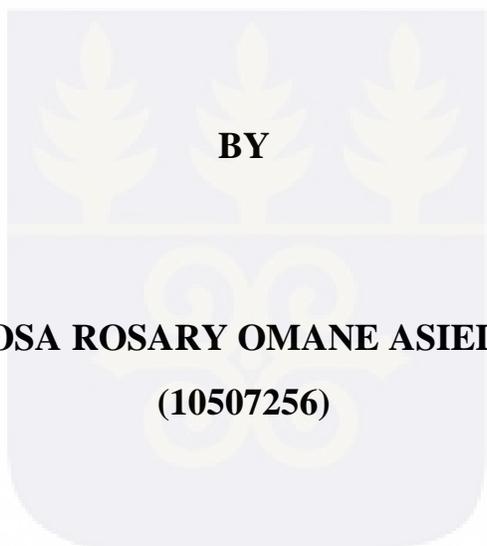


# **UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**

## **ONLINE BRAND COMMUNITY AND BRAND LOYALTY: THE ROLE OF BRAND TRUST AND BRAND COMMITMENT**



**BY**

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**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,  
LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR  
THE AWARD OF MPhil MARKETING DEGREE**

**JUNE, 2017**

## DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that this work is the result of my own research and has not been presented by anyone for any academic award in this or any other University. All references used in the work have been fully acknowledged.

I bear sole responsibility for any shortcomings.

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## CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this thesis was supervised in accordance with procedures laid down by the University.

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## DEDICATION

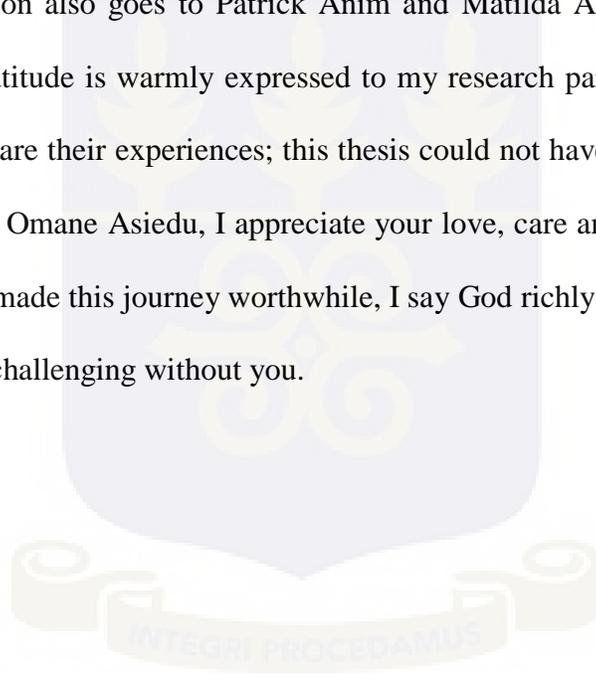
I dedicate this thesis to Almighty God for his grace and mercy and to the late John Aku Quashie.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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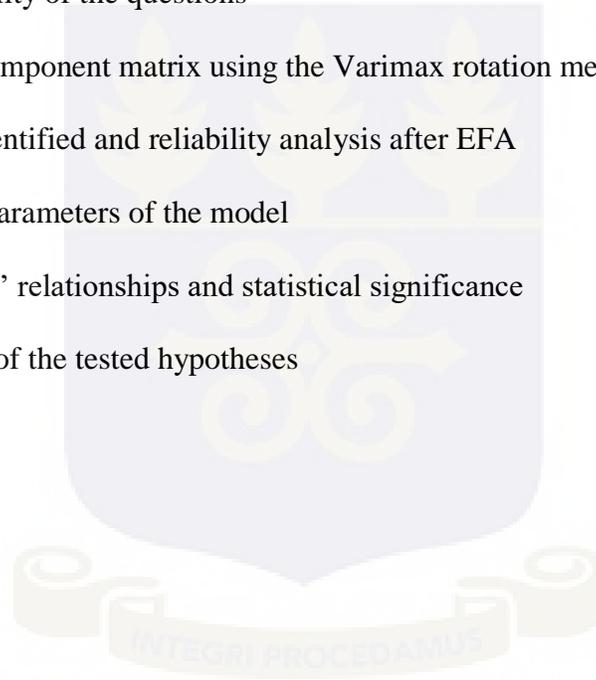
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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to the knowledge about Online Brand Communities and their influence on Brand Loyalty. More specifically, it focuses on measuring the role of brand commitment and trust within online brand communities to engender brand loyalty. This is done by adopting and adapting the model of Laroche et al. (2013) that explains the influence of Online brand communities on brand loyalty. Brand commitment, considered by many authors as relevant in this constellation and left out by the author of the model, is included and measured. In order to achieve the research objectives, 410 participants; all members of a specific online brand community were surveyed for this study. Using the quantitative approach from a deductive stand point, data was coded using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS V. 20) and analysed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) through a two-stage (EFA and CFA) approach. The results could not confirm the existence of brand commitment as such in the new model. In fact, the items used to measure this variable have been mixed with the items from the brand trust variable. Therefore, the existence and the influence of brand commitment could not be proven. However, there are encouraging signs that this variable plays a significant role in the model and future researches should integrate it. The study recommends that future research should find answers to whether cultural differences must be taken into consideration when customer's commitment and loyalty are created through online brand community on social media. Theoretical and managerial implications of the study are also discussed.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 Introduction

This section discusses an overview of the study. This includes; the background of the study, the problem statement and gaps in literature, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, and a summary of the chapter organisation.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Social media is slowly being adopted as an internet marketing tool within today's business circles (Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides, 2011). Multiple studies have shown that it is a useful marketing tool (e.g., Sin, Nor, & Al-Agaga, 2012; Naylor, Lamberton, & West, 2012; Patino, Pitta, & Quinones, 2012). It is believed to be one of the fastest ways of growing a business entity (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson, & Seymour, 2011) as well as promoting products and services (Patino et al., 2012; Smithee, 2011), considering the speed at which it is being adopted by consumers and businesses alike (Baird & Parasnis, 2011).

Social media creates a chance for buyers to assess products, make referrals to contacts, family or companions and connects current buys to future buys through status updates and twitter feeds (Forbes & Vespoli, 2013). By sharing individual encounters and sentiments about products and services, online clients have a tendency to acknowledge and utilise online data in their decision-making processes (Teng, Khong, Goh, & Chong, 2014). This makes social media a valuable marketing tool, which allows satisfied customers to make recommendations to potential customers (Boateng, 2014; Forbes et al., 2013).

During the last few years, to develop new marketing strategies and communication channels, most companies have established themselves on social networks, with facebook recording the highest. According to Chester, Montgomery, and Dorfman (2010), amongst the social media platforms, Facebook in particular, has transformed the media landscape. Facebook, the most widely used social network world wide, had about 1.65 billion monthly active users as of the first quarter of 2016 (The Statistics Portal, 2016). Facebook has certain features that categorise them as online communities, but also features that set them apart from traditional online communities (Pöyry, Parvinen, & Malmivaara, 2013).

Online brand communities are brand communities located on the Internet. Online communities are gaining significance and popularity around the world, and memberships are growing every year (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). With the change in the way we communicate with each other, the advent of social networks has changed the manner in which customers communicate with organisations and brands around us. There is a continuous argument about the position of organisations on social networks. Conversely, it signifies a stunning open door for an organisation to influence a huge number of customers and utilisation of social networks to advance their brands. Social networks offer an extremely prolific condition for advertisers. Then again, some contend the existence of products on social networks speak to a potential “crashing” factor as social networks lose their motivation to exist by not associating individuals any longer (Fournier & Avery, 2011, p. 193). Issues of this open deliberation are as still obscure and without a doubt, many changes are as yet holding up to happen. Along these lines, this thesis intends to understand the interactions between brands and customers in online brand communities. In

particular, it tries to comprehend the elements affecting customer's loyalty to a specific brand when he or she is a member of an online brand community.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

In today's competitive business markets, the creation and support of customer's image relations has turned into a basic achievement factor for organisations. Keeping in mind the end goal to be successful, organisations must make and oversee solid associations with their shoppers. Making and dealing with those connections is insufficient, so organisations should likewise guarantee that both sides can profit. In this way, enduring and commonly advantageous connections are key for making brand unwaveringness. Despite the fact that the concentration of recent studies has moved consideration from customary brand groups to online brand groups, there is as yet an absence of experimental information about the subject (Laroche et al. 2013, p. 76). In spite of the fact that lot of businesses have joined online platforms to increase brand awareness and acquire more customers, the exact nature regarding how brand loyalty is built and strengthened through brand communities online is unclear. Despite a plethora of studies conducted to determine the relationship between social media and loyalty in developed countries (Nisar & Whitehead, 2016; Balakrishnan, Dahnil & Jiunn Yi, 2014), there still exist a gap in the literature determining how brand commitment and trust can influence the relationship. This study represents an effort in this direction.

Contextually, research on social media in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has covered social media use and advertising (Boateng & Okoe, 2015; Nyekwere, Kur, & Nyekwere, 2013), social media browsing behaviours among selected youths (Ramnarain & Govender, 2013a, 2013b), social media marketing adoption by South African banks (Chikandiwa et al., 2013) and managing

customer knowledge on social media platforms (Boateng, 2014). These various studies indicate the lack of research in relation to online brand community and brand loyalty in the SSA and the Ghanaian context. Hence, the need for further studies to investigate the issue of online community and brand loyalty in the SSA context because, as suggested by Li, Li, and Zhao (2009), “the internet is a global medium, but its content is local to each country” (p. 126). Accordingly, this study with multi-item dimensional constructs will seek to make a contribution to literature by examining the influence of online brand community usage in enhancing brand trust and brand commitment, and ultimately boost brand loyalty.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

- i. To examine the influence of online brand community on brand loyalty.
- ii. To examine the role of brand trust and brand commitment in the relationship between online brand community and brand loyalty.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

- i. What is the effect of online brand community on brand loyalty of Cussons baby products?
- ii. What is the relationship between online brand community, brand trust, brand commitment and brand loyalty of Cusson baby products?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

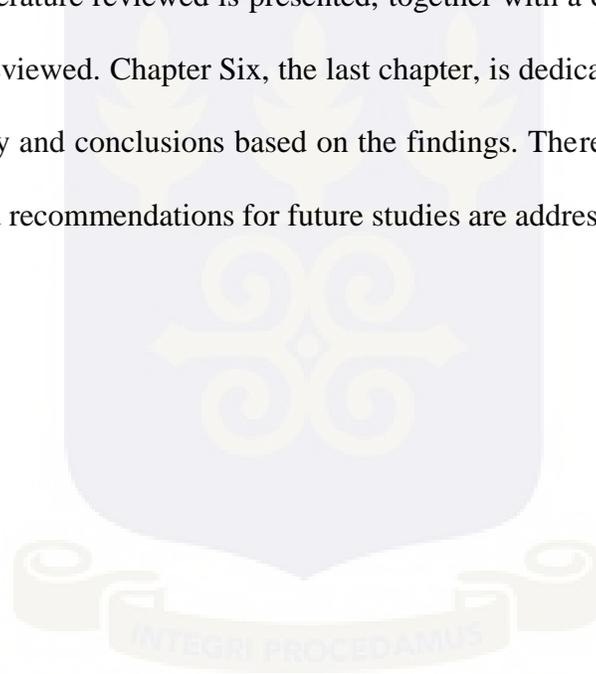
Literature on online brand community and brand loyalty in Ghana is arguably scarce. This research goes beyond the current research works on social media usage in Ghana by examining its relation to the critical area of brand loyalty. Furthermore, the research will contribute to the

existing conceptual and empirical literature on social media and serve as a basis for further research. This study will also be beneficial to instructors when lecturing on how the adoption of information technology drives brand loyalty. Concerning the implications of the study to practice, this study will provide an understanding of the contribution of social media to an organisational bottom line. This study will also shed more light on the contribution of an online brand community to customer brand commitment and trust to engender brand loyalty. In other words, businesses can utilise the findings of the study as guidelines for their social media policy and directions.

## **1.6 Chapter Disposition**

This study comprises of six chapters: the introduction of the study; literature review; research methodology, study context, data analysis and discussions; and finally, summary, conclusions and recommendations. The first chapter, which is the introductory chapter, covers the background of the study, research problem and gaps in literature, research objectives, research questions, and justification for the study. Chapter two is the literature review. The chapter presents a review on extensive related literature and presents a theoretical and conceptual framework guiding the study. Topics covered include the online brand community, brand trust, brand commitment and customer loyalty. Chapter Three, which has the research context, is dedicated to giving an overview of the internet in Ghana. Specifically, the chapter provides an overview of the social media adoption within the Ghanaian context. The chapter also gives an overview of internet and communication technology in Ghana, internet penetration in Ghana and social media usage in Ghana. Chapter Four, which focuses on the methodology, considers the research design, research population, sampling technique and sample size in this chapter.

Additionally, sources of data, data collection instrument(s), methods of data collection, and issues regarding the research ethical considerations are addressed. Thereafter, the data analysis tools and technique used for the study are discussed. The chapter concludes by presenting the method for testing the validity and reliability of the research instrument. Chapter Five, discusses data analysis and presents an analysis of the data collected. The descriptive and inferential analyses of the data are presented. Using structural equation modeling (SEM), the relationships between the latent constructs are established at this stage. In addition, a discussion of the findings in relation to literature reviewed is presented, together with a discussion of the findings in relation to literature reviewed. Chapter Six, the last chapter, is dedicated to the presentation of the summary of the study and conclusions based on the findings. Thereafter, implications of the study and limitations and recommendations for future studies are addressed.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter entails review of literature to elucidate existing theories and concepts that underpin this study. The chapter reviewed literature in the study area specifically; evolution of social media, online brand communities, brand commitment and brand trust. Subsequently, literature is reviewed on brand loyalty in the context of this study. Finally, this chapter also outlines the theoretical and conceptual framework guiding this study.

