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Consumer Engagement in Social Media Based Brand Communities: A Study of Facebook and Fast-food in Egypt

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A Thesis Submitted to the University of Huddersfield
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The Business School,
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Copyright statement

Abstract

This research project was conducted in response to several calls by marketing scholars and practitioners for a better understanding of the concept of consumer engagement in general and social media based brand communities in particular. The term 'consumer engagement' has grown in importance in recent years to describe consumers' interactive experiences with brands. The popularity of that term was boosted by the rapid penetration of social networking sites which facilitated engagement of consumers through online brand communities embedded in it.

This thesis investigates consumer engagement in Facebook brand pages. These pages are considered a form of online brand communities that are created by many companies for marketing purposes. Fast food brand pages in Egypt were used as a context for conducting this research study, where they are extensively used for targeting young consumers.

With the purpose of identifying the factors that enhance consumer engagement in these online communities, this study examined consumers' relationships with brands that initiated these communities as well as consumers' perceptions inside these communities. Also, it studied the role of these brand pages in fostering consumers' brand love as well as brand equity dimensions and outcomes. Brand love is an important marketing concept that has been appearing in academic publications recently to describe consumers' emotional connections with brands. It is becoming widely accepted that consumers' emotions towards brands, are a key determinant for their consumption behaviour.

A mixed method research design incorporating focus groups and online surveys was used to collect data in the current study. The data collection was conducted by drawing a sample from young consumers whose ages are between 18 and 29, and who are active members of official fast food brand pages on Facebook in Egypt. The first phase of this study adopted a series of qualitative focus group discussions with the aim of exploring the nature and dimensionality of consumer engagement from the perspective of young Egyptian consumers. Also, it was useful in exploring the benefits these consumers seek by their engagement in online communities. The second phase was conducted through an online survey that was posted on Facebook brand pages of the fast food chains in Egypt. The aim of the quantitative phase was to test a conceptual framework for the antecedents and outcomes of consumer engagement in social media based brand communities. This framework was developed from an extensive literature review as well as the qualitative discussions.

The findings indicated that consumer engagement is a multidimensional concept that consists of emotional, cognitive and behavioural dimensions, as well as several sub-dimensions. Also, three factors related to consumers' relationships with brands (brand identification, satisfaction and trust) and four factors related to consumers' perceptions inside the brand communities (critical mass; functional, hedonic and monetary benefits) were identified as antecedents of consumer engagement. Moreover, the study proved the positive effect of consumer engagement on the development of brand love. Furthermore, it indicated a positive influence of brand love on brand equity dimensions and outcomes.

The current study contributes theoretically by enhancing our understanding of the concept of consumer engagement, particularly in the context of social media based brand communities in Egypt. More importantly, the inclusion of brand love is expected to contribute to the body of consumer-brand relationships literature. Also, this thesis contributes by providing a measurement scale for consumer engagement in the context of social media. On the other hand, the study provides some practical implications, where it provides some useful guidelines for companies to follow when advertising to young consumers on Facebook brand pages.

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Dedication

To the soul of my mother, whom I miss very much, I wish I could

have been able to make you proud.

Conference Papers during the PhD

- Presented a paper entitled "*Content Strategies for Facebook Marketing. A Case Study of a Leading Fast Food Brand Page*" at the Academy of Marketing Science (AMS) annual conference. California, USA, May 2017.
- Presented a paper entitled "*Consumer Engagement in Online Brand Communities and Development of Brand Love: Evidence from Fan pages in Facebook*" at the Academy of Marketing annual conference and doctoral colloquium. Northumbria University, Newcastle, UK, June 2016.
- Presented a paper entitled "*Engage or Die: How to engage your customers on Facebook?-Insights from Egyptian's fast food industry*" at the Huddersfield Business School's show case research conference. University of Huddersfield, UK, January 2016.
- Presented a paper entitled "*Exploring the outcomes of young consumers' participation in fast-food brand communities on Facebook*" at the British Academy of Management annual conference and doctoral colloquium. University of Portsmouth, UK, September 2015.
- Presented a paper entitled "*Fast-food marketing strategies on Facebook brand communities. Are they achieving the expected outcomes?*" at the International Academic Conference in Paris (IACP), organised by the Academy of Business and Retail Management. Paris, France, August 2015.
- Presented a paper entitled "*Measuring the Factors that affect young consumers' attitudes towards SMS Advertising and their purchase intentions: The Case of Egypt*" at the Finance, MIS, Economics & Global Business Research Conference and in its special issue journal. Istanbul, Turkey, August 2014.
- Presented a paper entitled "*Investigating consumers' motives to join brand communities on social media*" in the Restructuring of the Global Economy International conference organised by the Academy of Business and Retail Management and the University of Cambridge. Cambridge, UK, June 2014. (Best paper presentation award).

Journal Papers during the PhD

- Gaber, H. R., & Wright, L. T. (2014). *Fast-food advertising in social media. A case study on Facebook in Egypt*. Journal of Business and Retail Management Research, 9(1), 52-63.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Thesis

1.1 Introduction

This research project investigates the extent to which the engagement of young Egyptian consumers on social media based brand communities enhances their relationships with brands. In doing so, it explores the dimensionality of their engagement in these online communities, as well as the impact of this engagement on the development of brand love and brand equity dimensions and outcomes. Through identifying the factors that enhance their engagement in these communities, this thesis provides some guidelines for companies to follow when adopting social media for marketing purposes. Traditionally, prior research has focused on antecedents and outcomes of consumer participation in offline brand communities. However, since the internet has affected how consumers interact and behave and how businesses perform their work (Pereira, de Fátima Salgueiro, & Mateus, 2014), this research expands the focus to the online and social media domains, which have largely replaced traditional marketing methods(Tuten & Solomon,2015).

With the rapid adoption of social media based brand communities that are initiated and operated by many companies for marketing purposes, questions have been raised by marketing scholars and practitioners about the antecedents and outcomes of consumers' interactions within these online communities (Islam & Rahman, 2017; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). Thus, this study aims to contribute towards the growing literature of social media marketing and its influence on consumer behaviour by addressing this gap.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research background, and the researcher's motivations for conducting this study. Also, it outlines the research objectives and a preface to the research methodology. Furthermore, it explains the research contributions and the structure of the thesis. The chapter is organised into eleven main sections. Section 1.2 provides an overview of social media and its adoption for marketing purposes, as well as the rise of online brand communities, specifically brand pages on Facebook. Then, section

1.3 presents the research purpose. Next, section 1.4 provides an explanation for the rationale of conducting the study. After that, section 1.5 outlines the research context, where it provides an overview of Egypt and the fast food industry in it, which is the main focus of this study. Following this, section 1.6 clarifies the importance of studying consumer engagement from both academic and practitioners' perspectives, while sections 1.7 and 1.8 respectively present the research questions and objectives. On the other hand, sections 1.9 and 1.10 respectively provide a preface for the research methodology and a quick overview of its contributions to both academic and practical fields. Finally, section 1.11 outlines the organisation of the study.

1.2 Research Background

In the past few years, there has been a continuous growth in social media penetration worldwide. Social networking sites are largely changing the traditional ways people communicate and socialise (Carvill & Taylor, 2013; Dahl, 2015; Ngai, Tao, & Moon, 2015). These social networks are considered "*online communities that allow people to socialise and interact with each other*" (Dennis, Morgan, Wright, & Jayawardhena, 2010, p. 153). Figures show that the continuous increase in social media usage shows no signs of stopping, where social networks like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Tumbler & Instagram have attracted hundreds of millions of users (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). See Table 1.1 for global social media statistics summary in 2016 and Table 1.2 for annual growth of social media network users worldwide in the recent six years.

Table 1. 1: The number of monthly active users of social networking websites

Social Network	Number of Monthly Active Users
Facebook	1.79 billion
YouTube	1 billion
G +	540 million
Instagram	500 million
Twitter	320 million
LinkedIn	255 million

Source: Official websites of these companies. Access Date: December (2016)

Table 1. 2: Growth in the number of users of social networking sites in the recent six years

Social Network	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Percentage increase between 2011-2016
NUMBER OF ACTIVE USERS IN MILLIONS							
Facebook	845	1056	1228	1393	1591	1790	111%
Instagram	10	30	150	300	400	500	4900%
Twitter	117	185	241	288	305	320	173%
All social networks	1220	1400	1590	1870	2040	2340	91%

Source: Adopted from Statista (2016)

The development of these new media and their popularity has facilitated not only the connection and interaction between people, but also people and organisations (Ellison, 2007; Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt, & Füller, 2013). The interactive nature of social media allowed consumers to bring their own consumption experiences into their profiles on various social networks (Harris & Dennis, 2011). Due to this socio-cultural and technological developments, more marketers are shifting their marketing and advertising budgets from traditional advertising media to these new media. For example, in a survey conducted by Nielsen (2013) to examine social media marketing usage, three quarters of advertisers surveyed indicated that they were adopting this channel for marketing purposes, and 64% of them mentioned they were going to increase their paid social media advertising budgets in the coming years. Similarly, according to the 2016 social media marketing industry report by the Social Media Examiner, most marketers who were surveyed considered social media to be a key aspect in their business and marketing efforts (Social Media Examiner, 2016). This is a response to the increasing number of consumers who are being 'detached' from traditional media (Evans, 2012).

The interest of marketers for adoption of social media marketing was derived by the high avoidance levels of consumers for advertisements (Speck & Elliott, 1997). Today, consumers are surrounded by advertisements in different media; accordingly, it is becoming more challenging for these advertisements to catch their attention (Kelly, Kerr, &

Drennan, 2010). Furthermore, since the costs of advertisements in traditional mass media, e.g. (TV, radio, print) are considered relatively high, marketers are looking for more effective ways to reach their target market through different media including social media platforms (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). With its interactive and viral nature, social media was able to change the traditional one-way marketing communication into two-way communication between companies and consumers (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016), as it encourages active participation and engagement and helps in brand community building (Hutter et al., 2013). This has led to a creation of new communication paradigm that amplified the power of marketing related conversations between consumers and organisations regardless of any time or location boundaries (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). These conversations provide big opportunities for companies to create favourable images of their brands (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). In summary, social media is becoming popular as a marketing platform to the extent that Tuten and Solomon (2015) considered it a fifth P together with the traditional 4P's of the marketing mix.

Specifically, Facebook is gaining the attention of marketers since it is the most popular social networking site worldwide with 1.79 billion monthly active users (Facebook, 2016). Brand pages (also known as fan pages) on Facebook are considered the most popular form of social media marketing (Luarn, Lin, & Chiu, 2015) where more than 50 million organisations have pages on this social network (Forbes, 2015). These pages are online communities that gather the fans of a certain brand in one platform, in which consumers are able to interact with each other and with the company (Khobzi & Teimourpour, 2015; Zaglia, 2013). When consumers click on the 'like' button of the brand page, they are able to follow the brand and become a part of its Facebook community. After joining this online community, consumers can view content that are posted by the managers of the page and interact with other consumers as well as the brand (De Vries & Carlson, 2014).

As a result of the rapid adoption of these online brand communities for marketing purposes, there has been a growing interest of marketers to increase consumer engagement in these new platforms (Hammedi, Kandampully, Zhang, & Bouquiaux, 2015). Specifically, there is an ongoing interest of both academics and marketers to understand the drivers and outcomes of this engagement (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Munnukka, Karjaluoto, & Tikkanen, 2015). So far, however, there has been little discussion about consumer engagement in these communities since previous studies of social media marketing in the literature did not deal with it in much detail (Dessart et al., 2015).

Despite the motivators and outcomes of consumer participation in offline brand communities being widely studied in literature ,e.g., (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005; Bowden, 2009; McAlexander, Kim, & Roberts, 2003; Ouwersloot & Odekerken-Schröder, 2008), it is expected that the motivators and outcomes of consumer engagement in the online communities should be different due to the interactive distinctive features of social media (Dessart et al., 2015; Habibi, Laroche, & Richard, 2016). Also, there is little known about how the interactions in these social media environments contribute to brand building efforts (De Vries & Carlson, 2014). It is clear from the previous discussion that there is an urgent need for more understanding of the effects of social media based brand communities on how consumers evaluate brands and companies.

1.3 Research Purpose

Despite the dramatic development of social media networks and the wide interest of companies in using it for marketing purposes, academic publications have not caught up with this rapid industry usage (Barger et al., 2016). Hence, the effects of social media marketing practices on consumers' perceptions of brands are not yet adequately understood (Hadija, Barnes, & Hair, 2012; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015; Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). Therefore, the purpose of this research study is to explore the concept of consumer engagement in the context of social media based brand communities. Also, it

aims to examine the antecedents and outcomes of this engagement. By examining consumer engagement on Egyptian fast food brand pages on Facebook, this thesis provides some recommendations for improved and better decision-making related to the usage of social media marketing tools by companies in general and fast food chains in particular.

1.4 Research Motivations and Rationale for Conducting the Study

The researcher began his research journey aiming to study consumers' attitudes towards social media marketing in general. However, conducting an extensive literature review and looking at the industry reports has led the researcher to focus on Facebook brand pages. These pages are being widely used for marketing purposes (Islam & Rahman, 2016; Ruiz-Mafe, Martí-Parreño, & Sanz-Blas, 2014; Sabate, Berbegal-Mirabent, Cañabate, & Lebherz, 2014; Zaglia, 2013).

The literature review helped the researcher to find limitations and gaps in academic research that discusses the concept of 'engagement', its antecedents and outcomes in the context of social media and online brand communities embedded in it. Despite that the term 'engagement' is widely used by marketing managers when they speak about their aims for members of their online brand communities, that concept is not yet adequately researched by the academics (Baldus, Voorhees, & Calantone, 2015; Chan, Zheng, Cheung, Lee, & Lee, 2014). This is because the concept of 'consumer engagement' or 'customer engagement' only appeared in the field of social media marketing recently to describe relationships that are developed between consumers and brands in online communities (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Ilic, 2011; Oliveira, Huertas, & Lin, 2016). While customer engagement has been identified as one of the main research priorities of the Marketing Science Institute (MSI, 2014; MSI, 2016), so far, academic research on this new concept is still evolving , specifically in the context of social media (Harrigan et al., 2017).

Another motivation for this research is the rapid rise of social media marketing (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). The continuous growth of social media, especially Facebook, has caught

the eyes of brand managers who wish to capitalise on it for marketing purposes (Harris & Dennis, 2011; Khobzi & Teimourpour, 2015; Tafesse, 2015). However, despite the interest, academic research was not as fast as this industry use (Hutter et al., 2013). Based on this, social media marketing is becoming a very hot topic that needs more academic exploration. Another motivation is the scarcity of research that examines consumers' responses towards social media marketing usage in developing countries, where there is little research compared with more developed countries (Ghauri & Maqsood, 2011). The researcher conducted this study in Egypt, where Facebook played an important role in the history of Egyptians in the call for revolution in 2011 (Fuchs, 2014). That motivated some authors to call it the 'revolution of Facebook' (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011). Statistics show that a large number of Egyptians are using social networking sites, specifically Facebook, where the number of its users has reached 15 million with a penetration of more than 16% of the population and about 73% of these Facebook users are considered young consumers between the ages of 18-29 years (Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government, 2014).

Additionally, the researcher was motivated by the rapid adoption of online brand communities embedded in social networks for marketing purposes (Hutter et al., 2013; Zaglia, 2013). Despite its rapid penetration, most academic publications have previously focused on brand communities in the offline context, e.g.(Algesheimer et al., 2005; Schau, Muñiz, & Arnould, 2009). Thus, little is known about consumers' interactions with brands in online brand communities on social media (Laroche, Habibi, Richard, & Sankaranarayanan, 2012). In social networked marketplaces, the crucial role of consumers in value creation processes has been boosted (Liao, Huang, & Xiao, 2017). This is due to the change of consumers' role from being passive recipients to active value creators in the brand community. Hence, conducting a research that examines online brand communities will add to the growing body of social media literature. Finally, this study responds to several calls by marketers to understand how to engage consumers on social media (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Sabate et al., 2014; Social Media Examiner, 2016).

Despite the practitioners' interest, there is still a limitation in understanding the concept of engagement, its antecedents and outcomes in that context (Zheng, Cheung, Lee, & Liang, 2015). Additionally, understanding how companies can promote user engagement in these websites and the utilization of these websites in customer relationship management is not well understood (Hutter et al., 2013; Wirtz et al., 2013). Therefore, this will be one of the objectives of this research.

1.5 Research Context

1.5.1 The Context of Egypt

Egypt is one of the Mediterranean Arab countries of the Middle East. This country lies in two continents (Africa and Asia) with an area that exceeds one million Km^2. It is bordered by the Gaza Strip and Israel to the north east, the Gulf of Aqaba to the east, the Red Sea to the east and south, Sudan to the south, and Libya to the west (Ibrahim, 2003). See Figure 1.1 for the map of Egypt.

Figure 1. 1: Map of Egypt

Egypt has a population of over 92 million, which makes it the most populated country in the Middle East and the third most populous in Africa (The World Bank, 2015). Most of Egypt's population are concentrated around the river Nile, in the Delta and near the Suez

Canal (CAPMAS, 2016). Administratively, Egypt is divided into 27 governorates which contain both urban centres and rural villages. The biggest two cities in Egypt are Cairo (the capital) and Alexandria. This country is characterised by a young population, with nearly 61% of the entire population less than 25 years of age (Roushdy & Sieverdin, 2015). According to the classification of the Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics (CAPMAS) in Egypt, youth are citizens whose ages range between 18 and 29 years. This age group is considered the biggest age group with more than 20 million Egyptians, which represents 23.6% of the entire population (CAPMAS, 2016).

Arabic is considered the official language in Egypt; however, English and French are widely understood by the educated classes (Schaub, 2000). On the other hand, religion plays an important role in the daily lives of Egyptians, with Sunni Muslims accounting for 90% of the entire population (Masoud, 2014). The role of religion was very evident in directing the votes of Egyptians in the presidential and parliament elections that followed the January 2011 revolution, where the majority of voters voted for Islamic parties and candidates (Rutherford, 2013). This can be attributed to the conservative social values of the majority of the population, which makes Egyptians more receptive to Islamic outreach (Martini & Worman, 2013).

During the modern history of Egypt, several economic systems and ideologies have been applied; for instance, in the 50s and 60s, the Egyptian economy was highly centralised according to the principles of socialism that were adopted by the former president, Gamal Abdel Nasser (Waterbury, 2014). However, the economy was later gradually directed towards the free market system during the period of former presidents Anwar El-Sadat and Mohamed Hosni Mubarak (Moustafa, 2007). This has led to an improvement in the economic conditions after a long period of stagnation (Louis et al.,2004). This improvement was driven by several reforms that aimed to diversify the Egyptian economy to become more dependent on agriculture, industry, construction and services (Fandy, 2015).

After the 2011 Arab spring revolution that ended Mubarak's regime, Egypt suffered from unstable political, security and economic conditions (Abdou & Zaazou, 2013). This had a dramatic negative influence on all economic sectors, especially the tourism and industrial sectors (Middle East Eye, 2016). Specifically, the reluctance of local and foreign investors to invest in Egypt has led to economic contraction and sluggish growth; hence, the annual growth rate of GDP slumped from 5.15% in 2010 to 2.24% in 2014 (Statista, 2014).

With the gradual stabilisation of the economic and political situation that followed the presidential elections in 2013, Egypt has started to gain the attention of foreign investors with its huge market (Rutherford, 2013). The Egyptian government announced that foreign investment is a top priority for developing the country in many economic sectors (Kassem & Yacoub, 2016). Thus, in March 2015, the government organised the Egypt Economic Development Conference (EEDC) to attract new foreign investments, where delegates from 112 different countries attended that conference. In 2016, according to the world investment report, Egypt was ranked 5th in the global foreign direct investment inflows (FDI) (UNCTAD, 2016). By making a new investment law, the Egyptian government is sending positive signals that would encourage foreign companies and business men to come and invest in the country. These amendments would restore investors' confidence in the investment climate by offering guarantees and incentives and removing obstacles that hinder new investments.

Egypt, with its large market and strategic location, is an important entry point to the Middle Eastern Markets (Beekune et al., 2008). Hence, it has attracted investments in many fields including agricultural, mining, industrial, construction, tourism and food processing sectors (Ministry of Investment, 2015). These investments are expected to contribute positively to the country's GDP and employment rates (Malec, Gouda, Kuzmenko, & Soleimani, 2016).

Along with other technological developments, Egypt witnessed a huge growth in the internet and the mobile phones penetration in recent years. According to the ministry of communications and information technology, Egypt had more than 28.77 million internet

subscribers in 2016 with an annual growth rate of 13.99%. Also, there were 93.5 million mobile subscribers with a 107.47% penetration rate (29.89% is the proportion of the mobile internet users of total mobile subscription) (MCIT, 2016). Figure 1.2 and Figure 1.3 demonstrate the statistics of mobile and internet subscriptions in Egypt respectively.

Figure 1. 2: Statistics of mobile phone subscriptions in Egypt

Mobile Subscription		Mobile Penetration
Million Subscription		%
93.50	August 2015	107.47
96.41	July 2016	108.99
96.25	August 2016	108.64
-0.17	Monthly Growth Rate (%)	-0.35
2.94	Annual Growth Rate (%)	1.18

Source: Adopted from MCIT (2016)

Figure 1. 3: Statistics of internet subscriptions in Egypt

Unit	August 2015	July 2016	August 2016	Monthly Growth Rate (%)	Annual Growth Rate (%)
Million Subscription	25.24	28.65	28.77	0.42	13.99
Million Subscription	4.03	3.37	3.36	-0.41	-16.57
Gbps	649.14	961.62	961.62 *	--	48.14

* July 2016
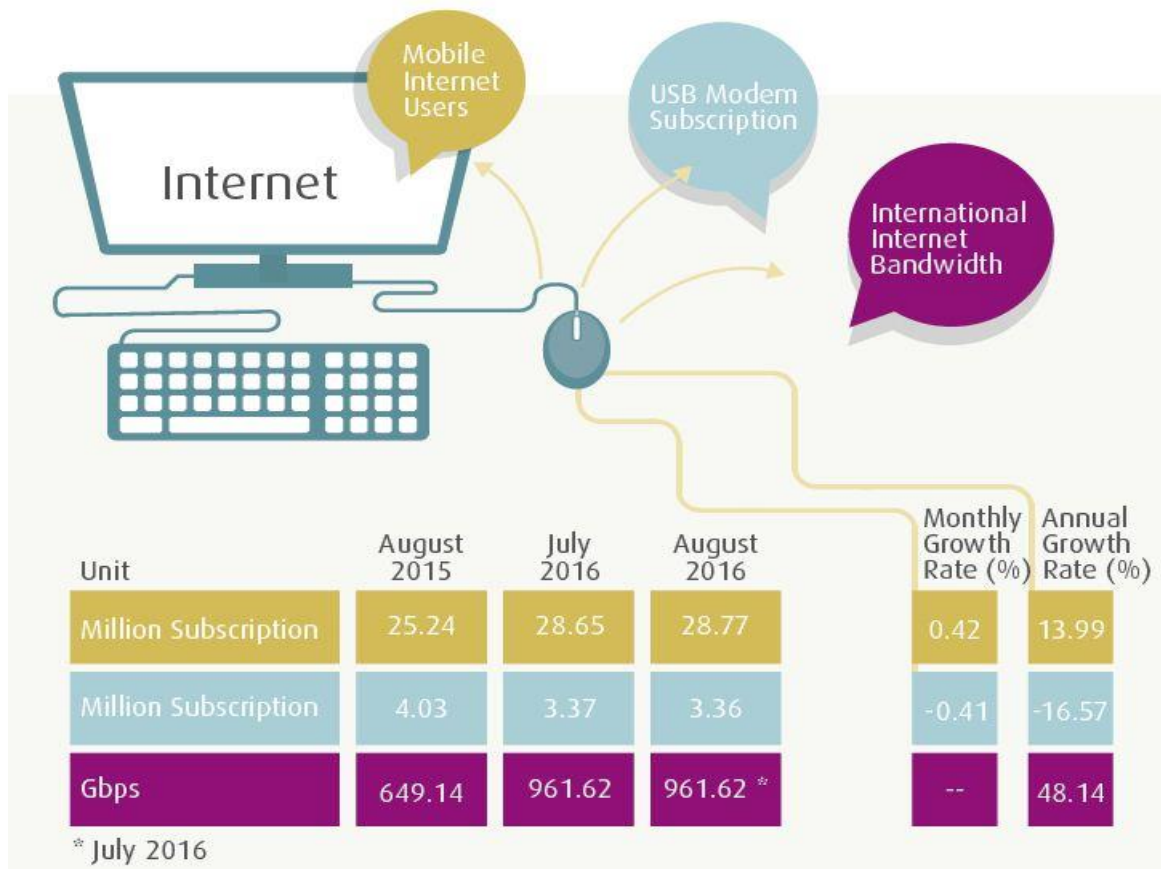
Source: Adopted from MCIT (2016)

Along with other countries, Egypt faced a dramatic increase in social media penetration. Chief among other networks, Egypt has 32 million Facebook users and is ranked 13th among countries that use Facebook. This makes Egypt the largest Arab country in user count, where it has almost 30% of Arab total users (Internet World Stats, 2016). According to a report published by eMarketing Egypt, 97% of Facebook users in Egypt access it on daily basis, with 26% staying active on this website between two and six hours daily (eMarketing Egypt, 2016).

1.5.2 The Fast Food Industry in Egypt

Egypt has witnessed a continuous modernisation of its society over the past fifty years (Cook, 2011). This modernisation was accompanied by the liberalisation of the economy and its transformation from socialism to a free market system (Ates, 2005). Also, it has

accompanied the rapid rise of globalisation which has affected many facets of the life in Egypt (Warschauer et al., 2002). Egypt, with a burgeoning population of 92 million, 40% of which consists of a vibrant youth population, is considered the largest consumer market in the Middle East (CAPMAS, 2016). Driven by the economic openness together with its large population and the rise of Egyptians' purchasing power despite the political conditions within the country, Egypt has always been a promising market for many global companies that are looking for investment opportunities in emerging markets (Badr & Ayed, 2015).

The fast food sector is one of the economic sectors that flourished in the past twenty years in Egypt. It remains one of the best performing categories in consumer food service (Euro Monitor International, 2016). The fast food meals have occupied the attention of a lot of young Egyptians for the ease of its preparation and the simplicity of its purchasing (Elnagar, 2015). Additionally, the increasingly rapid pace of life together with the increase in the number of working women have also led to an increase in the demand of fast food (Asante, 2002). These social and economic changes were responsible for the rapid expansion of the fast food restaurants in Egypt (Saad & Badran, 2017). According to the Egyptian General Authority of Investment and Free Zones (GAFI), the fast food franchise market in Egypt is valued at an estimated more than USD 300 million (GAFI, 2016). This sector is mainly dominated by popular global franchises such as Chili's, Burger King, TGI Fridays, Hard Rock Café, KFC, Little Caesars Pizza, McDonald's, Pizza Hut and Baskin Robins. Additionally, the nation has a number of popular home-grown chains like Mo'men, Bassmatio and Cook Door, which have adopted the franchising concept as well, leading to a strong presence in the market. These chains created many social changes to behavioural patterns of young Egyptians. For instance, they provide a cheerful atmosphere that attracts the young generation to use it as a meeting place for family and friends. Also, by introducing the idea of home delivery to the Egyptian market, these chains were able to provide convenience to their customers and have changed their eating habits which traditionally depended on cooked food at home (Elnagar, 2015). Instability in Egypt after

the 2011 Arab Spring has caused many difficulties to many industries in Egypt. However, the food industries, including the fast food industry, have remained resilient (Oxford Business Group, 2016). The long-term trends in the fast food market look positive and it is expected that this sector will be growing at an annual rate of 10-20% over the coming years (GAFI, 2016). According to a recent report about investment in Egypt published by the U.S. department of commerce, the fast food franchise sector remains the best prospect industry sector for this country, where there are over 50 American franchises that are operational or have imminent plans to open.

The main target market of fast food chains is the young and teenage consumers who have a strong desire to be a part of the modern life and markets (Ergin & Akbay, 2014; Fraser, Edwards, Cade, & Clarke, 2011; Harris, Schwartz, & Brownell, 2010). These young consumers have been described by multinational companies as 'global teenagers' (Hassan & Katsanis, 1991). Marketers with a globalisation perspective have started to view the world as a homogenous place which have teenagers enthusiastically eager to consume products like McDonald's hamburgers and fries (Quart, 2008). Thus, the Egyptian market represents a fertile land for multinationals due to its young population that is ready to try global fast food brands. In response to many critics of fast food companies for introducing unhealthy food, many of these chains have started to introduce healthy meals that depend mostly on the vegetarian component. This has enabled them to market for new target markets in the Egyptian market.

Competition in the fast food industry world-wide, including Egypt, is very severe, where consumer switching costs are relatively very low (Gregory, 2015). Thus, in order to maintain and attract new customers, the application of effective marketing and customer relationship management programs is crucial for the success of the fast food businesses (Ali et al., 2012). This requires the search for innovative ways for reaching and interacting with their target market. The fact that the majority of social media users are young people and the fact that the fast food chains mainly target that age group have made the social

networking sites like Facebook a suitable place for marketing for these chains (Gaber & Wright, 2014; Saad & Badran, 2017). This will be discussed in the following section.

1.5.3 Choice of the Fast food Industry

The researcher used the official Facebook brand pages of the fast food chains in Egypt as a context for conducting his study. Several reasons guided the researcher when choosing the fast food industry. The first reason is that the fast food industry is considered one of the several industries in Egypt that use Facebook for marketing purposes on a wide scale. See Appendix A for some screenshots of some fast food pages on Facebook. These chains found that the social networking site, Facebook, with its millions of daily active users, can be an effective medium for targeting young consumers who have been strongly resistant to advertising in traditional mass media, e.g. (television, radio and print, etc.). Hence, most fast food companies in Egypt established brand pages on Facebook to communicate with its current and prospective customers. These companies post a variety of branded content on their pages where members of these pages can interact with that content as well as with each other. The content can include information about the meals and sandwiches. Also, the managers of these pages can answer any questions that are posted by the customers. These pages have millions of customers that follow it after they have become members of these online communities. See Figure 1.4 for a screenshot of a fast food page on Facebook.

A review of the biggest twenty Facebook brand pages in terms of the number of members in Egypt showed that eight brand pages were initiated and are being managed by fast food chains. This makes the brand pages of the fast food industry one of the most suitable online environments for investigating consumer engagement, which is the main purpose of this research. See Table 1.3 that demonstrates the number of fans of some fast food brand pages on Facebook in Egypt and Table 1.4 for the largest 20 Facebook brand pages in Egypt in terms of number of fans. Another reason for the choice of the fast food industry as a context for this study is the fierce competition that fast food chains face. With the huge

number of global and local chains that are expanding in the Egyptian market, these chains have many problems with differentiating themselves and building their brand images (Saad & Badran, 2017). Social media, with its interactive nature and its embedded brand communities, can provide an opportunity for these chains to market their meals to their target market in a more effective and efficient manner.

A final reason for that choice is the absence of academic researches that examine the effect of social media marketing that is widely practiced by fast food chains on Egyptian consumers. Thus, through investigating the antecedents and outcomes of consumer engagement on Facebook brand pages, this thesis will be helpful to many companies in order to fully grasp the potential of using social media in marketing. To conclude, Egypt, with its huge market and young population, represents a huge opportunity for fast food chains to expand by adopting innovative ways of marketing like social media marketing.

Figure 1. 4: Screenshot of an official Egyptian fast food brand page on Facebook
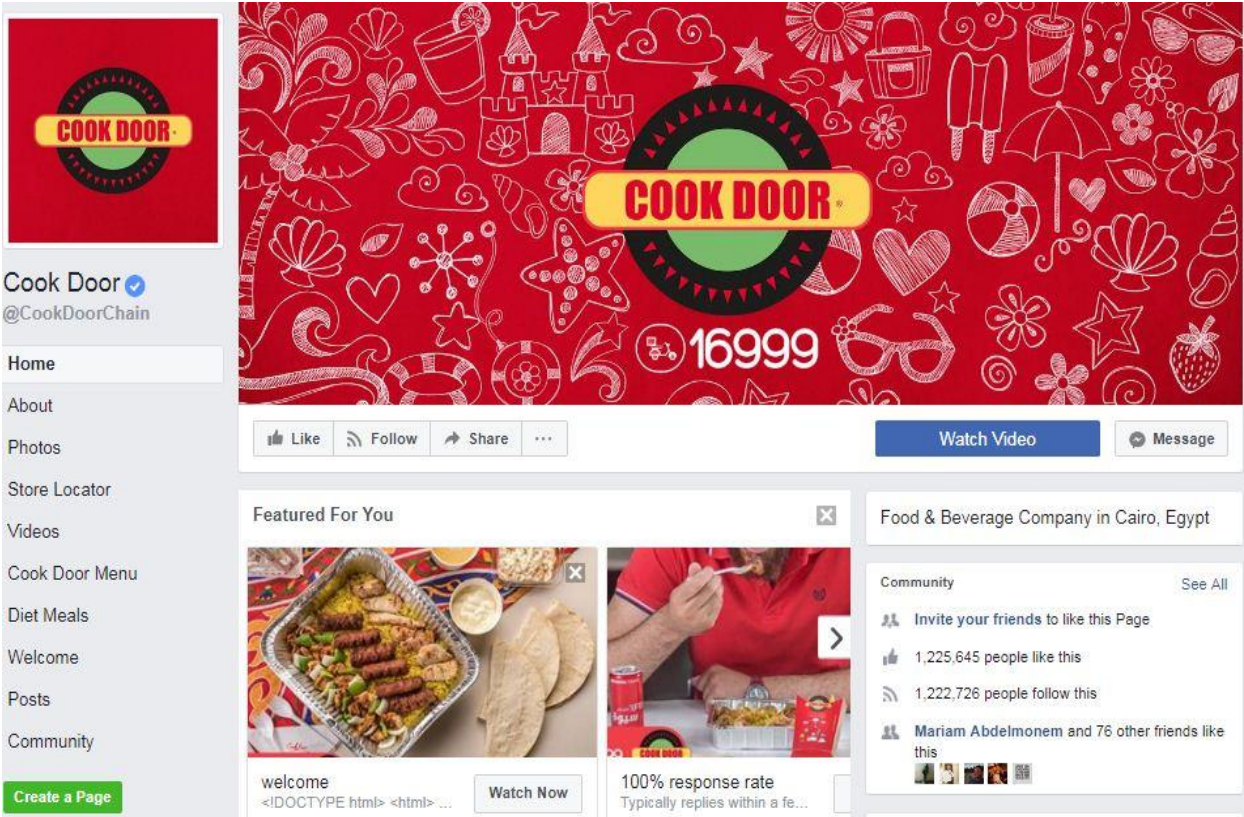
Table 1. 3: Some Egyptian Fast food brand pages on Facebook and their number of fans

Fast food brand page on Facebook	Number of Fans
Abou Gazya	3,286,808
McDonald's Egypt	2,151,016
Om Hassan Egypt	1,268,002
Pizza Hut	1,217,833
Hardee's Arabia	1,182,834
Cook Door	1,134,578
Domino's Pizza	825,167
Chili's Egypt	765,338
Chicken Tikka Egypt	643,043
Basmatio Chicken	606,026
Buffalo Burger	592,573
Burger King Arabia	489,275
Mo'men Egypt	392,878
Papa John's Egypt	274,716
Vinny's Pizzeria	225,520
Yank's Corner	80,545

Source: Official brand pages of these chains on Facebook. Access Date: January (2015)

Table 1. 4: The largest 20 Egyptian Facebook brand pages and their number of fans

Rank	Brand Name	Number of Fans	Industry
1	Vodafone Egypt	3,656,050	Telecommunications
2	Abou Gazya	3,286,808	Fast food
3	Samsung Egypt	2,313,543	Technology
4	Mcdonald's Egypt	2,151,016	Fast food
5	Huawei Mobile Egypt	2,081,362	Technology
6	Pepsi	1,993,556	Beverages
7	Orange	1,761,671	Telecommunications
8	Etisalat Misr	1,653,343	Telecommunications
9	Om Hassan Egypt	1,268,002	Fast food
10	Pizza Hut	1,217,833	Fast food
11	Hardee's Arabia	1,182,834	Fast food
12	D.Diamonds	1,155,526	Jewellery
13	Cook Door	1,134,578	Fast food
14	Kitkat	1,121,370	Food processing
15	Domino's Pizza	1,093,167	Fast food
16	Chipsy Egypt	1,023,572	Food processing
17	Nescafe	1,07,649	Beverages
18	Coca-Cola	998,266	Beverages
19	OLX Egypt	878,318	E-tailing
20	Chili's Egypt	765,338	Fast food

Source: Official brand pages of these companies on Facebook. Access Date: January (2015)

1.6 Importance of Studying Consumer Engagement in Online Brand Communities

The rapid growth of social media has made many companies to start directing their marketing efforts towards social media (Luarn et al., 2015). However, social media marketing literature is still in its infancy, with most research focused on online and interactive advertising (Bond, Ferraro, Luxton, & Sands, 2010; Li, Yang, & Liang, 2015; Rose, Clark, Samouel, & Hair, 2012).

Additionally, an exploration of the social media marketing literature has led to the conclusion that there is a limited understanding of the nature of consumer engagement on social media, specifically in online brand communities embedded in it (Harrigan et al., 2017). Thus, with the increasing number of consumers who spend time in these online communities, it is critical to investigate their engagement in it (He & Negahban, 2017). Also, the marketing literature is not enough regarding the outcomes of this engagement (Laroche et al., 2012). For example, the role of these online communities in generating positive emotions towards brands, e.g. (brand Love), needs more exploration (Rothensthal & Brito, 2017).

The aim of this study is, therefore, to understand the concept of consumer engagement in the context of online brand communities embedded in social media. However, the aim is not to replicate prior research on offline brand communities since the online context has its distinctive features that will be discussed later in the literature review chapter. By determining the antecedents and outcomes of consumer engagement in online communities, the researcher will be able to provide recommendations for companies to better engage consumers. There are also several gaps identified in the literature, including:

1. There is a conflict in social media literature in defining and understanding the nature and dimensionality of consumer engagement in the context of online brand communities, where some authors consider it a unidimensional concept, e.g. (He &

Negahban, 2017; Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Van Doorn et al., 2010), while other authors consider it a multidimensional concept, e.g. (Baldus et al., 2015; Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013; Dessart et al., 2015). Additionally, to the best of the knowledge of the researcher, no prior study developed a scale for measuring consumer engagement in online brand communities on social media, specifically brand pages on Facebook.

2. There is a scarcity in research that examined the effect of consumer engagement on developing brand love in social media brand communities, e.g. (Vernuccio, Pagani, Barbarossa, & Pastore, 2016). Previous studies of social media marketing did not deal with the concept of brand love as an outcome of engagement in these communities. The concept of brand love is receiving ongoing attention by academics and marketers (Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012), where it is argued that consumers' emotional bonding to brands is responsible for explaining much of the their consumption behaviour (Albert & Merunka,2013).

3. Literature on online brand communities has focused mainly on traditional online forums on the internet, e.g. (Cova & Pace, 2006; Sicilia & Palazon, 2008), but there is limited researches that focused on these communities in the social media context, especially in developing countries. Authors have generally used the term 'online brand community' to describe communities on the World Wide Web, e.g.(Gummerus, et al., 2012).

4. There are few academic publications that examined engagement factors in the social media based brand communities. Specifically, there is a limitation in identifying factors that are related to consumers' perceptions towards the brand and the brand community. Understanding these factors can be critical to the success of marketing campaigns, as these factors can explain why consumers get involved in some brand communities while they ignore others. Research on the

subject has been mostly restricted to limited comparisons of antecedents and outcomes of participation in the context of offline brand communities, e.g. (Algesheimer et al., 2005; de Chernatony et al., 2008; McAlexander et al., 2003).

To summarise, this research aims to address the gaps that were identified in the literature, including the conflict in the definitions of consumer engagement and the lack of studies that examined the antecedents and outcomes of consumer engagement in the context of online brand communities on social media. Thus, the study aims to present a richer perspective of online brand communities and the consumer relationship that develops as a result of consumer engagement in these communities. This study depends on the important theories of social identity theory, uses and gratification theory, and critical mass theory in order to provide a model that explains consumer engagement in the social media context.

1.7 Research Questions

The current research seeks to provide an advancement towards understanding consumer engagement in online brand communities embedded in social networking sites. Furthermore, given the exploratory nature of the study, it is important to examine the antecedents and outcomes of engagement in these communities.

In this study, the concept of consumer engagement in online brand communities is the main variable of interest to the researcher. Hence, it is vital to explore its dimensions and sub-dimensions in the social media context. There is a conflict in understanding the nature of consumer engagement in the social media context. For example, several researchers used the term 'engagement' interchangeably with 'participation,' considering only a behavioural dimension for engagement, e.g. (Tsai, Huang, & Chiu, 2012; Tsai & Men, 2013). Specifically, these studies depended on the number of likes and shares as a sole indicator for consumers' engagement in brand pages, e.g. (Tafesse & Tafesse, 2016). On the other hand, some researchers considered consumer engagement a multidimensional concept having affective, cognitive and behavioural dimensions, e.g. (Dessart et al., 2015).

Considering these conflicts, the following research question has been developed to investigate the concept of consumer engagement in the online brand communities on social media:

Q1. What is the nature of dimensionality of consumer engagement in social media based brand communities?

In the current study, the researcher focuses on brand pages on Facebook as the most popular form of online brand communities in social networking sites (Zaglia, 2013). Marketing on social media in general, and in brand pages on Facebook in particular, is widely replacing traditional marketing and advertising media (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Thus, it is critical to identify the benefits or content that consumers seek by interactions on these pages. Thus, the following research question has been developed to explore these benefits:

Q2. What are the benefits that consumers seek through their engagement in brand pages embedded in social networking sites?

Another important aim of this research is to identify the antecedents of consumer engagement in these online brand communities. In the offline context, several attempts have been made to investigate motivations of consumer participation in brand communities, e.g. (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Rosenbaum, Ostrom, & Kuntze, 2005; Stokburger-Sauer, 2010). A recent survey by Social Media Examiner (2016) revealed that most marketers said that they want to understand how to engage their consumers on various social media platforms. Thus, this research aims to help companies in general and fast food chains in particular to identify the antecedents of engagement. Despite marketers' interest, however, little effort has been made by researchers to identify the engagement antecedents in the context of online brand communities in social media.

In addition, in the current study, the researcher aims to investigate the outcomes of consumer engagement in social media. In the offline context, many researchers identified some outcomes of consumer engagement in brand communities including consumers' willingness to participate in the community and to recommend it to others (Algesheimer et

al., 2005). Also, in the online context, some studies identified some outcomes of consumer participation in online brand communities such as brand loyalty and brand recommendation intentions (Madupu & Cooley, 2010). However, little is known about outcomes of consumer engagement in online brand communities on social media (Hutter et al., 2013). This provides a motivation for the following research question:

Q3. Which hypotheses regarding the antecedents and consequences of consumer engagement in social media based brand communities are supported in this study?

1.8 Research Objectives

The research questions are answered by achieving certain research objectives that cover the main steps of the phenomena investigation. The objectives of the current study are presented as follows:

1) To explore the dimensionality of consumer engagement in online brand communities on social media, specifically in the fast food brand pages on Facebook.

2) To explore the benefits that consumers seek in brand pages on Facebook.

3) To develop a measurement scale for assessing the degree of consumer engagement in online brand communities.

4) To arrive at a conceptual model of the antecedents of consumer engagement on brand pages on Facebook. Mainly, the research investigates the factors related to consumers' relationships with the brands that initiated these communities as well as the factors related to consumers' perceptions in these communities.

5) To determine the effect of engagement on brand pages on Facebook on the development of brand love.

6) To examine the outcomes of brand love that develops from the consumers' engagement in these brand pages on consumers' willingness to pay a price

premium, positive word of mouth, perceived quality, resistance to negative information and brand loyalty.

7) To make conclusions and recommendations for fast food chains to follow when marketing on social media.

1.9 Preface to Research Methodology

This research follows a cross-sectional research design with the aim of addressing its research objectives and research questions. Also, the pragmatism philosophical paradigm guided the researchers' choice of mixed-methods research approach. According to the epistemological and ontological assumptions of this research, the researcher developed a conceptual framework and then tested the research hypotheses that were generated in this study. This study employed two modes of data collection: qualitative and quantitative. The data collection stages will be summarized in the following parts.

1.9.1 Qualitative Phase

This research is considered exploratory in nature, since the adoption of social media in marketing is considered a relatively new practice. Hence, there is a scarcity in the researches that examined consumer engagement in the context of online brand communities on social media. Therefore, the researcher started by employing qualitative data collection modes. A qualitative research is a type of research that helps in exploring what people think, feel, hope, believe and understand (McGivern, 2009). At the end of the qualitative data collection the researcher was able to formulate a conceptual model and the final research hypotheses.

1.9.1.1 Focus Groups

A focus group refers to a group of participants who are gathered to share their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and attitudes on a certain subject (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The method is particularly useful for exploring people's knowledge and experiences and can be used to

examine not only what people think but how they think and why they think that way (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Four focus groups were formed with young consumers in Cairo and Alexandria, which are the biggest Egyptian cities where all major fast food chains are located. The researcher made sure that all participants are active members of fast food Facebook brand pages. The aim of the focus group discussions was to deeply understand the nature and dimensionality of consumer engagement in online brand communities on social media. Also, it was helpful in generating items to develop a scale for measuring this engagement. Furthermore, the focus groups were helpful in identifying the benefits the consumers seek in brand communities to enhance their engagement.

1.9.2 Quantitative Phase

After the qualitative data collection mode was conducted and the research model and research hypotheses were formulated, the researcher employed quantitative data collection modes for testing the research hypotheses. See Figure 1.5 for the proposed conceptual model. The researcher first conducted a pilot study with the aim of testing and validating the newly developed engagement scale for the study. Also, the pilot stage was useful for testing the reliability and validity of other measures in the study. Then, the main study was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire for data collection. The questionnaire was conducted online, where the researcher placed the questionnaire as an advertisement on fast food brand pages on Facebook. The advantage of that technique is that the researcher will be able to target Egyptian consumers based on their location and age. Also, by placing the questionnaire through an invitation on Facebook brand pages, this helped to make sure that the respondents are aware of the concept of online brand communities which makes their response more accurate and relevant. For the main study, 591 complete questionnaires were collected and analysed with the aid of SPSS, and Smart PLS software.

Figure 1.5: Proposed Conceptual Model
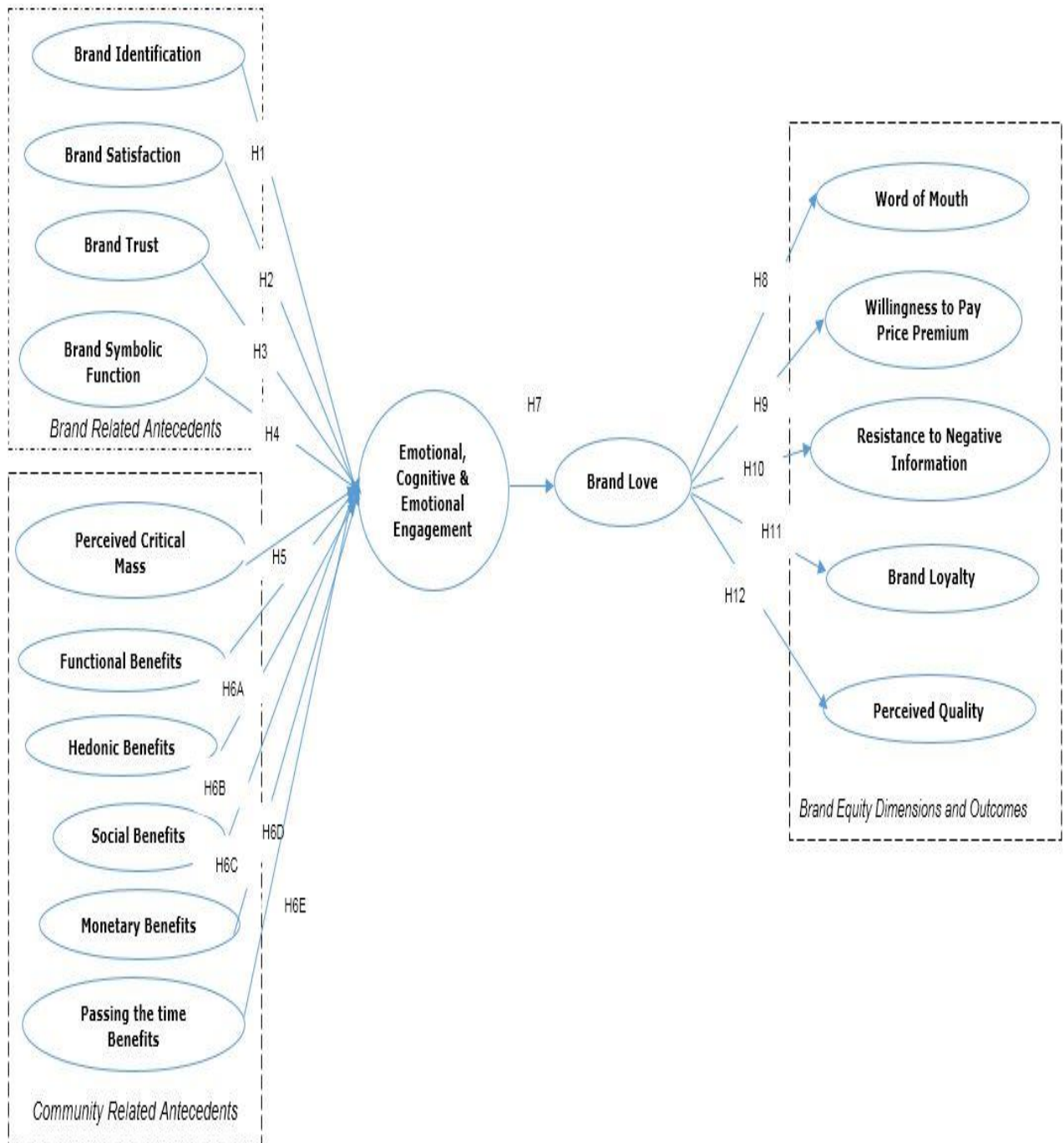
Source: This Research

1.10 Preface to Research Contributions

The study has a number of academic contributions and managerial implications. This will be detailed in chapter 10. However, this section provides an overview of these contributions.

1.10.1 Academic Contributions

The research has a number of contributions that will add to the academic body of knowledge and literature regarding understanding of online brand communities on social media, specifically Facebook. Therefore, this study will:

1. Help in understanding the dimensionality of consumer engagement in social media based brand communities.

2. Provide a pioneering contribution through developing a scale for measuring consumer engagement in these online communities.

3. Provide an overview of the factors that make consumers more engaged on brand pages on Facebook, which represent a popular form of online brand communities and is widely used in marketing on social media.

4. Present an evidence for the positive effect of consumer engagement in developing brand love.

5. Outline the outcomes that companies can get from having engaged consumers on their brand pages on Facebook.

1.10.2 Managerial Implications

This study helps fast food chains in recognising the importance of building and managing brand love (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Thus, it supports fast food chains in identifying how to build brand love on Facebook brand pages by engaging their customers in these online communities. With the intense competition these chains face, social media can become an ideal place for engaging consumers and for differentiating their brands. In summary, understanding the factors that make consumers more engaged in the online brand

communities will help social media marketing managers in executing more effective advertising campaigns on social media.

1.11 Organisation of the study

Chapter one introduced the research background as well as the research objectives and questions; this chapter is followed by:

Chapter Two: Social Media marketing and Online Brand Communities

This chapter provides an overview of social media marketing. Given the novelty of Facebook as a marketing channel, an introduction to Facebook will be presented. Furthermore, this chapter explains the concept of brand community and its characteristics.

Chapter Three: Consumer Engagement on Social Media Based Brand Communities

This chapter discusses the concept of consumer engagement, particularly in the context of social media based brand communities. By introducing the various definitions for this concept, this chapter highlights the limitations in understanding it in the social media context. Most importantly, it presents major theories related to the current study.

Chapter Four: Conceptual Framework

The main purpose of this chapter is to present the proposed conceptual framework of the study. Also, it discusses the research hypotheses that were developed to test the relationships between the study's construct.

Chapter Five: Research Methodology

This chapter details the methods that were adopted to collect the data in both the qualitative and quantitative phases of this research. It contains important methodological topics including philosophical foundations, research design, data collection methods, ethical considerations and data analysis techniques.

Chapter Six: Phase I: Qualitative Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the qualitative phase that was conducted through focus group discussions. It outlines the various dimensions and sub-dimensions of consumer engagement, as well as the benefits that facilitate this engagement in the online communities. Based on these findings, five sub-hypotheses are proposed to capture these benefits.

Chapter Seven: Engagement Scale Development

In this chapter, the researcher explains the rationale for developing a scale for measuring consumer engagement in the social media context. A detailed demonstration of the process of the new scale development is presented. Additionally, the results of the quantitative pilot study are presented.

Chapter Eight: Phase II: Quantitative Data Analysis and Results

The main purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the main quantitative study that was conducted through an online survey. This chapter consists of two main parts. The first part presents the descriptive statistics of the data collected for the main study. It also highlights the reliability and validity of the measurement scales. The second part shows the results of the hypotheses testing using structural equation modeling.

Chapter Nine: Discussion

This chapter includes discussions for the findings and comparing the findings with previous studies.

Chapter Ten: Contributions, Implications, Limitations, and Directions for Future Research

This chapter provides the contributions of the current study to both literature and practice. In addition, it explains the research limitations and proposes different directions for future studies in the context of social media marketing.

Chapter 2: Social Media Marketing and Online Brand Communities

2.1 Introduction

Social media is one of the technological developments that was able to change the modes of communication between people and organisations (Keegan & Rowley, 2017). Given the novelty of social media, this chapter introduces its background as well as its rapid adoption in marketing. This chapter is organised into six sections as follows: firstly, section 2.2 provides an overview of social media, where it discusses its growth as well as its various definitions. Then, section 2.3 introduces an overview of the social networking site, Facebook by outlining its history and rapid penetration in the past few years. Next, section 2.4 presents the wide usage of social media marketing. After that, section 2.5 explains the concept of brand community and how it was introduced to online environments. Finally, section 2.6 summarises the chapter.

2.2 The rise of Social Media

"We lived on farms, then we lived in cities, and now we're going to live on the Internet! "

Sean Parker in "The Social Network" (2010), Film by David Fincher.

The rapid development of the digital platforms is contributing to a new media revolution that is making people more connected than ever before (Copley,2014; Fuchs, 2014; Zhang et al., 2017). Social media is one of the developments that has had a big impact on people's lives and has facilitated their socialisation and cooperation by replacing traditional communication media (Yazdanparast, Joseph, & Qureshi, 2015).

In the past few years, the world has witnessed a huge growth in social media penetration (Dahl, 2015), where social networking sites are currently receiving the highest web traffic worldwide (Alexa, 2016). It is claimed that people spend more than one third of their working day consuming its content (Lang, 2010). A review of the literature provides some definitions for social media. For example, Bolton et al. (2013) described it as an online

service that enables individuals to create and share a variety of content. Another definition considered it "*a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which allows the creation and exchange of User Generated Content*" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Furthermore, Ward (2016) defined it as an online media that facilitates conversations between people as opposed to traditional media that doesn't allow viewers to interact with its content. It is apparent that these three definitions highlight the vital role of people in managing the social media content.

Several classifications for social media have been introduced in literature. For instance, Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) classified it into six types. They are collaborative projects, blogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds. On the other hand, Tuten & Solomon (2015) identified four social media zones which are social community, social publishing, social entertainment and social commerce. See Figure 2.1.

Figure 2. 1: Social media zones

Source: Adopted from Tuten & Solomon (2015)

Social media cannot be understood without first introducing the concept of Web 2.0. Web 2.0 is a term that was first used by O'reilly (2005) to describe a group of online platforms that are characterised by interactive and user-driven behaviour (Baym, 2015). Web 2.0 can be defined as "*a collection of open-source, interactive and user-controlled online applications expanding the experiences, knowledge and market power of the users as participants in business and social processes*" (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008, p.232)*.* It depends mainly on user-generated content that is originated and distributed on the internet by normal users (Daugherty, Eastin, & Bright, 2008). Earlier versions of the web (Web 1.0) focused on the digital platform as a publication platform, whereas Web 2.0 is characterised by the enhanced role of the audience, allowing user participation through conversation, content augmentation via commenting, rating, editing and sharing (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). See Figure 2.2.

Figure 2. 2: From Web 1.0 to Web 2.0
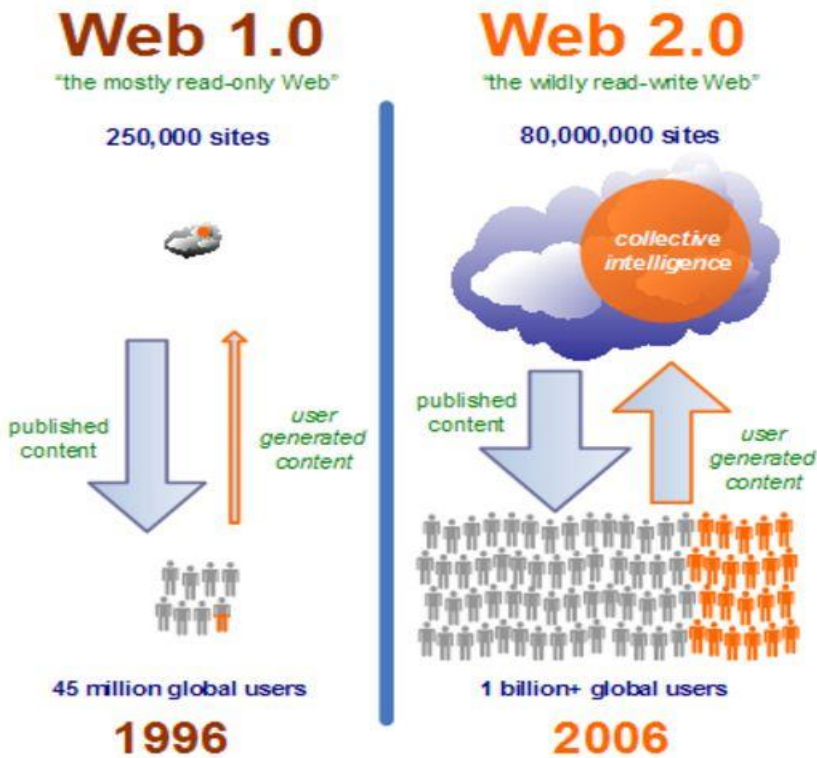
Source: Adopted from Ciccarelli (2006)

The term 'social networking websites' can be used interchangeably with the term 'social media' (Evans & Cothrel, 2014); however, Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) argued that social media is a broader concept that enhances the establishment of social networking websites which consequently facilitate peoples' modes of communication and interaction. Since social networking websites are considered virtual communities that are constructed around social relationships (Tuten & Solomon, 2015), they allow their users to construct public profiles that help them in connecting with people they know or don't know in the real world (Ellison, 2007).Buechel & Berger (2016) identified three motivators for people to join social networking websites, namely: (1) affiliation (i.e. connecting with friends), (2) identity expression (i.e. self-representation), and (3) information dissemination (i.e. the exchange of information inside the social network). Peoples' activities on social media can be classified into contribution (posting) or consumption (lurking or observing) (Bolton et al., 2013).

Social networking websites have become an essential part of the young generations' lives (Harris & Dennis, 2011). Through the easiness of access from any place, users can get in touch with large number of friends at the same time regardless of time or location boundaries (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Krishnamurthy & Dou, 2008). This allows them to change their socialising, learning, entertainment or even consumption habits (Aghazamani, 2010; Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). Furthermore, these websites give young people a space to express themselves by allowing them to exchange their experiences and opinions about different issues they are interested in (Saxena & Khanna, 2013).

In addition to the vital role social media plays in interpersonal relationships, it has also facilitated the relationships between businesses and consumers. For instance, these websites allow consumers to easily access the markets and to become more engaged with brands (Godey et al., 2016). Additionally, they allow them to exchange reviews about products and services (Heinrichs, Lim, & Lim, 2011).

A review of the literature suggests that social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+ and Pinterest are the most popular among users worldwide (Social Media Examiner, 2016). According to Alexa (2016), Facebook is considered the third most visited website on the internet. Twitter, the second most popular social networking site, is used for micro-blogging and is considered the eighth most visited website on the internet (Alexa, 2016). In addition, other popular social networks like LinkedIn and Flickr are used for connecting professionals and sharing photos respectively (Utz, 2016).

In the next section, the researcher presents an overview of Facebook, which represents the main focus of this research study.

2.3 Facebook

Initially, Facebook was founded by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 with the aim of connecting Harvard University students with each other (Kirkpatrick, 2011). Then Facebook gradually expanded, attracting millions of users worldwide (Haydon, 2015). It has grown dramatically from 1 million users in 2007 to 1.79 billion active monthly users in 2016 (Facebook, 2016). This social networking site has become popular to the extent that Mark Zuckerberg announced in August 2015 that for the first time ever more than 1 billion people (1 in 7 people on Earth) use Facebook every day to connect with their family and friends (Zuckerberg, 2015, August 27). Facebook has a very high penetration especially among youngsters; according to a report by the Pew Research Centre (2014), 89 per cent of online young adults who use social networking sites are using Facebook.

Egypt, along with other countries, has witnessed a huge growth in Facebook penetration; according to the 2015 Arab Social Media Report by the global marketing research company, TNS, 94 per cent of social media users in Egypt have accounts on Facebook (TNS, 2015). In that study, 54 per cent of participants claimed that Facebook has made their life happier, and they consider it a critical part of their lifestyles.

Similarly, like many other networks, Facebook ensures that its users register on its platform with their real identities. After that, they can construct their profile pages and start creating friendship connections with others (Istanbulluoğlu, 2014). At a minimum, profiles on Facebook require a user's name, gender, date of birth, and e-mail address (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). With the aim of satisfying their need for belonging and self-presentation, Facebook members use their Facebook profiles to portray positive images about themselves by posting pictures and other content that presents their life experiences (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). This can help them gain feelings of social acceptability by having others like posts they share on their Facebook accounts (Wallace et al., 2014). With the rapid penetration of Facebook among consumers, many companies have started to adopt it for marketing purposes (Habibi, Laroche, & Richard, 2014a). This is discussed in the following section.

2.4 Social Media Marketing

The marketing field has changed dramatically with the digitalisation of media and continuous advancements in information and communication technologies (Copley,2014; Tuten & Solomon, 2015). In the past, companies directed all of their advertising efforts towards traditional media such as the television and radio (Evans, 2012). Today, with the new technological advancements, marketers have started to direct a portion of their advertising budgets towards more digital media such as the internet and the mobile phone (Copley,2014; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Due to the numerous number of advertisements that consumers are exposed to every day, they have become more resistant towards advertising (Speck & Elliott, 1997). That has made the job of brand managers harder and more challenging in their efforts at brand building (Sung, Kim, Kwon, & Moon, 2010). Accordingly, marketers are continuously searching for more effective media for interacting and communicating with customers (Copley, 2014).

One of the new media that is being widely used for marketing purposes and has facilitated communication between companies and consumers is the social media (Royo-Vela &

Casamassima, 2011). The popularity of social media websites among consumers, especially the young generation, has led to a rapid adoption of social media marketing by many companies across various industries (Social Media Examiner 2016; Kim & Ko, 2012). With the rapid penetration of social media and the availability of consumers on these websites for long hours daily, marketers have found it an opportunity for marketing of their products and services (Hutter et al., 2013). Also, marketers recognize the importance of social media due to its interactive nature, personalised advertising, information search capabilities and great convenience for consumers (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). Hence, in a relatively short time, social media has become widely adopted in various marketing activities such as branding, market research, customer relationship management, and sales promotions (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

Social media marketing can be defined as "*connection between brands and consumers, while offering a personal channel and currency for user-centred networking and social interaction*" (Chi, 2011, p. 46). It includes the utilization of social media technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings that have value for an organisation's stakeholders (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). Social media marketing can be conducted through two main form of activities. The first practice is the use of free tools like brand communities embedded in social networking websites such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, where companies manage these communities by publishing branded content (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). The second practice involves the use of paid advertisements on social networks like Facebook and YouTube (Nielsen, 2013).

Many companies are using social media networks as additional marketing channels that can be integrated with traditional marketing channels as a part of the marketing mix (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). A recent report by Nielsen (2016) shows that with the high connectivity that consumers have access to, they are becoming more engaged with the branded content on social media. Research shows that social media is replacing traditional media of

marketing since it is cheaper, personal and social in nature, while more consumers are accepting advertising on social networks (Lukka & James, 2014).

