The Mediating Role of Consumer Engagement with the Brand Community and its Effect on Corporate Reputation

Abstract

We have two objectives in this research: first we test the proposed theoretical model to check the impact of perceived homophily and brand involvement on the consumer engagement with brand community, and the effect the latter on corporate reputation. Our results showed that in addition to the high association between consumer engagement and corporate reputation, engagement also fully mediates the relationship between perceived homophily and brand involvement with corporate reputation. As a second objective, while the engagement literature suggests that its definition and measurement vary according to the subject, object and context in which it is used, we argue that the existence of replicated scales in multiple contexts or with multiple objects indicates that keeping the subject constant (e.g., consumer) there can be a more comprehensive definition and more flexible scale that reduce the trend of fragmentation of the area. In this way, we propose that the consumer engagement scale of Vivek, Beatty, Dalela, and Morgan (2014) assumes this role. Because the scale has been validated in different contexts, we now adapt it to measure engagement with a different object. We confirmed the reliability and validity of the scale and show a good fit of the construct when measuring consumer engagement with the brand community.

Keywords: consumer engagement, brand community, social media.
Track: Consumer Behavior

1. Introduction

Academic research has also suggested that creating brand community or page on social media improves the corporate reputation (Dijkmans, Kerkhof, & Beukeboom, 2015), increases sales, returns on investment, positive word-of-mouth and was associated with brand equity, leading most of the Fortune Global 100's companies (87%) to be active on at least one social media. In such a context, Brazilian companies also have created communities, called fan pages on Facebook, for their brands in order to promote closer relationships with consumers. These fan pages are spaces on social networks where "businesses, organizations and brands share their stories and connect with people" (Facebook, 2015), and aim to broadcast great information in an official, public manner, to people who choose to connect with them (Zaglia, 2012).

As a result of the interest of companies and researchers, the term engagement (Mollen & Wilson (2010) is frequently used to represent the relationships between brands/companies and consumers in social media, playing a "central role in the process of relational exchange" (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013, p. 107). Previous research has tested consumer engagement in a nomological network with other relational concepts. For example, Vivek et al. (2014) developed a scale for consumer engagement and tested its relationship with other four relational outcomes: "value perceptions, benevolence perceptions (i.e. a dimension of trust), future patronage intent (i.e. a behavioral loyalty concept), and affective commitment toward the organization" (p. 412). In the context of social media, Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie (2014) also developed a scale and tested brand engagement with social media and three other relational concepts: consumer brand involvement as antecedent; and self-brand connection and brand usage intent as consequences.

Although other studies have also examined the nomological validity of community engagement with other relational concepts (e.g. Dessart, Veloutsou, & Thomas-Morgan, 2016; So, King, & Sparks, 2014), we did not find studies that examined jointly relational antecedents by using

drivers related to brand and other members in the brand community. Literature indicates that homophily (Alkhateeb, Moussa, & Alli, 2012; Tukachinsky & Tokunaga, 2013), and involvement (Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Leckie, Nyadzayo, & Johnson, 2016; Li, Berens & Maertelaere, 2013; Mollen & Wilson, 2010; Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan, 2012) may have impacts on consumer engagement, which in turn can also lead to a better corporate reputation (Dijkmans et al., 2015; Li et al., 2013).

Considering the inter-relations of these concepts, this work aims to test the proposed theoretical framework to check the impact of perceived homophily and brand involvement on the community engagement, and its impact on corporate reputation. Considering the central role of engagement, we also propose that the relationship between perceived homophily and brand involvement with corporate reputation is mediated by community engagement.

We also advanced methodologically by adapting the Vivek et al. (2014) brand engagement scale to measure the community engagement. Originally developed for application in various contexts and to measure the engagement with brands (a specific object), we validated this scale with the brand community (another object). We suggested that in addition to multiple contexts, this scale could be adapted to measure engagement with other objects, such as the brand community.

2. Literature review

In the scenario where consumers are trusting more on online reviews from consumers than traditional media (Nielsen, 2012), it is increasingly important that companies develop brand communities or pages to interact with people online, creating shareable content, addressing negative content found online, and following up on ideas that are shared through social media (Dijkmans et al., 2015).

Who first defined these brand community (BC) in marketing were Muniz & O'Guinn (2001), as "a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand" (p. 412). However, more suitable for this research and adopting a value perspective that considers both the interests of consumers and companies, Wirtz et al. (2013) defined BCs "as the network of relations between providers and brand consumers who attach to certain value to engaging in a relationship with both the provider and with the brand's other consumers" (p. 224).

As brand can act as a 'close friend' and interacts with consumers by means of personification, thus behaving as an active member in a relationship (Fournier, 1998), Brown et al. (2007) argue that online social networks themselves (i.e., brand fan pages) can also act as primary actors and serve as a proxy for individual identification who follow them. As consumers can engage with brand community, other followers and / or social media itself (Baldus et al., 2015), we analyze consumer engagement with brand community itself and.

