

Investigating social media-based brand community engagement's motives and evangelistic tendencies for football sport's fans

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate variables that motivate brand community engagement. Moreover, explores the mediating role of brand evangelism between brand community engagement and brand defense. The data was collected using quantitative research through an online questionnaire-based survey from 217 active members of certain social media brand communities (SMBCs) which are Facebook and WhatsApp. I chose them because they provide similar functionality. The data was analyzed by using regression analysis. Facebook, for example, adopts instant messaging (IM) features like those found in WhatsApp. However, the two tools of social media provide different social practices, resulting in different user experiences with the same functionality. Thus, the current research adapted these two tools to add richness to data collection. Respondents are a variety of university students and more than 50 different occupations. The data was analyzed by using multiple regression analysis. The research findings provide a comprehensive analysis of user perceptions and engagement within an entertainment platform across eight dimensions. Users hold favourable opinions of the platform, with high ratings for entertainment and information, while self-discovery offers opportunities for improvement. Reliability analysis indicates strong internal consistency among measured items, enhancing data trustworthiness. The correlation matrix underscores significant relationships among dimensions, highlighting their interconnectedness. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's Test supports data suitability. Communalities reveal variable significance through PCA. Regression analysis demonstrates the model's effectiveness in explaining engagement variance. Additionally, mediation analysis emphasizes the direct effects of engagement on brand defence, and indirect one via brand evangelism, contributing to a deeper understanding of user experiences on the platform.

Keywords: Brand Engagement, Brand Evangelism, Brand Community motives, Brand Defense

Introduction

Brand communities serve as important arenas for engagement, facilitating interactions not just between the companies and their customers but also among brand enthusiasts who share a deep affinity for a particular brand. These dedicated brand advocates play a pivotal role in a brand's achievements for several reasons, as highlighted in prior research (Andries et al., 2019; Hsieh and Wei, 2017; Hur et al., 2011; Popp et al., 2008; Wirtz et al., 2013).

Individuals who participate in brand communities do so to attain both utilitarian and hedonic advantages. Previous research has asserted that these utilitarian and hedonic benefits can be linked to the Social Identity Theory (Lee et al., 2011), wherein consumers engage in brand communities to satisfy their need for identification with symbols and groups (Habibi et al., 2019). We emphasize two main categories of advantages. First, we focus on practical benefits derived from self-expression driven by cognitive processes, which serve to meet a consumer's desire to establish and uphold their self-identity. Second, we consider

hedonic benefits arising from the act of self-expression itself, enhancing the enjoyment and pleasure of the consumption experience. (Morgan & Townsend, 2022). Additionally, this participation aligns with the Social Capital Theory as consumers seek to generate economic value through interactions with other members of the brand community (Habibi et al., 2019). Members of these brand communities have expressed their belief that communication within them is more reliable, informative, and engaging than traditional advertising channels (Chi, 2011; Khan et al., 2019)."

The evolution of technology, particularly the advent of Web 2.0, has facilitated the expansion of brand communities. According to Manchanda et al. (2013), around 25-50% of the top 100 leading brands had developed their brand communities in 2011. Furthermore, an analysis of the top 100 brands in 2017 revealed a substantial increase, with as many as 98% of them having embraced brand communities (Interbrand, 2018).

Prior research has explored the reasons behind engagement in brand communities. Madupy and Cooley (2010) conducted a seminal investigation into the catalysts and repercussions within an online brand community model, contributing significantly to our understanding of brand communities. This study contributes to the current understanding of engagement, evangelism, and brand defense, further enhancing our comprehension of how these aspects operate in diverse situations.

Prior research has frequently relied on the uses and gratifications theory (Flanagin & Metzger, 2001) to investigate the reasons behind and methods of user engagement with social media platforms, as well as to evaluate the impact of motives on the utilization of diverse media sources (Cheung et al., 2011; Lampe et al., 2010; Lee & Ma, 2012; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; Vale & Fernandes, 2018). To enhance the authenticity of interactions within brand communities, the central inquiry pertains to the factors motivating customers to participate and actively engage in these communities. The uses and gratifications theory seeks to comprehend the reasons individuals opt for specific media, the underlying needs prompting their media usage, and the gratifications derived from such usage. Originally, this theory was introduced to elucidate why individuals chose to consume the various media forms available during the 1940s (Haverila, McLaughlin, Haverila, & Viskovics, 2021).

Social networking websites have played a significant role in advancing the development of brand communities, leading many companies to actively oversee their brand communities on social media platforms (Dessart et al., 2015; Hollebeek et al., 2014). These social media-based brand communities (SMBCs) provide consumers with opportunities to interact with brands and engage in meaningful brand-related activities including social media campaigns and experiential marketing (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Enthusiastic brand followers leverage these opportunities to establish closer connections with the brands they follow (Coelho et al., 2019). The success of a brand community hinges on the engagement of its members (BCE - Brand Community Engagement), as it fosters and encourages desirable voluntary actions among community participants (Kumar and Kumar, 2020), a point emphasized in earlier studies (Fournier and Lee, 2009; Kumar and Nayak, 2019b).

The majority of consumers affiliate themselves with virtual groups, but only a minority actively engage in social media-Based Brand Communities (SMBCs) to endorse and advocate for their preferred brands, without expecting any commercial benefits in return (Marticotte et al., 2016; Vanmeter et al., 2018). This unselfish customer behaviour is termed 'evangelism' (Doss, 2014; Matzler et al., 2007; Schau et al., 2009). Evangelistic inclinations encompass the display of positive brand perceptions and the promotion and support of favoured brands (Becerra and Badrinarayanan, 2013; He et al., 2017; Marticotte et al., 2016).

