Don't Just "Like" Me, Promote Me: How Attachment and Attitude Influence Brand Related Behaviors on Social Media

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Abstract

As social media marketing becomes more pervasive, questions continue to emerge regarding utilizing the medium strategically to maximize positive brand-related outcomes. Marketers are increasingly seeking guidance for targeting consumers who will interact and behave in ways that are meaningful to the brand on social media. Understanding how individual differences among consumers can influence social media behaviors linked to valuable organizational outcomes is crucial for managers seeking to justify social media marketing expenditures. This research addresses that issue by applying Attachment Theory to social media. In Study 1, we examine the roles of two individual difference factors, attitude toward social media and attachment to social media (ASM), in predicting token and meaningful behaviors on social media. We find that while attitude toward social media and ASM are both related to token behaviors, only ASM predicts meaningful behaviors. In Study 2, we investigate attachment and attitude toward the brand and social media as predictors of offline and social media brand advocacy and demonstrate that individuals who are attached to or have a positive attitude toward the brand are more likely to engage in offline advocacy. Further, ASM adds incremental explanatory power, beyond attitude and attachment to the brand, in predicting advocacy via social media. In Study 3, we examine likelihood of advocating for a brand via social media as a moderator and find that even consumers who are not likely to be offline advocates are more likely to advocate for the brand on social media if they are strongly attached to social media. In sum, the results indicate that ASM is an important predictor of meaningful social media behaviors and is a new means by which marketers can identify consumers who are more likely to perform meaningful behaviors for brands via social media.
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Keywords: Attachment; Social media; Attitude; Brand advocacy; Brands; Social media recommendation

"We don't have a choice on whether we DO social media, the question is how well we DO it."
Erik Qualman, author of *Socialnomics*

Introduction

Extant research supports the notion that many consumers are open to learning about and interacting with brands via social media (e.g., King, Racherla, and Bush 2014; Kumar et al. 2016; Lamberton and Stephen 2016; VanMeter, Grisaffe, and Chonko 2015). For example, a leading digital marketing agency reports that 70% of consumers have read a corporate blog, 67% have watched brand videos on YouTube, 65% have played a branded game online, and over 30% of the world's populations (over 2.2 billion people) have an active social media account (Feed 2009; Kemp 2015; Shively and Hitz 2016). As consumer usage of social media continues to increase, so does the portion of marketing budgets allocated to this medium. Indeed, social media is predicted to grow to 24% of marketing budgets over the next five years, an increase from 10% today (White 2017). Further, the percentage of marketers who seek to actively

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engage their audiences using social media now stands at 91% (Stelzner 2017).

Since the mass proliferation of the Internet, researchers and marketers have been examining electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and numerous antecedents and consequences have been identified (see King, Racherla, and Bush 2014). However, in the emerging realm of social media marketing, much less is known about how to utilize the medium strategically to maximize the positive impacts of this new tool. For example, although it is considered relatively easy to precisely target consumers who are likely to click on paid advertisements on social media (e.g., through micro-targeted ads on Facebook), very little is known about how to strategically target consumers who are likely to "socially" interact with (e.g., "like," share) branded social media content (Lamberton and Stephen 2016). Even less is known about how to target consumers who are willing to undertake some of the most coveted social media behaviors, such as advocating for their favorite brands by mentioning them to their personal network of connections on social media (i.e., influence impressions; Li and Bernoff 2008). Much of the research to date has focused on the characteristics of the *content* itself rather than the consumer. For example, Kumar et al. (2016) found that firm-generated content (FGC) is positively and significantly related to consumer spending (total dollars) and cross-buying behaviors; Stephen and Galak (2012) had similar findings with user-generated content (UGC) posted to an organization's online community; and Ashley and Tuten (2015) examined how various types of creative strategies and appeals used in branded content relate to consumer engagement. However, to our knowledge, there is a dearth of research that examines the other side of the equation; that is, are there some types of *consumers* who are predisposed to interacting with content and performing behaviors beneficial to the brand?

This is an important research question as there is currently little guidance available to aid marketers in identifying and targeting consumers who will interact and behave in ways that are meaningful to the brand on social media. Many marketing practitioners are currently operating blindly and merely guessing at what drives social media behaviors such as "liking" and sharing brand-related content, all the while recognizing that "likes" do not necessarily translate into meaningful outcomes (Lake 2011; Naylor, Lamberton, and West 2012; John et al. 2017). The result is that brands and organizations are neither able to develop effective strategies for increasing meaningful social media behaviors, nor able to identify appropriate metrics of success. Clearly, more research is needed in this area, as it is crucial for managers to understand how individual differences among consumers can influence social media behaviors linked to valuable organizational outcomes in order to justify social media marketing expenditures.

Further, there are questions regarding the value of interactive behaviors with the brand in the context of social media. Recent research on helping behavior classifies consumer behaviors into one of two categories: *token* or *meaningful* behaviors (Kristofferson, White, and Peloza 2014). Token behaviors (e.g., wearing a lapel ribbon) for a cause do not always result in meaningful helping behavior (e.g., donation of time or money). In fact, individuals who display public token behaviors actually engage in lower levels of meaningful behaviors compared with those who do not exhibit token public behavior. Further, a recent study found that "liking" a brand is a token form of endorsement and is less effective than other more meaningful endorsements outside of social media (John et al. 2017). These findings bring to the forefront an important question: what drives meaningful social media behaviors? Although consumers can display token behaviors for causes or brands by "liking" them, this does not necessarily lead to more meaningful behaviors in the future, including ultimately, purchase behavior (John et al. 2017).

We posit that not all social media behaviors are equal, that they differ from one another in terms of their importance to the brand or organization, and they also differ in underlying motivation. In Study 1, we examine the roles of two individual difference variables in predicting various types of social media behaviors. Study 2 builds on the findings of Study 1 and investigates both brand- and social media-related variables' efficacy in predicting brand advocacy offline and on social media. Study 3 builds on the findings of Study 2 and investigates a moderator of an individual difference variable and the likelihood of advocating on behalf of a brand via social media. Taken together, the results of the studies address potential differences in the organizational value of various social media behaviors and provide new insights into what influences more valuable social media behaviors. Further, we provide managerial recommendations for driving organizationally meaningful social media outcomes.

Theory

In this section, we develop a conceptual framework and hypotheses that draw from Attachment Theory to shed light on motivations underlying consumer social media behaviors. We also differentiate consumers' ASM from their attitude toward social media, their attitude toward the brand, and their emotional attachment to the brand (EAB).

Attitude and attachment are important and different phenomena that plausibly relate to distinct behavioral intentions. Following the logic of Park, Chen, Gallagher (2010), we posit that ASM and attitude show differentiated influences on social media outcomes. Park, Chen, Gallagher (2010) demonstrated that brand attachment is distinct from brand attitude and that brand attachment provides incremental predictive value when both attachment and attitude are considered together as predictors of behavioral intentions. Additionally, they demonstrated that brand attachment is a better predictor of more difficult (versus less difficult) consumer behavioral intentions. That is, brand attitude plays a greater role in predicting less difficult consumer behaviors, whereas brand attachment plays an increasingly larger role as behavioral intentions become more difficult to enact. These differential outcomes stem from theoretical differences in the constructs themselves.

