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# **Capturing consumer engagement: duality, dimensionality and measurement**

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## **Biographical Details**

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## **Abstract**

This study advances the conceptualisation and operationalisation of consumer engagement in the context of online brand communities (OBCs). Past scholarship has only partially addressed the dimensionality of engagement and the different engagement foci, and these oversights have important theoretical and empirical consequences. This study contributes to the nascent stream of research that aims to theoretically refine and operationalize engagement by espousing the duality of engagement with two engagement foci (brand and community) and seven subdimensions of consumer engagement. Using qualitative data from consumers and experts, three survey data sets based on English and French samples, and two pools of mirrored items (one for each engagement focus), the study develops and validates a dual-focus 22-item scale of consumer engagement that can be used to operationalise engagement with various consumer engagement objects.

## **Keywords**

consumer engagement, brand engagement, community engagement, online brand community, social networks, scale development

## **Summary statement of contribution**

This study offers a theoretical and methodological contribution to the research on consumer engagement. Theoretically, the study refines the dimensions of engagement, identifies subdimensions, and reconceptualises two different foci of engagement in the context of OBCs, the brand, and the community. Methodologically, the study contributes to the operationalisation of consumer engagement and develops a reliable and valid scale of consumer engagement with two engagement foci. The scale, which encompasses seven

subdimensions of consumer engagement, is validated in a nomological net of relationships and through a cross-cultural comparison.

## **Introduction**

Contemporary scholarship on consumer engagement promises to significantly advance research on consumer-brand relationships (Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan, 2012). Consumer engagement is often defined in marketing as '*a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, cocreative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g., a brand) in focal service relationships*' (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Ilic, 2011, p. 260). Contrasted with more established concepts that capture consumer-brand relationships, such as brand commitment, brand relationship quality, or brand involvement (Hollebeek, 2011a), consumer engagement offers a modified view of relationships that is highly interactive (Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014) and social (Vivek, Beatty, Dalela, & Morgan, 2014). Reflecting the fundamental shifts in consumer relationships brought by computer-mediated interaction (Yadav & Pavlou, 2014), these features of engagement potentially enhance the conceptualisation and empirical treatment of the modern-day customer relationships that are inevitably affected by social, interactive, and highly empowering situational elements (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010).

Unsurprisingly, the concept of online consumer engagement attracts significant and growing attention from both academics (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013; Baldus, Voorhees, & Calantone, 2015), and practitioners of online marketing. Delivering compelling experiences for consumers is vital for online platforms and significant efforts concern enriching consumer engagement through the capture of relevant data. Facebook, for instance, uses Edgerank to predict and measure the engagement level of newsfeed content through site usage metrics and information (Labrecque, vor dem Esche, Mathwick, Novak, & Hofacker, 2013). Engagement agency SocialMetrics advocates the need to go beyond positional data used by Edgerank and

calls for a measure of engagement with relational metrics, which also include sentiment (Insead Knowledge, 2014). These recommendations are being implemented: Facebook has encouraged consumers to express their feelings by using the like button for years and is currently testing the use of a number of additional sentiment buttons, such as love, surprise, and sadness, based on massive user requests (Peterson, 2015). Therefore, the conceptualisation of consumer engagement has important theoretical and pragmatic consequences. Considering the nascent nature of consumer engagement research against the background of dynamic shifts in online communities and platforms, further refinement seems urgently needed.

Despite the advancement in the conceptual (van Doorn et al., 2010) and empirical (Brodie, et al., 2013) treatment of consumer engagement, the understanding of this important construct remains partial. For instance, conceptual research thus far has focused on engagement with brands (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010). Yet, engagement is by nature social and interactive, and there is evidence that consumers can engage concurrently with other actors than a brand, such as a community (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005) or a communication medium (Calder, Malthouse, & Schaedel, 2009). Similarly, measurement studies have tended to capture engagement with one focus at a time, namely, a brand (Hollebeek et al., 2014), brand-related content (Schivinski, Christodoulides, & Dabrowski, forthcoming), an organizational entity (Vivek et al., 2014), or an online brand community (Baldus, et al., 2015).

In reality, consumers engage and enter into relationships with different foci simultaneously (Brodie et al., 2011; Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2015; Vivek et al., 2012, 2014). Research in other domains, such as social identification, suggests that consumers identify with brands as well as other consumers (Marzocchi, Morandin, & Bergami, 2013) and that

they develop relationships with multiple foci concurrently, for example, with a brand and a brand community (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). The multiple foci of consumer engagement have thus far been ignored and this narrow treatment of consumer engagement operationalisation is worrying because the focus on one object of engagement may obscure the relevance of other objects, casting doubt on the validity of the research models. For example, overlooking different foci of engagement potentially leads to a partial understanding of the drivers and outcomes of engagement, thus increasing the possibility of conflation in research findings. Given the relative dearth of research on multiple foci, it remains questionable whether the empirical conceptualisations of engagement with one focus are applicable to another focus. Failing to take into account the multiplicity of engagement foci in a specific context seems an important oversight and is yet to be operationalised in confirmatory settings.

This study answers the calls for further refinement of consumer engagement by explicitly addressing the question of different engagement foci. The study aims to reconceptualise consumer engagement and to develop a novel scale, which reflects the multidimensionality of the concept (Brodie et al., 2011, 2013) and offers the possibility to accommodate multiple engagement foci in a given context (Wirtz et al., 2013). Specifically, the study addresses two objectives: first, to refine the conceptualisation of engagement by manifestly embracing different foci (Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart et al., 2015); second, to develop a multifocal scale that uses more than one engagement focus in a given context.

Building on the research on consumer engagement in marketing, the study focuses on the two most accepted engagement foci in OBCs: brand and brand community (Balduş et al., 2015) and OBCs embedded in social networks provide the setting for the empirical work. More specifically, this study focuses on OBCs embedded in the social network Facebook. Social

networks are one of the most popular forms of social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), and Facebook in particular is the preferred social network for consumers to engage with brands (Headstream, 2015). Such context seems to offer an excellent opportunity for examination of OBCs (Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart et al., 2015). OBCs are defined as ‘a *specialised, non-geographically bound community, based upon social relationships among admirers of a brand in cyberspace*’ (Jang, Olfmann, Ko, Koh, & Kim, 2008, p. 57). OBCs on social media are highly relevant to the study of consumer engagement because of their interactive and dynamic nature (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), and also because they support the creation of multi-way relationships between consumers and brands and among consumers (Ouwersloot & Oderkerken-Schröder, 2008; Stokbürger-Sauer, 2010). Because OBCs foster consumer engagement with multiple partners, including the brand and the community (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002; Wirtz et al., 2013), they do represent excellent settings for the study of engagement with multiple foci (Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart et al., 2015).

By extending consumer engagement beyond the usual brand focus (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010) and including other consumers as engagement partners (Algesheimer et al., 2005), this study significantly broadens the scope and the current conceptualisation and operationalisation of consumer engagement. This study builds on core research on consumer engagement in marketing. Starting with an extensive structured literature review on consumer engagement and using expert advice, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from multiple linguistic samples. These efforts contribute to the development and validation of a consumer engagement scale, which expand current conceptualisations and is well suited for dealing with multiple engagement foci, such as found in the context of OBC. In this study the scale measures OBC participants' engagement with brands and brand communities. The paper concludes with a discussion and final remarks.



## **Existing research on consumer engagement**

Consumer engagement is a relatively new concept in marketing (Hollebeek et al., 2014), and its initial conceptualisations have drawn on other fields of the social sciences, such as educational psychology and organisational behaviour (Bowden, 2009; Brodie et al., 2011). For instance, student engagement may develop in an education environment (Bryson & Hand, 2007) and employees are engaged in the context of organisations (Kahn, 1990). Within marketing, engagement has been investigated in contexts such as social media (Hollebeek et al., 2014), retailing (Vivek et al., 2014), and services (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014).

Despite its relatively short history in marketing literature, multiple studies address consumer engagement from a variety of perspectives, and the literature includes conceptual contributions and qualitative and quantitative studies (see Table 1 for an overview of key studies). Conceptualisations of consumer engagement tend to include a subject and an object (Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b) and varying levels of intensity (Patterson, Yu, & de Ruyter, 2006). Engagement is also context specific (Hollebeek, 2011a) and occurs in consumption-related contexts that extend beyond purchase (van Doorn et al., 2010).