#### 2.1 Evolution of Social Media

Today, social media seems to have become a popular term as more and more people around the world are using either one or more of these social media platforms. This was not always the case, as literature demonstrates that social media has developed over time from the primitive days to the medieval era and currently what is known as the golden era. The roots of social media stretch far deeper than what might be imagined (Hendricks, 2013).

The earliest form of social media started in 1979, from the primitive days of UseNet developed by Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis from Duke University to allow the posts of news to newsgroups on the internet (Hendricks, 2013; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The primitive days saw the introduction of the first site with login options for interaction known as Bulletin Board System (BBS); the first chat site CompuServe introduced in the early 1980s (Morrison, 2015); and the Prodigy Communications Corporations that offered clients access to a wide scope of network

services, including online news, shopping, notice sheets, games, stocks, travel, and a variety of other feature was introduced in 1984 (Hendricks, 2013; Morrison, 2015).

Internet relay chats (IRCs) were initially introduced in 1988 and it sustained its popularity well into the 1990s (Hendricks, 2013). The late 1980s to 1990s is therefore considered the medieval era of social media with the introduction of ICQ in November 1996; Six Degrees, the first identifiable social media site in 1997; and 1999 Live Journal, the first blogging site (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Morrison, 2015). SixDegrees.com is considered the first social media site since it permitted clients to make their own profiles, list associations with others and surf their rundowns (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Appealing to the masses was at the very heart of the site, as it was built on the notion that every person in the world is connected to another person through six or fewer relationships, because it is a small world (McIntyre, 2014).

Seen as one of the first and one of the oldest blog communities on the internet, Live Journal was launched as a way of connecting friends and keeping them updated on what was going on (Alvarez, 2015). It even began to function as a global social network site (SNS) in the first half of the 2000s (Roesen & Zvereva, 2014). Although LiveJournal is still in existence it has been eclipsed by new social media heavyweights such as Facebook and Twitter (Alvarez, 2015).

Although the roots of social media can be found in Friendster and Myspace, it is reasonable to suggest that social media did not really start until the launch of Facebook in 2004 (Bennett, 2014).

Web 1.0 is seen as the earliest incarnation of the World Wide Web (www), which was utilized primarily as a storehouse of online data and instrument that could be accessed to achieve an end (West & Turner, 2009). In the beginning, the Web was based on “read only”, performing basic function such as finding a website, and a navigating page between them using hyperlinks, sending emails to friends and other multimedia (see in West & Turner, 2009; Kidd & Chen, 2009). In its current age, the Web goes beyond these basic functionalities to incorporate content creation and sharing, creating online communities, sharing files and blogging. This latest incarnation of the www known as Web 2.0 is progressively utilized as a method for interactivity and individual expression (West & Turner, 2009).

### *2.1.1 Definition and nature of social media*

Social media is different for different individuals and organizations (Andzulis et al., 2012). Despite the popularity of social media, it appears not easily defined, “as there is disarray among managers and academic researchers alike as to what precisely ought to be incorporated under this term” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). According to Schultz et al. (2012), social media is any tool or service that uses the web to aid conversations. This definition of social media is not limited to any Web era and this seems very reasonable as social media can be traced as far back as 1979. Turban, King, Lang, and Lai (2009) share similar views as they refer to “social media as an online platform and tool that people use to share opinions and experiences including photos, videos, music, insights and perceptions, with each other”.

On the other hand, some authors (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Lewis, 2009; Lombardi, 2012) have argued that social media must be defined considering Web 2.0 and user-generated content

concepts as these are words frequently mentioned in conjunction with social media. This is because, as stated earlier, Web 2.0 has transformed the Web and Web 1.0 application, resulting in the popularity of such social media as it allowed more content creation such as sharing of photos, videos and music.

## **2.2 Brand Community**

### *2.2.1. Concepts of brand, community and brand community*

In order to understand the concept of brand community, one has to first understand the concept of brand and the concept of community separately. Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders and Wong (1999) defines “a brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, or design or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate from those of the competitor” (p. 571). These scholars use the following example to highlight the influence a brand has on consumers’ behavior:

Many manufacturers can produce Cola drinks. However, only Coca-Cola can deliver the original product everybody knows as “Coca-Cola” (Kotler et al., 1999, p. 571). This example emphasizes the impact a brand and more generally, the impact branding has on consumers and their perception as well as the way consumers identify themselves with a brand. Even if those consumers have the choice between different brands offering Cola drinks, Coca-Cola brand will still add more value to the product than other manufacturer because it is impregnated in consumers’ mind that Coca-Cola is the “real Cola”.

Scholars such as Jang, Olfman, Ko, Koh and Kim (2008) mention that a “Community is defined by three main elements: locality, social interaction and bond” (p. 58). Etzioni and Etzioni (1999) clarify that a community has two focal properties: affect laden connections of the individuals and their sense of duty regarding shared esteems, implications and a recorded character. Scholars display the community as a gathering of people working and associating together, in light of regular esteems, thoughts and sharing aggregate learning, history or encounters. Scholars like Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) deepen their definition of brand community, describing it as: “specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of the brand” (p. 412).

### *2.2.1 Online Brand Community*

Online brand groups are brand communities situated on the internet. The idea of online brand groups does not really vary from the previously mentioned groups. Be that as it may, with the end goal of this thesis, it is imperative to distinguish their particularities. At the point when a purchaser utilizes the internet and communicates with different customers, it is extremely likely that those collaborations will turn out to be increasingly repetitive and in time, form a wellspring of information and social associations. The consequence of this mechanism is nonexclusively named online communities/ group. One characteristic stays normal over every single distinctive definition utilized as a part of the literature to characterize online brand group; the way that virtual brand groups are the outcome of individuals utilizing the internet keeping in mind the end goal to make association with different individuals having comparative interests.

From that basic characteristic, meanings of online brand group vary in numerous angles. In his study, Kozinets (1999) utilized the meaning of Howard Rheingold (1993) who clarifies the

significance of online groups as “social aggregations that emerge from the net when enough people carry on public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace” (as cited in Kozinets, 1999, p. 253).

Some renowned scholars (Ridings, Gefen & Arinze, 2002) offer a more present day definition making strong emphasis that an internet group is not limited geographically. In any case, the area or the virtual area of the group is imperative, since it will fill in as a place where individuals meet. Moreover, from an innovative perspective, this virtual area will likewise characterize the component utilized by the individuals to speak with each other. The creators express that an online group can be characterized as: “groups of people with common interests and practices that communicate regularly and for some duration, in an organized way over the Internet through a common location or mechanism” (Ridings et al., 2002, p. 273).

Online brand groups are fundamentally the same as disconnected brand groups portrayed in the past segment. Sicilia and Palazon (2008) characterized online brand groups as: "a gathering of people with basic interests in a brand who speak with each other electronically in a stage given by the organization which bolsters the brand" (Sicilia & Palazon, 2008, p. 257). The principle contrasts amongst disconnected and online brand group is that, the last evacuates geological hindrances. Online brand groups can be isolated in two gatherings relying upon the group's initiator: purchaser started mark groups or organization started mark groups. Customer started mark groups are based on intentional premise by shoppers willing to share content about a particular brand. On the other hand, organization started mark groups are worked by the organization proprietor of the brand to build up an association with their shoppers and to make

gainful criticism systems with the group's individuals (Jang et al., 2008, p. 60). Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002) have characterized five general attributes of online brand groups. To start with, the group must be sorted out around a distinct interest which may allude to a specific item or a specific theme. Second, members must feel a sense of association amongst themselves and a feeling of partition with respect to nonmembers. Third, online groups may take after unmistakable standards of collaboration, contain customs or shared traditions. Fourth, the individuals produce the content through active participation through sharing contents or discourse. Fifth, the individuals have opportunity of expression, this for the most part in light of the fact that virtual groups are depending on textual correspondence (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002, p. 5).

### *2.2.2 Online brand group on interpersonal organizations*

For some scholars (Rakic & Rakic, 2014), regardless of the possibility that the key objective of informal organizations is to empower correspondence between its individuals, those platforms additionally created tools that empower advertisers to build up their promoting techniques and exercises. Since, social networks and especially Facebook have turned into an extremely appealing stage for some organizations with a specific end goal to make and build up their internet marketing (Rakic & Rakic, 2014, p. 181).

These days, the likelihood to execute online marketing as electronic verbal exchange speaks to one of the principle motivations to utilize marketing methodologies in light of social networks.

“Value of online marketing activities resides in the fact that consumers relay opinions of other consumers propagating opinion in trusting messages shared between the social network’s users” (Rakic & Rakic, 2014, p. 179).

### *2.2.3 Consumer Choice of Online Brand Community*

Getting information from the group is just a demonstration of perusing discussions, and in addition requesting data from different members by posting inquiries and remarks. Sharing information, on the other hand, should be possible by partaking in discussion, either by straightforwardly reacting to another members post or by beginning another theme in the group (Ridings, Gefen & Arinze, 2002, p. 274).

Being a part of an online community additionally fulfills social and mental needs. Watchman, Donthu, Macelroy and Wydra (2001) classified seven types of needs that are satisfied when a member is part of an online group (Porter et al., 2011, p. 81): “ 1) Information: members usually use the community as a source of information when they need to learn, solve problems or make decisions; 2) Relationship: the community is a potential place for creation of relationships among members; 3) Social identity and self-expression: through the community, members can fulfill self-awareness by expressing emotional and cognitive connection with the community; 4) Helping others: helping other members generates a feeling of satisfaction; 5) Enjoyment: members are looking for recreation and fun through their interactions within the community; 6) Belongingness: the satisfaction members have as being part of the community; 7) Status and influence: recognition and respect from other members when being part of the same community”.

## 2.3 Brand loyalty

Brands are profitable for organizations, and advertisers are continually attempting to enhance their perceivability with purchasers. For organizations, creating customer loyalty to a brand is something primordial, particularly in areas where rivalry is high. In any case, it speaks to a consistent test as it has turned out to be less demanding for customers to switch from one brand to another. Subsequently, organizations are attempting to grow long-term relationships with their clients keeping in mind the end goal to build their loyalty. Keeping in mind the end goal to do as such, organizations have begun utilizing more innovative communication channels so as to collaborate with their clients. Brand community has risen as another interaction channel offering organizations an approach to create loyalty among clients. In Oliver's study (1999) brand loyalty is defined as: "a deeply held commitment to repurchase or patronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive, same brand or same set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior" ( p. 34).

### 2.3.1 Brand loyalty in online community

Loyalty inside the brand community is an imperative viewpoint so as to assess the level of impact an organization has on its group individuals. In correlation, with brand commitment, "brand loyalty refers to a consumer that already has a certain degree of knowledge about the brand and the competition" (Jang et al., 2008, p. 58). Brand loyalty is based on top of commitment as customers more often than not have done a specific measure of brand communications and brand exchanging. "Brand commitment in the form of positive word of

mouth, for example, might lead to brand loyalty, because it reflects a positive attitude towards the brand from its customers” (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 23).

## **2.4 Brand Trust**

Trust, from a business point of view, is defined by Morgan and Hunt (1994) as: “when one party has confidence in an exchange partner’s reliability and integrity” (p. 23). Brand trust, is defined by Moorman, Deshpande and Zaltman (1992) as: “the willingness of a consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function” (p. 315). From customer’s point of view, “trust can be seen as expectations about the company’s trustworthiness that results from its skills, reliability or intentions”. Moorman et al. (1992) define it “as determinant for the relationship’s quality between the parties involved” (p. 315). Additionally, Delgado-Ballester (2004) defined brand trust as “the feeling of security held by the consumer in his/ her interaction with the brand that is based on the perceptions that the brand is reliable and responsible for the interests and welfare of the consumer” (p.575).

### *2.4.1. Brand trust in online community*

Ridings et al. (2002) explain that “trust in online groups is vital as tenets are normally missing” (p. 275). In this manner, trust is fundamental for the prosperity and the efficiency of the group. Indeed, it is shown that individuals from a group will participate and work better with different individuals in the event that they believe them. Then again, they will effectively stay away from different individuals with whom they could not make a trustful relationship. Ba's (2001) contends that 3 fundamental components must exist among the partners in a group (p. 324):

“1) The reliability of the partners, allowing all parties involved to be able to rely on the word and promises from other partners; 2) The predictability of the partners, meaning that the exchange partners behave in a way that equitably protects the welfare of both parties involved; 3) The fairness of the partners, when it comes to uncertainty and vulnerability”.

#### 2.4.2 *Trust and loyalty*

Brand trust significantly affects brand loyalty. As indicated by Berry (1993) “trust is the basis for loyalty” (p. 1). Here, trustworthiness must be comprehended as: “consumer’s confidence in the brand quality performance” and expertise as: “extent to which a brand is perceived to be skillful and knowledgeable” (p. 644). Those two components arise from encounters that the consumer have with the brand and its items/services, and through time and reiteration it will impact the loyalty of the buyers toward the brand. Laroche et al. (2013) advance that: “building and enhancing brand communities and consumer experience within the context of brand community is to make customers loyal to the brand” (p. 78). They likewise show two variables essential to expand brand trust and thusly enhance brand loyalty: the exchanges of information and a long-term connection amongst consumers and the brand.

#### 2.4.3 *Trust and Commitment*

Morgan and Hunt (1994) clarify relations amongst trust and commitment with five major precursors (p. 24):

“1) The relationship termination costs: Terminating a business relationship will engender switching cost for both sides; 2) Relationship benefits: Because of competitive aspects of the marketplace and the environment, companies must look for relationships allowing them to

generate the best outputs given the options they have; 3) Shared values: When both partners share common values like, what behavior to have, which goals to set, what policies must be implemented or what is right or wrong, there is a better chance that those parties will generate commitment and trust between themselves; 4) Communication: Here the term communication must be understood as formal, as well as informal sharing of meaningful and timely information; 5) Opportunistic behavior”.