Both attachment and attitude are psychological constructs that involve assessments of "strength" (i.e., the bond or the

judgment; Park, Chen, Gallagher 2010). However, what is strong with attachment is the bond that connects social media with the self, while with attitudes, what is strong is the person's judgment of the goodness or badness of social media. Attachment requires a deep bond between the person and the attachment object (Bowlby 1980). Attitude, on the other hand, is a subjective appraisal that is more "outward-looking" (not necessarily related to self) regarding the focal object. Thus, a person may have a positive attitude toward social media without having any sense of a relationship or connection with social media. Another differentiator involves time. An attitude can form quickly, even after a single exposure, whereas attachment phenomena are likely to be built over time based on multiple direct experiences (Park, Chen, Gallagher 2010). Additionally, "not all people who feel strongly positive about — or are transactionally loyal to — a brand will become Fans (on social media)" (Lapointe 2012, p. 287).

ASM is defined as *the strength of a bond between a person and social media* (VanMeter, Grisaffe, and Chonko 2015). The ASM construct includes eight distinct dimensions: connecting, nostalgia, informed, enjoyment, advice, affirmation, enhances my life, and influence. These eight dimensions serve as indicators of a second-order measure of ASM.[1] This concept is derived from psychological Attachment Theory, which originally described strong "bonds" between mothers and infants (Ainsworth and Bell 1970; Bowlby 1969). Over time, researchers extended attachment to include a host of others who play significant roles in individuals' lives (e.g., friends, siblings, romantic partners, celebrities). In all cases, the attachment between two individuals was found to predict significant relational outcomes (Belk 1988).

More recently, Attachment Theory has been used to examine how people develop attachments to objects, places, brands, and services (Kleine and Baker 2004; Mende, Bolton, and Bitner 2013; Thomson, MacInnis, and Park 2005). This extended line of research has resulted in a more generalized definition of attachment as an emotion-laden, target-specific bond between a person and a specific object (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park 2005). Further, marketing researchers have studied attachments to tangible objects (e.g., gifts, collectibles, brands), as well as attachment in more intangible contexts (e.g., service firms, service employees, and retailers). In this paper, we demonstrate that ASM is a form of attachment with valuable organizational implications for social media strategy, given that ASM can be utilized by organizations to target specific types of people (strongly attached to social media) who are more likely to participate in meaningful social media actions in support of the brand or organization.

In contrast, attitude toward social media is defined as *the valence of an individual's overall feelings about social media* (adapted from Batra and Stayman 1990). Although somewhat conceptually related, attitude toward social media and ASM operate in distinct ways. A test of this difference between attachment and attitude has been important in previous marketing-related applications of Attachment Theory (e.g., Park, Chen, Gallagher 2010). Thus, in this paper, ASM is investigated, with attitude toward social media as a rival predictor of various consumer behaviors on social media.

To understand the types of consumer social media behaviors that are currently valued by practitioners, we considered metrics reported to business users by the four largest social media platforms (i.e., Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter), and how paid content is displayed to users. Companies are spending a great deal of time and money attempting to comprehend each platform's distinct set of metrics (Neff 2017). While there are many differences among the metrics utilized, there are also some commonalities. For example, the largest platforms rely on algorithms that weight the following factors (in addition to others) in determining which content appears in an individual's newsfeed: the number of times the content is viewed; the number of times the content is viewed by people within a network; the duration of views; the likelihood people will find the content informative; the number of clicks; and the number of "likes," "shares," and "comments." Therefore, based on the algorithms, if an individual's friends "like" content or spend time reading it, it is more likely to show up in that person's newsfeed. Thus, while looking and learning are not traditionally viewed as behaviors in marketing, in a social media context, these perfunctory behaviors are exactly what enable more people to see the content (i.e., virality) and, subsequently, undertake more active behaviors. Moreover, the four major platforms all report the number of views and impressions/viewability, as this metric is critical to agencies because it affects how much they can charge clients (Neff 2017).

Using the commonalities among platforms and previous exploratory work (Syrdal and Briggs 2018), we identified behaviors consumers might undertake with respect to a brand on social media, and classified each as being representative of either *token* or *meaningful* behaviors using criteria from research on consumer "slacktivism" (Kristofferson, White, and Peloza 2014). *Token* behaviors occur when a consumer engages in cursory forms of online behaviors, such as actions that represent attention or interest. *Meaningful* behaviors are a deeper form of behavior that occurs when a consumer engages in behavioral changes, or exerts significant efforts, to offer more tangible contributions to an organization. Meaningful behaviors typically represent desire or action. Our classification resulted in three *token* behaviors (passive actions, such as "liking," that are associated with little effort or cost) and three *meaningful* behaviors (those that lead to an action requiring more effort, such as a purchase). A pretest was conducted to validate our classification before conducting Study 1. Our overall theoretical proposition is that ASM is a better predictor of meaningful and token social media behaviors compared to attitude toward social media.

H$_{1a}$. ASM is a better predictor of token behaviors compared to attitude toward social media.

H$_{1b}$. ASM is a better predictor of meaningful behaviors compared to attitude toward social media.

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[1] For more information about the scale development and empirical evidence of construct validity see VanMeter, Grisaffe, and Chonko (2015).

Study 1

Pretest

The sample comprised 273 students enrolled in introductory marketing or psychology courses at a Midwestern university. In exchange for their participation, students who completed the survey received course credit. The average age of respondents was 20 years old, and 56% were female.

After reading definitions of the terms "token" and "meaningful," respondents were presented with a randomly ordered list of the six social media behaviors and asked to indicate the degree to which each represents a token behavior or a meaningful behavior. A 10-point scale (1 = "token" to 10 = "meaningful") was used to capture the responses. The six behaviors of interest were:

Token behaviors:

- Looked at a restaurant's social media page.
- Learned information from a restaurant's social media page.
- Liked a restaurant's social media page.

Meaningful behaviors:

- Shared a restaurant's post.
- Bought something because of what I read on a restaurant's social media page.
- Advocated for the restaurant on my personal social media page.

To analyze the data, we created two composite variables from the behavioral items and conducted a paired-samples *t*-test, which validated our classification. That is, the token behaviors were rated significantly lower (M = 4.57) – more token – compared to the meaningful behaviors (M = 6.25, $t = -12.7$, $p = .000$).

Method

To examine the relative impact of ASM and attitude toward social media on consumer behaviors performed on social media, we conducted survey research as part of a larger project utilizing a cluster of restaurants near a large Southwestern university. An online survey was administered to three stakeholder groups of the university: students, faculty and staff, and members of local community groups. Respondents were recruited through email invitations, and entry into a drawing for one of seven $25 gift cards was used as an incentive for completing the survey. The survey was attempted by 586 members of the stakeholder groups. The measures required for analysis were completed by 437 respondents. The respondents ranged in age from 18 to 83 years (M = 40), 63.5% were female, and 69% indicated attainment of a bachelor's degree or higher.

Measures

The ASM scale (VanMeter, Grisaffe, and Chonko 2015) was used to gauge each respondent's level of attachment to social media using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree" to 7 = "strongly agree," α = .95). General attitude toward social media was measured with three items adapted from Batra and Stayman (1990). The responses were captured using a semantic differential scale ("good"/"bad," "positive"/"negative," "like"/ "dislike", α = .91).

We calculated a measure of social media behaviors using responses to the six social media behavior items evaluated in the pretest. Respondents were asked to use a series of checkboxes to indicate whether or not they had engaged in each behavior in the previous two-week period. The number of token and the number of meaningful behaviors reported by each respondent were subsequently used to generate a token count score and a meaningful count score. The count variables were comprised of one of four values for each respondent, ranging from 0 (engaged in none of the behaviors) to 3 (engaged in all three behaviors). The two count measures represent the dependent variables in this study.