2.1. Corporate reputation

Although there are different definitions of corporate reputation, it is a consensus that corporate reputation is a valuable and intangible asset that influences consumer buying decisions (Ponzi, Fombrun, & Gardberget, 2011), results from past company actions (Nguyen & Leblanc, 2001), and a collective phenomenon and includes direct and indirect interaction experiences (Walsh & Beatty, 2007).

In marketing literature, Walsh and Beatty (2007) conceptualizing it as an attitude-like evaluative judgment of firms. This judgment involves two key points: (1) attributes (Herbig & Milewicz, 1993) and (2) stakeholders (Wartick, 1992). A firm can have several reputations related to each attribute, such as product, price or quality, as well as a global reputation. In the same way, the evaluation of a company can be done by different stakeholders, such as clients, employees or suppliers (Nguyen & Leblanc, 2001).

While recognizing that corporate reputation is formed by the assessment of various stakeholders, the importance of clients has stood out from the others (Walsh & Beatty, 2007), evidenced in the number of studies that access reputation only through this group. Walsh and Beatty (2007), for example, developed a scale to measure customer-based corporate reputation.

There is also no consensus on the measurement of corporate reputation, with studies validating one-dimensional (e.g. Li et al., 2013; Nguyen & Leblanc, 2001; Ponzi et al., 2011) and multidimensional scales (e.g. Fombrun, Gardberg, & Sever, 2000; Walsh & Beatty, 2007; Walsh, Beatty, & Shiu, 2009). Although one-dimensional scales represent a simplification of the construct, items such as 'Company has a good overall reputation' or 'reputation of Company is better than other companies' have presented satisfactory results and are indicated for nomological validations, as in this research.

2.2. Community engagement

In the virtual environment research, the study of consumer engagement has been gaining strength over other relational concepts. Customer (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Ilic, 2011) or consumer engagement (Brodie et al., 2013) are interchangeable terms and a recent term in the relationship marketing literature (Hollebeek, 2011a), especially in the context of virtual communities or brand fan pages, replacing concepts such as involvement and participation (Brodie et al., 2011). Consumer engagement differs from involvement and participation because it has an interactive focus on experiences with an object and occurs within an interactive process that co-creates value (Brodie et al., 2011).

Although being a recent and under construction concept (Brodie et al., 2013), consumer engagement has many definitions (see Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2014). In marketing, Algesheimer, Dholakia, and Herrmann (2005) defined brand community engagement as positive influences of identifying with the brand community through the consumer's intrinsic motivation to interact/co-operate with community members, measuring it through emotional, social and utilitarian aspects. More recently, Mollen and Wilson (2010) considered cognitive and affective aspects as part of online engagement, defined "as a cognitive and affective commitment to an active relationship with the brand" (as personified by the website) (p. 12), while van Doorn et al. (2010) defined customer engagement behaviors "as the customers' behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers" (p. 254).

One of the first to aggregate these different cognitive, emotional and behavioral elements, Hollebeek (2011a) defined customer brand engagement as "the level of an individual customer's motivational, brand-related and context-dependent state of mind characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity in direct brand interactions" (p. 790). Considering these elements, consumer engagement definition of Vivek and colleagues (2014), was adopted as the most appropriate for this research, "goes beyond the purchase and

is 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/activity" (p. 406). By its breadth, this definition also applies to the context of brand communities, having already been applied in the context of social media.

As engagement is also related to a particular object, such as brand, product or organization, in a specific context, such as retail or brand community (Hollebeek, 2011a), there are several scales to measure engagement as both, one-dimensional (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Sprott, Czellar, & Spangenberg, 2009) or multidimensional construct (Baldus et al., 2015; Calder, Malthouse, & Schaedel, 2009; Dijkmans et al., 2015; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Vivek et al., 2014).

Among those who used multidimensional scales, there is a big difference in the used constructs: cognitive processing, affection and activation (Hollebeek et al., 2014); conscious attention, enthused participation and social connection (Vivek et al., 2014); familiarity and following activities (Dijkmans et al., 2015), or others. Despite differences, most multidimensional (and one-dimensional) scales include aspects of cognitive, emotional and/or behavioral engagement (Dessart et al., 2016; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Vivek et al., 2014). For example, Dessart et al. (2016) used seven dimensions: enthusiasm and enjoyment, as emotional dimensions; attention and absorption, as cognitive dimensions; and sharing, learning and endorsing as behavioral dimensions; Hollebeek et al. (2014) used three dimensions: cognitive processing (cognitive), affection (emotional), and activation (behavioral); and finally, Vivek et al. (2014) also used three dimensions: conscious attention (cognitive), enthused participation (behavioral and emotional) and social connection.

