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The influence of online brand communities on consumer engagement and brand loyalty: An emerging market perspective

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Author Note

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Masters in Management in the Field of Strategic Marketing degree.

Supervisor: Professor Steve Burgess

Abstract

Online brand communities are a recent phenomenon which have become an area of interest in marketing science and practice. There is currently limited research that informs marketing science and practice related to online brand communities in emerging markets. The consumption experience in emerging markets has at times mirrored that of the high income communities, but is also recognised as being divergent from what is currently understood in literature. The research aimed to understand how brand communities operating on Facebook influence consumer engagement and brand loyalty. This was done acknowledging the influence that consumer-brand identification has on motivations to belong to a group. Surveying members of automotive brand communities based in South Africa enabled the data collected to provide insights into an emerging market brand community. Data was tested for reliability, validity and overall model fit using path analysis and structural equation modelling. Results found that while there is a significant relationship between brand community membership, consumer engagement and brand loyalty; consumer brand identification has little influence on membership to a brand community.

Keywords: Brand Loyalty, Consumer Brand Identification, Consumer Engagement, Online Brand Communities

Declaration

I, Kananelo Kelello Sebati declare that this research report is my own original work, except as indicated, in my acknowledgements and the references. This report is submitted as part of the requirements for the fulfilment a degree of Master of Management in Strategic Marketing at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. This report has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.

Miss Kananelo K Sebati

Signed at Johannesburg

On the 9th Day of May 2019

Acknowledgements

"Finishing is better than starting. Patience is better than pride." – Ecclesiastes 7:8

It is by the grace of God that I started and it is His constant presence that has sustained me to the finish line and so it is necessary to start with acknowledging my source.

We know that it takes a village to raise a child, but one could argue that it takes a village to complete a masters too. Firstly, I thank my family. Mom, Dad and Rakgadi thank you for being pillars through every peak and pit, I will never forget what you sacrificed to help me reach every goal I set.

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The influence of online brand communities on consumer engagement and brand loyalty: An emerging market perspective

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of the Study

Consumer researchers have identified a plethora of antecedents and consequences of the consumer decision process durinhe last fifty years. Constant environmental change poses a number of challenges to consumer behaviour theories. The current research focuses on one of the contemporary change factors, the advent of online brand communities.

1.2 Context of the Study

The impression that consumer behaviour is influenced by personal and social influence has been widely accepted for half a century. In fact, social influence is explicit in the Engel, Kollat and Blackwell (1968) model which was the central focus of the first consumer behaviour textbook. This textbook was a leading text in the field and the principal influence in shaping the new field of consumer behaviour over the next four decades. Their major innovation was to construct a meta-theoretical model that helped shape and reflect research in the new scientific domain. Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard borrowed eclectically, incorporating John Dewey's (1910) steps in the decision process, the McGuire (1976) processing theory stages, and other influences to build their consumer behaviour model. A substantial part of consumer research focuses on the influence of individual differences, environmental influences and information processing on the steps in the consumer decision process (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2006).

The increasing interest in social influences on consumer behaviour is due to the increasingly cross-cultural nature of consumer marketing. In this vein, consumer culture theory

contributes to our understanding of consumer behaviour by highlighting sociocultural processes. In current research, the focus is on the sociocultural processes of consumer identity projects and marketplace cultures (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). *Consumer identity projects* refers to the active creation, transformation, enhancement and maintenance of a sense of identity; consumption is integral in the development and in the maintenance of these created identities (Larsen & Patterson, 2018, p. 195). Consumers made use of the marketplace's symbolic resources (e.g. brands and possessions) as a means if constructing narratives of identity (Russell W Belk, 1988). With the advent of digital technology and social media the construction of identities through the consumption of digital products and sharing has taken place (Russell W. Belk, 2013). *Marketplace culture* is defined as a key area of consumer culture theory and addresses "the way in which consumer forge feelings of solidarity and create distinctive, fragmentary, self-selected, and sometimes transient cultural worlds, through the pursuit of common consumption interests" (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p. 873). Consumer behaviour research has also focused on how culture has steered consumption choices. Consumers develop a sense of solidarity and create a distinctive cultural world held together by common consumption interests (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Brand communities are a key example of the grouping of people with common consumption interests.

Brand communities are defined as a specialised community not bound by any geographical boundaries, based on social relations between admirers of a brand, and are rooted in social identity theory (Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001; Stets & Burke, 2000). Social identity theory holds that people will perceive desirable and undesirable groups in society, and take steps to achieve positive social identity by membership in a desirable group (Tajfel, 1974). Individuals employ various strategies to achieve positive social identity, which include attempts to identify with desirable groups

(Jackson, Sullivan, Harnish, & Hodge, 1996). Brand communities can play an important role in achieving positive social identity by facilitating identification with a brand that is associated with a desirable group (Reed, Forehand, Puntoni, & Warlop, 2012).

Brand communities can be integral in managing a brand and building relationships with customers as they provide an opportunity for firms to interact with their customers and for consumers to interact with one another (Baldus, Voorhees, & Calantone, 2015). Computer-mediated environments have been an enabler for brand communities, particularly with the rise in prominence of social networks which have become an important facilitator of brand communities as consumers seek social connectedness by joining, contributing and interacting through a social network (Laroche, Habibi, Richard, & Sankaranarayanan, 2012).

An outcome of membership to a brand community observed in research is consumer engagement. Consumer engagement is a behavioural manifestation towards a brand that goes beyond purchase and has become a research priority for researchers as firms work towards building sustainable relationships with customers (MSI, 2010). Consumer engagement is a vehicle for creating, building and enhancing consumer relationships; within a brand community consumer engagement involves interactive experiences between consumers, the brand and other community members (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013).

Brand communities and the engagement activities within them are found to be antecedents to brand loyalty (Islam, Rahman, & Hollebeek, 2018). Brand loyalty is a component of brand equity that is directly influenced by the consumer and is necessary for the pursuit and maintenance of a competitive advantage (Gounaris & Stathakopoulos, 2004; Islam et al., 2018).

Emerging markets currently form more than half of the world's population; however, the majority of marketing theory has documented phenomena in a developed market context (Lunn &

Sheth, 2011). The cultural dynamics of emerging markets provide an opportunity to explore these marketing constructs in an emerging market context (Kivenzor, 2015). Culture in emerging markets is malleable and is informed by a consistently changing political and economic landscape. Consumption choices therefore provide consumers in these markets with a means of signalling social status, signalling membership to a social group, and avoiding social identity confusion (Kivenzor, 2015).

This study, aims to understand the relationship between the abovementioned constructs in an emerging market context.

1.3 Problem Statement

1.3.1 Main Problem

Research on social and personal influences on consumer decision making and information processing have produced valuable insights that have informed marketing practice and marketing strategy in the modern age. For the last seventeen years, brand communities have become an influential factor in consumer behaviour, particularly with the rise of marketing in computer-mediated environments including but not limited to social media. While computer-mediated environments have been an enabler for commerce allowing brands to market their goods and services around the world, there has been limited research around understanding the influence of computer-mediated environments in emerging markets.

The consumer behaviour research corpus distinguished between marketer dominated sources and other information sources, with the EBM model being a prime example of this. Previous research also links brand communities, consumer engagement and brand loyalty. These

achievements, notwithstanding, there remains the opportunity to establish whether accepted theories and empirical findings apply in emerging markets, due to the different institutional contexts there (Burgess & Steenkamp, 2006). The current research helps address this gap in our knowledge by examining the relationship between consumer-brand identification, brand community membership (embedded in Facebook), consumer engagement and loyalty in an emerging market context.

1.3.2 Sub-problems

Sub-problem 1

To examine the relationship between consumer brand identification and membership in a brand community embedded in Facebook in an emerging market context.

Sub-problem 2

To establish if there is a relationship between consumer engagement and brand community membership for current consumers and aspirant brand owners.

Sub-problem 3

To establish if there is a link between consumer engagement and brand loyalty for current and aspirant owners of a brand.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Brand community research is established in marketing literature, and these communities are an effective tool in strategically building a brand and an affinity towards said brand. There is also a growing body of research on marketing in computer-mediated environments. Social media and social networks in particular have become an integral platform for the facilitation of brand

communities. With the popularity of social networks as a tool for marketing communication, it is beneficial to understand how their use contributes to consumer engagement and brand loyalty.

Understanding these relationships in an emerging market context is also important as the culture, the identities and the consumption choices of consumers in these markets are constantly changing. This is evidenced in their consumption choices and the communication of those choices. As stated by Burgess and Steenkamp (2006) developing theory, gathering meaningful data, analysis of data and learning in an emerging market context, is important in moving marketing science forward. This research aims to contribute to literature by testing the relationship between the observed constructs in an emerging market context.

1.4 Delimitations of the Study

The scope of the study will be as follows that:

- Participants are over the age of eighteen;
- They already drive or have the desire to purchase a motor vehicle;
- The focus is on premium brands in the automotive sector; and
- The study will be conducted in the greater Gauteng area.

1.5 Assumptions

The study was conducted applying the following assumptions that:

- Participants answer the questions with honesty;
- Participants are genuinely interested in participating in the study;
- Participants are active on Facebook using the social network at least once a week; and
- They are owners or aspirant owners of a motor vehicle.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a theoretical background of the study and outlines the theoretical model that was tested. The section begins with a brief overview of the EBM model of consumer behaviour that forms the basis of the study and follows with a review of factors that influence the decision making processes consumers go through.

The model below guides the study exploring the relationship between variables that influence the consumer decision making process.

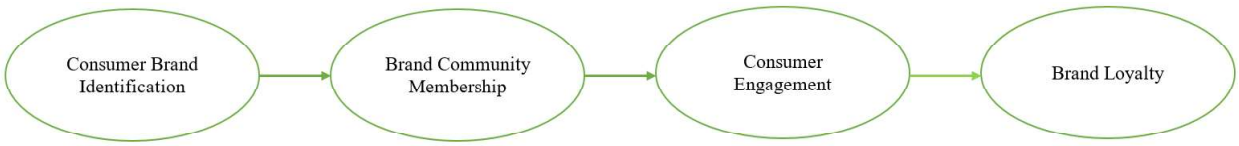


Figure 1 Theoretical Model

Consumer-brand identification, *the perception of similarity between a consumer and a brand; to the degree that a brand articulates or enriches a consumers identity* (Tuškej, Golob, & Podnar, 2013) is the first construct to be highlighted. Brand community, *a specialised community not bound by any geographical boundaries which is based on social relations between admirers of a brand* (Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001) is the second construct that is observed in the study.

The consequences of the first two constructs will be discussed, namely consumer engagement, *a motivational state that occurs through the facilitation of interactive customer experiences with a brand, its products and platforms* (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, & Ilić, 2011). The second is brand loyalty; *the biased behavioural response expressed over a period by a consumer with respect to one or a number of alternative brands* (Bloemer & Kasper, 1995).

2.2 Consumer decision making models

Consumer behaviour is an integral focus in marketing theory, as its study enables firms and academics to understand how, why, where and when consumers purchase, consume and dispose of products and services (Schiffman, Kanuk, & Wisenblit, 2010). It has served as a linchpin in developing appropriate strategies to reach customers, and has informed market segmentation, targeting, the positioning of brands, and even the marketing mix used to reach customers. Consumer behaviour involves a number of personal and situational variables that researchers have aimed to understand using a number of models (Teo & Yeong, 2003).

There are a number of models that have attempted to understand the decision making process of a consumer. The grand theories of decision making on consumer behaviour are the Nicosia Model, the Howard-Sheath Model, the Engel Kollat Blackwell Model (EKB) and the Engel, Blackwell, Minibar (EBM) Model (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005; Teo & Yeong, 2003).

2.2.1 The Nicosia Model (1965)

The Nicosia Model of Consumer Behaviour (see Figure 2) was the first metatheoretical model of consumer behaviour. It shifted the focus from the purchase of a product to the decision making process of the consumer making the purchase (Lunn & Sheth, 2011). In this model, the consumer is considered to be purposive, with purchasing behaviour being driven by the need to fulfil a certain goal through consumption. In addition, the concept of a funnel was introduced, where a customer would begin with a broad set of consumption objectives, eventually resulting the purchase of a single good or service (Lunn & Sheth, 2011). Another crucial highlight of the model is feedback, which is not only the result of finding information that guides the decision

making, but also the feedback that is provided as the consumers go through the process (Lunn & Sheth, 2011).

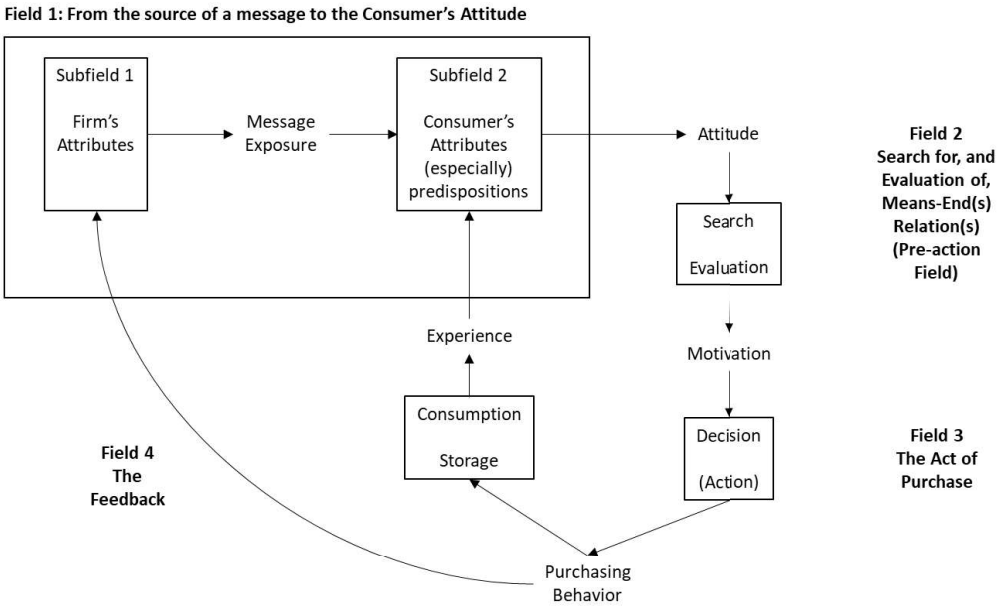


Figure 2 The Nicosia Model of Consumer Behaviour (Nicosia, 1966)

The model is split into four fields. Field 1 focuses on the firm's marketing environment and how their communication efforts subsequently affect a consumer's attitude towards a product or a service. Field 2 comprises the search for information and evaluation of alternatives, relying on the external information and means-end associations the consumer holds, culminating in a motivation to purchase (Erasmus, Boshoff, & Rousseau, 2001). In Field 3 is the act of purchase. The consumer decides to purchase and acts, culminating in consumption experiences and learning, that ultimately influences the consumer's attributes for the next purchase. Field 4 focuses on the feedback provided by the use of the product or the service. This feedback informs the consumer's experience and ultimately on their attitudes. The feedback also serves as feedback regarding the firm's attributes in the form of sales data or product reviews enabling them to review a firm's

communication, service/product design or their business model in its entirety. The Nicosia model did not provide any detail on the internal processes that would develop attitude, however the model provided an illustration of a flow of influences and feedback loops (Prasad & Jha, 2014). It was also viewed as a model skewed towards the marketers view (Milner & Rosenstreich, 2013). Although Nicosia did not update his model and it was not as influential as the models that followed it, the focus on means-end chains in modern marketing remains an important contribution.

2.2.2 The Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell Model of Consumer Behaviour (1968)

The Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell (EKB) model has widely been used in marketing literature. The original EKB model like the Howard-Sheth model comprises, inputs, processing factors and outputs. However, it is differentiated by the inclusion of five steps in the consumer decision process, which are borrowed from the educational philosopher John Dewey (1910). The model comprises five components inputs, information processing, decision process, decision process variables and external variables. Information input comprises of a variety of stimuli that a consumer is exposed to this could be from multiple media sources. The consumer will then process the information first by being exposed to it and paying attention to what are the most meaningful stimuli. The information that is focused on is what is comprehended interpreted and then stored in memory until it is accessed for decision making. The decision making process shown in Figure 3 would take place, however the consumer will not go through every step for every decision as routine purchases do not need to be as involved. Decisional variables and external influences represent the internal and the environmental or the situational influences of decision making.