**Table 1: Consumer engagement studies in marketing**

Authors	Construct	Dimensions	Paper Type
<b>I. Engagement with a brand, firm, or organisation</b>			
Patterson et al., 2006	Consumer engagement	Absorption, dedication, interaction, vigour	Conceptual
Bowden, 2009	Consumer engagement process	N/A	Conceptual
*Sprott, Czellar, and Spangenberg, 2009	Brand engagement in self-concept	Emotional	Quantitative
Mollen and Wilson, 2010	Engagement	Affective, cognitive	Conceptual
van Doorn et al., 2010	Consumer engagement behaviours	Behavioural	Conceptual
Verhoef, Reinartz, and Krafft, 2010	Consumer engagement	Behavioural	Conceptual
Brodie et al., 2011	Consumer engagement	Behavioural, cognitive, affective	Conceptual
Hollebeek, 2011a	Consumer-brand engagement	Behavioural, cognitive, affective	Conceptual
Hollebeek, 2011b	Consumer-brand engagement	Behavioural, cognitive, affective	Qualitative
Gambetti et al., 2012	Consumer-brand engagement	Experiential, social	Qualitative
Kumar, Pozza, and Ganesh, 2013	Customer engagement value	Behavioural, emotional	Conceptual
Kaltcheva, Patino, Laric, Pitta, and Imperato, 2014	Customer engagement	Behavioural, cognitive, affective	Conceptual
Franzak, Makarem, and Jae, 2014	Brand engagement	Behavioural, cognitive, affective	Conceptual
Hollebeek and Chen, 2014	Brand engagement	Behavioural, cognitive, affective	Qualitative
*Hollebeek et al., 2014	Consumer-brand engagement	Behavioural, cognitive, affective	Quantitative
Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014	Consumer engagement behaviour	Behavioural	Qualitative
Sarkar and Sreejesh, 2014	Active customer engagement	Behavioural and cognitive	Quantitative
*Vivek et al., 2014	Consumer engagement	Behavioural, cognitive, affective, social	Quantitative
Wallace, Buil, and de Chernatony, 2014	Consumer engagement	Behavioural	Quantitative
<b>II. Engagement with a(n) (online) brand community</b>			
Wirtz et al., 2013	Online brand–community engagement	Behavioural, cognitive, affective	Conceptual
Algesheimer et al., 2005	Brand-community engagement	Motivational	Quantitative
Gummerus, Liljander, Weman, and Pihlström, 2012	Consumer engagement	Behavioural	Quantitative

Kuo and Feng, 2013	Brand-community engagement	Interactive	Quantitative
Habibi, Laroche, and Richard, 2014	Brand-community engagement	Practices	Qualitative
*Baldus et al., 2015	Online brand–community engagement	Motivational	Quantitative
<b>III. Engagement with other foci</b>			
Higgins and Scholer, 2009	Consumer engagement with a goal pursuit	Sustained attention	Conceptual
Calder et al., 2009	Consumer engagement with a communication medium	Experiential, social	Quantitative
Phillips and McQuarrie, 2010	Engagement with advertising	Behavioural, affective, immersive, transporting, identification	Qualitative
Scott and Craig-Lees, 2010	Audience engagement with an entertainment piece	Emotional	Quantitative
Calder et al., 2013	Consumer engagement with a product or service	Civic, identity, intrinsic enjoyment, social, utilitarian	Quantitative
* Schivinski et al., forthcoming	Brand-related content on social media	Behavioural	Quantitative
<b>IV. Engagement with multiple engagement foci</b>			
Gambetti and Graffigna, 2010	Engagement	N/A	Review
Brodie et al., 2011	Consumer engagement	Behavioural, cognitive, affective	Qualitative
Vivek et al., 2012	Consumer engagement	Behavioural, cognitive, affective, social	Qualitative
Dessart et al., 2015	Consumer engagement	Cognition, affect, and behaviours	Qualitative
<b>* Indicates scale development studies</b>			

Different theoretical definitions have been used in the published academic work to report the object of engagement, including 'engagement', 'brand engagement', 'brand community engagement', and 'consumer engagement with a product' (see Table 1). This inconsistency in the terms is either because of a lack of agreement on the terminology or because of the different foci of engagement. Further analysis of the discrepancy in terminology reveals an important theoretical distinction concerning the conceptualisation of engagement. Whereas the studies generally agree that the relationship that forms the basis of engagement involves an actor or subject of engagement, typically the individual 'customer' (e.g., Bowden, 2009) or 'consumer' (Calder, Isaac, & Malthouse, 2013), significant diversity concerns the focus of engagement, that is, the object at the centre of a relationship (Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b).

Considerable differences concern the dimensionality of engagement, that is, the question of what constitutes engagement. Although some studies consider one dimension, for example, behaviour (van Doorn et al., 2010), the conceptual and qualitative research increasingly incorporates multiple dimensions and frequently recognises the behavioural, affective, and cognitive aspects of engagement (see the 'dimension' column of Table 1). The most recent theoretical work has also delineated the motivational, social, and interactive aspects of the concept (Brodie et al., 2011; Chandler & Lusch, 2015). To date, there is no agreement on the best way to represent engagement, nor is there consensus on the meaning of the dimensions.

A second point of confusion in the existing literature concerns the emphasis on single versus multiple engagement foci. To make this distinction clear, studies presented in Table 1 have been grouped in four categories. The top three sections include studies that investigate only one engagement focus at a time, namely, a brand, firm, or organisation (Section 1); a brand community (Section 2); or other actors (Section 3). Studies presented in the last section of the table (Section 4) have sought to combine two or more engagement foci in the same study

### **Existing measurement of consumer engagement and the research gaps**

As illustrated in Table 1, consumer engagement has often been treated conceptually or in exploratory qualitative studies. By contrast, there seems to be a relative dearth of quantitative studies, and very few of the existing studies aim to develop or report valid and reliable scales of consumer engagement (Table 2). The existing operationalisations are affected by shortcomings pertaining to dimensionality of the construct and/or foci of engagement.

The first issue warranting further research concerns the dimensionality of engagement. To date, existing empirical studies largely fail to recognise the multiple dimensions of engagement in spite of the conceptual and qualitative work on the topic. For example, Sprott et al. (2009) provide a conceptualisation of consumer engagement, which is largely psychological and rests on affective items, and do not take into account the interactive nature of engagement and its behavioural and cognitive dimension (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Similarly, Baldus et al. (2015) introduce a measure of consumer engagement with an OBC that is based on motivations to interact rather than the interaction itself. Last, Schivinski et al. (forthcoming) envisage engagement as only behavioural.

Further research concerning clarification of the dimensionality of consumer engagement seems warranted in order to achieve a strong and adequate conceptualisation and operationalisation. Although major studies on consumer engagement define it as multidimensional (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b), and some empirical studies measure it as such (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Vivek et al., 2014), the dimensionality of consumer engagement remains unclear. There seems to be a level of disagreement on the number of dimensions of engagement as well as their definition or composition.

**Table 2: Existing scales of consumer engagement**

<b>Study</b>	<b>Sprott et al., 2009</b>	<b>Hollebeek et al., 2014</b>	<b>Vivek et al., 2014</b>	<b>Baldus et al., 2015</b>	<b>Schivinski et al., forthcoming</b>
<b>Concept</b>	Brand engagement in self-concept	Consumer-brand engagement	Customer engagement	Online brand community engagement	Consumer engagement with social media brand-related content
<b>Definition</b>	A generalised tendency to include brands as a part of the self-concept	A consumer's positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional, and behavioural activity during or related to focal consumer-brand interactions	The level of the customer's (or potential customer's) interactions and connections with the brand or firm's offerings or activities, often involving others in the social network created around the brand, offering, or activity	N/A	COBRA, a set of brand-related online activities on the part of the consumer that vary in the degree to which the consumer interacts with social media and engages in the consumption, contribution, and creation of media content
<b>Subject</b>	Consumer	Consumer	Customer	Consumer	Consumer
<b>Focus/Foci</b>	Brand	Brand	Brand/offering/activity	Online brand community	Social media brand-related content
<b>Context(s) and brands under investigation (if applicable)</b>	University setting; multiple brands	Social media settings; social media brands; Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn in three different studies	University settings (for exploratory work) and focus on the Apple brand as well as retail brands in two different studies	OBC members, panel respondents  No brand or community information	Social media settings; multiple brands in each study
<b>Dimensions</b>	Affective ( <i>inferred</i> )	Cognitive (cognitive processing), affective (affection), and behavioural (activation)	Cognitive (conscious attention), affective and behavioural (enthused participation), social (social connection)	11 motivations: brand influence, brand passion, connecting, helping, like-minded discussion, rewards (hedonic and utilitarian), seeking assistance, self-expression, up-to-date information, validation	Behavioural (consuming, contributing, creating)

The second problem concerns the treatment of different engagement foci. Conceptual and qualitative studies show that consumers can be engaged with more than one entity (see Table 1). Conceptual and qualitative work argues that engagement with different foci can happen concurrently and affect one another in the same consumption-related context; for example, in online brand communities, consumer engagement comes about from the concurrent engagement with brand, online community, and individual members of the community (Brodie et al., 2011; Dessart et al., 2015; Vivek et al., 2012).

