differences in social media users' intentions to like, share and comment on lifestyle brand-related content depending on the level of social capital focus. Specifically, we identified social media users with bridging and social media users with a bonding focus considering these two dimensions of social capital. The major findings contribute to the aim of the paper and confirm that social media users' intentions to like, share and comment on lifestyle brand-related content vary according to the social capital focus.

### *Theoretical contributions*

The results of this study enrich the previous social media users' behavior and social capital literature by emphasizing the role of social capital focus in explaining the intentions of social media users to contribute to lifestyle brand-related content. The present study has underlined the central role which social capital focus plays in the intentions of social media users to like, share and comment on lifestyle brand-related content.

Additionally, this study adds significantly to the growing literature by analyzing social capital focus as a cause of social media user engagement. The previous research studies predominantly focused on analyzing social capital as an outcome of social media use (Ellison *et al.*, 2007; Raza *et al.*, 2016; Vanden Abeele *et al.*, 2018) whereas we analyzed the level of social capital focus assuming social capital focus is a determining factor in social media users' intentions to contribute brand-related activities.

Moreover, most of the previous research studies focused on examining overall contributing activities (Azar *et al.*, 2016; de Vries *et al.*, 2017; Palamidovska-Sterjadovska and Ciunova-Shuleska, 2020), and no research study empirically examined intentions to like, share and comment separately.

Additionally, our focus was specifically on intentions to like, share and comment on lifestyle brand-related content, thus, enriching the previous literature regarding different types of brand-related social media content. Most importantly, we examined the intentions to like, share, and comment on lifestyle brand-related content which encompasses brand-related interesting videos and photos, brand-related content about inspiring articles, brand-related content referring to practical wisdom, and referring to popular music and movies rather than analyzing brand-related content in general.

### *Practical implications*

The findings of this study can be used by marketing practitioners to help guide them in social media lifestyle brand-related content creation, in view of the decision of the social media users to invest in bridging or bonding social capital.

When posting lifestyle brand-related content on social media marketing managers should expect more intensive engagement activities by social media users with a bridging focus compared to social media users with a bonding focus.

In order to get large numbers of likes from social media users with a bridging focus, marketing managers should post brand-related interesting videos and photos followed by brand-related content about inspiring articles, brand-related content referring to practical wisdom, and referring to popular music and movies. Marketing managers should expect large number of comments and shares from social media users with a bridging focus if they post brand-related content about popular music and movies, followed by brand-related inspiring articles, interesting videos and photos, and brand-related posts about practical wisdom.

The highest number of likes from social media users with a bonding focus, the marketing managers will achieve by posting brand-related content regarding popular music and movies, followed by brand-related posts about practical wisdom, inspiring articles, and interesting photos and videos, whereas the highest number of comments from social media users with bonding focus will be generated from brand-related posts about popular music and movies and about practical wisdom followed by brand-related videos and photos and brand-related inspiring articles. Marketing managers should expect large number of shares from social media users with a bonding focus if they post brand-related content referring to popular music and movies, followed by content related to practical wisdom, and to

inspiring articles and content related to interesting videos and photos. The last two types of lifestyle content are the least equally effective in motivating the brand-related sharing activities of social media users with a bonding focus.

## Limitations and Future Research

Despite the valuable contributions that this study brings to the social media users' brand engagement and social capital literature, the current examination is not without limitations. First, the current study employed a sample from one country and relies on non-probability sampling which may impact the generalizability of its findings. However, the average sample age indicates that the sample comprises an age group that is most technologically savvy and passionate about using social media. Additionally, this study analyses intentions to like, share and comment on brand-related content by using a five-point Likert scale used to measure respondents' agreement with the statements, which creates a possibility for respondents to guess the researchers' intention or they may perceive the strength of each point on the Likert scale in a different manner. Future studies could test our findings on actual social media engagement actions measured through the number of likes, comments, and shares.

Researchers should also investigate other types of brand-related content. This study focuses on lifestyle brand-related content, but there are other types of content that should be explored such as commercial or personal opinion content. Moreover, besides liking, sharing, and commenting, other engagement activities could be analyzed, such as creating activities as highly engaging activities.

Also, the researchers could focus on a particular brand in a particular product category and analyze the differences in users' intentions to like, share, and comment on content on social media referring to that particular brand based on the social capital focus. Analyzing a certain brand could generate a different relationship between the analyzed groups of people with strong and weak connections on social networks.

Furthermore, given the specific nature of the research, future studies on this topic, in addition to quantitative data need to include qualitative data that will provide an in-depth view of the respondents' opinions, values, and beliefs.

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