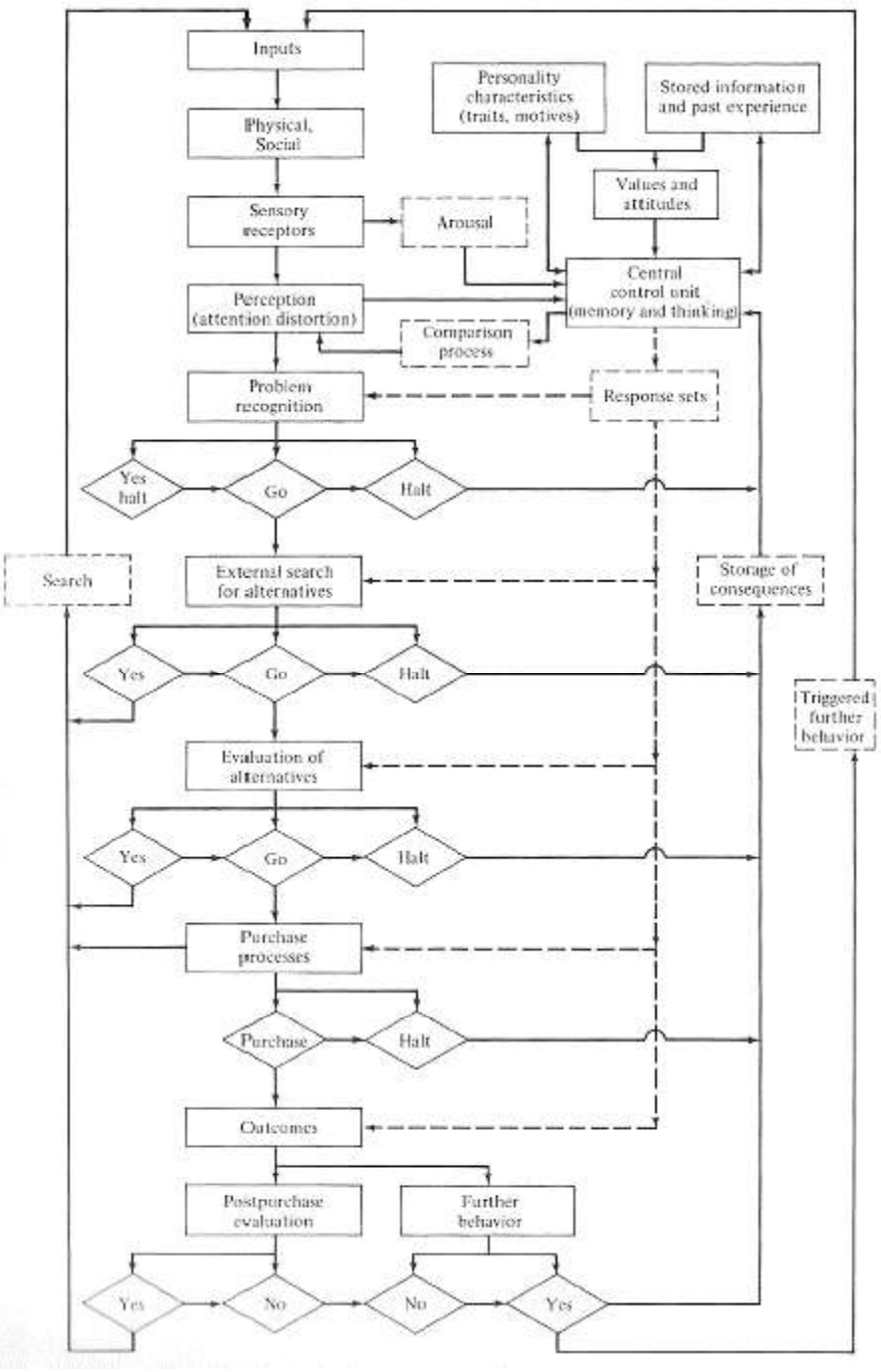


Figure 3 Engel, Kollat Blackwell Model (Engel et al., 1968)

The model was refined several times (see Section 2.2.4 below) to reflect the fast expanding field of consumer behaviour as the Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard model (EBM) (Blackwell et al., 2006) reflected. Refinements included the incorporation of McGuire's (1976) information

processing model, and its expansion, to include seven steps in the consumer decision making process (Blackwell et al., 2006). The seven steps include need recognition, search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, post purchase reflection and divestment (Puccinelli et al., 2009).

2.2.3 The Howard-Sheth Model of Buyer Behaviour (1969)

The Howard-Sheth model (see Figure 3) comprises a number of processes before, during and after consumption. The model assumes that individuals will seek to generalise prior purchase and consumption experiences; first seeking information actively, and then seeking less information as purchases are repeated. It is assumed further, that consumers will vary, and that an individual's type of decision making will vary across situations. Three levels of decision making are briefly outlined, to depict differences along a continuum of buyer motivations (viz., extensive problem solving, limited problem solving, and routine response behaviour) (Prasad & Jha, 2014).

The levels of decision making are as follows:

Level 1: is described as extensive problem solving. The customer has no prior knowledge of the products or the category at this stage and has no preferences. The customer seeks information about all the brands in the market before a decision is made.

Level 2: is characterised by limited problem solving where the customer will have limited consumer information about the market or the product they are about to purchase. They seek comparative brand information in order to make a decision in this case.

Level 3: is a ritual response behaviour. At this level the consumer is knowledgeable about the available brands and immediately decides regarding the product that they will purchase.

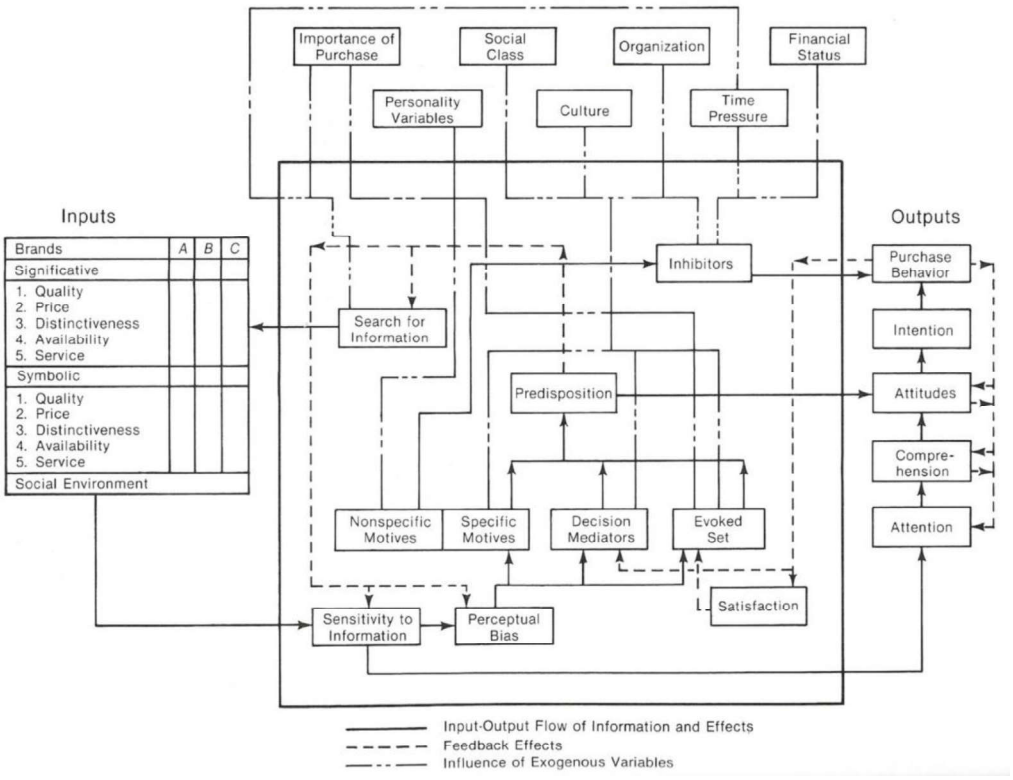


Figure 4 The Howard-Sheth Model (Howard & Sheth, 1969)

The model also proposes four sets of variables namely inputs, perceptual and learning constructs, outputs, and exogenous variables. Inputs consist of stimuli which include significative stimuli (brand, product and marketer related information), verbal and physical characteristics in the form of symbolic stimuli and finally the social environment in which decisions are made (Howard & Sheth, 1969). The most important contribution of the model was the description of the perceptual and learning processes. Perceptual and learning constructs are integral the model as this is the stage where these psychological factors enable consumers to make a decision (Lunn & Sheth, 2011). Perceptual constructs are closely related to how the consumer interprets inputs. Learning constructs are related to the way in which consumers achieve their consumption goals which in turn, is related to how consumers perceive and interpret input stimuli and accomplish

consumption goals. Outputs are the result of the perceptual and learning constructs and include purchases, attitude, brand comprehension and intention. Exogenous variables are external stimuli that influence the decision making process, but that are not directly related to this process (Lunn & Sheth, 2011). Howard and Sheth did not develop their model further.

2.2.4 The Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard Model of Consumer Behaviour (1986)

The EKB model was revised by Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (1986; 2006), to reflect a growing knowledge in the new discipline regarding consumer behaviour. In the EBM model, consumer decision making is shaped by a number of determinants, split into four broad categories, namely environmental influences, individual differences, information processing and the consumer decision process (Blackwell et al., 2006). Individual differences include consumers' resources; knowledge; attitudes; motivation; personality, values and lifestyle which are all influencing factors in the decision making process. Environmental influences include culture, social class, personal influences, family and situations. The information processing component applies McGuire's (1976) well-known model. Information processing includes the management of current knowledge through internal search processes.

The psychological process refers to the decision making process which begins with need recognition, where a consumer senses that there is a difference between their ideal state and their real state (Schiffman et al., 2010). The consumer will then embark on an internal search into memory, to determine whether they have enough information to make a decision, without an external information search. Should there be a need to gather more information, information is then gathered from market and non-market dominated sources such as advertising or word-of-mouth (Blackwell et al., 2006). Information processing will take place if a consumer has embarked

on an external search. This process is summated in five steps, including exposure, attention, comprehension acceptance and retention (Schiffman et al., 2010). Prior to purchasing, the consumer will do an evaluation of the product, based on their set evalutation criteria and the desired outcome of consumption. This evaluation will then result in the purchase and the consumption of the product (Blackwell et al., 2006). Consumption has become important to marketers, as it has an effect on the post-consumption evalutation of a product, and on whether a consumer will be satisfied with a product. Being disatified with a product could result in an external search taking place, to find a better alternative. The consumer could also divest by disposing, recyling or re-marketing the product (Schiffman et al., 2010).

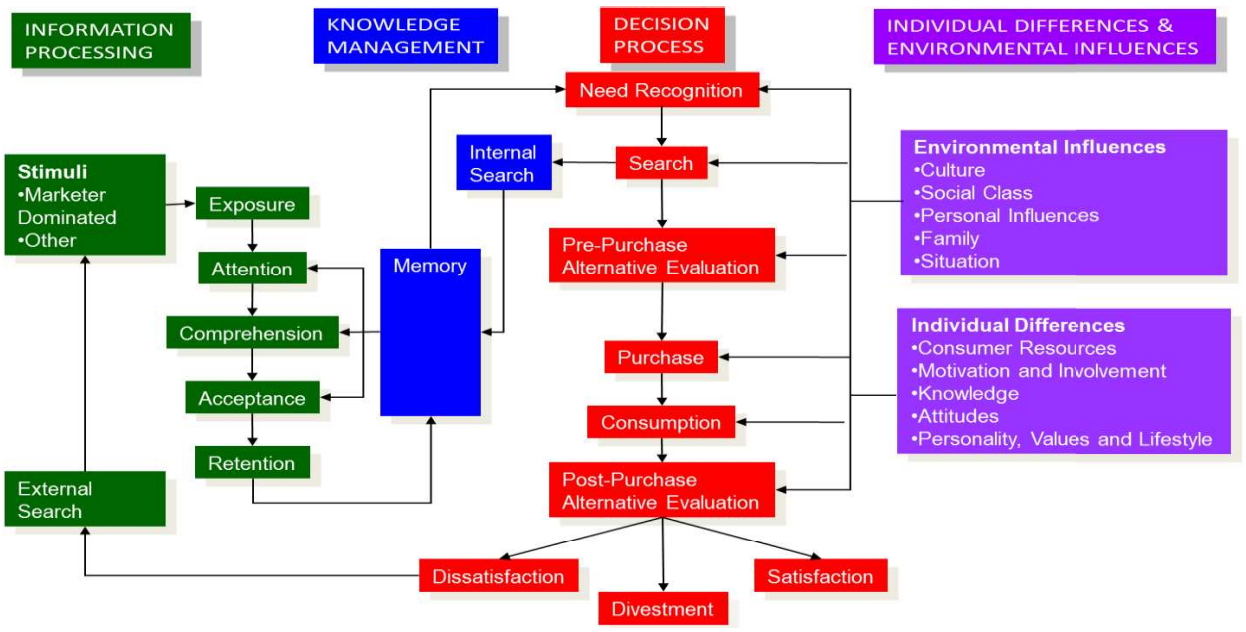


Figure 5 Engel, Blackwell and Miniard Model (Blackwell, Miniard, and Engel, 2006)

In summary, the revisions to the model (Blackwell et al., 2006) present a metatheory that includes four key areas, each of which continue to inform consumer behaviour research, for example (Puccinelli et al., 2009):

1. Steps in the consumer decision process
2. Individual differences that potentially influence the consumer decision process.
3. Environmental influences, which include social influences, that potentially influence the consumer decision process.
4. Information processing, which comprises the processing of internal and external information during search.

The EBM model combines decision process variables and external influences into one component (variables influencing decision making). Internal search which is part of memory in the EKB model is shown separately in the EBM model. Other differences include the depiction of the implementation of a decision being choice or purchase and the depiction of purchase outcomes (Blackwell et al., 2006). Dissonance only feeds back into the external search in the EKB model, while both satisfaction and disatisfaction feed into the external search in the EBM model.

While consumer behaviour models have helped in developing an understanding how consumers behave, they have been criticised, as many researchers have argued that the models were developed with the assumption that consumers always behave in a rational manner (Erasmus et al., 2001; Lunn, 2001). There have been a number of observations which show that these decisions can be made in a non-linear and in an indiscriminate manner, also known as the opportunistic approach, while some purchases are made at random or impulsively (Karimi, Papamichail, & Holland, 2015; Olshavsky & Granbois, 1979). Ultimately consumers make

consumption choices using a number of mechanisms, including heuristics and the intensive decision making will usually take place during the first purchase and will thereafter, become easier, with continued purchasing of a product or a service (Schiffman et al., 2010; Solomon, Russell-Bennett, & Previte, 2012).

Consumer behaviour and decision making models continue to be analysed and expanded on. Batra and Keller (2016) also acknowledge that there are a number of consumer behaviour models that have influenced the way in which marketers guide consumers in making purchase decisions. The authors expand the process in the following steps:

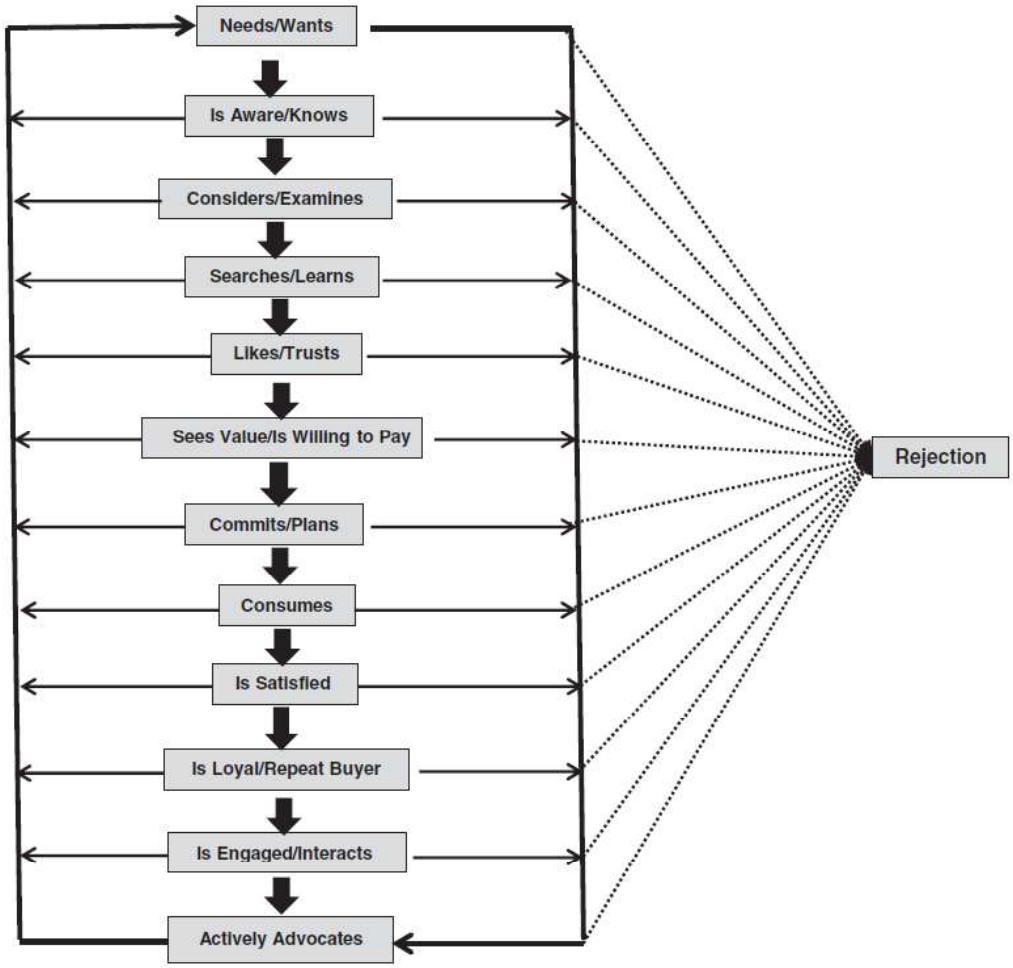


Figure 6 Expanded Consumer Decision Journey (Batra & Keller, 2016)

The EBM model of consumer behaviour has remained consistent over time, and technology has enhanced aspects of the consumer decision making process. Information gathering has enabled new modes of marketing such as search engine advertising, and have made company websites and other means of information like user-generated reviews important points of contact in this information search (Li & Kannan, 2014). Post-consumption evaluations have also become more social, with the ability to spread electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), share branded content, and engage with the brand, using online platforms (Batra & Keller, 2016). Xu, Duan, and Whinston (2014) broadly define the decision making process, in a digital context, in four steps where a consumer identifies a need and searches for information (consideration stage), then the consumer visits a website or another channel of information (information search stage) and then evaluates his options (the visit stage), and subsequently makes a purchase. Consumer decision making in computer-mediated environments has also allowed marketers to use attribution modelling to understand the effect of certain inputs throughout this decision making process and the final purchase decision (Yadav & Pavlou, 2014).

There are both environmental and individual differences that influence decision making. Environmental factors are relevant in consumer decision making as the environments that they inhabit shape consumers, consumers are also disposed to changing the environment through their behaviour and actions (Blackwell et al., 2006). These environmental factors include social class, family, personal influences and culture.

2.3 Culture's influence on consumer decision making

Culture is defined as *a system of ideas, practices and social institutions which inform the behaviour of a population, and is influential in the development of motivation, cognition and*

behaviour (Morris, Chiu, & Liu, 2015). Culture is ubiquitous and is sometimes considered an "invisible hand," that guides consumers, as they view themselves through the context of their culture, while simultaneously bringing their cultural framework into each experience (Schiffman et al., 2010). Consumption choices are closely linked to culture, as it is a guiding force that shapes the choices made (Solomon et al., 2012). Culture has a distinct influence on every step of the consumer decision making process; not only influencing the recognition of a need and consumption choices, but also the manner in which products and services are consumed (Solomon et al., 2012).