Among these scales, Vivek et al. (2014) developed a scale for multiple context and Dessart et al. (2016) for multiple objects. Although the scale of Dessart et al. (2016) has been developed to be applied to the social media context and to analyze engagement with the brand or brand community (objects), it contains 7 dimensions and 22 items, making it difficult to use in a wide nomological network.

With 10 items, 3 dimensions and validated in the context of brand product and retail context, the scale of Vivek et al. (2014) is one of the most used and it has been replicated in several contexts. As suggested by the authors, this scale was also validated in the context of social media, but the focal object of engagement has remained constant when analyzing engagement with the brand or brand product.

Here, we propose that in addition to being suitable for several contexts, the scale of Vivek et al. (2014) can be used with multiple objects, such as brand community. In addition to proposing a wide use of scale, its validation with other objects facilitates the nomological validation of consumer engagement as a multidimensional construct, especially since the scales for measuring engagement with the brand community have 7 (e.g. Dessart et al., 2016) or 11 dimensions (e.g. Baldus et al., 2015). Thus, we chose to replicate the scale of Vivek et al. (2014) to measure brand community engagement.

2.3. Customer brand involvement

Usually, involvement is defined as the perceived personal relevance or importance of a product or brand (Zaichkowsky 1994) related but different of consumer engagement, in the way that involvement is a more passive allocation of mental resources (Mollen & Wilson, 2010).

In the brand-consumer relationship literature, consumer brand involvement has won wide attention as one of the key concepts to explain the personal level of interest and relevance attributed to a brand (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Much of the articles, theoretical or empirical, indicated brand involvement as one of the main antecedents of consumer engagement (e.g. Brodie et al., 2011, 2013; Hollebeek 2011a, 2011b; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Vivek et al., 2012, 2014), while brand community involvement is a consequent (Vivek et al., 2012, 2014).

The four main scales of involvement used in the marketing area were evaluated in a comparative analysis. Among these, the most often cited and replicated was elaborated by Zaichkowsky, the personal involvement inventory scale, revised and reduced from 20 to 10 items most recently (Zaichkowsky, 1994). As previous research related this scale to consumer engagement on social medias (e.g. Hollebeek et al., 2014), we also used the customer brand involvement scale of Zaichkowsky (1994).

2.4. Perceived homophily

The first studies on homophily date from the 1920s and focus on small groups, analyzing how demographic characteristics (such as age, gender, ethnicity and education) and psychological characteristics (such as intelligence, attitudes and aspirations) influence the association among similar people (McPherson et al., 2001).

According to McPherson et al. (2001), homophily refers to the degree to which interacting individuals are similar to each other in relation to attributes such as beliefs, values, education and social status, demographic factors and behaviors. Homophily holds the principle that interaction with similar people occur more frequently than with different people (McPherson et al., 2001). Brown and Reingen (1987) consider it as a fundamental principle of human interaction, since people tend to interact with those who are like them. Similarity of attributes can occur between people, organizations or entities on a network. Although studies have focused more on sociodemographic characteristics, psychology literature points out that homophily affects attraction and that cognitive processes make communication between similar actors to be more likely (McPherson et al., 2001).

McCroskey, Richmond, and Daly (1975) developed a scale to measure the perceived homophily. Although the scale has two dimensions, attitude and background, the background dimension loses sense in the context of social media (Chu & Kim, 2011). Chu and Kim (2011), for example, measured only the attitudinal dimension to represent the perceived homophily.

3. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

3.1. Relation between perceived homophily and consumer engagement

There are little studies about homophily and consumer engagement in social media context, but Tukachinsky and Tokunaga (2013) found that homophily with characters can mean higher involvement or engagement with entertainment media. A similar result was found in the context of exchange of ideas, opinions and information, in which Alkhateeb et al. (2012) verified that homophily also determines consumer engagement in viral marketing. In this way, we expect that homophily in social media promotes consumer engagement. *H1: Perceived homophily is positively associated with consumer engagement with brand community.*

3.2. Relation between brand involvement and consumer engagement

The relationship between involvement and engagement has great theoretical and empirical support. Much of the theoretical or qualitative researches that discussed the definition of engagement indicated that it is different but closely related to the involvement, its antecedent (Brodie et al., 2011, 2013; Hollebeek 2011a, 2011b; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Vivek et al., 2012, 2014).

Among the studies that have empirically tested the engagement and involvement, Li et al. (2013) found no direct significant relationship, but verified a significant positive three-way interaction effect: when company involvement in the channel is high, the corporate Twitter channel has a specific purpose (versus generic purpose), and a high degree of depth, the degree of engagement with the community is increased.

