



Graduate School
of **BUSINESS**
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

**The social media value framework: development and
validation of a conceptual framework for social media
engagement and value creation**

Thesis presented to
The Graduate School of Business
University of Cape Town

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August 2024

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

As social media sites continue to dominate attention, consumers are overwhelmed with content, campaigns and information in today's virtual world. How do brands and marketers stand out and ensure that their social media communications result in value creation?

Engagement and the intent to engage are fundamental when considering return on investment. Post COVID-19, there has been a shift in the use of digital platforms and time spent on social media platforms. While multiple studies have looked at behavioural and user acceptance theories to gauge social media use, this study looked to determine whether these factors are still relevant post COVID-19 as well as provide a holistic view across multiple behavioural theories. Further to this, the introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI), which is changing the creation and consumption of content, brings a new complexity and requirement to further research on this topic.

The aim of study was to investigate the various behavioural, emotive and social factors that may enhance or impede engagement on social media platforms, with the focus on the ultimate behaviour resulting in value creation for the organisation. The study examines how various usage theories influence intent to engage and whether these result in trust and loyalty. The study posits that perceived benefit and cost factors can be identified that statistically influence social media engagement with the resultant creation of value to consumers.

The study was based on prior research results, which developed a social media framework through the lens of value-based performance measurement. This model was created to support organisations in understanding the value of social media and an approach to setting strategies and in turn measuring the impact of social media communications.

Social media has changed the relationship between organisations and their customers and therefore the importance of understanding social behaviour of customers within the

social media context has become extremely relevant. A large number of social media studies have looked at the socio-psychological behaviour of individual social media users using theories such as Social Cognitive Theory (Chiu et al., 2006; Lin et al., 2009); Technology Adoption Model (Hossain & de Silva, 2009; Kwon & Wen, 2010); Theory of Planned Behaviour (Casalo et al., 2015; Chang & Zhu, 2011) and Social Influence Theory (Cheung & Lee, 2010; Koo et al., 2011).

While the Social Media Value Chain (SMVC), derived from previous research by Littlewood and Bick (2015), considers the complexity of consumers and influencers, the framework needed to be further developed to incorporate these behavioural factors for organisations to fully understand how social media communications are engaged with and ultimately the value creation for both the consumer and the firm. Using the lens of Social Exchange Theory (SET), this study looked to a multidimensional model incorporating factors from the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) to create a framework to understand consumer engagement with social media communications and the resulting value creation for organisations. Using factors identified in the Social Media Value Chain together with behavioural and usage theories, the research incorporated the antecedents and moderators of social media engagement and validated this through a confirmatory quantitative survey. The output was a conceptual framework that will assist organisations in understanding the determinants of consumer engagement and what needs to be considered for social media strategy creation and measurement.

This study used a deductive quantitative method. Data was obtained using an online survey with closed-ended questions for demographic responses and a seven-point Likert scale as the measurement scale for the identified constructs. A total of 493 survey responses were collected with 411 usable responses from a global audience. Various statistical techniques were used for the analysis, including confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modelling (SEM).

The findings of the study reveal that two of the benefit factors have influence on the intent to engage and be satisfied with brands' social media platforms: Perceived usefulness had the highest overall influence on this intention, followed by perceived enjoyment, suggesting a shift away from pure enjoyment post COVID-19. Five benefit and cost factors, including perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, reciprocal communication, privacy concern and social media fatigue had a significant influence on trust and loyalty. Interestingly, perceived usefulness again showed the highest influence, however this was a negative influence suggesting factors such as misinformation and disinformation are impacting online experiences. Social media fatigue also saw an opposite influence with a positive relationship to trust and loyalty; however, this follows the paradoxical behaviour and suggests that consumers could be increasing their trust and loyalty to specific brands due to the overwhelming amount of content and choices on social media. The strongest relationship was the engagement intention on trust and loyalty, supporting literature's findings around the influence of satisfaction on both trust and loyalty and increasing consumer demands.

This study brings together multiple behavioural, social and usage models and extends the current knowledge on social media engagement and value creation, with a focus on exchange theory and benefits versus costs. The study's findings will assist marketers and industry specialists to better understand the impact of behaviour post the pandemic and how to adapt effective engagement strategies to drive trust and loyalty. Additional insight around negative factors, including social media fatigue, highlight the paradoxical behaviour seen on social media platforms. Further to this, the discussion and recommendations explores brands' responsibility when it comes to the social media perceived costs such as social media fatigue, privacy, as well as additional negative impacts of social media including disinformation and what a brand's role is in this space to protect mental health and wellbeing.

Keywords: social media engagement, value creation, technology adoption model, theory of reasoned action, theory of planned behaviour, social exchange theory

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My PhD experience would not have been possible without the guidance, inspiration and patience of my support network to whom I owe my sincere thanks and appreciation:

- To my Professor, Geoff Bick, who supported me with his expertise, patience and guidance throughout my longer than anticipated PhD journey and kept the light at the end of the tunnel burning brightly.
- To Neale Penman for his expertise and ability to simplify Structural Equation Modeling. Thank you for the guidance and helping make sense of the numbers.
- To all those who assisted me with additional input, support and guidance - including Anthony Stacey, Herman Potgieter, Morea Josias, Johannes Schueler, Mignon Reyneke and Mary Lister. And to everyone who completed the survey and shared far and wide on their social networks so this research could become a reality.
- To my colleagues along the way, who provided support and inspiration and were always willing to stand in for me during my study leave. And to all my clients for their encouragement.
- And finally, to my family, who never stopped believing in me and constantly provided support, inspiration and motivation. Thank you!

ASSOCIATED PUBLICATIONS

Conference papers

Littlewood, K. & Bick, G. (2015): 'Developing the Social Media Value Chain: A Conceptual Framework for the Measurement of Social Media', 2nd European Conference on Social Media, Polytechnic Institute of Porto, Portugal (9-10 July)

Littlewood, K., Bick, G. & Treen, E. (2016): 'A measurement construct for social media: the SM value chain', AMS (Academy of Marketing Science) 44th Annual Conference, Orlando, FL, USA, (18 – 20 May)

Littlewood, K., Bick, G. & Penman, N. (2023): 'The social media value framework: development and validation of a conceptual framework for value creation', 10th European Conference on Social Media, a Pedagogical University of Krakow, Poland (18-19 May)

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

This first chapter introduces this research study, providing an overview of the research area and context of the study. Section 1.2 through to 1.4 provides an overview of the research objectives and identified gaps identified from the literature before introducing the conceptual model in 1.5. This is followed by an overview of the research methodology in section 1.6, definition of terms in 1.7 and the research contributions in section 1.8, highlighting the academic, practical and empirical contribution before concluding with the research structure of the overall thesis in section 1.9 and chapter summary in 1.10.

Figure 1.1 provides an overview of Chapter 1.

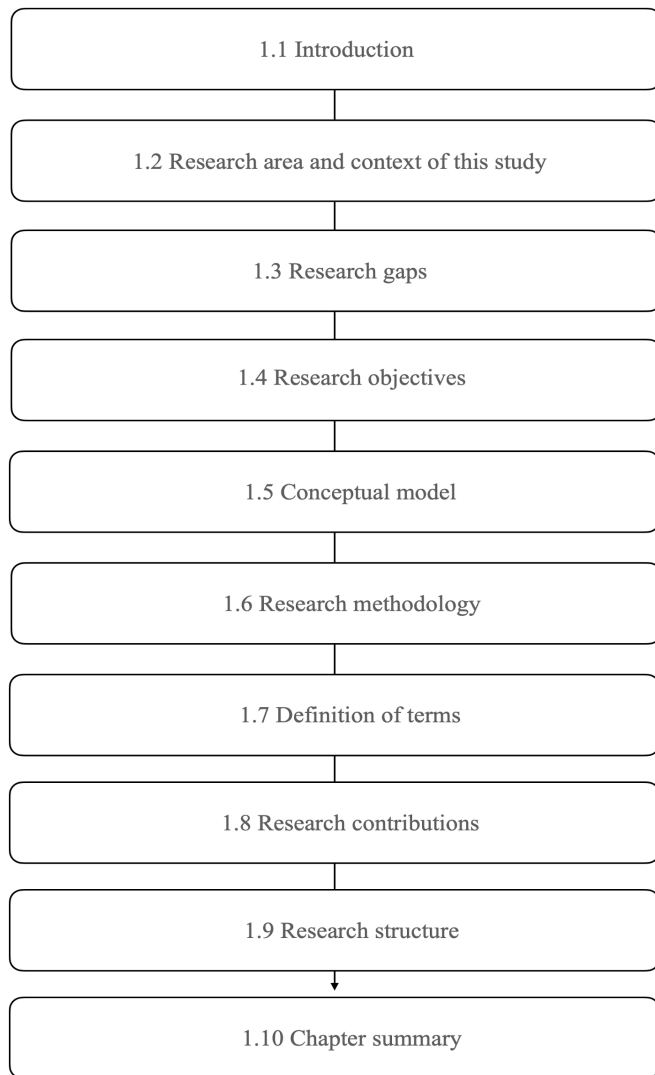


Figure 1.1: Chapter 1 overview

1.2. Research area and context of this study

While social media has become a vital part of the communications strategy and changed the marketer-consumer interface (Dolan et al., 2019; Li et al., 2021; Bartoloni & Ancillai, 2024), the concern around its value remains a challenge. Social media has become more than just a marketing channel with businesses integrating social media platforms into their customer service processes and social commerce technology. The ability for businesses to understand the value and impact of social media therefore becomes even more significant, especially through the lens of how businesses can drive engagement and loyalty.

Although many academics and practitioners have focused on the concept of engagement in social media (Brodie et al., 2013; Santos et al, 2022), this is an evolving field and with the impact of COVID-19 and constantly changing platforms and algorithms, needs to be re-evaluated. Various studies have focused on antecedents and consequences of customer engagement (Van Doorn et al., 2010; Gambetti et al., 2012; Leckie et al., 2016, Lim & Rasul, 2022), also referred to as the ADO framework (antecedents, decisions and outcomes) by Paul & Benito (2018). Few have investigated this construct incorporating multiple social, emotional, behavioural and user acceptance theories as revealed by a review by Lim & Rasul (2022) where defined categories and constructs were highlighted. Social media differs to many other technology platforms in that it incorporates a social construct, where all information is publicly available, and opinions can be formed. This brings in an element of perceived benefits and costs to the user, which forms the basis for this study. While costs are typically associated with value, there is an absence of reference to the costs of engagement in research, perhaps due to the nature of social media being a free platform as well as several risks being linked to the platform rather than engagement (Lim & Rasul, 2022). This is changing with costs such as social media fatigue, which can be seen as a direct result of engagement rather than the platform itself. Lim & Rasul (2022) call for future research to focus on this.

The impact of COVID-19 has yet to be fully realised; however, with the increase in digital transformation and online engagement, there has been a rise in the use of social media by both brands and consumers, and with it an overwhelming increase in content, campaigns and information overload that has changed the nature of attention and how consumers engage (Liu et al., 2021; Mason et al., 2021).

Marketers need to show accountability for their investment in social media platforms and the value to the organisation (Fisher, 2009; Hanna et al., 2011; Laradi et al, 2024; Singh, 2024). However, in order to make the right investment decisions, they need to have an understanding around why consumers engage with brands on social media and whether this engagement results in the right value creation for the firm. This is fundamental to creating the right social media investment decisions and strategies for success.

With the ever-changing landscape, the overall purpose of this research is to support businesses in understanding the impact and value of social media through the development and validation of a conceptual framework for consumer behaviour when engaging with brands post COVID-19. The framework was based on consumers' perceived benefits versus costs and considers an adaptation of social and user acceptance theories, bringing together the worlds of technology and community.

While the body of literature around social media, social media engagement and social media measurement continues to grow (Ajiboye et al., 2019; Hanna et al., 2011; Lim & Rasul, 2022), the nature of this topic is constantly evolving and adapting to the world around us. As such, there is an opportunity to continually revisit these subjects in order to determine whether the changes faced such as COVID-19 and digital transformation have in fact changed what is known about this dynamic field.

This study aims to contribute to the current literature by providing a thorough understanding of the behavioural factors that drive intention to engage on social media and the resulting behaviours through the lens of perceived benefits versus perceived costs. The research objective provides the development of a conceptual model incorporating behavioural factors from both social and user acceptance theories that influence social media engagement in order to predict value creation. The study looked to test the inter-relationships between the identified constructs and their influence on engagement and value creation.

1.3. Research gaps

Based on the literature review, this study has identified several research gaps in the field of social media and engagement that will be addressed as part of this research study.

Firstly, the field of social media is dynamic and constantly evolving (Kane, 2017, Van Bavel et al, 2024), which has resulted in a shift in the concept of engagement (Shawky et al., 2020) and the way consumers connect with brands on social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Okazaki & Taylor, 2013; Ritson, 2011; Anjorin et al, 2024). In a

systematic literature review of social media engagement, Trunfio and Rossi (2021) state that while there has been an increase in attention on this topic, there is still no consensus on its definition. Due to the fast pace and constant innovation, the future of social media marketing will most likely be different to what we know today (Appel et al., 2020), and this is more pertinent post the advancement following COVID-19. This brings an opportunity to continuously review the concepts of social media, including social media engagement to ensure these are relevant based on the speed of change within this field.

While there have been several studies focused on the area of social media engagement, few look holistically at a multi-dimensional model (Hollebeek, 2011b; Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart et al., 2015) and earlier studies have called for further research on social media brand engagement (Chalal et al., 2020; Dolan et al., 2019; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Hall-Phillips et al., 2016; Mardhatilah et al., 2024; Mou & Yang, 2024) as well as the need to consider the representation of social behaviour as part of these models (Pelaprat & Brown, 2012). Bianchi and Andrews (2015) further highlight that little is known around the factors that drive consumers' engagement with brands on social media resulting in value. This is supported by Hollebeek et al. (2014) stating that limited research assesses what factors influence engagement and ultimately result in purchasing of products or services or the value beyond purchase.

Secondly, while social media engagement studies tend to focus on the benefits of social media engagement, there is a need for more research to take into consideration the negative consequences of social media such as privacy concern, social media fatigue, media disinformation and misinformation. While social media has led to a wealth of data that marketers can leverage, there seems to be a lack of professional norms regarding the use of social media in the marketing field. It is through these negative consequences (or costs) that consumers may develop negative attitudes towards social media marketing and this in turn can lead to a lack of trust resulting in negative purchasing intentions and poor word of mouth (Jacobson et al., 2020). Through an examination of the negative effects of social media, a more comprehensive understanding of social media use can be gained (Sheng et al., 2023). This aligns with definition of engagement by Obilo et al. (2021), which takes into account both the positive and negative behavioural interactions with the brand.

Finally, while there is widely accepted research that focuses on the cognitive factors of social media engagement such as perceived usefulness, there is limited research that looks further to incorporate more social factors such as personal communication, social influence, and reciprocity as well as affective factors such as perceived enjoyment (Bianchi & Andrews, 2018).

Despite the growing literature on social media engagement, the focus tends to remain on conceptual guidelines (Peltier et al., 2020) and the measurement of engagement in social media and its impact requires further investigation (Trunfio & Rossi, 2021).

1.4. Research objectives

While the body of literature around social media, social media engagement and social media measurement continues to grow, the nature of this topic is constantly evolving and adapting to the world around us. As such, there is an opportunity to continually revisit these subjects to determine whether the changes we are facing such as COVID-19 and digital transformation, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), have in fact changed what we know about this dynamic field.

As such, this study aims to contribute to the current literature by providing a thorough understanding of the behavioural factors that drive intention to engage on social media and the resulting outcomes through the lens of perceived benefits versus perceived costs.

Primary research questions are:

RQ1: What factors influence consumers' intent to engage and engagement with brands on social media?

RQ2: To what extent does consumer intent to engage and engagement result in value creation for the brand?

Two secondary research questions linking to the impact of changing consumer behaviour and the concept of usage are:

RQ3: What is the impact of social media usage (SMU) on engagement and the resulting value creation?

RQ4: What is the impact on social media usage pre and during COVID-19 on the influence of engagement and resulting value creation?

The research objective comprises the development of a conceptual model incorporating behavioural factors from both social and user acceptance theories that influence social media intent and engagement to predict value creation. The study tests the inter-relationships between the identified constructs and their influence on intent to engage, engagement and value creation.

1.5. Conceptual model

The proposed conceptual model was developed to examine relationships between the various behavioural factors on engagement with brands on social media as well as the resulting value creation. The overall lens is based on Social Exchange Theory (SET), where consumers are faced with looking at perceived benefits against the perceived costs and whether this influences engagement.

The model was developed by integrating various factors across multiple behavioural and user acceptance theories, including the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Technology Adoption Model (TAM). In addition, factors identified from previous literature and research as well as the development of the Social Media Value Chain (SMVC) were incorporated.

The model looks at both perceived benefits including attitude, perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, personalised communications, social influence and reciprocity as well as perceived costs, including privacy risk and social media fatigue from a consumers' perspective when engaging with brands' social media communications. The moderating factor of social media usage is added as a consideration. Ultimately the model looks to determine the relationship between engagement and value creation, including satisfaction, trust and loyalty.

The underpinning theories and constructs are discussed in more detail in Chapter Three; however, Figure 1.2 below provides an initial view of the basic conceptual model.

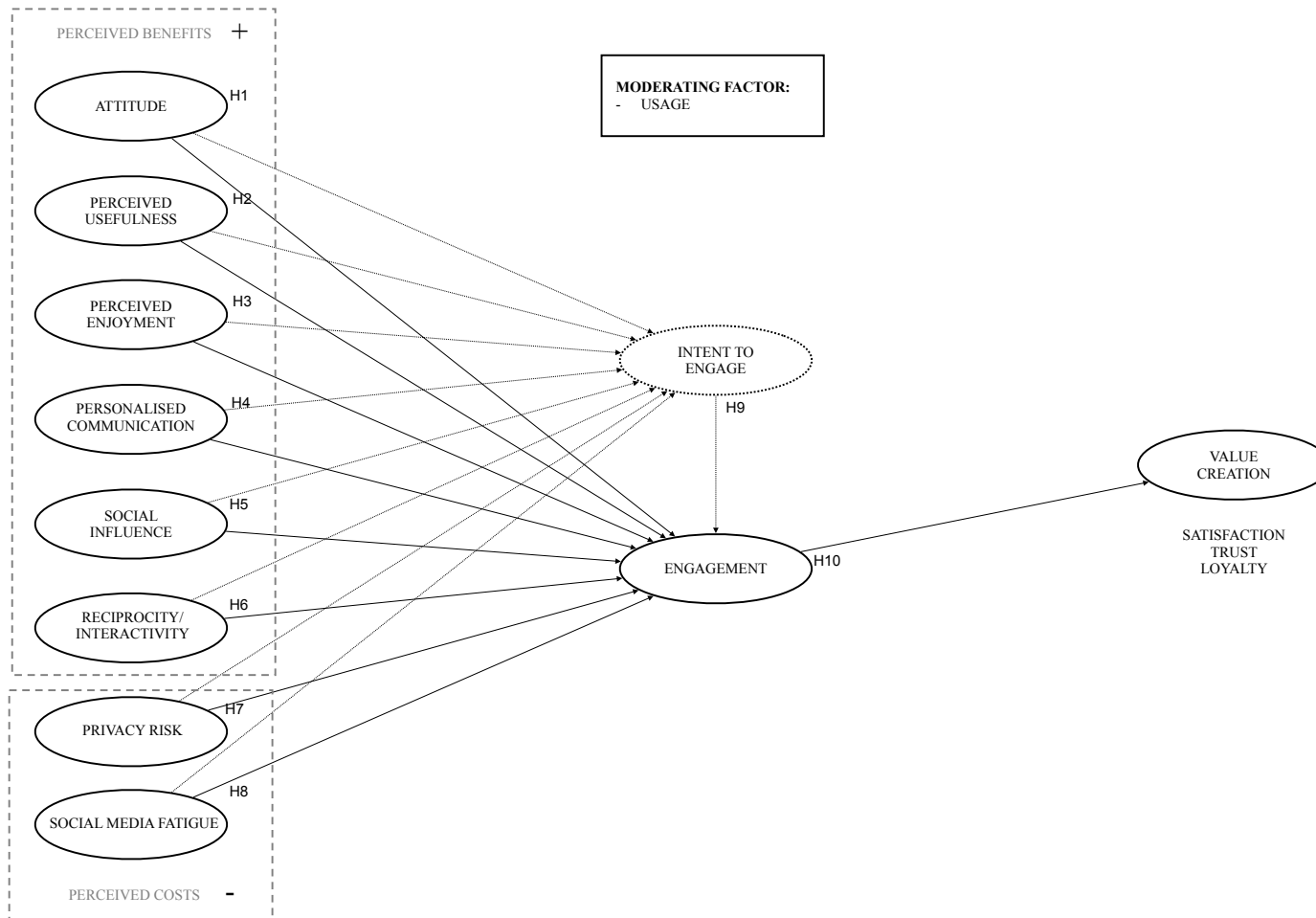


Figure 1.2: Proposed conceptual model for this thesis

1.6. Research methodology

To determine the relevant factors for this study, a comprehensive review of the literature and behavioural and usage theories was conducted. The theories were considered based on their relevance to engagement on social media and compared to identify relevant constructs for the conceptual model.

Based on this, positivism was selected as the most appropriate philosophy and consistent with this, a deductive quantitative method was adopted to test the conceptual model, which incorporated previous research from the SMVC. This approach allows for the validation of hypothetical relationships between constructs. An online closed-ended survey was created based on theoretical scales to collect the data. A seven-point Likert scale was selected as the preferred measurement scale.

A pilot study was conducted to verify the survey clarity as well as the survey length. Owing to a finding of survey fatigue during COVID-19, the online survey was condensed and simplified to encourage higher completion rates.

The target population consisted of social media users and due to the use of social media sharing for targeting purposes, expanded the population to multiple countries including South Africa, United Kingdom, Singapore, Germany, Israel and New Zealand. The online survey was run twice with the first round resulting in 391 survey responses and the second a further 102, totalling 493 survey responses and 411 completed survey responses. Data was loaded into SPSS where a data screening process was completed to check data accuracy.

Initial data analysis contains descriptive analysis to look at age categories, the preferred social media platforms, and time spent on social media sites pre and post COVID-19. This was to investigate differences across the demographic data and social media moderators, including platforms and usage. While usage remains an important consideration, the constant shift in platform choices by consumers suggests that

platform should be considered more from a strategic perspective around which platforms to use for targeting purposes.

For the survey analysis, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used as a starting point to assess each of the defined individual constructs before developing the measurement model to test the proposed hypotheses and structural model using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). SEM was selected to validate the model owing to the complexity of the model and the requirement to test multiple relationships across the variables.

1.7. Definition of terms

For ease of reference, several key terms that have been referred to in this study have been provided here for further context:

Customer / consumer engagement (CE): multidimensional concept that considers relationships between customers/consumers and brands from a behavioural, cognitive and affective perspective (Brodie et al., 2011, Hollebeek, 2011, Lim & Rasul, 2022).

Customer engagement behaviour (CEB): “a customer’s behavioural manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase.” (Van Doorn et al., 2010, p. 254) or the behavioural, affective and cognitive activities performed by the customer when interacting with the brand (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

Social media marketing (SMM): marketing techniques used as part of marketing communications such as online word of mouth and viral marketing with the goal of spreading online messaging to stimulate positive consumer conversation (Cvijikj et al., 2013).

Social media engagement behaviour (SMEB): motivational social media engagement behaviours beyond purchasing and transaction.

Social media brand engagement (SMBE): defined as the “connection, creation and communication of a brand’s story between the firm and consumers, using brand or brand-related language, images and meanings via the firm’s social networking site resulting from motivational drivers” (Osei-Frimpong & McLean, 2018, p. 12).

Social media use (SMU): focus on the social uses of the Internet via social media, adapted from Davis (2001) earlier examination of internet use and the later termed “pathological Internet use” referring to the multidimensional overuse of the internet (O’Day & Heimburg, 2021, p. 2).

Social media addiction (SMA): there is an increased awareness of SMA, however for the purposes of this thesis, SMA includes a lack of self-control through habit-driven addition as well as excessive use owing to social anxiety (Liao et al., 2023)

1.8. Research contribution

With the dynamic nature of social media, comes a need for constant research into this topic. Social media has changed the nature of marketing from traditional push marketing to two-way pull marketing but engaging consumers in conversation around products and services. For marketers to be successful in their campaigns and conversations, they need to understand the factors that result in an engagement with their communications and whether this engagement results in return on investment in the form of value, including satisfaction, loyalty and trust.