## **2.5 Brand commitment**

Concept of commitment can be described as: “an exchange partner believing that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum effort at maintaining it; that is, the committed party believes relationship is worth working on to ensure that it endures indefinitely” (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 23). This definition underlines the value of a relationship, as well as willingness to maintain it as long as possible, or at least as long as it is valuable for the parties involved. It also insists on the fact that parties are willing to work at maintaining the relationship. Interestingly, Berry and Parasuraman (1991) states that: “Relationships are built on the foundation of mutual commitment” which highlight the fact that commitment goes in both ways in a relationship (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991, p. 139).

Commitment also plays an important role in brand loyalty as some authors, like Assael (1987), state that brand loyalty is a form of “commitment to a certain brand” that manifests itself when there is a positive attitude towards the brand (Assael, 1987, p. 665). Morgan and Hunt (1994) place commitment in the middle of “all relational exchanges between the firm and its various partners” (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 23).

### *2.5.1 Brand commitment in online brand community*

In communities, commitment arises when members gain value from their relations with other members. Jang et al. (2008) states that: “interactive communication facilitates a positive attitude among members toward the community operator, as well as the community, and this, in turn, enhances the level of commitment to the community” (Jang et al., 2008, p. 610)

The type of online brand community has an impact on members’ commitment. As Jang et al. (2008, p. 62) states: “In a company-initiated online brand community, customers’ participation in building their opinions and managing their continuing experiences can be easily monitored and controlled by the company”. The consequence being that in such communities, it is harder to develop the customer’s commitment toward the brand and the community. One of the reasons is that firms are monitoring their online communities because consumers will base their opinions on other members’ thoughts and information posted online, and may have therefore an incentive to filter comments and discussions (Jang et al., 2008, p. 67). On the other hand, the authors state that: “in a consumer-initiated online brand community, costumers voluntarily participate in building information about good features of the product and valuable experiences with it. Uncontrolled feedback from fellow members helps members trust their community and strengthen their commitment”. It is therefore more likely to find more committed community members, when the community is not company-initiated (Jang et al., 2008, p. 62). Generating commitment in an online brand community represents a critical success factor for a firm’s online strategy. However, it remains a complex exercise because of the limited level of control the firm has on the community, and also because online communities are purely digital places where real contacts between the firm and the consumers cannot happen.

### 2.5.2 *Brand commitment and brand loyalty*

As found by Jang et al. (2008) “a higher level of commitment from community members will increase brand loyalty”. In their outcomes, the authors express that “company can improve its financial results if it can increase the level of commitment in their communities” (Jang et al., 2008, p. 75). Higher level of commitment will prompt customer rethinking, and online, as well as offline word of mouth. In this manner, community management as a choice of expanding commitment with a specific end goal to build customers’ loyalty might be a significant online technique for organizations.

## **2.6 Theoretical Foundation of the Study**

A theory can be described as “any coherent portrayal or explanation of observed, experienced, or documented phenomena” (Gioia & Pitre, 1990). It has also been defined as “a statement of constructs and their interrelationship that shows how and why a phenomenon occurs” (Corley & Gioia, 2011). Scholars have emphasised that theories are very useful tools that help us to accomplish many important outcomes and objectives in an academic field of study. They help us to: “(1) organise our thoughts and ideas about the world; (2) generate and explain relationships and interrelationships among individuals, groups, and entities; (3) improve our predictions and expectations about people, groups, and organisations; and (4) achieve better understanding of the world” (Hambrick, 2007).

The theoretical foundation on which this study sits is an interesting theory known as the social capital theory (SCT). The concept of social capital first appeared in Hannifin’s article, “the rural school community centres” (see in Hanifan, 1916). Hanifan (1916) describes social capital as the

“tangible substances (that) count for most in the daily lives of people” (p. 130). Social capital theory, a term originally seen as a sociological concept, has now transcended its roots and expanded into multiple fields (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Social capital may be defined as “the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 14). These resources may vary depending on the type of social relations.

According to Garson (2006), the resources include trust, norms, and networks of affiliation representing any group, which gathers consistently for a common purpose. The core concept of social capital, however, is straightforward: it involves the resources available to people through connection within and between social networks (Lin, 2001; Lin, Cook, & Burt, 2001). Social capital has high correlation level with factors such as better public health, lower crime rates, more efficient financial markets (Adler & Kwon, 2002); confidence in political institutions (Brehm & Rahn, 1997), and satisfaction with governments and political engagements (Putnam, 1993).

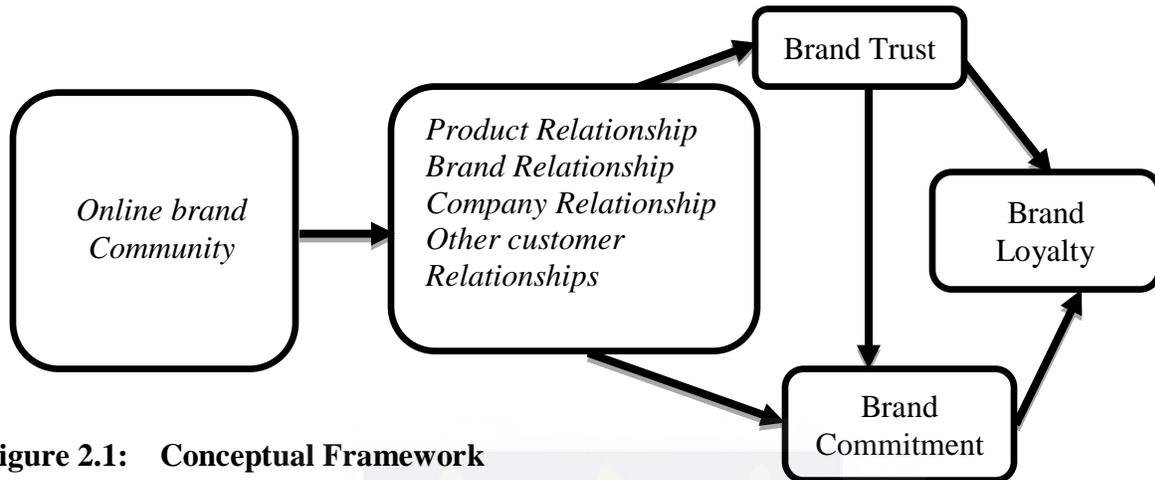
Literature relating to social capital has also traced the performance of people and co-operatives to networks of social interaction (Bourdieu, 1986; Lin, 2001). However one part of the literature emphasises how people use the resources accessible in their network of personal contacts to achieve individual objectives (e.g. Erickson, 1996), while the other emphasises the utilisation of networks for collective actions that include participation in civic and political groups (e.g. Gil de Zúñiga, Jung & Valenzuela, 2012). A central component of social capital is networking (Ferrer,

González-Rivera, Maldonado-Pérez, Martínez-Maurosa, & Soto-Montes, 2013). As a result, some studies have been conducted to characterise social capital in terms of social networks theory (Ferrer et al., 2013).

For individuals, social capital allows a person to draw on resources from other members of the networks to which they are part (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). According to Paxton (1999) these resources can take the form of useful information, personal relationships, or the capacity to organize groups. Access to individuals outside one's close circle provides access to non-redundant information, resulting in benefits such as employment connections (Granovetter, 1973). These are benefits that can be obtained from using social media. This is because, social media profiles permit clients to learn detailed information about other contacts, including personal backgrounds, interests, music tastes, and whereabouts (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012).

Applying SCT to this study, members within a given online community are able to draw resources in the form of information from each other to take a decision on their loyalty level to a particular brand the group members consume.

## 2.7 Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis for the Study



**Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework**

*Adapted from Laroche et al., 2013*

The conceptual framework above shows the influence between its different elements. Each arrow represents a relationship, which is then considered in the research as a hypothesis. The Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d and 3a are all based on the study of Laroche et al. (2013).

Adding brand commitment to the model is where this study tries to make a contribution to knowledge bring up new hypothesis, thus hypotheses 3b, 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d and 5

The first group of hypotheses represents the effect of brand community based on social network on the customer's relationships:

*H1a Social network based brand communities have positive effects on the product relationship.*

*H1b Social network based brand communities have positive effects on the brand relationship.*

*H1c Social network based brand communities have positive effects on the company relationship.*

*H1d Social network based brand communities have positive effects on other customers' relationship.*

This first group of hypotheses is based on Laroche et al. (2013) and is therefore included in the new model. They represent the impact of an online brand community on the different relations of the customers when he interacts on it.

The second group of hypotheses represents the effect of customer's relationships on the brand trust:

*H2a: The product relationship has a direct positive effect on brand trust.*

*H2b: Brand relationship has a direct positive effect on brand trust.*

*H2c: Company relationship has a direct positive effect on brand trust.*

*H2d: Other customers relationship has a direct positive effect on brand trust*

This second group of hypotheses is also based on Laroche et al. (2013) and supports the fact that through its interactions on the online brand community, trust will increase from customer's point of view. Repeat interactions and interactions over a long period of time, are the two effects under scrutiny here.

The third group of hypotheses accounts for the effect of brand trust on brand loyalty and brand commitment. The hypothesis H3a of this group is based on Laroche et al. (2013). However, the hypothesis H3b. is added to the model:

*H3a. Brand trust positively influences brand loyalty.*

*H3b. Brand trust positively influences brand commitment.*

Based on the theory presented previously, it is possible to assume that brand trust has a positive impact on brand commitment (McDonald, 1981 & Morgan & Hunt, 1994). H3b represents this motivation to maintain a valued relationship between partners based on the trust built along the whole relationship.

The fourth group of hypotheses represents the effect of customer's relationships on brand commitment:

*H4a: The product relationship, has a direct positive effect on brand commitment*

*H4b: The brand relationship has a direct positive effect on brand commitment*

*H4c: The company relationship has a direct positive effect on brand commitment*

*H4d: Other customers' relationship has a direct positive effect on brand commitment*

The fifth group refers to the effect of brand commitment on brand loyalty and contains one hypothesis:

*H5. Brand commitment positively influences brand loyalty*



## CHAPTER THREE

### CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

#### 3.1 Internet and Communication Technology in Ghana

The rise of social media has been enhanced by the increasing availability and the recent advances in internet technologies (Web 2.0). The internet is growing faster than all other communication technologies that have preceded it (Molosi, 2001). Via the use of the internet, millions of people all over the world get to communicate and share information. Boateng et al. (2008) states that the internet and allied technologies which basically make up the electronic commerce (e-commerce) that is used to conduct business transactions is an important development that has been widely acknowledged as a revolution for the conduct of business globally.

Ghana, a nation that lies on the shore of West Africa with a populace of around 28,833,629 as at 2017 ([www.worldometers.info/world-population/ghana-population/](http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/ghana-population/)) has seen significant increases in internet accessibility since the liberalization of the telecommunications industry in the 1990s (Hinson & Boateng, 2007; Woldie, Hinson, Iddrisu, & Boateng, 2008). The liberalization of the market ushered in a new economic system where companies compete for the attention of customers (Narteh, Odoom, Braimah, & Buame, 2012). Ghana was one of the first countries in SSA to gain internet services (Foster, Goodman, Osiakwan & Bernstein, 2004). The internet came into the commercial domain only in the early 1990s, yet its direction of dissemination has tackled a practically unsurprising example (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka & Lal, 2005) and by 1996, Ghana had three internet service providers (ISPs) competing with each other (Foster et al., 2004). During the flourishing years of the internet 1998-2000, the ISP and internet café industries in Ghana grew rapidly (Foster et al., 2004). The government of Ghana has been

serious in efforts to pursue a ‘knowledge-based economy’ agenda to make the country an attractive information and communication technology (ICT) destination (Woldie et al., 2008), because much of the rhetoric has been that internet enabled technology has enabled progress (Hinson & Amidu, 2006).

### **3.2 Internet Penetration in Ghana**

The internet world statistics (2015) indicated that “internet usage statistics for the world is estimated at 3,035,749,340 with a penetration rate of 42.3% as at June, 2014”. Likewise, “the assessed populace of Africa in 2014 was 1,125,721,038 of which 297,885,898 were internet users” (Internet world stats, 2015). By 1996, Ghana had three competing ISPs users. Although Ghana was the first SSA to have access to the internet, internet penetration did not progress rapidly until 2005 (Quarshie & Ami-Narh, 2012). This could possibly be attributed to the Government’s ratification and adoption of Information and Communication Technology for Accelerated Development (ICT4AD) in the year 2004 (Quarshie et al., 2012). The international telecommunication union (ITU) statistics and internet world stats (IWS) shows that Ghana has seen a steady rise in the internet penetration rate. Table 3.1 also reveals that there seems to be a correlation between population growth and internet usage.

**Table 3.1 Population Growth and Internet Usage in Ghana**

<b>Years</b>	<b>Users</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>% Pen.</b>
2000	30,000	18,881,600	0.20%
2005	368,000	21,029,850	1.60%
2006	401,300	21,801,662	1.80%
2007	609,800	21,801,662	2.80%
2008	880,000	23,382,848	3.80%
2009	997,000	23,887,812	4.20%
2010	1,297,000	24,339,838	5.30%
2011	2,085,501	24,791,073	8.40%
2015	5,171,993	26,327,649	19.60%

Source: (Internet World Stats, 2015; Quarshie et al., 2012)

The increase in internet penetration could also be attributed to the rise of mobile-broadband subscriptions. According to the latest report released by Ghana's telecommunications regulator the National Communications Authority (NCA), mobile data subscribers in the country has expanded exponentially with a penetration rate of 59.78%. Mobile internet subscribers increased to 16,106,218 nationwide, as at the end of March (National Communication Authority, 2015).

