

Relationship of Brand Community Characteristics with Brand Community Engagement

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ABSTRACT

Within the era of branding and consumer liberalization, the dynamics of engaging the brand community remained the center of attention for marketers. Referring to the existing literature this research aimed to establish the causal linkage between brand community characteristics- member's familiarity, trust with each other and perceived personalization with the community engagement. 200 iPhone users identified through purposive sampling came out to be the sample of the study. The questionnaire as the research instrument was selected to fulfill the purpose of data collection. Once the collected data meet the requirement of reliability through Cronbach alpha, correlation and multiple linear regression were applied to extract the final results of the study. The glaring importance of brand community characteristics {Adj-R²= .563, $f(3, 196) = 86.312$ } in influencing brand engagement emerged as the final results of the study. All three factors, Brand trust { $t(3, 196) = 5.293, p = .000$ }, familiarity { $t(3, 196) = 2.380, p = .018$ } and perceived personalization { $t(3, 196) = 5.574, p = .000$ } came out to be significant contributors towards brand engagement. The study contributes towards the refinement of understanding of policymakers and marketers related to engaging their respective brand community.

Keywords: Brand community, brand community engagement, perceived personalization.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

1.1.1. Brand Community

"Brand community" was for the first time addressed by Thomas C. O'Guinn and Albert Muniz Jr. in 2001, it's a community of those consumers who have developed a social relationship set due to their interest and usage of the product with no geographical limitations. Furthermore, you can directly interact with Business to Consumers (B2C) [sz1] and Consumers to Consumers (C2C) through brand communities, but now brand communities have been transformed into virtual brand communities that mean communities exist only on the internet not physically for example [sz2] at SWOT group people share their feedback regarding food and restaurants which helps others to make effective decisions. Another example is that of Sephora [sz3], one of

the leading online community for personal care and beauty products. It is doing a wonderful job of helping its customers to feel connected with the other members in their online community, this, in turn, is benefiting the marketers and organizations in terms of brand loyalty and Consumer Relationship Management (CRM). Beauty talk is where users get the chance to share ideas, ask questions, and give feedback. A virtual brand community is one of the many tools for the brand community. Thus, the brand community is a tool to strengthen customer relationships towards their brand as they have great potential to captivate and attract customers and immense marketing power.

1.1.2. C2C Interaction in Brand Communities

Because of the growth and expansion of social media, a great sense of attachment has developed among the peer members within a brand community. It is because of this that the collective environment gains more importance to CRM and word-of-mouth. Moreover, the internet eases the interactions among people not only in a place, region, but also around the world, thus their decisions are influenced by members who have similar interests.

1.1.3. Community Engagement

Community engagement is the process of working collaboratively with the community. It refers to encouraging and supporting the members to not only participate but also form a strong bond the products and other customers. The community engagement's consequences may correspond to a relatively stronger brand relationship that protects it from undesired behaviors and increases willingness to pay a premium for their desired brand. From the perspective of brand loyalty, consumers who lack brand awareness might lead to lesser interaction and communication within the circle of community.

1.1.4. Familiarity Among the Members

The Internet plays a significant role here, as it acts as a platform for brand identity creation and community interaction. The brand community has a significant effect on the brand because communities with the authority to angle the brand essence in any direction. Whenever there is an interaction between the brand and its community or the members within a community, a third-party relationship takes birth along with the brand value creation. However, the company should evaluate all the risk possibilities of the brand community. The risks usually involve public sharing of information on the internet among the members and thus, competitors are also exposed to this information. Moreover, it is not necessary that the user experience would always be positive. If negative, it can have an impact on brand value accordingly.

1.1.5. Community Trust

Several companies are supporting not only the creation, but also the development of brand communities through social networking medium. In this way, they make the most of the capabilities of not only the brand community but also social media. Famous brands like Jeep which have an offline brand community that tries to bond with its customers and thus, boost brand communities on the social sites, for example, Facebook and Myspace. Social media supported brand communities are those that are commenced on the social media platforms. Brand communities on social media develop brand loyalty. Such Brand communities have great effects on community markers.