Broader marketing scholarship supports the need to account for different foci of consumer engagement. For instance, recent research studies on consumer-brand relationships and brand communities have explicitly acknowledged that consumers can create relationships with other referents than brands, including individual members of the brand community and the brand community as a collective (Veloutsou, 2009, Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). The social identity theory also supports the multiplicity of foci in consumer research. Social identity is a concept whereby one perceives actual or symbolic belongingness to a group (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Similar to consumer engagement, scholarship on consumer identification began with consumer-brand identification (e.g., del Río, Vazquez, & Iglesias, 2001) but quickly widened to reflect the way consumers develop relationships (Johnson, Herrmann, & Huber, 2006). Brand community research embraces the concept of brand community identification and applies it in offline (Algesheimer et al., 2005) and online (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006) community settings.

Importantly, the coexistence and interrelationship of consumer-brand and consumer-community identification is now well recognised. Specifically, Marzocchi et al. (2013) show that consumer-brand and consumer-community identifications coexist in a brand-community

setting, that they differ, and that their role in the formation of consumer-brand relationships is complementary yet different. Brand community identification activates affect more, whereas brand identification is based on cognitive processes (Marzocchi et al., 2013). The notion of coexistence also applies to other relationship marketing concepts in online contexts, extending, for example, to brand commitment and brand community commitment (Kim, Choi, Qualls, & Han, 2008) and to research on brand community integration (Stockbürger-Sauer, 2010). In essence, the need to study a multiplicity of foci of consumer engagement seems to be strongly supported by previous social identity, brand relationship, and brand community literature.

In contrast to these considerations, the scales reported in Table 2 focus only on one type of engagement. The studies measure engagement with brands or brand-related content or activities. For example, although Hollebeek et al. (2014), Vivek et al. (2014), and Schivinski et al. (forthcoming) view engagement as a multidimensional and interactive concept and model engagement with different brands, they do not account for other engagement foci. Neither scale seems easily applicable to other foci of engagement. Specifically, in Hollebeek et al. (2014), consumer engagement is captured with items pertaining to ‘activation’, which relates to ‘usage’ of a brand, and this concept cannot easily be extended to another focus, for example, ‘other community members’, without losing its substantive meaning. In the same way, Vivek et al.’s (2014) notion of ‘social dimension’ is not very adaptable to all engagement contexts, and thus foci. To illustrate, most consumers tend to be physically alone when interacting online. Similarly, Schivinski et al. (forthcoming) conceptualisation is solely related to the actions that consumers undertake when they are engaging with brand-related content, and the scale cannot be used for other foci of engagement, such as the brand or the brand community. A full appreciation of what it means to be engaged is made possible only by accounting for different foci of engagement (Brodie et al., 2013; Vivek et al., 2014).



To summarise, the examination of the different foci of engagement is important for several reasons. First, different foci often coexist in a given consumption context such as (online) brand communities (Stockbürger-Sauer, 2010). Second, one focus might prevail or precede another in the formation of relevant consumer relationship outcomes (Kim et al., 2013). Third, the different foci may play different and variable roles in shaping engagement in terms of the underlying psychological processes that may be activated (Marzocchi et al., 2013). For these reasons, it seems crucial to consider the multiplicity of different foci when studying consumer engagement.

Clearly, very few studies model consumer engagement in a comprehensive manner by accounting for different foci of engagement or providing a precise meaning to its dimensions (Brodie et al., 2011; Dessart et al., 2015) (see Table 1). Moreover, these efforts have largely concerned exploratory settings (see Table 2). Given the limited number of quantitative studies on consumer engagement (Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart et al., 2015; Hollebeek et al., 2014), this is probably not surprising. Nonetheless, the exploratory studies offer important insights concerning the implications of different foci for engagement, and it seems imperative that these lessons are incorporated into confirmatory designs (Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2014). The current paper thus provides a conceptual framework that attempts to clarify the conceptual dimensionality of consumer engagement prior to the development of a dual-focus scale.

The context of OBCs embedded in social networks seems to offer an excellent opportunity for such an examination (Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart et al., 2015). OBCs are defined as ‘a *specialised, non-geographically bound community, based upon social relationships among admirers of a brand in cyberspace*’ (Jang, Olfmann, Ko, Koh, & Kim, 2008, p. 57). OBCs on social media are recognized recognised as highly relevant to the study of consumer

engagement because of their interactive and dynamic nature (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), and also because they support the creation of multi-way relationships between consumers and brands, and among consumers (Ouwensloot & Oderkerken-Schröder, 2008; Stokbürger-Sauer, 2010). Because OBCs foster consumer engagement with multiple partners, including the brand and the community (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002; Wirtz et al., 2013), they do represent excellent settings for the study of engagement with multiple foci (Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart et al., 2015). More specifically, this study focuses on OBCs embedded on in the social network Facebook. Social networks are one of the most popular forms of social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), and Facebook in particular is the preferred social network for consumers to engage with brands (Headstream, 2015).

## **Methodology**

The reconceptualisation of consumer engagement follows a multistage process incorporating the guidelines by Churchill (1979). Specifically, the development work includes five phases. The explorative Study 1 offers conceptual insights into the meaning of engagement for consumers and marketing industry experts in the OBC context. These insights combined with a literature review generate a conceptual foundation for consumer engagement and a first pool of items. The second phase, Study 2, involves a panel of academic experts who ensure the face validity of the scale and trim the initial pool of items. The third phase, Study 3, relies on the collection of quantitative consumer data and a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test the factorial validity of scores from the consumer engagement scales. The next phase, Study 4, aims to ensure the nomological validity of the constructs by fitting the consumer engagement scales in a nomological network of relationships with brand commitment and online interaction propensity. Finally, in Study 5, the results are validated using another linguistic sample, signalling the cross-cultural group invariance of the scales. The

methodological decisions undertaken in each one of these studies will be presented in each study.

## **Results**

### *Study 1: Dimensionality of consumer engagement and item generation*

The aim of Study 1 is to deepen our understanding of the conceptual dimensionality of consumer engagement in OBC. This study provides the foundation for the development of a pool of relevant items to reflect these dimensions. It is not uncommon to use qualitative consumer and expert data to develop a scale (e.g., Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009; Christodoulides, de Chernatory, Furrer, Shiu, & Abimbola, 2006; Walsh & Beatty, 2007), because such data tends to increase scale reliability (Churchill, 1979). In this instance, the exploratory stage involved 20 consumer informants who were members of OBCs embedded in social networks, as well as five marketing experts, specialised in social media marketing and engagement.

Using a snowball technique, the study informants were recruited directly through social networks until information saturation was reached (Creswell, 2007). In line with other OBC studies, the sampling sought highly engaged consumer informants (Cova, Pace, & Park, 2007; Muñiz & Schau, 2005) of diverse demographic profiles. Consumers were asked to select one or several brands that they followed on OBCs embedded in social networks and to explain their interactions with other consumers and brands in these settings. Moving from their general experience to more specific questions, they were ultimately asked to describe their experience with a brand and OBC, which they considered being engaged with, as well as to provide their own definition of the concept of consumer engagement.

The expert panel included digital marketing consultants and marketing managers directly in charge of their brand's OBCs on social networks, and the interviews provided a range of industry perspectives. The expert informants provided evidence of extensive experience in OBC and social network management, with a strong consumer engagement orientation. They were asked to define and detail their understanding of consumer engagement and comment on how they enact and measure engagement in their company.