Dedicated sports enthusiasts represent the backbone of professional sports teams, playing a pivotal role in the financial and long-term prosperity of the sports industry. Given the indispensable role fans play in the success of sports franchises, which are integral to the United States economy, it becomes imperative to explore strategies for cultivating enduring fan loyalty to sustain the industry's profitability (Bee & Havitz, 2010). Bee and Havitz (2010) discovered that comprehending the motivations behind an individual's ongoing support for a professional sports team offers insights into the most effective approaches for converting individuals who have yet to commit to a specific team or sport into devoted fans.

This study investigates the impact of motives on brand community engagement and also aims to fill the gap in understanding the impact of brand community engagement on evangelist consumers (football fans) within SMBCs and it contributes to the literature by examining key BCE antecedents and outcomes (brand defense), clarifying whether brand evangelism mediates the relationships between BCE and consumer brand defense and focusing specifically on how BCE enhances the supportive behaviour of evangelist customers.

Literature Review

Social Media Based Brand communities.

The landscape of marketing products and services has undergone significant transformation in recent decades. The commercial emergence of the internet, starting in 1995, has played a pivotal role in globalizing markets and bridging communication gaps among continents, cultures, communities, and individuals. The digitization process has brought about fundamental changes in how businesses and academic institutions operate and engage with their customers and other relevant stakeholders. This digital shift necessitates new skill sets in the field of marketing, with brand communities serving as one noteworthy example of this transformative process. It comes as no surprise that academic research on brand communities has flourished, particularly in the past decade (Dessart et al., 2015, 2016).

A brand community is defined as a 'specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand' (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Before the Internet era, brand communities were typically more localized and limited in their reach due to geographical constraints. The digital revolution, primarily influenced by the Internet, has significantly impacted the geographical aspect, allowing community members to interact and engage regardless of physical location. There are two primary categories of brand communities: those initiated by consumers and those initiated by marketers (Lee et al., 2011). Online brand communities are typically classified into marketer-created and consumer-created communities (Lee et al., 2011). Recognizing online brand communities as essential platforms for engaging with consumers, many companies have established marketer-created online brand communities to nurture enduring customer relationships (Dholakia et al., 2004; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Driven by the popularity of online brand communities, empowered consumers have also created their own online brand communities for information sharing (Jang et al., 2008). While numerous studies have focused on building and managing online brand communities, few have delved into the variations in consumer behaviours associated with diverse types of online brand communities (Lee et al., 2011). Consequently, this study was designed to investigate consumer perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours within two major categories of social network-based brand communities: marketer-created and consumer-created brand communities.

For assorted reasons, brand communities play a crucial role in contributing to a brand's success. For instance, researchers have discovered that the experience within a brand community is positively associated with factors such as brand image (Andries et al., 2019), brand engagement (Andries et al., 2019; Wirtz et al., 2013), brand loyalty (Popp et al., 2008; Wirtz et al., 2013), brand commitment (Hsieh and Wei, 2017; Zhou, 2011), positive word-of-mouth (Hur et al., 2011; Popp et al., 2008), and purchase intentions (Liaw, 2008). The significance of brand communities in achieving a brand's success cannot be understated, and their effective execution is paramount. To better serve customers, it is essential to cater to the needs of community members and encourage increased engagement within the brand community.

Social Media Brand Community Engagement

Brand Community Engagement (BCE) is defined as the inherent motivation of consumers to interact and collaborate with fellow community members (Algesheimer et al., 2005, p. 21). Nevertheless, online BCE can possess distinctive characteristics due to platforms enabling consumers to interact not only with brands but also with other community members (Dessart et al., 2015, 2016). Social Media-Based Brand Communities (SMBCs) empower group participants to engage, generate, and distribute content, leading to a heightened level of BCE (Zheng et al., 2015). The success of an SMBC hinges on the engagement fostered by its community participants (Kumar and Nayak, 2019b). Engaged consumers willingly share crucial brand-related information (Habibi et al., 2014a) and altruistically assist other members (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Kumar and Nayak, 2018).

Prior research has examined how Brand Community Engagement (BCE) contributes to strengthening consumer-brand relationships (Brodie et al., 2013) and has demonstrated its positive effects, including increased repurchase intent, recommendations, and loyalty among community members (Kumar and Kumar, 2020; Wirtz et al., 2013). Notably, recent studies have highlighted the limited extent of research on engagement within social media-Based Brand Communities (SMBCs) (Simon et al., 2016). Therefore, it is crucial to further investigate intrinsic motivations such as consumer engagement within SMBCs (Baldus et al., 2015), a topic that requires additional exploration (Kumar and Nayak, 2018, 2019a). While numerous studies have examined consumer engagement outcomes (Dessart et al., 2016; Kumar and Kumar, 2020; Osei-Frimpong and McLean, 2018), the protective role played by community members in SMBCs remains understudied (Colliander and Wien, 2013; Lisjak et al., 2012). As a result, there is a need for further exploration of BCE in the realm of social media (Baldus et al., 2015; Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart et al., 2016; Zaglia, 2013).

