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Engagement with Social Media and Social Media Advertising: The Differentiating Role of Platform Type

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This study examines how consumers' engagement with social media platforms drives engagement with advertising embedded in these platforms and, subsequently, evaluations of this advertising. Our survey (N = 1,346, aged 13 and older) maps social media users' engagement experiences with Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, Pinterest, and Snapchat and their experiences with and evaluations of advertising on these platforms. Our findings show that engagement is highly context specific; it comprises various types of experiences on each social media platform such that each is experienced in a unique way. Moreover, on each platform, a different set of experiences is related to advertising evaluations. It is further shown that engagement with social media advertising itself is key in explaining how social media engagement is related to advertising evaluations. The general conclusion is that there is no such thing as "social media."

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Advertisers are enthusiastically integrating social media into their advertising programs to drive digital engagement. For example, stating “digital engagement is key to us,” sports brand Adidas recently announced it will focus its marketing efforts exclusively on digital and social channels (McCarthy 2017). The effectiveness of such digital engagement programs is usually assessed with social media monitoring tools providing quantitative metrics, such as the number of likes, shares, comments, opens, views, followers, or clicks, as indicators of level of engagement or valence of engagement (positive or negative comments). Growth among these engagement metrics is often thought to stem from creative execution of ads. With A/B testing, for example, various colors, calls to action, background images, photos, and the like are juxtaposed to examine which option best stimulates engagement (Scheinbaum 2016).

Academic research also tends to focus on the executional factors in the content of the ad that drive digital engagement (e.g., Ashley and Tuten 2015; De Vries and Carlson 2014). We diverge from such approaches. We postulate that on social media the context (i.e., the platform), not the content, of advertising is a key determinant of its effectiveness. Although media context research shows that engagement with magazines, TV programs, and websites can carry over to evaluations of advertising included in the medium (Malthouse, Calder, and Tamhane 2007; Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel 2009; Calder, Isaac, and Malthouse 2016), to the authors' knowledge, this has never been tested with social media. Moreover, we argue that it is unlikely or inappropriate to equate engagement with a *medium* with advertising effectiveness because it disregards engagement with the embedded advertising. We therefore suggest that engagement with a social media platform spills over into how people engage with advertising within the platform and consequently affects ad evaluations. The main aim of the study is to examine the relation between social media engagement and social media advertising. However, to be able to examine this relation, we first need to understand consumer engagement with social media.

To advance our knowledge of (social media) engagement and the consequences for advertising embedded in social media platforms, we adopt the engagement experience framework. This framework suggests that digital engagement develops from digital experiences and has three distinctive characteristics (Calder, Isaac, and Malthouse 2016). First, the engagement experience framework fits the media engagement literature, explaining consumer–media interactions, and therefore enables us to advance knowledge on social media engagement. Second, this approach differs from the more quantitative approaches that emphasize intensity of engagement (e.g., intensity of media or advertising use) or valence of engagement (e.g., positive or negative posts in response to advertising) allowing for context-specific, instead of a one-size-fits-all, measurement of engagement that can vary among social media platforms. Third, this conceptualization of engagement was demonstrated to be predictive of advertising effectiveness (Davis Mersey, Malthouse, and Calder 2010) and thus advances our knowledge of the relation between media engagement and advertising, or social media engagement and social media advertising more specifically. In sum, we uniquely examine the more qualitative aspects of engagement with social media and with advertising on these platforms.

Unfortunately, there is little academic research to guide us. Examinations are scarce of how various social media platforms and advertising embedded on these platforms are experienced. Insight into experiences comprising engagement can further substantiate decisions about which messages to advertise on social media and on which social media platform brands may choose to be active. This may ultimately result in better theories about how advertising on social media works. At the moment, however, theory building is problematic because almost all existing studies of social media advertising (for an excellent review, see Knoll 2016) focus on social media in general (e.g., Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit 2011; Okazaki, Rubio, and Campo 2014; Van Noort, Antheunis, and Verlegh 2014) or on one specific social media platform, such as Facebook (e.g., Chi 2011; Chu 2011; Nelson-Field, Riebe, and Sharp 2012), YouTube (Liu-Thompkins 2012; Walther et al. 2010), Twitter (Liu, Burns, and Hou 2017; Sook Kwon et al. 2014), or Pinterest (Phillips, Miller, and McQuarrie 2014). Social media, so it seems, is regarded as either an umbrella concept or a specific social medium seen as exemplary for all social media. As a result, few studies employ a holistic approach that directly compares social media platforms (Smith, Fischer, and Yongjian 2012; Roy et al. 2017). Because this could result in disconnected insights, theory building might be impeded.

This study makes four contributions. First, we advance research on digital engagement by giving insight into consumers' engagement with eight social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Google+, Snapchat, Instagram,

and Pinterest). Second, we demonstrate that digital engagement is highly context specific. Engagement comprises various types of experiences for every social media platform, and the term *social media* is therefore unnecessarily (and perhaps harmfully) nonspecific. Third, we map engagement with advertising on these platforms to show whether this is a key variable in learning how advertising on social media works. Finally, and most importantly, we connect the literatures on digital engagement and context effects, and go beyond existing research that demonstrates the relationship between media engagement and advertising evaluation. We accomplish this by comparing how various types of experiences that constitute engagement with both social media platforms and advertising on these platforms affect evaluations of advertisements on various social media platforms.

Methodologically, this study is interesting because it employs a single-source approach. Consumers (aged 13 and older) were asked to report their experiences on multiple platforms in a similar way to guarantee that direct comparisons among social media platforms could be made in an externally valid way. Instead of asking about experiences with the platforms in general—for example, the way Malthouse, Calder, and Tamhane (2007) did for magazines—consumers were asked about their recent concrete social media consumption moments.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Conceptualization of Engagement

Conceptualizing engagement is challenging. For consumer–brand engagement specifically, many distinctive definitions exist (Hollebeek 2011). In this study we adopt an engagement approach which fits the media engagement literature and which was demonstrated to be predictive of advertising effectiveness (Davis Mersey, Malthouse, and Calder 2010). Therefore, we conceptualize engagement, in line with Calder, Isaac, and Malthouse (2016), as “a multilevel, multidimensional construct that emerges from the thoughts and feelings about one or more rich experiences involved in reaching a personal goal” (p. 40). Central to this view is the notion that engagement is manifested in various experiences (Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel 2009). Although this is an emergent view in the literature, its utility was demonstrated by multiple studies demonstrating that engagement differs between brands and products. For example, it was demonstrated that engagement with a newspaper is predictive of consumption behavior (e.g., readership of a newspaper) and that engagement with TV programs is predictive of evaluations of embedded advertising (Calder, Isaac, and Malthouse 2016). This approach clearly differs from approaches that conceptualize engagement as intensity of behavior or media use (e.g., readership, likes, shares). In fact, according to the current approach, use (or media or ad consumption) is dependent on the qualitative experiences with

the medium. Applying this approach to social media, engagement with social media and with advertising on social media results from how the medium and the advertising are experienced. Following the lead of Calder, Isaac, and Malthouse (2016), we explicitly contend that engagement is context specific: It varies across contexts. In the current study, context is defined as the environment of the ad provided by the vehicle carrying it: the medium context. More specifically, we focus on the total medium context (i.e., the social media platform), which conforms to Moorman, Neijens, and Smit (2002). Thus, in this study, the context of social media advertising is the social media platform.