Interviews were carried out in person or via Skype, and were recorded, and transcribed. All transcribed data were content analysed and coded in line with existing procedures (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Based on a content analysis, Appendix 1 provides an overview of the respondents, the brands they discussed, and key quotes that unveil the nature and dimensionality of consumer engagement. The analysis reveals that consumer engagement is a multidimensional concept and that the affective, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions, as previously conceptualised (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011a). However, informants added depth to the meaning of these dimensions and the analysis allowed for subdimensions to be extracted in light of the existing marketing literature.

To illustrate, the data evidences affective engagement and our informants use words such as 'bond', 'care', and 'emotion' when they speak of the brands or consumers they engage with. Affective engagement captures the summative and enduring level of emotions experienced by a consumer with respect to his or her engagement focus (Calder et al., 2013). The interviews show that the affective dimension can be broken down into enthusiasm and enjoyment. For example, the discourse of Anthony or Nigel (see Appendix 1) show that engagement is associated with a pleasurable state of enjoyment (Mollen & Wilson, 2010). Enthusiasm, however, is evident in the stories of Derek, who explained that he gets very excited about some of the brands he engages with. Similarly, Sam's experience supports the same notion of

enthusiasm when he comments that the community is like a family to him and that he even feels 'too involved' with it. Consumer enthusiasm seems to be a strong component of affective engagement, which reflects the consumer's level of excitement and interest regarding the engagement focus (Vivek et al., 2014).

The second dimension of engagement exposes its cognitive aspect. The data bring clarity to the meaning of cognitive engagement, which has been defined as a set of enduring and active mental states experienced by the consumer (Hollebeek, 2011a; Mollen & Wilson, 2010). Industry experts from IronValley and SmartForest agree that gaining the attention of consumers is a key aspect of engagement. Sophia makes a strong point by explaining that when she feels engaged with a clothing brand, '*it's an engagement of the mind*'.

The interview data strongly support the behavioural aspects of engagement. Consumer and expert informants frequently refer to activity and actions when characterising engagement in the OBC context. The notion of sharing information and being brand ambassadors is prominent in the data and so is the search for information and the act of sanctioning or showing approval (Brodie et al., 2013). For instance, Appendix 1 illustrates this aspect in the interviews with James, Liam, and Judith. Overall, behavioural engagement encompasses the behavioural manifestations towards an engagement focus, beyond purchase, that result from motivational drivers (MSI, 2010; van Doorn et al., 2010). These manifestations can take the form of sharing, learning, and endorsing behaviours, which are all inherently social.

A common thread that cuts through all these dimensions and subdimensions concerns multiple foci of engagement. The interviews clearly show that engagement in the OBC is not restricted to direct engagement with the brand but also encompasses interactions with the

community of OBC members. Consumers comment that they develop bonds and interactions with other consumers as a result of their common interest in the brand. Consumers ask questions to the community and learn from it (Claire), they value other's actions (James), enjoy interacting with them (Liam and Anthony), and consciously associate with them as a peer group interested in the same things (Steven).

### *Conceptual frame*

Based on the results from Study 1 and taking into account lessons from existing literature (Brodie et al., 2011, 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2011a), this study defines consumer engagement as *'the state that reflects consumers' individual dispositions toward engagement foci, which are context-specific. Engagement is expressed through varying levels of affective, cognitive, and behavioural manifestations that go beyond exchange situations'*. This definition conceptualises engagement as a state composed of explicit manifestations (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Vivek et al., 2014). The definition thus reflects Chandler and Lusch's (2015) focus on the internal dispositions of an actor, but contrasts with other views of engagement that qualify and measure it as a sum of motivational factors (see, for instance, Algesheimer et al., 2005, on community engagement, and more recently Baldus et al., 2015, on OBC engagement). Accordingly, the engagement as defined here is composed of a sum of activities and the subsequent measurement of engagement aims to understand the nature of these mental, emotional, and behavioural activities rather than to elaborate on the motivations (Baldus et al., 2015).

Consumer engagement is context-dependent (Hollebeek, 2011a) and individual consumers engage with different foci including brand, community, other individuals, advertisers, or the social network. Based on previous literature and the results of Study 1, we postulate that in the context of OBC, the most relevant foci to consider are the brand and the community of

other OBC members (Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart et al., 2015). This study refers to these two foci as ‘brand engagement’ and ‘community engagement’, respectively.

Table 3 captures the dimensions and subdimensions of engagement as derived from the interviews and the review of extant literature. Based on these foundations, a first pool of items was developed including 47 items for community engagement and an identical 47 items for brand engagement.

**Table 3: Consumer engagement: Definitions of the dimensions and subdimensions**

Dimensions and Subdimensions	References
<p><b>Affective:</b> Summative and enduring level of emotions experienced by a consumer</p> <p><b>Enthusiasm</b></p> <p>Intrinsic level of excitement and interest regarding the engagement partner</p> <p><b>Enjoyment</b></p> <p>Pleasure and happiness derived from interactions with the engagement partner</p>	<p>Brodie et al., 2011</p> <p>Calder et al., 2013</p> <p>Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b</p> <p>Mollen and Wilson, 2010</p> <p>Patterson et al., 2006</p>
<p><b>Behavioural:</b> Behavioural manifestations towards an engagement partner, beyond purchase, which results from motivational drivers</p> <p><b>Sharing</b></p> <p>The act of providing content, information, experiences, ideas, or other resources to the engagement partner</p> <p><b>Learning</b></p> <p>The act of seeking content, information, experiences, ideas, or other resources from the engagement partner</p> <p><b>Endorsing</b></p> <p>The act of sanctioning, showing support, referring resources shared by the engagement partner</p>	<p>Brodie et al., 2011</p> <p>Gummerus et al., 2012</p> <p>Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b</p> <p>van Doorn et al., 2010</p> <p>Verhoef et al., 2010</p>
<p><b>Cognitive:</b> Set of enduring and active mental states that a consumer experiences</p> <p><b>Attention</b></p> <p>Cognitive availability and amount of time spent thinking about, and being attentive to, the engagement partner</p> <p><b>Absorption</b></p> <p>Level of consumer's concentration and immersion with an engagement partner</p>	<p>Brodie et al., 2013</p> <p>Brodie et al., 2011</p> <p>Hollebeek 2011a, 2011b</p> <p>Mollen and Wilson, 2010</p> <p>Patterson et al., 2006</p> <p>Vivek et al., 2012</p>



### *Study 2: Academic expert insight*

The second study sought insight from academic experts to validate and refine the pool of items generated from the Study 1 data. Academic input is particularly valuable for content validity and item clarity and conciseness (DeVellis, 2012). In total 12 international academics were identified on the basis of the expertise and publication record in the fields of consumer engagement and/or OBC. They were contacted by email. In total, 9 of the 12 experts replied to the initial enquiry and were subsequently sent a link to an online questionnaire.

The questionnaire included the definitions from Table 4 and a list of items reflecting engagement with the brand and engagement with the OBC, respectively. Experts were invited to rate on a Likert scale from 1 (completely agree) to 5 (completely disagree) the extent to which they believed the item to be representative of a specific subdimension. They were also encouraged to comment on the clarity, conciseness, and representativeness of the items. As a rule, all items unanimously rated as highly representative of the dimensions and subdimensions among experts were kept. Subsequent item modifications reflected three types of comments: redundancy in meaning with another item, inadequate capturing of the conceptual domain of consumer engagement, or complexity of a statement. For instance the item *'the (brand community/brand) generates in me a feeling of excitement'* was deemed to tap into a transient emotion that was not representative of the enduring aspect of engagement and thus was deleted. Another item *'I sanction the brand/brand community's behaviour'*, was deleted because 'sanction' seemed too complex to understand. Following the recommendations of the experts, 14 items were edited and 9 of them were deleted, resulting in two pools of 39 items.

### *Study 3: Scale development, reliability, and validity*

The two pools of 39 items were edited to form an online questionnaire, using 7-point Likert scales anchored in 1 = completely disagree to 7 = completely agree. The questionnaire was first pretested on six OBC users to assess the overall quality of the instrument and then administered to a pilot sample of 101 undergraduate and postgraduate university students. As a result of the pretest and pilot phases, a further four items were deleted from each pool, resulting in a 35×2-item questionnaire.