1.8.1. Academic contribution

This study makes a contribution to the body of social media and social media engagement literature. The study proposes and validates a holistic multi-dimensional conceptual model that explains the inter-relationships between social, behavioural and emotive factors and the intention to engage with brands’ social media communications. The model provides a unique multi-dimensional view to engagement and value creation with the combination of key factors from several theories including TRA, TAM, and

TPB through the lens of SET and prior research derived from the SMVC. This model can therefore be used as a theoretical base for future research in this space.

This study provides additional learnings around value creation, including trust and loyalty based on the intent to engage with social media communications taking into consideration both the positive benefits and negative costs of engaging with brands on social media. The study also looks to understand the impact of demographics as well as the moderating factors of usage on the intent to engage and resulting value creation to determine the relevance of engagement factors post COVID-19.

Finally, the study provides further insights and learnings around combining several engagement and behaviour scales, resulting in adapted engagement constructs.

While the study looks at the concept of social media engagement holistically across multiple platforms, it is known that each social media platform has different features and might result in different engagement results. This study looks to investigate engagement across behaviour, emotive and social constructs.

1.8.2. Practical contribution

This study offers further insights into the factors that impact consumers' intent to engage with social media communications as well as the resulting value creation to the organisation. This is particularly important post COVID-19 as research looks to understand the impact on consumer behaviour and engagement. This study will provide practitioners with updated information around factors that influence engagement and result in value.

Insights will assist businesses in creating relevant strategies and campaigns for social media communications and further develop their digital transformation strategies in terms of adoption and engagement. It will also assist in identifying relevant metrics for engagement when considering the return of investment on social media communications and investment.

Further to this, this study considers the positive impact Brand Managers can make when addressing negative consequences of social media engagement including privacy, misinformation and disinformation, and social media fatigue. Brand Managers and Marketers need to consider the impact of social media usage on their consumers as well as the fair and transparent way they are implementing social media campaigns and use of data for further marketing purposes.

1.8.3. Empirical contribution

In addition to the theoretical and practical contribution, this study offers an empirical contribution through the quantitative testing of a full engagement model, including antecedents and outcomes of social media brand engagement, using SEM post COVID-19.

This study consolidates multiple scales developed for prior studies that have not previously been tested together and considers the lens of costs versus benefits. While researchers such as Dessart (2017), Bianchi and Andrews (2018) and Zhang et al. (2018) consider the multidimensional nature of CBE adapted from Hollebeek et al. (2014), these models were tested prior to COVID-19.

Further to this, while several SEM social media brand engagement studies have been conducted post COVID-19, the focus of these studies is from a contextual perspective including industry (e.g. Cao et al., 2021; Abbasi et al., 2023), and platform (Oliveira & Fernandes, 2020).

Finally, in a review of customer engagement (CE) papers by Lim and Rasul (2022), findings revealed that few studies have been conducted across multiple countries and social media platforms and encourages future research with these contrasts. In addition, Lim and Rasul (2022) found that only two studies employed three theories (e.g. Wang & Lee, 2020) and therefore theoretical integration could be an area for further research.

Despite the number of papers focusing on this concept, there appears to be no quantitative study that explores and tests this proposed conceptual model.

1.9. Research structure

This study is made up of seven chapters taking the reader through the research journey starting with a review of the literature and the defined conceptual model through to the selected research methodology and resultant analysis, discussion and conclusion. The following overview provides a roadmap outlining the orientation of the study:

- **Chapter 1** provides a view of the research area and context before exploring the resulting research gaps and objectives. The conceptual model is introduced, supported by a summary of the research methodology that was followed for this study. The chapter concludes with both the academic, empirical and practical research contributions.
- **Chapter 2** explores the detailed literature review, introducing the focal concepts of the study. An overview of the social media shift is provided, followed by a more detailed view of social media engagement, value creation and measurement. An introduction to the social media value chain provides an initial view to the starting point of this research before applying the lens of behavioural and user adoption theories and concluding with a summary of factors and outcomes identified from the literature.
- **Chapter 3** provides an overview of the conceptual model, starting with the overall research objective before conducting a review of existing models. The conceptual model is broken down into the list of perceived benefits and costs, where each of the factors are detailed before concluding with the developed hypotheses.
- **Chapter 4** describes the research methodology used to identify and measure the conceptual model. The chapter starts with the research strategy before detailing the research paradigm, philosophy and philosophy justification resulting in the quantitative nature of the study. This is followed by an overview of the data collection and analysis process, outlining the selected method SEM. A

discussion of the validity, reliability and ethics considerations concludes the chapter.

- **Chapter 5** presents the data analysis and results of the survey, which starts off with an overview of the respondent demographics and behavioural profile. The chapter then explores the validation of the conceptual model through the rationalisation of using SEM, the starting point of CFA, the observed data points used to assess model fit and the reliability and validity of the model. The CFA results and measurement model are detailed before providing the results of the structural model testing. Finally, the chapter concludes with the hypotheses findings based on the results as well as a comparative analysis of the perceived benefits versus costs.
- **Chapter 6** discusses the findings presented in the previous chapter against the relevant literature explored in Chapter 2 looking at answering the key research questions identified in the introduction as well as providing further insights around demographics and usage. The key findings provide the basis for both the academic and practical contributions of the analysis as well as the list of recommendations for brands and marketing specialists in the industry.
- **Chapter 7** concludes the overall thesis with a final discussion on the theoretical, empirical and practical contributions of the findings. The chapter continues with the identification of the limitations of the research as well as the direction for future research. An interesting finding from the research was the integration of multiple scales and resulting adaptation of constructs, which needs to be further validated for future research. The chapter ends with a view of final remarks.

1.10. Chapter Summary

This first chapter sets the context and foundations for this thesis, looking at the overarching research context and background. The research gaps and resulting objectives are explored prior to introducing the conceptual model. This is followed by

a summary of the quantitative research methodology that was undertaken in this research before addressing the focal academic and practical contributions. The chapter concludes with the structure and outline of the overall thesis.

The next chapter, Chapter 2, will commence the research journey with an exploration of the literature and theory on social media engagement, introducing each of the concepts and theoretical foundations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

While research and theory around the topic of social media has grown, this continues to be an evolving field and with the impact of COVID-19 as well as the ongoing introduction of new social media platforms such as Threads, needs to be constantly re-evaluated.

This chapter provides a critical review of the social media literature, looking at recent shifts and strategies in social media as well as the concepts of engagement, value creation and measurement. Section 2.6 introduces prior measurement research and the resulting output of the SMVC framework, which was the starting point for this paper. Section 2.7 brings in the lens of behavioural and user acceptance theories in relation to the social media context. Drawing on the literature and theories, Section 2.8 summarises the factors of social media engagement, from which the conceptual model is derived.

Figure 2.1 provides a roadmap for Chapter 2.

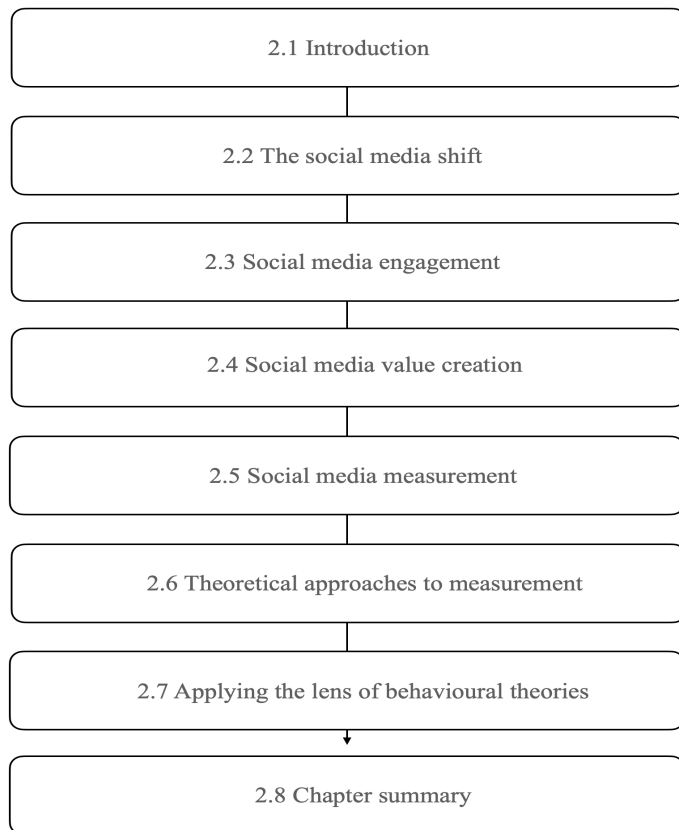


Figure 2.1: Chapter 2 overview

While social media has been a focus of multiple researcher papers over the last few decades, and more recently the prominent concept of CE from 2010 (Lim et al., 2022), the transformative nature and constantly evolving digital landscape requires constant review. The recent increasing use of social media post the COVID-19 pandemic (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2022) has continued to change the information and communication practices of customers (Dwivedi et al., 2021), resulting in the need for new research focus areas as well as validation of existing models and definitions.

Social media has changed the traditional marketer-stakeholder interface, enabling customers with the ability to engage directly with organisations (Harrigan et al., 2017). This shift, together with the promise of growing satisfaction and profitability (Lim et al., 2022) has led to an increased importance of social media in the business world with increased budgets and marketing spend allocated to this two-way engagement channel. This increase in spend has resulted in a need for better measurement (Trunfio & Rossi, 2021) and understanding of engagement in order to meet the needs of customers while providing value to the brand.

The following section will further explore the shifting nature of social media engagement and resulting impact to business.

2.2. The social media shift

2.2.1. The shift in two-way engagement

The rapid growth of social media has changed the way people communicate: the rise of this influential channel has seen a shift in marketing to a two-way engagement process between brands and their customers (Drury, 2008; Malthouse et al., 2013; Agusiady et al. 2024; Sumantyo, 2024). Social media platforms have created a change in consumer behaviour; empowered by social media platforms, consumers now have more control and are able to define their own perspectives on businesses and brands (Bernoff & Li, 2008; Christodoulides et al., 2012). The ability of consumers to create and share content across social media platforms is significantly impacting brands' reputations and sales (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

To successfully take advantage of social media, brands need to embrace this shift towards social customer relationship management (Social CRM) by designing experiences that offer “tangible value for consumers in return for their time, attention, endorsement and data” (Heller Baird & Parasnis, 2011, p.30).

2.2.2. Brand strategies in social media

The dynamic and real-time interaction that is provided by social media has changed the landscape for brands (Gensler et al., 2013) and become a more dominant focus for marketing and communication (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Sashi, 2012); consumers who share their brand stories through these platforms have gained a voice that brands and businesses cannot ignore. Social media has also become a platform that enables conversations about brands (Fossen & Schweidel, 2019; Hewett et al., 2015; Zubair et al., 2022)

Brands have recognised the importance of social media and the opportunities to create and enhance their online presence, drive marketing objectives and engage with

customers (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The advantages to using social media includes increased brand awareness, improved customer engagement, enhanced customer service and potential for brand advocacy, if the social media channels are managed correctly (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Social media marketing differs from traditional marketing and therefore requires a clearly defined strategy and focus on relationship marketing, with the focus on shifting from “trying to sell” to “making connections” (Gordhamer, 2009; Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012). Communications appear to be more sincere in social media marketing (Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012).

There are several key factors driving the usage of social media platforms by brands, including the ability to target specific audiences, the interactive nature of social media, and the ability to gather insights and feedback in real-time. However, the use of social media does not come without its challenges – continuous monitoring and management of brands’ social media accounts and platforms is imperative to ensure a consistent brand voice, address negative feedback and manage brand reputation, understand and adapt the continuous algorithm changes and find ways to measure the return on investment (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). With the increase in online content and the ever-changing algorithms, it is imperative for brands to ensure they provide relevant and updated content to ensure success (Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012)

The integration of social media into brand marketing strategies is expected to continue and evolve with the dynamic nature of social media. As technology continues to advance and consumer preferences continue to change, brands will need to adapt and innovate in order to stay relevant.

2.2.3. The impact of increased usage social media post COVID-19

The dynamic and real time interaction that is provided by social media has changed the landscape for brands and their brand and community managers (Gensler et al., 2013); consumers who share their brand stories through these platforms have gained a voice that brands and businesses cannot ignore.

Research conducted by Mason et al. (2021) post COVID-19 showed that consumers’

use of social media is on the rise with the focus to identify products, collect information and evaluate these products and ultimately make product purchases. Brands need to look at adopting these changes seen across consumers in the social media decision-making process. This shift in preference of online channels has seen an increase in social commerce post COVID-19 (Elshaer et al., 2024).

Further to this increased use of social media seen during COVID-19, the pandemic has accelerated the acceptance of remote working (Chan et al., 2023; Delbosc & Kent, 2023), which has resulted in a prolonged use of online channels to support both online working and shopping behaviour. There has been an extreme move in consumer behaviour towards technology (Sheth, 2020).

Brands need to consider strategies to promote active engagement as consumers can experience dissonance resulting from negative social media experiences that can result in moving (Dhir et al., 2016) or a lack of engagement. Studies looking at consumers' social media activity levels (Kaur et al., 2016) show that factors such as user enjoyment as well as social interaction play an important role in the consumer experience.

With the increase in social media usage, which results in prolific amounts of content, research is now pointing to a concept termed social media fatigue (Bright, Kleiser & Grau, 2015). An important consideration for brands post COVID is not to encourage behaviours that lead to social media fatigue (Mason et al., 2020). Social media amplification during COVID-19 has further enhanced both use and the amount of content being generated.

Social media fatigue and its antecedents have been studied by several researchers (Bright et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2016; Cao et al., 2018; Dhir et al., 2018; Gao et al., 2018), however the link to what causes these stressors remains relatively unknown (Xiao & Mou, 2019; Islam et al., 2020; Sheng et al., 2023). Based on research, social media fatigue can be seen as a user choosing not to participate with social media when overwhelmed with content (Bright et al., 2015) or a "self-evaluated" sense of tiredness from using social media (Lee et al., 2016). Further to information overload, additional stressors including privacy concerns (Bright et al., 2015) and system overload, Lee et al., 2016) have been identified. Factors including the time spent and content

encountered appear to be triggers for social media fatigue, however it is the reasons behind the increased social media usage such as ‘fear of missing out’ (Przybylski et al., 2013; Dhir et al., 2018) and ‘social compensation hypotheses’ (Lee et al., 2012) that need to be further research to understand the implications behind this.

Social media fatigue is also seen with brand interactions: brands tend to focus their use of social media platforms to post information about products and solicit opinions, however several studies show that consumers prefer content such as reviews and discounts (Heller Baird & Parasnis, 2011) – this shows a disconnect between what consumers want and brands are delivering. However more recent studies have found that rational and informational content drives engagement more than remunerative content such as discounts (Dolan et al., 2019). This could be as a result of the shift in acceptance of social media and trust in the content shared by brands over time. The effect of social media fatigue can lead to a decrease in social media activity or ultimately even stopping use, which can be unfavourable to brands (Fu et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2016).

Another factor driving social media fatigue includes the concern around privacy (Goasduff & Pettey, 2011; Bright et al., 2021; Bright et al., 2022). Research from Xiao & Mou (2019) found that the concept of privacy invasion had a significant positive effect on social media fatigue. Despite the growth and acceptance of social media, privacy risks remain a key concern for consumers, particularly on social media (Zhu & Bao, 2018). Privacy concerns in the context of online and social media refer to the concern that personal information is collected and used (Gutierrez et al., 2019), which increases the risk perception associated with social media intentions and behaviours (Bhargava & Velasquez, 2021). The concept of privacy invasion refers to the belief that privacy has been compromised based on what has been done with a consumers’ information (Alge, 2001). Consumers need to perceive value in exchange for disclosing their personal information, therefore brands need to ensure that they are providing value and meeting consumers’ motivations, should these be for information, social interaction or entertainment.

As social media platforms continue to generate more content and inundate consumers with information (Logan et al., 2018), the impact on competing for users’ attention

needs to be considered. Research into how social media is potentially compromising learning and attention shows that users pay less attention when faced with more distractions and recall less information (Lang, 2000). Further to this, studies from multiple research papers show information overload as the side effect of this age of information (Bright et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2021). With the increasing use of persuasive design, including infinite scrolling and push notification, social media platforms are intensifying the problem by increasing users' exposure to the stimuli. This overwhelming stimulus can result in negative effects on attention, engagement, decision making and brand loyalty, which impact brands and marketers, making it more challenging to capture and maintain consumer attention. Post COVID-19, following the information overload, disengagement was seen by Gen Zs after the initial stages of lockdown (Liu et al., 2021)

This increase in the use of social media as an information source for updates and real-time information sharing has also led to challenges related to disinformation and misinformation.

The information disorder, which entails the concepts of disinformation, misinformation and malinformation, can be summarised as the inability to distinguish between content that is real and content that is manipulated (Bakowicz, 2023). Social media platforms provide a common medium for spreading disinformation, which is information that is intentionally misleading through distortion of the facts, e.g. fake news. Disinformation is usually based on motivational factors such as political or social influence and financial gain, which is important to understand (Wardle, 2020). Misinformation is more unintentional, where the user will share manipulated information with friends, family or followers. The sharer usually will not verify the information and as a result, this information is shared with the assumption that it is correct. Malinformation on the other hand, is true information that is shared with the intention of provoking a negative response and causing harm. This information is difficult to track and remove as it is not false information, however it can be more harmful than both disinformation and misinformation (Bakowicz, 2023; Wardle, 2020)

The concept of information disorder is becoming more prevalent and requires readers to become more critical and evaluate the content they consume. This factor could

contribute further to the negative elements of social media such as social media fatigue or could become a negative cost of its own. Brands will need to take on responsibility for fact checking information that is not only created by them but also shared on their community platforms. Both brands and consumers will need to take accountability for the information shared to reduce this potentially harmful phenomenon.

Social media content continues to increase with digital spend by brands, however marketing efforts will fail unless brands know how to effectively develop their content to enable consumer engagement (Lee et al., 2013; Dolan et al., 2019), taking into consideration factors such as limited attention and information disorder.

The following section will further elaborate on social media engagement, looking at its multidimensional nature (Vivek et al., 2012; Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2016).

2.3. Social media engagement

Social media has changed the marketing-consumer interface enabling direct consumer engagement with the organisation in real-time (Harrigan et al., 2017). This has allowed brands to become more interactive with consumers (Vivek et al., 2012) and as such, opened research opportunities to better understand the concept of social media engagement by academics and practitioners including the construct (Brodie et al., 2013), development of measurement scales (Hollebeek et al., 2014) and identification of antecedents and consequences (De Vries et al., 2012; Wirtz et al., 2013).

While engagement has become a buzzword, the concept and definition of engagement since Brodie et al.'s (2011) pioneering study has been applied in a number of different applications (Santos et al., 2022) and there is no consensus on the definition (Harrigan et al., 2017; Trunfio & Rossi, 2021):

- Social media brand engagement (SMBE) is defined as the conception and communication of a brand's story with consumers on a social media platform because of motivational drivers (Osei-Frimpong & McLean, 2018).

- Customer engagement (CE) is a concept that can be applied from various approaches but to reach the purpose of persuading the desired customer behaviour including loyalty and purchase intent (Lim et al., 2022)
- Customer or consumer brand engagement (CBE) is defined by Hollebeek et al. (2014) as the behavioural, affective and cognitive activities performed by the consumer when interacting with the brand. CBE considers both the positive and negative consumer behavioural interactions with the brand as a result of many high value experiences (Obilo et al., 2021).

Further to this, Dessart (2017) posits that social media engagement can take place with either the brand, or the wider community, which represents fellow consumers in the brand community.

From a value perspective, and for the purpose of this study, the concept of engagement will focus on the value-based description by Kumar et al. (2019), as the mechanics that add value to the firm. Linking to this, Van Doorn et al. (2010) identify outcomes on engagement, including commitment, loyalty, satisfaction and trust, further building on Obilo et al.'s (2021) consideration of both positive and negative interactions.

Businesses do however need to take cognisance that consumers are only willing to engage with brands on social media platforms if they consider the interactions as beneficial. The perception that consumers want to be part of a community and feel connected to the brand is often just a misconception of the business (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Brand interaction does however go beyond engagement with the brand and involves engagement with the wider brand community, which comprises not only the products and the firm but also the other consumers (Santos et al., 2022). While the concept of community was a focus of the prior research derived by Littlewood and Bick (2015), the SMVC, limited research on communities and effective scales were available at the time to include in this research construct. As such, the focus is on social media influence, which extends beyond the community.

The interactive nature of social media has changed consumers from pure observers of marketing content to active and engaged participants, who in turn create their own online content through interactions (Malthouse et al., 2013). Muntinga et al. (2011) posit that consumers' creation, contribution or consumption of brand content reflects

engagement, however the degree of engagement can vary from a like to co-creation such as writing a recommendation or review (Malthouse et al., 2013)

Trust plays an important role in deciding whether to engage with the business and choosing social media as the optimum channel in getting the value they require. Chiu et al. (2010) highlight the importance of trust and further argue that post COVID, organisations need to prioritise accountability and transparency to build and maintain trust. Consumers who do engage with businesses through social media will already have an affinity for the brand, however engagement will not necessarily reflect in a direct increase in spend or loyalty. The power of social media is through the community influence and the role of endorsements to family and friends, extending the potential network (Heller Baird & Parasnis, 2011).

Another benefit to brands is the potential of self-disclosure in online communities, which can become an important source of marketing research (Posey et al., 2010). What is important is open self-disclosure, which can cultivate relationships between consumers who share the same brand affinity. However, before engaging in relationships, consumers will need to weigh up the costs and benefits before deciding whether to engage, this links to SET and Social Penetration Theory (SPT), which are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Two other factors to consider when it comes to online relationships, community and engagement are social influence and reciprocity.

Social influence can be defined in this particular context as the degree to which a consumer's attitudes or behaviours are influenced by others in their environment. Taking into consideration TRA and TPB, which are referenced later in this chapter, it is the perception of social norms that drives the intention towards a specific behaviour. This is supported by the Social Learning Theory, which concludes that individual behaviour is the learned response from others behaviour in the environment (Bandura, 1977a). Posey et al. (2010) also refer to the principle of social proof, where individuals will engage in a certain activity if they know others are also engaging. What is interesting here is that consumers will alter their engagement and disclosure within these online communities and environments depending on their similarity to those in this environment and the need for conformity.

Reciprocity, also referenced as the dyadic effect, is another factor linked to the SPT and important for social exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Reciprocity can be defined as the exchange (giving and receiving) between two or more individuals with a mutual benefit, although this might not always be the case (Holton et al., 2015). It is important to note that the concept of reciprocity is not for profit or benefit but more around the symbolic nature of the gesture and the formation of the relationship that it facilitates. Reciprocity, both online and offline, is the cause for community interconnection (Pelaprat & Brown, 2012) and can be used to better understand the dynamic nature of online social relationships.

The following section will investigate the dynamic nature of relationships within social media brand communities.

2.4. Social media brand communities

Social media brand engagement can be experienced and therefore “classified into two main dimensions: community engagement and brand engagement” (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2022, pg 293). This classification is supported by both Brodie et al. (2013) and Dessart (2017). The importance of these brand communities as marketing tools to build and enable relationships is also well researched (De Vries et al., 2012; Coelho et al., 2018), however what is even more interesting is the ability for brands and customers to meet as equals owing to the technological nature of social media.

Brand communities provide benefit to both customers and brands. Customers have the ability to engage with both the brand as well as other consumers, creating a sense of community and belongingness (Kannan & Li, 2017). Customers also benefit brands through increased brand awareness, trust and loyalty, which ultimately increase organisational profit (Habibi et al., 2014; Bianchi & Andrew, 2018; Zhang et al., 2017).

This concept is further alluded to below as a joint effort in creating value, for both the customer and the brand.

2.5. Social media value creation

The concept of value is multidimensional and while literature tends to focus on value creation for the consumer, the process of value creation is a joint effort and should also be assessed from the seller's perspective (Möller & Törrönen, 2003; Agnihotri et al., 2012)

Social media provides different value creation to businesses, from brand awareness and popularity (De Vries et al., 2012), promoting word of mouth communication (Chen et al., 2011) through to increasing sales (Agnihotri et al., 2012). With the variety of platforms and engagement types, measurement can however be complex, with metrics often questioned (Dahl, 2021).