In this study, the experiences comprising social media engagement are defined as the emotional, intuitive experiences or perceptions that people undergo when using a particular medium at a particular moment. These experiences can be multidimensional, such as satisfying the need to find useful information, fill empty moments, and do or share something with others. This definition is comparable to that used by Bronner and Neijens (2006), Malthouse, Calder, and Tamhane (2007), and Calder, Isaac, and Malthouse (2016). We investigate consumers' concrete experiences during a media consumption moment. Therefore, we use the term *media experience* to refer to the specific experiences during a concrete social media consumption moment. Social media engagement is the sum of these specific social media experiences (Calder, Isaac, and Malthouse 2016). Analogous to social media engagement, social media advertising engagement is the sum of experiences that people obtain while being confronted with social media advertising on that platform.

To explain the role of social media advertising engagement, we first delve into what actually drives advertising engagement, that is, engagement with the social media platform.

Engagement across Social Media Platforms

In media research, many studies have been conducted to identify the categories of experiences that constitute media engagement or can explain media use, such as information, transportation, interaction, identification, and pastime (e.g., Bronner and Neijens 2006; Malthouse, Calder, and Tamhane 2007). Earlier studies have been conducted on experiences with social media, but they tend to focus on social media in general (e.g., Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit 2011; Gironde and Korgaonkar 2014) or on one specific social media platform (e.g., Chi 2011; Sook Kwon et al. 2014; Phillips, Miller, and McQuarrie 2014; Utz, Muscanell, and Khalid 2015). Regardless of the lack of studies that directly compare social media platforms, we expect that people actively use and engage with the various platforms differently based on the unique characteristics that each offers in terms of functionalities, interface, and content.

Though social media can broadly be defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and

technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, p. 61), many variations and types of social media exist. Facebook (a social network), Snapchat (an instant photo messaging application), Instagram (a photo-sharing application), Twitter (a microblogging application), LinkedIn (a business- and employment-oriented social networking service), Google+ (an interest-based social network), and Pinterest (a "catalog of ideas" or photo-sharing website) represent different types of social media, each with unique architectures, cultures, and norms (Van Dijk 2013). For example, while Snapchat allows users to share 10-second videos, and Twitter allows them to share brief tweets of 140 characters (with hashtags, @mentions, a photo or video, URLs, or geotags), a platform such as Facebook allows communication using more elaborate messages.

Previous conceptual articles on the phenomenon of social media (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010; Kietzmann et al. 2011; Zhu and Chen 2015) have categorized social media platforms along several dimensions. For instance, Zhu and Chen (2015) developed a typology based on two characteristics of social media: nature of connection (profile based versus content based) and level of customization of messages (the degree to which a service is customized to satisfy an individual's particular preferences). Together these two defining characteristics lead to four categories of social media:

1. *Relationship* represents social media platforms that are profile based and consist mostly of customized messages; this category includes platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn.
2. *Self-media* platforms are also profile based but offer people the chance to manage their own social media communication channels. A typical example is Twitter.
3. *Creative outlet* platforms are content based and allow users to share their interests and creativity, for example, YouTube and Instagram.
4. Finally, *collaboration* platforms are also content based but allow people to ask questions, get advice, or find the most interesting news and content of the day.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) argue that social presence/media richness and self-presentation/self-disclosure are the defining characteristics of social media. Using these characteristics, they distinguish collaborative projects, blogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds. Finally, Kietzmann et al. (2011) distinguish social media platforms by using seven functional building blocks: identity ("the extent to which users reveal their identities in a social media setting," p. 243), conversations ("the extent to which users communicate with other users," p. 244), sharing ("the extent to which users exchange distribute, and receive content," p. 245), presence ("the extent to which users can know if other users are accessible," p. 245),

relationships (“the extent to which users can be related to other users,” p. 246), reputation (“the extent to which users can identify the standing of others, including themselves,” p. 247), and groups (“the extent to which users can form communities and sub communities,” p. 247). Different social media platforms are defined by the extent to which they focus on some or all of these blocks. Next to these categorizations that exist in the literature, social media platforms also differ on many other characteristics, for instance, modality, private versus public access to content, privacy parameters, type of connections (friends/colleagues), and longevity of content accessibility. It is likely that all of these characteristics contribute to different engagement experiences among social media platforms.

We postulate that, because of the many differences among platforms, each offers a unique context for advertising. Moreover, advertising itself appears differently. For example, on Instagram, companies advertise by using attractive pictures, whereas on Snapchat, they make sponsored lenses available, or on Twitter, they post short messages (e.g., Newberry 2016). We expect these differences to translate into different experiences with a platform and the advertising embedded within it, which is in line with Calder, Isaac, and Malthouse (2016), who contend that engagement is variable across domains, product categories, and brands. This leads to the following hypotheses (see Figure 1):

H1: Social media engagement experiences differ across social media platforms.

H2: Social media advertising engagement differs across social media platforms.

How Social Media Engagement Drives Advertising Evaluations

As discussed previously, the social media platform can be seen as the context for social media advertising; the social media platform provides the environment of the ad. Media context studies provide compelling evidence for the idea that the same source delivering the same message to the same audience on separate occasions produces different effects depending on the context in which the message appears (Norris and Colman 1992). Engagement with a medium can be seen as an essential context characteristic that drives responses to advertising (Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel 2009). Earlier empirical research shows that engagement with a magazine, television program, or online newspaper affects reactions to

advertising embedded in these vehicles (Malthouse, Calder, and Tamhane 2007; Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel 2009; Calder, Isaac, and Malthouse 2016). These studies show there is a carryover effect of engagement with a vehicle to advertising evaluations. The more engaged a consumer is in a television program, magazine, or online newspaper, the more favorable the evaluation of the embedded advertisement. We propose that a similar relationship exists when social media is the vehicle and therefore present the following hypothesis:

H3: Engagement with a social media platform is positively related to social media advertising evaluations, and this relationship is contingent on the social media platform (see Figure 1).

The Role of Social Media Advertising Engagement

Although we believe that the relationship proposed in hypothesis 3 holds for social media, we also believe that investigating the direct relationship between engagement with a medium and effectiveness of advertising included in the medium is implausible, because there could be intervening variables explaining the relationship. We therefore investigate whether engagement with social media advertising itself is a driver of advertising evaluations. When studying theoretical explanations for the influence of media engagement on advertising evaluations, it seems that the explanatory role of advertising engagement is most likely assumed but never explicitly tested. The theoretical explanations we discuss in the following section point to possible carryover effects from media engagement to advertising *engagement* rather than from media engagement to advertising *evaluations*.

In the context literature (e.g., Dahlén 2005; Malthouse, Calder, and Tamhane 2007; Moorman, Neijens, and Smit 2007; Moorman et al. 2012; De Pelsmacker, Geuens, and Anckaert 2002), three primary theoretical explanations are proposed for why context—in this case, engagement with a social media platform—influences the evaluations of advertisements. These theoretical explanations are nicely summarized by Dahlén (2005; also see Malthouse, Calder, and Tamhane 2007, p. 8; and Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel 2009, p. 324) and point to how media engagement influences engagement with advertising.

First, based on the notion of priming, Dahlén (2005) argues that the context serves as a cognitive prime that “activates a semantic network of related material that guides attention and determines the interpretation of the ad” (p. 90; Malthouse, Calder, and Tamhane 2007, p. 8). To apply this to social media engagement, if a social media platform is experienced as topical, priming increases the likelihood that ads embedded in the platform are also experienced in such a way.

Second, the mood congruency–accessibility hypothesis states: “The ad context makes a certain mood or affect more accessible and relieves the processing of stimuli with similar moods or affects” (Dahlén 2005, p. 90; Malthouse, Calder, and

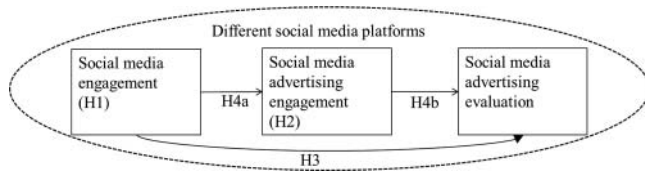


FIG. 1. Conceptual model of social media advertising engagement.