The questionnaire in English was then posted on OBCs for the main data collection. Sampling of OBCs followed a purposive (Kozinets, 1999), two-step approach by selecting first OBCs on Facebook that represented a wide range of product categories (i.e., official branded Facebook pages). The administrators of the pages were contacted and prompted to post the link to the survey on their page to ensure that the population of interest, that is, the individual consumer members of an OBC, could then be reached. Although not adhering to the principle of random sampling, the approach adopted here seemed valid for accessing OBC populations on social networks, because they are inherently hard to reach (Preece, Nonnecke, & Andrews, 2004) and a reliable listing of OBCs that would form robust sampling frames seemed unobtainable (Wright, 2005).

A total of 326 Facebook page administrators were contacted using an introduction letter explaining the purpose of the study and content of the questionnaire. Once the questionnaire was posted on the page, it would be visible to its members. In total, 989 individuals started the questionnaire but only 448 cases were retained after a deletion of cases with more than 10% missing data. Missing data was addressed with the expectation maximisation method on SPSS (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2000). The final study sample shows considerable diversity and includes 56% male and 44% of female respondents majority of whom were younger consumers (43% were 25 to 34 years old, and 23% were within 35 to 44 category. A

significant proportion of the sample, 48%, had a postgraduate degree and 28% lived in the United Kingdom. In general, the respondents were active Facebook users, with 34% of the sample reporting to be continually connected through push notifications, and most others admitting to log onto Facebook at least once every day. In terms of visits of the pages they like, the frequency varied with 15% admitting to visiting several times a week and 27% stating less than once a month.

The represented brand categories include travel (33%), food and beverage (20%), durable goods (15%), entertainment (13%), fashion and beauty (11%), services (5%), and others (3%). In total, 48 different pages were represented, including international brands such as Star Alliance, Apple, ASOS, or Porsche, but the sample also includes a large number of local retailers. The number of responses per brand community varied, ranging from 1 to 142.

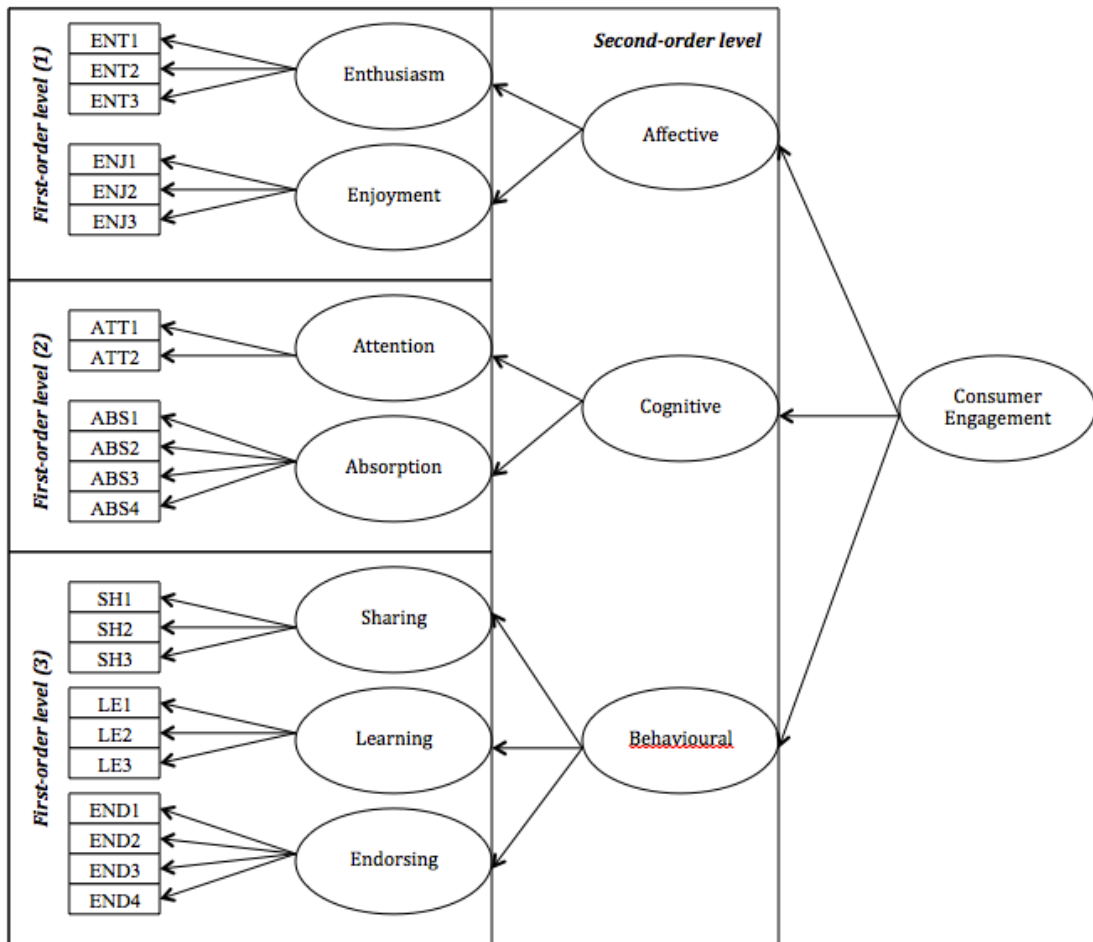
The usable sample was randomly split into calibration and validation samples (Churchill, 1979; Gerbing & Anderson, 1988). Each subsample consisted of 224 consumers. The calibration sample was used to develop the scale, and the validation sample served to verify its dimensionality and establish its psychometric properties.

To verify that a factor structure underlies the data, an EFA (Exploratory Factor Analysis) was carried out on the calibration sample, using the principal axis factor extraction with oblique rotation (Byrne, 2010). Two models were estimated: one for brand and one for community engagement and on each occasion the EFA model included a full set of items for the 3 dimensions of the for scale. The results largely support the expected structure of the whole measurement model. The KMO statistic of 0.94 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity for the correlation matrix ( $\chi^2(528) = 8217.489$  ( $p = 0.000$ )) both support the existence of large

correlations amongst the items of the brand engagement scale (Kaiser, 1974). The factor extraction suggests the existence of 5 factors: the affective items all load on the same factor, as well as the cognitive items on another factor, and the behavioural items load on three different factors, adequately polarizing the sharing, learning and endorsing items. This extraction cumulatively explains 83 percent of the average variance extracted. Following Hair et al. (2010), one offending “learning” item with loading below 0.40 was deleted at that stage. For the community engagement scale, the KMO statistic of 0.95 and the Bartlett’s test of sphericity for the correlation matrix ( $\chi^2 (528) = 9284.035 (p = 0.000)$ ) also support the existence of an underlying factor structure. Specifically, 85 cumulative percent of the average variance extracted is explained by a 6 factor structure, which once again parts the expected dimensions as expected, and sub-dimensions as well, to some extent: the affective enjoyment and enthusiasm items load on two factors respectively, the three behavioural sub-dimensions of sharing, learning and endorsing also load on separate factors, and the cognitive items on the other hand all load together on one factor. No factor with below-standard loading is detected here.

Although the extracted factor structure is not a perfect replication of the theorized one, there is a clear extraction of at least five factors for both brand and community engagement scale, which perfectly respects the dimensions split, as well as the behavioural sub-dimensions categorization. As Hurley et al. (1997) suggest that EFA procedures are better used in conjunction with CFA, it is conducted to verify whether the expected factor structure can be confirmed and assess the representativeness of the items for each. The subdimensions of each dimension were correlated, as depicted in Figure 1. This first-order CFA initially exhibited a poor fit for each of the dimensions and items were deleted based on the validity and reliability indicators (Gerbing & Hamilton, 1996). The final model including 22 items showed an acceptable fit (see Table 4 for details).

Figure 1: First-order and second-order level CFA



**Table 4: CFA: Calibration sample**

<b>Focus</b>	<b>Fit Indices</b>	<b>Enthusiasm and Enjoyment</b>	<b>Attention and Absorption</b>	<b>Sharing, Learning, and Endorsing</b>
<b>Community</b>	Chi-square	10.37	6.92	71.28
	<i>p</i> -value	0.25	0.32	0.00
	df	8.00	6.00	32.00
	CFI	0.99	0.99	0.98
	TLI	0.99	0.99	0.98
	RSMEA	0.04	0.03	0.07
<b>Brand</b>	Chi-square	18.94	11.85	56.57
	<i>p</i> -value	0.01	0.07	0.01
	df	8.00	6.00	32.00
	CFI	0.99	0.99	0.98
	TLI	0.98	0.99	0.98
	RSMEA	0.08	0.06	0.06

The validation sample was then used to verify the psychometric properties of the scale. Similar to the previous step, a CFA was carried out, this time using the reduced 22-item model to validate the model on the first-order level (see Figure 1). The brand engagement model's shows acceptable fit with  $\chi^2$  at 326.10 ( $p = 0.00$ ), RMSEA at 0.06, CFI at 0.97, and TLI at 0.96. For the community engagement model's  $\chi^2$  stood at 438.04 ( $p = 0.00$ ), RMSEA at 0.07, CFI at 0.96, and TLI at 0.95.

