



## An Integrative Typology of Relational Benefits&Costs in Social Media Brand Pages

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This paper focuses on consumer-brand relationships in the social media environment, and suggests a typology of the benefits and costs consumers perceive when interacting with social media brand pages. Employing an online questionnaire, quantitative data were collected from 881 followers of popular brand pages on both Facebook and Twitter. Study results indicate that followers of brand pages on Facebook and Twitter perceive 'social', 'functional', 'enjoyment', 'special treatment', 'self-enhancement', 'advice' and 'status' benefits. 'Privacy concern', 'information overload' and 'ad irritation' are consumers' perceived costs. As the same seven factors of relational benefits and three factors of relational costs have been confirmed across all Facebook and Twitter brand pages, it is argued that the structure and dimensions of relational benefits and costs are medium and brand invariant, and are perceived in the same way by Facebook and Twitter followers. Considering the rapid development of social media and their penetration in business marketing actions, this research contributes to the digital marketing literature by providing a better understanding of relational benefits, relational costs and consumer-brand relationships in a social media context. **Finally, the paper offers recommendations to brand managers, when designing appropriate social media content, that can enhance and strengthen a brand's relationship with its customers.**

## Introduction

The emergence of communication technologies, which have developed in parallel with the rise of the Internet, have served as platforms facilitating interaction with and among consumers, allowing the formation of brand communities in social networks (Zaglia, 2013). The advent of social networking sites has not only introduced radically new means and ways of interaction between individuals, but also altered the digital marketing landscape (Hudson et al., 2016). Consumers increasingly use social media platforms to interact with the firms they love and purchase from, as well as with other consumers who may have insights about these firms (Kabadayi and Price, 2014). Concurrently, due to the popularity and the interactive nature of social media (SM), companies are increasingly building their own brand communities or brand pages (De Vries et al., 2012; Jahn and Kunz, 2012; Martins and Patricio, 2013) on popular social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to spread messages about their brand, drive engagement and awareness and create and enhance relationships with customers (Kabadayi and Price, 2014; Kang et al., 2014; Rohm et al., 2013; Valos et al., 2016).

For a long-term consumer-brand relationship to develop and last, consumers must perceive the relationship to be valuable enough to stay. One of the most promising conceptual approaches within the relationship marketing literature, which explains to a significant degree the success or failure of relationships between companies and customers, is the relational benefits and costs approach (Bendapudi and Berry, 1997; Gwinner et al., 1998; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Reynolds and Beatty, 1999). **Relational benefits are the benefits customers receive beyond the core offering of the company, and are derived from an established, long-term relationship with a firm, while relational costs refer to all the monetary and non-monetary sacrifices consumers face whilst in a relationship with a firm (Bendapudi and Berry, 1997; Gwinner et al., 1998; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Reynolds and Beatty, 1999).**

The interactive nature of SM has led marketers to refocus their marketing objectives, prioritizing the establishment and maintenance of fruitful consumer-brand relationships via SM interactions (Hudson, et al., 2016). However, a main challenge in doing so lies in generating engaging content that will make consumers perceive important relational benefits from the page (Zhang and Luo, 2016). Engaging SM brand pages not only ensure that consumers enjoy a positive experience along with their participation, but also enhance and strengthen the brand-consumer relationship (Gutiérrez-Cillán et al., 2017; Relling et al., 2016).

Even though SM have been recognized as potentially the most powerful medium for relationship building (Hudson et al., 2016; Labrecque, 2014), **very little is known about how social media relate to consumers' relationships with brands, and how social media-based consumer-brand interactions are perceived by consumers. In the literature, there is a lack of systematic work based on conceptual frameworks, that simultaneously captures and examines what benefits and costs consumers perceive through the use of SM brand pages. Previous research has mainly focused on the relational benefits based on customer-brand relationships in traditional services (e.g. Chen and Hu, 2012; Wang and Hsu, 2012), and has almost neglected the prospect of relational benefits and costs derived from consumer-consumer and consumer-brand relationships in the SM context. Additionally, many businesses today fail to use SM brand pages effectively to accomplish marketing goals, mainly because they do not fully understand the mechanisms of consumers' participation in SM brand pages (Martins and Patricio, 2013), or are unable to successfully meet consumer benefit needs (Shang and Luo, 2016). Therefore, empirical studies that look into the nature of social media consumer-brand relationships are needed.**

Considering this gap, the paper aims to identify a typology of the benefits and costs consumers perceive from interacting with Facebook and Twitter brand pages, thus extending

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2  
3 the relational benefits and costs frameworks in the context of SM. Through this examination,  
4 this study provides firms with insights to enhance the benefits perceptions of consumers, while  
5 minimizing the perceived costs that can jeopardize brand communication efforts and consumer-  
6 brand relationship longevity. Thus, the present study not only contributes to the theory of  
7 relationship marketing through its empirical investigation in the context of SM, but also has  
8 important implications for brand managers who strategically employ SM for the enhancement  
9 of brand-customers relationships.  
10

11 The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Firstly, the concepts of relational  
12 benefits, relational costs and social media are introduced. Secondly, the methodology of the  
13 field study is presented, followed by a presentation of the findings. It concludes by discussing  
14 the results and offering managerial implications, limitations, and directions for future research.  
15

