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Social media use by young Latin American consumers: An exploration

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a study that was undertaken to explore the factors that drive social media use among young consumers in Latin America, a region of the world in which such studies have been sparse. The research involves the application of an extended TAM, with the addition of three new model variables whose impact on social media use have not been explored previously: social facilitation experience, fear of missing out (FoMO), and general online social interaction propensity (GOSIP). In addition, the outcome variable relates to active social media behaviors, a novel dependent variable in this stream of research. The model is tested using SEM. The results show that social influence, social facilitation experience, perceived ease of use (PEOU), and perceived enjoyment (PE) are all significantly linked to perceived usefulness (PU) of social media; however, FoMO is not. GOSIP, PU, and PE are positively related to attitude toward social media use, which is positively related to active social media behaviors. We discuss the results and provide limitations and avenues for future research.

1. Introduction

One of the key developments in the global marketplace that has had major implications for marketers is the explosion in the use of social media by consumers all over the globe to interact among themselves and with marketers. Recent research by digital marketing company We Are Social (2017) revealed that at the start of 2017, there were 2.80 billion global social media users, equaling 37% penetration in global social media use. Of this number, almost 600 million were in the Americas—North America (66% penetration), Central America (51% penetration), and South America (59% penetration) (https://wearesocial.com/special-reports/digital-in-2017-global-overview). This increasing penetration of social media presents opportunities and challenges for marketers. On the one hand, marketers now have a new way of connecting with consumers; on the other hand, consumers have more control over marketing messages and more interactions with each other. For these reasons, researchers and marketers have shown increased interest in understanding consumer use of social media, in the hope that the knowledge gleaned from this stream of research can be harnessed in shaping digital marketing strategy, in general, and digital communications, in particular.

As a consequence of the foregoing observation, social media use, its antecedents, and consequences have generated a lot of recent research. This stream of research has looked at issues such as motives for engaging in electronic word-of-mouth on social media platforms (Shin et al., 2014; Wolny and Mueller, 2013;); use of social media in complaining behavior (Balaji et al., 2015); factors that drive social media use in sales (Guesalaga, 2016); and social media use in sharing consumption experiences (Sotiriadis, 2017), among other issues. Previous research in this stream has also looked at the application of models such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the theory of planned behavior in an effort to better understand social media use (Rauniar et al., 2014; Wirtz and Göttel, 2016; Yang and Wang, 2015)

Social media use specifically by young consumers has also become a global phenomenon and has generated some recent research (Bardhi et al., 2010; Muk et al., 2014; Singh, 2016). However, research on social media use varies by region of the world, with limited or no focus on social media use in certain regions. In addition, exploring factors that influence young consumers to use social media has not often been the focus of empirical investigation. Consumer use of social media continues to attract the attention of marketers and researchers, given the impact that social media can have on marketers' communication activities. Social media place people from all over the globe in contact, with the possibility of spreading messages that can have positive or negative impact on brands. It is therefore important to explore social media use in different regions of the globe.

This paper, therefore, explores social media use among young consumers in Latin America in an effort to understand some of the factors that drive use in this region and to add to this stream of research. This research applies an extended technology acceptance model

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(TAM) (Davis, 1989) in an exploration of social media use among these consumers. The TAM was developed by Davis (1989) to explain organizational information system use and has been adopted by a number of researchers to explain adoption of various kinds of technologies and innovations. Young Latin American consumers represent an attractive market not only for companies in that region but also for global companies that do business there. Ortegón (2015) proffered that there is economic power even among low-income Latin American Millennials. She reported that Latin American Millennials who lived on US$10 or less per day will shape the middle class in the coming years. According to her, this segment is "roughly 20% of a Latin American BoP market of 405 million people, worth $759 billion per year – are more connected, more educated, and have more disposable income than ever before" (https://www.forbes.com/). She also opined that the best way to reach this group is through technology and the Internet, thus underscoring the importance of understanding their social media use.

Overall, the paper contributes to the discourse on social media by exploring social media use in a Latin American context. The study enhances our understanding of this issue by introducing new explanatory variables to the TAM—social facilitation experience (SFE), general online social interaction propensity (GOSIP), and fear of missing out (FoMO) (see, for example, Perry, 2016, for a similar model). These are in addition to previous variables that have been used in TAM extensions: social influence and perceived enjoyment. In addition, the model introduces an outcome variable that focuses on active online social behaviors. After reviewing the theoretical background that forms the basis for the conceptual model and the resulting hypotheses, the research study, along with a discussion of the results and implications, will be presented.

2. Conceptual model and hypotheses

In this section, the conceptual model depicted in Fig. 1 (see below) is described, along with the hypotheses derived from it. First, a brief overview of the TAM is provided. There is a discussion of multiple variables, including social facilitation experience (SFE), social influence, social exclusion and FoMO, perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment, perceived usefulness, and online interaction propensity and GOSIP. The discussion of each variable is followed by the resulting hypothesis. The section concludes by positing the link between attitude and an outcome variable, specifically, active online social behaviors, in the conceptual model.