Although recent research suggests that common method variance does not represent a serious threat to the validity of survey research, it is recommended that a priori steps be taken to minimize the risk of bias (Fuller et al. 2016). Therefore, we utilized the following a priori procedural remedies to minimize any potential bias: protected respondent anonymity, assured respondents there were no right or wrong answers, asked for respondents to respond openly and honestly, and carefully worded and scaled the items (Podsakoff et al. 2003).

Analytical Approach

Count measures are nonnegative integers with a restricted range that violates the assumptions of ordinary least squares regression. A Poisson regression model is appropriate for count regression, but it assumes equality of variance and mean in the data. When overdispersion occurs with greater variance than the mean, a negative binomial model is more appropriate (Long 1997). Therefore, we conducted tests for overdispersion and the results revealed that negative binomial regression was the more appropriate analytical procedure (Long and Freese 2006). More specifically, our negative binomial regression model assumes that the outcome variable follows a Poisson distribution as follows,

$$y_i \sim Poisson(c_i\mu_i) \tag{1a}$$

where

$$\mu_i = \exp(\alpha_0 + \beta_1 asm_i + \beta_2 att_i). \tag{1b}$$

In Eq. (1a), y_i corresponds to one of the two outcome variables for individual *i*, the count of token behaviors or meaningful behaviors, and $c_i \sim Gamma(1/\theta, \theta)$, so $E(c_i)=1$ and $Var(c_i) = \theta$ (commonly referred to as the overdispersion parameter). In Eq. (1b), asm_i and att_i refer to attachment to social media and attitude toward social media for individual *i*, respectively. We estimated the negative binomial regressions using Stata MP Version 14.

An important component of our analysis is testing for differences in the effects of attitude and attachment within

dependent variables and also testing whether the effects of attitude and attachment are stronger for one dependent variable or the other. To test for differences in attitude and attachment within models, we standardized each independent variable to have a mean of zero and standard deviation of one. Next, we conducted Wald tests of the difference between the two coefficients (Greene 2008). To test whether the effects of attitude or attachment are stronger for one dependent variable or the other, we combined the estimates and associated variance/covariance matrices from the two negative binomial regressions. This allows testing of coefficients between the two models, taking account of the fact that the two models are not independent of each other (Clogg, Petkova, and Haritou 1995).

To test hypotheses H_{1a} and H_{1b}, we conducted two negative binomial regressions. Both regressions incorporated the count variable predicted by the rival predictors of ASM and attitude toward social media (Att) as independent variables. One model was run for each dependent measure: token behaviors (H_{1a}) and self-reported meaningful behaviors (H_{1b}).

Results

Of those who completed the survey, 289 reported that they had not undertaken any of the behaviors, whereas 279 respondents reported engaging in token behaviors via social media (193 looked, 154 learned, and 174 "liked"), and 124 indicated engaging in meaningful behaviors (34 shared, 62 advocated, 73 bought). Table 1 shows results from the negative binomial regressions in unstandardized and standardized terms. The likelihood ratio chi-squares involving tests of the overall model compared to a null model were significant for both dependent variables. For the model predicting token behaviors, the likelihood chi-square was 62.6 (2), $p \leq .000$ and for the model predicting meaningful behaviors, the likelihood chi-square was 48.4 (2), $p \leq .000$. Additionally, the test of model effects for token behaviors (Nagelkerke R-square = .11) shows that both ASM (M = 4.52, SD = 1.24, W = 24.8, $df = 1$, $p \leq .000$) and Att (M = 4.46, SD = 1.08, W = 13.8, $df = 1$, $p = .000$), are significant predictors of token behaviors. The model predicting

meaningful behaviors (Nagelkerke R-square = .11) demonstrates that ASM is a significant predictor (W = 36.2, $df = 1$, $p \leq .000$), whereas Att is not a significant predictor of meaningful behaviors (W = .001, $df = 1$, $p = .972$). The results indicate that being more attached to social media compared to being less attached to social media is a significant predictor of both token and meaningful behaviors, whereas stronger attitudes toward social media only predict token behaviors (see Table 1).[2]

To allow for comparison of the coefficients of attachment to social media (ASM) and attitude toward social media (Att), Table 1 also includes results estimating Eqs. (1a) and (1b) using standardized values of attachment to social media and attitude toward social media on the right side of the table. These coefficients have the following interpretations: a one standard deviation increase in ASM results in a 30.6% increase in token behaviors and a 70.3% increase in meaningful behaviors, and a one standard deviation increase in Att results in a 21.1% increase in token behaviors and no statistically significant change in meaningful behaviors. Table 1 also displays the chi-squared test statistics and associated p-values from a Wald test of the difference between the ASM and Att coefficients in each standardized model. While we do not find that the coefficients of ASM and Att are statistically significantly different from each other for token behaviors (Wald = .74, p-value = .39), we do find that they are statistically significantly different for meaningful behaviors (Wald = 14.25, p-value < .001). ASM and Att are both predictive of token behaviors, while ASM is the only significant predictor of meaningful behaviors.

Further, we examine the differential effects each IV has across social media behaviors. The bottom of Table 1 also displays the test statistics and associated p-values from tests of the relationship of ASM and Att across the dependent variables. These results indicate that ASM has a larger association with meaningful behaviors than with token behaviors (Wald = 15.62, p-value < .001), while Att has a larger association with token behaviors than with meaningful behaviors (Wald = 4.69, p-value = .03). Taken together, the results lead to the following overall conclusion regarding $H1_a$ and $H1_b$: ASM is the better predictor of both token and meaningful behaviors.

Fig. 1 shows the results visually at ±1 standard deviation and the mean for both ASM and attitude toward social media. Fig. 1a shows the significant impact of both variables on token behaviors. Fig. 1b illustrates that only ASM is significant in predicting meaningful behaviors.

Discussion

The results regarding H_{1a} and H_{1b}, reveal that individuals who are more strongly attached to social media engaged in more behavioral activities on social media overall, and

Table 1
Study 1: Negative binomial regression estimates for social media behaviors.

	Parameter	Original scale			Standardized B		
		B	S.E.	p-Value	B	S.E.	p-Value
Token behaviors	Intercept	−3.18	.279	<.001	−.215	.0541	<.001
	ASM	.246	.053	<.001	.306	.0657	<.001
	Attitude	.196	.058	.001	.211	.0626	.001
		Wald test statistic for ASM = Attitude: .74 (p = .39)					
Meaningful behaviors	Intercept	−4.01	.506	<.001	−1.47	.1007	<.001
	ASM	.566	.094	<.001	.703	.1169	<.001
	Attitude	−.003	.097	.971	−.003	.1041	.971
		Wald test statistic for ASM = Attitude: 14.25 (p < .001)					

Wald test statistic for [Token]ASM = [Meaningful]ASM: 15.62 (p-value < .001)
Wald test statistic for [Token]Att = [Meaningful]Att: 4.69 (p-value = .03)

Note: N = 591.

