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## Social media services branding: The use of corporate brand names

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## ABSTRACT

Companies are increasingly searching for ways to better engage consumers through social media. In this paper, we explore the impact of using different levels of brand names (corporate vs. product) in social media posts on customer engagement and purchase intentions for services. Building on services branding and brand self-identity literature, we argue that the use of corporate brand names in a services context will increase message likes and purchase intention and that corporate customer brand identification drives these effects. We test this assertion with both field and experimental studies. A field study, using actual services' Facebook brand posts, provides support for this hypothesis, finding that the use of corporate brand names increases message likes while the use of product brand names reduces them. Four follow-up experiments replicate these results, identify boundary conditions, and provide process evidence that the effect is mediated by customer brand identification. Implications are discussed.

## 1. Introduction

Social media provides an opportunity for services to strengthen branding and connect to customers. In particular, marketers encourage customers to engage with brand content in order to build better brand awareness, loyalty and relationships (Hajli, Shanmugam, Papagiannidis, Zahay, & Richard, 2017). Thus, one of the challenges for marketers is to implement appropriate social media content strategies to entice their audience to engage and popularize content (Swani, Milne, Brown, Assaf, & Donthu, 2017). However, marketers have numerous options in terms of the content they include in their social media communications. In particular, in contrast to goods, many services are better known by corporate names than by product ones (Aaker, 2004). How does this distinction impact social media content engagement and purchase intentions?

Stronger corporate brand names help the target audience reduce the perceived risks associated with services that arise due to services' intangibility and heterogeneity (Hamzah, Alwi, & Othman, 2014). Brand names impact customer's decision making since the name can depict several functional and emotional traits such as quality, value, credibility, personalities, and identities in the minds of consumers (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Lam, Ahearne, Mullins, Hayati, & Schillewaert, 2013). Customers often affiliate to brands that depict high affinity with their identities or the identities they would like to project in the eyes of others (Çifci et al., 2016; Lam et al., 2013). Indeed, customers often use

social media sites to share content with brand names with others to manage their self-impressions (Berger, 2014). Thus, for services the use of corporate brand names in social media content is important as it may cue the viewers to share brand content as well as entice them to make purchases.

In this research, we investigate the effectiveness of the use of corporate brand names (vs. product brand names) by services in a particular social media site, Facebook. While others have examined differences between the use of corporate brand names between services and goods, our investigation is the first known by the authors to examine the impact of the use of different levels of brand names on social media engagement and purchase intentions for services. Specifically, we explore how the use of corporate brand impacts services social media content engagement (likes) and purchase intentions and what drives this effect. We use both field (Study 1) and experimental (Studies 2a-b and 3) studies to demonstrate that the use of corporate brand names in Facebook services posts positively influences liking behavior of posts whereas the use of product brand names negatively influences the liking behavior of posts. The experimental studies further demonstrate that the use of corporate brand names not only influences liking intentions but also purchase intentions. Results further indicate that customer brand identification reflected through corporate brand name drives the intentions to like the message which ultimately leads to purchase intention. In Study 4, we test the boundary conditions for the hypothesized effects. Results indicate that the effect of brand names on

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liking intentions and purchase intentions is mitigated when both corporate and product names are seen as low or highly familiar. This research addresses the recent calls on social media branding and impact of consumer online engagement on marketing outcomes (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). Furthermore, our research elucidates the psychological process that drives engagement and purchase intentions (Stephen, 2016).

This research provides both theoretical and managerial contributions. First, it contributes to the services marketing, branding and social media literatures by establishing the importance of the use of brand names in social media content. Second, this research establishes the importance of cultivating customer brand identification (psychological process) which drives sharing of content and purchase intentions. Results indicate that the use of corporate brand name in content may prime users to share content and this effect is driven by corporate customer brand identity. The results hold for both hedonic and utilitarian services. Third, results also indicate how sharing social media engagement (liking) translates to purchase intentions. Fourth, the effect between the use of brand names is mitigated when both corporate and product brand names have low or high familiarity. This research provides directly applicable guidance to managers to promote corporate brands on social media and also highlights the importance of building strong customer brand identification with the target audience on social media sites.

This paper is organized as follows. First, we present a brief review of relevant literature related to service value-in-use on social media, brand names as signal to identity, service branding and customer brand identification in order to develop our hypotheses. Second, we describe the methodology for Study 1 (field study) and present the findings with discussion. Third, we describe our follow-up experimental studies (Study 2a-b, 3, and 4) and present results and discussion. Finally, we present conclusions and implications of the findings followed by limitations and future research directions.

## 2. Service value-in-use on social media

According to the Service Logic, value as value-in-use, is created by the customers both individually and socially (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). In a customer sphere, the customer is an independent value creator outside direct interaction with the provider where the provider may act as a value facilitator (Grönroos, 2008, 2011). In the realm of customer sphere, social media provides a unique environment where individuals can not only exchange their own service brand related experiences and information with other individuals but can also interact with service brand messages directly sent out by service providers to them. Here the customer creates value independently as value creation is influenced by interactions with other customers.

For service marketers, such customer brand interactions (online word-of-mouth) are useful as they may help the brand. Customer brand interactions have shown to impact both individual level outcomes (e.g., customer spending/purchase intentions, brand trust and loyalty, and customer brand engagement) and firm level outcomes (e.g., sales, ROI, revenues, and stock prices) (King, Racherla, & Bush, 2014). Furthermore, for services, online customer brand interactions are essential since customers often rely on others' opinions and experiences when making service purchases to help reduce risk and anxiety and set their expectations of value-in-use of service brands. Indeed, 71% of individuals indicate making a purchase of a product based on social media referrals and, of those individuals who referred a brand, 40% indicated making a purchase (Invesp, 2014).

Service marketers thus need to create appropriate brand content strategies that entice their fans/followers to engage with content and eventually make purchases. We argue that the choice of brand name in the content is an important factor to consider when crafting engaging content on social media sites.

## 3. Brand names as signal to identity

Brand names can send signals on product quality, performance, reliability, and reputation (Aaker, 1997; Brexendorf, Bayus, & Keller, 2015). These signals may help shape brand identity in consumers' minds (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Consumers often use brands to signal to others that they possess a trait(s) associated with the brand (Park & John, 2010). Brands are signals of identity and choice of brands that consumers prefer is driven by desires to communicate identity, self-expression, and uniqueness (Chan, Berger, & Van Boven, 2012).

Marketers communicate brand identity through signs and symbols using logos, name, taglines, and images. In the context of social media, marketers often use brand names in their messages to fans/followers. Customers tend to become fans/followers of familiar brands on social media sites that reflect their identity and often share messages related to those brands (Wallace, Buil, & de Chernatony, 2014). For marketers, one way to trigger brand identity in their brand communication messages is to include their brand names. We argue that the use of brand names in social media message context would elicit sharing of messages due to customer brand identity (Berger, 2014; Chan et al., 2012).

Brand names can act as primes by increasing a brand's accessibility which may affect the probability that it is retrieved and considered for choice (Nedungadi, 1990). Brand names could activate brand identity-consistent traits and concepts, thus influencing behaviors (Brasel & Gips, 2011; Fitzsimons, Chartrand, & Fitzsimons, 2008; Hudson, Huang, Roth, & Madden, 2016; Park & John, 2014; Wänke, 2016). Since brands are seen as extensions of self and have personalities, they tend to provide psychological value to customers by depicting their personality and identity related motivations (Aaker, 1997; Belk, 2013; Fitzsimons et al., 2008). Customers often relate to brands that reflect self-enhancement (want to build connection with brand and the self) and self-verification goals (want to be like others who use the brand) (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017). Indeed, consumers do use brands to signal who they are to others (Park & John, 2018).

Social media provides a unique opportunity for individuals to depict their opinions, values, identity, affiliations, and self-enhancing traits to others. On social media sites, consumers often become fans/followers of familiar brands and share brand related posts to elevate their self-enhancement and self-verification goals (Berger, 2014; Swani & Milne, 2017). The mention of familiar brand names in content is likely to impact its sharing. This should be true specifically when the familiar brand name in the social media content is congruent with one's self-identity or an image that one would like to portray in the eyes of others. One of the primary motivations for consumers to share content is to elevate their self-presentation or self-enhancement in the eyes of others (Berger, 2014). Familiar brands that may elevate such traits to enhance self-presentation are likely to be shared and consumed more than those brands that fail to do so (Berger, 2014; Lovett, Peres, & Shachar, 2013).