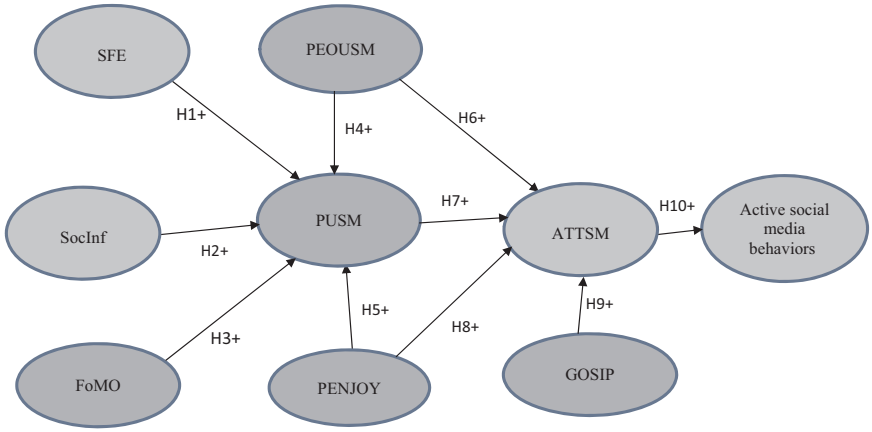
2.1. Technology acceptance model (TAM)

The TAM provides substantial insights into consumers' adoption and use of information technology. TAM posits that an individual's behavioral intentions to use such technology is determined by that individual's belief that using the technology will improve his/her job performance (perceived usefulness) and the extent to which that individual believes that using the technology will be relatively uncomplicated (perceived ease of use) (Davis, 1989). TAM also hypothesizes that perceived ease of use influences perceived usefulness (Davis, 1989). Venkatesh and Davis (2000) extended TAM in an effort to explain perceived usefulness and usage intentions in terms of social influence and cognitive instrumental processes. The TAM has been expanded and applied to exploration of adoption of innovations in a number of different domains, for example, email usage (Gefen and Straub, 1997); e-commerce acceptance (Pavlou, 2003); e-shopping acceptance (Ha and Stoel, 2009); consumer use of social media, specifically Facebook (Rauniar et al., 2014); and acceptance of mobile shopping applications (Natarajan et al., 2017). The current study enhances the TAM by incorporating social and individual difference factors into the model and linking them to the perceived usefulness of social media and attitude toward social media, as well as to social media behaviors. The hypotheses that flow from the model (see Fig. 1) are discussed below (Fig. 2).

2.2. Model variables and hypotheses

2.2.1. Social facilitation experience

Calder et al. (2009) introduced the concept of social facilitation experiences on websites as being one of the different engagement experiences that consumers can have in an online domain. They argued that, in the online context, social facilitation experience was one of the types of online engagement, whereby online participants found



Key:
SFE: Social facilitation experience
SocInf: Social influence
FoMO: Fear of missing out
PEOUSM: Perceived ease of use of social media
PUSM: Perceived usefulness of social media
PENJOY: Perceived enjoyment of social media
GOSIP: General online social interaction propensity
ATTSM: Attitude toward social media

"+": Positive relationship

Fig. 1. Conceptual model of social media use.

information online that they could use in conversations or discussions with others. Items generated in their scale to measure this construct are in Table 1. Thakur (2016), using items from the Calder et al. (2009) scale and adjusting them for mobile shopping applications, found that social facilitation experience was one of the dimensions of customer engagement that helped to explain customer loyalty to retailers. Given the nature of social media platforms, they, like Internet sites (Calder et al., 2009) and mobile shopping applications (Thakur, 2016), also provide consumers with information that they can use in discussions and conversations with others. Consumers will therefore perceive social media to be useful, given that they provide information that consumers can use in social settings.

More recently, Tafesse (2016) conducted a study regarding the impact of the experiential affordances of brands' Facebook pages on consumer engagement. The researcher classified these experiential affordances into perceptual, social, epistemic, and embodied experiences. The researcher also contended that "social experience captures consumers' involvement and participation in co-creating meaningful interactive experiences" (p. 427) and that brand pages that facilitated affordances for social experiences would lead to greater consumer engagement with those pages. This prediction was supported. This also supports the idea that consumers will see social media as useful given that social media allows for social facilitation experience. Thus, the following prediction results:

H1. Social facilitation experience will have a positive impact on perceived usefulness of social media (PUSM).

2.2.2. Social influence

Social influence has long been studied and applied in a number of different contexts, including as part of the extension of the TAM (e.g., Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004; Demoulin and Djelassi, 2016; Venkatesh and Bala, 2008). In the case of the TAM, the significance of social influences on individuals' technology acceptance has gained increasing attention as individuals' use of digital technology continues to experience rapid growth. Venkatesh and Bala (2008) included subjective norms in TAM3 and found a positive impact on perceived usefulness. Similar positive effects of social norms in the extended TAM have been identified by Okumus et al. (2015) in the case of diet apps use, and Demoulin and Djelassi (2016) in the context of self-service technologies. Consistent with the incorporation of social influence into other technology domains, we include social influence in our conceptual model and argue that:

H2. Social influence will have a positive impact on perceived usefulness of social media (PUSM).

2.2.3. Social exclusion and fear of missing out (FoMO)

Social exclusion theory argues that individuals are susceptible to experiencing anxiety at the thought of being excluded from important social groups (Baumeister and Tice, 1990). Baumeister and Tice (1990) suggest three primary reasons that groups exclude individuals, including perceptions that individuals are not making sufficient contributions to the group's welfare, individuals not conforming to groups' rules and norms, and, finally, individuals possessing undesirable attributes (e.g., unattractive physically or personality-wise). Leary (1990) argues that having a social support network and feeling included reduces anxiety, jealousy, loneliness, and depression. He writes that low self-esteem individuals are more likely to perceive threats to inclusion and thus more likely to feel anxious, lonely, jealous, and depressed. More recently, Wang et al. (2012) studied the impact of loneliness on consumers' responses to consensus-related social cues in consumption contexts. They found that when lonely consumers' preferences are subject to public scrutiny, these consumers' concerns about others negatively evaluating them cause them to conform.