Tamhane 2007, p. 8). This could, for example, mean that if Facebook is experienced as relaxing, and consumers encounter relaxing ads on Facebook, the similarity between the two would enhance processing and thus advertising evaluations.

The third explanation is the congruity principle. Dahlén (2005) describes congruity as the point where “the medium and the advertised brand converge and become more similar in consumers’ minds” (p. 90). For example, if a user experiences Instagram as relaxing, ads will be perceived as integral parts of the platform and therefore probably will be experienced in a similar way. Therefore, while earlier studies use these theoretical explanations to describe why media engagement influences advertising evaluations, we argue that it is more appropriate to assume a relationship between media engagement and advertising engagement.

As a result, we postulate that if social media platforms and advertising embedded in them are engaging in similar ways so that there is a fit between them, it is more likely that this fit will result in ad evaluations that are more positive (Moorman, Neijens, and Smit 2002; Voorveld and Valkenburg 2015). The reason could be that a fit between the engagement dimensions of a platform and its embedded advertising is more likely to translate into advertising that caters to consumers’ needs when experiencing a certain platform, at least if an ad is not ignored or avoided. For example, if Twitter is experienced as a platform that gives consumers useful information and assures they are up to date, advertising on Twitter may also need to give consumers useful and up-to-date information to be appreciated. On other social media platforms, other dimensions of engagement might be more prevalent; thus, embedded advertising needs to cater to those forms of engagement. Of course, there may be variables that complicate this relationship, but we believe it is interesting to investigate to what extent engagement with a social media platform and its embedded advertising are related and whether, for different platforms, different advertising engagement experiences are associated with social media advertising evaluations.

H4: (a) Engagement with a social media platform is related to engagement with advertising on that platform, and (b) social media advertising engagement subsequently affects social media advertising evaluations (see Figure 1).

METHOD

Design and Procedure

In our study we chose to focus on eight social media: five that are the most used in the Western European country in which the study was conducted (Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Google+) and three that represent the fastest growing number of users worldwide (Instagram, Pinterest, and Snapchat) (Newcom Research and Consultancy 2015). Our examination of each social media platform through a single-source approach allows them to be compared in terms of the

experiences comprising engagement, because all were measured in the same way in one representative sample. The design of the study was inspired by an earlier series of studies of experiences with traditional media (e.g., TV, magazines, newspapers) conducted in 1997, 2003, 2007, and 2011 and sponsored by many important players in the Dutch media field (e.g., Bronner 1999; Bronner and Neijens 2006).

Central to our approach was the absence of forced exposure (typically done in experiments) and the absence of measuring engagement with social media in general (e.g., “I use Snapchat frequently”). Instead, we concentrated on the engagement experience of consumers at a specific media consumption moment, which is consistent with our earlier definition that focuses on the social media “experience.” The reason for this was that consumers most likely cannot reliably report their experiences in general because (social) media usage usually occurs over a short time span and can be trivial and easily forgotten (Kim, Sohn, and Choi 2011; Voorveld et al. 2013; Bronner and Neijens 2006).

Respondents were first asked whether they recently used one or more of the eight previously described social media platforms. If they did, they were asked questions (date, time, place, device, and so on) about the most recent moment in which that particular platform was used, thus making the media consumption moment more salient. They were then asked about their engagement experiences with the platform during that moment, followed by a question about whether advertising was seen during that moment. If they did encounter advertising, they were asked to respond to items measuring advertising engagement experiences followed by items measuring advertising evaluation. These questions were posed to all respondents about each of the eight social media platforms in a random order (see Figure 2).

Participants and Data Collection

The data were collected by the market research agency TNS NIPO at the end of 2015. They approached members of its panel (aged 13 and older) who indicated regular use of social media. Respondents in this panel receive a certain amount of credits for completing surveys. A screening question checked whether at least one of the eight social media platforms was used in the past week. Questionnaire length was determined based on the number of social media platforms the respondent used in the prior week. On average, 13 minutes were required for questionnaire completion. A total of 1,919 respondents participated in the survey (response rate: 46%), of which 1,346 used at least one of the social media platforms. After weighting, the sample represented the Dutch population aged 13 and older. The average age of social media users in the sample was 43 years old and consisted of as many men as women. In this sample 19% had only a primary school education, 42% secondary education, and 39% higher education. These respondents described 3,299 media consumption moments across the eight social media platforms studied.

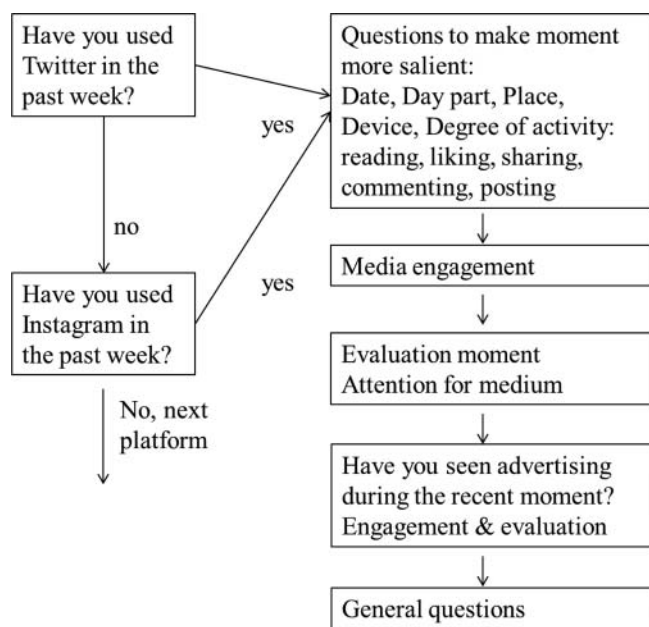


FIG. 2. Illustration of the method.

Measures

Social media engagement. Engagement with the various social media platforms was measured using 42 experience items (see Table 1) based largely on a study about media experiences with traditional media (Bronner and Neijens 2006; see supplemental appendix). The items were successfully used in several data collection efforts, all with similar underlying factor structures (e.g., Bronner 1999; Bronner and van Velthoven 2008; Bronner, Kuijpers, and Huizenga 2012). Because the original study focused on traditional media, some items were added to describe experiences especially appropriate or unique for social media, based on the work by Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit (2011) (i.e., “Made sure I could vent my opinion”; “Made sure I could help others”; “Made me feel that I had influence on others”; “Made sure (hopefully) that others like me respect me”). Use of a predetermined list of experiences (with some additional items), instead of performing qualitative research to develop an exhaustive list of possible experiences, was believed to be adequate. We chose this approach for two reasons. First, earlier research showed that consumers’ motivations to use online media, and experiences with these media are rather stable (Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit 2011). To illustrate: Ainscough (1996) observed, “At the end of the day those people who visit an Internet site are still people and still subject to the same motivations . . . and the same desires as people looking at your TV commercial” (p. 47). Second, our goal was not to devise an exhaustive list of experiences related to social media but to compare eight social media platforms. Because many aspects and many platforms were involved, no rating scales could be employed, as this would impose too

heavy a burden on respondents, which would lower the quality of the data; instead, we opted for a dichotomy (*Experienced* versus *Not experienced*, conforming to Bronner and Neijens 2006). Participants were presented with the list of experience items and were asked to check all experience items that were applicable to their previously identified social media moment.