### **3.3 Social Media Usage in Ghana**

The social media revolution has been going on for a long time now and Ghana has been no special case. The blast in social media on the African scene could be ascribed to the mobile phone blast. In the third quarter of 2012, the 54 nations and 1.08 billion individuals have accumulated 821 million subscriptions, up 16.9% year-on-year, bringing about a phone subscription penetration of 76.4% (Gallen, 2012). "While Western Europe languishes with barely positive overall growth quarter-on-quarter, Africa managed to generate 4.2% growth in the same period" according to Marina Lu, research associate, ABI Research. Table 3.1 shows social media usage for mobile internet subscribers with the most utilised platform in Ghana being Facebook

with the use of around 94.89%. Twitter positions second with 3.97%, Pinterest positions third with 0.62%, Google+ positions fourth with 0.18% and the staying informal organizations hold 0.34% utilizing the mobile web.

**Table 3.2 Mobile Facebook, Twitter, Social Media Usage Statistics in Ghana**

Rank	Social Media Platforms	Social Media Usage	% Social Media Usage
1	Facebook	94.89	94.89
2	Twitter	3.97	3.97
3	Pinterest	0.62	0.62
4	Google+	0.18	0.18
5	Tumblr	0.16	0.16
6	YouTube	0.08	0.08
7	StumbleUpon	0.07	0.07
8	Reddit	0.02	0.02
9	Other	0.01	0.01
	Total Social Media Usage	100	

**Source:** Stats Monkey (2015a)

Table 3.2 shows social media usage for desktop, with the most utilised social network platform in Ghana being Facebook with the utilization of around 90.99%, Twitter positions second with 4.39%, Pinterest positions third with 1.46%, Tumblr positions fourth with 1.11% and the staying informal organizations hold 2.05% utilizing desktop.

**Table 3.3: Social Network Usage Statistics Using Desktop in Ghana**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Social Media Platforms</b>	<b>Social Media Usage</b>	<b>% Social Media Usage</b>
1	Facebook	90.99	90.99
2	Twitter	4.39	4.39
3	Pinterest	1.46	1.46
4	Tumblr	1.11	1.11
5	Google+	0.58	0.58
6	Reddit	0.55	0.55
7	StumbleUpon	0.43	0.43
8	LinkedIn	0.3	0.3
9	You Tube	0.08	0.08
10	Y Combinator	0.04	0.04
11	Digg	0.03	0.03
12	Vkontakle	0.03	0.03
13	Other	0.01	0.01
	Total Social Network Usage	100	

**Source:** Stats Monkey (2015b)

From Table 3.1 and 3.2 the most utilised social network platform in Ghana is Facebook. According to statistics from Alexa.com, Facebook.com is the third most visited site in Ghana, the first and second being Google.com.gh and Google.com respectively.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter gives a detailed description of the various methods employed in conducting the research. It discusses the process in which the study was carried out in order to arrive at conclusions for the research based on the set objectives of the study. Diverse methodological issues ranging from the philosophy underpinning the study, research approach and strategy, to data collection and analysis techniques used are all discussed in details in this chapter.

#### **4.1 Research Philosophy and Paradigms**

Research philosophy is the development of knowledge in a particular field and the nature in which that knowledge is propounded. Proctor (2005) stresses that research philosophies are the basis on which every academic study is grounded. Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis (2007) are of the view that research philosophy is a signal of how the researcher views the world and that the conjectures made will drive the strategy and methods for the research. Therefore, one cannot overlook research philosophy as it will have adverse effects on the quality of work that will be produced. Saunders et al. (2007) placed research philosophies into three main perspectives: epistemology, ontology and axiology. Malhotra and Birks (2006) define research paradigms as “a set of assumptions consisting of agreed-upon knowledge, criteria of judgment, problem fields, and ways to consider them”. Paradigms as defined by Kuhn (1970) are “a set of beliefs, values and techniques which is shared by members of a scientific community, and which acts as a guide or map, dictating the kinds of problems scientists should address and the types of explanations that are acceptable to them”. Saunders et al (2007) define a paradigm as “a way of examining

social phenomena from which particular understandings of these phenomena can be gained and explanations attempted”. Accordingly, paradigms serve as a guide in the clarification and summarization of epistemologies and ontologies (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

Epistemology has to do with what is acceptable, adequate and legitimate knowledge within a field of study and the researcher is distant or independent from what is being studied (Saunders et al., 2007; Blakie, 2010). Under this perspective are positivist, realist and interpretivist philosophies (Saunders et al., 2007). Positivist, according to Remenyi et al. (1998, p.32). involves “working with an observable social reality and that the end product of such research can be law-like generalisations similar to those produced by the physical and natural scientists”. Ontological perspectives relate to the nature of reality based on the assumptions researchers make and their commitment to certain views (Saunders et al., 2007) as well as types of social phenomena that exist and conditions under which they exist and how they relate (Blakie, 2010). Saunders et al. (2007) group ontological perspectives as “Objectivism (that social entities exist in reality external to social actors), Subjectivism (that social phenomena are created from the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors) and Pragmatism”. On the other hand axiology is concerned with “studying judgment about value” (Saunders et al., 2007) and in this perspective Heron (1996) posit that one’s values guides all human actions. Downward and Mearman (2007), Beverland and Lindgreen (2010), and Jernigan (2010) point out that, amongst the several existing philosophical views, the major paradigms that dominate and reflect the most theoretical guidelines in social science research are critical realism, interpretivism, positivism, realism and relativism approaches. Malhotra and Birks (2006) also acknowledge that empiricism

(source of all knowledge is based on experience) and more specifically positivism are the most dominant perspectives in the development of new theories in marketing research.

Positivism, as described earlier, shares the view that consumer and marketing studies should be 'scientific' in the manner of the natural sciences (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). The positivistic approach is "founded on a belief that the study of human behaviour should be conducted in the same way as studies conducted in the natural sciences" (Collis & Hussey, 2003, p.52). This approach attempts to "establish causal links and relationships between the different elements (or variables) under study and relate them to a particular theory or practice" (Neville, 2007). This, therefore, makes the researcher independent of the study, thus becoming less biased. Realism views that there is truth, which is very independent from the human, mind (Saunders et al., 2007). Bickerton (2000) holds that a social phenomenon is understood through the development and testing of hypothesis to establish relationships between variables. This is similar to the positivist approach as it also "assumes a scientific approach to knowledge development" (Saunders et al., 2007). This study therefore adopts the positivist paradigm.

#### **4.2 Research Purpose**

Robson (2002) indicates that the main purpose for conducting research is exploratory, explanatory and descriptive. Malhotra and Birks (2006) categorizes research purpose into exploratory design and conclusive design. Social sciences research however also classifies research purpose as exploratory, descriptive and explanatory (Saunders et al., 2007). Descriptive research attempts to systematically describe a situation, problem, or phenomena by providing facts about living conditions or a depiction of people's attitudes towards issues (Kumar, 2011). Bhattacharjee (2012) indicates that "research is directed at making careful observations and detailed documentation of a phenomenon of interest". The researcher of this perspective

observes and vividly describes the observations made, which is expressed either quantitatively or qualitatively (Babbie, 2004). Boateng (2014) indicates that, in systematically describing a situation or phenomena, it is usually as the question “what”.

Exploratory research is undertaken purposely to explore an area where little knowledge has been acquired and usually a small scale study is undertaken to find out the possibilities of carrying out a detailed one (Kumar, 2011). According to Bhattacharjee (2012), exploratory studies are mostly carried out to: “(1) to scope out the magnitude or extent of a particular phenomenon, problem, or behaviour, (2) to generate some initial ideas about that phenomenon, or (3) to test the feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study regarding that phenomenon”. It serves as a valuable effort in discovering “what is happening; to seek insights to ask questions and to assess phenomena in new light” (Robson, 2002). Saunders et al. (2007) posit that it has advantages of being “flexible” and “adaptable” to change. On the other hand, explanatory research “seeks to find cause and effects by establishing relationships between variables” (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). It endeavours to “connect the dots” in research, by detecting instrumental factors and consequences of the target phenomenon (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Explanatory research seeks to find or clarify how and why a relationship exists between two facets of a situation (Kumar, 2011). Inherently it uses an independent variable and dependent variables, which are manipulated in one way or the other and measured to deduce causality (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). This study therefore adopts an exploratory approach based on the above discussions to investigate the effects of online brand community on brand loyalty, with the role of brand trust and brand commitment.

### 4.3 Research Approach

Researchers over the years have discussed two general approaches that are widely used in business and management research describing them as quantitative and qualitative research (Khotari, 2004; Dezin & Lincoln, 2000; Kumar, 2011). Saunders et al. (2007) as well as Creswell (2014) groups research approaches into mono, multi and mixed methods. Kumar (2011) describes quantitative research approach as a structured enquiry where objectives and questions that are planned to ask respondents are predetermined. Qualitative approach conversely, is more often used to explore the nature of an issue or phenomena and allows for the flexibility to describe the situation (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). Researchers such as Saunders et al. (2007) from the above perspectives describe quantitative and qualitative studies as deductive and inductive approaches respectively. The major differences may also lie in the number of respondents from which data are collected and analysed. These research approaches (qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods) are further delineated below.

#### 4.3.1 Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research has been defined by Malhotra and Birks (2006) as “an unstructured, primarily exploratory design based on small samples, intended to provide insight and understanding”. This, they postulate, is made up of various methods that can be flexibly applied in order to allow respondents to “reflect upon and express their views or observe their behaviour”. Such an approach aims at determining underlying motives and desires through the use of in-depth interviews (Kothari, 2004) and is most important in behavioural sciences in discovering underlying motives of human behaviour (Saunders et al., 2007). According to Amarantunga et al. (2002) and Herington et al. (2005) it involves having a close interaction with a small purposive sample over a lengthy time period. Arguments by Malhotra and Birks (2006)

and MacDonald and Headlam (2008), stands that qualitative research's effort is to increase understanding of the essential motives and drives for actions and establishes how people interpret their experiences and the world around them generating ideas and/or hypotheses.

#### *4.3.2 Quantitative Approach*

According to Creswell (2014), this approach is used for testing objective theories through the examination of the relationship between variables. It is more structured as it uses statistics to confirm or contradict conclusions or hypotheses drawn from theories on previous research (Kumar, 2011; Boateng, 2014). Kumar (2011) further states that it “helps you to quantify the magnitude of an association or relationship, provide an indication of the confidence you can place in your findings and help you to isolate the effect of different variables”. It is predominantly used in instances where data collection tools such as questionnaires are used in the research process (Saunders et al., 2007). In literature, quantitative research is mostly associated with positivism or empirism paradigm (Smith, 1983). A quantitative approach will therefore be testing the relationships among variables using statistical data collection tools and analysis techniques from which deductions will be made to either accept or reject hypotheses based on theory. Although it employs a larger sample sizes some critics have argued that generalizations does not apply to all issues and that it lacks in-depth understanding to situations (Wiskers, 2001; Yin, 2003).

### *4.3.3 Mixed Method Approach*

Generally, the term mixed method is used to refer to research, which employs both the qualitative and quantitative approaches (Saunders et al., 2007). Although scholars have the option of choosing between qualitative and quantitative approaches, Bhattacharjee (2012) views that it is an approach that leads to generating unique insights in the scientific community. This is emphasized by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) and Creswell (2014), in that the overall quality is greater than studies that employ a single approach in its investigations. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) argue that it is essential when it provides greater opportunities in answering research questions and allows for better evaluations on the extent to which findings can be trusted and inferences be generated from. Boateng (2014) and Creswell (2009) indicate that the mixed methods approach can take three major forms, which are sequential, concurrent and transformative. Saunders et al. (2007) points that mixed method approach uses both the quantitative and qualitative simultaneously or in a sequential manner but does not combine them.

From the above discussions, this study will adopt a quantitative approach as it will be more appropriate in achieving the set objectives. In the bid to establish the influence of online brand community on brand loyalty, and role brand trust and commitment play in this relationship. The quantitative approach is deemed more suitable as it will test to establish relationships among variables from the formulated hypothesis.

## **4.4 Research Strategy**

Research strategy is the procedures followed in order to gain understanding and provide answers to the research questions being asked. Saunders et al. (2007) indicates that there is no one best research strategy. Some major research strategies include the case study, experiment and survey.

#### *4.4.1 Case study*

The case study as defined by Robson (2002) is “a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence”. The issue of context in this manner is also highlighted by Yin (2003) noting that, in a cases study, the confines amid the phenomenon being studied and its context are not very clear. According to Morris and Wood (1991), it is essential when the researcher wishes to gain in-depth understanding of the research setting and procedures being enacted. It has the capabilities of providing answers to questions of ‘why?’, ‘what?’ and ‘how?’ and can be in the form of a single case or multiple cases (Saunders et al., 2007).

#### *4.4.2 Experiment*

The purpose of experiment, according to Hakim (2000), “is to study casual relationships to find out if a change in one independent variable causes a change in another dependent variable”. It provides a logical and systematic means of providing an answer to the question “What will happen if this is done when certain variables are carefully controlled or manipulated?” (Kothari, 2004). According to Bhattacharjee (2012), it is one of the most rigorous strategies employed in research and best for conducting explanatory studies. Saunders et al. (2007) indicates that more often experiments are carried out in laboratories rather than in the field and is more expensive to conduct.

#### *4.4.3 Survey*

This is a deductive approach which is used to answer the questions of “who”, “what”, “how much” and “how many” using a large amount of data from a “sizable” population (Saunders et

al., 2007). Survey research uses standardized questionnaires to gather data about people and their preferences in a systematic manner and has inherent strengths compared to other research techniques (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Babbie (2004) indicates that it reflects the views of a larger populace using cautiously developed structured questionnaires to draw data from them in a similar manner. Malhotra and Birks (2006) indicate that, though it most often uses questionnaires, other data collection instruments such as structured observations and interviews can be employed. In view of these arguments, the study employed a survey strategy as it seeks to gain direct responses from a cross-section of cursson baby product consumers who are member of the brand community on Facebook to sought their views on how their online brand community influence their trust and commitment of the brand and eventually lead to making them loyal to the brand.