Brand Community Engagement Motives

Brand community motives refer to the incentives that drive members' active participation within the brand community (Vale and Fernandes, 2018). Existing research has explored the various motivations behind brand community engagement, revealing a broad spectrum of factors considered in this context. A need becomes a motive when it is aroused to a sufficient level of intensity to drive us to act. Motivation has both directions. A requirement transforms into a motive when it reaches a level of intensity that compels us to act. Motivation entails both making choices between goals and varying degrees of determination in pursuing those goals. (Kotler & Keller, 2016)

A substantial body of research has been dedicated to examining the reasons behind involvement in brand communities. In Chan's work (2017), the motivations are categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Intrinsic motivations, as defined by Chan, pertain to inherently fulfilling engagement actions, whereas extrinsic motivations are tied to actions that are primarily dependent on achieving an outcome distinct from the action itself (Chan, 2017; Legault, 2016).

Anticipated positive emotions and aspects of social identity, including self-categorization, affective commitment, and group-based self-esteem, have been explored as factors influencing brand community engagement (Popp et al., 2008; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006). Furthermore, Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) differentiate motives at both individual and group levels. In a similar vein, Popp et al. (2008) distinguish between small group-based communities, where social benefits primarily drive engagement, and network-based communities, where information and instrumental value are the primary motivators.

In their research (Madupy & Cooley, 2010), the authors drew upon previous studies by Dholakia et al. (2004), Dholakia and Bagozzi (2004), and Flanagin and Metzger (2001) to identify five motivations underlying brand community engagement: the desire to acquire information, provide information, establish social connections, enhance one's status, and embark on a journey of self-discovery. By applying Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a conceptual framework, these motives can be linked to psychological needs for belongingness, love, and esteem, as well as self-fulfilment needs. Given this alignment with a well-established and widely recognized academic theory of motivation, the present study adopted the motivations outlined in the work by Madupy and Cooley (2010).

Motivations serve as driving forces that encourage individuals to take specific actions, and within the context of a brand community, these actions may encompass activities like browsing, commenting, content creation, information and experience sharing, and endorsing fellow members' contributions. Previous research has established that motive variables are more effective predictors of brand community engagement and usage compared to personality traits. Brand community engagement receives a significant boost when motives such as the desire to establish new friendships, convenience, brand affinity, and the potential for social influence are present (Satanasavapak, 2012). Therefore, understanding and acknowledging these motives is essential when aiming to cultivate a resilient brand community with actively engaged members.

Likewise, motives impact consumers' online brand-related activities (COBRAs), encompassing actions like consumption, contribution, and creation (Simona & Tossan, 2018). Consumption activities involve actions such as browsing, listening, and reading brand-related content, while contribution encompasses activities

like product ratings and participation in discussions. Finally, creation includes actions like generating and sharing multimedia content as well as composing product reviews (Muntinga et al., 2011).

Prior studies have also recognized diverse categories of motives, which encompass functional, social-psychological, hedonistic, and incentive motives (Ben-Shaul & Reichel, 2018). Functional motives are associated with tangible benefits related to purchasing or utilizing relevant services, while social-psychological motives involve offering emotional support and fostering connections with both existing and new friends. Some researchers have referred to these motives as purposive motives (Dholakia et al., 2004; Kelley & Alden, 2016; Lampe et al., 2010). In contrast, hedonistic motives revolve around the pursuit and consumption of knowledge, and incentive motives are linked to participation in contests and the pursuit of rewards (Ben-Shaul & Reichel, 2018).

Research has shown that motives vary in their significance. For instance, within the context of a Facebook tourism brand page, social-psychological motives were identified as the most prominent (Ben-Shaul & Reichel, 2018). Meanwhile, other researchers have identified primary motives for joining and engaging in brand communities, including information seeking and sharing, social enhancement, fostering interpersonal connections, seeking entertainment, self-discovery, cultivating a sense of belonging, and adhering to normative commitment (Lampe et al., 2010).

Diverse types of brand communities exist, each with its distinct characteristics. For instance, motivations diverge between brand pages and brand communities (Florenthal, 2019), with brand communities often having deeper and more profound motivations (Sicilia and Palazon, 2008). Additionally, prior research has categorized brand communities into alter-brand communities (which compete with the brand), counter-brand communities (which compete against the brand), and actual brand communities. Motivations within these distinct types of brand communities range from utopian and altruistic among alter-brand community members to feelings of frustration and exploitation among counter-brand community members, and finally, to experiences of enjoyment and self-improvement within traditional brand community members (Cova and White, 2010).

Many studies investigating brand community motivations have adopted the well-established uses and gratifications theory as a theoretical framework (Muntinga et al., 2011; Vale and Fernandes, 2018). This theory has been widely employed in previous research to understand media consumption, including its application to friend-networking sites (Raacke and Bonds-Raacke, 2008), e-consumer behaviour (Luo, 2002), social media usage (Whiting and Williams, 2013), brand engagement behaviour (Florenthal, 2019), the influence of environmental factors on information search, information-seeking behaviour related to community commitment (Park and Cho, 2012), and knowledge sharing (Wu and Sukoco, 2010).

Information, social integration, self-discovery, status enhancement, and entertainment motivations (Madupu and Cooley, 2010a) – or a closely related set of motives – have frequently been employed in this context (Ben-Shaul and Reichel, 2018; Lampe et al., 2010; Muntinga et al., 2011; Sung et al., 2010). As such, their connection to participation (Ben-Shaul and Reichel, 2018), which acts as a precursor to brand community engagement (Jahn et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2011), and brand engagement (Baldus et al., 2015; Dessart et al., 2015; Florenthal, 2019; MSI, 2010; Song et al., 2017; Vale and Fernandes, 2018) has been well-established. Consequently, this study seeks to examine the following hypotheses:

H1. The entertainment motive is positively related to brand community engagement.