Social exclusion can play an important role in FoMO, as social exclusion can cause anxiety because it indicates a loss of belonging (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). Of particular relevance to our research, FoMO is described as the fear that everyone else is having more fun, better jobs, more rewarding experiences, and so forth. While scant academic research exists to date in the area of FoMO, some researchers are beginning to explore this construct. Przybylski et al. (2013) define FoMO as "a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent" and "characterized by the desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing." They studied how FoMO agglomerates with motivational, behavioral, well-being, and demographic factors, and found FoMO negatively associated with general mood and overall life satisfaction. Their results suggest that FoMO is a key factor in explaining social media use over and above these other factors. They argued that those who suffer from FoMO may find social media attractive because social media facilitate social connections.

Other research finds that reading stories on social networking sites about friends' activities, which can cause individuals to feel left out, is linked to negative social and emotional states (e.g., loneliness), although it is unclear whether the user attention is causing loneliness or vice versa (Burke et al., 2010). Alt (2015) studied connections between college students' academic motivation, FoMO, and social media engagement. They found a link between social media engagement and FoMO. Beyens et al. (2016) found an association among need to belong, need for popularity, and FoMO; FoMO was linked to increased Facebook use. FoMO also mediated the relationships between need to belong and need for popularity, and Facebook use. More recently, Blackwell et al. (2017) found that FoMO was a predictor of social media use as well as social media addiction.

Given the foregoing discussion, the conceptual model in our study incorporated FoMO as a possible explanatory variable impacting social media use among young Latin American consumers. We expect that consumers will perceive social media as useful, given that they help to mitigate FoMO. The following prediction results:

H3. FoMO will have a positive impact on perceived usefulness of social media (PUSM).

2.2.4. Perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment, and perceived usefulness

The core TAM features perceived ease of use (PEOU), perceived usefulness (PU), attitudes, and intentions as key components. Kaushik and Rahman (2015) contend that: "PU, in general, refers to the degree to which one believes that using a specific technology will enhance one's performance. On the other hand, PEOU simply refers to the degree to which one believes that using a specific technology will be effortless" (p. 408). Prior research testing TAM found positive links between PEOU of a technology and the PU of the technology (Demoulin and Djelassi, 2016; Oh et al., 2013). Some extensions of the TAM have also included perceived enjoyment (PE) as one of the variables linked to PU of technologies. Here, enjoyment refers to the extent to which using a technology is seen as fun-filled or entertaining (Venkatesh and Bala, 2008). PE impacted PU of technologies in different domains: online shopping adoption (Ha and Stoel, 2009); app use (Okumus et al., 2015); and mobile shopping (Agrebi and Jallais, 2015; Grob, 2015). We expect that PEOU and PE of social media will lead to positive perceptions of their usefulness.

H4. PEOU of social media will have a positive impact on PU of social media.

H5. PE of social media will have a positive impact on PU of social media.

2.2.5. Attitude and the TAM

A number of studies incorporating attitude in the TAM have found significant relationships between attitude and other variables, including

PEOU, PU, and PE. Research has looked at the relationships between PU, perceived entertainment value, and attitudes toward using sensory-enabling technologies (Kim and Forsythe, 2008); impact of PU on consumer attitude toward e-shopping (Ha and Stoel, 2009); links among PEOU, PU, and attitude toward e-readers (Antón et al., 2013); links among PEOU, PU, and attitude toward self-service retail technology adoption (Kaushik and Rahman, 2015); the impact of PEOU on attitude toward Internet banking (Mansour, 2016); and links between PU and attitude toward e-auctions (Li et al., 2017). The following hypotheses are based on this discussion.

H6. PEOU of social media will have a positive impact on attitude toward social media use.

H7. PU of social media will have a positive impact on attitude toward social media use.

H8. PE of social media will have a positive impact on attitude toward social media use.

2.2.6. Online interaction propensity and GOSIP

Given the thrust by marketers toward online consumer engagement, prior research on consumer Internet and social media use has taken into account the impact of personality variables on consumers' online interaction behavior (for example, Marbach et al., 2016; Okazaki et al., 2013; Wiertz and de Ruyter, 2007). Wiertz and de Ruyter (2007) were among early researchers of consumer *online interaction propensity*, an individual difference factor that they argued would help to explain differential behaviors by consumers in online engagement. They defined online interaction propensity as "a prevailing tendency of an individual to interact with relative strangers (i.e. people they have never met offline) in an online environment" (p. 358). They argued further that: "It is this behavioral disposition, rooted in personality, that explains why one person will engage in online interaction and another will not under identical circumstances" (p. 358). They found that consumer *online interaction propensity* was among the strongest predictors of consumers' knowledge contribution in online communities.

Okazaki et al. (2013) explored behavior of online gossipers, questioning whether they promoted brands. They defined online gossip as "an attention-grabbing, cyber-communication strategy about social and personal topics that people use to influence others on the Internet" (p. 100). Online gossip, they postulated, served certain social functions such as establishing friendships, contributing to knowledge, and providing entertainment. They hypothesized that propensity to gossip online (defined by the researchers as "online small talk") led to greater information value, entertainment value, and friendship value. From their investigation, they found support for this hypothesis. Bianchi et al. (2017) also found that among the major drivers of social commerce was consumers' online social interaction propensity, which, among other things, influenced consumer satisfaction with brands' Facebook pages. Dessart (2017), in an investigation of individual-level antecedents and relational outcomes of social media engagement, also found that online interaction propensity was among the factors that had an impact on social media engagement.