From the perspective of value, both marketers and consumers add to the value of the brand through social media (Sohaib & Han, 2023), with the potential for social media marketing to positively influencing brand trust and brand loyalty. While strong brand-consumer relationships offer benefits to the consumer such as product quality and price, these relationships can also enable positive word-of-mouth, increase satisfaction and foster brand loyalty through the community aspect (Lee et al., 2014)

The following provides a view of factors that can be considered as value creation from a customer-brand relationship (Sohaib & Han, 2023):

2.5.1. Satisfaction

Satisfaction can be defined as a pleasurable response to the fulfilment of one's needs and desires (Brown et al., 2005; Oliver, 2014). Consumer satisfaction can be said to develop when the consumer's expectations about the brand's investment have been met. As an important post-purchase response, satisfaction is often associated with consumer outcomes such as loyalty and to a lesser extent, positive word-of-mouth. When a consumer is satisfied, the expectation is that they will share this positive feedback, yet there is little conclusive evidence to show this relationship. This divergent feedback might be owing to the other characteristics that influence the consumer such as the level of commitment (Brown et al., 2005).

2.5.2. Brand trust

Trust was previously highlighted as an important factor when consumers decide whether to engage with brands to get the value they require, however it is important to consider that trust is based on the individual's perception and therefore will differ across consumers (Gefen & Pavlou, 2004; Nelmapius & Boshoff, 2016). Trust also becomes important in online platforms owing to the lack of personal touch (Khan et al., 2020). The concept of brand trust focuses on the aspect of reliability and willingness of the consumer to rely on the brand to do what it should (Chaudhuri & Holdbrook, 2001; Sohaib & Han, 2023). According to these authors, consumers are spending more time with brand communities where the brands foster trust through reliability and delivering on promises made. Research has looked at brand trust as a mediator (Laroche et al., 2013), an outcome to engagement (Ferm & Thaichon, 2021) and an antecedent to loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Chiu et al., 2010) and purchase intent (McKnight et al., 2002), therefore there is potential to further research this construct (Sohaib & Han, 2023).

Satisfaction and brand trust are both important factors when it comes to relationship marketing (Sohaib & Han, 2023), and while they have been seen to act as a mediator to factors such as brand loyalty, there is a call for further investigation.

2.5.3. Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty and the impact of social media marketing has been a focus in marketing academia (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011; McKee, 2010; Coon, 2010). It can be defined as a consumer's commitment to repurchase from a preferred brand in future (Oliver, 1999) based on the degree to which they feel associated in a behavioural, cognitive or emotional way (Liu et al., 2012). Consumers who possess strong affection and beliefs toward a brand, tend to be more loyal to the brand (Vivek et al., 2012). Where social media plays an important role in creating brand loyalty is through better communication beyond traditional methods (Akhtar, 2011) while also leveraging off the concept of community building increases brand awareness and loyalty through the networking and peer conversations (McKee, 2010). Communication is the most effective way for

businesses to build co-creation along with interaction, which results in value (Franklin & Marshall, 2019; Sohaib & Han, 2023).

2.5.4. Electronic word-of-mouth

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) can be defined as the positive or negative feedback made about a company, product or service that is made available online by consumers, including former or potential consumers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Given the nature of the ability of this feedback to be directed to multiple individuals, eWOM becomes an important measure to the brand. This is where eWOM differs from traditional word of mouth (WOM) in that the information shared in WOM is limited by boundaries to friends and family and therefore diminishes more quickly over time, however eWOM enables a much wider audience and extended reach (Kim et al., 2018).

The sharing of positive feedback to others about a brand and its products has previously been linked to revenue (Reichheld, 2003) and subsequent purchase decisions (Park & Lee, 2009). Further to this, peer-generated opinions and recommendations are considered to be more trustworthy by consumers (Brown et al., 2007b) and these online opinions can have a potential impact on their decision-making process (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Brands can use these eWOM communications to their advantage to increase the effectiveness and persuasiveness of their messaging (Trusiv et al., 2010), amplifying this reach through the community.

2.5.5. Purchase intent

Social media's evolving and interactive nature allows for the platform to act as a socialising proxy for consumer interactions but also allows for brands to increase purchase behaviour (Gutierrez et al., 2023). While positive interactions enhance behavioural intentions towards positive eWOM, purchase and loyalty (Shanahan et al., 2019), negative interactions can reinforce brand distrust (Cheung & To, 2021).

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) posit that consumer purchase intentions refer to the priority of a consumer for a particular brand and therefore is an important predictor of consumer behaviour.

2.6. Social media measurement

While social media continues to experience growth, one of the greatest challenges remains measurement (Fisher, 2009; Hoffman & Fodor, 2010; Valos et al., 2014). Businesses are not always able to measure the contribution of social media to business performance, however they are expected to show accountability for their investment in social media activities and the resulting value creation (Fisher, 2009) and financial contribution (Hanna et al., 2011) of these programs for the business.

The measurement of social media is under-researched (Wang & Kim, 2017), however literature within the context of social media marketing tends to focus more on social media programme measurement (Littlewood & Bick, 2015). Murdoch (2009) provides a social media measurement process that iteratively links measurements to either an objective or goal. Hoffman and Fodor (2010) focus on key social media performance objectives and illustrate a set of relevant performance metrics. Larson and Watson (2011) advise that it is imperative to understand more around how social media has changed the traditional consumer-business interaction in order to identify effective metrics for social media. Their research further investigates how businesses can measure the success of social media activities with respect to consumers. Agostino and Sidorova (2016) develop a performance measurement system (PMS) to quantify the influence of social media activities through metrics and methods.

Further to this, there is also little consensus when reviewing the literature for social media engagement measurement with varying views on the benefits of qualitative through the use of interviews versus quantitative measurement such as likes, comments and shares etc. (Trunfio & Rossi, 2021).

Creating a presence on social media is of little value unless you do something with it. (Blanchard, 2011; Gibs & Allard, 2014). Measuring success in social media often translates into demands for proof of return on investment (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011; Gibs & Allard, 2014); however, Hoffman and Fodor (2010) suggest marketers are approaching return on investment (ROI) in the wrong way; ROI can be measured, but it requires a new set of measurements, starting with customer investment. This is further

supported by Fisher (2009), who suggests that ROI is only partially providing the full picture of social media as it only measures specific campaigns or actions and does not look at further community interactions. Lal et al. (2020) highlight that it is recognised that businesses struggle to calculate ROI from social media marketing efforts owing to the focus on quantifiable outcomes including sales and purchases. Through consideration of customer motivations and the investments customers make when engaging with brands, marketers can focus on long-term returns of social media investment (Littlewood & Bick, 2015).

Although social media measurement is important and contributes to the financial performance of a business, there is no theoretical consensus around this (Kizildag et al., 2017). What is known is that how much businesses will spend will be determined by the effectiveness of their social media marketing (Silva et al., 2020). While there is no single definition for social media ROI, marketers need to consider a range of indicators, metrics and outcomes to evaluate their social media marketing success (Etlinger & Li, 2011).

Silva et al. (2020) provide an overview of social media marketing performance indicators and metrics. From a non-financial performance, measures such as brand awareness, community engagement, word of mouth, customer satisfaction and loyalty can be measured. These can be measured using analytic tools and surveys to capture likes, impressions, search rankings, comments, views, mentions, complaints and share of voice. From a financial perspective, revenue (including sales through social media platforms, customer lifetime and cost savings) as well as desired outcomes can be measured through analytics, email, website, point-of-purchase and survey.

2.7. Theoretical approaches to measurement

2.7.1. Theoretical framework for measurement

There are several frameworks that can be applied to the field of marketing performance measurement. These emphasise the value-based approach, which links the input of marketing activities to the output of financial outcomes and performance (Littlewood, 2013).

Gupta and Zeithaml (2006) create a framework that recognises how customer metrics link to profitability and ultimately firm value. Gronholdt and Martensen (2006) put forward a conceptual framework adapted from the marketing value chain by Keller and Lehman (2003). This value chain offers a base from which businesses can establish important and relevant marketing measures. This is comparable to the Brand Value Chain (BVC) model, which gives marketers the ability to track the value creation of their brands and to understand the financial impact of the outlay and investment with regards to their brand marketing (Keller and Lehman, 2003). Further to this, Keller and Lehman (2006) expand on their BVC with a model representing the operation of a brand, interlinking cause and effect.

While there are several theoretical frameworks available in literature, there is little consistency in the different applications of these (Littlewood, 2013) with no framework adopting the ideas of value-based measurement as outlined by Keller and Lehmann (2003).

2.7.2. Introducing the social media value chain (derived from prior research)

The SMVC was developed by Littlewood and Bick (2015) to assist organisations with a conceptual framework to define, measure and evaluate social media. This was created in response to the need for organisations to show accountability for their social media investments (Fisher, 2009). Through a review of the social media and traditional marketing measurement frameworks, the research developed a value-based approach to performance measurement, which included the importance of creating strategies and establishing objectives in order to measure returns.

Based on a two round Delphi research approach, the framework for the social media was validated by social media experts resulting in the value chain, which is made up of three key focus areas including firm investment, community management and the overall return. The influences on social media implementation and realisation are provided in the framework as well as the feedback loop to ensure a continuous process of improvement. The framework aims to assist businesses in understanding the holistic

value of social media from the initial strategy creation and objective setting through to the return on investment from successful implementation (Littlewood & Bick, 2015).

Factors affecting the perception and resulting influence of the social media communications on the community and consumer form part of the value chain, with the outcomes providing necessary feedback and insights into the business as part of ongoing improvement.

Figure 2.2. provides a view of the final SMVC.

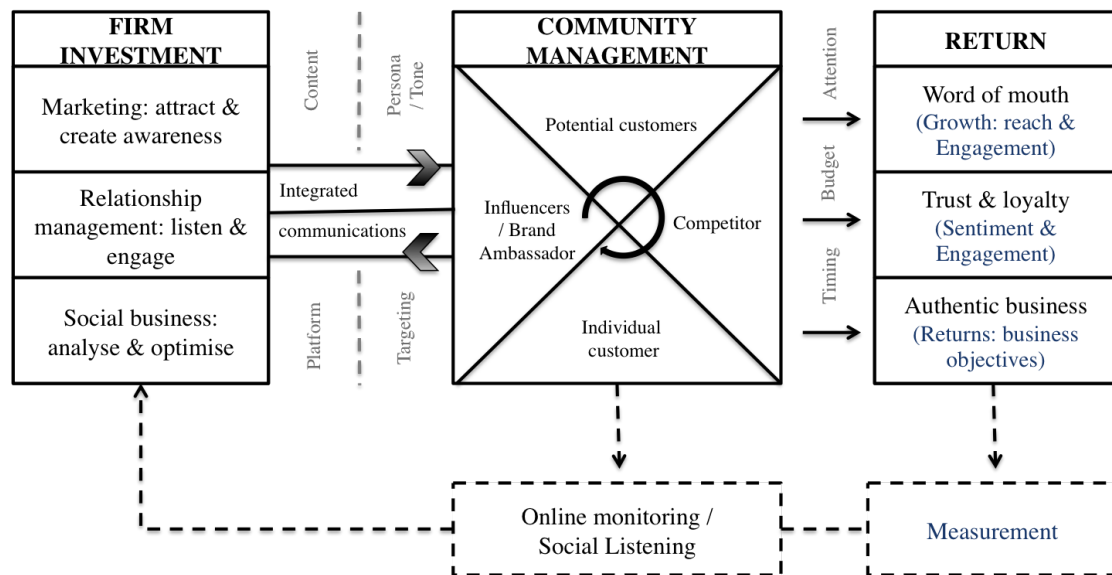


Figure 2.2: The Social Media Value Chain (Source: Littlewood & Bick, 2015)

The ultimate in value creation for an organisation is through minimising social media investment, while maximising returns through an effective program implementation. The social media value chain provides organisations with a structured framework through which marketing professionals can implement a value-based approach and in turn measure success.

While the model provides an effective lens through which the organisation can structure their social media investment, strategy and measurement, the model does not include an in-depth view into the community’s behaviour and usage, which provides the necessary insight for brands to further understand engagement and ultimately how this

translates into value creation, including word of mouth, trust and loyalty and authentic business. As such, while this framework was used as an underlying concept for this thesis, there was a need to validate the community behaviour and usage through the lens of behaviour theories in order to complete the feedback loop.

2.8. Applying the lens of behavioural theories

2.8.1. Applying the lens of behaviour theories

While the Social Media Value Chain provides an overview of certain factors that influence consumer behaviour and engagement from an organisational perspective, it does not incorporate the factors that influence behaviour from a social perspective. Owing to the nature of social media and the inherent aspect of social behaviour, these factors become an important consideration and therefore need to be incorporated into the social media value framework to ensure an alignment between the organisation and its consumers.

One of the key aspects identified in the SMVC is the complexity of the community and the importance of multiple influences as a motivator for behaviour. This aligns with the basis for Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001) and the triadic reciprocal determinism, which posits that human behaviour is not just one-sided, but rather shaped by different sources including the environment, cognition and personal factors and behaviour. In the context of mass communication, Bandura (2001) presents the Dual Paths of Influence (Figure 2.3), a model showing how communication systems operate through two different paths. The direct path where media and communications enable change through advising, empowering, inspiring and guiding participants and an indirect path where media influences participants to connect to social networks and community. The major change in behaviour is seen within this social context.

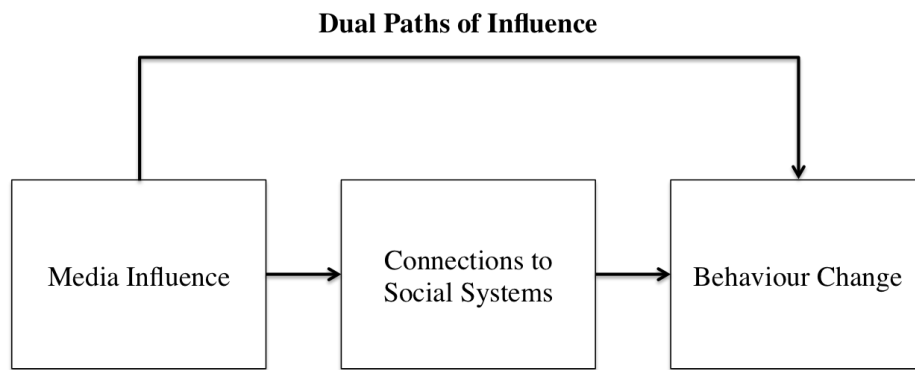


Figure 2.3: Dual paths of communication (Source: Bandura, 2001)

This is particularly applicable in the context of social media, where influence plays such a vital role in changing behaviour. Bandura (2001) recognised the complex nature of behavioural intention, highlighting multiple influences on behaviour.

Research suggests that it is unlikely for a single-variable model to adequately predict acceptance of a new technology or platform and as such proposes a combination of variables from multiple disciplines and theories. This multi-faceted view is supported by Ajzen (1991), suggesting that behaviour is complex and therefore requires a multi-dimensional model for prediction. In support of this view, the following theories have been assessed to incorporate factors into this conceptual model where relevant.

2.8.2. Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

One of the fundamental models from which a wide range of theories has been derived is TRA. This theory looks at predicting specific behavioural intentions that influence the resulting behaviour. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) examined the relationship between attitude and behaviour and proposed two factors that influence behaviour, namely an individual's attitude, which is determined by their own beliefs, and a subjective norm, influencing the perception to behave accordingly in a certain manner. To drive strong intentions that result in a certain behaviour, there needs to be a positive attitude and appropriate subjective norms.

One thing to consider around attitudes is that they are learned and develop through experiences, which results in attitudes being dynamic. This highlights the important of including the subjective norm, which link us to the concept of social influence, where

behaviour is persuaded by those around the individual that are considered as influential. Figure 2.4 depicts the constructs of TRA.

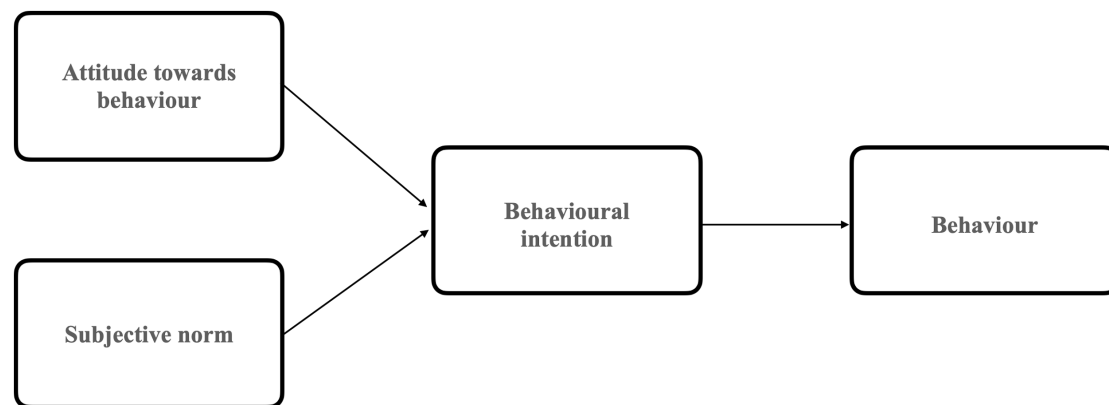


Figure 2.4: Theory of Reasoned Action (Source: Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975)

TRA provides a generalised model that looks to explain the factors that influence human behaviour when making decisions. The model is also believed to perform well when applied outside the original conditions (Sheppard et al., 1988), which is the reason behind including this model into the construct. While TRA has been widely used, it has been noted by researchers that including additional variables would enhance the predictive nature (Paul et al., 2016). As such, extensions of TRA including TPB and TPB's further extension, the Theory of Reasoned Goal Pursuit (TRGP) are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

2.8.3. Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

TPB, which is an extension of TRA, is one of the most widely researched user acceptance theories. Ajzen (1991) is in agreement with this multi-faceted interpretation that humans are complex and therefore a multi-dimensional approach to envisioning human behaviour is required (Nelmapius & Boshoff, 2016).

TPB posits that human behaviour is steered by three considerations, including:

- An individual's attitude and whether this is positive or negative towards the behaviour – a more positive attitude will strengthen the intention
- The amount of social pressure the individual feels about doing the behaviour
- Whether an individual feels in control of the particular behaviour

The factor of ‘perceived behavioural control’ was added by Ajzen (1991) to overcome the limitations of the original TRA. Behavioural control can be defined as the perception of an individual as to whether the behaviour is achievable dependent on the availability of information etc. The concept of perceived behavioural control can be linked to Bandura’s (1977b) self-efficacy construct, which refers to individual’s belief in their ability to act in a way necessary to achieve the desired goal. This forms the basis for the social cognitive theory from Bandura referred to in section 2.8.1 above.

Figure 2.5 depicts the constructs of the TPB.

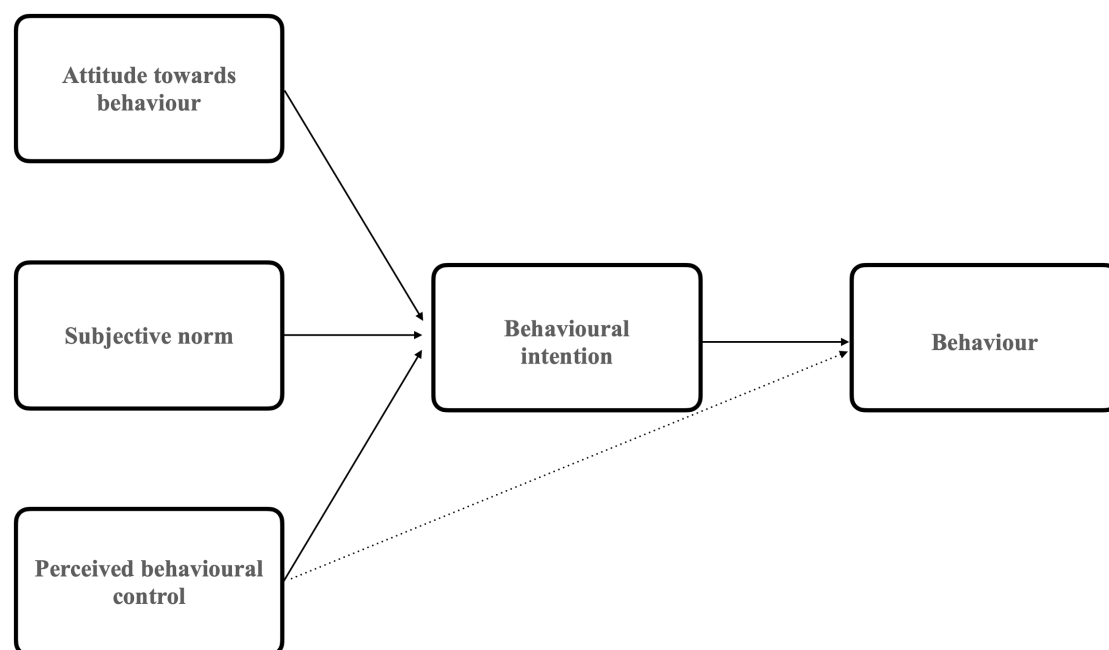


Figure 2.5: Theory of Planned Behaviour (Source: Ajzen, 1991)

While TPB has been the cause for some debate owing to its limited conditions and the fact that it is based on perceptions that are difficult to measure, the theory is widely used for the expectation of human behaviour and will therefore be adapted and incorporated into this conceptual framework. One of the constructs that varies quite substantially across different studies is the ‘intention-behaviour’ correlation. Mediating factors can impact the intent to behave in a certain way, resulting in a weak correlation. This is an important consideration for social media, especially with organisations measuring metrics such as ‘likes’ and ‘shares’ which might only hint at an intention and do not necessarily translate into an actual action.

2.8.4. Theory of Reasoned Goal Pursuit (TRGP)

A newer extension of the TPB is TRGP, which considers the more active goals that result in the motivation of people's behaviour (Ajzen & Kruglanski, 2019; Ajzen & Schmidt, 2020). While TPB as a theory does not tend to focus on the why, TRGP incorporates a new lens that looks at why people consider engaging in the specified behaviour in the first place by understanding the goals behind the desired behaviour (Hamilton et al., 2022). TRGP provides an expanded scope of behaviour through the inclusion of motivation, which ultimately results in a more accurate forecast of both intent and behaviour. The theory provides a distinction between the outcomes that people are motivated to attain, whether these are through procurement or approval goals.

Rather than the direct impact of attitude and subjective norm on the intention, the TRGP suggests these provide the foundation for motivation towards the intent. Motivation alone is not enough to drive intention; it is only when individuals accept that they have control over the intended behaviour and therefore 'perceived behaviour control' is included as a moderator. Finally, TRGP also advises that the effect of attitude and subjective norm on an individual's motivation is stronger when the intended behaviour serves to achieve both procurement and approval goals (Hamilton et al., 2022).

Figure 2.6 below provides a full view of TRGP.