H2. The information motive is positively related to brand community engagement.

H3. The self-discovery motive is positively related to brand community engagement.

H4. The social integration motive is positively related to brand community engagement.

H5. The status enhancement motive is positively related to brand community engagement.

Brand Evangelism and Brand community engagement

Brand evangelism represents a robust consumer-brand relationship, characterized as an extension of favorable consumer-to-consumer word-of-mouth communication (Riivits-Arkonsuo et al., 2014, p. 6). An evangelist is a consumer who actively contributes to creating a positive brand image and willingly invests resources in promoting a brand (Kumar and Nayak, 2018). What sets evangelists apart from loyal customers is their enthusiastic dedication to spreading positive information and selfless devotion to a brand (Matzler et al., 2007). They also exhibit a stronger intention to purchase their preferred brands (Becerra and Badrinarayanan, 2013). Brand evangelists play a pivotal role in generating crucial brand outcomes by sharing valuable brand-related information, which positively influences other consumers (Swimberghe et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2019). Moreover, the innovation and creativity displayed by brand evangelists when sharing their brand experiences (Riivits-Arkonsuo et al., 2014) contribute to fostering positive attitudes toward their favoured brands.

Engaged members often cultivate meaningful relationships with brands and become brand advocates (Fierro et al., 2014; Kumar and Nayak, 2019a). Furthermore, prolonged engagement with social media-Based Brand Communities (SMBCs) enhances the likelihood of community success, promoting enduring relationships (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001) and achieving collective objectives. Undoubtedly, sustained involvement in SMBCs reflects active participation, and Brand Community Engagement (BCE) bolsters brand loyalty, trust, and commitment (Brodie et al., 2013; Fernandes and Moreira, 2019; Islam and Rahman, 2017). Additionally, evangelists amplify their favourable opinions about brands within SMBCs (Matzler et al., 2007). Research has intricately linked community engagement to community advocacy intentions (Algesheimer et al., 2005). In discussions about engagement, evangelism holds significance as it encourages extra-role behaviour and accelerates promotional efforts, defensive roles, and selfless brand advocacy (He et al., 2017; Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Schau et al., 2009). Given that SMBCs provide individuals with a platform to express their opinions and brand-related concerns (Scarpi, 2010), highly engaged consumers are more likely to exhibit evangelistic tendencies. Based on the existing literature, the study tested the following hypotheses.

H6. BCE is positively related to brand evangelism.

Brand evangelism and brand defense

Brand defense entails taking proactive measures to safeguard a brand's best interests, provide backing, and uphold its good reputation and goodwill (Wilk et al., 2019, p. 420). It also contributes to positive word-of-mouth marketing due to the deep affection consumers hold for their favoured brands (Dalman et al., 2019, p. 878). Past research has empirically substantiated the existence of six distinct defense styles that consumers employ when defending companies online: advocating, justifying, trivializing, stalling, vouching, and doubting (Colliander and Wien, 2013). Consumers exhibit brand defense behaviours exclusively when the brand is under attack, in contrast to brand evangelism, which occurs under different circumstances (Becerra and Badrinarayanan, 2013). Given the heightened research interest in the field of brand defense (Badrinarayanan and Sierra, 2018; Taute et al., 2017; Taute and Sierra, 2014), social media-Based Brand Communities (SMBCs) offer a particularly promising avenue for further exploration.

Social identity theory posits that individuals regard brands as integral components of their own identity (Sharma, Sadh, Billore, & Motiani, 2022). Consequently, any threat to a brand is perceived as a personal threat, triggering the same defensive mechanisms employed to protect their identities (Becerra and Badrinarayanan, 2013; Khalifa and Shukla, 2017). Due to their sustained engagement with SMBCs and brands, individuals may perceive the brand's successes and failures as reflective of their own experiences (Marticotte et al., 2016; (Sharma, Sadh, Billore, & Motiani, 2022). Research suggests that both in-role and extra-role behaviours contribute to brand development (He et al., 2017). Extra-role behaviour may encompass promoting the brand and defending it against significant criticisms.

As SMBCs continue to expand, and consumers gain more opportunities to freely discuss brands on these platforms, the role of brand evangelists becomes increasingly crucial. These highly loyal consumers are motivated to protect a brand's image by employing specific coping mechanisms and actively defending their favored brands during crises (Marticotte et al., 2016; Monga and John, 2008). Evangelists reinforce the most

valued aspects of their preferred brand, enhancing its image and relationships by engaging in positive word-of-mouth marketing (Fierro et al., 2014).

Previous studies have highlighted that motivated individuals willingly engage in brand evangelism, advocacy, and protection of SMBCs (He et al., 2017; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). They have also emphasized the significance of comprehending individuals' supportive and defensive strategies (Colliander and Wien, 2013; Marticotte et al., 2016). SMBC members extend their support by actively defending brands or strategically avoiding adverse situations (Dalman et al., 2019). Supportive behaviours from devoted consumers are pivotal from the perspective of brand managers, and researchers have explored various consumer activities aimed at supporting brands on SMBCs (Dalman et al., 2019). Building on the existing literature, this study assessed the following hypothesis: H5. Brand evangelism positively influences brand defense. Consequently, this study incorporated the following hypotheses:

H7. BCE is positively related to brand defense.