1.2. Scope of the Study

In this study, we will find out the relationship between the characteristics of the brand community (i.e. familiarity among the members, perceived personalization, and brand community trust) and the brand community engagement. Here, this study will consider the brand apple among the youth, particularly the students of Institute of Business Management.

1.3. Problem Statement

There are a lot of studies that examine the brand community characteristics to the effect it has on the behavior of consumers (Brodie *et al.*, 2013; De Valck *et al.*, 2009). It is noteworthy that there are very few studies that evaluate the relationship and correlation between the variable characteristics of the brand community. Nambisan and Baron (2007) the managers need to learn customer engagement in social media supported brand communities was established. Moreover, the significance of brand community engagement has been distinguished by many other scholars (Algesheimer *et al.*, 2005; Schau *et al.*, 2009). Also, there is no such study found in social media brand communities about customer engagement's conceptual framework regarding marketing context (Brodie *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, a few studies are present in the engagement of the brand community (Habibi *et al.*, 2014). There are lesser studies present that draws attention to the relationship of the brand community engagement and the brand community characteristics.

1.4. Research Questions

Does brand community trust have a positive relationship with brand community engagement?

Does familiarity among the members has a positive relationship with brand community engagement?

Does brand community engagement and perceived personalization to have a positive relationship?

1.5. Hypotheses

H1: "there is no positive relation between brand community trust and the brand community engagement."

H2: "there is no positive relation between familiarity among the members and the brand community engagement."

H3: "there is no positive relationship between the brand community engagement and perceived personalization."

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: literature review is given in section two, section three explains the research methodology and data descriptions are reported in section four, section five outlines discussion of study and conclusions, suggestions and recommendations are given in section six.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Review of Literature

A brand community is a circle/group of ardent customers that are organized around the activities, lifestyle, and ethics of the brand. Brand communities can be not only virtual but also physical. In a brand community, people who are fascinated by a particular brand, socialize (McAlexander *et al.*, 2002; Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001). However, there are several reasons why a brand community exists. A few of these include knowledge and skill development of an individual regarding a particular product, obtain information and socialization and enjoyment (Zaglia, 2013).

2.1.1. Brand Communities

A brand community is of two types; physical and virtual brand communities. Virtual brand communities exist only on social media platforms or broadly, on the internet. It acts as a tool for the brand community. These communities are created based on the connection of a brand or product with no geographical boundaries (McAlexander *et al.*, 2002; Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001). Obtaining information about a particular product or brand, building up one's knowledge and abilities for a specific product, satisfaction or socialization are various benefits of communities. (Zaglia, 2013)

Distinct forms of online communities are present, counting on the scope of activities, operational activities, formation's methodology, and the entity that makes the community. To strengthen customer relationships towards their brand, corporations create corporation-led communities where customers share their experiences regarding brand or products which influences others to make purchase decisions because word-of-mouth is a tool which transforms normal buyer into potential buyers or vice versa by delivering positive or negative information.

It has been seen that customer-led communities tend to attract individuals having a similar interest such as favorite celebrities, parenting, marriage, music, fashion, and interiors. Members in the communities share their valuable feedback and information which helps others to make decisions. It is because of their parallel interests, they generate strong bonds with each other. Thus, brand communities formed based on similar interest among people towards a product or brand.

2.1.2. C2C Interaction in Brand Communities

Interaction is very vital in brand communities. Without the interactions, you cannot share and communicate information or convey your messages to anyone regarding anything. The Internet plays a fundamental role in our lives, it has eased the interactions among numerous people around the globe. With the expansion of social media, the interactions have increased among peers in a brand community. Hence, these interactions influence the decisions of the members with similar interest that means their decisions are dependent on others. They do not take decisions autonomously anymore. (Bruhn *et al.*, 2014; Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001). Moreover, it is proposed by studies that such exchanges affect loyalty with the communities' circle (Chen *et al.*, 2009). According to Bruhn *et al.* (2014), customer to customer C2C interaction is a process of exchange of thoughts, experience, information between the people who use similar brands. C2C (consumer to consumer) interactions focused on one-to-one interactions between customers and the providers of the services. Nonetheless, currently, the invisible online space is where it occurs (Gruen *et al.*, 2005). C2C communication can lead to a reduction in the vagueness in activities (Adjei *et al.*, 2010). C2C interaction makes a strong bond between members, therefore, it protects the brand from unwanted behaviors and increases willingness to pay more for their preferred brand which creates a constructive impact on profitability, loyalty, financial performance, and brand equity (Gruen *et al.*, 2005).