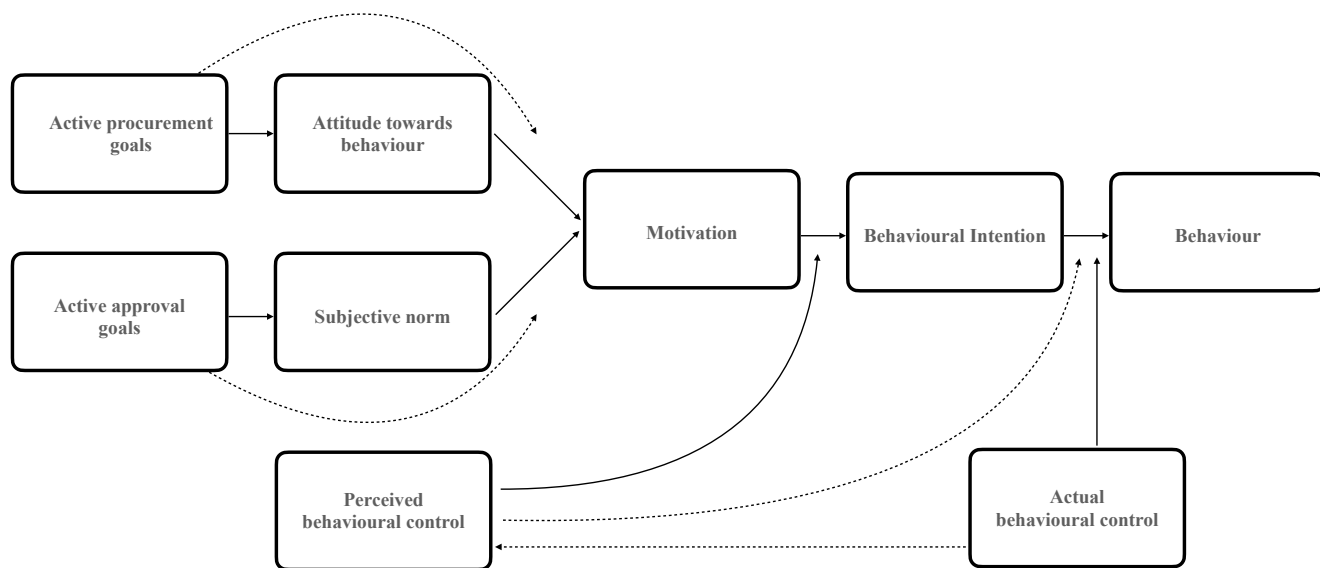


Figure 2.6: Theory of Reasoned Goal Pursuit (Source: Ajzen and Kruglanski, 2019)

While the TRGP provides an interesting extension to the previous behavioural theories, particularly with exploring motivation of social media use, this theory was not fully incorporated in expanding the construct to limit further complexity with the model and SEM. Goals and motivations were considered as part of the reasons for social media use, however the construct would need to be adapted to be considered for future research.

2.8.5. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

TAM is derived from a number of theories and attempts to predict user acceptance of technology focusing on two factors (Davis, 1989), including Perceived Usefulness (extent to which an individual considers a specific technology is beneficial) and Perceived Ease of Use (extent to which an individual considers use of a specific technology as effortless).

TAM predicts that an individual's attitude towards a specific behaviour is influenced by the perceived usefulness of the technology as well as the perceived ease of use in order to use the technology. This results in either a positive or negative attitude towards the technology, which will in turn result in a favourable or unfavourable intention and actual use of the technology.

Figure 2.7. depicts the constructs of TAM.

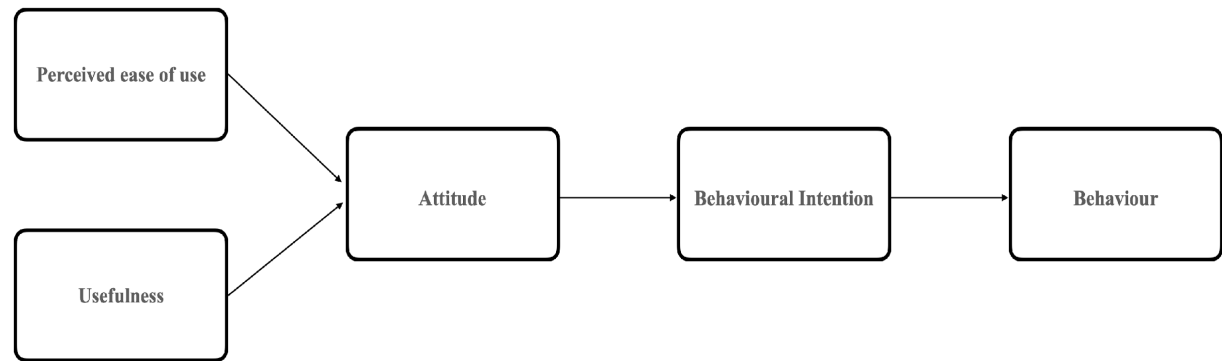


Figure 2.7: The Technology Adoption Model (Source: Davis et al., 1989)

Perceived enjoyment is an additional factor within the TAM framework and was found by both Davis et al. (1992) and Venkatesh (2000) as a significant determinant of behavioural intention. Perceived enjoyment is considered an intrinsic motivation and reflects pure satisfaction when linked to using technology, or in using social media sites (Hart et al., 2008).

The revised model of TAM2 by Venkatesh and Davis (2000) removes the construct of attitude while reintroducing the concept of social influence as a subjective norm.

Prior research shows that TAM and the extended TAM2 can be applied to various contexts and provide relevant results, however, it requires additional models to consider the motivational elements that drive technology adoption. Research from Reiter et al. (2017) shows the beneficial application of TAM in social media environments, concluding that constructs such as the perceived ease of use and usefulness can be successfully applied to social media technology use.

Another extension of the TAM framework are the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), which furthers the understanding of cognitive processes behind individuals' use of information technology through four core constructs, including performance (equivalent to perceived usefulness), effort (equivalent to perceived ease of use), facilitating conditions and social influence. The extended UTAUT2 further considers the impact of hedonic motivation, price value and habit through the moderated factors of age, gender and experience. While the application of

these models has been applied in technology acceptance research, owing to the complexity of the models, only the construct of social influence has been included for the purposes of this research.

2.8.6. Social Exchange Theory (SET)

SET looks at how individuals form relationships with others and posits that individuals will engage in a social exchange when the benefits outweigh the costs, and therefore apply a cost-benefit analysis, which has also been seen applied to TAM. As individual consumers form relationships with brands through social exchanges on social media, it is important to understand the value and benefits they perceive in order to invest more time in interacting with the brand (Guitierrez et al., 2023).

This theory proposes that individuals will seek to maximise the benefits and minimise the costs in social interactions, so requires an active assessment of the potential benefits and drawbacks before engaging in a specific behaviour. Further to this, individuals will evaluate relationships based on the rewards they expect to receive.

Homans (1958) also introduces the concept of reciprocity, where individuals exchange benefits to maintain social relationships. When applied to social media, SET proposes that individuals engage in social media exchanges because the rewards or benefits outweigh the costs, however the comparison that comes with social media platforms can result in a sense of inequity, which can result in the end of the exchange (Cook et al., 2013). It is important to note as previously mentioned, that the concept of reciprocity is focused more on intangible benefits.

While focused on IS context, research highlights the willingness to exchange information based on the belief that the other party (in this case the organisation) will reciprocate with increased recognition (Posey et al., 2010). While applied in a different context, it is an important consideration to social media platforms where there is the impact of privacy risk as well as those consumers who tend to remain as observers versus engaged participants on social media platforms.

2.8.7. Social Penetration Theory (SPT)

Where SET focuses primarily on how individuals form relationships, SPT developed by Altman and Taylor (1973) brings a lens of these concepts to communication and self-disclosure, which are both important when considering social media.

SPT is essentially an extension of SET but looks at how individuals cultivate a continued relationship based on the benefits and costs experienced. Individuals will assess the benefits versus costs (or satisfaction versus dissatisfaction) gained in the interaction with another, be it an individual or a brand and as a result, the advancement of the relationship will be determined. As long as the cost-benefit remains on the positive side, the relationship will continue (Posey et al., 2010).

Where this becomes important to social media is in relation to engagement with the brand and the wider community. If a consumer does not feel like they are getting more from the engagement through the means of reciprocity or if they feel like the costs outweigh the benefits such as privacy risks, then there is a chance that they will end the engagement. This is potentially an area for further research to understand if there is an opportunity for the individual or consumer to re-engage with the brand or community should they feel the costs of disengaging start to outweigh their initial decision.

2.9. Chapter Summary

2.9.1. Conclusion of literature review

While there has been an exponential growth in social media research over the last decade, the dynamic nature of this topic continues to change at an advanced rate. With the emergence of new platforms, the evolution of how we as individuals and consumers engage with these social media platforms and the increasing negative impact of concepts like social media fatigue, disinformation and decreased attention, this is an area that benefits from continuous review and updated research.

Based on prior research and a lack of measurement frameworks at the time, the SMVC was developed to create an overall view of the value of social media from an organisational perspective. What was lacking at the time however was a full exploration

of the impact of social media engagement and the complexity of behaviour and influence in this environment.

Through the exploration of previous social media studies grounded in behavioural theories, the theme of a multi-dimensional approach to understanding behaviour becomes clear. Using the lens of SET and SPT together with a review of the social media engagement, value and measurement literature and an adapted view of multiple theories including TRA, TAM and the TPB, this research looked to integrate antecedents and moderators of social media engagement and behaviour and validate a conceptual framework for outcome of social media value creation.

Applying the theory of SET and a view of perceived benefits versus perceived costs, the following factors were identified as a result of a thorough review of the social media engagement, value and measurement literature and assessment of key theories:

Table 1: Summary of factors and outcomes identified from the literature review

RQ1: What factors influence consumers' intent to engage and engagement with brands on social media?			
Factor	Identified from	References	SET Perception
Attitude	Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TRA: Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975 ● TPB: Ajzen, 1991 ● TAM: Davis, 1989 	Perceived benefit (positive attitude as potential to become negative if influenced)
Perceived usefulness	Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TAM: Davis, 1989 	Perceived benefit
Perceived enjoyment	Theory and literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Davis et al., 1992 ● Lin et al., 2008 	Perceived benefit

Personalised communications	Theory and literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dual paths of communication: Bandura, 2001 ● SMVC: Littlewood & Bick, 2015 ● Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012 ● Kreuter et al., 1999. 	Perceived benefit (potential to become perceived cost with dis/misinformation)
Social Influence	Theory and literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TRA: Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975 ● TRB: Ajzen, 1991 ● Social Learning Theory: Bandura, 1977a ● SMVC: Littlewood & Bick, 2015 ● Posey et al., 2010 ● Cheung & Lee, 2010 ● Koo et al., 2011 ● Venkatesh, 2012 	Perceived benefit
Reciprocity	Theory and literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SET: Homans, 1958 ● SPT: Altman & Taylor, 1973 ● SMVC: Littlewood & Bick, 2015 ● Posey et al., 2010 ● Pelaprat & Brown, 2012 ● Labrecque, 2014 ● Holton et al., 2015 	Perceived benefit
Privacy concern	Literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nelmapius & Boshoff, 2016 ● Goasduff & Pettey, 2011 ● Bright et al., 2015 ● Gutierrez et al., 2019 	Perceived cost

Social media fatigue	Literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bright et al., 2015 ● Lee et al., 2016 ● Xiao & Mou, 2019 ● Sheng et al., 2023 	Perceived cost
RQ2: To what extent does consumer intent to engage and engagement result in value creation for the brand?			
Outcome	Theme	Reference	
Intent to engage	Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TRA: Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975 ● TPB: Ajzen, 1991 ● TAM: Davis, 1989 	Perceived outcome
Engagement	Literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Brodie et al., 2011 & 2013 ● De Vries et al., 2012 ● Wirtz et al., 2013 ● Malthouse et al., 2013 ● Hollebeek et al., 2014 ● Harrigan et al., 2017 ● Osei-Frimpong & McLean, 2018 ● Lim et al., 2022 	Perceived outcome
Value creation: Satisfaction Brand Trust	Literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Brown et al., 2005 ● Oliver, 2014 ● Oliver, 1999 ● Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010 ● McKee, 2010 ● Coon, 2010 ● Akhtar, 2011 ● Vivek et al., 2012 	Perceived outcomes

Brand Loyalty		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001 ● Gefen & Pavlou, 2004 ● Chiu et al., 2010 ● Laroche et al., 2013 ● Nelmapius, 2016 ● Khan et al., 2020 ● Casper Ferm & Thaichon, 2021 ● Sohaib & Han, 2023 	
eWOM		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reichheld, 2003 ● Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004 ● Brown et al., 2007a ● Park & Lee, 2009 ● Trusiv et al, 2010 ● Cheung & Thadani, 2012 ● Kim et al, 2018 	
Purchase intent		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975 ● Shanahan et al., 2019 ● Cheung & To, 2021 ● Gutierrez et al., 2023 	

While all factors identified as part of the literature review and previous SMVC research have been included, Chapter 3 provides more detail around how the factors contribute to the conceptual model as well as what factors have been included in the final value creation construct.

Both the secondary research questions, RQ3 and RQ4 linking to the impact of changing consumer behaviour and the concept of usage will be determined from the current study as part of the final contribution and not based on prior research.

The next chapter, Chapter 3, will detail the development of the conceptual model, including a review of the existing models as well as an outline of the conceptual model adapted from literature and the resulting hypotheses.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

3.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the conceptual model development as well as the related hypotheses for this study. The research objective is clarified in Section 3.2, supported by a discussion around the existing social media engagement models in Section 3.3. Drawing on these models, the gaps highlighted in Chapter 1 and the Literature Review, Section 3.4 details the conceptual research model for engagement and value creation. Section 3.5 provides an overview of the final hypotheses before concluding with the final chapter summary in 3.6.

Figure 3.1 provides an overview to Chapter 3.

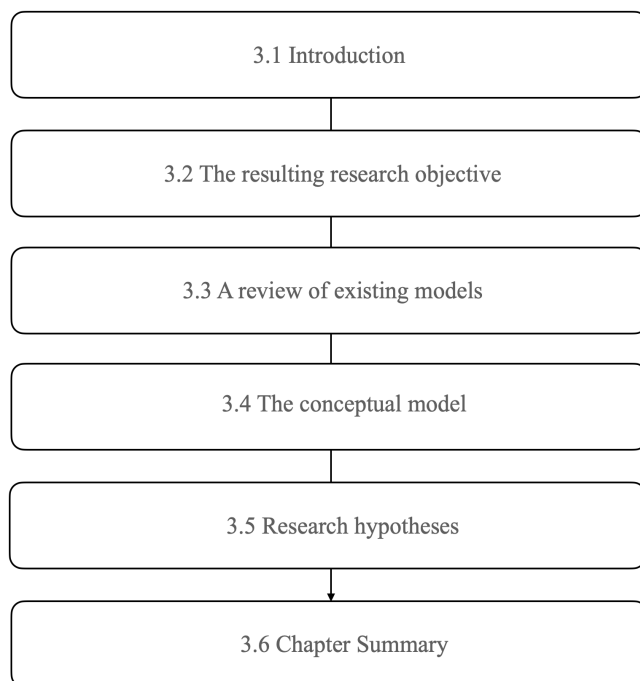


Figure 3.1: Chapter 3 overview

3.2. The resulting research objective

Businesses are required to show accountability for their investment in social media activities and the resulting value creation of these activities for the firm (Fisher, 2009; Littlewood, 2013). The overall objective of this research is to investigate social media value creation as initially developed in the SMVC (Littlewood & Bick, 2015); however,

incorporating the element of consumer behaviour and engagement, which becomes the focal point to understanding how to design social media strategies in order to better define the resulting return on investment and value creation to both the consumer and the firm.

As highlighted in the literature, there is a need to incorporate a multi-dimensional view when it comes to social media behaviour and engagement and consider these from the lens of perceived benefits and perceived costs. As such, this model incorporates concepts and factors from multiple behavioural and user acceptance theories including TRA, TPB, TAM and the SMVC derived from prior research. These theories are all applied to the conceptual model through the holistic lens of social relationships and a cost-benefit analysis adapted from SET and SPT.

The initial SMVC, developed in 2015, was derived through a qualitative study with 15 social media experts from organisations and agencies across South Africa. The focus was on deductively identifying themes and insight around the investment, strategy creation, implementation and measurement of social media for brands. While there was consideration around the complexity of the consumer and social media community, the framework remains limited to an organisational view of value creation. Although there is a significant amount of data that is provided through social media campaign analytics, there is a fundamental need to understand consumer behaviour on social media with reference to brands' social media platforms to create relevant and consumer centric campaigns and communications. Although social media is a dynamic and fast changing media, there are central behaviour and usage theories that can be applied.

To ensure a holistic overview and consideration, this new research study focused on an exploration of behavioural theories to test and validate antecedents and moderators that influence behaviour and engagement in the social media context and identify the resulting value creation.

3.3. A review of existing models

While there have been an increasing number of models developed since 2011 (Santos et al., 2022) focusing on social media engagement and value creation, there is a lack of consistent conceptualisation, and few have provided a holistic, multi-dimensional view bringing these broader concepts together. Owing to the importance of this topic and need to better understand the concept, social media engagement has been researched by academics and practitioners, looking at the construct (Brodie et al., 2013), development of measurement scales (Hollebeek et al., 2014) as well as identification of antecedents and consequences (De Vries et al., 2012; Laroche et al., 2012; Wirtz et al., 2013; Luo et al., 2015; Dessart, 2017), however the definition of engagement still lacks consensus (Harrigan et al., 2017). Santos et al. (2022) conclude that while the concept of consumer engagement in social media brand communities is getting considerable attention, the conceptualisation of this concept is still inconsistent.

The role of consumer engagement in conceptual models, as highlighted by a literature review completed by Santos et al. (2022), has been conceptualised as an independent variable, dependent variable, mediator or moderator; however, few provide a holistic, multi-dimensional framework investigating a broader view of antecedents and outcomes across multi-platforms, as is seen by today's consumers who are dispersed across these platforms (Santos et al., 2022).

The following table adapted from Santos et al. (2022) highlights the list of quantitative papers by survey research that focus on consumer engagement in brand communities and the key findings from the model. The focus on quantitative studies over the last four years has increased, taking into consideration the number of qualitative papers to use as the theoretical base.

Table 2: Review of quantitative engagement models

Quantitative papers by survey research					
Authors	Concept	Scale	Method	Model	Key findings
Laroche et al., 2012	Community engagement	Based on Algesheimer et al., 2005	SEM	Community engagement as a value creation practice influences brand trust and brand loyalty	Positive effects
Cheung et al., 2012	Consumer engagement	Adapted from Algesheimer et al., 2005 & Koh & Kim, 2004	PLS	Consumer engagement behaviour (Participation and promotion) affect online community commitment, which affects brand commitment, purchase intentions and WOM intentions	Positive effects
Tsai & Men, 2013	Consumer engagement	Adapted from Mutinga et al., 2011	HRA	Motives to engage in Facebook brand pages	Positive influence
Tsai & Men, 2013	Consumer engagement	Adapted from Mutinga et al., 2011	t-test	Motives to engage in Facebook brand pages, comparing two cultures	Differences across cultures
Luo et al., 2015	Community engagement	Adapted from Algesheimer et al., 2005 & Laroche et al., 2012	SEM	Community engagement as a value creation practice influences consumer-brand relationship and	Two of the four positively influence consumer-

				consumer-other consumer relationship, leading to community commitment and brand loyalty	brand relationships.
Verhagen et al., 2015	Customer engagement	Algesheimer et al., 2005 & Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004	PLS	Model relating virtual environment characteristics, perceived benefits (Cognitive, social, hedonic, and personal) and customer engagement intentions	Positive influence
Hall-Phillips et al., 2016	Consumer Engagement	Lee et al., 2011	SEM	To foster consumer identification with social venture	Site experience: Excitement, aesthetics, Educational Value, Escapism influence CE. Consumer engagement and attractiveness of identity influence consumer identification of consumer with social venture

Osakwe et al, 2016;	Consumer Engagement	Adapted from Hollebeek et al., 2014	PLS	Conceptual model involving consumer engagement in social media in consumer purchase decision, mediated by WOM	CE do not affect WOM
Islam & Rahman, 2016	Customer engagement	Adapted from Vivek et al., 2014	SEM	Customer engagement influences brand trust and WOM	Customer engagement influences brand trust and WOM
Dessart, 2017	Community engagement	Dessart et al., 2016	SEM	Community engagement influences brand engagement, commitment, trust and loyalty	High social media engagement increases brand relationships significantly
Zhang et al., 2017	Customer engagement	Vivek et al., 2012	SEM	How customer engagement influences brand stickiness and WOM intentions	Positive influence
Bianchi & Andrews, 2018	Consumer-brand engagement	Lin et al., 2014 & Yang, 2010	Online questionnaire SEM	Attitude towards engaging influence engagement intentions, that influence intentions to purchase through SM	Main drivers of consumer-brand engagement that can lead to purchase intentions

Arya et al., 2018	Consumer engagement		Online questionnaire SEM	The influence of CESNS in brand attachment behaviours, mediated by brand communication	Brand communication mediates the relationship
Kujur & Singh, 2019	Consumer engagement	Schivinski et al., 2016	Online and offline questionnaire SEM	Content related factors, social factors and perceptual factors influence consumer engagement. How consumer engagement behaviour influences the customer organization relationship	The 3 factors have positive impact on CE. CE influences C-O relationship
Lima et al., 2019	Customer Engagement	Customer activities	Online questionnaire PLS	How customer engagement affects customer happiness and consequently WOM and purchase intentions	Positive influence
Kwon et al., 2020	Consumer engagement	Vivek et al., 2014 & Dessart et al., 2016	SEM	The effects of marketing communications, such as advertisement/promotion and social network service (SNS) content, on consumer engagement (CE), brand trust and brand loyalty	Advertisement/promotion and SNS content have a positive effect on CE. CE has a positive effect on brand trust, and CE

					and brand trust have a positive effect on brand loyalty.
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Source (A summary of the adapted findings from Santos et al., 2022)

Based on the overview provided, few studies have incorporated a holistic, multi-dimensional conceptual framework for consumer or customer engagement incorporating multiple scales. This is supported by Lim & Rasul, 2022 in a review of customer engagement and social media where they call for “greater investigation of the categories of antecedents and consequences that remain unexplored, namely brand-, industry-, marketer-, platform-, social-, and value-related antecedents, as well as business-, customer-, and social media-related consequences” (pg. 336). The above studies have been reviewed in order to better understand and validate the relationships between researched antecedents, mediators and outcomes.

3.4. The conceptual model

Hair et al. (2010) define a model as a theoretical representation that explains a phenomenon through a set of relationships. SEM requires two different models, the first a measurement model that represents how the variables that are being measured fit together to represent a construct, and the second a structural model that shows how these constructs are associated with each other. The authors go on to state that models should not be developed without core theory, and therefore this was the first step in determining the conceptual model for this study.

Based on a review of the literature and existing engagement models as well as the identified need for further comprehensive multi-dimensional model in the field of social media engagement, the following conceptual model was developed as depicted in Figure 3.2. The conceptual framework has taken a view of the various engagement theories and integrated relevant factors identified from the following models: TRA, TPB, TAM and the SMVC as well as concepts adapted from SET and SPT. In their review, Lim and Rasul (2022) highlight that many studies in the social media

engagement space have made use of a single theory to investigate engagement, however few have considered a combination of theories, which is argued to “provide richer insights” (pg.337). Through analysis of the various models, several factors that are not relevant to this study have been excluded.

Figure 3.2 below provides a view of the proposed conceptual model, highlighting the mediating variables of intent to engage and engagement, the antecedents considered through the lens of perceived benefits versus perceived costs, and the dependent variable and outcome of value creation. Finally, the model looks at the impact of moderating factors including the type of social media platform and usage. The model is depicted using a path diagram to visually portray the measured variables and relationship between them (Hair et al., 2010).

