

**A Cross-cultural Study of Belgian and U.S. Social Media Users' Need for Community:
An Exploratory Study using PLS-SEM**

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Abstract

Social media offers great opportunities for international marketing and community building, yet little research has explored cross-cultural differences in consumers' motivations to seek and build community in this environment. This exploratory research investigates this underexplored question between Belgian and U.S. young consumers. Informal interviews and secondary data analysis of industry reports furthered our iterative literature review to inform motivation items in a survey. Exploratory factor analysis revealed the factor categories of curiosity, self-presentation, social interaction, the importance of social verification, and communications. Results of partial least squares structural modeling show slight incongruencies between the two samples. Theoretical and managerial implications are discussed.

Introduction

Global marketers are hastily adopting social media as a tool of choice (Hootsuite 2018) and are finding that great care should be taken in as they integrate this tool. International marketing faux-pas fill textbooks, yet in our fast-paced, viral social media environments, making cultural mistakes online continues to be a challenge, beyond solely translations but understanding cultural encoding (Kozak 2020). Furthermore, community seeking and building have become integral to social media marketing, with 71% of global brands utilizing community engagement (Hootsuite 2018). Social media has brought forth additional opportunities for globalization and can offer a space for consumers to build upon and advance consumer communities. Although social media platforms, in theory, provide an environment for global exchange to occur and values to meld (van Dijck et al. 2018), consumers' online and offline identities are often not unique (Marwick 2012), and mono-cultures are less likely (Keijzer et al. 2018).

Many consumers turn to social media to find community, which has only increased as a result of the pandemic. Social media usage during the pandemic increased substantially as consumers sought new forms of community (Dixon 2022; Fullerton 2021; Pandya & Lodha 2021). Literature has revealed consumers' need for community as being an optimal place to co-create

community and ultimately value beneficial for consumers as well as brands (Schau et al. 2009). The extant literature has limited knowledge of how consumers' motivations to seek and build community online differs based on the differing global ideals. In other words, the way consumers interact with each other offline may uniquely influence how consumers interact online, and these interactions may be in part due to their cultural norms of appropriate social discourse. Nevertheless, cross-cultural marketing blunders have occurred online, often resulting from lacking legal knowledge but also from insensitivity to consumers' culture. Arguably, by clearly understanding consumers' offline culture and their individual desires to seek and build community on social media, strategic community building may be possible.

As such, in this exploratory research we investigate the following question: *What cross-cultural differences exist in why consumers pursue social media consumption for the objective of seeking and building community?* To investigate this research question, we engage in preliminary interviews and identify common motivations also grounded in the literature. We isolate our investigation to young adults in the countries of Belgium and the United States of America (U.S. hereafter). Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of motivations identifies common motivating factors that uniquely load between the two countries. Following the EFA, we utilize PLS-SEM to identify factors most likely to drive their need for community. Findings reveal nuanced differences between the two countries. This study contributes to the social media literature focused on understanding cross-cultural differences of digital consumer communities.

Literature Review of Motivations to use Social Media

Consumer research and marketing scholars have been studying motivating factors for engaging on social media, whether engaging with peers on these platforms (Tafess & Wien 2018; Whiting & Williams 2013), engaging with brands (Anderson et al. 2014; Dessart 2017), or sharing brand messages (Wolny & Mueller 2013). Early research, inspired by uses and gratification theory,

identified several reasons for engaging with social media platforms, including the utilitarian motives (e.g., information), hedonic motives (e.g., entertainment), in addition to social benefits (Heinonen 2011; Park et al. 2009; Whiting & Williams 2013). While not examining social media per se, but branded apps in general, Tran et al. (2020) examined consumers' utilitarian, hedonic and social motivations for using branded mobile apps and surprisingly found that hedonic motivations lead to stronger brand feelings/ attachments while utilitarian and social motivations did not. This is surprising as literature has found that many consumers are motivated to engage in online activities based on the ability to meet their needs to gather information (Noguti & Waller 2020) and the potential for convenience, efficiency, and time savings (Tran et al. 2020).