A principal components analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation was conducted on the entire data set with all social media consumption moments as a unit of analysis, revealing 11 dimensions (see Table 1). These 11 dimensions show great similarities to the dimensions extracted in earlier studies of traditional media in 2011 but with some interpretable differences (see supplemental appendix). The most important difference is the disappearance of a dimension that was earlier dubbed “information.” While earlier studies of traditional media clearly showed such a dimension, the items included in this dimension were now scattered over the other 11 dimensions. Next, existing dimensions capturing social interaction and practical use were more clearly noticeable in the social media data than they were in the 2011 traditional media data. Finally, we detected that the social media data revealed two dimensions, rather than one, comprising negative emotions. One was related to the actual content and the other to the medium/platform. All dimensions (except one) were measured with multiple items. We calculated the percentage of checked items within a dimension for every social media platform, so we factored multiple dichotomous items to create one score for every dimension and social media platform. Given the binary nature of the data, we verified the results of the PCA with an additional analysis that is appropriate for categorical items: CATPCA (Linting and van der Kooij 2012). All items except one (“Gave me credible information”) loaded on the same dimension as in the original PCA.

Exposure to social media advertising. To measure whether people were confronted with advertising during their most recent media consumption moment, we asked them whether they saw “a message from a product, brand, company or organization.” We purposefully did not ask about exposure to advertising, because advertising on social media can take many different forms and is often more subtle (Ashley and Tuten 2015; Campbell and Marks 2015; Mangold and Faulds 2009).

Social media advertising engagement. If respondents indicated they encountered “a message from a product, brand, company, or organization” during the recent consumption moment, we then asked about the experience with and for an evaluation of this advertising. Engagement experiences and advertising evaluations could not be measured at the specific ad level because this would have made the questionnaire too unwieldy. We therefore decided to compromise by rating social media advertising in its entirety at the specific moment (conforming to Bronner and Neijens 2006). To measure social media advertising engagement, we used a subset of items used to measure social media engagement but then applied it to social media advertising engagement. For example, the item

TABLE 1
Instrument Used to Measure Engagement

11 Experience Dimensions	Items (Factor Loadings between Brackets)
Entertainment (EV = 2.57; R^2 = 6.12%)	Gave me enjoyment (.43); <i>made me cheerful</i> (.67); gave me a pleasant feeling (.61); gave me a satisfied feeling (.48); made me forget everything for a moment (.59); was relaxing (.58); was suitable for a moment by myself (.44)
Negative emotion related to content (EV = 2.14; R^2 = 5.09%)	Disturbed me (.74); made me sad (.73); taught me about what is going on in the world (.45); I felt involved in it (.42)
Negative emotion related to platform (EV = 1.06; R^2 = 2.61%)	<i>Annoyed me</i> (.50); <i>was rather unclear</i> (.79)
Pastime (EV = 1.16; R^2 = 2.76%)	<i>Filled an empty moment</i> (.73)
Stimulation (EV = 1.93; R^2 = 4.58%)	<i>Made me enthusiastic</i> (.47); fascinated me (.51); <i>was original and unique</i> (.54); kept me informed of new trends (.54); <i>offered me something new</i> (.46)
Identification (EV = 1.54; R^2 = 3.66%)	<i>I recognized myself in it</i> (.61); I empathized with it (.54); <i>made sure I could vent my opinion</i> (.42)
Practical use (EV = 1.81; R^2 = 4.31%)	Provided me with useful ideas/tips/advice (.60); <i>motivated me to visit a shop/search for more information</i> (.47); showed me how I could approach problems (.56); <i>gave me credible information</i> (.42); <i>gave me the opportunity to come into contact with new things, to be surprised</i> (.42)
Social interaction (EV = 2.11; R^2 = 5.01%)	<i>Enabled me to do or share something with others</i> (.49); gave me the possibility to know how it is with others (.59); made sure I am in contact with others (.64); <i>gives subject of conversation</i> (.52); enabled me to gain knowledge of the opinions of others (.49)
Innovation/trendsetter (EV = 1.18; R^2 = 2.81%)	Made sure I was ahead of others, in the lead (.80); made sure (hopefully) that others like me, respect me (.41)
Topicality (EV = 1.72; R^2 = 4.10%)	Made sure I was quickly informed (.66); <i>made sure I was up to date</i> (.62); <i>gave me useful information</i> (.44)
Empowerment (EV = 1.44; R^2 = 3.43%)	Made sure I could help others (.65); made me feel that I had influence on others (.71)

Note. Italics = also measured for advertising. Based on principal components analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation on data set with all social media consumption moments. Three items from the original instrument used to measure media experience of traditional media did not load on any factor ($< .40$) and did not substantially fit to the factor with the highest factor loading: helped me in forming an opinion; excited me; made me curious. More details on differences between the current and original instrument, see appendix.

“Enabled me to do or share something with others,” used to measure social media engagement, was also used to measure social media advertising engagement: “The messages from a product, brand, company, or organization that I encountered” ... “enabled me to do or share something with others.”

Instead of repeating all 42 items, we used a subset of 16 items of the social media engagement measure to maintain an acceptable respondent burden. Although only 10 items were used in the 2011 study, we used more items to make sure that the measure sufficiently captures the rich experiences with digital advertising in social media. We also used at least one item in every dimension from the 2011 questionnaire. However, because the factor structure was different than what was used in the 2011 study of traditional media, three engagement dimensions were ultimately not addressed: innovation, empowerment, and negative emotions related to the content.









Social media advertising evaluation. Evaluation of social media advertising encountered in the recent consumption moment was measured with two items on a 7-point scale (*Not likable at all* to *Very likeable*; *Not relevant at all* to *Very relevant*; Smit, Van Meurs, and Neijens 2006). Correlations among these items were significant for all platforms (ranging from .77 to .95).

RESULTS

How Social Media Engagement Differs across Platforms (Hypothesis 1)

We found clear differences between the different social media platforms when examining the various engagement dimensions confirming hypothesis 1 (see Table 2). The differences are evaluated in two ways: first, by discussing each platform and giving insight into how each is experienced

TABLE 2
Social Media Engagement with the Different Platforms

									<i>M</i>	<i>F</i> (7, 3100) ^a
<i>N</i>	1,149	223	875	275	277	105	220	175		
Entertainment	16.13	8.04	24.65	2.96	7.41	25.77	20.44	20.89	15.79	48.45 ^{**}
Negative emotion related to content	14.83	16.42	3.38	2.24	5.85	4.35	7.94	1.45	7.06	42.05 ^{**}
Negative emotion related to platform	5.09	2.41	0.78	3.10	1.95	0.97	0.29	0.95	1.94	9.67 ^{**}
Pastime	22.57	12.64	14.98	9.84	12.18	16.76	26.19	15.22	16.30	6.29 ^{**}
Stimulation	7.32	7.02	11.61	4.73	8.14	6.70	11.67	26.50	10.46	33.29 ^{**}
Identification	11.40	8.41	3.18	2.74	3.55	9.21	7.15	4.63	6.28	21.33 ^{**}
Practical use	5.59	5.94	8.61	6.70	13.08	3.24	5.46	20.17	8.60	29.39 ^{**}
Social interaction	28.56	14.67	5.61	14.02	12.44	27.79	16.19	5.89	15.65	104.31 ^{**}
Innovation	2.10	3.47	1.02	1.11	1.35	5.71	3.66	1.95	2.55	5.44 ^{**}
Topicality	27.56	39.29	16.60	33.34	36.43	17.52	23.24	20.40	26.80	27.85 ^{**}
Empowerment	2.46	1.65	1.93	1.20	2.11	6.37	3.23	2.59	2.69	2.08 [*]
Sum of all dimensions	143.61	119.96	92.35	81.98	104.49	124.39	125.46	120.64		

Note. Percent checked items per dimension, 0 to 100%.

^aBased on a MANOVA with platform as fixed factor and the engagement dimensions as dependent variable on data file with all media consumption moments as cases. Wilks’s lambda = 0.52, *F* = 27.38, *p* < .001.

p* < .05; *p* < .01.

irrespective of the others; second, by interpreting the relative scores of each platform on each dimension.