In the literature, culture has been subjectively separated into three dimensions; firstly, the supranational or subjective differences that are evident across national boundaries (for example Schwartz's cultural value orientations), secondly the national level or shared identity that defines citizens of a country. The third is the group level where cultural divisions contain a diverse group of individuals (for example sub-cultures or corporate cultures) (Schiffman et al., 2010). Each level of culture influences the behaviour of consumers and develops references that are used to make consumption choices and methods. Culture is apparent in both abstract and material contexts; manifesting itself in societal rituals and values, and in material objects like cars, clothing or food valued by that community (Solomon et al., 2012).

Culture is dynamic, and while there have been attempts to simplify culture into principles (for example Hofstede's dimensions of culture), there is an acknowledgement that culture is nuanced and context is required, before trying to analyse a culture (Solomon et al., 2012). Globalisation has enabled multiple cultures to influence the cultural reference of an individual. Cultural diversity is increasing in our globalised world and this has required consumers to convey

their identities and their resultant behaviour in multiple cultures and sub-cultures (Broderick et al., 2011).

In consumer behaviour research, evidence of distinct consumption behaviour has been observed due to a consumer using more than one cultural frame of reference. When consumers have lived in one cultural context, and are then faced with operating in a different or multiple contexts they will either assimilate, integrate, segregate or marginalise themselves from their host culture. This action or inaction informs their consumption choices (Luedicke, 2011). Assimilation involves adopting the culture of the host, while integration enables an individual to maintain their original culture, while introducing elements of a local peers culture (Luedicke, 2011); or there are some who choose not to adopt the local culture at all, by maintaining their home culture's norms and values (Luedicke, 2011).

The desire to assimilate is driven by the desire to behave in the same manner as an aspirant group, or to remain consistent with a reference group that builds and reinforces an identity (C. Chan, Berger, & Van Boven, 2012). The effects of culture on the desire and the ability to assimilate, to integrate or to adapt has been mainly studied by observing these outcomes in the context of immigration, to understand its psychological and policy implications (Luedicke, 2011). The inability to achieve assimilation or integration effectively may lead to identity conflict, while other consumers may choose not to take on any of a host's culture. These conflicts can become more pronounced where consumers try to differentiate themselves while still attempting to remain relevant to their desired in-groups (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Miller, Brewer, & Arbuckle, 2009).

Luedicke (2011) studied how consumers take on some of the consumption behaviours of their host countries in an attempt to find an in-group with which they can associate themselves. Where consumers have assimilated a culture or an in-group, it is sometimes found that consumers

may still want to set themselves apart to meet their need for differentiation. This is illustrated in the Miller et al. (2009) study, where consumers could belong to a community and still find ways to be unique within that in-group. As observed in the literature, globalisation has resulted in people taking on cultural identities that are far more complex than they had experienced before, and then operate on a transnational level (Kipnis et al., 2013).

In multicultural marketplaces, cultures are defined by the need to differentiate from a foreign host's culture while borrowing and adapting from others (Morris et al., 2015). These marketplaces exist in an environment where consumers, brands, ideologies and institution's cultures converge. Cosmopolitan cities such as New York, Singapore and London are examples of these places (Demangeot et al., 2015). Much of the research focusing on acculturation and the formation of reference groups has focused on developed markets. However, culture in emerging markets is noted as differing from what is observed in established markets.

In emerging markets, a cultural granularity that is unlike anything seen in developed markets is evident. In these contexts culture is malleable and the changes in the prevailing culture are closely linked to the changing circumstances of the population (Kivenzor, 2015). Consumption preferences in these emerging markets are closely linked to communicating changes in status and communicating their extended selves in private and social contexts (Kivenzor, 2015). Culture and more so, sub-cultures in these markets are integral to the development of values, and consequently an individual's self-construal and social identity (Kivenzor, 2015). There is a link between culture and identity development as a culture, life experiences and aspirant identity all inform the category labels with which consumers associate themselves (Reed et al., 2012). These labels inform the consumption choices made by the consumer.

Identity is defined as a label with which consumers associate themselves; these labels are either self-selected or inherited (Reed et al., 2012). Identity is comprised of five pillars; namely identity salience, identity association, identity relevance and identity conflict. For identity salience to occur, an identity needs to be accessible by the consumer. The increase in the salience of the identity is likely to have an influence on a person's future motivation and behaviour (Reed et al., 2012). Identity association enables stimuli to become positively associated with an identity, while identity relevance occurs when information related to the identity is actively processed and has the greatest influence where the stimuli are relevant to the identity (Reed et al., 2012). Identity verification is the monitoring of behaviour in order to manage and to reinforce identity and identity conflict are identity linked behaviours that assist in managing the conflict that may occur between multiple identities (Reed et al., 2012).

Identity can be either personal or social. Personal identity is developed by traits, goals and characteristics which are independent of any social group or relationship held, and are related to the person (Oyserman, 2009; White, Argo, & Sengupta, 2012). Social identity is the personal knowledge of belonging to a particular group or to a social category (Stets & Burke, 2000). Social identity theory posits that social identities are part of an individual's self-concept, which are derived from the social categories, roles or groups in which a consumer participates, and are developed by goals, traits, attitudes, behaviours and even brands (Coleman & Williams, 2013). Social identity comprises cognitive, affective and evaluative elements. From a cognitive viewpoint, a social identification takes place when the prevailing culture in a society plays an integral role, as consumers establish and operate identities (Kipnis et al., 2013). In addition to understanding the influence of culture; understanding the influence of identity on a consumer's behaviour is important, as consumption choices are a means of communicating their identity, and

signalling their membership of a desired in-group (C. Chan et al., 2012). In this light, brands have become cultural, social and ideological artefacts used by both consumers and companies to establish and to operationalise identities on a personal and on a social level (Kipnis et al., 2013).

2.4 Consumer Brand Identification

The marketplace has become a platform from which mythic and symbolic resources are used by consumers to construct identities, whether consumers have the means to acquire them or not (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). A brand, which is a symbol, name, mark, logo or a combination of these that distinguishes a product or service from other similar items in the market, have become influential artefacts in the construction of social and personal identities (Russell W. Belk, 2013; Wood, 2000). Social and personal identities are recognised as two sub-systems of self-concept, namely, the self-held and the self-constructed beliefs an individual has, which reflect on themselves and which colours their interactions with others (Turner, 1982). The author indicates that social identities are the result of membership in various categories based on gender, political affiliation or religion; while personal identities observe more personal attributes related to the individual.

Consumer-brand identification (CBI) is the psychological state of perceiving, valuing or a feeling of oneness with a brand (Lam, Ahearne, Mullins, Hayati, & Schillewaert, 2013). It is also defined as the perceived overlap between a brand identity and a consumer's self-concept (Elbedweihy, Jayawardhena, Elsharnouby, & Elsharnouby, 2016). This concept, while new to marketing literature, is rooted in a social identity theory, defined as the knowledge that a person belongs to a group, and consumer-company identification defined as the degree with which a consumer identifies with a company; on the basis that their values are congruent (Bhattacharya &

Sen, 2003; Stets & Burke, 2000). Consumers who identify with a brand therefore use that as a means to satisfy motives that enable self-enhancement (Wolter, Brach, Cronin, & Bonn, 2016).

2.4.1 Social Identity Theory

The development of social identity is a cumulative process in which an individual constantly identifies him/herself, or another person in a system of social categorisations. This is in addition to these categorisations having an emotional and value significance (Turner, 1982). Stets and Burke (2000) define it as an individual's knowledge of belonging to a group or to a social category. In forming these identities, an individual will be simultaneously self-categorising and comparing themselves to identity references.

Social identity lies on the continuum of self-concept where personal identity lies at one end and social identity on the other. Social identification, the process of locating a person within a system of social categorisations or a means of identifying one's self, defines the social identity of the individual (Jaspars & Warnaen, 1982). Once it becomes functional, social identity monitors and construes social stimuli to provide a guide for behaviour.

Social identity theory has also been influential in understanding intergroup relations. Individuals therefore identify with a group as their social identity is linked to that group (Stets & Burke, 2000). People strive to maintain a positive social identity and this then drives their need to differentiate from groups that may be deemed unfavourable (Brown, 2000). In emerging markets, social identity is encountered in an environment that could be perceived as volatile due to the rapid socio-political and economic changes occurring. these changes result in changing social interaction patterns and lifestyle experiences (Burgess & Harris, 1999). The authors found that in emerging markets such as South Africa previous colonial heritage, socio-political change, and

rapid economic change, can result in an intense awareness and processing of social identity perceptions and consequently striving for a positive social identity.

Building on the foundation of social identity theory, consumer-company identification is described as *the degree to which a member of an organisation perceives themselves and their focal organisation as sharing defining characteristics* (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, & Gruen, 2005). A company's identity comprises the consumer's knowledge of its structures, corporate reputation and company associations (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). The more that a company is perceived to be prestigious, distinctive, trustworthy and similar to the consumer's view of themselves, the more attractive it will be to that person (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). This attractiveness ultimately leads to consumer-company identification taking place. Consumer-company identification helped marketers to understand the relationship that can be formed between consumers and organisations, enabling CBI to be understood better in the context of constructing an individual's personal and social identity.

The theory around consumers' use of brands for identity projects has been studied in the context of the extended self, brand personality, brand relationship and brand attachment; from which CBI research has flowed (Wolter et al., 2016). In pursuit of finding identity in the world consumers consciously or unconsciously, regard possessions, as an extension of themselves, in both a personal and a social context, thus making brands an influential possession for consumers (Russell W Belk, 1988). This observation has become more salient in the digital space, where these self-extensions can be carefully curated and shared (Russell W. Belk, 2013). The notion that possessions are an influential extension of self has been important in understanding the antecedents of consumer-brand identification. These brands go beyond their utilitarian benefits.

2.4.2 Drivers of Consumer-Brand Identification

Defining identity is driven by higher order needs. Individuals need to firstly know themselves, secondly to feel unique in relative terms, and ultimately to feel good about themselves (Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, & Sen, 2012). Due to these needs, identification with a brand is likely to be linked to the brand having a personality similar to the consumer; a brand that is unique and prestigious (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). The authors also identify six drivers of CBI namely:

1. Self-brand similarity**:** This referrers to the degree to which a brand is congruent with the consumers self-concept
2. Brand distinctiveness: A consumer needs to firstly identify with a group while still remaining relatable to a group. A distinctive brand is important in fulfilling that role.
3. Brand prestige: The status or the honour associated with a brand in an individual's need for self-enhancement
4. Brand social benefits: Brands carry social and cultural meaning. Brands provide an opportunity to create opportunities to socialise with certain groups, simply by virtue of making use of a brand.
5. Brand warmth: The extent to which a brand is perceived as warm, based on either a brands communication or the category in which it belongs.
6. Memorable brand experiences: The extent to which a consumer had a positive brand experience which remains active in their memory.

Lam et al. (2013) posits that there are three drivers that affect consumer brand identification; namely initial perceived quality, initial self-brand congruity and innate innovativeness. Initial perceived quality is an instrumental driver, meaning it is integral to meeting

the consumer's goals. Initial self-brand congruity is a symbolic driver and describes the relationship that a consumer will have with the abstract aspects of a brand that matches their identity and their innate innovativeness, which is a consumer trait related to a consumer's openness towards trying out new products (Lam et al., 2013). The perceived quality of a brand is important in how consumers initially identify a brand. This could be on a functional level, due to product knowledge or an abstract level by merely assessing a brand name (Lam et al., 2013). Self-brand congruity posits that a consumer will identify with aspects of a brand that aligns with his/her own self-concept or satisfies a need to maintain self-continuity (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Innate innovativeness is motivated by a consumer's inclination to try brands that they have never used before. These consumers usually develop a higher initial identification with a brand, when compared with a less innovative consumer (Lam et al., 2013). The authors found that symbolic drivers were far more influential in the CBI of a new brand than instrumental drivers were.

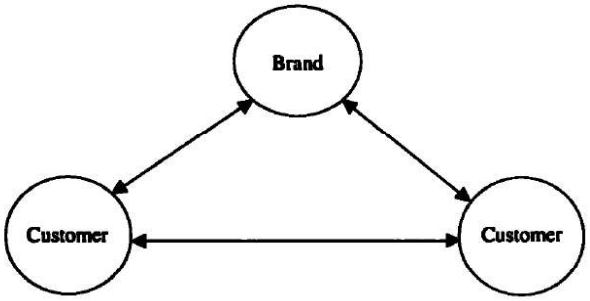
Cognitive and affective drivers are also associated with the development of CBI. Cognitive drivers are developed based on similarity with the brand personality, the distinctiveness of the brand, and its prestige (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). These brands are therefore important in getting to know ourselves, feeling unique or elevating our status through consumption. Affective drivers are related to the consumption experience of the brand, and to how the brand enables consumers to connect socially, have a great brand experience and perceive the brand as warm (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). The social benefit derived from the use of a brand is another antecedent of CBI, representing the emotional associations that can be created between a brand and a consumer (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). A brand with values that are harmonious with those of an individual, are also found to be an important driver of CBI (Tuškej et al., 2013).

There are several benefits to a brand when CBI is attained. CBI enhances a consumer's commitment to a brand, particularly when there is value congruity between the consumer and a brand (Tuškej et al., 2013). The commitment to a brand and the resulting long-term relationships with brands is important in the development of a sustainable competitive advantage for companies, as a loyal customer is far more valuable and profitable for a company in the long-term (Evanschitzky et al., 2012). CBI is also closely linked to the distribution of positive word of mouth (WOM), this is important, as WOM has the ability to shape consumer attitudes and behaviour (Tuškej et al., 2013). Consumers who identify with a brand are also more resilient to negative information provided about the brand, consumers are also likely to be loyal to the brand (Elbedweihy et al., 2016).

Consumers who identify with the brand participate in cooperative behaviours and therefore they make an effort to support a brand (Elbedweihy et al., 2016). The identification with brands and the social benefits derived from this identification have encouraged consumers to form groups where they are able to express their affinity to a brand, and form strong social links (Algesheimer, Dholakia & Herrmann, 2005; Stokburger-Sauer, 2010).

2.5 Brand Community

Community has been a core concept in research being studies by a group as diverse as to include philosophers and scientists. While the concept of a traditional community had fallen away



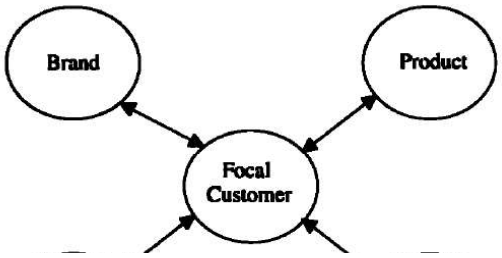


Figure 7 Customer Centric Model of Brand Community (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002)

in society for some time and people became more private, consumer culture has more recently, developed a new type of community, based on the devotion to a brand (Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001). Brand communities were initially described as a triadic and mutual relationship between a brand and customers (Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001). McAlexander et al. (2002) expanded the brand community triad proposing a customer-centric model, which purports that relationships with customers exist between the product, brand, the company and other customers.

Brand communities are platforms that allow consumers to disseminate information, influence perceptions, facilitate learning and give marketers the opportunity to collaborate with customers, to create better products and services (Algesheimer et al., 2005). These communities have existed in several contexts. Some have been used to reinforce an identity (for example, Harley Davidson H.O.G. reinforce masculinity), while other communities are viewed in a religious manner (for example fans of Star Trek), and others exist solely to counter an established community (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2010; Muniz Jr & Schau, 2005).

Brand communities are rooted in social identity theory, which posits that people use social groups and organisations as a base from which their self-concepts are defined (Lam, Ahearne, Hu, & Schillewaert, 2010). This social identity is an indication that people do not only have a personal identity, but a social identity that is encompassed by group classifications that could be demographic, membership to organisations or even just a role in society (for example a mother or a sibling) (Heere et al., 2011). Brand communities are therefore beneficial in the development of a consumer's collective or social self. Brand communities also construct social hierarchies to legitimise the community, therefore only retaining members who are truly passionate about the

brand. This ensures that only members who fit in socially form part of the in-group (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Luedicke, 2011).

Brand communities comprise three pillars, namely a shared consciousness of mind, shared rituals, traditions, and moral obligations to the society (Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001). Shared consciousness of mind refers to an intrinsic connection shared between members, this is a core element in the development of a brand community. Members feel a strong connection to both the brand and to one another (Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001). This consciousness of kind comprises two components legitimacy and oppositional brand loyalty. Legitimacy is a process where true brand community members are differentiated from those who are not. While brand communities are open to all, there is still an intrinsic social hierarchy that prevails. Belonging to the group needs to be rooted in good intention (Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001). An oppositional brand loyalty builds the cohesiveness of a brand community by getting members to rally against a "common enemy" (Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001).

Shared rituals are vital for the effective operation of communities and serves as symbolic means of communication and as a type of preservation (Laroche et al., 2012). These rituals often take place during a consumption experience in the brand community (Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001). Both the celebration of the brand history and the tradition of storytelling are important in the socialising of new recruits and in maintaining the consciousness of kind within the community; this ensures that the legacy of the brand is secured (Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001). Community members also have a moral obligation towards the community. This responsibility is characterised by welcoming new community members and educating members regarding the correct use of the brand (Zaglia, 2013).

Identification with a brand community is imperative for individual participation in the community if it is to have any meaningful effect for a consumer. This identification is as a result of a consumer construing themselves as part of the community (Algesheimer et al., 2005). This identification with the community is both cognitive as well as affective. The cognitive component comprises categorisation and maintaining an awareness of belonging to a group. The emotional component comprises an affective commitment to the group as well as a kinship between the members (Algesheimer et al., 2005). Identification with these brand communities results in positive and negative outcomes for a consumer. On the positive side, consumers will engage with a brand, particularly where there is an overlap between self-identity and brand community identity. On the negative side, normal community pressure to adhere to external demands that affect membership will be a consequence of identifying with a brand community (Algesheimer et al., 2005).

Like experience based, lifestyle based, ideology based and web based communities, a brand community is a driver of value for its members, by enabling a number of value to create initiatives within the community (Schau, Muñiz Jr, & Arnould, 2009). These value creating brand community practices are divided into four categories; namely, social networking, impression management, community engagement and brand use.