Mediation of brand evangelism

Previous research has asserted that active individual participation within communities enhances engagement (Algesheimer et al., 2005). Additionally, studies have indicated that individuals who perceive an intense sense of belonging to brand communities are more likely to engage in brand-related activities and actively advocate for a brand (Swimberghe et al., 2018). Community members tend to function as brand guardians, defending these brands against severe criticisms (Habibi et al., 2014a). They post comments and share their firsthand experiences, often influencing others on social media-Based Brand Communities (SMBCs). Recent research has suggested that the presence of brand love can lead to the perception of brand sacredness and, subsequently, brand evangelism among consumers (Wang et al., 2019). Several types of love may have distinct antecedents and consequences (Khandeparkar and Motiani, 2018). Brand love represents more of an attitude, whereas evangelism represents a behaviour (Wang et al., 2019). Consequently, love may act as a catalyst for evangelism, which, in turn, contributes to the display of resilient characteristics.

In addition to sharing unique and innovative experiences, brand evangelists also promote positive brand recommendations by disseminating essential information (Can et al., 2014; De Vries and Carlson, 2014). Thanks to these favourable recommendations, they play a significant role in influencing other consumers and converting non-users into devoted followers and admirers of a brand (Belk and Tumbat, 2005; Massa et al., 2017). Therefore, this study proposed the following hypotheses:

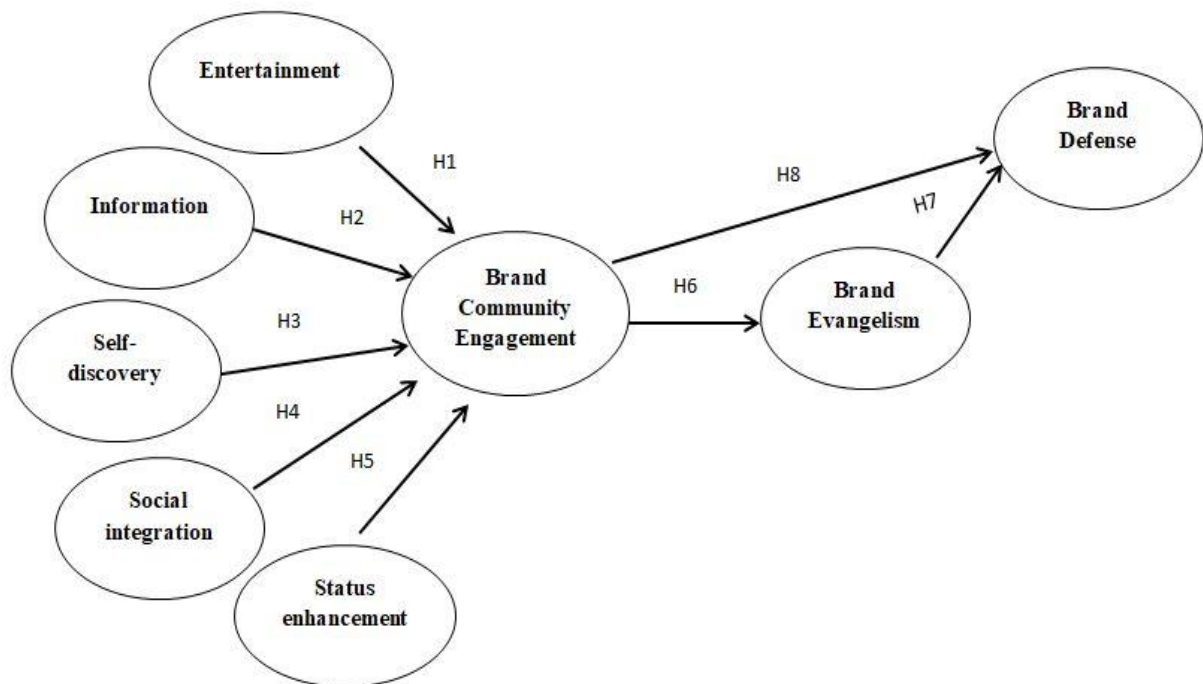
H8. Brand evangelism mediates the relationship between BCE and brand defense.

Research Methodology

Measures

A questionnaire was prepared through Google Forms based on 8 constructs on the items from existing scales, as summarized in Table 1. Respondents were asked to report their responses on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) which is adopted from previous studies.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



Sample

The data were collected using an online questionnaire through Google form from 217 active members of various SMBCs. The respondents were from a large variety of backgrounds with more than 50 different occupations in Egypt and other three countries according to Roscoe (1975); the most appropriate sample size for scientific research is between 30 and 500. Therefore, 217 respondents were given the research questionnaires.

There were 217 participants, and a total of 216 responses were valid. The respondents were asked to report the football club they encourage and associate with as the research paper seeks to investigate the evangelistic tendencies of football sport’s fans and they were asked if they have a social media account to make sure that the sample included covers social media brand communities. A questionnaire was designed to collect the data and the languages used in it were English and Arabic. The questions were carefully translated from Arabic to English to make sure respondents answered questions accurately in their preferred proficient language.

Results

The sample contains 68.5% male (149) and 31.5% female (68). This was consistent with previous studies (Dessart et al., 2020). Table 2 displays the sample characteristics. As younger consumers are more active on social networks than older consumers, it is common for social media context studies to mostly include young individuals (Sharif and Yeoh, 2018).