#### **4.5 Research Design**

Research design is “the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure” (Selltitz, Deutsch & Cook, 1962). Saunders et al. (2009) purports that the “general plan” as to how you will answer your research objectives is what the research plan is about. It is basically about turning the research questions into a viable research project as indicated by Robson (2002). Maholtra and Birks (2006) connotes that the research design is the overall framework or blueprint, which serves as a guide giving details as to the processes necessary to obtain information to provide solutions to marketing research issues. Thus, the research design lays the foundation for carrying out a project (Kothari, 2004). According to Bhattacharjee (2012), research design is a “comprehensive plan for data collection in an empirical research project”. Saunders et al. (2007) also stress that it must specify the sources from which data will be

collected and consideration given to constraints that will be inevitable such as data access, time, location and funds. A marketing research study needs a good research design, which will ensure it is conducted effectively and efficiently.

#### *4.5.1 Research Design Adopted*

From the various discussions held in the previous sections and grounded on Gill and Johnson (1997), the research clearly adopted a positivist approach using a methodology that was well structured with data collected on a quantitative basis and analyzed statistically. A review of existing literature helped in the formulation of research hypotheses, which were tested empirically to establish the relationship that exists between the dependent and independent variables. The study was explanatory in nature which sought to give clarification to a phenomena subject to the research situation by seeking to understand customers' perception and how online brand communities drives their trust and commitment in a brand and eventually influence their continuous repurchase intention of the brand. A survey strategy was adopted (Saunders et al., 2007) in order to test the relationships between various latent variables and their importance of perception of online brand communities and brand loyalty. Structured questionnaires were used in collecting information from respondents though an online survey, which helped in providing statistical evidence of the role of online brand community on brand loyalty. A cross sectional time horizon was adopted as it studied a specific phenomenon at a particular period (Saunders et al., 2007) employing the survey strategy (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002; Robson, 2002). In addition, survey strategy has been mostly employed by scholars using cross-sectional time horizon in their studies such as Wu (2011), Chahal and Bala (2012), and Mensah (2015).

#### **4.6 Data Sources and Data Collection Techniques**

To undertake a research there is the need to obtain the right/required data. This could sometimes be existing whereas in other cases data may not be available (Kumar, 2011). Saunders et al. (2007) indicate that, basically, there exist two main sources of data for conducting research, which are primary and secondary data. According to Maholtra and Birks (2007), primary data originates from the researcher for specific purposes of addressing a particular problem while secondary data consists of data gathered for other purposes than the current issue at hand. There are various ways of gathering primary data (Kumar, 2011). These include, and are not limited to, observation, questionnaires, and semi-structured, in-depth and group interviews (Saunders et al., 2007). Data collected from census, government and organisational publications, journals, magazines, newspapers, personal records among others constitute secondary data, which is information collected for purposes other than what is at stake (Kothari, 2004). This study adopted primary sources for data collection as it was deemed essential in obtaining direct responses on consumers' views on the effect of online brand community activities on brand loyalty and how this relationship is influence by brand trust and commitment.

Structured questionnaire was used, employing the online survey strategy and purposive sampling technique. Participants were selected based on their interaction on Facebook page of Cursson baby products, the communication with them was established through the messaging interface of Facebook. The use of questionnaires was found to be more affordable as collection of data involved a large sample size. Saunders et al. (2007) stress that the use of structured questionnaires with its standardized nature makes it easier to collect data as compared to other alternatives. The questionnaire was essential as each respondent was made to respond to the same set of questions making it an efficient way of collecting responses from a large sample

prior to analyzing it quantitatively (Saunders et al., 2007). Another advantage of using the questionnaire is the fact that it is easy and simple to tabulate and analyse (Peterson, 2000). In order to minimize errors, misinterpretation and misconstruction it was pretested for reliability as stressed by Mitchel (1996). This was important as Saunders et al. (2007) opine that respondents may consistently interpret a question in a way that may be very far from what the researcher actually means.

#### **4.7 Questionnaire Design and Administration**

The questionnaire used in conducting the study was developed based on Saunders et al. (2007) who give guidance on how to develop questionnaires for a survey, taking research questions and objectives into critical consideration. The early stages involved a careful blend of the relevant literature applicable to the ebb and flow of the study from which certain ideas in the current study model resulted from. The consequent activity involved developing new construct variables and their estimations in light of the literature that supports and underpins these ideas and variables. “In order to ensure that respondents have no problem answering the questions, and that the online survey platform records the data in the right way” (Saunders et al. 2009, p. 394).

In all, the questionnaire was designed in two parts. The first part of the questionnaire captures the demographic characteristics of the respondents (gender, age, education) and other information, which were relevant to the study. The second segment focused on the variables under the conceptual framework.

With brand community; three items derived from the study of Laroche et al. and aim to measure: “the degree to which members feels bonded to each other, share information and experiences and

the extent to which they find these exchanges useful” (Laroche et al., 2013, p. 81) were adapted. For Product; four items were adopted and adapted from the study of Laroche et al. (2003) and aims to measure the customer/product relationship. Regarding Brand (B1, B2, B3); three items were used to measure the customer/brand relationship. These items were adapted from Laroche et al. (p. 81). The Company construct had two items measuring the customer/brand relationship and these items were adapted from Laroche et al. (p. 81). For the Other Customers construct; three items were used to measure the customer/other customer relationship and these items were adapted from Laroche et al. (2013, p. 81). Brand Loyalty as a construct was measured using seven items adapted from Laroche et al. (2013, p. 81) and Bobalca et al. (2012, p. 627). The Brand Trust construct was measured using three items to measure the brand trust of the community member and these items were adapted from Laroche et al. (2013, p. 81). With Brand Commitment; the first two items used to measure the brand commitment were adapted from Zhou, Zhang, Su & Zhou (2012, p. 839), the items BT3, BT4, BT5, were adapted from Punniyamorthy and Mohan Raj (2007, p. 229) and the last two items were adapted from Turri, Smith and Kemp (2013, p. 224). Overall, a total of 32 items were used and measured using a 5-point Likert scale with “1” being “strongly disagree” and “5” as “strongly agree”.

#### **4.8 Population, Sample and Sampling Technique**

The set of cases from which the sample used in a study is drawn from is called the population (Saunders et al., 2009). Maholtra and Birks (2006) indicate that the target population is made up of those people who possess the information needed to make inferences in a research. Kumar (2011) stress the need to clearly identify those who constitute the study population in order to select appropriate respondents to provide the needed information. Specifically identifying and

defining the study population therefore makes the data obtained very reliable for making judgments in a study. Attewell and Rule (1991) suggests that using theoretical sampling could be credible as sometimes the true population may not be reasonable enough. Using theoretical sampling helps in purposely selecting cases that have relevant information for the study. The population of the study was identified as all members of Cussons baby products who are active users of their Facebook online brand community.

Sampling is a key element of any research work (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). This study, unlike some other studies which had smaller interest groups serving as the target, thus the likelihood to obtain data from the entire population being high, has a very large population therefore there was the need to employ sampling techniques. Malhotra and Birks (2006), Saunders et al. (2007), and Kumar (2011) indicate that, generally, there are two major sampling techniques, namely, non-probability and probability sampling methods. According to Saunders et al. (2007) probability sampling techniques are more often associated with survey and experimental studies; whereas the non-probability sampling techniques relates more to case study researches, and are used in quantitative research in scenarios where the population is large. Probability sampling involves giving each element within the target population the equal chance of being selected (Kumar, 2011). Probability sampling techniques, as indicated by Kumar (2011), is imperative as it allows each case to be selected without the consideration of the researcher's personal preferences. Saunders et al. (2007) associates this sampling procedure with survey-based strategies giving five main techniques: "simple random; systematic; stratified random; cluster; and multi-stage". In non-probability sampling, the chance of sample cases being equally selected is quite lean as there is no basis for estimating the probability that an element within the sample will be included

(Kothari, 2004). The researcher in this situation deliberately selects cases that will be involved in the study. Malhotra and Birks (2006) undernoted that also probability sampling procedures rely, to an extent, on personal judgments indicating it may not be entirely representative of the populace; however, generalizations could still be made from it. Some classifications of non-probability sampling include; “quota sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling, and convenience sampling procedures”. According to Malhotra and Birks (2006), quota sampling is a technique that involves a two-stage restricted judgmental sampling. They indicate that initial stages involve the development of control categories or quotas of the population cases, for example based on gender and elements selected based on some level of judgment or convenience. Purposive sampling techniques’ primary concern is the use of judgments to select who can provide the best of information that will help achieve the objectives of the study (Kumar, 2011). Convenience sampling consists of selecting randomly those cases that are easiest to acquire for your sample (Saunders et al., 2007) with snowballing being used when the identification of members of the population is difficult to obtain (Saunders et al., 2009), with subsequent samples obtained through referrals (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). Non-probability sampling was used in this study to select samples as the population was large and data was being collected. Specifically, this study used the purposive sampling technique to elicit information from the sampled respondents.

Determination of sample size for research purposes involves various qualitative and quantitative techniques (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). The use of quantitative techniques in selecting samples that are as large as possible is recommended by researchers such as Hair et al. (2009), Gray (2009), and Burns (2000). A sample size of at least 100 and over is considered reasonable

enough in conducting a quantitative study (Hair et al., 2009). Academic scholars share the view that the larger the sample sizes for the study, the more accurate the data will be in reflecting the true situation at hand. Saunders et al. (2007) indicate that the larger the sample size, the lower the probability error in generalizing the results to the population. Based on these discussions as well as recommendations, and for the sake of achieving accuracy, it was deemed important to use a large sample size for the survey, thus 410 respondents were considered for eliciting information for the study where the first set of 200 respondents were used for EFA which informed the design of new set of questionnaires and the choice of another 210 respondents for CFA, bringing a total of 410 respondents for this study.

#### **4.9 Mode and Instrumentation for Data Analysis**

A deductive approach was used in the analysis of data for the study as the hypotheses, which were tested, were based on the review of existing literature. Three main analysis methods used in order to analyze research results are: first the reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alfa, then the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and finally the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

##### *4.9.1 Exploratory factors analysis*

The EFA is a method used in order to explore a certain field and discover constructs or dimensions. It is usually the first method used for investigating complex subjects (Kline, 1994, p. 7). EFA is particularly useful for researches where the subject is complex and where the role of variables is uncertain or undefined.

As defined by Brown (2006): “EFA is a data-driven approach such that no specifications are made in regard to the number of latent factors (initially) or to the pattern of relationships between the common factors and the indicators (i.e., the factor loadings) (Brown, 2006, p. 13). Rather, the researcher employs EFA as an exploratory or descriptive technique to determine the appropriate number of common factors and to uncover which measured variables are reasonable indicators of the various latent dimensions (e.g., by the size and differential magnitude of factor loadings)”.

With the EFA it is possible to determine the factors that lead to the covariance among the observed variables (Byrne, 2010, p.5). The EFA was fully performed using the statistical software SPSS.

#### *4.9.2 Confirmatory factor analysis*

The second stage of factor analysis is performed using a SEM in the sense of a “statistical methodology that takes a confirmatory (hypothesis-testing) approach to the analysis of a structural theory bearing on some phenomenon” as defined by Byrne (2010, p. 3). As Byrne (2010) states: “the term structural equation modeling conveys two important aspects of the procedure: (a) that the causal processes under study are represented by a series of structural (i.e., regression) equations, and (b) that these structural relations can be modeled pictorially to enable a clearer conceptualization of the theory under study (Byrne, 2010, p. 3). The hypothesized model can then be tested statistically in a simultaneous analysis of the entire system of variables to determine the extent to which it is consistent with the data. If goodness-of-fit is adequate, the model argues for the plausibility of postulated relations among variables; if it is inadequate, the tenability of such relations is rejected”.

The purpose of the CFA is similar to the EFA as it intends to identify the latent factors] that lead to variation and co-variation among a set of items. Usually, both EFA and CFA rely on the same factor model. The difference is that the EFA is a descriptive or exploratory procedure allowing to research among all factors independently from knowing how they vary and influence each other.

For the CFA, it is necessary to pre-specify the aspects of the model like the number of factors or the factor loadings. Therefore, the CFA relies on the strong empirical and conceptual foundations. As Brown explains: “EFA is typically used earlier in the process of scale development and construct validation, whereas CFA is used in later phases after the underlying structure has been established on prior empirical EFA and theoretical grounds” (Brown, 2006, p. 40).

As Brown (2006) explains: “the researcher can specify the number of factors and the pattern of indicator factor loadings in advance, as well as other parameters such as; those bearing on the independence or covariance of the factors and indicator unique variances (Brown, 2006, p. 13). The pre-specified factor’s solution is evaluated in terms of how well it reproduces the sample correlation (covariance) matrix of the measured variables”. The CFA is hypothesis- driven and helps to confirm or reject the hypothesis raised in this work (Brown, 2006, p.1). The CFA in this thesis has been performed using the statistical program AMOS.

#### **4.10 Validity and Reliability**

Reliability, according to Malhotra and Birks (2006), is the degree to which a dimension will replicate unswerving results if the procedures involved are repeated. Moser and Kalton (1989)

claim that “a scale or test is reliable to the extent that repeat measurements made by it under constant conditions will give the same result”. Pallant (2011) indicates it is the degree to which a scale will be independent of random errors. The most generally used approaches in assessment of reliability, according to Malhotra and Birks (2006), include internal consistency and test-retest. Kumar (2011) found external consistency (test-retest and parallel forms of the same test) a measure of reliability. Internal consistency is the level to which the items making up the scales are evaluating the same core elements and test-retest is a reliability test that calculates the relationship between two scores using correlation after the administration of scales to the same groups of people at varying time intervals (Maholtra & Birks, 2006). The split-half technique is an internal consistency procedure, which is designed to correlate half of the items with that of other items (Kumar, 2011). Cronbach’s alpha is the most widely used indicator of reliability and is considered by Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) as a measurement of inter-correlations between the several items representing constructs. Hair et al. (2009) indicates that, to be able to reveal a suitable reliability, the calculated value for Cronbach alpha should not be anything less than 0.70 margin although this could decrease to 0.6 in exploratory studies. In order to test and confirm the degree of reliability for the instrument used in conducting the research Cronbach alpha was then employed.