Tuten & Solomon (2015) argued that social media marketing can influence all stages of the purchase process by increasing awareness, influencing desire, encouraging trial, facilitating purchase and building brand loyalty. According to the 2016 social media industry report by Social Media Examiner (2016), most marketers who were surveyed indicated that they are using social media for marketing purposes together with traditional marketing purposes. Table 2.1 shows some key highlights from that report.

Table 2. 1: Highlights from the 2016 social media industry report

63% of marketers are planning to increase their use of social networking sites.
55% of marketers said that Facebook is their most preferred website for advertising and only 4% of marketers said they are not going to increase their budgets for Facebook marketing.
67% of marketers are planning to increase their Facebook marketing activities.
86% of social marketers regularly use Facebook advertisements.
90% of marketers said that they are eager to know the most effective social tactics and the best methods to engage their target markets on social media.
Most marketers mentioned that they are unsure if their Facebook marketing is working or not.

Source: Adopted from Social Media Examiner (2016)

In an exploratory piece of research for identifying the reasons that make marketers adopt social media marketing, Tsimonis & Dimitriadis (2014) found that they have various motives that include the following:

- Growth and popularity of social media among consumers.

- Viral nature of social media, as consumers are able to share marketing content, which results in influencing others through the sharing of brand experiences.

- The presence of competitors on social media.

- Headquarters social media strategy, as many multinationals adopt a global social media strategy.

- Cost reduction, since social media marketing is considered a cheaper form of marketing when compared to traditional marketing media.

In addition, Tsimonis & Dimitriadis (2014) indicated that brand managers engage in social media marketing activities to achieve the following aims:

- Creating, strengthening, and enhancing the relationships with customers by communicating with them on a daily basis.

- Easily interacting and engaging with customers and listening to their needs by allowing consumers to express their opinions and feelings on social media.

- Gaining brand awareness and creating positive word of mouth.

- Accessing new audiences in a new targeted way.

- Supporting the implementation of marketing actions and promoting product use.

- Engagement of consumers, which represents the most important benefit by allowing consumers to speak and interact with the brand.

Mangold & Faulds (2009) argued that social media is transforming the traditional marketing communication into a new communications paradigm as shown in Figure 2.3. These changes are due to reasons that include:

- The rapid penetration of social media and its adoption as a communication tool.

- Consumers are moving away from traditional media to social media, where more consumers have more control over the type and time of the information they need about products and services they consume.

- Consumers rely on social media for their information search and purchase decisions.

- Social media is perceived as a trustworthy source of information by consumers since most of its content is consumer-generated and based on word of mouth.

Figure 2. 3: The new communications paradigm
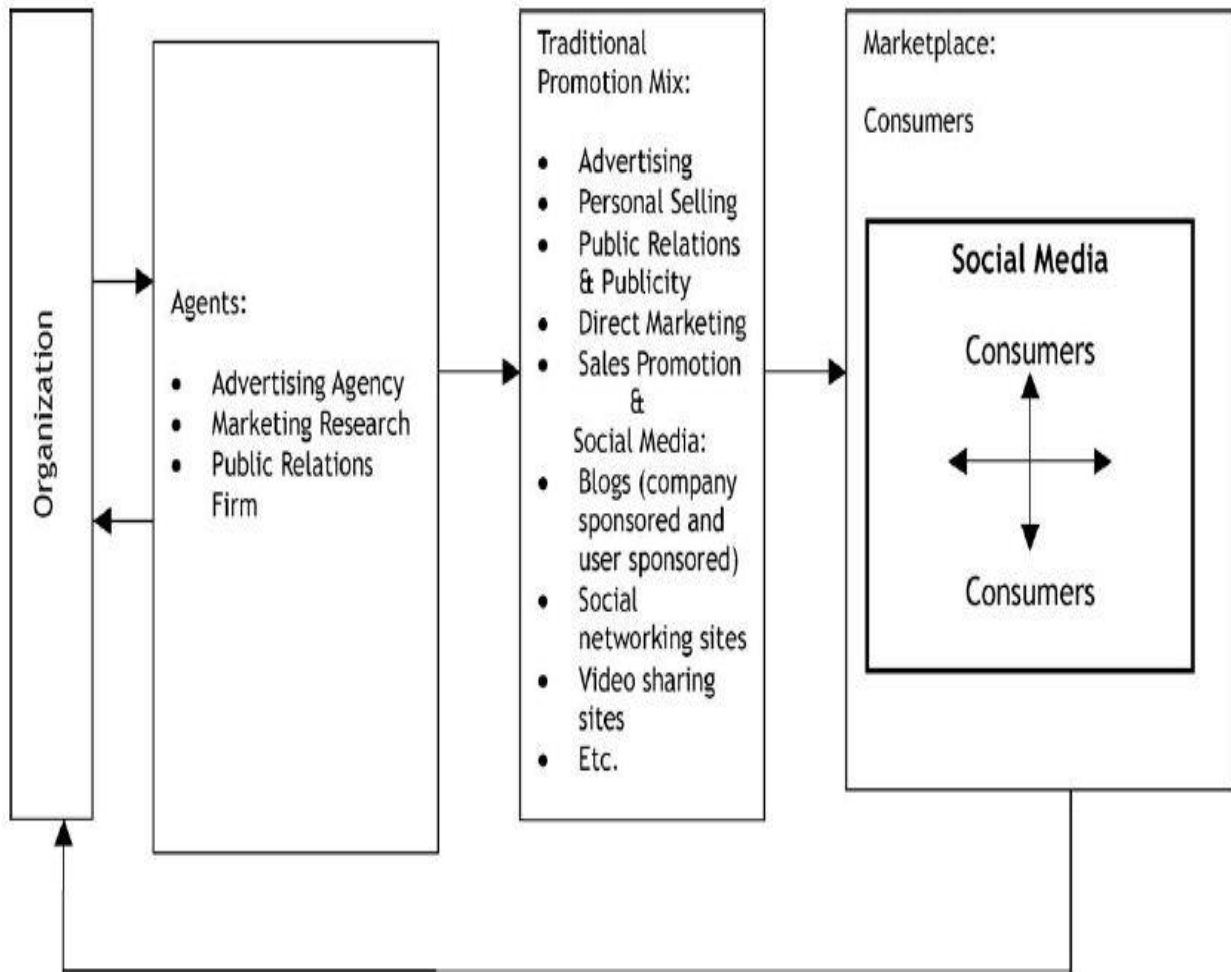
Social media has changed the view of the traditional purchasing process; in the past, marketers assumed that consumers had several brands in their minds that they would choose from (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). After purchasing that brand, consumers evaluate their purchase process after using the product or service. In that form of marketing, companies depended only on traditional one-way communication such as reward programs, public relations, and direct marketing to build and develop relationships with their customers (Dahl, 2015). Thus, customers were only passive recipients of the marketing messages. On the other hand, with the capabilities that social media offer, consumers have become co-creators and multipliers of the marketing messages, in which marketing has

shifted from being a one-way process to two-way customer centric process that allows companies to benefit from free word of mouth marketing (Hutter et al., 2013). Hence, the view of how consumers interact and engage with brands has become more sophisticated (Hudson & Thal, 2013).

Several studies show that most consumers have positive attitudes towards social media marketing. For example, Chandra, Goswami, and Chouhan (2013) argued that consumers perceive social media marketing to be more credible than other sources of marketing due to its support of purchase decisions and its ability to help them reach lower-priced products. Another research paper by Gaber & Wright (2014) showed that consumers consider social media advertising as an interesting form of advertising that is more preferred than other traditional forms of advertising. In that study, consumers reported that they are willing to share their information on these social media platforms, which in turn can help marketers in capturing consumers' interests and preferences. On the other hand, Kelly et al. (2010) showed that consumers can avoid advertising on social media websites for several reasons such as: perception of the irrelevance of the advertising, scepticism towards the advertising message and or the scepticism towards the advertising medium.

In the current study, the researcher focuses on social media based brand communities as the most emerging types of marketing on social media (He & Neghaban, 2017; Zaglia, 2013). In the following section, the researcher presents a background of the concept of brand community and its online forms. Also, Facebook brand pages, as a popular form of social media based brand communities, will be explained.

2.5 An Introduction to Brand Community

2.5.1 The concept of Brand Community

To understand the concept of brand community, it is important to understand its evolution and rapid adoption in the field of marketing in the recent years. The study of communities started in the field of sociology, where it was an important concern for many social theorists and philosophers in the past two centuries (Wellman, 1979). This became so important when many sociologists thought that modernity is challenging traditional societies and even destroying it (Cosgrove, 2006; Haferkamp & Smelser, 1992).

The development of consumption commonalities has led to the creation of brand communities or the communities of consumption (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002). Boorstin (1974) was perhaps the earliest commentator on communities based on consumption; he describes it as invisible new communities created and preserved by how and what people consumed. Boorstin indicated that this definition was shifting away communities from a geographic and interpersonal collection to a loose gathering based on consumption of brands.

Since people by nature have a continuous need to form and maintain interpersonal relationships, it is expected that these interpersonal relationships can be formed based on their consumption habits leading to establishment of brand communities (Stokburger-Sauer, 2010). Marketing literature has provided several definitions for a brand community; for example, it was defined as "*specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand*" (Muniz & O'guinn, 2001, p. 441). It is apparent that this definition implies that a brand community is specifically oriented and not bounded by a certain geographic area because its members don't have to live in the same physical location. Another definition for a brand community considers it a place that gathers people who are voluntarily related to each other by their common interest in a certain brand (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalíu, 2008). That definition suggests a

degree of homogeneity among members. Amine & Sitz (2004, p. 3) proposed a third definition, which is "*a self-selected, hierarchical and non-geographically bound group of consumers that share values, norms and social representations and recognize a strong feeling of membership with each other members and with the group as a whole on the basis of a common attachment to brands*".

The literature presents various reasons that encourage consumers to participate in brand communities; for instance, Algesheimer et al., (2005) indicated that brand communities represent an ideal place that enables consumers to take the opinion of others regarding the quality and performance of brands. Another reason is to share their consumption experiences with others since these communities are useful in products that need synergistic or joint consumption, such as sport teams communities (McAlexander et al., 2002). Additionally, it was found that these communities gather consumers who have strong brand identity and who wish to be associated with brands (de Chernatony et al., 2008). Likewise, Nambisan & Baron (2007) argued that these communities help its members in gaining four types of benefits which are: learning, social, personal and hedonic benefits.

Algesheimer et al. (2005) highlighted several reasons for marketers' interest in brand communities, which includes the ability to influence the actions and perceptions of its members, to test consumers' evaluation of the new offerings and to connect with the loyal customers. On the other hand, Bagozzi & Dholakia (2006a) argued that marketers prefer brand communities to engage consumers who have become resistant to traditional forms of marketing. Despite the practitioners' interest, there is still a need to understand consumers' perceptions inside a brand community and its effect in influencing consumer behaviour

(Clark, Black, & Judson, 2007; Hutter et al., 2013).

One of the famous brand communities that is well cited in literature is the Harley-Davidson Owners Group (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995; Schouten &

McAlexander, 1995). This community was initiated by the company to include the owners of motorcycles, where customers are added to the community after they purchase the motorcycles (Algesheimer et al., 2005). Harley-Davidson established its competitive strategy around its brand community since all of the events are organised by its employees and riders. Hence, many employees become motorcycle riders and many motorcycle riders become employees after joining the community (Fournier & Lee, 2009).

Algesheimer et al. (2005) argued that despite that many consumers who join a brand community hold positive attitudes towards the brand before joining it, their membership can have a positive impact on consumers' emotional and relational connections with the brand. This can be explained by the various tasks that a brand community introduces for its members on behalf of the brand such as information sharing, emphasising the brand's culture and providing assistance to customers (Laroche et al., 2012).

2.5.2 Characteristics of a Brand Community

Muniz & O'guinn (2001) were able to identify three characteristics that distinguish members of a brand community; these characteristics are: consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions, and moral responsibility. This is explained as follows:

2.5.2.1 Consciousness of Kind

According to Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), consciousness of kind is one of the most important characteristics of a brand community. It involves perceptions of connection that the brand community members have towards each other and the perceived difference they have towards non-members. In other words, members feel similarity with other members in the community, and separate themselves from outsiders (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006a). This marker of the brand community intersects with the social identity theory which assumes that people tend to categorise themselves into certain social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Brand communities usually gather people who possess a strong connection towards

the brand and towards each other, where in many cases they feel that they know each other although they have never met before (Habibi et al., 2014b; Relling et al., 2016). McAlexander et al. (2002) highlighted the importance of consciousness of kind in directing the behaviour of brand community members, where they argue that consumers don't participate in a brand community if they feel that they will not be accepted by other members or that they feel that they don't share a connection with members of the community or not fit in it. Therefore, consciousness of kind is considered a legitimate feeling that distinguishes true members from false members. It creates a feeling of belonging to the community and an opposition to other communities or groups (Martínez-López et al., 2016b).

2.5.2.2 Shared Rituals and Traditions

The second important characteristic of members of a brand community is their shared rituals and traditions. Members can share their individual consumption experiences and meanings they create regarding the brand with other members of the community. These shared rituals are usually understood by all members of this community. Examples of shared rituals can be the celebration of brand history and exchange of brand related stories (Muniz & O'guinn, 2001). Also, they can appear in the form of specific behaviours such as common language or signs that the members use while communicating with each other (Zaglia, 2013). Through these rituals and traditions, the meanings of the community and the brand is transmitted and shared inside and outside the community (Black & Veloutsou,2017; Casaló et al., 2008). Therefore, marketers should be aware of developing shared rituals, traditions and meanings that enhance community members' feelings to belong to the brand community (McAlexander et al., 2002).

2.5.2.3 Moral Responsibility

The third characteristic of brand communities is moral responsibility. It is defined as "*a sense of duty to the community as a whole, and to individual members of the community*"

(Muniz & O'guinn, 2001, p. 424). The feeling of moral responsibility produces a sense of collective action in times of threat to the community or the brand (Sierra, Badrinarayanan & Taute, 2016; McAlexander et al., 2002). Moral responsibility can be evident, for example, when old members help new members by giving them some advice regarding the brand consumption or when they integrate new members into the brand community (Muniz & O'guinn, 2001). This sense of moral responsibility makes experienced members feel an obligation towards newer members; they can answer their questions and provide any type of support by educating them about the usage of the products or services (Zaglia, 2013). McAlexander et al., (2002) argued that brand communities possess some additional characteristics, which are:

Geography: This characteristic is concerned with whether brand communities are scattered in different places or whether they are concentrated in one place. The introduction of the computer-mediated environments and the internet has allowed the formation of online brand communities regardless of location boundaries.

Social Context: This characteristic refers to different relationships inside the brand community, where in some communities members know everything about each other because they know each other personally; whereas in other communities members don't know each other.

Temporality: This feature highlights the importance of time when describing brand communities. Some communities are temporary while others are stable and sustainable.

2.5.3 Consumers' Relationships in a Brand Community and Customer Centric Model

Different descriptions for consumers' relationships inside brand communities have been proposed in marketing literature. For instance, Muniz & O'guinn (2001) described these relationships as a customer-customer brand triad. Under that model, consumers develop two types of relationships which are: consumer-consumer and consumer-brand

relationships (See Figure 2.4). McAlexander et al. (2002) criticised Muniz & O'guinn's model for not being able to describe the crucial role of consumers inside the brand community. In other words, they indicated that the customer-customer-brand triad is correct yet not sufficient where it ignored the relationships that customers have with the product and the company (Wiegandt,2009). Thus, McAlexander et al. (2002) expanded the descriptions of relationships inside a brand community to a customer centric model whereby the customer is at the centre of the brand community. In that model, four consumer relationships can exist, which are consumer-product, consumer-brand, consumer-company, and consumer-consumer relationships. Figure 2.4 compares the brand community triad by Muniz & O'guinn (2001) and customer centric model by McAlexander et al. (2002).

McAlexander et al. (2002) further highlighted the importance of customer experiences inside the brand communities as well as the importance of the integration of new members. Integrated customers act as marketers for the brand by spreading its news to other communities. Also, these customers are more forgiving than others for any shortcomings regarding the brand performance (McAlexander, Kim & Roberts, 2003).

Figure 2. 4: Key relationships in the brand community
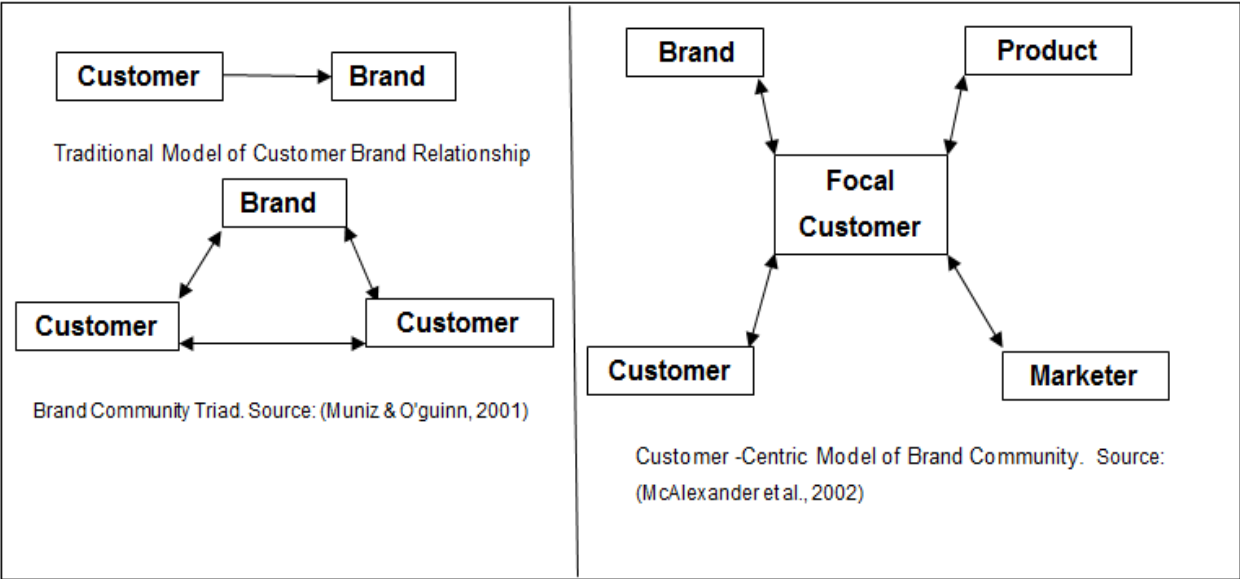
Source: Adopted from McAlexander et al. (2002) and Muniz & O'guinn (2001)

The development of the internet to become Web 2.0, which is based on connectivity and participation (O'reilly, 2005), allows consumers and companies to form brand communities on social media platforms (Zaglia, 2013). In the current study, the researcher focuses on brand pages on Facebook as one of the most popular forms of social media based brand communities. This will be discussed in the following section.

2.5.4 Online Brand Communities

Many companies are looking for innovative and cost-efficient ways to retain their profitable customers and sustain long-lasting relationships with them (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). In this new marketing era, one of the media that enhances the communication between companies and its customers is the social media based brand communities (Clark et al., 2017). The development of social networks has allowed people and companies to form virtual (online) communities, giving less attention to geographic boundaries, which were one of the main characteristics of traditional communities (Zaglia, 2013).

Authors have been using the term 'online brand communities' synonymously with 'virtual brand communities' in marketing literature (Casaló et al., 2008; Martínez-López et al., 2016a). According to De Valck et al. (2009, p. 185), a virtual community can be defined as "*a specialized, non-geographically bound, online community based on social communications and relationships among a brand's consumers*." These communities have been developed in a computer-mediated environment, which allows the formation of virtual communities that enable people to exchange information and emotions (Brogi, 2014). They represent an online grouping of individuals who share a mutual interest in a brand, using electronic mediation to overcome real-life space and time limitations (Royo-Vela & Casamassima, 2011). These online communities can be developed and managed by the brand managers or by consumers of a certain brand (Zaglia, 2013).

The main feature of an online brand community is the ability of its members to interact with each other (Martínez-López et al., 2016a). Similarly, like traditional communities, consumers join such communities because they are interested in a specific brand and want

to exchange information or knowledge or simply express their passion for the brand (Hutter et al., 2013). Since these communities represent an additional channel for communication between companies and consumers (Sung et al., 2010), they enable prospective customers to benefit from the experiences of current customers, which can facilitate the development of brand loyalty and commitment (Dessart et al., 2015).

Relying on the interactive nature of social media, online brand communities allow companies to change their traditional one-way communication into a more participatory two-way communication with its current and prospective customers (Munnukka et al., 2015). When a consumer joins a brand community on social media, interacts with other people who share similar interests by exchanging reviews and experiences, the invisible member becomes visible (Habibi et al., 2014b). Thus, in contrast to conventional online advertising, online brand communities not only target the relationship between the brand and customers but also the relationship between customers, which can result in a change in their consumption behaviour (Altobelli & Meister, 2013).

With the aim of investigating the unique characteristics of brand communities on social media, Habibi et al. (2014b) conducted a netnographic research on two brand communities. In that study, the researchers attributed their unique characteristics to two aspects, which are: the technological aspect of the web 2.0, which allows communication between users in a low-cost manner and which enables consumers to exchange all types of materials between each other, and the ideological aspect of the user-generated content, which enables consumers to exchange knowledge and culture.

Brogi (2014) identified four characteristics of online brand communities that are related to consumers' interactions inside these communities. The first characteristic is the level of interaction and participation between the members and the degree of their social involvement. The second characteristic is the level of consumers' satisfaction with the benefits they get from the community, while the third characteristic is the consumers' level of identification with the community, and finally the level of the communication quality,

which refers to the consumers' evaluation of the quality of information exchange in the community, which can include timeliness, relevance, frequency and duration.

Several studies highlighted the reasons that encourage consumers to join online brand communities. For instance, through surveying members of an online community, Sung et al. (2010) indicated that there are six social and psychological motives that encourage consumers to participate in the community. These reasons are:

- Interpersonal utility - users join the community to meet people who have the same interests.
- Brand likability - users join the community because they have favourable attitudes towards the brand.
- Entertainment seeking - members perceive the community to be enjoyable.
- Information seeking - these communities are useful in providing information and solving problems.
- Incentive seeking - consumers are looking for certain rewards.
- Convenience - these communities are easily used and accessed.

Furthermore, by examining a number of brand pages on Facebook through the adoption of netnographic approach, Zaglia (2013) indicated that consumers join these online communities because of their passion for the brands and their willingness to learn about them. Additionally, they found that consumers consider these communities a reliable source of information and a place that helps them socialise with like-minded consumers.

On the other hand, Royo-Vela & Casamassima (2011) conducted a study to examine the outcomes of consumers belonging to Facebook brand communities. The findings showed that consumers' membership in these online communities can result in their satisfaction, positive word of mouth and affective commitment to the brand. In that study, the researchers distinguished between participative and non-participative belonging; in participative belonging, the users of the brand community interact with the posts and share content with other users, while in non-participative belonging users join the community only to get updated about news and offers from the brand. Laroche et al. (2012) follow a

similar path in their research. They stated that consumers' membership in social media based brand communities can lead to their loyalty for brands.

2.5.5 Online versus Offline Brand Communities

Several criteria can be used to differentiate between traditional offline brand communities and virtual (online) communities. Firstly, it is interesting to look at the consumers' perceptions inside the two forms. In the offline communities, relationships are formed between people who are interested in a certain brand. They meet physically to practice some activities that are related to the brand consumption. A famous example of this type is the Harly-Davidson riders group, where these like-minded customers organise events to practice their riding activities (Algesheimer et al., 2005). On the other hand, virtual brand communities tend to have less precise descriptions. Their members exchange information about certain topics related to the brand in online environments (Martínez-López, Anaya-Sánchez, Aguilar-Illescas, & Molinillo, 2015). Thus, it is apparent that social relationships in the traditional community tend to be more established than in the online form (Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013). Another difference between the offline and online brand communities is the degree of dispersion of their members. The number of members of online communities is often larger than the number of members of offline communities, where members of the online ones are not geographically bounded or restricted. Also, they are not bounded to any time restrictions as they don't need to be virtually present during the times of interactions (Wirtz et al., 2013). Table 2.2 summarises the differences between the offline and online brand communities. On the other hand, some authors identified some major differences between social media based brand communities and online brand communities. For example, Habibi et al. (2014b) stated that the brand communities on social networks do not cost a lot to create and maintain. Another difference is that the users of the social media communities provide their real identities contrary to users of online communities who usually use nicknames. The major differences between social media based and traditional online communities are outlined in Table 2.3.

Table 2. 2: Major differences between offline and online brand communities

Dimension	Offline Brand Community	Online Brand Community
Mode of Interaction	Face-to-face interactions. More formal structure.	Virtual interactions. Less formal structure.
Cost	High costs (monetary costs for travel, costs of time and effort).	Low costs because interactions are conducted in online environments.
Involvement with the Company and the Brand	Greater involvement since interpersonal relationships between members develop over time.	Less involvement because members join these communities for different reasons. Also, many members could be less active (passive participants).
Reason for Participation	Seeking the intrinsic benefits of participating and maintaining relationships. Expression of devotion and loyalty towards the brands.	Seeking the help of other members and obtaining discounts.
Community Norms and Rituals	High levels of shared norms and rituals.	The norms and rituals are less evident.
User Identity and Community Interaction between Members	True identities of members cannot be hidden due to the face-to-face interactions.	The users have the option of either using their real identities or not, depending on the context interactions take place.

Source: Adopted from Martínez-López et al. (2015) and Wirtz et al. (2013)

Table 2. 3: Major differences between social media and online brand communities

Dimension	Social media Brand Community	Online Brand Community
Cost	Very low costs.	Low costs.
Initiator	Can be initiated and managed by firms or by consumers.	Usually initiated and managed by companies.
Time of joining the community	Consumers can join these communities any time without even purchasing from the brand.	Consumers are usually invited to the community after they have purchased from the brand, e.g. brand fests or private club communities.
User Identity and Community Interaction between Members	In most cases, members of these communities interact with their real identities.	Pseudonyms are usually used.

Source: Adopted from Habibi et al. (2014b)

In the following part, the researcher introduces an overview of the Facebook brand pages, which are considered the most popular form of social media based brand communities (Shi, Chen & Chow,2016), and represent the main focus of the current study.

2.5.6 Brand Pages on Facebook

With the expansion of social networking sites, many companies established their brand communities on these networks (Zaglia, 2013). Social media based brand communities are often called brand pages or fan pages (Al Said, 2013; Hutter et al., 2013). These brand pages are profiles created and managed by companies on various social media platforms to connect them with their current and prospective customers (Habibi et al., 2014a; Kang, Tang, & Fiore, 2015). They are usually run by one or more moderators (social media managers) who are employed by the company (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). Many companies usually post a variety of brand-related content on these pages hoping for consumer engagement with this content (Chow & Shi, 2015). By doing so, these companies aim to attract customers towards their brands (Borle, Dholakia, Singh, & Durham, 2012).

In the case of Facebook, many companies have considered it the most attractive social media platform for marketing purposes, particularly for business-to-consumer communication (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Khobzi & Teimourpour, 2015; Social Media Examiner, 2016). The rapid popularity of Facebook marketing prompted Kotler and Armstrong (2016) to mention it seventy-nine times in different sections in their best-selling book, 'Principles of Marketing'. On Facebook, one of the most popular social media marketing tools, which is widely used by marketers, is the 'brand page' (Khobzi & Teimourpour, 2015; Kudeshia, Sikdar, & Mittal, 2016). On that social network, users can become 'fans' of certain brands by pressing the 'like button' on their pages (Jahn & Kunz, 2012). After becoming fans of these brands, users can see brand-related content published on these pages on the brand page wall, as well as a central part of the users' page known as the wall or the timeline (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Su, Reynolds, & Sun, 2015). Also,

when consumers actively engage with this content, the story of this engagement appears to the friends of these users and are published as 'stories about friends' (Haydon, 2015). See Figure 2.5 for a screenshot of a brand story on Facebook.

Figure 2. 5: A screenshot of a brand story shared by a consumer on Facebook

On Facebook brand pages, consumers can post comments, interact with other consumers as well as with companies that operate these pages (Jahn & Kunz, 2012). Therefore, by performing these behaviours, consumers become active participants (Khobzi & Teimourpour, 2015). This is in contrast to traditional mass media, where consumers are passive recipients of marketing messages (Quan-Haase & Young, 2014).

A review of social media marketing literature shows that many companies have been increasingly using Facebook brand pages for various reasons such as increasing brand awareness and gaining access to new audiences in a more targeted way (Tsimonis &

Dimitriadis, 2014), delivering information to their current and prospective customers (Chow & Chi, 2015), and engaging customers with their brands (Social media examiner, 2016).

Despite the popularity of Facebook brand pages among marketers and consumers, there is still a limitation in academic knowledge regarding consumers' motivation to use and engage on brand pages (Jahn & Kunz, 2012). Additionally, there are very limited studies on theorising the mechanism by which brand pages on Facebook enhance consumer-brand relationships (Su et al., 2015). More importantly, there has always been an unanswered question regarding the best ways that could help companies get full advantage of these pages (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). Moreover, the nature of brand communities and their effects on consumer behaviour need more exploration (Hutter et al., 2013; Hsieh & Wei,2017).

2.6 Summary

This chapter has presented an overview of the continuous growth of social media and its rapid adoption for marketing purposes. Specifically, it has focused on the social networking website, Facebook. More importantly, it has introduced the concept of brand community and its various characteristics. Finally, it has discussed the rapid rise of online brand communities, specifically Facebook brand pages.

Chapter 3: Consumer Engagement in Social Media Based Brand Communities

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher reviews the existing scholarly work around the concept of consumer engagement. The chapter is organised into six main sections as follows: firstly, section 3.2 provides an overview of the concept of consumer engagement, as well as the limitations of understanding it in general and in the context of online brand communities embedded in social networks in particular. After that, section 3.3 discusses the antecedents of engagement, with specific focus on relevant theories to the current study. Then, section 3.4 discusses the concept of brand love. Following this, section 3.5 demonstrates the concept of brand equity and its outcomes, as well as the limitations of understanding it in online environments. Finally, section 3.6 summarises this chapter.

3.2 The Concept of Consumer Engagement

Originally, the term 'engagement' was widely used across different academic disciplines including sociology 'civic engagement' (Skocpol & Fiorina, 2004), psychology 'social engagement' (Arai & Pedlar, 2003) and management 'employee engagement' (Saks, 2006). Also, this concept has attracted the attention of scholars in the organisational behaviour field. For instance, Kahn (1990) used the concept of engagement to describe a group of personnel behaviours in the work settings. He described engaged employees as those who "*employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances*"(Kahn, 1990, p. 694). Similarly, another group of studies used psychological explanations to describe employee engagement as a multidimensional construct that consists of cognitive, emotional and physical dimensions (Luthans & Peterson, 2002; Macey & Schneider, 2008).

In the marketing literature, many concepts have been traditionally used to describe positive relationships between consumers and brands, such as consumer trust (Hoffman, Novak, & Peralta, 1999), consumer loyalty (Lewis & Soureli, 2006), brand attachment (Thomson et al.,2005) and consumer brand preference (Lin, 2002). However, academic interest regarding interactive experiences and relationships between consumers and brands (i.e., consumer engagement) has been evident in some recent marketing publications (Barger et al., 2016; Khan et al., 2016).

In the marketing literature, consumer engagement as a sub-concept under the umbrella term, 'engagement', is becoming an important subject of interest (Brodie et al., 2011; Gambetti, Graffigna, & Biraghi, 2012; Oh, Roumani, Nwankpa, & Hu, 2016; Van Doorn et al., 2010). A relatively new concept in the field of marketing (Zhang, Guo, Hu, & Liu, 2016), consumer engagement is considered a hot topic in the study of consumer-brand relationships (Gambetti, Biraghi, Schultz, & Graffigna, 2016; Leckie, Nyadzayo, & Johnson, 2016). The importance of this topic has become very evident. For instance, the Journal of Service Research called for a special issue entitled 'customer engagement' in 2010 asking for a better academic understanding of that new concept. Furthermore, Kotler & Armstrong (2016) added a special chapter on customer engagement in the sixteenth edition of their widely sold book 'principles of marketing'. In their book, they defined customer engagement marketing as "*making the brand a meaningful part of consumers' conversations and lives by fostering direct and continuous customer involvement in shaping brand conversations, experiences and community*" (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016, p. 42). The interest of academics to study consumer engagement has increased after it was linked with some important marketing constructs (Bijmolt et al., 2010). For example, high levels of consumer engagement have been associated with customer loyalty (Leckie et al., 2016; Schau et al., 2009), brand love (Leventhal, Wallace, Buil, & de Chernatony, 2014), customer feedback and referrals (Nambisan & Baron, 2007), satisfaction (Challagalla, Venkatesh, & Kohli, 2009) and the willingness of consumers to generate positive word of

mouth (Oh et al., 2016). Furthermore, the importance of studying consumer engagement has increased as a result of the inadequacy of other constructs in predicting consumer behaviour. For instance, consumer engagement is a different concept than more established concepts that are often used to describe consumer-brand relationships, including brand commitment, brand involvement and brand relationship quality (Hollebeek, 2011). Also, it differs from other constructs that are used in describing customer attitudes such as trust and satisfaction (Van Doorn et al., 2010).

Based on this recent academic interest, it is expected that consumer engagement research will provide a significant advancement in branding and relationship marketing literature (De Vries & Carlson, 2014; He & Negahban, 2017; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan, 2012). Despite its recent history in the marketing literature, the literature provides several definitions for the term 'engagement' in the marketing field. See Table 3.1.

Table 3. 1: Various definitions of consumer engagement in the marketing literature

Author (s)	Definition	Operationalisation
Vivek et al. (2012)	Customer engagement refers to the degree of customers' participation and connection with different organisational offerings.	Multidimensional construct (Utilitarian, hedonic and social components).
Brodie et al. (2011)	Customer engagement is a motivational condition that results from customers' interactive experiences with brands through various relationships.	Multidimensional construct (Cognitive, emotional and behavioural components).
Bowden (2009)	Consumer engagement is a psychological process that involves mechanisms that allow old and new customers to develop loyalty for various services.	Multidimensional construct (Cognitive and affective components).
Patterson, Yu, & De Ruyter (2006)	It is the level of customers' various "presence" in their relationship with a service organisation	Multidimensional construct (Vigour, dedication, absorption, and interaction.).
Hollebeek (2011)	Consumers are engaged when they are emotionally, cognitively and behaviourally involved with brands.	Multidimensional construct (Cognitive, emotional and behavioural components).
Van Doorn et al. (2010)	Customer engagement involves motivational drivers that results in different behavioural manifestations towards brands during and after the purchase process.	Unidimensional construct (Behavioural component).
Kumar et al. (2010)	Engagement of customers involves active experiences they have with companies as well as with other customers.	Multidimensional construct (Cognitive, emotional and behavioural components).
Higgins & Scholer (2009)	Engagement is a state of being involved, occupied, fully absorbed or engrossed in something.	Multidimensional construct (Cognitive, emotional and behavioural components).
So, King, & Sparks (2014)	Customer engagement is a customer's personal connection to a brand as manifested in cognitive, affective, and behavioural actions outside of the purchase situation.	Multidimensional construct (Enthusiasm (or vigour), attention, absorption, interaction, and identification components).
Mollen & Wilson (2010)	Consumer engagement is a customer's emotional and cognitive involvement with brands on a website or a computer-mediated environment.	Multidimensional construct (Cognitive, instrumental value and experiential value components).
Sprott, Czellar, & Spangenberg (2009)	Brand engagement in self-concept (BESC) refers to consumers' propensity to include important brands as part of how they view themselves.	Unidimensional construct (Emotional component).
Hollebeek et al. (2014)	Consumer brand engagement is the consumers' positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity that are related to consumer-brand interactions.	Multidimensional construct (Cognitive processing, affection and activation components).
Dwivedi (2015)	Consumers' level of vigour, dedication and absorption towards brands.	Multidimensional construct (Cognitive, emotional and behavioural components).
Jaakkola & Alexander (2014)	Customer engagement behaviours is the voluntary resource contributions given by customers and that have a brand or firm focus but go beyond fundamental transactions.	Unidimensional construct (Behavioural component).
Lane (2003)	It is the degree to which customers are ready to provide their personal resources to sustain their relationships with brands.	Multidimensional construct (Cognition, participation and interaction components).
Harrigan et al. (2017)	Customer engagement is the result of customers' involvement with brands, which is expected to enhance their loyalty towards these brands.	Multidimensional construct (Enthusiasm, attention, absorption, interaction and identification components).

These various definitions for consumer engagement indicate that the nature of consumer engagement is context-dependant (Noguti, Lee, & Dwivedi, 2016). In addition, it shows that there are different explanations for the dimensionality of engagement, where it has been described in some studies as unidimensional, e.g. (Jaakkola & Alexander,2014; Van Doorn et al., 2010), while in other studies it was conceptualised as a multidimensional construct, e.g. (Harrigan et al.,2017;Hollebeek, 2011). Additionally, it is apparent that most of these definitions focus on the active role of consumers in their relationship with brands (Verleye, Gemmel, & Rangarajan, 2016), where it highlights consumers' interactive and co-creative experiences with companies and brands (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013).

Similarly, like academics, practitioners have been at the forefront of attempts to understand and build customer engagement (Sashi, 2012; So et al.,2014). They usually view engagement as the ability of companies to build relationships with customers by involving and connecting them through and with the aid of relationship programs (Vivek et al., 2012). They consider it an ongoing effort of activating customers through interaction, shared values, experiential contents and rewards, with the aim of strengthening the bond between consumers and brands (Schultz, 2007). Also, the practitioners' interest in building customer engagement is as a result of the recognition of its positive outcomes including sales growth, customer involvement, customer feedback and positive word of mouth (Harrigan et al., 2017). More importantly, the rise of the consciousness of managers on the importance of customer engagement has paralleled the rise of information technologies (Chan et al., 2014). Specifically, the emergence of social media and its enhanced ability to facilitate interactions between buyers and sellers has occupied the heart of practitioners' interest (Sashi, 2012; Wirtz et al., 2013). The development of social networking sites with its interactive nature has facilitated the conversations between companies and customers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). This has amplified consumer empowerment since consumers get more involved in value creation and content generation (Laroche et al., 2012).

Consumer engagement has its theoretical roots in the literature of relationship marketing (Van Doorn et al., 2010; Vivek et al., 2012). Relationship marketing theory provides a suitable background for examining the concept of consumer engagement (Ashley et al., 2011), and offers a better understanding of the relationships between consumers and brands (Dessart et al., 2015). The expanded domain of relationship marketing considers consumers an essential element in the value creation process for companies; therefore, it is expected that consumers be actively engaged in the process (Vivek, 2009).

Likewise, Ashley, Noble, Donthu, and Lemon (2011) considered consumer engagement a key factor in the success of relationship marketing practices since many traditional relationship marketing programs lack success because they fail to engage consumers in their marketing activities. This broadening of the relationship-marketing domain highlights the role of existing and prospective customers, as well as consumer communities, on value creation within organisations throughout their interactive consumer experiences (Brodie et al., 2013).

The main challenge for academics and managers is that although they are eager to engage their consumers by providing platforms that allow them to interact together (Dessart et al., 2015; Vivek et al., 2012), the area of consumer engagement is still relatively young and unexplored (Brodie et al., 2011) and empirical research is, therefore, limited to its drivers and outcomes (Leckie et al., 2016). In addition, only few researches developed and tested measurement scales for consumer engagement with brands, e.g. (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

3.2.1 Engagement in Social Media Based Brand Communities

With the rapid rise of social media based brand communities, the term 'consumer engagement' has been increasingly used to describe the nature of consumers' interactive experiences inside these online communities (Baldus et al., 2015; Oh et al., 2016). Hence, this has directed the consumer engagement research in the recent few years, e.g. (Brodie et al., 2013; Chan et al., 2014). This follows on from marketers' eagerness to adopt social

media platforms for engaging consumers with the two-way communication capabilities these social media platforms offer (De Vries & Carlson, 2014; Hutter et al., 2013; Jahn & Kunz, 2012) and fuelled by a rapid growth in brand pages on Facebook for engaging consumers (Brogi, 2014). These pages facilitate engagement, where consumers can join their favourite brand pages, share brand stories and consumption experiences within the triad of online communications between consumers about brands, other consumers and suppliers (Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins, & Wiertz, 2013).This has enabled consumers to become co-creators and multipliers of brand messages, which gives companies a great opportunity to benefit from free word of mouth (Jahn & Kunz, 2012). Despite this interest, a limitation in understanding the differences between that concept and other concepts in the context of social media, such as involvement and participation, is a challenge (Brodie et al., 2013). So while the literature about online brand communities provides various definitions for consumer engagement in the online context (see Table 3.2), they also provide theoretical bases to consider for research studies.

Table 3. 2: Various definitions of consumer engagement in the online context

Author (s)	Definition	Paper Type	Operationalisation
Dessart et al. (2015)	Online brand community engagement involves engagement with both the community and the brand. Both forms are intertwined, each one of them sustaining the other.	Qualitative	Multidimensional construct (Affective, cognitive and behavioural components).
Jahn & Kunz (2012)	Fan page engagement is the consumers' interactive and integrative participation in the fan page community.	Quantitative	Unidimensional construct (Behavioural component).
Baldus et al. (2015)	Online brand community engagement is the consumers' compelling, intrinsic motivations to continue interacting with an online brand community.	Qualitative & Quantitative	Multidimensional construct (11 dimensions).
Calder, Malthouse, & Schaedel (2009)	Consumer engagement with a website is defined as a collection of consumer's beliefs about how a website fits into their life.	Quantitative	Multidimensional construct (Personal and Social-Interactive Engagement).
Noguti et al. (2016)	User engagement in online content communities involves the number of comments and likes to posts in that community.	Quantitative	Unidimensional construct (Behavioural component).
Evans & Cothrel, (2014)	Online brand community engagement involves progression towards increasing consumers' participation.	Conceptual	Unidimensional construct (Behavioural component).
Zhang et al. (2016)	Engagement is the repeated interactions between consumers and brands on social media. These interactions strengthen the emotional, psychological and physical investment consumers have in those brands.	Quantitative	Multidimensional construct (Conscious participation, enthusiasm, and social interaction components).
Brodie et al. (2013)	Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community involves specific interactive experiences between consumers and the brand, and/or other members of the community.	Qualitative	Multidimensional concept (Cognitive, emotional and behavioural components).
Chan et al. (2014)	Consumer engagement in online brand communities is defined as the level of a person's cognitive, emotional and behavioural presence in brand interactions with an online community.	Quantitative	Multidimensional Construct (Cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions).
Wirtz et al.(2013)	Online brand community engagement refers to the positive influence of consumers identifying with the community. This is defined as the consumer's intrinsic motivation to interact and cooperate with community members	Conceptual	Multidimensional Construct (Cognitive and affective).
Kuzgun (2015)	Consumer engagement in virtual brand communities involves deep immersion and concentration on the virtual brand community page. Also, it involves positive emotions that are aroused after a certain period of experiencing the brand community page. Finally, it involves favourable physical activities towards the brand and its community.	Qualitative & Quantitative	Multidimensional Construct (Cognitive, emotional and physical).
Harrigan et al. (2017)	Customer engagement with companies and brands on social media involves repeated interactions between a customer and organisations that strengthen the emotional, psychological or physical investment a customer has in the brand and the organisation.	Quantitative	Multidimensional Construct (Enthusiasm, Attention, Absorption, Interaction and Identification).

In addition to the previous definitions, Evans (2012) developed the 'hierarchy of engagement', which shows a progression of consumers towards an increasing participation on social media. The stages of engagement hierarchy are consumption, creation, curation and advocacy.

1. **Consumption:** It means downloading, reading, watching or listening to the digital content on social media. This stage represents the first stage of consumer engagement with social media content.

2. **Creation**: It means contributing and participating in the content. This occurs when consumers add videos, photos, or any other content.

3. **Curation**: It means rating, classifying or commenting on any content posted by others. This usually happens when consumers rate the reviews of others on social media platforms.

4. **Advocacy:** It refers to co-creating, recommending or defending on behalf of the brand or the product. When consumers are encouraging others to buy or use the product and helping them to take the best decision, they are in the advocacy stage.

Despite the availability of various definitions, there is still a lack of agreement on the definition of engagement in the social media based brand communities (Chan et al., 2014). In other words, the interpretations of that term is still mired in vagueness and controversy (Dessart et al., 2015). The following section provides an overview of these limitations and conflicts.

3.2.2 Limitations in the Understanding of the Nature of Consumer Engagement in Social Media Based Brand Communities

Despite the significant interest marketers and academics have in understanding the concept of consumer engagement, the marketing literature shows a number of shortcomings. Firstly, academic scholars have not reached an agreement with its definition (Zhang et al., 2016). Specifically, there is no consensus on the description of the nature of consumer engagement. Some authors consider it a psychological process, while others focus on its behavioural facets. For instance, Bowden (2009) argued that customer engagement is a

psychological process that consumers go through to develop loyalty for brands. On the other hand, other studies provided a different approach by considering the behavioural aspects of consumer engagement. For example, Bolton (2011) and Van Doorn et al. (2010) argued that consumer engagement goes beyond feelings to include behavioural manifestations. These studies indicated that engaged customers are more likely to do things that show their engagement, such as giving feedback to companies, spreading positive word of mouth and helping other consumers. Similarly, Gummerus et al. (2012) argued that consumer engagement involves performing some firm-related activities. This type of customer engagement was enhanced by the emergence of the social media that facilitated the consumer-brand interaction (Harrigan et al., 2017). Accordingly, customer engagement in online environments can include behaviours that weren't available in the offline context, such as online discussions, commenting, information search and participation in online polls (Gummerus, et al., 2012). Given the conflicts in identifying the nature of consumer engagement, it is clear that more work is needed regarding that area.

The second shortcoming in the marketing literature is the conflict in identifying the dimensionality of consumer engagement. Some studies considered consumer engagement a unidimensional construct, while other studies considered it a multidimensional construct. For example, a group of studies focused on one dimension of engagement, capturing engagement behaviours, e.g. (Kabadayi & Price,2014; Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014; Verhoef, Reinartz, & Krafft, 2010). On the other hand, other studies provide a broader perspective for consumer engagement by adding more dimensions. For instance, by conducting a netnographic analysis of some online communities, Brodie et al. (2013) found out that consumer engagement is a multidimensional concept that includes emotional, cognitive and behavioural dimensions. Another study by Vivek et al. (2012) added the social elements to these three dimensions. On the other hand, Patterson et al. (2006) provided a different conceptualisation by identifying four dimensions of consumer engagement, which are vigour, dedication, absorption, and interaction. In summary, these

various conceptualisations show the need for more work that identifies the dimensions and sub-dimensions of consumer engagement, especially in online environments that are characterised by its interactive nature.

As a result of the rapid adoption of online brand communities for marketing purposes, as well the growing interest of marketers to increase consumer engagement in these online communities (Hammedi et al., 2015), there is an increasing interest of both academics and marketers to understand the drivers and outcomes of consumer engagement in these online brand communities (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Munnukka et al., 2015). Even though the motivators and outcomes of consumer engagement and participation in offline brand communities are being widely studied in literature (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Ouwersloot & Odekerken-Schröder, 2008), it is expected that the motivators and outcomes of consumer engagement in the online communities should be different due to the interactive distinctive features of social media (Dessart et al., 2015; Habibi et al., 2016). Engagement is very essential on social media, as without it social media might be like television or radio (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). Thus, it is very important to understand this new concept in the context of social media and online brand communities embedded in it.

To conclude, in this study, the concept of consumer engagement on social media based brand communities is the main variable of interest. Hence, it is vital to explore its dimensions and sub-dimensions in the context of social media. Most of the recent work in that area focused on studying some engagement behaviours on these online communities (i.e., number of likes, comments and shares) as a sole indicator of consumer engagement, e.g. (Dolan et al., 2015; Khobzi & Teimourpour 2015; Tafesse & Tafesse, 2016). Given the wide popularity of Facebook brand pages among consumers and marketers, it is very important to investigate the concept of consumer engagement in that context. More importantly, identifying the antecedents and outcomes of this engagement will be beneficial to both academics and practitioners. The following section discusses important antecedents to engagement on social media brand communities based on an extensive literature review.

3.3 Antecedents of Engagement

Different antecedents of consumer behaviour in the context of online brand communities have been proposed in the marketing literature, e.g. (Aksoy et al., 2013; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006a; Dessart et al., 2015; Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Madupu & Cooley, 2010; Woisetschläger, Hartleb, & Blut, 2008). The literature indicated that consumer participation in the brand communities can be facilitated by the availability of some factors, which are categorised into two groups. The first group includes some factors that are related to consumers' relationships with the brands that initiated these online communities; these factors include brand identification, brand satisfaction, brand trust and brand symbolic function. On the other hand, the second group of variables is related to consumers' perceptions in the brand community; these factors include consumers' perceptions of the availability of a certain critical mass and certain benefits or rewards in the brand community. This will be discussed in the following sections in details.

3.3.1 Brand Identification

It is widely agreed that the strong relationships that develop between consumers and brands will lead to positive outcomes for both parties of this relationship (Stokburger-Sauer, 2010). One of the positive outcomes that develops as a result of these relationships is the consumer-brand identification (Tuškej, Golob, & Podnar, 2013). Various definitions for brand identification have been proposed in marketing literature. For example, Carlson, Suter, and Brown (2008, p. 286) stated that personal identification with the brand is "*the degree of overlap between an individual's self-schema and the schema s/he holds for a brand*". Also, it has been described as "*the degree to which a person defines him or herself by the same attributes that he or she believes defines a brand*" (Hughes & Ahearne, 2010, p. 84). Brand identification entails consumers' perceived state of oneness with a brand, where it enables them to express their identities by becoming part of brands' identities (Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, & Sen, 2012). From these three definitions, it is apparent

that consumers who have high levels of brand identification tend to express themselves by coming closer to brands (Aksoy et al., 2013).

In the time of high consumer scepticism towards brands and the decrease in the effectiveness of traditional mass media in promoting brands, the value of brand identification has become increasingly important (Tuškej et al., 2013). Prior research has identified the crucial role of consumer identification with brands. For instance, high level of brand identification was associated with brand preference (Tildesley & Coote, 2009), consumer loyalty , high purchase intention (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2008), brand commitment, word of mouth (Tuškej et al., 2013), brand advocacy and consumer resilience to negative information (Wheeler,2013). A review of the marketing literature shows that consumers' level of brand identification can be an important driver for their participation in brand communities (Algesheimer et al.,2005; McAlexander et al., 2002; Stokburger-Sauer, 2010). This can be explained by the social identity theory which will be discussed in the following section.

3.3.1.1 Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory (SIT) was first introduced by Tajfel (1978) and later by Tajfel & Turner (1979). In addition to the personal identity that an individual has, this theory argues that people often have a social identity (Greenberg, 2012). In other words, it assumes that people go beyond their personal identity to develop a social identity (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Brewer, 1991). This theory indicates that an essential part of an individual's identity is determined by his/her belonging to different social groups (Trepte, 2006), where it focuses on the group inside each individual (Hogg & Abrams, 2006). A social identity is different from a personal identity, which refers to the characteristics that define a particular individual, such as age, height and personal interests (Greenberg, 2012).

According to Tajfel (1979), people tend to categorise themselves and others into homogenous groups that share common characteristics. These groups (e.g., family, social

class, football team, nationality, etc.) can be an important source of pride and self-esteem for people and can give them a sense of belonging to the social world that they belong to (Tajfel,1979). Additionally, these groups facilitate individuals' self-definition within their own social environment (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). People tend to perceive huge differences between themselves and other social groups they don't belong to and little differences between themselves and other people inside the same group that they categorised themselves into (Trepte, 2006). In other words, people tend to divide the world into "them" and "us" through the process of social categorisation (Hogg & Abrams, 2006). Accordingly, they are more likely to perceive that their membership in various social groups is helpful in reducing stress and in enhancing their social image (Haslam, O'Brien, Jetten, Vormedal, & Penna, 2005).

Ashforth & Mael (1989) were among the first authors that used the social identity theory to explain consumers' identification with companies. They argued that consumers tend to develop a sense of belonging with companies that they find to be self-referential or self-defining. The sense of connection between people and companies is derived from two images – what the member believes is distinctive, central, and enduring about the company ('perceived organizational identity') and what the member believes outsiders think of the company ('construed external image') (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). This identification can have some positive outcomes for companies, including customers' loyalty and retention and customers' resilience to negative information (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003).

Social media, with its interactive nature, allows people to create desirable images about themselves by posting pictures and other information on their profiles on these networks (Tamburrini, Cinnirella, Jansen, & Bryden, 2015). Thus, it gives them the opportunity to enhance their social image and to build their social identity through online interactions with others (Wang, Ma, & Li, 2015). In the marketing literature, the social identity theory was used to explain consumers' willingness to interact with brands on social media. For

example, Habibi et al. (2014a) used this theory to partly explain why consumers would join a social media based brand community. They stated that by joining this community consumers are able to fulfil their need of brand identification. Another study by Heere et al. (2011) showed that brand communities can present a suitable place for consumers to express their identification and devotion for brands.

3.3.2 Brand Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is one of the important concepts that have been extensively researched in the marketing field (Chinomona, 2013; Kuenzel & Halliday, 2008; Pappu & Quester, 2006; Rahimi & Kozak, 2017). This is because it is widely accepted that customer satisfaction with brands is one of the key factors that are responsible for long-term success and profits of organisations (Luo & Homburg, 2007).

Consumer satisfaction with brands refers to the favourable attitudes that consumers develop as a result of their positive evaluations of their consumption experiences with these brands (Erciş, Ünal, Candan, & Yıldırım, 2012). Consumers perceive a sense of satisfaction when their perception of a brand's performance exceeds their expectations (He, Li, & Harris, 2012). The marketing literature provides two perspectives for explaining customer satisfaction, which are: transaction-specific satisfaction and overall satisfaction. Transaction-specific satisfaction is considered an immediate post-purchase evaluation judgement that consumers conduct regarding the brand performance (Oliver & Westbrook, 1993). It entails consumer' affective reactions in response to their recent experiences during the purchase process of certain brands (San Martín & Del Bosque, 2008). On the other hand, overall satisfaction involves consumers' aggregated judgements of their experiences with a certain company or brand (Veloutsou, Gilbert, Moutinho, & Goode, 2005). In other words, it results from their evaluations of the total purchases and consumption experiences with brands over time (Rockwell, 2008). Rather than measuring the transient evaluations and emotions, applied market research tends to capture overall satisfaction as a cumulative construct (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999).

The marketing literature provides some positive outcomes that companies can achieve from satisfying their customers. For example, it is argued that customer satisfaction with brands can be a leading indicator for repurchase intentions and loyalty (Baines & Fill, 2014). Also, it was found that customer satisfaction with a certain brand increases its lifetime value, reduces customer churn rate and provides a point of differentiation (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman, & Hansen, 2016). Furthermore, it was proved that it is cheaper to retain customers than to acquire new customers (Kotler et al.,2016). Hence, it is very important for companies to retain their satisfied customers.

The current study argues that brand satisfaction could be one the factors that make some consumers become a part of certain brand communities. Prior research shows that satisfied customers usually tend to develop strong levels of brand trust and loyalty (McAlexander et al., 2003). Hence, it is expected that satisfied customers develop their relationships with brands by actively participating in social media brand communities.

3.3.3 Brand Trust

Trust, generally, is an important element for the establishment of successful relationships (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). In the marketing field, consumers' trust for companies and brands have been widely studied in a wide range of academic publications, e.g. (Delgado-Ballester & Luis Munuera-Alemán, 2005; Eggers, O'Dwyer, Kraus, Vallaster, & Güldenberg, 2013; Knipp, 2009; Song, Hur, & Kim, 2012). It is widely agreed that one of the key roles of marketing is to create sense of bond between consumers and brands, in which brand trust represents the infrastructure of this bond (Hiscock, 2001). Hence, brand trust plays a crucial role in strengthening or destroying the relationships between consumers and brands (Kotler et al., 2016).

The marketing literature has provided several definitions of the concept of brand trust. For instance, it was defined as the belief of a consumer that a brand is able to achieve its communicated functions and attributes (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Thus, it involves the willingness of consumers to rely on brands to perform its stated functions (Chaudhuri &

Holbrook, 2001). Another definition by Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande (1992, p. 315) is "*the willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence*". It is evident that these definitions highlight the critical role of reliance, trustworthiness and integrity of the parties that are involved in the exchange relationships.

Brand trust encompasses both cognitive and emotional components (Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman, & Yague-Guillen, 2003). The cognitive element is related to consumers' belief that the brand is able to meet their expectations (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Moreover, it results from their perception of the fair, responsible and accountable behaviour of brands towards its audience (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). This cognitive element arises from an accumulated knowledge that allows consumers to make predictions with some level of confidence regarding future transactions (Johnson & Grayson, 2005). On the other hand, the emotional component is related to consumers' perception of the honesty and altruism of brands (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003). It is closely related to the perception that a partner's actions are intrinsically motivated and results from feelings of security and perceived strength of the relationship (Johnson & Grayson, 2005). Hence, it is clear that when consumers perceive high levels of utilitarian and hedonic benefits from their interactions with brands, their trust in these brands would increase (Laroche et al., 2012).

The marketing literature provides several outcomes of brand trust. For instance, it was found that the role of brand trust is vital in situations of uncertainty, information asymmetry. In addition, it has a critical role in making consumers comfortable with brands (Chiu, Huang, & Yen, 2010). Also, it is considered a vital ingredient in the development of brand attachment (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), brand loyalty and purchase intentions (Lassoued & Hobbs, 2015).

In the online environments, it was found that trust plays a key role in decreasing consumers' perception of uncertainty since they know that they can depend on the trusted brand (Ha, 2004). Additionally, trust is important for consumers since it affects several dimensions related to online transactions, such as security and privacy (Carminati et al.,

2014). In a study that examined the effect of offline brand trust on consumers' confidence in online shopping, Hongyoun Hahn & Kim, (2009) showed that consumers who have high levels of trust in a traditional offline brick and mortar retailers will also have high levels of trust in the online retailers of these brands.

The current study argues that brand trust can be one of the antecedents of consumers' engagement with brands on social media. When consumers develop trust towards a certain company or brand, they usually develop favourable thoughts and feelings about it (Winch & Joyce, 2006). Accordingly, their previous experiences with these trusted companies and brands play a vital role in influencing their behaviour in the future (Moorman et al., 1992). The social media brand communities, as representatives of brands, can be a suitable place for consumers who have high levels of trust from previous offline transactions to develop their relationships with these brands by becoming part of these online communities.

3.3.4 Brand Symbolic Function

It is widely accepted among academics and practitioners that developing, communicating and maintaining a brand's image is one of the important drivers of long-term success of many companies (Anselmsson, Vestman, & Johansson, 2014; Saleem, Rahman, & Umar, 2015). A brand image can be either positioned as functional or symbolic (Park, Jaworski, & MacInnis, 1986). Functional aspects of a brand image can satisfy an immediate and practical consumption need (Solomon, 2014). These aspects are related to consumers' needs for products and services that solve their rational and efficient consumption problems (Wu, 2009). On the other hand, symbolic aspects of brand images satisfy consumers' symbolic needs, including those needs of self-expression and prestige (Bhat & Reddy, 1998). Consumers are able to meet their symbolic needs when they buy a certain brand that satisfies their need for enhancing their self-image and social identification (Solomon, 2014).

Brands can be described as symbols that can elicit specific meanings in consumers' minds (Kotler et al., 2016). These meanings enable consumers to express their personalities

(O'cass & Frost, 2002). Symbolism of brands and products involves the feelings of excitement and pleasure that consumers experience while buying or using them (Bhat & Reddy, 1998).

The concept of brand identity was proposed by Aaker (1996) to describe symbolic meanings of brands. Consumers can buy brands' products for the hedonic or symbolic meanings they provide for them. Hedonic consumption is defined as "*facets of consumer behaviour that relate to the multisensory, fantasy, and emotive aspects of product usage experience*" (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982, p. 92). This type of consumption is based on the enjoyment consumers get while buying different products (Tifferet & Herstein, 2012).

Many brands provide consumers with a means of reaching and strengthening their iconic status (de Chernatony et al., 2008). In the context of the fast food industry, fast food brands can provide hedonic values for consumers when they eat out with their friends or family (Park, 2004). This research study argues that consumers' perception of symbolic functions of fast food brands can be a motivator for their engagement in the communities of these brands on social media.

3.3.5 Perceived Critical Mass and the Critical Mass Theory

Originally, the term critical mass was introduced in the natural sciences like physics and chemistry to describe the minimum mass of fissile material needed to maintain a chain reaction (Tinghui & Mingming, 2012). Then, the concept of critical mass was adopted in other academic disciplines. For instance, in social sciences, the critical mass refers to some threshold of participants or actions that has to be crossed before a social movement explodes into being (Hardin, 2015; Oliver, Marwell, & Teixeira, 1985; Olson, 2009). The critical mass represents "*a small segment of the population that chooses to make big contributions to the collective action*" (Oliver, Marwell, & Teixeira, 1985, p. 524). This critical mass can be responsible for people's collective actions, where it is claimed that

collective actions occur "*when a critical mass of interested and resourceful individuals can coordinate their efforts*" (Marwell, Oliver, & Prahl, 1988, p. 532).

The concept of critical mass has been adopted to study the size of the users needed for a new technology to be considered successful (Morris & Ogan, 1996). It was used to refer to the point at which a certain minimum number of users adopt an innovation (Shen, Cheung, & Lee, 2013). At this point, the rate of the adoption of the new communication suddenly faces a dramatic increase (Rogers, 2010). In other words, it represents the minimum size that a system or network needs to grow rapidly (Tinghui & Mingming, 2012). For instance, in the advertising field, in order for a technological development to be a mass medium that is economical for advertisers to use, a critical mass of audience must be achieved to ensure its feasibility (Morris & Ogan, 1996). This is because the usefulness and efficiency of a communication medium is enhanced with every additional adopter (Rogers, 2010).

The critical mass theory was useful in explaining users' adoption and acceptance of many technological developments, including the fax (Economides & Himmelberg, 1995), mobile phones (Leung & Wei, 1999), the internet (Morris & Ogan, 1996), 3G mobile services (Cho, 2011) , mobile instant messaging (Lou, Chau, & Li, 2005) and social networking sites (Shen et al., 2013).

Usually, it is difficult to determine the critical mass threshold of technology users. However, Valente (1995) found out that 10 to 20 percent of the population is needed to adopt a technological innovation before its usage explodes dramatically. On the other hand, most authors argued that users usually depend on their subjective perceptions, which affect the threshold needed (Ilie, Van Slyke, Green, & Hao, 2005; Lou, Luo, & Strong, 2000). Achieving this critical mass will assist in the collective acceptance of the new technologies (Van Slyke, Ilie, Lou, & Stafford, 2007).

In the context of social media research, the critical mass theory was used to explain users' interactions with different features of social networking websites. For example, Shen et al. (2013) used it to explain the willingness of users to use instant messaging and group

discussion platforms. In that study, it was found that a user's perception of the critical mass of participants influences his/her perception of we-attention when interacting with this new technology (Shen et al., 2013).

In the current study, the researcher is using the critical mass theory to explain user engagement in social media brand communities. The researcher argues that when consumers perceive high levels of interactions on the Facebook brand pages, they are likely to join these brand pages and engage in their activities.

3.3.6 Perceived Benefits and the Uses and Gratifications Theory

The uses and gratifications (UGT) theory has its roots in the needs and motivation theory. The latter argues that people aim to satisfy their hierarchy of needs through directed behaviour (Maslow, Frager, Fadiman, McReynolds, & Cox, 1970). In the mass communication field, Katz & Blumler (1974) developed the principles of Maslow Hierarchy to explain peoples' usage of different media to gratify their needs. Thus, the uses and gratifications approach is widely used in empirical mass communication research to explain peoples' motives for adopting mass media to satisfy their needs (Katz, 1959; Rubin, 2009).

The term 'uses and gratifications' refers to the uses that people have for media and the gratifications they are able to get from the usage of these media (Quinn, 2016). Thus, it explains the proposition of individuals' choice and usage for different media (Ferguson & Perse, 2000). The focus of the theory is on what people do on different media rather than the outcomes of the media on its users (Katz, 1959; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). Hence, it is considered one of the most influential theories that explain peoples' interaction with various media (Roy, 2009).

This theory has been used to explain peoples' use of various media, including television (Bantz, 1982), cinema (Weaver, Brosius, & Mundorf, 1993), mobile phones (Quan-Haase &

Young, 2010) newspaper (Leung & Wei, 1998), internet (Flanagin & Metzger, 2001; LaRose & Eastin, 2004), e-books (Shin, 2011) and online games (Wu, Wang, & Tsai, 2010).

