



Effect of brand communities on consumer engagement and trust: Evidence from mobile phone brands' Facebook pages in Burundi

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ABSTRACT

The use of Facebook as a social media platform has been cited to revolutionize the performance of different brands and firms globally. The performance of the products and brands has been attributed to the creation of Facebook media brand communities, whose level of engagement influences consumer product outcomes. This study attempted to establish to what extent Facebook social media brand communities and brand engagement on brand trust. The study established that the three attributes of Facebook brand communities positively influenced consumer brand engagement (shared consciousness ($\beta=1.52$, $p=0.001$), shared rituals ($\beta=1.44$, $p=0.001$), obligations to society ($\beta=2.11$, $p=0.001$). The study further established that social media brand engagement positively influenced brand trust. The study recommends that firms should effectively increase their product and brand promotion and engagement through Facebook.

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Introduction

The inception of social media platforms has equated the global business community to a global village of brand consumers. Social media platforms are easily accessible where firms take advantage to advertise and sell their products thus improving their competitiveness (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). With the ever-changing technological world, organizations have been forced to concentrate more on social media communities to gain a competitive advantage over their competitors. Such interest has strongly been driven by the fact that organizations would want to establish how consumers perceive their products and services and create new online consumers (Laroche et al., 2012). According to Patterson (2012), social media has created a large community due to its low cost and high communication efficiency. Currently, several firms have taken advantage of social media platforms and brand communities to create and develop new brands. These brands are advertised and promoted in various social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Myspace and Instagram.

In the recent past, the effect of brand communities on consumer behavior and firm performance has dominated the social media marketing research. Evidence has demonstrated that virtual brand communities bind brands and communities together enhancing customers' relationship and attitude towards a brand (Hollebeek & Solem, 2017). Studies reveal that social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn reach over and above 700 million active users across the globe. This has transformed the business world with its consumers changing from silent and isolated individuals to noisy, collective and active contributors to the daily operation of the business (Harrigan, Evers, Miles, & Daly, 2017; Patterson, 2012). Virtual environments enable group formations that have similar interests in a brand to share their interests, exchange information and knowledge and express their level of satisfaction with a given brand. This also allows brand owners to get feedback on their brands. Social media and brand communities have offered firms with latent tools to advance brand associations. The objective of our research is to appreciate the importance of social media and brand communities. From the perspective of brand engagement and trust, the study considers whether and how social media has affected consumer trust and brand engagement.

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Literature Review

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media is defined as a group of online and offline applications that allows for the exchange of user-generated content including the exchange of knowledge and opinions. Social media is a group of internet-based applications that generally build on the ideologies which enable the exchange of user-generated content. Globally, almost every single firm is promoting its products and services on social media. The level of investment on social media handles is so huge because of the outcomes social media has had on the performance of these firms. Besides, with the recent technology, social media has gained immense popularity since these platforms can be accessed from any electronic gadget. Social media platforms have influenced and revolutionized business activities like promotion, advertising and after-sales services. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), further post that social media is an asset to organizations which allows for the flexibility in direct engagement with consumers.

The study by Patterson (2012) echoed the findings by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), that social media is not only suitable for large companies, but also small and medium-sized enterprises. There are several social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Vimeo, and LinkedIn. Each company needs to evaluate and select a platform suited for its customers' engagement. According to a study by Patterson (2012), social media offers a very large potential customer base to organizations which makes it easy to connect with consumers and compete with competitors. The study also alludes that social media empowers consumers enabling them to have a voice which cannot be offered by many organizations. Empirical studies post that social media communities shape the opinions of consumers and even those of competing businesses (Zhang, Sun, Zhu, & Fang, 2010). There is little evidence on how social media communities influence the level of consumer engagement and trust of firms which have a high virtual presence. The little available evidence offers mixed findings on the intricate relationship between social media communities and the performance of firms.

Social Media Brand Communities

A brand community is a non-geographically bound community based on structured social relations among users of a certain brand (Schuh, 2018). A brand community is made up of people who are skewed to the same interest in a particular brand, product or service. According to Shneiderman (2015), brand communities are crucial in performing several functions on behalf of a brand. Such functions include informing customers of new product developments, acting as a platform for customers to advocate for or against a brand, and acting as a marketing tool for the brand. Several authors have proposed five dimensions of social media brand communities which include the social context, the structured context, scale, storytelling and the affiliates (Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013).