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[2] Using CFA we find the AVE for ASM and attitude toward social media is .80 and .78 respectively and the CR is .99 and .91 respectively demonstrating convergent validity. The squared correlation between ASM and attitude is .24, indicating less than 25% shared variance between the two constructs. The variance extracted estimates are greater than the squared correlation estimates, therefore providing good evidence of discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981).
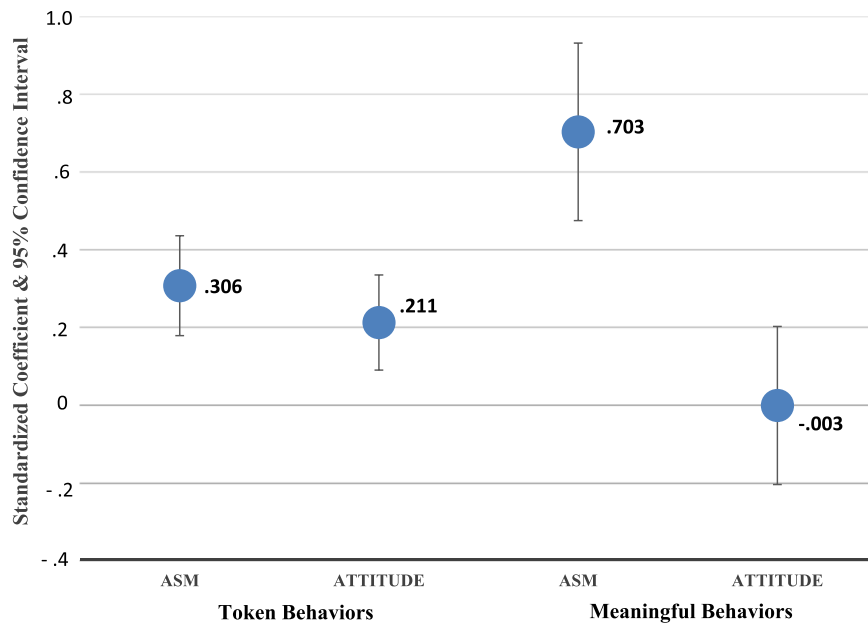
Fig. 1. Study 1: Box and whiskers plot for standardized data.

specifically more *meaningful* social media behaviors. Attitude only predicts token behaviors although its effect weaker than that of ASM. The findings suggest ASM could be utilized as a psychographic variable for targeting consumers who are more likely to perform desirable brand-related social media behaviors.

The focus of Study 1 was on social media attitude and attachment in relation to token and meaningful behaviors. In Study 2, we extend our investigation to consider attitude and attachment toward a *brand*, while focusing on the specific, meaningful outcome of consumer willingness to advocate on behalf of the brand, both offline and via social media.

Study 2

In this study, we examine two meaningful marketing outcomes — traditional word-of-mouth recommendation and word-of-mouth recommendation via social media. We explore potential differential effects of four key attachment and attitude variables — attitude toward and attachment to the *brand*, along with attitude toward and attachment to *social media*. We expand upon Study 1 to gain theoretical and managerial insight into the potentially incremental explanatory value of attachment phenomena relative to attitude phenomena in realizing social media recommendation versus traditional recommendation.

First, word-of-mouth recommendation is a vital area of focus in marketing, both currently and historically (e.g., Baker, Donthu, and Kumar 2016). However, the importance of word-of-mouth is significantly magnified in social media environments (King, Racherla, and Bush 2014; Mantel et al. 2015). Social media inherently involves a one-to-many format; therefore, social media recommendations have augmented *reach* compared to in-person recommendations. For example, the mean number of Facebook friends per user exceeds 300

(Smith 2014), and the mean number of Twitter followers per user exceeds 200 (Beevolve 2012). Thus, a positive recommendation posted on both platforms could potentially reach an average of 500 friends and followers. Re-tweeting and re-posting also can produce additional "viral" impressions in multiplicatively expanded social networks.

Beyond reach, social media recommendation has the potential to create greater *frequency* of impressions. Because a posted recommendation creates a tangible written statement of advocacy, it persists (King, Racherla, and Bush 2014), at least for a period of time. Thus, an individual may see it multiple times after the initial posting. In addition, affirming comments from others about the initial post can "pile on" dynamically in real time, making any number of additional positive impressions. Consequently, a recommendation on social media has the potential to produce greater impression impact compared with traditional recommendations due to the frequency of views. Together, the magnified reach and frequency of a social media recommendation differ notably from a traditional verbally-conveyed recommendation, which is inherently perishable, typically one-to-one, making only a single impression, on a single person, at a single moment in time. Because of the substantial potential advantages of recommendation via social media, we explore it as a highly meaningful outcome of interest compared to traditional recommendation.

Social Media Recommendation vs. Traditional Word-of-Mouth Recommendation

Word-of-mouth recommendations conveyed through social media are likely to operate differently than those expressed through traditional means for substantive theoretical reasons. Substantially more psychological "effort" is required to make a recommendation on social media as compared to traditional

word-of-mouth (King, Racherla, and Bush 2014). Park, Chen, Gallagher (2010) distinguish different behavioral intentions based on varying levels of "enactment difficulty" involving the amounts and types of personal resources exerted, including "economic, social, psychological, temporal, or physical resources," (p. 4). Brand promotion through social media is specifically mentioned as a form of behavior more difficult to enact than traditional recommendation because it involves higher exertion of resources.

Social media typically involves presentation of a persona or "public self" (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010; Seidman 2013), and when a person posts a statement of advocacy for a particular brand, s/he explicitly links that brand to her/his public identity (Laroche et al. 2012; Schau and Gilly 2003). This is because social media advocacy says something not only about the brand, but also about the person recommending it. It expands the self to include elements of the brand's identity (Belk 2014). Therefore, recommended brands in a social media context are more likely to involve stronger brand–self connections (Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie 2014), and this self-connection increases consumers' willingness to exert social and psychological resources to promote and defend the brand (Park, Chen, Gallagher 2010).

Further, the benefits and risks of a recommendation on social media are tied in part to its public visibility, making it a more carefully considered and effortful act (King, Racherla, and Bush 2014). Recommendation on social media requires strong confidence in the brand because there is reputational risk if others express contradictory negative experiences or publicly disagree about the recommended brand. An individual may "lose face" in front of an entire network of friends if the original recommendation is publicly refuted. Further, the credibility of future comments and recommendations may be eroded.

Additionally, recommendation of a brand on social media may influence one's socially-perceived persona (Laroche et al. 2012) because others are likely to make inferences about the recommender based on associations with the brand (Schau and Gilly 2003; Schau, Muñiz, and Arnould 2009). This can enhance or detract from a person's social-self and reputation. Consequently, individuals are likely to exert greater effort and care in the social media environment, implying greater temporal, social, and psychological exertion, because of the inherent risk associated with social media brand recommendations (Park, Chen, Gallagher 2010).

These forces highlight substantive differences between word-of-mouth recommendation on social media and traditional word-of-mouth recommendation. Therefore, in Study 2, both types of recommendations are treated as distinct dependent variables. Attitude and attachment phenomena are examined as predictors of these dependent variables. We study attachment and attitudes with respect to social media and a focal brand. Because recommendations are by nature brand specific, we ask respondents to provide data about a specific familiar and used brand. As such, we include attitude toward the *brand* and attachment to the *brand* as additional independent variables. As in Study 1, we also examine attitude toward *social media*, and attachment to *social media*. We allow these four brand and social media attitude and

attachment variables to relate to both types of word-of-mouth. We theorize that attachment will add value beyond attitude in the prediction of both types of recommendation, but especially with respect to social media recommendation. These notions are expressed in hypothesis statements to follow.

First, because influences of *brand* attitude and brand attachment on *traditional* word of mouth have been shown in past research (Park, Chen, Gallagher 2010), we include these effects in our model for specification purposes, framing them only as replication tests. This is indicated in Hypothesis 2 with a subscript $_R$ for replication:

H$_{2R}$. Brand attitude and brand attachment will positively relate to traditional word-of-mouth recommendations.