Considering convergent validity, all item loadings were significant and strong ranging from 0.80 to 0.99, as shown in Table 5. The scale has good reliability with Cronbach's alphas and construct reliabilities all above 0.88 for each subdimension, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair, Bush, & Ortinau, 2014). The values for Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were all above 0.50 to indicate convergent validity for all subdimensions (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). To test for discriminant validity, we used the Fornell-Larcker approach and compared the respective AVEs with the squared inter-construct correlation. For each combination of the paired constructs, AVE value exceeded the squared correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In addition, a chi-square difference test was used to test for discriminant validity. Following this method, models with fewer subdimensions were compared against models with more subdimensions (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988) to assess if all subdimensions were distinct and thus required. The  $p$ -values in this test all being below 0.05 indicated that the chi-square of the full seven-subdimension model was significantly lower than all other nested models' chi-squares, therefore indicating discriminant validity between subdimensions.

**Table 5: CFA first order: Validation sample**

Latent Factors and Items	Brand Engagement		Community Engagement	
	St Loading	t-value	St Loading	t-value
<b>Enthusiasm</b>	<b>Alpha = 0.94, AVE = 0.79, CR = 0.92</b>		<b>Alpha = 0.93, AVE = 0.83, CR = 0.94</b>	
I feel enthusiastic about (engagement focus – hereafter EF).	0.88	17.78	0.93	19.85
I am interested in anything about (EF).	0.90	17.08	0.87	21.78
I find (EF) interesting.	<i>Deleted CFA</i>			
<b>Enjoyment</b>	<b>Alpha = 0.95, AVE = 0.88, CR = 0.96</b>		<b>Alpha = 0.94, AVE = 0.85, CR = 0.94</b>	
When interacting with (EF), I feel happy.	0.97	22.6	0.91	24.04
I get pleasure from interacting with (EF).	0.99	23.69	0.92	24.8
Interacting with (EF) is like a treat for me.	0.86	23.04	0.93	24.52
<b>Attention</b>	<b>Alpha= 0.93, AVE= 0.87, CR= 0.93</b>		<b>Alpha= 0.97, AVE= 0.94, CR= 0.97</b>	
I spend a lot of time thinking about (EF).	0.92	23.01	0.97	35.54
I make time to think about (EF).	0.94	24.85	0.97	32.64
<b>Absorption</b>	<b>Alpha= 0.96, AVE= 0.87, CR= 0.96</b>		<b>Alpha= 0.98, AVE= 0.88, CR= 0.96</b>	
When interacting with (EF), I forget everything else around me.	0.94	23.86	0.94	29.9
Time flies when I am interacting with (EF).	0.96	25.01	0.96	33.08
When I am interacting with (EF), I get carried away.	0.92	27.14	0.94	42.46
When interacting with (EF), it is difficult to detach myself.	0.90	25.16	0.95	37.18
<b>Sharing</b>	<b>Alpha= 0.94, AVE= 0.83, CR= 0.94</b>		<b>Alpha= 0.95, AVE= 0.88, CR= 0.96</b>	
I share my ideas with (EF).	0.90	20.44	0.92	23.97
I share interesting content with (EF).	0.93	22.95	0.97	28.02
I help (EF).	0.90	19.56	0.92	29.56
<b>Learning</b>	<b>Alpha= 0.90, AVE= 0.72, CR= 0.88</b>		<b>Alpha= 0.90, AVE= 0.76, CR= 0.90</b>	
I ask (EF) questions.	0.89	13.83	0.85	16.36
I seek ideas or information from (EF).	0.84	16.02	0.90	18.09
I seek help from (EF).	0.81	18.52	0.87	17.52
<b>Endorsing</b>	<b>Alpha= 0.92, AVE= 0.74, CR= 0.92</b>		<b>Alpha= 0.95, AVE= 0.82, CR= 0.95</b>	
I promote (EF).	0.88	15.59	0.93	22.16
I try to get other interested in (EF).	0.89	15.74	0.93	22.75
I actively defend (EF) from its critics.	0.86	15.15	0.87	19.11
I say positive things about (EF) to other people.	0.80	16.2	0.89	21.05



Having assured validity of the first-level measurement model, a CFA was then carried out at the second-order (i.e., dimension) level. Because each dimension represented a rather large number of items, in order to make the manipulation of the second-order level factors manageable, the aggregate score of each subdimension was computed to fit into the model, using the following formula:

$$\text{Aggregate value of enthusiasm items} = 0.332 * BENT1 + 0.336 * BENT2 + 0.332 * BENT4$$

The weight of an item was calculated as the fraction of the path estimate of that dimension over the sum of the other relevant path estimates, in line with Yoo and Donthu's (2001) procedure.

CFA was thus carried out at the dimension level, where the aggregate score of the subdimensions were items, and the dimensions of which they were reflective, first-order factors. The brand engagement CFA performed adequately with a  $\chi^2$  of 26.78 ( $p = 0.003$ ) with 10 degrees of freedom. RMSEA was 0.08, CFI is 0.99, and TLI was 0.98. The community engagement model exhibited a  $\chi^2$  of 15.03 ( $p = 0.053$ ) with 8 degrees of freedom, and an RMSEA of 0.06, a CFI equal to 0.99, and a TLI of 0.98. The item loadings to their constructs on the validation sample ranged from 0.71 to 1.00, as shown in Table 6, so they were all significant.

The CFA also yielded satisfactory goodness-of-fit values at the second order level without aggregating the sub-dimensions item values. This CFA for the brand engagement scale had a  $\chi^2$  of 471.17 ( $p = 0.000$ ) with 195 degrees of freedom, an RMSEA of 0.07, CFI of 0.95, and

TLI of 0.95. The community engagement model exhibited a  $\chi^2$  of 657.14 ( $p = 0.000$ ) with 204 degrees of freedom, and an RMSEA of 0.08, a CFI equal to 0.93, and a TLI of 0.92. The item loadings to their constructs on the validation sample ranged from 0.70 to 0.99, and were all significant. Model parsimony explains the slightly weaker performance of the full scales versus the scales with aggregated sub-dimensions values: more complex scales tend to perform worse than those with fewer items (Ruvio et al., 2008).

**Table 6: CFA second order: Validation sample**

Latent Factors/Items (Aggregate Scores)	Online Brand Engagement		OBC Engagement	
	St Loading	<i>t</i> -value	St Loading	<i>t</i> -value
<b>AFFECTIVE</b>	<b>Alpha = 0.86, AVE = 0.76, CR = 0.86</b>		<b>Alpha= 0.83, AVE = 0.76, CR = 0.84</b>	
Enthusiasm	0.94	14.60	0.74	13.74
Enjoyment	0.80	15.20	0.96	15.89
<b>COGNITIVE</b>	<b>Alpha= 0.88, AVE= 0.78, CR= 0.87</b>		<b>Alpha= 0.90, AVE= 0.82, CR= 0.90</b>	
Attention	0.89	16.49	0.88	19.97
Absorption	0.87	15.28	0.93	21.54
<b>BEHAVIOURAL</b>	<b>Alpha= 0.93, AVE= 0.76, CR= 0.91</b>		<b>Alpha= 0.93, AVE= 0.82, CR= 0.93</b>	
Sharing	0.89	24.93	0.95	40.63
Learning	0.71	14.77	0.74	16.39
Endorsing	1.00	18.52	1.00	17.20

The measurement model shows good reliability at the dimension level, with Cronbach's alphas all largely above the cut-off value of 0.70, and coefficients of reliability (CR) also ranging from 0.76 to 0.93. Convergent validity was also acceptable with AVE values above 0.50 for all three dimensions of each scale. Specifically, for the brand engagement scale, the AVE was 0.76 for the affective dimension, 0.78 for the cognitive dimension, and 0.76 for the behavioural dimension. The corresponding values for the community engagement scale were 0.76, 0.82, and 0.82, respectively. In order to assess discriminant validity, a chi-square difference test was used, similar to the first-order CFA. Again, *p*-values were below 0.05, indicating that the chi-square of the full three-dimension model was significantly lower than all other nested models' chi-squares. The model could not be further reduced without compromising fit, therefore indicating discriminant validity.