Facebook. Facebook scored highest on the dimensions of social interaction and topicality. It allowed people to correspond with others, to do or share something with others, and to be quickly informed and up to date. It also scored high on the pastime dimension: Consumers used it to fill empty moments. It had moderate scores on the dimension about negative emotions related to content. Content on Facebook made users sad or disturbed in about 15% of the moments. The score on this dimension was similar to that on the entertainment dimension (16%), which describes Facebook moments as providing enjoyment, satisfaction, or relaxation.

Twitter. Twitter particularly ensured that people were quickly informed and up to date. On all dimensions other than topicality, it scored low. The dimension scoring second highest was about negative emotions related to content. It often disturbed users, made them sad, taught them about happenings in the world, or made users feel involved with it. The dimension scoring third highest (although relatively low) was social interaction.

YouTube. YouTube scored highest on the entertainment dimension: Users indicated it made them happy and relaxed, and allowed them to have a moment for themselves. On all other dimensions, it scored much lower, but the second highest score was on topicality, followed by pastime. Therefore, to a certain extent, people used YouTube to be up to date and to fill an empty moment.

LinkedIn. LinkedIn scored highest on the dimension topicality: It was perceived by users as a social medium that ensured they were quickly informed and up to date. On all other dimensions, scores were lower, even for the dimension with the second highest score, social interaction.

Google+. Google+ also scored highest on the topicality dimension: It was seen as a medium through which users are quickly updated and informed. Although the dimension practical use scored lower, respondents indicated they used Google+ to get useful ideas/tips/advice, motivating them to visit a shop or search for more information, and showing them how they could approach problems.

Snapchat. Snapchat scored highest on the social interaction and entertainment dimensions: It allowed users to do or share something with others and ensured people could correspond with others. Using Snapchat also was enjoyable, made users happy, and was relaxing. It also scored high on topicality.

Instagram. Instagram scored highest on the pastime and topicality dimensions: It was often used to fill empty moments, and it was perceived by users as a social medium that ensured they were quickly informed and up to date. Scores on entertainment and social interaction were also moderate to high.

Pinterest. Pinterest scored highest on the stimulation dimension. Users indicated the platform made them enthusiastic, was original and unique, and offered something new. It scored relatively high on the entertainment, practical use, and topicality dimensions. Using Pinterest was enjoyable and relaxing (entertainment), and it gave users practice tips, ideas,

and advice, motivating them to visit a shop or to search for more information, and ensuring they were quickly informed and up to date.

In sum, all social media platforms were experienced uniquely, and each had a distinctive profile with high and low scores on various dimensions.

Social Media Engagement per Dimension

By interpreting scores per dimension (horizontally, instead of vertically, in Table 2), advertisers can match the types of experiences that describe their communication objectives or messages to the platform that scored highest on the appropriate dimension.

Entertainment. Snapchat and YouTube scored highest on this dimension followed by Pinterest, Instagram, and Facebook. LinkedIn, Google+, and Twitter scored lowest.

Negative emotion related to content. Twitter and Facebook scored highest on this dimension; Pinterest and LinkedIn scored lowest. Advertisers might not often want to communicate a message that makes people feel sad or disturbed, but some messages might aim to evoke such feelings or at least aim to teach people about what is going on in the world or to feel involved with it. In such cases, Twitter and Facebook might fit best.

Negative emotion related to the platform. People were most often irritated when using Facebook, but in general, scores on this dimension were very low.

Pastime. On this dimension, Instagram and Facebook scored highest. If advertisers have content suitable for filling an empty moment, these platforms might provide a good fit.

Stimulation. Compared to all other platforms, Pinterest scored highest on this dimension by far. If advertisers aimed to make people enthusiastic or have original and unique content, Pinterest might be the most suitable platform.

Identification. Overall, scores on this dimension were low. However, Facebook scored highest: Slightly more than 10% of Facebook moments were experienced as users recognizing themselves or empathizing with others. LinkedIn and YouTube scored lowest.

Practical use. Pinterest scored highest on this dimension and was followed by Google+. Snapchat scored lowest. Content in which advertisers provide useful tips, give credible information on new things, or tell how to approach problems best fit with how users experience Pinterest.

Social interaction. Facebook and Snapchat scored highest on this dimension, whereas YouTube and Pinterest scored lowest. If advertisers aim for or have content suitable for sharing with others or about which users would like to communicate with others, Facebook and YouTube might be a good fit.

Innovation. All platforms scored very low on this dimension. No single platform was perceived to guarantee users they were ahead of others or could gain the fondness or respect of others.

Topicality. On this dimension, all platforms scored high, led by Twitter, Google+, and LinkedIn and trailed by YouTube and Snapchat. Apparently, all social media platforms were found to offer quick, up-to-date, and useful information.

Empowerment. Empowerment was a dimension added to the questionnaire because we believed that social media enables people to help or influence others (Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit 2011). All platforms scored extremely low on this dimension but the score was highest for Snapchat.

Comparing all engagement dimensions. These results also give useful insights into engagement with social media in general. The topicality dimension scored highest, showing that users experience social media as providers of quick, useful, and up-to-date information. In spite of lower scores, entertainment, pastime, and social interaction were also shown to be important in social media. Empowerment is seen as an important motivation for using social media, but it was not delivered by the platforms we studied. For most dimensions, at least one platform scored high relative to other platforms, giving advertisers the ability to find a platform that will provide a good fit between their advertising and users' experiences.









How Social Media Advertising Engagement Differs across Platforms (Hypothesis 2)

Before evaluating how consumers engaged with social media advertising, it was interesting to examine the large differences between platforms in the frequency of observing advertising (see Table 3). Users most often reported they were exposed to advertising on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. In approximately 30% of the reported moments, users reported they were confronted with a message from a product, brand, company, or organization. On Snapchat, only 6.67% of our respondents indicated they saw advertising; on Pinterest, it was 12%.

Although respondents saw advertising on all social media platforms, we found that consumers were generally not highly negative about seeing it (Table 3). Advertising was evaluated most negatively on YouTube, followed by Facebook and Twitter; all of these scored significantly below the midpoint of the scale. Consumers were most positive about advertising on Google+ and Pinterest.

Table 3 also shows the percentage of respondents who reported seeing one or more messages from a product, brand, company, or organization and reported having experienced these messages in a certain way. There are many differences between the social media platforms, confirming hypothesis 2, but the most striking differences were found in the negative emotions related to the platform dimension. Almost 30% of respondents were annoyed or felt confused by the advertising on YouTube, and more than 20% had these experiences with advertising on Facebook or Twitter. On the entertainment dimension, Instagram scored 12 percentage points higher than any other social media platform. On the practical use

TABLE 3
Advertising Engagement with the Different Platforms

									<i>M</i>	<i>F</i> (5,792) ^a
<i>N</i>	365	62	237	62	71	7	49	21		
Percentage of the moments in which advertising was encountered	31.77	27.80	27.09	22.55	25.63	6.67	22.27	12.00		
Mean evaluation (<i>SD</i>)	3.35 (1.67)	3.49 (1.81)	2.95 (1.84)	4.04 (1.40)	4.55 (1.59)	—	3.58 (1.87)	4.39 (1.78)		
Entertainment	3.28	0.0	5.81	1.11	4.26	—	18.67	5.30	5.49	4.53 ^{**}
Negative emotion related to platform	22.87	21.70	29.47	12.05	13.51	—	19.43	11.39	18.63	7.35 ^{**}
Pastime	6.27	1.70	3.87	7.85	5.84	—	7.44	0.00	4.71	.73
Stimulation	6.28	5.47	5.35	5.01	14.04	—	3.78	24.86	9.26	4.74 ^{**}
Identification	2.41	1.98	0.94	1.73	1.13	—	3.81	0.00	1.71	0.75
Practical use	7.32	5.89	5.08	8.55	16.47	—	6.57	12.17	8.86	4.23 ^{**}
Social interaction	4.50	3.23	2.35	5.70	6.94	—	5.02	17.48	6.46	3.08 ^{**}
Topicality	13.43	21.21	9.58	22.97	33.53	—	13.02	29.72	20.49	8.65 ^{**}
Sum of all dimensions	66.36	61.18	62.45	64.97	95.72	0	77.74	100.92		

Note. Percent checked items, 0 to 100%; evaluation: 7-point scale; — = too few respondents indicated that they encountered advertising on Snapchat.