In the online context, this theory was used to explain consumers' motivations for using the internet. For instance, Ruggiero (2000) claimed that people use the internet for a variety of reasons, including convenience, entertainment, socialising, information and functional service. On the other hand, in the context of social media research, several studies used the uses and gratifications theory to explain why people adopt various social media platforms. For instance, Lee & Hong (2016) stated that students join social networks for different reasons, which are entertainment, socialising, seeking for information and status. Another study by Whiting & Williams (2013,p.362) identified ten uses for these networks, which are "*social interaction, information seeking, passing the time, entertainment, relaxation, communicatory utility, convenience utility, expression of opinion, information sharing, and surveillance/knowledge about others*".

In the current study, the researcher uses the uses and gratifications theory to explain why consumers adopt the social media brand communities. In other words, the current study argues that there are certain benefits that encourage consumers to join and interact in these online communities. Prior research shows a positive correlation between users' perception of benefits they get from different media and their continuance of use of these media (Levy & Windahl, 1984). Literature on online brand communities has focused mainly on traditional online forums on the internet, e.g. (Cova & Pace, 2006; Sicilia & Palazon, 2008), but there is a limited amount of research that focused on these communities in the social media context. Given the rapid adoption of the social media brand communities for marketing purposes, identifying the perceived benefits that enhance consumer engagement in these online communities will add to the growing body of the social media marketing literature.

Consumers can develop positive emotional connections with brands as a result of good relationships with them (Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010). These

emotional bonds have been reported in the marketing literature as brand attachment (Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005) or brand love (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). The researcher discusses the concept of brand love in the following section.

3.4 Brand Love

One of the main aims of the marketing communications is to create a strong bond between consumers and brands. With the growth in competition and the numerous number of brands that are introduced every day, branding provides an opportunity for marketers to differentiate their products and services (Aaker, 1991; Lee, Yao, Mizerski, & Lambert, 2015).

Research in the context of consumer-brand relationships has suggested and tested various concepts that capture consumers' attitudes towards brands, including brand trust (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003), brand identification (Tuškej et al., 2013), brand satisfaction (Erciş et al., 2012), brand advocacy (Urban & Hauser, 2004), brand attitude strength (Park et al., 2010) and brand loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). However, in the past few years, the marketing literature has shown a growing interest in studying consumers' emotional connections with brands (Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2009; Sarkar, 2014). One of the marketing concepts that has widely attracted the attention of researchers recently is the concept of 'brand love' (Batra et al., 2012; Maxian, Bradley, Wise, & Toulouse, 2013; Schlobohm, Zulauf, & Wagner, 2016). This interest stemmed from the belief that consumers' loyalty for many brands is strengthened by their positive emotions towards these brands (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Kudeshia et al., 2016).

Research shows that consumers can develop strong emotional bonds towards brands (Thomson et al., 2005). They can experience a sense of love towards brands the same way they experience it in their interpersonal relationships (Batra et al., 2012; Fournier, 1998). Building on the theory of love, Pawle and Cooper (2006) showed that brands are like people, where consumers can simply like some brands, be passionate about others, love others or even dislike or hate some brands.

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Brand love differs from other constructs that have been widely used in the marketing literature to describe consumer' attitudes (Roy, Eshghi, & Sarkar, 2013). For example, brand love can be distinguished from brand satisfaction, which is based mainly on cognitive judgements of the brand performance (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). On the other hand, brand love usually develops as a result of consumers' positive emotional feelings towards the brands in the absence of cognition (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Also, brand love is the result of consumers' long term relationships with brands, while satisfaction can result from single transactions with brands (Chen, Papazafeiropoulou, Chen, Duan, & Liu, 2014). Thus, consumers' brand love can be considered an emotional construct rather than a relational construct (Batra et al., 2012). Thus, not all satisfied customers experience brand love (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Additionally, Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) argue that brand love is different from simple brand affection (i.e. Brand liking), where brand love involves more intensive emotional feelings towards the brand and an intention to declare its love.

Different conceptualisations for brand love have been proposed in the marketing literature. For example, Batra et al. (2012) argued that brand love has several components, including superior quality, brands' symbolic meanings, intrinsic rewards, self-identity, favourable affect, passionate desire, a sense of natural fit, emotional bonding and anticipated heartbreak, willingness to invest, frequency of usage, as well as long relationship history with the brand. Another conceptualisation for brand love was proposed by Caroll & Ahuvia (2006); they considered it as "*the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name*" (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006, p. 81). It includes passion for the brand, attachment to the brand, positive emotions towards the brand, positive evaluation of the brand, as well as declaration of love for the brand (Ahuvia, 2005).

First investigations of the concept of brand love were conducted by Shimp & Madden (1988). By adopting Sternberg's (1986) theory of interpersonal love, Shimp & Madden (1988) indicated that consumers' brand love is formed of three dimensions, namely: liking,

yearning and decision/commitment. Consumers' liking and yearning include feelings of intimacy and passion for the brand respectively, while decision/commitment involves the cognitive component of brand love (Roy et al., 2013). These dimensions correspond to Sternberg's components of interpersonal love, which are intimacy, passion and decision/commitment. Thus, Shimp & Madden (1988) focused on the strong similarity between interpersonal love and love for consumption objects. Also, it was found that brand love shares two fundamental aspects with interpersonal love (Langner, Bruns, Fischer, & Rossiter, 2016), which are deep affection (Sternberg, 1986) and anticipated separation distress (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Even though consumers interact with thousands of brands daily, they only develop strong emotional connections with a few number of these brands (Sarkar, 2014). In fact, only a few studies have investigated factors that drive consumers' love for brands. For example, Carroll & Ahuvia (2006) showed that consumers develop more love for brands in hedonic product categories if compared to utilitarian brands. Also, they argued that brands that offer more symbolic benefits tend to generate deeper brand love. Another study by Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen (2010) indicated that consumers' sense of brand identification is an important antecedent of brand love. In addition, some studies highlighted the role of brand positive image (Sallam, 2014) and brand trust (Albert & Merunka, 2013) in generating brand love. Furthermore, research shows that consumers can develop brand love based on previous experience either with brand consumption (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010) or through word of mouth communication about the brand (Berry, 2000). Hence, consumers can develop love for brands without even consuming or trying it (Roy et al., 2013). Moreover, brand lovers might still experience a positive emotional attachment towards brands even if for any reason they stop buying them (Batra et al., 2012).

Brand love is not only a positive emotional feeling that a consumer has towards his/her favourite brand but also it involves an integration of the brand with the consumer's identity, making it difficult for consumers to have negative feelings towards the brand (Arruda-Filho,

Cabusas, & Dholakia, 2010). Research shows that consumers who have high levels of emotional bonding with brands tend to resist any negative information about these brands (Batra et al., 2012; Bauer, Heinrich, & Albrecht, 2009; Trump, 2014). Also, they tend to forgive any shortcoming in terms of the brands' performance; forgiveness is mainly related to the consumers' perception of similarity between the brands and themselves, since they consider the threat to the brands as a threat to themselves (Cheng, White, & Chaplin, 2012). Other positive outcomes of brand love have been reported in literature, including positive word of mouth and brand loyalty (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Ismail & Spinelli, 2012), as well as active engagement and impulsive buying (Sarkar, 2014). Also, it has been associated with consumers' willingness to pay a price premium (Albert & Merunka, 2012).

In the era of Web 2.0 and social media, consumers can show their interest in certain brands by following them on various social media platforms (Zaglia, 2013). Despite the wide usage of social media marketing, researchers and brand managers have limited understanding of the impacts of social media communication on how consumers perceive brands (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). In particular, it is unclear how consumers' engagement in online brand communities affects brand love. Also, despite that research into brand love is rising (Morrish, Prayag, & Nguyen, 2016), most studies of brand love have been focusing on its conceptualisation (Albert et al., 2008) and measurement (Heinrich et al., 2008). However, little is known about what generates brand love relationships, where research into this new marketing construct is still in its infancy (Riivits-Arkonsuo & Leppiman, 2015).

3.5 Brand Equity Dimensions and Outcomes

3.5.1 Brand Equity

Building a strong brand is one of the top priorities for many organisations. A brand is defined as "*a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors*" (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016, p. 442). The purpose of the branding is to differentiate products from those of competitors as well as to enhance the value of the product beyond its functional purpose (Farquhar, 1989; Simon & Sullivan, 1993). Also, it helps consumers in making buying decisions by leveraging a product's perceived value (Kotler et al., 2016). Given the importance of branding as a critical success factor, many companies are aiming to build, enhance and maintain strong brands with the aim of achieving a sustainable competitive advantage in the marketplace (Kim, Gon Kim, & An, 2003).

In the marketing literature, the term 'brand equity' appeared as an attempt to define the relationship between customers and brands (Wood, 2000). Several definitions for brand equity have been proposed. For example, Aaker (1991) described it as a group of brand assets and liabilities that are linked to a brand's name and symbol. These assets and liabilities add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers. Similarly, Aaker & Biel (2013) and Farquhar (1989) defined brand equity as the added value to a product by associating it with a particular brand. Another definition by Clow & Baack (2005) indicated that brand equity is a group of characteristics that make a brand unique in the marketplace and which gives it a higher market share than unbranded products. A last definition by Kotler & Armstrong (2016, p.275) described it as "*the differential effect knowing the brand name has on customers' response to the product or its marketing".* It is clear that all these definitions stress the role of building brand equity as an essential part of the brand building process (Shafi & Madhavaiah, 2014).

There has always been a continuous interest by academics and practitioners to understand brand equity (Keller, Parameswaran, & Jacob, 2011). That interest was derived by the positive outcomes identified in the branding literature. For instance, it was found that brands that possess high equity usually have good opportunities for successful extensions, and have the ability to differentiate themselves from competitors' marketing offerings, and to create barriers to entry of rivals (Farquhar, 1989; Lassar, Mittal, & Sharma, 1995).

Brand equity has been studied from two different approaches, which are the financial and customer-based brand equity (Thiripurasundari & Natarajan, 2011). These two approaches include various ways of defining, operationalising, and measuring brand equity (Aaker & Biel, 2013). The financial perspective of brand equity is concerned with the financial assets or value that a brand creates for the company (Simon & Sullivan, 1993). On the other hand, the customer-based brand equity (CBBE) looks at the brand equity from the marketing perspective (Keller, 2016; Pappu, Quester, & Cooksey, 2005). In other words, in the marketing field, the term brand equity is described as CBBE (Wood, 2000). The customer-based brand equity (CBBE) approach is the most used perspective in marketing research, because if a brand doesn't have value or meaning for consumers, it will not be useful and will be meaningless for investors and companies (Christodoulides et al., 2015). Since the current study is concerned with consumers' perception of brand equity, the following section will provide an overview of CBBE by demonstrating its definitions and various dimensions.

3.5.2 Customer-Based Brand Equity

Customer-based brand equity has been studied extensively in the marketing literature (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993, 2016; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). Academic publications have mainly focused on studying CBBE since it is considered one of the main driving forces for sustainable financial gains for companies (Lassar et al., 1995). CBBE occurs when consumers have a favourable distinctive associations of brands in their minds (Wang, Wei,

& Yu, 2008), where it is often called the marketing perspective of brand equity (Motameni & Shahrokhi, 1998). Several dimensions for CBBE have been proposed in the branding literature. Most of these conceptualisations are built upon Keller (1993) and Aaker (1991) models of brand equity. Aaker (1991) identified four main conceptual dimensions of brand equity, namely: brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty. On the other hand, Keller (1993) argued that CBBE is based on the brand knowledge that consists of two components, which are brand awareness and brand image. Although these two models have different conceptualisations for brand equity, both of them defined it from the customers' perspective. Table 3.3 provides various dimensions of CBBE that were presented in the marketing literature.

Table 3. 3: Various dimensions of customer-based brand equity

Studies	CBBE Dimensions
Aaker (1991)	Brand awareness, brand associations, brand perceived quality, and brand loyalty.
Keller (1993)	Brand awareness and brand image.
Kimpakorn & Torquer (2010)	Brand awareness, brand perceived quality, brand differentiation, brand associations, brand trust and brand relationships.
Burmann, Jost-Benz, & Riley (2009)	Brand benefit clarity, perceived brand quality, brand benefit uniqueness, brand sympathy, brand trust.
Berry (2000)	Brand awareness, brand meaning.
Netemeyer et al. (2004)	Perceived quality, perceived value, uniqueness and willingness to pay a price premium.
Buil, De Chernatony, & Martínez (2013)	Brand perceived quality, brand awareness, brand associations, and brand loyalty.
Sharp (1996)	Company/brand awareness, brand image, relationships with customers/existing customer franchise.
Kim et al. (2003)	Brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand perceived quality, and brand image.
Atilgan et al. (2009)	Brand associations, perceived quality, loyalty and trust.

It is apparent from these various definitions that researchers have disagreed on the dimensions of the CBBE (Chahal & Bala, 2012). Thus, the discussions and conceptualisations of CBBE are still evolving over time (Taylor, Hunter, & Lindberg, 2007).

3.5.3 Customer-Based Brand Equity Dimensions

The current study has included brand loyalty and brand perceived quality as dimensions of CBBE. Also, it has included positive word of mouth, resistance to negative information and willingness to pay price premium as outcomes for brand equity. These dimensions and outcomes are presented as follows:

3.5.3.1 Brand Loyalty

The concept of 'brand loyalty' is considered one of the most favourable outcomes for companies. This has been widely studied in relationship marketing literature (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Laroche et al., 2013; Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000). As one of the CBBE dimensions, the positive effect of brand loyalty on brand equity has been shown in many studies (Aaker, 1991; Sasmita & Mohd Suki, 2015; Yoo et al., 2000). Thus, the concept of brand loyalty remains one of the most important concepts in the marketing field (Oliver, 1999; Yoo et al., 2000).

Several definitions for brand loyalty have been proposed in marketing literature. For instance, Oliver (1997,p.392) defined it as "*a deeply held commitment to rebuy or patronise a preferred product or service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour*". Another definition by Aaker (1991) stated that brand loyalty is strong attachment consumers possess towards a certain brand. It is apparent that these definitions highlight the vital role of brand loyalty in driving the profitability of companies.

Several positive outcomes for brand loyalty have been identified in the literature. For example, it was found that loyal customers are willing to invest time, money and effort to sustain their relationships with brands (Park et al., 2010). Also, the existence of loyal

customers enables companies to increase a premium price for its products and services (Kotler et al., 2016). In addition, brand loyalty enables companies to be more resistant to competitors' persuasion efforts (Aaker & Biel, 2013). Furthermore, it was claimed that brand loyalty has the power to save costs for consumers by reducing the costs of developing new consumption relationships with other brands (Erenkol & Duygun, 2010). In other words, it encourages consumers buy brands routinely, which reduces their switching to competitors (Shafi & Madhavaiah, 2014; Yoo et al., 2000).

Brand loyalty can be conceptualised into behavioural and attitudinal loyalty (Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978). Behavioural loyalty can be identified through a number of repeated purchases (Bandyopadhyay & Martell, 2007), since it involves consumers' commitment to rebuy a certain brand as their first choice (Oliver, 1999). Many previous studies used behavioural loyalty as a sole indicator for consumers' brand loyalty, e.g. (Kahn, Kalwani, & Morrison, 1986; Leenheer, Van Heerde, Bijmolt, & Smidts, 2007; Romaniuk & Nenycz-Thiel, 2013). On the other hand, attitudinal loyalty refers to the consumers' feeling of attachment to certain brands or companies (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Thus, it views loyalty as a strong internal predisposition that leads to consumers' behavioural actions towards brands (Gounaris & Stathakopoulos, 2004).

Different levels of loyalty have been proposed in the marketing literature. For instance, some authors considered that the lowest form of brand loyalty involves consumers who have low attitudes and low purchase patterns (Dick & Basu, 1994). These authors indicated that even non-users of a certain brand can be classified into the bottom of the loyalty ladder, where it is important to include them because they are considered potential customers, especially if it is unclear why they are non-users (Bandyopadhyay & Martell, 2007).

In the current study, the researcher conceptualises brand loyalty as a behavioural construct that captures consumers' willingness to purchase the same brand in the future. Behavioural

loyalty is considered an important determinant of consumers' repeated purchase and commitment (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Bandyopadhyay & Martell, 2007).

Even though the concept of brand loyalty has been extensively studied in the marketing field, very few researchers have investigated the effect of consumers' engagement on social media brand communities on the development of brand loyalty.

3.5.3.2 Perceived Quality

In the marketing literature, the concept of quality has been identified as a core concept in building customer value and influencing consumption behaviour (Ophuis & Van Trijp, 1995). Brand perceived quality is one of the most important elements that influence consumer preference (Tingchi Liu et al., 2014). Many authors consider it one of the main dimensions of consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) (Aaker, 1991, 1996; Dyson, Farr, & Hollis, 1996; Keller, 1993; Kim et al., 2003; Motameni & Shahrokhi, 1998; Pappu et al., 2005; Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Brand perceived quality is "*not the actual quality of the product but the consumer's subjective evaluation of the product*" (Pappu et al., 2005, p. 145). It is defined as "*the consumer's judgment about a product's overall excellence or superiority*" (Zeithaml, 1988, p. 3). Thus, perceived quality is not necessarily evaluated objectively by consumers (Joung, Choi, & Wang, 2016). Instead, it depends on the subjective personal judgements of consumers about the product or service characteristics from a subjective viewpoint (Kwun, 2011; Yacout & ElSahn, 2011; Zeitaml, 1988). As one of the dimensions of brand equity, items of measurement of perceived brand quality consistently appear in several scales for measuring brand equity (Washburn & Plank, 2002; Yoo & Donthu, 2001).

The means-end chain and expectancy value theories have been used to explain how perceived quality judgements are formed (Netemeyer et al., 2004). The means-end approach shows that a consumer's cognitive structure keeps brand-related information in his/her memory at different levels of abstraction (Zeitaml, 1988). At the simpler levels are the brand attributes that propose quality benefits (i.e. functional, practical) that lead to overall value from using the brand. Information about these attributes can be obtained

from promotions that stress the benefits of using the brands. Also, they can be obtained

from the direct consumption experience of these brands (Netemeyer et al., 2004). On the

other hand, the perceived value is "*a multiplicative function of the attributes and benefits

espoused in expectancy value theory*" (Netemeyer et al., 2004, p.211). The concept of

'customer perceived value' has its roots in the 'equity theory' (Yang & Peterson, 2004). This

theory argues that people perceive value if they find fairness between the outputs they

gain and the inputs they put (Vera, 2015)

Perceived quality offers consumers a purchase reason for a certain brand rather than other

competing brands (Kayaman & Arasli, 2007; Zeithaml, 1988). In addition, consumers'

perceived quality of a brand could be a strong enhancer of price inelasticity, which can

enhance customers' willingness to pay a price premium (Vera, 2015). In addition, many

studies considered perceived quality an influential factor for enhancing the purchase

intention (Chaudhuri, 2002; Tsiotsou, 2006).

Despite the importance of the concept of perceived quality in the marketing literature, very

few studies investigated the extent to which consumer engagement on social media based

brand community enhances the brand perceived quality. The current study argues that by

interacting inside the brand community, consumers are able to develop positive emotional

connections with brands, which in turn will have a positive impact on their perceptions of

the quality of these brands.

3.5.4 Brand Equity Outcomes

3.5.4.1 Brand Equity and Positive Word of Mouth

Word of mouth is a naturally occurring phenomenon in the consumer behaviour (Kozinets,

De Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010). It refers to all types of positive or negative

interpersonal communication about a firm, brand or product between a receiver and a

communicator (Hutter et al., 2013). It includes "*informal communication between private

parties concerning evaluations of goods and services*" (Anderson 1988, p.6). It can be

defined as "*informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization or a service*" (Harrison-Walker, 2001, p. 63). Moreover, it is described as a mechanism that allows consumers to share information about certain products and brands with other consumers. This information influences the purchasing decision made by these consumers towards buying or not buying these products and brands (Wu & Wang, 2011). Thus, it is claimed that word of mouth is a major influencer of peoples' knowledge, feelings and attitudes (Buttle, 1998).

Word of mouth conversations between consumers might include both cognitive and emotional elements (Sweeney, Soutar, & Mazzarol, 2012). The cognitive elements are related to the rational appeals, where consumers use practical benefits of brands to convince others to use these brands. On the other hand, the emotional or hedonic benefits of brands are sometimes used by consumers to arouse the purchase intention of others (Kotler et al., 2016). Usually, consumers engage in positive word of mouth about brands as a result of their satisfaction, identification or commitment to these brands (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Brown, Barry, Dacin, & Gunst, 2005).

Many companies are trying to engage their customers in positive word of mouth about their products and services (Keller & Fay, 2016), where it is widely agreed that the word of mouth represents a strong drive for superior financial performance (Babić Rosario, Sotgiu, De Valck, & Bijmolt, 2016). This positive word of mouth is a good way for companies to get new customers through referral prospects (Hutter et al., 2013), which is considered a free promotion for brands (Harrison-Walker, 2001). Due to its interpersonal and informal nature, word of mouth is considered a credible communication source (Harrison-Walker, 2001). Consumers who receive positive recommendations from other customers are more likely to remain committed to brands (Villanueva et al., 2008). Word of mouth is perceived by consumers as more credible than paid advertisements (Asada & Ko., 2016). This is due to the fact that consumers speak about their consumption experiences with their families,

friends and social networks (Cheung & Lee, 2012). A piece of research by Word of Mouth Marketing Association in 2014 showed that one third of the sales are made as a result of word of mouth that supports paid advertising (Chen & Berger, 2016).

With the introduction of the social media, the capabilities of word of mouth have been amplified with its viral and interactive capabilities (Kozinets et al., 2010). The online and viral nature of conversations that takes place online (i.e. electronic word of mouth) can have a positive effect on consumers' brand attitude, brand affection and purchase intention (Wu & Wang, 2011). Despite the importance of word of mouth as reported in the marketing literature, there is still a lack of knowledge of word of mouth in the context of online brand communities (Yeh & Choi, 2011).

The current study argues that the engagement of consumers on social media based brand communities will have a positive effect on eliciting their positive emotions towards brands, which will result in their engagement in positive conservations about these brands.

3.5.4.2 Brand Equity and Resistance to Negative Information

The concept of consumer resistance or resilience to negative information has been widely studied in the branding literature (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Eisingerich et al., 2010; Japutra et al., 2014). Consumer resistance to negative information is defined as the extent to which consumers don't allow negative information to change their views of an organisation; hence, it is considered one of the strongest indicators of the strength of relationship between consumers and organisations (Eisingerich et al., 2010). It occurs when identified customers tend to downplay or overlook negative information about companies or its brands, especially when the magnitude of this information is relatively minor by displaying forgiveness (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Customer forgiveness has been defined as "*customers' internal act of relinquishing anger and the desire to seek revenge against a firm that has caused harm as well as the enhancement of positive emotions and thoughts toward this harm-doing firm*" (Joireman, Grégoire & Tripp, 2016,

p.76). This behaviour occurs when an organisation has established 'a reservoir of goodwill' and when consumers experience an increased fit with the firm's identity (Skarmeas & Leonidou, 2013).

The extant literature shows that consumers who are attached to brands tend to forgive companies and to defend it if they hear any negative news about it from other consumers. Also, they are more willing to give these brands another chance (Japutra et al., 2014). Given the importance of the concept of resistance to negative information as an outcome of brand equity, one of the objectives of the current study is to investigate the effect of consumer engagement on social media based brand communities on its development.

3.5.4.3 Brand Equity and Willingness to Pay Price Premium

A brand is said to have a price premium when the amount of money the consumers are willing to pay for this brand is higher than the sum of money they are willing to pay for competitor brands (Aaker, 1996). Some authors consider consumers' willingness to pay a price premium as one of the strongest indicators of high brand equity (Aaker, 1996; Anselmsson et al., 2014; Sethuraman, 2000). Also, consumer's willingness to pay a price premium for specific brands is a strong sign of their loyalty to these brands (Aaker, 1996; Evanschitzky et al., 2012; Netemeyer et al., 2004). This is due to the fact that the more consumers value the brand, the more they are willing to pay a price premium for it (Aaker, 1991). Ailawadi, Lehmann, and Neslin (2003) supported that argument by indicating that consumers' willingness to pay a price premium is relatively stable over time and is one of the factors that are responsible for high market share for companies and brands.

The extant literature provides a number of antecedents for consumers' willingness to pay a price premium. For instance, Anselmsson et al. (2014) showed that three elements have a strong influence on it, including the brand's uniqueness, social image and home country origin. Also, it was found that price premium is strongly linked to perceived quality (Netemeyer et al., 2004; Steenkamp, Van Heerde, & Geyskens, 2010).

The current study speculates that consumers' engagement on social media based brand communities will have a positive effect on their willingness to pay a price premium for brands. It argues that consumers' emotional attachment to brands, which is developed through consumers' engagement, will influence consumers' willingness to pay a price premium. Prior research has not explored the effect of online brand communities on willingness to pay a price premium for brands. Accordingly, this will be one of the objectives of the current study.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has presented and reviewed the extant literature related to the concept of consumer engagement. In addition, it has demonstrated the limitations in understanding it in the context of social media brand communities. Furthermore, it has presented an overview of three theories that are used in explaining consumers' motivation to engage in brand communities, namely: social identity, uses and gratifications and critical mass theories. Finally, it has provided an overview of brand love and brand equity dimensions and outcomes. The next chapter outlines the proposed conceptual framework and the hypotheses that were developed based on the literature review.

Chapter 4: Conceptual Framework

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the conceptual framework that was developed from an extensive literature review to address the research questions and objectives. Also, it aims to discuss the research hypotheses that show the relationships between the variables of the current study. The research hypotheses will be presented in consecutive sections that demonstrate the stages of the conceptual framework. This chapter is organised into six main sections as follows: firstly, section 4.2 presents the conceptual model. Next, section 4.3 demonstrates the antecedents of engagement on social media based brand communities. Then, section 4.4 introduces the impact of consumer engagement on the development of brand love in these online communities. After that, section 4.5 demonstrates the relationship between brand love and brand equity dimensions and outcomes. Finally, section 4.6 summarises the chapter.

4.2 The Conceptual Model

The conceptual model of the current study is presented in Figure 4.1. This proposed model demonstrates the antecedents of engagement in social media based brand communities and the outcomes of that engagement. The research model can be broken down into three segments. The first segment shows the antecedents of engagement; this segment can be further classified into two groups of antecedents: antecedents that are related to consumers' relationships with the brands that manage these online communities and antecedents that are related to consumers' perceptions inside these communities. On the other hand, the second segment focuses on the relationship between consumer engagement and brand love. Finally, the third segment examines the effects of brand love on brand equity dimensions and outcomes. In the following sections, the researcher will discuss these relationships in detail, as well as the proposed hypotheses.

Figure 4. 1: Proposed Conceptual Model (Antecedents and outcomes of consumer engagement in social media based brand communities)
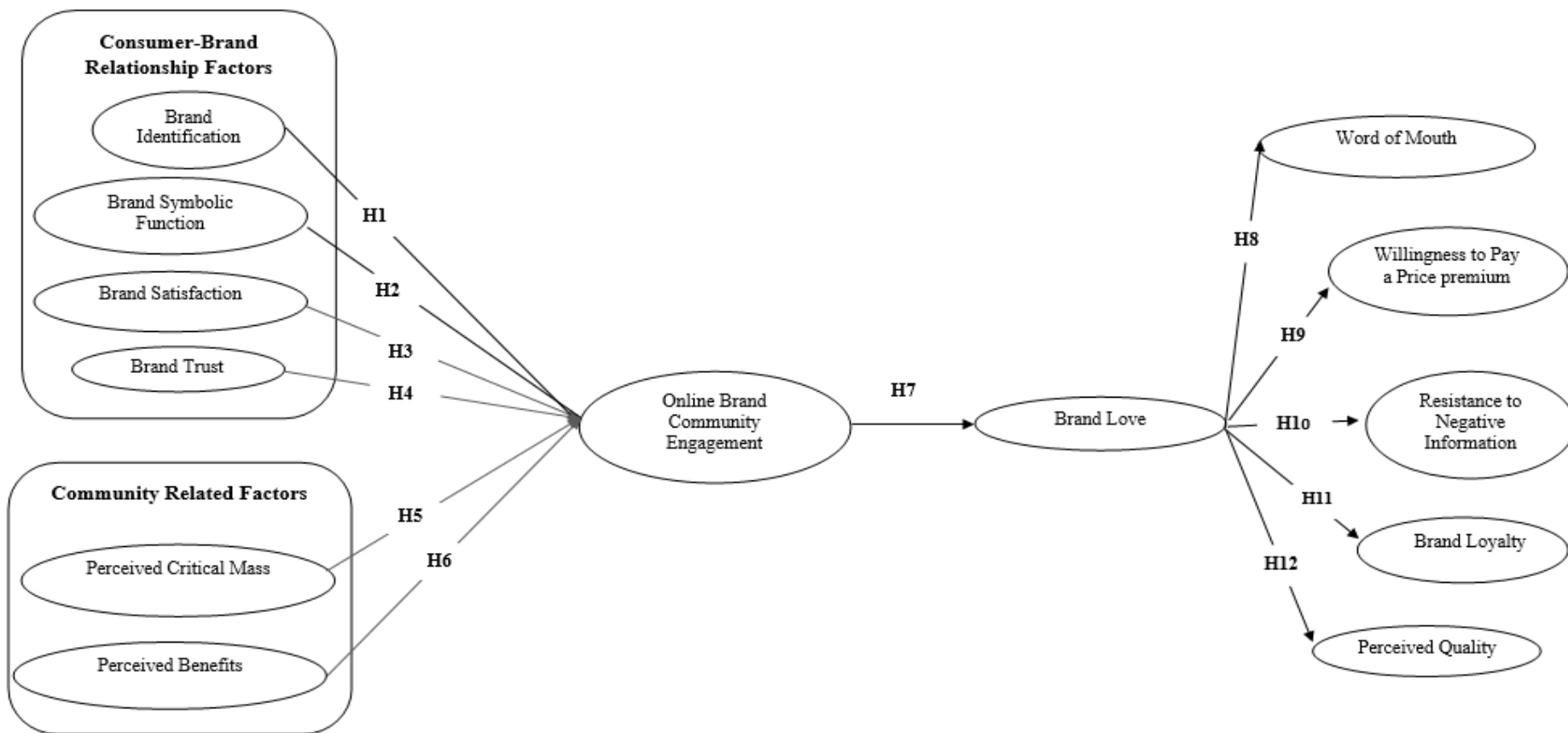
Source: This Research

4.3 Antecedents of Engagement in Online Brand Communities

4.3.1 Antecedents Related to Consumers' Relationships with Brands

4.3.1.1 Brand Identification and Consumer Engagement

Consumers who are identified with certain brands are more likely to be eager to develop their relationships with these brands (Tuškej et al., 2013). This could be due to the fact that this identification is mainly related to their need to enhance their self-esteem by becoming closer to such brands (Cardador & Pratt, 2006). By stressing personal meanings through their relationships with their preferred brands, consumers use these brands as a means of constructing their social identity and for presenting themselves favourably to others (Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Kuenzel & Halliday, 2010). Brand communities that gather consumers who want to be associated with brands can help individuals to satisfy their need to belong to a certain community of brand users and to behave according to its shared values and norms (Heere et al., 2011).

In the context of traditional offline brand communities, some studies examined the relationship between consumers' identification with brands and their willingness to participate in these brand communities. For example, Algesheimer et al. (2005) found that members of car clubs who have high levels of identification with car brands are strongly motivated to interact with other members of the brand community. Another study by Jones & Runyan (2013) indicated that consumers who possess high levels of identification with retailer brands tend to develop "positive brand community associations".

On the other hand, some studies examined the relationship between identification and engagement in the online context. For instance, research by Tsai et al. (2012) indicated that consumers who are strongly identified with an online forum of a car brand tend to have high levels of interest in participating in its activities. Similarly, Woisetschläger et

al. (2008) conducted a study to examine perceptions of members of a number of virtual brand communities. The results showed that consumers' identification with the brand communities had a positive influence on their level of participation.

The social identity theory can be revisited to explain the eagerness of consumers to develop their relationships with certain brands by joining their brand communities. Since members of social networking sites use their profiles on these networks to portray favourable images about themselves (Peluchette & Karl, 2009), it is expected that consumers can engage in brand communities that are embedded in these networks to influence their social image positively (Jahn & Kunz, 2012). Consumers can express their social identity by actively participating in these online communities; where these communities enable their members to show a number of engagement behaviours. For instance, Facebook brand pages allow users to like, comment and share posts on their platforms, which are visible to other members on the social network (Su et al., 2015).

Therefore, drawing from the assumptions of the social identity theory and extant literature that examined consumer behaviour in brand communities in the offline and online context, it is hoped that consumer brand identification is one of the antecedents of consumer engagement on social media brand communities. Thus, the following hypothesis is developed:

H1: Brand identification has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in online brand communities.

4.3.1.2 Brand Satisfaction and Consumer Engagement

The concept of brand satisfaction and its role in consumer-brand relationships is well cited in the marketing literature (Fetscherin & Heinrich, 2015; McAlexander et al., 2003; Veloutsou, 2015). Satisfaction refers to a positive judgment by consumers for a consumption experience with a certain brand (Oliver, 1999). It is considered an affective

response by consumers after evaluating brands' performance based on previously set pre-purchase standards (Fornell, 1992).

The extant literature shows that brand satisfaction has a positive influence on an individual's consumption behaviour, as it is one of the predictors for brand trust and brand commitment (Erciş et al., 2012), brand preference (Chinomona, 2013), and brand loyalty (Veloutsou, 2015). Also, it can be one of the antecedents of brand love (Drennan et al., 2015) because it provides a basis for the development of emotional connections with brands (Thomson et al., 2005).

Despite the importance of brand satisfaction, only a few studies examined its effect on consumer engagement in the online context. For instance, Nel & Halaszovich (2015) examined the role of customer satisfaction on driving engagement behaviours on Facebook. By examining the behaviour of Facebook users, they proved the positive effect of consumers' satisfaction, with a certain brand on their intention to like its Facebook page and continue participating in that online community. This can be explained through the emotional attachment associated with customer satisfaction; this attachment can be responsible for consumers' willingness to actively engage with brands (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010). Another study by Dessart et al. (2015) showed that one of the factors that enhances consumer engagement in online brand communities is their level of brand satisfaction. Additionally, Wirtz et al. (2013) highlighted the vital role of customer satisfaction with an online brand community in enhancing loyalty and positive word of mouth towards the brand and its community. Likewise, Casaló et al. (2008) argued that consumers' satisfaction in previous interactions with a brand in the offline context can influence their intention to participate in its virtual (online) community.

The effect of customers' satisfaction with brands in the offline context and their willingness to continue their relationship with these brands on social media can be explained by the vital role satisfaction plays in continuously driving relationship between consumers and brands. For example, Verhoef, Franses, & Hoekstra (2002) argued that

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satisfied customers are more willing to sustain their relationships with brands. Additionally, they highlighted the vital role of customer satisfaction in extending the relationship duration between consumers and brands. From the previous discussion, the researcher proposes the following hypothesis:

H2: Brand satisfaction has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in online brand communities.

4.3.1.3 Brand Trust and Consumer Engagement

Building brand trust is one of the key factors that allow organisations to achieve success by building long-term relationships with customers (Hongyoun Hahn & Kim, 2009). Consumers' trust in companies and brands is generated as a result of transactions that are characterised by high levels of reliability, honesty and integrity (Fetscherin & Heilmann, 2015). Hence, consumers depend on the trusted brands to decrease uncertainty, which can lead to brand loyalty (Matzler, Grabner-Kräuter, & Bidmon, 2008) and brand commitment and passion (Albert et al., 2013).

The concept of brand trust is considered very important in the context of social media and virtual brand communities (Casaló et al., 2008), since consumers perceive higher risk while interacting with companies in online environments (Harris & Goode, 2004). Because consumers rely heavily on social networks in their search for information and in making buying choices (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), it is very important for them to perceive the trustworthiness of information and updates they find on these networks.

Given the importance of brand trust, some studies examined its role in influencing consumer behaviour in the online context. For instance, Hongyoun Hahn & Kim (2009) and Lee, Kang, & McKnight (2007) noted that there is a positive relationship between consumers' trust in brands in the offline context and their perceived confidence in online interactions with these brands. These findings highlight the critical role offline brand trust plays in directing consumer behaviour in online environments. The current study

argues that the consumers' trust in certain fast food brands that have developed as a result of their previous interactions with these brands will influence their eagerness to continue their relationships with these brands on social media. From these arguments, the researcher hypothesizes the following:

H3: Brand trust has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in online brand communities.

4.3.1.4 Brand Symbolic Function and Consumer Engagement

A symbolic meaning is a key dimension of a brand identity, which represents a group of mental associations for consumers (Aaker, 1996). Besides the utilitarian values that encourage consumers to buy brands, many consumers buy brands for the symbolic meanings or values these brands represent for them (Bhat & Reddy, 1998; Solomon, 2014). Thus, brand symbolism has always represented an essential component in the construction of self-identity of consumers through the use of brands and the formation of self-brand connections (Escalas & Bettman, 2005).

The role of brand symbolism has been highlighted in prior research in the context of online brand communities. For instance, Wirtz et al. (2013) argued that consumers can participate in brand communities for the symbolic function or social image that these communities provide for its members. Another study by Bernritter et al. (2016) showed that consumers who have high perceptions of brands' symbolism are more likely to perform high levels of online brand endorsements on Facebook. They indicated that these consumers endorse brands by sharing brand-related information publicly on Facebook.

Due to the fact that many brands have symbolic meanings, a brand community can help brand managers to strengthen that meaning in the mind of consumers (De Vries & Carlson, 2014). Furthermore, a brand community can represent an ideal place for

consumers to show their devotion and associations with brands (Ouwersloot & Odekerken-Schröder, 2008). From these assumptions, it is hypothesised that:

H4: Consumers' perceptions of symbolic function of brands have a positive effect on their engagement in online brand communities.

4.3.2 Antecedents Related to Consumers' Perceptions inside Brand Communities

4.3.2.1 Perceived Critical Mass and Consumer Engagement

Consumers perceive a critical mass in a certain community when the number of participants and interactions exceed a certain level (Lim, 2014). Although it is difficult for consumers to identify the critical mass of a brand community, they can determine the achievement of a certain critical mass through indirect observations of the online interactions inside the community (Hsu & Lu, 2004). Additionally, Hellofs & Jacobson (1999) argued that consumers can identify the critical mass by knowing the number of participants inside that community.

With the increase in the number of participants on a certain network, consumers can perceive some benefits from their participation (Katz & Shapiro, 1986). In other words, when consumers know that there are plenty of interactive experiences inside the brand community, they are more likely to participate following a certain critical mass (Tsai et al., 2012). The critical mass theory can be useful in explaining consumers' engagement in social media brand communities. Previously, this theory was used to explain users' adoption of some technological developments. For example, it was used to explain the rapid adoption of instant messaging for team collaboration (Cameron & Webster, 2005; Shen, Lee, Cheung, & Chen, 2009). One of the assumptions of the critical mass theory is that people are often influenced by other people who came before them (Markus, 1987).

The effect of consumers' perception of the size of the brand community in influencing their behaviour in online environments has been noted in the marketing literature. For

instance, in the context of social media research, it was shown that the number of likes in Facebook brand pages has a positive effect on consumers' willingness to like that page (Phua & Ahn, 2014). Another piece of research by Sledfianowski & Kulvivat (2009) indicated that perceived critical mass is one of the significant predictors of users' intention to join a social networking site.

In the current study, the researcher argues that consumers' perceptions of high levels of interactions inside Facebook brand pages will lead to a positive impact on their level of engagement in these online communities. Due to the fact that brand communities gather consumers who perceive themselves to be a part of certain social groups, they tend to have 'we-intentions' to perform different activities as members of a group (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Ngai et al., 2015). From these assumptions, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H5: Perceived critical mass in a brand community has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in the community.

4.3.2.2 Perceived Benefits and Consumer Engagement

The current study argues that consumers are more likely to be engaged on social media based brand communities if they perceive some benefits from their interactions inside these communities. The extant literature in the context of consumer-brand relationships has shown that consumers often seek relational benefits from their long-term relationships with companies (Gwinner, Gremler, & Bitner, 1998). The relational benefits imply that companies and consumers must benefit from each other in order to build successful relationships for the sake of both parties (Kang, Tang, & Fiore, 2014).

From the theoretical perspective, the uses and gratifications theory can be used to explain consumer behaviour on social media (Bond et al., 2010; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008). One of the underpinning elements of the theory is that users of different communication media usually have different motives to use these media in order to

satisfy their needs (Katz and Blumler, 1974). Thus, in the context of social media research, some studies identified the benefits people gain from their interactions on Facebook. For example, Ellison (2007) found that Facebook users were primarily motivated by their need to connect with their friends. Similarly, Quan-Haase and Young (2010) stated that students use Facebook to satisfy their desire to be fashionable in interacting with their peers and colleagues. From the assumptions of the uses an gratifications theory and previous social media research, it is believed that consumers join and interact in Facebook brand pages to gain a number of benefits. Hence, the researcher formulated the following hypothesis:

H6: Perceived benefits will have a positive effect on consumers' engagement in an online brand community.

4.4 Consumer Engagement and Brand Love

Consumer-brand relationships, or (more specifically) consumers' brand love, is a relevant factor in the context of online brand communities. Consumers can develop strong emotional connections towards brands in the same way they develop it in interpersonal relationships (Fournier, 1998). This strong connection that develops between consumers and brands has been noted in the marketing literature as brand love (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006).

The extant research in the context of offline brand communities indicated that consumers' participation in brand communities has a positive effect on their relationships with brands. For instance, McAlexander et al. (2003) noted that the integration of consumers in a casino brand community has a positive influence on their general satisfaction and brand loyalty. Also, some studies have shown the positive effect of consumers' engagement on brands and development of brand love (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Ismail & Spinelli, 2012; Sarkar, 2014). Also, prior literature has shown the positive effects of consumers' interactions inside brand communities based in social media on their relationships with brands. For example, Laroche et al. (2013) argued that

consumers' membership in social media brand communities has a positive influence on their relationship with companies and brands. Despite the positive outcomes reported in the marketing literature for consumer engagement with brands in the offline and online context, little is known about the relationship between consumer engagement in social media and development of brand love (Leventhal et al., 2014; Kudeshia et al., 2016). Therefore, this study aims to understand the relationship between engagement in Facebook brand pages and development of emotional connections with brands. This provides the basis of the following hypothesis:

H7: Consumers' engagement in an online brand community affects their brand love positively.

4.5 Effect of Brand Love on Brand Equity Dimensions and Outcomes

4.5.1 Brand love and Positive Word of mouth

In the current study, the researcher argues that consumers' love for brands has a positive effect on their positive word of mouth regarding these brands. The power of the word of mouth has been enhanced with the introduction of the internet and social networking sites (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). Social media allow consumers to share their reviews and opinions about brands they like or dislike with thousands of people regardless of time or geographic boundaries (Dahl, 2015).

The relationship between consumers' love for brands and their positive word of mouth has its roots in the interpersonal love literature, which shows that individuals tend to speak a lot with others about their loved ones (Sternberg, 1986). On the other hand, in the consumer behaviour literature, a number of academic publications indicated that consumers who have high degrees of brand love tend to talk about it in a favourable and positive way (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Baena, 2016; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Harrison-

Walker, 2001; Ismail & Spinelli, 2012). From the previous discussion, the researcher proposes the following hypothesis:

H8: Brand love will have a positive impact on consumers' word of mouth.

4.5.2 Brand love and Willingness to Pay a Price Premium

In the consumer-brand relationship literature, it was found that consumers are willing to pay more for the brands that they are emotionally attached to in order to continue their relationship with these brands and to eliminate the distress of separation (Batra, 2012). This can be due to the loss of a loved brand, which can be costly to consumers and could result in distress and anxiety (Thomson et al., 2005).

The extant literature shows that consumers who are emotionally attached to a certain brand tend to invest resources to maintain their relationship with the brand (Albert & Merunka, 2013). They consider the brand as a part of their self-concept and perceive the brand's resources as their own. Therefore, they have no problem with allocating their financial resources to that brand (Thomson et al., 2005). In other words, the more consumers perceive value in a brand the more they are willing to accept its price increase (Aaker, 1991). Thus, consumers usually accept a price increase if there is no other alternative to satisfy the emotional bonding they have with their beloved brands (Fetscherin & Heilmann, 2015). The current study argues that consumers' love that is developed from consumer engagement in brand communities has the ability to make them accept a price premium for these brands. Based on these assumptions, the following hypothesis is introduced:

H9: Brand love has a positive influence on consumers' willingness to pay a price premium.

4.5.3 Brand love and Resistance to Negative Information

In the current study, the researcher argues that consumers' love for brands can explain their resistance to negative information about these brands. Consumers' resilience to

negative information is related to their willingness to forgive any shortcomings in the performance of certain brands. Also, it refers to consumers' tendency to unbelieve any negative news or information about these brands (Skarmeas & Leonidou, 2013). Consumers' resistance to negative information about their beloved brands can be explained by revisiting the literature of interpersonal relationships; consumers consider their beloved brands as a part of their identity and they don't believe any negative news about these brands in the same way people don't accept any criticism about themselves or their beloved ones (Batra et al., 2012).

It is expected that the brand love that is developed from consumers' interactions inside a brand community can make them less likely to believe any negative information or rumours about the company that initiated that community. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H10*:* Brand love has a positive impact on consumers' resistance to negative information.

4.5.4 Brand Love and Brand Loyalty

Many companies are struggling to make their customers loyal to their brands in order to achieve a competitive position in the market and to improve their overall brand equity and market value (Sallam & Wahid, 2015). The current study argues that consumers' brand love, which is developed as a result of consumers' engagement in social media brand communities, can be an antecedent to their brand loyalty. The extant literature in consumer-brand relationships has shown that consumers who are attached to brands are willing to invest time, money and effort with the aim of sustaining their relationships with brands (Park, MacInnis, & Priester, 2008). Despite the recent adoption of the term 'brand love' in the marketing field, several researches indicated that brand loyalty can develop as a result of consumers' brand love, e.g. (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Ismail & Spinelli, 2012).

Consumers' brand loyalty as a result of their love for brands can be explained by revisiting the triangular theory of love, which indicates a strong decision of commitment from the lover to the beloved one (Sternberg,1986). This decision of commitment can be responsible for consumers loyalty for their beloved brands (Ismail & Spinelli, 2012).

In the context of online brand communities research, Dessart et al. (2015) noted that brand loyalty can develop as a result of consumers' engagement in these online communities. In that study, the researchers argued that loyalty can develop for both happy and unhappy customers, where their interactions with other customers inside the community can remove their fears regarding the brand consumption which prevents them from shifting to competing brands. Based on the previous discussion, the researcher hypothesised the following:

H11: Brand love has a positive impact on consumers' brand loyalty.

4.5.5 Brand Love and Perceived Quality

In the current study, the researcher argues that brand love has a positive impact on consumers' perceptions of quality of brands. Perceived quality of a product is related to customer's recognition of its overall quality or superiority with respect to its intended purpose, relative to alternatives (Aaker, 1991). Perceived quality has been found to have positive outcomes for companies in the marketing literature. For instance, it is strongly associated with customer satisfaction and purchase intention (Szymanski & Henard, 2001) as well as consumers' acceptance for a price premium (Aaker, 1996).

Prior research indicates that consumers who are emotionally attached to brands tend to have perceptions of uniqueness, dependency and high quality of these brands (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008; Fournier, 1998). In the context of online brand communities research, Brogi et al. (2013) showed that consumers can develop perceived quality of luxury fashion brands as a result of their interactive experiences in online communities. The interactive experiences and positive emotional feelings consumers experience inside

the brand community can reinforce their emotional connections with brands and accordingly their perception of the quality of the brands.

The current study argues that the positive emotional feelings consumers develop as a result of their interactions inside Facebook brand pages have a positive influence on their perceptions of brand quality. Thus, it is hypothesised that:

H12*:* Brand love is directly and positively related to perceived quality.

4.6 Summary

Chapter four has presented the conceptual framework that is adopted in the current study. In addition, it proposed a number of hypotheses that will be tested. The discussion of the research hypotheses has been discussed in three sections, representing the main groups of relationships in the proposed conceptual framework. The first set of relationships discussed the antecedents of consumer engagement on social media based brand communities. The second group of relationships elaborated the role of consumer engagement in developing brand love. Finally, the last group of relationships demonstrated the effect of consumer' brand love on brand equity dimensions and outcomes. Chapter 6 (qualitative findings) will discuss the sub-hypotheses that were developed based on focus groups discussions regarding the benefits that consumer expect in the brand community that enhance consumer engagement. In the next chapter, the research methodology of this study is discussed.

Chapter 5: Research Methodology

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the methodology that was adopted in this research study. Hence, the chapter provides a bridge between the proposed conceptual model and the findings of this study. This chapter is organised around seven main sections. At the beginning, section 5.2 establishes the philosophical foundations, as well as a justification of the choice of a pragmatic paradigm in the current study. Following this, section 5.3 outlines the mixed methods approach that was used to answer the research questions. Then, section 5.4 discusses the first phase (qualitative approach) of the study. After that, section 5.5 details the second phase (quantitative approach). Next, section 5.6 provides an overview of the ethical considerations that guided the research process. Finally, section 5.7 summarises this chapter.

5.2 Philosophical Foundations

As a starting point, it is essential to clarify the theoretical perspectives that determine the philosophical view, which is the rationale behind choosing the research methodology (Crotty, 1998). Hence, before discussing the research methodology, the researcher must determine the philosophical approach that is most suitable for the research process, considering the effect of his 'world view' and the nature of the phenomenon under study (Burrell & Morgan, 1992). This is important since a researcher's philosophical position often underpins the research strategy and the methodology chosen as a part of that strategy (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016). This is clear from definitions of a research methodology. For example, Avison & Fitzgerald (1995, p. 63) described it as *"a collection of procedures, techniques, tools and documentation aids…but a methodology is more than merely a collection of these things. It is usually based on some philosophical paradigms; otherwise, it is merely a method, like a recipe"*.

Thus, a research methodology involves approaches specifying how the researcher can ask and answer the proposed research questions (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

It is important to consider the paradigm that mostly fits the research study, where selecting the most suitable research paradigm is vital to the research process in all of its stages (Mangan, Lalwani, & Gardner, 2004). There are various definitions for the term 'paradigm' in social research. For instance, drawing on the work of Kuhn (1970), Bryman & Bell (2015, p. 35) defined the term 'paradigm' as "*a cluster of beliefs and dictates which for scientists in a particular discipline influence what should be studied, how research should be done, and how results should be interpreted*". Another definition was given by Chalmers (2013, p. 90). It said that "*a paradigm is made up of the general theoretical assumptions and laws and techniques for their application, which the members of a particular scientific community adopt*". A third definition that stresses the role of a paradigm in influencing a researcher's beliefs is a "*worldview, complete with the assumptions that are associated with that view*" (Mertens, 2003, p. 139). All of these definitions highlight the vital role of a paradigm in shaping a researcher's views about how research problems should be understood and addressed.

Identifying the research paradigm is considered a critical point in understanding phenomena, especially in human and social sciences (Creswell, 2013). Thus, selecting the proper research paradigm is important for a rigorous research study, as it often guides dealing with the methodological questions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, it helps researchers in plotting their own route throughout all the stages of the research process (Burrell & Morgan, 1992). According to Guba (1990), paradigms are characterised by three critical assumptions about how the researcher views the world. These assumptions involve three main points to consider; these points are: ontology (What is reality?), epistemology (How do you know something?) and methodology (How do you go about finding it out?).

Based on these assumptions, the researcher began the research process by locating the study within the proper paradigm of research inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002); this will support the researcher's strategy and the methods selected (Bryman, 2015). Regarding the different research paradigms adopted in social sciences, researchers can be classified into three main categories: first group are quantitative researchers who work within the positivist or post-positivist research paradigms and are interested in collecting and analysing numerical data. Second group are qualitative researchers who often work within the interpretivism (constructivist) paradigm, where they are interested in collecting and analysing narrative data. Finally, the third group are the mixed methodologists who adopt the pragmatic research paradigm and are usually interested in both qualitative and quantitative data (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

In the current study, the researcher followed a pragmatic approach that involves both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Also, he adopted both the inductive and deductive logic. Its ontology combines both objective and subjective points of view to assist in interpreting the data. Additionally, its epistemology combines both the interpretivist and the positivist positions. In the following section, the researcher presents an overview of the 'pragmatism' research paradigm that was adopted.

5.2.1 Pragmatism

The researcher follows the philosophical approach of 'pragmatism', which assumes that 'positivism' and 'interpretivism' could exist together for the benefit of social studies. Pragmatism is considered the most associated paradigm with mixed methods research (Maxcy, 2003; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The rationale behind mixing different methods is that sometimes neither the qualitative methods nor the quantitative methods are adequate solely to answer the research questions (Bryman, 2015). Pragmatism can be defined as "*a deconstructive paradigm that debunks concepts such as "truth" and*

"reality" and focuses instead on "what works" as the truth regarding the research questions. It rejects the "either/or" choices associated with the paradigm wars, advocates for the use of mixed methods in research, and acknowledges that the values of the researcher play a large role in interpretations of results" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 7).

The pragmatic approach appeared in response to the challenges researchers often face when choosing between the positivism and the interpretivism research approaches (Saunders et al., 2016). Since there has been a long history for what is called 'paradigm wars' or 'paradigm debates' between qualitative and quantitative researchers (Gage, 1989; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Kuhn, 2012; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), pragmatism stood out as a research paradigm that gives researchers the freedom of choosing the methods, techniques and procedures that suit their objectives in research (Creswell, 2013). Hence, it allowed researchers to get away from what pragmatists consider pointless debates about concepts of truth and reality (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

5.2.1.1 Justifying the Pragmatic Position

In the current study, the researcher followed the pragmatists' view that both the qualitative and quantitative methods can be used in compatible ways, where using both methods in the same study helps to answer the research questions in a better way. According to pragmatists, there is no contradiction in using different philosophies in the same research study, because it is rather useful to think of the adopted philosophy as a continuum rather than opposite positions (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). According to Morgan (2007), Saunders et al. (2016) and Tashakkori & Teddlie (1998), the research questions in most social sciences are better answered by adopting a mixed methods research rather than the single use of either qualitative or quantitative research. Additionally, Saunders et al. (2016) argue that pragmatists view the research questions as the most important determinant of the ontology and epistemology. Accordingly, they

accept the idea that researchers can work perfectly with variations in their ontology and epistemology if the research questions don't indicate clearly a positivist or interpretivism approaches. Thus, pragmatic world view isn't committed to any one system of philosophy and reality (Creswell, 2013).

In the current study, the researcher aims to answer the following research questions from consumers' perspective regarding their experiences with fast food brand pages on Facebook.

- **Q1.** What is the nature of dimensionality of consumer engagement in social media based brand communities?

- **Q2.** What are the benefits consumers seek through their engagement in brand pages embedded in social networking sites?

- **Q3.** Which hypotheses regarding the antecedents and consequences of consumer engagement in social media brand communities are supported in this study?

These three main research questions include three different things; therefore, the researcher will deal with them using two different approaches. Since the purpose of this research is to investigate the concept of 'consumer engagement' in the context of social media brand communities, the complexity of the research questions guided the researcher in using the mixed methods approach.

The exploratory qualitative investigation provided an overall picture of the concept of consumer engagement. This is achieved by exploring the dimensions and sub-dimensions of consumer engagement in the online brand communities. The qualitative study also enabled the researcher to explore the benefits that can enhance consumers' engagement in these online communities. Finally, the qualitative study was useful in generating items for development of a new scale for measuring consumer engagement in that online context. In other words, the qualitative study was useful in answering the first two research questions. Given the novelty of the adoption of social media for

marketing purposes by the Egyptian fast food chains, the qualitative enquiry was most suitable for probing and exploring consumers' perceptions regarding this new form of marketing. On the other hand, the quantitative phase that followed the qualitative one enabled the researcher to test the proposed hypotheses and arrived at a conceptual model of the antecedents of consumers' engagement on fast food brand pages. Hence, it was useful in answering the third research question.

5.2.2 Epistemological and Ontological Considerations

The philosophical underpinnings of research can be broadly explained through its ontology and epistemology (Crotty, 1998). The chosen pragmatic paradigm guided the researcher in dealing with both the ontological and epistemological questions. This is detailed in the following parts.

5.2.2.1 Ontology

Ontology is a term concerned with the nature of reality (Bryman, 2015; Saunders et al., 2016) or the nature of existence (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The philosophical questions of ontology are "*What is the nature of the social world and what is there to know about it?"* (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013, p. 4). Hence, questions of social ontology cannot be divorced from the conduct of business research, where ontological assumptions feed into the formulation of research questions and the way research is carried out (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Social ontology is related to the assumptions of social entities; it studies whether social entities should be objective entities that have an external reality or whether they should be considered social constructions that are formed from the perceptions of social actors (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In other words, questions of ontology are concerned with whether the natural and social worlds exist in similar or different ways (Ritchie et al., 2013). The position of ontology is between two extremes: either objectivism or subjectivism (Saunders et al., 2016).

5.2.2.1.1 Objectivism

Objectivism, also known as realism (Ritchie et al., 2013), holds the position that social entities exist in reality external to social actors concerned with their existence (Saunders et al., 2016). In other words, it assumes that social phenomenon has an external reality beyond our influence. Thus, it assumes that social entities have an objective reality (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Positivists support that position by believing that there is a 'real reality' that researchers can go and find (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). That ontological position distinguishes the way the world is and the meanings and interpretations individuals give to that world (Ritchie et al., 2013).

5.2.2.1.2 Subjectivism

The second ontological position is subjectivism. Also known as 'idealism', the view of subjectivism is that social phenomena are created from perceptions and consequent actions of social actors concerned with their existence (Ritchie et al., 2013). Hence, it assumes that reality is socially constructed through individuals' interpretations and meanings of the world (Saunders et al., 2016). Thus, subjectivism is often associated with the term constructionism, or social constructionism (Saunders et. al., 2016). It can be defined as the "*ontological position which asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors*" (Bryman, 2015, p. 23). The main assumption of that view is that reality is formed through social interactions and is continuously changing (Rawnsley, 1997). Social constructionists argues that it is essential to study the details of the situation or the context to understand the reality from the perceptions of the individuals (Remenyi & Williams, 1998).

The interpretivists hold this view by assuming that it is important to understand the subjective meanings that are responsible for the action of social actors (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Thus, they believe that there are multiple co-constructed realities (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

5.2.2.1.3 Pragmatists' View of Ontology

Pragmatists have the same opinion with positivists and post-positivists in that there is an external reality that is independent of our minds (Cherryholmes, 1992). However, they deny that the truth regarding this reality can be determined (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Pragmatists argue that researchers have no evidence that choosing a particular reality is superior to other explanations in generating desired outcomes, where they are unsure if any explanation of this reality is superior to other explanations (Cherryholmes, 1992). Accordingly, pragmatists have "*diverse viewpoints regarding social realities; best explanations within personal value systems*" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p.88).

Howe (1988, p. 14) explained pragmatists' views regarding truth by the following words: "*for pragmatists, truth is a normative concept, like "good", and "truth is what works", which is best seen not as a theory or definition, but are the* pragmatists' *attempt to say something interesting about the nature of truth and to suggest, in particular, that knowledge claims cannot be totally abstracted from contingent beliefs, interests and projects*". From these views, it is evident that pragmatists somewhat accept both 'objectivism' and 'subjectivism' views regarding the nature of reality.

From the current study's perspective, the researcher believes that there are certain factors that affect the level of consumer engagement in online brand communities, such as the consumers' perceptions of the availability of certain benefits in the community. These factors exist independent of the interpretations of our minds. However, these factors are not final explanations. Consumers from various backgrounds and in different contexts can interact with these brand communities in different ways, and this is not stable over time. Accordingly, it is difficult to measure all the relevant factors to this type of engagement. Hence, by applying a mixed methods approach, the researcher is able to generate the best desirable outcomes by capturing the relevant factors. This is achieved by developing and validating a conceptual framework that presents the antecedents and outcomes of consumers' engagement in the fast food brand pages on Facebook.

5.2.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with what is considered acceptable knowledge in the discipline (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Saunders et al., 2016). It studies the "*relationship between the knower and the unknown (the researcher and the participant)*" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 89). Questions of epistemology study the nature of knowledge and how knowledge is generated (Bryman & Bell, 2015). These questions focus on the methods of learning about the world and concentrates on topics about how individuals learn about reality and what constitutes the basis of their knowledge (Ritchie et al., 2013). There are different views for positivists, interpretivists and pragmatists regarding research epistemology. This is detailed as follows:

5.2.2.2.1 Positivism

The positivism paradigm, also known as the scientific paradigm, assumes that the purpose of research is either to prove or disapprove hypotheses (Mack, 2010). According to Blumberg, Cooper, and Schindler (2014), this research philosophy was adopted from natural sciences. It assumes that the social world exists externally and is viewed objectively, where the research is value-free and the researcher is independent, taking the role of an objective analyst (Quinlan & Zikmund, 2015). The knowledge that is developed according to this approach is based on observation and measurement of the objective reality that exists in the world rather than interpretations from the researcher (Creswell & Clark, 2007; Ritchie et al., 2013).

Due to the exploratory nature of the current study, where the research variables and the relationships between them are not well defined, since it studies constructs in complicated, social life experiences (Bryman & Bell, 2015), the adoption of positivism paradigm solely is not suitable for the purpose of this research. Positivism assumes that observable facts are objective because they are external and cannot be influenced (Blumberg et al., 2014), which is not the case of this research that deals with perceptions and experiences of consumers in online environments. Again, positivists and

post-positivists argue that there should be a separation between the knower and the unknown (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), which is not suitable for this research. In the current study, the researcher depended on his experience and judgement to interpret consumers' experiences regarding their different forms of engagement in fast food brand pages on Facebook. Also, his judgement was important in determining the different types of benefits these consumers seek by their engagement.

5.2.2.2.2 Interpretivism

The second paradigm is interpretivism. It is considered an 'anti-positivist' paradigm because it was developed as a reaction to positivism (Mack, 2010). Interpretivists, unlike positivists, assume that the social world cannot be understood by applying the principles of social sciences; therefore, they consider it to be constructed through the subjective interpretations and meanings of people. They consider research as subjective process in which the researcher and participants work closely together to co-construct social realities (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). They argue that the researcher should be an integral part of the research (Blumberg et al., 2014).

Interpretivists argue that humans are often influenced by the subjective perception of their environment rather than realities (Willis, Jost, & Nilakanta, 2007). The interpretivism approach is criticized by the positivists for lack of scientific procedures of verification (Mack, 2010). Also, it has been criticized for neglecting the analysis of the economic and technological aspects of business (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996). Hence, this approach has the advantage of relying much on the participants' view of the situation being studied (Creswell, 2013). The interpretivism paradigm is also seen as unsuitable for use as a standalone paradigm in this research, because this study also needs the use of objective and measurable concepts. In other words, the hypotheses that have been developed through literature review and qualitative discussions have to be tested through quantitative objective methods. By testing the conceptual model of antecedents

and outcomes of consumer engagement on Facebook pages of fast food chains, the researcher can achieve an acceptable level of generalisation.

5.2.2.2.3 Pragmatists' View of Epistemology

Pragmatists challenge the distinct opposition between objectivity of positivists and subjectivity of interpretivists, where they suppose that epistemological considerations exist on a continuum rather than on opposite positions (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Pragmatists assume that researchers need to interact closely with participants in some parts of the research that require deep understanding of meanings and that involve complex research questions. On the other hand, in other situations, researchers don't need to come closer with participants when testing hypotheses through quantitative techniques (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Thus, pragmatists argue that researchers need both subjective and objective points of view based on the stage of their research cycle (Bryman, 2015). The embrace of both subjective and objective reality leads pragmatists to adopt both qualitative and quantitative methods.

According to the philosophical thinking of pragmatism that was followed in this study, the researcher focused on the study of antecedents and outcomes of consumer engagement in Facebook brand pages of Egyptian fast food chains. The researcher believes that there are external factors that influence consumers' engagement, which are independent of all minds. However, it is anticipated that there is no single factor that affects the level of engagement, but a group of factors. There could be multiple explanations of consumers' engagement, including factors related to consumers' relationships with the fast food brands such as satisfaction and trust or factors related to their perceptions inside the brand community such as their perceptions of benefits and a critical mass. However, despite these variations, there are consistent patterns that can be captured by applying both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

To summarise the philosophical underpinnings in this research, the researcher adopted a pragmatic research paradigm in which a mixture between interpretivism and positivism

is adopted. The researcher adopted the interpretivist position when dealing with consumers in the qualitative approach; this position was useful in capturing consumers' impressions and perceptions. In the position of interpretivism, the researcher deals with humans as social actors in the world of business and management rather than objects (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). On the other hand, in the quantitative study, the positivist paradigm was useful since the researcher dealt with facts rather than feelings (Saunders et al., 2016). In this study, the researcher adopted a methodological triangulation which can be defined as "*the use of multiple methods to study a single problem*" (Patton, 2002, p. 247). Mixing between interpretivism and positivism has led to a combination between inductive and deductive approaches respectively. Inductive approach is often associated with the interpretivist position and qualitative approach, whereas the deductive approach is often associated with the positivistic position and quantitative approach. A comparison between inductive and deductive approaches is provided in Table 5.1.