Basically, “validity has to do with the ability of an instrument to measure what it is designed to measure” (Kumar, 2011). This according to Kerlinger (1973), it can be simply defined by asking the question: “Are we measuring what we think we are measuring?”. According to Kumar (2011), “there are three types of validity: face and content validity; concurrent and predictive validity; and construct validity”. The study instrument was examined using the face and content

validity procedure. The items or questions asked must relate logically to the study objectives. This link is termed as face validity and assessing the items within the instrument in this note is content validity (Kumar, 2011). Kothari (2004) notes that it is the degree to which the instrument of measurement adequately covers the issues under study. Based on standards set by academic scholars who stress that the use of simple face validity test by asking for the views of people on the study (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005) and conducting pre-tests for content validity as postulated by Hair et al. (2009). The questionnaire was appraised by the supervising professor and pre-tested.

#### **4.11 Ethical Considerations**

In all professions, ethical guidance is of high value. Kumar (2011) indicates that over the years ethical codes have evolved in order to accommodate the dynamic ethos, values, needs and expectations. On this premise, the consent of all respondents were respectively sought with the aims and objectives of the study clarified to them. Ethical considerations were made a priority as participants were encouraged to willingly part-take in the study. Confidentiality was assured as the personal information of respondents was not revealed in the study since it was for academic purposes.

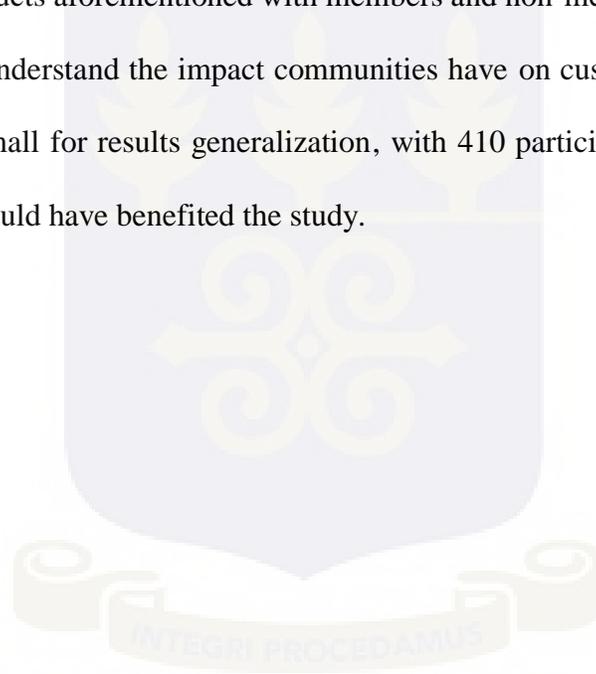
#### **4.12 Limitation of the study**

This study contains some limitations that might explain the lack of results from the analysis.

First limitation to be reported, is the measurement of complex constructs like brand commitment, brand trust and brand loyalty with a Likert-scale questions. It might have been more suited to conduct an interview based on a more qualitative approach in order to observe other aspects of

customer's relations and the brand commitment, trust and loyalty. Also, it is possible that respondents might not have been able to fully understand and assess their commitment, loyalty and trust toward the brand.

Another limitation is that the sample used for the study was too restrictive, as only members interacting on one post of Cusson Facebook page have been chosen. This might have restricted the chance to understand some other effects of the model. Plus, it would have been interesting to compare the three constructs aforementioned with members and non-members of an online brand community in order to understand the impact communities have on customers. Furthermore, the sample was relatively small for results generalization, with 410 participants. A larger and more heterogeneous sample could have benefited the study.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This section presents the data analysis and discussion of findings, and confronts the theoretical chapters with empirical evidence. The presentation of the results closely follows the research objectives proposed in the introduction section of this study. First, descriptive statistics of the scale variables are provided. This is followed by the results from the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) as well as confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for the constructs in the conceptual framework. In addition to this, various reliability and validity tests on the scales used in this research are carried out to validate and authenticate the final model obtained in the empirical data presentation. Finally, the chapter presents the structural model assessments that tests evidence in the conceptual framework for the study by the use of structural equation modeling (SEM).

#### **5.1 Descriptive Statistics**

From the table the highest mean was 4.25 (I have an interest in the community because of the other owners of the brands.) while the lowest was 3.08 (The members of this community benefit from the community. The 32 variables displayed in Table 5.1 below represented the components of the eight main constructs depicted in the conceptual framework for the study.

**Table 5.1: Descriptive Statistics of variables**

	<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
The members of this community benefit from the community.	B1	3.08	1.73
The members share a common bond with other members of the community.	B2	3.24	1.74
The members are strongly affiliated with other members.	B3	3.7	1.71
I value the heritage of the brand.	BC1	3.23	1.73
If I were to replace the product, I would replace it with another product of the same brand.	BC2	3.24	1.74
My brand is of the highest quality.	BC3	3.23	1.73
If this brand were not available, it would make little difference to me if I had to choose another brand.	BCM1	3.2	1.8
I will more likely purchase a brand that is on sale than to purchase this brand.	BCM2	3.2	1.8
I have strong preference for this brand.	BCM3	3.76	1.78
To change my preference from this brand would require huge rethinking.	BCM4	3.84	1.76
Even if close friends recommend another brand, I would not change my preference.	BCM5	3.86	1.78
I feel strong sense of belonging to this brand.	BCM6	3.92	1.8
In the future I see myself being committed to the brand.	BCM7	4.07	1.91
I consider myself to be loyal to the brand.	BL1	3.48	1.89
If the brand is not available at the same store, I would buy the same brand from some other store.	BL2	3.47	1.82
I am willing to pay more for my brand.	BL3	3.59	1.77
I bought this brand because I really like it.	BL4	3.51	1.75
I feel more attached to this brand than to other brands.	BL5	3.81	1.89
I intend to buy this brand in the future, too.	BL6	3.59	1.86
I recommend this brand those who ask my advice.	BL7	3.88	1.88
My brand gives me everything that I expect out of the product.	BT1	3.2	1.8
I relay on my brand.	BT2	3.4	1.78
My brand never disappoints me.	BT3	3.58	1.79

The company understands my needs.	CP1	3.23	1.73
The company cares about my opinions.	CP2	3.63	1.78
I have met wonderful people because of the community.	OC1	3.82	2.07
I have a feeling of kinship with the other owners.	OC2	3.88	1.94
I have an interest in the community because of the other owners of the brands.	OC3	4.25	1.98
I love the product of the brand.	P1	3.62	2.06
I am proud of the product.	P2	3.88	1.93
The product is one of my prized possession.	P3	4.02	1.87
The product is fun to use.	P4	3.95	1.86

**Source: Field Data, 2017**

### 5.3.1 Profile of respondents for the confirmatory factor analysis

The demographic profiles of respondents included in the study are presented in the Table 5.2 below. Respondents for the study have been profiled according to gender of respondents; age of respondents, academic qualification of respondents, and mobile networks used by respondents.

**Table 5.2: Demographic profile of Respondents**

Response	Response	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	73	34.8
	Female	137	65.2
Age	18-25	15	7.1
	26-35	42	20
	36-45	95	45.2
	46-55	35	16.7
	Above 55	23	11

Educational Qualification	JHS	18	8.6
	SHS	42	20
	Diploma	27	12.9
	HND	25	11.9
	Degree	62	30
	Masters	1	0.5
	Others	35	16.7
Are you a member of an online brand community	Yes	210	100
	No	0	0
Religion	Christian	148	70.5
	Muslim	58	27.6
	Traditionalist	1	0.5
	Artist	3	1.4
n= 210			

**Source: Field Data, 2017**

From the table above, 73 males and 137 female online brand community members were included in the study, representing 34.8% and 65.2% respectively. In terms of age group, 15 respondents, representing 7.1% indicated 18-25 years as their age range. Respondents within the age range of 26 to 35 were 42 representing 20%. Ninety five respondents included in the study representing 45.2% claimed to be within the age range of 36-45 years. Again, respondents within 46 to 55 years were 35 (16.7%) while those above 55 years were 23 representing 11%. This shows that

majority of the respondents included in the study were the youth who mostly explore innovations and are more engaged in online communities for discussion purposes. There was also an assessment of the educational qualifications of these respondents. About 28.6% have had basic education (from primary to secondary education) with the rest having tertiary education encompassing diploma certificate (12.9%), HND certificate (11.9%), degree certificates (30%), masters qualifications (0.5%) as well as other qualifications (16.7%). This reveals that majority of the respondents had more than just a senior high educational qualification and thus understood the key issues being studied. In terms of whether respondents included in the study were on any online community, all respondents said “yes” representing 100% responses. Regarding the religion, it was unveiled that, 148 respondents, representing 70.5% claimed to be Christians. Respondents who were Muslims and traditionalist were 58 and 1 respectively, representing 27.6% and 0.5% respectively. The researcher did not intend to skew any of the above profiles towards any particular parameter since most of these respondents were contacted on their availability and willingness to partake in the study.

## **5.2 Reliability Analysis using Cronbach’s alpha and bivariate analysis**

For the reliability analysis of the items used to measure the constructs, Cronbach’s alpha and bivariate method were used. All constructs’ reliability coefficients have been calculated with Cronbach’s alpha, with the exception of the Company construct, where only two items have been used for the measurement. Therefore the bivariate method was needed. The table 5.2 contains all coefficients resulting from the reliability analysis.

All Cronbach's alpha coefficients are higher than 0.7. Therefore, the items used to measure the constructs can be considered as reliable as their internal consistency is sufficient. No items had to be removed, as all coefficients were higher than the threshold. The Company construct has a bivariate coefficient of 0.515 and therefore the items used for this measurement cannot be considered as reliable enough (Gliem & Gliem, 2003, p. 87).

**Table 5.3: Constructs, number of items, items and Cronbach's Alpha**

<b>Indicators/ Measurement Items</b>	<b>Latent Constructs</b>	<b>Labels</b>	<b>Items number</b>	<b>Cronbach Alpha/ Bivariate</b>
The members of this community benefit from the community.	Brand Community (BC)	BC1	3	0.815
The members share a common bond with other members of the community.		BC2		
The members are strongly affiliated with other members.		BC3		
I love the product of the brand.	Product (P)	P1	4	0.842
I am proud of the product.		P2		
The product is one of my prized possession.		P3		
The product is fun to use.		P4		
I value the heritage of the brand.	Brand (B)	B1	3	0.739
If I were to replace the product, I would replace it with another product of the same brand.		B2		
My brand is of the highest quality.		B3		
The company understands my needs.	Company (C)	C1	2	0.515
The company cares about my opinions.		C2		
I have met wonderful people because of the community.	Other Customers (OC)	OC1	3	0.853
I have a feeling of kindship with the other owners.		OC2		
I have an interest in the community because of the other owners of the brands.		OC3		
I consider myself to be loyal to the brand.	Brand	BL1	7	0.876

If the brand is not available at the same store, I would buy the same brand from some other store.	Loyalty (BL)	BL2		
I am willing to pay more for my brand.		BL3		
I bought this brand because I really like it.		BL4		
I feel more attached to this brand than to other brands.		BL5		
I intend to buy this brand in the future, too.		BL6		
I recommend this brand those who ask my advice.		BL7		
My brand gives me everything that I expect out of the product.		Brand Trust (BT)	BT1	
I rely on my brand.	BT2		3	0.82
My brand never disappoints me.	BT3			
If Cussons were not available, it would make little difference to me if I had to choose another brand.	Brand Commitment (BCM)	BCM1		
I will more likely purchase a brand that is on sale than to purchase Cussons.		BCM2		
I have strong preference for this brand.		BCM3		
To change my preference from this brand would require huge rethinking.		BCM4	7	0.758
Even if close friends recommend another brand, I would not change my preference.		BCM5		
I feel strong sense of belonging to this brand.		BCM6		
In the future I see myself being committed to the Cussons.		BCM7		

**Source: Field Data, 2017**

### 5.3 Exploratory Factor analysis

The EFA was performed including all 32 items used to measure the 8 constructs. EFA was performed with SPSS including all items and using a Varimax rotation (assuming that extracted factors are independent).

First, part of the analysis is the KMO and Bartlett’s test, presented in table 6. The test shows that items are suitable for performing a factor analysis as the KMO value of 0.809 is bigger than 0.7, and items can be grouped into smaller set of underlying factors, as the Bartlett’s test significant value 0.00 is less than 0.05.

**Table 5.4: KMO and Bartlett Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		<b>0.809</b>
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2618.105
	Df	496
	Sig.	<b>0.000</b>

**Source: KMO and Bartlett’s Test results**

The table 5.5, presents the communalities, indicating if the items are suitable for the EFA. All of the items have an extraction factor higher than .5 which indicates that none of the items need to be removed before performing the EFA.

**Table 5.5: Communality of the questions**

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Extraction</b>
BC1	0.833
BC2	0.855
BC3	0.682
P1	0.809
P2	0.738
P3	0.777
P4	0.785
B1	0.725
B2	0.559
B3	0.628
CP1	0.746
CP2	0.643
OC1	0.727

OC2	0.743
OC3	0.643
BL1	0.733
BL2	0.648
BL3	0.619
BL4	0.718
BL5	0.686
BL6	0.680
BL7	0.622
BT1	0.810
BT2	0.699
BT3	0.591
BCM1	0.829
BCM2	0.758
BCM3	0.628
BCM4	0.639
BCM5	0.619
BCM6	0.710
BCM7	0.584

***Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis***

The next part of the analysis, represented in table 8, concerns the total variance explanation. The total variance explanation table shows that 70.202% of the variance is explained by 8 factors: factor 1, 34.801% which accounted for considerably more variance than the remaining seven factors, factor 2, 6.928%, factor 3, 6.245%, factor 4, 5.566%, factor 5, 5.123% and factor 6, 4.343 %. The factors' variance is also displayed on the Scree Plot on figure 5.1. As the Scree Plot does not allow the selection of a certain number of factors based on a visual analysis, factor with an Eigenvalue higher than 1 will be extracted based on the total explained variance table.