Social networking practices focus on getting community members to create, build and sustain ties. These practices include welcoming, emphasising and governing and are rooted in an emotive domain thus reinforcing social and moral bonds between members (Schau et al., 2009). Impression management practices have an external focus on creating a positive impression of the brand to those outside of the community. These practices include evangelising and justifying. Brand community members to evangelise about their beloved brand and aim to justify their love

for a brand, particularly if it has been discontinued or carries some stigma (Muniz Jr & Schau, 2005; Schau et al., 2009). Community engagement reinforces the members' continued engagement with a brand community. These include practices of staking, documenting, mile stoning and badging. These practices can be competitive and reinforce the hierarchy within a community, and provide members with social capital (Schau et al., 2009). Brand use practices are related to the improved use of a brand. These practices include grooming, customising and commoditising. Brand community members actively share information on how to use the brand how to customise it and how to enhance performance with it (Schau et al., 2009).

Early research of brand communities focused on traditional and often geographically restricted communities (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Brodie et al., 2013). The emergence of networked computers and the internet enabled a wide variety of communities to congregate online and to communicate social information, to negotiate group-specific identities and to form both social and romantic relationships (Kozinets, 1999). The original online brand communities were developed on Web 1.0 platforms, making use of company portals and consumer-driven message boards (Laroche et al., 2012). The Web 2.0 platform enabled social media, particularly social networks, to become the new means of organising brand communities beyond geographic boundaries. Online brand communities possess the same characteristics as traditional brand communities, in addition to some additional key dimensions; namely brand orientation, funding and governance, both being provided by the brand or by the communities, and the use of the internet with the community either existing online only, or as a hybrid of the offline and online community (Wirtz et al., 2013). Brogi (2014) has identified four key factors that differentiate online brand communities from traditional brand communities, as illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Factors that differentiate online brand communities from traditional brand communities

	Factors	Definition
1	The degree of social involvement in the brand community	The degree of social involvement in the community.
2	The quality of relationships within the brand community	Expressed in terms of satisfaction, an overall assessment made by the consumer regarding what to share in the community
3	Level of identification	The degree to which the consumer feels like they are part of the community.
4	Level of quality communication	Expressed in the relation to the four dimensions of information shared: timeliness, relevance, frequency and duration.

For organisations, these online brand communities have a threefold purpose by serving as an additional platform from which the organisation can communicate, by establishing a link between current and potential customers while maintaining long-term relationships with them. The online brand communities also facilitate loyalty to the brand and commitment (Chan, Zheng, Cheung, Lee & Lee, 2014).

The increasing influence of social media in the marketing mix has added another dimension to online brand communities and in some cases, it has replaced platforms such as forums or fan websites that initially facilitated brand communities in computer mediated environments (Habibi, Laroche, & Richard, 2014). These brand communities facilitated on online social networks have

essentially created a new geographical space, in which brand communities can exist (Laroche et al., 2012; Zaglia, 2013). While social networks and brand communities have some commonalities, the differences lie in the fact that social networks have a wide reach, and are accessible, whereas brand communities are more focused, with strong ties between members, even when operating on social networks (Zaglia, 2013). Laroche et al. (2012) found that social network-based brand communities have a positive influence on the three pillars of a brand community (consciousness of kind, moral obligation and shared rituals and traditions). Brand communities can therefore exist on social media platforms, but these are not necessary for the community to thrive on.

Brand communities are ultimately in a form of a consumer agency. They are important informational resources providing social benefits (Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001). Social networks have enhanced this benefit of brand communities. Consumer-brand identification has been proven to have a positive relationship with a consumer's commitment to a brand, and to provide a willingness to spread positive word of mouth and membership to a brand community that has been found to further enhance this identification (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Tuškej et al., 2013). While this fact has been established in a developed market context, the strength of this relationship is not established in an emerging market context, where the same social networks exist and should therefore be similar.

H_1: There is a positive relationship between consumer-brand identification and brand community membership on Facebook, for a consumer.

Current research has focused on online brand communities embedded in social networks (Baldus et al., 2015; Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2015; Habibi et al., 2014; Zaglia, 2013) however; there is a need to understand the growing influence of these communities on

various marketing outcomes. Some of these outcomes include consumer engagement and brand loyalty.

2.6 Consumer Engagement

Batra and Keller (2016) highlight that following the consumption of a product in the consumer decision making process, consumers go through a number of post consumption stages, one of which includes engagement (Batra & Keller, 2016). While engagement has been studied in the fields of organisational development, psychology and education; its initial introduction in marketing literature was in the study of relationship and services marketing (Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014). In the context of organisational literature, engagement has been studied as a means to understand organisational commitment and citizenship, and its influence on a company's bottom line (Bowden, 2009).

In marketing literature, engagement has taken on many theoretical definitions, including engagement, brand engagement, brand community engagement, consumer brand engagement and consumer engagement (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Breidbach, Brodie, & Hollebeek, 2014; Brodie et al., 2011; Gambetti, Graffigna, & Biraghi, 2012; Hollebeek, 2011). Engagement literature has also focused on the fact that there is a variation in what is identified as consumer engagement, and how it is defined (T. K. Chan et al., 2014; Sashi, 2012; Vivek, Beatty, Dalela, & Morgan, 2014; Zheng, Cheung, Lee, & Liang, 2015). The multiple theoretical definitions highlight the fact that the engagement construct has multiple foci and can still be refined (Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2016).

Zheng et al. (2015) observed that definitions of engagement have been conceptualised in three ways. Firstly, as a psychological process leading up to loyalty. Secondly, as a behavioural

manifestation which leads to behaviours such as repurchase or word of mouth. Thirdly, as a psychological state characterised by a degree of drive, commitment, collaboration and immersion.

Brodie et al. (2011) developed five fundamental propositions in the development of the consumer engagement construct, namely:

1. Consumer engagement reflects a psychological state in which consumers interact with a focus within a service environment.
2. Consumer engagement occurs in an interactive process in a service relationship that creates value.
3. Consumer engagement plays a focal role in the natural network of service relationships.
4. Consumer engagement is a multidimensional concept, subject to a context or stakeholder-specific expression of a cognitive, affective or behavioural dimension.
5. Consumer engagement happens within a specific set of situational conditions, generating various levels of consumer engagement.

Dessart et al. (2016) defined consumer engagement as *the cognitive, behavioural and emotional commitment to an active relationship with a brand, consumers and other actors.* Consumer engagement is iterative and begins with customer satisfaction, resulting in loyalty, while simultaneously building commitment, trust and delight (Brodie et al., 2013).

Consumer engagement transcends the purchase of a product and results in motivational behaviours such as spreading the word of mouth, the customer-to-customer interactions and the reviews. Consumers also use their own social networks, product knowledge and creativity, to contribute to the marketing efforts of a company (Harmeling, Moffett, Arnold, & Carlson, 2017). Consumer engagement can be expressed in a variety of ways, such as time spent discussing a

product or a service and can result in both positive and negative outcomes for the brand (Gummerus, Liljander, Weman, & Pihlström, 2012). Consumer engagement has been considered as a research and a business priority for academics and marketers for nearly ten years, as it is integral to enhancing consumer-firm relationships and profits for a business. Engaged customers are important for the development of new products and services, creating experiences and value. (Brodie et al., 2011; MSI, 2010, 2014).

Claffey and Brady (2017) highlight that engagement is rooted in the service dominant logic, where consumers collaborate with a firm in creating value. This value is not dictated by the firm, but rather determined by the consumer.

2.6.1 Dimensions of Consumer Engagement

Consumer engagement is multidimensional, consisting of affective, behavioural and cognitive dimensions. Affective outcomes include enjoyment and enthusiasm, which reflects the excitement of a customer, and the happiness derived from interacting with a brand or a community. (Dessart et al., 2015). Behaviourally engaged consumers provide content, resources and information to the organisation and the consumers. These consumers also seek information, as learning is important; they also show support by endorsing the brand and by other actors (Dessart et al., 2016). Cognitive outcomes of engagement include a great amount of time being spent actively thinking about the brand, and being immersed in brand community activities (Dessart et al., 2015). The dimensions and sub-dimensions of consumer brand engagement are summarised in Figure 9 below.

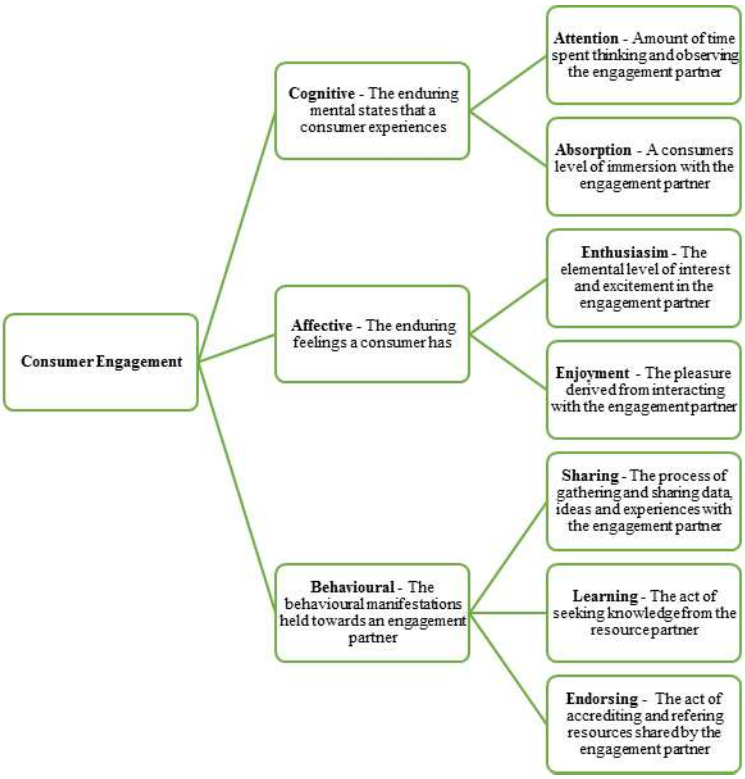


Figure 9 Dimensions of Consumer Engagement (Dessart et al., 2015)

2.6.2 Drivers of Consumer Engagement

There are a number of motivational drivers that are observed as integral to engagement, particularly to an online brand community (Claffey & Brady, 2017). These motivations are hedonic, utilitarian, social and personal integrative, and also aimed at positive self-enhancement (Claffey & Brady, 2017). Hedonic motives are behavioural drivers that are related to the goal of being engaged in enjoyable activities. Socially integrative motives are behavioural drivers that push the consumer to develop social connections, while personal integrative motives drive behaviour aimed at generating a positive perception from others (Claffey & Brady, 2017). Positive self-enhancement motives are defined by the psychological benefits associated with

engaging with a community or a brand; while utilitarian motives are a behavioural motive associated with the achievement of instrumental benefits such as savings (Claffey & Brady, 2017).

While studying the engagement in online brand communities, Dessart et al. (2015) identified three drivers of consumer engagement, namely: brand related drivers, social drivers and community value drivers. Brand related drivers include brand identification, brand trust and brand satisfaction. Brand identification involves the overlap of a consumer's identity with the brand identity (Wirtz et al., 2013). The authors also identify the brand's symbolic function and the customers need to live up to it, as another brand-related driver of consumer engagement.

Social drivers include the online brand community involvement community. However, Wirtz et al. (2013) also identified social benefits such as getting help from other brand users, and social identity derived from being actively involved in a brand community as another driver of consumer engagement. Value drivers, otherwise known as functional drivers, include information seeking, entertainment, networking and monetary incentives (Dessart et al., 2015). Wirtz et al. (2013) identified functional benefits that are centred on information sharing. Customers are well informed, uncertainty is mitigated, and community members are assured that quality information is being shared about the brand. In addition to this, monetary incentives in the form of loyalty points or invitations to exclusive events serve as another driver of consumer engagement.

2.6.3 Consumer engagement in online brand communities

Consumers have become skilful at using Web 2.0 applications to make purchasing decisions, and this has influenced the way in which organisations and consumers communicate. This has prompted consumers and organisations to create communities using company websites, web-portals and social networking sites (Zheng et al., 2015). Social media and social networks in

particular are able to facilitate customer relationships and to serve as a tool for customer engagement (Sashi, 2012).

Consumer engagement in an online brand community is an interactive experience between consumers, the brand and other members within a brand community (Brodie et al., 2013). Engagement in a brand community is more than just an attitude towards the brand, but is reflective of their attentiveness and absorption in the online brand community (T. K. Chan et al., 2014). In these communities, there is motivation to share information, to learn about the brand and to endorse the brand within and beyond the boundaries of the community (Dessart et al., 2015). Furthermore, Habibi et al. (2014) defined engagement as the consumer's motivation to collaborate with members of the community. While Brodie et al. (2013), proposed that consumer engagement in a brand community comprise a number of sub-processes that include sharing, learning, advocating, socialising and co-creation. Learning is the process of acquiring competencies that consumers can use during decision making. Sharing information and knowledge about a brand by actively contributing to the community, is another sub-process of engagement. Advocacy is described as an expression of the consumer engagement that happens when consumers actively recommend products or information on how to best use them. Socialising is a non-functional way of communicating where community members develop norms and language of communication. Co-creation is the process where consumers are actively contributing to the development of new products , new services, new brands and brand meanings (Brodie et al., 2013).

These sub-processes are not only as the result of satisfaction and loyalty that lead to empowerment, trust, commitment, and emotional bonds, but they are also outcomes of engagement within a brand community (Brodie et al., 2013). These sub-processes are necessary for the maintenance of the brand community, and to relate to all three dimensions of brand community.

Much of the research investigating engagement in online brand communities has highlighted that consumer engagement is a necessary component of the health of an online brand community. While this idea has been conceptualised and discussed in marketing literature, there is still a need to confirm the empirical relationship between the variables.

H_2: There is a positive relationship between brand community membership on a social network and consumer engagement for a consumer.

Dessart et al. (2015) identify consequences that are as a result of consumer brand engagement. Engagement is an expression of the satisfaction, the trust, the loyalty, the empowerment and the emotional bonding that a consumer has found within a brand community. Engaging in these communities also informs future purchase decisions and can even keep unsatisfied customers loyal. While there are many observed outcomes of engagement in a brand community, conceptually, loyalty is the most commonly observed consequence (T. K. Chan et al., 2014; Dessart et al., 2015; Leckie, Nyadzayo, & Johnson, 2016; Maslowska, Malthouse, & Collinger, 2016).

The path to loyalty requires continuous relationship building, the fortifying of brand knowledge and product purchase (Batra & Keller, 2016). With a combination of the two, it is possible to achieve the objective of both loyalty and enhancing lifelong value for customers.

2.7 Brand Loyalty

Loyalty to a brand is considered as a prerequisite for favourable consumer behaviour including repeat purchases, cross-selling and positive word of mouth (T. K. Chan et al., 2014). Brand loyalty is an important outcome in retaining customers over an extended period, and while it is often confused with repeat purchase behaviour, they are two distinct constructs. Jacoby and

Kyner (1973) define brand loyalty as *the biased behavioural response, expressed over an extended period, by a decision maker who articulates a preference for one brand over another*.

Gounaris and Stathakopoulos (2004) describe four types of loyalty influenced by purchasing behaviour, emotional attachment and social influences:

1. No loyalty to the brand – No attachment to the brand or to the purchase of the brand.
2. A covetous loyalty - This type of loyalty is characterised by a desire to own the brand and a positive disposition towards the brand.
3. Inertia loyalty – This consumer purchases a product out of habit, this consumer has developed a behavioural attachment to the brand.
4. Premium loyalty – This consumer displays a high attachment and a repeat purchase of a brand. They have a high degree of commitment to the brand.

Loyalty and repurchase or inertia are often confused however loyalty differs in that it is a deeply held commitment to repurchase a product, regardless of any change in circumstances or marketing programs (Curtis, Abratt, Rhoades, & Dion, 2011). A defining difference between the two, is that loyalty is a consumer-conscious choice to purchase goods or services continuously (Solomon et al., 2012). The customer's intention to repurchase a brand is essential to maintaining relationships with consumers and the repeat purchasing can ultimately lead to loyalty.

Loyalty to a brand is ultimately the attitudinal and behavioural commitment to repurchase the brand, and is therefore posited to comprise two components; behavioural loyalty and attitudinal loyalty (Chi, Yeh, & Yang, 2009). Behavioural loyalty is the propensity to make repeat purchases of a product or a service and is the result of either searching for the best alternatives and not finding them, or not having knowledge of the available alternatives (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Curtis et al., 2011). Attitudinal loyalty is the commitment to the brand based on the value that the

consumer places on the brand, and is strongly related to the emotional ties a consumer forms with a product or a brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). When a customer is loyal to a brand, the preference for the brand supersedes any situational or marketing influences that might have swayed the purchase decision in any other circumstance (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

The development of loyalty has also been described as the phased approach, beginning with cognitive loyalty where brand attribute information indicated that one brand is preferred over another; followed by affective loyalty, where a liking for the brand is developed after cumulatively experiencing positive experiences with a brand (Oliver, 1999). Consumers experience cognitive loyalty next, where a consumer will be influenced by repeated incidents of affirmative affect towards a brand. Action loyalty is the final stage, where motivation from a previous loyalty is transformed into a readiness to act, reinforcing the definition of loyalty; being a deeply held commitment to purchase a product/service consistently (Oliver, 1999).

Satisfaction has been acknowledged as one of the key contributing factors to brand loyalty by marketing scholars (McAlexander, Kim, & Roberts, 2003). In addition to satisfaction, the value (the overall utility of the product, based on what was expected and received) and trust (confidence in the exchange partners), are identified as important contributors to loyalty (He, Li, & Harris, 2012). Oliver (1999), points out that while loyal customers will often be satisfied, satisfaction is not a pre-requisite for loyalty. The author highlights a six-point spectrum where satisfaction and loyalty are considered the same concept at one end of the spectrum, and where satisfaction is transformed to loyalty over an enduring period as shown in Figure 10.

2.7.1 Social Identity and Brand Identity Impact on Brand Loyalty

A number of factors including a consumer's risk aversion, the reputation of a brand, the availability of alternatives and the influence of a social group affect brand loyalty (Gounaris & Stathakopoulos, 2004). Furthermore, a consumer is more likely to be loyal to a brand that is reflective of their personal and social identity, and assists an individual in building this desired identity (He et al., 2012). The social influence on brand loyalty is particularly significant, as consumers participate in pro-brand activities when they identify with a brand (He et al., 2012). The authors find that participation in brand communities is the kind of pro-social activity that can foster loyalty not only to the community of likeminded consumers, but to the brand as well. Participation in brand communities, particularly those embedded in social networks is intrinsically tied to consumer engagement with a brand, and with other members of a brand community (Brodie et al., 2013; Gummerus et al., 2012; Habibi et al., 2014; Hollebeek et al., 2014). A well-known consequence of this engagement is brand loyalty.