## 4. Hypotheses development

Companies have the option of employing a corporate or product branding strategy. Corporate branding is the marketing of various goods and services under the corporate name. In contrast, product branding involves the marketing of the individual product without the company name being present in the advertising or product labeling. Companies, such as Proctor and Gamble, who want to have a "stand alone" product use product branding and those companies, such as American Express, whose corporate brand name is associated with all products choose a monolithic (corporate) strategy. Some companies have dual approaches (Berens, Riel, & Bruggen, 2005). All approaches can work if they build trust and a sense of loyalty.

Services have been historically examined and discussed using corporate brand names. As Berry (2000) writes, "the company is the primary brand" (p. 128). It is the organization name that allows for differentiation among service providers and customers relate to

organization and service personnel (frontline service employees) through corporate brand names (Aaker, 2004). Indeed, customers build attachments and identity with companies through these multiple interactions (Thomson, 2006; Zaglia, 2013). This branding strategy in turn increases consumers' familiarity and personal relationships with corporate brand names rather than product brand names.

As a result of the centrality of the corporate brand name in interactions and conversations about services, the corporate brand name becomes the logical node for connecting additional brand associations. From a categorization perspective, it is the natural, or basic, level at which customers conceptualize services. The 'basic level' of categorization is the predominant way of structuring concepts (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987). It is the level at which objects are spontaneously named and at which discrimination among like objects is easiest (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987).

These properties suggest that corporate brand names will have a high level of conceptual fluency than less familiar product brand names. Conceptual fluency refers to the ease with which a target comes to mind and pertains to processing of meaning (Lee & Labroo, 2004). A large body of research supports that people's attitudes towards an object become more positive when they can easily process it (e.g., Anand & Sternthal, 1991; Labroo, Dhar, & Schwarz, 2008; Lee & Labroo, 2004; Schwarz, 2004). Applied to the current context, this research suggests that to the degree that familiar corporate brand names increase processing fluency, the use of these names vs. less familiar product brand names should lead to more positive attitudes towards social media posts containing them. We expect this increased positive attitude will translate into positive consumer outcomes.

Prior research suggests positive outcomes of the use of familiar corporate brand strategy (Fetscherin & Usunier, 2012). For services, the use of corporate brand names vs. product or no brand names has been shown to influence firm profits (Silva, Gerwe, & Becerra, 2017). Corporate branding strategy has also been shown to be associated with higher values of Tobin's  $q$  and that corporate brand equity drives firm performance (Rao, Agarwal, & Dahlhoff, 2004; Wang & Sengupta, 2016). Furthermore, in the context of social media, the use of corporate brand names influences higher consumer engagement for services vs. goods, whereas the use of product brand names influence higher consumer engagement for goods vs. services (Swani & Milne, 2017). Thus, we predict that the use of the corporate brand name (vs. less familiar product brand name) in social media posts will translate into (a) a greater number of Facebook-post likes and (b) higher purchase intentions.

**H1.** The use of a corporate brand name (vs. product brand name) in a services social media message will increase (a) message likes and (b) purchase intention.

At the same time corporate brand names may also serve as a cue for prior positive experiences with the firm. Customers often express their social identity through brand association or brand consumption (Belén del Río, Vazquez, & Iglesias, 2001). Thus, they are likely to purchase or engage with brands that may align with their image or personality (Hamzah et al., 2014). Services can be personalized towards consumers' needs thus increasing emotional attachment with the corporate brands that in turn build stronger customer brand identification (CBI). Personal experience, consumption of services, and contact with brand leads to higher CBI (Bhattacharya & Elsbach, 2002). Indeed consumers need to be familiar with the brand to develop any contact or experience with the brand. In a services context, CBI is analogous to customer company identification due to the fact that the corporate brand name is a company name.

Customer brand identification (CBI) is defined as a customer's psychological state of perceiving, feeling, and valuing his or her belongingness with a brand (Lam et al., 2013). Such brand identification has been shown to positively influence brand loyalty and brand equity (Çifci et al., 2016; Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci,

2010). Further, customers are more likely to purchase brands consistent with their image or personality (Schmitt, 1999). Just as employees who identify with their organizations are more likely to engage in positive word-of-mouth (Löhdorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014), it is reasonable to expect that customers who identify with brands will also be more likely to publicly support these brands and engage in positive word-of-mouth. Conversely, it is reasonable to expect that brands that customers do not relate to or identify with will receive less public support and consumption. This is indeed true for less familiar brands since consumer with less familiarity towards a brand tend to have a greater dis-identification with the brand (Bhattacharya & Elsbach, 2002; Wolter, Brach, Cronin, & Bonn, 2016). Likewise, individuals with high familiarity with the brand tend to have higher CBI (Wolter et al., 2016).

For services, the emphasis on cultivating CBI is primarily through corporate branding rather than product branding. Thus service companies often rely on building strong customer corporate identification as a part of overall marketing strategy to better support consumer relationships (Huang et al., 2017). In addition, customers in their decision making put a great importance on the values corporations espouse. The cultivation of corporate branding efforts thus may help customers reflect their identity-consistent traits similar to those depicted by corporate brands, thus influencing behaviors.

Based on the above discussion and the identity signaling literature discussed earlier, we argue that the use of corporate brand names (vs. less familiar product brand names) in social media content may prime the brand's accessibility in customers' minds in turn activating brand identity-consistent traits and concepts. This in turn may elicit sharing of messages and purchase intentions due to corporate customer-brand identity (Berger, 2014; Chan et al., 2012). This proposed psychological process suggests that CBI will positively mediate the relationship between the use of corporate brand name and (a) Facebook brand-post likes and (b) purchase intention.

**H2.** Customer-brand identification will mediate the relationship between the use of a corporate brand name (vs. product brand name) in a services social media message and (a) message likes and (b) purchase intention.

Although prior research suggests that the use and effectiveness of communication strategies across service type (hedonic vs. utilitarian) differs (Albers-Miller & Royne Stafford, 1999; Andreu, Casado-Díaz, & Mattila, 2015; Stafford, Stafford, & Day, 2002), we do not expect the effect of service type to impact the relationship between the use of brand names on message likes and purchase intentions. However, to test this assertion we do explore whether H1a–b hold across both hedonic and utilitarian service brands.

## 5. Study 1: Field study

The goal of this study was to test whether the use of brand names (both corporate and product) in services social media content influence consumers to make content popular. Specifically, we wanted to test whether the use of corporate brand names (vs. less familiar product brand names) increased the likelihood to like the content (H1a). As part of a robustness test, we further explored whether the results vary across the service type (hedonic vs. utilitarian) since service type is likely to affect customer brand engagement (Hollebeek, Srivastava, & Chen, 2016).

### 5.1. Data

The data consisted of 1467 unique brand wall posts from over 200 Facebook brand pages. The data was a subset from the first author's dissertation. Facebook is the largest social media network with 2.20 billion monthly active users and over 80% of Fortune 500 (F-500) companies actively post brand communications on their brand pages to interact with their fans/followers (Barnes & Griswold, 2016; Facebook,

2018). To collect the brand posts, we manually tracked the brand pages of 303 Facebook brand pages for the week of 9/29/11 (randomly selected) based on the list provided by Barnes (2010). During this time period, 213 of the brands were active, making a total of 1467 unique posts. The active brands ranked across the entire F-500 list and spanned across all industries, including both services and goods. Thus, the data sample provided a good representation of F-500 brand posts.

## 5.2. Content analysis

Two coders were trained to code the Facebook brand posts. The coders went through four rigorous training sessions where they coded brand type, message appeals (functional and emotional), vividness, direct call to purchase, and whether information promotes service/goods for over 60 sample Facebook brand posts for practice. The training sessions ensured that the coders understood the key concepts and coding scheme (see Appendix A for coding scheme). The message appeals, vividness, direct call to purchase, and whether information promotes service/goods were coded to be included as control variables in the analysis since prior research suggests that they may influence brand post engagement (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012; Swani et al., 2017; Swani, Milne, & Brown, 2013). The intercoder reliability across the coders was calculated using Rust and Cooil's (1994) proportional reduction in loss (PRL) index (Neuendorf, 2002) on 100 randomly selected brand posts not included in the actual data set. This procedure ensured non-contamination of the original data set (Swani et al., 2017). The intercoder reliability was calculated on brand type, message appeals, and vividness. All reliabilities were high and were above 0.92 (mean = 0.96). High reliabilities suggest that there are virtually no differences among coders.