Many consumers are motivated by entertainment (Fernandes & Castro 2020) and the enjoyment or excitement of the experience (Noguti & Waller 2020). Some even seek out social media to relax (Noguti & Waller 2020), as the tool offers a space to unplug and escape the current reality. Additional motivations are important for consumers engaging in activities with brands, including economic benefits (Anderson et al. 2014; Chahal et al. 2020; Fernandes & Castro 2020), seeking customer service (Hamilton et al. 2016), and consumers' attitude toward the brand (Chahal et al. 2020; Van Heerden & Wiese 2021). Nonetheless, because we focus on consumers' social media usage to seek and build community, these are less likely to play a large factor. Some scholars point to political (Yannopoulou et al. 2019) and professional motivations (Pentina et al. 2016) to come together on social media. For instance, Yannopoulou et al. (2019) show how consumers build community for a common political cause and their cultural motivations to do so. Indignant Citizens, a political opposition to how the Greek government handled the economic crisis at the time, developed as a Facebook group enabling consumers' personal and collective identity expression in hopes of reimagining society. Through this activity, they cocreated new consumption forms in line

with their cocreated cultural values. Social and cultural motivations are, such as those noted within the Indignant Citizens, important aspects of community.

Social Identity and Motivations

Consumers' identity is often tied to social media usage as platforms offer a playground for consumers to understand their identity, take on new practices, and ultimately validate potential identities with social groups (Belk 2013; Drenten & Zayer 2018; Jain et al. 2021). Consumers who engage in community often to develop a sense of self within their social environment (Schouten & McAlexander 1995). The way they present themselves, whether in physical or digital form, characterizes how they believe they are and how they wish to be perceived (Belk 2013; Constantinides et al. 2015). While scholars acknowledge that community is both geographical and relational (Gusfield 1975) and involves skills and interests (Durkheim 1964), online communities where people share content highlights the relational aspect of communities (Albinsson & Perera 2012). Recognizing that social media is an extension of community, individuals' performance on social media can be a stage (Goffman 1959) used to facilitate desired assimilation and integration into new cultures. Thomas et al. (2017) recognize social media as a tool that new university students use to build community as they learn more about themselves as young adults. Today, children are becoming socialized within a community where digital and social media are a salient aspect of how identity is developed and how social group norms are enacted (Chen 2021; Doster 2013). As digital virtual consumption is on the rise (Denegri-Knott & Molesworth 2010), it is important to understand consumers' online social activities (Ducarroz & Albinsson 2022).

In-group versus out-group activities are instilled in social media communities. As a social stage, consumers use social media to help compare and contrast themselves to others through practices such as posting pictures during vacation (Siegel & Wang 2019) and symbolic inclusion for politically-driven social signaling (Penney 2015). In social media, consumers' aim for social

presentation includes sensory elements communicated to develop a sense of intimacy (Chen et al. 2021; Kaplan & Haenlein 2010). Creating and sharing content with specific online groups and networks, such as music and videos online, is one such social presentation activity which brings people together and builds community (Albinsson & Perera 2012; Albinsson 2021; Ducarroz & Albinsson 2022; Tran et al. 2020). However, motivations used in prior literature are commonly context specific and are rarely compared cross-culturally.

Cultural Nuance in Social Media Community Building

Culture can influence how consumer communities develop online through social media, further impacting marketing strategies (Alarcon-del-Amo et al. 2016). From a brand perspective, social-centric mobile apps such as social networking apps aim to “increase the sense of intimacy with customers, foster brand engagement by building a community of loyal customers or allow customers to communicate positive brand images with their social circles” (Zhao & Balagué 2015, p. 309). In a virtual live music event context, or music events shared on social media and other sites, the motivations among U.S. and Belgian social media users (Albinsson 2021; Ducarroz & Albinsson 2022) and Dutch Facebook users (Vandenberg et al. 2020) were often to seek out community and connection with others, and being part of something bigger. Interaction through various chat functions on social media increases the ability to build community (Albinsson & Perera 2012). In such interaction, tolerance and trust in others are vital for community building (Coleman 1990; Putnam 1993; Walzer 1997).