However, Hollebeek et al. (2014) confirmed the three hypotheses drawn to the relationship between consumer engagement dimensions and involvement. Leckie et al. (2016), which replicated the scale of Hollebeek et al. (2014) have also empirically verified that the involvement positively impacts on each consumer engagement dimensions, which leads us to hypothesize that *H2: Brand involvement is positively associated with consumer engagement with brand community.*

3.3. Relation between consumer engagement and corporate reputation

Theoretical articles already suggested that corporate reputation represents a consequence of the customer engagement behavior (e.g. van Doorn et al., 2010), being one of the main benefits for brands. The online brand community literature also suggested that the improvement in corporate image is a consequence of consumer engagement in this context. According to Gotsi and Wilson (2001), some authors do not differentiate image and corporate reputation.

Empirically, Dijkmans et al. (2015) showed that the engagement in company's social media activities is positively related to corporate reputation, especially among non-customers. Similarly, Li et al. (2013) identified that user engagement is positively related to firms' reputation in social media, which leads us to hypothesize that *H3: Consumer engagement with brand community is positively associated with corporate reputation.*

3.4. Mediating role of consumer engagement

The theoretical framework of Van Door et al. (2010) suggested that antecedents based on customer, firm and context can benefit consumers or businesses through customer engagement behavior. Similarly, Wirtz et al. (2013) proposed an implicit relationship by means of online brand engagement, in which brand, social and functional drivers create value for consumers and companies.

Besides these theoretical works indicate that the consumer engagement plays the central role, Hollebeek et al. (2014) identified that the consumer brand engagement with the social media itself has an important mediating role between consumer involvement with consumer self-brand connection and brand usage intent.

Considering this central role of engagement and that we do not find in the literature studies direct relationship between perceived homophily and brand involvement with corporate

reputation, we propose that engagement is an important mediator of this relationship. Consequently, we expect the indirect (mediated) relationship to be stronger and we propose the following hypotheses *H4: Consumer engagement with brand community significantly mediates the relationship between perceived homophily and corporate reputation; H5: Consumer engagement with brand community significantly mediates the relationship between brand involvement and corporate reputation.*

4. Method

4.1. Sample

We did a survey with followers of different brand pages. As a filter, we asked for the respondents if they have Facebook, if they follow brands and on their recent frequency of use. Those who do not have Facebook profile, do not follow brands and/or do not have a good frequency of access on Facebook were excluded from the sample. As a final check, we verified the pages indicated by respondents and delete those that indicate inactive or low interaction pages (as Ridings, et al., 2002). We considered inactive or low interaction pages those with less than 7 brand posts in the last week. Those that pass through these filters correspond to our sample / population of interest.

4.2. Measures

First, we translate all scales for Portuguese following a collaborative and interactive approach to instrument translation (Douglas & Craig, 2007). First three PhD students with different skills translated items and a professor with knowledge of questionnaire design and linguistic skills acted as an adjudicator to solve conflicting translations. In order to standardize the scales used, we decided to use five-points for Likert and semantic differential scales.

Homophily. McCroskey et al. (1975) developed the most used scale to measure homophily, but McCroskey, Richmond, and Richmond (2006) reviewed and reduced the construct from 4 to 2 dimensions: attitude and background. As background (social class, status, economic situation, geographic region, and others) does not apply to brand-consumer relationship, we follow Chu and Kim (2011) and use only the attitude dimension.

Consumer Involvement. Following Hollebeek et al. (2014), that consider consumer involvement related but different from consumer engagement, we understand that involvement includes the level of interest and personal relevance of individuals in relation to a focal object in terms of values, goals and self-concept (Zaichkowsky, 1994). We measure it with the semantic differential scale developed by Zaichkowsky (1994).

Consumer Engagement. Among the main scales developed and validated to measure consumer engagement, those of Dessart and colleagues (2016), Hollebeek and colleagues (2014), and Vivek and colleagues (2014) appear as the most appropriate to be applied to this research. Of these, the scale of Vivek et al. (2014) was tested in several contexts and presented good statistical indexes (such as factor loading, reliability, convergent and discriminant validity), besides contemplating the multidimensionality predicted by the definition of the construct with its 10 items. Considering our objective to prove that this scale can also be adapted to several objects, we decided to measure consumer engagement with the brand community through the scale of Vivek et al. (2014), which is composed of the conscious attention (cognitive), enthused participation (behavioral and emotional) and social connection (social aspects) dimensions.

Corporate reputation. As discussed earlier, corporate reputation can be measured as a one-dimensional or multidimensional construct. In the absence of a consensus on the valid scales for this construct and considering that this study aims to analyze this construct in a nomological network, we opted for a one-dimensional scale. Analyzing different instruments of research, we decided to use the three items developed by Nguyen and Leblanc (2001) to measure the corporate reputation.

4.3. Pretests

We did two pretests. First, 53 followers of active football pages answered the link of the questionnaire developed in Qualtrics. They were accessed by convenience through for convenience among our friends on Facebook and answered the questionnaire based on the brand that he/she more interacts on Facebook. As this first pretest aimed specifically to verify if the writing of the items was appropriate, we asked respondents to indicate only the official football club page they usually followed.