The dataset of 1467 Facebook posts was then divided equally among the two coders. Each coder recorded the presence (coded as 1) or absence (coded as 0) of corporate brand name, product brand name, functional appeals, emotional appeals, images, videos, direct call to purchase, and whether information promotes service/goods for each message in their half of the dataset. For example, the mention of corporate brand name in the brand post was coded as 1, else 0. Likewise, the mention of product brand names in the content was coded as 1, else 0. The coders recorded the fanlikes for each Facebook brand page as well as message time – recorded as the difference in the time when message was sent to the time when message was archived. The coders also recorded the number of likes and comments for each message. The F-500 brand rank for each brand was recorded by the authors, to be added as a brand control measure.

After the coding was completed, we classified services and goods Facebook brands using the North American Industry Classification System SIC codes. Given our focus on services, Facebook posts from brands classified as goods were excluded from the dataset.

## 5.3. Descriptive statistics

Our final dataset comprised of 996 brand posts from 131 Facebook services brand pages. 25.80% of brand posts used corporate brand name in their content whereas 24.00% used product brand name in their content. The use of functional appeals in brand post was 17.87% whereas the use of emotional appeals in brand posts was 54.62%. Over half (52.91%) of brand posts contained images whereas only 7.13% of brand posts contained videos. 15.80% of messages contained cues for a direct call to purchase and 28.30% promoted the service. The average number of likes for brand posts was 495 and 69.48% of brand posts had at least one comment. The average fan base size for Facebook brand posts was 1,553,199. The correlations among the variables are provided in Table 1.

## 5.4. Results

Given the nature of our dependent measure, number of likes (counts), we chose to run a multilevel negative binomial model using Bayesian Analysis. The multilevel approach was appropriate given the nesting of message posts within brands. In model 1, we included the key variables of interest: presence of corporate and product brand names. We also included several variables in the model to serve as controls: presence of functional and emotional appeals, images, videos, direct call to purchase, information promoting the service (1 = present; 0 = absent) and number of comments. We also included fanlikes (transformed to log), message time (transformed to square root), and brand rank in the model as control variables. These control variables were added since they are likely to influence liking behavior (De Vries et al., 2012; Swani et al., 2017). The variables “fanlikes” and “brand rank” were added as level 2 variables while other message related variables including message characteristics, message time, and message comments, were added at level 1.

Refer to Table 2 (model 1) for results. We report the results at 95% HDI. The variable corporate brand name ( $\beta = 0.22$ ) was positive and significant, whereas, the variable product brand name ( $\beta = -0.17$ ) was negative and significant. The presence of corporate brand names (vs. absence) increased number of likes, whereas presence of product brand names (vs. absence) decreased number of likes in Facebook services posts. Based on the different impact of the use of corporate brand names and product brand names, corporate brand names have a more positive impact on likes than product brand names. Overall, these results provide support for H1a. The presence (vs. absence) of images ( $\beta = -0.21$ ), videos ( $\beta = -0.31$ ) and direct call to purchase ( $\beta = -0.18$ ) were negative and significant. The variables comments ( $\beta = 0.01$ ), fanlikes ( $\beta = 0.64$ ) and message time ( $\beta = 0.02$ ) were positive and significant.

## 5.5. Hedonic vs. utilitarian service brands

To explore whether the impact of mention of corporate brand names on likes may be impacted by the nature of service type (hedonic vs. utilitarian), we classified the 131 Facebook brands as hedonic or utilitarian services brands. Although we do not hypothesize specific effects of service type on the relationships between mention of brand names and message likes, the exploratory moderation analysis of service type was conducted as a part of a robustness check.

We recruited three coders to classify the 131 brands as hedonic, utilitarian or both. The intercoder reliability between the coders was acceptable (PRL = 0.89). The discrepancies were resolved using the majority response among the three. Brands were classified as both in cases where all three coders differed. After eliminating the brand posts from 32 service brands which were classified as both, the final sample was comprised of 716 brand posts from 99 service brands. 31.84% brands were classified as hedonic (27 brands) whereas 68.16% brands were classified as utilitarian (72 brands).

First, we ran a multilevel negative binomial regression (model 2) similar to model 1 with the new sample and included the variable service type (1 = hedonic; 0 = utilitarian). The results from model 2 were quite similar to those of model 1 (refer to Table 3). Of primary interest, the variable corporate brand name ( $\beta = 0.20$ ) was positive and significant, whereas the variable product brand name ( $\beta = -0.27$ ) was negative and significant at 95% HDI, supporting H1a. Also, the variable service type was positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.27$ ). Next, we ran model 3 by including the interaction terms between various content strategies (brand names, appeals, vividness, information promotes services, and direct calls to action) and service type to model 2. Here the key variables of interest are interactions between use of brand names (corporate and product) and service type since a significant interaction would suggest that relationship between the use of brand names and propensity to like is moderated by service type (hedonic vs. utilitarian).

Refer to Table 3 (model 3) for results. The interaction between



**Table 1**  
Correlations among variables.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Corporate brand name (1)												
Product brand name (2)	0.109**											
Functional appeal (3)	0.198**	0.284**										
Emotional appeal (4)	-0.006	0.111**	-0.075*									
Images (5)	0.051	0.101**	-0.001	0.021								
Videos (6)	0.015	-0.009	-0.007	-0.022	-0.262**							
Information promoting service (7)	0.159**	0.393**	0.533**	0.004	0.044	0.086**						
Direct call to purchase (8)	0.009	0.228**	0.071*	0.223**	0.088*	-0.023	0.003					
Messagetime (9)	0.011	0.022	0.108*	0.021	-0.018	-0.015	0.054	-0.031				
Comments (10)	-0.05	-0.052	-0.052	0.122**	-0.050	-0.029	-0.054	-0.057	0.012			
FanLikes (11)	-0.032	0.144**	-0.003	0.355**	0.202**	0.038	0.116**	0.155**	-0.001	0.244**		
Brand rank (12)	-0.001	-0.123**	-0.031	0.017	-0.043	0.061	-0.054	-0.005	0.054	-0.065*	-0.151**	
Likes (13)	-0.027	-0.023	-0.027	0.048	0.019	-0.014	-0.026	-0.027	-0.008	0.670**	0.132**	-0.021

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

\*  $p < .05$ .

**Table 2**  
Effect of brand name use on message likes.

Effect	Model 1		
	Estimate	SD	95% HDI
Intercept	-4.091	0.053	[-4.120, -3.990]
Corporate brand name (1 = yes)	<b>0.216</b>	0.018	[0.180, 0.250]
Product brand name (1 = yes)	-0.168	0.054	[-0.276, -0.065]
Functional appeal (1 = yes)	-0.070	0.057	[-0.179, 0.050]
Emotional appeal (1 = yes)	0.044	0.047	[-0.044, 0.135]
Images (1 = yes)	-0.209	0.042	[-0.293, -0.126]
Videos (1 = yes)	-0.307	0.029	[-0.358, -0.248]
Information promoting service (1 = yes)	-0.007	0.035	[-0.0735, 0.0617]
Direct call to purchase (1 = yes)	-0.177	0.033	[-0.243, -0.113]
Messagetime	0.015	0.005	[0.006, 0.0244]
Comments	0.002	0.000	[0.001, 0.002]
FanLikes	0.636	0.012	[0.613, 0.661]
Brand Rank	-0.001	0.000	[-0.001, 0.001]

$N = 996$ . Bolded betas are significant. Italicized variables are level 2 variables of the multilevel model. 95% HDI (high density interval) contains the lower limit and upper limit of highest density posterior region. The priors for beta coefficients were drawn from a normal distribution with means set at zero and a low precision (0.01) with the Random-walk Metropolis-Hastings sampling (Markov chain Monte Carlo), using 50,000 draws with a burn-in of 10,000.

corporate brand name and service type as well as the interaction between product brand name and service type were not significant at 95% HDI. Thus, H1a holds across all service types (both hedonic and utilitarian). Several other interactions were significant. We find that the use of emotional appeals ( $\beta = 0.39$ ), information promotes services ( $\beta = 0.49$ ), and direct call to purchase ( $\beta = 0.21$ ) are more effective in propensity to like messages for hedonic vs utilitarian services, whereas the use of functional appeals ( $\beta = -0.12$ ), images ( $\beta = -0.39$ ), and videos ( $\beta = -0.63$ ) are more effective in propensity to like messages for utilitarian vs hedonic services.