## 16 **Theoretical Background**

### 17 *Social media brand pages*

18  
19 Traditionally, companies have tried to reach consumers and build relationships through  
20 conventional marketing activities such as public relations, reward programs and direct  
21 marketing (Jahn and Kunz, 2012). The emergence of social networks brought major changes  
22 in marketing practices and company-customer relationships by enabling the establishment of  
23 SM brand pages, where companies frequently develop direct relationships with their fans  
24 (Martins and Patricio, 2013). SM brand pages can be found in the literature as 'brand fan pages'  
25 (De Vries et al., 2012; Jahn and Kunz, 2012) or as 'company social networks', which according  
26 to Martins and Patricio (2013: page 568) are "a group of people (followers, fans) connected to  
27 a company or brand within the boundaries of a social network site".  
28

29 Recent research shows that the marketing budgets directed towards SM are constantly  
30 growing, suggesting that brands are increasingly interested in interacting with fans, shaping  
31 their experiences and leveraging their voices for greater marketing impact (Hudson et al.,  
32 2016). SM brand pages are mainly company driven and used as an explicit brand  
33 communication and interaction channel (Jahn and Kunz, 2012). Through them, companies  
34 offer activities and content related to the brand, or the core product or service, while the  
35 consumer-brand interactions are now more complex, as they represent a multi-party  
36 conversation about the brand rather than a brand-dictated monologue (Tsimonis and  
37 Dimitriadis, 2014). SM brand pages are usually visible to all SM users, with distinct spaces  
38 for static information about the company and for interactions with and among followers. When  
39 consumers connect with a brand on SM, they start receiving company updates and news on  
40 their personal page stream without needing to revisit the page. Furthermore, followers of a SM  
41 brand page are more likely to post comments on the page, get in contact with the company,  
42 forward messages and offers from the page, and interact with other followers (Hudson et al.,  
43 2016).  
44

### 45 *Relational benefits*

46  
47 According to the theory of relationship marketing, for a relationship to develop and last, both  
48 parties should receive some benefits additional to those stemming from the core-product or  
49 service. Two widely adopted and used typologies of relationship benefits within an off-line  
50 service context were proposed by Gwinner et al. (1998) (i.e. 'confidence', 'social', and 'special  
51 treatment' benefits) and Reynolds and Beatty (1999) (i.e. 'social' and 'functional' benefits).  
52 With the emergence of the Internet and e-commerce, several authors studied and confirmed the  
53 existence of the relational benefits proposed by Gwinner et al. (1998) in a Web 1.0  
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3 environment. These were ‘confidence’ and ‘special treatment’ by Yen and Gwinner (2003),  
4 and ‘confidence’, ‘special treatment’ and ‘social’ by Colgate et al. (2005) and Su et al. (2009).

5  
6 Similarly, a number of authors have studied the benefits that people expect (defined as  
7 ‘motives’), or actually perceive when participating in a social network environment. This  
8 involved adopting mainly ‘use and gratifications’ (U&G) (Katz et al., 1974; Nambisan and  
9 Baron, 2009), ‘motivation’ (Davis et al., 1992), or ‘social identity’ (Bagozzi and Dholakia,  
10 2002) theories. For instance, studies based on the motivation theory have explored the role of  
11 a series of motives such as ‘usefulness’ (e.g. Lin and Lu, 2011) and ‘status’ (e.g. Li, 2011), and  
12 perceived benefits such as ‘enjoyment’ (e.g. Li, 2011; Lin and Lu, 2011), on intentions to use  
13 social networks. The study of Parra-López et al. (2011) revealed that intentions to use SM when  
14 organizing and taking vacation trips are directly influenced by the perceived benefits (‘social’,  
15 ‘functional’, ‘hedonic’ and ‘psychological’). Gummerus et al. (2012) studied the effect of  
16 customer engagement behaviours within a Facebook brand community on perceived relational  
17 benefits and relationship outcomes, and confirmed the existence of ‘social’, ‘entertainment’  
18 and ‘economic’ benefits. Based on the ‘use and gratifications’ (U&G) theory, Wang et al.  
19 (2013) examined how customer interactions in virtual brand communities affect the perceptions  
20 of ‘social-integrative’, ‘cognitive’, ‘personal integrative’, and ‘affective’ benefits and brand  
21 loyalty. Likewise, Jung et al. (2014) proposed that ‘social’ and ‘information’ benefits affect the  
22 attitude towards an online brand community, while Park and Kim (2014) examined the  
23 existence of ‘functional’ (information and economic) and ‘experiential’ (social and hedonic)  
24 benefits in the context of company social networks. Also, Kang et al. (2014) studied the impact  
25 of ‘functional’, ‘social-psychological’, ‘hedonic’, and ‘monetary’ benefits on active  
26 participation in restaurant SM pages. Finally, Zhang and Luo (2016) confirmed the positive  
27 impact of ‘confidence’, ‘social’ and ‘honor’ benefits on satisfaction with a SM community.  
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### 32 *Relational costs*

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34 Apart from benefits, the development and maintenance of a relationship between customers  
35 and firms is supposed to generate, or require from the customer, some sacrifices and costs.  
36 Relational costs have been mainly discussed and empirically examined as ‘termination’  
37 (Bendapudi and Berry, 1997; Morgan and Hunt, 1994) or ‘switching’ (Burnham et al., 2003;  
38 Jones et al., 2007) costs.