Despite the common need for consumers to seek out community, and the adoption of social media to engage in this activity, cultures do not have the same norms as they build community. Social media has not molded a mono-culture as some anticipated, and in fact, can create more cultural isolation (Keijzer et al. 2018). Different motivations that arise based on the culture or country (Kim et al. 2011; Alarcon-del-Amo et al. 2016; Xu & Mocarski 2014) play into some of the

variation. These communication forms and motivations are more complex than can be captured through Hofstede's dimensions (Xu & Mocarski 2014). Shifman (2016) finds that communities' values and emotional communicative forms influence consumers' user-generated content (UGC) that makes up much of the engagement on social media. In other words, depending on the cross-cultural communication differences offline, this is likely to impact why and how consumers communicate on social media. In addition to differences in social media communication based on cultural differences, online cultural norms have been changing over time (Hyvärinen & Beck 2018). As such, the reasons we seek out community online now may not mirror our needs in ten years.

Method

Country selection

Two western countries, Belgium and the U.S., were selected as previous research has shown while certain differences do exist on some of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, in the marketing contexts studied to date e.g., brand nostalgia (Ford et al. 2018) and virtual live music streaming (Ducarroz & Albinsson 2022), these have been minor. Nevertheless, 76% of Belgian consumers claimed to be active on social media in January 2021 (Kemp 2021), which is similar to the U.S. in February 2021 of 72% (Auxier & Anderson 2021)

To investigate our research question, following our literature review, we run preliminary interviews and identify motivations on why consumers pursue social media consumption to seek and build community, also grounded in the literature described above. We then test these motivations in a survey aimed at young adults in the countries of Belgium and in the U.S. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is then used to identify common motivating factors that uniquely load between the two countries. Our literature review and interviews give us some *a priori* expectations about these motivating factors, such as curiosity, self-presentation, social interactions,

the importance of social verification, and using social media for communication, but our approach is still exploratory, as insights from the literature are sparse.

Following the EFA identifying motivating factors, we utilize Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to measure the potential impact of the identified factors on young adults' need for community.

Interviews, Survey and Measurements

Semi-structured informal interviews were conducted with 59 U.S. social media users to understand better why they utilized social media. While a questionnaire guide provided structure to the interviews, the interviewers asked follow-up questions when needed. The second author oversaw several research assistants that conducted the interviews. The informants ranged in age from 18-35 and consisted of 28 males and 31 females. The purpose of the interviews was to solicit the motivations behind using social media for the quantitative survey.

The Qualtrics questionnaire consisted of three major parts. We first asked respondents a qualifying question on whether they used social media. All respondents answered yes to this question. We then listed general social media usage questions such as time spent, social media sites used, etc. Then we asked respondents' reasons for posting/ engaging in social media by asking them to express their agreement on 15 extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. These motivating factors were derived from previous literature and secondary sources such as industry data, research reports and primary qualitative data (i.e., 59 informal interviews with U.S. respondents) and later reviewed by three social media motivations literature experts. Separate Likert-scale items were developed, anchored by strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (7).

Second, besides these 15 extrinsic and intrinsic motivations, we include two potential factors identified in the literature: consumers' social support through Social Media Communication (i.e., communication) and the importance of social verification. Communication was measured by a

shortened version of a multidimensional scale measuring social support. We only used items 9-12 from the original scale by Zimet et al. (1988) and asked the respondent to answer the following statement: Social media is the primary source of communication type with my: 1) family, 2) friends or 3) work. The items were anchored by strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (7). Importance of social verification was measured with three items in a semantic differential scale anchored by not at all important (1) and extremely important (7) created by the authors. After the statement “When posting on social media something I care about...”, the respondents rated the following three items: 1) The number of likes I get is... 2), The number of comments I get is.... and 3), the number of followers I get is...

In the last part of the questionnaire, to further investigate the reasons for consumers seeking community on social media, we used Albinsson, Shows, and Boya’s (2021) scale on community affiliation. The three Likert-scale items: 1) When I use social media, I feel part of something bigger than myself, 2) I use social media because it give me a sense of belonging, 3), I use social media because it makes me feel part of the community, were anchored by strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (7). We finalized the questionnaire with demographic questions.

Data collection and Sample Descriptive Statistics

A Qualtrics survey was administered electronically via email lists to college students; they in turn were asked to share the survey with others in their network. The final sample size of the convenience sample was N=603 for U.S. and N= 533 for Belgium. Data collection was conducted during 2019 and early in 2020, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The U.S. sample comprised 65% females, 67% ages 18-29, and the majority of the sample were still in college (34%) or had a 2- or 4-year university degree (46%). Fifty-eight percent of the sample made less than \$29,999. The top three social media sites favored by the U.S. sample were Facebook (36.3%), Instagram (34.3%),

and Snapchat (15%). Sixty-one percent state that they use social media several times a day, while 19.2% say that they constantly use social media, and 15.4% use at least once a day.