However, in keeping with the aim of the current research, differential effects of attitude and attachment have not been tested with respect to the meaningful and effortful behavior of recommendation on social media. We, therefore, propose new hypotheses regarding these effects. The first additional hypothesis is intuitive and a simple extension of H$_{2R}$. Because brand attitude and brand attachment affect recommendation in general, we logically expect them also to influence recommendation on social media.

H$_3$. Brand attitude and brand attachment will positively relate to word-of-mouth recommendations on social media.

Given theory and research on attachment and enactment difficulty, however, we count recommendations on social media as more difficult behaviors to enact than traditional word of mouth recommendation. Thus, we hypothesize that brand attachment phenomena will play a larger relative role than brand attitude in recommendations on social media. We propose the following:

H$_4$. The relative role of brand attachment will be greater than that of brand attitude in word-of-mouth recommendations on social media.

Note that hypotheses H$_3$ and H$_4$ involve "established" brand-related IVs on a relatively newer social-media-related DV. In addition, however, this paper aims to examine other IVs in relation to social media recommendation as well. In keeping with the current study and other recent research (VanMeter, Grisaffe, and Chonko 2015), social media can be a focal target of attitude and attachment phenomena distinct from the brand itself. Because social media is a unique and powerful outlet for expression, attitude toward social media and attachment to social media are also likely to contribute to individuals' social media recommendations. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

H$_5$. Attitude toward social media and ASM will positively relate to word-of-mouth recommendations on social media.

We also anticipate differential contributions from social media attitude and social media attachment. Because we have argued that attachment-related measures play a more prominent role than attitudes in influencing outcomes with higher enactment difficulty and that social media recommendation

has higher enactment difficulty than traditional word-of-mouth recommendation, we propose that ASM will have a more prominent role than social media attitude in predicting social media recommendation. This theoretically-driven proposition is formally represented in the following additional hypothesis:

H₆. The relative impact of ASM will be greater than that of attitude in influencing word-of-mouth recommendation on social media.

The combined set of hypothesized associations is visually represented in Fig. 2. Next, we describe our approach to testing these hypotheses.

Method

An online survey was administered to students in subject pools at two large U.S. public universities, one in the Midwest and the other in the Southwest. Complete responses were submitted by 526 respondents (mean age = 23 years, 60% female), who received course credit in exchange for their participation. To obtain data from each respondent regarding a single focal brand, we identified a set of brands with which respondents were likely to be familiar and have recently used. Six brands (each with an active social media brand presence) were chosen from The World's Most Valuable Brands list (Badenhausen 2015) in three industry categories: beverage (Coke and Pepsi), retail (Wal-Mart and Target), and cellular service providers (AT&T and Verizon).

Measures

After screening to ensure use of social media, respondents rated their attitude toward social media and level of ASM using the same measures utilized in Study 1. Each respondent was then presented with all brands (in random order) and asked to indicate their level of familiarity with each one using a 5-point scale from 1 = "extremely familiar" to 5 = "hardly familiar at all." Respondents were then asked to indicate which of the brands they had used in the last three months. Although recent research suggests that common method variance does not represent a serious threat to the validity of survey research (Fuller et al. 2016), the same a priori procedures to minimize the potential for common method variance (Podsakoff et al. 2003) from Study 1 were used in this study as well.

After establishing familiarity and usage, respondents were then presented with survey items regarding a single familiar and used brand, which was "piped" into each item. If respondents indicated they were familiar with and used more than one of the brands, they were randomly assigned to only one of those brands. Respondents who did not meet the familiarity and use criteria were asked to provide the name of their current cellular service provider and answer the subsequent questions with respect to that brand. Rating scales from extant literature were utilized to capture attachment to the *brand* (10-point scale, 1 = "completely" to 10 = "not at all"; Park, Chen, Gallagher 2010) and *brand* attitude valence (6-point scale, same as attitude toward social media; adapted from Batra and Stayman 1990).
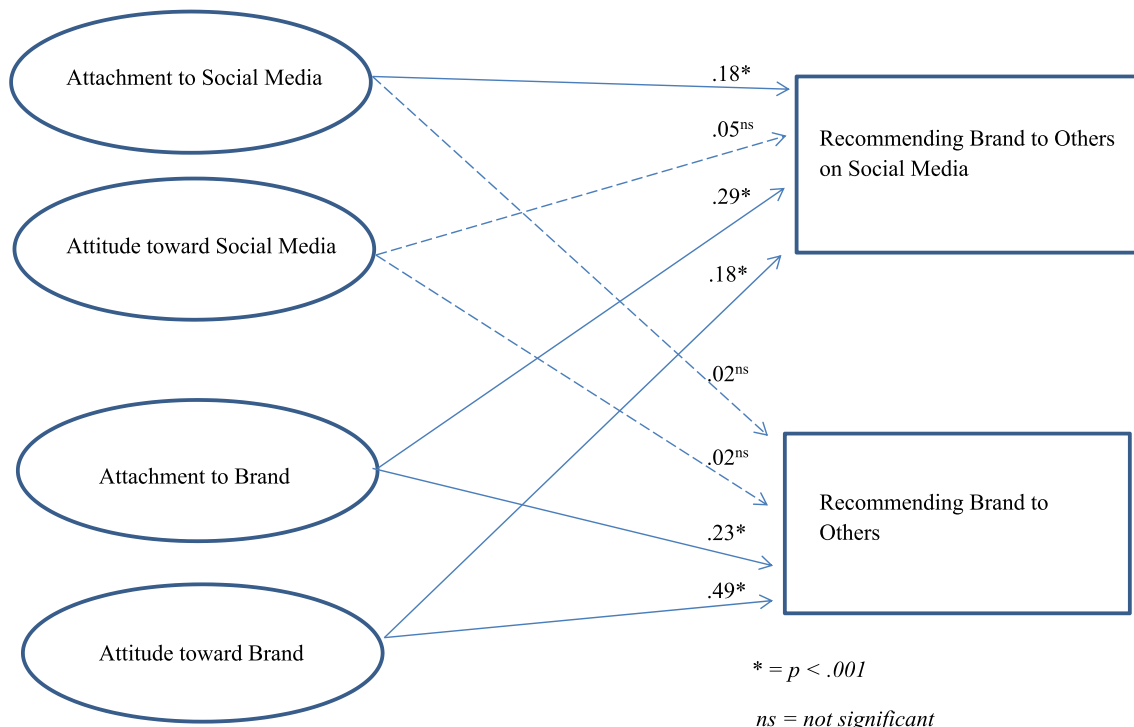

Fig. 2. Study 2: Brand and social media attachment and attitude on social media and traditional recommendation.

Regarding dependent measures, we adapted Park, Chen, Gallagher's (2010) 0-to-10 behavioral intention rating scale for use with our two recommendation intention questions (0 = "not at all likely," 5 = "neutral," and 10 = "extremely likely"). For traditional word-of-mouth, we asked, "How likely is it that you would recommend [brand] to a friend or colleague?" For the intent to recommend on social media we asked, "How likely is it that you would use social media sites to recommend [brand] to a friend or colleague?" These two recommendation items were our key dependent variables of interest.