Laroche et al. (2013), postulates that engagement is the most critical aspect of social media communities as this enables organizations to easily obtain a bigger market share and more consumer attention. Social media pages like Facebook, Twitter, My Space, and Instagram have allowed organizations to engage more than often on a one on one with their customers. This enables feedback to be obtained about the performance of a brand. Social media consumers engage differently with their brands. Whereas some may spend very little time on social media pages reviewing the content of their brand, some may spend several hours comparing their brands with other competing brands. Consequently, community members vary according to their engagement with the brand community. Also, they have varying attitudes towards a brand according to their motivations to become a community member on social media (Lapointe, Ramaprasad, & Vedel, 2014)

Several reasons motivate consumers in joining social media communities. Some of these reasons include; seeking information and advice to aid their understanding of the products they use, comparing various reviews from other virtual communities, comparing reviews of their brands with reviews of other brands, and scavenging for emerging new brands Shneiderman (2015). Some may join to seek a recommendation from a social network connection. Shneiderman (2015) concluded that the more trustworthy the social media community is to a member, the more they participate, thus resulting in a positive experience and loyalty to a brand. A study by Shneiderman (2015) established that trust is a critical factor in enabling the survival of a social media community. The study also postulated that security profoundly influences a consumer's sentiments regarding social media communities. This can eventually affect a consumer's trust.

Other scholars have supported the foregoing literature by stating that within Social Media Brand Communities, fresh forms of social exchange are picking up between consumers which have been termed as consumer-to-consumer interactions. These interactions are playing a very vital role between customers when making the purchase decision. For instance, when a customer on a Facebook page poses a question or a concern about a product's use and specifications. A response from another customer who has utilized the gives other individuals who are on the same page find the confidence of buying the same (Lapointe et al., 2014)

Consumer Brand Engagement (0.5)

Many scholars have delved into the concept of consumer brand engagement giving it different definitions. According to Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie (2014), brand engagement can be defined as a consumer's behavioral manifestation towards (Harrigan et al., 2017). According to other scholars, consumer-brand engagement can be conceptualized as a psychological state that occurs in conjunction with a customer's interactive experience with a focal brand, as well as a multidimensional construct comprising cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions (Lapointe et al., 2014). According to Schuh (2018) consumer engagement is a

psychological process, which describes the underlying mechanisms in operation when a new customer forms loyalty or a repeat customer maintains loyalty.

Hollebeek and Solem (2017), stated that inasmuch as social media platforms have created a suitable environment for developing customer relationships, the increase in the utilization of social media has brought up the need for the concept of customer engagement. The study further revealed that social media communities have, in the recent past, created the best platforms for customers to depict their engagement behaviors. As a result, this has allowed the organizations to engage with their customers online. Social communities provide both customers and firm's cheaper and easy ways to engage with each other. The study by Hollebeek and Solem (2017), also found out that social brand engagement and participation always focus on loyal customers rather than one-time buyer customers. Furthermore, their focus is on the customers' perceptions about a given brand, sharing of information and learning about the brand customers and their needs.

Consumer brand engagement has been acknowledged as a key area of study for researchers in the marketing field as well as in social science. However, there are very few empirical studies that have been done in this area and little has been documented about how customer behavioral engagement within a social media brand communities (Harrigan et al., 2017). Research by Van Harrigan et al. (2017), identified the consequences of customers' engagement behavior, which result in factors such as trust, satisfaction, commitment and loyalty. The basis for this argument is that social media engagement can add to the shopping experience for a customer and provide entertainment and knowledge. However, further analysis is required to investigate how relationship factors can influence purchase decisions.

Consumer Brand Trust

Consumer brand trust is a customer's belief in a brand that makes it possible for a repurchase or new customer's referral. A consumer can only trust a brand if he/she has obtained the level of satisfaction anticipated over a long period. In the current century, the online purchase has gained so much popularity hence making individuals visit and join organizations' social media brand communities (SMBCs) to enable them to gather more information before deciding whether to purchase or not (Cvijikj, Spiegler, & Michahelles, 2013). The study further postulates that social media should serve two main agendas when it comes to e-business and trust. Foremost, delivering information to the members of a social group. Secondly, providing a platform where people, with the same interest in a brand, can freely share and exchange their experiences and information about a brand.