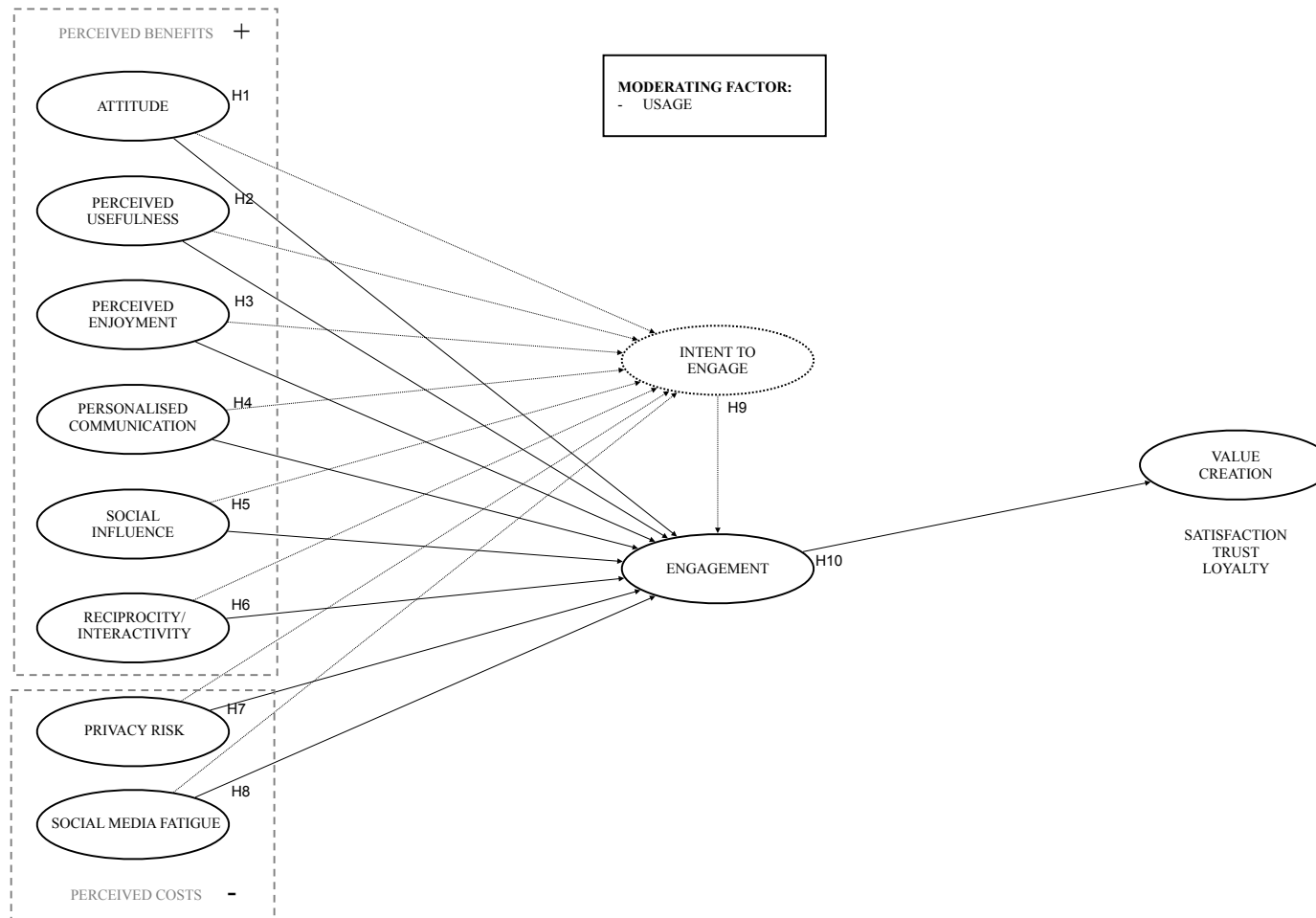


Figure 3.2: Proposed conceptual model for this thesis

The antecedents of social media engagement and the intent to engage are broken into the perceived benefits and perceived costs based on both the SET and SPT theories, where individuals engage in social media because the benefits outweigh the costs. Based on the emerging theme of negative engagement (Martinkek, 2021) and disengagement (Nguyen et al., 2020), an understanding of the costs of social media engagement and the resulting impact is important (Santos et al., 2022).

3.4.1. Perceived benefits

Based on the literature, the following factors have been incorporated in the conceptual model as perceived benefits or positively linked to the intent to engage or actual engagement with brands on social media:

3.4.1.1 Attitude

Attitude can be defined as a consumers' feelings, either positive or negative, toward carrying out the expected behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Attitudes are learned and developed through various experiences, therefore can be considered as dynamic should the experience change, and this is something that should be noted by brands.

The construct of attitude can be found across multiple behavioural and user acceptance theories, including TRA, where Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) propose that an individual's attitude, determined by their own belief, influences their behaviour through either a positive or negative evaluation. The TPB posits that attitude will guide behaviour and a more positive attitude will strengthen the intention to behave in a certain way (Ajzen, 1991). TAM predicts that an individual's attitude towards a specific behaviour will be influenced by the perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of technology that is being used, which in this case is social media. Several studies have looked at the impact of attitude on social media continuance intention (Change et al., 2015). A positive attitude will result in a favourable intention and use of the technology. Gironda and Korgaonkar (2014) also advise that attitude is an important predictor on consumers' intention to engage with social media.

While there is a possibility that based on a negative experience, the consumer's attitude could be negative, this study looks at the effect of a positive attitude as a perceived benefit. This is supported by prior studies proposing that attitude is an important predictor to social media intent (Girona & Korgaonkar, 2014; Liao et al., 2014), social media continuance intention (Al-Debai et al., 2013), and behaviour (Bosnjak et al., 2020) while highlighting that positive evaluations result in intention (Bianchi & Andrews, 2018). For simplicity, the study also looks at attitude as a separate construct based on TRA and TPB rather than as influenced in TAM and therefore the following hypotheses have been proposed:

H1a: Consumers' positive attitude is positively related to the intent to engage with brands on social media

H1b: Consumers' positive attitude is positively related to social media engagement

3.4.1.2 Perceived usefulness

Perceived usefulness is the extent of how beneficial a certain technology is on an individual's performance (Davis, 1989) and how much individuals believe their efficiency would improve using this technology. It is this perceived benefit that determines the adoption and uptake of new technologies.

Perceived usefulness is an important factor in TAM when determining an individual's intention to use a technology, however the application is widely accepted across many different technologies (Dahnil et al., 2014) and has been successfully applied to social media from an adoption perspective (Hwang, 2010; Chen et al., 2012). In terms of better performance, social media can be used to help consumers find product related information to support their purchasing decisions (Bianchi & Andrews, 2018).

In addition to the TAM, prior research has shown that perceived usefulness is important in shaping attitude (Yap & Gaur, 2015) as well as intentions (Flavian et al., 2006). For purposes of simplicity, this study takes into consideration the impact of perceived usefulness on attitudes, however the model will include the positive impact of perceived usefulness on the intent to engage with social media. This study also excludes the factor of perceived ease of use, this variable has been found to have low significance in previous studies (Bianchi & Andrews, 2013), however social media design is created

to ensure ease of use and therefore this could be considered as something inherent in the use of social media platforms. As such, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

H2a: Consumers' perceived usefulness is positively related to the intent to engage with brands on social media

H2b: Consumers' perceived usefulness is positively related to social media engagement

3.4.1.3 Perceived enjoyment

Drawing on Davis et al. (1992), enjoyment is how much a consumer enjoys using and engaging with social media, regardless of the usefulness. This is supported by Venkatesh et al. (2012) who confirm that enjoyment has been defined as an important construct for social media.

Perceived enjoyment can be defined as being in a state of flow (Lin et al., 2008) and a key factor in adoption and acceptance of technology (Davis et al., 1992) as well as the intention to use technology (Van der Heijden, 2004). Research shows that an individuals' motivation will increase if they perceive enjoyment from using the technology (Lin & Lu, 2011; Lin et al., 2014; Van der Heijden, 2004) and social media (Sullivan & Koh, 2019). Based on this, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

H3a: Consumers perceived enjoyment is positively related to the intent to engage with brands on social media

H3b: Consumers perceived enjoyment is positively related to social media engagement

3.4.1.4 Personalised communication

Personalised communication can be defined as sharing the right message at the right time using the right channel. Ensuring that communication, messaging and imagery are relevant to the target consumer becomes important, particularly in a time where attention becomes a commodity (Littlewood & Bick, 2015). According to Kreuter et al. (1999), personalised and tailored communications are believed to be more credible, better recalled and more successful in influencing behaviour.

Supporting this, research has started to show the increased use of social media as an important channel for communication during the COVID-19 pandemic (Wei et al., 2023) and as a result an interactive channel between brands and consumers (Du Plessis, 2017). An important consideration around communication is the concept of fake news and misinformation (Wei et al., 2023) and therefore for purposes of this research, the construct of personalised communication is considered to be factual and relevant information and communication, targeted at the consumer. Based on the this, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

H4a: personalised communication is positively related to the intent to engage with brands on social media

H4b: personalised communication is positively related to social media engagement

3.4.1.5 Social influence

Social influence is the degree to which social peers, family or friends influence the decision to behave in a certain way (Littlewood & Bick, 2015). Marketing literature posits that peers are key socialisation agents over and above family members (Zhang & Daugherty, 2009). Posey et al. (2010) believe that cultural inclinations directly influence individuals and maintain that social influence is an important factor, which is supported by Bandura's (1977a) social learning theory stating that behaviours are learned responses from other individuals within the environment.

Engaging with peers through social media communications creates a space to influence others and be influenced (Park et al., 2015), which links into the concept of personalised communication as discussed in 3.4.1.4 above. Baker and White (2010) also show that the intent to use and engage with social media sites increases when an individual perceives that other peers are using these platforms. Therefore, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

H5a: social influence is positively related to the intent to engage with brands on social media

H5b: social influence is positively related to social media engagement

3.4.1.6 Reciprocity

Reciprocity is the two-way engagement between the brand and the consumer resulting in value creation for both parties (Littlewood & Bick, 2015). Also referenced as the dyadic effect, reciprocity is another factor linked with the Social Penetration Theory (SPT) and can be defined as the exchange between two or more individuals with mutual benefit (Holton et al., 2015). Benefits can be displayed through reciprocity (Altman & Taylor, 1973), although this is not always the case.

The concept of reciprocity can also be linked as a cause for community interconnection (Pelaprat & Brown, 2012) and as such can be linked to the above factor of social influence.

Based on the above, and with the focus on positive benefits, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

H6a: reciprocity is positively related to the intent to engage with brands on social media

H6b: reciprocity is positively related to social media engagement

3.4.2. Perceived costs

As the use of social media continues to grow, an increasing number of studies are starting to consider the negative impacts of social media use and engagement. In addition to the two factors included in this study, privacy concern and social media fatigue, factors such as misinformation, disinformation and malinformation (Bakowicz, 2023; Wardle, 2020) are becoming much more prevalent in the media space, impacting trust. As these concepts are still being explored, they have been excluded from the model, however, will be considered as part of the recommendations going forward.

Based on the literature, the following factors have been incorporated in the conceptual model as perceived costs or negatively linked to the intent to engage or actual engagement with brands on social media:

3.4.2.1 Privacy concern

Despite the acceptance of social media, privacy concern remains a concern. Privacy risk can be defined as the concern for loss of anonymity, potential theft of information and invasion of privacy (Nelmapius & Boshoff, 2016). In the context of social media, privacy can be linked to the concern around the collection and use of personal information (Gutierrez et al., 2019) and this impacts the perceived risk around intention to engage with social media (Bhargava & Velasquez, 2021). It is this invasion and potential for personal information to be compromised that creates a negative perception (Alge, 2001). While consumers are open to sharing information when value is perceived (potentially resulting in a positive impact), it is the potential risk that drives this negative view. Based on the inherent risks identified, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

H7a: privacy concern is negatively related to the intent to engage with brands on social media

H7b: privacy concern is negatively related to social media engagement

3.4.2.2 Social media fatigue

While social media fatigue is yet to be fully defined (Islam et al., 2020; Sheng et al., 2023), the current view is that of individuals choosing not to participate owing to a sense of tiredness from using social media including the time spent as well as the overwhelming amount of content or information (Lee et al., 2016).

Prior research argues that the impact of social media fatigue can result in the intention to discontinue the use of social media; however this was based on the intensity of social media fatigue and therefore the impact ranged from certain periods of time to permanent (Maier et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2016; Xie & Tsai, 2021).

The impact of social media fatigue can be unfavourable to brands owing to the decrease in social media activity or even termination of use (Fu et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2016) and based on this, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

H8a: social media fatigue is negatively related to the intent to engage with brands on social media

H8b: social media fatigue is negatively related to social media engagement

3.4.3. Intent to engage with brands on social media

A central factor in this conceptual model is the intent to engage with brands on social media as a mediator to engagement and ultimately value creation. According to Ajzen (1991), the stronger the intention to conduct a certain behaviour, the greater the chance that the actual behaviour will be performed. Further to this, the intent also highlights the amount of effort individuals are willing to exert on this behaviour (Kim et al., 2008).

Based on TPB, the intention to engage on social media should be included prior to the actual behaviour, however the strength of the intention-behaviour relationship has varied across multiple studies. Intent can be impacted by mediating factors and should therefore be taken into consideration.

For this study, intention is considered as a factor that consumers will continue to engage with brands on social media platforms and based on research where engagement elicits positive reactions as well as behavioural, cognitive and emotional investment in brand interactions (Hollebeek, 2011) and more interest (Kim & Ko, 2012; Wang et al., 2012), the following hypothesis has been proposed:

H9: consumers' intention to engage with brands on social media is positively related to social media engagement

3.4.4. Social media engagement

The core mediator to value creation is the construct of social media engagement. Based on TPB, the intention to engage on social media should be included prior to the actual behaviour, however the strength of the intention-behaviour relationship has varied across multiple studies. Intent can be impacted by mediating factors and should therefore be taken into consideration.

Using the pioneering study by Brodie et al. (2011), engagement can be defined as a multi-faceted concept reflecting a psychological state derived through an interactive customer experience within service relationships. The concept is more than loyalty and

customer satisfaction and as a result provides real competitive advantage (Kumar, Petersen & Leone, 2010). As discussed in the literature review, there have been a number of different definitions applied to social media engagement and no consensus on the definition (Harrigan et al., 2017), however all definitions provided in this study refer to a two-way interaction between a brand and its consumers, a form of communicating a brands' story with its consumers, and the appeal to consumers motivational drivers to result in some form of persuasive goal.

What is important is that consumers tend to hold the power and will only engage with brands if they consider the interactions beneficial. Interestingly, there are multiple views around brand community and the perceptions that consumers want to feel connected, or part of a brand's community. Muniz and O'Guinn (2011) posit that this is often a misconception, yet researchers such as Carlson et al. (2018) and Dwivedi et al. (2021) refer to the fact that marketers are increasingly using brand communities to connect these consumers with the focus on facilitating the exchange of brand information. Taking the above into consideration, the following hypothesis has been proposed:

H10: Consumers' social media engagement is positively related to value creation

Marbach et al. (2015) suggest that prior research links customer engagement to value creation in general while other researchers hypothesise a relationship between online communities and customer value. The following section provides an overview of the construct of value creation as used in this study.

3.4.5. Value creation

The dependent variable of value creation is multidimensional, and social media can provide different value to brands and consumers depending on the strategy and objectives. This can include brand awareness (De Vries et al., 2012), promotion through word of mouth (Chen et al., 2011) increased sales via purchases of products and services (Agnihotri et al., 2012), as well as increased satisfaction and brand loyalty (Ismail, 2017; Lee et al., 2014). Further to this, engagement in social media brand

communities can help to build brand awareness, loyalty and trust (Bianchi & Andrews, 2018; Habibi et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2018).

According to Hair et al. (2010), most theoretical constructs such as satisfaction and loyalty are complex and can have multiple dimensions and meanings. As value creation can be complex and have different meanings, this construct has been represented through a collective set of questions rather than multiple questions for each single item to ensure better comprehension.

Based on the factors identified in the SMVC (Littlewood & Bick, 2015) and supported by the literature review, the following outcomes addressing value creation contain:

- Satisfaction
- Loyalty (incorporating word of mouth and purchase intent)
- Trust

The value creation construct has been simplified taking into consideration previously proved correlation to prevent the model from becoming too complex. The relationship marketing theory shows that an increase in satisfaction and loyalty will result in positive word of mouth and purchase intent. Trust, satisfaction, and loyalty have all been proven as strongly correlated (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

3.4.6. Usage

One of the core propositions of the research is to understand the impact of social media usage and engagement post COVID-19. Therefore, the moderator of usage has been included as a factor in the conceptual model.

While the impact of COVID-19 post pandemic is still an area for exploration, several researchers have indicated a rise in the use of social media use during (Cauberghe et al., 2021), with reports of more problematic social media use (PSMU). With limited studies in this area, PSMU needs further investigation (Casale et al., 2023). Mason et al., (2020) looked at consumer social media use and highlighted a rise in use of social media, with particular reference to the use of social media in collecting product information for evaluation and purchasing.

3.5. Research hypotheses

Based on the above, a number of hypotheses have been developed, including H1 to H6 to address the perceived benefits of social media engagement and H7 to H8 to address the perceived costs of social media engagement. H9 further examines the relationship between intent to engage and engagement, while H10 looks at the impact on value creation including trust and loyalty.

The table below provides a full summary of the hypotheses as derived from the conceptual model:

Table 3: Summary of hypotheses

Number	Hypothesis
Perceived benefits	
H1a	Consumers' positive attitude is positively related to the intent to engage with brands on social media.
H1b	Consumers' positive attitude is positively related to social media engagement
H2a	Consumers' perceived usefulness is positively related to the intent to engage with brands on social media
H2b	Consumers' perceived usefulness is positively related to social media engagement
H3a	Consumers' perceived enjoyment is positively related to the intent to engage with brands on social media
H3b	Consumers' perceived enjoyment is positively related to social media engagement
H4a	Personalised communication is positively related to the intent to engage with brands on social media
H4b	Personalised communication is positively related to social media engagement
H5a	Social influence is positively related to the intent to engage with brands on social media
H5b	

	Social influence is positively related to social media engagement
H6a	Reciprocity is positively related to the intent to engage with brands on social media
H6b	Reciprocity is positively related to social media engagement
Perceived costs	
H7a	H7a: privacy concern is negatively related to the intent to engage with brands on social media
H7b	H7b: privacy concern is negatively related to social media engagement
H8a	H8a: social media fatigue is negatively related to the intent to engage with brands on social media
H8b	H8b: social media fatigue is negatively related to social media engagement
Behavioural intention	
H9	Consumers' intention to engage with brands on social media is positively related to social media engagement
Value creation	
H10	Consumers' social media engagement is positively related to value creation

3.6. Chapter summary

Chapter 3 has provided an overview of the framework that was used to develop the conceptual model for this study as well as a summary of the related hypotheses.

The chapter provided a refresher on the research objective, which was supported by a concise discussion around the existing social media engagement models. Drawing on the gaps highlighted both in the existing literature as well as noted across the existing engagement models, the need for further research on social media engagement and a multidimensional view was identified. Taking into consideration existing models and

proven cognitive factors, the conceptual model goes further to define both affective and social factors as predictors of intention to engage and engagement behaviours.

The model is broken down into a view of the antecedents, using the lens of the social theories to depict a view of perceived benefits versus perceived costs. These antecedents are considered against the mediators of intent to engage and social media engagement. And finally, the model looks at the influence of engagement on the resulting dependent variable of value creation, simplifying factors of satisfaction, trust and loyalty. Further to this, moderator of social media usage has been added and will be explored as part of the multigroup analysis.

The next chapter, Chapter 4, will provide an overview of the research methodology, looking at the strategy, research paradigm and philosophy and detailed research design before concluding with the important factors of reliability, validity and ethics.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology for this study. The chapter begins with the overall research strategy in 4.2 before going into detail around the research paradigm and philosophy in 4.3 as well as the justification behind the chosen philosophy in 4.4. A more practical discussion follows in line with the philosophy application discussing the approach, methodology, time horizon and sampling process in 4.5 before going into detail around the survey development and data collection in 4.6 and 4.7 respectively. A short synopsis of the data analysis approach is provided in 4.8, supported by the important validity, reliability and ethics considerations in 4.9 and 4.10. The data analysis is elaborated on further in chapter 5 of the study. The chapter is concluded with the chapter summary in 4.11.

Figure 4.1 provides an overview of Chapter 4.

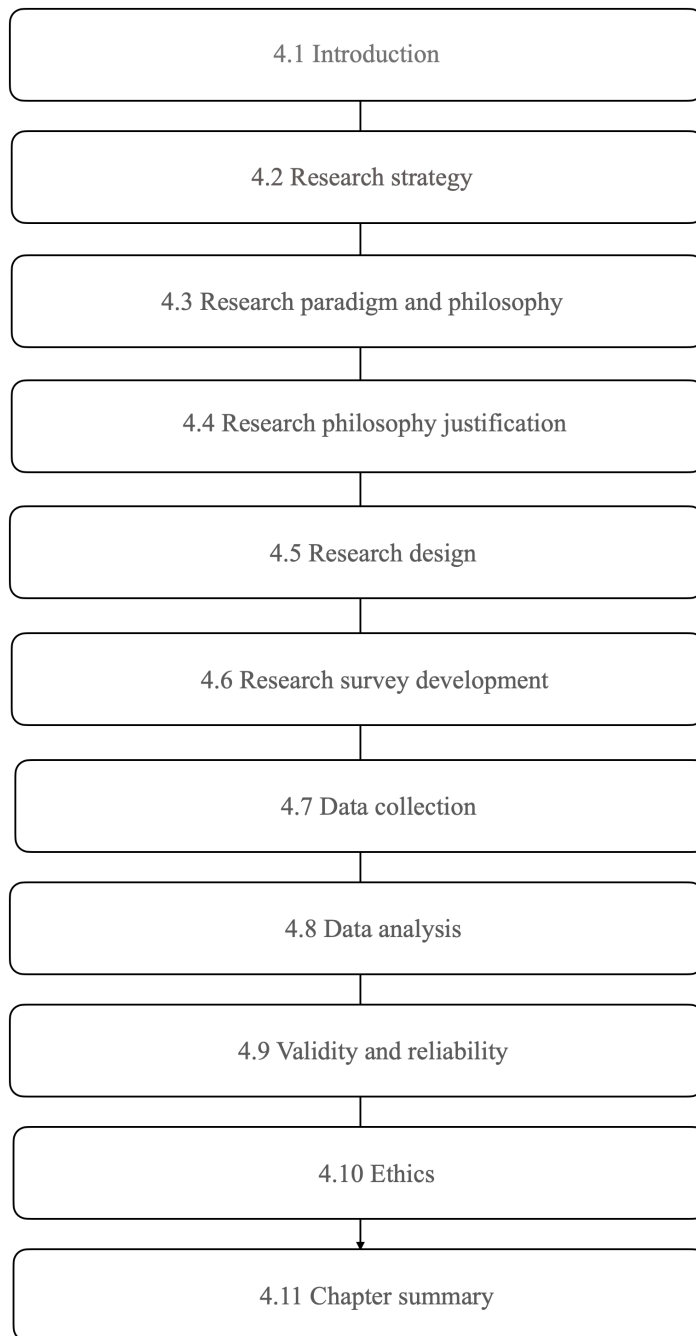


Figure 4.1: Chapter 4 overview

4.2. Research strategy

The purpose of this study was to examine additional behavioural and social constructs of social media engagement with a view to developing a conceptual model to test the influence of these factors on engagement with brands and the resulting value creation.

Previous research completed by Littlewood and Bick (2015) took an exploratory qualitative lens to understanding the SMVC and the factors influencing value creation from an organisational perspective, however this framework focused on the organisational lens and did not include behavioural and social consumer factors required for an overarching view. Therefore, the focus for the second phase of the research was to examine factors influencing social media engagement through an in-depth literature review prior to testing and validating this conceptual model. The factors identified have been discussed in detail in Chapter 3 above.

The study adopted a deductive approach, consistent with the positivist philosophy and based on gaps identified in the literature review around the need for a more holistic engagement framework. A deductive approach is one that further defines an explanation between constructs and concepts (Saunders et al., 2015). This approach makes use of hypotheses developed through a critical review of the existing literature, which are then tested through structural equation modelling.

4.3. Research paradigm and philosophy

The research paradigm can be considered a worldview of fundamental assumptions that guides the researcher by addressing 3 fundamental questions around ontology and the nature of reality, epistemology and the relationships formed as well as methodology and the approach (Lincoln & Guba, 2004).

The research philosophy is a subset of the research paradigm and guides the research approach and methodology (Cresswell, 2013). While no philosophical stance can be considered as preferential (Holden & Lynch, 2004), the practicalities of the research questions and implications will guide the researcher in choosing a specific research philosophy, which in turn will direct the research approach and way of gathering data.

There are 4 main philosophies, including:

- Positivism – emphasis on the use of a scientific and deductive quantitative method where hypotheses are created from existing theories to determine cause and effect relationships.
- Realism – combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to obtain a deeper understanding of the social world, as knowledge cannot be collected objectively from what takes place in the real world and therefore different methods are required (Dobson, 2001).
- Constructivism – stronger tendency for qualitative research including interviews and observation to create a more subjective understanding of the world. Quantitative data can be used to expand on qualitative findings.
- Pragmatism – emphasis on mixed methods to fully understand the problem with significance of the outcome efficacy. There is also a willingness to adapt approaches based on the research requirement.

This study follows a positivist philosophy, which will be elaborated further in the research philosophy justification.

4.4. Research philosophy justification

While the initial research used to develop the SMVC was qualitative, using the Delphi method to explore the topic of social media value, the proposed method for this research is quantitative to further refine, test and validate the framework. Taking into consideration that the main objective of this research was to examine and define each of the factors of engagement and establish the cause-and-effect relationship between these behavioural factors, the intent to engage with brands on social media platforms and the resulting value creation, a positivist philosophy was selected. Further to this, the development of hypotheses from theory to build out the conceptual model aligns with that of a positivist approach.