Analysis

We tested our hypotheses by predicting the two recommendation variables simultaneously using the four brand-related and social media-related attitude and attachment measures as independent variables, as shown in Fig. 2. Prior to model estimation, we prescreened the data for multivariate outliers (Hair et al. 2010). Fourteen of the 526 cases were eliminated from further consideration due to unusual patterning of values relative to the sample as a whole (Mahalanobis distance *t*-score values greater than 3.0; Hair et al. 2010). Seventeen additional cases were removed based on regression diagnostics (Hair et al. 2010), resulting in a final estimation sample size of 495. Means, standard deviations, correlations, and alpha reliabilities for composite scales are presented in Table 2.

Our statistical model allowed the four attitude and attachment constructs to predict the two recommendation dependent variables simultaneously. We also specified brands within industry categories to control for any variation in our dependent variables that might be accounted for by the specific brand/category stimulus rated by a respondent. We applied a multivariate version of the general linear model (GLM) (Haase 2011) to estimate the proposed system of relationships in Fig. 2.

Multivariate GLM was chosen for several reasons. First, the two dependent variables are separate single-item indicators of brand-specific recommendations, making GLM more appropriate than SEM. Second, it is possible that these dependent variables correlate. Thus, an analytic approach that accommodates multiple simultaneous correlated dependent variables was desirable. Third, we sought a single model estimation that would produce an inferential significance test for the entire system of proposed interrelationships. Fourth, we wanted simultaneous estimation of each parameter estimate associated with our collective set of hypotheses. Fifth, we sought the capability to

model nested rather than crossed factors (brands nested within beverage, retail, and cellular categories respectively) to control for any brand or category influences on the dependent variables of interest. Multivariate GLM accommodated all these desired aspects.

Results

The overall test of the full multivariate GLM model was statistically significant (Wilk's Λ = .552, $F_{(8,968)}$ = 41.80, $p < .001$, multivariate η^2 = 25.7%). Each dependent variable showed statistically significant association with the set of independent variables as follows: recommendation on social media ($F_{(4,485)}$ = 29.39, $p < .001$, R-square = 19.5%), and traditional recommendation ($F_{(4,485)}$ = 80.10, $p < .001$, R-square = 39.8%). Multivariate GLM parameter estimates relating to hypotheses $H2_R$ through $H6$ are displayed over their respective paths in Fig. 2, along with indication of the outcomes of statistical significance testing. Standardized coefficients are reported to facilitate comparability given the differences in rating scales across the measures (Hair et al. 2010).

As can be seen from Fig. 2, all hypothesized relationships and patterns were supported except for one part of H_5. The effect of attitude toward social media was not statistically significant in predicting recommendation on social media. However, attachment to social media was significantly related to recommendation on social media. Even given the nonsignificant effect of attitude, this finding is consistent with Study 1 and with previous research. Specifically, in a direct pitting of attitude toward social media against ASM, when the outcome of interest is more meaningful or harder to enact, attitude does not contribute significantly when attachment is also present (Park, Chen, Gallagher 2010; VanMeter, Grisaffe, and Chonko 2015). Thus, when it comes to social media brand recommendations, as opposed to traditional word of mouth recommendations, attachment to the brand *and* attachment to social media exert more powerful influences than their respectively paired attitudinal counterparts.

Discussion

Study 2 demonstrates that brand attitude and brand attachment each plays a role in brand-specific recommendation on social media and that these roles are different than the roles they play regarding traditional word-of-mouth. Because social

Table 2
Study 2: Descriptive statistics correlations.

	Mean	SD	TRAD-REC	SM-REC	BRAND-ATTI	ABRAND	SM-ATTI	ASM
Dependent variables								
Traditional likely to recommend (TRAD-REC)	5.78	2.33	1.000					
Likely to recommend on social media (SM-REC)	3.89	2.65	.445	1.000				
Independent variables								
Attitude toward brand (BRAND-ATTI) (scale α = .94)	4.88	1.16	.644	.347	1.000			
Attachment to brand (ABRAND) (scale α = .92)	5.35	2.64	.467	.385	.440	1.000		
Attitude toward social media (SM-ATTI) (scale α = .88)	4.72	.89	.158	.141	.239	.186	1.000	
Attachment to social media (ASM) (scale α = .87)	4.60	.85	.198	.254	.238	.173	.490	1.000

media recommendation is more publicly visible and more difficult to enact, the relative role of brand attachment is stronger than in the case of the less difficult traditional form of recommendation. This finding is consistent with theory on enactment difficulty (Park, Chen, Gallagher 2010). Further, a stronger bond with social media itself (ASM) relates to higher likelihood to manifest brand specific recommendation on social media. ASM, but not attitude toward social media, adds incremental predictive value beyond brand attitude and brand attachment. This effect has not been shown previously in the literature. As a highly meaningful social media outcome, this result also parallels the findings of Study 1. Finally, when moving from less difficult to more difficult intentions, shifts in the relative contributions of the four independent variables were consistent with hypotheses H$_4$ and H$_6$, as theoretically predicted.

Study 2 sheds new light on the differential operation of brand-related and social media-related attachment and attitude effects on the two distinct dependent variables. These distinctions are important considerations for researchers studying the measurement and management of both offline and online brand advocacy (Baker, Donthu, and Kumar 2016). Attachment to the brand and attitude toward the brand are related to both online and offline brand advocacy. Regarding online brand advocacy, ASM, but not attitude toward social media, augments these effects. For marketers wishing to build strong online recommendations, it is thus not only about the brand, but it is also about the medium. Various social media strategies and engagement tactics (e.g., gamification) may strengthen the degree of bonding with social media itself, in addition to strengthening ties to the brand. Both types of attachment are important, and both contribute independently to making social media recommendation more likely.

These results contribute to the advocacy literature, specifically in the social media context, by examining individual-level predictors of both online and offline intentions to advocate. A recent study looked at content specific variables in predicting purchase and retransmission intentions (advocacy) and found only a small difference on the respective consumer intentions based on where the information came from (offline and online; Baker, Donthu, and Kumar 2016). Our study differs in two important ways. First, we investigate advocacy intentions in terms of the channel (online vs. offline); Baker, Donthu, and Kumar (2016) studied the channel in terms of the source of the word-of-mouth. Second, we investigate individual-level differences to predict advocacy via online or offline channel; Baker, Donthu, and Kumar (2016) examined differences in the content (brand word-of-mouth conversation valence, social tie strength) to predict advocacy (regardless of channel). We extend the findings from this work and investigate what drives consumers to have conversations about brands on social media by explicitly focusing on social media as the intended channel for advocacy.

The findings of Study 2 also lead us to a new question: are loyal consumers who advocate on behalf of brands via social media the same individuals who advocate for brands in more traditional ways? That is, do social media expand a brand's

advocate base above and beyond traditional advocates? Given that those who are strongly attached to social media tend to produce more meaningful social media behaviors (Study 1), and those who are attached to a brand tend to advocate for that brand in both traditional settings and on social media (Study 2), we hypothesize that consumers' overall tendency to be brand advocates has a main effect on social media brand advocacy, and interacts with ASM such that when offline brand advocacy is low, strong ASM will increase the social media brand advocacy. We, therefore, propose the following hypotheses to be examined in Study 3:

H$_8$. Overall tendency to advocate for a brand is positively related to social media brand advocacy.

H$_9$. ASM and brand advocacy interact, such that when brand advocacy is low, ASM will increase a consumer's likelihood of participating in social media brand advocacy.

Study 3

In Study 3, we expand upon both word-of-mouth and social media literature by examining the effects of brand advocacy on the relationship between ASM and brand advocacy via social media.