Table 1: Sample demographic details

Variable	Characteristic	Count	(%)
Gender	Male	149	68.6
	Female	68	31.5
Occupation	Student	100	46.3
	Sales manager	1	0.46
	Project Coordinator	3	1.39
	Senior Accountant	1	0.46
	Teacher	3	1.39
	Software Engineer	1	0.46
	Hardware Engineer	1	0.46
	University Professor	1	0.46

	Pharmacist	1	0.46
	Purchasing head	1	0.46
	Medical analysis specialist	1	0.46
	Logistics and supply chain specialist	1	0.46
	Entrepreneur	2	0.93
	Nurse	1	0.46
	Other occupations	99	45.6
Age (In years)	Under 20	30	13.8
	20:35	129	73.15
	35: 50	54	25
	50: 65	4	1.85

Results

Descriptive data analysis and Histograms:

Table 2 shows the calculations of frequencies in the research based on user ratings ranging from 1 to 5 providing insights into user perceptions and engagement within an entertainment platform across eight dimensions.

Constructs	AVG	MED	SD
1. Entertainment	3.86	4.00	0.97
2. Information	3.8	4.00	0.95
3. Self-discovery	3.7	4.00	1.0913
4. Self- integration	3.99	4.00	0.95
5. Status enhancement	3.19	3.25	1.13
6. Engagement	3.69	3.83	1.039
7. Evangelism	3.62	3.75	0.997
8. Brand defense	3.59	3.67	1.109

Frequencies reflect that users hold favourable opinions of the platform, with notable mean ratings: Entertainment (Mean: 3.86) and Information (Mean: 3.82) are highly appreciated, indicating effective delivery of engaging content and valuable information. Self-integration (Mean: 3.99) receives strong user consensus, while Self-discovery (Mean: 3.71) offers opportunities, although opinions vary. Conversely, Status enhancement (Mean: 3.19) scores lower, suggesting room for improvement and divergent views. Engagement (Mean: 3.70) levels are high, and users exhibit moderate Evangelism (Mean: 3.63). Brand defense (Mean: 3.59) is perceived moderately positively, albeit with some variation in opinions. In summary, the platform excels in key areas but may benefit from addressing variations in user opinions and enhancing aspects related to status enhancement to further improve user satisfaction.

Cronbach's Alpha indicates a prominent level of internal consistency among the measured items by the coefficient of .934. This coefficient, which ranges from 0 to 1, serves as a robust measure of reliability, with higher values suggesting greater consistency. In this case, the scale comprising eight items exhibits a strong level of reliability, ensuring that the items used in the research consistently measure the intended construct. This finding enhances the overall validity and trustworthiness of the research measurements, reinforcing the reliability of the data collected from the sample.

Correlations, KMO, Bartlett's Test and Commonalities

Table 3 shows the correlation matrix serves to quantify relationships between different dimensions. It helps identify patterns and informs further analysis.

Construct	Entertainment	Information	Self-discovery	Self-integration	Status enhancement	Engagement	Evangelism	Brand defense
1. Entertainment	1	0.719	0.559	0.586	0.5	0.631	0.565	0.503
2. Information		1	0.711	0.668	0.589	0.71	0.603	0.564
3. Self-discovery			1	0.672	0.669	0.733	0.623	0.63
4. Self-integration				1	0.604	0.694	0.641	0.671
5. Status enhancement					1	0.732	0.626	0.644
6. Engagement						1	0.731	0.678
7. Evangelism							1	0.75
8. Brand defense								1

The correlation matrix presented in this research study reveals significant relationships among the examined dimensions. Notably, the dimension of Entertainment exhibits strong positive correlations with Information ($r = 0.719$), Self-discovery ($r = 0.559$), Self-integration ($r = 0.586$), Status enhancement ($r = 0.500$), Engagement ($r = 0.631$), Evangelism ($r = 0.565$), and Brand defense ($r = 0.503$). Similarly, Information shows substantial positive correlations with Self-discovery ($r = 0.711$), Self-integration ($r = 0.668$), Status enhancement ($r = 0.589$), Engagement ($r = 0.710$), Evangelism ($r = 0.603$), and Brand defense ($r = 0.564$). These strong correlations are statistically significant with p-values of .000, indicating their robustness. These findings suggest that these dimensions are closely related, reinforcing the interconnectivity of user perceptions and engagement within the research context. Additionally, the determinant of the correlation matrix is .002, further confirming the reliability of the dataset for subsequent analyses.

Table 4 represents the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity underscores the suitability and reliability of the data used in this research.

Table 4: KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.925
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1294.168
	df	28
	Sig.	.000

The KMO value of .925, which ranges from 0 to 1, indicates an exceptionally prominent level of sampling adequacy, suggesting that the data is well-suited for factor analysis. Additionally, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity produced an approximate chi-square value of 1294.168 with 28 degrees of freedom, yielding a significant p-value of .000. This statistical significance supports the rejection of the null hypothesis, confirming that the intercorrelations among variables are sufficiently different from a random pattern, thus validating the appropriateness of factor analysis. These results collectively affirm the robustness and reliability of the dataset, reinforcing its suitability for rigorous statistical analysis in the research study.

Table 5 indicates the table displays communalities, indicating how well variables are explained by extracted factors through PCA. It assists in assessing dimensionality, selecting relevant variables, and interpreting the success of the factor extraction process. Communalities provide insights into data quality and variable significance.

Table 5: Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
Entertainment	1.000	.574
Information	1.000	.703
Self-discovery	1.000	.715
Self-integration	1.000	.697
Status enhancement	1.000	.654
Engagement	1.000	.798
Evangelism	1.000	.698
Brand defense	1.000	.673
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.		