Consumer engagement has also been linked to brand loyalty, as consumers who are engaging with a brand are noted as being more satisfied; this satisfaction is linked to brand-related outcomes such as loyalty (Wirtz et al., 2013). While there is literature that has explored the relationship between consumer engagement and brand loyalty (Brodie et al., 2013) (see Table 2 below), there is still a need to test whether this observed relationship is valid, in an emerging market context (Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek, 2011; Viswanathan et al., 2017).

H_3: There is a positive relationship between consumer engagement and brand loyalty.

Table 2

Summary of the relationship between consumer engagement and loyalty

Author	Proposed relationship	Conceptual	Empirical

(Leckie et al., 2016)	Cognitive processing, affection and activation → Brand loyalty		X
(Dessart et al., 2015)	Brand, social and community drivers → engagement → Brand loyalty	X	
(Harrigan, Evers, Miles, & Daly, 2017)	Customer involvement → Customer Engagement → Behavioural intention of loyalty		X
(Wirtz et al., 2013)	Brand, social and functional drivers → Online brand community engagement → Satisfaction and loyalty	X	
(Brodie et al., 2013)	Engagement Triggers → consumer engagement sub-processes → Loyalty & Satisfaction	X	

A consumers loyalty to a brand is known to be bolstered by strong relationships, requiring marketers to truly understand the strategic marketing impact consumer engagement and brand communities have on brand loyalty (Leckie et al., 2016). The development of brand loyalty is important in sustaining the brand equity of a company, and remaining profitable, as loyal customers provide a higher return on marketing investment (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Chi et al., 2009; Gounaris & Stathakopoulos, 2004).

2.8 Conclusion of Literature Review

The EBM model of consumer behaviour includes a consumer decision making process that has enabled marketers to document the process consumers go through when making consumption choices. The model acknowledges that there are internal and external factors that influence this process at various points (Blackwell et al., 2006). As highlighted in the literature review, culture

is a key determinant motivating decision making and consumption. The influence of culture is ubiquitous and becomes highly evident in identity construction projects. Globalisation has enabled people to move around the world in pursuit of a better life. With this movement of people, multicultural marketplaces have enabled consumers to construct identities that are an amalgamation of the culture from which they come and currently operate in. The advent of the internet has also enabled borders to break down and influence identity projects, enabling someone to adopt elements of another culture while remaining in their own. Online brand communities are an example of a platform that has enabled consumers to develop their social identity, using brands (Russell W. Belk, 2013). A primary goal of this research is to understand the influence the environmental factors of the EBM model have on a customer's decision making process and the outcomes of their consumption choices. This research also aims to understand the influence that the constructs of brand community involvement, consumer engagement and brand loyalty have on the consumption and post consumption phases of decision making. These observations are made in the context of emerging markets, where the economic conditions and consumption choices experience consistent change (Kivenzor, 2015).

Observing the relationship between consumer brand identification, brand community membership, consumer engagement and brand loyalty will contribute to the understanding of how external factors, rooted in culture and identity, affect consumer behaviour. They will also offer an emerging market perspective on constructs that have been mostly observed in a western context. The model illustrated below is the guideline in completing this study.

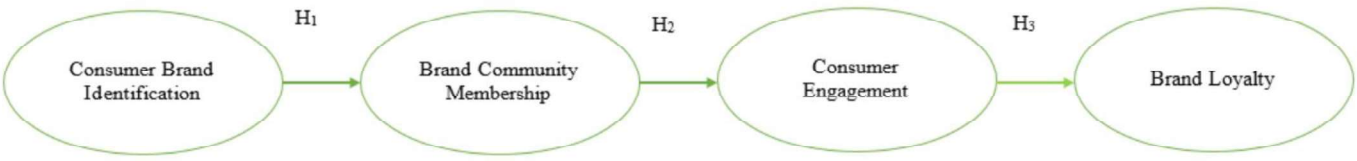


Figure 10 Theoretical Model

Chapter 3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Methodology / Paradigm

For this study, a quantitative research strategy rooted in a positivist worldview is applied, with the aim being to understand the cause and the effect of the relationship between consumer brand identification, brand community membership, consumer engagement and brand loyalty. This paradigm is selected, as it is highly structured and is reliant on the scientific methodology (Creswell, 2014). The positivist worldview is rooted in the principle that the truth is independent of the viewer and the observer (Aliyu, Bello, Kasim, & Martin, 2014). As observed by Bryman (2015) positivism is rooted in five principles:

1. Only phenomena and therefore knowledge confirmed by the senses can be merited as knowledge.
2. Theory is purposed to generate a hypothesis and to enable laws to be measured.
3. Knowledge is gathered to provide a basis for laws.
4. Science must be conducted in a manner devoid of any values.
5. Normative and scientific statements are clearly defined. The belief in science is the true domain of a scientist.

The ontological position of the study is objectivism, implying that social phenomena are influenced by external factors that are out of the control of social actors (Bryman, 2015). This research strategy was selected, as previous studies that have focused on one or more of the observed constructs observed consumer behaviour using quantitative methodology (Baldus et al., 2015; Brodie et al., 2011; Habibi et al., 2014).

3.2 Research Design

To collect the data for this study a cross-sectional design, which enables phenomena to be observed at a specific point in time, was selected (Bryman, 2015). In a cross-sectional research design, a research subject's internal states are often reported simultaneously with their recollection of past experiences (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). Employing a cross-sectional research design is beneficial, as it is inexpensive to administer, it can capture data on a subset of the observed population, and there is no loss of follow-up, which would occur in a longitudinal study (Levin, 2006). Disadvantages related to this research design include the difficulty in determining causal inferences, the fact that the study is merely a snapshot of a specific time, and common method variance (Levin, 2006; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012).

3.3 Population and Sample

3.3.1 Population

The population refers to the universe of people or components from which a sample could be drawn (Bryman, 2015). The target population to which these results are generalizable initially consisted of members of the BMW Car Club Gauteng, and fans of the BMW South Africa Facebook pages. It was expanded to include Audi South Africa and Mercedes-Benz South Africa as the initially selected pool, which provided a sample of the population that was too small to collect data on that could be analysed. The selected population consists of community members of a premium product and is unlikely to cause any deviation from the observed constructs. This population consists of both owners and non-owners of the brand.

The sample frame of communities collectively comprises approximately 2 652 540 members collectively.

3.3.2 Sample and Sampling Method

A sample is a subset of the population studied, to gain insight into the entire population (Vehovar, Toepoel, & Steinmetz, 2016). The sample consists of brand community members based in the Gauteng province. This is because the only officially recognised car club, which is an internationally endorsed brand community, is based in the province. The sample will consist of 384 people, based on a population of 508 045 people, with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error.

A non-probability sampling method making use of convenience sampling was used, to access respondents who were easily accessible, considering the time constraints applicable to the study. The convenience sample used for this study does not significantly differ from a regular population, as members of brand communities are a captive audience on their chosen social network, Facebook. Whether they are randomly selected or directly approached to participate, they will be members of the community with no tangible difference in the qualifying criteria. A convenience sample is used with the assumption that the selected sample is homogenous and the results would be the same if a random sample was selected (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Non-probability sampling affects the generalizability of results, as the respondents are not selected in a completely random manner. The results of the study are also likely to be biased, due to a convenience sample (Etikan et al., 2016).

3.4 The Research Instrument

To collect data from the selected sample a self-completed questionnaire was used. This method was selected due to the ease of collective administration. The data collection instrument used was divided into three sections including qualifying questions, scales measuring

consumer-brand identification, brand community membership, consumer engagement and brand loyalty. The final section consisted of questions to describe the population.

Section 1: Qualifying questions

The first section of the questionnaire included qualifying questions regarding the use of Facebook, the frequency of Facebook use, and to one of the four selected brand communities. Any participants that did not meet the qualifying criteria were thanked for their participation and were not required to complete the survey.

Section 2: Scales used

To measure the constructs of consumer-brand identification, brand community involvement, consumer engagement and brand loyalty; all the scales used were multi-item scales measured using a 7-point Likert scale. All scales used are multiple item scales, these scales are beneficial as a single indicator may not aptly capture the variation between respondents, and so by asking multiple questions, the researcher is able to capture the entire spectrum of a concept (Bryman, 2015). The following scales were used to measure the constructs:

Table 3

Scales used to measure constructs

Scale	Researcher	Construct Measured	Reliability
Consumer Brand Identification Scale	(Torres, Augusto, & Godinho, 2017)	Consumer Brand Identification	$\alpha = 0.96$
Community Identification Scale	(Algesheimer et al., 2005)	Brand Community Involvement	$\alpha = 0.78$

Community Engagement Scale	(Algesheimer et al., 2005)	Brand Community Involvement	$\alpha = 0.74$
Consumer Engagement Scale	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Consumer Engagement	$\alpha = 0.88$
Brand Loyalty Scale	(Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001)	Brand Loyalty	$\alpha = 0.89$

Section 3: Demographic Data

The purpose of this section was to collect data that describes the population. Questions regarding age, gender, employment status and total household income were asked.

3.5 Procedure for Data Collection

The survey data was gathered using collective administration. The survey was distributed via email, the mobile application WhatsApp, and social media links placed on Facebook, LinkedIn and Reddit. The online survey tool Qualtrics was used as the platform to collect data. This was due to its adaptability, as it can be used on both a desktop and a mobile phone so there was no limitation on where data could be collected.

All data was stored on a secure password protected hard drive. The data will be stored for no longer than five years and will be destroyed once the period lapses, in accordance with privacy laws in the country. All the Qualtrics links used are anonymous. This ensured that no data could be traced back to the respondent.

3.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Following the data collection, data processing and coding took place to remove any incomplete responses and to prepare the data for analysis. Descriptive analysis was conducted to describe the sample and highlight the demographic composition of the sample for the study.

3.6.1 Reliability and Validity

Testing for the reliability and the validity of the study is critical in firstly establishing that the scales used to observe the population can consistently measure what they are intended to measure, and also establishing that the scales actually measure what they were intended to measure (Bryman, 2015). To confirm the reliability of the study, the coefficient alpha of the measurement scales was calculated, to confirm that the scales were statistically reliable. To assess the validity of the study, a confirmatory factor analysis was done, firstly to test the overall model fit and secondly, to test the convergent and internal validity of the data gathered, to enable further analysis to take place.

There are various iterations of validity. Firstly, there is convergent validity, external validity, internal validity and ecological validity. Convergent validity relates to whether the concept is measured as it is supposed to be, external validity relates to whether the results can be generalised beyond a specific context, internal validity relates to whether the causal relationship between two or more variables is sound and ecological validity relates to whether the result actually relates to real life situations (Bryman, 2015).

Steenkamp & Van Trijp (1991) indicated that for construct validity to be confirmed, the following criteria need to be met: unidimensionality, within method convergent validity, reliability, stability, across method convergent validity, discriminant validity and nomological validity. The unidimensionality of the data was measured using confirmatory factor analysis,

reducing the scales and making them more manageable for analysis. To test for convergent validity, a factor regression coefficient was calculated, the correlations should exceed 0.5 (Steenkamp & Van Trijp, 1991). Mplus Version 8 was used to test the factorial invariance of a construct, by establishing factor regression coefficients. To test for cross-method convergent validity, a multi-trait multi-method matrix (using confirmatory factor analysis) was used; this methodology is appropriate, as high convergent validity is often attributable to all items converging to a method, and not loading on the observed construct (Steenkamp & Van Trijp, 1991). A goodness of fit test was conducted, to test the nomological validity.

3.6.2 Structural Equation Model

To test the overall model fit, a structural equation model was tested. Maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors was used as an estimator, as an alternative. Using this method maximises the probability of observing Y variables in the sample with given X values (Boomsma, 1983). Maximum likelihood estimation is often used for confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation models, with the assumption that the data follows a multivariate normal distribution (Beauducel & Herzberg, 2006). This method of structural equation modelling is traditionally used in research.

3.7 Limitations of the Study

From an administrative view, the use of non-probability sampling will limit the generalizability of the study to the area of study. There is also a challenge in getting the right respondents for the study in the time set out for data collection. As the study takes on a cross-

sectional research design, there is a limitation on understanding the relationship between the variables, over a sustained time.

3.8 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The structure and psychometric properties of the Consumer Brand Identification, Community Identification, Consumer Engagement and Brand Loyalty scales were tested, using the confirmatory factor analysis approach (CFA) recommended by Steenkamp & Van Trijp (1991). The theorised relations were assessed using covariance structure modelling. All analyses were conducted on item covariances, using robust maximum likelihood estimation in Mplus Version 8.

As shown in Figure 11, the CFA indicated high path correlations between the constructs.

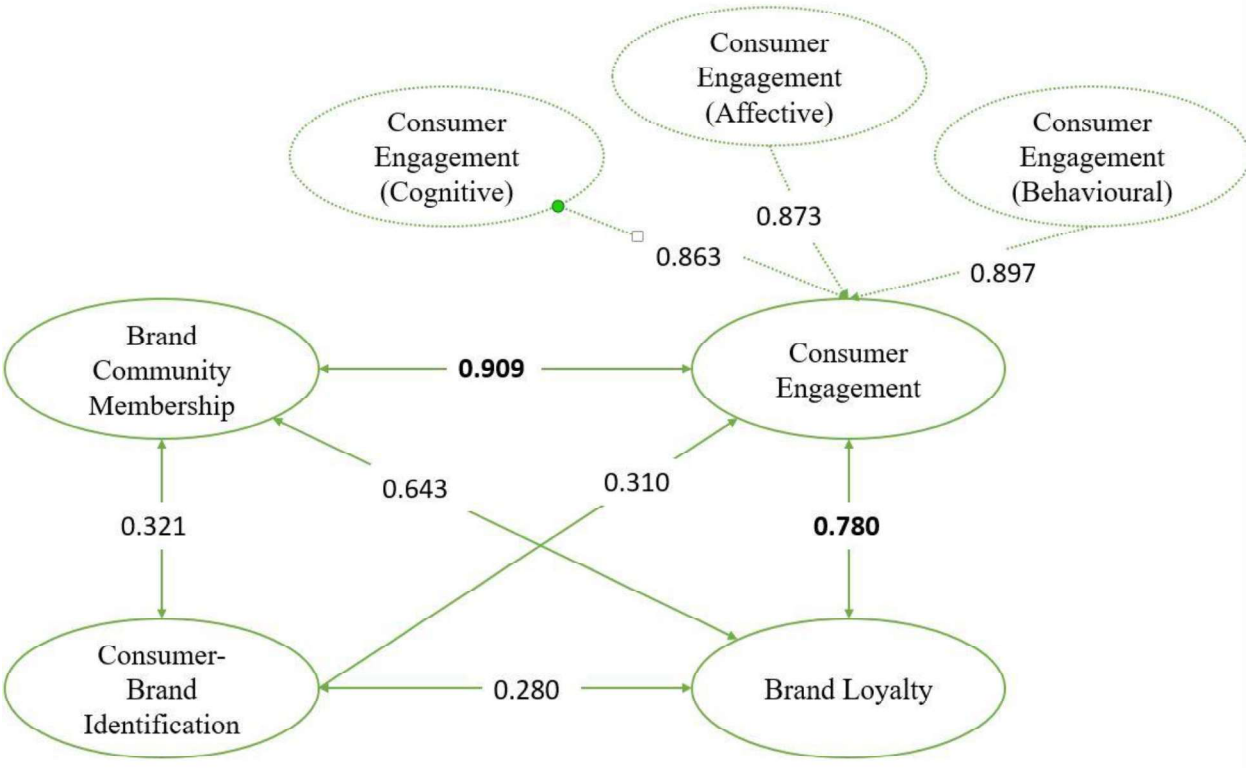


Figure 11 Summary of the Path Coefficients

Table 4

Summary of CFA Model Fit

Index	Level of Acceptance	Results
Chi-square	P > 0.05	P = <0.0001
Root Mean Square Error Approximation (RMSEA)	RMSEA < 0.06-0.08	0.074
Probability of RMSEA	<= .05	0.000
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	CFI > 0.9	0.868
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	TFI > 0.9	0.858
Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)	SRMR < 0.08	0.073
Chisq/df	Chisq/df < 5.0	2.327

The model fit indices of the CFA represented in Table 4 above indicate that the model fit is acceptable for a model of this complexity. RMSEA and SRMR are both less than 0.08, indicating an acceptable fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1992). Although Hu and Bentler (1999) recommend that model fit be considered good when CFI and TLI is 0.90, this would not apply to a model of this complexity. This is supported by Baumgartner and Steenkamp (1996) who developed an exploratory buying behaviour tendencies (EBBT) scale, and scored below the recommended level, but still confirmed convergent validity, due to the factor loadings being significant (above 0.6).

Convergent validity is verified when analysing the model path coefficients (see Appendix C) and these were all statistically significant. In addition to this, the correlation between the item and constructs exceeds 0.5 and the overall model fit is significant (Steenkamp & Van Trijp, 1991). Discriminant validity is achieved when two constructs are not perfectly correlated. The results from the correlation matrix in Appendix E indicated that there is discriminant validity. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis therefore confirmed the validity of the constructs.

3.9 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methodology that was used to gather the data and to test the hypotheses. A quantitative methodology was employed to test the validity of the hypotheses statistically. This data was collected using collective administration on an online platform. Descriptive statistics are used to describe the population. Reliability was also tested to ensure that the instruments measured what they were supposed to measure. A confirmatory is done to test the validity of the data. A structural equation model was done to test the overall model fit, and to assess the relationship between variables. In addition to the structural equation model, a liner regression was done to test the relationship between the constructs.

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Chapter 4. Presentation of the Results

This chapter serves as a presentation of the results of the research study, following the plan outlined in Chapter 3. The purpose of this study is to understand the relationship that consumer-brand identification and membership to a brand community (embedded in Facebook) has on consumer engagement and loyalty, in an emerging market context.