As a result, pretest with a sample of 53 respondents led us to delete two items of customer brand Involvement scale. These items (unimportant / important; mundane / fascinating) have also been excluded by Hollebeek et al. (2014), suggesting that they should not fit for the social media context. Three other items that used the word 'interaction' for different constructs presented problems. These have been modified to facilitate the understanding of what we believe to represent the user interaction to each item. No other problems were found, indicating the validity of the data.

As we analyze the community engagement with brands in general, we conducted a second pretest to check if different types of brands (e.g. beverage, media, sports, electronics, retailers, industries, among others) not hinder the understanding of respondents. We send this survey through Vidi Shoppers database, a national online database that was also used in the final research.

We received 51 valid answers, in which 45 different brands were indicated. Most of these brands belonged to sectors such as hygiene and cosmetics (10), automotive (7), fashion (6), technology (4) and retailers (4). As our analysis of the questionnaire showed that the items had a good adaptability for the various types of brands mentioned, we maintained the instrument for the final research.

4.4. Analysis and Procedure

We analyzed the data by means of covariance-based Structural Equation Modelling (CB-SEM) using Amos 20.0 software, more recommended if the goal is theory testing, theory confirmation, or comparison of alternative theories. As this phase included a primary data collection, we also perform the Harman single factor test to check the common method variance and verify if respondents tended to answer all the questions under the influence of a unique trace.

We conducted the analysis in two stages. At first, for each construct, we realize tests of reliability and construct (convergent and discriminant) validity. We followed Fornell and Larcker (1981) to test for the composite reliability, convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs. Lastly, we analyzed the structural model considering the chi-square per degree of

freedom ($\chi 2/df$), the p-value of the Chi-square, and the GFI, TLI, CFI and RMSEA indices for the model fit, providing a good background for assessing the suitability of the estimated model. Usually, $\chi 2/df > 5.0$ and $p < .05$ indicate good fit. The literature also recommends cutoff value above to .90 for GFI, cutoff value close to .95 for TLI and CFI (Hu & Bentler, 1999), and cutoff value close to .06 for RMSEA (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

5. Results and discussion

5.1. Sample description

Our final collection obtained 658 responses, of which 277 were valid. We excluded answers with the same degree of agreement or incomplete, respondents who did not follow brands (or followed pages with low interaction) and who answered erroneously the questions that checked the respondent's attention. 54 outliers have been changed to the minimum not discrepant.

Our sample consisted mostly of women (62.5%), married (50.9%), with higher education level (33.5 complete and 26.5% incomplete), income between R$ 3,520.01 and R$ 8,800.00 (39%) and with a mean age of 35.2 (9.78). There were 166 different brands cited, showing a wide variety of sectors and sizes of companies and brand communities. The most cited brands were Samsung (16), Nike (12), Flamengo (9), Apple (6), Adidas (5), Dafiti (5) and Fiat (5), while the sectors that stood out were technology, hygiene and cosmetics, sports, automotive, fashion, retailers, food and beverage.

Regarding the items of the scales, the average brand community engagement (3.27) is slightly above the middle of the scale, being higher for conscious attention (3.75) and smaller for dimension enthused participation (2.85). This result is similar to that found by Vivek et al. (2014), in which the cognitive engagement is greater than the behavioral, affective and social. The average of perceived homophily with the other members of the brand community was also high (3.53), suggesting that respondents believe that others think and behave similarly to them. Involvement with the brand (3.95) and corporate reputation (3.99) were much larger than the midpoint, showing that our sample is composed of respondents who indicated brands with whom they have high involvement and consider having a good corporate reputation.

5.2. Result of the models for each construct

We used maximum likelihood estimation and started with the confirmatory factorial analyzes (CFAs) of each construct, and then we analyzed the structural equations model. The 8-items of the brand involvement scale suggested a reasonable fit of the model: $\chi 2$ (20) = 79.193 (p = .000); $\chi 2/df$ = 3.960; GFI = .926; TLI = .947; CFI = .962; and RMSEA = .104. As Inv6 presented the lowest factor load (.73) and high modification index (19.6, associated to item Inv4), we chose to exclude it, resulting in a better model fit: $\chi 2$ (14) = 41.286 (p = .000); $\chi 2/df$ = 2.949; GFI = .958; TLI = .970; CFI = .980; and RMSEA = .084.

As perceived homophily is a 4-items scale, some more sensitive adjustment indices (e.g. $\chi 2/df$), showed a result lower than desired: $\chi 2$ (2) = 19.735 (p = .000); $\chi 2/df$ = 9.868; GFI = .963; TLI = .913; CFI = .971; and RMSEA = .179. Despite this, factor loads were high (between .80 and .82) and modification indices were low.