Specific to our research is the concept of general online social interaction propensity (GOSIP). Blazevic et al. (2014) conceptualized GOSIP as a trait-based factor that expresses individuals' differences in their predisposition to interact with others online. They found evidence that consumers who exhibit high levels of GOSIP are more likely to engage in online discussions with others than are consumers who exhibit low levels of GOSIP. These findings are consistent with the previously discussed findings regarding the effects of online interaction propensity on consumer online engagement. In the same way that propensity for online gossip led to higher friendship value and entertainment value, the expectation is that GOSIP would lead to higher friendship value and entertainment value. For that reason, high GOSIP consumers would be expected to find social media more attractive than low GOSIP consumers, as social media cater to their need for online interaction, which would result in heightened friendship value and entertainment value for them. We therefore propose the following.

H9. GOSIP will have a positive impact on attitude toward social media use.

2.2.7. Attitude and outcome behavior

Prior research using TAM has established that favorable attitudes toward a technology impact behaviors and intentions to use the technology. For example, Kim and Forsythe (2008) found that consumers' attitudes toward using sensory-enabling technologies influenced their use of these technologies. Chang et al. (2012) found significant links between consumers' attitudes toward website quality and intentions to use the website in the travel sector, while Grob (2015) found that attitude positively influenced behavioral intentions and behaviors in the area of mobile shopping. Other research found significant relationships between attitudes and intentions or behaviors in the cases of young American consumers' engagement in passing along viral messages (Yang and Zhou, 2011); travelers' use of hotel self-service kiosks (Kim and Qu, 2014); and consumer acceptance of smart virtual closets (Perry, 2016).

2.3. Outcome variable

In the social media realm, consumers engage in a number of different behaviors of interest to marketers. These include content creation and content consumption behaviors. Various researchers have distinguished between these behaviors and have come up with classification schemes: contributing/creating (or active) and consuming (passive; curating) behaviors (Muntinga et al., 2011; Pagani et al., 2011). Pagani et al.'s (2011) classification (active behaviors) forms the basis for the outcome variable in this study.

2.4. Active behaviors

Active social media behaviors include uploading content/pictures, sharing information, and talking to individuals, among others. Pagani et al. (2011) adapted a previously used scale (Shim et al., 2008) to measure active social network use. This scale uses items including: time spent participating in content creation; sharing information; talking to other people; and posting/uploading videos and photos. We adapted this scale as the basis for the measure of active online behaviors.

Given the discussion above about direct effects between attitudes, intentions, and behaviors, we expect a positive link between attitudes toward social media use and engagement in active social media behaviors:

H10. Attitude toward social media use will have a positive impact on active social media behaviors.

3. Methodology

Data were collected by way of a survey administered in-person to students enrolled in a Costa Rica public university and via email among students enrolled in a Colombian university. This resulted in the collection of 296 completed responses: 92 from the Costa Rican university students and 204 from the Colombian university students. The use of samples from both countries is appropriate for a number of reasons, the principal one being the historical similarity between the two countries. The Costa Rican and Colombian cultures share a common origin. Both countries belonged at one time to the Spanish empire in the Americas, and, up until November 1903, they shared terrestrial borders, as Panama was until then a part of Colombia. Currently, they share maritime borders (Gómez, 2000). As a result of these factors, cultural exchange between the two countries has flourished. The geographic

proximity and the historical backgrounds of the two countries have contributed to similarities in culture. This is furthered by the similar economic evolution, with economies based on agriculture, in general, and coffee, in particular (Esquerra, 1991). There are also similarities between the two countries in educational development and political structure (Quintero, 2006). Overall, Costa Rica and Colombia are two countries with similar economic, educational, and cultural similarities, making a study combining samples of young people from both countries appropriate.

3.1. Questionnaire

The initial version of the questionnaire was developed in English and translated into Spanish by a bilingual (English-Spanish) researcher, who then worked with a native speaker of Spanish to fine-tune the final instrument. The final version was tested for clarity of the questions among a group of Costa Rican university students. No major changes to the questions were made as a result of this pretest. The introduction to the questionnaire told participants that the study related to young university students' use of social media and invited them to take part. The first part of the questionnaire contained questions related to the variables in the study, while the second part contained demographic questions.

3.2. Sample

The majority of the participants were female (67%); full-time students (49%); and age 18–24 years (66%). In the case of age, 2.1% of the population were under 18 years, 23.7% were in the age group 25–34 years, and 5.8% in the age group 35–44 years. So, fully 93% of the sample were 34 years or younger. They were primarily enrolled in social and political sciences (26%) or business administration and accounting (24%). This sample seems to mirror samples in previous studies conducted on the use of different social networks in this region. For example, Carias (2017) reported that: "The profile of the Latin American user coincides with the average Internaut. The INTAL and BID report says that 'it is generally observed a greater use at younger age with a higher socioeconomic and educational level. This also shows that the profile of the average internet user in Latin America is in line with international trends: 81% of people aged under 24 use Facebook…'" (https://thecostaricanews.com/costa-rica-leader-social-networks-use-latin-america/). Among countries in Latin America, Costa Rica was number two in the use of social networks, surpassed only by Paraguay. Carias (2017) also reported that among Latin America's social media users, 81% of this group support measures including a lowering of trade barriers in this region, and more integrated labor and economic standards.