^aBased on a MANOVA with platform as fixed factor and the engagement dimensions as dependent variable on data file with all media consumption moments as cases. Wilks’s lambda = 0.81, *F* = 3.49, *p* < .001.

p* < .05; *p* < .01.

dimension, Google+ and Pinterest scored highest. Although the scores for topicality were generally high relative to other dimensions, YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook scored considerably lower on topicality than other platforms, especially Google+ and Pinterest. Respondents experienced advertising on Pinterest, more so than on other platforms, as enabling for doing or sharing something with others or for talking about with others (social interaction). Finally, some remarkable differences were found in the stimulation dimension where, again, Pinterest scored highest, and Instagram scored lowest.









The Relationship between Engagement with a Social Media Platform and Advertising Evaluation (Hypothesis 3)

To test whether the total engagement score for a social media platform was related to evaluations of advertising on that platform (hypothesis 3), separate regression analyses for every platform were conducted, with the sum of all engagement dimensions as the independent variable and advertising evaluation as the dependent variable. Because of the small number of experiences with advertising on Snapchat (7) and Pinterest (21), regression analyses were not conducted for these platforms. Results show that a significant relationship between total engagement score and advertising evaluation exists only for Facebook ($\beta = .122, p = .02$; all other *ps* > .05).

Then, we focused on the various experience dimensions by using separate regression analyses for every dimension and

platform; again, the experience dimensions were entered as the independent variable and advertising evaluation was the dependent variable (see Table 4). We found that only a few experience dimensions were related to advertising evaluations. The practical use dimension was the only one related to a more positive evaluation of advertising on Facebook. Respondents who experienced this platform as one that provided useful ideas, tips, or advice evaluated advertising more positively. For Twitter, experiencing innovation had a positive carryover effect to advertising evaluation. Respondents who experienced Twitter as a platform that made sure they were ahead of others evaluated advertising more positively. Surprisingly, a negative carryover effect was found on the entertainment dimension for Twitter. If Twitter was enjoyable or relaxing, advertising was evaluated in a more negative way. Similar to Facebook, YouTube showed a positive relationship between the practical use dimension and advertising evaluations, but it showed an additional relationship: a negative carryover effect from the pastime dimension. If YouTube was filling an empty moment for a user, advertising was evaluated more negatively. For LinkedIn and Google+, no significant carryover effects were observed (although some were marginally significant). For Instagram, two engagement dimensions yielded significant carryover effects: stimulation and negative emotions in relation to the content. Surprisingly, a positive carryover effect was found from the latter dimension. If Instagram disturbed respondents, advertising was evaluated more positively.

TABLE 4
Relation between Social Media Engagement and Evaluation of Advertising on the Different Platforms

								
<i>N</i>	365	62	237	62	71	7	49	21
Entertainment	.05	-.49*	-.80	.04	.20	—	-.29	—
Negative emotion related to content	-.10	-.17	-.14 [†]	-.04	.04	—	.54*	—
Negative emotion related to platform	-.07	.15	-.00	—	-.20	—	.01	—
Pastime	-.10 [†]	.18	-.19**	-.28 [†]	-.16	—	.16	—
Stimulation	.10 [†]	.01	.08	.16	-.05	—	.58*	—
Identification	.09	.17	.07	.13	-.09	—	-.26	—
Practical use	.12*	-.02	.25**	.08	-.03	—	-.27	—
Social interaction	.01	.74	-.02	.02	-.25	—	-.29	—
Innovation	.07	.45**	.13 [†]	.00	.16	—	.23	—
Topicality	.03	.12	.07	.11	.25	—	-.28	—
Empowerment	.10 [†]	-.19	.02	.03	.07	—	-.40 [†]	—

Note. Betas * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; [†] $p < .10$. — = information is not available due to small sample size or constant. All regression models as a whole were significant, $p < .01$.

In sum, few carryover effects were revealed, so engagement with a social media platform in itself was not often related to evaluative reactions to advertising included in those platforms. Moreover, the carryover effects were highly contingent on the specific social media platform: Only some engagement dimensions were important in influencing advertising evaluations, and these differed across platforms.

illustrates that the relationship differs across the platforms and across engagement dimensions. For Facebook, carryover effects were the most prevalent: We found significant effects on all dimensions. In contrast, for Google+ these were less prevalent, and carryover effects were found on only two engagement dimensions. More importantly, relationships were highly contingent on the social media platform. Only for topicality was there a uniform carryover effect across all platforms.









The Relationship between Social Media Engagement and Social Media Advertising Engagement (Hypothesis 4a)

Table 5 shows the relationship between engagement with a social media platform and engagement with the advertising embedded in that platform based on correlation analyses. It

The Relationship between Social Media Advertising Engagement and Advertising Evaluation (Hypothesis 4b)

To test whether engagement with social media advertising on a certain platform is related to evaluations of that

TABLE 5
Correlations between Social Media Engagement and Advertising Engagement

								
<i>N</i>	365	62	237	62	71	7	49	21
Entertainment	.26*	—	.08	.24 [†]	.05	—	-.25 [†]	—
Negative emotion related to platform	.13*	-.14	.17*	—	.21	—	.28 [†]	—
Pastime	.12**	-.05	-.10	.30*	.12	—	.35*	—
Stimulation	.18**	-.03	.15*	.09	.12	—	.13	—
Identification	.34*	.38**	.03	-.08	.15	—	-.06	—
Practical use	.28*	.09	.45*	.12	.52*	—	.02	—
Social interaction	.22*	.32*	.16*	.13	.03	—	.05	—
Topicality	.16**	.24 [†]	.36*	.21 [†]	.32*	—	.47*	—

Note. — = information is not available due to small sample size or constant.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; [†] $p < .10$.

advertising, regression analyses were conducted using a total score for advertising engagement (sum of all dimensions) on a certain platform as the independent variable and advertising evaluations on that platform as the dependent variable. Results show that, for all platforms, a significant positive relationship between the total advertising engagement score and advertising evaluation was found (Facebook, $\beta = .36, p < .001$; Twitter, $\beta = .35, p < .01$; YouTube, $\beta = .43, p < .001$; LinkedIn, $\beta = .30, p < .05$; Google+, $\beta = .39, p < .01$; Instagram, $\beta = .48, p < .01$). Thus, the more engaged people were with advertising, the more positively they evaluated it.

Because the dimensions comprising engagement differ across social media platforms, we examined advertising evaluations based on those dimensions for each platform (Table 6) using similar analyses for the separate dimensions. Only two experience dimensions (negative emotions and topicality) were related to advertising evaluations across all platforms. A negative relationship between the negative emotions dimension and advertising evaluations was found. Not surprisingly, if respondents experienced advertising as annoying or unclear, they evaluated it more negatively.