In the final step, discriminant validity was assessed across the two foci. Although the items were mirrored across brand and community engagement scales, it was important to show that measuring engagement with different foci actually generated different results. To this end, both scales were included in one CFA model to enable the calculation of the Fornell and Larcker (1981) test. The scales demonstrate acceptable level of discriminant validity: AVE values for brand engagement and community engagement were 0.84 and 0.86 respectively exceeding their squared correlation at 0.79. This result provides a strong support for discriminant validity of the different engagement foci.

#### *Study 4: Scale validation: Nomological network*

Study 4 aimed to assess the nomological validity of the scale by verifying that the scale behaved as expected in relation to other constructs. To this end, the study tested the psychometric properties of consumer engagement in relation to another brand relationship concept, brand commitment, as well as online interaction propensity. Brand commitment was

chosen because consumer engagement is likely to strengthen the relationships that consumers have with a brand (Hollebeek, 2011a) and more specifically increase their likelihood to remain committed to this brand, therefore increasing their brand commitment (van Doorn et al., 2010). This relationship has been conceptually explored but never validated empirically. Moreover, we know that consumers can develop high levels of brand commitment in OBC settings (Kim, Choi, Qualls, & Han, 2008). Validating the empirical distinctiveness of brand engagement and brand commitment is important because they are relational constructs (Hollebeek, 2011a). Additionally, the OBC literature suggests that individuals with overall higher online interaction propensity are more likely to establish interactions with other members of a community (Wiertz & de Ruyter, 2007). For these reasons, brand commitment and online interaction propensity seemed adequate variables to test the nomological validity of the scale.

To test these relationships, the validation sample of Study 3 was used. To capture online interaction propensity, the scale developed by Wiertz and de Ruyter (2007) was used, with four items on a 7-point Likert scale. Brand commitment was measured using items adapted from El-Manstrly and Harrison (2013), who view brand commitment as an attitudinal concept capturing the consumer's intention to remain in a long-term relationship with the brand.

All variables were included in a CFA model in AMOS. The consumer engagement scale used the aggregate scores of the subdimensions to reduce the complexity of the model. The model demonstrated good fit, with  $\chi^2(53df) = 129,706$ , CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.96, and RMSEA = 0.08. The Cronbach's alpha values for each scale ranged from 0.90 to 0.93 and construct reliabilities ranged from 0.74 to 0.92. These values exceeded the threshold of 0.70, indicating the internal consistency of the scales. All factor-loading estimates were statistically significant and ranged from 0.71 to 0.97 ( $p < 0.001$ ). The AVE and MSV values were also

calculated for each subscale. The AVE values ranged from 0.60 to 0.75 and were greater than squared correlations of the underlying variables. These results support the nomological validity of the consumer engagement dual-focus scale and indicate that the new scale seems a reliable and valid instrument.

#### *Study 5: Cross-linguistic scale validation*

Studies 1 to 4 used data collected from an English-speaking sample. To provide further evidence of the validity, data were collected on a French sample using procedures that ensured translation and administration equivalence (Douglas & Craig, 2006; van de Vijver & Tanzer, 2004). Cross-cultural validation seemed warranted given the global nature of computer-mediated platforms such as OBCs and the need to embrace the increasingly diverse international audience (Jang et al., 2008). The French sample showed good diversity and consisted of residents of France and Belgium, 49% of whom were male, largely younger respondents (with 51% between 25 to 34 years old). They tended to be well educated with 51% of sample reporting to have a postgraduate degree. Moreover, 36% of respondents received push notifications from Facebook. Their page visits were varied in terms of frequency but overall tended to be lower than the English sample. The represented brand categories included mainly food and beverage (55%), entertainment (12%), and fashion and beauty (18%) spanning a total of 20 different business pages, mainly of local nature.

The cross-cultural validity was examined with using invariance test in AMOS multigroup analysis function. The test compared the English sample (first 'group') with the French sample (the second 'group') at the configural, measurement, and structural levels (Byrne, 2010). The consumer engagement scale developed in Study 3 was used as a baseline model and subsequently established as a configural model. To test for measurement invariance across groups, the factor loadings were constrained as equal and a cut-off criterion of the CFI

difference between the configural and constrained model was set at  $\leq 0.01$ . The community engagement scale exhibited a CFI difference of 0.01 and the brand engagement scale 0.001, indicating invariance between the French and English samples. The same procedure of constraint was applied to the structural weights and covariances, with community and brand engagement scales having a CFI difference equal to 0.003. These values confirmed that there was full-group invariance on configural, measurement, and structural levels between the English- and the French-speaking samples, constituting an indication of the applicability of the scale across languages.

### **Discussion and concluding remarks**

This study offers a novel conceptualisation and operationalisation of consumer engagement as a multifaceted and multidimensional construct. Building on current literature on engagement, the study provides a new conceptualisation of engagement and validates its operationalisation through a multistage procedure. The research is based in the context of OBCs, which lent itself particularly well to this investigation because of the multiple actors involved (McAlexander et al., 2002). The new scale of consumer engagement offers several contributions to existing knowledge.

Recognition and successful operationalisation of multiple engagement foci represent a major contribution of this study, answering earlier calls for a better measurement of engagement (Brodie et al. (2013). Prior literature in relationship marketing, brand communities, and consumer identification research has argued that the recognition of different foci is important to avoid conflation of findings (Marzocchi et al., 2013). The variety of foci is particularly relevant in online contexts where the opportunities of interaction are magnified and at the same time subject to considerable complexity. For example, engagement with a Facebook brand page involves interactions with other users, the platform, and the brand. By examining

two different engagement foci, a brand and a community of consumers centred on the said brand, in a confirmatory setting, this study makes a pioneering attempt to measure consumer engagement in a uniform way, which may help to better understand engagement, its antecedents, and outcomes. For instance, following Marzocchi et al.'s (2013) logic, consumer engagement might be a strong predictor of brand trust and affect, whereas brand engagement could have stronger ties with brand loyalty.

Additionally, this article clarifies the dimensionality of engagement by proposing three dimension and seven sub-dimensions of engagement. The adopted conceptualisation supports the existence of the recognised three-dimensionality of consumer engagement with behavioural, cognitive and emotional engagement as dimensions (Brodie et al., 2011, 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2014), but enhances the understanding of these dimensions of engagement by adding detail in their conceptual and operational makeup.

To be more precise, in an effort to operationalize the behavioural aspect of engagement, this study elaborates on the notion that behavioural engagement is a level of energy, effort and time spend (Hollebeek et al., 2014) and clarifies its exact nature through three dimensions (sharing, learning and endorsing). Similarly, the conscious cognitive processing (Hollebeek et al., 2014) or degree of cognitive interest (Vivek et al., 2014) previously approached as one dimension is conceptually refined with two aspects of active mental processing: attention and absorption, which are more precise depictions of the engagement construct (Schaufelli et al., 2002; Higgins and Scholer, 2009). Lastly, the emotional aspect of engagement, which past research defines as a general degree of positive brand-related affect (Hollebeek et al., 2014) or “zealous reactions” and feelings (Vivek et al., 2014), is here more precisely envisioned and operated through measures of enthusiasm and enjoyment, both recognized to be enduring forms of affect related to a specific focus (Schaufelli et al., 2002). These conceptual and



methodological refinements contribute to construct clarity and rigorously add operational precision to the constructs previously identified by Hollebeek et al. (2014) and Vivek et al. (2014).

This article also offers broader theoretical implications regarding the role of consumer engagement in the interactive and social aspect of consumer-brand relationships. In recognising different engagement foci, the study supports prior research, which stresses the role of social interaction with and around a brand, supported by OBC (Fetscherin & Heinrich 2015). This view parallels the notion that brands are social agents in brand-related communities (Quinton, 2013). In addition, the article contributes to the wider brand community and social network literature by providing a way to capture multidimensional interactive participation on these platforms (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Gummerus, Liljander, Weman, & Pihlström, 2012; Kim et al., 2008).