Colombia also has one of the highest levels of social media penetration in Latin America (Mintic, 2016). Some 26 million Colombians have an active Facebook profile (La Republica, 2016). The group with the greatest use of social media is millennial Colombians, who represent some 28% of the population (Kien, 2017); in the US, Millennials represent about 30% of the population. In reporting on social media usage in Colombia, Nesbit (2016) opined: "…as Colombian social media explodes, the opportunities are ripe for capitalism to sink its teeth into a medium in which the average user has not yet mastered the art of ignoring advertisements with the proficiency of their American counterpart. Studies have shown that newer users are more likely to interact with ads. With hundreds of new accounts created every day, Colombians on Facebook and YouTube are ready to be reached in greater numbers than ever before" (https://www.socialmediadelivered.com/blog/2016/07/13/colombia-the-new-frontier-of-social-media).

3.3. Measures

The questionnaire contained items used to measure the study's variables. The measures were based on scales from prior studies and were modified to suit the social media context. In one case, FoMO, a short-form of the original scale was used. This resulted from the need to control for overall questionnaire length. In addition, if an item from the original scale did not load highly on this factor, it was dropped from the scale. Table 1 contains information on these measures, including the sources of the scales. Items were measured on 7-point Likert scales. Anchors were *Strongly disagree/Strongly agree* for the variables in the core TAM (PEOU, PU, Enjoyment, Attitude) and social influence; *Not at all true/Totally true* for FoMO, GOSIP, and social facilitation experience scales; and *Very unlikely/Very likely* for the social media behaviors scale.

4. Data analysis and results

4.1. Measurement model results

An initial CFA was conducted; however, prior to this, the data were checked for appropriateness for factor analysis using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling accuracy as well as Bartlett's test of sphericity. Both measures (KMO = 0.89; Bartlett's test: Chi-square = 6395.51, df = 595, p-value = 0.000) indicated that the data were suitable for CFA (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). In addition, common method basis was assessed by Harman's single factor test. This test assesses whether the majority of variance in data can be explained by a single factor. An exploratory factor analysis, with non-rotation of factors and number of factors to be extracted limited to one, indicated that common method bias was not present. The single factor accounted for 27 per cent of the variance in the data. Furthermore, a confirmatory factor analysis, in which all the variables in the model were loaded onto one factor and the model fit examined, showed that the single-factor model did not fit the data well: CFI = 0.33; TLI = 0.29; RMSEA = 0.16; SRMR = 0.17, $\chi^2(665) = 5511.88$, $p < 0.001$ (Korsgaard and Roberson, 1995; Mossholder et al., 1998).

Unidimensionality of the constructs were assessed using exploratory factor analysis (EFA). This led to the identification of problematic items prior to a CFA (Farrell and Rudd, 2009). We deleted items that did not load highly (≥ 0.50) on their related factors and items that significantly lowered a scale's Cronbach's alpha. The scales reported in Table 1 were retained for a CFA. We used Mplus 7.3 (Muthén and Muthén, 1998–2014) for the CFA and test of the structural model.

The CFA results indicated an overall goodness of fit of the model indices to the data: CFI = 0.95; TLI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.05; SRMR = 0.05, $\chi^2(614) = 999.70$, $p < 0.001$ (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). Table 1 contains information on the constructs. Items loaded on the appropriate factors; factor loadings were all significant at p-value = 0.000, indicating convergent validity. All the constructs satisfied the requirement that the value of AVE for each construct should be at least 0.50; AVEs ranged from a low of 0.51 for PU to a high of 0.77 for social influence. If the AVEs for two constructs (X, Y) exceed the square of the correlation between the two constructs, this indicates discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Table 2 provides the correlation matrix for the constructs, with AVEs on the diagonal. The data confirm discriminant validities of all the pairs of constructs in the model.

Table 1
Measurement model estimation.

Factors/Items	Factor loadings	CR	α	AVE
Social facilitation experience (SFE)				
In conversations with many other people, I bring up things I have seen on social media platforms.	0.81***	0.93	0.86	0.67
Social media sites often give me something to talk about.	0.88***			
I use things from social media sites in discussions or arguments with people I know.	0.77***			
Source: Calder et al (2009)				
Social influence				
My friends would approve of my participation in social media.	0.92***	0.93	0.87	0.77
My family would approve of my participation in social media.	0.83***			
Source: Trongmateerut and Sweeney (2013)				
FoMO (Short-form)				
I fear others have more rewarding experiences than me.	0.68***	0.91	0.84	0.53
I fear my friends have more rewarding experiences than me.	0.74***			
I get worried when I find out my friends are having fun without me.	0.87***			
I get anxious when I don't know what my friends are up to.	0.58***			
Source: Przybylski et al. (2013)				
PEOU				
Learning how to participate on social media was easy for me.	0.81***	0.92	0.85	0.64
I find social media easy to use.	0.81***			
It was easy for me to figure out how to participate on social media.	0.77***			
Source: Curran and Lennon (2011)				
PU				
Social media make it easier for me to keep up with issues that interest me.	0.76***	0.94	0.88	0.51
Social media make it easier for me to keep up with businesses that interest me.	0.58***			
Social media improve the way I keep up with things that interest me.	0.72***			
Social media make it easier to stay in touch with my friends.	0.72***			
Social media provide me with useful information.	0.65***			
Social media make it easier for me to stay in touch with what is going on around me.	0.81***			
Source: Curran and Lennon (2011)				
PE				
I enjoy using social networking sites to keep up with people.	0.82***	0.94	0.85	0.62
It is fun to be involved with social media.	0.90***			
I enjoy participating on social media.	0.79***			
I find social media to be entertaining.	0.60***			
Source: Curran and Lennon (2011)				
GOSIP				
In general, I am someone who answers questions of others in online discussion forums.	0.70***	0.95	0.93	0.64
In general, I am someone who enjoys starting a dialog online.	0.66***			
In general, I like to get involved in online discussions.	0.91***			
I find the idea of belonging to an online discussion group pleasant.	0.83***			
I am someone who likes actively participating in online discussions.	0.90***			
I am someone who likes interaction with like-minded others online.	0.81***			
In general, I thoroughly enjoy exchanging ideas with other people online.	0.75***			
Source: Blazevic et al. (2014)				
Attitude				
I have a favorable attitude toward using social media.	0.75***	0.92	0.87	0.61
I have a positive attitude toward using social media.	0.80***			
Using social media is desirable.	0.80***			
Source: Yi (1990); Lafferty et al. (2002)				
Social media behavior				
Participate in companies' games and contests	0.58***	0.95	0.88	0.56
Share companies' videos, audios, pictures, and messages on my Facebook page	0.72***			
Recommend companies' Facebook pages and other social media platforms to my contacts	0.79***			
Upload brand-related videos, audios, pictures, or images	0.83***			
Share a link to a video about a brand	0.83***			
Post information about my experiences with brands on a social media.	0.70***			
Source: Pagani et al. (2011); Tsai and Men (2013)				