The Belgian sample comprised 63.2% females, and 76.7% were aged 18-29. The majority of the sample had a high school degree or were still in college (29.5%), or had a university degree (29.5%), while 35% had a master's degree. Fifty-eight percent of the sample made less than \$29,999 a year. Belgian respondents listed Facebook (54.4%), Instagram (31.5%), and then Snapchat (5.6%) as their favorite sites. Similar to the U.S. sample, 59.5% state that they use social media several times a day, while 24.4% say that they constantly use social media, and 10.7% use at least once a day.

Social Media Behavior

U.S. sample: While on social media, 97.5% go there to read others' posts, 62% repost others' posts, 30% join groups, 60.4% follow others, 63% share details of their lives, and 20.6% share their views on causes, politics, and current events. Twenty percent are looking for a job, 19.2% are looking to network, 34% are looking to buy or sell things, 38.6% want to express their positive feelings, and 15.1% want to express negative feelings. Finally, 21% want to express their performance in different life events such as sports, work, and contests.

Belgian sample: While on social media, 94.4% go there to read others' posts, 29.8% repost others' posts, 39% join groups, 48.2% follow others, 43.9% share details of their lives, and 14.8% share their views on causes, politics, and current events. Seventeen percent are looking for a job, 19.5% are looking to network, 20% are looking to buy or sell things, 14.8% want to express their positive feelings, and 8.1% want to express negative feelings. Finally, 17.3% want to express their performance on different life events such as sports, work, and contests.

Group belonging

U.S. sample: While only 30% of the sample said they go to social media to join groups, more respondents admitted to belonging to various groups. Fifty-six percent state they belong to student/ work/ professional groups, 58.5% to a hobby or interest group, 18.9% to support groups (parenting, health, exercise), 20.1% to self-improvements/ motivational groups, 29% to religious groups, 27.5% to company, organization, brand groups, and only 15% said they did not belong to any groups.

Belgian sample: Slightly higher than in the US, 39% of the sample said they go to social media to join groups, and more respondents admitted to belonging to various groups. Seventy-seven percent belong to student/ work/ professional groups, 68.7% to a hobby or interest group, 17.6% to support groups (parenting, health, exercise), 7.7% to self-improvements/ motivational groups, 1.1% percent to religious groups, 18% to company, organization, brand groups, and only 6.4% said they did not belong to any groups.

Exploratory Factor Analysis: Results

Maximum likelihood extraction with varimax rotation produced five factors for U.S. and six for Belgian data from the motivating variables. The slight variations in the items loading on different factors is most likely due to cultural variations. The U.S. data produced five factors with Eigenvalues over 1 for a cumulative explained variance of 49.07%. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was over the $>.5$ threshold at .850, $p<.000$ in the U.S. sample (Schmitt et al. 2021). The EFA for the *Belgian* data produced six factors with Eigenvalues over 1 with a cumulative explained variance of 51.19%. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling adequacy was over the $>.5$ threshold at .861, $p<.000$ in the Belgian sample.

The common motivating factors to use social media, identified in both samples, are: curiosity (linked to the openness to the world), self-presentation (linked to intrinsic motivations of self-fulfillment), social interactions (linked to support given to or provided by others), importance of social verification (linked to the importance of others' interest in their presentation),

communication (linked to the use of social media as a communication tool with friends and family). In the Belgian sample, two specific items loaded on a 6th factor, which we called “connection”, representing the strength of connections with others as a motivating factor to use social media.

Therefore, different PLS-SEM models were created for each country’s specific data. However, we made sure that all factors adhered to regular scale development criteria. Please see Table 1 for factor loadings, means, standard Cronbach’s alphas, composite reliabilities, and average variance extracted Cronbach’s alpha for all measures were above 0.70, except for curiosity.

Tentative Model and PLS-SEM results

As we are comparing how consumers in two different western cultures seek community on social media, the following *a priori* relationships between the identified motivating factors and need for community are proposed:

P1: Curiosity is negatively related to the need for community.

P2: Self-presentation is positively related to the need for community.

P3: Social interactions are positively related to the need for community.