**Figure 5.1: Scree Plot**

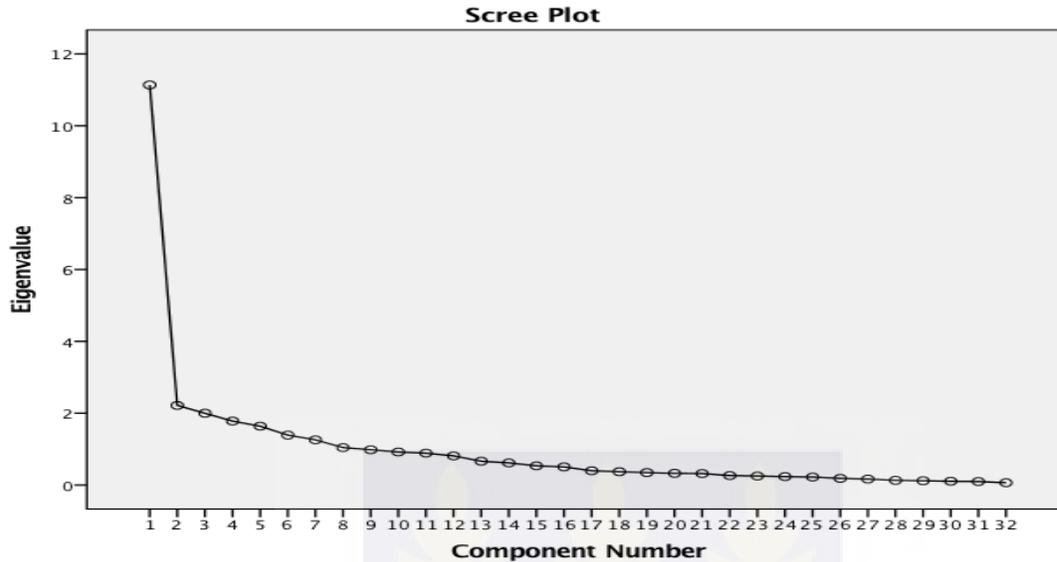


Table 5.6, represents the rotated components matrix generated with the Varimax rotation method. The Varimax method is used here because it is assumed that the eight extracted factors are independent from each other. Based on these results, it is possible to group the items per extracted factors (highlighted in color) based on the factor loading indicators.

**Table 5.6: Rotated component matrix using the Varimax rotation method**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
BCM5	0.714							
BT1	0.703							
BT2	0.690							
BCM4	0.675							
BCM3	0.608							
BCM6	0.537							
BCM7	0.537							
BT3	0.528							
BL4		0.739						
BL6		0.725						
BL5		0.717						
BL7		0.682						
BL3		0.616						
BL2		0.552						

OC1	0.753		
OC3	0.736		
OC2	0.688		
BL1	0.590		
B1		0.773	
CP1		0.687	
B2		0.624	
B3		0.615	
CP2		0.581	
P4			0.798
P3			0.761
P1			0.705
P2			0.669
BC1			0.859
BC2			0.857
BCM1			0.881
BCM2			0.845
BC3			0.529

The rotated matrix is showing which items or questions are loaded in which factor. The goal now is to understand if questions loaded in the same factor represent a common theme and a construct related to the real world as the table shows only a statistical representation of the constructs.

Table 5.7, shows the identified factors grouped and named regarding what they represent. Plus, the table displays the reliability analysis of each factor using a Cronbach's alpha. In other words, it assesses how good the items in the extracted factors are at measuring it. The Cronbach's alpha, being relatively high, it is possible to deduct that the items selected in each factor are particularly good at measuring it.

From the previous analysis, two factors had to be removed (Factor 7 and Factor 8). In fact, Factor 7 was loaded with two items from Brand Commitment and as factor 1 was already loaded with most of the items, it is not possible to create a second factor measuring the same construct.

For factor 8, the deletion was due to the fact that the factor loaded only one item, which is not enough to be kept for further analysis.

The table shows that Factor 1 is loaded with both, “brand trust” and “brand commitment” items. This factor is therefore named Brand Trust and Commitment. Factor 2 loaded most the “Brand Loyalty” items and is consequently named “Brand Loyalty”. Factor 3 loaded three items related to “Other customers” and can therefore be named so as well. Factor 4 is split between the “Brand” and “the Company” items. In this case the factor is named “Brand” as is represented with more items than the company’s one. Factor 5 is loaded with all the items related to “Product” and finally the Factor 6 is related to the “Brand Community” items.

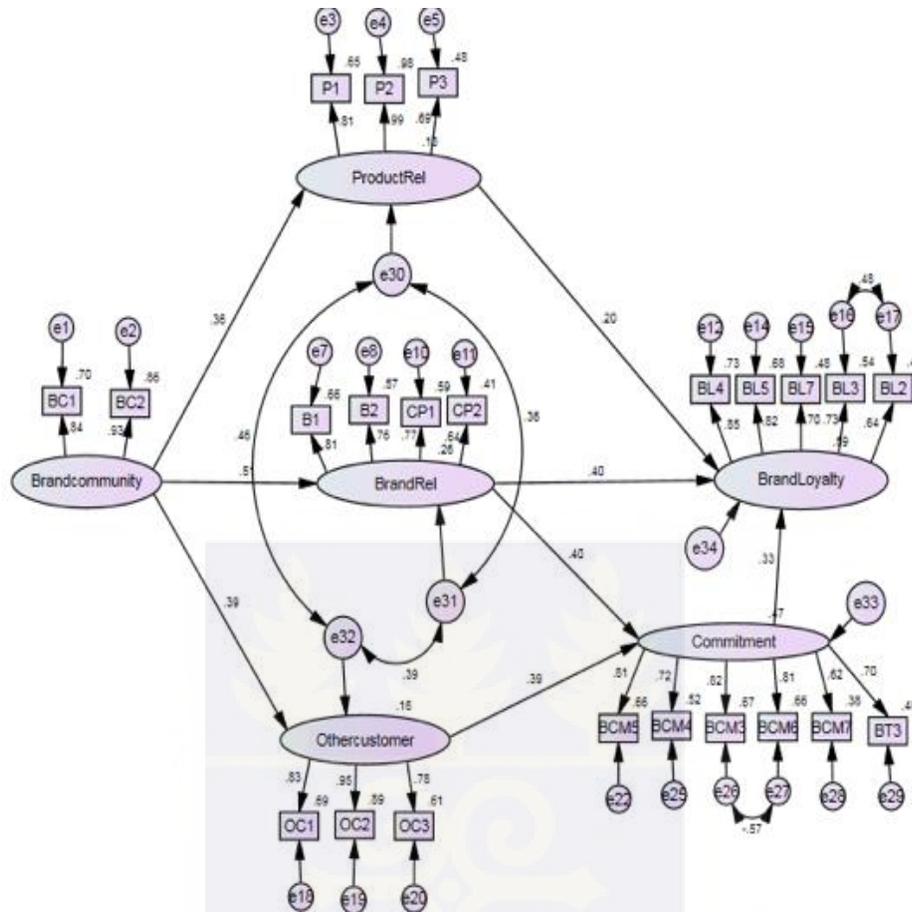
**Table 5.7: Factors identified and reliability analysis after EFA**

	No. of Items	Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand Trust & Commitment	8	BCM5	3.86	1.78	<b>0.875</b>
		BT1	3.20	1.8	
		BT2	3.40	1.78	
		BCM4	3.84	1.76	
		BCM3	3.76	1.78	
		BCM6	3.92	1.8	
		BCM7	4.07	1.91	
		BT3	3.58	1.79	
Factor 2 Brand Loyalty	6	BL4	3.51	1.75	<b>0.866</b>
		BL6	3.59	1.86	
		BL5	3.81	1.89	
		BL7	3.88	1.88	
		BL3	3.59	1.77	
		BL2	3.47	1.82	
Factor 3 Other Customers	4	OC1	3.82	2.07	<b>0.839</b>
		OC3	4.25	1.98	
		OC2	3.88	1.94	
		BL1	3.48	1.89	

		B1	3.08	1.73	
		CP1	3.23	1.73	
Factor 4	5	B2	3.24	1.74	<b>0.810</b>
Brand		B3	3.70	1.71	
		CP2	3.63	1.78	
		P4	3.95	1.86	
		P3	4.02	1.87	
Factor 5	4	P1	3.62	2.06	<b>0.842</b>
Product		P2	3.88	1.93	
		BC1	3.23	1.73	
Factor 6	2	BC2	3.24	1.74	<b>0.754</b>
Brand					
Community					

#### 5.4 Confirmatory factor analysis

The goal of the CFA is to test the six constructs discovered during the EFA presented in the previous chapter. The CFA intends to determine if the model designed after the EFA presents a good fit. This means that all factors and indicators discovered and grouped in the EFA are built together in order to form a hypothetical model. Then the model is tested and the indicators that do not fit the model are removed until a fitting model appears (Byrne, 2010, p. 66). The model determined by the CFA is presented in the figure 10, from 29 indicators in the initial phase, remain 26 of them that can be considered a fitting.



**Figure 5.2: The final CFA model**

Based on the CFA, it is possible to advance that the model presented above adequately describes the sample data observed in this research. Because the initial CFA model that included all 29 indicators did not had the desirable statistical fit, three indicators had to be removed due to their low factor loadings and commonalities.

#### 5.4.1. Validity of the model

According to these results, the model can be validated as significant (higher than the threshold of 252.365 at .05 and 217 degree of freedom). However, the Chi-square is intended to be used only

as a quick overview for the model fit. Indeed, AMOS provides other statistical analysis of the model fit (Byrne, 2010, p. 76).

#### *5.4.2. Fit indicators*

In order to assess the fit of the model it is necessary to analysis other indicators. The most appropriate one are the CMIN, the RMR, GFI, baseline comparison and the RMSEA values, presented in table 13 (Byrne, 2010, p. 176).

The first indicator to analyze is the CMIN, which indicates discrepancy of the covariance matrix in the model. The observed value of CMIN is 353.038 and the degree of freedom is 217. The ratio that must be analysed is the CMIN/DF observed at 1.627 which is acceptable (should not be superior than 3) (Byrne, 2010, p. 75). The test of hypothesized model yielded a  $X^2$  value 353.038, with 217 degrees of freedom, and probability level less than .000 ( $< .05$ ).

Next to the GFI, the Comparative Fit Index has to be analyzed. The CFI's values are derived from a comparison of the model and a hypothesized one. The observed value of the CFI is at 0.919, which can be considered as fitting for the model as it is higher than the threshold of .90 usually used. As indicated by Byrne (2010) values higher than 0.90 are good indicators for a fitting model (Byrne, 2010, p. 78).

The Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) observed here is also not high enough to be considered as a good fit. The observed value for the TLI is at 0.906, which is higher than the threshold of 0.90 that

indicates a good fit. Based on the observed values the model based on the TLI is a good fit (Byrne, 2010, p. 79).

The next statistics focuses on the RMSEA. The observed RMSEA is 0.073 and enters the reasonable fit category (Byrne, 2010, p. 81).

Summary of the fit indicators discussed above are presented in table 5.7 below.

**Table 5.8 Value of parameters of the model**

Measure	Value
Chi- square	353.038
Degrees of freedom	217
CMIN/df	1.627
GFI (>0.9)	0.806
TLI (>0.9)	0.906
RMSEA (>0.08)	0.073
CFI (>0.9)	0.919

#### 5.4.3. Test of the hypothesis

The next step of the CFA is to test the hypothesis. The table 5.9, shows the relationships between the constructs and their statistical significance in the form of standardised regression and degree of dependence. Those relationships are also presented on figure 5.2, on the AMOS model. The estimates are displayed on the arrows linking the constructs with each other.

**Table 5.9: Constructs’ relationships and statistical significance**

Relationship between constructs	B estimates	P-Value	R2
BC (brand community)-> B (brand)	0.513	.36***	
BC (brand community)-> OC (other customers)	0.394	.39***	
BC (brand community) -> P (product)	0.364	.5***	
B (brand)->BMC (brand commitment)	0.399	.40***	0.263
OC (other customers) ->BMC	0.322	.39***	0.155

BMC (brand commitment)->BL (brand loyalty)	0.329	0.002	0.473
P (product)->BL (brand loyalty)	0.198	0.021	0.132
B (brand)->BL (brand loyalty)	0.398	.40***	0.59

Path significance: \*p<.01; \*\* p<.005; \*\*\*p<.001

Two of eight relationships were not significant enough to be supported and are therefore rejected. It is the brand commitment (BCM) influence on brand loyalty (BL) and the product relationship (P) on brand loyalty (BL). Regarding the latter, this was not a hypothesis based on the theory but proposed by AMOS during the CFA. All other relationships are significant at the .001 level and positive according to the theory. The squared multiple correlation coefficients (R<sup>2</sup>) were not particularly high .590 for brand loyalty (BL), .473 for brand commitment (BC), .263 for brand (B), .155 for other customers (OC), .132 for product (P).

There is a relationship between brand community (BC) and product (P), brand (B), other customers (OC), which confirms hypothesis H1a, H1b and H1d. It is not surprising that the strongest relationship was found in these three variables because their effect was already mentioned in previous literature. The other relationships between brand (B) and brand commitment (BC) and other customers (OC) and brand commitment (BC) are quite weak but still positive and significant. This means there is support for hypothesis H4b and H4d.