2.1.3. Community Engagement

Engagement brings positive results to a brand as it includes interactions and cooperation. The brand community, not only strengthens the brand ties, but also the products, corporations, and the customers (Habibi *et al.*, 2014). The brand community is not just a terminology; it is rather a whole process. In this process, the members that are a constituent of the brand community, encourage other members to participate and they also support the fellow members (Algesheimer *et al.*, 2005; Jang *et al.*, 2008; McAlexander *et al.*, 2002; Nambisan and Baron, 2007). According to Wu, Fan & Zhao (2018), community engagement increases the probability of post-purchase reviews and positive online word of mouth.

2.1.4. Brand Community and Perceived Personalization

Besides the mentioned aspects, perceived personalization is considered essential in satisfying the customer needs using customization. Customize or Individualize marketing is vital to increasing brand loyalty and customer retention. Management, engineering, and service science intend to grow competence and by offering to the growth of personalized services through bettering the process of service by implementing information technology systems, (Liang *et al.*, 2012). Perceived personalization refers to customer data that is eligible to e-commerce exchange in between customer and firms by using technology. Personalization attributes to the procedure in which customer information is gathered by companies in real-time and to look

for information which is catering to consumers' demands and desires (Herbig and Kramer, 1994). According to modern studies, it is perceived that customers' Loyalty and satisfaction towards corporations is increased by personalized/specialized services. Sooner or Later, these increased levels of interaction (McMillan and Hwang, 2002). Personalized services are greatly inquisitive to 80% of the users on the internet (Kobsa, 2007; Liang *et al.*, 2012). The formation of comprehension on the internet is chained to CRM that implicate services that are modified by specific customer demands (Montgomery and Smith, 2009). Personnel analyzing customer preference service gives content and services suitable to the needs of customers by evaluating customer partiality (Liang *et al.*, 2012).

Komiak and Benbasat (2006) state the definition of perceived personalization the same as the consumer's perceptions to the level that suggestion agents acknowledge and consider the wants of the customers. The definition is used in this study to re-examine perceived personalization among virtual brand communities as the insights of the customer to the extent to which the brand communities substitute and understand the demands of the customer. Perceived personalization is same as customization and modification in a sense, and implies to the transaction environments suitable to customer choices by identifying customers, does the retailer's website has the ability to deliver services, and products (Srinivasan *et al.*, 2002).

Personalization constantly attracts not the customers, but also the potential users to websites and enhances an attitude that is positive towards the websites (Holland and Baker, 2001). The website's perceived personalization results in increased customers' loyalty by helping customers swiftly focus on the data they require (Srinivasan *et al.*, 2002). Properly establishing a contact instrument to make interaction with the members easy and to bridge the gap among members that is essential (Kuo and Feng, 2013). Personalized service refers to a practice of interaction in which individuals are provided specialized services that are very much related based upon their liking (Miceli *et al.*, 2007; Liang *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, personalized service was detected as an essential factor for this purpose.

2.1.5. Perceived Familiarity Among the Members and Brand Engagement

A community is referred to as a cluster where small groups or individuals share a sense of responsibility mutually and get together (Rothaermel and Sugiyama, 2001). The brand communities' asset is worthless by ascertaining a bond between the members concerned in the brands (Jang *et al.*, 2008). A perceived familiarity between the parties— familiarity among those who interact – is a cause that induces interaction, According to social psychology (Hays, 1985; Lascu and Zinkhan, 1999). Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001) propose that there should be a connection between members who think they are dissimilar from people outside the community. An environment that is computer-mediated today can originate mutual connections (Bordia, 1997). The familiarity between the brand community associates is circumscribed as individuals' wisdom of the community's other members along with their affairs (Shen *et al.*, 2010). Familiarity has also been explained at the level of interaction between members (Hinds *et al.*, 2000; Shen *et al.*, 2010).