Method

Data was collected through an online survey administered to 958 students in subject pools at large Southwestern university. Respondents who completed the survey (n = 933) were given course credit in exchange for participation (mean age = 24, 59% female). After answering questions regarding their overall social media usage, respondents were asked to respond to scale items concerning a specific focal brand. Because we were interested in brand-specific social media behavior, we chose the following eight national brands across four product categories that are considered to be among the top most valuable brands in the world (Badenhausen 2015), have a strong social media presence (SocialBakers.com), and have a competitor that also meets the first two criteria: Wal-Mart and Target, Apple and Samsung, Coca-Cola and Pepsi, and AT&T and Verizon. Following the procedure used in Study 2, respondents reported their familiarity with, and usage of, the brands, and were then randomly assigned to a brand with which they had both a high degree of familiarity and recent usage (see Table 3).

Measures

Attitude toward social media was measured using the same scale from Studies 1 and 2 (Batra and Stayman 1990, α = .87). Respondents who passed a screening question to ensure they use social media were then asked to indicate which platforms they use and the amount of time they spent on each. ASM was measured using the same measure from Studies 1 and 2 (VanMeter, Grisaffe, and Chonko 2015, α = .86). Respondents were then directed to indicate their familiarity with and usage of each of eight brands (see Table 3). They subsequently answered

Table 3
Study 3: Product categories and brands utilized.

Product category	Brand	N
Phones or tech gadgets	Apple	182
	Samsung	78
Retailer	Wal-Mart	184
	Target	111
Cell phone provider	Verizon	41
	AT&T	118
	Name brand [a]	7
Soft drinks	Coca-Cola	141
	Pepsi	71

[a] Name brand is where the brand the respondents provided is their cell phone provider's name.

questions concerning one randomly assigned brand with which they indicated they were familiar and had recently used. As in Study 2, cellular service providers served as the focal brand for respondents who did not meet the familiarity and usage criteria for any of the eight brands.

To gauge advocacy in this study, we adapted psychometrically reliable and valid measures of the advocacy construct to a social media context. Social media brand advocacy was measured with a 7-point scale on which 1 = "describes me very well" and 7 = "does not describe me at all" (adapted from White and Schneider 2000, $\alpha = .97$) and brand-specific advocacy (not related to social media) was measured using a 7-point scale on which 1 = "highly probable" and 7 = "not at all probable" (Romani, Grappi, and Bagozzi 2013, $\alpha = .79$).

While hypotheses for Study 3 focus on the interaction of brand advocacy and ASM, Study 2 established that emotional attachment to the brand (EAB) has a significant influence on social media brand advocacy. Therefore, we measure EAB in the current study to ensure that it does not have a separate effect on social media advocacy. In addition, it is plausible that time spent on social media and attitude toward the brand may influence social media advocacy and, thus, those variables were also measured. EAB ($\alpha = .93$) and brand attitude valence ($\alpha = .94$) were collected using the same scales described in Study 2. Attitude toward social media was measured using the same scale used in Studies 1 and 2 ($\alpha = .94$). Although recent research suggests that common method variance (CMV) does not represent a serious threat to the validity of survey research (Fuller et al. 2016), the same a priori procedures to minimize the potential for CMV (Podsakoff et al. 2003) from Study 1 and Study 2 were used in this study as well. Additionally, because all variables in Study 3 consist of multi-item measures, we also empirically tested for CMV using the Single Unmeasured Latent Method Test (Podsakoff et al. 2003) and we found no evidence to suggest that CMV is biasing the results of this research.[3]

Results

The moderation analysis prescribed by Preacher and Hayes (2008) Model 1 was used to analyze the model of interest rather

than utilizing simple regression because the Preacher and Hayes method allows the interactive effects to be broken down into conditional effects of independent variables on the dependent variable at the various levels of the moderator.

The hypotheses (H_6, H_8, and H_9) propose a simple moderation model involving two main effects and an interactive effect of ASM and offline brand advocacy on social media brand advocacy. A moderated model using ordinary least squares path analysis with bias-correcting bootstrapping (10,000 re-samples and 95% confidence interval) was run using Preacher and Hayes' (2013) Model 1. This model tests the hypothesis that the influence of ASM on the social media brand advocacy is strengthened by the moderator (the individual's inherent offline brand advocacy). The model is significant ($R^2 = .33$, $F(7) = 64.39$, $p < .001$) and there are main effects of both attachment to social media ($t = 3.06$, $p = .002$) and offline brand advocacy ($t = 5.19$, $p < .001$, behaviors H_6 and H_8). In addition, there is an interaction between the two with a significant R^2 increase due to the interaction ($F(1) = 7.85$, $p = .005$, behaviors H_9, see Fig. 3 and Table 4). The conditional effects of ASM on social media brand advocacy illustrate that the interactive difference is only significant at low levels of offline brand advocacy. That is, at moderate or high levels of offline brand advocacy, ASM does not have an incremental effect on social media brand advocacy. However, at the lowest levels of offline brand advocacy, there is a significant positive effect of ASM on social media brand advocacy ($t = 2.74$, $p = .006$). Thus, when an individual is not inherently an offline brand advocate, they will be more likely to advocate for a brand on social media if they are attached to social media (see Fig. 3).

Next, to rule out alternative explanations of the results, we statistically controlled for the following covariates by including them in a stepwise progression and re-examining the hypothesized relationships[4]: EAB, attitude toward the brand, time spent on social media, and the brand. While EAB ($t = 10.31$, $p < .001$) and the brand ($t = 2.12$, $p < .034$) both have significant main effects, the hypothesized relationships remain intact for both the simple and full models. Even so, to be sure that EAB did not have an interactive effect, we tested it as an additional moderator and no interaction was found.[5] Further, attitude toward the brand and time spent on social media do not have a significant impact on social media advocacy.

Discussion

The findings of Study 3 provide guidance for brands and organizations to reach consumers who are likely to advocate for the brand via social media. In addition to consumers who are inherently more likely to advocate on behalf of brands in an offline setting, marketing practitioners can target consumers

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[3] Results of the CMV test can be found in Web Appendix C & D.

[4] For simplicity, we report the full model here, but include the simple model in the Web Appendix A Table 1.

[5] See Web Appendix B Table 2 for the investigation of the interactions for EAB.
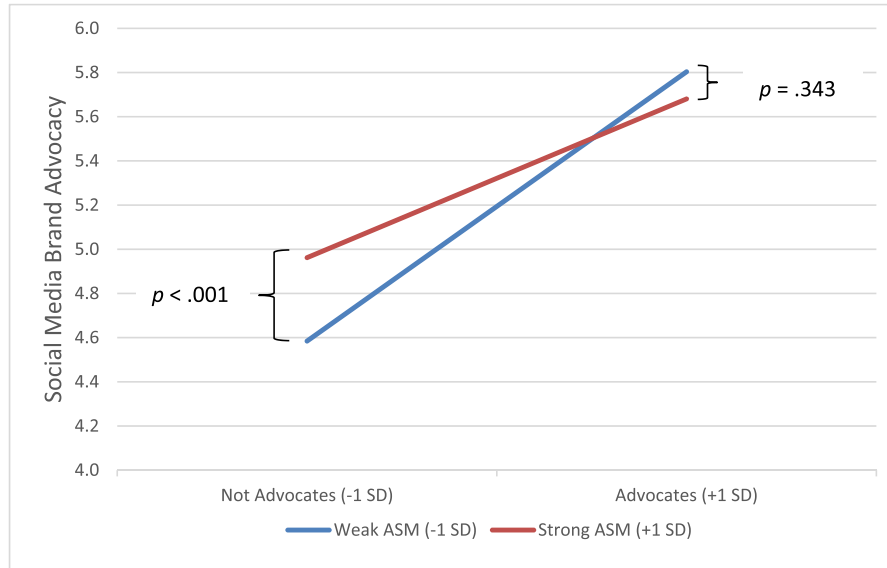
Fig. 3. Study 3: Moderation results.

who are attached to social media and encourage them to share their brand advocacy via social media. Although some consumers may not be willing to advocate via traditional means, Study 3 shows those who are strongly attached to social media will be more likely to advocate online on behalf of loved brands.