*** $p < 0.001$.

4.2. Hypotheses testing results

The structural model was tested using the maximum likelihood method with Mplus 7.3 (Muthén and Muthén, 1998–2014). The proposed structural model showed an acceptable fit: CFI = 0.95; TLI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.05; SRMR = 0.06, $\chi^2(624) = 1012.05$, $p < 0.001$ (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). Table 3 contains the detailed results. All the hypothesized paths, with the exception of that proposed in H3, were significant. H1 predicted that social facilitation experience would have a positive impact on perceived usefulness of social media. This was supported ($\beta = 0.15$, $t = 3.08$, $p < 0.01$). H2, which was also supported ($\beta = 0.34$, $t = 6.46$, $p < 0.001$), predicted a positive impact of social influence on perceived usefulness of social media. H3 was not supported, as there was no significant impact of FoMO on PU of social media ($\beta = -0.01$, $t = -0.24$, $p > 0.05$). FoMo does not directly affect PU of social media, as it may function indirectly through some other variables to impact PU. H4 hypothesized that PEOU of social media would have a positive impact on PU of social media, while H5 predicted

Table 2
Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix with AVEs on the diagonal[a].

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. SFE	14.11	5.24	**0.67**[a]								
2. SocInf	11.20	3.23	0.21	**0.77**							
3. FOMO	8.92	5.82	0.13	0.04[n]	**0.53**						
4. PEOUSM	18.53	3.78	0.12	0.43	− 0.05[n]	**0.64**					
5. PUSM	34.19	7.48	0.31	0.58	− 0.02[n]	0.62	**0.54**				
6. PE	21.88	5.64	0.28	0.47	0.02[n]	0.62	0.66	**0.62**			
7. GOSIP	21.91	11.83	0.46	0.13	0.20[n]	0.01[n]	0.15	0.27	**0.64**		
8. Attitude	16.51	4.30	0.43	0.36	− 0.01[n]	0.25	0.46	0.45	0.30	**0.61**	
9. SM behavior	25.82	11.26	0.30	0.18	0.01[n]	0.06[n]	0.24	0.25	0.34	0.34	**0.54**

N = not significant.
[a] Numbers in bold represent the AVEs for the variables.

Table 3
Hypotheses testing results.

Hypotheses and paths	β path coefficients (t-values)	Test result
H1 **SFE > PU**	0.15 (3.08)**	Supported
H2 **SocInf > PU**	0.34 (6.46)***	Supported
H3 **FoMO > PU**	−0.01 (− 0.24)[n]	Not supported
H4 **PEOU > PU**	0.33 (4.71)***	Supported
H5 **PE > PU**	0.31 (4.24)***	Supported
H6 **PEOU > Attitude**	− 0.34 (− 2.82)**	Not supported
H7 **PU > Attitude**	0.54 (4.37)***	Supported
H8 **PE > Attitude**	0.29 (2.300*	Supported
H9 **GOSIP > Attitude**	0.20 (2.96)**	Supported
H10 **Attitude > Social media behavior**	0.41 (7.08)***	Supported

* $p < 0.05$.
** $p < 0.01$.
*** $p < 0.001$.

that perceived enjoyment of social media would have a positive impact on PU of social media. Both hypotheses were supported (H4: β = 0.33, t = 4.71, $p < 0.001$; H5: β = 0.31, t = 4.24, $p < 0.001$). In the case of H6, even though the hypothesized relationship was significant, it was counter to the prediction that PEOU would be positively related to attitude toward social media use (β = -0.34, t = -2.82, $p < 0.01$). This may have to do with young consumers' comfort with social media, which is discussed in the next section. H7–H9 made predictions regarding the impact of PU (β = 0.54, t = 4.37, $p < 0.001$), perceived enjoyment (β = 0.29, t = 2.30, $p < 0.05$), and GOSIP (β = 0.20, t = 2.96, $p < 0.01$) on attitude; and all three predictions were supported. The positive impact of attitude on social media behavior, which was the premise of H10, was also supported (β = 0.41, t = 7.08, $p < 0.001$).