Aligned with the positivist view of Comte that “social phenomena should be studied using the scientific method” this study looks to prove or disprove the identified

hypotheses “using the scientific method, statistical analysis and generalisability of results” (Alakwe, 2017: p42).

The positivism philosophy provided guidance around the methodological approach, which is summarised in table 4 below.

Table 4: Research philosophy application

	Application to this study
Philosophy	Positivism
Approach	Deductive and scientific
Methodology	Quantitative online surveys
Time horizon	Cross-sectional
Population and sampling	Social media end consumers
Data collection and analysis	Pilot survey to determine effectiveness of survey design followed by main survey. Analysis contains descriptive stats, factor analysis, and structural equation modelling.

Source: adapted from Van de Ven (2007) and Saunders et al. (2015)

Based on the philosophy application, the research strategy and design details the framework around the approach and methodology, time horizon and sampling process before focusing in on the survey development in 4.6 and data collection in 4.7 (Birks & Malhotra, 2006).

4.5. Research design

4.5.1. Research approach and methodology

Consistent with the positivist philosophy, a deductive research approach was used to test and validate relationships within the framework that contribute to theory (Saunders et al., 2015). Using a deductive approach, the hypotheses were developed based on a critical view of the literature and further tested through the collection of data through a quantitative online survey to measure the factors. The measurement instrument (a self-

administered online survey) incorporated factors identified in the literature as well as outcomes from prior qualitative research from the Social Media Value Chain (Littlewood & Bick, 2015).

A pilot study was developed to ensure the questions in the survey were clear, concise and relevant to the target audience. That provided internal validity and integrity for the research process. Bell and Bryman (2007) suggest that self-administered surveys can often result in a false sense of accuracy and may be sensitive to self-selection bias. It is important that this was taken into consideration during analysis to ensure a reflective sample was selected to limit bias. The pilot study survey, including a full breakdown of the scale development per construct, as well as the applied changes to the pilot survey have been included in Appendix A.

4.5.2. Time horizon

Consistent with findings from Malhotra (2010) that cross-sectional research is prominent in marketing, this study makes use of a cross-sectional approach, which refers to the collection of data from a particular source at a particular time. This approach is considered as quicker to complete because it looks at a snapshot in time, however this does present criticism in that the validity of this approach can be impacted using these single sources (Rindfleisch et al., 2008). Bryman & Cramer (2012) do however support that cross-sectional research is appropriate when used to understand relationships between variables.

4.5.3. Sampling process

The approach towards sampling comprises identification of the target population as well as the sampling approach. Zikmund and Babin (2013) provide several stages to obtain the right data from a sample, including definition of the target population, the sample frame, the sampling method, sample size and finally the plan for selection before actual selection and data collection takes place.

As the sample from the previous SMVC study was focused on brands, the target population for this study looked to include end consumers that engage with brands through social media platforms to further understand the behavioural component.

Initially the study looked to focus on end consumers based in South Africa as this was the basis for the SMVC research; however, due to the use of snowball sampling and social media as a channel for awareness, the survey was shared wider than the initially identified target population. While the international sample size was not large enough for comparison purposes, the responses were added in the overall research as the theories in the conceptual model were global in nature.

Owing to the ever-increasing social media population, a sample frame was required to ensure a quicker timeframe to collect the data and more accurate results (Cooper et al., 2003). Due to the nature of this study, non-probability sampling was selected where the probability of each selection is not known. Based on the criticism around selection bias with convenience sampling (Rahi, 2017), snowball sampling was selected. This approach required contacting an initial group on social media, who then requested their networks to complete the survey. As the survey required a sample of social media users, Facebook and WhatsApp were selected as two key channels to share the survey. To prevent sampling bias and ensure a larger sample was achieved, the second survey included targeted demographics to increase representation across age groups.

The appropriate sample size is important to provide meaningful results that can be used in decision making, however this is a challenge due to varying opinions found in the literature as well as the advancement of statistical modelling software (Wolf et al., 2013). Sample size is extremely important when incorporating statistical techniques such as structural equation modelling (Rahi, 2017), however the flexibility of SEM does impede the ability to create generalised guidelines regarding sample size (MacCallum et al., 1999).

Research from Wolf et al. (2013: 925) states that “one size does not fit all” and corroborates prior insights from Marsh et al. (1998) suggesting that the increase in number of indicators per factor can compensate for a smaller sample size. They go on to say that researchers should consider whether simplicity of fewer indicators per factor outweighs the precision from having more indicators and provide an estimated sample size of 30 to 460 dependent on the number of factors and indicators.

For purposes of this study and taking into consideration the simplification of fewer indicators to ensure completion of the survey, the target population selected was 300. This is aligned with Hair et al.'s (2010) suggested minimum sample of 300 for models with seven constructs with multiple having fewer than 3 measured items.

Based on survey fatigue experienced during COVID-19, a self-administered approach was adopted in combination with the simplified approach to ensure a short completion time and to eliminate any potential interviewer bias (Kumar et al., 2018).

4.6. Research survey development

The first step in developing the survey instrument was to define the concept being measured. This process was completed as part of the literature review and further refined in the conceptual model development chapter. As mentioned in the conceptual model development, many concepts are multidimensional and as such require multiple constructs to be measured effectively.

Once the concept and resulting constructs were defined, the constructs were then operationalised using inputs adopted from existing validated scales in literature and previous studies. The scale development was based on existing scales as referenced in table 5 below. The scales were considered based on the studies available at the time of drafting and therefore the newer constructs such as social media fatigue, reciprocity, social influence and personalised communication were not as well established. The full set of questions has been included in the pilot survey overview by each item (see Appendix A) as well as the adaptations based on feedback from the pilot survey. The scale items were adapted to read as more personalised statements for each of the participants and the number of questions per item was reduced to shorten the survey and completion time to ensure the required sample size was met. Based on the lens of perceived benefits versus perceived costs adapted from SET, the study developed measures for all factors contained in the conceptual model.

4.6.1. Perceived benefits

Perceived benefits is comprised of six items identified as positively influencing the intent to engage and engagement with brands on social media based on a review of the literature.

Table 5 presents a view of the factors measuring the perceived benefit constructs in the proposed model and the referenced scale that was used for purposes of the survey instrument to measure the defined factor.

Table 5: Items used to measure perceived benefits of engagement

Factor	Summarised definition	Scale	References
Attitude	Positive or negative feelings towards performing the expected behaviour	Adapted from Bhattacharjee (2001) & Al-Debei et al. (2015)	TRA: Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; TPB: Ajzen, 1991; TAM: Davis, 1989
Perceived usefulness	How beneficial social media is to the consumer	Adapted from Davis et al. (1989) & Kim et al. (2009)	TAM: Davis, 1989
Perceived enjoyment	How much the consumer enjoys using social media	Adapted from Lee, Kim & Choi (2019) & Venkatesh & Bala (2008)	Davis et al., 1992 Lin et al., 2008 Venkatesh & Bala, 2008 Lee & Choi (2018)

Personalised communication	Credible information at the right time on the right channel	Adapted from Lau & Lee (1999)	Dual paths of communication: Bandura, 2001; SMVC: Littlewood & Bick, 2015; Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012; Kreuter et al., 1999.
Social influence	Influenced by social peers, family or friends	Adapted from Taylor & Todd, 1995	TRA: Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975 TRB: Ajzen, 1991 Social Learning Theory: Bandura, 1977a; SMVC: Littlewood & Bick, 2015; Posey et al., 2010; Cheung & Lee, 2010; Koo et al., 2011
Reciprocity	Two-way engagement with mutual benefit	Adapted from Labrecque (2014) & Gligor et al (2019)	SET: Homans, 1958; SPT: Altman & Taylor, 1973 SMVC: Littlewood & Bick, 2015; Altman & Taylor, 1973 Posey et al., 2010 Pelaprat & Brown, 2012 Labrecque, 2014; Holton et al., 2015

The table provides a view of the perceived benefits, which positively impact the engagement experience with brands on social media. The following section will explore the perceived costs.

4.6.2. Perceived costs

Perceived costs is comprised of two items identified as negatively influencing the intent to engage and engagement with brands on social media based on a review of the literature.

Table 6 presents a view of the factors measuring the perceived cost constructs in the proposed model and the referenced scale that was used for purposes of the survey to measure the defined factor.

Table 6: Items used to measure perceived costs of engagement

Factor	Summarised definition	Scale	References
Privacy concern	Concern for loss of anonymity, potential theft of information or invasion of privacy	Adapted from Ayyagari et al., 2011 & Bright et al., 2015	Nelmapius & Boshoff, 2016 Goasduff & Pettey, 2011 Bright et al., 2015 Gutierrez et al., 2019
Social media fatigue	Sense of tiredness from time spent using social media and overwhelming amount of content	Adapted from Xiao & Mou, 2019 and Bright et al., 2015	Bright et al., 2015 Lee et al., 2016 Sheng et al., 2023

The above table provides a view of the perceived costs, which negatively impact the engagement experience with brands on social media. The following section will explore the constructs of engagement and value creation.

4.6.3. Engagement and value creation

The mediator, social media engagement was measured with a 3-item scale that was adapted from Osei-Frimpong and McLean (2018) and Gligor et al (2019) while the intent to engage with brands on social media was adapted from Battacherjee (2001).

As mentioned in the conceptual model development chapter, value creation is considered a complex and multidimensional construct and as a result was adapted from multiple sources and measured with a 3-item scale across several factors, including:

- Satisfaction – scale adapted from Battacherjee (2001); Zboja and Voorhees (2006); and Hsiao et al. (2016)
- Loyalty – scale adapted from Zeithaml et al. (1996); and Labrecque (2014)
- Trust – scale adapted from Chadhuri & Holbrook (2001); and Habibi et al. (2014)

While this research made use of existing scales, Hair et al. (2003) refer to several criteria when developing scales. The first criteria looks at the degree to which the respondents can understand the questions of the scale. This was considered through the review of the survey questions by a SEM research expert in South Africa as well as the pilot testing of the survey. The second and third criteria looks at the descriptors and measurement of data as well as the ability to differentiate between the different constructs. This was considered through the adoption and adaptation of existing scales, however as these have not been previously tested, the results show several of the scales do include similar items of measurement, which resulted in a merge of some of the factors as seen in the final output. This will be discussed further in the data analysis chapter. The final criteria is scale reliability and yielding the same results, however as this study did not look to develop the scale but rather use this for testing purposes, this would be a consideration for future research with an adapted model and survey and a detailed review looking at the similarity of the measurement items.

With regards to the measurement scale, a Likert scale was used for the item measurement. This has also been a cause of much debate in the literature around the optimal number of response categories. Based on the literature, the most common scale for marketing research purposes is the 7-point scale (Bruner et al., 2005), which was supported by the SEM Expert reviewing the survey during development. For these reasons, a 7-point Likert scale was used for this study including strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, agree and strongly agree. This provides a greater spread of responses for the analysis.

To reduce method bias variance, the survey was updated to contain both positively and negatively worded items, however these negatively worded items were re-coded to ensure all constructs were symmetric prior to factor analysis (Podsakoff et al, 2003).

The survey questionnaire was tested as part of the pilot group prior to data collection to identify any potential completion issues and to determine question wording clarity as well as time to complete the survey. This feedback was noted and incorporated into the final draft of the survey as outlined in Appendix A.

A full version of the final survey questionnaire is included in Appendix B. This provides a view of the introductory letter outlining the purpose behind the questionnaire, screening questions to determine if the respondents were social media users who had engaged with brands, followed by demographic and behavioural profile questions before the main focus on the scale to measure predictor variables as well as the scale to measure outcome variables. The questions for the scale have been provided per factor and in order of the conceptual model development, however for the purposes of data collection, the questions were randomised before shared with respondents via the online survey tool.

4.7. Data collection

The data collected was used to respond to the research questions identified in chapter 1 of this study and validate the proposed constructs and hypotheses.

Data collection often comes with a number of challenges and the main challenge with this study was that data collection took place during the impacts of COVID-19 and relied on the use of digital and social media platforms to source participants. The initial survey was launched in August 2020 and ran for a period of 2 months to reach the target sample of 300. This was the required minimum sample required to achieve meaningful results with SEM. This is in line with Hair et al.,'s (2010) suggested minimum of 300 participants for models with 7 constructs. As there were no significant changes with COVID-19 lockdown during this period, no time-based inconsistencies in the data was expected. Based on initial analysis of the data and a number of incomplete surveys, a larger sample was required in order to ensure a significant model. The survey was therefore reopened for two weeks in November 2020 and an additional 193 survey responses were completed, taking the total to 493 with 411 fully completed and usable responses. The second survey was targeted to ensure a more diversified sample across the required demographics (including age and gender) to limit any potential bias.

The survey was shared via WhatsApp and Email as well as social media sites including Facebook and LinkedIn. Multiple reminders and shared posts were sent to drive participation, however there was an increased sense of pandemic fatigue during COVID-19 as defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2020 (Rodriguez-Blazquez et al., 2022), which resulted in slower response rates and the survey was therefore kept open for the period of 2 months to achieve the required minimum sample size. The benefit however was that the use of social media for entertainment, education and corporate reasons increased (Aggarwal et al., 2022) and this was incorporated into the study as part of the behavioural profile.

To address potential non-response errors, the survey was simplified and reduced as part of the pilot testing process. Reminders were sent via the different communication channels such as WhatsApp, Email and social media platforms (LinkedIn and Facebook) to prompt participation.

4.8. Data analysis

The first step in analysis was to screen the data using SPSS version 28. This process involved identifying missing data and checking for accuracy. This is an important step to ensure the data is ready for further multivariate analysis. The surveys with missing data were deleted as per Bryne (2010).

Once the data was screened and the final dataset selected, the next step was to understand the descriptive statistics to provide a description about the target sample characteristics (Zikmund & Babin, 2013) and create a general view of the sample's social media behaviour (Bianchi & Andrews, 2018).

The data was then put through a measurement purification process to assess the items and identify the factor structure through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) before determining convergent and discriminant validity of the factors. Based on the item-total correlations and Cronbach's alpha, items with low reliability and discriminant validity were removed before conducting an updated EFA. Hair et al. (2010) provide a set of guidelines to support which factors should be retained, including factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 and explaining at least 60% cumulative variance.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to verify the structure and test the hypothesis between the variables and their underlying construct (Bryman & Bell, 2012) to determine if the observed data fits the model. Fit indices including Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) were used to assess fit.

The analysis used SEM to assist in a more accurate synthesis of the data to identify the direct and indirect influences on social media engagement as well as the strength of the relationships. SEM is a measurement technique that is more suited to complex relationships and allows for analysis of several variables for a single independent or dependent variable. The strength of this technique is that it allows the researcher to

consider a number of possible alternatives to find the variables with statistical significance (Hair et al., 2010). SEM as a research approach does not come without concerns. Issues in sample size suggest the importance of determining the minimum sample size required to achieve statistical significance. Additional issues such as fit indices and selection of approach should also be considered in applying SEM (Hoe, 2008). AMOS version 28 was used as the dedicated SEM software. More detailed information around the SEM stages has been provided in the following Data Analysis and Results Chapter.

The data for this study was analysed with the support from a qualified structural equation modelling expert.

4.9. Validity and reliability

Validity is a key consideration as part of the methodology and data analysis, particularly for SEM. Validity looks at the accuracy of what is being measured while reliability looks at how this is being measured.

According to several researchers including Hair et al. (2010) and Zikmund-Fisher et al. (2010), validity shows the research accuracy and establishing a valid survey instrument is an important consideration to ensure findings are trustworthy. There are several different types of validity to consider, including content and construct validity.

Content validity refers to the completion of an extensive literature review. For purposes of this research, an extensive review of social media engagement as well as behavioural and usage theories was reviewed to determine the identified gaps as well as the scope for the conceptual model and constructs. The theories were adapted to create a multi-dimensional conceptual model and survey instrument. A pilot study was conducted to ensure the questions were clear and respondents were able to answer accordingly.

An important requirement when using SEM is construct validity, which shows that theory has been thoroughly reviewed to identify relevant factors that most reflect the constructs. Other important requirements are convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity measures the extent to which two items are similar to each other within a factor, while discriminant validity is how unique each factor is and how it differs from the other factors. To ensure validity, items with low reliability and discriminant validity were removed when assessed as part of the Cronbach's Alpha.

Reliability is another key consideration for research quality and looks at the extent to which the research findings would be consistent if repeated by another researcher or at another time (Saunders et al., 2015). While this should be considered, it is also important to note that as this is a cross-sectional study based on a specific time period, findings could change over time as the context changes.

There are several factors to consider for reliability, including participant error and bias and researcher error and bias. To mitigate risk on the participant side, the survey was reviewed by an SEM expert and tested as part of a pilot to ensure limited errors. The survey incorporated a mixed question set to limit the chance of response bias, which could result if the questions were asked in a structured order. Respondents were also assured of complete anonymity and able to complete the survey at their convenience. From a researcher perspective, once the data collection was completed, the data analysis was conducted with the support of a SEM expert to mitigate any researcher bias towards the analysis and findings.

4.10. Ethics

This research study adhered to all ethical considerations. Participation in the study was voluntary with no incentivisation offered. All participants were informed about the purpose of the research and completion was considered as consent. The survey ensured complete anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents' details with only aggregated data being used and shared in the final thesis and associated publications.

Ethical clearance was submitted to the Commerce Faculty Ethics in research committee at the Graduate School of Business, University of Cape Town and approved.

4.11. Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a detailed discussion of the research methodology applied. The chapter started with a view of the overall research strategy before providing more detail around the selection and justification of the positivist philosophy and the application to this study. As highlighted in the chapter, positivism was the most fitting philosophy based on the purpose of this research and the use of a scientific and deductive quantitative method with the creation of hypotheses from existing theory to determine relationships.

This was supported by a practical discussion of the research approach and methodology, detailing the use of a cross-sectional approach that is more widely used in marketing research as well as the sampling process and approach to ensuring an appropriate sample size for validity purposes.

An overview of the survey development was provided, going through each of the steps in detail from defining the concepts and resulting constructs. The conceptual model was adapted from SET and divided the constructs into perceived benefits versus perceived costs before looking at the dependent variable and outcome of value. The chapter continued with a detailed overview of the data collection and data analysis process, introducing the selection of SEM. To conclude, important considerations around ensuring validity and reliability were discussed as well as ensuring the necessary ethical requirements were met.

The next chapter will present the analysis and results of the survey, including a detailed view of the demographic and behavioural data as well as the full SEM output.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

5.1. Introduction

Chapter 5 presents a detailed view of the data analysis and results of the survey. The chapter starts with the sample size and data screening in 5.2 before providing a deep dive into the demographic and behavioural profiles of the respondents in 5.3 and 5.4. The chapter then moves to the conceptual model, which is validated in 5.5 before detailing the CFA results and the full measurement model in 5.6. Once the measurement model has been assessed for reliability and validity, the structural model is assessed in 5.7 with a view of the resulting analysis for each of the hypotheses. Over and above the SEM analysis, comparative analysis is conducted to look through the lens of SET and the perceived benefits versus costs in 5.8 before concluding with multigroup analysis of social media users (rare versus frequent) and usage pre and during COVID-19 (same usage and increased usage) in 5.9. The chapter is concluded with the summary in 5.10.

Figure 5.1 provides an overview of Chapter 5.

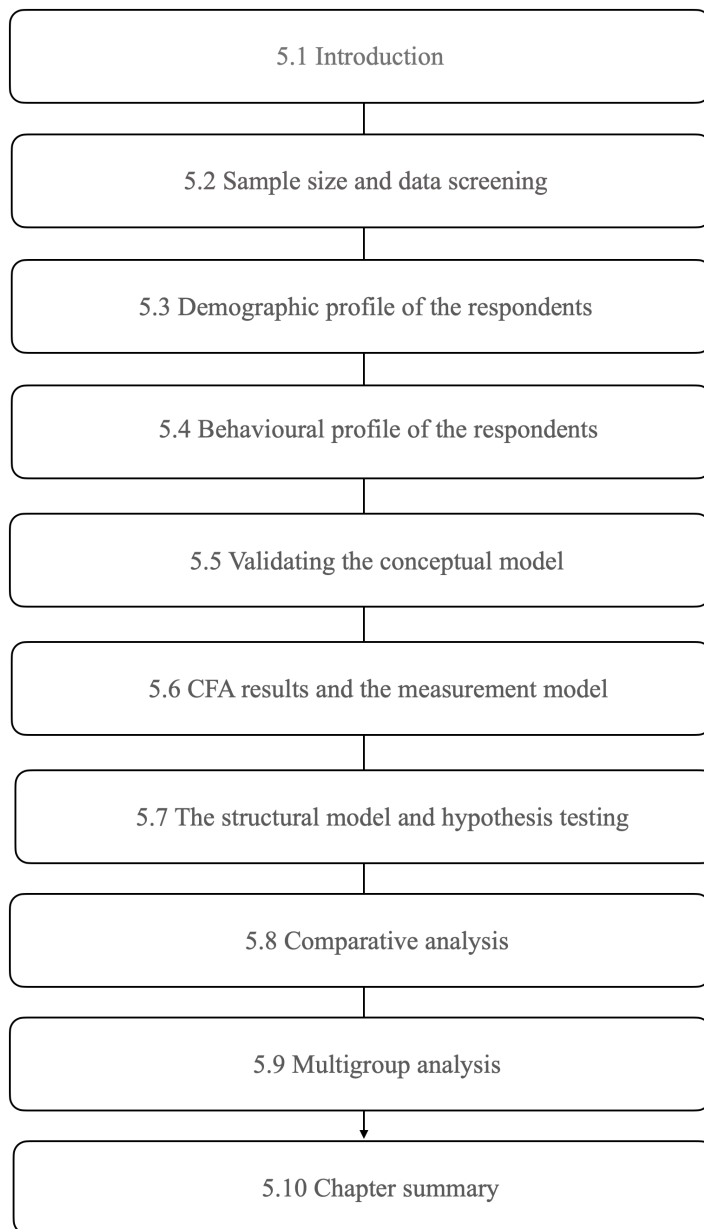


Figure 5.1: Chapter 5 overview

5.2. Sample size and data screening

The data obtained from the total sample of 411 completed survey responses was loaded into IBM SPSS version 28. A data screening process was followed to check the accuracy of the data file. This included identifying missing data, assessing outliers and ensuring the data was ready for further multivariate analysis.

Of the total 493 responses, 82 survey responses were identified as incomplete or missing data and therefore removed from the dataset. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, two rounds of data collection were run to ensure a minimum of 300 completed surveys, aligned to the requirement for SEM as per Hair et al. (2010).

5.3. Demographic profile of the respondents

The final sample used for the study comprised a total of 411 global respondents. The following sections provide a breakdown of the key demographics collected from the survey, including gender, age, geographic profile and education level.

5.3.1 Gender

Table 7 provides an overview of the gender profiles for the sample. Based on the use of non-probability sampling to ensure a larger sample size, there is potential for response bias as seen with the higher response of females at 66.4%.

In South Africa, social media usage by gender closely follows the South Africa population split with 51.5% female and 48.7% male according to the latest South Africa Social Media statistics by Meltwater (2024). While the percentage split is higher for females in this study, the higher percentage is reflective of social media usage in South Africa at the time of the survey and therefore could be seen to strengthen the statistical analysis.

While not statistically significant, there is evidence that in online surveys, female participation rates are higher than males (Wu et al., 2022).

Table 7: Gender identity of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	273	66.4
Male	136	33.1
Prefer not to answer	2	0.5
Total	411	100.0

5.3.2 Age

Table 8 provides a breakdown of the respondents by age group. The two largest age groups include 30-39 followed by 20-29, which could be a result of the requirement to engage with brands on social media. Research studies have looked at the significance of social media activity between age groups, however results may not be representative and have therefore not been referred to in this study. While non-probability sampling was used, targeting across age groups was considered in sharing across the different channels to attempt a wider representation.

According to the latest Statista (2024) results, the below is aligned with the age group representation of social media users in South Africa with the largest being female users between 25 and 34 at 15.2% followed by males at 14.4%.