Table 5 reports communalities for the dimensions under examination, both initially and after extraction using Principal Component Analysis. Initially, all dimensions had a perfect commonality of 1.000, indicating that each variable accounted for all its variance.

However, after extraction, communalities ranged from .574 to .798, suggesting that through the PCA process, some common variance was shared among these dimensions. Specifically, the dimensions of Engagement (.798), Self-discovery (.715), and Information (.703) retained a higher proportion of their original variance, while others like Status enhancement (.654) and Brand defense (.673) showed slightly lower communalities. These findings demonstrate the degree to which each dimension's variance is captured in the extraction process, providing insights into the dimensionality of the data, and informing subsequent analyses. **Table 6** represents the Component Matrix resulting from Principal Component Analysis and demonstrates the strength and direction of each variable's relationship with the single component extracted.

Table6: Component Matrix	
	Component

	1
Entertainment	.757
Information	.838
Self-discovery	.845
Self-integration	.835
Status enhancement	.809
Engagement	.894
Evangelism	.836
Brand defense	.820
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.	
a. 1 component extracted.	

This one-component solution simplifies the data dimensionality, emphasizing the primary factor influencing the variables. Specifically, Entertainment (.757), Information (.838), Self-discovery (.845), Self-integration (.835), Status enhancement (.809), Engagement (.894), Evangelism (.836), Brand defense (.820) all exhibit substantial loadings on this primary component. These high numerical values emphasize the strong association between each variable and the common underlying factor. These findings underscore the significance of this factor in explaining the interrelationships among the variables, facilitating a clearer understanding of their collective influence within the research context.

Regression:

Table 7 shows the Model Summary table which provides essential insights into the regression model's performance.				
Table 7: Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.843 ^a	.710	.703	.565907811864133
a. Predictors: (Constant), Status enhancement, Entertainment, Self-integration, Self-discovery, Information				

The coefficient of multiple determination (R Square) is .710, indicating that approximately 71% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by these predictors. The adjusted R Square, which considers the number of predictors, is .703, suggesting that this model accounts for a substantial portion of the variance while addressing potential overfitting. The model's predictive accuracy is further characterized by a standard error of the estimate of .566. The overall model, represented by an R-value of .843, signifies a strong relationship between the predictors and the dependent variable. These numerical values collectively demonstrate the model's effectiveness in explaining and predicting the dependent variable's variation, underscoring its utility in the research context.

Table 8, representing the ANOVA table, provides crucial statistical insights into the regression model's overall performance concerning the dependent variable.

Table 9: ANOVA^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.

1	Regression	165.575	5	33.115	103.403	.000 ^b
	Residual	67.573	211	.320		
	Total	233.148	216			
a. Dependent Variable: Engagement						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Status enhancement, Entertainment, Self-integration, Self-discovery, Information						

The table indicates that the regression model, which includes predictors such as Status enhancement, Entertainment, Self-integration, Self-discovery, and Information, accounts for a sizable portion of the variance in Engagement. This is evident from the substantial sum of squares for the Regression (165.575), corresponding to a mean square of 33.115. The associated F-statistic is 103.403, with an extremely low p-value of .000, indicating the model's overall statistical significance. In contrast, the Residual sum of squares is 67.573, reflecting the unexplained variance in the dependent variable, while the Total sum of squares is 233.148, encompassing the total variation.

These statistical findings collectively affirm the model's effectiveness in explaining and predicting the variance in Engagement, highlighting its significance within the research context. **Table 9** reflecting the Coefficients table provides estimated parameter values and statistical significance for predictor variables in a regression model, aiding in understanding their impact on the dependent variable. Standardized coefficients allow for relative importance comparisons among predictors.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1 (Constant)	.037	.183		.203	.839	-.324	.398
Entertainment	.147	.058	.138	2.532	.012	.033	.262
Information	.166	.071	.152	2.343	.020	.026	.305
Self-discovery	.205	.058	.215	3.539	.000	.091	.319
Self-integration	.184	.061	.169	3.015	.003	.064	.305
Status enhancement	.300	.048	.328	6.243	.000	.206	.395
a. Dependent Variable: Engagement							

The Coefficients table provides parameter estimates for the regression model regarding the dependent variable, Engagement. The constant term ($B = 0.037$) is not statistically significant ($t = 0.203$, $p = 0.839$), suggesting it does not contribute significantly to the model. However, predictors such as Entertainment ($B = 0.147$), Information ($B = 0.166$), Self-discovery ($B = 0.205$), Self-integration ($B = 0.184$), and Status enhancement ($B = 0.300$) have positive unstandardized coefficients, indicating their positive influence on Engagement. These coefficients are statistically significant with t-statistics ranging from 2.343 to 6.243 and associated p-values below 0.020. The standardized coefficients (Beta) reveal the relative importance of each predictor, with Self-discovery and Status enhancement having the highest standardized coefficients. These findings underscore the significant role of these predictors in explaining and predicting Engagement within the research context.

Mediating effect of brand evangelism

We used a certain matrix which is a result of a statistical analysis conducted using the PROCESS procedure in SPSS, aimed at examining direct and indirect effects within regression models. It offers a comprehensive summary of the research findings. Two dependent variables, Brand Evangelism and Brand Defense, are separately analyzed. In the Brand Evangelism model, Engagement demonstrates a significant positive effect (Coeff = 0.7014, $p < 0.001$), explaining a substantial proportion of the variance ($R\text{-sq} = 0.5338$). Similarly, in the Brand Defense model, both Engagement (Coeff = 0.2972, $p < 0.001$) and Brand Evangelism (Coeff = 0.6077, $p < 0.001$) exhibit significant positive effects, with the model explaining a notable amount of variance ($R\text{-sq} = 0.5985$). Additionally, direct, and indirect effects are calculated, with a significant direct effect of Engagement on Brand Defense (Coeff = 0.2972, $p < 0.001$) and an indirect effect through Brand Evangelism (effect = 0.4263). These findings illustrate the considerable impact of the analyzed variables on the outcomes and the interplay between them in the research context.