Table 5. 1: Differences between Inductive and Deductive approaches

Inductive Approach	Deductive Approach
• Gaining an understanding of the meanings humans attach to events. • A close understanding of the research context. • The collection of qualitative data. • A more flexible structure to permit changes of research emphasis as the research progresses. • A realisation that the researcher is part of the research process. • Less concern with the need to generalise.	• Scientific principles. • Moving from theory to data. • The need to explain causal relationships between variables. • The collection of quantitative data. • The application of controls to ensure validity of data. • The operationalisation of concepts to ensure clarity of definition. • A highly structured approach. • Researcher independence of what is being researched. • The necessity to select samples of sufficient size in order to generalise conclusions.

Source: Adopted from Creswell (2013)

5.3 Mixed Methods Approach

This study adopts a mixed methods approach, which includes both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis procedures sequentially (Creswell, 2013). Mixed methods research is "*the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches, (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, and inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration*" (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007, p. 123). Mixed methods research hasn't gained the attention of researchers like qualitative or quantitative research, since it emerged as a separate orientation (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). However, mixed methods research is increasingly being used and accepted in social science research in general and in business research in particular (Bryman & Bell, 2015), since it is considered a third research approach (Johnson et al., 2007; Parylo, 2012) or third methodological movement (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

Researchers who use mixed methods research argue that both qualitative and quantitative data are both important for answering research questions (Creswell, 2013). It is argued that mixing different types of methods can strengthen a research study by providing better answers for the research questions, which in turn make researchers have more confidence in their research findings (Harrison & Reilly, 2011; Milliken, 2001; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

In mixed methods research, researchers can make decisions regarding the timing of the qualitative and quantitative strands; timing can be classified into three ways: concurrent, sequential and multiphase combination (Creswell & Clark, 2007). In concurrent timing, the researcher conducts both qualitative and quantitative data collection during the same phase of the research study. This simultaneous triangulation involves little interaction between the two sources of data during the data collection

stage. However, the findings complement each other in the data interpretation stage (Morse, 1991). On the other hand, in the sequential timing, the researcher begins with qualitative phase followed by quantitative phase or the opposite. In other words, one phase should precede the other in which one of them depends on the data output of the other. Finally, in the multiphase timing type, the researcher chooses to include sequential and/or concurrent timing over a program of study (Creswell & Clark, 2007).

Since this study is considered exploratory in nature, where the adoption of online brand communities on social media for marketing purposes by fast food chains is relatively a new practice, especially in developing countries like Egypt, the researcher uses the exploratory sequential design (Creswell, 2013) as shown in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5. 1: Exploratory Sequential Design
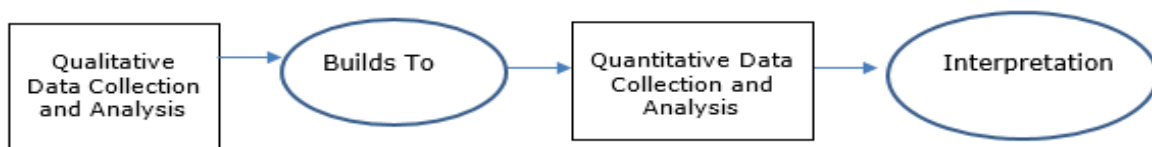
Source: Adopted from Creswell (2013)

In the current study, the qualitative phase is conducted through focus groups discussions; this is followed by a quantitative phase in which data is collected through an online survey. The rationale behind this sequential triangulation is that the results of one approach are necessary for planning the next method (Morse, 1991); where the results of the two approaches are interlinked (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Sieber (1973) argued that at the design stage, qualitative data can assist quantitative component of the study by helping with the conceptual and instrument development. For that reason, this design is called 'instrument development design' (Creswell, 2013). The two-phase exploratory design is useful when qualitative method can help develop or inform the second quantitative method (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Morgan, 1996). Creswell & Clark (2007) argued that the separate phases in this design makes it straightforward in

describing, implementing and reporting. Additionally, although this design has a qualitative component, the quantitative aspect can make this approach more acceptable to quantitative researchers. In addition, this design is associated with investigations that require the generation of hypotheses, which can be tested in the following quantitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

To summarise, the main objective of using mixed methods approach is as follows: to explore the dimensionality of consumer engagement in the qualitative study. Also, the qualitative study was useful in generating some hypotheses related to consumers' perceived benefits in the online communities. The findings of the qualitative phase were helpful in developing a measurement scale (questionnaire) 'Measure of consumer engagement'. The second phase (quantitative phase) was essential to test the research hypotheses (that were developed based on literature and the qualitative study). In the quantitative phase, the researcher employs statistical techniques with the aim of achieving an acceptable level of generalisation.

5.4 Phase I: Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research is a method of inquiry employed in many different social academic disciplines (McGivern, 2009). It is characterised by its aims, which relate to the understanding of some aspects of social life, and its methods which, in general, generate words rather than numbers, as data for analysis (Smith, 2007). Qualitative research can be defined as "*unstructured, primarily exploratory design based on small samples, intended to provide depth, insight and understanding*" (Malhotra, Birks, & Wills, 2012, p. 187). Qualitative research produces descriptive data that arises from people's written or spoken words and observable behaviour, since it is concerned with how people think and act in their everyday lives (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015). It is concerned with detailed description, understanding and insight rather than measurement (McGivern, 2009).

Qualitative research includes a variety of data collection methods and techniques, including observation, group discussions (focus groups), informal, unstructured, and in-depth interviews and participant observation (including ethnography) (Creswell, 2013; McGivern, 2009). Besides, it can include language-based approaches for collection of qualitative data, such as discourse and conversation analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Qualitative research procedures can be classified into direct and indirect approaches. Direct (non-disguised) approaches include group and in-depth interviews. On the other hand, indirect (disguised) approaches include observation or projective techniques (Malhotra et al., 2012).

In qualitative studies, the researcher focuses on the meanings people attach to things in their lives (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Due to its inductive nature, qualitative researchers aim to develop concepts, insights and understanding from patterns in the data (Taylor et al., 2015). Furthermore, qualitative research is characterised by its flexible research design (Belk, Fischer, & Kozinets, 2012), since it is less structured than most quantitative approaches (Babin & Zikmund, 2015), so the resulting data have more depth and greater richness of context usually resulting in new insights and perspectives (Aaker, Kumar, & Day, 2008). It is suggested that qualitative research is the most suitable approach for capturing consumers' attitudes, motives and behaviour (Malhotra et al., 2012). However, it is becoming more common for marketing researchers to combine both qualitative and quantitative research into a single study (McDaniel & Gates, 2010).

Since this research is exploratory in nature, because adoption of social media for marketing purposes is relatively a new practice and is widely changing the marketing landscape (Tuten & Solomon, 2015) and because there is a scarcity in the researches that examined consumer engagement, its antecedents and outcomes in the context of social media brand communities (Gummerus, et al., 2012), the researcher started the first phase of research by employing qualitative data collection methods. Specifically,

qualitative research was useful in capturing dimensions and sub-dimensions of consumer engagement in these online communities; it was also useful in generating some hypotheses related to consumers' perceived benefits in the online communities.

Qualitative research is particularly useful for exploring people's knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what people think but how they think and why they think that way (Krueger & Casey, 2014). Furthermore, it is advisable to conduct qualitative research at the beginning of the study to generate and develop ideas or hypotheses to define the issues under investigation (McGivern, 2009).

The qualitative stage in the first phase was useful in filling the gaps in the understanding of the consumer engagement in the context of social media. By its inductive nature, qualitative research has the ability to investigate the dimensionality of consumer engagement in that online environment. A relatively new topic in the academic marketing literature, qualitative research is used to investigate consumers' perceptions of benefits in the fast food brand pages. Also, the qualitative phase also aided the understanding of how consumers view relationships with fast food brands on social media. Qualitative research is capable of providing a deep understanding of motivations and developing novel concept, where it provides an in-depth and very detailed understanding of phenomenon (Babin & Zikmund, 2015). Moreover, qualitative phase is useful when the research topic is relatively complex, broad and when the knowledge is insufficient (Bonoma, 1985). Also, the open-ended and responsive questioning techniques were appropriate to encourage participants to describe their motivations for engagement in online brand communities. It is recommended to conduct qualitative research for assisting in the early phases of the research when a certain phenomenon is not well understood (consumer engagement in online brand communities) and the relationship between the variables are not clearly established (Aaker et al., 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2002). Finally, the research was useful in providing items for the proposed measures (Morgan, 1996), where qualitative research allows participants to express their

behaviour, experiences and feelings in their own terms. Qualitative information is often helpful in structuring quantitative research and designing questionnaires (McGivern, 2009).

The qualitative tool that was used in this research is focus groups. In the next section, the researcher provides a comprehensive discussion of focus groups as a data collection method in qualitative studies.

5.4.1 Focus Groups Discussions

Focus groups or small group interviews, as a method of qualitative data collection, have a long history in social sciences research (Cook, 2005; Morgan, 1996; Perecman & Curran, 2006). This data collection mode has become popular since World War I, and has widely grown steadily in the past fifty years in behavioural science studies (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). Specifically, it has been extensively used for academic research in marketing (Carson, Gilmore, Perry, & Gronhaug, 2001). Focus groups remain the most commonly used qualitative data collection method in industry and business (Belk et al., 2012), and it is a globally accepted form of marketing research (McDaniel & Gates, 2010).

Focus groups are conducted by bringing a group of people together to discuss a certain topic in a friendly, open and natural manner (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Malhotra et al., 2012). This group gathering takes place in focus groups facility for conducting face-to-face discussions (Belk et al., 2012; McDaniel & Gates, 2010). The number of participants in these discussions ranges from 6-12 participants (Catterall & Maclaran, 2006), but they can include smaller number when discussing sensitive issues (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Too small or too large a group results in less effective participation (Babin & Zikmund, 2015; Blumberg et al., 2014). These discussions can last for an hour or more (Blumberg et al., 2014); however, long focus groups are not recommended in order to keep the respondents at a good level of concentration in the discussions (McDaniel & Gates,

2010). Participants of focus groups are recruited from a variety of sources; two traditional procedures are random telephone screening and mall intercepts interviewing (McDaniel & Gates, 2010). However, online focus groups are rising in popularity (Stewart & Williams, 2005). The person who runs the focus group is often called a moderator or facilitator, and he or she is expected to guide the focus group. This trained moderator follows a flexible format, encouraging dialogue among respondents (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Also, the moderator should be able to build rapport with the participants during discussions to encourage them to express their views in a comfortable and secure environment (McDaniel & Gates, 2010).

The main aim of focus groups is to interview people who are experienced in a certain topic or issue about their experiences. Focus groups are useful for obtaining detailed information about personal and group feelings, perceptions and opinions (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This data collection method is often used when researchers want to find out about people's stories, the way in which they interpret things, or the meanings they attach to things (McGivern, 2009). According to Schmidt & Hollensen (2006), focus groups have several objectives, such as generation of ideas, understanding consumer vocabulary and revealing consumer needs, motives, attitudes and perceptions. The outcomes of the focus group sessions are often used for later quantitative testing (Blumberg et al., 2014).

Focus groups discussions help researchers to understand why people feel the way they do, where the collective discussions between the participants allow them to probe each other's reason for holding a certain view. This is one of the advantages of the focus group approach over individual interviewing approach, which doesn't allow interaction between participants since the interaction between participants in focus groups allow participants to change their answers according to the flow of discussions (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The arguments or discussions between participants provide richer information (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In focus groups, different contributions from participants can be

combined into new insights, which encourage further contributions on a topic that would have remained hidden in individual interviews (Blumberg et al., 2014). Furthermore, focus groups are relatively quick, easy and inexpensive to conduct (Belk et al., 2012).

In the first phase of this study, the researcher chose to apply focus groups interviewing as the most suitable data collection tool due to the exploratory nature of that phase. Focus groups discussions with members of fast food brand pages helped the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the nature and dimensionality of consumer engagement in the online brand communities on social media. Focus groups discussions are useful when researchers want to examine shared meanings and terminology (Belk et al., 2012; Catterall & Maclaran, 2006). Also, it is argued that exploratory focus groups can be used early in the market research process to define the research problem more precisely and can also be used to generate hypotheses (Schmidt & Hollensen, 2006). Additionally, these discussions give the participants the opportunity to describe their experiences with marketing on Facebook, specifically on Facebook brand pages. These discussions helped the researcher to gain insights since participants feel sufficiently comfortable and relaxed (Malhotra et al., 2012). Furthermore, it allowed the participants to report their engagement experiences in the fast food brand pages and to describe the benefits they perceive by their membership in these communities. Also, since focus groups allow people to discuss their true feelings, anxieties and experiences in their own words (Babin & Zikmund, 2015), the discussions were helpful in generating items that were used in developing a new scale for measuring consumer engagement in social media brand communities. The findings of the focus groups discussions will be presented in chapter 6.

5.4.2 Project Size, Participants' Recruitment and Sampling Technique in the Qualitative Phase

Regarding the project size, Krueger & Casey (2014) suggested conducting 2-4 focus groups until theoretical saturation is reached. Moreover, according to Malhotra et al. (2012), the number of focus groups should depend on the available time and budget,

geographic spread of participants and the paradigm that guides the administration and analysis of these discussions. Based on the previous suggestions, the researcher conducted four focus groups with members of fast food brand pages on Facebook in Cairo and Alexandria, which are the biggest Egyptian cities where all the main fast food chains are located. The discussions were conducted face-to-face, where the participants were recruited through an online invitation that was posted on 8 brand pages of fast food chains on Facebook in Egypt (see Appendix B for the online invitation and the names of the fast food chains). Selected participants received an online invitation to participate in the focus group discussions informing them about the session time, data and location of the focus groups (Blumberg et al., 2014). Recruiting participants for focus groups through social media platforms is becoming a popular practice (Mcinttyre, 2013).

Focus groups require that respondents are screened based on relevant characteristics (Babin & Zikmund, 2015). Given the purpose of the qualitative phase which aimed to study the nature of consumer engagement on fast food brand pages on Facebook, the researcher purposively selected the participants based on their high engagement level. Hence, the researcher made sure that all participants were active members on Facebook and in the fast food brand pages. All the participants were young consumers between the ages of 18 and 29 years. Each of the focus groups had 10 participants with a total of 40 participants in the four focus groups. The researcher followed the recommendations of Hastings & Perry (2000) which indicated that the qualitative data should be collected until data saturation is achieved.

The researcher used purposive (judgemental) sampling for recruiting participants of the focus groups. Purposive (judgemental) sampling is a type of non-probability sampling in which the population elements are selected based on the judgement of researchers (Malhotra et al., 2012). This technique enables researchers to use their subjective judgement in selecting cases that are informative; in other words, the cases are selected

because researchers believe that they are representative of the population of interest and will help in achieving the research objectives (Malhotra et al., 2012; Saunders et al., 2016). The findings resulting from the purposive sample were very helpful in the qualitative phase where they allowed the researcher to generate ideas and insights and to develop some hypotheses, also they were helpful in generating items for the development of some measurement scales for the quantitative phase.

The focus groups were held in meeting rooms in the campus of a university (Arab Academy for Science, Technology & Maritime Transport). Two focus groups were conducted in Cairo campus while the other two groups were conducted in Alexandria campus in Egypt. The small numbers of participants allowed the researcher to get a greater depth of response from group participants (McGivern, 2009). Additionally, the homogenous grouping of the participants tends to promote more intense discussion and freer interaction (Blumberg et al., 2014).

5.4.3 Focus Groups Topics

The main purpose of these focus groups was to gain a deep understanding of consumer engagement in Facebook brand pages. Also, the focus groups discussions were helpful in identifying various dimensions and sub-dimensions of consumer engagement. Also, they were useful in identifying the benefits that consumers seek from their interactions inside these communities. Additionally, they were helpful in generating items for developing a new scale for measuring this consumer engagement. The researcher developed a discussion guide; its draft version was revised by the PhD supervisors and two other lecturers in marketing who are interested in social media marketing. Also, the researcher held three interviews with three social media managers of fast food chains in Egypt with the aim of identifying the main topics that should be taken into consideration when designing the discussion guide of the focus groups. These interviews were helpful in adding some questions relevant to consumer engagement on social media. The topics and questions of the discussion guide are available in Appendix B.

The discussion guide contained twenty-two main questions, which were classified into four main sections. The first section consisted of introductory questions about the familiarity of the participants with social media marketing of fast food brands and its different forms, specifically marketing through Facebook brand pages. The second section contained questions regarding different engagement behaviours they perform on the brand pages. Also, this section contained questions that aimed to understand consumer engagement and its different forms in the context of social media based brand communities. The third section aimed to understand the reasons that encourage consumers to participate in fast food brand pages. Finally, the last section aimed at reaching at a conclusion by asking the participants their overall impression on marketing through brand pages and the recommendations they suggest to companies.

During the focus groups discussions, the research used all types of questions suggested by Krueger & Casey (2014), including opening, introductory, transition, key and ending questions. Adoption of different types of questions was helpful in gaining deep insights and answers from the participants. For example, at the beginning of the discussions, the researcher asked some opening questions about their experiences with social media marketing which are: *"Could you please tell me about your relationship with Facebook?, And for how long have you been a member?"* Usually, opening questions are not discussion questions and don't intend to obtain useful information in the study, but these questions aim to encourage every member to talk in the group (Dick, 1990; Krueger & Casey, 2014). The researcher asked the respondents a group of introductory questions aiming to understand their experiences with social media marketing. An example of introductory question is "*Please tell me about your experience with different forms of social media marketing on Facebook, and what type do you prefer?*"

Another type of questions that were used in the discussions is the transition questions. Transition questions were used to move the conversation into the key questions that drive the study (Krueger & Casey, 2014). An example of these questions is "*Can you*

please describe your relationship with fast food brand pages on Facebook?" Furthermore, the researcher used key questions to drive the study; an example of key question is "*Why did you participate in the brand pages of the fast food chains*?" Finally, the researcher used ending questions to bring closure to the discussions and to enable participants to reflect back to previous questions. An example of these questions is "*What are your recommendations for fast food chains in managing their brand pages on* Facebook?"

Additionally, each section contained open and probing questions. Open questions aimed to capture facts and to encourage participants to provide additional information. It also helped to show the respondents' attitudes (Grummitt, 1980). For example, these questions were used: "*Do you read the comments and reviews of other consumers on the brand page on Facebook?" and "How do you describe your experiences on the brand pages?"* On the other hand, probing questions aimed at seeking more explanation when the respondents' answers were not enough or unclear (Bryman, 2015; Yin, 2016). Examples of probing questions are: "*Can you please tell me more?"* and *"Can you tell me why?"*

5.4.4 Focus Groups Procedures

Each focus group lasted for about two hours and was recorded using a digital voice recorder. The recorder allowed the researcher to capture the data more accurately and to keep the recording to be subsequently transcribed (Bryman & Bell, 2015). With the aim of conducting focus groups in a welcoming and friendly environment that enables the participants to freely express themselves (Belk et al., 2012), the participants were provided with water, soft drinks and refreshments. Also, they were given name tags to help them in addressing each other.

The researcher used a discussion guide to help him in managing the discussions. This guide serves as the focus group outline (Babin & Zikmund, 2015). McDaniel & Gates (2010) indicated that discussion guides should lead the discussion in three stages; in the

first stage, the rapport is established and the regulations of group discussions are explained. In the second stage, the discussions that aim to answer the research questions are conducted. Finally, in the last stage, the researcher summarises the findings. Based on this, the focus groups began by welcoming the participants and thanking them for taking part in the discussions. Also, the researcher demonstrated to the participants the importance of their participation by outlining the research objectives. In order to establish rapport, the participants were asked to introduce themselves. Also, they were motivated to present their experiences regarding social media in general and Facebook in particular. Additionally, they were asked about their familiarity with social media marketing practices. Then, the researcher asked probing questions regarding their engagement experiences with fast food brand pages on Facebook. During the discussions, the researcher made sure that all participants actively engaged in the discussions. When some members tried to dominate the discussions, the researcher made sure to direct questions to silent members (Belk et al., 2012). At the end of the focus groups, the researcher thanked the participants for their time and asked them if they would like to have a copy of the findings when available. A detailed description of the data analysis procedures of the focus groups is presented in chapter 6 (Qualitative findings).

5.4.5 Validity and Reliability of Focus Groups

Reliability and validity are important concepts in both qualitative and quantitative studies (Golafshani, 2003; Morgan, 1996; Wright & Crimp, 1995), as they are considered an essential part of any rigorous research methodology (Chioncel et al., 2003). Data quality in the mixed methods is evaluated by the quality standards in the qualitative and quantitative stages (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Reliability and validity in qualitative research are understood in a different way than quantitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although reliability and validity in research have different definitions (Winter, 2000), these definitions generally refer to "*truth or accuracy of the representations and*

generalizations made by the researcher - how true the claims made in the study are or how accurate the interpretations are" (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, p. 24).

The concept of validity in qualitative research involves a good match between researcher's observations and the theoretical ideas that are developed based on these observations (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In qualitative research, validity involves both internal and external validity (Burke, 1997). It differs from validity of quantitative studies. For instance, internal validity in quantitative studies depend on constructing credible measuring instruments (Golafshani, 2003). In fact, in qualitative studies, the instrument is considered the researcher (Patton, 1990). Accordingly, qualitative research has its reliability and validity dependent on the ability and effort of the researcher (Golafshani, 2003). Specifically, in focus groups, reliability and validity are dependent on the type of interview used and experience of the moderator (Byers & Wilcox, 1991).

Internal validity implies the ability of the research to provide an explanation for the cause and effect relationships (Byers & Wilcox, 1991). In the focus groups, the researcher tried to ensure internal validity by accurate sample selection – young consumers who subscribed to fast food brand pages on Facebook. It is argued that accurate sample selection and responses can enhance the internal validity of qualitative research (Winter, 2000). Also, the researcher followed all the required steps in the stages of conducting the focus groups discussions and analysing it. Additionally, the researcher tried to ensure the internal validity by combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches in the same study. Regarding external validity, in qualitative research, it refers to the degree to which the findings can be generalised across social settings (Bryman, 2015; Riege, 2003). In the current study, external validity was achieved by comparing the results of the focus groups with the existing literature.

On the other hand, regarding the reliability in qualitative research, it refers to the ability of research to generate similar results when the research inquiry techniques and procedures are replicated by other researchers (Winter, 2000). This was achieved by

following structural and operational procedures during all the stages of the focus group discussions, including recording, transcription and interpretation of the data.

Patton (1990) suggests that the use of triangulation, including both qualitative and quantitative approaches, can increase the reliability and validity of research. As such, Mathison (1988) argues that triangulation is important for controlling bias and establishing valid propositions; this is a typical strategy test for improving the validity and reliability and evaluation of findings (Golafshani, 2003). Therefore, the use of mixed methods approach increased the possibility of producing valid findings in the current study.

Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggested an alternative way for assessing the quality of qualitative research, which includes credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. In qualitative research, credibility is similar to internal validity. It is achieved by conducting the research process in accordance to the rules of good practice and by gaining respondent validation (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). In the current study, the credibility assumption was confirmed by sending the findings of the qualitative study to the respondents to get their feedback. Also, the quantitative study that followed the qualitative study was helpful in establishing credibility (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Shenton, 2004). On the other hand, transferability parallels external validity; it refers to the ability of the research findings to be applied in other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To facilitate achieving transferability in research, Geertz (1993) suggests conducting 'thick description' by extensively describing the research context and culture. To achieve the transferability in the current study, the researcher provided a detailed description of the culture and context in which the research took place, which will help other researchers to make judgments about the transferability of research to other contexts (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Shenton, 2004). Moreover, dependability in qualitative research parallels reliability; it refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied at other times/contexts (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In the qualitative phase, the researcher kept

complete records at all phases of the research to ensure the dependability of the findings (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The last criterion for evaluation of the quality of the focus groups data is the conformability; it refers to the degree to which the researcher maintained objective values in the research process by not interfering by adding his personal views or theoretical inclinations (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In the current study, the researcher maintained his objectivity and didn't interfere with the respondents' views. Also, the researcher made sure to check and recheck the data throughout the research process (Lincoln & Guba ,1985).

5.4.6 Data Analysis Technique and Software in the Qualitative Phase

The qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is defined as a method for identifying, analysing and reporting common patterns within qualitative data; it involves extracting themes or patterns that are relevant to the description of a phenomenon and are highly associated with a specific research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is performed through the use of coding, which is a key process that should begin as soon as the qualitative data is collected. Coding involves the breaking down of data into component parts, which are given labels (Bryman, 2015). According to Fereday & Muir-Cochrane (2006), thematic analysis is one of the most suitable approaches for analysing focus group data. The steps of the thematic analysis involve familiarisation with data, generating initial codes, searching for initial themes, reviewing themes, defining and producing report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In the current study, the researcher familiarised himself with the data through the process of transcribing and reading the transcripts several times. Through the careful reading, the researcher was able to familiarise himself with the respondents' attitudes and experiences regarding their engagement in social media brand communities. After that, the researcher started conducting the initial coding manually with the aim of identifying initial themes. Then, the initial themes were identified through careful

examination of common patterns in the data. Finally, the actual themes were identified using thematic reports. The coding and analysis were conducted with the aid of NVivo v.11 qualitative analysis software (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). This software was extremely helpful in the reduction and management of qualitative data and made the identification of relevant themes relatively easy. A detailed description of the qualitative findings is presented in chapter 6.

5.5 Phase II: Quantitative Approach

Quantitative methods refer to the techniques that are associated with the collection, analysis, interpretation and presentation of numerical information (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Thus, quantitative researchers are interested in addressing research objectives through empirical assessments that involve numerical measurement and statistical analysis (Babin & Zikmund, 2015). The quantitative phase of the current study was conducted in two stages: pilot and main studies. Both stages were conducted using online surveys. The objective of the pilot study was to assess the reliability and validity of the measurement scales of the study's constructs. Also, it aimed to purify the items of the new engagement scale. The details of the pilot study are presented in chapter 7. On the other hand, the aim of the main quantitative study was to test the research hypotheses of the proposed conceptual framework.

5.5.1 Rationale for Using Quantitative Approach in Phase II

Quantitative research is used to capture relationships between variables within conceptual models (Williams, 2011). Thus, it can be used to establish, confirm, validate and develop generalisation with the aim of adding a contribution to theory (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Quantitative methods have been used successfully in some studies in the context of social media marketing and online brand communities, e.g. (Leventhal et al., 2014; Gummerus et al., 2012; Hutter et al., 2013; Jahn & Kunz, 2012).

In the current study, an online self-completion questionnaire was adopted to capture consumers' perceptions. This method has several advantages including being cheap to administer to large samples (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2012), as well as the absence of problems that are common in personal interviews, such as interviewers' effects and variability (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Data obtained from surveys are often reliable because respondents have to choose between limited alternatives, which reduce variability in the results (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). A final advantage is the relative simplicity in coding, analysis and interpretation of the data (Malhotra et al., 2012).

5.5.2 Justification for Adopting an Online Survey

Surveys are used to collect information on different things, including personal facts, opinions, attitudes and past behaviours (Maylor & Blackmon, 2005). Online or web-based surveys are rising in popularity as a result of the application of modern communications technology to the research process (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). This form of surveys is considered faster and cheaper relatively to other survey methods (Malhotra et al., 2012). It is completed online, and responses are stored directly in an online database for statistical processing later (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). This form of surveys is highly targeted, since the researcher retains control over who is allowed to participate in the survey (Sue & Ritter, 2012). Also, respondents answering online surveys feel a high degree of anonymity, which makes them express their views more openly (Blumberg et al., 2014).

In the current study, the target of the online survey was young Egyptian consumers who are members of fast food brand pages on Facebook. Accordingly, posting the link of the online questionnaire on these brand pages was the most suitable way to reach the target population in order to capture their perceptions regarding marketing through online brand communities on social media. Online questionnaires on Facebook brand pages as a data collection method have become popular in many studies that were conducted in the field of social media marketing, e.g. (Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2016;

Kudeshia et al., 2016; Munnukka et al., 2015; Vernuccio et al., 2015). This method was useful in capturing consumers' perceptions regarding their interactions with brands in online environments.

5.5.3 Survey Design and Administration

5.5.3.1 Survey Procedures

The researcher developed a questionnaire to be adopted in the quantitative phase. The questionnaire was revised and accepted by the supervisors and other marketing scholars who are interested in the social media marketing field. The questionnaire was originally developed in English, and then it was translated to Arabic by professional translators. Following this, a back translation was conducted by translating the Arabic statements back to English. Back translation plays an important role in ensuring the quality of translation of measuring instruments (Brislin, Lonner, & Thorndike, 1973; Maneesriwongul & Dixon, 2004). After that, the translated version was further crosschecked by another group of bilingual researchers in order to make sure that both Arabic and English versions have the same meaning. The questionnaire was sent to the Ethical committee at the University of Huddersfield to check the absence of any offensive or inappropriate questions.

The questionnaire contained a short introduction about the purpose of the research; also, it thanked respondents for participating. In addition, the introduction ensured that the participation in the survey is voluntary, where participants have the full right to withdraw at any time without mentioning reasons.

The questionnaire was sent to a number of colleague researchers and academics to indicate the duration needed to complete it. Next, the link of the online survey was posted on 8 brand pages of fast food chains on Facebook for the purpose of the pilot study. (See Appendix B for the names of the fast food pages). A total of 218 responses were collected for the pilot study. Pilot studies are often conducted on small samples of

participants to eliminate any problems in questionnaires (Malhotra et al., 2012). Based on the pilot study, minor modifications were made for the final version of the questionnaire. Then, for the main study, the link of the final version of the questionnaire was posted on the official Facebook brand pages of 20 leading fast food chains in Egypt. The researcher kept collecting the data for 6 months. See Appendix B for the final version of the questionnaire. To identify the official Facebook pages of the investigated fast food chains, the researcher reviewed the companies' websites to get the link of the Facebook page. Also, the Facebook search engines were used to identify the link of these official pages.

5.5.3.2 Operationalisation of the Study's Constructs

The researcher operationalised the constructs by adopting scales from previous literature. However, the researcher developed scales for measuring one construct, which is 'engagement in social media based brand communities' based on the focus groups discussions. The steps of this new scale development are presented in chapter 7.

In the following part, the researcher presents the items that were used in measuring the research variables. All the scales that were adopted for measuring the study constructs used 7-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) ' strongly disagree' to (7) ' Strongly Agree'. Likert scale is a good representation of an interval measurement scale (Byrne & van De Vijver, 2010). Also, it gives the researchers the ability to perform various types of statistical analysis (Malhotra et al., 2012).

5.5.3.2.1 Screening and Warm-up Questions

The researcher began the online survey by putting up some questions with the aim of screening out participants who are not interested in the study. Also, these questions helped the respondents to get into the topic of the study. For instance, at the beginning of the survey, the respondents were asked four questions about their relationship with Facebook and Facebook advertising. Then, they were asked two questions related to the

number of fast food brand pages they are following on Facebook and the name of their favourite page. If the participants were not fans of these pages, they were asked politely not to complete the questionnaire. The questions that were used for this part are presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5. 2: Screening and warm up questions

How many hours do you spend on Facebook daily?
From which devices do you log on to your Facebook account?
What are the activities that you regularly perform on Facebook?
What is the type of Facebook advertising that mostly grabs your attention?
Are you a fan of one of the fast food brand pages on Facebook?

Source: This Research

5.5.3.2.2 Operationalisation of Brand Identification

Brand identification of consumers refers to their identification with brands that help them to satisfy their self-definitional needs (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; So, King, Hudson, & Meng, 2017). Brand identification was measured using five items borrowed from He et al. (2012). The respondents were presented with five statements that assessed the level of their identification with fast food brands. Table 5.3 presents the items of the brand identification scale.

Table 5. 3: Items of Brand Identification Scale

When someone criticizes this fast food brand, it feels like a personal insult.
I am very interested in what others think about this fast food brand.
The successes of this fast food brand are my successes.
When someone praises this fast food brand, it feels like a personal compliment.
If a story in the media criticized this fast food brand, I would feel embarrassed.

Source: Adopted from He et al. (2012)

5.5.3.2.3 Operationalisation of Brand Satisfaction

Overall satisfaction of consumers can be defined as "*an overall evaluation based on the total purchase and consumption experience with a product or service over time*" (Anderson, Fornell, and Lehmann,1994, p. 54). In the online questionnaire, brand satisfaction was measured using three items borrowed from Delgado-Ballester &

Munuera-Alemán (2005). The respondents were presented with three statements that assessed the level of their satisfaction with fast food brands. Items in the brand satisfaction scale are shown in Table 5.4.

Table 5. 4: Items of Brand Satisfaction Scale

Considering all my consumption experience with this fast food brand I am very satisfied.
Considering all my consumption experience with this fast food brand I am very pleased.
Considering all my consumption experience with this fast food brand I am not very disappointed.

Source: Adopted from Tuškej et al. (2013)

5.5.2.2.4 Operationalisation of Brand Trust

Brand trust is defined as consumers' confidence that a brand will able to deliver its promised function (Agustin & Singh, 2005). In the current study, brand trust was measured using four items borrowed from He et al. (2012). The respondents were presented with four statements that assessed the level of their trust to fast food brands as shown in Table 5.5.

Table 5. 5: Items of Brand Trust scale

I trust this fast food brand.
I rely on this fast food brand.
This fast food brand is honest.
This fast food brand is safe.

Source: Adopted from He et al. (2012)

5.5.2.2.5 Operationalisation of Brand Symbolic Function

In the current study, brand symbolic function was measured using three items borrowed from Kumar & Advani (2005). The respondents were presented with three statements that assessed the level of their perceptions of brand symbolism for fast food brands as shown in Table 5.6.

Table 5. 6: Items of Brand Symbolic Function

Buying this fast food brand helps me express my personality.
Knowing whether a person uses this fast food brand or not tells a lot about this person.
One can tell a lot about a person from the fast food brand he buys.

Source: Adopted from Kumar & Advani (2005)

5.5.2.2.6 Operationalisation of Perceived Critical Mass

Perceived critical mass refers to the degree to which a consumer perceives the number of participants and interactions in a community to be greater than some threshold (Tsai et al., 2012). In the current study, perceived critical mass was measured using three items borrowed from Hsu & Lu (2004).The respondents were presented with three statements that assessed the level of perception of critical mass in the brand page as shown in Table 5.7.

Table 5. 7: Items of Perceived Critical Mass Scale

Many of my friends joined this fast food brand page.
I find that most members regularly share their consumption experiences on the fast food brand page.
I find that the majority of members joined the fast food brand page after purchasing the fast food brand.

Source: Adopted from Hsu & Lu (2004)

5.5.2.2.7 Operationalisation of Perceived Hedonic Benefits

Online hedonic consumption refers to the emotional stimulation, positive emotions that include feeling good, enjoyment, excitement, happiness, and enthusiasm on the internet (Hoffman & Novak, 1996). The researcher borrowed three items from Wang & Fesenmaier (2004). Respondents were presented with three statements that assessed their perception of hedonic benefits in the brand community as shown in Table 5.8.

Table 5. 8: Items of Perceived Hedonic Benefits scale

I am amused by other members in this fast food brand page.
I am having fun in the page of this fast food brand.
This fast food brand page is entertaining.

Source: Adopted from Wang & Fesenmaier (2004)

5.5.2.2.8 Operationalisation of Perceived Functional Benefits

Functional benefits can be defined as the value derived from achieving specific purposes such as information gathering and sharing, convenience and efficiency (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004). In this study, the researcher borrowed three items from Wang &

Fesenmaier (2004) and Kang et al. (2014). Respondents were presented with three statements that assessed the level of perception for functional benefits in the fast food brand pages shown in Table 5.9.

Table 5. 9: Items of Perceived Functional Benefits

This brand page helps me obtain up-to-date information about the fast food brand.
This page helps me efficiently and conveniently communicate with others online.
This brand page helps me in sharing my experiences of the fast food brand.

Source: Adopted from Wang & Fesenmaier (2004)

5.5.2.2.9 Operationalisation of Perceived Monetary Benefits

Monetary benefits refer to savings, e.g. (discounts, special price breaks) that encourage consumers to develop relationships with companies (Harris, O'malley, & Patterson, 2003; Peterson, 1995).In the current study, the researcher borrowed three items from Gwinner et al. (1998); Kang et al. (2014) and Lee, Ahn, & Kim (2008). Respondents were presented with three statements that assessed the level of consumers' perception of monetary benefits in fast food brand pages as shown in Table 5.10.

Table 5. 10: Items of Perceived Monetary Benefits scale

This brand page allows me to obtain discounts or special deals that most consumers do not get.
This brand page allows me to obtain better prices than other consumers.
This brand page gives me the opportunity to receive free coupons and some discounts.

Source: Adopted from Gwinner et al. (1998); Kang et al. (2014) and Lee et al. (2008)

5.5.2.2.10 Operationalisation of Perceived Social Benefits

Social benefits refer to the different forms of help and support that the community members can provide for each other Wang & Fesenmaier (2004). The researcher borrowed three items from Chung & Buhalis (2008) and Kang et al. (2014). Respondents were presented with three statements that assessed the level of perception of social benefits in the fast food brand pages on Facebook as shown in Table 5.11.

Table 5. 11: Items of Perceived Social Benefits Scale

This brand page helps me to get involved with other members.
This brand page gives me a sense of belonging.
This brand page gives me the opportunity to establish and maintain relationships with other members.

Source: Adopted from Wang & Fesenmaier (2004)

5.5.2.2.11 Operationalisation of Perceived Passing the time Benefits

In the context of social media research, passing the time motive was defined as the usage of social media to occupy time and relieve boredom (Whiting & Williams, 2013). The researcher borrowed three items from Papacharissi & Rubin (2000). Respondents were presented with three statements that assessed the level of their perception of "passing the time" benefits as a result of their interactions inside the fast food brand pages on Facebook as shown in Table 5.12.

Table 5. 12: Items of Perceived "Passing the time" Benefits Scale

I use this brand page when I have nothing to do.
I use this brand page to occupy my time.
I use this brand page to pass the time when bored.

Source: Adopted from Papacharissi & Rubin (2000)

5.5.2.2.12 Operationalisation of Brand Love

Brand love refers to the "*degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name*" (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006, p. 81). In the current study, the researcher borrowed seven items from Carroll & Ahuvia (2006) and Vernuccio et al. (2015). Respondents were presented with six statements that assessed the level of their brand love as shown in Table 5.13.

Table 5. 13: Items of Brand Love scale

This is a wonderful fast food brand.
This fast food brand makes me feel good.
This fast food brand is totally awesome.
This fast food brand makes me very happy.
This fast food brand is pure delight.
I am passionate about this fast food brand.

Source: Adopted from Carroll & Ahuvia (2006) and Vernuccio et al. (2015)

5.5.2.2.13 Operationalisation of Word of Mouth

Word of mouth is defined as "*informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization or a service*" (Harrison-Walker, 2001, p. 63). The researcher borrowed three items from Arnett et al. (2003) to measure consumers' positive word of mouth for fast food brands. The three items are shown in Table 5.14.

Table 5. 14: Items of Word of Mouth scale

I 'talk up' this brand to people I know.
I bring up this brand in a positive way in conversations I have with friends and acquaintances.
In social situations, I often speak favourably about this fast-food brand.

Source: Adopted from Harrison-Walker (2001)

5.5.2.2.14 Operationalisation of Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty refers to the overall commitment of being loyal to a specific brand (Yoo et al., 2000). The researcher borrowed four items from Carroll & Ahuvia (2006) to measure brand loyalty of consumers towards fast food brands that are marketed through Facebook brand pages. Respondents were presented with four statements that assessed the level of their loyalty as shown in Table 5.15.

Table 5. 15: Items of Brand Loyalty scale

This is the only brand of fast food that I will buy.
When I go shopping, I don't even notice competing brands.
If I couldn't find this brand, I'll postpone buying until I find it.
I'll 'do without' rather than buy another brand.

Source: Adopted from Carroll & Ahuvia (2006)

5.5.2.2.15 Operationalisation of Perceived Quality

Perceived quality refer to "*the customers' subjective judgment about a brand's overall excellence or superiority and addresses overall quality rather than individual elements of quality*" (Yoo et al. ,2000). Consumers' perceived quality of fast food brands was

measured using the scale that was developed by Yoo et al. (2000).The perceived quality scale is presented in Table 5.16.

Table 5. 16: Items of Perceived Quality Scale.

This fast food brand is of high quality.
This fast food brand is a reliable brand.
The likelihood that this fast food brand would be of good quality is very high.

Source: Adopted from (Yoo et al., 2000)

5.5.2.2.16 Operationalisation of Willingness to Pay a Price Premium

A brand is said to have a price premium when the total amount of money consumers are willing to spend on this brand is higher than the total amount they are willing to pay for similar products from other relevant brands (Aaker, 1996).For measuring consumers' willingness to pay a price premium, the researcher used a three items adopted from Netemeyer et al. (2004). The items of the developed scale are presented in Table 5.17.

Table 5. 17: Items of Willingness to Pay a Price Premium scale.

If the price of this fast food brand goes up I will switch to another brand of fast food.
I am willing to pay a higher price for this fast food brand than for other brands of fast food.
I am willing to pay more for this fast food brand than other brands of fast food.

Source: Adopted from Netemeyer et al. (2004)

5.5.2.2.17 Operationalisation of Resistance to Negative Information

Consumers' resistance to negative information refers to their overlooking and downplaying for any negative information that they might get about a certain brand (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Respondents were presented with four statements that assessed the level of resistance to negative information as shown in Table 5.18. These items were adopted from Bhattacharya & Sen (2003) and Xie & Peng (2009).

Table 5. 18: Items of Resistance to Negative Information Scale.

I forgive this fast food brand when it makes mistakes.
I will forgive the fast food brand for any negative information about it.
Given the fast food brand mistakes, I wouldn't condemn it.
I would think favourably of this fast food brand upon hearing negative information about it.

Source: Adopted from Bhattacharya & Sen (2003) and Xie & Peng (2009)

5.5.4 Sampling and Time Horizon

5.5.4.1 Target Population

Identifying the population of the study and sampling procedures are keys issues before data collection (Creswell, 2013). In any research, the population is the "*aggregate of all the elements, sharing some common set of characteristics that compromise the universe for the purpose of the marketing research problem*" (Malhotra et al., 2012, p. 494). In other words, it is considered the universe of units from which the sample is to be chosen (Saunders et al., 2016).

Within the current study, the population of interest consisted of all young Egyptian consumers between ages 18 and 29 who are members of official fast food brand pages of Facebook in Egypt. According to E-marketing Egypt (2016), the number of Facebook users in Egypt reached 28 million users in 2016, with 73% of them between the ages of 18 and 29 years (Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government, 2015). For planning the sampling strategy, several factors should be considered, including selecting the sampling technique and the sample size (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This will be discussed in the following sections in detail.

5.5.4.2 Sampling Strategy

The following part discusses the different sampling strategies that can be used in research. This is followed by a discussion of the sampling strategy that was adopted in the current study.

5.5.4.2.1 Probability Sampling Techniques

In probability sampling techniques, every element of the population has an equal opportunity to appear in the sample; this requires a specification of the target population and the sampling frame (Malhotra et al., 2012). Thus, before conducting probability sampling techniques, researchers must identify a sampling frame which consists of a

complete list of all the cases in the population from which your sample will be drawn (Malhotra et al., 2012; Saunders et al., 2016). There are four types of probability sampling techniques.

Simple Random Sampling

In this type of sampling, every element in the population has a known and equal probability to be selected in the sample (Bryman & Bell, 2015). To choose a simple random sample, the researcher first prepares a list for the sampling frame, in which each element is assigned a unique identification number. Then, the researcher chooses a sample from these elements in a random way (Malhotra et al., 2012). Simple random sampling allows researchers to select a sample without bias; however, this type of sampling is considered difficult, since it is hard to construct sampling frame, as it needs an accurate and accessible data (Saunders et al., 2016).

Systematic Sampling

Systematic sampling involves selecting the sample at regular intervals from a sampling frame (Saunders et al., 2016). The elements of the sample frame can be ordered based on some characteristics that are related or unrelated to the characteristic under investigation (Malhotra et al., 2012). Systematic sampling needs sampling frame that does not contain periodic patterns, is accurate, and easily accessible (Saunders et al., 2016). One disadvantage of systematic sampling is that it can decrease representativeness depending on order in the sampling frame (Malhotra et al., 2012).

Stratified Random Sampling

Stratified random sampling is usually conducted in two stages. First, population is divided into strata. Then, the elements are selected from each stratum by a random procedure (Malhotra et al., 2012). This type of sampling is challenging, since it needs an accurate, easily accessible sample frame (Saunders et al., 2016). Also, it is relatively difficult to select relevant stratification variables; in addition, it is not feasible to stratify on many variables (Malhotra et al., 2012). Thus, this type of sampling is only feasible

when the relevant information about sampling criteria is available (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Cluster Sampling

Cluster sampling is also conducted on two stages. First, target population is divided into mutually exclusive sub-populations that contain the diversity of participants held in the target population. Then, a random sample of clusters is selected (Malhotra et al., 2012). Unfortunately, this type is imprecise and difficult to compute and interpret results (Malhotra et al., 2012).

5.5.4.2.2 Non-Probability Sampling Techniques

In these sampling techniques, the researcher depends on his personal judgment for choosing the sample (Malhotra et al., 2012). In that type of sampling, not all population elements have an equal chance of appearing in the sample since the probability of each case being selected from the total population is not known (Saunders et al., 2016). Non-probability sampling techniques involve four types including:

Convenience Sampling

In convenience sampling, the selection of the sampling units is left primarily to the researcher, where a sample of convenient elements is drawn from the population (Malhotra et al., 2012). In that type, the sample selection process is continued until the researcher reaches the required sample size (Saunders et al., 2016). In business and management research, convenience samples are very common and indeed are more popular than samples based on probability sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2015), since it is considered the least expensive and least-time consuming of all the sampling techniques (Malhotra et al., 2012).

Purposive (Judgmental) Sampling

In judgmental sampling, participants are selected by personal judgement of the researcher because they possess a certain feature that is relevant to the research study

(Malhotra et al., 2012). This type of sampling involves choosing participants who have the capacity to inform the research (Quinlan & Zikmund, 2015). Often known as purposive sampling, this sample type is usually used when working with very small samples such as in case study research (Saunders et al., 2016). Despite that the costs of conducting judgmental sampling is considered reasonable (Bryman & Bell, 2015), it is criticised for being subjective (Malhotra et al., 2012).

Quota Sampling

In that sampling type, the researcher starts by developing control categories or quotas of the population elements. Then, sample elements are selected based on convenience or judgments (Malhotra et al., 2012). Quota sampling is normally used for large populations (Saunders et al., 2016); it can be used for selecting interviewees in qualitative studies (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Quota sampling has a number of advantages over the probabilistic techniques, since it is less costly and can be set up very quickly (Saunders et al., 2016). Quota sampling is criticised because there's a possibility of selection bias and it doesn't ensure representativeness (Malhotra et al., 2012).

Snowball Sampling

In snowball sampling, researchers choose a group of participants from the population to be contacted. Then, these participants are asked to recommend other participants to take part in the research (Malhotra et al., 2012). This sampling technique is useful when researchers face difficulties in identifying cases to participate in their studies (Saunders et al., 2016). Despite that snowball sampling can help in estimating characteristics that are rare in the target population, it can be time consuming (Malhotra et al., 2012).

Self-Selection Sampling

Self-selection sampling is conducted when researchers ask individuals to identify their desire to participate in the research studies (Saunders et al., 2016). To recruit respondents, researchers usually post invitations or advertisements in magazines or newspapers that their target population usually read; also, they can post invitations on

appropriate internet discussion groups or forums. Additionally, they can send letters or emails to invite individuals to take part in their research (Saunders et al., 2016). The advantage of this type of sampling is that respondents are usually interested in the research topic, as they participate voluntarily in the research. Also, they are usually committed and willing to give information regarding the research topic (Bradley, 1999).

5.5.4.2.3 Sampling Techniques in the Quantitative Study

In the current study, the target population is young consumers who are members of fast food brand pages in Egypt. The major criterion was that respondents were members of 'official' fast food brand pages on Facebook. Although there are a number of brand page ranking websites (e.g., socialbakers.com and fanpagelist.com) that provide the number of page fans for major consumer brands, it does not act as a sampling frame. It is impossible to know the authenticity of the numbers since it is difficult to determine which accounts are real and which are used for spamming. Also, although these pages have millions of members, the listings of the number of fans do not provide a mailing list or any contact information. Hence, given the absence of a complete list of fast food brand pages on Facebook and a list of members of these pages, applying probability sampling techniques was extremely difficult and impossible. Thus, the researcher applied purposive (judgmental) sampling to choose the fast food brand pages that can be used to collect the data through an online survey.

Since the main objective of this research is to study the behavior and engagement experiences of consumers in online brand communities, the researcher purposively chose the biggest 20 fast food brand pages on Facebook in Egypt in terms of numbers of users to conduct his study (See Appendix B for the names of the brand pages). In other words, posting an online survey on these pages that have millions of consumers on their platforms was extremely helpful in capturing consumers' attitudes and experiences in

these online environments. Also, this sampling method made the researcher able to collect data from the pages of both local and international chains.

On the other hand, the researcher chose the self-selection sampling technique to collect the data from these pages. Since the data was collected using an online survey that was posted on the brand pages in Facebook, self-selection sampling enabled the researcher to gain access to respondents in the study. The researcher didn't interfere in choosing who answers the research, where members of the fast food brand pages were given the freedom of choice in answering the survey. This sampling technique was appropriate for the research purpose where all members of the population were given an opportunity to voluntarily participate in the online survey.

Data collection through a self-selection sampling has become very popular in many recent studies that examined consumer behaviour in Facebook brand pages, e.g. (Gummerus et al., 2012; Kudeshia et al., 2016; Vernuccio et al., 2015). Self-selection samples have several advantages over other types of samples including its ability to reduce the amount of time needed to search for participants and its ability to generate answers from participants who are eager and willing to provide useful information regarding the research topic (Saunders et al., 2016).

5.5.4.2.4 Sample Size in the Quantitative Study

Sample size refers to the number of elements that can be concluded in the study (Malhotra et al., 2012). Following the recommendations of Stevens (1996), the sample size should be at least 15 respondents per variable, and the current study's model with around 17 variables, will employ about 255 subjects. In the current study, the sample size for the pilot stage was 218 and in the main study it was 591 respondents.

Additionally, an important consideration in determining the sample size is the average size of samples in similar studies, in addition to the resource constraints of the research (Malhotra et al., 2012). Therefore, the researcher examined the number of respondents

in similar studies that were conducted in the context of online brand communities that are embedded in social media (See Table 5.19 for average sample size in similar studies) to determine the sample size of this research. In the current study, the sample size exceeded the average number of respondents in similar studies.

Table 5. 19: Sample size of previous studies in the context of social media brand communities

Author	Data collection Method	Sample Size
Hammedi et al. (2015)	Online survey posted on Facebook brand pages.	276
Kang et al. (2014)	Online survey sent on emails of participants.	392
Vernuccio et al. (2015)	Self-administered online questionnaire posted on Facebook brand pages.	387
Habibi et al. (2016)	Online survey sent to online consumer panel.	270
Jahn & Kunz (2012)	Online survey posted on Facebook brand pages.	523
Dessart et al. (2016)	Online survey posted on Facebook brand pages.	448
Wang et al. (2015)	Web-based survey on online brand community.	199
Chan et al. (2014)	Self-administered questionnaire to Facebook users at a local university.	276
De Vries & Carlson (2014)	Self-administered questionnaire at a public university.	452
Casaló et al. (2008)	Web survey distributed through email and posted on heavy traffic websites.	215
Woisetschläger et al. (2008)	Online survey e-mailed to all registered members of the virtual brand community.	1025
Hutter et al. (2013)	Online questionnaire broadcasted through a posting on a car Facebook brand page.	311
Hsu et al. (2015)	Online questionnaire was distributed via an online survey distribution platform.	599
Munnukka et al. (2015)	Online survey was placed on two companies 'Facebook pages	1936
Kudeshia et al. (2016)	A web-based survey sent to the brand page followers of five organizations.	311
Zhang and Luo (2016)	Online questionnaire survey.	643
Gummerus et al. (2012)	Online Survey posted by invitation on online community.	289

5.5.4.2.5 Time Horizons

In this study, the researcher employed a single cross-sectional time horizon. A cross-sectional design is "*a research design that entails the collection of data on more than one case and at a single point in time in order to collect a body of quantitative or*

quantifiable data in connection with two or more variables" (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 411). In a single cross-sectional design, the researcher collects information from one sample of a population only once (Malhotra et al., 2012). It is considered the most frequently used descriptive design in marketing research (Malhotra et al., 2012). Hence, the researcher asked the respondents to answer the online survey only once.

5.5.5 Data Analysis Methods in the Quantitative phase

A number of statistical techniques were employed to analyse the data that were collected in the quantitative phase. These techniques included descriptive statistics, factor analysis and partial least square structural equation modeling techniques (PLS-SEM). Furthermore, some statistical techniques were used to assess the reliability and validity of the measurement scales.

5.5.5.1 Descriptive Statistics

To describe the demographic characteristics of the sample, e.g. (age, gender, city of residence, current occupation, monthly income), the researcher employed descriptive statistical techniques. Additionally, these descriptive statistical techniques were useful in describing some characteristics of the sample regarding their usage habits of Facebook and attitudes towards social media marketing. Descriptive statistics included frequencies and percentages (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Hence, descriptive statistics were useful in analysing questions that are based on nominal scales. Descriptive statistics were performed with the aid of SPSS V.22 software, which was helpful in generation of some tables and pie charts for presenting the data.

5.5.5.2 Factor Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) techniques were employed to explore the dimensionality of the new scales (engagement in social media based brand communities) that were developed throughout this study. The EFA was performed with the aid of SPSS

V.22 software. Factor analysis is often used for summarising a big amount of variables through investigating the relationships between them (Pallant, 2013). To perform the factor analysis, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was examined to ensure the applicability of the data for factor analysis techniques (Williams, Onsman, & Brown, 2010). The KMO, whose value can range from 0 to 1, should have 0.6 as the minimum value, before the factor analysis can be conducted. In addition, the Bartlett's test of sphericity must be significant ($p \leq 0.05$) for the factor analysis to be applied (Hair, 2010). To perform the EFA, The researcher used the principle component extraction method (Pallant, 2013). When performing factor analysis, items which are often found to be highly correlated often represent dimensions within the data that helps in creation of new composite measures (Hair, 2010). Additionally, the scree test was used to determine the number of factors (Catell, 1966). Also, conducting the EFA was useful in deleting items that don't load on a factor properly (Pallant, 2013). The results of factor analysis are presented in chapter 7, which details the procedures of the new scales development.

In addition to the EFA, the researcher used the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to confirm the unidimensionality of the new engagement scales (Garver & Mentezer, 1999). The CFA was performed with the aid of AMOS V.22 software. The values of Chi-Square $\chi 2$, Normed Fit Chi-Square ($\chi 2 / df$), CFI, TLI, GFI and RMSEA fit indices were examined to establish the unidimensionality of the proposed constructs. To establish an acceptable fit, the following values should be achieved (Byrne, 2016):

- Goodness-Of-Fit Index (GFI): value >0.95 good fit; 0 .90 to 0.95 adequate fit.
- Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI): value >0.95 good fit; 0 .90 to 0.95 adequate fit.
- Comparative Fit Index (CFI) value: close to 1 very good fit; value >0.95 good fit; 0.90 to 0.95 adequate fit.
- Chi-Square χ^2 : Non-significant χ^2 value at least p value> 0.05.
- Normed Fit Chi-Square (χ^2 / df) (df=degrees of freedom): values with good fit should be less than 2 (Ulman, 2001).
- Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value: ideally less than 0.05; 0.05 to 0.08 are adequate fit.

5.5.5.3 Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) and Hypotheses Testing

The researcher tested the research hypotheses using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)(Fornell & Cha, 1994), with SMART-PLS 3.0. Structural equation modeling have been chosen over other simple regression approaches because it has the ability to test a set of dependent associations simultaneously (Hair, 2010).

The PLS-SEM method has many advantages over other covariance based SEM methods. For instance, it is better to use PLS-SEM when the research model possess many indicators and when there are many relationships that need to be estimated (Fornell & Cha, 1994). PLS-SEM has emerged as a strong approach to investigate causal frameworks that involve multiple constructs with multiple indicators (Liljander, Polsa, & Van Riel, 2009). In other words, it is recommended to used PLS to test complex frameworks that have multiple mediators (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011; Magnusson, Westjohn, Semenov, Randrianasolo, & Zdravkovic, 2013).

PLS-SEM is also useful in situations when the model is emphasising predictive modeling (Hair et al., 2011). On the other hand, PLS approach doesn't require normal distribution data (Barclay, Higgins, & Thompson, 1995; Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). This is in controversy of other covariance-based methods that need a normality in the distribution of the data (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2012). Furthermore, this approach has the power to model latent constructs in small to medium sample sizes (Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2005). In the current study, the researcher computed the path coefficients (β) values, significance values (p) and (t value) using 5000 bootstrap samples with the aim of testing the research hypotheses.

5.5.5.4 Reliability, Validity and Model Fit

5.5.5.4.1 Reliability of the Research Instrument

Reliability refers to the extent to which a measurement scale produces consistent results if repeated measurements are made (Malhotra et al., 2012). Bagozzi (1994, p. 17) defined reliability as "*the amount of agreement between independent attempts to measure the same theoretical concept*". It is used as an indicator to identify the extent that an observed variable indicates a true value and is error free (Hair, 2010). Thus, a scale is said to be reliable if the measurements are repeatable, when different researchers perform the measurement, on different occasions and in different contexts (Nunnally,1978). Reliability is assessed through determining the proportion of systematic variation in a scale, where reliable scales contain a small variation of results between items measuring the same construct (Malhotra et al., 2012).

According to Malhotra et al. (2012), there are various approaches for assessing reliability such as the test-retest, alternative-forms and internal consistency methods. In the test-retest approach, the same respondents are given same scales on two different times (Zikmund, 2003), the time between administration of the two scales is usually between two to four weeks (Malhotra et al., 2012). Since the survey was conducted online, the researcher was not able to ask the respondents to answer the questionnaire online on two different times. Accordingly, applying the test-retest approach was impossible. Also, conducting the survey on two different times has some disadvantages, for example, respondents' answers in the first time might influence their responses in the second time, since their answers in the first time can make them change their attitudes in the second survey, thus, yielding inconsistent results between the two surveys (Malhotra et al., 2012).

On the other hand, in the alternative-form reliability, two equivalent forms of scales are constructed, in which the scales are given to the same sample of participants between

two different times (Carmines & Zeller, 1979; Drost, 2011). In that type, reliability is evaluated by calculating the correlation between the two test scores in the same sample (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Similarly like the test-retest approach, it was impossible to apply alternative-form reliability approach. Since the survey was conducted online, it was extremely impossible to give the same respondents two different surveys at two different times, where it was impossible to identify the respondents to give them another survey.

In the current study, the researcher ensured the reliability of the scales by applying internal consistency approach of reliability. This approach involves high inter-correlations between items of scales which indicates that the items are measuring the same thing (Streiner, 2003). It is evaluated by calculating the average correlation between items in the test (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Thus, this study employed coefficient alpha (Cronbach's alpha) for assessing the internal consistency of the scales (Churchill, 1979; Cronbach, 1990). The Cronbach's alpha (α) reliability coefficient is often calculated to assess the psychometric properties of the constructs (Nunnally & Bernstein 1994). It is useful in determining the degree of consistency among a group of items that are intended to measure the same variable (Netemeyer, Bearden, & Sharma, 2003). Values of Cronbach's alpha (∞) can range between 0 to 1 (Malhotra et al., 2012). However, scales of good reliability should have Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 or above (Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins, & Kuppelwieser, 2014; Nunnally, 1978; Pallant, 2013). Values of 0.6 or below indicate unsatisfactory internal consistency reliability (Hair et al., 2010).

Cronbach's alpha (α) is not sufficient as a stand-alone indicator of reliability in PLS-SEM (Marcoulides & Chin, 2013). Hence, the researcher examined the composite reliability (CR) to ensure that are all measures of the study are reliable (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics (2009) indicated that composite reliability is more

preferred for PLS-SEM. To ensure the composite reliability (CR), all items loading should exceed the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Hair, 2014).

5.5.5.4.2 Validity of the Research Instrument

Whereas reliability is concerned with the absence of systematic variation between items of the same scale, validity is concerned with whether the differences in observed scores are determined by the construct of interest rather than systematic or random error in the results (Malhotra et al., 2012). In other words, the validity of a scale measures "*the extent to which a measurement represents characteristics that exist in the phenomenon under investigation*" (Malhotra et al., 2012, p. 436). In the current study, the researcher aimed to construct two types of validity which are content validity and construct validity.

Content validity (sometimes called face validity) is a systematic assessment of the extent to which the content of a scale represents the measurement task at hand (Malhotra et al., 2012). Content validity is usually performed by the help of an expert judge who has suitable experience in evaluating the degree to which the items of the scale represent the construct under study (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Hair et al., 2014; Malhotra et al., 2012). To establish the content validity, a number of marketing scholars and practitioners specialised in consumer behaviour and online marketing was asked to evaluate all the measurement scales of the study. Because of its subjective nature, content validity cannot stand alone as a sole determinant of validity (Yaghmaei, 2009). Therefore, the researcher further used construct validity techniques to assess the validity of the measurement scales.

Construct validity is concerned with the characteristics the scale is measuring (Malhotra et al., 2012). In this study, the researcher assessed the convergent and discriminant validity of scales with the aim of establishing construct validity. Convergent validity refers to the degree to which the measurement outcomes representing a construct agree with other indicators of the same construct (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). On the other

hand, discriminant validity involves low degree of correlation between items measuring different constructs (Brackett & Mayer, 2003). In the current study, the researcher calculated the average variance extracted (AVE) with the aim of assessing the convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Good convergent validity is established if the AVE values are 0.5 or above (Hair et al., 2014). Additionally, items whose loadings are greater than 0.6 were kept (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), which indicates that these items explain at least 60% of what they are expected to measure (convergent valid). Furthermore, the researcher made sure that the loading of an item on its associated construct should be greater than the loading of another non-construct item on that construct (Chin, 2010).On the other hand, to establish discriminant validity, the researcher tested whether the square root of AVE of each construct is higher than the correlations between it and any other construct in the research model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

5.5.5.4.3 Model Fit Indicators

Traditional goodness-of-fit statistics are often inappropriate for the evaluation of overall model fit in PLS-SEM (Henseler et al., 2012). In studies that adopted PLS-SEM, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is often used for measuring predictive accuracy (Nitzl, 2016). The higher the (R^2) score of the dependent variable, the better is its prediction (Hair et al., 2016). In the current study, the R^2 was calculated for all the dependant variables.

5.6 Ethical Considerations

Researchers should take into consideration a set of rules and guidelines known as research ethics while conducting studies (Saunders et al., 2016). Ethical issues should be applied to all research approaches, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research (Creswell, 2013). These ethics often guide formulating the research topics, designing the research, collecting data, processing and storing data and writing

up the research findings (Saunders et al., 2016). To ensure ethical guidelines are followed, the current research followed the ethical guidelines of the ethical committee of the business school at the University of Huddersfield. Essentially, the study obtained ethical approval from the committee prior to collecting data in both qualitative and quantitative phases of the research. The approval letter is presented in Appendix B.

In both phases of this research, participants were subjected to minimal risk since "*participants will experience no stress beyond what they might experience in their everyday lives*" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 199). The research questions involved topics about social media marketing and consumers' relationships with fast food brand pages. These topics don't deal with any sensitive issues that can put participants under stress or psychological trauma.

Participants, in the first phase of the study, which involved focus groups discussions, were asked to sign an informed consent prior to the start of discussions (See Appendix B). This form contained information about the research and its purpose. In addition, it clarified the participants' rights of voluntary participation, as well as their right to withdraw at any time during the discussions. In addition, another aim of this form was to seek participants' permission in recording the discussions.

To protect the confidentiality and anonymity, the researcher made sure to remove all identifying features from focus group transcripts before they undergo group analysis; accordingly, respondents' answers couldn't be identifiable. Also, in the analysis and writing phase, the researcher kept the identity of the participants anonymous by giving a code for each participant.