### 5.6. Discussion

The results from the above models demonstrate that the presence of corporate brand names (vs. absence) in a service brand context increases the consumer's propensity to like and thus share the content. However, the presence of product brand names (vs. absence) in a service context decreases the consumer's propensity to like the content. The negative effect for the use of product brand names might be due to low familiarity and conceptual fluency, thus low association among viewers and product brand names. Low levels of consumer brand associations would lead to less consumer brand interactions (Berger, 2014). Also, the use of product brand name may have caused confusion among viewers since they may be expecting some reference of

corporate brand. The viewers thus may have simply ignored the messages with product brand mentions leading to less or no interactions (message likes) compared to those messages that contained no brand names. The presence of (less familiar) product brand name would have created consumer dis-identification leading to less or no interactions with the brand post (Wolter et al., 2016).

The results further suggest that the effect of corporate as well as product brand names on liking behavior is not impacted by the nature of the service, whether hedonic or utilitarian. The results provide compelling evidence on the importance of corporate branding in services marketing. Consumers relate more to service organization, their offerings and even service personnel through corporate brand names rather than product brand names (Aaker, 2004). This affinity with corporate brands leads consumers to engage with content involving corporate brand names rather than product brand names on social media sites.

Results from study 1 suggest different impact of the use of corporate brand names and product brand names. Specifically, corporate brand names have a more positive impact on likes than product brand names, as predicted in H1a. To more directly test effects against each other, we manipulated corporate brand name vs. product brand name in studies 2 and 3.

## 6. Study 2 & 3: Lab study

While Study 1 provided evidence to support H1a, it did not allow us to explore the impact of increased engagement on purchase intention. Further, because actual posts were used, we could not manipulate the use of the corporate brand name vs. product brand name, limiting our conclusions with respect to causality. Thus, we conducted three different experiments using different samples and different service brands (utilitarian and hedonic) to further explore the impact of using the familiar corporate brand name (vs. less familiar product brand name). We further wanted to test whether the use of brand name used vs. twice would have any impact on outcome measures. More specifically, our experiments had the following objectives. First, we wanted to directly test the effectiveness of the use of corporate branding vs. product branding in social media messages on message liking as well as purchase intentions in a controlled setting (H1a–b). Second, we wanted to test the role of corporate branding for different services types to be able to generalize our findings and in the process we used student sample (Study 2a) and consumer sample (Study 2b and Study 3). Third, we wanted to test our theory suggesting that saliency of corporate CBI (H2a–b) is likely to stimulate transmission of social media content and purchase intentions (Study 3). Fourth, we also wanted to test whether liking a message will lead to intention to purchase the advertised service (Study 3), signifying the prevailing importance of message likes.

**Table 3**  
Effect of brand name use on message likes: hedonic vs. utilitarian brands.

Effect	Model 2			Model 3		
	Estimate	SD	95% HDI	Estimate	SD	95% HDI
Intercept	–3.588	0.276	[–4.140, –3.060]	–3.106	0.014	[–3.135, –3.080]
Corporate brand name (1 = yes)	<b>0.204</b>	0.098	[0.013, 0.394]	<b>0.206</b>	0.019	[0.175, 0.238]
Product brand name (1 = yes)	–0.270	0.097	[–0.452, –0.077]	–0.188	0.040	[–0.260, –0.104]
Functional appeal (1 = yes)	0.076	0.131	[–0.165, 0.341]	<b>0.175</b>	0.051	[0.075, 0.269]
Emotional appeal (1 = yes)	<b>0.073</b>	0.036	[0.001, 0.1424]	–0.080	0.011	[–0.099, –0.061]
Images (1 = yes)	–0.162	0.096	[–0.354, 0.024]	–0.154	0.046	[–0.240, –0.072]
Videos (1 = yes)	–0.332	0.164	[–0.634, 0.005]	–0.067	0.010	[–0.089, –0.047]
Information promoting service (1 = yes)	–0.049	0.066	[–0.181, 0.077]	–0.230	0.047	[–0.330, –0.149]
Direct call to purchase (1 = yes)	–0.302	0.077	[–0.448, –0.147]	–0.323	0.020	[–0.359, –0.280]
Message time	<b>0.019</b>	0.005	[0.010, 0.0285]	<b>0.013</b>	0.005	[0.002, 0.0235]
Comments	<b>0.001</b>	0.000	[0.001, 0.002]	<b>0.001</b>	0.000	[0.001, 0.002]
Service type (1 = hedonic; 0 = utilitarian)	<b>0.268</b>	0.121	[0.033, 0.495]	–0.003	0.059	[–0.102, 0.107]
Corporate brand name × service type				–0.020	0.039	[–0.093, 0.049]
Product brand name × service type				0.008	0.051	[–0.093, 0.092]
Functional appeals × service type				–0.121	0.033	[–0.182, –0.059]
Emotional appeals × service type				<b>0.394</b>	0.053	[0.315, 0.505]
Images × service type				–0.388	0.017	[–0.416, –0.354]
Videos × service type				–0.633	0.030	[–0.697, –0.580]
Information promoting service × service type				<b>0.487</b>	0.039	[0.423, 0.565]
Direct call to purchase × service type				<b>0.212</b>	0.017	[0.183, 0.249]
FanLikes	<b>0.596</b>	0.026	[0.546, 0.648]	<b>0.588</b>	0.017	[0.551, 0.621]
Brand Rank	–0.001	0.000	[–0.002, 0.001]	–0.001	0.001	[–0.003, –0.001]

$N = 716$ . Bolded betas are significant. Italicized variables are level 2 variables of the multilevel model. 95% HDI (high density interval) contains the lower limit and upper limit of highest density posterior region. The priors for beta coefficients were drawn from a normal distribution with means set at zero and a low precision (0.01) with Random-walk Metropolis-Hastings sampling (Markov chain Monte Carlo), using 50,000 draws with a burn-in of 10,000.

In the context of social media consumers follow or become fans of brands with whom they are not only familiar with but also have developed some personal relationships (Zaglia, 2013). Thus for our experiments (Study 2 and 3) we restrict our sample analysis to those who are familiar with the corporate brands used in the studies (Bhattacharya & Elsbach, 2002; Wolter et al., 2016).

### 6.1. Study 2a: Utilitarian context (Dropbox)

We ran a one factor between subjects experiment (brand type: corporate, product) to test H1a–b using a student sample. We used Dropbox service as the service brand and accordingly the stimulus for the social media message was adapted from a Dropbox Facebook post (refer to Appendix B). The corporate brand condition stated the brand name Dropbox twice in the text whereas in the product brand condition it was replaced by GetSpace, a fictitious service provided by Dropbox. The use of a fictitious brand name approximates a company that has just introduced a new product. In each condition we included the Dropbox brand logo as appearing in the actual Facebook post. The participants saw one of the conditions after which they answered, “How likely are you to “Like” the Facebook wall post?” and “How likely are you to purchase this advertised service?” (1- very unlikely; 7- very likely); our dependent measures. As a manipulation check we asked the participants to identify the brand name they read in the Facebook wall post. In the response, besides those mentioned in the stimuli, we included two more brands plus an option for none. The participants also rated their familiarity with Dropbox (1- not at all familiar; 7- extremely familiar) and answered questions about gender and age. To test for demand effects, at the end of the survey, participants answered, in an open ended format, “What was this study about?”

The participants were recruited from an undergraduate class at a northeastern university. We sought to include only participants who were familiar with Dropbox as individuals who become fans/followers of brands on social media are familiar with those brands. Of the 66 respondents who were familiar with Dropbox, 46 (70%) who passed the manipulation check and did not guess the experiment purpose were

retained for the study. The 46 cases were 37% female and 95.7% between ages 18–24 years.