**Table 5.10: Summary of the tested hypotheses**

<b>The effect of online brand community on social network</b>	
H1a Product relationship.	Supported
H1b Brand relationship.	Supported
H1c Company relationship.	Not Tested
H1d Other customers relationship.	Supported
<b>The effect of customer's relationships on the brand trust</b>	
H2a Product relationship has a direct positive effect on brand trust.	Not Tested

H2b	Brand relationship has a direct positive effect on brand trust.	Not Tested
H2c	Company relationship has a direct positive effect on brand trust.	Not Tested
H2d	Other customers relationship have direct positive effects on brand trust	Not Tested
<b>The effect of brand trust on brand commitment and on brand loyalty</b>		
H3a	brand loyalty	Not Tested
H3b	brand commitment	Not Tested
<b>The effect of customer's relationships on the brand commitment</b>		
H4a	product relationship has a direct positive effect on brand commitment.	Not Tested
H4b	company relationship has a direct positive effect on brand commitment.	Supported
H4c	company relationship has a direct positive effect on brand commitment.	Not Tested
H4d	other customers relationship have direct positive effects on brand commitment	Supported
<b>The effect of brand commitment on brand loyalty</b>		
H5	brand commitment positively influences on brand loyalty.	Not Supported

## 5.5 Discussion of the findings

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the effect of brand commitment on brand loyalty in online brand community located on social network. To examine this effect, brand commitment has been added to the existing and already tested model of Laroche et al. (2013). This particular effect has been tested on the members of the online brand community from cusion baby products, based on their interactions within the community.

In order to examine this effect, an empirical study quantitatively assessed the relationships between online brand community, the customers' relationships, brand trust, brand commitment and brand loyalty. The empirical study first searched factors through an exploratory factors analysis. Once the factors were identified, they have been tested as a model in a confirmatory factor analysis.

Table 5.10 summarises the hypothesis tested in this study and the results obtained. First, the CFA confirmed the influence of online brand community based on social network on the customer's relationships based on the customer centric model. In Fact, the relationships between brand community and the customer / brand relationship (H1a), the customer / other customer relationship (H1b) and the customer / product relationship (H1d) were all reported positive and statistically significant. The last relationship of the customer with the company has not been included in the AMOS model as a variable, due to a low factor loading during the EFA. However, the items measuring this element were added to the brand relationships variable, as during the EFA they were not identified as being part of a single factor. This may be due to the fact that only two items were used to measure the construct customer / company relations. Another possibility is that the construct of brand and company were too similar. With the exception of this last relationship, the results confirm that online brand communities on social networks have an impact on the customers' relations within the community. Those findings are aligned and match the findings reported in Laroche et al.'s study from 2013 (Laroche et al., 2013, p. 80).

The second finding that must be reported is the misconceptions of brand trust and brand commitments that have been considered as one factor after the EFA. Based on the EFA it was therefore not possible to identify brand trust or brand commitment as almost all items used to measure those constructs have been grouped in the same factor. In the CFA, most of the items used for brand trust have been removed when optimising the model. Even after this operation, it was not possible to observe a relation between brand commitment (the variable kept in the CFA)

and brand loyalty. However, the CFA has reported an influence from the customer / brand relationship and the customer / other customer relationship on the brand commitment construct.

The reason for this is that maybe brand trust and brand commitment constructs were too similar and hard to interpret from the respondent's point of view. They might have been able to clearly identify their trust or commitment toward the brand. Due to this, the hypothesis H2a, H2b, H2c and H2d could not have been tested by the CFA and are therefore reported here as not tested as well as H3a and H3b.

Considering the influence of customer's relationships on brand commitment, two of four relations have been supported by the CFA, the customer / other customers and the customer / brand relationships. Those observed relations indicate that commitment has certainly a part to play in this model. However, due to mixing of brand trust and brand commitment, it is complicated to clearly define how commitment influences the model.

The third finding that is important to report here is the fact that influence between brand commitment on brand loyalty (H5) was not supported by the CFA. This is surprising because of strong indications in the literature that brand commitment has influence on brand loyalty. The reason for it might be that selection of participants based on their involvement with the brand community was too restrictive and could not permit to observe a larger population. Also, people selected for the study were already committed to the online brand community as they interacted with it, in form of comment, like or share. A more heterogeneous sample could have lead to different results here.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 6.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the major findings of the study, conclusions in accordance with the study objectives, implications of the study to management and practice, study limitations and further research directions.

#### 6.1 Summary of findings

This section discusses the summary of the major findings from the data analysis based on the study objectives.

It must be stated that for the purpose of this study relative to the stated objectives, customers of Cussons baby products online were the target audience of developed questionnaires.

*Objective 1: To examine the influence of Online brand community on brand loyalty.*

The first objective of the study provided evidence for the justification that online brand community aided in achieving some level of brand loyalty. This finding clearly showed that online brand community positively and significantly influence brand loyalty. This suggests that, customers of Cussons baby products found online were seen to be loyal to Cussons baby product brand. Their loyalty revealed itself in both attitude and behavioural , that is, customers within the Cussons baby products online brand communities consistently made repeat purchases, very rarely reacted to price changes, talked about the products to other customers and made referrals etc . These Online Brand communities were found to promote and encourage positive feelings and intentions about the brand.

*Objective 2: To examine the role of brand trust and brand commitment in the relationship between online brand community and brand loyalty.*

A very strong and significant positive relationship was established between online brand community, brand trust, brand commitment and brand loyalty. This is an indication that the presence or existence of online brand communities' encourages and promotes brand trust and commitment. Online Brand Community enables trust and Commitment which promotes loyalty. The study also saw brand trust and brand commitment merging due to the fact that they could not differentiate both from each other. Additionally, the results obtained with this study show that model of Laroche et al. (2013) is still relevant for explaining the impact of online brand community based on social media on the brand commitment, trust and loyalty. Even though all the relations could not be validated, there is some evidence that commitment might also be added to this model.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

The main goal of this thesis was to contribute to the general knowledge about online brand communities and their influence on brand loyalty. The design used for the research was specifically addressing the lack of empirical studies conducted in this field. Even though many authors explained the role of brand trust and brand commitment on brand loyalty, none of them conducted empirical researches combining those variables together.

Even though the model developed in this thesis could not be fully supported by the statistical analysis, the results show that there are good signs that those aforementioned variables do

influence the brand loyalty. The researcher therefore recommend for future researches to keep considering brand commitment as being part of the model.

However the methods used to measure this aspect should be modified, as it appears that consumers do not fully distinguish between brand commitment and brand trust. The researcher also recommends developing new items aiming to measure this variable. Researches and marketers should continue their efforts to understand better the role of brand communities in influencing the customers' brand loyalty. In an economy where consumers are not only connected with others consumers but with a multitude of entities through social networks, understanding the roles of those connections and their impact on the consumers will certainly create a competitive advantage. Even though brand communities might appears to be a threat for certain companies, they are an opportunity for companies willing to increase their brand loyalty. In fact, this study as well as the results of Laroche et al. (2013) confirms that brand communities have a positive impact on brand loyalty. Therefore, companies should invest in understanding how to be present on social networks.

### **6.3 Theoretical and Managerial Contributions**

From a managerial perspective, there are several important implications which can be derived from the findings of this study. A number of practical managerial implications for generating and managing online brand communities to achieve increased customer commitment and loyalty are provided.

The study presented in this thesis contributes to the literature and researches on online brand community on social network. Though the impact on brand loyalty could not be clearly demonstrated, the role of commitment within online brand commitment has to be taken in account. The results show some good signs that customers' interactions on online brand communities based on social networks, do result in a positive influence on brand commitment (for two or four relationships). This will provide valuable insights to manager and practitioners to know what strategies to develop on online platforms to increase customer loyalty towards their brands.

Practically it is logical to realise that customers accepting a product that has presence on social media platforms and their intentions to repurchase are essential to gaining higher market share. 'Intentions to repurchase' is a viable indicator in estimating the number of re-acquisitions of the customer. It is therefore essential for managers to balance the two very well in order to maintain their market share through repeat patronage. Managers can therefore create very smart marketing strategies with customers found in online brand communities to capture the market and maintain their market share.

Additionally, firms should not rely only on online communities or solely centre on customers acquisition, but must combine both, thus, eliminating the notion of managers in charge of online brand communities working at one end with the aim of capturing customer mind-set, and with customer relationship managers directing efforts at acquiring new customers. By fusing the two functions, firms can achieve superiority, thus, the need for a well-organized strategic tactical level management.

## **6.5 Recommendations for the future study**

For future, it could be recommended not only to use quantitative analysis, but also some qualitative ones. As mentioned in the previous section, it is possible that complex constructs are hard to understand in an online questionnaire where no interaction takes place between the researcher and the respondent.

In order to increase the theoretical knowledge about social network and brand community, it would be interesting to conduct a study across different social networks (YouTube, Twitter, Instagram or Tumblr) in order to see if they differ in the way they influence the customers' commitment, trust and brand loyalty.

From a methodological perspective, the study obtained a relatively large sample of respondents (n=410). However, the sampled responses were collected at one time (cross-sectional) as well as through convenience sampling. Thus, it is acknowledged that the sample does not cover the entire population of all online customers of Cussons baby product. The study was cross-sectional in nature, thus, there is the need for future studies to consider longitudinal approaches. Qualitative studies could also be considered for further studies as quantitative studies have their own limitations.

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## QUESTIONNAIRE

**Dear respondent,**

I am a second year MPhil student with the Department of Marketing and Entrepreneurship at the University of Ghana Business School currently conducting a study on “**Online brand community and brand loyalty: the mediating role of brand commitment**”. The outcome of this study would be used for only academic purposes, specifically in partial fulfillment for the award of a Master of Philosophy degree in marketing.

**Please choose the most appropriate to you with the following statements**

1. Gender: Male [ ] Female [ ]
2. Age group: 18-25 [ ] 25-35 [ ] 35-45 [ ] 45-55 [ ] more than 55 [ ]
3. Academic qualification: JHS [ ] SHS [ ] Certificate [ ] Diploma [ ] HND [ ] Degree [ ] Post-graduate/Masters [ ] Doctorate [ ]

Please indicate your opinion with the following statement considering Cussons brand community on Facebook

Key: Strongly Agree = SA Agree = A Neutral = N Disagree = D Strongly Disagree = SD

No	<i>Brand Community (BC)</i>	SA 5	A 4	N 3	D 2	SD 1
1.	The members of this community benefit from the community.					
2.	The members share a common bond with other members of the community.					
3.	The members are strongly affiliated with other members.					

Please indicate your opinion with the following statement considering using product

Key: Strongly Agree = SA Agree = A Neutral = N Disagree = D Strongly Disagree = SD

No	Product relationship (P)	SA 5	A 4	N 3	D 2	SD 1
4.	I love the product of the brand.					
5.	I am proud of the product.					
6.	The product is one of my prized possessions.					
7.	The product is fun to use.					

Please indicate your opinion with the following statement considering Cusson brand

Key: Strongly Agree = SA Agree = A Neutral = N Disagree = D Strongly Disagree = SD

No	Brand Relationship (B)	SA 5	A 4	N 3	D 2	SD 1
8.	I value the heritage of the brand.					
9.	If I were to replace the product, I would replace it with another product of the same brand.					
10.	My brand is of the highest quality.					

Please indicate your opinion with the following statement considering using Cussons Company

Key: Strongly Agree = SA Agree = A Neutral = N Disagree = D Strongly Disagree = SD

No	Company Relationship (C)	SA 5	A 4	N 3	D 2	SD 1
11.	The company understands my needs.					
12.	The company cares about my opinions.					

Please indicate your opinion with the following statement considering **other customers relationship** from the online brand community

Key: Strongly Agree = SA Agree = A Neutral = N Disagree = D Strongly Disagree = SD

No	<b>Other customer relationship (OC)</b>	<b>SA 5</b>	<b>A 4</b>	<b>N 3</b>	<b>D 2</b>	<b>SD 1</b>
13.	I have met wonderful people because of the community.					
14.	I have a feeling of kindship with the other owners.					
15.	I have an interest in the community because of the other owners of the brands.					

Please indicate your opinion with the following statement considering **brand loyalty**

Key: Strongly Agree = SA Agree = A Neutral = N Disagree = D Strongly Disagree = SD

No.	<b>Brand Loyalty (BL)</b>	<b>SA 5</b>	<b>A 4</b>	<b>N 3</b>	<b>D 2</b>	<b>SD 1</b>
16.	I consider myself to be loyal to the brand.					
17.	If the brand is not available at the same store, I would buy the same brand from some other store.					
18.	I am willing to pay more for my brand.					
19.	I bought this brand because I really like it.					
20.	I feel more attached to this brand than to other brands.					
21.	I intend to buy this brand in the future, too.					
22.	I recommend this brand those who ask my advice.					

Please indicate your opinion with the following statement considering **brand trust**

Key: Strongly Agree = SA Agree = A Neutral = N Disagree = D Strongly Disagree = SD

No.	<b>Brand Trust (BT)</b>	<b>SA 5</b>	<b>A 4</b>	<b>N 3</b>	<b>D 2</b>	<b>SD 1</b>
23.	My brand gives me everything that I expect out of the product.					
24.	rely on my brand.					
25.	My brand never disappoints me.					

Please indicate your opinion with the following statement considering **brand commitment**

Key: Strongly Agree = SA Agree = A Neutral = N Disagree = D Strongly Disagree = SD

No.	<b>Brand Commitment (BCM)</b>	<b>SA 5</b>	<b>A 4</b>	<b>N 3</b>	<b>D 2</b>	<b>SD 1</b>
23.	If Cusson were not available, it would make little difference to me if I had to choose another brand.					
24.	I will more likely purchase a brand that is on sale than to purchase Cusson baby products					
25.	I have strong preference for this brand.					
26.	To change my preference from this brand would require huge rethinking.					
27.	Even if close friends recommend another brand, I would not change my preference.					
28.	I feel strong sense of belonging to this brand.					
29.	In the future I see myself being committed to the Cusson brand					
30.	If Cusson were not available, it would make little difference to me if I had to choose another brand.					

**THANK YOU!**