More interesting is the influence of the topicality dimension across platforms. For all platforms, it turned out that if respondents experienced advertising as helping them stay up to date, they evaluated advertising more positively. For the other dimensions, large differences were found across platforms, stressing the need to address engagement as context specific. The entertainment dimension was important for YouTube and Pinterest, and was marginally significant for Google+. Advertising was evaluated more positively on these platforms when it made respondents cheerful. The pastime dimension was important only for LinkedIn. If respondents experienced advertising on LinkedIn as filling an empty

moment, they evaluated it more positively. Experiencing stimulation was positively related to advertising evaluation for Facebook and Twitter. If advertising on these platforms made respondents enthusiastic or fascinated or offered them something original, new, or unique, it was evaluated more positively. Identification was a less important dimension on all platforms and was significantly related to evaluations of advertising only on Facebook and YouTube—negatively for the former, but positively for the latter. The practical use dimension was important only for Facebook and YouTube (and for Instagram in a marginally significant way), providing a positive relationship in each case. Social interaction turned out to be important only for Instagram and Twitter, providing a positive relationship in each case.

The Relationship between Media Engagement, Advertising Engagement, and Advertising Evaluations (Hypotheses 4a and 4b)

Interestingly, for some advertising engagement dimensions that were positively related to advertising evaluations (hypothesis 4b), a carryover effect of experience with the platform to experience with the advertising was also found (see Table 6 bolded entries and the previous discussion of the results for hypothesis 4a in Table 5). For example, when Facebook was experienced as a motivator to visit a shop or search for more information, users experienced advertising on the platform similarly, resulting in evaluations that were more positive. Negative carryover effects were also found. For example, when Instagram was found to provoke cheerfulness, advertising on the platform was found to diminish that cheerfulness, resulting in evaluations that were more negative. Across all platforms, 23 advertising engagement dimensions were significantly related to advertising evaluations, and 13 of these also

TABLE 6
Relation between Advertising Engagement and Evaluation of Advertising on the Different Platforms

								
N	365	62	237	62	71	7	49	21
Entertainment	.03	—	.20*	.04	.21 [†]	—	.44*	—
Negative emotion related to platform	-.37*	-.39*	-.47*	-.56*	-.44*	—	-.18	—
Pastime	.06	.02	.01	.19*	.04	—	-.05	—
Stimulation	.14**	.29**	.01	.12	.06	—	-.17	—
Identification	-.08 [†]	-.10	.07 [†]	.08	.04	—	.16	—
Practical use	.27*	.12	.19**	.08	.16	—	.30 [†]	—
Social interaction	.01	.22*	.07	.04	-.08	—	.28*	—
Topicality	.22*	.39*	.20**	.26*	.31**	—	.26*	—

Note. Betas. Bold = there is also a significant correlation between experience of the platform and experience of advertising. — = information is not available due to small sample size or constant. All regression models as a whole were significant, $p < .01$.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; [†] $p < .10$.

had significant carryover effects from experiences with the platform. This means that engagement with a social media platform only partially explains the positive effects of advertising engagement. Engagement with social media advertising per se is another important driver of successful advertising on social media.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study offer several valuable contributions to the literature on digital engagement and social media advertising. First, we advance theory on digital engagement by giving insight into engagement with eight social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Google+, Snapchat, Instagram, and Pinterest). Our approach allows us to demonstrate that digital engagement is highly dependent on the platform. Earlier empirical studies lump all digital platforms together and so fail to appreciate that, based on engagement dimensions, each of these platforms comprises a substantially different makeup in terms of experience. Our study, however, unambiguously shows that different functionalities and characteristics of social media platforms translate into different consumer experiences. Contrary to earlier studies, our results demonstrate that each digital platform is experienced in a unique way.

Of course, there are also similarities. Except for YouTube and Pinterest, all social media platforms are experienced as a way to remain up to date. But similarities are the exception rather than the rule. While Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat are used for social interaction, YouTube and Pinterest are not. While Facebook and Instagram are used to fill an empty moment, others are used in this way to a much lesser extent. Only Pinterest is used for innovation and practical use. Therefore, the conclusion is justified that all social media platforms have their own strengths and weaknesses in the various experiences delivered to the user.

Second, we show that not only are the eight platforms themselves uniquely experienced but also that advertising on these platforms has a unique profile. The most striking differences between platforms are in the negative emotions dimension, where advertising on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter scores highest. For YouTube, an explanation might be that advertising in this platform is unavoidable and often intrusive for users; on many occasions, users have to wait several seconds to be able to skip the ad and continue to the video content (see Belanche, Flavián, and Pérez-Rueda 2017). Furthermore, advertising on Instagram is experienced as more entertaining compared to other platforms; advertising on Google+ stands out for practical use; and advertising on Pinterest is found to stimulate users and provide topicality (see Phillips, Miller, and McQuarrie 2014). Thus, we demonstrate that not only does social media engagement differ itself but also social media advertising engagement differs across platforms.

Third, we show how various types of experiences constituting engagement differentially affect evaluations of advertisements on several social media platforms. The most important conclusion is that engagement and advertising evaluations are related in a highly context-specific way because the relationship is highly contingent on the platform. Each platform provides a unique set of experience dimensions, which is related to how positively (or negatively) advertisements are evaluated. A notable theoretical implication derived from this finding is that social media should not be treated as an umbrella concept. While this concept is common among advertising scholars (e.g., Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit 2011), it is clear that not all platforms are created equal. To talk of “social media” essentially disregards the prominent qualitative differences between the platforms. But language matters, and when we continue to use an all-purpose term such as “social media,” meaningfully advancing our understanding of this multifaceted phenomenon is unlikely to occur. Instead, each digital platform should be studied separately (e.g., see Phillips, Miller, and McQuarrie 2014; Schweidel and Moe 2014; and Smith, Fischer, and Yongjian 2012). Alternatively, social media could be classified along the lines of their features and characteristics, such as media richness, degree of self-disclosure, type of self-presentation, nature of the relationships, and nature of information (e.g., see conceptual papers by Kaplan and Haenlein 2010; Kietzmann et al. 2011; and Zhu and Chen 2015). Perhaps interestingly in this respect, a recent volume comprising the latest thinking on interactive advertising conspicuously avoids using “social media” in its title and instead specifically speaks of “digital advertising” (Rodgers and Thorson 2017).

Theoretically, however, the most interesting implication of the current study is that it is important to take into account not only engagement with a medium when discussing the relation between digital engagement and advertising effectiveness (as was done in, e.g., Calder, Isaac, and Malthouse 2016; and Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel 2009) but also engagement with the advertising itself. Engagement with advertising is related to evaluations of that advertising, and in almost half of the cases where such a relation is present, this is not caused by a significant carryover effect from engagement with the social media platform itself; social media advertising can be engaging beyond engagement with the social media platform or vice versa. Thus, social media advertising engagement plays a key role in learning how advertising on social media works.

This study also has implications for the way we look at social media from a broader perspective. When focusing on engagement dimensions across the eight social media platforms studied, topicality is experienced most intensely. However, in the literature, it is generally believed that using social media has become a convenient and necessary way to communicate with friends and satisfy social needs (Jeong and Coyle 2014). Although the name *social* media implies that all social media platforms are social and focused on social connections, this study shows that not all social media platforms are

experienced in such a way. Because topicality is a dimension of engagement that is more uniformly experienced across all social media platforms, *topical* media might be a better name.

Another key implication stems from a comparison between the results of this factor analysis and the results of previous factor analyses using the same items to measure engagement with traditional media (Bronner and Neijens 2006). As could be expected based on the inherently interactive nature of the digital platforms comprising social media, the experience dimensions that captured social interaction and practical use are prominent. In addition, while the study on traditional media that used these items yielded one factor for negative emotions, the current study revealed two factors, either related to the content or related to the platform. Given the ubiquity and influence of negatively valenced consumer-generated content (e.g., Pfeffer, Zorbach, and Carley 2014), this is also a more prominent a feature for social media than for traditional media (Bhandari and Rodgers 2016). Perhaps most remarkable is the finding that an individual information dimension (measured with such items as “Offered me something new”; “Gave me useful information”; and “Taught me about what is going on in the world”) disappears as a driver of social media use. Prior brand-related social media research, however, has consistently considered information—alongside entertainment—to be an important antecedent of social media use (e.g., Muntinga et al. 2016; Porter et al. 2011; Zhu and Chen 2015). That we find no separate information dimension breaks with this precedent.