The chapter begins with an overview of the pilot study, followed by a presentation of the demographic composition of the sample. The results pertaining to reliability and validity are presented, along with the path model and the results from the regression analysis

4.1 Pilot Study

Pilot studies are a pivotal part of research, as they enable the researcher to test the reliability of new or existing scales, to determine the response rate, and to pre-empt any difficulty in responding to the research instrument. They are ultimately a method of determining the feasibility of a study (Johanson & Brooks, 2010).

A pilot study was conducted to test the feasibility of the study and iron out any challenges that could be mitigated before the wide scale data collection takes place. A total of fifty seven responses were collected. Of these, twenty seven could be used for analysis, as they qualified through the screening process. The reliability and validity of the responses was tested and the following conclusions were made:

- Although the response rate is high due to the screening questions, approximately 40% of the responses can be used for analysis.

- The Brand Social Benefits scale was removed from the questionnaire due to its relevance in the questionnaire being questioned. Only the Consumer Brand Identification developed by Torres et al. (2017) was deemed relevant.
- While the items measuring enjoyment in the consumer engagement scale scored low in the reliability test, the items are kept in the questionnaire.

4.2 Characteristics of the sample

The data collection process returned a total of one thousand one hundred and twenty two cases. To ensure that quality data was used eight hundred and eighty one responses were discarded, as they were incomplete, incoherent, or did not consist of qualifying participants. This left a final sample size of two hundred and forty one cases.

Age

Most survey respondents were between the ages of twenty five and twenty nine (32.8%), followed by ages thirty five to forty nine (28.6%), thirty to thirty four (20.7%), eighteen to twenty four (11.2%), fifty to fifty five (3.3%) and fifty five plus (2.9%). One respondent did not state their age, representing 0.4% of the total sample.

Gender

Most of the respondents were Male (51%), while 48.1% of respondent were Female and 0.8% of the respondents did not identify with any gender.

Employment status

Most respondents are employed in full-time jobs (75.5%), while 12% are employed on a part time basis and 6.6% are full time students. Unemployed individuals formed 5.5% of the total population and one respondent did not respond.

Total monthly household income

The majority of respondents' total household income was less than R20 000.00 (31.1%). 21.1% of the respondents earn between R20 001 - R30 000, while 20.7% earn R50 001 and over. Sixteen per cent (16%) of the respondents earn R30 001 - R40 000, while 9.5% of respondents earn between R40 001 – R50 000. One respondent did not answer the question, making up 0.4% of the total respondents.

Most respondents were employed full-time (75.5%) and earning less than R20 000 per month. Most of the participants are between the ages of twenty five and twenty nine with 64.7% of the respondents being under thirty five.

Most of the respondents were frequent users of Facebook, visiting the website more than once a day.

4.3 Results pertaining to the qualifying criteria

Table 5

How often do you use Facebook?

	Frequency	Percent
More than once a day	205	85.1
Once a day	33	13.7
Once a month	3	1.2
Total	241	100.0

Table 6

Are you a member of an online brand community?

	Frequency	Percent
BMW South Africa	138	57.3
BMW Car Club Gauteng	22	9.1
Audi South Africa	32	13.3
Mercedes Benz South Africa	49	20.3
Total	241	100.0

Table 7

Are you an owner of your chosen brand?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	110	45.6
No	131	54.4
Total	241	100

4.3 Results pertaining to the internal reliability and validity of the model

Data was coded (Appendix B) and the data was screened for missing data, which was removed. In addition, irregular responses were removed using identification techniques set out by (Meade & Craig, 2012). This allows data to be analysed.

4.3.1. Internal reliability

As an initial procedure in the analysis of the data, the composite reliability from the path loading was analysed. In Table 8, the internal reliability of all the items for each factor is shown.

Table 8

Path loadings of measurement scale items

		STDYX Standardisation			
	Parameter estimate	Standard error	Estimate/Std error	Two-Tailed P-Value	
CB	BY				
CBI1	0.909	0.018	50.606	0.000	
CBI2	0.933	0.013	70.137	0.000	
CBI3	0.916	0.015	61.976	0.000	
CBI4	0.918	0.012	73.77	0.000	
CBI5	0.888	0.021	42.272	0.000	
BCM	BY				
BCM1	0.806	0.031	26.404	0.000	
BCM2	0.784	0.035	22.677	0.000	
BCM3	0.82	0.029	28.395	0.000	
BCM4	0.815	0.033	24.721	0.000	
BCM5	0.82	0.033	24.892	0.000	
CEC	BY				
CE_C1	0.756	0.048	15.839	0.000	
CE_C2	0.785	0.041	19.329	0.000	

CE_C3		0.712	0.051	13.916	0.000
CE_C4		0.886	0.025	35.927	0.000
CE_C5		0.827	0.035	23.891	0.000
CE_C6		0.766	0.039	19.696	0.000
CEA	BY				
CE_A1		0.817	0.032	25.74	0.000
CE_A2		0.845	0.024	35.113	0.000
CE_A3		0.916	0.015	59.418	0.000
CE_A4		0.915	0.017	52.33	0.000
CE_A5		0.882	0.026	34.45	0.000
CEB	BY				
CE_B1		0.85	0.026	32.598	0.000
CE_B2		0.85	0.024	35.62	0.000
CE_B3		0.876	0.023	38.019	0.000
CE_B4		0.854	0.022	38.353	0.000
CE_B5		0.835	0.028	30.288	0.000
CE_B6		0.861	0.02	42.951	0.000
CE_B7		0.674	0.048	14.059	0.000
CE_B8		0.701	0.052	13.526	0.000
CE_B9		0.642	0.055	11.776	0.000
CE_B10		0.582	0.059	9.793	0.000
BL	BY				
BL_1		0.801	0.034	23.817	0.000

BL_2	0.774	0.042	18.468	0.000
BL_3	0.794	0.037	21.661	0.000
BL_4	0.809	0.044	18.34	0.000
BL_5	0.834	0.033	25.651	0.000
BL_6	0.814	0.034	24.093	0.000

The path loadings shown in Table 8 above corroborate that there is composite reliability in the scales. This indicates that the scales consistently measure what they are intended to measure.

4.3.2 Validity

In addition to measuring the reliability of the scales, measuring whether the data collected is valid, the validity of constructs is important for the development and testing of theory, making it a necessary factor in the scientific process (Steenkamp & Van Trijp, 1991). This is to ensure that the research instrument has actually measured what it was intended to measure (Winter, 2000).

4.4 Results pertaining to the Structural Equation Model

A structural equation model was run to test the model fit and test the latent relationships between the endogenous and the exogenous variables. The structural equation model measured the direct and the indirect effects on the dependent latent variable. The model fit information is represented in Table 9 below.

Table 9

Summary of Model Fit

Fit Index	Typical guidelines	Result

Scaling Correction Factor for MLR		1.3216
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	≤ 0.08	0.074
RMSEA: 90 Percent confidence interval		0.69-0.79
Probability of RMSEA ≤ .05	≤ .05	0.000
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	CFI > 0.95	0.867
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	TFI > 0.95	0.858
Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)	SRMR < 0.08	0.074

The results indicate that there is an acceptable model fit, which means the statistical model fits the set of observations.

Table 10

Standardised Results for Paths

		Estimate	S.E.	Est./S.E.	Two-Tailed P-Value
CE	BY				
CEA		0.88	0.025	35.14	0.000
CEB		0.904	0.025	36.58	0.000
CEC		0.86	0.031	27.659	0.000
CE	ON				
CB		0.018	0.048	0.38	0.704
BCM		0.892	0.041	21.785	0.000
BL	ON				

CE		0.761	0.043	17.682	0.000
BCM	WITH				
CB		0.32		4.824	0.000

The factor loadings here are good as they were all over 0.5, proving that it is not necessary to drop any items. The latent relationship between the Consumer Engagement and the Consumer Brand Identification is not supported.

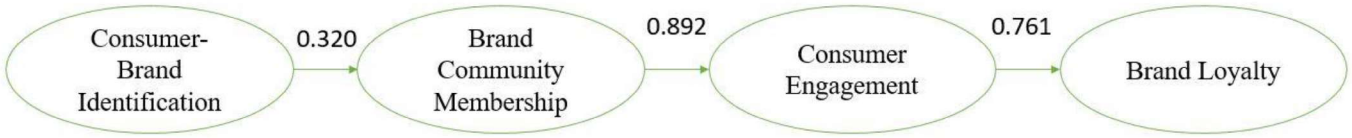

Figure 12 Summary of path diagram with latent relationship scores

Table 11

Variances for the Paths

	Estimate	S.E.	Est./S.E.	Two-Tailed P-Value
CBI1	0.174	0.033	5.345	0.000
CBI2	0.129	0.025	5.193	0.000
CBI3	0.162	0.027	5.973	0.000
CBI4	0.156	0.023	6.839	0.000
CBI5	0.211	0.037	5.666	0.000
BCM1	0.35	0.049	7.119	0.000

BCM2	0.385	0.054	7.102	0.000
BCM3	0.328	0.047	6.915	0.000
BCM4	0.336	0.054	6.261	0.000
BCM5	0.328	0.054	6.085	0.000
CE_C1	0.428	0.072	5.927	0.000
CE_C2	0.384	0.064	6.016	0.000
CE_C3	0.492	0.073	6.752	0.000
CE_C4	0.215	0.044	4.915	0.000
CE_C5	0.315	0.057	5.502	0.000
CE_C6	0.413	0.06	6.928	0.000
CE_A1	0.332	0.052	6.407	0.000
CE_A2	0.285	0.041	7.004	0.000
CE_A3	0.162	0.028	5.724	0.000
CE_A4	0.163	0.032	5.079	0.000
CE_A5	0.223	0.045	4.94	0.000
CE_B1	0.277	0.044	6.251	0.000
CE_B2	0.277	0.041	6.833	0.000
CE_B3	0.233	0.04	5.775	0.000
CE_B4	0.271	0.038	7.134	0.000
CE_B5	0.303	0.046	6.574	0.000
CE_B6	0.259	0.034	7.521	0.000
CE_B7	0.545	0.065	8.432	0.000
CE_B8	0.509	0.073	7.004	0.000

CE_B9	0.588	0.07	8.392	0.000
CE_B10	0.661	0.069	9.565	0.000
BL_1	0.358	0.054	6.632	0.000
BL_2	0.4	0.065	6.165	0.000
BL_3	0.37	0.058	6.363	0.000
BL_4	0.346	0.071	4.842	0.000
BL_5	0.304	0.054	5.615	0.000
BL_6	0.338	0.055	6.141	0.000
CEC	0.261	0.053	4.872	0.000
CEA	0.226	0.044	5.118	0.000
CEB	0.184	0.045	4.114	0.000
BL	0.421	0.065	6.434	0.000
CE	0.194	0.08	2.414	0.016

Table 12

Standardized Total Indirect Specific Indirect and Direct Effects

	Estimate	S.E.	Est./S.E.	Two-Tailed P-Value
Effects from CB to BL				
Total	0.014	0.036	0.381	0.703
Total indirect	0.014	0.036	0.381	0.703
Specific indirect				
BL				

CE				
CB	0.014	0.036	0.381	0.703
Effects from BCM to BL				
Total	0.679	0.044	15.372	0.00
Total indirect	0.679	0.044	15.372	0.00
Specific indirect				
BL				
CE				
BCM	0.679	0.044	15.372	0.00

Table 12 above shows the standardized total indirect specific indirect and direct effects of the relationship between the endogenous and exogenous variables. The latent relationship between Consumer Brand Identification and Brand Loyalty was not supported. This result indicates that there is an insignificant relationship between consumer brand identification and brand loyalty. The latent relationship between Brand Community Membership and Brand Loyalty is supported. This indicates that there is a significant mediation effect of brand community on brand loyalty.

Chapter 5. Discussion of the Results

5.1 Introduction

Models of consumer behaviour continue to give marketers and academics a framework from which to understand how consumers make decisions and the environmental factors that influence the process. Decades of consumer research have highlighted that while these models have provided perspective on consumers, they are not definitive as decisions made can be random. The proliferation of the internet has also made the process less structured driving the need to continue to understand how consumers make decisions and how new media has affected this process (Batra & Keller, 2016).

The purpose of this study was to understand how consumer engagement and brand loyalty are influenced by consumer-brand identification and the effect the membership of a brand community embedded in Facebook has on consumer engagement. Furthermore, the objectives of the research aimed to understand the relationship between consumer-brand identification and brand community membership, the relationship between brand community membership and consumer engagement and the relationship between consumer engagement and brand loyalty.

Research focused on the constructs of brand community, consumer-brand identification, consumer engagement and brand loyalty which have been studied in a western context. Lunn and Sheth (2011) highlighted this fact and stated that emerging markets would continue to be a disruptive force on marketing theory and practice. Viewing these practices through the lens of an emerging market was important, to confirm whether the proliferation of the internet has made emerging market consumers any different from those in the developed world. It was also important to assess if the cultural granularity which is inherent in emerging markets has an impact on the decision making processes of consumers (Kivenzor, 2015). Research has shown that due to this

cultural granularity and the heterogeneity within these markets, the use of brands in an emerging market context makes it important to understand and to develop marketing theory through this prism (Kivenzor, 2015).

Employing quantitative research techniques, data was collected using an online survey directed to a designated group of participants on the Facebook social networking platform. The participants were required to answer questions measuring the constructs of consumer brand identification, brand community membership, consumer engagement and brand loyalty, in relation to their chosen online brand community. They were also required to answer questions regarding their use of Facebook, and demographic questions to understand the structure of the sample. There were one thousand one hundred and twenty two responses collected with two hundred and forty one responses being acceptable for data analysis.

The following hypotheses were tested:

H_1: There is a positive relationship between consumer-brand identification and brand community membership of Facebook for a consumer.

H_2: There is a positive relationship between brand community membership on a social network and consumer engagement for a consumer.

H_3: There is a positive relationship between consumer engagement and brand loyalty.

Prior to the analysis it was important to establish that the data was reliable and valid, as these two criteria are important in maintaining the credibility of the study and ensuring that the correct measurements have been used (Bryman, 2015). The reliability of the measures was confirmed, and all the scales used consistently measured what they had

been set out to measure. Convergent validity is defined as the extent to which measurements are designed to measure a construct, and to correlate with one another (Cunningham, Preacher, & Banaji, 2001).

5.2 Results pertaining to H_1

Literature has shown that a strong identification with a brand is often necessary for the membership of a brand community, as an affinity to a brand is what brings consumers together (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001). H_1 aimed to establish whether there is a relationship between consumer brand identification and brand community membership. While the purpose of this study was to answer the question regarding this relationship, it produced more questions than answers. The results of the study do not support the hypothesis that there is a relationship between consumer-brand identification and brand community membership. This result differs from previous research that identified brand community membership or involvement as a consequence of consumer-brand identification, where strong social ties were seen as developing between consumers who share an affinity with the brand and who find that participation in a brand driven group is part of their social identity and an even bigger part in their identity project (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004; Stokburger-Sauer, 2010). There could be multiple reasons for the weak link. Observing the customer centric model of brand community developed by McAlexander et al. (2002), it is evident that the brand is not the only influencing factor behind joining a community. Other consumers and the products and activities initiated by the marketer all influence the brand community membership. Membership of the community could be predicated on other factors, including the pursuit of information, entertainment, social integration, social enhancement or self-discovery (Madupu & Cooley, 2010).

5.3 Results pertaining to H_2

Web 2.0 and social media in particular, have enabled marketers to measure the effectiveness of their online initiatives. Consumer engagement and how we measure it has become a key area of interest as a result of this (MSI, 2010). Within online brand communities engagement takes place in a triadic manner, between brand, consumer and other consumers within the community (Brodie et al., 2013). This study aimed to establish if there was a positive relationship between brand community membership on a social network, and consumer engagement in an emerging market context. The results proved that there is a significant positive relationship between brand community membership on a social network and consumer engagement.

Brand communities are collaborative environments where consumers are responsible for co-creating the value that is derived from participating with other consumers and the brand (Schau et al., 2009). Engagement transcends financial patronage and is a voluntary contribution to a company's marketing initiatives, using consumer networks, creativity and knowledge (Harmeling et al., 2017). This dynamic is an important foundation for the development of engagement, once a brand has been purchased. This result confirms the relationship conceptualised by Brodie et al. (2013), Dessart et al. (2015) and Wirtz et al. (2013) contribute to the body of knowledge, by highlighting that the process of engagement, that has been studied in a Western context, is applicable to an emerging market as well.

Social media has become one of the most influential ways for brands to communicate and interact with their customer base. This has made engagement an important metric in measuring the success of brand-driven communication (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). The online brand communities that were observed in this study enabled community members to learn from one

another by sharing information on vehicle repair and fitment, endorsing the brand, reselling of parts and sharing their love for the brand and the automobiles. Their attention and their absorption can be maintained by posting relevant information that keeps members regularly coming back to the social media site. Eighty five per cent (85%) of the survey participants use Facebook more than once a day, making this an important element of engagement in the online community. In addition to the other factors, enjoyment and enthusiasm are generated as a result of the activity taking place within the community. Membership in brand communities and the continued publishing of relevant content ensures that the level of engagement with the brand is maintained.

5.4 Results pertaining to H_3

As indicated in Table 1 there has been conceptual and empirical research that has observed the relationship between consumer engagement in a brand community and brand loyalty. A third objective of this research was to establish whether there is a relationship between consumer engagement in an online brand community and brand loyalty. Results observed in the study indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between consumer engagement in an online brand community and brand loyalty. This result corroborates both the conceptual and the empirical research in evaluating the outcomes of consumer engagement.

This result corroborates research by He et al. (2012) and Wirtz et al. (2013). The finding is significant, as brand loyalty is critical in maintaining long-term and profitable customers for a brand.

Brand loyalty is the degree of attachment that a consumer will have to a brand, and it is strategically important in increasing the lifetime value of a customer (Leckie et al., 2016). However, there are other contributing factors to loyalty that were not measured, and may have

contributed to a customer's loyalty to a brand, regardless of their engagement in an online brand community. Satisfaction is a well-known antecedent of brand loyalty and is closely related to the consumption of the brand. Risk reduction, variety seeking, social group and peer influence and brand trust are other contributing antecedents to brand loyalty (Gounaris & Stathakopoulos, 2004). These factors have little or no direct influence on community engagement, but do influence the consumer's decision to be loyal to a brand.

The results of the study show that there is no significant difference between developed markets and emerging markets, regarding the relationship between consumer engagement and brand loyalty. This is significant in understanding how the heterogeneity in emerging markets does not have a real impact on the relationship between the constructs.