#### 6.1.1. Results

Results indicated that the level of familiarity with brand Dropbox across the two conditions was not significantly different ( $M_{Corporate Brand} = 4.36$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ;  $M_{Product Brand} = 4.22$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ;  $t(44) = 0.460$ ,  $p > .05$ ). To test H1a, we regressed corporate brand (corporate brand = 1; product brand = 0) on message likes and found a significant effect for the use of corporate brand ( $\beta = 1.12$ ,  $t(44) = 2.17$ ,  $p < .05$ ); participants were more likely to like the Facebook post when the corporate brand was included ( $M_{Corporate Brand} = 3.18$ ,  $SD = 1.95$ ;  $M_{Product Brand} = 2.06$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ), consistent with the findings from Study 1 and H1a. We found similar results for intention to purchase ( $\beta = 0.93$ ,  $t(44) = 2.44$ ,  $p < .05$ ;  $M_{Corporate Brand} = 2.93$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ;  $M_{Product Brand} = 2.00$ ,  $SD = 0.97$ ), supporting H1b. Participants' intention to purchase the advertised service was higher for the Facebook message containing a corporate brand name than the one with product brand name.

To rule out the possibility that familiarity with the brand name is driving our results, we conducted mediation analysis using bootstrapping technique (Hayes, Preacher, & Myers, 2011). The familiarity with Dropbox did not mediate the path between use of brand names and liking ( $\beta = 0.03$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ , 95% CI [–0.19, 0.25]) of post or purchase intentions ( $\beta = -0.02$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ , 95% CI [–0.24, 0.11]). The indirect effects were not significant since the 95% CIs contained a zero value.

#### 6.1.2. Discussion

The results from Study 2a replicate those from Study 1. The use of corporate brand name (vs. a new product brand name by that company) in a service brand context not only increases the consumer's propensity to like content, but also increases the intentions to purchase the service. The results provide a cautionary tale to social media managers seeking to introduce new product service brand names.

## 6.2. Study 2b: Hedonic context (Royal Caribbean)

The goal of Study 2b was to replicate the findings of Study 1 and 2a. Study 2b was similar to Study 2a except we used Royal Caribbean corporate brand name, a hedonic service, and an actual service name *Symphony of the Seas* (refer to Appendix B). The stimulus for the study was adapted from the Royal Caribbean website. The stimulus mentioned the brand name once in the text and also included the corporate brand 'Royal Caribbean' on the top of the post along with the logo to simulate the content as it appears on Facebook. Furthermore, we restricted the sample to ages below 35 years, the most active demographic on Facebook and current target market of cruise ships on social media sites (BuzzFeed, 2014; Pew, 2018). Similar to Study 2a, the participants were randomly assigned to one of the conditions (corporate brand or product brand) after which they responded to the questions on liking and purchase intentions. For manipulation check, the participants indicated the brand name they read within the stimulus. Besides the two brand names used in the stimuli, two other brand names along with a "none" option were included as choices. Similar to Study 2a, the participants also indicated their familiarity with and liking for Royal Caribbean and Symphony of the Seas as well as their gender and age. To test for demand effects, participants also answered, "What was this study about?" at the very end.

The participants were recruited from Mturk. Similar to Study 2a, we selected participants who were familiar with Royal Caribbean. Of 57 respondents who were familiar with Royal Caribbean, 53 (93%) passed the manipulation check, did not guess the purpose of the experiment and were retained for the study. The final sample was 53% female with 79% between ages 25–34 years.

### 6.2.1. Results

Results indicated that the level of familiarity with ( $M_{Corporate\ Brand} = 5.58$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ ;  $M_{Product\ Brand} = 5.04$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ;  $t(51) = 1.50$ ,  $p > .05$ ) and liking ( $M_{Corporate\ Brand} = 5.69$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ;  $M_{Product\ Brand} = 5.26$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ;  $t(51) = 1.47$ ,  $p > .05$ ) Royal Caribbean brand across the two brand conditions were not significant. Similarly, the level of familiarity ( $M_{Corporate\ Brand} = 2.19$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ ;  $M_{Product\ Brand} = 2.56$ ,  $SD = 1.92$ ;  $t(51) = 0.73$ ,  $p > .05$ ) and liking ( $M_{Corporate\ Brand} = 4.19$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ;  $M_{Product\ Brand} = 4.56$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ;  $t(51) = -1.30$ ,  $p > .05$ ) for Symphony of the Seas did not significantly differ across the two brand conditions. The regression analysis suggested a significant effect of corporate brand (corporate brand = 1; product brand = 0) on message likes ( $\beta = 1.26$ ,  $t(51) = 2.25$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The participants were more likely to like the Facebook post when the corporate brand was included in the text ( $M_{Corporate\ Brand} = 4.96$ ,  $SD = 1.69$ ;  $M_{Product\ Brand} = 3.70$ ,  $SD = 2.32$ ), supporting H1a. The effect of corporate brand name on intention to purchase ( $\beta = 0.79$ ,  $t(51) = 1.66$ ,  $p > .05$ ;  $M_{Corporate\ Brand} = 4.35$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ ;  $M_{Product\ Brand} = 3.56$ ,  $SD = 1.78$ ), was not significant although the direction of the means showed trends in the predicted direction; thus, H1b was not supported.

To ensure that our results are not being affected by the lower familiarity with the product brand name (Symphony of the Seas), we tested hypothesis H1a–b for individuals who were familiar ( $n = 28$ ;  $M_{Familiarity} = 3.61$ ) and not familiar ( $n = 25$ ;  $M_{Familiarity} = 1.0$ ;  $t(51) = 3.74$ ,  $p < .01$ ) with the product brand name (Symphony of the Seas). Somewhat surprisingly, the negative effects of the use of product name were stronger for those with higher familiarity. Specifically, for those reporting moderate familiarity, there was a significant effect of name type on message likes ( $t(26) = 2.48$ ,  $p < .05$ ) with those seeing the corporate brand reporting higher liking ( $M_{Corporate\ Brand} = 5.92$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ) than those seeing the product brand name ( $M_{Product\ Brand} = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 2.58$ ). A similar pattern was observed for purchase intentions ( $M_{Corporate\ Brand} = 4.92$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ;  $M_{Product\ Brand} = 3.75$ ,  $SD = 1.77$ ;  $t(26) = 1.95$ ,  $p = .06$ ). In contrast, there was no effect of name type on message likes ( $M_{Corporate\ Brand} = 4.14$ ,  $SD = 1.83$ ;  $M_{Product\ Brand} = 3.27$ ,  $SD = 1.90$ ;  $t(23) = 1.16$ ,  $p > .05$ ) or purchase intentions

( $M_{Corporate\ Brand} = 3.86$ ,  $SD = 1.88$ ;  $M_{Product\ Brand} = 3.27$ ,  $SD = 1.85$ ;  $t(23) = 0.78$ ,  $p > .05$ ) for those reporting no familiarity with the product brand name.

To rule out the possibility of familiarity with or liking to brand names driving our results, we conducted mediation analysis using bootstrapping technique (Hayes et al., 2011). Neither the familiarity with nor liking of Royal Caribbean or Symphony of the Seas mediated the path between use of brand names and liking of post (Royal Caribbean familiarity:  $\beta = -0.39$ ,  $SE = 0.28$ , 95% CI [-0.98, 0.11]; Royal Caribbean liking:  $\beta = -0.57$ ,  $SE = 0.39$ , 95% CI [-1.35, 0.17]; Symphony of the Seas familiarity:  $\beta = 0.09$ ,  $SE = 0.15$ , 95% CI [-0.21, 0.40]; Symphony of the Seas liking:  $\beta = 0.09$ ,  $SE = 0.13$ , 95% CI [-0.14, 0.44]) or purchase intentions (Royal Caribbean familiarity:  $\beta = -0.33$ ,  $SE = 0.25$ , 95% CI [-0.89, 0.11]; Royal Caribbean liking:  $\beta = -0.47$ ,  $SE = 0.34$ , 95% CI [-1.29, 0.14]; Symphony of the Seas familiarity:  $\beta = 0.06$ ,  $SE = 0.11$ , 95% CI [-0.16, 0.29]; Symphony of the Seas liking:  $\beta = 0.04$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ , 95% CI [-0.16, 0.26]). The indirect effects were not significant since the 95% CIs contained a zero value.