5. General discussion

This study explored social networking among young consumers in Latin America, with the aim of extending our understanding of this phenomenon in a region that has not been the focus of much of the exploration of social networking and social media use. The study relied on a tested model, technology acceptance model (TAM), that has been used previously in a number of studies that have investigated consumer acceptance of different types of technologies and innovations. The current study expanded this model by incorporating certain individual difference factors that were expected to relate to social media use: social facilitation experience; FoMO; and GOSIP. In addition, the model used as outcome variables social networking behaviors that have been characterized as active/contributing social media behaviors in previous studies (Muntinga et al., 2011; Pagani et al., 2011; Tsai and Men, 2013) and in which marketers would be interested.

The model developed in the study was tested using structural equation modeling and found that all the hypothesized paths were significant with the exception of the relationship between FoMO and perceived usefulness. Two of the three individual difference variables, that is, social facilitation experience (SFE) and GOSIP, show significant relationships with perceived usefulness and attitude toward social media use, respectively. In the case of SFE, this suggests that consumers who rely on social media as a source of information for use in social settings are more likely to perceive social media as being useful for their goals, hence the nature of the link between SFE and PU. Similarly, in the case of GOSIP, consumers who see social media as an environment

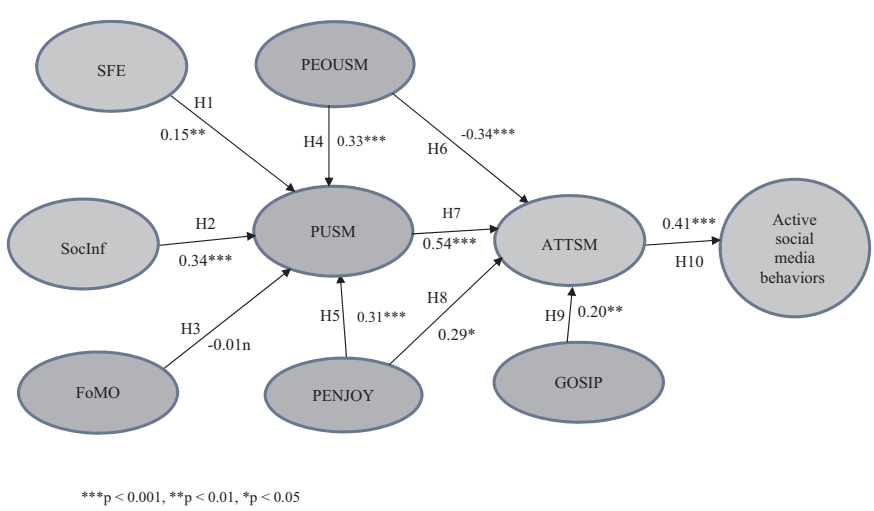


Fig. 2. Structural model with results from hypotheses testing.

in which they can socialize with others and exchange ideas will view social media in a more favorable manner. Social influence had a significant impact on perceived usefulness of social media, as did perceived enjoyment and perceived ease of use of social media. Of these three variables, social influence had the highest impact (based on the coefficients). However, given the negligible differences among the coefficients, the argument could be made that all three factors (social influence, perceived enjoyment and PEOU) contribute equally to consumer perceptions of the usefulness of social media. So, the extent to which consumers think others want them to use the technology, as well as these consumers' ability to derive fun from using the technology and the lack of complexity of the technology, works to ensure favorable perceptions of the usefulness of social media.

The findings regarding the relationships among perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, and perceived ease of use of social media are consistent with earlier findings in different domains, including recent findings by Natarajan et al. (2017). They found that perceived ease of use and perceived enjoyment had significant impact on perceived usefulness of using mobile shopping applications. The perceived enjoyment → perceived usefulness link underscores that consumers derive hedonic benefits from technology, including social media. These hedonic benefits can drive favorable perceptions of the utility of the technology, in this case, social media. The results showed that perceived ease of use of social networking sites was negatively related to attitude toward social networking sites, which was counter to expectations. A possible explanation for this finding could be that these young consumers do not regard social media as being particularly difficult to use, so perceptions of ease of use do not positively influence their attitudes. As was expected, attitude toward social media had a strong positive impact on engagement in active social media behaviors. This means that consumers who have more favorable impressions of social media will use these media more often to indulge in activities that can prove beneficial for marketers.

6. Research implications

The study extends the TAM into the social media realm by incorporating additional variables not previously included. In addition, while prior research has studied TAM in the context of one specific social media site, Facebook (Rauniar et al., 2014), our study looks at TAM in the context of social media use in general. The results show that TAM does a good job of explaining social media use among young Latin American consumers. This adds to the robustness of the model in that it can be applied in a number of different technological domains. These results further bear out that perceived usefulness is an important variable in the TAM, given its high level of impact on attitude toward social media, as well as the strong link between attitude toward social media and active social media behaviors.

The results further support the roles of social influence and perceived enjoyment, which are previous extensions to the TAM, in explaining technology adoption or use. In addition, the study underscores that variables such as a person's propensity for online interaction and their engagement in online socialization impact their social media perceptions and behaviors. Hence, these results show the usefulness of a concept such as GOSIP in explaining what drives social media use. Another explanatory variable for social media use that was revealed by this study is social facilitation experience. This finding suggests that social media users may be motivated by the need for information acquisition, and they need this information for social settings. The study also highlights the role of new dimensions of social media engagement in this literature stream. This engagement relates specifically to active/contributing social media behaviors such as participating in companies' games and contests; sharing companies' videos, audios, pictures, and messages on social media; and recommending companies' Facebook pages and other social media platforms to others. The conceptual model in the study suggests the possibilities of various mediating relationships, which possibilities could form the bases for future research.