The doubt in a relationship with a new party is abridged by familiarity. It is essential for trust. It is formed through experience, learning, and exchanges with the other party. Familiarity reinforces emotionally and trust affects the process of social interaction and communication (Shen *et al.*, 2010; Shin, 2012). Moreover, familiarity makes one appealing in interpersonal relations thus, influences attachment, commitment positively, and the interaction quality. (Flowers, 1977; Shin, 2014). Persistent familiarity with the other party influences future interaction and communication (Hinds *et al.*, 2000). Familiarity also lessens risks and uncertainties in online relations and increments member engagement (Gefen, 2000; Ridings *et al.*, 2002). It is attributed to the truth that they contribute to common interests; community members are expected to sense a closeness to one another, (Wellman *et al.*, 1996). The members that constitute a particular community vigorously take part in activities only when they comfy in the circle (Rothaermel and Sugiyama, 2001).

2.1.6. C2C Interactions in Brand Community

The interactive and informal process experienced by the customers let them give quick and multiple feedbacks (Hoffman and Novak, 1996). The individuals' interaction determines the commercial success of the company (Rothaermel and Sugiyama, 2001). The trust among members is thus the product of the members' continuous interaction and information exchange (Rothaermel and Sugiyama, 2001).

Online C2C communication comprises of different types of online communication among community members (McMillan and Hwang, 2002; Shin *et al.*, 2013). The reduction theory spotted that, consumers are guided in making their purchase decision effective through the assistance provided provided by C2C communication (Adjei *et al.*, 2010) - consumer understanding of each other (Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Shin, 2012), issues solutions (Wiertz and de Ruyter, 2007), product-related knowledge and virtual community issues discussion- are all major areas addressed by it (Füller *et al.*, 2008). This process facilitates the brand-related issues faced by members of the community (Wu and Fang, 2010).

According to McMillan and Hwang (2002) & Shin *et al.* (2013), customers can be persuaded and engaged through interactions, Additionally, one on one communication is considered to be producing more effective results for engaging the brand community (Habibi *et al.*, 2014). The value of C2C communication is enhanced when every member of that community takes active participation in it (Bruhn *et al.*, 2014). The active communication involving knowledge, feedback and review exchange among members help them fulfil their needs by buying the best product. (Shin, 2013).

2.1.7. Brand Community Trust and Brand Community

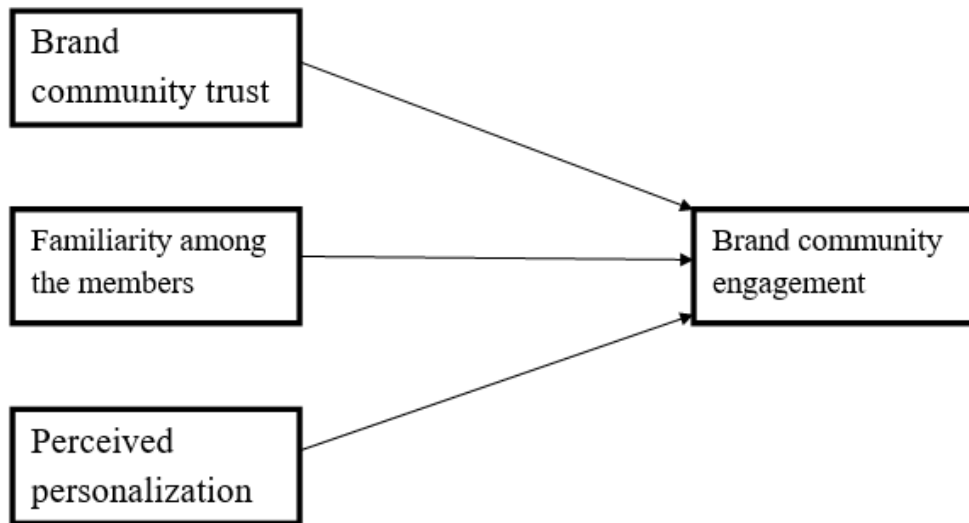
Shin (2010) explains that trust means a person's compliance to take risks following the deeds of the trustee, depending upon the anticipation that he/she takes a crucial and specific action for the sake of trust. Brand community trust speaks of the feeling and surety of protection or security, emerging from the truthfulness, trustworthiness, and reliability of a brand community and its circle (Casaló *et al.*, 2008; Shin, 2015). It is the Community trust that makes possible altruistic interactions, for example, information sharing that needs considerable efforts and time and takes place by connecting consumers with the same hobbies, interests, and values. In a brand community, it is the trust in the brand and its brand community that are very important in making relationship exchange easy and smooth (Bruhn *et al.*, 2014). According to Wang, Tajvidi, Lin & Hajli (2019), privacy control and related risks, as well as collaborative norms, have a significant influence on consumers' trust. In such communities, a trustable and interactive/reciprocal environment should be developed (Bruhn *et al.*, 2014). That is why; trust within the community is one of the major constituents for building a community (Bruhn *et al.*, 2014). Trust is an element that leads the way in easing the interactions in a brand community. Or, it can be said, trust makes a pathway for brand community communications and interactions (the interactions are arguably in the community because the other brand community members' behavior stays uncertain). Trust diminishes the alleged risk growing from the communication of more than two people. Also, trust enables brand community members' cooperative behaviour (Casaló *et al.*, 2008).