Regarding the second phase of the study, which involved an online survey, participants were not asked to provide any identifiable information, such as names, telephone numbers and addresses. This allowed participants to experience a high degree of privacy and anonymity. In addition, the introduction session of the survey contained information

about the purpose of the research and its aims. Also, it mentioned that the participants have the right to withdraw at any time while completing the survey. In general, the data that was collected was not used for any reason other than the research as specified to the participants.

5.7 Summary

The current study adopts the pragmatist's view, which compromises adopting several philosophical positions including interpretivism and positivism, using both inductive and deductive approaches, and accepting both objective and subjective knowledge (Cherryholmes, 1992). The rationale behind this view is that pragmatists believe that several approaches are useful in answering various research questions in a better way (Saunders et al., 2016; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

In this research, mixed methodology was employed to collect data involving both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The first phase of the study (qualitative phase) was useful in identifying the dimensions and sub-dimensions of consumer engagement in online brand communities on social media. Also, it was helpful in generating items for a new scale development for capturing consumer engagement and generation of research hypotheses. The second phase (quantitative phase) allowed the researcher to test the hypotheses of the proposed conceptual framework.

A purposive sampling was used in the qualitative study and four focus groups were conducted over the period of two months. The discussions were transcribed, coded and analysed using themed analysis. Then, for the quantitative study, an online survey was posted on the brand pages of twenty leading fast food chains on Facebook. Over the period of six months, 591 complete questionnaires were collected. The quantitative data were analysed using SPSS, AMOS, and PLS-SEM.

Chapter 6: Phase I: Qualitative Findings

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the qualitative stage of the current study. Despite the substantial interest of many academics and practitioners in the concept of consumer engagement (Islam & Rahman, 2016; Leckie et al., 2016), most of the conceptualisations of that concept was conducted theoretically (Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Kang et al., 2014), with limited information about it coming from an empirical base. Thus, in order to explore the concept of engagement from the perspective of social media users, and to identify the key dimensions that determine the strength of engagement within the social media context, qualitative data collection (focus groups) was adopted in the current study. During the discussions with a number of active members of fast food brand pages on Facebook, the researcher investigated the concept of 'consumer engagement in social media based brand communities' with the aim of identifying its nature and dimensionality. This investigation is a response to several calls by academics for understanding the dimensionality of consumer engagement on social media, e.g. (Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart et al., 2015; Simon et al., 2016). In addition, the discussions were useful in exploring the benefits that consumers seek by their engagement in fast food brand pages on Facebook. Also, the discussions were helpful in generating some items that aided in the development of a measurement scale for consumer engagement on social media.

This chapter is organised into four main sections. Firstly, the descriptive analysis of the characteristics of the participants in the focus groups is presented in section 6.2. Next, a detailed overview of the findings, including the themes that emerged from the discussions, is discussed in section 6.3. Finally, section 6.4 provides a summary of the chapter. Also, see a summary of the findings of the focus group discussions in Appendix C.

6.2 Focus Groups: Descriptive Analysis

In the qualitative phase, four focus groups were conducted. The participants in the discussions had dealt with various fast food brand pages on Facebook, including local and global franchises in the Egyptian fast food market. Given the large amount of data that the researcher should handle, NVivo 11 qualitative data analysis software was useful in handling the data, where it helped in coding, search and retrieval of information (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). One of the advantages of this software in data analysis and management is its ability to link the characteristics of the sample to the research outcomes. The researcher created a node folder entitled 'Participants Identification,' which allowed to create a detailed profile of the participants. See Figure 6.1.

Figure 6. 1: Screenshot of the NVivo folder entitled 'demographic characteristics'
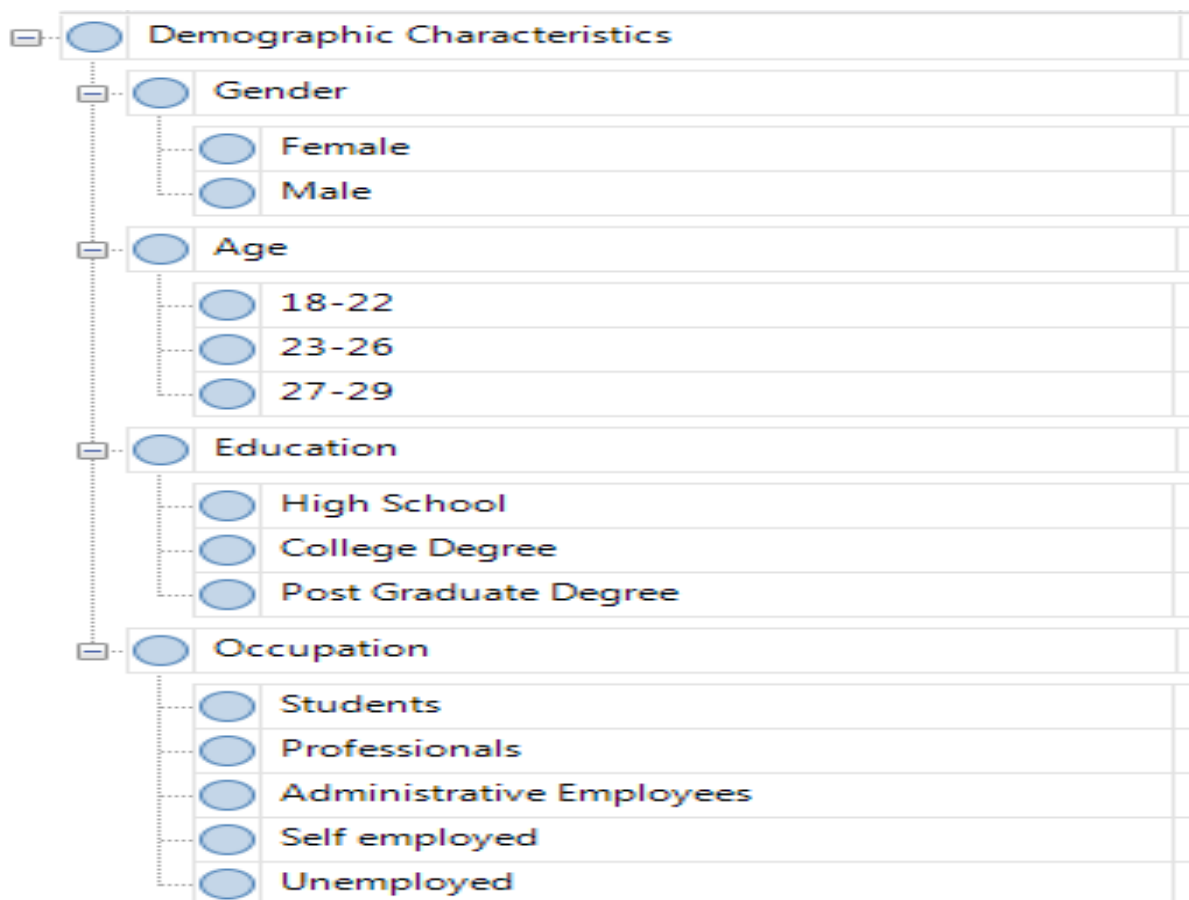
Source: This Research

A total of 40 participants attended the focus group discussions. The participants had various socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, education and occupation). After conducting all the discussions, 55 % of the participants were females, while 45% were males. According to the analysis of the age attribute, 42.5% of the interviewees were between the ages of 18 and 22, 25% were between the ages of 23 and 26, and finally, 32.5% were between the ages of 27 and 29. The discussions also showed that the respondents came from different educational backgrounds: 55% were college students with a high school degree, 35% were college graduates and finally, 10% of the respondents had a post-graduate degree. Regarding their occupations, the majority of the interviewees were students with a percentage of 47%, while the rest of the participants had different occupations. See Table 6.1 for a summary of the demographic characteristics:

Table 6. 1: Demographic characteristics of the participants in the focus groups

Demographic Variable	Percentage of Respondents
Gender	
Female	55%
Male	45%
Age	
18-22	42.5%
23-26	25%
27-29	32.5%
Education	
High school degree	55%
College degree	35%
Post graduate degree	10%
Occupation	
Students	47%
Professionals	10.5%
Administrative Employees	17.5%
Self-employed	7.5%
Unemployed	17.5%

Source: This Research

6.3 Focus Groups: Detailed Analysis

The discussions consisted of four key areas. The first area represents the introductory area. This area looked at the respondents' general knowledge about social media marketing practices. Also, it aimed to get an idea about their familiarity with fast food marketing efforts on Facebook. The second key area included some specific questions about the respondents' relationships with Facebook brand pages. The aim of these questions was to gain some insights about the meaning of 'consumer engagement in social media brand communities' from the perspective of young Egyptian consumers. The third area goes into more details about the reasons and motivators that make the participants join and participate in fast food brand pages on Facebook. Finally, the last area represented the concluding section where participants were asked to provide some recommendations for fast food chains when marketing on social media.

6.3.1 Key Area One: General Knowledge of the Marketing Activities on Facebook

The discussions began by asking the participants about their familiarity with different forms of marketing on social media in general and on Facebook in particular. The aim of this introductory part was to attract the participants' attention towards the research topic and to prepare them for discussions on the key research focus areas. Based on the participants' background, all of them were familiar with social media marketing practices. During the discussions, it was apparent that recruiting participants using an online invitation was successful in recruiting participants who are highly familiar with Facebook and fast food brand pages on that social network.

From the analysis, all participants indicated that they were active members of Facebook. The majority of them (70% of participants) mentioned that they have been using this social networking site for more than 3 years. Moreover, about 90% of the participants indicated that they log into their Facebook accounts at least once per day, while 68% of

them indicated that they spend at least 1 hour daily on that social networking website. An implication of the previous characteristics of the participants is that their high familiarity with Facebook could represent strong reflection of their experiences. One of the introductory questions that aimed to break the ice with the participants and to encourage them to speak was a question about the different uses they have for Facebook. Different reasons for using Facebook appeared in the analysis. The majority of participants mentioned that they use Facebook to connect with their friends and family, where they consider it a free and convenient mode of communication. Also, they mentioned that they use it for other reasons such as getting updated about the news, entertainment, posting pictures and updates about themselves, looking for jobs as well as educational reasons. Figure 6.2 shows an output of an NVivo word cloud (word frequency query) for the different uses the respondents have for Facebook.

Figure 6. 2: NVivo word cloud of the different uses of Facebook

Source: This Research

It was important to understand the participants' attitudes towards the marketing practices of fast food chains on Facebook in the introductory area. Here, the researcher explored the familiarity of the consumers with the various advertising practices of the fast food chains and their attitudes towards it. The discussions showed that all consumers were familiar with the fast food advertisements on their Facebook accounts. Most of the participants said that they have positive attitudes towards that form of advertising because they felt that it is informative and entertaining. About 75% of the participants indicated that they have no problem with finding any type of advertising on their Facebook accounts. They mentioned that they are familiar with all forms of fast food marketing on Facebook, including brand pages. All the participants were members in at least one of the fast food brand pages on Facebook. The duration of the participants' membership in their preferred fast food brand pages varied from less than 6 months to more than three years. Figure 6.3 shows the NVivo output of the duration of participants' membership in the fast food brand pages.

Figure 6. 3: NVivo output for the duration of participants' memberships in Facebook brand pages
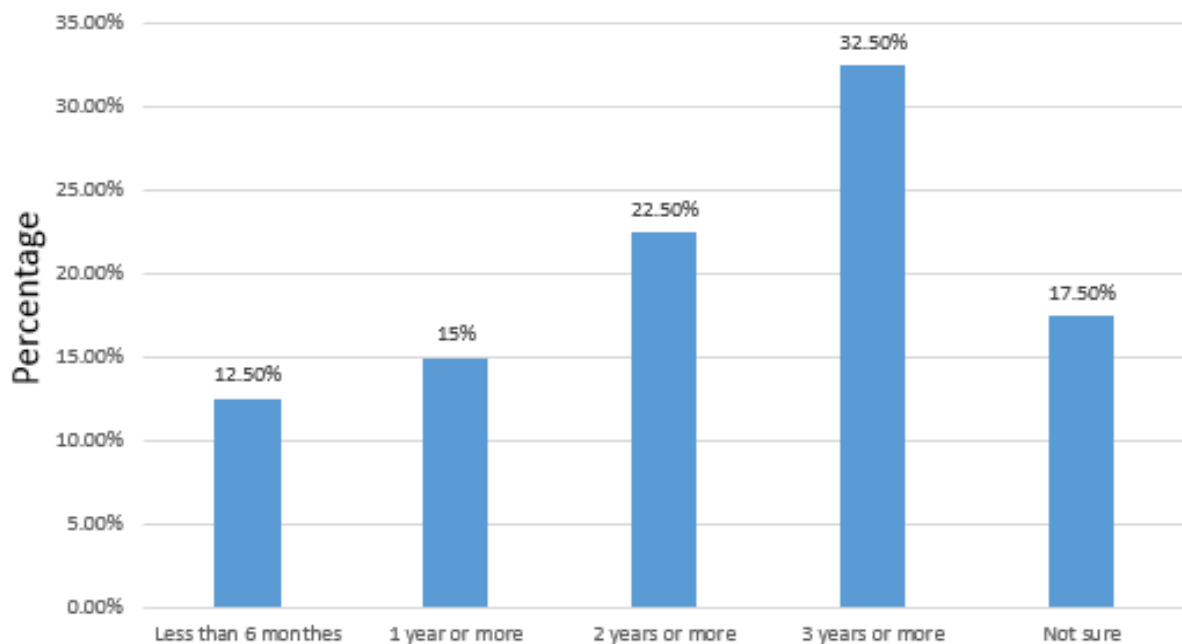
Source: This Research

Almost all of the participants liked the idea of fast food brand pages on Facebook because they believed it is an innovative and entertaining way for fast food chains to market their meals. Moreover, they reported that they prefer Facebook advertising over other traditional web advertising because Facebook advertising is not annoying and not disturbing in contrast to web advertisements that suddenly pop up, causing a big amount of inconvenience and interruption. For example, one student described his preference for advertising on Facebook by the following words: "*I usually find some fast food advertisements on my Facebook profile page and on the right side of my Facebook profile. It usually catches my attention and interests me. I think it is better than traditional internet pop-up advertising because it doesn't harm me, as I have the option to click it or not*" (Male Participant in Focus Group 2). Another respondent described his attitude towards Facebook advertising by saying the following: "*On Facebook, I have a high degree of control over the advertisements I see. I can simply ignore the advertisements if I don't like it, or click on it if catches my attention*" (Female participant in Focus Group 4).

Also, the introductory area of discussion was useful in understanding the respondents' preference regarding the advertising type on Facebook. It became clear from the discussions that the respondents' most preferred type of marketing is the brand pages on Facebook. Almost all respondents said they are regularly following the updates of at least one fast food brand on Facebook, in addition to some brands from other industries. Participants indicated that they are following the Facebook brand pages as illustrated with examples from the following sentences: "*I follow many brand pages on Facebook, including fast food pages. Membership of these brand pages helps me to know what's new they are introducing. Also, when I want to know about any brand that I don't know before, I search for the pages of the brands and ask them some questions to get an answer. I also look at the comments and other consumers' reviews. These reviews are likely to affect my attitude towards the brands and purchase decision*" (Female

participant in Focus Group 3). *"I remember that I am following more than one fast food chain on Facebook. I only follow brands that interests me. There are plenty of them"* (Male participant in Focus Group 2).

To summarise, the introductory part of the discussions was helpful in introducing the research topic and preparing the participants for further discussions regarding their relationships with brand communities and fast food brands, which represent the main research questions. Also, the questions that the researcher asked at that stage enabled him to gain more confidence in choosing brand pages on Facebook as a focus for this research study. Moreover, the enthusiasm and excitement the respondents showed while answering the questions confirmed the participants' suitability and ability to be insightful and informative on the research topic.

6.3.2 Key Area Two: Defining Consumer Engagement and Identifying its Dimensionality

In the second area of the discussions, the researcher aimed to understand the meaning of consumer engagement in the context of online brand communities that are embedded in social networking sites. That was achieved by defining consumer engagement and identifying its dimensions and sub-dimensions from the perspective of the members of Facebook brand pages. Defining consumer engagement was challenging for all the participants, where different meanings were proposed throughout the discussions. However, the researcher was able to build a definition of engagement based on three dimensions and eight sub-dimensions that were identified from the discussions. This will be presented in the following parts in much detail. The dimensions and sub-dimension of consumer engagement are summarised in Figure 6.4 and Figure 6.5. Also, see Appendix C for a screenshot of the NVivo nodes of the engagement dimensions.

Figure 6. 4: NVivo thematic map of the dimensions and sub-dimensions of consumer engagement
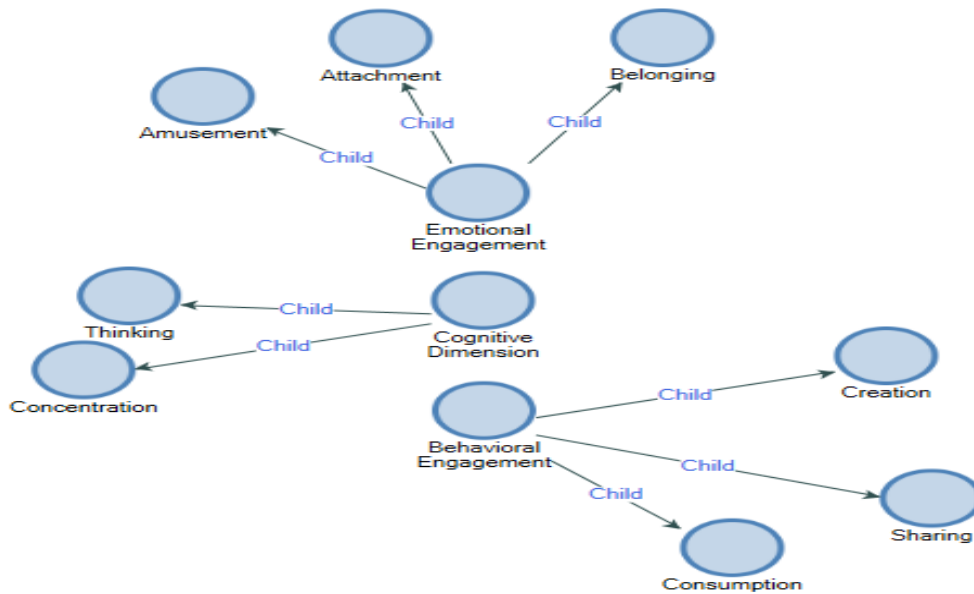
Source: This Research

Figure 6. 5: Dimensions and sub-dimensions of consumer engagement in social media based brand communities
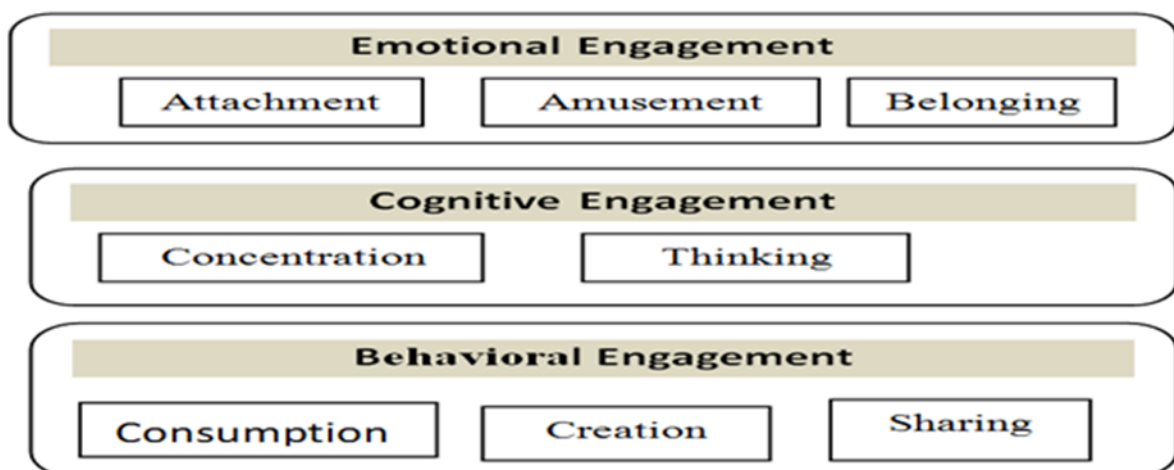
Source: This Research

6.3.2.1 Dimensions and Sub-dimensions of Consumer Engagement in Social Media Based Brand Communities

6.3.2.1.1 Emotional Engagement

Emotional engagement, as a component of consumer engagement, is apparently the first level that consumers go through in their engagement process. The discussions showed that the participants have an emotional or affective facet of their engagement with the fast food brand pages. Consumers who are emotionally engaged perceive the brand community as a source of meaning; this helps them to be inspired with the community and its members. This emotional feeling was clear from the participants' expressions of belonging, attachment and enjoyment when they describe themselves as being 'active members of the brand pages'. From the discussions, the researcher defines emotional engagement as "the *positive emotions and feelings that consumers experience as a result of their active participation in online brand communities. These emotions involve feelings of attachment, belonging and amusement".* Based on the discussions, the researcher was able to classify the emotional dimension into three sub-dimensions, which represent different emotional feelings consumer perceive in the community. These sub-dimensions are presented as follows:

Attachment

Many respondents indicated that they have feelings of attachment and emotional connection to the fast food brand pages. The majority of the interviewees (26 out of 40) indicated that the brand pages of the fast food chains are very important to their lives. They mentioned that they usually check out the brand page updates most of the times they log into their Facebook accounts. The following examples show the emotion of attachment in the discussions: A participant expressed her attachment to a fast food brand page that she follows on Facebook using the following words: *"I regularly log into the brand page of my favourite fast food chain because I am used to doing so. This brand page is helpful because I find many useful information about the meals. I check it*

routinely and it is one of the main pages I visit on Facebook" (Female participant in Focus Group 1). Another participant stressed the meaning of attachment through the following quotation: "*I depend on the brand page to get updated about the new meals and sandwiches. I would feel disappointed if the brand page no longer existed"* (Male participant in Focus Group 4). A third participant indicated her emotional dependency on the brand page by the following sentences: "*I really love this fast food page on Facebook; the page represents a very important thing for me. I would be disappointed if this brand page doesn't exist because this page made my life easier"* (Female participant in Focus Group 2).

Amusement

In the extant literature, it was reported that the high levels of happiness while interacting with computer-based media will lead to an increase in the consumer perception of positive mood and affection (Hoffman & Novak, 1996). During the discussions, the majority of respondents (33 out of 40) indicated that they have feelings of amusement and entertainment while interacting with their most preferred fast food brand pages. They showed high levels of enthusiasm to read funny posts on the brand page. Importantly, they claimed that reading the funny content that are posted by the brand page moderators and other consumers gives them feelings of pleasure and happiness. This can be shown in the following examples: A participant reported her feeling of amusement by the following words: "*My favourite fast food brand page is really amusing. I usually log into the brand page to read the funny things. These posts makes me laugh and I am really enjoying it*" (Female participant in Focus Group 1). Another participant stressed the meaning of enjoyment that she gets while interacting with the brand page by the following quotation: "*There are plenty of fast food brand pages on Facebook. However, my favourite brand page is really amusing. Every day, I find funny pictures on the page. Also, I can't stop laughing at the pictures and comments that are posted by other members"* (Female participant in Focus Group 4). A third

participant expressed his interest in the brand page by the following words. "Brand pages are like Facebook. The most important thing about them is that they're amusing, and I really enjoy them" (Male participant in Focus Group 1).

Belonging

Consumers' perceptions of belonging to the brand pages they follow on Facebook was very evident in the discussions. The majority of respondents (29 out of 40) indicated that they perceive themselves to be part of the communities of the fast food brands that initiated the brand pages. Consumers' perception of belonging to the brand community is illustrated by the following examples: A participant indicated his enthusiasm to the brand page of his favourite fast food chain by the following words: *"Being an active member of the brand page makes me feel that I am part of a group that has the same interests. It is like a big family. I like to see how other members who have the same taste like me feel about this fast food brand and its new offers"* (Male participant in Focus Group 2). Another participant stressed the similarity of his interests with other members in the brand page by the following words: *"My favourite brand page allows me to find people who are interested in the fast food brand. By following the brand page and interacting with other consumers I feel that I am not alone and I am a part of a big community. I feel that I belong to this brand community. I and most of the other members of the community share the same interests"* (Male participant in Focus Group 1). Similarly, another participant stressed her emotions of identification and belonging to the brand community through the following sentences: *"I enjoy being a part of the brand community. Yes, it is important for me to be identified with the fast food brand. I can achieve this by being a regular follower of its brand page on Facebook"* (Male participant in Focus Group 4).

6.3.2.1.2 Cognitive Engagement

In the extant literature, the cognitive aspect of engagement is described as a set of enduring and active mental states that consumers experience with the object of

engagement (Hollebeek, 2013). In educational research, authors have highlighted the importance of cognitive engagement together with the emotional engagement of students, because students who are behaviourally engaged are not necessarily cognitively engaged (Davis, Summers, & Miller, 2012).

From the analysis, it became clear that engaged consumers have a cognitive facet or a level of engagement. Consumers who are cognitively engaged in brand pages are usually mentally involved. They think and concentrate in the content that are posted on the brand pages. They are strongly absorbed, immersed and keen to read the posts from the brand as well as other consumers. From the discussions, the researcher defined the cognitive dimension of engagement as "*a psychological state in which consumers put mental effort to absorb the content in the brand community. It involves concentration in the content and thinking about it".* The two sub-dimensions that form cognitive engagement are presented as follows:

Thinking

The majority of consumers (25 out of 40) mentioned that they not only read the content they see on the brand page, but they also think about it. The thinking sub-dimension involves the rational judgment and reasoning regarding the content posted in the brand community. This can be demonstrated through the following examples: A participant expressed his interest in thinking about the posts he finds in the brand pages through the following words: *"I usually think about the posts I see about the brand. I can easily distinguish between real and fake posts. Sometimes I find people writing reviews insulting the brand. I feel that these posts are written by competitors from the way they're written"* (Male participant in Focus Group 3). Another participant mentioned that he usually reads the posts on the brand page before making buying decisions. He said, *"I pay attention to the posts and the comments of other members in the brand community. I am rarely distracted when I visit this brand page. Some reviews in the brand page help me in choosing better meals"* (Male participant in Focus Group 1). A third participant

showed a deep engagement of her mind in her favourite fast food brand page through this quotation: *"I think about the community and its activities. I usually remember the posts I read and make it a reference for my opinions about the brand"* (Female participant in Focus Group 1).

Concentration

This theme deals with the second sub-dimension of cognitive engagement. The majority of participants (27 of 40) showed their deep interest in the content that are posted on the fast food brand pages. Concentration is related to the amount of cognitive attention and immersion consumers have towards the content of the brand page. The concentration sub-dimension can be shown in the following examples: A participant showed her deep absorption in the content of the brand page by using the following words: *"I usually read the posts carefully. This helps me choose the best meal"* (Female participant in Focus Group 4). Another participant showed his interest in the posts of the brand page by saying the following: *"I concentrate on the posts that I find relevant to me. Even though I read most of the posts that are written by other people, I only give attention to the information that is relevant to me"* (Male participant in Focus Group 2). A third participant indicated her ability to sustain concentration on the brand page posts by mentioning the following quotation: "I *usually pay attention to what I read in the brand community*" (Female participant in Focus Group 1). Finally, a fourth participant stressed the ability of his most preferred fast food brand page to keep him interested in the brand. He said, "*This brand page always posts updates and offers. I log in every weekend to find a nice offer*" (Male participant in Focus Group 2).

6.3.2.1.3 Behavioural Engagement

The behavioural facets of engagement were evident in the participants' answers. When the respondents were asked about their behaviours on the brand pages, the majority commented that they perform various activities in these online communities. These activities involve reading the posts that are posted by both the brand and other

consumers on the brand page. Also, these behaviours include contributing to the brand page by writing comments and posting reviews about product usage, or even asking questions. Finally, participants can share the interesting posts and reviews with their friends on the social network. From these responses, the researcher was able to define behavioural engagement as "*Behavioural manifestations that consumers perform inside the brand community. These behaviours can range from simply consuming content that is posted in the brand community, to creating and sharing content in it*". From the analysis*,* three sub-dimensions for behavioural engagement were identified, which are consumption, creation and sharing. This is discussed as follows:

Consumption

The vast majority of participants (36 of 40) indicated that one of the activities they regularly perform on the fast food brand pages include reading the comments and posts available on the pages. Evans (2012) highlighted the role of content consumption by considering it a key stage of consumer involvement with the content of the social media. It involves downloading, reading, watching or listening to the digital content on social media (Evans, 2012). During the discussions, the respondents said that reading the content helps them to know more about the brand. Also, it helps them to get some reviews regarding different meals and sandwiches. The behaviour of content consumption can be shown in the following examples: A participant indicated his interest in reading the comments in the posts of the fast food brand as well as what other consumers post in the brand page by the following words: "*I usually log into the brand page to get news about the brand and its offers. I also like to read the posts of other consumers*" (Male participant in Focus Group 3). Another participant showed the importance of the posts on the brand page by saying, "*It is important to me to read all the posts in the brand community to shape my purchasing decision.*" (Female participant in Focus Group 1). This was later contradicted by another participant who said, "*I only*

read posts if I need information about a certain meal or sandwich, but I usually ignore most posts by the brand".

Creation

About half of the participants (21 out of 40) indicated that they not only read the posts in the fast food brand pages but that they also actively participate in their activities. Participation takes the form of contributing to the brand page content. They said that they usually post questions about anything they would like to know in the brand community. They can ask about the prices, calorie intake of meals, delivery options, etc. Also, they mentioned that they post comments on the pictures and videos that attracts their attention. Moreover, they can participate in the contests and sweepstakes that the fast food chains announce on their pages. Some the participants were able to remember some interesting stories about their contribution to the fast food brand pages' content. Here are some examples: A participant indicated that he participated in a contest on the brand page by mentioning the following words: "The *fast food chain asked its followers on the Facebook page to predict a score of a match of the national football team. I was able to predict the score and I won a free meal in return. I don't win all the times; it depends on my predictions, but I usually comment on interesting posts on the page"* (Male participant in Focus Group 2). Another participant indicated that she helps other consumers on the page by answering their questions. She used the following quotation: "I *usually answer the questions that other members ask. Last week, I recommended a meal for a girl who asked other customers about their opinion on the meals and sandwiches"* (Female participant in Focus Group 1)*.* Another participant stressed his interest in posting comments on the brand page by using the following words: *"I keep commenting on the page of my preferred brand. I can ask questions or provide reviews to certain meals or answers to other members' questions regarding any aspect of the brand consumption"* (Male participant in Focus Group 4).

Sharing

The majority of respondents (26 out of 40) mentioned that they sometimes share the posts they find interesting in the brand page. Sharing is the act of forwarding the content to other members of the social network. They said that they shared a variety of brand-related content on the brand pages; this content can include offers and discounts, funny pictures and videos, information about new meals, contests or any content they find interesting. The behavioural act of sharing is clear in the following quotations: *"I share the posts I like or information I find useful to other members of my social network"* (Male participant in Focus Group 2). "*Once I found an attractive discount in my favourite restaurant, I tagged my friends in the post and we went together to the place. It was an interesting experience and a wonderful day that I still remember*" (Female participant in Focus group 3). *"I forward the posts I like to all friends on my social network"* (Male participant in Focus group 3).

6.3.3 Key Area Three: Perceived Benefits in the Brand Community

The discussion topics in the focus groups enabled the researcher to probe the various reasons that make consumers use fast food brand pages on Facebook. After the participants were asked about the different forms of engagement in the brand pages, they were asked questions that aimed to understand the different benefits they aim to get through their engagement in these online communities. From the discussions, five themes emerged, which represent the different uses consumer have for the fast food brand pages. The researcher used these themes to develop 5 sub-hypotheses for hypotheses 6 regarding the consumers' perceived benefits in the fast food brand communities. The modified conceptual model is presented in Figure 6.7. In addition, Table 6.2 integrates the similarities in the views of the majority of participants regarding their expected benefits in the brand pages. Furthermore, Figure 6.6 provides the thematic analysis of the consumers' perceived benefits in the brand community.

Table 6. 2: Perceived benefits and representation quotes

Benefit Type	Representation Quotes	Sources
Functional Benefits	*"When I want to find the location or a phone number of a fast food chain, I usually log into the brand page to get this information"* (Male participant in focus group 3). *"This brand page offers me useful information about the brand and its new sandwiches"* (Male participant in focus group 3). *"When I want to find the location or a phone number of a fast food chain, I usually log into the brand page to get this information"* (Male participant in focus group 2). *"The brand page allows an easy access to information. I think it is more convenient for me than the fast food chain's website"* (Female participant in focus group 4).	32
Hedonic Benefits	*"I like mostly Facebook posts that are funny and that have high sense of humour"* (Female participant in focus group 2). *"When I am in a bad mood, I log into these brand pages to read some funny posts and comments"* (Male participant in focus group 4). *"I find many entertaining posts from the brand on its brand page"* (Female participant in focus group 1). *"The page has a lot of funny posts and videos, this is the best thing I like about this fast food page"* (Male participant in focus group 2). *"Last week I found a very funny video on the fast food brand pages, I shared it because I liked it very much"* (Female participant in focus group 3).	34
Social Benefits	*"When I need advice regarding a new sandwich, I often ask other members about their reviews"* (Female participant in focus group 2). *"I often discuss issues related to the brand on the brand page"* (Female participant in focus group 4). *"I think I can make friends on these websites, I wish these brands organise more events on their pages"* (Male participant in focus group 3). *"When the brand posts any question about my opinion, I often write a true review"* (Male Participant in Focus group 2). *"This brand page facilitates my communication with members with similar interests"* (Female Participant in Focus group 1).	21
Monetary Benefits	*"I prefer brand pages that offer discounts and offers"* (Male Participant in focus group 2). *"I saw an advertisement on Facebook promoting a new fast food chain in my city. I clicked on the advertisement which directed me to its brand page. I found that 40 of my friends are fans of this chain. I kept browsing the posts on the brand page and participated in a contest on it. Next day, I visited the chain with one of my friends"* (Female participant in focus group 3). *"I am a big fan of pizza. I always click on advertisements showing offers of pizza and new pizza chains in the city I live in"* (Male Participant in focus group 3). *"Last week I won a cup by ordering a meal, I know about it from the Facebook page"* (Male participant in focus group 2).	25
Passing the Time Benefits	*"I joined these fast food brand pages by coincidence, the nice pictures attracted me, I think it is for entertainment and passing time"* (Male participant in focus group 1). *"These brand pages are found on Facebook. There are plenty of them, because I spend long hours on Facebook and these pages are a part of Facebook, I consider it a way to kill time"* (Female participant in focus group 2). *"I check my Facebook profile before I sleep and as soon as I wake up, it's a part of my daily routine, I think that checking the pages of all industries including Facebook is a way relieving boredom"* (Male participant in focus group 3).	12

Source: This Research

Figure 6. 6: NVivo thematic analysis of perceived benefits in the brand community
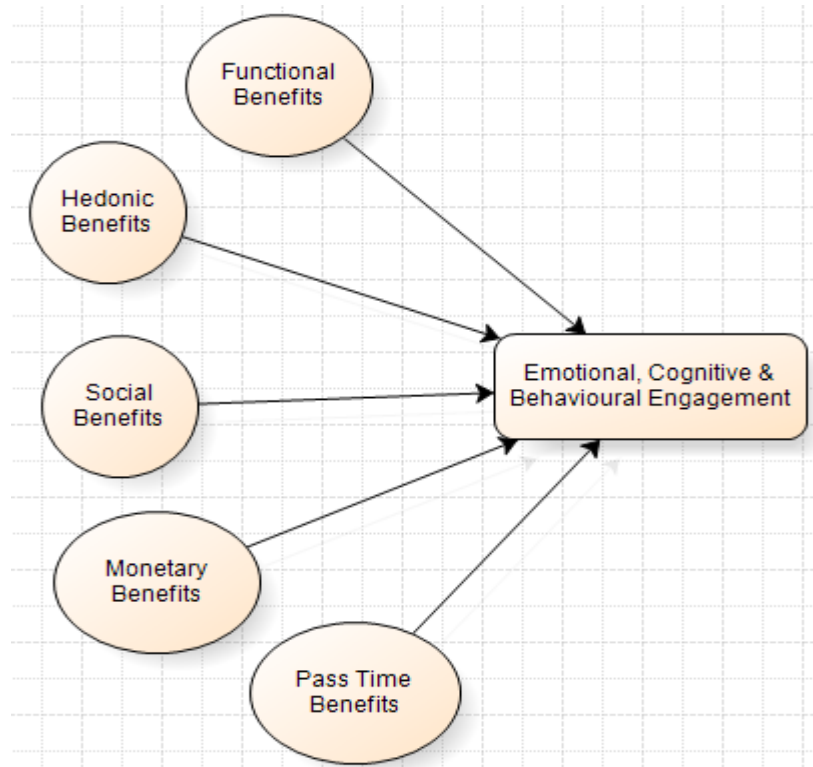
Source: This Research

6.3.3.1 First Theme: Perceived Functional Benefits

It became clear from the discussions that one of the most important motives for the respondents' participation in brand pages is their search for functional benefits. The majority of the participants indicated that they rely on the brand pages when they need information about fast food brands and their offers.

In the extant literature, the role of functional (informational benefits) has been highlighted in the context of online communities' research. For example, Wang & Fesenmaier (2004) argued that consumers join online travel communities for some functional benefits such as buying and selling, exchanging of information without any time and geographic limitations and for seeking help in their decision-making process. Also, it was found that consumers can rely on Facebook as a source of information on

products and services (Harris & Dennis, 2011). Another piece of research by Kang et al. (2014) indicated that there is a positive relationship between consumers' active participation in restaurant brand pages and the availability of functional benefits. Thus, these functional benefits are achieved when the community members are able to fulfil their specific needs from participation (Armstrong & Hagel, 2000). As mentioned earlier in the literature review chapter, the uses and gratifications theory provides a background for explaining consumers' engagement on social media to obtain different forms of benefits (Ngai et al., 2015), where this theory has gained a considerable attention in social media research, e.g.(De Vries & Carlson, 2014; Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004; Jahn & Kunz, 2012). Given this level of qualitative support, it is hypothesised that:

H6A: Perceived functional benefits in a brand community have a positive effect on consumers' level of engagement.

6.3.3.2 Second Theme: Perceived Hedonic Benefits

Another important theme that appeared in the discussions is the participants' need for entertaining or hedonic content in the brand pages that they follow on Facebook. They not only joined the brand pages to gain functional benefits but also to gain entertaining and enjoyment benefits. The hedonic perspective of consumption assumes that consumers tend to be pleasure seekers who search for activities that activate their feelings of enjoyment, entertainment and amusement (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004).

Many respondents said that they are entertained by the posts they see in the brand community, where many posts by the fast food chains seem to contain a high sense of humour. They indicated that they often log into the brand community to see different types of posts. Hedonic benefits in a brand community can include exclusive content, sweepstakes, and online events that deliver interesting, innovative and entertaining content (Jahn & Kunz, 2012).

The entertainment facet of advertisements have been reported in the extant literature, where it refers to the ability of an advertisement to fulfil an audience's needs for

escapism, diversion, aesthetic enjoyment, or emotional enjoyment (Ducoffe, 1996). Usually, entertainment results from the relaxation, enjoyment and emotional relief people get from escaping from the daily routine (Park et al., 2009). Similarly, like in the case of functional benefits, the uses and gratifications theory is useful in explaining consumers' need for entertainment benefits in the context of social media, since this theory is usually used to explain motivations of individuals for media choices and usage (Tsai & Men, 2013). Given the level of support in the focus groups discussions for the vital role of hedonic content in the brand page, it is hypothesised that:

H6B: Perceived hedonic benefits in a brand community have a positive effect on consumers' level of engagement.

6.3.3.3 Third Theme: Perceived Social Benefits

An important theme that emerged from the analysis is the participants' valuation for social benefits as an important motive for their engagement in the brand communities. Most respondents mentioned that they like to communicate with people with similar interests in the brand page. Whiting & Williams (2013) highlighted the role of consumers' need for socialisation as a motivator for their interactions in the social networking sites. Since brand communities are constructed from social aggregations, they can convey social meanings and present social benefits for their members (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004). Social benefits in the brand community result from discussions of consumers with others on the brand pages. These discussions are related to the product usage as well as getting feedback from other members about the fast food chains. In addition, the respondents said that they can exchange ideas and form relationships with other members; they can also seek help and advice from other consumers who have tried different meals and have visited other branches. These relationships are socially constructed in a friendly and supportive environment. The role of social benefits for motivation of participation in brand communities has been highlighted in prior literature (Kang et al., 2014), where members expect help from other members when they post

useful information (Ridings, Gefen, & Arinze, 2006). Given this level of qualitative support, the researcher proposes the following hypothesis:

H6C: Perceived social benefits in a brand community have a positive effect on consumers' level of engagement.

6.3.3.4 Fourth Theme: Perceived Monetary Benefits

An important theme that emerged from the discussions, which explains consumers' participation in the brand communities, is their need for monetary benefits. During the discussions, some participants said that they were able to get certain discounts as a result of their membership, as they prefer brand pages that offer some discounts in some occasions. Monetary benefits in online brand communities can include loyalty points, contests, and price promotions that encourage consumers to participate in the community (Wirtz et al., 2013).

Prior research that examined the usage of consumers for Facebook brand pages has highlighted the vital role of discounts in driving consumers' desire to interact with brands on Facebook. For instance, Harris & Dennis (2011) indicated that consumers follow companies on Facebook to keep them updated about certain discounts and offers, rather than interact with other members on Facebook. Similarly, like other benefits, consumers' search for monetary benefits can be explained by the uses and gratifications theory; this theory might explain consumers' participation in brand communities to get access to benefits that non-members don't have access to. From the previous discussion the researcher proposes the following hypothesis:

H6D: Perceived monetary benefits in a brand community have a positive effect on consumers' level of engagement.

6.3.3.5 Fifth Theme: Perceived "Passing the Time" Benefits

One of the benefits that seemed to influence the respondents' level of engagement is their perceived "passing the time" benefits. The participants indicated that the brand pages on Facebook can be an innovative way of passing time and killing boredom. The

role of the "passing the time motive in the social media research was highlighted by Whiting & Williams (2013). By interviewing a number of social media users, Whiting & Williams indicated that the "passing the time" motive is one of the strongest motives that make people use social media, where they use it when they are bored at school or work. The title "passing the time" theme comes also from Palmgreen & Rayburn (1979) who indicated that one of the strongest motives for television viewers is to kill time and boredom. Also, the "passing the time" motive appeared in the work of Papacharissi & Rubin (2000) when they found that internet users use it when they have nothing to do and when they need to occupy their time. Given the level of qualitative support for the "passing the time" benefits in the focus group discussions, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6E: Perceived "passing the time" benefits in a brand community have a positive effect on consumers' level of engagement.

Table 6. 3: Final proposed research hypotheses

No	Hypotheses
H1	Brand identification has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in online brand communities.
H2	Brand satisfaction has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in online brand communities.
H3	Brand trust has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in online brand communities.
H4	Consumers' perceptions of symbolic function of brands have a positive effect on their engagement in online brand communities.
H5	Perceived critical mass in a brand community has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in the community.
H6A	Perceived functional benefits in a brand community have a positive effect on consumers' level of engagement.
H6B	Perceived hedonic benefits in a brand community have a positive effect on consumers' level of engagement.
H6C	Perceived social benefits in a brand community have a positive effect on consumers' level of engagement.
H6D	Perceived monetary benefits in a brand community have a positive effect on consumers' level of engagement.
H6E	Perceived "passing the time" benefits in a brand community have a positive effect on consumers' level of engagement.
H7	Consumer' engagement in an online brand community affects their brand love positively.
H8	Brand love will have a positive impact on consumers' word of mouth.
H9	Brand love has a positive influence on consumers' willingness to pay a price premium.
H10	Brand love has a positive impact on consumers' resistance to negative information.
H11	Brand love has a positive impact on consumers' brand loyalty.
H12	Brand love is directly and positively related to perceived quality.

Source: This Research

Figure 6. 7: Modified Conceptual Framework
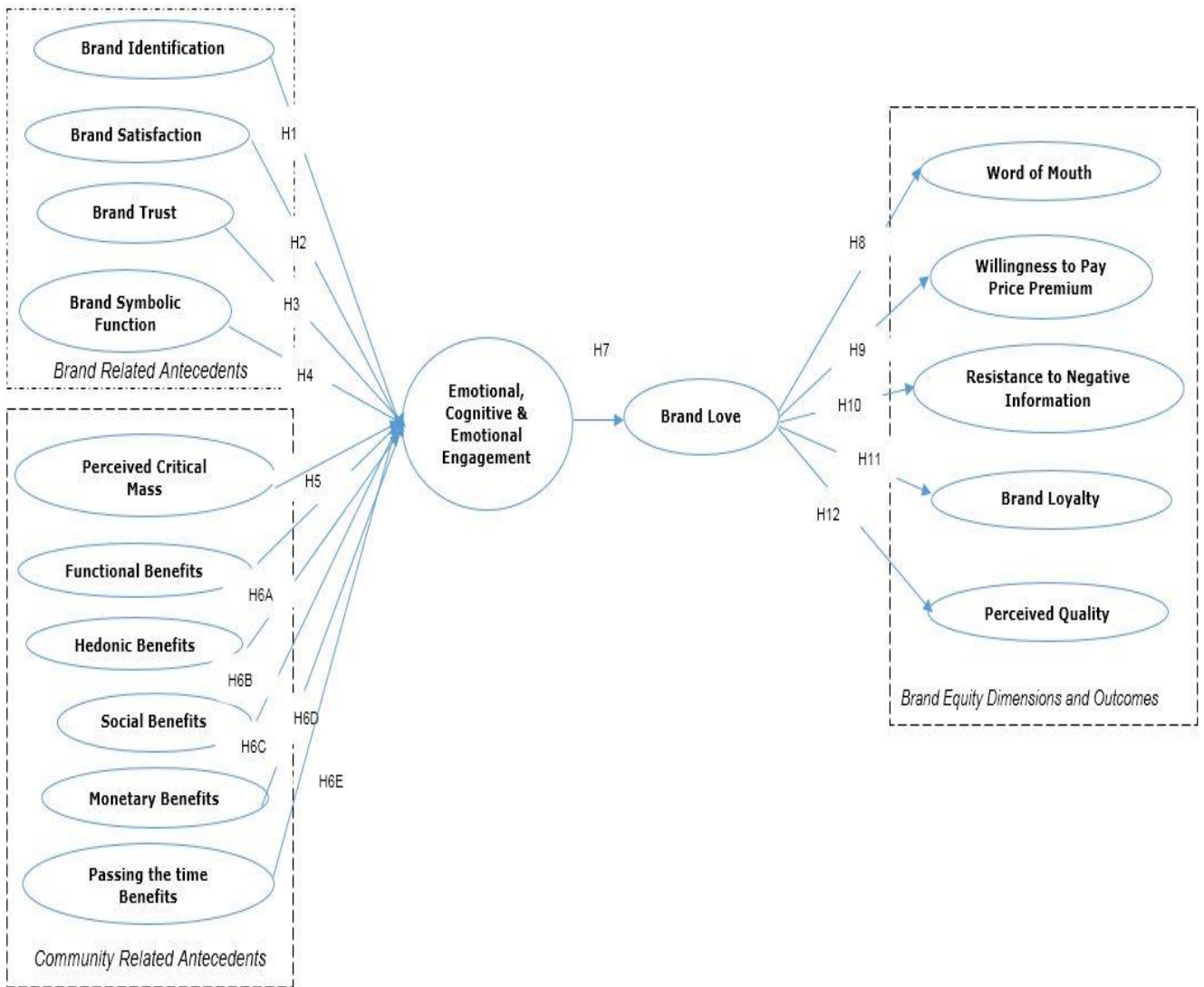
Source: This Research

6.3.4 Key Area Four: Concluding Section

In the last area of the discussions, the researcher asked the participants to provide some recommendations for fast food chains to follow when marketing on Facebook brand pages. The majority of the participants said that the fast food chains must include various types of content on their brand pages. For example, a participant stressed the vital role of social media moderators in managing these pages by using the following words: "I *think one of the important roles of social media managers is to update the content of their pages on Facebook. One of the main things that make me like some pages and ignore others is the level of activity on these pages*" (Male participant in focus 2). Another participant advised the fast food chains to answer the questions that are posted on the brand pages by using the following sentences: "*Sometimes I ask questions on brand pages and I never get an answer, I think that the fast food chains must answer the questions posted by consumers rapidly*" (Female participant in focus 1). A third participant highlighted the importance of diversifying the content that is posted by fast food chains on their brand pages, he said "*As an innovative form of connecting with customers, fast food chains must advertise all prices of meals; also, they should post entertaining pictures and videos as well as offers and discounts*". Also, see Figure 6.8 for the NVivo word tree for some recommendations that the consumers gave to fast food chains during the discussions. At the end of the discussions, the researcher thanked the participants for taking part in the focus groups. Also, he asked them for their emails to send the summary of the findings when available. (See a summary of the findings in Appendix C).

Figure 6. 8: NVivo word tree for the respondents' recommendations to fast food chains
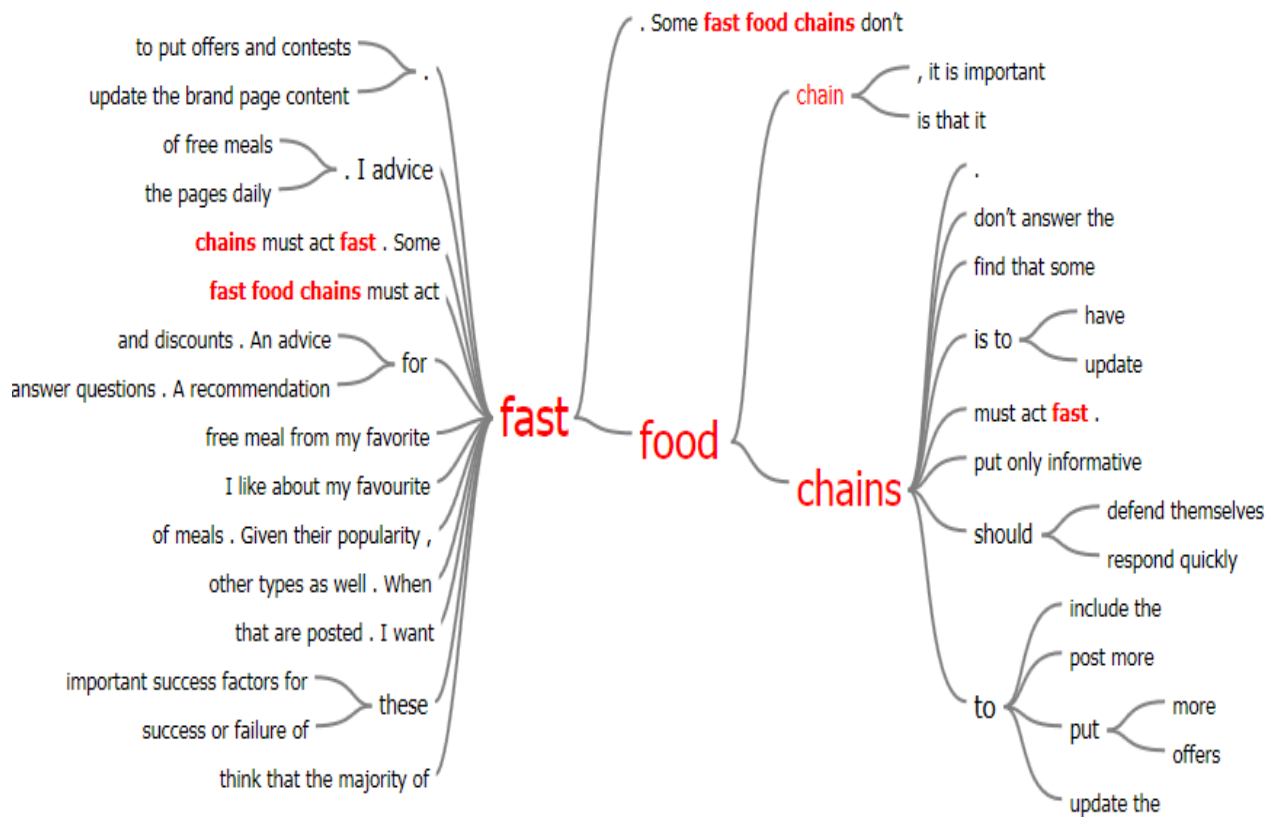
Source: This Research

6.4 Summary

The focus group discussions represented the initial step in exploring the concept of consumer engagement from the perspective of members of fast food brand communities. The findings of the qualitative stage were helpful in exploring the concept of consumer engagement and identifying its dimensions and sub-dimensions. Also, the findings led to the development of some hypotheses regarding consumers' perceived benefits in the brand communities. Another aim of the qualitative phase was to generate items for a new measurement scale for capturing the construct of 'consumer engagement in an online brand'. The details of the scale development are detailed in chapter 7. In chapter 8, the researcher presents the second phase of the study (quantitative phase) that was conducted to test the proposed hypotheses.

Chapter 7: Engagement Scale Development

7.1 Introduction

In chapter six, the researcher presented the findings of the qualitative phase of the study. The qualitative phase was useful in identifying the dimensions and sub-dimensions of consumer engagement. The main purpose of this chapter is to present a detailed description of the development and validating procedures of a new measurement scale that captures the 'consumer engagement on social media based brand communities' construct. This new scale is based on the dimensions and sub-dimensions that were identified in the qualitative study. Another important aim of this chapter is to show the findings of the pilot stage of the quantitative phase of this study.

This chapter is divided into five main sections. Firstly, section 7.2 demonstrates the rationale for developing new scales that capture the engagement construct. Additionally, it shows the unsuitability and inadequacy of the measures that were adopted in prior literature for capturing consumer behaviour in traditional offline and virtual brand communities to be used in this study. After that, section 7.3 details the process of the engagement scale development. Then, section 7.4 will further demonstrate the reliability and validity of other scales that were adopted in the current study. Finally, section 7.5 will provide a summary for this chapter.

7.2 Rationale for Developing a New Scale for the Measurement of Consumer Engagement on Social Media Based Brand Communities

With the aim of understanding consumers' relationships with online brand communities embedded in social media, the researcher developed some items with the aim of capturing and measuring the dimensions and sub-dimensions of consumer engagement in these communities. The researcher has several motivations for developing a new scale for capturing this form of consumer engagement. The first motivation is the rapid emergence of the concept of consumer engagement in the marketing literature to

describe consumers' interactive experiences with brands (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). Despite the recent rise in popularity of that term, there has been several limitations in theorising and conceptualising that concept in general (Kuvykaitė & Tarutė, 2015), and in the context of online brand communities in particular (Dessart et al., 2015; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Schivinski, Christodoulides, & Dabrowski, 2016; Wong & Merrilees, 2015). Hence, there has been limitations in developing measurement scales for this concept due to the various interpretations present in prior literature. Another motivation is the wide interest of marketers in engaging consumers in online brand communities, specifically communities embedded in social media (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Sabate et al., 2014; Zheng et al., 2015). Recent industry reports show that most marketers are eager to learn better ways of engaging their customers on social media (Social Media Examiner, 2016). Despite practitioners' interest, the academic research that examined consumers' relationships on social media in general and online brand communities in particular were not able to catch up with the rapid industry use (Hutter et al., 2013; Zheng et al., 2015). Specifically, the concept of consumer engagement in the context of online brand communities needs more exploration. Hence, developing a scale for measuring consumer engagement in these communities will have contributions from both academic and practitioners' perspectives.

Another motivation for developing new scales is the conflict that is present in literature in understanding the dimensionality of consumer engagement, where there are different views that presented its dimensions, including unidimensional and multidimensional views. For example, some authors consider engagement to be formed only from a behavioural dimension ,e.g. (Van Doorn et al., 2010; Vivek et al., 2012). Another group of studies further adds both cognitive and emotional dimensions of consumer engagement, e.g. (Hollebeek, 2011; Patterson et al., 2006), where they considered it a multidimensional concept. A final motivation is the inadequacy and unsuitability of scales that were adopted in prior literature of offline brand communities. These scales

aimed to capture constructs other than engagement, such as 'community participation', e.g. (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006a) and 'brand community integration', e.g. (McAlexander et al., 2003). In addition, the scales that were developed in previous work to capture 'consumer engagement' in the context of online brand communities suffered from shortcomings. Most of these scales focused only on dimension of engagement, which is the behavioural dimension, e.g. (Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Lee, Kim, & Kim, 2011). Specifically, in the context of brand pages on social networking sites including Facebook, the vast majority of studies argued that engagement involves behavioural manifestations compromising liking, commenting and sharing content of the brand page, e.g. (Hausman, Kabadayi, & Price, 2014; Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Luarn et al., 2015; Su et al., 2015).

If compared to existing scales, the proposed scales are comprehensive. These scales capture the three dimensions of engagement that were identified through qualitative discussions (emotional, cognitive & behavioural). On the other hand, the developed scales capture the more complex perspective of social media brand communities. The perspective proposed in the current study focuses on the engagement construct as a multidimensional construct compromising positive emotional feelings towards the brand community (attachment, belonging and amusement), cognitive processing (thinking and concentration) and behavioural activities inside the community (consumption, creation and sharing).

7.3 Engagement Scale Development

The researcher followed the steps that were specified by Churchill (1979) for the development of new and better measurement scales in marketing. Accordingly, the researcher started by determining the domain of the construct. Then, the researcher was able to generate a pool of items for measuring consumer engagement in social media-based brand communities (i.e. Facebook brand pages). The generation of these items was conducted through the qualitative study that was detailed in chapter six. Then, a

group of experts validated and refined the pool of items that were generated in the qualitative study. After that, the researcher conducted the pilot phase of the quantitative study (online survey). The pilot study was useful in purification of the new developed engagement scale. Also, it was useful in the purification and validation of other scales that were used in the study. As a last step, the reliability and validity of the engagement scales were assessed. This section will demonstrate the details of the new engagement scales development.

7.3.1 Domain of Construct 'Dimensionality of Engagement'

According to Churchill (1979), the first step in developing measures involves specifying the domain of the construct. Thus, as a start to the engagement scale development process, the researcher wanted to determine what the new scales aimed to measure. The researcher performed an extensive literature review (see chapter 3) with the aim of determining the gaps in prior literature and to determine how engagement was conceptualised in this literature. Hence, a review of the concept of engagement in both offline and online contexts was conducted (e.g.,Algesheimer et al., 2005; Baldus et al., 2015; Calder et al., 2009; Dessart et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2011; Ouwersloot & Odekerken-Schröder, 2008). As mentioned previously in the literature review chapters, there has been a conflict in identifying the dimensions of consumer engagement. Therefore, the researcher depended on the focus groups discussions for defining the meaning of consumer engagement in the context of social media based brand communities from the consumer perspective (see chapter 6 for a detailed description of the focus groups' discussions). Hence, these qualitative discussions helped the researcher to identify the domain of engagement to develop a scale for the measurement of engagement. In other words, it helped in identifying three dimensions and eight sub-dimensions of consumer engagement. See Table 7.1.

Table 7. 1: Various dimensions and sub-dimensions of consumer engagement

Dimensions	Sub-dimensions
Emotional Engagement	Attachment, Belonging and Amusement.
Cognitive Engagement	Thinking and Concentration.
Behavioural Engagement	Consumption, Creating and Sharing.

Source: This Research

To summarise, based on the qualitative discussions and taking into consideration lessons from existing literature, e.g. (Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart et al., 2015; Leckie et al., 2016), this study conceptualises consumer engagement in social media brand communities as a multidimensional construct that consists of three dimensions and eight sub-dimensions. The analysis of the focus groups data provided a strong evidence in support of the three dimensions of engagement that were identified by Hollebeek (2011). While the work of Hollebeek (2011) provided the foundation for identifying the new engagement scale for this research, through its proposed three dimensions, it was still important to carry out some focus groups discussions to explore the sub-dimensions of engagement in the unique context of social media brand communities. The nature of engagement in brand pages on Facebook provide a unique medium that needs to be investigated. The interactive nature of social media makes it very hard to apply previously used scales in the context of online groups that are present in other platforms and websites. In addition, the unique features that Facebook allows to its users such as sharing content they are interested in makes it a more distinguishable environment than other online platforms.

7.3.2 Generation of Items

Churchill (1979, p. 67) argues that "*the second step in the procedure for developing better measures is to generate items that capture the domain as specified*". Thus, following the identification of engagement dimensions and sub-dimensions, the researcher was able to develop a first pool of items which included 34 items to capture

the engagement construct with the aid of the focus groups discussions (See Appendix D for the first pool of items that were developed to capture consumer engagement).

7.3.3 Item Reduction and Expert Review

After the pool of items were created, they were given out for expert review. Expert review is an essential step in developing scales since it is useful in checking its Face validity (Hardesty & Bearden, 2004). The review of the pools of items was conducted by three marketing faculty members and two marketing doctoral students who are familiar with social media marketing literature. Also, they were given to two social media managers of fast food chains in Egypt. For each of the 34 items, the experts were asked to assign each item to the most suitable engagement dimension and sub-dimension based on their definitions. The researcher retained the items that were correctly assigned to their intended definition for further testing.

In total, 23 items were retained according to the expert review. These items were initially proposed to measure the three dimensions and eight sub-dimensions of engagement. The first set of ten items were developed to capture the emotional engagement. These items were developed to capture consumers' feelings of attachment, amusement and belonging in the brand community. The second set of six items aimed to capture consumers' cognitive immersion in the brand community. They were developed to capture consumers' cognitive processes of concentration and thinking in the brand community. The third set of six items was developed to capture consumers' engagement behaviours, which include consumption, creation and sharing. All items were measured using a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (7) "strongly agree". The developed items are shown in Table 7.2.

Table 7. 2: Items developed to measure consumer engagement on social media brand communities after conducting the expert review

Dimension	Sub-dimension	Definition	Statements measuring sub-dimensions
Emotional Engagement	**Attachment**	The feeling of affection towards the online brand community.	1. I have a positive emotional connection towards this brand page.
			2. I would be disappointed if this brand page no longer existed.
			3. I feel personally connected to this brand page.
	Amusement	The feeling of happiness and enjoyment that arise from interaction in the brand community.	4. This brand page makes me happy.
			5. I interact in this brand page just for fun.
			6. This brand page is interesting.
	Belonging	The emotion of being part of, and identification with the brand community.	7. I enjoy being part of this brand page.
			8. I feel that I belong to this page brand.
			9. I like to be identified with this brand page.
			10. I feel like a part of the family of this brand page.
Cognitive Engagement	**Concentration**	The amount of cognitive attention and concentration to the content in the brand community.	11. I usually pay attention to what I read in the brand page.
			12. I am immersed in the content of this brand page.
			13. I usually concentrate and focus on what I am reading in the brand page.
	Thinking	The rational judgment and reasoning regarding the content posted in the brand community.	14. I usually think about the posts I find in this brand page.
			15. I am rarely distracted when I visit this brand page.
			16. I often remember the posts I see in the brand page.
Behavioural Engagement	**Consumption**	The act of reading, listening and watching content in the online brand community.	17. I usually log into this brand page to get updated about its content.
			18. It is important to me to follow the posts in this brand page.
	Creation	It means contributing and participating in the content of the online brand communities.	19. I interact with the posts that I see in this brand page.
			20. I post pictures and videos on the wall of the brand page.
			21. I write comments in this brand page.
	Sharing	It is the act of forwarding the content to other members in the social network.	22. I usually share posts from this brand page with other users in my social network.
			23. I ask my friends to join this brand page.

Source: This Research

7.3.4 Pilot Study Data Collection

After the expert review stage, a pilot stage was conducted with the aim of collecting data for testing the engagement scales, as well as other scales of the study. The data was collected using an online questionnaire. The link to the survey was posted on leading 8 fast food brand pages in Egypt. The pilot study was carried out using Survey Monkey.com electronic survey website. Survey Monkey is a comprehensive electronic survey building website which allows tools for data analysis. The data collection took place from January 2015 to March 2015. The target sample from the pilot study was Egyptian young Facebook users between ages 18 and 29 years and who are active members of fast food brand pages on Facebook.

The researcher sent a number of invitations asking the members of the brand pages to answer the survey. The posts invited young consumers to join the study by following a link embedded in the posts. The link directed consumers to the online survey on the Survey Monkey website. The questionnaire was uploaded in Arabic. The researcher chose to collect data through an online questionnaire on brand pages to make sure that consumers answer the survey related to their most preferred brand page. Online surveys have the advantage of giving the respondents the freedom of choice to complete the survey at their own convenience (Lefever, Dal, & Matthiasdottir, 2007). A total of 218 complete questionnaires were collected during the pilot stage of the quantitative study.