39  
40 In the online environment, costs arising from consumer-brand relationships take a quite  
41 different form. The use of online environments such as e-commerce websites, online  
42 communities and personal social networking sites is accompanied by a series of consumer  
43 concerns, unpleasant experiences and feelings related to, and derived from, marketing and  
44 promotional actions of firms. These can make the use of such environments difficult and  
45 generate perceptions of certain costs. The most commonly discussed and examined costs in the  
46 online environment are ‘effort’ costs and ‘difficulty of use’ (e.g. Parra-López et al., 2011),  
47 ‘privacy concern’ (e.g. Ku et al., 2013), ‘ad irritation’ (e.g. Baek and Morimoto, 2012) and  
48 ‘information overload’ (e.g. Chen et al., 2009).

49  
50 ‘Effort’ costs concern the time and the personal effort needed to find information of  
51 interest by means of SM, while ‘difficulty of use’ concerns all the processes that Internet users  
52 face when trying to contribute by posting comments and expressing opinions on SM pages (e.g.  
53 login, registration), which may force them quit the process (Parra-López et al., 2011). With the  
54 emerging popularity of social networks, some researchers have begun giving attention to the  
55 issue of ‘privacy concern’ in the context of online social networking (e.g. Ku et al., 2013; Tan  
56 et al., 2012). ‘Privacy concern’ is a person’s awareness and assessment of risks related to  
57 privacy violations (Tan et al., 2012). In other words, it is an individual’s concern about who  
58 has access to his or her private information, and how such information will be used. Hence,  
59 ‘privacy concern’ is suggested as causing additional psychological costs for the consumer in  
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3 an online environment (Tan et al., 2012). Similarly, the advent and the continuously growing  
4 use of SM has led to an increase in the amount of information to which users are exposed,  
5 making consumers experience 'information overload' (Chen et al., 2009). 'Information  
6 overload' refers to the simple notion of receiving too much information. It is defined as the  
7 difference between the volume of information supplied and an individual's information  
8 processing capacity (Chen et al., 2009). Also, stemming from the advertising and psychology  
9 literatures, 'ad irritation' on the Internet has been perceived and studied as a negative feeling  
10 in response to online advertisements. This can cause disturbance and interruption to  
11 performance of a task such as thinking (Baek and Morimoto, 2012). As online activities in  
12 social networks involve mostly enjoyment of the content, and individuals tend to be more task-  
13 oriented when online, they usually perceive online advertisements as being intrusive and  
14 irritating (Li et al., 2002).

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16  
17 Although a number of studies have theoretically proposed or empirically tested the  
18 existence of various individual benefits and unpleasant experiences perceived by Internet users  
19 in several online contexts (i.e. e-commerce websites, online communities, personal social  
20 networking sites), none of them have examined and identified what relational benefits and costs  
21 consumers simultaneously perceive through their participation in company created Facebook  
22 and Twitter brand pages.

23  
24 Hence, this paper aims to:

- 25 1) identify the benefits and costs consumers perceive through their participation in  
26 Facebook and Twitter brand pages; and
  - 27 2) propose and validate a typology of relational benefits and costs that will operate  
28 as an integrated marketing mechanism for firms to strategically enhance brand  
29 communication efforts and consumer-brand relationship development and  
30 continuance in the SM environment.
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## 34 **Methodology**

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36 Given the purpose of this research, the study undertook quantitative research using the survey  
37 method, which is an effective way to gather quantitative data (Hair et al., 2010). Measurement  
38 items were adapted to the study's specific context from established scales. **Table 1** presents  
39 the items of the measurement scale and their respective theoretical sources. All items of the  
40 questionnaire were measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to  
41 'strongly agree'. Because the study took place in Greece, the questionnaire was translated from  
42 English to Greek following the 'Back-Translation' methodology (Behling and Law, 2000). The  
43 questionnaire was also slightly adjusted according to the medium (Facebook or Twitter), and  
44 the specific company or brand.

45  
46 The questionnaire was subjected to a rigorous pilot testing process to eliminate flaws and  
47 to identify potential concerns by using two highly recommended pre-testing methods: personal  
48 interviews and field survey for pre-testing (Churchill, 1995; Hunt et al., 1982). The final  
49 questionnaire for each firm's Facebook and Twitter brand page was uploaded on an online  
50 survey platform.  
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**Table 1: Measurement Scale**