5.5 Conclusion

The main problem of this study is aimed to understand the influence consumer-brand identification and membership of a brand community (embedded in Facebook) have on consumer engagement and brand loyalty, in an emerging market context. The purpose of doing this was to understand the effect that these processes have on consumer behaviour. Figure 10 illustrates how the observed constructs in this study influence consumer behaviour and the consumer decision making process. Our behaviour as consumers is influenced by a number of stimuli, lived experiences and past consumption experiences. The constructs observed in this study are not only a consequence of these processes, but contribute to them and are the result of a complex system of factors, that both externally and intrinsically influence consumption decisions.

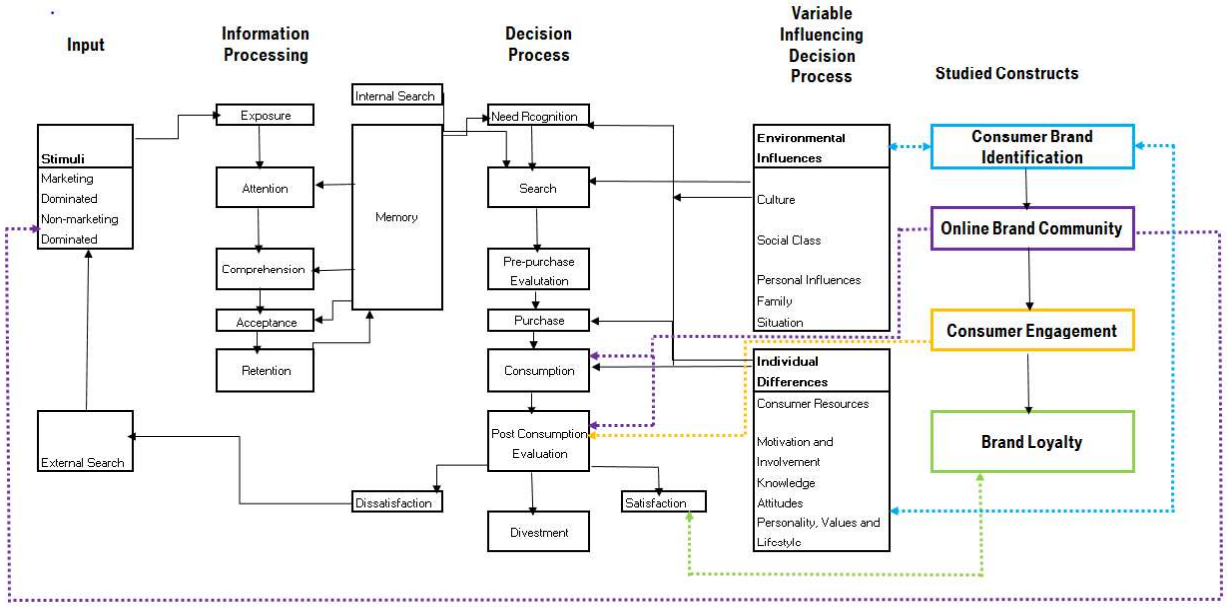

Figure 13 Observed constructs influence on consumer behaviour

Consumer-brand identification is known to be linked to the social identity of an individual and can be linked to the environmental influences shown in the EBM model. While the relationship between consumer-brand identification and brand community membership was weak, a consumer's identification with a brand will continue to influence their decision to purchase a product. There is a significant relationship between membership of brand communities, consumer engagement and brand loyalty. These outcomes influence consumer decision making directly; but also affect marketing communication and the consequences of consumption.

The brand communities observed in this study were all in the premium segment of the automotive industry. In an emerging market, premium products and services are a means of differentiation, and can be used for avoiding misidentification or simply signalling a change in social status (Kivenzor, 2015). This study provided some insights into how processes that influence consumer decision making relate to one another and to the overall EBM consumer

behaviour model; while also providing an emerging market perspective on the matter. Table 13 below serves as a summary of the hypotheses tested.

Table 13

Summary of the hypothesis tested

	Hypothesis	Result
H_1	There is a positive relationship between consumer-brand identification and brand community membership on Facebook for a consumer.	Not supported
H_2	There is a positive relationship between brand community membership on a social network and consumer engagement for a consumer.	Supported
H_3	There is a positive relationship between consumer engagement and brand loyalty.	Supported

Chapter 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Introduction

Underpinning the main purpose of this study was the need to understand the influences of a consumer's decision making process. The antecedents and consequences of the consumer decision making process have been studied in marketing literature for over fifty years, with the prominence of the internet as a platform for marketing activities being one of the greatest influences for both motivation and consequences (Batra & Keller, 2016).

These studies have often been done in the context of developed nations, however there is an understanding that exploring marketing topics in the context of emerging markets is important for the development of new marketing theory (Burgess & Steenkamp, 2006; Lunn & Sheth, 2011). This study aimed to give an emerging market perspective on nascent topics like brand communities and consumer engagement. The ultimate goal of this study was to comprehend the relationship between consumer-brand identification and membership of a brand community (embedded in Facebook) and the effect that these have on consumer engagement and loyalty, in an emerging market context. Previous research has highlighted the relationship between the observed topics, but there has been no conclusive evidence that these relationships are analogous in emerging markets, where the cultural granularity can produce noticeable differences between consumers, who would otherwise be considered the same.

This chapter is a summary of the key findings in the research, followed by a discussion of the managerial and theoretical implications of the research findings. The chapter also highlights the limitations of the research and provides suggestions for further research

6.2. Conclusions of the Study

It is evident through a number of indicators such as, gross domestic product, employment rates and internet penetration that the developed world differs greatly from emerging markets. Economic differences are usually the most evident, but research has found that cultural heterogeneity and consumption are other contributing factors to these differences. In developed nations the cultural differences in consumption have been studied to understand how people acculturate or differentiate themselves from their host cultures. In emerging markets, the consumption choices are driven by several factors, which include signalling social status.

The study of online brand communities aimed to understand their influence on consumer engagement and brand loyalty in an emerging market context, with the purpose of assessing the significance of these relationships. The study unpacked three research problems with the aim of truly gaining insight into these relationships, in an emerging market context.

Sub-problem 1: *To understand the relationship between consumer-brand identification and membership to a brand community, for both current consumers and those who aspire to consume the brand.*

Contrary to prior research showing that there is a relationship between consumer brand identification and brand community membership, the findings showed that the relationship between consumer-brand identification and brand community membership was insignificant. There are a number of other antecedents that have been known to influence a consumer's participation in a brand community.

Sub-problem 2: *To establish if there is a relationship between consumer engagement and brand community membership for current consumers and aspirant brand owners.*

Consumer engagement is strongly influenced by membership, with membership of a brand community creating an enabling platform for consumers, as shown by the results in this study. This confirms the findings made by a number of authors highlighting the significance of that relationship.

Sub-problem 3: *To understand the link between consumer engagement and brand loyalty for current and aspirant owners of the brand.*

The research found that there is a significant relationship between consumer engagement and loyalty to the brand. This finding corroborated a number of conceptual and empirical studies that have been done evaluating brand communities in a developed market context. This highlighted the fact that South African consumers in the premium automotive market respond in a manner that is similar to consumers in developed markets.

6.3. Theoretical Implications

The findings of this research contribute to literature that previously studied these relationships in a developed market context. Burgess and Steenkamp (2006) stated that there are many constructs that have been well grounded theoretically and can therefore be applied in the emerging market context. The constructs observed in this study indicate that the constructs of brand community, brand loyalty and consumer engagement can be observed in a similar manner in the emerging market context.

The results of this study provided further evidence backing studies conducted by Dessart et al. (2015), to indicate that online brand communities are an environment that facilitate consumer engagement. They also corroborate findings by Brodie et al. (2013) which confirmed that there is a positive relationship between consumer engagement and brand community membership. The

findings however opposed observations made by Lam et al. (2010), showing that membership to a brand community is an outcome of consumer-brand identification.

6.4. Managerial Implications and Recommendations

Online brand communities offer organisations an important platform from which they can communicate with customers in an authentic manner; not only giving them information, but also providing brands with an opportunity to listen. This ability to communicate with a customer at every step of a consumer's journey, enables brands to build loyalty which is not just situational but also longstanding. Online brand communities offer a platform for consumers to interact with the brand to either praise, to complain or to seek guidance from a firm and from users of its products and services. The findings in this research reinforces the importance of having an online platform that enables consumers to engage with the brand and with one another.

Facebook is one of the most effective tools to build a brand community, as the platform has a strong emphasis on encouraging and enabling communities to organise themselves. The social media platform has even enabled brands to create groups within their pages, allowing organisations to segment their community members. For example BMW can now create a group dedicated to the E30 BMW 325is which has a cult following in the country. Creating content that engages these communities and effectively moderating content posted by members, will enable the commonalities of a brand community to grow, by fostering consciousness of kind, the enforcement of moral responsibility to the community and to share traditions and rituals that are the backbone of a community.

While Facebook continues to be one of the most commonly used platforms, it is important to explore other digital platforms that have increasing influence such as Instagram and Snapchat.

While these platforms do not have groups that a consumer can join, they have become important tools within which consumers can interact. The use of hashtags and links to click through to other pages may allow these platforms to become enablers to the community on other platforms.

It is recommended that firms provide resources to the establishment and to the cultivation of brand communities both online and offline. Where a firm does not have the administrator rights in a brand community, it is recommended that they reach out to community administrators, to share insights regarding the brand and to share resources that could enhance the experience of engaging with the brand. In these cases, they should only provide the community with advice or resources, but should refrain from interfering in the community or attempting to compete or take over.

This could include previews of upcoming products and services, exclusive memorabilia or fast-tracked complaints resolution. Endorsing a brand community to solidify its status, and a credible community of passionate consumers could be another way of developing and maintaining loyalty to a brand.

6.5. Research Limitations

I. The emerging market is larger than the limited geographical area focused on in the study. Due to this the results cannot be generalised.

II. Due to the stringent qualifying criteria and the large number of incomplete responses a large percentage of the data was discarded.

III. The results of this study are limited to the automotive industry; more specifically the premium segment, as it was the focus of the study and cannot be applied to other industries.

IV. Scales were adapted from other studies, this is likely to have affected validity by not measuring what they were intended to measure.

6.6. Suggestions for Further Research

The study used a survey-based self-reporting method of data collection, which relied solely on the participant's recollection of their attitudes towards a brand and membership of a brand community. It would be beneficial to study these relationships using a netnographic approach, to observe consumer behaviour, with little risk of response bias. Antecedents of brand community membership should be investigated in emerging markets, to examine what other factors might contribute to the membership and participation in brand communities. Further research should explore the relationships between brand community membership, consumer engagement and brand loyalty in other emerging markets, to see if there are any significant differences between these markets and developed nations. It would also be beneficial to study the relationship between the constructs in a longitudinal study, to evaluate the long-term effect of engaging with a brand on brand loyalty.

The automotive industry was used as the focal product in this study and a vehicle is a product that has a longer buying cycle than other goods and services. It would be interesting to replicate the study, using a product that has a shorter buying cycle (for example mobile phones) and to also assess if there are any significant differences between durable goods and fast-moving consumer goods. While not observed in this paper, it would be interesting to evaluate whether being an active member or a lurker in an online brand community, has any significant impact on engagement and brand loyalty.

In addition to replicating the study in other markets to evaluate the significance of the model, it would be beneficial to examine the differences in consumer engagement in brand communities driven by the firm and those driven by consumers. Consumer-brand identification was posited to be an antecedent of membership to a brand community. However the findings of the study did not deem this a significant relationship. Evaluating the significance of consumer-brand identification in an emerging market and investigating what other factors contribute to brand community membership should be taken further.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Data Collection Instrument

Good Day

My name is Kananelo Sebati and I am a post-graduate student at the Wits Business School at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. I am currently a post graduate student at the Wits Business School enrolled in the Master of Management in Strategic Marketing. My research topic is titled "The influence of online brand communities on consumer engagement and brand loyalty: An emerging market perspective".

I am conducting research on to understand the influence the brand communities on social networks have on consumer behaviour. Insights from this research will provide brand operating in emerging markets with clarity on the benefits of brand communities for the overall marketing strategy. As members of an online brand community, you are invited to take part in this survey. The purpose of this survey is to find out the extent to which involvement in a brand community influences consumer engagement and brand loyalty.

Your response is important and there are no right or wrong answers. This survey is both confidential and anonymous. Anonymity and confidentiality are guaranteed by not needing to enter your name on the questionnaire. Your participation is completely voluntary and involves no risk, penalty, or loss of benefits whether or not you participate. You may withdraw from the survey at any stage.

The first part of the survey comprises 48 statements. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement, by ticking in the appropriate box. The second part of the survey captures some demographic data.

Please tick whichever boxes are applicable. The entire survey should take between 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

Thank you for considering participating. Should you have any questions, or should you wish to obtain a copy of the results of the survey, please contact me on 359163@students.wits.ac.za – Cell number: 0766817399.

My contact details: 359163@students.wits.ac.za – Cell number: 0766817399

My supervisor's name and email are: Professor Steve Burgess – Steve.Burgess@wits.ac.za

Kind regards

Kananelo Sebati

Masters Student: Wits Business School (Master of Management in Strategic Marketing)

Wits Business School

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Q1 Are you a user of Facebook

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q2 how often do you use Facebook

- More than once a day (1)
- Once a day (2)
- Once a month (3)
- Less than once a month (4)

Q3 Have you liked any one of the following Facebook Pages

- ○ BMW South Africa (1)
- ○ BMW Car Club Gauteng (2)
- ○ Audi South Africa (3)
- ○ Mercedes Benz South Africa (4)
- ○ None (5)

Skip To: End of Survey If Have you liked any one of the following Facebook Pages = None

Q4 Are you an owner of one of the above mentioned brands

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q5 Are you a resident of Gauteng

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q6 Please answer the questions below in relation to your chosen brand

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
My chosen brand is a part of me (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel a strong sense of belonging to the brand community (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I identify strongly with the brand (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The brand embodies what I believe in (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The brand is like a part of me (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The brand has a great deal of personal meaning to me (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The brand community offers me the opportunity to socialize (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel a sense of kinship with other people who use the brand community (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I gain a lot of interactions with other customers/users of the brands Facebook community (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Being a customer/future customer of the brand makes me feel like I belong to a special group (10)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The brand creates a warm feeling among its users (11)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q7 Please answer the questions below in relation to your chosen brand

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat agree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly disagree (7)
I am very attached to the brand community (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Other community members and I share the same objectives (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The friendships I have with other community members means a lot to me (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

If community members planned something, I would think of it as something "we" would do rather than something "they" would do (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I see myself as part of the brand community (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q9 Please answer the questions below in relation to your chosen brand

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat agree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly disagree (7)
I feel enthusiastic about the brand (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am interested in anything about the brand (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I find the brand interesting (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

When interacting with brand, I feel happy (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I get pleasure from interacting with brand (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I spend a lot of time thinking about the brand (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I make time to think about the brand (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

When interacting with the brand, I forget everything else around me (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Time flies when I am interacting with the brand (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When I am interacting with the brand, I get carried away (10)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

When interacting with the brand, it is difficult to detach myself (11)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I share my ideas with the brand and community members (12)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I share interesting content with brand and community members (13)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I help the brand community members (14)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I ask the brand and community members questions (15)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I seek ideas or information from the brand and community members (16)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I seek help from the brand and community members (17)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I promote my chosen brand (18)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I try to get others interested in my chosen brand (19)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I actively defend my chosen brand from its critics (20)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I say positive things about my chosen brand to other people (21)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q10 Please answer the questions below in relation to your chosen brand

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat agree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly disagree (7)
I consider myself to be loyal to my chosen brand (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

If the brand is not available at the store I would buy my chosen brand from some other dealership (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am willing to pay more for my chosen brand (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I will buy this brand the next time I buy a vehicle (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I intend to keep purchasing this brand (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would be willing to pay a higher price for this brand over other brands (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q11 Please indicate you age

- ○ 18-24 (1)
- ○ 25-29 (2)
- ○ 30-34 (3)
- ○ 35-49 (4)
- ○ 50-55 (5)
- ○ 55+ (6)

Q12 Please indicate your gender

- ○ Female (1)
- ○ Male (2)
- ○ I chose not to answer (3)

Q13 Please indicate total monthly household income

- Less than R20000 (1)
- R20001 - R30000 (2)
- R30001 - R40000 (3)
- R40001 - 50000 (4)
- R50001 and over (5)

Q14 Please indicate you employment status

- Employed full-time (1)
- Employed part-time (2)
- Student (3)
- Unemployed (4)