P4: Social verification (such as likes, comments and followers) is positively related to the need for community.

P5: Communication is positively related to the need for community.

Based on the literature, most factors are likely to positively relate to consumers’ need for community. However, we expect the curiosity factor to be negatively associated with the dependent variable as those items do not necessarily rely on others’ interactions. As the EFA displayed a slightly different factor solution for the fifteen motivations, P3 was stated in two parts for the Belgian sample:

P3a: Social interactions are positively related to the need for community.

P3b: Relational connection is positively related to the need for community.

Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used via SmartPLS3.3.9 (Ringle et al. 2015) to analyze the results. Due to the exploratory nature of the research, which examines the reasons to use social media from the community aspect of social media, PLS-SEM was deemed appropriate (Gottfried et al. 2017; Hair et al. 2022; Matthews and Edmondson 2020).

U.S. subsample

Both Cronbach's Alpha (α) and composite reliability (C.R.) were used to assess the reliability of all the reflective constructs, and all exceeded the minimum 0.70 threshold (again, except for the curiosity variable, which was lower and exhibited $\alpha = 0.63$). Item 1, "curious of what is posted" was deleted as it had a 0.61 loading. The next highest loading was "keeping up with news" with 0.66, which we kept. The Cronbach's alpha for curiosity after dropping the lowest loading item was $\alpha = 0.61$. However, as this is exploratory research, we kept curiosity in the overall PLS-SEM model as Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), Pallant (2001), and Taber (2018) have deemed that .61-.65 is a moderate and adequate reliability.

Assessing the measurement model in SmartPLS shows that most reflective indicator loadings exceeded .708 (Hair et al. 2022). While a few reflective loadings ranged from .58 and below .708 we decided to retain them as this research is exploratory and newer scales are used (Hulland 1999). In addition, Hair et al. (2022) recommend keeping items between .40-.70 if by removing them affects content validity and if when dropping them, the internal consistency reliability or convergent validity does not increase drastically. All constructs after dropping the above-mentioned item, exceeded the 0.50 average variance extracted (AVE), confirming convergent validity. Discriminant validity was established since the Heterotrait-Montotrait (HTMT) scores were well below 0.85 for different constructs and 0.90 for similar constructs (Hair et al. 2017). Therefore, the measurement model was deemed to be valid and reliable (see Table 1). To analyze

the structural model, bootstrapping was performed with 5,000 resamples for the two data sets (U.S. and Belgium) separately. The results of bootstrapping are reported below.

U.S. - bootstrapping results

The impact of curiosity on community building (P1) was not significant $\beta = -0.04$, $p=0.315$, therefore P1 is not supported. Self-presentation has a positive relationship with the need for community $\beta = 0.24$, $p<.000$, supporting P2. Social interaction positively related to the need for community $\beta = 0.28$, $p<.000$ supporting P3. The fourth proposition, which states that the importance of verification in social media statistics is positively related to the need for community, is also supported $\beta = 0.16$, $p<.000$. The final relationship (P5) was also supported as communication is significantly and positively related to the need for community, $\beta = 0.11$, $p=.0004$.

Belgium

Assessing the measurement model in SmartPLS shows again that most reflective indicator loadings exceeded .708 (Hair et al. 2022). A few reflective indicator loadings loaded between .63-0.70 but using the same theoretical support as with the U.S. data, we kept these items in the model as removing them would affect the content validity of the measures (Hair et al. 2022). Both Cronbach's Alpha (α) and composite reliability (C.R.) were used to assess reliability of all the reflective constructs, and all exceeded the minimum 0.70 threshold (except for the two-item variable for connection which displayed $\alpha = 0.693$ and the Communications variable that exhibited $\alpha = 0.614$). We kept all three items for Communications while the lowest loading was 0.63. However, as this is exploratory research, we kept both the connection variable and the communications variables in the overall PLS-SEM model as an alpha between 0.61-.65 has been deemed a moderate fit (Taber 2018), and levels between .5 and .6 are deemed acceptable for exploratory research (Schmitt et al 2021). All constructs exceeded the 0.50 average variance extracted (AVE) (except for self-presentation, which was .498. However, as that was so close to the

guidelines, we suggest the results confirm convergent validity. Discriminant validity was established since the Heterotrait-Montotrait (HTMT) scores were well below 0.85 for different constructs and 0.90 for similar constructs (Hair et al., 2017). Therefore, the measurement model was deemed to be valid and reliable (See Table 1).