7. Managerial implications

Managerial implications also flow from the results of this study. The current study established a significant positive relationship between individuals' predisposition to interact with others online (GOSIP) and attitudes toward social media use, which subsequently influenced social media behaviors. This highlights the possibility of using GOSIP as a measure to segment consumers. Consumers could be grouped into segments of high GOSIP consumers and low GOSIP consumers (see, for example, Dimitriu and Guesalaga, 2017, for a similar approach to segmentation of consumers based on their social media behaviors). Those with higher GOSIP propensity would be targeted using social media, given the relationships found in the study. The results also show that there is a positive and significant link between attitude toward social media and engagement in active online social behaviors. Companies are well aware of the positive benefits provided by engaged consumers, whether these consumers are actively interacting with their brands (e.g., creating content) or simply consuming content. For example, active online consumers provide brands with positive word-of-mouth deemed credible to others. However, not all consumers actively interact with brands online. These results show that attitude toward social media use had a significant impact on social media behaviors, which suggests that marketers should facilitate consumer engagement on social media based on attitudes toward social media, as well as GOSIP. Incorporating images of friends and family in social media marketing campaigns may also be undertaken, given that social influence has a significant impact on perceived usefulness of social media among these consumers.

In the case of FoMO, the conceptual model proposed that this variable would have an impact on perceived usefulness of social media. However, the results indicated that this was not the case among this population of consumers. This suggests that marketers may not want to focus on this fear as a basis to drive these consumers to use their social media platforms. Focus could then be placed on the behaviors in which consumers engage on social media. For example, based on our results, when consumers have favorable attitudes toward social media, this influences behaviors such as: sharing companies' videos, audios, pictures, and messages on social media; recommending companies' social media platforms to others; uploading brand-related videos, audios, pictures, or images; share a link to a video about a brand; and posting information about experiences with brands on a social media platform. These are behaviors that researchers (Muntinga et al., 2011; Pagani et al., 2011; Tsai and Men, 2013) classified as active/contributing social media behaviors. These are also behaviors that attest to consumer engagement with a brand. The study's results underscore that companies can rely on consumers who have positive attitudes toward social media to engage in activities that would be beneficial to their brands.

Brands could also use various means of marketing communications such as digital advertising and online sales promotions to increase consumer perception that actively using their social media sites will benefit consumers in some way. This, in turn, could positively influence these consumers' attitudes toward these brands' social media sites. For example, among the social media behaviors that are impacted by GOSIP and attitude toward social media were companies' games and contests. Brands could use these as ways to reward those who act on their behalf on social media. In addition, these games and contests could enhance perceived enjoyment of social media, contributing to the positive impact that perceived enjoyment has on attitude toward social media use. Though not explored in this study, possible direct and indirect links exist between perceived enjoyment of social media and social media

behaviors, with games and contests likely contributing to perceived enjoyment.

Online commerce is fast evolving into social e-commerce (Huang and Benyoucef, 2017), and increased consumer use of social media can only prove positive for brands engaged in social e-commerce. Companies will realize from results of studies such as these that they can enhance customer engagement and e-commerce through social media. There is also a role of social media marketing in the cases of brand building and customer acquisition (de Vries et al., 2017). Information on social media use may also be relevant to managers in the domain of digital marketing management. While companies that effectively use social media stand to benefit from doing so, many must overcome the social media skills gap, or the difference between constantly evolving digital demands and the lack of employee training (Nugent, 2017). A recent study found that when asked whether they had enough personnel with the skills necessary for the digital transformation of their companies, only 15% of businesses agreed or strongly agreed. In the same study, only 57% of companies that regard social media as an important skill claim to be skilled or highly skilled in this domain (Hoberg et al., 2017). Therefore, finding ways to help companies understand how different consumers use social media and how they can incorporate this into their strategies and tactics can only benefit those companies.

8. Limitations and future research

This exploration of social media use among young consumers in Latin America helps to advance our understanding of this phenomenon in a region with primarily developing countries. The study results also underline the importance of the extended TAM in further knowledge about adoption and use of different technologies and innovations. However, there are certain limitations to the study, which in themselves can form the basis for future research. The current study focused primarily on young consumers in Latin America, so the results cannot be generalized to all groups of consumers in this region. In addition, data were collected in two countries, one in Central America and the other in South America, using two different data collection methods. The difference in data collection methods was to address concerns about maximization of participant response in each country. So, even though this study provides information regarding social networking of young Latin American consumers, future studies could expand the number of countries involved as well as the different groups of consumers involved, in order to increase our knowledge and understanding of how social networking and social media use operate in this population. The current study also relied on convenience samples of participants, and, as a result, the use of nationally-representative samples for future studies on this issue is encouraged. Results from such studies would enable generalizations about these consumers.

This exploratory work also looked at social media in general and did not distinguish among the different social media platforms. It is possible that consumers may respond differently to the various social media platforms, so future research could explore whether this is the case and how the conceptual model in this study operates when applied to specific social media platforms. Future research should explore the relationship between perceived ease of use of social networking sites and consumers' attitudes toward social networking sites, in light of the negative relationship found in this study. This would help to unearth possible reasons that perceived ease of use of social media is operating in this way, or if this is an aberration peculiar to these countries. In addition, participants reported on their participation in social media behaviors on 7-point Likert scales, with no actual tracking of these behaviors. Longitudinal studies that track actual social media behaviors of these consumers and relate them to the variables in the model would also be productive.

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