	Factors	Items	Adapted from:
<b>Relational Benefits</b>	<b>Social Benefits</b>	SB1 I am recognized by certain followers of the brand page	Gwinner et al. (1998) Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)
		SB2 I have developed friendships with other followers	
		SB3 Users know my name	
		SB4 I enjoy certain social aspects of the relationship with other followers	
		SB5 I am familiar with the brand page administrator	
		SB6 It's fun to communicate this way with other people in the brand page	
		SB7 I meet nice people this way	
		SB8 I believe a chat among like-minded people is a nice thing	
		SB9 I enjoy certain social aspects of the relationship with the company	
<b>Enjoyment Benefits</b>		EB1 Using the brand page provides me with a lot of enjoyment	Li (2011)
		EB2 I enjoy using this brand page	
		EB3 I have fun using the brand page	
		EB4 It's boring for me to use the brand page	
		EB5 Participating in the brand page entertains me	
<b>Special Treatment Benefits</b>		STB1 I get better prices than non-brand page followers	Gwinner et al. (1998)
		STB2 The company does services for me that they don't do for non-brand page followers	
		STB3 I get discounts, coupons & special deals that non-brand page followers don't get	
		STB4 I am given priority over customers who are non-brand page followers	
		STB5 I get better service than non-brand page followers	
		STB6 I get faster service than non-brand page followers	
<b>Status Benefits</b>		SB1 My popularity among the other followers is increased	Li (2011)
		SB2 My status among the followers is increased	
		SB3 I am becoming a more valued member of the page	
		SB4 My image among the followers is improved	
<b>Self-Enhancement Benefits</b>		SEB1 I can express my joy about a good buy of a product that company sells	Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)
		SEB2 I can tell other brand page followers about a great experience with the company	
		SEB3 I feel good when I can tell other brand page followers about my buying success	
		SEB4 My contribution to the brand page shows others that I am a clever customer	
<b>Functional Benefits</b>		FB1 I value the time saving benefits the brand page provides me very highly	Reynolds and Beatty (1999)
		FB2 I value the convenience benefits the brand page provides me very highly	
		FB3 I benefit from the advices the brand page gives me	
		FB4 By following this page, I make better purchase decisions	
<b>Advice Benefits</b>		AB1 I receive tips from other brand page followers about the products that company sells	Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)
		AB2 I receive advice from other brand page followers that helps me solve problems with the products that company sells	
<b>Relational Costs</b>	<b>Ad Irritation</b>	When the brand page posts advertising messages, I think it is	Back and Morimoto (2012)
		AD1 Negative	
		AD2 Irritating	
		AD3 Pointless	
		AD4 Unappealing	
		AD5 Regressive	
		AD6 Unattractive	
		AD7 Impolite	
AD8 Awful			
<b>Information Overload</b>		IO1 There is too much information on this brand page that I am unable to handle it	Chen et al. (2009) Winzar and Savik (2002)
		IO2 I can effectively handle all the information on this brand page	
		IO3 Because of the plenty information on this brand page, I feel difficult in acquiring all this information	
		IO4 The brand page posts messages too often	
		IO5 I have no idea about where to find the information I need on this brand page	
		IO6 I feel overloaded by the amount of information on this brand page	
<b>Privacy Concern</b>		PC1 It bothers me when this brand page asks me for this much personal information	Ku et al. (2013)
		PC2 I am concerned that this brand page is collecting too much personal information about me	
		PC3 I am concerned that unauthorized people may access my personal information	
		PC4 I am concerned that this brand page may keep inaccurate personal information about me	
		PC5 I am concerned about submitting information to this brand page	

### Data collection

Following a thorough screening process, we identified SM brand pages that had regular posting activity and content updates, and a relatively large number of followers on both Facebook and Twitter. It also ensured that participants had adequate experience with the SM brand pages. Fifteen firms were invited by email to take part in the research. Subsequently, two leading firms/brands operating in telecommunication services and FMCG in Greece agreed to have a

link to the survey instrument displayed on their SM brand pages on Facebook and Twitter (**Table 2**) in order to target their followers. This resulted in the collection of survey data from four purposive samples, which are representative of the SM population in Greece. In total, 881 followers of Facebook (470) and Twitter (411) brand pages completed the online questionnaire. The majority of the respondents were aged between 18-54, with 58% males and 42% females (**Table 3**). Hence, the sample profile is comparable to the generic social media population or to the ones typically observed in similar studies (Socialbakers, 2017).

**Table 2: Participating companies/brands, SM brand page followers & sample size.**

Company	Industry	FB Followers	FB Sample N	TW Followers	TW Sample N
Company 1	Telecoms Services	>80,000	203	>4,800	196
Company 2	FMCG <sup>a</sup>	>330,000	267	>23,800	215

Note: FB=Facebook, TW=Twitter, a=coffee products.

**Table 3: Sample Demographics**

		Company 1		Company 2		Total
		FB	TW	FB	TW	
Gender	Male	120	135	122	133	510
	Female	83	61	145	82	371
Age	Less than 18	21	19	14	12	66
	18-24	54	47	32	59	192
	25-34	57	79	128	89	353
	35-54	53	46	83	51	233
	55+	18	5	10	4	37

Note: FB=Facebook, TW=Twitter.

## Results

EFA was first carried out to explore the structure of the data and identify the factors of relational benefits and costs<sup>1</sup>. Subsequently, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to confirm the factors of relational benefits and costs and assess the psychometric properties and the unidimensionality of the measurement scales using two Facebook and two Twitter samples. Based on the goodness-of-fit indices, which were above their recommended thresholds (Hair et al., 2010), the measurement scales of relational benefits and costs reflected a good fit for the data (**Tables 4&5**). The CFA verified the seven-factor solution for relational benefits consisting of 'Social', 'Enjoyment', 'Special Treatment', 'Status', 'Self-Enhancement', 'Functional' and 'Advice' benefits (**Table 4**). CFA also demonstrated the existence of three factors for relational costs as expected: 'Ad Irritation', 'Information Overload' and 'Privacy Concern' (**Table 5**). In each performed CFA, most item loadings were well above the recommended threshold of .70 and were statistically significant.