Table 8: Age group of respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 20	5	1.2
20-29	126	30.7
30-39	140	34.1
40-49	96	23.4
50-59	27	6.6
60+	17	4.1
Total	411	100.0

5.3.3 Geographic profile

Table 9 provides a breakdown of the respondents by geographic profile. The initial focus on the survey was South Africa, however owing to the nature of sharing the survey across social media channels, the survey was shared and completed across geographies. While the response rate outside of South Africa only represents 10% of the sample, it was included to show a more global view.

The response rate below is aligned with Gauteng at 47.4% being the largest population in South Africa.

Table 9: Geographical location of respondents

Location	Frequency	Percentage
Eastern Cape	9	2.2
Free State	3	0.7
Gauteng	195	47.4
Kwazulu-Natal	34	8.3
Limpopo	2	0.5
Mpumalanga	5	1.2
North West	6	1.5
Northern Cape	1	0.2
Western Cape	114	27.7
Other	42	10.2
Total	411	100.0

Table 10 provides a detailed breakdown of the “other” geographic regions as input by respondents. The largest global representation was from the United Kingdom (3.2%) followed by Australia (2.2%) and Singapore (1.2%).

As mentioned in the methodology, while the global sample is not large enough to consider any cross tabulations, it has been incorporated in the final dataset for purposes of this analysis.

Table 10: Detailed view of "other" geographical location of respondents

Location	Frequency	Percentage
Australia	9	2.2
Botswana	1	0.2
France	1	0.2
Germany	2	0.5
Israel	1	0.2
Kenya	1	0.2

Namibia	1	0.2
New Zealand	1	0.2
Singapore	5	1.2
United Kingdom	13	3.2
United States of America	2	0.5
Zambia	1	0.2
Zimbabwe	4	1.0
	369	89.8
Total	411	100.0

5.3.4 Education

Table 11 provides a breakdown of the respondents by education. The majority of respondents included in the sample have a Bachelors Degree (44.5%), followed by a Masters Degree (25.1%) and a Post Matric Certificate or Diploma (19.5%). This is expected based on the non-probability sampling method and approach of sharing the survey through social media channels, which resulted in the survey being shared across a network. As this study does not look at cross-tabulations by education level, this sample provides a good spread of appropriately qualified respondents.

Table 11: Education level of respondents

Education level	Frequency	Percentage
High school or less	33	8.0
Post Matric or Diploma	80	19.5
Bachelors Degree	183	44.5
Masters Degree	103	25.1
Doctoral Degree	2	0.5
Other	10	2.4
Total	411	100.0

5.4. Behavioural profile of the respondents

The following section provides an overview of the behavioural profile, looking at the usage, frequency and channels of use for the respondents.

5.4.1 Length of time

Question: How long have you been using social media?

Table 12 provides a view of the length of time respondents' have been using social media. As expected, the majority (75.9%) have been using social media for over 5 years. While globally, social media adoption and usage has been around for many years, South Africa is known to be behind the curve in terms of technology adoption and has only recently started to see the shift to social media commerce and customer service. As such, the timeline for usage was included up to 5 years to see how many of the users are still new to using social media and in particular engaging with brands, which was part of the screening questions.

Table 12: Period of time using social media

Length of time	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 year	1	0.2
1-2 years	3	0.7
3-4 years	2	0.5
4-5 years	6	1.5
More than 5 years	312	75.9
Total	411	100.0

5.4.2 Daily usage prior to COVID-19

Question: Prior to COVID-19, how much time did you spend on social media daily?

Table 13 shows the average time that respondents spend on social media daily prior to COVID-19. Of the total sample, 87 respondents (21.2%) did not provide an answer. This might be as a result of not remembering how much time they spent on social media

channels previously or realising how much time they do spend and opting not to disclose this. The majority of respondents (29.7%) indicate that they spent around 1-2 hours per day with 3-4 hours at the second highest (23.1%). Only 1.0% indicated that they didn't use social media on a daily basis.

Table 13: Average daily use of social media prior to COVID-19

Daily Usage	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	68	16.5
1-2 hours	122	29.7
3-4 hours	95	23.1
5-6 hours	21	5.1
7-8 hours	3	0.7
More than 8 hours	11	2.7
I didn't use it daily	4	1.0
No response	87	21.2
Total	411	100.0

5.4.3 Daily usage post COVID-19

Question: Since the start of COVID-19, how much time do you spend on social media daily?

Table 14 looks at the average amount of time respondents spend on social media since the start of COVID-19. This question follows the same pattern as the previous question with 87 (21.2%) of respondents not answering the question. There has been a slight shift in the usage patterns since the start of COVID-19 with the majority of respondents (25.8%) using social media on average 3-4 hours per month. The largest percentage change overall from pre COVID-19 to during COVID-19 is the 7-8 hour at 400% followed by the 5-6 hours at 190% increase.

Table 14: Average daily use of social media since the start of COVID-19

Daily Usage	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	37	9.0

1-2 hours	89	21.2
3-4 hours	106	25.8
5-6 hours	61	14.8
7-8 hours	15	3.6
More than 8 hours	13	3.2
I didn't use it daily	3	0.7
No response	87	21.2
Total	411	100.0

Figure 5.2 below shows an overall view of average daily social media usage pre and during COVID-19 as a percentage. For pre-COVID use, the majority of respondents selected under 4 hours on average, while this increases to 6 hours during COVID with a few super users (3.2%) selecting more than 8 hours average use daily.

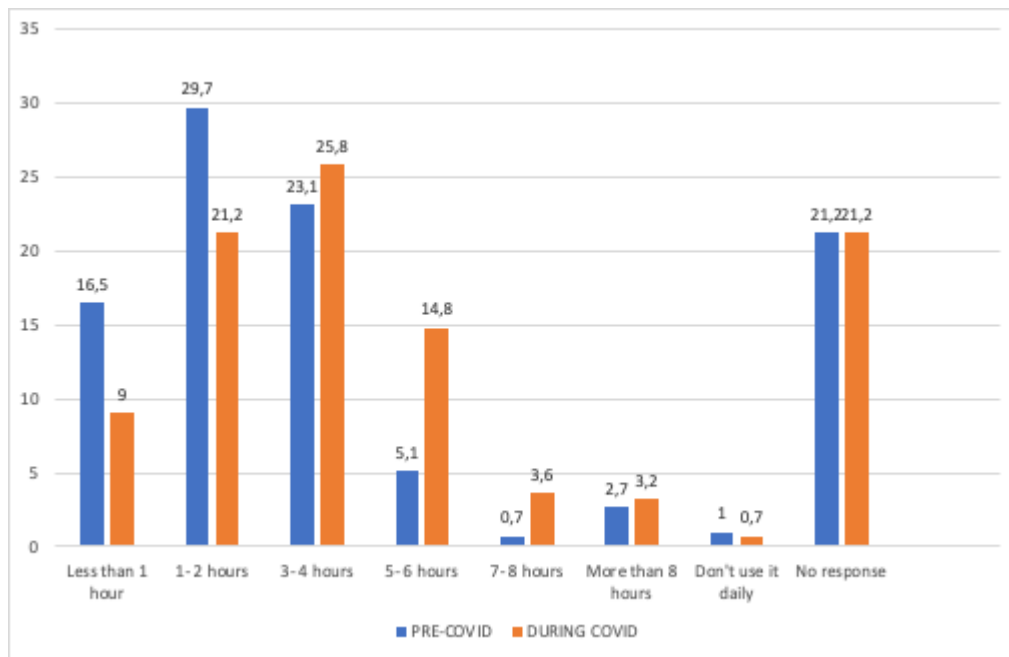


Figure 5.2: Average daily use showing pre and during COVID-19

5.4.4 Average usage with brands

Question: On average how often do you use social media to engage with brands or companies?

Table 15 shows the frequency with which respondents use social media to engage with brands or companies. The results show a divergent response with 25.1% of the respondents only engaging a few times a year, followed closely by 24.6% who engage all the time.

Table 15: Frequency of social media use with brands

Frequency of use	Frequency	Percentage
A few times a year	103	25.1
Monthly	49	11.9
Weekly	97	23.6
Once a day	61	14.8
All the time	101	24.6
Total	411	100.0

5.4.5 Engagement increase post COVID-19

Question: Has your engagement with brands or companies increased because of COVID-19, and why?

Table 16 shows whether respondents' saw an increase in their engagement with brands owing to COVID-19. With the overall usage percentage increases in Table 7 and Table 8, an increased engagement is to be expected, however this might not be specifically with brands or companies, this could be viewing friends and family content.

Table 16: Increase of use with brands during COVID-19

Increase of use	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	229	55.7
No	182	44.3
Total	411	100.0

5.4.6 Top social media sites

Question: What social media sites do you use most often to engage with brands or companies?

The top 3 sites for engaging with brands include Facebook (72%), Instagram (63.5%) and WhatsApp (54.5%). These results are reflective of the top social media sites used at the time of the survey; however, this has since shifted according to recent research to show an increased use of TikTok and Snapchat.

These results are shown graphically in Figure 5.3 below highlighting the top site as Facebook, followed by Instagram and then WhatsApp.

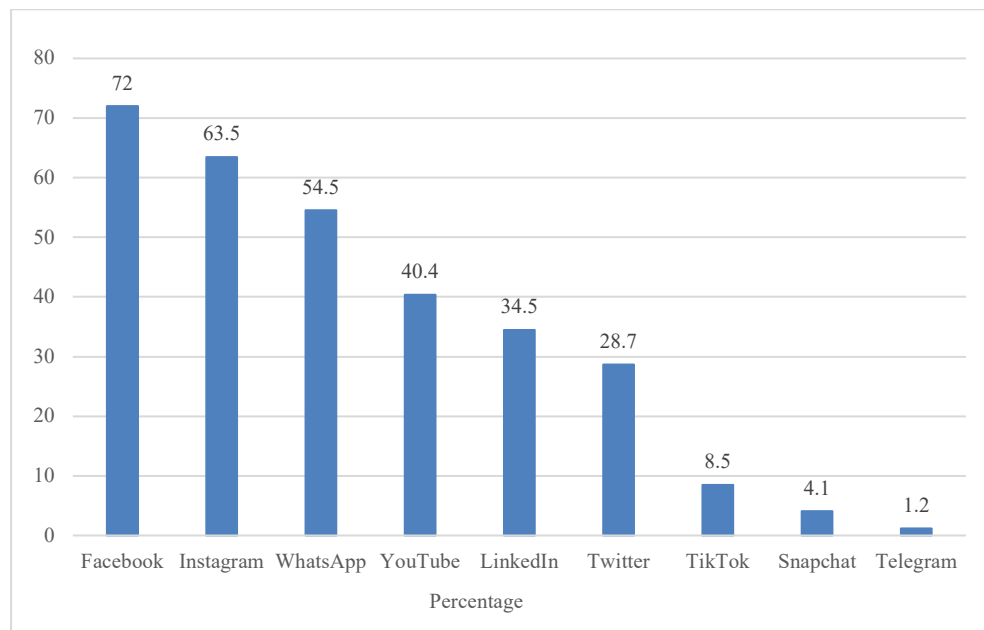


Figure 5.3: Preferred platform for social media use

5.4.7 Social media preferred usage

Question: What do you use social media sites for?

Top usage of social media platforms with brands includes research on a product or service (63.3%) followed closely by Inspiration (62.3%) and Passing time (55.2%). This is consistent with existing literature on popular brand posts with product and service-related content (informational posts) generating more shares and comments (De Vries et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2018). Purchasing of both essential and luxury items was

the lowest at 19.2% and 17%, however this is consistent with the research around online purchasing and privacy concerns.

Other usage that refers to engagement with brands includes following specific causes, new product launches and engaging with other fans. The remaining reasons referred to alternate uses include interacting with friends and family, work, promoting their own products, learning and job hunting.

These results are shown graphically in Figure 5.4 below highlighting the top three uses as research, inspiration and passing time.

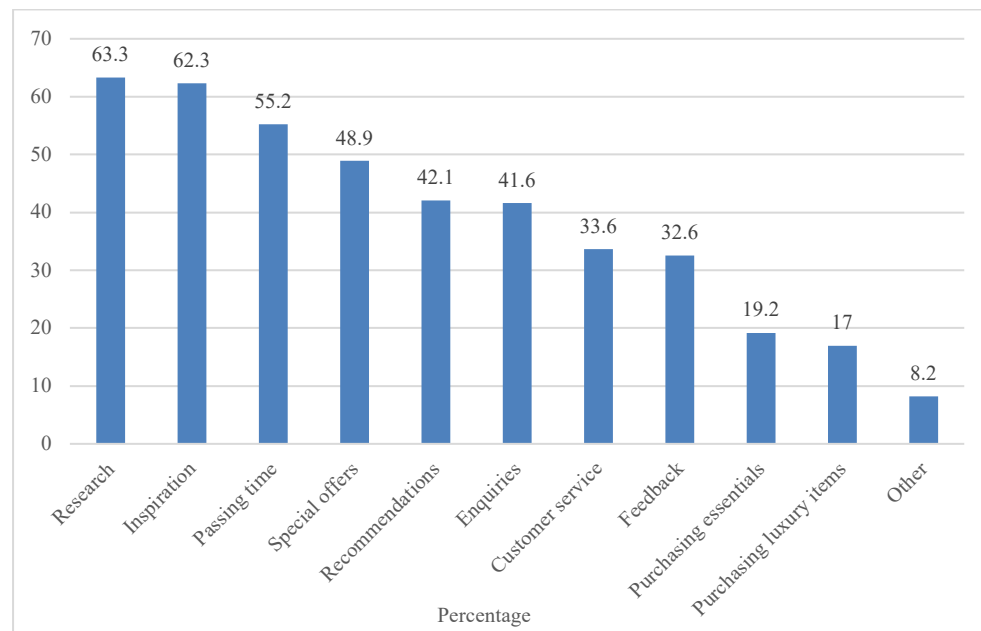


Figure 5.4: Preferred usage on social media sites

The following section will go into detail around the conceptual model created from literature as well as the rationale for selecting SEM.

5.5. Validating the conceptual model

5.5.1. Rationalisation for Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

SEM was chosen to validate the proposed conceptual model owing to the complexity of the model and requirement to test the relationship between multiple variables. SEM can be described as a multivariate technique that looks to gain information about the relationship between the latent (unobserved) and observed constructs in a proposed model (Schreiber et al., 2006). In addition, SEM is able to address the measurement error while assessing the causal relationships (He et al., 2012) through two components including the measurement model for fit and validity (essentially the CFA) as well as the final structural model (Schreiber et al., 2006).

SEM is an advancement on traditional regression analysis based on the ability to assess complex models, addressing both the direct and the indirect relationships (Bagozzi, 2010). This is an important aspect in selecting SEM to assess the direct relationships between the constructs and the indirect relationship of each factor on the outcome of trust and loyalty via the intent to engage. SEM also provides for an estimation of fit of the data collected against the proposed model (Hair et al., 2010), which was fundamental based on the use of multiple scales that have not previously been tested together.

A six-stage approach is recommended by authors such as Hair et al. (2010) when applying SEM for analysis. This includes defining the individual constructs (as identified and defined in Chapter 2), development of the measurement model (as discussed in Chapter 3), designing the study for empirical results (as presented in the methodology of Chapter 4), and finally evaluating the measurement model validity before specifying and assessing the structural model and validity (as discussed further in this chapter 5).

5.5.2. Factor Analysis

To analyse the structure of the data and relationships between constructs, factor analysis was used as the starting point (Hair et al., 2010). Based on the objective of validating the proposed conceptual model and hypotheses through SEM, CFA was selected. This

allowed for measurement validation and refinement of the variables as part of the SEM process. As part of the purification process, EFA was used to validate the items loading prior to the second round of CFA. The results for the EFA are included in Appendix D.

CFA is a theory driven confirmatory technique (Schreiber et al., 2006) and considered to be more widely used in SEM owing to the ability for inferential testing to determine the significance of the factor loadings as well as the overall model fit (Bagozzi, 2010), resulting in an overall assessment of the measurement model validity. Validity is dependent on both the model fit as well as the construct validity, which are discussed further below. CFA is ultimately used to test if the measures of a particular construct are consistent with that of the researcher.

The measurement model for SEM tests the reliability of the observed variables and allows for examination of interrelationships, or lack among the latent constructs (Schreiber et al., 2006). CFA makes use of factor loadings and modification indexes to obtain the best indicators prior to testing the full structural model, allowing for observed variables to be dropped or added where required. For purposes of this study, a pooled measurement model was used to validate multiple latent constructs.

5.5.3. Assessing model fit

Model fit is important to consider in SEM as it evaluates the degree to which the hypothesised theoretical model aligns with the observed data. In addition, model fit considers how well the measurement model denotes the variable relationships within the model.

To evaluate whether the theoretical conceptual model is supported by the empirical data, researchers can refer to a number of goodness-of-fit indicators with authors such as Schreiber et al. (2006) referring to common fit indexes including Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) for one-time analyses. Authors Hu and Bentler (1999) refer to two of the most popular evaluation methods being chi-squared goodness-of-fit statistics and fit indexes, which include absolute fit indexes such as goodness-of-fit (GFI), RMSEA and root mean squared residual (SRMR) and incremental fit indexes such as the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI).

Hu and Bentler (1999) go further to investigate adequate cut-off criteria for these fit indexes with preliminary analysis suggesting certain combinational rules should be used to assess fit. According to these authors when evaluating the sensitivity of several fit indexes, GFI performed poorly and was therefore not recommended when evaluating model fit.

Owing to the inconsistency around which fit indices should be used when presenting SEM results, this study has used fit indices adapted as per the Table 17 below.

Table 17: Model fit indices

Fit Index	Definition	Reasonable fit
CMIN/DF	Relative/normed Chi-square	< 5.0
GFI	Goodness-of-Fit Index	> 0.9
TLI	Tucker Lewis Index	> 0.9
CFI	Comparative Fit Index	> 0.9
RMSEA	Root mean square error of approximation	< 0.08
SRMR	Standardised root mean square residual	< 0.08

(Source: adapted from Byrne, 1994; Schreiber et al., 2006; Hu & Bentler, 1998; Bentler, 1990; and Hair et al., 2010).

An overview of the fit indices as per the table above have been detailed below:

5.5.3.1 Chi-square (χ^2)

The Chi-square (χ^2) measure looks at the extent of the difference between the sample and its covariance matrices (Hu & Bentler, 1999) and is seen by many as a fundamental fit measure. The required result for chi-square values is to be low with a p-value greater than the threshold of 0.05 to indicate a significant difference. There are however some limitations of this measure, including the fact that it is sensitive to sample size and larger samples can present a much larger chi-square value; however, to overcome this restriction, it is recommended to make use of the relative Chi-square (CMIN/DF),

which reduces the impact of sample size (Hooper et al., 2008). A CMIN/DF score below 5 implies a reasonable model fit.

5.5.3.2 Goodness-of-fit (GFI)

The Goodness-of-fit (GFI) is another common fit index that calculates the proportion of variance and should range between 0 and 1, with a value closer to 1 indicating a perfect fit. It is widely accepted that a GFI above 0.9 demonstrates a reasonable fit (Byrne, 1994; Kline, 2011). There are once again limitations with GFI's sensitivity to model complexity, in which case the adjusted goodness-of-fit (AGFI) can be used, with a value above 0.9 indicating a good fit (Hooper et al., 2008). Hu and Bentler (1999) and Schreiber et al. (2006) do not recommend GFI to assess model fit, or if used, it should be done so in conjunction with other fit indices to get a comprehensive assessment.

5.5.3.3 Tucker Lewis Index

The Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) measures the fit or relative improvement of the hypothesized model against the null model. Then benefit of the TLI is that is insensitive to size (Marsh et al., 1996). The value of TLI should be between 0 and 1 with values greater than 0.9 indicating a good fit (Byrne, 1994; Hair et al., 2010).

5.5.3.4 Comparative Fit Index (CFI)

The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) measures the improvement of the hypothesized model against the null model and takes into consideration model complexity and sample size (Bryne, 2010). The CFI values can fall between 0 and 1, with values greater than 0.9 indicating a good fit (Byrne 1994; Kline, 2011).

5.5.3.5 Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)

The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) measures how well the model fits against the population and takes into account both the model complexity and the sample size (Hu & Bentler, 1998). Hair et al. (2010) recommend that researchers report RMSEA values between 0.03 and 0.08 as indicative of reasonable fit with 95% confidence.

5.5.3.6 Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)

The Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) indicates the average standardised difference between the covariance matrix and the hypothesized model. The SRMR ranges between 0 and 1, however lower values of SRMR indicate a better model fit with a cut off range from 0.05 (Bryne, 2010) to 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999)

For the purposes of SEM, it is suggested to report on the CMIN/FD, CFI, RMSEA and SRMR at a minimum to ensure a comprehensive assessment (Kline, 2015).

5.5.4. Determining validity and reliability

Once the CFA for the measurement model has been completed, measures for validity and reliability need to be summarised and assessed prior to modelling the structural model. Assessing the measurement model for reliability should be done at both an indicator reliability level as well as a construct level for internal consistency reliability (Hair et al., 2010).

5.5.4.1 Construct validity

The construct validity measures how well the measured items represent the theoretical idea or construct (Hair et al., 2010). The accuracy of the measurement is further determined by convergent and discriminant validity (Malhotra, 2010).

5.5.4.2 Convergent validity

Convergent validity refers to the extent of correlation between similar measures within a specific construct. Therefore, a successful convergent validity will show that all measured items within a construct share a high proportion of common variance. Convergent validity is examined through factor loading, where loading estimates are > 0.5 , as well as the average variance extracted (AVE), where $AVE > 0.5$ and composite reliability (CR), where $CR > 0.7$. According to Hair et al. (2010), CR is an important indicator for reliability and commonly used with CFA.

5.5.4.3. Discriminant validity

Discriminant (or divergent) validity on the other hand refers to the extent by which the measures are different. Therefore, a successful discriminant validity will show that the construct is distinct from other constructs and the set of items link to represent only one

latent variable. According to Hair et al. (2010), discriminant validity can be measured two ways, the first by comparing the fit between a two-construct and one-construct model of the more rigorous way of comparing the AVE for any two constructs with the squared correlation. This method has been used for the purposes of this study.

5.6. CFA results and measurement model

This section presents the results of CFA and resulting measurement model. AMOS v28 was used to code the constructs.

Table 18 illustrates the initial construct naming convention, item labels and question numbers as defined in the survey instrument included in Appendix B:

Table 18: Construct definition for Phase 1

Construct Name	Construct Item and Label	Question Number
Attitude (ATT)	ATT1 – ATT3	2a
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	PU1-PU3	2b
Perceived enjoyment (PE)	PE1-PE3	2c
Personalised communication (C)	C1-C3	2d
Social influence (SI)	SI1-SI3	2e
Privacy concern (PC)	PC1 – PC3	2f
Reciprocity (R)	R1-R3	2g
Social Media Fatigue (SMF)	SMF1-SMF4	2h
Intent to engage (IE)	IE1-IE3	3a
Engagement (E)	E1-E3	3b
Customer Satisfaction (CS)	CS1-CS3	3c
Loyalty (L)	L1-L4	3d
Trust (T)	T1-T3	3e

5.6.1. CFA overview

Based on the survey designed from the literature, CFA was selected as the preferred measurement method for SEM to test the data against the fit of the conceptual model (Streiner, 2006). Owing to several of the scales having never previously been tested before, two rounds of optimisation and further adjustment to the constructs was required to achieve acceptable fit indices.

For Model 1, the construct of reciprocity was removed. The removal of this construct resulted in output Model 1 with an acceptable CMIN/DF of 2.341, CFI of 0.907 and a RMSEA of 0.057; however, the GFI of 0.848 and TLI of 0.891 were not within the accepted thresholds. The output of Model 1 has been included in Appendix C.

To address the GFI and TLI in Model 1, further optimisation was required for Model 2 with the removal of a non-loading item Social Media Fatigue (SMF) 3. This resulted in an acceptable CMIN/DF of 2.170, TLI of 0.906, CFI of 0.922 and RMSEA of 0.053; however, the GFI of 0.866 was still below the acceptable threshold. The output of Model 2 has been included in Appendix D.

The resulting model fit summary for the Full Measurement Model did not meet the acceptable thresholds and this therefore required a review of the constructs and EFA was conducted to determine factor loadings to support an adjusted phase 2.

Table 19 provides an overview of the various model fit summaries for the output of Model 1 and Model 2.