Trust increases the insight of interacting partners and, in conclusion, refreshes C2C interactions among members. It is a community trust and brand commitment that results in online word of mouth in terms of online reviews (Akrouf & Nagy, 2018). Bruhn *et al.* (2014) stated that in a business-to-business B2B brand community if there is trust, it has a significantly positive effect on C2C interactions. According to Tsai *et al.* (2012), it is the trust in a relationship that boosts brand community contribution. Higher stages of brand community trust reduce unequal information. Consequently, community members' participation is made stronger, and a two-way reciprocal relationship is developed between brand community engagement and brand trust (Habibi *et al.*, 2014). Ridings *et al.* (2002) believe that trust is when brand community members are ready to reveal their personal information.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

The study will be based on social capital theory. This theory largely refers to successfully functioning social groups' those factors that include such things as a shared feeling of identity, interpersonal relationships, a shared understanding, shared values and reciprocity, trust and norms.

The conceptual framework of the study is as follows:



3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Data

Primary data is used to obtain consumer insights. A questionnaire with 4 constructs based on a five-point Likert scale has been floated to gather the data.

3.2. Variables

There are 4 variables altogether. Brand Community Engagement is the dependent variable. Whereas the characteristics of brand community' i.e. familiarity among the members, brand community trust and perceived personalization are the independent variables.

3.3. Inclusion Criteria

The study includes the youth of the age bracket 18-44 years old who is studying in the Institute of Business Management and are iPhone users. Both the genders are part of this study.

3.4. Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size for the study consists of 200 participants. The study establishes a relationship between the brand community characteristics and brand community engagement. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling since only those respondents that are users of the iPhone came to be eligible as a sample of the study.

3.5. Statistical Technique

Since the study focuses to find out a relationship between brand community characteristics and brand community engagement, OLS – Ordinary Least Square, a regression model has been used.

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon$$

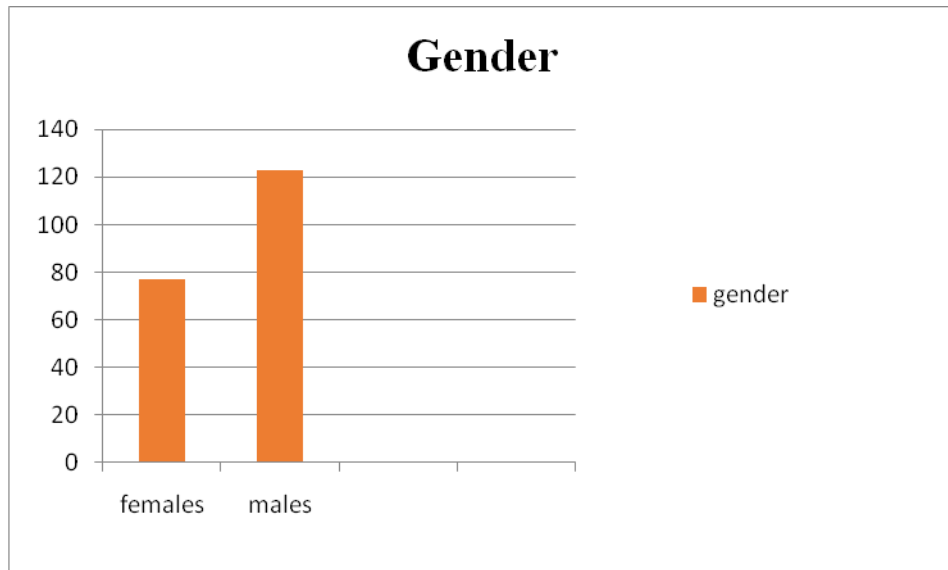
4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Descriptive Analysis