### *Reliability and Validity Assessment*

The reliability and validity of the measurement scales were established through CFA, the analysis of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) using the procedures recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). For each factor of the relational benefits and costs scales, Cronbach's reliability alpha scores and composite reliability scores were greater than .70, supporting the internal consistency of the measurement scales (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988), while the average variance extracted (AVE) was greater than

<sup>1</sup> EFA results are not presented for space reasons but are available upon request from the leading author.



.50 (Tables 4&5). These results suggest that the scale is reliable for measuring relational benefits and costs on firms' SM brand pages.

Construct validity was assessed in terms of convergent and discriminant validity. As shown in Tables 4&5, the measurement scales for each factor exhibited strong factor loadings, and composite reliability scores above the recommended threshold of .70 and AVE values greater than .50, together confirming convergent validity (Bagozzi and Yi 1988; Fornell and Larcker 1981). With regard to discriminant validity, the square root of the AVE of each construct should be larger than the correlation of the specific construct with any of the other constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The results showed that, in all instances, the square root of the AVE of each construct was greater than the correlation coefficients between the constructs<sup>2</sup>. Thus, the analysis supports the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement scales.

**Table 4: CFA for Relational Benefits**

Factors	Items	FB C1				FB C2				TW C1				TW C2			
		FL	Ca	CR	AVE	FL	Ca	CR	AVE	FL	Ca	CR	AVE	FL	Ca	CR	AVE
<b>Social Benefits</b>	SOB1	.975	.992	.992	.933	.972	.991	.991	.991	.986	.996	.996	.969	.983	.996	.996	.967
	SOB2	.984				.970				.978				.976			
	SOB3	.983				.969				.992				.995			
	SOB4	.978				.955				.981				.988			
	SOB5	.954				.930				.982				.990			
	SOB6	.947				.970				.985				.956			
	SOB7	.968				.975				.981				.995			
	SOB8	.917				.932				.986				.988			
	SOB9	.987				.988				.988				.974			
<b>Enjoyment Benefits</b>	EB1	.962	.980	.980	.907	.986	.992	.992	.961	.910	.965	.965	.848	.972	.994	.994	.972
	EB2	.967				.995				.936				.991			
	EB3	.949				.988				.913				.991			
	EB4	.935				.953				.929				.991			
	EB5	.949				.980				.915				.985			
<b>Special Treatment Benefits</b>	STB1	.964	.988	.987	.928	.979	.993	.993	.959	.979	.993	.993	.957	.982	.996	.996	.974
	STB2	.966				.982				.979				.992			
	STB3	.976				.988				.987				.989			
	STB4	.981				.981				.980				.984			
	STB5	.944				.980				.967				.991			
	STB6	.947				.965				.979				.984			
<b>Status Benefits</b>	SB1	.919	.965	.966	.876	.935	.971	.971	.893	.924	.973	.974	.903	.987	.992	.992	.968
	SB2	.961				.938				.964				.979			
	SB3	.962				.948				.954				.983			
	SB4	.901				.959				.958				.986			
<b>Self-Enhancement Benefits</b>	SEB1	.938	.980	.980	.926	.980	.990	.990	.961	.939	.986	.986	.946	.993	.980	.980	.925
	SEB2	.975				.987				.993				.967			
	SEB3	.977				.983				.984				.923			
	SEB4	.959				.972				.974				.962			
<b>Functional Benefits</b>	FB1	.993	.993	.993	.972	.957	.983	.983	.934	.992	.996	.996	.986	.962	.989	.989	.958
	FB2	.990				.973				.992				.983			
	FB3	.979				.974				.991				.985			
	FB4	.982				.961				.996				.984			
<b>Advice Benefits</b>	AB1	.991	.998	.998	.995	.948	.946	.946	.897	.980	.974	.974	.950	.981	.953	.954	.912
	AB2	.995				.946				.969				.928			
<b>G-o-F Indicators</b>	$\chi^2$ :	1075.23				1086.21				579.84				600.68			
	p	<0.001				<0.001				<0.001				<0.001			
	df:	502				492				506				506			
	CFI:	.962				.971				.995				.995			
	TLI:	.958				.967				.995				.994			
	NFI:	.932				.948				.964				.969			
RMSEA:	.075				.067				.027				.030				

Note: FB=Facebook, TW=Twitter, C=Company, FL=Factor Loadings, Ca=Cronbach's alpha, CR=Composite Reliability, AVE=Average Variance Extracted.

<sup>2</sup> Due to space constraint, tables are not included but are available upon request from the leading author.