The CFA for the three-factor brand community engagement scale indicated a good fit of the model: $\chi 2$ (32) = 71.436 (p = .000); $\chi 2/df$ = 2.232; GFI = .950; TLI = .944; CFI = .961; and

RMSEA = .067. However, the factor loads of some items were slightly below .70, reducing the convergent and discriminant validity. Considering that we apply this scale in a context (social media) and object (brand community) different from what was developed, we consider the results satisfactory, but additional adjustments are necessary. We excluded one item per dimension (CA2, EP3 and SC1 with factorial loads between .67 and .71), improving the convergent and discriminant validity of the dimensions of the construct and maintaining the model fit: $\chi 2$ (11) = 29.971 (p = .002); $\chi 2/df$ = 2.725; GFI = .970; TLI = .939; CFI = .968; and RMSEA = .079.

Finally, corporate reputation was measured by means of 3 items, which makes it impossible to consider the adjustment indices of the model for this construct. As a result of the CFA, the items presented satisfactory factorial load, except for Rep3 (.61), which we excluded from the analysis.

5.3. Result of the structural model

Before analyzing the proposed structural model, we performed a CFA with all 6 constructs (involvement, homophily, reputation and the 3 engagement dimensions) to check for existence of correlation between the constructs. According to Table 1, the results indicated that there are significant correlations (between .22 and 69) with all pair of constructs. The level of significance was $p < .000$ (except for EP-Rep with $p = .007$ and Hom-Rep with $p = .002$).

We found that the highest correlations were between engagement dimensions (between .55 and .69). This result was expected and confirmed a literature to indicate a greater correlation for dimensions of the same construct. The other correlations were .47 or less, except for the correlation between CA-Rep (.68).

Table 1
Correlation Matrix, reliability, convergent and discriminant validity.

	Mean	SD	α	CR	Inv	Hom	CA	EP	SC	Rep
Involvement (Inv)	3.93	1.00	.93	.93	**.65**	.22	.21	.13	.09	.19
Homomophily (Hom)	3.53	.99	.89	.89	.47**	**.66**	.12	.09	.07	.06
Conscious Attention (CA)	3.76	.95	.68	.68	.46**	.35**	**.51**	.47	.30	.46
Enthused Participation (EP)	2.67	1.25	.76	.76	.36**	.30**	.69**	**.51**	.45	.05
Social Connection (SC)	3.33	1.12	.75	.76	.30**	.27**	.55**	.67**	**.61**	.13
Reputation (Rep)	4.09	.91	.68	.68	.44**	.24**	.68**	.22**	.36**	**.52**

Notes — SD = Standard deviation; α = Cronbach's alpha; CR = composed reliability; **bivariate correlations between the constructs significant at $p < 0.01$; AVEs are shown on the diagonal (in bold); squared correlations are shown above the diagonal; n = 277.

Attested to correlation, we found that the reliability of the constructs was satisfactory (between .68 and .93). The exclusion of an item from conscious attention and corporate reputation constructs reduced their reliability, which were measured on the basis of only 2 items. Both presented Cronbach's alpha (.68) and composed reliability (.68) below .70. Despite this, we opted to proceed with the analysis and maintain the exclusions since the reliability was close to the recommended and there are authors that attest reliability higher than .60.

The average variance extracted (AVE) between .51 and .66 suggests convergent validity of the constructs (see Table 1). As the variance between pairs of constructs was smaller than the variance within the constructs (AVE), our results also indicated the discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) for 15 possible construct pairs.

Finally, the hypothesized structural model (Figure 1) showed good model fit: $\chi 2$ (161) = 329.591 (p = .000); $\chi 2/df$ = 2.047; GFI = .893; TLI = .932; CFI = .942; and RMSEA = .062. The standardized regression weights of all items were satisfactory (between .68 and 88). Of the structural paths of the model, only the relationship between perceived homophily and corporate reputation was not significant (t = .281; p = .779). As this relationship is not predicted in the literature, this result was expected.