Belgium - bootstrapping results

The impact of curiosity on community building was not significant $\beta = 0.05$, $p=0.290$, therefore P1 is not supported. Self-presentation has a positive relationship with the need for community $\beta = 0.42$, $p<.000$, supporting P2. Social interaction, which we divided into two a priori relationships for the Belgian sample, was not supported. P3a stated that social interaction is positively related to the need for community $\beta = 0.01$, $p=.766$, and P3b stated that relational connections are positively related to the need for community $\beta = -.02$, $p=.576$, thereby rejecting both P3a and P3b. The fourth proposition, which stated that an interest in verification of social media statistics is positively related to the need for community, is also supported $\beta = 0.11$, $p=.011$. The final proposed relationship (P5) on communications was also supported as it is significantly and positively related to the need for community, $\beta = 0.13$, $p=.0004$. Please see Table 2 for PLS-SEM results.

Discussion

In this article, we find that despite previous research that has found similarities between U.S. and Belgian consumer behavior (Ford et al. 2018; Ducarroz & Albinsson 2022), consumer cultures may still vary in their motivations to interact on social media for community building. Specifically, we identify motivational differences between young Belgium and U.S. consumers for building community on social media despite similar cultural indicators per Hofstede's dimension (see Ford, et al. 2018). A consumer's country shapes social dynamics, arguably within social media usage as well. Because much of the research understanding how to interpret social media data is

predominantly from a perspective of one country, we take a cross-cultural approach. In particular, we find for both countries that curiosity (P1 linked to some curiosity) is not important in community building online, yet, what would have been commonly considered social factors, are more relevant. However, the EFA highlights differences between consumers' need to socially present themselves in a group setting (P2 self-presentation factor) and consumers' need to socially interact with others (P3 social interaction factor). While more "selfish" motivations (P2, P4, P5) are found to be significant in both samples, young Belgian consumers were less concerned about "altruistic motivations" such as interacting with others socially (i.e., P3a & P3b relationships not supported). In fact, for Belgians, presenting themselves to others was a significant motivator and comprised 42% of the variance for seeking and building community. In summary, this study finds that young Belgian consumers' altruistic motivations are lower than young U.S. consumers and that these motivations are not as important in community building.

We also found differing behavior between the two countries, where young Belgian consumers were less likely to post with sentiment (positive or negative). Young Belgian consumers are also much less likely to belong to self-improvement and religious groups compared to young U.S. consumers. Furthermore, descriptive analysis revealed that young U.S. consumers are more likely to state they belong to professional and hobby groups and are more likely to follow others and share details about their lives.

While several studies have analyzed consumers' motivations to engage on social media (Park et al. 2009; Pentina et al. 2016; Whiting & Williams 2013) and engage with brands on social media (Anderson et al. 2014; Dessart 2017; Fernandes & Castro 2020), little work has explored motivations for seeking social media communities cross-culturally. By understanding variances in how different cultures are motivated, we build upon the limited work of recognizing that seemingly similar cultures may, in fact, have nuanced differences (Pentina et al. 2016). These distinctions are

of utmost importance to marketers as they pursue international community-building. Evaluating social media from a cosmopolitan and culturally homogenous view may be appealing, but indifference to offline country cultures may stunt a marketers' understanding and lead to inaccurate marketing strategies. For instance, for marketers wishing to engage consumers to build community, while communicating with support and emotional sentiment may be acceptable in the U.S., this display may be less valued in Belgium.

While this research was exploratory in nature, it is clear that there are cultural differences in how social media users seek out community via social media based on the country. Future research should employ further scale developments to fully understand the various extrinsic and intrinsic motivations for using social media for community needs. Because this study focuses on younger consumers, there is an opportunity to evaluate motivations for a more diverse age group. Some of the differences in loadings and relationships could be explored further. For instance, this study identified that for Belgium, escapism is classified as a curiosity, yet it was identified as a self-presentation motivation for the U.S. More research could explore this difference. It is possible younger U.S. consumers may find it easier to present themselves to others in the social media reality. If U.S. consumers are more reliant on SM platforms to manage their social lives, this is a salient paradox for theoretical exploration and for policy. Understanding where else this is occurring could help inform international policy and regulations for social media platforms.