**Table 5: CFA for Relational Costs**

Factors	Items	FB C1				FB C2				TW C1				TW C2			
		FL	Ca	CR	AVE	FL	Ca	CR	AVE	FL	Ca	CR	AVE	FL	Ca	CR	AVE
<b>Ad Irritation</b>	AI1	.917	.985	.984	.886	.990	.996	.996	.967	.995	.997	.997	.978	.993	.997	.997	.975
	AI2	.922				.983				.998				.978			
	AI3	.938				.982				.990				.986			
	AI4	.965				.987				.994				.995			
	AI5	.965				.988				.989				.986			
	AI6	.947				.984				.975				.988			
	AI7	.944				.983				.994				.983			
	AI8	.931				.971				.978				.991			
<b>Information Overload</b>	IO1	.933	.981	.980	.893	.961	.984	.984	.912	.995	.994	.994	.964	.996	.995	.995	.973
	IO2	.914				.885				.987				.976			
	IO3	.964				.967				.970				.986			
	IO4	.961				.967				.979				.988			
	IO5	.923				.970				.980				.987			
	IO6	.973				.978				.980				.986			
<b>Privacy Concern</b>	PC1	.899	.981	.981	.913	.958	.986	.985	.929	.995	.999	.999	.994	.995	.996	.996	.995
	PC2	.968				.967				.995				.985			
	PC3	.971				.980				.996				.986			
	PC4	.974				.947				.996				.984			
	PC5	.963				.968				.999				.994			
<b>G-o-F Indicators</b>	$\chi^2$ :	424.11				349.19				170.81				149.69			
	p	<0.001				<0.001				<0.001				<0.001			
	df:	137				145				149				149			
	CFI:	.961				.983				.998				.995			
	TLI:	.952				.980				.998				.995			
	NFI:	.944				.972				.986				.988			
RMSEA	.097				.073				.027				.022				

Note: FB=Facebook, TW=Twitter, C=Company, FL=Factor Loadings, Ca= Cronbach's alpha, CR=Composite Reliability, AVE=Average Variance Extracted.

Following the establishment of the reliability and validity of the measurement scales, **Table 6** presents the identified factors of relationship benefits and costs in social media brand pages, along with their definitions.

**Table 6: An Integrative Typology of Relational Benefits and Costs in Social Media brand pages**

Relational Benefits	Definition
Social Benefits	<i>Benefits arising from the social interactions with the brand and other consumers who share similar needs and interests and feel 'connected'.</i>
Enjoyment Benefits	<i>Perceptions of fun and enjoyment by spending time with others and using the brand page.</i>
Special Treatment Benefits	<i>Exceptional and personalised treatment, economic gains such as as rewards, discounts, competition prizes and coupons for brand page members.</i>
Status Benefits	<i>Increased popularity, improved image and status, and being a more valued member of a community as a result of sharing knowledge and information.</i>
Self-Enhancement Benefits	<i>Feeling and/or being viewed as an intelligent shopper or consumption expert by others.</i>
Functional Benefits	<i>Personal gains regarding information usefulness, convenience and time saving.</i>
Advice Benefits	<i>The benefit of receiving tips from other consumers about a brand's products and services, or from the information provided by the brand itself.</i>
<b>Relational Costs</b>	
Ad Irritation	<i>Feeling annoyed by the amount of promotional content to which someone is exposed.</i>
Information Overload	<i>Feeling overloaded with information. Receiving more information than someone can process.</i>
Privacy Concern	<i>An individual's concern about who has access to his/her private information and how such information will be used.</i>

## Discussion

### *Theoretical implications*

This study contributes to the understanding of consumer-brand relationships developed in a SM environment by providing a comprehensive analysis of the positive and negative experiences consumers perceive in the SM brand pages they follow. The paper enriches the SM marketing and relationship marketing literature, as it is a first attempt to propose, test and validate an integrative typology of perceived relational benefits and costs in the SM context. Our research differs from previous research by identifying and empirically examining both the relational benefits and costs simultaneously perceived by followers of SM brand pages. Also, the collected quantitative data come from two leading FMCG and telecommunications companies with a strong SM presence, that allowed the collection of 881 responses from both Facebook and Twitter brand page followers. This has further allowed us not only to propose and validate a typology of relational benefits and costs, but also outline and confirm their dimensions across popular SM platforms utilised by firms operating in two distinct sectors.

To the best of our current knowledge, though various studies have sparsely examined some relational benefits in the Web 2.0 environment, these were studied as expectations or motives for participation, were explored individually and in isolation from relational costs, and most importantly, were not examined in the SM brand pages context. Based on the study's results, the same seven-factor structure of relational benefits, (i.e. 'social', 'enjoyment', 'special treatment', 'status', 'self-enhancement', 'functional' and 'advice' benefits), and the same three-factor structure of relational costs (i.e. 'ad irritation', 'information overload' and 'privacy concern') were identified in all Facebook and Twitter samples. Thus, the findings provide strong supporting evidence that followers of Facebook and Twitter brand pages perceive the same relational benefits and are faced with the same relational costs.

Social benefits indicate that consumers benefit not only from interactions with the brand, but also from the social interactions with other consumers who share similar needs and interests, and feel an important connection with them. Social benefits confirm that brand communities in SM are an important conversational and social environment (Park and Kim, 2014), and that individuals join brand pages to interact with others (Hajli, 2014; Okazaki et al., 2014b). The importance of social benefits has been recently explored in the study of Zhang and Luo (2016), which confirmed the strong and positive impact of social benefits on satisfaction with a SM community.