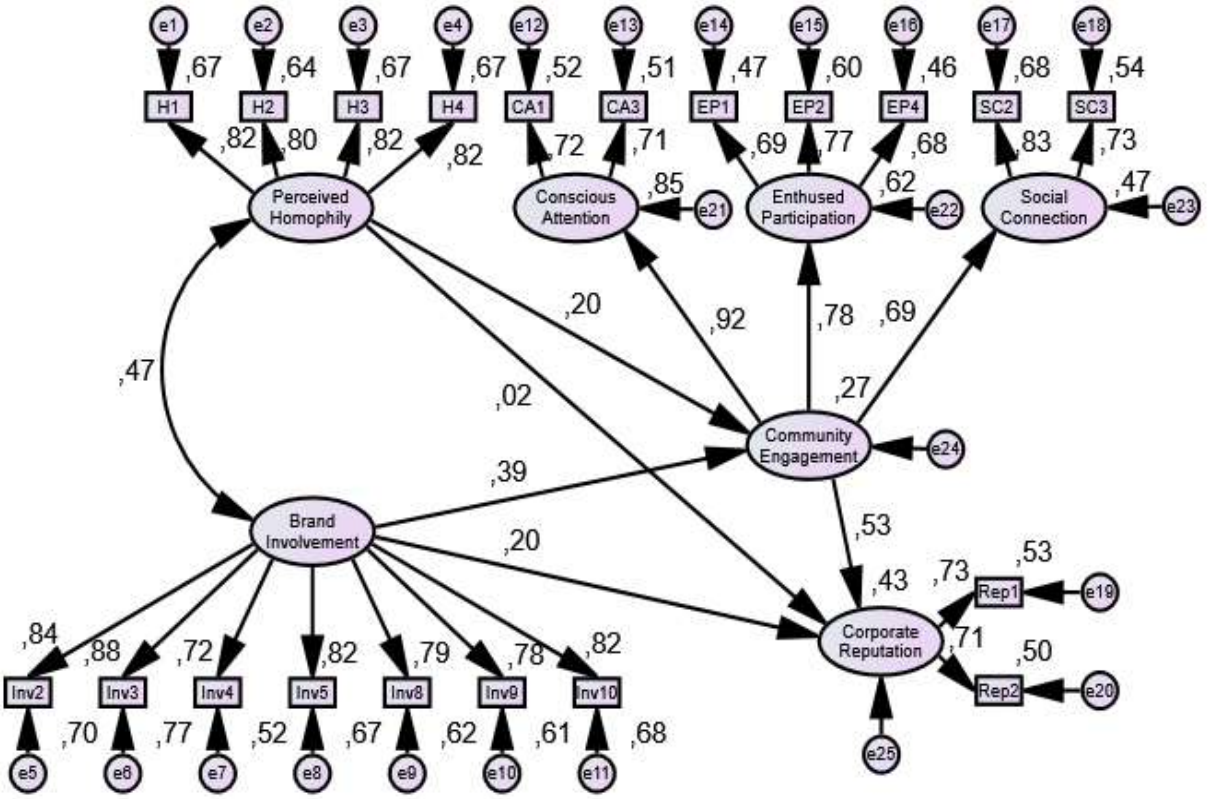


Figure 1. Hypothesized structural model.

As we collected primary data, we applied the Harman single factor test to verify if our data were affected by common method variance. As the first explained factor only explained 34% of the data variance (less than 50%), we concluded that the common method variance had not much influence on the data and therefore is unlikely to affect our results and their interpretation.

5.4. Hypothesis test

As shown in Figure 1, we found that perceived homophily and brand involvement have a significant relationship with community engagement, providing support the hypotheses H1 and H2 (See Table 2). Together, the two constructs explain .27 of engagement, showing a reasonable explanatory power if we consider that there are different drivers that influence community engagement, especially aspects related to the community itself, such as the type of content. We also find similar results when we analyze the effect of community engagement on corporate reputation (H3). Our findings corroborate the results found by Dijkmans et al. (2015), in which engagement in company's social media activities affects corporate reputation as well as mediate the relationship between the intensity of social media use and corporate reputation.

Table 2
Hypothesis testing results.

No.	Hypothesis	β	($t_{critical}$)	*p*	Result
H1	Perceived homophily is positively associated with consumer engagement with brand community.	.204	2.552	.011	Confirmed
H2	Brand involvement is positively associated with consumer engagement with brand community.	.389	4.693	.000	Confirmed
H3	Consumer engagement with brand community is positively associated with corporate reputation.	.526	4.791	.000	Confirmed

To check H4 and H5, we conducted two tests to check mediation hypotheses. First, we followed Baron and Kenny (1986), who suggested that there is mediation only if the direct relations between independent variable and mediator, independent and dependent variable, and mediator and dependent variable are significant, and the insertion of the mediator in the model reduces the effect of the independent variable on the dependent (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Starting with perceived homophily, we found significant direct relationships between Hom-Eng (p = .000, R^2 = .14), Hom-Rep (p = .000, R^2 = .09), and Eng-Rep (p = .000, R^2 = .39). With the inclusion of the mediator variable, only community engagement (β = .56, p = .000) contributed significantly to explain corporate reputation (R^2 = .37). The effect of perceived homophily (β = .11, p = .13) on corporate reputation became not significant, indicating that the community engagement fully mediated this relationship (β between perceived homophily and corporate reputation reduced from .30 to .11).

We also verified significant direct relationships between Inv-Eng (p = .000, R^2 = .22), Inv-Rep (p = .000, R^2 = .21) and Eng-Rep (p = .000, R^2 = .39). By including community engagement as mediator, both brand involvement (β = .20, p = .013) and community engagement (β = .53, p = .000) made significant contributions to explain corporate reputation (R^2 = .43), Indicating a partial mediation of community engagement (reducing the β between brand involvement and corporate reputation from .46 to .20).