Consumer engagement has significant and growing importance for the management of brands, and the study offers several managerial implications. The first set concerns multiple manifestations of engagement that include cognitive, affective, and behavioural manifestations. Managers need to include all three dimensions when measuring engagement, not just behavioural site metrics. Importantly, the study also gives a more accurate understanding of engagement to managers to classify and target consumers with more relevant and appropriate content, based on their precise 'engagement profile'. For instance, consumers with high attention but little enjoyment might respond entirely differently to marketing efforts than low-attention, high-enjoyment users. An important managerial contribution concerns instrumentality: in order to manage or affect change in consumer attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours, it is essential to accurately determine their root causes. In this respect, the distinction between engagements with different foci seems of paramount

importance: there is little point in changing brands when the root cause of disengagement may concern community features. To affect its change in engagement, it seems of utmost importance for practitioners to understand its precise makeup. For example, does product involvement affect engagements with the community and the brand? Similarly, considering outcomes of engagements, it seems of huge practical, if not theoretical, relevance if engagement with different foci leads to similar or different results in terms of loyalty or commitment. Although the latter have not been investigated in this study, it seems plausible that different sets of outcomes and different antecedents affect engagement with different foci differently. Futures studies may focus on the testing of such relationships.

Despite these contributions, this article has several limitations. First, the nature of OBCs embedded in social networks did not enable accessing a probabilistic random sample (Preece & Maloney-Krichmar, 2005), which has implications for the generalisability of the study's results. Once the survey was posted on the Facebook pages, the authors did not have control over who did or did not see it. Studies may try to avoid these sampling issues in the future by using larger samples or through the application of randomised sampling.

Generalisability of the study's results could be further enhanced by extending the context to other social networks hosting OBCs, such as Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram. The scale is created to enable transferability across contexts and different types of platforms, which might generate different levels of engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2014). As online platforms keep growing in size, evolving in form and expanding in terms of marketing applications, it is expected that the number of consumer engagement options will grow exponentially.

Last, the results did not enable the ability to directly compare brands or brand categories because of a lack of consistency in the representation of each brand category. The aim in selecting OBCs was to represent a broad range of brand categories (Schau, Muñiz, & Arnould, 2009), which would span a majority of brand types present on Facebook. Diversity in brand types was favoured against an even representation of the product categories.

The study findings offer several new research avenues. Future studies may, for example, embrace the socially constructed view of relationships presented here and examine other relationship foci. It is possible that others are present in an online context; for example, it would be interesting to determine if the social network (Facebook, Twitter) or ecosystem potentially affects engagement and its outcomes as suggested by Breidbach, Brodie, & Hollebeek (2014). Second, because engagement is context specific, future investigations may look into engagement foci that seem of relevance to other contexts. Future research may draw on larger samples, focus on specific brand types, or control for product category effects in order to be able to statistically verify if there are differences of engagement levels or relationships for different types of foci. Additionally, an important point that was raised throughout the article is the instrumental role that this scale could play in better understanding the antecedents and outcomes of consumer engagement. We strongly advocate investigating the drivers and outcomes of consumer engagement with different foci in future research.

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1: Study 1 informant information

Consumer Informant	Number of Pages Followed	Facebook Communities Discussed	Consumer Engagement Quote (Brands)	Dimension (Subdimension) Expressed
Akim M, 27, Pakistan	87	Apple, Morgan Stanley	If you want to know what other people are saying, you need to go on Facebook because they [the brand] don't publish it on their website.	Behavioural (learning)
Anthony M, 48, Belgium	34	Paul Smith, The Rolling Stones, Digital Wallonia	It is not necessarily important to have comments on what you posted, but it's a pleasure; it's a nice added value.	Affective (enjoyment)
Claire F, 28, UK	23	Michael Kors, Liz Earle, Urban Outfitters	I got a pen burst in one of my favourite bags and I tweeted about it and asked if anybody had any 'at-home' remedies, and I got loads back.	Behavioural (learning)
Derek M, 33, Canada	187	Apple, Shanghaiist	Being engaged, it is being excited about something, at least a little bit.	Affective (enthusiasm)
Flora F, 23, Peru	67	Disney, KLM, Paypal	It just depends how much time you are willing to sacrifice for the group, how much time you spend thinking about it.	Cognitive (attention)
Fred M, 40, Belgium	36	Louis Vuitton, David Bowie, The Rolling Stones	I follow people that I find remarkable, [who] are worth sharing, [who] are the best of their kind. This is what I get hooked on, what I really like.	Affective (enthusiasm)
Helen F, 24, Greece	131	I Love Greece, Greek Radio	For instance, I sent a picture from their page to my friend, asking her 'Look at this, do you want to go there?'	Behavioural (sharing)

<b>Consumer Informant</b>	<b>Number of Pages Followed</b>	<b>Facebook Communities Discussed</b>	<b>Consumer Engagement Quote (Brands)</b>	<b>Dimension (Subdimension) Expressed</b>
James M, 27, UK	122	Rangers Football Club, Bose	If you see that some comment got a lot of likes, it is as if the group has authenticated the words for you. It gives some sort of seal of approval, or quality seal.	Behavioural (endorsing, learning)
Judith F, 28, Belgium	1007	Rotary Club, Yelp	I find it extremely difficult to stop reading on Facebook pages. It takes me hours, I have to check everything. I'm liking things a lot; I'm the kind of person [who] sees someone and then, hop, I like it.	Cognitive (absorption) Behavioural (endorsing)
Laura F, 26, Germany	180	Designed by Humans, Bastille, Morphsuits	I took part in the vote and then promoted the campaign on Facebook.	Behavioural (endorsing, sharing)
Liam M, 25, China	185	Vivienne Westwood, Glasgow Angling Center	I love to like on Facebook.	Behavioural (endorsing)
Maria F, 25, Greece	523	Sticky, Pet Shelter	I use the Facebook page to share experiences about visits.	Behavioural (sharing)
Matt M, 25, Belgium	319	Coldplay, Apple	I'm quite sensitive to good, interesting, or funny content.	Affective (enjoyment)
Nigel M, 28, China	136	Starbucks	When they post a beautiful picture, which makes me feel great, then yes, there is something in there for me.	Affective (enjoyment)
Ray M, 28, Belgium	85	Brussels Airlines, Twitter	They reply to your requests, so they show that they care about what the consumers think [...] it creates an emotional bond.	Cognitive (attention) Affective
Sabrina F, 27, Belgium	167	Nutella, Bebat, Esprit, Rihanna	They always have something fun to tell on their page [...] I really like this page because it represents what I enjoy in life.	Affective (enjoyment)

<b>Consumer Informant</b>	<b>Number of Pages Followed</b>	<b>Facebook Communities Discussed</b>	<b>Consumer Engagement Quote (Brands)</b>	<b>Dimension (Subdimension) Expressed</b>
Sam M, 29, Pakistan	89	Pakistan Cricket Board, M&S	[The people on the page] are like a family for me; I am too involved!	Affective (enthusiasm)
Sandra F, 27, Belgium	176	Esprit	When you become a fan of the page on Facebook, you always see information about the brand [...] you are updated about what they do.	Behavioural (learning)
Sophia F, 23, Pakistan	104	The Body Shop, Zara, Prada, Gucci	I follow them to know which products they are launching.  It's an engagement of the mind!	Behavioural (learning) Cognitive
Steven M, 27, Belgium	225	Ricky Gervais, Norman fait des videos, Apple	I follow him because I am interested in what he does and his career; I pay attention to what he posts and unconsciously, I have created a community of friends who are interested in the same things.	Cognitive (attention) Behavioural (sharing)
<b>Expert Informants</b>			<b>Consumer Engagement Approach</b>	<b>Underlying (Sub) Dimension</b>
Agentia, Belgium		If I had to translate engagement into another word, I would say 'being an actor'.		Behavioural
GreenSocial, India		Emotions are a great part of engagement. The extent of behavioural modification through branding also matters while measuring the depth of engagement.		Affective Behavioural
F-Industry, Belgium		With engagement, you start by thinking about it, then you really become active, up to the point of sharing the message.		Cognitive Behavioural
SmartForest, Belgium		Customer engagement is the 'level' of connection a customer has with a brand, which results in showing this publicly.		Affective Behavioural
IronValley, Canada		Engaging consumers means reducing the distance between your brand and them, and creating strong brand ambassadors.		Affective Behavioural