Functional benefits describe the personal gains regarding information usefulness, convenience and time saving derived from participation in the brand page. This finding is consistent with previous research, which supports that people choose to join online brand communities to access information about products and services (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). Additionally, research suggests that virtual brand communities on social networking sites provide features such as useful brand-related information and utilitarian incentives, which enhance users' convenience (Sung et al., 2010). Similarly, authors have supported that practical and informational benefits are often achievable through online communities (Dholakia et al., 2004; Li, 2011) and companies' Facebook sites (Gummerus et al., 2012).

Enjoyment benefits suggest that brand page followers perceive fun and enjoyment by spending time with others and using the page. This is supported by previous research, which highlights the importance of 'entertainment value', 'enjoyment', 'hedonic' or 'affective' benefits in online communities (Dholakia et al., 2004; Gummerus et al., 2012; Nambisan and Baron, 2009).

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3 Results also indicate that followers perceive exceptional treatment through their  
4 participation in Facebook and Twitter brand pages, such as rewards, incentives, sales  
5 promotions, contests and coupons for brand page members. This finding suggests that non-  
6 monetary and monetary incentives can play a significant role in the interactions that take place  
7 within the brand page. This is in line with previous studies, which found that online consumers  
8 do perceive special treatment benefits in a Web 1.0 environment (e.g. Colgate et al., 2005), and  
9 that such benefits can have a positive impact on satisfaction with an online retailer (Su et al.,  
10 2009; Yen and Gwinner, 2003). The non-monetary and monetary incentives can also be an  
11 important 'incentive motive' for consumer participation (Rohm et al., 2013; Sung et al., 2010).

12 Self-enhancement benefits can take the form of being viewed as an intelligent shopper or  
13 consumption expert by other consumers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). As one of the typical  
14 characteristics of fans is self-identification, consumers decide to participate in fan pages  
15 expecting an impact on their image. Also, by being members of a SM brand page, consumers  
16 feel that they gain value for their own personal identity (Jahn and Kunz, 2012).

17 Similarly, the status benefits refer to the degree to which sharing information through  
18 social networking websites is perceived to be effective in enhancing social status in one's social  
19 group (Li, 2011). This is consistent with previous studies in the context of online communities,  
20 which address the concept of 'personal-integrative' benefits, defined as the gains in reputation,  
21 through product knowledge exhibition and application of problem-solving skills in online  
22 brand communities (Nambisan and Baron, 2009). Further, relevant studies (e.g. Lampel and  
23 Bhalla, 2007; Wasko and Faraj, 2005) suggest that people's social status or reputation could  
24 be enhanced through participation in an online community.

25 The advice benefits refer to the benefit of receiving tips from other brand page followers  
26 about a brand's products, and arise from individuals who write product reviews or comments  
27 describing their experiences with a product or service, and either submit or request problem-  
28 solving information. Advice benefits may also derive from the information provided by the  
29 brand itself. According to previous research, advice benefits have been found to be a significant  
30 consumer motive for participating in an online community (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004;  
31 Dholakia et al., 2004). Also, literature supports that social networking sites like Twitter, are  
32 places where members tend to help and support each other by exchanging opinions and ideas  
33 and answering other members' questions (Okazaki et al., 2014a).

34 Privacy concern, information overload, and ad irritation were the relational costs that were  
35 identified. In the context of SM brand pages, privacy concern refers to an individual's concern  
36 about who has access to his or her private information, and how such information will be used.  
37 With the increased use of social networking and the information sharing it evolves, several  
38 studies have examined and confirmed the existence of privacy concern in the context of social  
39 networking websites. These also identified privacy concern as a key factor that negatively  
40 affects attitude toward using social media (Mohamed and Ahmad, 2012; Tan et al., 2012).

41 The emergence of SM has led to an increase in the amount of information to which a user  
42 is exposed, making followers of SM brand pages experience information overload. This type  
43 of negative experience has also been studied by Hutter et al. (2013), who found that information  
44 overload in SM can cause annoyance, which in turn has a negative effect on the evaluation of  
45 the brand regarding purchase intentions and word of mouth. Finally, ad irritation was identified  
46 as another cost perceived by followers of Facebook and Twitter brand pages. This implies that  
47 ad irritation may be an important issue in SM brand pages. To the best of our knowledge, this  
48 study is the first attempt to address the issues of information overload and ad irritation in the  
49 context of SM brand pages.

### *Managerial Implications*

This research leads to important managerial implications, and offers brands practical and applicable recommendations on how to increase a SM brand page's capabilities and relationship building effectiveness. We propose a cross-medium and cross-sector validated typology of relational benefits and costs that can operate as an integrated marketing mechanism for firms to better understand their followers' needs and concerns, appropriately address them, and strategically enhance brand communication efforts. More specifically, the findings of this research provide a deeper understanding of the structure of the relational benefits and costs in the environment of SM brand pages that can guide brand managers' relationship building efforts when designing and implementing their SM marketing activities. To our knowledge, this is the first time that an integrative typology of consumer-brand benefits and costs related to SM is established. Given the existence of these seven benefits and three costs, marketers should design and implement activities that promote and strengthen perceived benefits among users of their SM brand pages, whilst ensuring that the content of such pages does not create costs for their customers.