### 6.2.2. Discussion

The results from Study 2a replicate those from Study 2b for likes and show a similar pattern for intention to purchase. The use of corporate brand names (vs. less familiar product brand names) in a service brand context increases the consumer's intentions to like the content and directionally increased purchase intentions. The results for likes replicated for a hedonic brand even when the brand name was used only once in the text. Further, these results appear to hold even when the product brand name is moderately familiar and well-liked by consumers (mean liking for the Symphony of the Seas brand name for those familiar with the brand was 4.82 on a 1–7 scale). However, the effect is mitigated when product brand was not familiar. The participants who were more familiar with Symphony of the Seas indicated higher familiarity with Royal Caribbean whereas, those who were not familiar with Symphony of the Seas indicated less familiarity with Royal Caribbean. Consumers with high levels of familiarity with the corporate brand name may have developed higher CBI whereas, consumers with low levels of familiarity may have developed some level of dis-identification with the corporate brand (Bhattacharya & Elsbach, 2002; Wolter et al., 2016).

## 6.3. Study 3: The role of CBI (Jiffy Lube service)

Study 3 was similar to Study 2 except we used Jiffy Lube corporate brand, a utilitarian service, and an actual service name *Signature Service* offered by Jiffy Lube in the product brand name condition (refer to Appendix B). We also included a no brand name condition to better understand the effects of both product and corporate brand names. The stimulus for this study was adapted from the Jiffy Lube website. We added customer-brand identification scale (CBI) (Lam et al., 2013) in the experiment to test the mediating role of CBI on the use of corporate brand name (vs. less familiar product brand name) and message like and purchase intention paths. Specifically, we speculate that CBI driven through the use of corporate brand will drive this effect. Similar to Study 2, the participants reported their content liking and purchase intentions. They also identified the brand name they read in the Facebook brand post and rated their familiarity with Jiffy Lube as well as answered questions about gender and age. Finally, they answered, "What was this study about?" to test for demand effects.

One hundred and twenty participants were recruited from Mturk who were familiar with Jiffy Lube. After removing participants who failed the manipulation check or guessed the purpose of the study, we had 92 (77%) participants (33.7% female with 76.1% between 18 and 34 years).

### 6.3.1. Results

Results indicated that the level of familiarity with brand JiffyLube across the three brand conditions was not significantly different ( $M_{Corporate\ Brand} = 5.09$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ;  $M_{Product\ Brand} = 4.80$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ;  $M_{No\ Brand} = 4.89$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ;  $F(2,89) = 0.66$ ,  $p > .05$ ). As expected, the regression result indicated a significant effect for the variable representing the use of corporate brand name (corporate brand = 1; product brand = 0) for message likes ( $\beta = 0.85$ ,  $t(71) = 1.94$ ,  $p = .056$ ;  $M_{Corporate\ Brand} = 3.35$ ,  $SD = 1.88$ ;  $M_{Product\ Brand} = 2.50$ ,  $SD = 1.78$ ). We found similar result for purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.95$ ,  $t(71) = 2.52$ ,  $p < .05$ ;  $M_{Corporate\ Brand} = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 1.60$ ;  $M_{Product\ Brand} = 3.00$ ,  $SD = 1.58$ ). Participants' intentions to purchase the advertised service and like the message were higher for the Facebook message containing the corporate brand name than the one with product brand name. These results are consistent with the prior two studies and support **H1a** and **b**. We also tested the use of brand names vs. no brand name on engagement and purchase intentions. We ran regression analysis with two dummy variables: corporate brand vs. no brand (corporate brand = 1; no brand name = 0) and product brand name vs. no brand name (product brand = 1; no brand name = 0) for message likes and purchase intentions. For message likes, the effect of the use of corporate brand vs. no brand was significant ( $\beta = 0.98$ ,  $t = 1.97$ ,  $p < .05$ ;  $M_{No\ Brand} = 2.37$ ,  $SD = 1.71$ ), but not for product brand name vs. no brand name ( $\beta = 0.13$ ,  $t = 0.25$ ,  $p > .10$ ). For purchase intentions, the effect of the use of corporate brand vs. no brand ( $\beta = 0.74$ ,  $t = 1.60$ ,  $p > .10$ ;  $M_{No\ Brand} = 3.21$ ,  $SD = 1.99$ ) as well as the effect of the use of product brand vs. no brand ( $\beta = -0.21$ ,  $t = -0.06$ ,  $p > .10$ ) were not significant.

Next, we analyze the psychological process driving the relationships between the use of brand names and message likes and purchase intentions. We predicted that the motivation of self-identity reflected through corporate CBI ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ) will mediate the relationship between the use of corporate brand name (vs. product brand name) and message likes (**H2a**) as well as the use of corporate brand name (vs. product brand name) and purchase intention (**H2b**). We used the bootstrapping mediation technique (Hayes et al., 2011) to test the mediation effect of CBI on the use of corporate brand name and message likes and purchase intentions paths. CBI mean scores were computed across six items for the analysis. The results indicated a full mediation of CBI on the path from

the use of corporate brand to message likes (refer to Fig. 1). The direct effect of the use of corporate brand name on message like became insignificant ( $\beta = 0.31$ ,  $t = 0.83$ ,  $p > .05$ ) in the presence of the CBI whereas the indirect effect was significant ( $\beta = 0.54$ ,  $SE = 0.23$ , 95% CI [0.08, 1.01]), supporting **H2a**. A full mediation was also revealed for purchase intention. The direct effect of the use of corporate brand name (vs. product brand name) on purchase intention in the presence of CBI became insignificant ( $\beta = 0.58$ ,  $t = 1.64$ ,  $p > .05$ ) whereas the indirect effect was significant ( $\beta = 0.38$ ,  $SE = 0.17$ , 95% CI [0.06, 0.70]), supporting **H2b**. Additionally, we ran a path model using SEM bootstrapping technique 5000 (MPLUS) from the use of corporate brand name to CBI to message like to purchase intention (refer to Fig. 2). Consistent with **H2**, only the path from corporate brand name to purchase intention via CBI and message like was significant; the final model included only significant paths. The overall model fit was good ( $\chi_{(3)}^2 = 4.74$ ,  $p > .05$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.089$ ;  $CFI = 0.977$ ). The total indirect effect was significant ( $\beta = 0.33$ ,  $SE = 0.16$ , 95% CI [0.07, 0.69]), suggesting a full mediation for path corporate brand name to purchase intention via CBI and message like.

Furthermore, the familiarity with JiffyLube did not mediate the path between use of brand names and liking of post ( $\beta = 0.11$ ,  $SE = 0.13$ , 95% CI [-0.10, 0.41]) or purchase intentions ( $\beta = 0.12$ ,  $SE = 0.13$ , 95% CI [-0.10, 0.40]). The indirect effects were not significant since the 95% CIs contained a zero value. These results rule out the alternate explanation that familiarity with brand name may be driving the effect.

### 6.3.2. Discussion

Study 3 findings reinforce our results from the field (Study 1) and Study 2a-b. The use of familiar corporate brand is likely to be an important strategy not only to generate more message likes but also to increase the intention to purchase the advertised service. The results also indicate that there might be some benefits of using corporate brand name over no brand name. We further find that the use of corporate brand name enhances self-identity (CBI) which increases the likelihood to like the message, which ultimately leads to purchase intention. These findings signify the importance of CBI, which instigates sharing of content and purchase intentions. Furthermore, our results establish an important positive relationship between message liking and purchase intention.

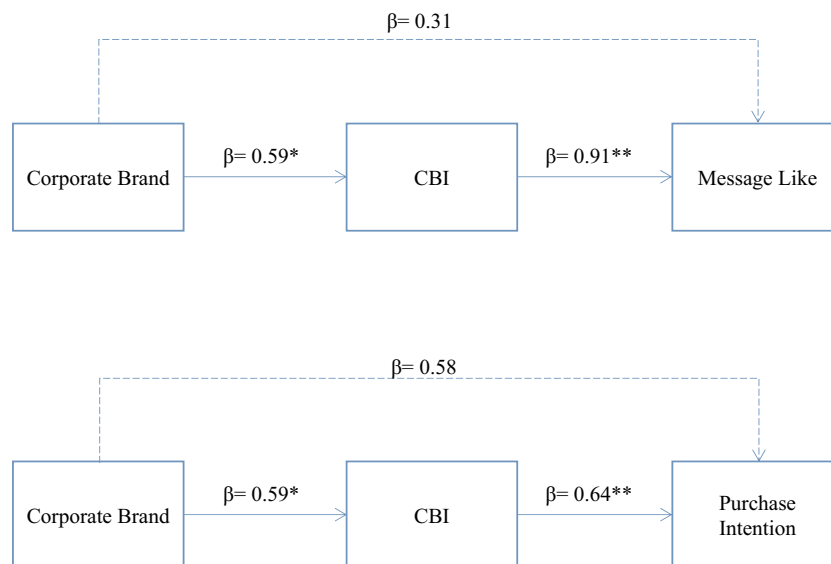


Fig. 1. Mediation analysis.