As second mediation test, we follow the steps proposed by Zhao et al. (2010, p. 204) and employed the recommended 5000 bootstrap samples at the 95% confidence level (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Our results showed (Table 3) the existence of significant indirect effect (mediated by community engagement) both between Hom-Rep (β = .10, p = .009) and Inv-Rep (β = .20, p = .000). As we identified non-significant direct effect of Hom-Rep (β = .02, p = .815) and Inv-Rep (β = .196, p = .118), our results suggest full mediation (supporting H4 and H5).

Table 3
Result of mediation hypotheses.

No.	Hypothesis	Direct effect	*p*	Indirect effect	*p*	Result
H4	Consumer engagement with brand community significantly mediates the relationship between perceived homophily and corporate reputation.	.023	.815	.107	.009	Full mediation
H5	Consumer engagement with brand community significantly mediates the relationship between brand involvement and corporate reputation.	.196	.118	.205	.000	Full mediation

6. Conclusion

In this article, we address theoretical, methodological and managerial implications. Theoretical, our goal was to fill a knowledge gap by analyzing a specific theoretical framework, in which we consider different drivers of community engagement and the benefit of this engagement for the company (Wirtz et al., 2013, van Doorn Et al., 2010), contributing to the consumer-brand relationship and marketing relationship literature.

While some studies have analyzed the role of the communication channel and aspects related to the company itself as antecedents of engagement (e.g. Li et al., 2013), here we analyzed how aspects related to brand and the other community members can promote community engagement. Our results show that a construct that has been neglected, homophily perceived with the other community members, has a positive impact on brand community engagement. In addition, we reinforce the findings of previous studies (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Leckie et al., 2016) noting that brand involvement also positively affects community engagement, and this in turn positively impacts on corporate reputation (van Doorn Et al., 2010; Dijkmans et al., 2015).

Another theoretical contribution we offer is to approximate two major currents of study of engagement, brand engagement and community engagement. As engagement literature suggests that this construct varies according to the subject, object and context of analysis, these two areas are discussed practically isolated. Despite this, some empirical studies already showed the possibility of converging these areas in the context of social media (Dessart et al., 2016).

If on the one hand Dessart et al. (2016) validated a scale that serves to measure engagement with different objects (brand and community), on the other Vivek et al. (2014) validated a scale for measuring brand engagement in multiple contexts. This has led us to question whether engagement must have fragmented streams of study for each combination of subject, object, and context. Thus, we suggest that keeping the constant subject (consumer, in our case), literature can converge to a single definition and measurement instrument in different contexts and with different objects of engagement.

As a methodological contribution resulting from this theoretical contribution, we propose that the Vivek et al. (2014) scale, validated in multiple contexts, can also be adopted to measure engagement with multiple objects. To do so, we validate this scale in relation to brand communities (object), while the scale was originally developed to measure the engagement with brands. Our results attested to the reliability, convergent and discriminant validity of the scale and provide a short multidimensional scale option to measure the construct, since most community engagement scales were developed with 6, 7, 8 or even 11 dimensions (e.g. Baldus et al., 2015; Calder et al., 2009, Dessart et al., 2016), making it difficult to validate them in a nomological network.

We also confirm the mediating role of community engagement (Dijkmans et al., 2015). Theoretical studies have already implied that this construct has antecedents related to different drivers (consumer, company, brand, community, context, channel, among others) that generate benefits for consumers and companies through engagement with the brand community (Doorn et al., 2010; Dijkmans et al., 2015). We have found that the perceived homophily and brand involvement have the positive effect on corporate reputation fully mediated by community engagement.

As a managerial contribution, this research identifies that managers can increase community engagement mainly through brand involvement. However, the company must attract to its community customers with similar characteristics to increase the perceived homophily among members, which in turn improves the community engagement. In the same way that the company imagines an audience when developing a product for their consumers, these results are important to show managers that the company must also create a brand community with a specific audience, rather than just worry about the number of followers.

By increasing community involvement, the company improves the way it is viewed by its followers, either by the significant direct effect of community engagement on corporate reputation, or by the indirect effect that this important mediating variable has. This result suggests to managers that community engagement is doubly important and can improve or restore corporate reputation.

Finally, our study presents some limitations, such as high brand involvement of our sample, which suggests that our results are only valid for consumers highly involved with brand. We also measure corporate reputation through only two items, while many studies show the multidimensional nature of this construct. We also were not able to show a perfect adaptation of the Vivek et al. (2014) scale when we measured the community engagement, since 3 items were excluded because they undermined the validation of the scale.

Future research can attempt to access people with low brand engagement and check their effect on consumer engagement, especially because other studies have also accessed consumers with higher involvement with brands (e.g. Hollebeek et al., 2014; Leckie et al., 2016). Likewise, future research could replicate the scale of Vivek et al. (2014) with other objects, such as products, services and other communication channels.

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