Appendix B: Data Code book

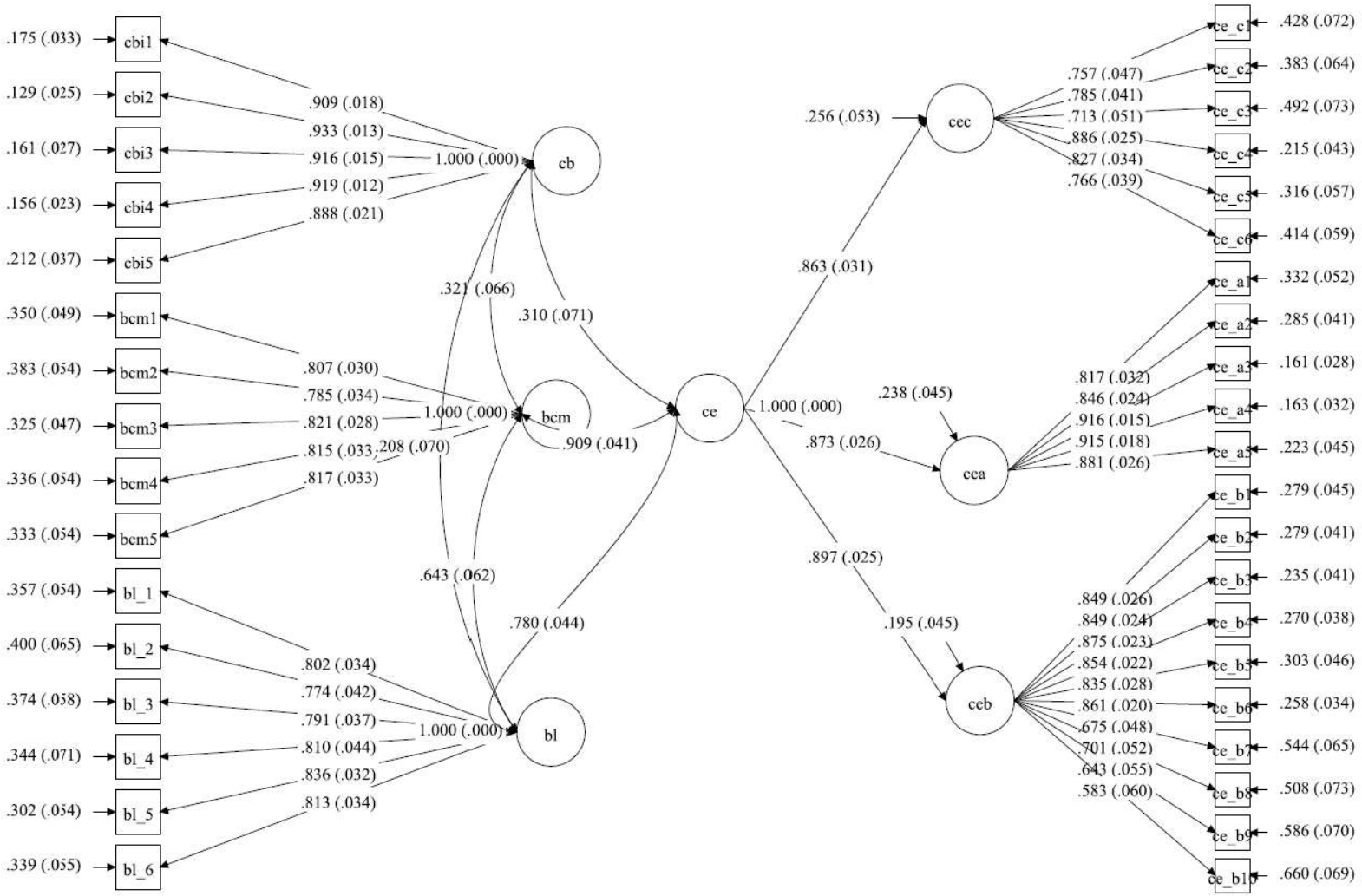
Code	Originality	Source	Dimension
CBI1	I feel a strong sense of belonging to brand _.	(Torres et al., 2017)	Consumer Brand Identification
CBI2	I identify strongly with brand _.	(Torres et al., 2017)	Consumer Brand Identification
CBI3	Brand _ embodies what I believe in.	(Torres et al., 2017)	Consumer Brand Identification
CBI4	Brand _ is like a part of me.	(Torres et al., 2017)	Consumer Brand Identification
CBI5	Brand_ has a great deal of personal meaning to me.	(Torres et al., 2017)	Consumer Brand Identification

Code	Originality	Source	Dimension
BCM1	I am very attached to the community.	(Algesheimer et al., 2005)	Community Identification
BCM2	Other brand community members and I share the same objectives.	(Algesheimer et al., 2005)	Community Identification
BCM3	The friendships I have with others brand community members mean a lot to me.	(Algesheimer et al., 2005)	Community Identification
BCM4	If brand community members planned something I'd think go it as something "we" would do rather than something "they" would do	(Algesheimer et al., 2005)	Community Identification

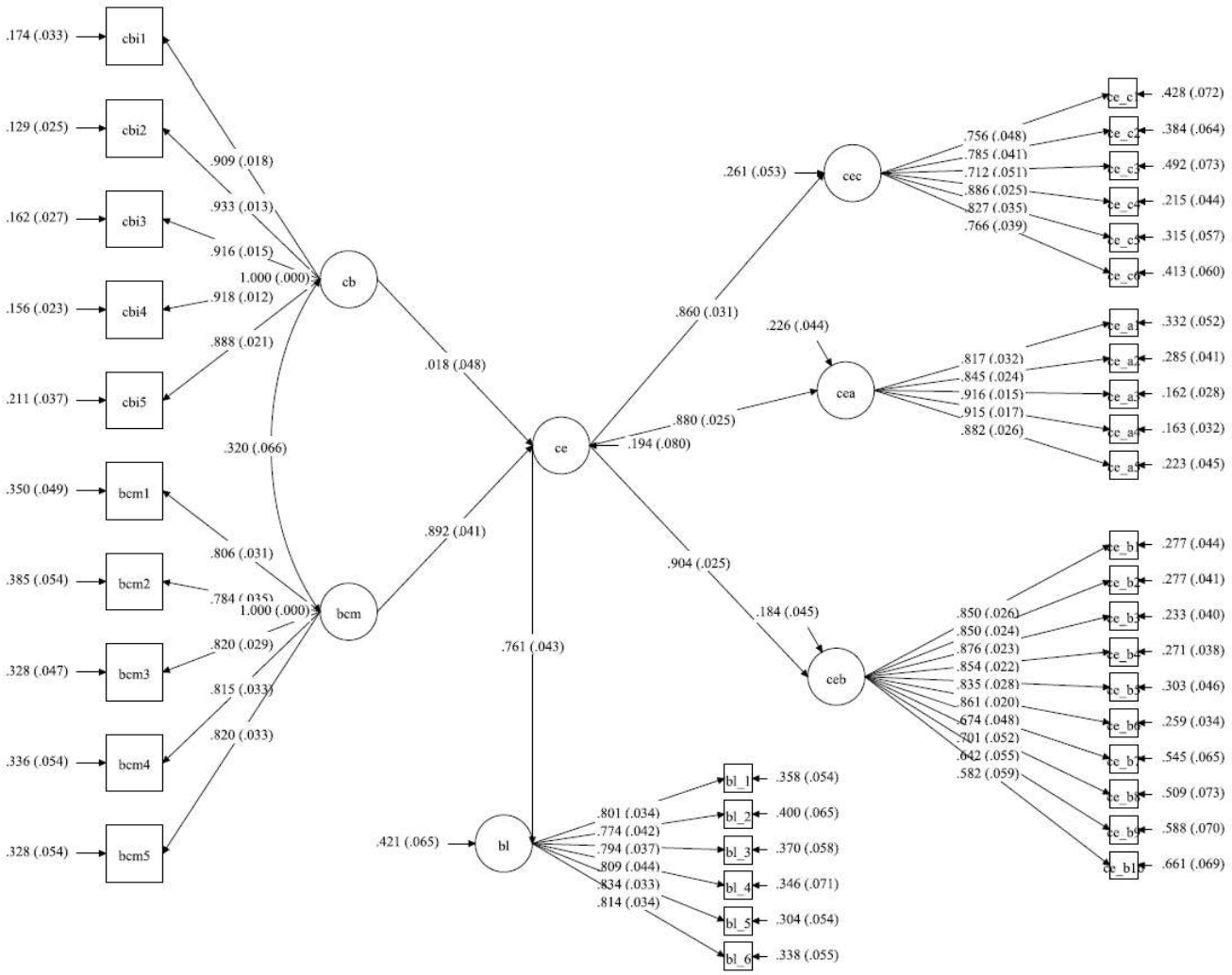
Code	Originality	Source	Dimension
CE_A1	I feel enthusiastic about (engagement focus – hereafter EF)	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Enthusiasm
CE_A2	I am interested in anything about (EF)	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Enthusiasm
CE_A3	I find (EF) interesting	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Enthusiasm
CE_A4	When interacting with (EF), I feel happy	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Enjoyment
CE_A5	I get pleasure from interacting with (EF)	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Enjoyment
CE_C1	spend a lot of time thinking about (EF)	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Attention
CE_C2	I make time to think about (EF)	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Attention
CE_C3	When interacting with (EF), I forget everything else around me	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Absorption
CE_C4	Time flies when I am interacting with (EF)	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Absorption
CE_C5	When I am interacting with (EF), I get carried away	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Absorption
CE_C6	When interacting with (EF), it is difficult to detach myself	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Absorption
CE_B1	I share my ideas with (EF)	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Sharing
CE_B2	I share interesting content with (EF)	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Sharing
CE_B3	I help (EF)	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Sharing
CE_B4	I ask (EF) questions	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Learning
CE_B5	I seek ideas or information from (EF)	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Learning
CE_B6	I seek help from (EF)	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Learning
CE_B7	I promote (EF)	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Endorsing
CE_B8	I try to get other interested in (EF)	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Endorsing
CE_B9	I actively defend (EF) from its critics	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Endorsing
CE_B10	I say positive things about (EF) to other people	(Dessart et al., 2015)	Endorsing

Code	Originality	Source	Dimension
BL1	I consider myself to be loyal to brand	(Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001)	Brand Loyalty
BL2	If the brand is not available at the store I would buy a brand from some other dealership	(Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001)	Brand Loyalty
BL3	I am willing to pay more for my brand	(Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001)	Brand Loyalty
BL4	I will buy this brand the next time I buy a vehicle	(Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001)	Brand Loyalty
BL5	I intend to keep purchasing this brand	(Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001)	Brand Loyalty
BL6	I would be willing to pay a higher price for this brand over other brands	(Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001)	Brand Loyalty

Appendix C: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Path Diagram



Appendix D: Structural Equation Model Path Diagram



Appendix E Correlation Matrix

	CBI1	CBI2	CBI3	CBI4	CBI5
CBI1	1				
CBI2	0.854	1			
CBI3	0.831	0.854	1		
CBI4	0.824	0.839	0.867	1	
CBI5	0.815	0.85	0.775	0.822	1
BCM1	0.283	0.278	0.338	0.294	0.261
BCM2	0.159	0.178	0.241	0.188	0.14
BCM3	0.242	0.225	0.333	0.323	0.195
BCM4	0.221	0.19	0.252	0.276	0.197
BCM5	0.193	0.192	0.247	0.258	0.168
CE_C1	0.202	0.153	0.225	0.193	0.177
CE_C2	0.203	0.199	0.26	0.278	0.167
CE_C3	0.276	0.277	0.279	0.275	0.219
CE_C4	0.216	0.221	0.271	0.282	0.19
CE_C5	0.128	0.156	0.215	0.186	0.16
CE_C6	0.214	0.201	0.266	0.273	0.201
CE_A1	0.206	0.197	0.299	0.272	0.168
CE_A2	0.213	0.238	0.289	0.246	0.197
CE_A3	0.199	0.216	0.292	0.241	0.167
CE_A4	0.205	0.231	0.307	0.275	0.177
CE_A5	0.163	0.175	0.265	0.252	0.128

CE_B1	0.154	0.157	0.259	0.234	0.132
CE_B2	0.182	0.163	0.254	0.216	0.143
CE_B3	0.186	0.191	0.279	0.235	0.198
CE_B4	0.185	0.138	0.232	0.183	0.13
CE_B5	0.177	0.182	0.28	0.242	0.144
CE_B6	0.13	0.147	0.238	0.191	0.125
CE_B7	0.167	0.167	0.217	0.211	0.175
CE_B8	0.175	0.173	0.251	0.248	0.151
CE_B9	0.093	0.144	0.144	0.128	0.123
CE_B10	0.142	0.184	0.158	0.123	0.15
BL_1	0.204	0.22	0.234	0.194	0.18
BL_2	0.153	0.15	0.174	0.142	0.15
BL_3	0.119	0.14	0.192	0.141	0.137
BL_4	0.161	0.132	0.151	0.12	0.148
BL_5	0.147	0.157	0.141	0.138	0.145
BL_6	0.14	0.09	0.164	0.146	0.119

	BCM1	BCM2	BCM3	BCM4	BCM5
BCM1	1				
BCM2	0.684	1			

BCM3	0.654	0.68	1		
BCM4	0.605	0.615	0.694	1	
BCM5	0.649	0.57	0.671	0.717	1
CE_C1	0.486	0.397	0.31	0.341	0.463
CE_C2	0.465	0.487	0.415	0.406	0.495
CE_C3	0.391	0.387	0.261	0.307	0.429
CE_C4	0.591	0.559	0.503	0.54	0.65
CE_C5	0.571	0.558	0.514	0.54	0.605
CE_C6	0.566	0.528	0.548	0.567	0.543
CE_A1	0.581	0.54	0.574	0.572	0.54
CE_A2	0.544	0.541	0.552	0.516	0.474
CE_A3	0.643	0.621	0.59	0.603	0.552
CE_A4	0.616	0.569	0.579	0.602	0.577
CE_A5	0.591	0.566	0.586	0.597	0.548
CE_B1	0.561	0.556	0.606	0.584	0.619
CE_B2	0.605	0.569	0.583	0.62	0.597
CE_B3	0.576	0.551	0.586	0.629	0.58
CE_B4	0.499	0.531	0.513	0.572	0.574
CE_B5	0.445	0.493	0.51	0.516	0.553
CE_B6	0.562	0.564	0.555	0.577	0.598
CE_B7	0.483	0.516	0.44	0.468	0.473
CE_B8	0.495	0.47	0.466	0.46	0.493
CE_B9	0.457	0.48	0.37	0.413	0.525

CE_B10	0.321	0.354	0.261	0.333	0.418
BL_1	0.468	0.47	0.426	0.448	0.547
BL_2	0.429	0.358	0.344	0.379	0.481
BL_3	0.432	0.459	0.417	0.515	0.528
BL_4	0.377	0.324	0.295	0.319	0.428
BL_5	0.431	0.391	0.344	0.377	0.484
BL_6	0.422	0.449	0.389	0.453	0.452

	CE_C1	CE_C2	CE_C3	CE_C4	CE_C5	CE_C6
CE_C1	1					
CE_C2	0.697	1				
CE_C3	0.672	0.685	1			
CE_C4	0.664	0.66	0.673	1		
CE_C5	0.563	0.609	0.518	0.771	1	
CE_C6	0.555	0.594	0.426	0.642	0.656	1
CE_A1	0.375	0.471	0.301	0.557	0.573	0.778
CE_A2	0.313	0.412	0.259	0.471	0.497	0.672

CE_A3	0.398	0.491	0.379	0.601	0.641	0.68
CE_A4	0.42	0.475	0.355	0.592	0.649	0.731
CE_A5	0.428	0.512	0.34	0.561	0.574	0.731
CE_B1	0.456	0.477	0.354	0.595	0.653	0.557
CE_B2	0.452	0.469	0.385	0.577	0.594	0.603
CE_B3	0.431	0.449	0.314	0.542	0.544	0.579
CE_B4	0.437	0.431	0.354	0.493	0.477	0.483
CE_B5	0.396	0.423	0.4	0.513	0.463	0.488
CE_B6	0.447	0.444	0.366	0.528	0.529	0.507
CE_B7	0.479	0.49	0.402	0.555	0.465	0.561
CE_B8	0.444	0.522	0.43	0.594	0.525	0.582
CE_B9	0.458	0.478	0.474	0.579	0.502	0.511
CE_B10	0.486	0.464	0.502	0.563	0.479	0.411
BL_1	0.575	0.499	0.521	0.62	0.532	0.553
BL_2	0.426	0.446	0.45	0.517	0.503	0.411
BL_3	0.416	0.437	0.327	0.521	0.504	0.509
BL_4	0.451	0.403	0.394	0.433	0.459	0.443
BL_5	0.505	0.521	0.464	0.526	0.471	0.535
BL_6	0.467	0.517	0.397	0.47	0.444	0.528

	CE_A1	CE_A2	CE_A3	CE_A4	CE_A5
CE_A1	1				

CE_A2	0.77	1			
CE_A3	0.728	0.786	1		
CE_A4	0.697	0.756	0.859	1	
CE_A5	0.738	0.732	0.78	0.827	1
CE_B1	0.578	0.574	0.641	0.668	0.692
CE_B2	0.646	0.599	0.686	0.649	0.663
CE_B3	0.613	0.616	0.653	0.63	0.668
CE_B4	0.507	0.493	0.542	0.538	0.544
CE_B5	0.483	0.518	0.565	0.581	0.552
CE_B6	0.542	0.527	0.581	0.574	0.603
CE_B7	0.528	0.519	0.563	0.566	0.544
CE_B8	0.581	0.551	0.608	0.592	0.573
CE_B9	0.505	0.484	0.574	0.526	0.472
CE_B10	0.35	0.34	0.433	0.401	0.339
BL_1	0.481	0.446	0.519	0.517	0.463
BL_2	0.403	0.378	0.411	0.414	0.393
BL_3	0.474	0.429	0.494	0.501	0.507
BL_4	0.429	0.325	0.437	0.43	0.367
BL_5	0.472	0.369	0.471	0.448	0.48
BL_6	0.473	0.456	0.486	0.452	0.524

		CE_B1	CE_B2	CE_B3	CE_B4	CE_B5	CE_B6	CE_B7	CE_B8	CE_B9	CE_B10
CE_B1		1									

CE_B2		0.816	1							
CE_B3		0.795	0.81	1						
CE_B4		0.719	0.691	0.774	1					
CE_B5		0.683	0.67	0.731	0.829	1				
CE_B6		0.737	0.71	0.757	0.778	0.771	1			
CE_B7		0.477	0.524	0.534	0.507	0.514	0.557	1		
CE_B8		0.492	0.51	0.536	0.56	0.579	0.551	0.762	1	
CE_B9		0.423	0.457	0.456	0.501	0.503	0.552	0.619	0.738	1
CE_B10		0.406	0.412	0.413	0.494	0.468	0.461	0.583	0.624	0.71
BL_1		0.468	0.522	0.435	0.45	0.464	0.478	0.634	0.614	0.677
BL_2		0.455	0.434	0.388	0.397	0.4	0.465	0.494	0.509	0.568
BL_3		0.471	0.448	0.441	0.431	0.411	0.449	0.516	0.558	0.558
BL_4		0.393	0.403	0.316	0.377	0.351	0.424	0.45	0.468	0.536
BL_5		0.465	0.507	0.436	0.399	0.401	0.507	0.545	0.518	0.574
BL_6		0.438	0.462	0.408	0.426	0.406	0.438	0.552	0.564	0.543

	BL_1	BL_2	BL_3	BL_4	BL_5	BL_6
BL_1	1					
BL_2	0.696	1				

BL_3	0.63	0.569	1			
BL_4	0.607	0.666	0.61	1		
BL_5	0.652	0.626	0.608	0.771		
BL_6	0.61	0.59	0.76	0.634		
BL_5					1	
BL_6					0.673	1