A study by Schultz (2017) alludes that consumer brand trust develops in stages. The initial stage of trust is based purely on economic benefits which are strengthened by the availability of online information. This online information emanates from experiences being shared by other virtual community consumers. The study further recorded that trust in social media brand communities is centered on the benefits derived from information and knowledge available in the community, and also on social identification with other members of the community. The main reason for Electronic Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises to advance SMBCs is the opportunity to distribute promotional information to consumers. Advertisement and promotional information highlighting products and services provide customers with the opportunity to assess the credibility of the social commerce websites.

According to Johnson and Hyysalo (2012), brand trust in an e-SME SMBC is based upon the quality of its information, such as accuracy, reliability and objectivity. Consumers' brand trust in an e-SME brand may also be based upon their identification with other consumers within a social media community. Johnson and Hyysalo (2012), argued that the credibility of other consumers can be transferred to a social media community, and hence helping customers to build high levels of confidence in an e-SME brand. The research further alluded that when users have a high level of trust in other members then they are more likely to trust a social media community and to frequently use it. One of the key functions of marketing is for companies to create a sense of a bond between consumers and brands in which brand trust is a crucial determining factor in this bond. According to Schuh (2018), brand trust can either strengthen or destroy a relationship between consumers and brands. Brand trust consists of both emotional and cognitive components. The emotional element represents the consumers' perception that the information they have about a brand is honest. On the other hand, the cognitive element represents the ability of consumers to make future transactions with a brand with confidence; based on the knowledge accumulated on the social media pages about a brand (Schultz, 2017).

Hypothesis development

Theoretical Review

The following two theories supported the study.

Theory of Planned Behavior

This theory was first started as the Theory of reasoned action in the 1980s. The Theory expressed an individual's intentions to engage in certain behaviors in specific times and places. This theory was meant to explain how individuals can exert self-control. Human beings always react in different ways and this is what determines our characters. It can be powerful if one could be able to have the capability to accurately predict how people could react to different situations. This theory was developed from two theories; "The information integration theory and the theory of reasoned action." The information integration theory which was introduced in 1971 Cvijikj et al. (2013) described how a combination of new information and the existing thoughts results in information and changes

in people's attitudes. This is well applied in decision making before one can make a judgment. This is basically how people view pieces of information and their different ways of perception. The theory of reasoned action was developed and introduced in 1980 (Laroche et al., 2013).

The theory enhances the inclusion of behavioral intention and an individual's pre-existing attitudes. The behavior of a person is or can be influenced not only by attitude or perceptions but also a person's expectations. The theory of reasoned action works under three elements; Firstly, Individuals' attitude which are personal opinions of certain specific behaviors which can be positive or negative, secondly, prevailing subjective norms which comprise of social pressure that arise from expectations of other people and it is usually has two components that is individual normative beliefs and individual's motivation and thirdly perceived behavioral control of persons which are the perceptions of one's ability to perform specific behavior (Hollebeek & Solem, 2017). The theory of planned behavior then gives reinforcement to the assumptions in the two theories. This theory gives assumptions in the intentions of individuals, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. Therefore the stronger a person's intentions are to engage in a certain behavior or norm forms a greater likelihood for elicited behavior.

Theory of Reasoned Action

This theory usually gives a relative comparison when it comes to attitudes and behaviors in human actions. The theory expresses how people behave in their existing attitudes and behaviors intentions (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2015; Zhang et al., 2010). This theory makes it easier for individuals to understand their voluntary behavior. This is done by an examination of basic motivation that forms performance actions. The theory states that "A person's intention to perform a behavior mainly predicts whether or not they perform that behavior (Harrigan et al., 2017). These kinds of behaviors are what are referred to as reasoned actions. This theory thereof suggests stronger intentions which lead to increased efforts to perform a behavior. Brand loyalty has been studied under this theory. Through this theory the antecedents of purchase behavior form attitudes that affect the purchasing power and norm (Schuh, 2018). When behaviors and attitudes are favorable then consumer brand loyalty is achieved (Lapointe et al., 2014). Factors like attitudes towards the behavior, subjective norm and purchase behavior are a combination of customers' brand loyalty (Schuh, 2018). Temporary disloyalty should not worry managers but they should strive for opportunities in grabbing brand loyalty when customers are showing loyalty to only one of them.