Firstly, through these benefits, SM channels provide marketing managers with the opportunity to have deeper interactions with consumers in ways that previous media could not deliver. For instance, the value of social benefits is multiplied when the instant nature of SM brand pages enables users to interact almost immediately with other users. Social benefits can be developed by providing more opportunities for member-to-member interactions, and by adding social features that are valued by members. These interactions can be strengthened by a firm seeding conversations or planting provocative ideas. Also, brand page events, or even interactive games such as knowledge games, can trigger discussions about relevant topics. Companies could also reinforce their actions towards the strengthening of social ties among brand page users by motivating them to share their experiences with others (Okazaki, 2014b) and touching them emotionally. Lastly, the social nature of SM brand pages makes them an effective forum to exchange opinions about the brand, and to learn from customer conversations. Firms can identify new consumer needs arising from consumer feedback on SM brand pages and rapidly adjust marketing efforts accordingly.

Regarding the enhancement of enjoyment benefits, brands should deliver entertaining content to its followers. Online events and contests are some of the means SM brand pages can utilize to accomplish this. By offering enjoyable content, brand pages can put consumers in a good mood, increase perceptions of enjoyment benefits, and ensure consumers experience the brand in a more positive way.

Considering the fact that functional and advice benefits are perceived by followers of Facebook and Twitter brands pages, firms should adjust their SM activities more in this direction, by offering useful, daily, innovative and informational content. As Facebook and Twitter are two different platforms, each one with its fans, differentiating and adjusting the offered content could enhance followers' perceived functional benefits. Furthermore, as SM are a world of information, brands can increase the attractiveness of their pages and make their followers feel that they gain informational value by providing useful content to their fans.

Special treatment benefits can arise from both monetary and non-monetary incentives. Thus, positive perceptions can be enhanced through rewards and incentives, contests, coupons and exclusive content. On the other hand, brands should adjust their communication with fans by interacting personally with each follower, answering each question separately and mentioning the name of the person. By providing special treatment benefits marketers, can generate positive word of mouth (Relling et al., 2016) and gain brand recommendations (Barreto, 2014; Okazaki et al., 2014b).

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3 As regards the enhancement of the perceptions of status and self-enhancement benefits,  
4 marketers could strengthen the information sharing capability of their brand pages. Thus, brand  
5 page followers will have the opportunity to tell others about their experiences with the  
6 company's products, and feel that they are a valued member of the brand page.

7 Likewise, brands should adjust their SM strategy to moderate followers' perceived  
8 relational costs. With respect to information overload, when consumers get overloaded by the  
9 information provided by the brand page, they may turn against it by spreading negative word  
10 of mouth (Barreto, 2014). Marketers could aim at getting feedback from followers to figure out  
11 the optimum frequency of updates on Facebook and Twitter brand pages.

12 Additionally, marketers should put more effort into understanding brand page followers'  
13 perceptions and concerns on security-related factors, and how these factors influence members'  
14 attitudes. Firms should define a clear policy on followers' personal data and, inform their fans  
15 about the handling of their information. **The introduction of General Data Protection  
16 Regulation (GDPR) in Europe has further pushed all companies to communicate more clearly  
17 with their customers about their data collection, storage and use. Similarly, the recent  
18 Cambridge Analytica scandal indicates that users of social networking sites are becoming more  
19 concerned about their privacy. As Facebook has been under increasing pressure over its privacy  
20 policies, especially in relation to the collection and misuse of personally identifiable  
21 information by third party apps, brands should also adapt and adjust their policies of handling  
22 social media users' personal data.**

23 Finally, concerning irritation caused by advertising messages, marketers should realize  
24 that SM pages are not there for selling only. When posting updates, companies should make  
25 sure that they are providing useful content, not just promotional advertising for their products  
26 and services.

### 27 28 29 30 31 32 **Limitations and suggestions for further research**

33  
34 This study validated a typology of the benefits and costs consumers perceive when participating  
35 in SM brand pages. Findings proved to be robust across two SM and two sectors. However, as  
36 there are various SM, each one with different characteristics and audiences, results should be  
37 validated for other SM platforms (e.g. Instagram, Snapchat), and across other sectors (e.g.  
38 retailers). As this study was conducted in Greece, further studies in different cultural settings  
39 are needed. A longitudinal examination of SM participation is also needed in order to observe  
40 how users' perceptions of benefits and costs are affected by changes and newly added features  
41 of SM. Thus, the extension of the present study to other platforms, combined with a  
42 longitudinal observation, may reveal additional benefits and costs, perceived in different SM  
43 platforms.

44  
45 Further quantitative studies are welcomed to measure the impact of relational benefits and  
46 costs on behavioral intentions towards the SM brand pages and behavioral outcomes towards  
47 the brand. Also, a quantitative measurement of the impact of page characteristics (i.e. number  
48 of photos, company information, important pinned posts) on perceived relational benefits and  
49 costs would be an interesting research direction. Finally, subsequent studies might identify  
50 distinct individual member's segments, according to their different participation motives and  
51 the page characteristics they value most.

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