4.1.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Gender

	Females	Males
N	77	123

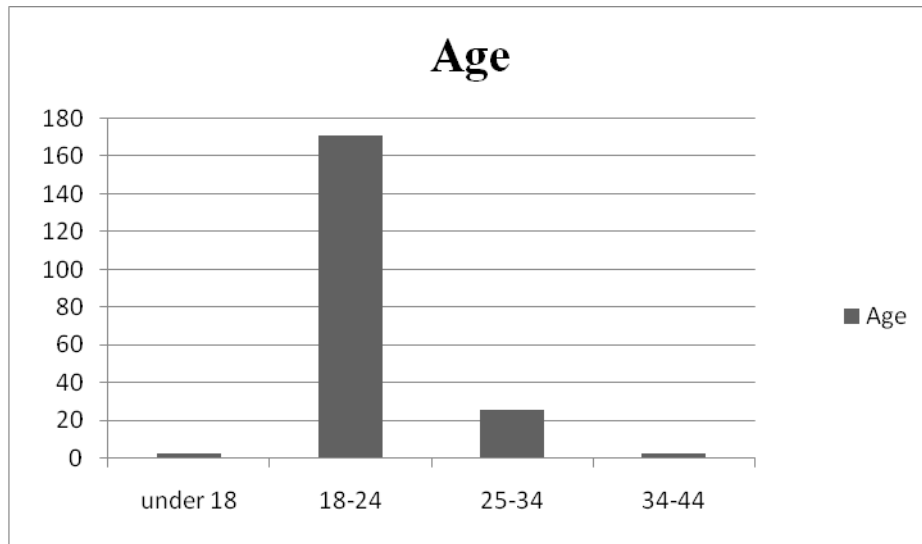


Income

	Less than 50k	51k-100k	101k-150k	151k-200k	Above 200k
N	144	35	9	3	9



Age				
	Under 18	18-24	25-34	34-44
N	2	171	25	2



4.1.2. Reliability Analysis

Reliability Analysis

	Cronbach alpha	No. of items
Brand community trust	0.761	4
Familiarity among the members	0.787	3
Perceived personalization	0.825	3
Brand community engagement	0.851	4

The alpha value of the 4 items of brand community trust is 0.761. It suggests that there is significantly higher reliability among the items of brand community trust. The criterion suggests that any value above 0.6 is high and "acceptable". Similarly, the value of the 3 items of familiarity among the members is 0.787, the value of the 3 items of perceived personalization is 0.825 and that of brand community engagement's 4 items is 0.851. All these values are highly acceptable as they are within the region. They suggest that there is significantly higher reliability among the items.

4.1.3. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance	SE of Mean
Brand community trust	2.701	0.862	0.744	0.061
Perceived personalization	2.881	0.992	0.985	0.070
Familiarity among the members	2.571	1.001	1.003	0.070
Brand community engagement	2.78	0.972	0.945	0.068

The number of valid observations is 200. The arithmetic mean of brand community trust is 2.701, perceived personalization is 2.881, familiarity among the members is 2.571 and that of brand community engagement is 2.78. Variance is the square of standard deviation and its used to measure the set's spread of observation.

The standard error of brand community trust is 0.061, perceived personalization has a standard error of 0.070, familiarity among the members has an error of 0.070 and that of brand community engagement is 0.068.

4.2. Inferential Analysis

Pearson Correlation

		BCE	T	PP	F
Pearson Correlation	BCE	1.000	0.684	0.605	0.650
	T	0.684	1.000	0.693	0.603
	PP	0.605	0.693	1.000	0.560
	F	0.650	0.603	0.560	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	BCE	.	0.000	0.000	0.000
	T	0.000	.	0.000	0.000
	PP	0.000	0.000	.	0.000
	F	0.000	0.000	0.000	.
N		200	200	200	200

The Pearson correlation between brand community engagement and brand community trust is 0.684, while that with perceived personalization is 0.605 and that with the familiarity among the members is 0.650. This shows that they are significantly correlated.

Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
1	0.754 ^a	0.569	0.563	0.64291

a. Predictors: (Constant), F, PP, T

The value of R shows the correlation. It is .754 here which means there is a very strong correlation. However, the value of R-Square represents the coefficient of determination. It shows that how much variation does the independent variable brings in the dependent variable. Here it is 56.9%.

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	107.026	3	35.675	86.312	0.000 ^b
Residual	81.013	196	0.413		
Total	188.039	199			

^a Dependent Variable: BCE

^b Predictors: (Constant), F, PP, T

It is observable here that the significance level is 0.000 that is below .01. It shows that there is a significant relationship between brand community engagement with brand community trust, perceived personalization, and familiarity among the members. The value of F=86.312, it is because of the huge difference between the mean squares.

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-test	Sig.
	B	SE	Beta		
Const	0.364	0.159		2.284	0.023
T	0.416	0.079	0.369	5.293	0.000
PP	0.157	0.066	0.160	2.380	0.018
F	0.328	0.059	0.338	5.574	0.000

^a Dependent Variable: BCE

The relation between brand community engagement and brand community trust is 0.416. The value of .369 suggests that significance at 1% is with t-value=5.293. The relation between brand community engagement and perceived personalization is 0.157. The value of .160 suggests that significance at 1% is with t-value=2.380. The relation between brand community engagement and familiarity among the members is .328. The value of .338 suggests that significance at 1% is with t-value=5.574.

4.3. Hypotheses Assessment

Hypotheses Assessment Summary

S. No.	Hypotheses	Retain/Reject	Criteria
1	there is no positive relation between brand community trust and the brand community engagement	Rejected	p-value=0.000
2	There is no positive relation between familiarity among the members and the brand community engagement.	Rejected	p-value=0.000
3	there is no positive relationship between the brand community engagement and perceived personalization	Rejected	p-value=0.000

5. DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to find out the relationships between familiarity among community members, perceived personalization, and community engagement. From our results, it is observed that there is a positive relationship between brand community characteristics (i.e., familiarity among the members, perceived personalization, and brand community trust) and the brand community engagement.

Concerning the relationship between brand community engagement, perceived personalization, personalized service has a significant positive impact on brand community engagement, thus due to the evolution of the internet and modern mediums of communication users can easily share their feedback and experiences, recommendations in online brand communities. (Wang *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, the purpose of the brand community is to connect members so that they can interact with each other by active participation in a community. As a result, they can obtain information about products and brands in more details. Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006). The literature reviews we used in our research helped us to analyze the result and interpret that c2c interactions play a vital role not only in building brand image but also in enhancing member's awareness in the brand community because with interaction members cannot communicate, share information, feedback, experience or convert your message to their members. In previous researches it was proved that yes, there is a positive relationship between familiarity among community members, perceived personalization, and community engagement as members can easily make decisions on the information, experiences, opinions, feedbacks shared by other members of the community moreover continuous interaction developed trust within communities as well as members know each other more closely that can

help them in solving their issues, therefore, brands need to focus on brand community characteristics in order to build a positive brand image in the mind of customers as customers are the key to the success of their brand. According to the respondents, there were 3 hypotheses which we were tested and all of them were rejected as the significant level was below 0.05 that shows there is a positive relationship among variables.

6. CONCLUSION, LIMITATION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Conclusion

We can say on the grounds of our research that there is a positive relation of brand community engagement with brand community trust, familiarity among the members and perceived personalization. The P-value rejected the hypotheses that were mentioned above. The values of correlation showed that there is a significantly strong correlation. Companies can utilize this research to not only enhance their brand but also to develop a brand. The research can be used to make a brand strong by making its community strong and designing strategies that align with this. Brand community engagement is all about exploring new possibilities and going beyond them. Only then your business is going to win the battle. The foundations of strong brand community engagement are trust, personalization, and familiarity. As long as the business is catering that, the customer is all yours and thus, the business grows.