7.3.5 Purifying the Engagement Scales

The researcher randomly split the 218 complete responses into calibration and validation samples (Churchill, 1979; Gerbing & Anderson, 1988), where each group consisted of 109 responses. The researcher used the calibration sample to develop the scale, whereas the validation sample was used to construct its psychometric properties.

The researcher used the scale reliability (Cronbach's alpha) and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) on the calibration sample for the purpose of purification of the

engagement scale items. After checking the reliability of the scale, the researcher dropped 7 statements (Items 3, 5, 10, 12, 15, 20, and 23) because they had low Corrected Item-Total Correlation values (less than 0.3) (Pallant, 2013), (See Appendix D). After dropping these seven items, the overall reliability of the scale (Cronbach's alpha) improved to 0.876 exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair, 2010). Thus, the reliability analysis ensured the internal consistency of the engagement scale. Table 7.3 shows the SPSS output of the reliability analysis of the engagement scale items in the calibration sample.

Table 7. 3: Reliability analysis of the Engagement Scale Items in the Calibration Sample

Item-Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Engagement1	67.4679	227.492	.507	.870
Engamenent2	67.5046	226.012	.545	.868
Engagement4	67.4404	229.138	.494	.870
Engagement6	67.4220	225.357	.616	.865
Engagement7	67.4862	227.437	.535	.868
Engagement8	67.2752	223.553	.631	.864
Engagement9	67.3486	235.451	.438	.872
Engagement11	67.3028	242.046	.303	.878
Engagement13	67.0275	237.286	.484	.870
Engagement14	67.0367	230.258	.527	.869
Engagement16	67.0642	232.301	.516	.869
Engagement 17	66.7615	234.202	.523	.869
Engagement18	66.7431	231.896	.568	.867
Engagement19	66.7339	233.697	.537	.868
Engagement21	66.7248	232.720	.570	.867
Engaggement22	66.7431	234.915	.513	.869

Source: This Research

For the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), the researcher used the principle axis factor extraction (Byrne, 2005). The results of EFA indicated that the engagement constructs and measurement scales generally acted as expected, where the results indicated that consumer engagement is a multidimensional construct. Three meaningful factors were extracted when the EFA was conducted on all of the engagement items (i.e.23 items), see Appendix D.

The results supported the proposed theoretical structure of the proposed measurement model where the data analysis revealed the existence of three factors (emotional, cognitive and behavioural). The factor extraction showed that the emotional engagement items load on the same factor, the cognitive items load on another factor and all the behavioural items load on third factor. The KMO statistic was (0.846) and the Bartlett's sphericity test for the correlation matrix (χ^2=1727.193, (p=0.000)) strongly support the existence of high correlations among the items of the engagement scale. This extraction cumulatively explains about 75.267 % of the average variance extracted, see Table 7.4 for the SPSS output of the EFA of the engagement scale in the calibration sample and see Appendix D for the scree plot of the engagement scale.

Table 7. 4: Exploratory Factor Analysis of the Engagement Scale

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.846
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1727.193
	df	120
	Sig.	.000

Source: This Research

As shown in Table 7.5, the factors loading for the items measuring emotional engagement ranged from 0.731 to 0.881. Additionally, the factor loadings for the items measuring cognitive engagement ranged from 0.710 to 0.888. Moreover, the factor loadings for the items measuring behavioural engagement ranged from 0.930 to 0.958. This exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.4 (Hair, Bush, & Ortinau, 2006).

Table 7. 5: Loadings of the items of the engagement scale

Rotated Component Matrix[a]			
	Component		
	1	2	3
Engagement1	-.044-	.765	.166
Engamenent2	-.082-	.823	.199
Engagement4	-.004-	.821	.008
Engagement6	.083	.881	.047
Engagement7	.029	.783	.116
Engagement8	.091	.846	.125
Engagement9	.094	.731	-.098-
Engagement11	.064	.017	.710
Engagement13	.272	.120	.690
Engagement14	.157	.156	.888
Engagement16	.228	.105	.853
Engagement 17	.947	.012	.156
Engagement18	.958	.055	.166
Engagement19	.947	-.008-	.213
Engagement21	.944	.040	.204
Engaggement22	.930	.044	.107

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Source: This Research

Thompson (2004) suggested the use of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) together with Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to confirm the expected factor structure and to assess the representativeness of each item in the scales. After conducting the CFA, the final model that consisted of 16 items showed an adequate fit as demonstrated in Table 7.6.

Table 7. 6: Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of the Items of the Engagement Scale in the Calibration Sample

Fit indices	Consumer Engagement Scale
Chi-square (χ^2)	99.944
Degree of Freedom (DF)	91
Normed Fir Chi-square χ^2/DF	1.098
p-value	0.245
CFI	0.995
TLI	0.993
RMSEA	0.030
GFI	0.901

Source: This Research

The researcher used the validation sample to verify the psychometric properties of the scale. Thus, CFA was carried out on the validation sample as well. The engagement scale model showed an acceptable fit with X^2 at 96.983, DF=96, χ^2/DF=1.010 (p=0.453), RMSEA at 0.010, CFI at 0.999., GFI at 0.904 and TLI at 0.999. The loadings, t-values, AVE, composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha of the 16 items are shown in Table 7.7. Also, see Appendix D for the output of the CFA tests.

Table 7. 7: Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of the Validation Sample

Latent factors and items	loading	t-value
Emotional Engagement Alpha=0.937, AVE=0.661, CR=0.970		
Attachment		
I feel a positive emotional connection to this brand page.	0.728	
I would be disappointed if this brand page no longer existed.	0.955	10.446
Amusement		
This brand page makes me happy.	0.736	7.897
This brand page is interesting.	0.805	8.625
Belonging		
I enjoy being part of this brand page.	0.870	9.501
I feel that I belong to this page brand.	0.745	9.608
I like to be identified with this brand page.	0.923	10.162
Cognitive Engagement Alpha=0.921, AVE=0.852, CR=0.966		
Concentration		
I usually pay attention to what I read in the brand page.	0.767	
I usually concentrate and focus on what I am reading in the brand page.	0.797	15.590
Thinking		
I usually think about the posts I find in this brand page.	0.988	10.896
I often remember the posts I see in the brand page.	0.842	9.8338
Behavioural Engagement Alpha=0.916, AVE=0.674, CR=0.946		
Consumption		
I usually log into this brand page to get updated about its content.	0.854	9.997
It is important to me to follow the posts in this brand page.	0.782	9.059
Creation		
I interact with the posts that I see in this brand page.	0.826	9.521
I write comments in this brand page.	0.876	10.632
Sharing		
I usually share posts from this brand page with my social network.	0.802	

Source: This Research

Regarding the convergent validity of the scale items, Table 7.7 shows that all items significantly load on its relevant engagement dimension. Also, the AVE of each dimension exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.5 confirming its convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Also, the Cronbach alpha and composite reliability in the validation sample of each dimension exceeded the required threshold of 0.7 confirming the reliability of the new scales (Hair et al., 2014) (See Table 7.7).

Regarding the discriminant validity of the new engagement scales, the researcher used the Fornell & Larcker (1981) criteria. According to that approach, discriminant validity is established if a latent variable accounts for more variance in its associated indicator variables than it shares with other constructs in the same model. A measurement model containing latent variables is generally considered to have acceptable discriminant validity if the square root of the average variance extracted for each latent variable is higher than any of the bivariate correlations involving the latent variables in question (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As shown Table 7.8, the square root of the AVE of each of the three engagement dimensions is higher than the any of the bivariate correlations between each of the engagement dimensions. Thus, the engagement scale shows high discriminant validity.

Table 7. 8: Discriminant Validity of the Engagement Scale in the Validation Sample

	Emotional	Cognitive	Behavioural	AVE	SQR (AVE)
Emotional		0.250	0.237	0.661	0.813
Cognitive	0.250		0.190	0.852	0.923
Behavioural	0.237	0.190		0.674	0.820
AVE	0.661	0.852	0.674		
SQR (AVE)	0.813	0.923	0.820		

Source: This Research

7.4 Adjustments of Other Scales' Items

An additional aim for the pilot study survey was to examine the previously validated measures that are adopted in the current study. The results showed that respondents were able to answer most questions suggesting the absence of difficult or ununderstood questions. However, the pilot study helped the researcher to make some adjustments regarding the items of the questionnaire. For example, the researcher dropped a question related to respondents' number of logging times to their favourite fast food brands pages, since most respondents were not able to remember the exact number of their visits to these online communities.

Also, the pilot study showed that the majority of scales have good reliability showing a Cronbach alpha above 0.7 as suggested by Hair (2010). The Cronbach's alpha for all the study's constructs are shown in Table 7.9. However, items (3) and (5) in the brand identification scale were dropped because of their poor item-to-total correlation (i.e. reliability). These statements are "*The successes of this fast food brand are my successes*" and "*If a story in the media criticised this fast food brand, I would feel embarrassed*". Also, item (6), which intended to measure consumers' brand love was deleted to improve the scale reliability. This statement is "*This fast food brand is a pure delight*". Furthermore, statement (2) in the brand trust scale was removed from the questionnaire to improve the reliability. This statement is "I rely on this fast food brand". Finally, statement (4) in the scale that intended to measure brand loyalty was deleted for the same reason. This statement is "*I'll 'do without' rather than buy another fast food brand*". After these items were removed all the scales had good Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (above 0.7) as shown in Table 7.9.To test the factor structure of the study's constructs, the researcher adopted EFA. The factor analysis showed that the items measuring each of constructs significantly loaded on their relevant factor. (See Appendix D for some outputs of the EFA). After these adjustments were conducted, the researcher performed tests for checking the convergent and discriminant validity. All the

scales were found to be convergent valid where the AVE of these scales exceeded 0.5 threshold (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The AVE of the study's constructs are shown in Table 7.9. Additionally, as presented in Table 7.10 the square root of the constructs' AVE is higher than the correlations between it and any other construct within the model suggesting its discriminant validity.

Table 7. 9: Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and AVE of the research's constructs in the pilot study

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Brand Identification	0.746	0.855	0.663
Brand Satisfaction	0.849	0.908	0.768
Brand Trust	0.725	0.844	0.644
Brand's symbolic function	0.734	0.848	0.653
Perceived Critical Mass	0.864	0.916	0.785
Perceived Functional Benefits	0.766	0.865	0.682
Perceived Hedonic Benefits	0.873	0.841	0.640
Perceived social Benefits	0.780	0.874	0.698
Perceived Monetary Benefits	0.818	0.902	0.755
Perceived "Passing the Time" Benefits	0.773	0.855	0.664
Brand Love	0.865	0.935	0.625
Word of Mouth	0.815	0.890	0.731
Perceived Quality	0.884	0.928	0.811
Resistance to Negative Information	0.718	0.842	0.640
Brand Loyalty	0.712	0.845	0.645
Willingness to Pay a Price Premium	0.815	0.838	0.634

Source: This Research

Table 7. 10: Discriminant Validity of the Scales in the Pilot Study

	BI	BS	BT	BSF	FB	HB	SB	MB	CM	PTB	BL	WOM	LOY	PQ	RNI	WPPP	AVE	SQR (AVE)
BI																	0.663	0.814
BS	0.177																0.768	0.876
BT	0.156	0.345															0.644	0.802
BSF	0.152	0.190	0.257														0.653	0.808
FB	0.291	0.426	0.269	0.275													0.682	0.825
HB	0.288	0.208	0.060	0.103	0.380												0.640	0.800
SB	0.394	0.275	0.208	0.254	0.418	0.356											0.698	0.835
MB	0.322	0.312	0.223	0.315	0.497	0.528	0.463										0.755	0.868
CM	0.033	0.055	0.013	0.114	0.073	0.013	0.083	0.031									0.785	0.886
PTB	0.007	0.017	0.027	0.017	0.022	0.010	0.045	0.119	0.015								0.664	0.814
BL	0.226	0.307	0.358	0.297	0.449	0.310	0.399	0.472	0.047	0.078							0.625	0.790
WOM	0.113	0.116	0.047	0.049	0.075	0.010	0.059	0.071	0.048	0.008	0.007						0.731	0.854
LOY	0.087	0.094	0.112	0.151	0.125	0.122	0.046	0.122	0.012	0.009	0.010	0.119					0.645	0.803
PQ	0.014	0.010	0.009	0.100	0.009	0.034	0.114	0.003	0.066	0.055	0.051	0.140	0.015				0.811	0.900
RNI	0.007	0.020	0.073	0.047	0.008	0.050	0.089	0.101	0.053	0.121	0.117	0.049	0.027	0.012			0.640	0.800
WPPP	0.142	0.140	0.005	0.017	0.237	0.082	0.092	0.151	0.008	0.046	0.114	0.078	0.156	0.037	0.097		0.634	0.796
AVE	0.663	0.768	0.644	0.653	0.682	0.640	0.698	0.755	0.785	0.664	0.625	0.731	0.645	0.811	0.640	0.634		
SQR (AVE)	0.814	0.876	0.802	0.808	0.825	0.800	0.835	0.868	0.886	0.814	0.790	0.854	0.803	0.900	0.800	0.796		
Source: This Research																		

7.5 Summary

Chapter 7 demonstrated the process of developing a new scale to measure the three proposed dimensions of the consumer engagement construct. It elaborated the rationale for the development of this new scale. Additionally, it showed the steps of generation of new items for these new scales through the focus groups discussions. Furthermore, this chapter provided an overview of the pilot study that was conducted through an online survey to purify the items of the new scale and to test the reliability and validity of other measures in the study. The next chapter details the results of the main quantitative phase of the study.

Chapter 8: Phase II: Quantitative Data Analysis and Results

8.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the main quantitative study. It is divided into two main parts. The first part presents some descriptive statistics of the demographic characteristics of the sample. In addition, it includes tests of reliability and validity. On the other hand, the second part of this chapter presents the results of the hypotheses testing by using partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). This chapter is further divided into six main sections. Firstly, section 8.2 provides an overview of demographic characteristics of the sample. Following this, section 8.3 highlights the respondents' perceptions regarding Facebook and advertising on it. After that, section 8.4 discusses the convergent and discriminant validity as well as the reliability of the study constructs. Then, section 8.5 presents the findings of the hypotheses testing. Finally, section 8.6 provides a summary for this chapter.

Part One

This part demonstrates the descriptive statistics of the demographic characteristics of the study's sample as well as some descriptive statistics related to consumers' perceptions regarding Facebook and advertising on it. Furthermore, it presents tests of validity (convergent and discriminant validity) and the reliability of scales.

8.2 Descriptive Statistics of the Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

A total of 591 members of fast food brand pages in Facebook were surveyed online for the purpose of the main quantitative study. Of these 591 participants, 347 were males which constitute (59 %) of the total sample, and 244 females, which constitute (41%) of the total sample. Consumers' age in the sample ranged from eighteen to twenty-nine

years old. 226 customers aged 18 to less than 22 represent the greatest portion (38 %) of the total sample. 195 customers aged 23 to less than 25 represent (33 %) of the total sample. Finally, 170 customers aged 26 to less than 30 represent the smallest portion (29 %) of the total sample.

Respondents' current occupations varied from students, professionals, employees, academics, self-employed, unemployed graduates and house wives. The largest portion included 223 students, which represent about (38 %) of the total sample. Also, 124 employees were surveyed, which represents (21 %) of the total sample. In addition, there were 74 self-employed respondents which represent (13 %) of the total sample. Furthermore, 62 professionals were included which represents (10 %) of the sample, while there were 52 house wives which represent (9 %) of the population. On the other hand, 38 of the respondents were unemployed graduates and 18 were academics, which represent (6%) and (3%) of the total respondents respectively.

On the other hand, the sample contained respondents who lived in different Egyptian cities. The largest proportion of customers were 245, which represent about (41 %) of the total sample lived in Cairo (the capital of Egypt and its largest city). Then, 181 respondents, which represent (31 %) of the sample were from Alexandria. Finally, 165 respondents, which represent (28 %), lived in other cities.

Respondents' monthly income level ranged from less than 1000 Egyptian pounds (L.E), from 1000 to less than 2000 L.E., from 2000 L.E. to less than 3000 LE and finally above 3000 LE. The largest proportion were consumers who earned from 2000 to less than 3000 L.E (241 respondents, which represent (41 %) of the sample). Then, 184 consumers earned 1000 L.E. to less than 2000 L.E, which represent (31 %) of the total sample. Then, 107 customers who earned less than 1000 L.E., which represent (18 %) of the sample. However, the smallest portion was 59 respondents who earned more than 3000 L.E., which represent (10 %) of the total sample. In Table 8.1, the researcher summarises the descriptive statistics of the demographics of the main study's sample.

Table 8. 1: Frequency Distributions (Demographics) of the Sample

Demographic Variable	Criteria	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-22	226	38%
	23-25	195	33 %
	26-29	170	29 %
Gender	Male	347	59 %
	Female	244	41 %
City of Residence	Cairo	245	41 %
	Alexandria	181	31 %
	Other Cities	165	28 %
Current Occupation	Students	223	38%
	Employees	124	21%
	Self employed	74	13%
	Professionals	62	10%
	House Wives	52	9%
	Unemployed Graduates	38	6%
	Academics	18	3%
Monthly Income	Less than 1000 LE.	107	18%
	1000-2000 LE.	184	31%
	2001-3000 LE.	241	41%
	Above 3000 LE.	59	10%

Source: This research

8.3 Respondents' Relationships with Facebook and Facebook Marketing

In this section, the researcher presents some of the results regarding consumer behaviours and perceptions towards marketing on Facebook. These questions were introduced to the respondents in the first section of the online questionnaire. The aim of these general introductory questions was to encourage the respondents to approach the survey and to prepare them for answering the next section which was related to the main objectives of the study.

8.3.1 Time Spent on Facebook

The respondents in this study spend different amount of time as follows: less than 1 hour (36%), 1-2 hours (23%), 2-3 hours (18%), 3-4 hours (13%) and more than 4 hours (10%). Figure 8.1 illustrates the duration respondents spend on the social networking site Facebook.

Figure 8. 1: Time spent on Facebook
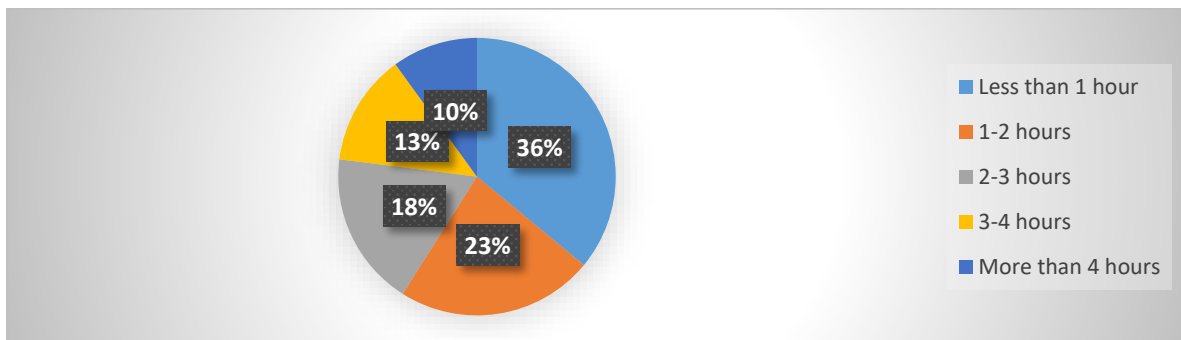
Source: This Research

8.3.2 Devices Used to Access Facebook

The majority of the respondents (44%) logged into Facebook from their smart phone only. On the other hand, (32%) of respondents logged into Facebook from both their computers and smart phones. Finally, (25%) of respondents logged into their Facebook accounts from their computers only. Figure 8.2 illustrates the devices that the respondents use to log into Facebook.

Figure 8. 2: Devices used to access Facebook
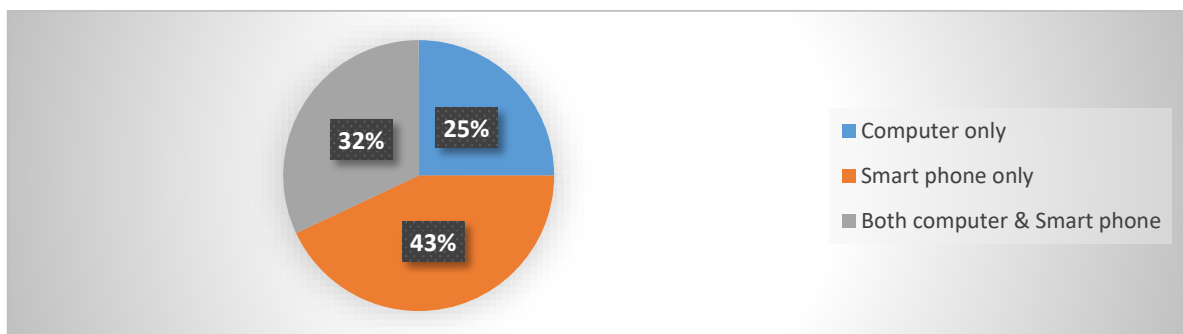
Source: This Research

8.3.3 Type of preferred Advertisements on Facebook

The findings show that consumers prefer various forms of advertising on Facebook. The majority of respondents (72%) demonstrated that their preferred type is brand pages on Facebook. In addition, (15%) of respondents indicated that they prefer sponsored advertising on their Facebook home page. Also, (13%) of them said that they prefer advertising on the side of their profile page. Figure 8.3 illustrates the various forms of advertising most preferred by consumers.

Figure 8. 3: Type of Preferred Advertisements on Facebook
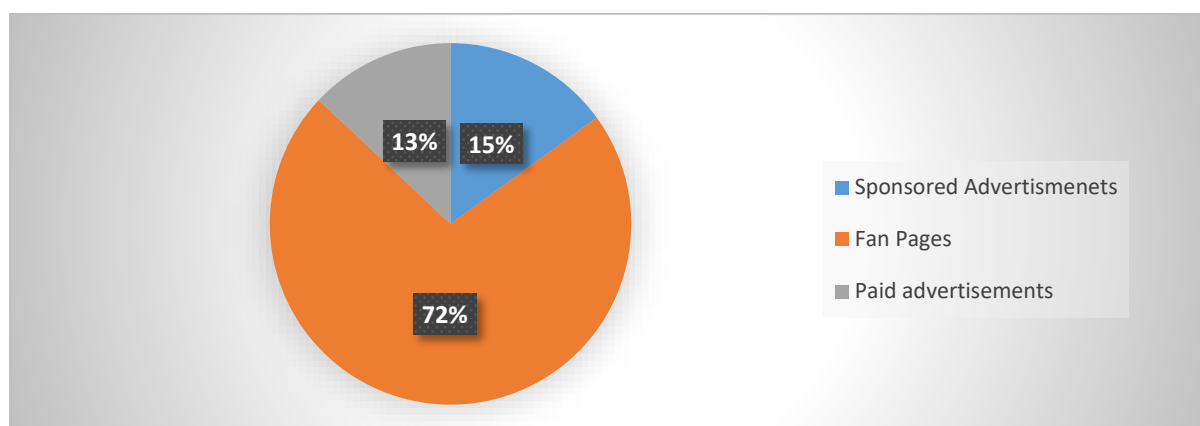
Source: This Research

8.3.4 Duration of Membership in Fast food Brand Pages

Furthermore, the analysis showed that (31%) of consumers joined the fast food fan page for a duration between 1 and 2 years. In addition, it appeared that (24%) joined the fan pages for a duration between 2 and 3 years. Also, (23%) of respondents said that they have been members of the fan pages for less than a year. On the other hand, (7%) of respondents indicated that they have been members for more than 3 years. Finally, (15%) said that they are not sure about the duration of their membership. Figure 8.4 illustrates the duration that respondents have been members of the fast food brand pages.

Figure 8. 4: Duration of membership in fast food brand pages
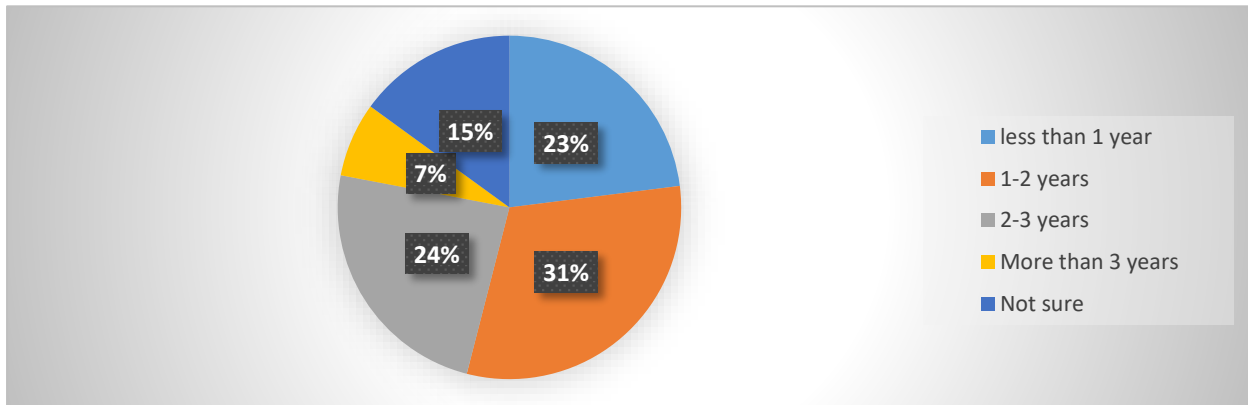
Source: This Research

8.3.5 Activities performed on Facebook

The analysis of the data showed that consumers perform various activities on Facebook. The majority of respondents (82%) said that they use Facebook for chatting with their friends. Also, (80%) indicated that they use it to comment on others' posts and to share posts and photos with their friends on the social network. In addition, they indicated that Facebook helps them to stay connected with brands and companies through fan pages. Also, they provided several other reasons for joining Facebook. These activities are shown in Figure 8.5.

Figure 8. 5: Activities performed on Facebook
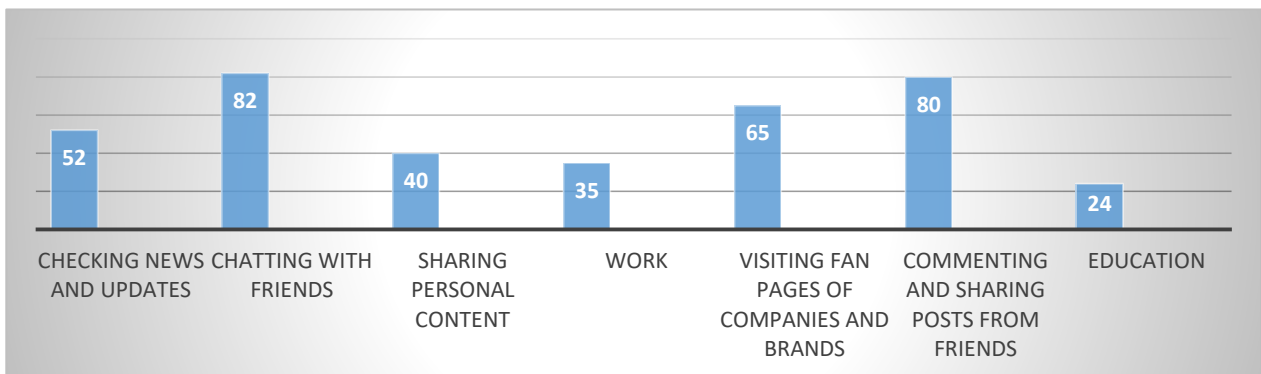
Source: This Research

8.4 Assessing Reliability and Validity

The researcher conducted several tests before investigating the proposed research hypotheses. The tests included tests of internal consistency (reliability) and tests of convergent and discriminant validity. These tests are essential before evaluating any research model (Hair et al., 2011).

8.4.1 Reliability of the Study's Variables

PLS-SEM analysis necessitates checking for unidimensionality of each variable in the model. A variable is unidimensional when its Cronbach's alpha (α) value and composite reliability (CR) value are greater than 0.7 (Tenenhaus et al., 2005). The researcher performed the reliability tests on the research variables before applying statistical analysis methods. Reliability analysis is needed to make sure that the measurement scales of each variable are able to yield consistent results when the measurements are performed in other times (Pallant, 2013). Table 8.2 provides an overview of the values of the Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability coefficients.

Table 8. 2: The results from the measurement model estimation (loading, CR value, Cronbach's α, and AVE).

Variable	Manifest variable	Outer Loading	Cronbach's alpha (α)	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
Brand Identification	BI1	0.779	0.761	0.863	0.677
	BI1	0.863			
	BI3	0.824			
Brand Satisfaction	SAT1	0.861	0.783	0.874	0.697
	SAT2	0.818			
	SAT3	0.825			
Brand Trust	TR1	0.774	0.811	0.888	0.727
	TR2	0.901			
	TR3	0.877			
Brand Symbolic Function	BSF1	0.787	0.818	0.888	0.728
	BSF2	0.907			

	BSF3	0.860			
Perceived Critical Mass	CM1	0.903	0.872	0.921	0.796
	CM2	0.910			
	CM3	0.863			
Functional Benefits	FB1	0.689	0.718	0.843	0.644
	FB2	0.882			
	FB3	0.825			
Hedonic Benefits	HB1	0.840	0.790	0.878	0.705
	HB2	0.881			
	HB3	0.797			
Social Benefits	SB1	0.565	0.794	0.691	0.501
	SB2	0.508			
	SB3	0.939			
Monetary Benefits	MB1	0.836	0.796	0.880	0.710
	MB2	0.894			
	MB3	0.795			
Passing the Time Benefits	PT1	0.891	0.834	0.851	0.663
	PT2	0.914			
	PT3	0.599			
Brand Love	BL1	0.687	0.833	0.882	0.601
	BL2	0.790			
	BL3	0.813			
	BL4	0.708			
	BL5	0.864			
Word of Mouth	WOM1	0.601	0.718	0.770	0.539
	WOM2	0.934			
	WOM3	0.619			
Willingness to Pay Price Premium	WPP1	0.817	0.772	0.868	0.686
	WPP2	0.836			
	WPP3	0.831			
Resistance to Negative Information	RNI1	0.789	0.736	0.849	0.653
	RNI2	0.766			
	RNI3	0.866			
Brand Loyalty	lOY1	0.867	0.844	0.905	0.761
	Loy2	0.836			
	lOY3	0.893			
Perceived Quality	PQ1	0.795	0.715	0.838	0.633
	PQ2	0.745			
	PQ3	0.845			

Source: This Research

As shown in Table 8.2, the Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.715 to 0.872, this indicates a good reliability of the measurement scales in the context of theory testing research (Pallant, 2013). Therefore, each scale will result in consistent answers if the measurements are conducted repeatedly. On the other hand, the values of composite reliability ranged from 0.770 to 0.905 which are above the 0.70 cut-off point (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988), which is a good indicator for the scales' reliability (Henseler et al., 2009).

The outer loadings are useful in assessing individual item reliability. A loading higher than 0.7 signals the item's reliability (Gotz et al., 2010; Henseler et al., 2009). In this study, the vast majority of outer loadings are higher than 0.7 as shown in Table 8.2. However, the researcher maintained SIX items (FB1, SB1, SB2, BL1, WOM1, and WOM3) as they had loadings above the threshold of 0.4 that was suggested by Hulland (1999).

8.4.2 Convergent Validity

To examine the convergent validity of the study's constructs, the researcher examined the average variance extracted (AVE) as shown in Table 8.2. In the current study, AVE measures ranged from 0.501to 0.796, exceeding the threshold value (0.5) that was suggested by Fornell & Larker (1981).

The AVE of brand identification is 67.7 %, which is greater than 50% that was suggested by Hair (2010). This means that 67.7 % of the total information available in the three items could be extracted by using one factor to express brand identification instead of using these three items. Accordingly, by decreasing the number of items to one factor, 67.7 % of the total information will be maintained. Furthermore, the AVE of brand satisfaction is 69.7%, which is greater than 50%. This means that 69.7% of the total information available in the three items can be extracted by using one factor to indicate brand satisfaction instead of using the three items. Accordingly, by decreasing the number of items to be one factor, 69.7% of the total information will be kept.

The AVE of brand trust is 72.7 %, which is greater than 50%. This indicates that 72.7 % of the total information available in the four items could be extracted by using one factor to express brand trust instead of using four items. Therefore, by reducing the number of items to be one factor, 72.7 % of the total information will be maintained. On the other hand, the AVE of brand symbolic function is 72.8 %, which is greater than 50%. This means that 72.8 % of the total information available in the three items can be extracted by using one factor to express (brand symbolic function) instead of using these three items. Therefore, by decreasing the number of items to one factor, 72.8 % of the total information will be maintained.

The AVE of perceived critical mass is 79.6 %, which is greater than 50%. That indicates that 79.6% of the total information available in the three items could be extracted by using one factor to express perceived critical mass instead of using these three items. Accordingly, by decreasing the number of items to be one factor, 79.6% of the total information will be maintained. Additionally, the AVE of perceived functional benefits is 64.4%, which is higher than 50%. This means that 64.4% of the total available information in the three items can be extracted by using one factor to express perceived functional benefits instead of using these three items. Accordingly, by decreasing the number of items to one factor, 64.4% of the overall information will be kept.

The AVE of perceived hedonic benefits is 70.5%, which is greater than 50%. This indicates that 70.5 % of the total information available in the three items could be extracted by using one factor to express hedonic benefits instead of using these three items. Accordingly, by decreasing the number of items to be one factor, 70.5 % of the total information will be maintained. In addition, the AVE of social benefits is 50.1%, which is greater than 50%. This indicates that 50.1 % of the total information available in the three items could be extracted by using one factor to express social benefits instead of using these three items. Accordingly, by decreasing the number of items to be one factor, 50.1% of the total information will be maintained.

The AVE of perceived monetary benefits is 71%, which is greater than 50%. That indicates the 71% of the total information available in the three items could be extracted by using one factor to express (monetary benefits) instead of using these three items. Accordingly, by decreasing the number of items to be one factor, 71% of the total information will be maintained. In addition, the AVE of perceived passing the time benefits is 66.3 %, which is greater than 50%. That indicates the 66.3 % of the total information available in the three items could be extracted by using one factor to express (perceived "passing the time" benefits) instead of using these three items. Accordingly, by decreasing the number of items to be one factor, 66.3 % of the total information will be maintained.

The AVE of brand love is 60.1%, which is greater than 50%. That indicates the 60.1% of the total information available in the five items could be extracted by using one factor to express (brand love) instead of using these five items. Accordingly, by decreasing the number of items to be one factor, 60.1% of the total information will be maintained. In addition, the AVE of word of mouth is 53.9%, which is greater than 50%.That indicates the 53.9% of the total information available in the three items could be extracted by using one factor to express (word of mouth) instead of using these three items. Accordingly, by decreasing the number of items to be one factor, 53.9% of the total information will be maintained. Furthermore, the AVE of brand loyalty is 76.1%, which is greater than 50%. That indicates the 76.1% of the total information available in the three items could be extracted by using one factor to express (brand loyalty) instead of using these three items. Accordingly, by decreasing the number of items to be one factor, 76.1% of the total information will be maintained.

The AVE of perceived quality is 63.3%, which is greater than 50%.That indicates the 63.3% of the total information available in the three items could be extracted by using one factor to express (perceived quality) instead of using these three items. Accordingly, by decreasing the number of items to be one factor, 63.3% of the total information will

be maintained. In addition, the AVE of willingness to pay a price premium is 68.6% which is greater than 50%.That indicates the 68.6% of the total information available in the three items could be extracted by using one factor to express (perceived quality) instead of using these three items. Accordingly, by decreasing the number of items to be one factor, 68.6% of the total information will be maintained.

Finally, the AVE of resistance to negative information is 65.3%, which is greater than 50 %. That indicates the 65.3% of the total information available in the three items could be extracted by using one factor to express (resistance to negative information) instead of using these three items. Accordingly, by decreasing the number of items to be one factor, 65.3 % of the total information will be maintained.

8.4.3 Discriminant Validity

With the aim of investigating the discriminant validity of the research variables, the researcher compared the square root of AVE of each construct with its correlation with other variables (Fornell & Larker; 1981).Table 8.3 demonstrates the correlations between each variable and other variables of the current study. The results show that the all are lower than the AVE of each variable indicating the discriminant validity of the study constructs. In other words, it is evident that the respondents can discriminate between all research variables (Brown, 2015).

 Henseler et al. (2015) indicated that the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) can be a more reliable criterion to assess discriminant validity in PLS-SEM. Usually, a value of HTMT above 0.85 shows a lack of discriminant validity. After examining the HTMT for all the study's constructs, it was evident that all the scales possess a strong discriminant validity as shown in Figure 8.6.

Table 8. 3: Discriminant validity of the study's constructs

	BI	BS	BT	BSF	FB	HB	SB	MB	CM	PTB	BL	WOM	LOY	PQ	RNI	WPP	AVE	SQR (AVE)
BI																	0.677	0.822
BS	0.097																0.697	0.834
BT	0.321	0.021															0.727	0.852
BSF	0.095	0.193	0.041														0.728	0.853
FB	0.099	0.135	0.015	0.149													0.796	0.892
HB	0.094	0.002	0.005	0.114	0.099												0.644	0.802
SB	0.070	0.021	0.037	0.034	0.053	0.061											0.501	0.714
MB	0.052	0.074	0.046	0.066	0.027	0.008	0.021										0.710	0.842
CM	0.006	0.044	0.044	0.056	0.137	0.061	0.001	0.029									0.796	0.892
PTB	0.056	0.049	0.020	0.017	0.021	0.003	0.079	0.048	0.035								0.663	0.814
BL	0.339	0.163	0.220	0.139	0.257	0.325	0.040	0.093	0.235	0.016							0.601	0.774
WOM	0.192	0.054	0.136	0.102	0.117	0.151	0.065	0.028	0.159	0.08	0.408						0.539	0.734
LOY	0.236	0.055	0.124	0.053	0.092	0.212	0.018	0.105	0.085	0.023	0.360	0.176					0.761	0.872
PQ	0.188	0.123	0.113	0.010	0.165	0.207	0.055	0.094	0.167	0.045	0.531	0.195	0.235				0.633	0.795
RNI	0.150	0.017	0.124	0.001	0.025	0.093	0.013	0.014	0.129	0.006	0.381	0.205	0.128	0.179			0.653	0.808
WPPP	0.125	0.037	0.050	0.014	0.054	0.148	0.058	0.065	0.02	0.016	0.444	0.192	0.238	0.345			0.686	0.828
AVE	0.677	0.697	0.727	0.728	0.796	0.644	0.501	0.710	0.796	0.663	0.601	0.539	0.761	0.633	0.653	0.686		
SQR (AVE)	0.822	0.834	0.852	0.853	0.892	0.802	0.0.714	0.842	0.892	0.814	0.774	0.734	0.872	0.795	0.808	0.828		
Source: This Research																		

Figure 8. 6: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT) in assessing the discriminant validity

Source: This Research

Part Two

8.5 Structural Equation Modeling for Hypotheses Testing

The researcher adopted structural equation modeling techniques to test the relationships between the variables of the proposed conceptual framework. The researcher analysed the relationships between the constructs using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM doesn't require normal distribution of data (Hair et al., 2011). Hence, it evaluates the fitting of the model through Square Multiple Correlations through examining the coefficient of determination (R^2) (Cohen, 1988). R^2 measures the construct's percentage of variation that can be explained by the model (Wixom & Watson, 2001). The higher the R^2, the better the model fits the data (Pallant, 2013). Table 8.4 shows a summary of the results of hypotheses testing. On the hand, Table 8.5 shows the R^2 of the dependent variables in the current study.

Table 8. 4: Summary of results of hypotheses testing (Path coefficients β, t-value and Significance levels p)

	Hypothesised Path	Results	Path Coefficient β	t	Significance p
H1	Brand Identification-→ Engagement.	Supported	0.302***	11.477	0.000 (Significant)
H2	Brand Satisfaction-→ Engagement.	Supported	0.161***	6.315	0.000 (Significant)
H3	Brand Trust-→ Engagement.	Supported	0.208***	9.128	0.000 (Significant)
H4	Brand Symbolic Function-→ Engagement.	**Rejected**	-0.037	1.917	0.055 (Insignificant)
H5	Perceived Critical Mass-→ Engagement.	Supported	0.522***	20.819	0.000 (Significant)
H6A	Functional Benefits-→ Engagement.	Supported	0.227***	11.787	0.000 (Significant)
H6B	Hedonic Benefits-→ Engagement.	Supported	0.317***	14.042	0.000 (Significant)
H6C	Social Benefits-→ Engagement.	**Rejected**	0.002	0.104	0.917 (Insignificant)
H6D	Monetary Benefits-→ Engagement.	Supported	0.181***	6.809	0.000 (Significant)
H6E	Passing the Time Benefits-→ Engagement	**Rejected**	-0.008	0.299	0.765 (Insignificant)
H7	Engagement-→Brand Love.	Supported	0.495***	11.837	0.000 (Significant)
H8	Brand Love→Word of Mouth.	Supported	0.617***	18.512	0.000 (Significant)
H9	Brand Love→ Price premium.	Supported	0.457***	11.525	0.000 (Significant)
H10	Brand Love→Resistance to Negative Information.	Supported	0.400***	10.420	0.000 (Significant)
H11	Brand Love→ Brand Loyalty.	Supported	0.381***	8.016	0.000 (Significant)
H12	Brand Love→ Perceived Quality.	Supported	0.553***	14997	0.000 (Significant)
Note: Significance levels					
* p<0.05					
** p<0.01					
*** p<0.001					

Source: This Research

Table 8. 5: R-Square of the Dependent Variables

Variable	R^2
Consumer Engagement	0.769
Brand Love	0.245
Word of Mouth	0.381
Willingness to Pay Price Premium	0.209
Resistance to Negative Information	0.160
Brand Loyalty	0.145
Perceived Quality	0.306

Source: This Research

According to the values of R2, about 76.9 % of the changes that occur in consumers'
engagement in the online brand community can be explained by the following
antecedents (brand identification, brand satisfaction, brand trust, perceived critical
mass, functional benefits, hedonic benefits and monetary benefits). Additionally, 24.5%
of consumers' brand love can be explained by consumers' engagement in online brand
communities. Furthermore 38.1 % of word of mouth, 14.5 % of brand loyalty, 16% of
resistance to negative information, 20.9 % of willingness to pay a price premium, and
30.6% of perceived quality can be explained by brand love. (See Appendix E). Figure 8.7
provides   a   summary   of   the   results   of   the   hypotheses   testing.

Figure 8. 7: Path coefficients in the conceptual model
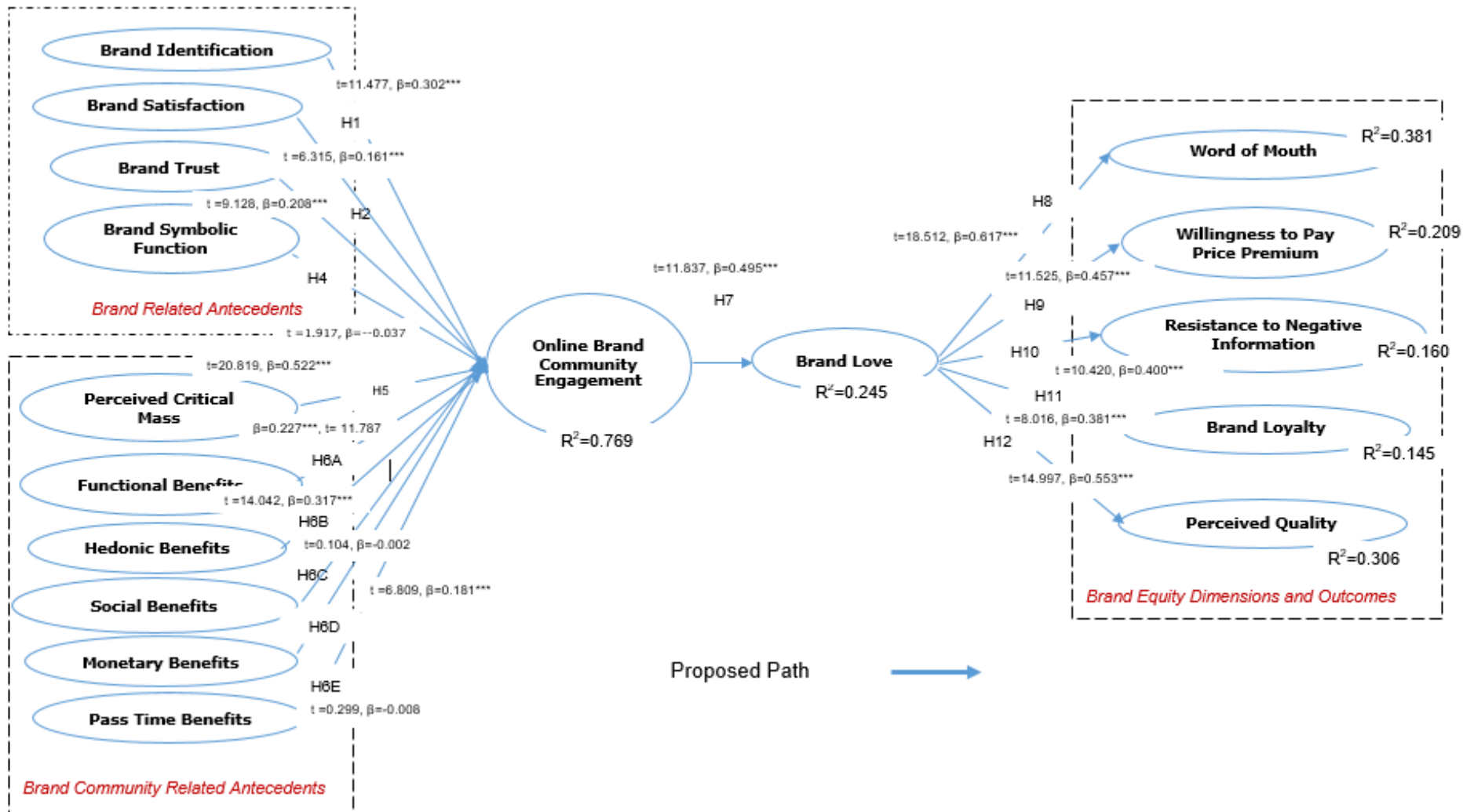
Note: ***$p \leq 0.001$

Source: This Research

8.5.1 Antecedents of Consumer Engagement Related to Consumers' Relationships with Brands

8.5.1.1 Relationship between Brand Identification and Consumer Engagement

H1: Brand identification has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in online brand communities. (Supported)

The testing of H1 indicates a positive and direct significant relationship between brand identification and consumer engagement in online brand communities (t=11.477, β=0.302, p=0.000). This means that a 100 point change in brand identification will lead to a 30.2 point change in consumer engagement.

8.5.1.2 Relationship between Brand Satisfaction and Consumer Engagement

H2: Brand satisfaction has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in online brand communities. (Supported)

The testing of H2 shows that the relationship between brand satisfaction and consumer engagement in online brand communities is a direct and positive one (t-value=6.315, β=0.161, p=0.000). This indicates that a 100 point change in brand satisfaction will lead to a 16.1 point change in consumer engagement.

8.5.1.3 Relationship between Brand Trust and Consumer Engagement

H3: Brand trust has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in online brand communities. (Supported)

Testing of H3 shows a positive and a direct relationship between brand trust and consumer engagement in online brand communities (t-value=9.128, β=0.208, p=0.000). This means that a 100 point change in brand trust will lead to a 20.8 point change in consumer engagement.

8.5.1.4 Relationship between Brand Symbolic Function and Consumer Engagement

H4: Consumers' perceptions of symbolic function of brands have a positive effect on consumers' engagement in the community. (Rejected)

Testing of H4 shows insignificant relationship between customers' perception of a brand's symbolic function on their engagement in the brand communities (t-value=1.917, β=-0.037, p=0.055).

8.5.2 Antecedents of Consumer Engagement Related to Consumers' Perceptions inside Brand Communities

8.5.2.1 Relationship between Perceived Critical mass and Consumer Engagement

H5: Perceived critical mass in a brand community has a positive effect on consumers' consumers' engagement in the community. (Supported)

Testing of H5 shows a positive and a direct relationship between consumer' perceived critical mass and consumer engagement in online brand communities (t-value=20.819, β=0.522, p=0.000). This means that a 100 point change in brand trust will lead to 52.2 point change in consumer engagement.

8.5.2.2 Relationship between Perceived Functional Benefits and Consumer Engagement

H6A: Perceived functional benefits in a brand community have a positive effect on consumers' level of engagement. (Supported)

Testing of H6A shows a positive and a direct relationship between consumer' perception of functional benefits and their engagement in online brand communities (t-value=11.787, β=0.227, p=0.000). This means that a 100 point change in consumers' perception of hedonic benefits will lead to 22.7 point change in consumer engagement.

8.5.2.3 Relationship between Perceived Hedonic Benefits and Consumer Engagement

H6B: Perceived hedonic benefits in a brand community have a positive effect on consumers' level of engagement. (Supported)

Testing of H6B shows a positive and a direct relationship between consumer' perceived critical mass and consumer engagement in online brand communities (t-value=14.042, $\beta=0.317$, $p=0.000$). This means that a 100 point change in consumers' perception of hedonic benefits will lead to 31.7 point change in their engagement.

8.5.2.4 Relationship between Perceived Social Benefits and Consumer Engagement

H6C: Perceived social benefits in a brand community have a positive effect on consumers' level of engagement. (Rejected)

Testing of H6C shows insignificant effect of customers' perception of social benefits on their engagement in the brand communities (t-value=0.104, $\beta=-0.002$, $p=0.917$).

8.5.2.5 Relationship between Perceived Monetary Benefits and Consumer Engagement

H6D: Perceived monetary benefits in a brand community have a positive effect on consumers' level of engagement. Supported)

Testing of H6D shows a positive and a direct relationship between consumer' perception of monetary benefits and their engagement in online brand communities (t-value=6.809, $\beta=0.181$, $p=0.000$). This means that a 100 point change in consumers' perception of monetary benefits will lead to 18.1 point change in their engagement.

8.5.2.5 Relationship between Passing the Time Benefits and Consumer engagement

H6E: Perceived passing the time benefits in a brand community have a positive effect on consumers' level of Engagement. (Rejected)

Testing of H6E shows insignificant effect of customers' perception of social benefits on their engagement in the brand communities (t-value=0.299, β=-0.008, *p*=0.765).

8.5.3 Relationship between Consumer Engagement and Brand love

H7: Consumers' engagement in an online brand community affects their brand love positively. (Supported)

Testing of H7 shows a positive and a direct relationship between consumer' engagement in online brand communities and their brand love (t-value=11.837, β=0.495, *p*=0.000). This means that a 100 point change in consumers' engagement will lead to 49.5 point change in their brand love.

8.5.4 Relationship between Brand Love and Brand Equity Dimensions and Outcomes

8.5.4.1 Relationship between Brand Love and Word of Mouth

H8: Brand love will have a positive effect on consumers' word of mouth. (Supported)

Testing of H8 shows a positive and a direct relationship between consumer' brand love and their brand love (t-value=18.512, β=0.617, *p*=0.000). This means that a 100 point change in consumers' brand love will lead to 61.7 point change in their positive word of mouth.

8.5.4.2 Relationship between Brand Love and Willingness to Pay a Price Premium

H9: Brand love has a positive influence on consumers' willingness to pay a price premium. (Supported)

Testing of H9 shows a positive and a direct relationship between consumer' brand love and their willingness to pay a price premium (t-value=11.525, β=0.457, *p*=0.000). This means that a 100 point change in consumers' brand love will lead to 45.7 point change in their willingness to pay a price premium.

8.5.4.3 Relationship between Brand Love and Consumers' Resistance to Negative Information

H10: Brand love has a positive impact on consumers' resistance to negative information. (Supported)

Testing of H10 shows a positive and a direct relationship between consumer' brand love and their resistance to negative information (t-value=10.420, β=0.400, p=0.000). This means that a 100 point change in consumers' brand love will lead to 40 point change in their resistance to negative information.

8.5.4.4 Relationship between Brand Love and Brand Loyalty

H11: Brand love has a positive impact on consumers' brand loyalty. (Supported)

Testing of H11 shows a positive and a direct significant relationship between consumer' brand love and their loyalty for brands (t-value=8.016, β=0.381, p=0.000). This means that a 100 point change in consumers' brand love will lead to 38.1 point change in their brand loyalty.

8.5.4.5 Relationship between Brand Love and Perceived Quality

H12: Brand love is directly and positively related to perceived quality. (Supported)

Testing of H12 shows a positive and a direct relationship between consumer' brand love and their perceived quality for brands (t-value=14.997, β=0.553, p=0.000). This means that a 100 point change in consumers' brand love will lead to 55.3 point change in their perceived quality of fast food brands.

8.6 Summary

This chapter presented the steps of testing the hypothesis of the proposed conceptual model. Based on the findings, the researcher was able to determine some antecedents and outcomes of consumer engagement on social media based brand communities. The next chapter discusses these findings in much detail.

Chapter 9: Research Discussion

9.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings related to the nature of dimensionality of consumer engagement on social media based brand communities that were presented in chapter 6 as well as the findings related to the hypotheses testing that were outlined in chapter 8.

It is divided into eight main major sections. First, section 9.2 provides an overall summary of the hypotheses testing results. After that, section 9.3 presents a discussion of the findings of this study and focuses on the relationship between four factors related to consumers' relationships with brands namely: brand identification, brand satisfaction, brand trust, brand symbolic function and consumer engagement in online brand communities. On the other hand, section 9.4 focuses on the relationship between six factors related to consumers' perceptions inside brand communities namely: perceived critical mass and perceived benefits in the brand community including functional, hedonic, social, monetary, passing the time and consumer engagement. Following this, section 9.5 discusses the relationship between consumer engagement and development of brand love in online brand communities embedded in social media. Then section 9.6 highlights the relationship between consumer engagement and brand equity dimensions and outcomes including word of mouth, willingness to pay price premium, resistance to negative information, brand loyalty and perceived quality. Following this, section 9.7 demonstrates the various dimensions and sub-dimensions of consumer engagement that emerged from the qualitative discussions. Finally, section 9.8 provides a summary of the chapter.

Figure 9.1 presents the conceptual framework of the study and the research hypotheses.

Figure 9. 1: Conceptual Framework and Research Hypotheses
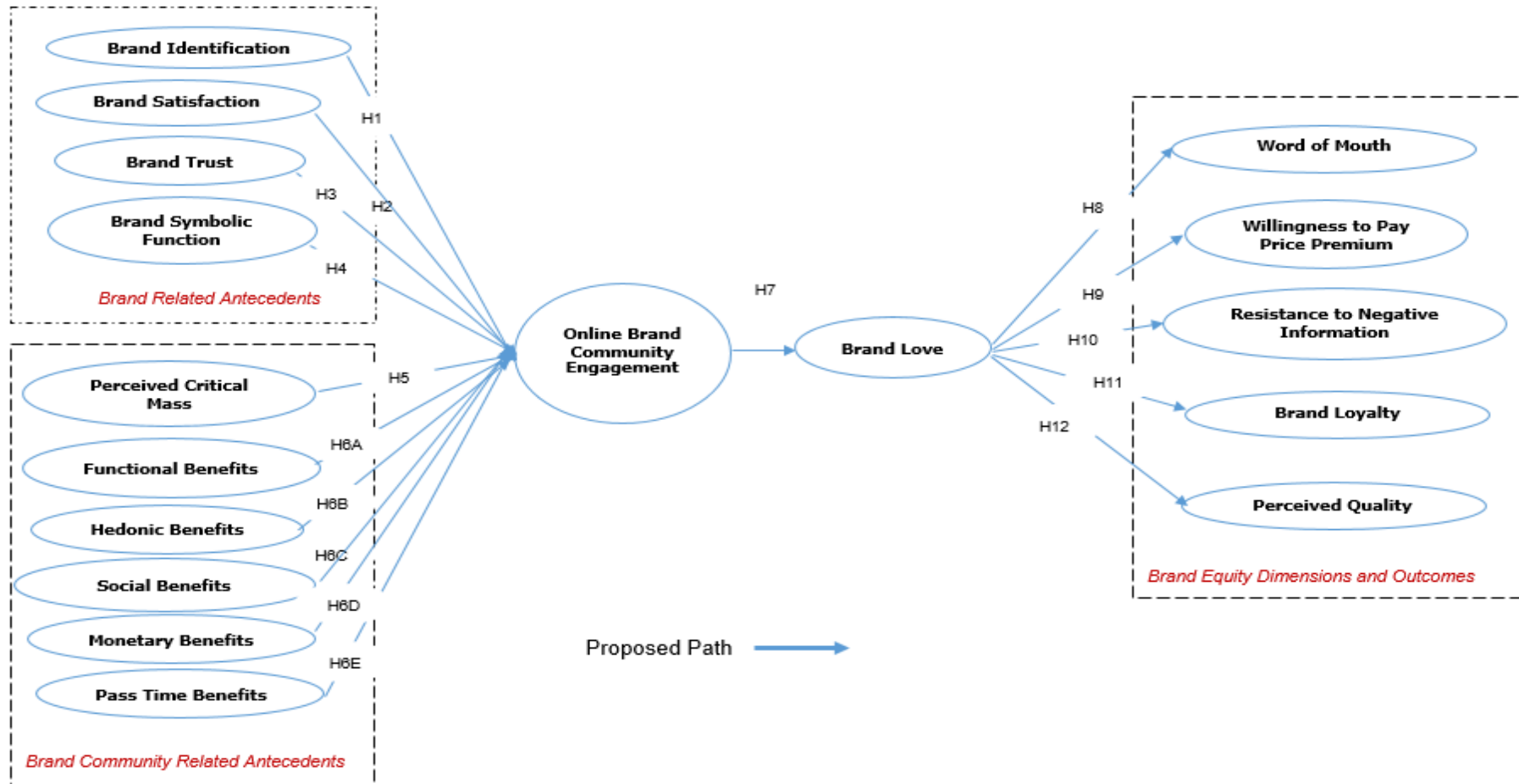
Source: This Research

9. 2 Findings of the Proposed Relationships

9.2.1 Overall Results of Hypotheses Testing

Four groups of relationships were investigated in this research. The first group of relationships examined antecedents of consumer engagement related to consumers' relationships with the brand. The second group investigated antecedents of consumer engagement related to consumers' perceptions inside the brand community. The third group of relationships is between consumer engagement and brand love. Finally, the fourth sets of relationships are between brand love and brand equity dimensions and outcomes. A summary of the results of the hypotheses testing is presented in Table 9.1.

Table 9. 1: Summary of the results of the relationships in this research

	Hypothesised Path	**Results**
H1	Brand Identification-→Online Brand Community Engagement.	Supported
H2	Brand Satisfaction-→Online Brand Community Engagement.	Supported
H3	Brand Trust-→ Online Brand Community Engagement.	Supported
H4	Brand Symbolic Function-→Online Brand Community Engagement.	**Rejected**
H5	Perceived Critical Mass-→ Online Brand Community Engagement.	Supported
H6A	Functional Benefits-→ Online Brand Community Engagement.	Supported
H6B	Hedonic Benefits-→ Online Brand Community Engagement.	Supported
H6C	Social Benefits-→ Online Brand Community Engagement.	**Rejected**
H6D	Monetary Benefits-→ Online Brand Community Engagement.	Supported
H6E	Passing the time Benefits-→ Online Brand Community Engagement	**Rejected**
H7	Brand Community Engagement-→Brand Love.	Supported
H8	Brand Love→Word of Mouth.	Supported
H9	Brand Love→Willingness to pay price premium.	Supported
H10	Brand Love→Resilience to Negative Information.	Supported
H11	Brand Love→ Brand Loyalty.	Supported
H12	Brand Love→ Perceived Quality.	Supported

Source: This Research

The results of the hypotheses testing in chapter 8 show that consumer engagement in online brand communities is predicted by three factors related to consumers' relationships with fast food brands. These factors are brand identification, brand trust and brand satisfaction, thus supporting H1, H2, and H3. Surprisingly, in contrast to the researcher's expectations, the results indicate that a brand's symbolic function does not significantly influence consumer engagement. This means that H4 was rejected. In addition, the results demonstrate that consumer engagement is predicted by three factors related to consumers' perceptions inside the brand community, which are perceived critical mass and perceived functional, hedonic and monetary benefits. Thus, H5, H6A, H6B and H6D were supported. However, the current study has been unable to demonstrate that consumers' perception of social and passing the time benefits in a brand community influences their level of engagement. Thus, H6C and H6E were not supported. In addition, the results suggest that consumer engagement has a positive influence on brand love, so H7 was supported. Moreover, the results indicated the positive role of brand love in developing positive word of mouth, willingness to pay price premium, resistance to negative information, brand loyalty and perceived quality, thus supporting H8, H9, H10, H11 and H12.

9.3 Antecedents of Consumer Engagement related to Consumers' Relationships with the Brands

9.3.1 Relationship between Brand Identification and Engagement in Online Brand Communities

H1: Brand identification has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in online brand communities. (Supported)

As proposed, it is apparent from the findings that consumers' identification with a brand enhances their engagement with its brand community. In other words, consumers who

are highly identified with certain fast food brands are eager to develop their relationship with these brands through brand communities. Thus, these consumers tend to come closer to fast foods brand by becoming highly engaged in their brand pages on Facebook.

The positive relationship between consumers' identification with a brand and consumers' willingness to engage in its brand community can be explained by revisiting the social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978).In addition to personal identities that individuals have, people usually aim to construct their social identities by becoming part of certain social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

In their daily consumption lives, consumers might identify with companies that help them in portraying attractive social images (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). This can be considered an aspect of consumers' identification with brands. For consumers, brands are more easier than companies to identify themselves to since they have more familiarity with brands (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2008). Since brands are becoming more socially defined, they represent attractive, positive and meaningful social categories that allow consumers to identify themselves with (Hutter et al., 2013). Consumer-brand identification can be defined as "*a consumer's psychological state of perceiving, feeling, and valuing his or her belongingness with a brand*" (Lam, Ahearne, Mullins, Hayati, & Schillewaert, 2013, p. 235).

Successful companies have been able to construct unique identities for their brands (Schultz, Hatch, & Larsen, 2000). Brand identity is a group of brand associations which enables consumers to develop functional, emotional, and self-expressive benefits (Hughes & Ahearne, 2010). Consumers' brand identification involves an integration of these brand associations into the consumers' identity (Tuškej et al., 2013). Thus, when consumers are identified with a certain brand, they tend to perceive an overlapping

between their own self-image and the brand's image or identity (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). This makes them consider the brand as a reference point that distinguishes them from the non-brand users (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Accordingly, consumers who believe that a certain brand reflects their personality and enhances their social status and self-esteem are more likely to develop long relationships with this brand (Wang, 2002).

Two approaches for explaining identification were identified in the literature. These are the self-referential and the self-defining approaches (Ashforth et al., 2008). Self-referential approach refers to identification through an affinity, where consumers perceive a sense of similarity between brands and themselves. On the other hand, self-definitional approach refers to individuals' changes to become similar to the group through a process of simulation (Ashforth et al., 2008). Consumers' identification with brands allows them to satisfy their key self-definitional needs (Tildesley & Coote, 2009). Also, this brand identification leads consumers to become more committed to the brand (Tuškej et al., 2013). Brand communities can represent a place that gathers consumers who wish to be identified with a certain brand (Kang et al., 2015). In addition, it allows them to become close to other people who they like to be identified with (Zaglia, 2013). In a brand community, social identity is related to individuals' feeling to belong to a group. It is strongly associated with one of the community characteristics, which is the consciousness of kind (Muniz & O'guinn, 2001). Brand community members usually feel an intrinsic connection towards other members in the community (Laroche et al., 2012). In addition, they have a collective sense of difference towards others that are not in the community (Jang, Olfman, Ko, Koh, & Kim, 2008).

Consumers' identification with brand pages has two facets. First, identification with the brand page, itself, which is considered a representation of the brand. Second, consumers

want to identify with a group of people who are associated with the brand consumption (Popp, Wilson, Horbel, & Woratschek, 2015). Consumers' strong relationships with brands make them more eager to search for and interact with like-minded consumers who have similar enthusiasm (Wirtz et al., 2013). With the enormous number of consumers who are active on social media networks, online brand communities embedded in these networks allow them to interact with brands (Zaglia, 2013). This can be part of their social identity construction.

A key feature of Facebook is that it enables its users to see the activities of other users on this social network (Shih, 2009). For instance, when a consumer follows a brand page, other users can see that he or she has started following this brand (Kudeshia et al., 2016). Additionally, when consumers perform any of the engagement behaviours such as liking, sharing and commenting on brand page posts in Facebook, other users will be able to see and interact with these actions (Istanbulluoğlu, 2014). This gives consumers the ability to portray favourable image about themselves to their social network friends as well as other consumers in the online community (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). A recent study by Simon et al. (2016) indicated that one of the strongest motives that make consumers engage on social media is due to their need for self-image enhancement value.