Table 4
Study 3: Full moderation model results.

Model summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.572	.328	2.412	64.388	7	925	.000

Model

	Coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	1.420	.576	2.467	.014	.290	2.549
Brand Adv.	.630	.121	5.195	.000	.392	.868
ASM	.371	.121	3.063	.002	.133	.609
ASM × Brand Adv.	−.088	.031	−2.803	.005	−.150	−.026
EAB	.238	.023	10.313	.000	.193	.283
Attitude brand	−.019	.056	−.336	.737	−.128	.091
Brand	.047	.022	2.119	.034	.003	.090
Time	.001	.003	.234	.815	−.005	.006

R-square increase due to interaction(s)

	R^2-chng	F	df1	df2	p
ASM × Brand Adv.	.006	7.854	1	925	.005

Conditional effect of X on Y at values of the moderator(s)

Brand Adv.	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
1.9728	.198	.072	2.738	.006	.056	.339
3.462	.067	.056	1.189	.235	−.043	.177
4.9511	−.064	.074	−.873	.383	−.209	.080

Discussion and Conclusions

Across three studies, we demonstrate that ASM is a driver of *meaningful* social media behaviors. This is an important contribution to the social media literature as it allows marketing managers and practitioners to understand the potential benefits of a carefully crafted social media marketing strategy and campaign. In Study 1, we authenticate the idea that not all behaviors performed on social media are equal and that they can be categorized into token and meaningful behaviors. Additionally, we affirm that both attitude toward social media and ASM are predictive of token behaviors, while only ASM is predictive of more important meaningful social media behaviors. In Study 2, we incorporate literature related to EAB and ASM to focus on organizationally valuable advocacy behavior both offline and online (via social media). The findings reveal that traditional consumer advocacy (i.e., offline) is predicted by EAB and attitude toward the brand; however, for social media advocacy, ASM, not attitude toward social media is predictive. While EAB and attitude toward the brand are also significant predictors of social media advocacy, ASM adds incremental predictive value beyond those effects. In Study 3, we demonstrate that ASM strengthens the influence of brand advocacy on the meaningful behavior of social media advocacy. A key takeaway of this research is that an individual's level of ASM drives *meaningful* social media interactions with brands and organizations, more so than attitude toward social media, attitude toward the brand, or the amount of time spent on social media.

Theoretical Implications

Social media marketing continues to change the way consumers interact with brands; however, it has been unclear how traditional theoretical constructs translate into this new

medium. This research extends the domains of both the attachment and attitude literature by asserting that, in a social media context, ASM is important in predicting behaviors that will have a considerable impact on brand conversations via social media. This research is unique in that it represents a first attempt to categorize social media behaviors using the token vs. meaningful framework. Additionally, through various measures and methods, this research demonstrates that ASM is a driver of *meaningful* social media behaviors.

Managerial Implications

Eighty-seven percent of marketers are trying to understand social media relative to their ideal customers and prospects (Stelzner 2017). Managers are looking for effective ways to incorporate social media into their marketing strategy, encourage engagement and positive consumer-generated content, as well as promote eWOM. This research provides an enhanced roadmap into the psyche of the individual social media consumer and demonstrates that ASM is a precursor to meaningful social media behaviors. Specifically, while mere attitude toward social media is predictive of token behaviors performed on social media, it is not predictive of meaningful behaviors in this environment. Meaningful behaviors are the type of behaviors we expect loyal customers to perform. Thus, by identifying and targeting consumers who are more strongly attached to social media, marketing managers can identify consumers who are more likely to interact and engage with their brand or organization via social media.

This research may also provide insight into why some social media campaigns are so effective, and others were not. Interestingly, it appears several companies have focused on consumers who are strongly attached to social media, perhaps without knowing it. The construct of ASM is comprised of eight dimensions, including nostalgia and influence. Several successful social media campaigns reference these two dimensions. For example, nostalgia is an element commonly incorporated in social media campaigns such as "Throwback Thursdays" (#TBT). As of March 2017, a search for #TBT on Instagram yields over 362 million posts, many attributed to brands (i.e., Pepsi, Southwest, and Red Bull have all developed #TBT content). Throwback Thursdays are noted as a good idea for businesses to utilize when creating social media content because TBT-themed content demonstrates: 1) the longevity of the company; 2) the relevancy of the company; 3) the personality of the company, and 4) the creativity of the company (Frasco 2013). Our findings may provide an additional reason why #TBT campaigns are effective — because they reach consumers who use social media to connect with personally meaningful past experiences.

Another common social media strategy taps into the desire to influence others via social media. In early 2014, P & G's Always #LikeAGirl social media campaign was largely successful, achieving 53 million views on YouTube within one week and producing meaningful brand outcomes — Always saw a double-digit percentage increase in brand equity during the campaign, while most competitors saw a decline (Carter 2015). The results of this campaign align with the work of Baker, Donthu, and Kumar (2016), which suggests consumers *want* to share positive messages. Therefore, brand-related social media campaigns should focus on positive themes that motivate consumers to talk about the brand both online and offline. The success of the Always brand is also consistent with findings reported herein, as the desire to share social media content that positively influences others is a dimension of ASM and therefore may contribute to successful outcomes like those of the #LikeAGirl campaign.

Furthermore, given widespread attention to recommendation as a key corporate performance indicator and the heightened corporate interest in leveraging social media for marketing purposes, deeper understanding of recommendation processes in a social media environment is helpful because it allows organizations to potentially increase consumers' willingness to recommend a brand via social media. This contribution has important practical value given the advantages of social media's reach and frequency over other promotional tools, and the important theoretical differences characterizing conditions under which customers are willing to exert heightened personal resources to recommend a brand on social media.

Future Research

While the results are quite robust, it is important to note that the 27-item ASM scale may be considered cumbersome for practitioner use. For that reason, we recommend the development of a short form of the ASM scale, which would be more practical for industry usage. Additionally, while it has been theorized that strategic social media usage enables brands and organizations to develop deeper connections with customers, as well as build affinity and loyalty (Powers et al. 2012), a casual linkage has yet to be established. An important avenue for future research would be to expand upon the outcome variables examined in our studies by investigating whether high-ASM consumers are more likely to demonstrate greater affinity and loyalty for brands with which they are connected on social media. Further, another direction for future research would be to examine whether high-ASM consumers spend more on the brands and companies with which they are connected via social media. This work opens the door to a host of research opportunities. Currently, influencer marketing is becoming more popular in both academic research and industry practices, as 84% of marketers anticipate using influencer marketing to push their products in the next twelve months (Agrawal 2016). While influencer marketing is an interesting and worthy area of investigation, these individuals are being paid to explicitly post meaningful material and thus fall outside the scope of our work being paid to explicitly post meaningful material. By contrast, ASM helps to identify individuals whose attachment to social media facilitates a desire to influence others for primarily intrinsic reasons. ASM could, therefore, offer important new insights into more organically occurring influencer behaviors.

Appendix A. Supplementary Data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2018.03.003.

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