6.2. Recommendations and Limitations

The limitations of the study are as follows. First, the study sample was only 200 individuals who are iPhone users due to which an overall perspective/relationship of brand community engagement and brand community characteristics could not be taken due to the respondent's constraints. Therefore, mentioning that the sample reflects all the iPhone users who use brand communities is not justified. The study may create biases [sz4] as it was collected from the 200 students only. To generalize the study, a bigger sample should be taken. The survey of this study was collected from the users of several brand community product groups, which may include the other brand community experiences apart from the iPhone.

Second, the study shows effect upon the customer to customer interaction, even when its survey included variables for brand community characteristics, customer to customer quality, brand engagement. As the main purpose of the online brand community is to maintain C2C communication and understand it, therefore, to do so, these variables should be included in the study as well.

Third, additional moderating variables apart from these should be considered to grasp the relationship between brand community engagement and brand community characteristics. The variables such as brand knowledge and involvement could have a moderating effect. The communities could have been consumer-led communities or company-led communities so the role of checking the type of communities in the future would be important.

Fourth, the scope of the study was limited to a virtual brand community, thus the scope could be expanded by including several/different hypothesis.

Finally, the study only looks upon the customer interactions based upon the past only. The consequences should also be identified through variables such as participation and commitment (loyalty). Also, it should state that the results are helpful for the managers by identifying the role of brands in working out the relationship between the brand community characteristics and brand community engagement. It is often seen that brand communities and social media often overlap. Social media is seen as a vital platform to form brand communities, the four characteristics of the brand community should have been discussed that are Membership, influence, integration, and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

Relationship of Brand Community Characteristics and Brand Community Engagement

* Required

Untitled Section

Gender *

- Female
- Male

What is your age? *

- Under 18
- 18-24 years old
- 25-34 years old
- 35-44 years old
- Above 44

Education *

Your answer

Occupation *

- Student
- Employed Full time
- Employed Half time
- Self Employed
- Retired

Which of these describes your income last month? *

- Less than Rs.50000
- Rs.51000 to Rs.100000
- Rs.101000 to Rs. 150000
- Rs.151000 to Rs. 200000
- More than Rs.200000

Please answer to all questions below *

***Instruction:** 1 shows the least level of Agreement and 5 being the Highest level of Agreement

- Based on my past experience with the online brand community in the past, I know it is not opportunistic

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- Based on my past experience with the e-service in the online brand community in the past, I know it cares about community members

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- Based on my past experience with the online brand community in the past, I know it is honest

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- Based on my past experience with the online brand community in the past, I know it is predictable

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- This online brand community understands my needs

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- This online brand community knows what I want

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- This online brand community takes my needs as its own preferences

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- Members of the online brand community are as familiar to me as good friends are

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- I have frequent interactions with other members of the online brand community by writing or replying to articles

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- The online brand community members feel familiar to me

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- I benefit from following the brand community's rules

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- I am motivated to participate in the brand community's activities because I feel better afterwards

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- I am motivated to participate in the brand community's activities because I am able to support other members

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- I am motivated to participate in the brand community's activities because I am able to reach personal goals

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- Based on my past experience with the online brand community in the past, I know it is not opportunistic

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- Based on my past experience with the e-service in the online brand community in the past, I know it cares about community members

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- Based on my past experience with the online brand community in the past, I know it is honest

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- Based on my past experience with the online brand community in the past, I know it is predictable

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- This online brand community understands my needs

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- This online brand community knows what I want

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- This online brand community takes my needs as its own preferences

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- Members of the online brand community are as familiar to me as good friends are

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- I have frequent interactions with other members of the online brand community by writing or replying to articles

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- The online brand community members feel familiar to me

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- The interaction with other members of the online brand community is of high quality

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- I am very satisfied with the quality of interaction with other members of the online brand community

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- My demands concerning the quality of interaction with other members of the online brand community are met

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- I benefit from following the brand community's rules

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- I am motivated to participate in the brand community's activities because I feel better afterwards

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- I am motivated to participate in the brand community's activities because I am able to support other members

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- I am motivated to participate in the brand community's activities because I am able to reach personal goal

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---