Note: The dotted line represents the insignificant path in the presence of the mediating variable customer-brand identity (CBI) when regressed on the dependent measures, message like and purchase intention.  $N = 73$ .

\* $p < 0.05$ .

\*\* $p < 0.01$ .



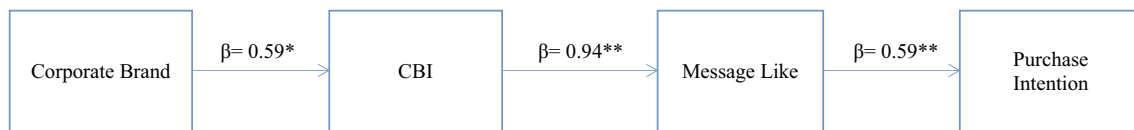


Fig. 2. Path model.

Note: Only significant paths were included in the path model. Model fit:  $\chi_{(3)}^2 = 4.74$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ; RMSEA = 0.089; CFI = 0.977. N = 73.

\* $p < 0.05$ .

\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

## 7. Study 4: Boundary conditions

We restricted participation in Lab studies 2 and 3 to those familiar with the brands based on findings from prior research that consumers need to have familiarity with the corporate brand name for CBI to occur (Bhattacharya & Elsbach, 2002; Wolter et al., 2016). However, in situations when both corporate brand names and product brand names have low or high familiarity, we do not expect the predicted effect of the use of the two brand names on message likes and purchase intentions. In low familiarity conditions consumers have no or minimal brand identification whereas, in high familiarity conditions consumers have high brand identification for both types of brands which in turn would mitigate the predicted effect. Thus we predict the following boundary condition:

**H3.** The effect of H1a-b is mitigated when both corporate and product brands have either low or high levels of familiarity.

To test this assertion, we first conducted a pretest ( $n = 48$ ) to select combinations of high familiar corporate and product brand names and low familiar corporate and product brand names to be used in our main study.

Based on the pretest, we used Starbucks (corporate brand name) ( $M = 6.60$ ;  $SD = 1.12$ ) and Frappuccino (product brand name) ( $M = 4.25$ ;  $SD = 2.00$ ) as high familiar brands and Rosewood Hotel and Resorts (corporate brand name) ( $M = 1.25$ ;  $SD = 0.57$ ) and The Carlyle Hotel (product brand name) ( $M = 1.19$ ;  $SD = 0.57$ ) as low familiar brands. The participants were randomly assigned to both low and high familiar conditions in which they randomly saw either a corporate or product brand post. The stimuli for this study were adapted from the brands' Facebook pages (refer to Appendix B). Similar to Study 2, participants reported their content liking and purchase intentions after viewing each Facebook post. As a part of the manipulation check, they identified the brand name they read in the Facebook brand post and the brand name that made the Facebook post. The participants rated their familiarity with, liking, and brand equity (Yoo & Donthu 2001) for the four brands as well as answered questions about gender and age. At the end of the survey, they answered, "What was this study about?" to test for demand effects.

A total of 77 participants were recruited from a Midwest university. After removing participants who failed the manipulation check or guessed the purpose of the study, we had 73 (87%) participants for Starbucks/Frappuccino condition (46.3% female with 95.5% between 18 and 34 years) and 55 (71%) participants for Rosewood Hotels and Resorts/The Carlyle Hotel condition (49.1% female with 98.2% between 18 and 34 years).

### 7.1. Results

We first report the results for high familiar brands condition. The familiarity with Starbucks (corporate brand) and Frappuccino (product brand) was high ( $M_{Starbucks} = 5.90$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ;  $M_{Frappuccino} = 4.88$ ,  $SD = 1.83$ ), although participants indicated higher familiarity with Starbucks than Frappuccino ( $t(1,66) = 5.49$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The liking of Starbucks and Frappuccino was also high with no significant difference ( $M_{Starbucks} = 5.27$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ;  $M_{Frappuccino} = 4.96$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ;  $t(1,66) = 1.92$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Furthermore, there was no difference in brand equity for the two brands ( $M_{Starbucks} = 3.80$ ,  $SD = 1.30$ ,  $\alpha = 0.90$ ;  $M_{Frappuccino} = 3.74$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ,  $\alpha = 0.79$ ;  $t(1,66) = 0.45$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

As expected, the regression result indicated no significant effect for the variable representing the use of corporate brand name (corporate brand = 1; product brand = 0) for message likes ( $\beta = 0.09$ ,  $t(65) = 0.17$ ,  $p > .05$ ;  $M_{Corporate Brand} = 3.86$ ,  $SD = 2.14$ ;  $M_{Product Brand} = 3.77$ ,  $SD = 2.16$ ). We found similar result for purchase intention ( $\beta = -0.20$ ,  $t(65) = -0.04$ ,  $p > .05$ ;  $M_{Corporate Brand} = 3.72$ ,  $SD = 1.73$ ;  $M_{Product Brand} = 3.74$ ,  $SD = 2.00$ ). H3 was supported when both brands had high levels of familiarity.

Next, we report results for low familiar condition. The familiarity between Rosewood Hotels and Resorts (corporate brand) and The Carlyle Hotel (product brand) was low and not significant ( $M_{Rosewood Hotels and Resorts} = 1.45$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ;  $M_{The Carlyle Hotel} = 1.40$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ;  $t(1,54) = 0.83$ ,  $p > .05$ ). The liking of Rosewood Hotels and Resorts and The Carlyle Hotel was also low with no significant difference ( $M_{Rosewood Hotels and Resorts} = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ;  $M_{The Carlyle Hotel} = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ ;  $t(1,54) = 0.01$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Furthermore, there was no significant difference in brand equity for the two brands ( $M_{Rosewood Hotels and Resorts} = 3.31$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ,  $\alpha = 0.91$ ;  $M_{The Carlyle Hotel} = 3.20$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ,  $\alpha = 0.95$ ;  $t(1,54) = 1.95$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

As predicted, the regression result indicated no significant effect for the variable representing the use of corporate brand name (corporate brand = 1; product brand = 0) for message likes ( $\beta = -0.07$ ,  $t(53) = -0.13$ ,  $p > .05$ ;  $M_{Corporate Brand} = 2.90$ ,  $SD = 2.02$ ;  $M_{Product Brand} = 2.96$ ,  $SD = 1.69$ ). We found similar result for purchase intention ( $\beta = -0.16$ ,  $t(53) = -0.31$ ,  $p > .05$ ;  $M_{Corporate Brand} = 2.38$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ;  $M_{Product Brand} = 2.50$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ ). H3 was supported when both brands had low levels of familiarity.

### 7.2. Discussion

The goal of Study 4 was to test the boundary conditions for effect of the use of corporate brand name vs. product brand name on post like and purchase intentions. The results indicate no effect of the use of brand names when both corporate brand names and product brand names have low or high familiarity. In low familiarity condition, consumers may have minimal customer brand identification with both corporate and product brands causing no differential advantage of using corporate vs. product brand names. In high familiar condition, consumers may have developed high customer brand identification for both corporate and product brand making the use of either brand name equally effective.

## 8. Conclusion

Corporate branding is an integral part of services marketing which helps marketers differentiate their offerings from their competitors in the minds of consumers. How can service marketers leverage their branding efforts on social media sites? Specifically, does the use of corporate brand names instead of product brand names in social media content provide additional advantage? Through a multi-method approach, this research provides support for the importance of the use of corporate brand names in social media content. Results indicate that the use of corporate brand names in services' Facebook brand posts boosts engagement, primarily through message likes whereas the use of low familiar product brand names reduces this behavior. These findings are in contrast to observed social media strategies for goods, where the use of product brand names

is more prevalent (Swani & Milne, 2017). Services marketers should focus on corporate branding rather than product branding since consumers relate to organization and service personnel as well as conceptualize service offering through corporate brand names (Aaker, 2004). Indeed, consumers are more likely to identify themselves with corporate brand names for services (Berger, 2014; Hamzah et al., 2014).