Marketing literature highlights the role of brand identification in the context of brand communities. For instance, Tsai & Bagozzi (2014) mentioned that consumers who are highly identified with brands tend to be more active and responsible for self-governance of a brand community. They are usually active participants and tend to help other members in the brand community through answering their questions. Also, it was found that consumers participate in fan pages on Facebook because they expect an impact on their status and image (Jahn & Kunz, 2012).

To summarise, the results highlight the role of brand identification in the social media context. The findings of the current study are consistent with previous studies in the context of offline brand communities. Traditionally, it was shown that brand identification has an important effect on driving consumers' behaviour in offline brand communities. For example, Algesheimer et al. (2005) proved the positive relationship between consumers' identification with car brands and being members of its brand clubs and communities. Another research by Bagozzi & Dholakia (2006a) on Harley-Davidson riders demonstrated the key role of their social identity perception in driving their participation in the activities of the brand community.

In addition, this study contributes by revisiting the social identity theory and expanding its focus to include online environments. This theory has been traditionally used to explain consumers' intentions to associate themselves with brands, e.g. (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, & Gruen, 2005; Kuenzel & Halliday, 2008). Hence, the adoption of this theory to explain part of consumers' engagement in fast food brand pages can provide insights for marketers and decision maker who want to execute more effective social media marketing campaigns. Based on the findings, companies should be aware of the potential of brand pages in attracting and engaging consumers who wish to be associated with their brands.

9.3.2 Relationship between Brand Satisfaction and Engagement in Online Brand Communities

H2: Brand satisfaction has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in online brand communities. (Supported)

The findings show a positive influence of consumers' satisfaction with brands on their engagement in online brand communities. Specifically, it is clear that satisfied

consumers tend to develop their relationships with fast food brands by becoming actively engaged in their Facebook brand pages.

These findings are in line with consumer-brand relationships literature which has shown that consumers' brand satisfaction often results in positive outcomes for companies. For example, it was found that brand satisfaction can be a leading predictor for repurchase intentions and loyalty (Erciş et al., 2012; Iacobucci, 2015; Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). Additionally, it increases customers' lifetime value and reduces negative word of mouth about companies and brands (Kotler et al., 2016). Furthermore, satisfied customers are more likely to have a desire to continue their relationship with the brand (Erciş et al., 2012; Suh & Han, 2003).

Consumers' engagement in online brand communities can be explained by their desire to develop their relationships with brands as a result of their positive experiences with these brands. Consumers tend to satisfy their needs by establishing and maintaining stable relationships with brands (Fournier, 1998). Brand communities as representatives of brands, allow consumers to maintain long term relationships with these brands (Millán & Díaz, 2014).Usually, customers' satisfaction results from consumers' evaluation of their consumption experiences of a certain brand (Kasmer, 2005). In addition, satisfaction depends on the extent to which a products' perceived performance matches consumers' expectations (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016).

In the current study, the researcher focused on customers' satisfaction as a predictor of a community's past, current and future performance (Woisetschläger et al., 2008). In marketing literature, customers' satisfaction usually explains consumers' commitment for brands (Royo-Vela & Casamassima, 2011). In the online context, it was found that customers' overall satisfaction has a stronger effect on their behaviours than the offline context (Shankar, Smith, & Rangaswamy, 2003). This may be due to the fact that

competition is fiercer in online environments, where consumers are more empowered in it (Kumar, Dalla Pozza, & Ganesh, 2013). This consumer empowerment was the result of technological developments such as social media, which enabled consumers to be able to access more information about products, services and offers… etc. (Dahlén & Edenius, 2007).

The findings of the current study are in line with the findings in some other academic disciplines where positive relationships were identified between engagement and satisfaction. For example, in organisational behavioural studies, it was found that employee satisfaction provides a basis for developing employee engagement (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). Satisfied employees employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances (Abraham, 2012). Thus, employee satisfaction can provide a foundation upon which employee engagement can grow and thrive (Rogel, 2016).

The contribution of this research lies in extending the positive outcomes of customer satisfaction to the social media context. It shows that satisfied consumers are eager to extend their relationships with the brands by joining their brand pages on Facebook. Brand pages on Facebook allow consumers to come closer to the brand by allowing them to interact with the brand, as well as other consumers in a friendly environment (Kang & Shin, 2016). These pages can provide a secure place for them to express their emotions and beliefs about the brands with brand managers as well as with other users of the brand community. Hence, consumers' various experiences with brands provide a basis for shaping their evaluations for that brand (Hollebeek, 2011). In addition, brand communities allow consumers to develop their familiarity with brands. Customers' familiarity with a specific brand increases over time when consumers develop knowledge and experience with the brand (Söderlund, 2006).

In marketing literature, previous studies showed that consumer's satisfaction with previous interactions with a brand has a positive effect on their commitment to its brand community (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalíu, 2010). Also, Hollebeek (2011) found a positive relationship between consumers' satisfaction and their engagement with brands.

This study highlighted the role of brand satisfaction in driving consumers' willingness to engage in brand pages on Facebook. The findings are similar to the findings of other studies in the online context. For example, Dessart et al. (2015) showed a positive relationship between consumers' satisfaction as a driver for their engagement in online brand communities. Another study by Nel & Halaszovich (2015) argued that consumers' satisfaction with a brand influences their intention to like its brand page on Facebook and become part of its brand community.

The findings of the current study shows brand managers the importance of customers' satisfaction in directing their behaviour in the social media context.

9.3.3 Relationship between Brand Trust and Engagement in Online Brand Communities

H3: Brand trust has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in online brand communities. (Supported)

The findings show a positive influence of consumers' perception of brand trust on their level of engagement in social media based brand communities. Thus, the results indicate that brand trust significantly affects consumer engagement in Facebook brand pages. In other words, consumers' high levels of trust in certain fast food brands have a positive effect on their emotional, cognitive and behavioural engagement on their brand pages.

The role of brand trust in influencing consumer behaviour has been extensively cited in marketing literature (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2005). Brand trust refers to consumers' perceived security and reliability in

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brand interactions. It also refers to the belief that the brand acts in consumers' best interests (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003). It involves consumers' willingness to rely on a brand (Becerra & korgaonkan, 2013). Trust is considered a fundamental principle of interpersonal exchanges that is continuously constructed through repeated interactions (Leimeister, Ebner, & Krcmar, 2005). It includes cognitive beliefs about the brand (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003) as well as affective perceptions about it (Elliott & Yannopoulou, 2007). Without trust, individuals wouldn't continue their relationships beyond a single transaction (Gefen, 2000). Therefore, when consumers trust brands, they are willing to continue their relationships with it by becoming members of their brand pages on Facebook. In other words, if consumers trust a brand, they can rely on its Facebook brand page (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). That can be attributed to their belief of the usefulness of the information about the brand in the brand page. Also, consumers can seek guidance and help from other experienced consumers with the brand (Chow & Shi, 2015). In the online context, prior research showed that trust positively affects consumers' establishment of long-term relationships with online websites (Yang & Lin, 2014). The current study highlights the vital role of brand trust in the context of social media. In the marketing literature, several studies highlighted the role of consumers' brand trust in the online context. For example, Ha & Perks (2005) argued that brand trust is considered one of the most important factors that encourage consumers to deal with brands and purchase online. Similarly, a piece of research by Becerra & Korgaonkar (2011) showed that brand trust positively influences consumers' online brand purchase intentions. Another study by Hallier Willi, Nguyen, Melewar, & Dennis (2014) highlighted the role of source credibility in deriving corporate image formation in online communities.

In consumer-brand relationships literature, the two constructs (trust and involvement) have been found to be interrelated in the process of forming high levels of commitment

towards brands (Bowden, 2009). This can be explained by the fact that consumers' trust usually tends to lessen their risk perception in the consumption process and usually guides consumers' intentions (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2001). Also, prior literature has highlighted the critical role of brand trust. For instance, it was found that consumers' trust in offline brand names has a positive effect on their willingness to interact and purchase from brands online (Hongyoun Hahn & Kim, 2009). This can be explained by the fact that previous offline brand trust can encourage consumers to interact with the trusted brands in online contexts.

The findings of the current study are in line with prior research that highlighted the importance of consumers' trust in the social media context. For example, it was found that trust is an antecedent of consumer engagement in positive word of mouth on social networking sites (Chu & Kim, 2011). Another piece of research by Hollebeek (2011) indicated the positive impact of a consumers' brand trust on their engagement with brands. In addition, Dessart et al. (2015) proved a positive influence of brand trust on consumers' engagement in online brand communities embedded on social media networks. Moreover, it was found that brand trust leads to consumer willingness to continue their relationship with the brand through brand pages on Facebook (Kang et al., 2015).

Based on the findings of the current study, marketers should be aware of the importance of building brand trust in online and offline contexts.

9.3.4 Relationship between Brand Symbolic Function and Engagement in Online Brand Communities

H4: Consumers' perceptions of symbolic function of brands has a positive effect on their engagement in online brand communities. (Rejected)

In this study, the findings of the research showed insignificant effect of brands' symbolic function on consumers' engagement in online brand communities. This means that consumers' engagement in fast food brand pages on Facebook is not predicted by consumer' perceptions of fast food brands' symbolic function.

In general, consumer' perceptions of brands can include either functional or symbolic positioning (Bhat & Reddy, 1998). Functional positioning involves consumers' beliefs in the ability of brands to satisfy their immediate and practical needs (Solomon, 2014). On the other hand, consumers can come close to brands for the symbolic meanings (i.e. symbolic positioning) brands provide. The concept of brand identity suggests that brands can have a brand identity in consumers' minds (Aaker, 1996). Brand symbolism usually compromises two sub-dimensions, namely: brand prestige and brand personality (Aaker, 1991). Some brands have important symbolic meanings that encourage consumers to join their communities to express their devotion to the symbols of these brands (de Chernatony et al., 2008).

The unexpected lack of support for the relationships between brands' symbolic function and consumer' engagement can be explained by the lack of importance of the symbolic meanings in driving consumers' engagement in online brand communities. Despite that brands represent important symbolic meanings for consumers (Aaker, 1996), it is apparent that consumers are indifferent towards the symbolic meanings of brands as a motivational factor of their engagement on the fan pages. From other findings of the study, it is evident that consumers join and engage in these pages to get some rewards that is available in the community such as: functional, hedonic and monetary benefits. This will be discussed in the following sections. Another important explanation for the importance of brand symbolism in deriving consumer engagement is that despite that brand communities gather consumers who wish to be associated with certain brands,

their perception of brand symbolism is not necessarily a drive for their active engagement in these online communities. Also, another explanation is that most consumers who participated in this research are low on self-centrality of consumption activities (Kozinets, 1999), where brands' symbolic function did not drive consumers to engage in these brand pages on Facebook.

These results are different from studies that examined consumer participation in traditional offline brand communities. For example, Algesheimer et al. (2005) showed that one of the motives that derive consumers' participation in car brand communities is to strengthen their symbolic meaning and to express their devotion to the brands' symbolic functions. A possible explanation for the insignificance of the brands' symbolic functions in the online context is the inability of the brands to differentiate themselves and build a unique meaningful brand in consumers' minds. Also, the results are inconsistent with the results of de Chernatony et al. (2008). According to that study, one of the motives of consumers participating in a brand community is their eagerness to live up to the brand's symbolic function.

9.4 Antecedents of Consumer Engagement Related to Consumers' Perceptions inside the Brand Communities

9.4.1 Relationship between Perceived Critical Mass and Engagement in Online Brand Communities

H5: Perceived critical mass in a brand community has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in the community. (Supported)

The results of H5 are in line with expectations. The findings show a positive effect of consumers' perception of the availability of a specific critical mass in the brand community on their engagement in it. When consumers perceive that many of their friends on the social network as well as other consumers that they don't know personally

are joining these fast food brand pages and becoming part of the brands' communities, they tend to participate in these brand communities as well. In other words, the availability of millions of consumers on fast food brand pages on Facebook can enhance consumers' engagement on these pages. Originally, the term 'critical mass' originated in natural sciences such as physics to refer to the minimum mass of fissile material needed to maintain a chain reaction (Tinghui & Mingming, 2012). Then, that concept was later adopted in other academic disciplines. For example, in social sciences, critical mass refers to the idea that some threshold of participants or actions has to be crossed before a social movement explodes into being (Oliver et al., 1985). This definition implies that critical mass can provide a basis for explaining peoples' collective actions.

In the context of new technology, the term 'critical mass' was used to refer to the point at which a certain minimum number of users adopt an innovation (Shen et al., 2013). At this point the rate of the adoption of the new communication suddenly faces a dramatic increase (Rogers, 2010). In other words, it represents the minimum size that a system or network needs to grow rapidly (Tinghui & Mingming, 2012).Usually, it is very difficult to measure the actual critical mass threshold of a particular group technology (Van Slyke et al., 2007). However, users develop a sense of perception of whether a group technology has a critical mass of users through interacting with others (Lou et al., 2000). In other words, researchers agree that subjective perceptions of critical mass is used to determine the critical mass of a certain phenomenon (Shen et al., 2013). Because a perceived critical mass depends on individuals' perception of whether an innovation gets critical mass of users, that perception may or may not reflect the actual critical mass (Shen et al., 2013). Consumers' perception of critical mass was initially used to explain consumers' adoption for various technological developments. For example, users' perceptions of critical mass was used to explain their adoption of instant messaging for team collaboration (Cameron & Webster, 2005; Shen et al., 2009).

Furthermore, it was used to explain consumers' usage for telephones, paper mail systems, electronic mails, voice messages and computer conferences (Markus, 1987). Because consumers perceive themselves as part of different social groups, they usually have 'we intentions' to perform different activities as members of a group (Bagozzi & Lee, 2002). Additionally, the critical mass theory was useful in explaining users' adoption and usage of interactive media, because the value of technology increases with the number of its users (Shen et al., 2013). The ability of interactive media to achieve a critical mass of active users will boost consumers' acceptance of this interactive media (Van Slyke et al., 2007).

In the current study, consumers' perceived critical mass of interactions inside the brand community can derive their willingness to become a part of that brand community. Thus, the study provides a pioneering contribution by revisiting the critical mass theory through adopting it to explain consumers' relationships with social media based brand communities. However, the findings of the current study are in line with some prior research. For instance, it was found that when consumers who are outside a certain network realise that other consumers are adopting a certain network or system, they are more likely to engage in participatory behaviour (Koch, Toker, & Brulez, 2011). Also, Tsai et al. (2012) showed that consumers' recognition of a specific critical mass in a brand community can enhance their participation in that community. On the other hand, the findings are different to the results of Simon et al. (2016) which showed that the number of fans are unimportant in deriving brand community engagement.

On Facebook, the number of likes can be considered an indicator for critical mass of consumers in this social networking site (De Vries et al., 2012). Consumers can join online communities on Facebook without effort or cost through clicking the 'like' button of the brand page. Accordingly, it is easy for these brand pages to acquire millions of

consumers (Simon et al., 2016). That is different than the case of offline brand communities which needs a lot of efforts from its members to become integrated in these communities. Thus, in various social networking sites, consumers can identify how many of their friends are members of a certain brand page before joining it and becoming part of a brand's community (Coulter & Roggeveen, 2012). Despite that most of the users in online communities are usually passive members, their presence is important to shape other consumers' attitude towards the brand and its community (Naylor, Lamberton, & West, 2012). Because social media requires collective efforts that involves interactions between two or more people, usage behaviour is no longer an individual's own decision or plan (Shen et al., 2013).

A recommendation to fast food chains based on these findings is to try to gather large numbers of consumers on their brand pages on Facebook. By doing this, new consumers will join these online communities to benefit for the huge numbers of interactions that take place inside these online communities.

9.4.2 Relationship between Perceived Functional Benefits and Engagement in Online Brand Communities

H6A: Perceived functional benefits in a brand community have a positive effect on consumers' level of engagement (Supported)

The results of H6 are in line with expectations. The findings demonstrate that engagement in online brand communities is significantly and positively influenced by consumers' perceptions of functional benefits in the brand community. Functional benefits are derived from the direct, information-based support that consumers get from online brand communities (Dholakia et al., 2009). Thus, consumers' need for information about fast food brands encourage them to participate in Facebook brand pages.

One of the reasons that encourage consumers to join virtual communities is their desire to gain instrumental benefits (Dholakia et al., 2009). A brand community can act as an information warehouse that enables consumers to ask questions at any time irrespective of their location (Kang et al., 2014). Functional benefits of a brand page can include useful information about the brand (Luarn et al., 2015). It includes information about product specifications and technical details from the audience about the product attributes (Tafesse, 2015). Accordingly, members of brand communities can get information and knowledge in these communities (Kuo & Feng, 2013). Discussions of consumers with each other on online forums help them shape their attitudes towards the brand (Tonteri, Kosonen, Ellonen, & Tarkiainen, 2011). Members of online brand communities have enormous expertise that can benefit other members (Wirtz et al., 2013). They provide advice to other members on various topics such as recommending some products, potential problems that appear with product usage and general tips on the usage of products (Dholakia et al., 2009).

The findings of the current study are not surprising since one of the primary objectives of people when they go online is to gain information (Holland & Menzel Baker, 2001; Mathwick, Wiertz, & De Ruyter, 2008). Specifically, information seeking is one of the important motivations of individuals to use social networking websites (Lin & Lu, 2011). Consumers depend on social media sites to get information, as they are less dependent on traditional media such as television, radio and magazines (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). The development and popularity of information and communication technology facilitated the social interaction between consumers, especially through online communities (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). One of the popular types of content on brand pages is the informative content (De Vries et al., 2012). Social media transformed traditional one-way communication between companies and brands into two-way communication (Berthon, Pitt, & Campbell, 2008). Thus, consumers can depend on online brand

communities embedded in social media to ask questions and receive instant advice from other consumers.

The positive link between engagement with consumers' perception of functional benefits and engagement can be explained by revisiting the uses and gratification theory (Katz & Blumler, 1974). In order to get information about the brand and its offers, consumers participate in brand pages on Facebook. The functional benefits in a brand community is defined as gratification of functional adequacy through interactions inside the brand community (Kang & Shin, 2016). Functional benefits describe the ease of commercial transactions and information exchange in online brand communities (Kang et al., 2014). It is frequently derived from the direct, information-based support that consumers receive from the online brand community (Dholakia et al., 2009). Thus, if a company posts informative content in its brand community about the brand, then the brand fans' motivations for getting information are met (De Vries et al., 2012).

The findings of H6A are in line with findings of previous research in the context of social media marketing. For instance, Jahn and Kunz (2012) showed that functional benefits are one of the most important drivers for attracting users to brand pages. Likewise, a study by Tonteri et al. (2011) indicated that consumers participate in virtual brand communities by reading messages as they expect cognitive benefits. Also, in the context of virtual brand communities, it was found that virtual communities can provide information to satisfy the cognitive needs of its members (Shang, Chen, & Liao, 2006).

On the other hand, the findings of H6A are inconsistent with findings of Kang et al. (2014). In that study, the researchers argued that consumers actively participate in online brand communities for various reasons not including gaining functional benefits. They indicated that brand pages are not a primary source information about the brand. Also, another study by Park & Kim (2014) found no empirical support for the positive

effect of functional benefits on consumer-brand relationships in brand communities embedded in social media networks. Based on the findings of the current study, fast food chains should provide updated content on their Facebook pages to satisfy the information needs of consumers.

9.4.3 Relationship between Perceived Hedonic Benefits and Engagement in Online Brand Communities

H6B: Perceived hedonic benefits in a brand community have a positive effect on consumers' level of engagement. (Supported)

The findings of H6B are in line with expectations. It shows a positive effect of consumers' perception of hedonic benefits in the brand communities and consumer engagement. In other words, it was found that consumers who find hedonic benefits in fast food brand pages on Facebook tend to engage in these online communities.

It is evident that people seek entertainment and fun (i.e. hedonic benefits) by joining social networking websites (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). Expected hedonic benefits is defined as "*the expectation of feeling of amusement, relaxation and/or refreshment*" (Tonteri et al., 2011, p. 2217). The hedonic perspective in consumer behaviour studies considers consumers to be pleasure seekers that search for activities that elicit enjoyment, entertainment, amusement and fun (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004). Hedonic consumption is one of the most driving forces in consumer behaviour. Hedonic consumption of products is based primarily on the desire to experience pleasure and happiness (Solomon, 2014).

In brand communities, entertainment benefits are usually derived from consumers' perception of relaxation and fun (Dholakia et al., 2004). It refers to the consumers' feelings of pleasure, fun and entertainment that consumers perceive inside the brand community (Kang et al., 2014). In general, playfulness and enjoyment were identified as

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critical factors for generating users' acceptance for internet websites (Moon & Kim, 2001). In addition, one of the critical components of individuals' relationship with computers is their enjoyment and pleasure that results from their interactive experiences with these technological devices (Hoffman & Novak, 1996). Thus, consumers are attached to virtual communities if their hedonic needs are met by interactions in it (Koh, Kim, & Kim, 2003). In these online communities, fun and relaxation can be obtained by playing or even just participating and interacting in the community (Vélez-Muñoz, 2014). Accordingly, community participation may result in enjoyable experiences for consumers.

The uses and gratification theory can be used to explain why consumers seek hedonic benefits in brand communities. This theory argues that people have different gratifications for their interaction with different media (Katz & Blumler, 1974). In social networking sites, people seek enjoyment and amusement (Jahn & Kunz, 2012), where entertainment was found to be the strongest motives of people to interact on social media (Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009). One of the content types that is posted on brand pages on Facebook is the entertaining content. Entertaining content such as humour artistic works offer the audience enjoyment and amusement(Tafesse, 2015). Therefore, brand pages must deliver interesting, entertaining and innovative content to its users (Jahn & Kunz, 2012).

The findings of the current study are in line with findings of some other studies in the online context. For example, Sung et al. (2010) argued that Korean consumers join virtual brand communities on social networking sites for entertainment purposes. They join these communities to pass the time when they are bored, to relax and to seek enjoyment. Additionally, another study by Nov, Naaman, and Ye (2010) argued that enjoyment is considered an intrinsic motivation for users' sharing of photos in online communities. Furthermore, Gummerus, et al. (2012) argued that entertainment benefits

in an online brand community have a positive effect on consumers' satisfaction and loyalty. Thus, they highlighted the role of online games in brand communities in driving consumers' participation and satisfaction. Furthermore, Kang et al. (2014) indicated the positive influence of consumers' perception of hedonic benefits on their active participation in restaurants' Facebook fan pages. Another study by Whiting & Williams (2013) indicated that people use social media for satisfying their entertainment needs where they can play games, listen to music or watch videos. On the other hand, some of the findings of H7 are inconsistent with the results of previous research. For instance, Abuljadail, Ha, Wang, & Yang (2015) argued that consumers intend to like brand pages on Facebook in order to gain functional benefits. They argued that consumers are indifferent about hedonic benefits on Fan pages on Facebook.

Based on the findings of the current study, fast food chains must make sure to post entertaining content on their Facebook pages to facilitate consumer engagement.

9.4.4 Relationship between Perceived Social Benefits and Engagement in Online Brand Communities

H6C: Perceived social benefits in a brand community have a positive effect on consumers' level of engagement. (Rejected)

In the current study, the findings of H6C are not in line with the researchers' expectations where it shows insignificant effect for consumers' perception of social benefits in fast food brand pages and their engagement with these online communities. Social benefits in a brand community refer to members' improved relationships as a result of their membership in these communities (Kuo & Feng, 2013). It includes benefits that result from social interactions with others inside the community (Park & Kim, 2014). One of the important motives of consumers on social networking sites is to grow, maintain and broaden their relationships with others (Dunne, Lawlor, & Rowley, 2010;

Ellison, 2007). However, from the findings, it is apparent that social benefits in online brand communities are not very important to consumers in online environments.

In other words, it is evident that consumers have other motives for engaging in brand communities such as obtaining hedonic, informational and monetary benefits. The lack of consumers' valuation for social benefits in online communities may be due to their preference to conduct these social relationships in an offline context or with friends in the social networks away from the brand community. In other words, it could be interpreted that a Facebook fan page is not a primary outlet for consumers to obtain social benefits where they prefer to do it on social networking sites. Whiting & Williams (2013) indicated that people use social networking sites to communicate and interact with others. These websites allow people to interact with friends as well as stay connected with people across distances (VanMeter, Grisaffe, & Chonko, 2015).

Since it is easy for consumers to become members in these online communities by simply clicking on the "like" button on the Facebook brand page, these brand communities have succeeded to attract millions of consumers on its platforms (Simon et al., 2016). Since more than 90 per cent of the online audience remains silent during social interactions (Walker et al., 2013), these communities are often characterised by weak social ties as opposed to offline communities that need the presence of members physically in the social interactions (Granovetter,1973; Simon et al., 2016).

Another possible explanation may be due to the failure of the fast food companies to create events on their brand pages that facilitate socialisation of its members. Therefore, companies should put engaging content that facilitate consumers' interactions inside the brand community (Tuten & Solomon, 2015).Prior research showed that social interactions between consumers inside a brand community can lead to positive emotional and behavioural outcomes (Munnukka et al., 2015).

The findings are inconsistent with findings of other studies that examined social benefits in offline brand communities. For example, Ouwersloot & Odekerken-Schröder (2008) showed that members of Swatch watch brand community have great value for social relationships between members of the brand community. Also, Algesheimer et al. (2005) argued that one of the important motivations of consumers to join car clubs is to socialise and interact with like-minded consumers. Furthermore, the findings are inconsistent with findings of previous research in the context of online brand communities. For example, Kuo & Feng (2013) indicated the positive effect of consumers' perceptions of social benefits in the brand community on their engagement in the community. Another piece of research by Wang & Fesenmaier (2004) indicated that consumers seek socialisation in online travel communities by forming informal relationships and getting involved with other members. Also, Pöyry, Parvinen, & Malmivaara (2013) indicated that consumers participate in online brand communities to get fun and entertainment. Thus, they consider social benefits in the brand community a secondary motive for participation. On the other hand, the findings of H6C are in line with prior research in the context of Facebook brand communities. For example, Gummerus, et al. (2012) indicated that social activities on brand pages, such as socialising with other community members and helping others in the community are less important to members. They argued that consumers seek other benefits, including hedonic benefits, in the community.

9.4.5 Relationship between Perceived Monetary Benefits and Engagement in Online Brand Communities

H6D: Perceived monetary benefits in a brand community have a positive effect on consumers' level of engagement. (Supported)

The findings of H6D are in line with expectations. The findings show that consumers' perception of the availability of monetary benefits in the brand communities drives their engagement. It is apparent that various forms of incentives in the fast food brand pages facilitate consumers' participation and engagement in it. In brand pages, monetary benefits are derived from "*monetary rewards in terms of lotteries, sales and coupons that customers may receive by participating*" (Chow & Shi, 2015, p. 50).

With the development of the internet from an informational to transactional medium, utilitarian benefits include monetary rewards such as incentives, merchandise and prizes (Baldus et al., 2015). Monetary sales promotions involve economic advantages such as special price breaks and discounts that are valuable to consumers (Gwinner et al., 1998). Relational benefits propose that both companies and consumers must benefit from each other so that the relationship between them lasts long (Kang et al., 2014). Relational benefits can include social, psychological and special treatment (Gwinner et al., 1998).

Consumers' need for monetary benefits in brand communities can be explained by revisiting the uses and gratification theory. In brand communities, monetary benefits involve consumers' perceptions of discounts and specific offers that non-members don't have access to (Park, 2011). On Facebook, monetary benefits refer to benefits offered by brand communities to its members in the form of rewards for posting a "like" on Facebook or various contexts that are posted in the community (Yang & Lin, 2014). Compared to other benefits, economic benefits have not been much explored in prior literature because it is considered a unique benefit that only online brand communities provide to its members.

In prior research in the social media context, the importance of the monetary benefits was highlighted. For instance, Garnefeld, Iseke, & Krebs (2012) and Wirtz et al. (2013)

highlighted the role of monetary incentives such as loyalty points and price promotions in encouraging consumer participation in online brand communities. In addition, Gaber & Wright (2014) stressed the key role of economic benefits on Facebook fan pages in improving consumers' attitudes towards fast food brands.

On the other hand, the results of H6D are inconsistent with findings of previous research in the context of brand communities. For example, Gummerus, et al. (2012) indicated that economic benefits such as bonuses and lotteries in the brand community have an insignificant influence on consumers' satisfaction or loyalty. Another piece of research by Kang et al. (2014) indicated the unimportance of the monetary benefits on brand pages in driving customers' engagement in restaurant fan pages. Likewise, in a study that examined monetary benefits in online brand communities, Park & Kim (2014) indicated that consumers can get bored of repeated promotional offers on these communities. Accordingly, repeated offers can make them resistant to it and it has insignificant influence on their relationship with the brand.

Building on the findings of the current study, fast food chains must make sure to include various discounts and offers on their Facebook pages. These promotions can make consumers feel that their active engagement is highly rewarded by these companies.

9.4.6 Relationship between Perceived Passing the Time Benefits and Engagement in Online Brand Communities

H6E: Perceived passing the time benefits in a brand community have a positive effect on consumers' level of engagement. (Rejected)

The findings of H6E are not in line with the researcher's expectations. The findings indicated that consumers' perception of passing the time benefits of the brand community is not a reason for them to participate in its activities. In other words, they don't join it to relieve stress or boredom. An explanation of these findings is that

consumers actively engage on Facebook brand pages to satisfy various needs including information, entertainment and monetary needs. The findings are not in line with the extant literature that indicated that consumers use various media for passing the time benefits. For instance, Palmgreen & Rayburn (1979) argued that people watch the television to pass the time, another study by Papacharissi & Rubin (2000) inducted that one of the important motives for people to use the internet is to occupy their time.

Based on the findings of the current study, fast food chains must include various types of benefits on their Facebook pages to satisfy the different motives of consumers.

9.5 Relationship between Engagement in Online Brand Communities and Brand Love

H7: Consumer engagement in an online brand community affects brand love positively. (Supported)

The findings of H7 are in line with the researchers' expectations. The findings show a positive influence of consumer engagement in online brand communities on the development of brand love. Consumers who are emotionally, cognitively and behaviourally engaged in fast food brand pages on Facebook tend to develop high levels of emotional connections towards these brands.

For decades, researchers have studied consumers' "*like-dislike"* attitudes towards brands. However, the past few years have witnessed an increased interest among both practitioners and academics for the study of consumers' love for brands (Batra et al., 2012; Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Langner et al., 2016; Sarkar, 2013). Brand love refers to the degree of emotional attachment a satisfied customer has for a particular brand name (Kang, 2015). When consumers develop strong associations with brands, they can develop a sense of love for these brands (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Building and strengthening emotional bonds between consumers and brands can be explained by the

theory of love (Kudeshia et al., 2016). Consumers can associate personality characteristics with brands (Sentis & Markus, 1986), in the same way they experience interpersonal relationships (Sarkar, 2013), which can be basis for relationship building (Fournier, 1998).

Park et al. (2008) argues that consumers develop positive emotional connections with brands that provide them with hedonic, symbolic and functional resources. When a brand offers consumers with sensory, hedonic or aesthetic pleasure, it is perceived by consumers to be self-connected and personally significant (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). In addition, consumers are attached to brands when they offer them symbolic resources that help them define and express their self-concept (Chaplin & John, 2005) and differentiate themselves from others (Park et al., 2008). Finally, consumers get attached to brands that offer functional benefits, *"enabling a sense of self-efficacy and allowing the pursuit and achievement of mastery goals"* (Park et al., 2008,p.12). Thus, marketers should be aware of the importance of the functional benefits of brands as well as its symbolic benefits (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016).Consumers' association with brand communities helps them get close to their favourite brands, enabling them to achieve these benefits, which leads to the development of emotional bonds with them.

A possible explanation of the ability of brand communities to generate brand love is by revisiting interpersonal love literature. For example, Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, and O'connor (1987) argue that one of the antecedents of individuals' love emotion is their evaluation of the ability of their loved ones to provide something they want, need or like. Thus, when brands are able to provide consumers with the benefits they perceive as valuable through brand communities, they tend to develop positive emotional connections with these brands.

Another explanation for the development of brand love through consumer engagement in brand communities is the development of consumer relationship with brands in the community. The nature of interactions and behaviours that consumers go through inside brand communities make them become closer to the brand. It is argued that consumers develop bonds with brands when they go through a relationship process with these brands (Fournier, 1998). Brand communities are one of the places that allow consumers to develop relationships with brands (Casaló et al., 2008). Consumers' attachment towards brands develops gradually with time as a result of consumers' experiences and interactions with brands (Park et al., 2008). Thus, brand communities provide a background of development of brand love.

Some studies investigated the effect of consumer engagement on online brand communities on consumers' relationships with brands, including brand loyalty (e.g. (Dessart et al., 2015; Ruiz-Mafe et al., 2014). However, very few studies examined the role of online brand communities in affecting consumers' emotional relationships with brands. Consumers are no longer motivated by loyalty, but by emotional attachments to brands (Albert & Merunka, 2013).

The findings of the current study are in line with findings of other studies in the context of offline brand communities. For example, Algesheimer et al. (2005); Bagozzi & Dholakia (2006a) indicated that even though brand communities are formed by consumers who possess positive emotions and attitudes towards brands, it is evident that the emotional bonds of consumers with the brand are enhanced through their membership in the brand community. Similarly, the study's findings match the results of some recent studies in the context of social media marketing. For example, some studies argue that consumers' like for fan pages on Facebook has a positive influence on their love for brands (Leventhal et al., 2014; Kudeshia et al., 2016). Another study by

Vernuccio et al. (2015) confirmed the positive effect of consumers in online brand communities on the development of brand love. Furthermore, Vélez-Muñoz (2014) argued that consumers' level of participation in brand communities affects their emotional connections with brands i.e. brand love. Based on the findings of the current study, companies should be aware of the importance of engaging their customers on brand communities on the development of positive emotional connections with their brands.

9.6 Relationship between Brand Love and Brand Equity Dimensions and Outcomes

In the following part, the researcher discusses the research findings that are related to the effects of brand love on brand equity outcomes including word of mouth, willingness to pay a price premium and resilience to negative information. In addition, the influence of brand love on brand equity dimensions including brand loyalty and perceived quality is outlined.

9.6.1 Relationship between Brand Love and Word of Mouth

H8: Brand love will have a positive impact on consumers' word of mouth. (Supported)

The findings of H8 are in line with expectations. This means that when consumers are emotionally attached to a certain brand, they are more likely to talk about it with their friends and family in a positive way. Word of mouth can be defined as "*an informal communications of the consumers with other consumers about the usage, performance, characteristics or ownership of the particular goods or services*" (Westbrook, 1987, p. 261).

The positive link between consumers' love with a brand and their positive word of mouth about it can be explained by revisiting the nature of consumers' emotional connections

towards brands. Brand attachment involves two dimensions: brand self-connection and brand prominence (Park et al., 2010). Brand self-connection is the extent to which consumers view the brand as integral to their identity (Jin & Bolebruch, 2009). Brand prominence refers to the consumers' positive feelings and memories about the brand (Park et al., 2008).Thus, consumers' love for brands involves a feeling of emotional connectedness and bonding, as well as a deep integration with their core values (Batra et al., 2012).

Individuals can develop sense of love with brands in the same way they develop it with other people (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Fournier, 1998).In interpersonal love, individuals tend to speak a lot about their loved ones (Sternberg, 1986).Similarly, in consumer behaviour literature, prior research indicates that consumers who have high degrees of brand love tend to talk about it in a favourable and positive way (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Ismail & Spinelli, 2012). Brand love encourages consumers to speak positively about the brand even if it has a high price (Albert et al., 2008).

Word of mouth refers to the process of sharing 'information and opinions by consumers to other people (Solomon, 2014). It is argued that word of mouth usually has a strong effect on consumer buying behaviour (Kotler et al., 2016). The personal words and recommendations of trusted friends tend to be more credible than those coming from commercial sources (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). Thus, recommendations from friends have the most powerful influence on consumers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). Word of mouth is considered an important concept to marketers because it represents a free promotion for the brand (Harrison-Walker, 2001).

The power of word of mouth has been enhanced with the introduction of the internet and social networking sites (Chu & Kim, 2011; Tuten & Solomon, 2015). Social media

networks allow consumers to share their reviews and opinions about brands they like or dislike with thousands of people regardless of time or geographic location (Dahl, 2015).

The findings of H8 are in line with findings in previous studies in consumer behaviour research regarding the outcomes of brand love. Word of mouth has been identified as an outcome of consumers' positive emotions towards brands (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Ismail & Spinelli, 2012; Vlachos, Theotokis, Pramatari, & Vrechopoulos, 2010; Yasin & Shamim, 2013). Also, the findings are similar to other findings in prior research in the context of social media marketing. For instance, in a study on the effects of social media marketing on touristic festivals, it was found that consumers' interactions with brands on social media have a positive effect on their emotional attachment towards the festivals (Hudson & Thal, 2013). Also, their emotional attachment had a strong effect on their positive word of mouth. Another piece of research by Islam & Rahman (2016) highlighted the role of consumer engagement on brand pages on Facebook in generating positive word of mouth about the companies and brands. Moreover, Chow & Shi (2015) argued that consumers who are satisfied with brand pages on social networking sites tend to positively talk about these experiences with brands with others.

9.6.2 Relationship between Brand Love and Willingness to Pay Price Premium

H9: Brand love has a positive influence on consumers' willingness to pay a price premium. (Supported)

The findings of H9 are in line with expectations. This means that the more consumers love the brands, the more they are willing to pay a price premium for the brands. A good explanation for this result can be tracked in the attachment literature. Brands are like people. The strong bond a person has with another person guides behaviours that

maintains attachment for the attachment figure (Thomson et al., 2005). A persons' emotional attachment for another person predicts his or her commitment to that person (Drigotas & Rusbult, 1992). In marketing literature, it was found that consumers' emotional attachment to a brand explains their commitment for that brand (Ahuvia, 2005). Commitment refers to the extent to which individuals consider the relationship to be long term and their willingness to continue the relationship even when things become difficult (Van Lange et al., 1997). A valid measurement for consumers' emotional attachment to brands is their willingness to pay a price premium to get it (Thomson et al., 2005).

Another explanation is that when individuals are emotionally attached to a certain object, they often feel a distress when separated from that attachment object (Cassidy, 1999). Thus, they are willing to do what they can to maintain the proximity with the attachment figure (Bowlby, 1979).In the consumption context, consumers are willing to pay more for the brands they are attached to in order to continue their relationship with it and eliminate the distress of separation from that brand (Batra, 2012). Similarly, Thomson et al. (2005) indicated that consumers can experience negative emotional experiences if they lose their loved brand.

In the literature of consumer-brand relationships, the love concept provides support for the positive relationship between brand love and consumers' willingness to pay a price premium (Albert & Merunka, 2013). Fournier (1998) was among the first authors to include love as one of the key elements of consumers' relationships with brands. Consumers' love for brands have some behavioural outcomes (Batra et al., 2012).For instance, Loureiro (2011) argued that consumers' love for brands make them make sacrifices for it. One of the sacrifices that consumers are willing to make is to use their

own discretionary resources such as money, time and energy for the brand. Thus, consumers are willing to pay a price premium for the brands they love (Loureiro, 2011).

Companies adopt social media marketing practices to portray a good image about their brands (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). Engaging consumers in online brand communities on various social media platforms has a positive effect on these brand building efforts (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). One of the key determinants of consumers' willingness to pay a price premium is the image of companies and brands (Anselmsson et al., 2014).

Prior research shows that consumers who are emotionally attached to a certain brand tend to invest resources to maintain their relationship with the brand (Albert & Merunka, 2013). They consider the brand as a part of their self-concept and perceive the brand's resources as their own, therefore they have no problem in allocating their financial resources to the brand (Thomson et al., 2005).

The results of H9 are consistent with empirical evidence from the consumer behaviour literature. Prior research indicated that consumers who are attached to brands are distressed if they discontinue their relationships with the brands and couldn't imagine life without them (Park et al., 2010). This means that they are willing to bear higher prices of the brand (Park et al., 2008). Another study by Bauer et al. (2009) indicated the positive role of brand love in developing consumers' willingness to pay a price premium.

Based on the findings of the current study, companies should be aware of the positive outcomes they can achieve by building brand love for their engaged members in their online brand communities.

9.6.3 Relationship between Brand Love and Resistance to Negative Information

H10: Brand love has a positive impact on consumers' resistance to negative information. (Supported)

As expected, the findings of H10 show that consumers who are emotionally attached to brands tend to disbelieve any negative information about them. Also, they tend to forgive mistakes from the company. Consumers' forgiveness refers to consumers' willingness to give up retaliation, alienation, and other destructive behaviours, and to respond in constructive ways after an organization's violation of trust and the related recovery efforts (Xie & Peng, 2009, p. 578).

Consumers' resistance to negative information about brands they are emotionally attached to can be explained by understanding the concept of brand love. Brand lovers tend to integrate the loved brand into their personal identity (Batra et al., 2012). People, by nature often resist negative information about themselves as well as deny any bad news that affects their social image (Ahearne et al., 2005).Thus, defending the brand is part of defending themselves. In other words, if emotionally attached consumers find other people talking poorly about the brand, they tend to increase their self-defence mechanism since they consider insults to the brands as insults to themselves (Japutra, Ekinci, & Simkin, 2016).

Another explanation for consumers' resistance to negative information can be drawn from the concept of love in interpersonal relationships. According to Sternberg's (1986) theory of love, people tend to disregard any negative information about their beloved ones. Also, they tend to forgive them for any shortcomings. As such, in consumer-brand relationship literature, prior research indicated that emotionally attached consumers have a high willingness to forgive the brands' mishaps (McCullough, 2000; Park et al.,

2008).Also, it was found that highly identified consumers with the brand tend to overlook and downplay any negative information they receive about the company, especially if the magnitude of such information is relatively minor (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Japutra et al., 2014).

The results of H10 are consistent with previous research in the context of social media marketing. For example, Chang, Hsieh, and Tseng (2013) showed that consumers who are identified with a brand are resistant to negative brand events in a brand community. Also, the findings are in line with previous research of consumer-brand relationships. For example, Batra et al. (2012) indicated a positive relationship between consumers' love for brands and their resistance to negative information about it. In their study, they claimed that consumers' don't believe any bad news about brands they are emotionally attached to. However, if the performance becomes poor and couldn't be denied, they usually loose this positive emotional connection with it. Another piece of research by Park et al. (2010) indicated the consumers' strong emotional attachments towards brands leads them to perform difficult behaviours such as defending the brand. On the other hand, in a study conducted by Japutra et al. (2016) to explore the outcomes of consumers' attachments to brands, the authors indicated that once a strong bond between the consumer and brand has been constructed, consumers are more likely to forgive the brand if it conducts any mistakes and violations.

9.6.4 Relationship between Brand Love and Brand Loyalty

H11: Brand love has a positive impact on consumers' brand loyalty. (Supported)

The results of H11 indicate the positive link between consumers' brand love and brand loyalty. This shows that the more consumers are emotionally attached to the fast food brands, the more loyal they are to these brands. Many companies are struggling to achieve brand loyalty as a target function that helps them to achieve a competitive

position in the market and improves overall brand equity and market value (Sallam & Wahid, 2015).

Brand loyalty is often generated from an emotional attachment to brands. This is apparent in the definition of brand loyalty. It is defined as the extent of a consumers' emotional attachment to a brand and involves six dimensions: willingness to repurchase, price premium, satisfaction rate, switching cost, preference over other brands and brand commitment (Aaker, 1996). Consumers' attachments to brands are relevant indicator for their loyalty to brands. For instance, recent research showed that even after the consumers stop buying the product for any reason, consumers might continue to show strong attachment towards their favourite brands (Bloemer & Odekerken-Schroder, 2002).

One possible explanation of the loyalty of emotionally attached consumers is the separation distress they often have if they stop buying that brand (Batra et al., 2012). Prior research shows that emotional attachment has a high motivation and behavioural effect. Consumers who have high levels of attachment towards brands tend to keep the proximity of the attachment target and will suffer separation if they lose it (Ramli, 2015).

Despite that limited research has examined the relationship between emotional brand attachment and brand loyalty, several recent researches examined the relationship between the two constructs in consumer-brand relationship literature. For example, Japutra et al. (2014) indicated the significant role of consumers' emotional attachments to brand in developing consumers' loyalty for brands. Another piece of research by Lee and Hong (2016) indicated that consumers' brand love has a positive effect on consumers' behavioural loyalty. Moreover, Albert & Merunka (2013) argued that

consumers' love for a certain brand can be a key determinant in their commitment for that brand.

The findings of H11 are in line with findings of research in the context of offline brand communities. For example, Algesheimer et al. (2005) proved a positive relationship in consumers' perception of brand-relationship quality in car clubs on consumers' loyalty intentions. Also, the results of H11 are consistent with empirical evidence in the social media marketing literature. Brand communities now play a significant role in building brand loyalty (Chang et al., 2013). For instance, Dessart et al. (2015) showed that consumers' engagement in online brand communities has a positive effect on consumers' brand loyalty. Online brand communities allow consumers who have high degrees of love towards the brand to defend it against its opponents, thus reinforcing their brand loyalty. Also, engaging consumers on social media platforms has the power to keep unsatisfied customers and prevent them from defecting to another brand by giving them positive customer care after a negative experience (Dessart et al., 2015). Another piece of research by Jahn & Kunz (2012) argued that fan pages on social media are excellent tools for developing consumers' brand loyalty. Brand communities on social media improve the sense of community among members and contribute to creating value for both the company and members (Laroche et al., 2012).

Building on the findings of the current study, marketers should be aware of the importance of engaging their customers and building brand love in generating loyalty to brands and making their customers resistant to competing offers.

9.6.5 Relationship between Brand Love and Perceived Quality

H12: Brand love is directly and positively related to perceived quality. (Supported)The results of H12 indicate the positive relationship between emotional attachment to the brand and the consumers' perception of the brands' quality. That means that the more consumers are in love with the brand, the more they will perceive the brand to be of high quality. Perceived quality refers to consumers' judgement of the overall quality of a brand with respect to its intended purpose if it is compared to alternatives (Aaker, 1991). It is defined as *"the consumer's judgment about a product's overall excellence or superiority"* (Tsiotsou, 2006, p. 210). It depends on psychological assessments of a consumer about the quality of products based on their perceptions (Saleem et al., 2015). Perceived quality enables brands to differentiate themselves and provides a rationale for buying a certain brand (Aaker, 1991).Consumers' perceived quality involves a subjective evaluation of the product (Pappu et al., 2005). Consumers' love for brands makes them willing to perceive it in a better way. Thus, this emotional attachments to brands can explain their perception of high quality of brands. Perceived quality can be linked to brand love because it is conceptualised as a brand association, which has an important role in generating brand equity (Aaker, 1996).

Consumers' direct experiences with brands may have positive effects on their judgements for their quality (Netemeyer et al., 2004). It is argued that quality judgements that result from direct experiences with brands are stronger than others developed through indirect experiences. This is because direct experiences are easily retrieved by memory (Netemeyer et al., 2004). Brand communities enable direct interactive experiences of consumers with brands (Zaglia, 2013). These interactive experiences help consumers to know the brand better and consequently perceive it to be of superior quality.

When individuals are attached to a certain object, they tend to perceive it a part of their self-concept (Kleine & Baker, 2004). Consumers who have high sense of emotional attachments towards brands tend to perceive them to be of high quality. One of the possible explanations is that consumers develop a sense of brand-self connection. Individuals who are attached to certain objects often consider that to be a part of their self-concept (Kleine & Baker, 2004). "*By categorizing a brand as part of the self-concept, consumers develop a sense of oneness with the brand, establishing cognitive links that connect the brand with the self* "(Park et al., 2008, p. 2). Therefore, consumers consider the high quality of brands as a part of their view for themselves. The direct experience and interactions that occur between consumers and brands in the brand community can have a positive effect on consumers' perception of brand quality.

The results of H12 are consistent with previous results in the context of online brand communities. For example, Brogi et al. (2013) proved a positive effect of consumers' participation in online brand communities on consumers' perception of quality of brands.

9.7 Nature of Consumer Engagement in Social Media Based Brand Communities

In the following part, the researcher presents an elaborate discussion related to the findings of the nature of dimensionality of consumer engagement in social media based brand communities. From the qualitative focus groups discussions with active members of fast food brand pages on Facebook, the researcher concluded that consumer engagement is a multidimensional construct compromising emotional, cognitive and behavioural dimensions. In the following part, the researcher provides an overview of these dimensions:

9.7.1 Emotional Engagement

In the context of online brand communities embedded in social media, the current study defines emotional engagement as "the *positive emotions and feelings that consumers experience as a result of their active participation in online brand communities. These emotions involve feelings of attachment, belonging and amusement".* The emotional component of engagement captures the set of emotions that consumers' experience towards their engagement focus (Calder et al., 2009). It involves a sustainable and long-lasting emotions, rather than one-time emotions (Dessart et al., 2015).

The findings of the current study indicate that the emotional component represents an important part in shaping consumers' engagement with brand communities. Consumers who are emotionally engaged tend to possess feelings of attachment, belonging and amusement towards the brand community. Attachment to the brand community involves a strong emotional bond between consumers and the community. Attachment results from consumers' continuous interactions with brand posts in these online communities. By perceiving different gratifications in the` community such as functional, hedonic and monetary benefits, consumers can develop a sense of emotional bonding "*attachment*" with this brand community. In other words, the positive experiences that consumers get inside the brand community may result in a feeling of emotional dependence (i.e. attachment) towards the brand community. Prior research in marketing has highlighted the importance of consumers' attachment to brands. For instance, it is suggested that consumers can also develop attachments to marketplace entities, including product brand (Park et al., 2010). Due to the fact that brand communities can be considered representatives of brands in social networking sites (Islam & Rahman, 2016), consumers can develop a sense of attachment with these communities in the same way that they develop it with brands. On the other hand, consumers can develop a sense of

"*belonging*" towards the brand community through actively engaging in it. Consumers' perceptions of belonging to the brand community is related to their feelings of being part of a group of people who are related to the brand consumption. Muniz and O'guinn (2001,p.418) indicated that one of the distinguishable features of consumers in brand communities are their "*consciousness of kind*". This is related to their consumers' perceptions of uniqueness in the brand community in which they tend to feel a common tie with other members in the community and perceived difference with non-members (Muniz & O'guinn, 2001). Thus, the feeling of attachment can be related to their perceptions of that "consciousness of kind". Finally, the last facet of emotional engagement is related to consumers' perceptions of amusement in the brand community. This feelings can be related to consumers' perceptions of hedonic benefits in the brand page. By continuously being exposed to funny posts that are uploaded by the brand managers on the brand page, as well as posts from other community members, consumers can develop feelings of happiness and pleasure in the community. Prior research in social media has shown that consumers usually visit social media websites for entertainment purposes, where they consider these networks as a source of enjoyment and amusement (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

Prior research that examined consumer engagement in online brand communities highlighted the role of emotional component of engagement. For example, Dessart et al. (2015) argued that there is an affective facet of consumer engagement in brand communities. In that study, the researchers indicated that consumers who are actively engaged tend to have high levels of enthusiasm and enjoyment towards the brand and its community. These consumers usually enjoy posting content in brand communities and have pleasure in seeing others' reactions to these posts. Also, they enjoy commenting on posts from other users in the community. In addition, they enjoy reading funny content that are posted by the brand. On the other hand, many other studies

ignored the emotional component of engagement in conceptualising engagement in online environments, where they conceptualised engagement as a purely behavioural construct, e.g. (Hausman et al., 2014; Dolan, Conduit, Fahy, & Goodman, 2015; Gummerus, Liljander, Weman, & Pihlstrom, 2012; Oh et al., 2016). On the other hand, in studies that examined consumer engagement construct in general, the emotional component has been highlighted in some studies,(e.g. Leckie et al., 2016; Tarute et al., 2017), while ignored in other studies, (e.g. Van Doorn et al., 2010; Wei, Miao, & Huang, 2013).

9.7.2 Cognitive Engagement

In the current study, the researcher defines cognitive engagement in the context of online brand communities as "*a psychological state in which consumers put mental effort to absorb the content in the brand community. It involves concentration on the content and thinking about it".* In engagement literature, the cognitive component of engagement has been described as a group of enduring and active mental states that consumers experience regarding their focal object of engagement (Hollebeek, 2011). In other words, consumers' cognitive processing describes brand related thoughts that consumers experience while interacting with a particular brand (Leckie et al., 2016). The cognitive facet of engagement is characterised by high levels of 'immersion' which is defined as "'*a customer's level of brand-related concentration in particular brand interactions', and as such, reveals the extent of individuals*"(Hollebeek, 2011, p. 566).

The findings of the current study highlight the importance of cognitive component of engagement. The focus groups discussions revealed that the cognitive dimension of engagement can be broken down into an element of thinking and an element of concentration. Consumers who are cognitively engaged in the brand community tend to think about the posts that they are continuously exposed to in the brand page. Usually,

these members are mentally engaged in the brand page and are using it as a reference before making a purchase decision. On the other hand, the element of concentration refers to consumers' mental focus in the content of the brand pages. It is evident that these members are carefully following the various forms of content that are posted in the brand community with the aim of capturing various benefits. For example, they are looking for certain offers such as discounts that are posted on the brand page. This sub-dimension of cognitive engagement in online brand communities are in line with Hollebeek (2011) descriptions for consumers who are cognitively engaged by 'engrossed in' and 'absorbed in' the engagement focus.

Very few researchers considered cognitive engagement an essential part of consumer engagement in online brand communities. For example, Dessart et al. (2015) indicated that engaged members usually have high levels of dedication and absorption in the community. These consumers tend to leave other tasks while interacting with other consumers in the brand community. Usually, these engaged consumers are unable to detach themselves from the brand community after being connected with it, since they are totally absorbed in its contents. Again, like emotional engagement, many researches ignored the cognitive component of engagement when studying consumer engagement in online brand communities, (e.g. De Vries et al., 2012; Su et al., 2015).

9.7.3 Behavioural Engagement

In the context of online brand communities embedded in social media, the current study defines behavioural engagement as "*Behavioural manifestations that consumers perform inside the brand community. These behaviours can range from simply consuming content that is posted in the brand community, to creating and sharing content in it".* The first sub-dimension of behavioural engagement involves the act of consuming. Consuming content in the brand community occurs when consumers start reading posts

in the brand page on a regular basis. When consumers find that the brand page managers upload regular updates about the brand and its offers, they are more likely to log into the brand page to acquire these benefits. In the context of social media, consumption means downloading, reading, watching and listening to the digital content. This stage represents the first stage of consumer engagement with the content in the social media (Evans & Cothrel, 2014). Another sub-dimension of behavioural engagement is the act of creation. Consumers can create various forms of content in the brand pages. This content can involve stories about their consumption experiences, or can simply ask questions or feedback from more experienced members of the brands. Another form of creation in the brand communities is an act of commenting. All social media platforms allow consumer to comment on the materials that are posted by others. Thus, consumers who are behaviourally engaged tend to answer questions that are posted by other members on the brand page. They can also comment on any post that interests them from the brand. In social media literature, the term 'creation' was used to describe the act of contributing to the content of the social media. This occurs when consumers add videos or photos or any other content on these online communities (Evans & Cothrel, 2014). Finally, consumers who are behaviourally engaged perform the action of sharing. This sub-dimension of behavioural engagement occurs when consumers share the content that they find interesting in the brand page. This is usually facilitated by the 'share' button in Facebook, which allows users to forward any content to other users in the social network (Gaber & Wright, 2014). Sharing content with their friends and peers allows consumers to gain the advantage of exchanging useful information about the brands with them. One of the motives of people when they go online is to gain the approval of others and to portray positive images about themselves (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Hence, the act of sharing can satisfy this motive, especially

when young consumers want to be perceived among their friends as a part of the modern life of fast food consumption.

The behavioural dimension of consumer engagement was highlighted in many academic publications, (e.g. Gummerus et al.,2012; Van Doorn et al., 2010). That may be attributed to the Marketing Science Institute conceptualisation of consumer engagement, where it was defined as "*consumers' behavioural manifestation toward a brand or firm beyond purchase, which results from motivational drivers*" (MSI, 2010, p. 4). In the context of online brand communities, Dessart et al. (2015) indicated that consumers can behaviourally engage in the brand community by performing some behaviours. These behaviours include sharing interesting content with other consumers in the brand community, as well as seeking help, advice and information from the company or from other members in the brand community. In addition, in several other studies, researchers considered behavioural engagement in brand communities as an act of commenting and liking posts that are uploaded on the brand pages, e.g. (Jahn & Kunz, 2012 ; Nel & Halaszovich , 2015).

9.8 Summary

Strong relationships between consumers and brands usually result in positive outcomes for both partners of the relationship (Stokburger-Sauer, 2010). In the offline context, it was found that brand communities are useful instrument that helps in strengthening consumer-brand relationships (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Muniz & O'guinn, 2001). The current study expands our understanding to the online context, where it studied antecedents and outcomes of consumer engagement in social media based brand communities. An increasing number of studies are examining the theoretical and practical implications of social media and online brand communities in particular for brand building (Godey et al., 2016). At the beginning of the chapter, the researcher presented an overview of the study's results. Then the researcher discussed the findings of the proposed relationships and hypotheses in the conceptual model. After that, the various dimensions of consumer engagement in online brand communities were discussed. The next chapter details the research's contributions, managerial implications, limitations and directions of future research.

Chapter 10: Contributions, Implications, Limitations, and Directions for Future Research

10.1 Introduction

Chapter ten, the final chapter, provides an overview of the contributions of the current study, which are presented in line with the study's objectives that were outlined in the first introduction chapter of this thesis. The chapter is divided into six main sections. Firstly, section 10.2 provides a summary of the thesis. Then section 10.3 outlines the contributions and theoretical implications. Next, section 10.4 demonstrates its managerial implications. After that, the research limitations as well as the suggestions for future research are presented in sections 10.5 and 10.6 respectively. Finally, section 10.7 offers concluding reflections about this PhD journey.

10.2 Summary of the Thesis

This research had three major objectives. The **first objective** was to explore the dimensionality of consumer engagement on social media based brand communities (a special type of online brand communities). Hence, the current study investigated consumer engagement on Facebook brand pages as an example of these communities. The researcher chose these pages due to their wide popularity among consumers and for their rapid adoption in marketing on social media networks. This study was conducted by drawing a sample from members of fast food Facebook brand pages in Egypt. The fast food industry in Egypt is one of the industries that have an extensive use for Facebook brand pages in marketing. Driven by the high penetration of social media networks among their target market and due to the harsh unstable economic conditions after the Arab spring revolutions, the fast food chains started directing larger portions of their marketing budgets to social media aiming for a more effective and efficient impact on

consumers. These chains have succeeded in attracting millions of consumers to become 'fans' on these pages. After conducting focus group discussions with active members on these brand pages, the researcher was able to conceptualise consumer engagement on social media based brand communities as a multidimensional construct. Specifically, the engagement framework offers three dimensions and eight sub-dimensions of engagement.

The **second objective** of this thesis was to investigate the antecedents of consumer engagement in these online communities. The study examined two groups of antecedents: antecedents related to consumers' relationships with brands and antecedents related to consumers' perceptions inside brand communities. By posting an online questionnaire on fast food Facebook brand pages, the study was able to identify three antecedents related to consumers' relationships with brands, namely: brand identification, satisfaction and trust. Surprisingly, the study indicated that brands' symbolic function doesn't have a significant influence on consumers' engagement in these online communities. On the other hand, the study was able to identify four antecedents related to consumers' perceptions inside brand communities, namely: perceived critical mass and perceived functional, hedonic and monetary benefits. One of the unexpected findings is the indifference of consumers towards social and passing the time benefits in the brand community, where these benefits didn't have a significant influence on their level of engagement.

The **third objective** of this study was to investigate the effect of consumer engagement on social media based brand communities on the development of emotional connections with fast food brands and in building and supporting brand equity. Accordingly, it was able to identify a positive effect of consumer engagement on development of brand love. In addition, the study identified a positive effect of brand love on consumers' positive

word of mouth, willingness to pay price premium, resistance to negative information, brand loyalty and perceived quality of the fast food brands.

The researcher started his study by conducting an extensive literature review with the aim of developing a conceptual model for the antecedents and outcomes of consumer engagement on social media based brand communities. Following this, the researcher started collecting data by performing a qualitative study with the aim of understanding the notion of dimensionality of consumer engagement. The themes that emerged from the qualitative discussions assisted the researcher in developing five sub-hypotheses related to consumers' perceived benefits that facilitate consumers' engagement in the online communities. Finally, the conceptual framework that was based on literature review and qualitative discussions was tested through an online survey.

Chapter one provided an introduction for the research. Additionally, it was useful in outlining the research aims and objectives. *Chapter two* presented the research background which included an overview of marketing through social media in general and through the online brand communities embedded in it in particular. Additionally, it outlined adoption of Facebook brand pages for marketing of Fast food in Egypt. *Chapter three* presented an elaborate discussion of consumer engagement and its antecedents. It also covered the topic of brand love as well as brand equity dimensions and outcomes.

Chapter four presented the conceptual model based on the research questions and objectives of the study. Also, it outlined a group of hypothesized relationships between the study's constructs. The conceptual model and hypotheses that were introduced in that chapter were developed based on a comprehensive literature review. *Chapter five* provided an overview of the methodology that was adopted by the researcher to answer the research questions and achieve the study's objectives. That chapter demonstrated the philosophical orientation that guided the research methodology. It also detailed the

research strategy, data collection and analysis methods. In addition, it gave a detailed description of the focus groups procedures and steps of adopting the online survey.

Chapter six presented the results of the phase I (qualitative phase) of data collection in the study. In doing so, it presented a comprehensive discussion of the respondents' responses during the focus groups. Those discussions were useful in reporting the various dimensions of consumer engagement in social media based brand communities. Also, the chapter demonstrated the sub-hypotheses regarding the consumers' perceived benefits that facilitate their engagement, which were developed with the aid of the qualitative discussions. Finally, it presented the final proposed conceptual model of the study. On the other hand, *chapter seven* detailed the steps of developing a new scale for capturing consumer engagement in the context of social networking sites. Finally, it presented the results of the pilot stage of the quantitative study.

Chapter eight presented the results of the hypotheses testing which were based on the analysis of the data that were collected through an online questionnaire during phase II (quantitative phase) of data collection. In addition, it presented the descriptive statistics of the respondents' demographic variables as well as reliability and validity of the measurement constructs. *Chapter nine* presented a discussion of the nature of consumer engagement in online brand communities as well as its antecedents and outcomes. Finally, *chapter ten* demonstrated the research contributions to theory and practice as well as the study's limitations and directions for future research.

10.3 Theoretical Contribution of the Study

The development of the internet and social media has given a huge boost to customer engagement marketing (Dijkmans, Kerkhof, & Beukeboom, 2015; Kotler & Armstrong, 2016; Nadeem, Andreini, Salo, & Laukkanen, 2015). Though the term 'consumer engagement' is widely used by marketing managers when they speak about aims for the

members of their online brand communities, the concept is not yet adequately researched by academics (Baldus et al., 2015; Barger et al., 2016; Kuvykaitė & Tarutė, 2015; Leckie et al., 2016). Specifically, there is still a limitation in understanding the dimensionality of the concept of engagement in the social media context in general and virtual brand communities embedded in it in particular (Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart et al., 2015). Most conceptualisations of that concept in the social media research focused on consumers' behavioural manifestations on social media platforms and online brand communities, (e.g. Bitter & Grabner-Kräuter, 2016; Oh et al., 2016). For example, these studies focused on certain consumers' behaviours in brand pages on social networking sites (i.e. Facebook) such as commenting, sharing and liking for capturing engagement, (e.g. Hausman et al., 2014; Nel & Halaszovich, 2015; Rossmann, Ranjan, Sugathan, Russell-Bennett, & Zhu, 2016; Simon et al., 2016; Tafesse & Tafesse, 2016). From an academic point of view, this study contributes to growing research on consumers' relationships with brands on social media by empirically assessing their relationships with social media brand communities. Hence, this research has a number of theoretical contributions:

First, this research contributes by conceptualising consumer engagement on social media based brand communities as a multidimensional construct that involves emotional, cognitive and behavioural dimensions. In other words, consumers pass through various levels of engagement on Facebook brand pages. Consumers start their engagement process when they start developing affective feelings towards the brand community. Another level of engagement is the cognitive engagement in which consumers experience a set of enduring and active mental states towards the content that is posted in the online community. Finally, the highest level of consumers' engagement compromises consumers' behavioural manifestations in the brand pages. When consumers develop high levels of engagement in the brand community, this will be

more likely reflected in their emotional connections to the brands. Hence, this study's contribution lies in supporting the existence of different dimensions of engagement in online brand communities. In summary, this study responds to several calls for a deeper understanding of consumers' engagement on social media (Dessart et al., 2015; Harrigan et al., 2017; Hoffman & Novak, 2012; MSI, 2014).