Hypothesis Development

Brand community based on social media

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), defines social media as a group of Internet-based applications that are built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and enables the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (UGC). The technology involved enables consumers and companies to have an access to social media in many formats from blogs and microblogs to video sharing and networking sites. The concept of user-generated content on this platform implies that consumers are not mere users of the content but they are the content producers. Social media allows people of similar minds to form groups to discuss, share information and exchange views and opinions about various brands thus forming a brand community. Such communities are referred to as brand-based communities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Schultz, 2017).

Social media-based brand communities can either be initiated by a customer who then invites other brand users to join or it can be created by brand managers. Such communities are very crucial to marketers, of young and growing companies, as they provide countless benefits which include; information about their brands, keeping in constant communication with loyal customers, consumer integration into brand identity, aiding in market research for new product innovation, and creating a lasting value with consumers (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2015). With social media, companies are able to strengthen the cultural norms and brand values of their products. Social identity theory states that consumers join social-based brand communities to establish social identity by classifying themselves into social groups in order to allow brands to fulfill their needs. The social capital theory alludes that social media-based communities create a network through which participants realize intangible social capital through sharing of information and resources about a brand (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Social media brand communities have an effect on community commonalities like consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions. Consciousness of kind is the shared intrinsic connection shared amongst people in the same group. It was found that members of a brand community felt a greater connection with one another. Through the processes of legitimacy, it was also discovered that brand loyalty members maintain their consciousness of a kind. A study by Hollebeek and Solem (2017), found out that brand communities survive on shared consciousness. There is a feeling of oneness which goes beyond the geographical boundaries. Another pillar of social media-based brand communities is shared rituals and traditions. Shared rituals and traditions help in binding communities together and expressing the meaning of the community within and beyond. They are symbolic ways of communication within a group and they help in establishing and preserving the community's identity (Laroche et al., 2013). The study found out that shared rituals and traditions among brand community members strengthen culture through celebrations, advertising, storytelling and shared experience (Shneiderman, 2015).

Social responsibility is another factor found in social media-based brand community which is crucial in ensuring the survival of such communities. Research by Harrigan et al. (2017), established two functions of social responsibilities in brand communities. The first function is to help members in reasoning and differentiating what is right from what is wrong. The second reason is to help members

of a community to reach out to each other when seeking information on their brand consumption behavior. From the foregoing literature we deduce that community communalities are positively affected in social media brand based communities with a view that social media is meant to connect people spread across the globe. We therefore propose the following hypothesis:

H1: *Social media-based brand communities positively influence shared rituals, sense of moral responsibility and consciousness of kind among members.*

Brand community based on brand trust

Trust is a critical element when it comes to brand or seller performance (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001) and it's very important during shopping. Trust is selected in our study because it is important when determining a brand performance on social media and in marketing. Social media is a platform where companies need to develop the highest level of trust, awareness, and loyalty. According to Schultz (2017), brand trust is the ability and capability of a customer to believe that a brand will perform its function appropriately to achieve total satisfaction. However, it becomes an issue when there is information asymmetry and a possibility of exploitation. The scholar further states that when there is no chance of exploitation and there is a reduction of information asymmetry, then a brand gains more trust and loyalty from customers. Consumer relationship with brand community elements on social media is enhanced through information dissemination and moral responsibilities.

According to Harrigan et al. (2017), the constant and repeated interactions of people on social media increase trust in one another and hence in the respective brand. The scholar alludes that when a brand is exposed on social media, the customers can develop a lasting relationship with a brand and hence increased the brand trust. When customers join a brand community based on social media they become constantly exposed to the brand contents as well as the meaningful experiences that other customers had with the brand and its products. They begin to communicate with other brand members as well as with marketers (Schultz, 2017). Sharing meaningful experiences with the brand on social media and receiving feedback from fellow members strengthen the ties among consumers and brand entities such as the product, the company, and other consumers. These enhanced relationships that result from the rich interactions in social media would make consumers consider the brand as more trustworthy. In social media contexts, consumers are frequently exposed to and interact with brands' posts, pictures, videos and fans. Therefore, from the foregoing literature, our study proposes the following hypothesis;

H2: *Consumers' relationship with the brand, product, company and other consumers on social media, positively influence brand trust.*

Consumer engagement with the Brand, product, and the Company

Consumer engagement and social media are highly correlated. According to Hollebeek et al. (2014), all organizations' fan pages work hard to achieve the highest number of customers' attention to like and consume their brands. However, the study postulates that people on social media vary in terms of their engagement with the brand as some may take longer hours on the same platform while others may take as little time as few minutes consuming its content. A study by (Schuh, 2018), states that not all consumers on social media behave the same since individuals' attitudes matter a great deal. The study alludes that although people with a positive attitude towards a brand, a product or a company will spend a lot of their time on these pages consuming its content; others with a negative attitude towards the same will stay as members of a brand community to continue shopping for future purposes.