Discussion and implication

Regarding theoretical implications, the findings demonstrate that this dataset can be applied to the general population because it encompasses various categories of individuals within social media football communities, each with diverse backgrounds, occupations, and ages. The results also indicate that football should leverage the robust presence of evangelistic tendencies across different age groups on social media platforms for marketing purposes. Additionally, these findings underscore the importance of highlighting the role of these evangelists in defending the club against criticism. Furthermore, these findings highlight the interconnected relationships among the variables in the model, suggesting that individuals who rate one aspect positively are likely to rate other aspects positively as well. Consequently, these results offer valuable insights into the interplay among these aspects, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of their dynamics. Football clubs should also prioritize leveraging the impact of the five constructs, namely entertainment, information, self-discovery, social integration, and status enhancement, to boost fan engagement, eventually cultivating a community of evangelists across different social media platforms.

In the literature on brand communities, the significant role of digital platforms, such as social media, in facilitating the formation and growth of brand communities is emphasized (Dessart et al., 2015, 2016). The digitization of marketing and communication has transformed how companies and academic institutions interact with consumers, resulting in increased research interest in brand communities. This study's findings contribute to this body of literature by examining the specific factors that influence engagement levels within brand communities. The positive ratings and perceptions of various aspects in this study align with prior research emphasizing the importance of factors such as entertainment, information, self-discovery, social integration, and status enhancement in driving engagement within brand communities (Baldus et al., 2015; Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart et al., 2016; Florenthal, 2019; Madupu and Cooley, 2010a).

These findings reinforce the idea that individuals seek engaging experiences that not only provide entertainment but also facilitate personal growth, social connection, and access to relevant information. The significant correlations observed among these aspects underscore their interconnected nature, indicating that these elements tend to coexist and mutually influence each other (Ben-Shaul and Reichel, 2018; Lampe et

al., 2010; Muntinga et al., 2011; Sung et al., 2010). Understanding these interrelationships is crucial for designing interventions and experiences that simultaneously leverage multiple aspects to enhance overall engagement. Researchers can further explore these interrelationships to uncover additional insights into how various aspects interact and impact engagement levels within brand communities. The identified predictors of engagement, including self-discovery, status enhancement, entertainment, self-integration, and information, offer valuable guidance for practitioners aiming to enhance engagement within brand communities (Habib et al., 2014a; Satanasavapak, 2012). By recognizing these predictors, practitioners can tailor their strategies and interventions to address the specific motivations and needs of community members. For example, designing activities or content that promote self-discovery or provide entertaining experiences can increase engagement levels and foster a sense of belonging within the community.

Moreover, the positive impact of engagement on both Evangelism and Brand Defense underscores the importance of cultivating elevated levels of engagement within brand communities (He et al., 2017; Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Schau et al., 2009). Engaged individuals are more likely to become brand evangelists, actively spreading positive word-of-mouth and advocating for brands or products (Becerra and Badrinarayanan, 2013; Wang et al., 2019). They also exhibit stronger brand defense, actively protecting and supporting brands in the face of criticism or competition (Becerra and Badrinarayanan, 2013; Dalman et al., 2019). These findings emphasize the pivotal role of engagement in cultivating brand advocates and fostering brand loyalty. The integration of the literature on brand communities provides a broader context for discussing and understanding the implications of the study's findings. The literature underscores the significance of brand community experience, engagement, and motivations in influencing brand-related outcomes such as brand image, loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and purchase intentions (Andries et al., 2019; Hsieh and Wei, 2017; Liaw, 2008; Popp et al., 2008; Wirtz et al., 2013). Taking these factors into consideration, practitioners can develop strategies that not only enhance engagement within brand communities but also leverage that engagement to generate positive brand-related outcomes.

Limitation and future research

This study has several limitations. Although the research has studied the direct relation between five main concepts which are entertainment, information, self-discovery, social integration, and status enhancement, I suggest using different variables to measure their impacts on brand community engagement such as social network marketing. Moreover, the incorporated data was collected from only two social media platforms. So, future research can gather data from different social media communities on different platforms. Future research could also explore the impact of certain stimuli related to antecedents that lead to fan engagement features influencing BCE. For example, asking fans whether using certain tools on Facebook to help them know the date of the football match is helpful or not. There is a recommendation to compare how generation can play a moderating role between brand engagement and brand defense.

Conclusion

This study sheds light on the antecedents of brand community motives and their impact on brand engagement. The findings indicate positive perceptions and strong interrelationships among the aspects examined. Self-discovery, Status enhancement, Entertainment, Self-integration, and Information were identified as significant predictors of engagement. Moreover, the study reveals that engagement positively influences brand evangelism and defense. These findings provide valuable insights for practitioners, emphasizing the importance of understanding and leveraging brand engagement motives in social media communities to cultivate brand evangelists who are willing to defend the associated brand. This research adds to the existing knowledge on engagement, evangelism, and brand defense, contributing to a deeper understanding of their dynamics in different contexts.

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