Table 1: Construct Reliability, Convergent Validity, Exploratory Factor Analysis and Correlation Analysis

		U.S.			BELGIUM		
Factors	Items	Factor Loadings	Mean (SD)	Cr.α * CR* AVE*	Factor Loadings	Mean (SD)	Cr.α * CR* AVE*
Curiosity	Curious of what is posted	.360**	5.58 (1.32)	0.61 0.79 0.558	.493	5.21 (1.48)	0.763 0.84 0.515
	Be entertained	.665	5.85 (1.12)		.681	5.42 (1.38)	
	Keep up with the news	.440	5.66 (1.21)		.422	5.63 (1.26)	
	Fill up spare-time	.557	5.58 (1.32)		.768	5.06 (1.16)	
	Escape from everyday (<i>Belgium only</i>)	-	-	-	.526	3.71 (1.75)	
Self-Presentation	Belong to a group (<i>Belgium only</i>)	-	-	-	.515	3.52 (1.62)	0.752 0.832 0.498
	Entertain others	.383	4.26 (1.71)	0.79 0.855 0.545	.464	2.89 (1.69)	
	Not feeling left out	.632	3.77 (1.77)		.585	2.85 (1.67)	
	Self-fulfillment	.727	3.58 (1.68)		.441	3.31 (1.51)	
	Be admired	.667	3.32 (1.77)		.560	2.23 (1.47)	
	Escape from everyday (<i>US only</i>)	.481	4.43 (1.73)		-	-	-
Social interactions	Proud of others' accomplishments	.724	5.19 (1.142)	0.82 0.868 0.523	.671	3.97 (1.59)	0.781 0.867 0.687
	Show support for others	.820	5.65 (1.16)		.867	4.33 (1.53)	
	Get support from others	.484	4.58 (1.67)		.495	3.29 (1.64)	
	Connect with people (<i>US only</i>)	.566	5.67 (1.28)		-	-	-
	Nourish relationships (<i>US only</i>)	.540	4.72 (1.50)		-	-	-
	Belong to a group (<i>US only</i>)	.366	4.20 (1.60)		-	-	-
Connection (<i>Belgium only</i>)	Connect with people	-	-	-	.617	6.04 (1.15)	0.693 0.856 0.75
	Nourish relationships	-	-	-	.731	5.38 (1.36)	
Importance of Social Verification	Number of likes	.849	3.23 (1.87)	0.89 0.93 0.815	.833	3.82 (1.65)	0.857 0.913 0.778
	Number of comments	.767	2.52 (1.64)		.731	3.12 (1.59)	
	Number of followers	.836	2.56 (1.72)		.722	3.04 (1.64)	
Communication	Family	.693	3.32 (1.91)	0.70 0.833 0.6251	.487	3.26 (1.9)	0.614 0.786 0.553
	Friends	.755	4.61 (1.86)		.817	5.3 (1.75)	
	Work	.499	2.85 (1.70)		.364	3.19 (1.86)	
Need for community	Community 1	-	3.63 (1.54)	0.833 0.901 0.752 R ² =0.34		3.08 (1.69)	0.804 0.884 0.719 R ² =0.338
	Community 2	-	3.46 (1.55)			2.82 (1.55)	
	Community 3	-	3.98			3.03	

			(1.58)			(1.62)	
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* Cr.α = Cronbach's alpha; CR= Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted

**dropped

Table 2: Main Results for the Model by Sample

	β	T-Statistic	P-Value
U.S. Sample			
External motivations-> Need for Community	-0.04	1.02	.308
Self-presentation -> Need for Community	0.24	5.421	0.000
Social-interaction -> Need for Community	0.28	6.763	0.000
Verification Statistics -> Need for Community	0.16	4.181	0.000
Communications -> Need for Community	0.11	2.835	0.004
Belgian Sample			
External motivations -> Need for Community	0.05	1.093	0.274
Self-presentation -> Need for Community	0.42	8.775	0.000
Social Interaction-> Need for Community	0.01	0.285	0.775
Relational Connections -> Need for Community	-0.02	0.559	0.576
Verification Statistics -> Need for Community	0.11	2.577	0.011
Communications-> Need for Community	0.13	3.253	0.001

Bold indicates significant relationship at .05 level

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