The study by Schuh (2018), further postulates that while some people join a brand community to seek help and receive information; others do it to add on their knowledge about a brand, product or organization, some do it for curiosity purposes and others as competitors to steal ideas. Consumer engagement is the intrinsic motivation to engage with a brand and other consumers by interacting through social media platforms via story sharing, liking, sharing of photos, videos and commenting on related issues. Therefore, a higher engagement leads to higher social interactions and hence having higher positive effects on brand consumption. Higher engagement translates into higher attention and efforts towards a brand meaning, consumers will spend more time consuming the content of a brand page thus building stronger relationships with the brand. We therefore hypothesize that:

H3: *Consumers' relationship with a brand, a product, and the company is stronger for consumers with high product engagement compared to consumers with low engagement.*

Consumer engagement with Social Media Brand communities (0.5)

This is the concept of consumers' interaction with other members on social media communities. Rapid growth of pages on various social media platforms has greatly increased consumers' engagement. Social media communities facilitate consumer engagement since through it consumers can join their favorite brand pages, they can share brand stories and consumption experience hence increased customer purchase (Laroche et al., 2013). According to scholarly studies, social media brand communities have enabled consumers to become co-creators and multipliers of messages thus bringing about benefits of free word of mouth which increases consumer base (Schultz, 2017)

Research Model

The research model is shown in the diagram below.

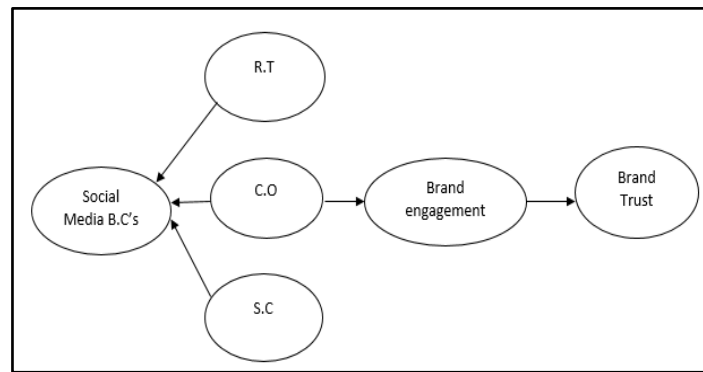


Figure 1: Research Model

Methodology

This study utilized descriptive research design to explore the relationship between Facebook brand communities, consumer engagement, and trust. Since we test our model in the context of social media based brand communities, the target population is all members of brand communities on social networking websites. This was purely an ‘opinion survey’ as such respondents were asked to state which brand community they belong to in Facebook. Various brand community were listed and the level of engagement and trust was ascertained using the Likert scale. The Likert scale was code on the 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree.

Data and Instrumentation

This study utilized only quantitative data and the respondents were sampled using purposeful sampling. Caution was exercised to ensure that only the respondents who are members of Facebook virtual communities participated in the study. To exactly establish members of a certain brand community, only those members who have liked pages of the firms that own such brands or pages of the exact brands were sampled.

Data Collection Procedures

The questionnaires were distributed through Facebook, and only members of the Facebook community were allowed to participate the study.

Variables and Measures

The model of this study involved three variables (brand communities, consumer engagement, and consumer trust). The items were measured with a multiple item scale, though some were adopted from the literature and modified to meet the current study.

Social Media Brand communities: Social media brand communities items were based on their experiences with brand communities on social networking sites of which they are members. A set of six items on a 5-point Likert scale measured this construct. This scale was adopted from the scale on measurement of brand communities previously used by Chi (2011). The scale by Srinivasan, Anderson, and Ponnayolu (2002) offered three dimensions of social media brand communities namely shared consciousness (6 items), rituals and traditions (6 items), and obligation to society (4 items) Shared Cronbach alpha was 0.73.