As a possible explanation, information might increasingly be a “by-product” of social media use rather than a central feature. Early research in the particular realm of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) demonstrated that seeking out product information drives the use of review platforms (e.g., Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). But studies that take a broader view of social media also use a broader conceptualization of information. Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit (2011), for instance, also view “staying updated about one’s social environment” as a form of information; and Kietzmann et al. (2011) take a less functional view of information.

In the platforms that we investigated, information seems less dominant than previously shown, perhaps as a result of consumers’ increasing familiarity with social media. As social media take a more a more central role in consumers’ lives, exchanging information is a means to an end rather than a goal in itself. This seems to be reflected in the present study. The fact that the information dimension in its entirety disappears does not mean that information is irrelevant. Rather, information has a presence under topicality (staying up to date), under practical use (seeking out useful tips and ideas), and under stimulation (trend-related information). Thus, while this study suggests that, as a separate dimension, information is no longer driving the use of the platforms that we examined, this by no means suggests that information has lost its relevance; it lives on as a subdimension of many other dimensions. Less

prominent should not be mistaken for less important. Differences between the dimensions that were earlier found for traditional media and those found for social media can also be seen as proof that engagement with social media differs from engagement with traditional media. Thus, engagement differs not only among social media platforms but also among media types (e.g., TV and social media).

Practical Implications

Contrary to popular advertising planning speak, there is no such thing as social media. This is this study’s first important practical implication. As our findings suggest, *social media* as an umbrella term does not accurately fit the various platforms’ differences detailed in this study and therefore has no real managerial value. To social media practitioners, this may initially appear to be of little practical relevance. How are such professionals supposed to implement this academic conclusion in their daily jobs? Yet, as stated earlier, language matters. We assert that to speak of “social media” essentially means to lack a fundamental understanding of the field. Similar to how a term such as “broadcast media” hardly reflects the many important and far-reaching differences between television and radio, the managerial relevance of this conclusion lies in the advertiser’s realization that different platforms have different features and attributes that create different experiential values, which in turn affect advertising evaluations. Without this understanding, the advertising professional essentially remains an amateur.

As each digital platform offers users a unique experience, this experience carries over to the advertisements placed on that platform. Thus, to a substantial extent, the platform determines how an ad is evaluated. This finding has important managerial implications. It suggests that social media advertisers must select the right social medium for their brands’ purposes to enhance the effectiveness of their interactive advertising programs. Social media applications come and go; new applications appear almost daily. Because advertisers simply cannot be active on all digital platforms, selecting the proper platform is important. The current results provide advertisers with means to assess whether, what, and how to advertise on which platform, so that a decision to advertise is motivated by “should” rather than “could.”

First and foremost, advertisers should plan and evaluate their digital media expenditures not only on such quantitative metrics as the numbers of likes, comments, views, or followers; eyeballs continue to matter, but, as this study argues, as a stand-alone metric they are a solid proxy for neither engagement nor advertising effectiveness. In particular, advertisers who decide to vastly increase their digital spending, as Adidas did, should realize that as television is experienced differently than radio, and magazine *X* is experienced differently than magazine *Y*, social media platforms also differ in qualitative terms. Importantly, this engagement spills over to the

advertisements placed. This means that when selecting a platform for advertising purposes, advertisers should always carefully align platform character with (1) product type (e.g., durable or service, high- or low-involvement product, emotional or more rational choice process), (2) advertising goal (e.g., creation of awareness, likeability, sales response, warm feelings), and (3) advertising message. For instance, engagement with Twitter is characterized by topicality, a focus on quick updates, and useful information, and this is likely to carry over to any ad placed on Twitter. It follows that for advertisers for whom topicality is important, for instance, service brands, Twitter is a must. For advertisers who are unlikely to value topicality, for instance, wine brands, Twitter is unlikely to add value.

It also means that while the adage “content is king” was applicable to traditional media, this study demonstrates that, when it comes to social media advertising, context trumps content. For example, advertising on Twitter needs to give consumers useful and up-to-date information that they expect to find there, and failing to meet these experience expectations can have negative consequences for advertising evaluations. To fully benefit from social media, advertisers should either adapt their content to the platform or choose a platform that matches the goal and message of the ad. Thus, if an advertiser wishes to communicate a message that helps people relax, makes them cheerful, or allows them to enjoy themselves, Snapchat, YouTube, Instagram, and/or Pinterest are good fits, whereas Twitter is not. All in all, managers should understand that digital engagement is highly context specific and that each social media platform has strengths and weaknesses that must be considered before buying social media advertising.

Furthermore, while previous insights can help managers justify their decisions about how to advertise on social media and on which social media platforms to be active, our findings also demonstrate that advertising in itself is not appreciated by consumers on all occasions. Most notably, Twitter and Facebook users are not very appreciative of advertising. Being the quintessential platform for engaging in social interactions paradoxically makes Facebook both more and less attractive for advertisers. On one hand, an ad placed in someone’s timeline arguably ensures a lot of views; on the other hand, the ad interrupts what is meant to be a social experience. This causes consumers to view the ad in a negative light, with possible drawbacks for the advertiser. Advertisers thus face a trade-off between winning consumers’ attention and losing consumers’ acceptance of brands on social media. In any case, a full examination of Facebook’s engagement experience suggests that advertisers must avoid being seen as “crashing the social media party,” as Fournier and Avery (2011, p. 193) so eloquently put it.

Taken together, these practical implications provide advertisers and media planners with valuable directions on how to make their advertising on social media platforms more relevant. In a world where consumers are increasingly skeptical of advertising’s persuasive intentions and in large numbers install

ad blockers to avoid annoying and irrelevant advertising messages, an understanding of the relationship between digital engagement experiences and advertising effectiveness is much needed, if not indispensable.

Future Research and Limitations

Although the current study made several important contributions and used a unique methodological design, it is not without its limitations, which could be addressed in future research. In line with the media experience framework, we postulate that media experiences represent social media engagement. Clearly, this approach deviates from conceptualizations of engagement emphasizing intensity (intensity of usage) or valence (positive or negative engagement). This means we do not try to capture positive or negative engagement. Future research might try to empirically test the relationship between the current approach and more traditional approaches that conceptualize engagement in terms of intensity or valence.

Engagement with social media platforms might differ across other contexts rather than the type of context that is considered in the current study. We focused on the total context (i.e., the social media platform), but it might be worthwhile to investigate specific context characteristics (e.g. modality, self-disclosure, media richness, privacy parameters). Future research might test whether such (conceptual) differences are perceived by users, and how potential differences translate to digital engagement and advertising evaluations. Furthermore, it might be interesting to focus on the receiver context; for example, engagement might differ between situations in which people use a social media platform in a passive (only reading or browsing) versus an active way (e.g., commenting, posting sharing; see Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit 2011), and it may also differ across type of device used to access these platforms.¹

Notwithstanding the limitations of the current study, we hope that our article has made a contribution to better theories on digital engagement with advertising. Because the general conclusion is that there is no such thing as “social media,” we hope that future research also continues to directly compare different social media platforms.

SUPPLEMENTAL DATA

Supplemental data for this article can be accessed at www.tandfonline.com/ujoa.

NOTE

1. The current study asked whether participants used a laptop/PC, tablet, or smartphone during their recent social media consumption moment, and preliminary analyses showed some differences. The focus of the current article does not allow us to discuss these differences, but details are available from the authors upon request.

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