Experimental results further indicate that the use of corporate brand names (vs. low familiar product brand names) in social media post increases the intentions to like the content and purchase the service offering and that corporate customer brand identification drives these effects. Services brand managers should focus on cultivating higher CBI using corporate brands since it is the sole driver of consumer social media brand post engagement and purchase intentions. Consumers often try to manage their self-impressions on social media sites through sharing content and brand names can help them project their identities in the eyes of others (Berger, 2014; Lam et al., 2013). Brand names that augment consumer self-image are more likely to get consumer attention through social media engagement and purchases.

Marketers should focus on building better brand impressions in minds of consumers by developing positive brand meaning, values, and experiences since CBI is about self-expression of symbolic values (Hamzah et al., 2014). The concept of CBI could also be developed through building brand personalities or identities akin to those emphasized by primary target market and through customer-based brand equity, which occurs when customers have favorable, strong, and unique associations with familiar brands (Keller, 1993; Wolter et al., 2016). Since consumers use social media sites to depict various images of themselves, marketers can influence consumer behaviors by aligning brands' identities with those of the consumers (Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011). The nature of the social media site as well as the type of social network may also serve as an important nuance for marketers to unravel patterns of consumers' depiction of self-images and identities. For example, an individual may use LinkedIn to depict different identities to impress their professional network than those on Facebook to impress their personal social network.

Although marketers may opt to use different branding strategies, they still need to focus on the brand level in their social media strategy that is consistent with their broader marketing strategy and develop CBI in order to drive engagement that may lead to purchases. For instance, service marketers may create a sub-branding strategy to promote their different offerings (e.g., FedEx Ground, FedEx Express, DoubleTree by Hilton, and Embassy Suites by Hilton). However, family/parent brand name still should be the key focus since the consumers' positive association with the family brand transfers to its sub-brands (He, Chen, Tam, & Lee, 2016). This is important since the CBI with family brand name may be the

deciding factor in consumer engagement and service purchases.

Our results indicate that the advantage of the use of corporate brand names over product brand names is mitigated when both corporate brand names and product brand names have low or high familiarity. Familiarity with brands aids in cultivating CBI. Consumers who are less familiar with brands are more likely to dis-identify with those brands whereas consumers who are familiar with brands are more likely to identify with those brands (Wolter et al., 2016). Thus, we recommend marketers who plan to implement product branding to focus on cultivating CBI for product brand names.

Finally, marketers should focus on engaging consumers through social media brand posts. The engagement through social media sites not only favorably influences brand outcomes but also financial outcomes such as purchasing behaviors (Kumar & Mirchandani, 2012; Swani et al., 2017).

## 9. Limitations and future research

This research has limitations that provide useful opportunities for future research. First, we investigated Facebook post content so our results may not generalize to other social media sites. Future research can extend this research to investigate other social media sites such as Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Second, we investigated the engagement of content through liking behavior. Although "Like" is the most frequent reaction to Facebook posts (Tian, Galery, Dulcinati, Molimpakis, & Sun, 2017), investigating other engagement behaviors on social media sites (e.g., Facebook reactions, comments, sharing, and retweeting) is an important avenue for future research. Third, we measured post like and purchase intentions. Future research could investigate how social media engaging behaviors may translate to actual purchases. The use of lab experiments that simulate the interactive social media environment could be one possible way to not only replicate our findings but also capture actual behaviors. In addition, as the Facebook environment changes over time, future research can examine the impact of these changes on user engagement.

Building on our research, future research could investigate the effectiveness of the use of sub-brand names on social media content. Specifically, how does the impact of CBI through corporate brand name impact sub-brands? Future research may also investigate factors that may facilitate or inhibit the use of corporate brand names on marketing outcomes. Finally, future research could further investigate the role of CBI on social media sites since consumers may depict various self-images of themselves through brand content sharing. For instance, how does CBI affect consumer brand post engagement when sharing content with professional networks vs. personal social networks?

## Appendix A. Coding scheme

Variable name	Description
Company brand name (1 = yes, 0 = no)	A social media message that has a company brand name mentioned in the message.
Product brand name (1 = yes, 0 = no)	A social media message that has a product brand name mentioned in the message.
Functional appeal (1 = yes, 0 = no)	Functional appeal deals with specific product specification, feature, performance, and more. A functional-based message would communicate only technicalities that are relevant to describe a product, a service, or even a company.
Emotional appeal (1 = yes, 0 = no)	Emotional appeal attempts to stir up either negative or positive emotions. Messages contain themes such as fear, humor, romance, sensuousness, adventure, guilt, play/contest, and other emotional cues.
Images (1 = yes, 0 = no)	A social media message that has an image(s) present in the message.
Videos (1 = yes, 0 = no)	A social media message that has a video(s) present in the message.
Information promotes service/goods (1 = yes, 0 = no)	Information presented in a social media message promotes service/goods.
Direct calls to purchase (1 = yes, 0 = no)	Direct calls to purchases refer to explicit statements encouraging prospective buyers to make an immediate purchase. For instance, these calls to action could be commands to make a purchases.

Adapted from (Swani et al., 2017).

## Appendix B. Study 2, 3 &amp; 4 Stimuli

## Study 2a: Stimuli

Corporate Brand Name [Product Brand Name]

**Instructions:** Please *carefully read* the Facebook wall post (below) and answer the questions that follow.



Thrilled to announce our latest **Dropbox [GetSpace]** app for Android, Apple, and Windows phones. Enjoy automatic upload of all your photos and videos so you never have to worry about losing them again! Plus with **Dropbox [GetSpace]** app we also give you an extra 5 GB for free for your first automatic upload from a phone or tablet!

## Study 2b: Stimuli

Corporate Brand Name [Product Brand Name]

**Instructions:** Please *carefully read* the Facebook wall post (below) and answer the questions that follow.



Royal Caribbean

July, 26<sup>th</sup> at 5pm

Being biggest is great. But best is even better. And there isn't a vacation in the world that packs more adventure into one week than **Royal Caribbean [the new Symphony of the Seas]**. Come experience the island-hopping expedition with excitement drenched slides and rides, shows that transcend the stage, and gourmet globetrotting from Italy to Wonderland. Discover why we are consistently awarded Cruise [Best Ship] year after year by Travel Weekly readers.

Book a cruise now and get 50% off on second guest!

## Study 3: Stimuli

Corporate Brand Name [Product Brand Name]

**Instructions:** Please *carefully read* the Facebook wall post (below) and answer the questions that follow.



With as much as you paid for your vehicle, you want to keep it on the road as long as possible. That's why at **Jiffy Lube** we offer the new oil change service [That's why we offer the new **Signature Service** oil change]. It's more than an oil change, it's preventive maintenance to change, inspect, check/fill and clean essential components of your vehicle and help keep it all running smoothly. By taking care of your vehicle with a **Jiffy Lube [Signature Service]** oil change, you'll be getting the peace of mind that your vehicle will be with you for a long time.

For a limited time, get \$5 off!

No Brand Name



With as much as you paid for your vehicle, you want to keep it on the road as long as possible. That's why we offer the new oil change service. It's more than an oil change, it's preventive maintenance to change, inspect, check/fill and clean essential components of your vehicle and help keep it all running smoothly. By taking care of your vehicle with a new oil change, you'll be getting the peace of mind that your vehicle will be with you for a long time.

For a limited time, get \$5 off!

## Study 4: Stimuli

Corporate Brand Name [Product Brand Name]

**Instructions:** Please *carefully read* the Facebook wall post (below) and answer the questions that follow.



Starbucks

January, 28th at 5pm

The New Year magic continues!

Enjoy Starbucks [Frappuccino] made your way with subtly sweet Starbucks

[Frappuccino] Blonde or bold and roasty espresso. Buy three cups this week and enter to win free Starbucks [Frappuccino] coffee for a year!



Rosewood Hotels &amp; Resorts

January, 28th at 5pm

This New Year, give yourself the gift of discovery with 12 Days of Rosewood Hotels & Resorts [The Carlyle Hotel]-exceptional journeys inspired by the culture and heritage of each destination. Rosewood Hotels & Resorts' [The Carlyle Hotel's] thoughtfully curated experiences offer unparalleled access to the world's top tastemakers and experts from the worlds of fashion, philanthropy, sport, design, and art. The perfect gift for the discerning traveler. #RosewoodHotels&Resorts [#TheCarlyleHotel].

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