Social media Brand Community engagement: Social media Brand Community engagement: was measured using the scale developed by Schuh (2018). The scale consists of three 5-point Likert items. The average variance extracted is 0.64 and the Cronbach’s alpha is 0.72.

Brand Trust:

It was measured as a three-item index based on the four item index originally developed by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), using a 5-point rating of agreement with three statements: ‘I trust my brand to give me everything I expect out of it,’ ‘I rely on this brand,’ and ‘My brand never disappoints me.’ The Cronbach’s alpha for this index is 0.74.

Data analysis and findings

Data analysis Procedure

Collected data was analyzed using structural equation modelling carried out in SPSS Amos. All the necessary data fitness tests were carried out including unidimensional, internal consistency, CFA, discriminant validity, and convergent validity.

Discriminant and Convergent Validity

Discriminant validity is achieved when the correlations between the constructs differ significantly from 1 or when chi-square difference tests indicate that two constructs are not perfectly correlated. As a test of discriminant validity, the correlations among the latent variables were checked to determine if they are significantly different from 1. The results are as shown in the table below.

Convergent validity was supported from CFA results since all the factor loadings were above 0.5. The results are shown in table 2 below.

Internal Consistency

Internal consistency was evaluated by carrying out a reliability test and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The minimum Cronbach reliability value was based at 0.70, while the minimum AVE value of 0.50 was accepted in support of internal consistency.

Model estimation.

Model estimation was done prior to the hypothesis testing to estimate model fitness and any nesting of respondents in particular brands. The model estimation tests was done using intra-class correlation coefficient and

Intra-class correlation Coefficient

Intra-class correlation (ICC) was carried out to ascertain variance associated with the nesting of various subordinates within various supervisors (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2006). The ICCs for the five measures used in this study were as shown in table two below.

Table 1: Intra-class Correlation Coefficients of the Variables

Variable	ICC value
Brand community(consumer obligation (C.O)	0.032
Brand community (Rituals and traditions (O.S)	0.146
Brand community (Shared consciousness (S.C)	0.141
Consumer engagement	0.071
Consumer trust	0.058

According to Hox (2002), in general, coefficients of .05–.09 indicate a low effect, coefficients of .10–.14 represent a moderate effect, and coefficients of .15 above indicate a large effect. From the results in table 3 above, the ICC of all the variables in the study was within the acceptable range for three constructs out of the five. Therefore, there was slight variance associated with nesting of virtual communities in different brands, implying that their opinions concerning one brand was not the same with the other brand.

Correlations Matrix

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviations, Coefficient Alphas, and Inter-correlations between Variables in the Present Study

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Brand communities(C.O)	.10	.42	-				
Brand communities(S.C)	.21	.76	.245*	-			
Brand communities(O.S)	.03	.18	.254**	.213**	-		
Consumer engagement	.17	.25*	.597**	.464*	.76**	-	
Brand Trust	.81	0.92*	-.265*	.244*	-.238*	.384	-
Education level	.18	.251	.15	.06*	-.042	.221	-.28
Gender(1=Male)	.18	.502	.013	.351	.032	-.36	-.32

From the correlation coefficient above, it’s evident that brand trust and consumer engagement are positively related to various dimensions of brand communities in Facebook. After the correlational tests, we carried out the CFA to ascertain the loading levels of the different measures. Of all the 22 factors only 14 loaded well with above 0.5. The variables for each variable included: 3 items for 4 items 3 items for, 5 items for consumer engagement, and 4 items for consumer trust. The KMO Bartlett’s test was carried out to test if there was a variance between the responses of the Facebook users and those of other social media platforms concerning their level of trust on the respective brands. The KMO Bartlett’s test results revealed that there was no significant variance in the responses from Facebook and those from other social media platforms concerning the platforms. The **Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy** value was close to 1 thus indicating that the factor analysis was necessary to the data.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis.

The table below shows the indicators and values of model fitness.