Second, this research proposes eight sub-dimensions for capturing the various dimensions of consumer engagement on social media based brand communities. The emotional dimension contains three sub-dimensions, namely: attachment, belonging and amusement. In addition, the cognitive dimension contains further two sub-dimensions, namely: thinking and concentration. Finally, the behavioural dimension contains three sub-dimensions which are consumption, creation and sharing. Thus, the contribution of these findings lies in stressing the multi-dimensionality of the consumer engagement construct. Conceptualising the various components of the three engagement dimensions adds to the body of knowledge of consumer engagement. Based on the sub-dimensions, this study introduced a new scale for measuring consumer engagement on social media-based brand communities. Previous measurement scales that were used to capture consumer participation in the context of offline brand communities, (e.g. Algesheimer et al., 2005; Woisetschläger et al., 2008) are inadequate to capture consumer engagement in the online context due to the interactive nature of social media. In summary, this research will serve as a base for future studies in the growing literature of consumer engagement marketing, which suffered from the lack of adequate conceptualisation for that new concept (Barger et al., 2016).

Third, the current study contributes theoretically by outlining the antecedents of consumers' engagement on social media brand communities. Thus, this study responds to several calls by marketing scholars and practitioners for a better understanding of the

antecedents of consumer engagement on social media (Barger et al., 2016; Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Dessart et al., 2015; Tsai & Men, 2013). In particular, this research highlights the role of factors related to consumers' relationships with the brand in enhancing consumer engagement. It stresses the positive role of consumers' level of satisfaction, trust and identification with the brand in driving their level of engagement in the brand community. Additionally, it establishes the role of factors related to consumers' perceptions of the brand community in driving consumer engagement. In doing so, it demonstrates the positive role of consumers' perceived critical mass in the community in enhancing engagement. Also, it outlines the positive effect of consumers' perception of functional, hedonic and monetary benefits in the brand community in driving consumer engagement. Traditionally, prior research focused on the factors consumers aim at by their participation in offline brand communities, (e.g. Algesheimer et al., 2005; de Chernatony et al., 2008). This research expands theoretical understanding of brand communities to the online context. Also, since this study focused on the concept of 'consumer engagement', a newly adopted concept in the marketing field, it adds to the extant knowledge of engagement. In other words, by identifying its antecedents in the context of brand communities, the current study enables marketers and scholars to understand how engagement is formed on social media. Prior researchers focused on factors facilitating consumer engagement in general, where they didn't focus on a specific context, (e.g. Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010; Wallace et al., 2014).

Fourth, while this study uses three theories (social identity, critical mass, uses and gratification) to explain consumers' engagement with online brand communities, prior research in the offline context, e.g. Algesheimer et al. (2005), used single theories to explain consumer participation in brand communities. Developing a multi-theoretical

framework in the current study is useful in capturing the factors stated that facilitate consumer engagement in the online context.

Fifth, the current study establishes the positive effect of consumer engagement in online brand communities embedded on social media on the development of brand love. Brand love is a relatively new construct that is gaining the attention of marketing scholars. Prior research indicated that consumers can develop positive emotional connections towards brands (Batra et al., 2012; Maxian et al., 2013). It is argued that consumers' emotional attachments to brands is a better predictor of their consumption behaviour (Batra et al., 2012). Thus, the current study enhances our knowledge of this new construct by understanding its antecedents and outcomes.

Sixth, the current study establishes the critical role of brand love in influencing brand equity dimensions and outcomes. Given the novelty of the use of 'brand love' construct in branding literature, there is a scarcity of academic publications that investigate its outcomes. This research contributes by supporting the positive impact of brand love on perceived quality as well as substantiating its positive effect on brand loyalty. Also, it confirms its positive effect on consumers' positive word of mouth and demonstrates its significant influence on consumers' willingness to pay a price premium. Finally, it shows a positive effect of consumers' brand love on their resilience to negative information. Hence, the theoretical contribution of the current study lies in adding to the body of knowledge of the outcomes of brand love. Few academic publications in the marketing field have tried to examine this construct by applying the interpersonal love theories, (e.g. Batra et al., 2012).

Seventh, this study represents one of the first attempts that examine consumers' relationships with social media brand communities in one of the Middle-East countries. The literature review indicated that a number of studies have addressed branding issues

and challenges faced by companies in their social media marketing campaigns in western countries, e.g. (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). However, this research contributes to social media marketing literature by expanding the focus to developing Middle-Eastern countries like Egypt.

Eighth, the study makes a methodological contribution by adopting both qualitative and quantitative approaches to answer the research questions. This methodological choice enabled the researcher to gain the advantages of both approaches in the same study. Qualitative discussions were useful in probing the meaning of engagement in the social media brand communities' context from consumers' point of view. Obtaining information from consumers offers valuable and more realistic insights into engagement issues, adding more knowledge in this area. Also, the quantitative approach was useful in testing and validating a conceptual framework for antecedents and outcomes of consumer engagement that was developed based on literature review and the qualitative approach. As the researcher reviewed the literature, it has been found that the majority of prior researches applied pure quantitative research to understand consumer engagement, (e.g. Chan et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2016). On the other hand, few studies such as Dessart et al. (2015) applied pure qualitative approach. Very few studies such as Tsai et al. (2012) applied both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study to study consumers' participation in brand communities.

10.4 Managerial Implications

In addition to the theoretical contributions of the study that were presented in the previous section, the current study offers marketers and decision makers valuable managerial implications as well. As mentioned earlier, in the past few years, marketers have been increasingly interested in engaging consumers on various social media platforms. Despite that interest, recent industry surveys have indicated that the majority

of marketers had problems in engaging consumers on various social networking sites; hence, they are continuously looking for better ways to facilitate that engagement, especially on Facebook (Social Media Examiner, 2016). Specifically, these marketers indicated that they have been unsure of the effectiveness of their Facebook marketing. Thus, by investigating antecedents and outcomes of consumers' engagement on Facebook brand pages, this study provides a pioneering contribution that sheds light on an important concept in the context of social media, which is 'engagement', and helps in closing this gap. In summary, this study provides useful insights to marketing managers, particularly in the Egyptian fast food sector:

First, this study highlights the vital role of social media in engaging young consumers through online brand communities embedded in its platforms. In recent years, consumers have been developing continuous resistance and avoidance towards traditional advertising media such as the television and the radio, due to advertising clutter (Elliott & Speck, 1998; Hammer, Riebe, & Kennedy, 2009). Thus, when traditional marketing strategies are not effective in the current competitive environment, social media, with its interactive nature, represents an excellent opportunity for companies to market their products and services. Hence, by engaging their customers, companies aim to establish deeper relationships that go beyond buying brands (Park & Kim, 2014). Customer engagement marketing goes beyond just selling brands to consumers, where it aims to make brands a meaningful part of consumers' conversations and lives (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). Based on that, social media technologies can be adopted to build long lasting engagement rather than short term revenues (Schultz & Peltier, 2013). Recent industry surveys show a bright future for the adoption of social media marketing. For instance, it was found that active Facebook fans spend 43% on buying the brands more than non-fans (syncapse, 2013).

Second, the current research underscores the need to treat brand pages as a main marketing channel for fast food chains. Brand pages on various social networking sites offer excellent opportunities for companies, including fast food chains, to engage their consumers. Engaging consumers on brand pages can be important since companies can collect information about consumers through these online communities (Simon et al., 2016). Engaged members usually express their feelings and feedback about the brand on these pages. This allows companies to gain access to important information about their brands' performance, which provides a basis for improved products and services. Also, the brand related conversations between marketers and consumers on the brand pages can give companies useful insights for the development of new products and services.

Third, the findings of this research indicate that Facebook brand pages can be an ultimate place for engaging young consumers with fast food brands. Furthermore, the findings offer managers some useful insights for engaging consumers by providing various functional, hedonic and monetary content or benefits on their brand pages. Thus, the current study represents a response to several calls by practitioners for understanding how to engage their customers on social media, e.g. (Social Media Examiner, 2016). These benefits act as motivators for consumers to revisit these brand pages (Zhang & Luo,2016). For instance, consumers' perception of functional benefits have a critical role in driving their engagement in the brand community. Consumers join brand communities to get up-to-date information about brands and their offers. Therefore, fast food chains must make sure to include concise informative contents on their brand pages. Thus, to keep their customers interested in their pages, managers in charge should post a steady stream of updates about their brands, other relevant products and allied events. Informative posts can contain a variety of content such as information about new sandwiches and meals, prices of meals, brand locations and

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corporate social responsibility practices. In addition to the informative contents on brand pages, companies should also provide entertaining content to satisfy consumer hedonic needs. This can include some funny pictures of consumers eating in restaurants, posts congratulating consumers on particular occasions such as the New Year, Valentine, etc. Consumers join brand pages to get access to offers and promotions that non-members don't have access to. Thus, fast food chains should make sure to provide various economic and monetary incentives on their pages. For instance, fast food chains should include various offers and discounts. Additionally, they can include prizes that consumers can have access to if they share a certain post or advertisement with their social networking friends.

Fourth, the current study highlights the role of consumers' perceived critical mass in driving consumers' engagement in online communities. Accordingly, it is critical for fast food chains to let consumers know that an increasing numbers of other consumers are joining their brand pages on Facebook. A recommendation to companies is to include interactive posts that encourage consumers' participation. Interactive posts on fast food brand pages can include questions about their favourite sandwiches or meals. Also, they can include posts that have different types of competitions. The aim of these engaging posts is to activate the pages which can appeal to other consumers who might join these pages to take part in these interactions.

Fifth, the study's findings show that word of mouth, perceived quality, resistance to negative information, brand loyalty and willingness to pay a price premium are positively influenced by consumers' brand love. Since the study's findings show that consumer engagement on brand pages have a positive role in generating brand love, companies should focus on their engagement efforts to create positive emotional bonding with

brands. Thus, fast food marketers must benefit from management of consumers' interactions and engagement in brand communities to generate brand love.

10.5 Research Limitations

Despite that this study provides some important theoretical and managerial contributions, it is not without limitations. A number of important limitations are considered:

1. The data of the study for both the qualitative and quantitative stages was collected through a sample from Egypt, where the sample consisted of young Egyptian consumers. Therefore, the results of the study may not be generalised to other nationalities and other age groups of brand pages on Facebook. Accordingly, the generalisability of the sample may be limited to young Egyptian brand page users. When generalising the findings to other countries and contexts, the economic, geographic and cultural features in Egypt should be taken into consideration when the results are interpreted.

2. The current study has only examined users of fast food brand pages on Facebook. This limits the findings to the fast food industry and Facebook. Future research should investigate other industries and different online brand communities on other social media networking sites. In spite of the fact that Facebook is considered the largest and most popular social media channel, there are also other important social media channels such as Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

3. In this study, the data was collected in the quantitative phase using an online questionnaire. Although this type of data collection has some advantages, such as reducing data entry errors and avoiding double entry issues, it may suffer from some problems. For example, respondents might fill the survey while browsing other sites,

which leads to distraction. Also, respondents might not be fully aware of their reasons for any given answer because of lack of memory on the subject, or even boredom.

4. In this research, four focus groups were conducted with fast food brand pages members. Although the focus groups sessions were useful in generating ideas, larger numbers of groups and members would increase the confidence of the results of the study.

5. The focus groups were conducted in the biggest cities in Egypt (Cairo and Alexandria), the country's capital and its second major city. Despite that the vast majority of fast food chains are located in these two cities, the results cannot be generalised to all other Egyptian cities. Also, the study only examined the concept of consumer engagement from the perspective of young Egyptian consumers. This limits the findings to that age group.

6. The current study employed cross-sectional design to investigate the relationships between variables of interest. Therefore, the results only provided a snapshot of consumers' engagement with fast food online brand communities. This limits the research's ability in determining the cause and effect between variables.

7. The current study employed purposive (Judgemental) sampling in choosing the fast food brand pages to post the online survey. Even though this sampling technique was useful in studying consumer engagement in Facebook brand pages, this sampling technique has some disadvantages. Given the nature of purposive sampling as one of the non-probability sampling techniques, there's a possibility of selection bias and it doesn't ensure representativeness (Saunders et al., 2016). Also, the study employed a self-selection sample where the online survey was posted on the brand pages and the participants were invited to answer it. Despite the advantages of self-selection sampling

in recruiting participants who are willing to provide useful information, this sampling technique is criticised for being subjective and biased (Saunders et al., 2016).

10.6 Directions for Future Research

This research has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation:

First, the current study was conducted only on Facebook brand pages, as the most popular form of online brand communities embedded on social networks. More research is needed to better understand consumer engagement factors on other social networking sites.

Second, this study investigated consumers of only one industry, which is the fast food industry in Egypt. It is suggested that the study should be replicated in other industries. This is because the factors that contribute to building brand love and overall brand equity in online brand communities may vary from one industry to another.

Third, in the current study, only brand pages that are formed and operated by companies were examined. A recommendation for future studies is to investigate online brand communities that are initiated and managed by consumers. Thus, it will be interesting to understand the differences in consumers' responses and interactions towards both firm-created and user-generated content on the social media.

Fourth, future research can collect longitudinal data for testing the effect of consumer engagement on building brand love to identify if consumers' perception towards brands varies with time or not. This will allow the tracking of consumer behaviour that can change over time. Also, further research could assess the effect of membership duration in brand communities on engagement and brand love levels. Additionally, longitudinal data can assess the dynamics of the factors that facilitate engagement with time.

Furthermore, future research can use one of the probability sampling techniques in recruiting participants to ensure the generalisation of the findings.

Fifth, future research can test which type of advertising will have the most impact on building brand love; for example, traditional media like broadcast, print, and outdoor or through social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.

Sixth, since this research only investigated the effect of overall consumer engagement in online brand communities on generation of brand love, future research could investigate the effect of each of the three dimensions (emotional-cognitive-behavioural) on the development of brand love. Also, further research can investigate the antecedents that facilitate the development of each of these engagement dimensions.

Seventh, the emphasis of this study was on investigating the impact of engagement of consumers in online brand communities on brand love. There are, however, more antecedents to brand love than those proposed in this research. Possible antecedents to brand love could be previous relationships with the brand in the real world and other marketing communications and promotions methods. Thus, further research could investigate other antecedents of brand love in the offline context.

Eighth, future research can aim to classify members of brand pages into different categories based on their emotional, cognitive and behavioural extent of engagement on the brand pages.

Ninth, further research can study consumers' behaviour on the brand pages by applying various netnographic and content analysis techniques. This can help researchers identify various content types available on fan pages and consumers' response to each content type. Additionally, this can help them identify the reasons consumers join the brand pages.

Tenth, the current study focused on Egyptian Facebook users. Additional research, in fact, is needed in other cultural groups. Therefore, a cross-cultural study would discover if other nationalities consider their relationships with online brand communities the same way. Furthermore, the proposed model could be tested in other developed and developing countries.

Eleventh, this study focused on young Egyptian consumers. Despite that this age group represent the main target market for fast food chains and the majority of users of social networking sites, future research can examine other age consumer behaviour of other age groups.

10.7 Reflection on the Research Process

I engaged in a PhD program for four years to obtain a doctoral degree, which I needed to boost my teaching and research career. At the beginning of my PhD journey, I was interested in doing a research on social media marketing. That was driven by my personal observations, where the huge number of advertisements I saw on my Facebook account caught my attention. Also, I was surprised by the large number of the undergraduate marketing students who are interested in working as social media moderators, which has become a highly demanded marketing job. Accordingly, these observations directed my desire to study that innovative form of marketing.

I wrote a PhD proposal and presented it to my supervisors. The proposal initially aimed to study consumers' attitudes towards social media marketing in the Egyptian context. However, after I conducted a comprehensive literature review and looked at the industry reports, I recognised the importance and popularity of Facebook brand pages in marketing of the fast food chains in Egypt, which I have focused on in my study. Additionally, my main PhD supervisor encouraged me to attend several international conferences to present my thoughts and get feedback from academic and industrial

experts in my PhD topic. These conferences were extremely useful in shaping my ideas. The feedback I received at these conferences as well as the several academic calls for papers directed my research towards studying consumer engagement, which became later the main construct in my study. Thus, the choice of the context in which to investigate theoretical gaps present in the literature was a chance to fit the researcher's academic interests with the current research gaps.

The qualitative data collection phase was easily set up due to the nature of participants. Given their young age and their enthusiasm for Facebook usage, the focus group discussions were extremely useful in shedding light on consumers' relationships with Facebook brand pages and fast food marketing practices in it. Accordingly, the focus groups discussions were held in a very friendly and supportive environment, where the participants were happy to tell interesting stories about their relationship with fast food brands and how they experience its advertising on Facebook. On the other hand, the quantitative data collection was not as easy as the qualitative one. Recruiting participants to answer a paper-and-pencil questionnaire was not efficient since the researcher didn't find enough respondents. Hence, the researcher started thinking of adopting an online survey. However, that was not an easy decision. Despite that the online survey received poor feedback from the fast food brand page members, posting a link to the online questionnaire on these pages on a daily basis for several months helped the researcher collect the required number of respondents.

The research process, which was effective and smooth during the planning and data collection stages, witnessed several challenges during the data analysis phase. Analysing the qualitative data was not an easy process because the researcher lacked the required experience for that type of analysis. However, with some directions and advice from my supervisor I was able to register in a course that helped me learn qualitative analysis

techniques and NVivo.10 software. On the other hand, attending a course on SMART PLS and AMOS software at the University of Huddersfield was extremely helpful in the analysis of the data collected during the quantitative phase.

The last part in this reflection section is about publication. I was really impressed and encouraged by my main supervisors' long experience in publishing. She encouraged me to write articles to good journals. Writing to good journals was really helpful in improving my academic writing style. It allowed me to change my writing from being descriptive to a more critical analysis. Also, the feedback I received from the reviewers of these academic journals directed me during the whole research process. Furthermore, it helped me gain self-confidence about my research topic and contributions.

In summary, at the end of this tough and interesting research journey, I recognised that acquiring knowledge is an endless process. Academics and researchers shouldn't give up improving their research skills and gaining more experience. I advise all students who are thinking of doing a PhD to do it and never lose the golden opportunity of learning.

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Appendix A

Screenshots of some Fast food Pages on Facebook in Egypt

Screenshots of some Fast food Pages on Facebook in Egypt (continued)

Screenshots of some Fast food Pages on Facebook in Egypt (continued)

Sparta Restaurant
Like This Page · April 19 · ⚙

in love with cheese Mania😍😍❤️
#Sparta Be Our Soldier👍😊

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ➤ Share

👍❤️😮 517   Top Comn

3 shares   122 Con

Mayar Elmasre Rana Ezzat Basant Mamdouh
e3mlo 7sabko awel elshahr hanro7o ana olt 👋
Like · Reply · 👍 1 · April 19 at 1:55pm
↳ View previous replies

Sparta Restaurant sparta mokhtlef 3an
a5roon 3ashan kda mayar 3mlt mention😊
😊grbo w ololna ra2ykoo👍
Like · Reply · April 19 at 2:27pm
↳ View more replies

Appendix B

Online Invitation of the Focus group discussions

List of Egyptian Fast food Brand Pages that were used to recruit the participants to participate in the focus groups

Fast food brand page on Facebook	Brand's Origin
McDonald's Egypt	Global
Pizza Hut	Global
KFC	Global
Domino's Pizza	Global
Yanks' corner	Local
Mo'men Egypt	Local
Cook Door	Local
Chicken Tikka	Local

Appendix B (Continued)

Discussion Guide of the Focus groups

Section (1): General knowledge of the marketing activities on Facebook.

Purpose: This section aims to introduce the participants to the purpose of the research and to break the ice between them.

- How long have you been using Facebook? What other social networks that you use with Facebook?
- Why do you use Facebook? How much time do you spend on Facebook daily?
- Do you see advertisements from fast food chains on your Facebook account? Which type of advertisements do you prefer? Why?
- Are you familiar with fast food brand pages on Facebook? What are the names of the fast food brands that you follow their pages on that social network?

Section (2): Defining Consumer Engagement & Identifying its dimensionality.

Purpose: This section aims to explore the meaning of engagement in brand pages from participants' point of view.

- How long have you been using these brand pages?
- How do you interact with the posts that you find interesting?
- How do you define the term 'engagement' in these brand pages?
- Do you consider yourself an active member in these pages? Give examples.
- What do you like about these brand pages? Give examples.
- Is it important for you to read the posts that are posted by the brand and by other consumers?
- Do you think about the posts you find in the brand page before buying the fast food meals?

Section (3): Perceived benefits in the brand Community.

Purpose: This section aims to understand the reasons that encourage consumers to participate in fast food brand pages.

- What are the reasons that make you join the fast food brand pages?
- What content type do you prefer in these posts?
- Have you ever known a brand from its brand page on Facebook?
- If you want information about fast food brand, will you visit its Facebook page?
- Have you ever found an offers (i.e. discounts) on these pages
- What are the benefits that you gain from being an active member in the brand page?
- Do you participate in these pages if you are bored?

Section (4): Conclusion.

Purpose: This section aims to reach to a conclusion by asking participants to give participants to provide recommendations to the fast food chains.

- How can you think fast food chains can improve their pages to become more appealing for you?
- Can you summarise what you like and dislike in these brand pages?

Appendix B (Continued)

Ethical Approval Letter

THE UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD
Business School

Reviewer Proforma. (Ethical Committee)

Project Title:	Antecedents and Outcomes of Consumer Engagement in Social Media Based Brand Communities. Evidence from Facebook Brand Pages
Name of researcher (s):	Hazem Rasheed Gaber
Supervisor (where appropriate):	Len Tiu Wright

Issue	Advice / Comments to applicant
Aim / objectives of the study	Clear aim and objectives provided
Research methodology	Clear and detailed description of the research methodology.
Permissions for study?	Not required.
Participants	Details given.
Access to participants	Full details provided with clear explanations as to how participants will be identified and contacted.
How will your data be recorded and stored?	Details provided address the issues of secure storage.
Confidentiality	Sufficient details provided. Measures to ensure confidentiality are appropriate. Issues relating to informed consent and how this will be managed have been discussed and are appropriate.
Anonymity	Sufficient details provided. Measures to ensure anonymity are appropriate.
Could the research induce psychological stress or anxiety, cause harm or negative consequences for the participants (beyond the risks encountered in normal life).	The researcher has addressed this issue and it is accepted that any risk is minimal.
Supporting documents (e.g. questionnaire, interview schedule, letters etc)	The questionnaire now has an assurance regarding the right to withdraw.
Other comments	Please also note that there are new guidelines on right to withdraw that it would be useful to be aware of: **Proposed guidance to applicants on withdrawal on consent.** 1) The presumption is that research participants should always have the right to withdraw, or withdraw any data they have provided, from the research process at any stage of their direct participation, providing that withdrawal is feasible. 2) At certain stages of the research, withdrawal in person or of data provided may no longer be feasible. For example, once respondent data has been pooled with other responses, or anonymized, or results have already been published, it may no longer be possible to extract an individual's data. 3) Ethics committee reviewers will expect applicants to have considered the issues of withdrawal of consent as part of their ethics application and will expect applicants to put forward a reasonable plan for a withdrawing consent and the rationale for their choices.

OVERALL RESPONSE

APPROVE OUTRIGHT	Approve Outright

Reviewer name   S. Daley-Yates

Appendix B (Continued)

(Informed Consent)

Informed Consent to Participate in a Focus Group discussion

This research aims to investigate the motivations that make young consumers join fast-food brand pages in Facebook and the outcomes of participation in these online brand communities. The discussion has no sensitive issues; please note that participation in the focus group discussion is completely voluntary. Also, be sure that you have **the right to withdraw** at any time during the focus groups discussions.

The researcher will make sure that your identity will be completely anonymous. Also, the findings of the research will also used for academic and scientific purposes only.

The researcher

I agree to participate in the focus group discussions and I accept to record my responses and discussions on an audio cassette:

Name of Participant:

Signature:

Please send the consent form by email to:

Hazem.gaber@hud.ac.uk

Appendix B (Continued)

List of Egyptian Fast food Brand Pages that were used to recruit the participants to participate in the main online survey

Fast food brand page on Facebook	Brand's Origin
Abou Gazya	Local brand
McDonald's Egypt	Global brand
Om Hassan Egypt	Local brand
Pizza Hut	Global brand
Hardee's Arabia	Global brand
Cook Door	Local brand
Domino's Pizza	Global brand
Chili's Egypt	Local brand
Chicken Tikka Egypt	Local brand
Basmatio Chicken	Local brand
Buffalo Burger	Local brand
Burger King Arabia	Local brand
Mo'men Egypt	Local brand
Papa John's Egypt	Global brand
Vinny's Pizzeria	Local brand
Yank's Corner	Local brand
Sbarro Egypt	Global brand
Pizza Station	Local brand
Burger Pump	Local brand
Subway Egypt	Global brand

Appendix B (Continued)

Online Survey

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire aims to investigate the attitudes and responses of young Egyptian consumers towards fast food marketing in Facebook brand pages. This will help us in providing recommendations to fast food chains to improve their marketing in social media platforms. The questionnaire should take about 7-8 minutes to complete. All responses are completely anonymous and confidential.

There are no potential risks in participating in this academic research. Please be sure that any information provided by you will be kept confidential and only people who are working on this research will gain access to it. We thank you very much for your valuable time and appreciate your participation in this research.

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints regarding the way in which the research is or has been conducted, you may contact Mr. Hazem Rasheed Gaber at Hazem.gaber@hud.ac.uk.

Please note that participation in this online survey is completely voluntary. Also, you can withdraw at any stage during answering this survey.

Part 1: Introductory questions:

Please choose the most appropriate answer:

Q1) How many hours do you spend on Facebook daily?

a)   Less than 1 hour.
b) 1-2 hours.
c) 2-3 hours.
d) 3-4 hours.
e) More than 4 hours.

Q2) From which devices do you log on to your Facebook account?

a)   Computer only.
b)   Mobile phone only.
c)   Both computer & mobile phone.

Q3) What are the activities that you regularly perform on Facebook?

a)   Checking news and updates.
b)   Chatting with friends.
c)   Sharing personal content.
d)   Work.
e)   Visiting fan pages of companies and brands.
f)   Commenting and sharing posts from friends
g)   Education.

Q4) what is the most type of Facebook advertising that grabs your attention?

a)   Sponsored advertising on my home page.
b)   Advertising on the side of my profile page.
c)   Fan pages on Facebook.

Part 2: Antecedents and Motivators of Consumers' Participation in Facebook Brand Pages.

Q5) Are you a fan of one of the fast food brand pages on Facebook?

a) If yes, Please write the names of the fast food fan pages that you are following & Complete this questionnaire: ……………………………………… ……………………………………… ……………………………………… ………………………………………
b) If No, please don't complete this questionnaire.

Q6) In the box below, I would like you to type the name of a fast food fan page (brand community) that you regularly follow on Facebook:

Important Note: *In the following part answer the questions bearing in mind the fast food brand that you typed in question 6.*

Please make a circle around the number that suits your choice, where 1 means that you strongly disagree and 7 means you strongly agree with the statement.

Q7) The following statements aims to assess your <u>level of identification</u> with the fast food brand that you follow its community in Facebook. Please indicate your level of agreement with it.

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Some What Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Some What Agree	Strongly Agree
a) When someone criticizes this fast food brand, it feels like a personal insult.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) I am very interested in what others think about this fast food brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) The successes of this fast food brand are my successes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d) When someone praises this fast food brand, it feels like a personal compliment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e) If a story in the media criticized this fast food brand, I would feel embarrassed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q8) The following statements aim to assess your <u>level of satisfaction</u> with the fast food brand that you follow its page in Facebook. Please indicate your level of agreement with it.

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Some What Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Some What Agree	Strongly Agree
a) Considering all my consumption experience with this fast food brand I am very satisfied.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) Considering all my consumption experience with this fast food brand I am very pleased.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) Considering all my consumption experience with	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

this fast food brand I am not very disappointed.							

Q9) The following statements aim to assess your <u>level of trust</u> with the fast food brand that you follow its page on Facebook. Please indicate your level of agreement with it.

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Some What Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Some What Agree	Strongly Agree
a) I trust this fast food brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) I rely on this fast food brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) This fast food brand is honest.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d) This fast food brand is safe.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q10) The following statements aim to assess your <u>level of perception of a brand's symbolic function</u> with the fast-food brand that you follow its community on Facebook. Please indicate your level of agreement with it.

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Some What Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Some What Agree	Strongly Agree
a) Buying this fast food brand helps me express my personality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) Knowing whether a person uses this fast food brand or not tells a lot about this person.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) One can tell a lot about a person from the fast food brand he buys.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q11) The following statements aim to assess your <u>perceived critical mass</u> of the behaviour of your friends and brand community members. Please indicate your level of agreement with these statements:

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Some What Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Some What Agree	Strongly Agree
a) Many of my friends joined this fast food brand page.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) I find that most members of the fast food brand community regularly share their consumption experiences of the fast food brand page.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) I find that the majority of members joined the fast food brand page after purchasing the fast food brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q12) The following statements aim to assess your perceived functional benefits in the fan page of Facebook. Please indicate your level of agreement with these statements:

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Some What Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Some What Agree	Strongly Agree
a) This brand page helps me obtain up-to-date information about the fast food brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) This page helps me efficiently and conveniently communicate with others online.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) This brand page helps me in sharing experiences with the fast food brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q13) The following statements aim to assess your perceived hedonic benefits in the fan page of Facebook. Please indicate your level of agreement with these statements:

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Some What Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Some What Agree	Strongly Agree
a) I am amused by other members in this fast food brand page.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) I am having fun in the page of this fast food brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) This fast food brand page is entertaining.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q14) The following statements aim to assess your perceived monetary benefits in the fan page of Facebook. Please indicate your level of agreement with these statements:

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Some What Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Some What Agree	Strongly Agree
a) This brand page allows me to obtain discounts or special deals that most consumers do not get.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) This brand page allows me to obtain better prices than other consumers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) This brand page gives me the opportunity to receive free coupons and discounts.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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Q15) The following statements aim to assess your perceived <u>social benefits</u> in the fan page of Facebook. Please indicate your level of agreement with these statements:

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Some What Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Some What Agree	Strongly Agree
a) This brand page helps me to get involved with other members.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) This brand page gives me a sense of belonging.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) This brand page gives me the opportunity to establish and maintain relationships with other members.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q16) The following statements aim to assess <u>the "passing the time" benefits</u> in the fan page of Facebook. Please indicate your level of agreement with these statements:

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Some What Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Some What Agree	Strongly Agree
a) I use this brand page when I have nothing to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) I use this brand page to occupy my time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) I use this brand page to pass the time when bored.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q17) The following statements aim to assess your <u>level of engagement</u> in the fan page of Facebook. Please indicate your level of agreement with these statements:

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Some What Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Some What Agree	Strongly Agree
a) I have a positive emotional connection towards this brand page.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) I would be disappointed if this brand page no longer existed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) I feel personally connected to this brand page.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d) This brand page makes me happy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e) I interact in this brand page just for fun.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f) This brand page is interesting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g) I enjoy being part	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	of this brand page.							
h)	I feel that I belong to this page brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i)	I like to be identified with this brand page.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j)	I feel like a part of the family of this brand page.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
k)	I usually pay attention to what I read in the brand page.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
l)	I am immersed in the content of this brand page.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
m)	I usually concentrate and focus on what I am reading in the brand page.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
n)	I usually think about the posts I find in this brand page.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
o)	I am rarely distracted when I visit this brand page.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
p)	I often remember the posts I see in the brand page.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
q)	I usually log into this brand page to get updated about its content.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
r)	It is important to me to follow the posts in this brand page.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
s)	I interact with the posts that I see in this brand page.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
t)	I post pictures and videos on the wall of the brand page.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
u)	I write comments in this brand page.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
v)	I usually share posts from this brand page with other users in my social network.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
w)	I ask my friends to join this brand page.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Part 3: Outcomes and Consequences of consumers' engagement in fast food brand pages in Facebook

Q18) The following statements aim to assess <u>your level of brand love to the fast-food brand</u>. Please indicate your level of agreement with these statements:

	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Some What Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Some What Agree	Strongly Agree
a)	This is a wonderful fast food brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b)	This fast food brand makes me feel good.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c)	This fast food brand is totally awesome.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d)	This fast food brand makes me very happy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e)	This fast food brand is pure delight.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f)	I am passionate about this fast food brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q19) The following statements aim to assess <u>your word of mouth</u> about the fast-food brand. Please indicate your level of agreement with these statements:

	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Some What Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Some What Agree	Strongly Agree
a)	I "talk up" this brand to people I know.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b)	I bring up this brand in a positive way in conversations I have with friends and acquaintances.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c)	In social situations, I often speak favorably about this fast-food brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q20) The following statements aim to assess <u>your level of loyalty</u> towards the fast-food brand. Please indicate your level of agreement with these statements:

	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Some What Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Some What Agree	Strongly Agree
a)	This is the only brand of fast food that I will buy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b)	When I go shopping, I don't even notice competing brands.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c)	If I couldn't find	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	this brand, I'll postpone buying until I find it.						
d)	I'll 'do without' rather than buy another brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q21) **The following statements aim to assess <u>your level of perceived quality</u> of the fast-food brand. Please indicate your level of agreement with these statements:**

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Some What Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Some What Agree	Strongly Agree
a) This brand is of high quality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) This brand is a reliable brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) The likelihood that this brand would be of good quality is very high.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q22) **The following statements aim to assess <u>your willingness to pay a price premium for</u> the fast-food brand. Please indicate your level of agreement with these statements:**

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Some What Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Some What Agree	Strongly Agree
a) If the price of this fast food brand would go up I would switch to another brand of fast food.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) I am willing to pay a higher price for this fast food brand than for other brands of fast food.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) I am willing to pay more for this fast food brand than other brands of fast food.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q23) **The following statements aim to assess <u>your resistance to negative information about</u> the fast food brand. Please indicate your level of agreement with these statements:**

Statements		Strongly Disagree	Some What Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Some What Agree	Strongly Agree
a)	I forgive this fast food brand when it makes mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b)	I will forgive the fast food brand for any negative information about it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c)	Given the fast food brand mistakes, I wouldn't condemn it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d)	I would think favourably of this fast food brand upon hearing negative information about it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Part 4: Demographic data

Q24) Please indicate your age:

      a. 18-22
      b. 23-25
      c. 26-29
      d. Other

Q25) Please indicate your gender:

    a. Male
    b. Female

Q26) Please indicate your city of residence:

      a. Cairo
      b. Alexandria
      c. Other

Q27) Duration of membership in the fast-food fan page in Facebook:

    a. Less than 1 year.
   b. 1- 2 years.
    c. 2-3 years.
    d. More than 3 years.

<u>Thank you for your time and cooperation</u>

Appendix C

Summary of Focus Group Findings

Discussion Theme	Responses/ Findings
Familiarity with Facebook and Social Media Marketing	▪ Consumers use Facebook as their main social networking site. ▪ Consumers use Facebook for a variety of reasons including socialization, entertainment and getting news and updates. ▪ Most participants spend many hours on Facebook. ▪ All consumers are familiar with fast food advertising in Facebook. ▪ Brand pages are the most preferred type of advertisements because consumers have the option to follow it or not, (i.e. lacks irritation).
Fast food Brand Pages and Motivators of Participation	▪ Consumers join fast food brand pages for a variety of reasons including getting information about the brand, entertainment, passing the time, socialising and getting offers and discounts. ▪ Consumers got introduced to some fast food chains through its Facebook brand pages. ▪ Consumers consider brand pages on Facebook easier than the fast food chains official websites in getting information and true reviews about the brand.
Forms of Engagement in Fast Food Brand Pages	▪ Different themes appeared regarding different forms of consumers' engagement in the fast food brand pages. ▪ Consumers stressed the important of content type in deriving their engagement in the brand pages. ▪ Different items for developing a scale for measuring consumer engagement were generated.
Conclusion	▪ Consumers asked fast food chains to be more responsive on the brand pages. Also, they preferred entertaining and funny posts that can make their engagement experiences more appealing and exciting.

Appendix C (Continued)

Screenshot of NVivo nodes of Consumer Engagement Dimensions and Sub-dimensions
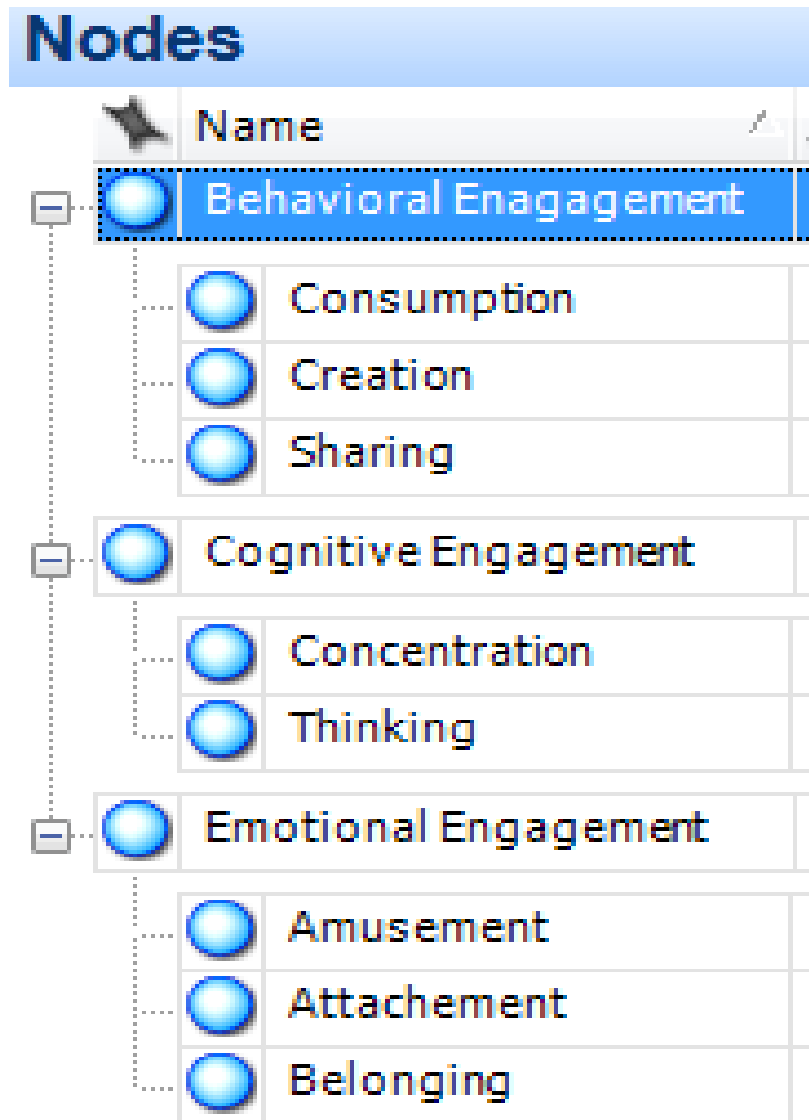
Appendix D

First Pool of Items Developed to Capture Consumer Engagement in Social Media Based Brand Communities

Dimension	Sub-dimension	Statements measuring sub-dimensions
Emotional Engagement	**Attachment**	1. I have a positive emotional connection to this brand page.
		2. I am psychological connected to this brand page.
		3. I would be disappointed if this brand page no longer existed.
		4. I love everything in this brand page.
		5. I feel personally connected to this brand page.
	Amusement	6. This brand page makes me happy.
		7. When I am in a bad mood, I log the brand page to read funny comments.
		8. I interact in this brand page just for fun.
		9. This brand page is interesting.
		10. I have pleasant experiences in this brand page.
	Belonging	11. I enjoy being part of this brand page.
		12. I trust all the comments that other consumers post in this brand page.
		13. I feel that I belong to this brand page.
		14. People who are not members in this brand page ae different than me in many aspects.
		15. I like to be identified with this brand page.
		16. I feel like a part of the family of this brand page.
Cognitive Engagement	**Concentration**	17. I usually pay attention to what I read in the brand page.
		18. I am immersed in the content of this brand page.
		19. I refer to the views in the brand page in my purchase decisions.
		20. I usually concentrate and focus on what I am reading in the brand page.
	Thinking	21. I usually think about the posts I find in this brand page.
		22. I am rarely distracted when I visit this brand page.
		23. I often remember the posts I see in the brand page.
		24. I am convinced with the views I find in the brand page.
Behavioural Engagement	**Consumption**	25. I usually log into this brand page to get updated about its content.
		26. It is important to me to follow the posts in this brand page.
		27. I read the content that are posted in the brand page on a regular basis.
	Creation	28. I interact with the posts that I see in this brand page.
		29. I post pictures and videos on the wall of the brand page.
		30. I write comments in this brand page.
		31. I usually help other members in the brand page when they ask questions related to the brand consumption.
		32. I usually post questions on the brand page.
	Sharing	33. I usually share posts from this brand page with my social network.
		34. I ask my friends to join this brand page.

Appendix D (Continued)

(Pilot Study Tests)

I)   Engagement Scale Development (Calibration Sample)

SPSS Output (Total Variance Extracted of the Engagement Scale items in the Calibration Sample)

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.797	36.229	36.229	5.797	36.229	36.229	4.656	29.100	29.100
2	4.316	26.973	63.202	4.316	26.973	63.202	4.633	28.955	58.055
3	1.930	12.065	75.267	1.930	12.065	75.267	2.754	17.212	75.267
4	.803	5.017	80.284						
5	.705	4.404	84.688						
6	.509	3.178	87.866						
7	.446	2.786	90.652						
8	.355	2.220	92.872						
9	.332	2.078	94.950						
10	.267	1.670	96.620						
11	.185	1.158	97.778						
12	.122	.763	98.541						
13	.080	.499	99.040						
14	.061	.380	99.420						
15	.058	.365	99.786						
16	.034	.214	100.000						

Total Variance Explained

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

SPSS Output (Scree Plot of the Engagement Scale items in the Calibration Sample)
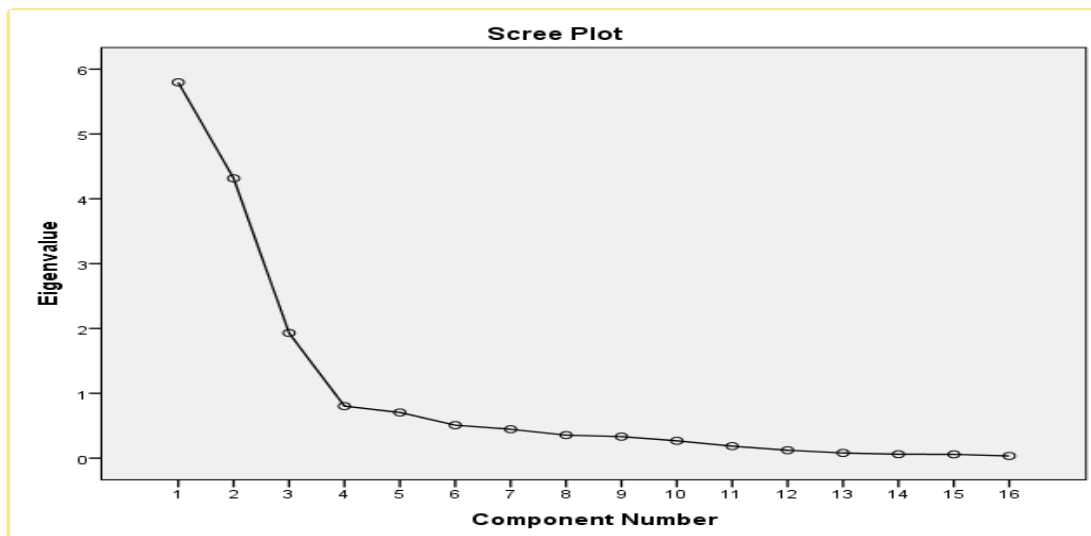
SPSS Output (Loadings of the Engagement Scale items in the Calibration Sample)

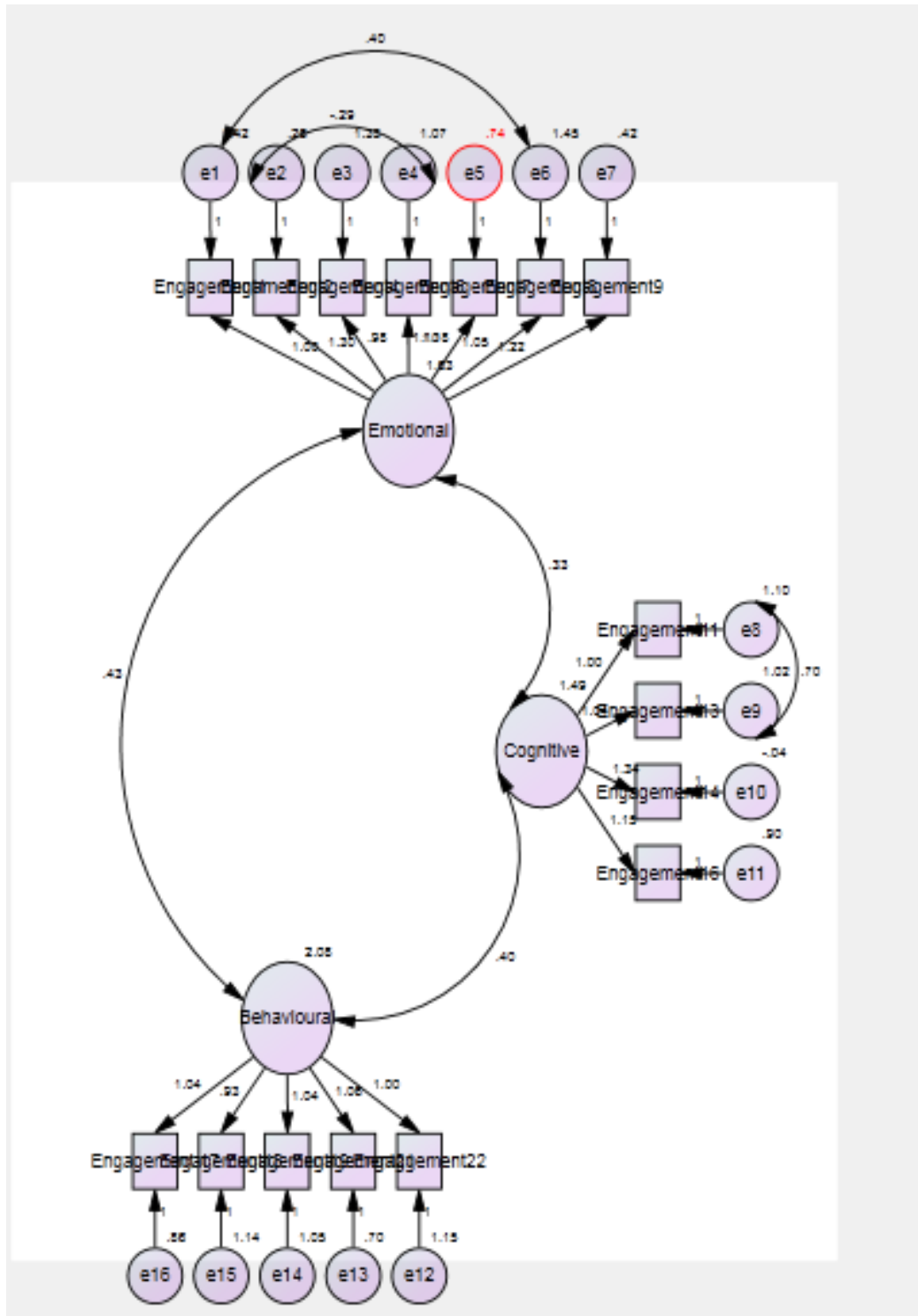| Rotated Component Matrix^a	Component		
	1	2	3
Engagement1	-.044-	.765	.166
Engamenent2	-.082-	.823	.199
Engagement4	-.004-	.821	.008
Engagement6	.083	.881	.047
Engagement7	.029	.783	.116
Engagement8	.091	.846	.125
Engagement9	.094	.731	-.098-
Engagement11	.064	.017	.710
Engagement13	.272	.120	.690
Engagement14	.157	.156	.888
Engagement16	.228	.105	.853
Engagement 17	.947	.012	.156
Engagement18	.958	.055	.166
Engagement19	.947	-.008-	.213
Engagement21	.944	.040	.204
Engaggement22	.930	.044	.107

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

SPSS Output (Reliability analysis for the Engagement Scale items in the Calibration Sample)

Item-Total Statistics	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Engagement1	96.0275	243.990	.467	.780
Engamenent2	96.0642	241.468	.521	.776
Engagement3	96.2018	271.403	.022	.806
Engagement4	96.0000	244.815	.469	.780
Engagement5	96.7064	275.450	-.027-	.804
Engagement6	95.9817	240.685	.592	.773
Engagement7	96.0459	243.174	.507	.777
Engagement8	95.8349	239.269	.599	.772
Engagement9	95.9083	250.954	.417	.783
Engagement10	96.1101	278.691	-.093-	.805
Engagement11	95.8624	258.101	.277	.791
Engagement12	95.8440	269.337	.073	.801
Engagement13	95.5872	253.189	.452	.782
Engagement14	95.5963	244.576	.526	.777
Engagement15	96.3945	278.130	-.082-	.809
Engagement16	95.6239	247.792	.492	.779
Engagement 17	95.3211	249.016	.513	.779
Engagement18	95.3028	246.083	.571	.776
Engagement19	95.2936	248.191	.534	.778
Enagagement20	95.5046	268.271	.076	.802
Engagement21	95.2844	247.761	.554	.777
Engaggement22	95.3028	250.102	.496	.780
Engagement23	95.8349	278.972	-.097-	.809

Engagement Scale Development (Validation Sample)

AMOS Output (CFA of the Engagement Scale Items)

SPSS Output (Exploratory Factor Analysis for some variables in the Pilot Study)

Component Score Coefficient Matrix

	Component
	1
Brand Identification 1	.409
Brand Identification 2	.434
Brand Identification 3	.383

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Component Matrix[a]

	Component
	1
perceived monetary benefits 1	.899
perceived monetary benefits 2	.910
perceived monetary benefits 3	.794

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

Component Matrix[a]

	Component
	1
Trust1	.789
Trust2	.839
Trust3	.789

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

Appendix E

Some SPSS outputs of Demographic characteristics in the main survey

Statistics

Age

N	Valid	591
	Missing	0

Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-22	226	38.2	38.2	38.2
	23-25	195	33.0	33.0	71.2
	26-29	170	28.8	28.8	100.0
	Total	591	100.0	100.0	

Statistics

Gender

N	Valid	591
	Missing	0

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	347	58.7	58.7	58.7
	Female	244	41.3	41.3	100.0
	Total	591	100.0	100.0	

Screenshot of the SMART PLS Outputs (t value)
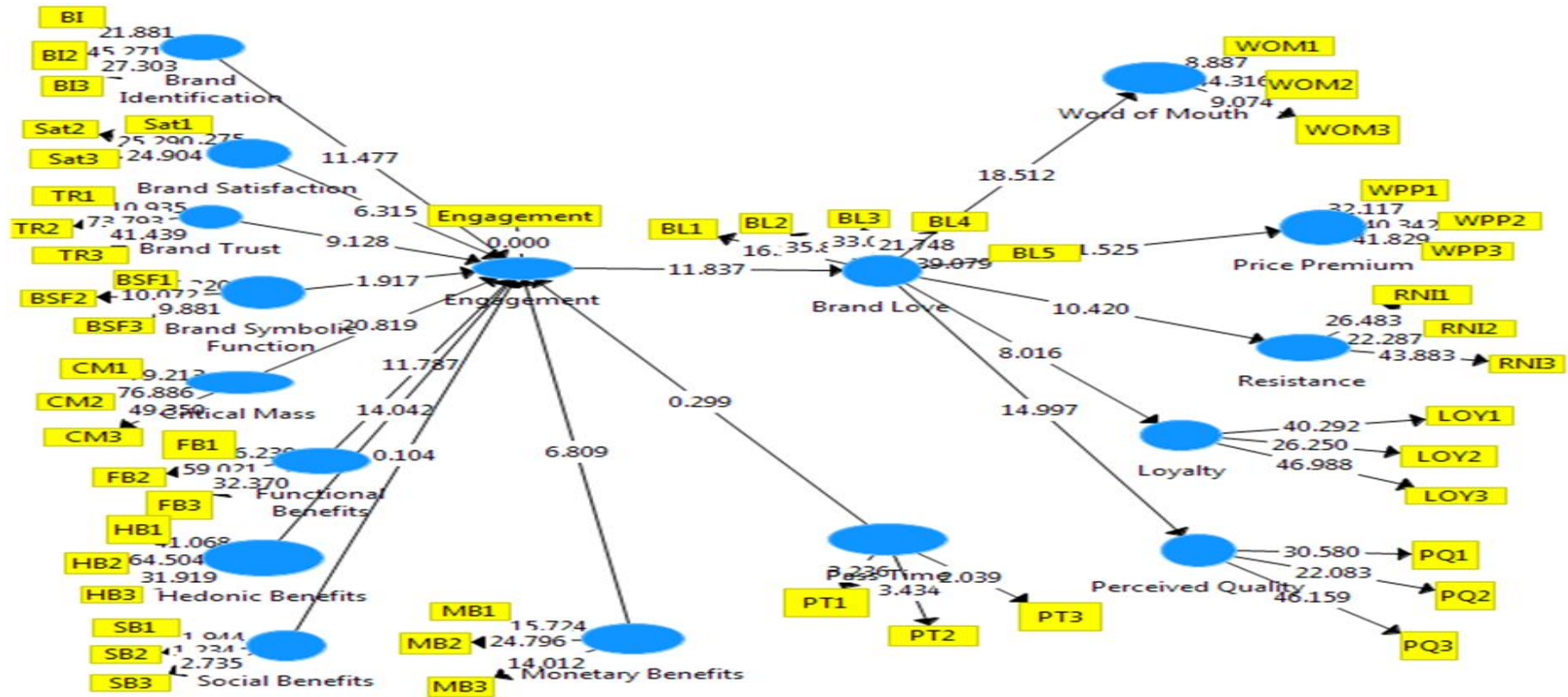
Screenshot of the SMART PLS Outputs (Path Coefficients)
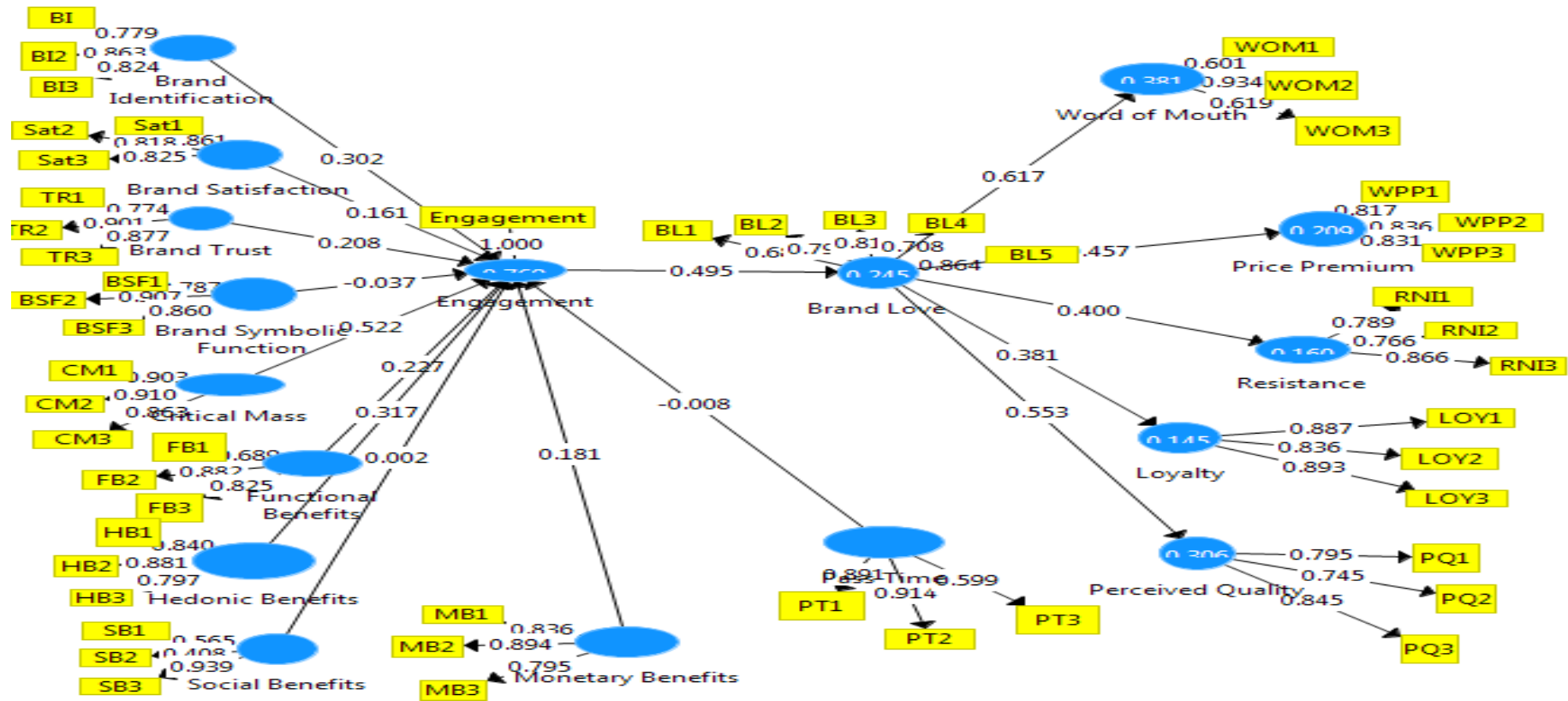
Screenshot of the SMART PLS Outputs (Path Coefficients)

Path Coefficients

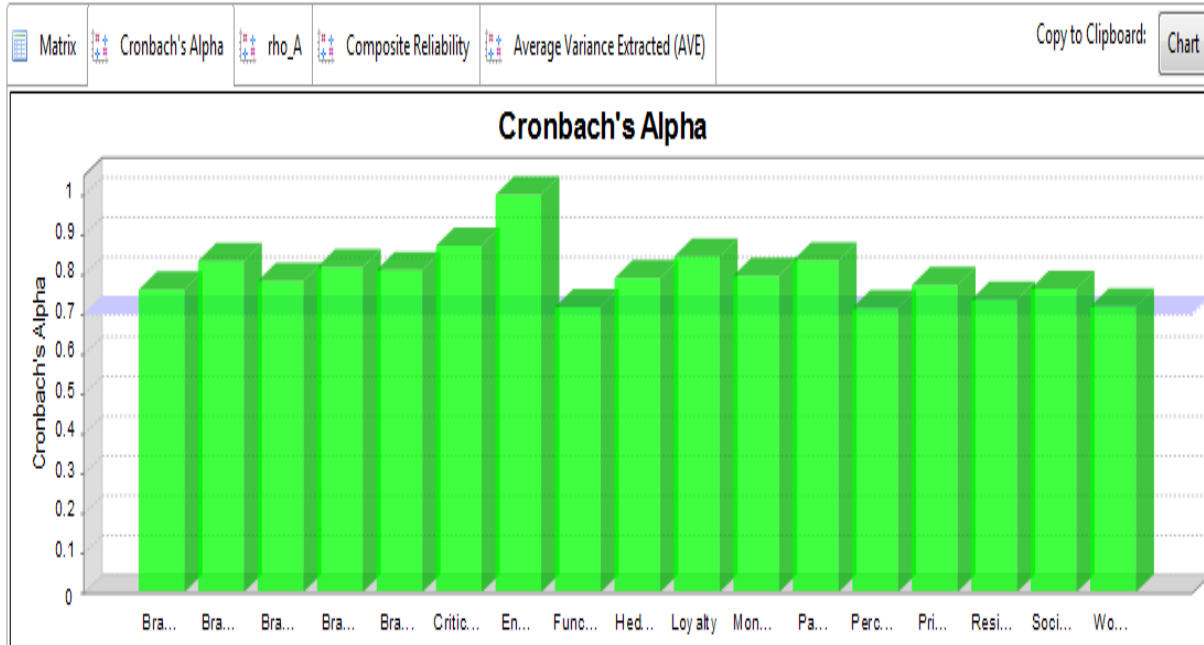| | Mean, STDEV, T-Values... | | Confidence Intervals | | Confidence Intervals B... | | Samples | Copy to Clipboard: | Excel Format | R For |

	Original Sampl...	Sample Mean (...	Standard Devia...	T Statistics (|O...	P Values
Brand Identification_ -> Engagement	0.302	0.301	0.026	11.477	0.000
Brand Love -> Loyalty	0.381	0.385	0.047	8.016	0.000
Brand Love -> Perceived Quality	0.553	0.555	0.037	14.997	0.000
Brand Love -> Price Premium	0.457	0.457	0.040	11.525	0.000
Brand Love -> Resistance	0.400	0.402	0.038	10.420	0.000
Brand Love -> Word of Mouth	0.617	0.620	0.033	18.512	0.000
Brand Satisfaction -> Engagement	0.161	0.162	0.026	6.315	0.000
Brand Symbolic Function -> Engagement	-0.037	-0.036	0.020	1.917	0.055
Brand Trust -> Engagement	0.208	0.207	0.023	9.128	0.000
Critical Mass -> Engagement	0.522	0.520	0.025	20.819	0.000
Engagement -> Brand Love	0.495	0.496	0.042	11.837	0.000
Functional Benefits -> Engagement	0.227	0.225	0.019	11.787	0.000
Hedonic Benefits -> Engagement	0.317	0.316	0.023	14.042	0.000
Monetary Benefits -> Engagement	0.181	0.182	0.027	6.809	0.000
Pass Time -> Engagement	-0.008	-0.000	0.027	0.299	0.765
Social Benefits -> Engagement	0.002	0.001	0.023	0.104	0.917

Path Coefficients

| | Matrix | | Path Coefficients | | | Copy to Clipboard: | Chart |

Path Coefficients
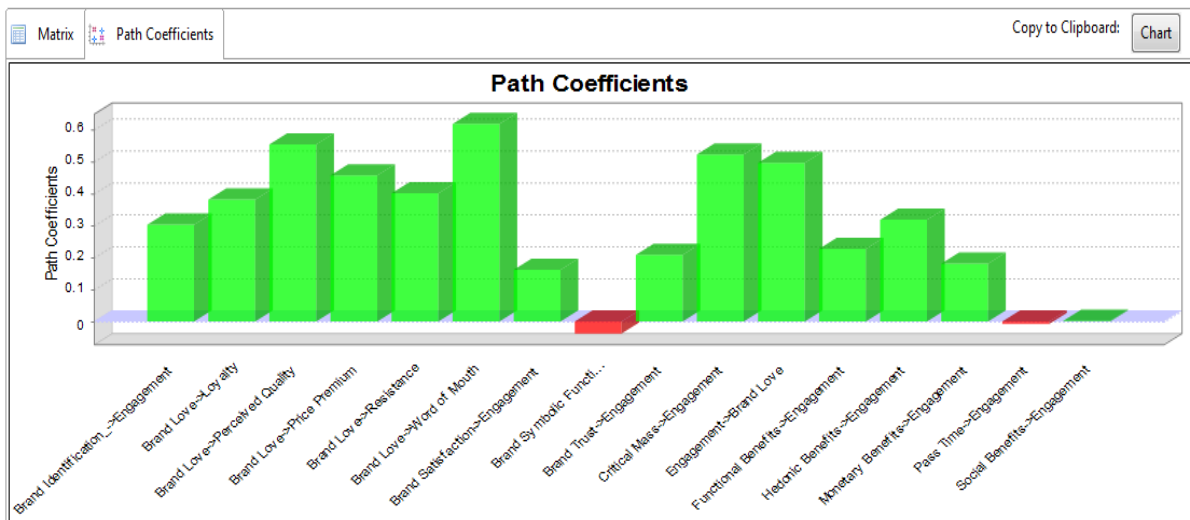
Screenshot of the SMART PLS Output (Cronbach's Alpha)

Construct Reliability and Validity

| Matrix | Cronbach's Alpha | rho_A | Composite Reliability | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) | Copy to Clipboard: | Chart |

Screenshot of the SMART PLS Outputs (R-square)

R Square

| Mean, STDEV, T-Values... | Confidence Intervals | Confidence Intervals B... | Samples | Copy to |

	Original Sampl...	Sample Mean (...	Standard Devia...	T Statistics (|O...	P Values
Brand Love	0.245	0.248	0.041	5.929	0.000
Engagement	0.769	0.774	0.035	21.950	0.000
Loyalty	0.145	0.150	0.036	3.978	0.000
Perceived Qual...	0.306	0.309	0.041	7.522	0.000
Price Premium	0.209	0.211	0.036	5.772	0.000
Resistance	0.160	0.163	0.031	5.195	0.000
Word of Mouth	0.381	0.386	0.041	9.225	0.000