Table 4: Overall reliability of the constructs and CFA loadings of indicators

Construct	Validity	AVE	MSV	ASV	Cronbach α	Factor Loading	t-Value
CC	CC1	0.560	0.450	0.175	.884	.736	17.524***
	CC 2					.772	18.682***
	CC3					.458	15.024***
	CC4					.773	18.683***
CT	CT2	0.511	0.260	0.115	0.922	.804	19.638***
	CT3					.444	18.029***
	CT4					.718	17.164***
	CT5					.444	18.030***
	CT6					.719	17.165***
	CE					CE1	0.583
CE2	.702	16.628***					
CE3	.403	19.633***					
CE4	.755	18.386***					
CR	CR1	0.500	0.177	0.102	0.956	.767	18.428***
	CR2					.315	17.044***
	CR3					.816	20.580***
	CR4					.403	19.633***
	CR5					.772	18.938***
	CR6					.772	18.682***
	CR7					.373	18.683***
RT	RT1	0.601	0.451	0.316	0.901	.767	18.428***
	RT2					.784	18.465***
	RT3					.782	18.465***
	RT4					.467	18.428***
	NSG5					.723	17.168***
	NSG6					.724	17.168***
	NSG7					.684	15.468***

Note: AVE represents average variance extracted., MSV represents maximum shared variance., ASV= represents average shared variance., CR represents construct or composite reliability, C.E represent consumer engagement., c,o represents consumer obligation., RT represents ritual and tradition., S.C represents shared consciousness., C.T represents consumer Trust.

***Significant at the 0.001 significance level.

From the findings in the factor analysis revealed of some factors which had a low loading of less than 0.5 and hence they were dropped. Convergent validity for the factors left was above 0.5, hence they were retained and used for the analysis. With respect to the fit statistics for the full model ($X^2(347) = 634.8$, $X^2/df = 1.45$, $p = 0.000$), the Chi-square is significant ($p < 0.05$), which is usually the case for large sample sizes. All other statistics are within acceptable ranges including RMSEA = 0.024, CFI = .89, GFI = 0.93, IFI = 0.92, RMR = 0.032.

Results and hypothesis testing

After ascertaining model fitness, the model was run and both direct and indirect effect measured using Beta (β) coefficients.

The results from the analysis found strong support for the effects of social media based brand community on the three markers of brand community, i.e., shared consciousness ($\beta=1.52$, $p=0.001$), shared rituals ($\beta=1.44$, $p=0.001$) and traditions, and obligations to society ($\beta=2.11$, $p=0.001$), which supported hypothesis H1 which stated that Social media based brand communities positively influence consumer obligation (C.O), rituals and consumption traditions (R.T), and shared consciousness(S.C). In another analysis, shared consciousness (S.C) had a positive significant effect on brand engagement (B.E), ($\beta=1.22$, $p=0.001$). The relationship between consumer engagement with the brand in Facebook was positively associated with their level of trust on the brand ($\beta=1.65$, $p=0.001$), which supported hypothesis H2 which stated that Consumers' engagement (C.E) with the brand, and other consumers on in Facebook, positively influence brand trust. The study further established that the three dimensions of brand communities i.e: consumer obligation (C.O) ($\beta=1.09$, $p=0.05$), rituals and consumption traditions (R.T), ($\beta=2.98$, $p=0.05$), and shared consciousness (S.C) ($\beta=2.04$, $p=0.05$) were positively associated with brand engagement in Facebook, hence hypothesis H3, was accepted.

Conclusions

This study established that products and brands establish brand communities in social media, especially Facebook because Facebook is widely used globally except in few countries. The study further established that this brand communities are influenced by the consumer obligations with regard to what they entail to consume, shared consciousness which arises out of the lengthy discussions the virtual communities hold with each other as well as the rituals and shared traditions. African countries (like Burundi), just like other western countries have rituals like Christmas, or birthdays which greatly influences the consumption behaviours especially if certain behaviours have been portrayed in social media.

Studies have equated consumption trends as a result of influence of social media communities to what is famously described in market communication as 'monkey see, monkey do). As long as consumers are convinced through the various engagement forums in Facebook concerning a certain firm or brand, their trust in such a brand increases which has a positive reciprocal effect on the level of consumption of the brands. Therefore, this study concluded that consumer brand communities in Facebook greatly with good shared conciseness, ritual consumption, and consumer obligation influences other consumers level of engagement to the brands which ultimately influences the trust of new consumers on the new brand to be high. This ultimately will influence their consumer behaviour.

The study was limited in scope as it only focused on Facebook leaving out many other social media platforms. The study also limited itself to consumer behavior and the brand/product level.

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