Table 19: Measurement model - model fit summaries

Fit Index	Definition	Cut-off values	Model 1	Model 2	Full Measurement Model V1
CMIN/DF	Relative/normed Chi-square	< 5.0	2.341	2.170	2.279

GFI	Goodness-of-Fit Index	> 0.9	0.847	0.866	0.847
CFI	Comparative Fit Index	> 0.9	0.907	0.922	0.908
TLI	Tucker Lewis Index	> 0.9	0.891	0.906	0.891
RMSEA	Root mean square error of approximation	< 0.08	0.056	0.053	0.056
SRMR	Standardised RMR	<0.08			0.552

Further investigation into the combined scales and items suggested several similarities across the questions. As this combination of scales has not been tested together previously, this resulted in having to determine which of these constructs needed to be adjusted. EFA was conducted to determine the item loadings and the adjusted constructs were then used as input into a second round of CFA. The results of the EFA have been provided in Appendix D.

The EFA item loadings provided a view of the adjusted constructs as outlined in the table below.

Table 20: Construct definition for Phase 2

Updated Construct Name	Updated Construct Item and Label	EFA results conclusions
Attitude (ATT)	Removed	ATT removed
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	PU1/PU2/PU3 +C3	Addition of C3
Perceived enjoyment (PE)	PE1/PE2 + E3	Addition of E3
Personalised communication (C)	C1 + R1/R3 /T3	Adjusted construct
Social influence (SI)	SI1/SI2/SI3 + E1/E2	Addition of E1/2
Privacy concern (PC)	PC1 – PC3	Acceptable

Reciprocity (R)	R1-R3	Combined with C
Social Media Fatigue (SMF)	SMF1-SMF4	Accepted
Intent to engage and be satisfied (Satisfaction ITE)	IE1/IE2/IE3 + CS1/CS2/CS3	Adjusted construct
Engagement (E)	E1-E3	Combined with SI
Customer Satisfaction (CS)	CS1-CS3	Combined with IE
Loyalty (L) & Trust (T)	L2/L3 + T1/T2	Adjusted construct
Trust (T)	T1-T3	Combined with L

The results for Phase 2 of the CFA and adjusted constructs shown in the table below highlight improved results, however the GFI result is still below the acceptable cut-off. Based on Hu and Bentler's (1999) analysis that GFI is not recommended to measure model fit, but rather a combination of TLI, RMSEA and SRMR, the overall fit indices meet the threshold for the measurement model.

Table 21 provides a view of the adjusted measurement model summary.

Table 21: Adjusted construct measurement model - model fit summary

Fit Index	Definition	Cut-off values	Measurement Model V2
CMIN/DF	Relative/normed Chi-square	< 5.0	2.208
GFI	Goodness-of-Fit Index	> 0.9	0.870
CFI	Comparative Fit Index	> 0.9	0.929
TLI	Tucker Lewis Index	> 0.9	0.917
RMSEA	Root mean square error of approximation	< 0.08	0.054
SRMR	Standardised root mean square residual	< 0.08	0.0497

The theoretical model for this analysis initially consisted of 13 constructs / latent variables, however based on the adjusted constructs, a total of 9 constructs / latent variables were included in the final CFA as depicted in figure 5.5 below.

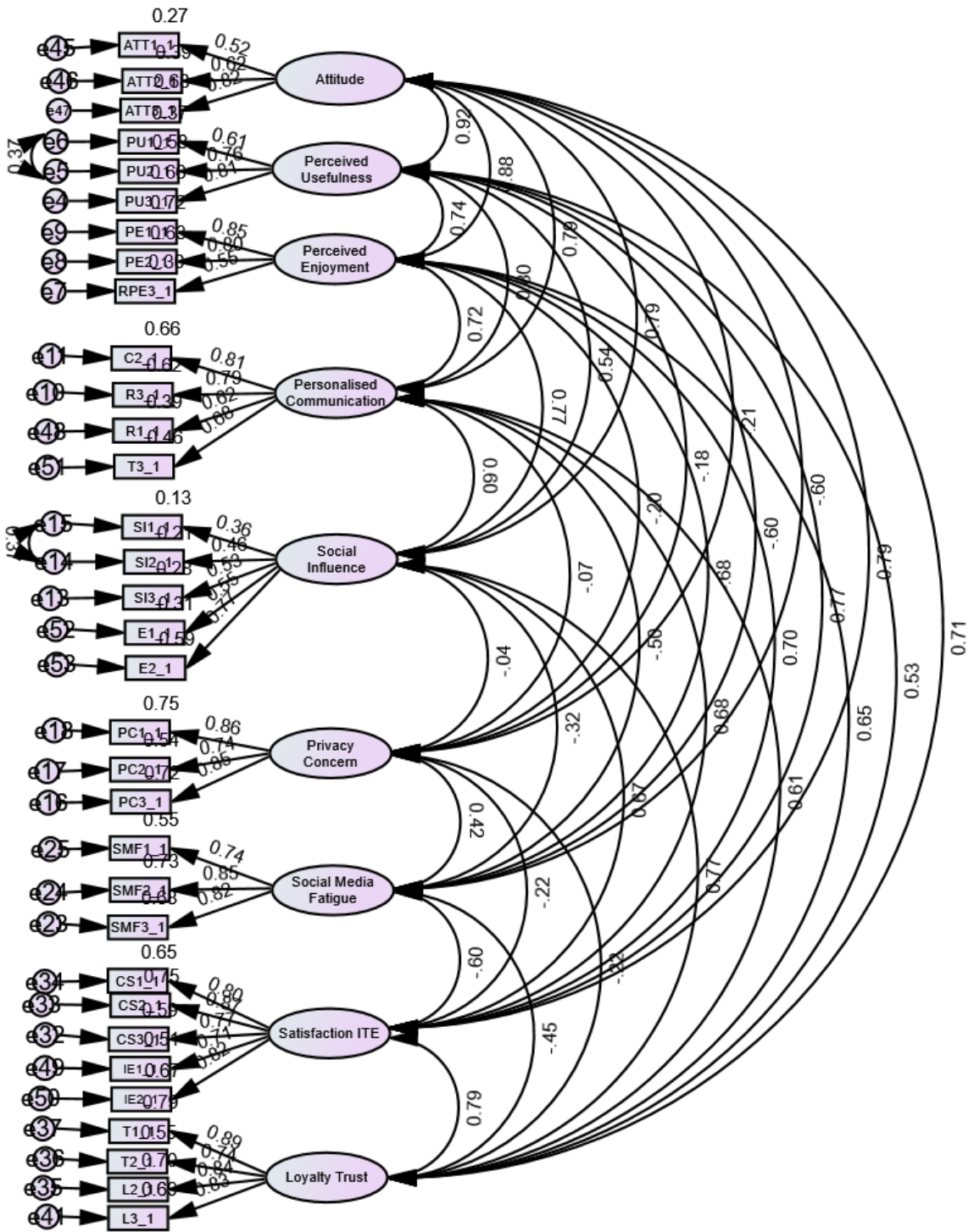


Figure 5.5: CFA for adjusted constructs - Full measurement model

An overview of the updated adjusted constructs as per the output of the factor analysis has been provided in Table 22 below:

Table 22: Adjusted constructs

Construct Name	Construct Item and Label	Updates
Attitude (ATT)	ATT1 – ATT3	
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	PU1-PU3	
Perceived enjoyment (PE)	PE1-PE3	
Personalised communication (C)	C2, R1, R3, T3	Renamed reciprocal communication
Social influence (SI)	SI1, SI2, SI3, E1, E2	
Privacy concern (PC)	PC1 – PC3	
Reciprocity (R)		Removed
Social Media Fatigue (SMF)	SMF1-SMF4	SMF 3 removed
Intent to engage and be satisfied (S ITE)	IE1, IE2, CS1, CS2, CS3, RIE3	
Trust and loyalty	T1, T2, L2, L3	

Using the standard factor loadings, the convergent validity was assessed as presented in Table 23 below.

Table 23: Convergent validity

Construct	Code	Factor loading (FL)	CR	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Attitude	ATT1	0.517	0.788	0.445
	ATT2	0.625		

	ATT3	0.823		
Perceived usefulness	PU1	0.610	0.854	0.538
	PU2	0.765		
	PU3	0.812		
Perceived enjoyment	PE1	0.851	0.857	0.553
	PE2	0.769		
	RPE3	0.550		
Reciprocal communication	C2	0.814	0.916	0.534
	R1	0.623		
	R3	0.790		
	T3	0.680		
Social Influence	SI1	0.360	0.810	0.301
	SI2	0.455		
	SI3	0.529		
	E1	0.766		
	E2	0.533		
Privacy concern	PC1	0.864	0.916	0.671
	PC2	0.738		
	PC3	0.851		
Social media fatigue	SMF1	0.743	0.909	0.651
	SMF2	0.852		
	SMF3	0.822		
Intent to engage and be satisfied	IE1	0.819	0.959	0.634
	IE2	0.715		
	CS1	0.804		
	CS2	0.866		

	CS3	0.770		
Loyalty & Trust	L2	0.837	0.953	0.685
	L3	0.833		
	T1	0.891		
	T2	0.745		

As per the output illustrated in Table 24, factor loading values for all the constructs except social influence were reported above 0.5. This is further supported by the AVE values reflecting above 0.5 for all constructs except social influence (0.301) and attitude (0.445). The remaining AVE values ranged from 0.534 for personalised communications to 0.685 for trust and loyalty. The CR values all reflected above the required 0.7 and greater than the corresponding AVE value for each construct. CR values ranged from 0.788 for attitude to 0.959 for satisfaction intent. As per Hair et al. (2010), adequate convergent validity could be inferred for all constructs except attitude and social influence.

Using the square root of AVE, the discriminant validity was assessed as presented in table 24 below.

Table 24: Discriminant validity

	ATT	PU	PE	C	SI	PC	SMI	SI	LT
ATT	0.667								
PU	0.919	0.734							
PE	0.877	0.739	0.744						
C	0.794	0.798	0.719	0.731					
SI	0.788	0.545	0.545	0.595	0.549				
PC	-0.215	-0.176	-0.195	-0.071	-0.036	0.820			
SMI	-0.603	-0.603	-0.685	-0.503	-0.32	0.423	0.807		
SI	0.786	0.771	0.703	0.678	0.671	-0.222	-0.605	0.796	
LT	0.713	0.535	0.653	0.653	0.77	-0.223	-0.446	0.793	0.828

Based on the above table, the constructs of attitude (ATT) and social influence (SI) both show unacceptable discriminant validity. Taking into consideration the convergent and discriminant output for both these constructs, attitude and social influence showed insufficient statistical evidence and therefore were not included in the structural model. All other constructs display sufficient convergent and discriminant validity to proceed in the structural model.

5.7. The structural model and hypothesis testing

Following the assessment of the measurement model for convergent and divergent/discriminant validity and the removal of two constructs including attitude and social influence, the structural model was then used to test the conceptual model and proposed hypotheses.

5.7.1. Structural model assessment

The full structural model is shown in Figure 5.6 below.

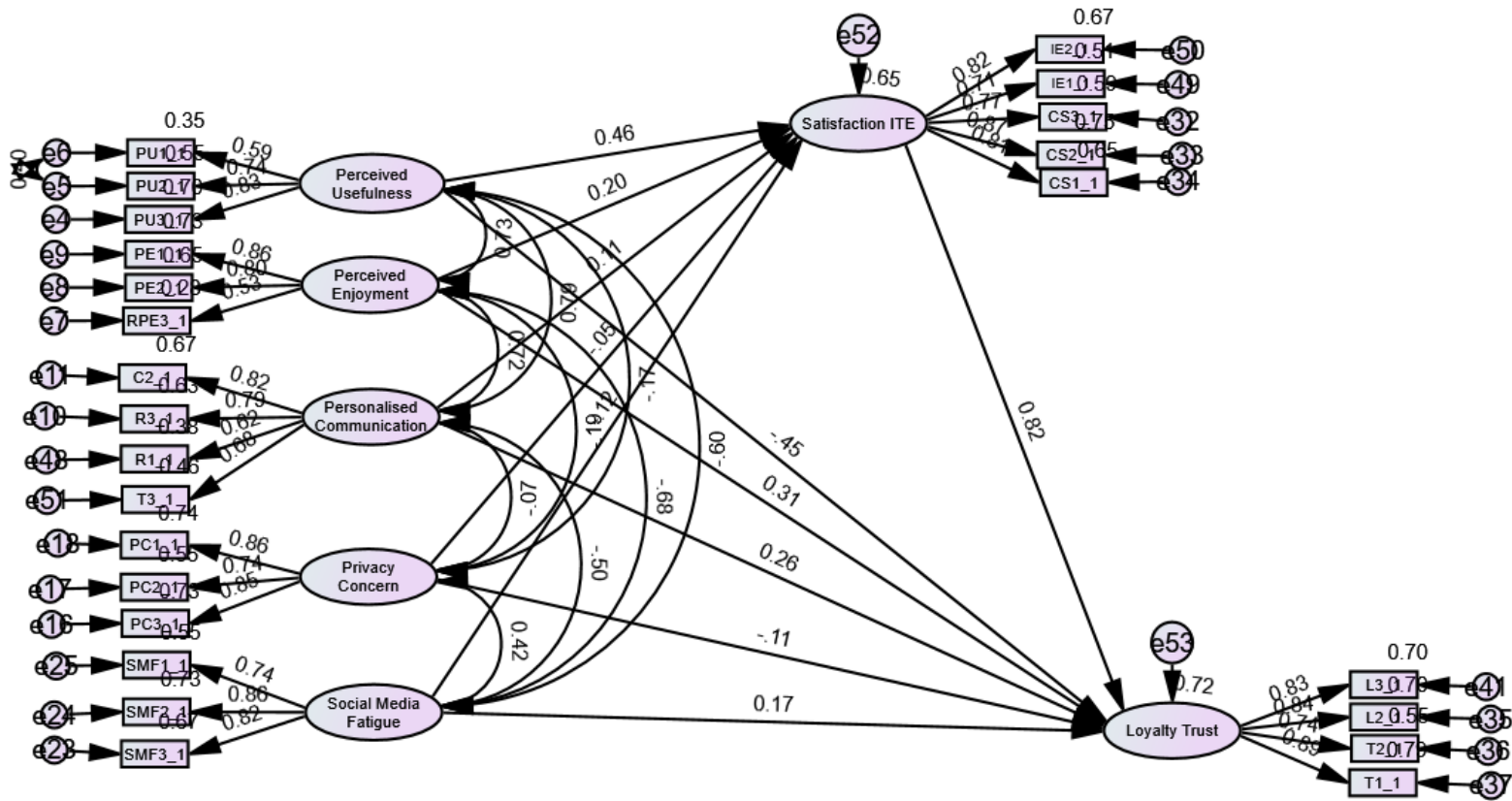


Figure 5.6: Structural model

Based on the R^2 , it can be concluded that 65% of the variance is accounted for by the predictor variables of satisfaction intent and 72% for loyalty and trust. The correlation between these two constructs also shows a strong correlation at 0.82.

The overall fit indices for the structural model have been provided in Table 25 below.

Table 25: Structural model - model fit summary

Fit Index	Definition	Cut-off values	Structural Model
CMIN/DF	Relative/normed Chi-square	< 5.0	2.433
GFI	Goodness-of-Fit Index	> 0.9	0.895
CFI	Comparative Fit Index	> 0.9	0.942
TLI	Tucker Lewis Index	> 0.9	0.931
RMSEA	Root mean square error of approximation	< 0.08	0.059
SRMR	Standardised root mean square residual	< 0.08	0.0546

All parameters except for GFI show an acceptable fit for the structural model.

A simplified illustration of the structural model was produced below in Figure 5.7 to clearly show the relationships between the constructs, presenting the standardised regression coefficient of each path relationships.

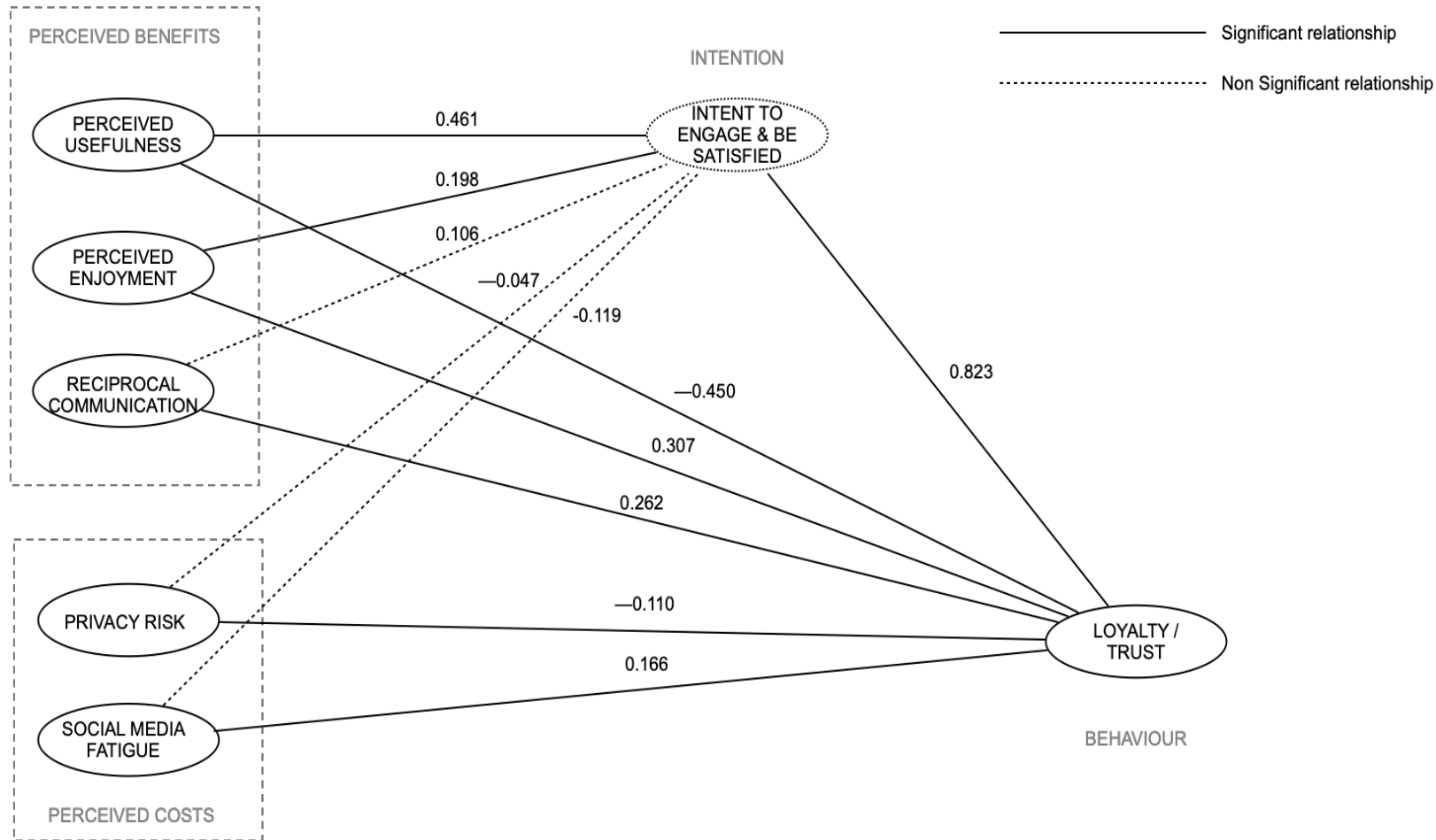


Figure 5.7: Simple structural model

5.7.2. Hypotheses testing

The hypotheses relevant to the adjusted model were tested by looking at the standardised regression coefficient (β), critical ratio (t-value) and significance levels (p-values) for each of the hypothesised relationships. Table 26 provides a view of the results of the updated hypotheses based on the adjusted constructs.

Hypotheses for the variables attitude (H1a and 1b) and social influence (H5a and 5b) were removed based on these variables not being included in the adjusted model. The hypotheses for personalised communication (H4a and 4b) and reciprocity (H6a and 6b) were combined based on the results from the factor analysis. Finally, hypotheses 9 and 10 were combined based on the adjusted engagement variable.

Table 26: Hypotheses testing

Proposed hypotheses		Beta	t-value	p-value	Finding
H2a:	Perceived usefulness positively related to satisfaction intent	0.461	4.292	***	Supported
H2b	Perceived usefulness positively related to loyalty/trust	-0.450	-3.531	***	Negatively supported
H3a	Perceived enjoyment positively related to satisfaction intent	0.198	2.299	0.022	Supported
H3b	Perceived enjoyment positively related to loyalty/trust	0.307	3.327	***	Supported
H4a	Reciprocal communications positively related to satisfaction intent	0.106	1.137	0.256	Rejected
H4b	Reciprocal communications positively related to loyalty/trust	0.262	2.700	0.007	Supported

H7a	Privacy concern negatively related to satisfaction intent	0.047	-1.033	0.302	Rejected
H7b	Privacy concern negatively related to loyalty/trust	0.110	-2.350	0.019	Supported
H8a	Social media fatigue negatively related to satisfaction intent	-0.119	-1.705	0.088	Rejected
H8b	Social media fatigue is negatively related to loyalty/trust	0.166	2.310	0.021	Positively supported
H10	Consumers intent to engage and be satisfied is positively related to loyalty/trust	0.823	9.039	***	Supported

Note: *** p<0.001

Based on the findings outlined in Table 26, it can be concluded that 8 out of the 11 adjusted hypotheses were supported with the remaining 3 rejected or not supported. The relationships were also seen to be significant at differing confidence levels, including 0.05 (95% confidence) and 0.001 (99.9% confidence).

Looking at the standardised regression weights (β) and path significance, perceived usefulness has the greatest influence on both the intent to engage and be satisfied ($\beta = 0.461$; $p < 0.001$) as well as the behavioural output of trust and loyalty ($\beta = -0.450$; $p < 0.001$), however the impact on trust and loyalty is statistically reversed, which will be further explored in the discussion chapter.

Perceived engagement has a significant relationship with both intent to engage and be satisfied ($\beta = 0.198$; $P < 0.05$) as well as trust and loyalty ($\beta = 0.307$; $P < 0.001$), however a greater influence on trust and loyalty with a more significant relationship level.

Reciprocal communication ($\beta = 0.262$; $p < 0.05$), privacy concern ($\beta = 0.110$; $P < 0.5$) and social media fatigue ($\beta = 0.166$; $p < 0.05$) all only have a significant relationship with trust and loyalty at 95% confidence with no significant relationship to the intent

to engage and be satisfied. Social media fatigue, which is considered a perceived cost, has shown a positive relationship with trust and loyalty. This relationship will also be explored further in the discussion chapter.

Finally, the intent to engage and be satisfied has a significant positive relationship with trust and loyalty and shows the greatest influence on this construct ($\beta = 0.823$; $p < 0.001$).

5.8. Comparative analysis

5.8.1 Relative impact of perceived benefits vs costs

As the conceptual model looks at both the impact of perceived benefits and costs against engagement with brands, a comparative analysis of the relative regression coefficients against the intent to engage and be satisfied was conducted.

Table 27 provides the output from the comparative analysis of perceived benefits versus costs on the intent to engage and be satisfied.

Table 27: Comparative analysis of perceived benefits vs costs on intention

Construct on intent to engage and be satisfied		Regression coefficient
Perceived benefits	Perceived usefulness	0.461
	Perceived enjoyment	0.198
	Reciprocal communication	0.106
TOTAL		0.765
Perceived costs	Social media fatigue	-0.119
	Privacy concern	-0.047
TOTAL		-0.166

As expected with more constructs identified under the perceived benefits, this has a larger influence and impact on the intent to engage and be satisfied with brands.

Table 28 provide the output from the comparative analysis of perceived benefits versus costs on the construct of loyalty and trust.

Table 28: Comparative analysis of perceived benefits vs costs on loyalty and trust

Construct on loyalty and trust		Regression coefficient
Perceived benefits	Perceived usefulness	-0.450
	Perceived enjoyment	0.307
	Reciprocal communication	0.262
TOTAL		0.119
Perceived costs	Social media fatigue	0.166
	Privacy concern	-0.110
TOTAL		-0.056

The influence and impact of perceived benefits on loyalty and trust however is much smaller owing to the negative influence of perceived usefulness and positive influence of social media fatigue. This suggests that loyalty and trust are not necessarily considered as transactional, but this will be further explored in the discussion chapter.

The Figure 5.8 below shows the comparison of perceived benefits vs costs on both the intention to engage and be satisfied as well as loyalty and trust.

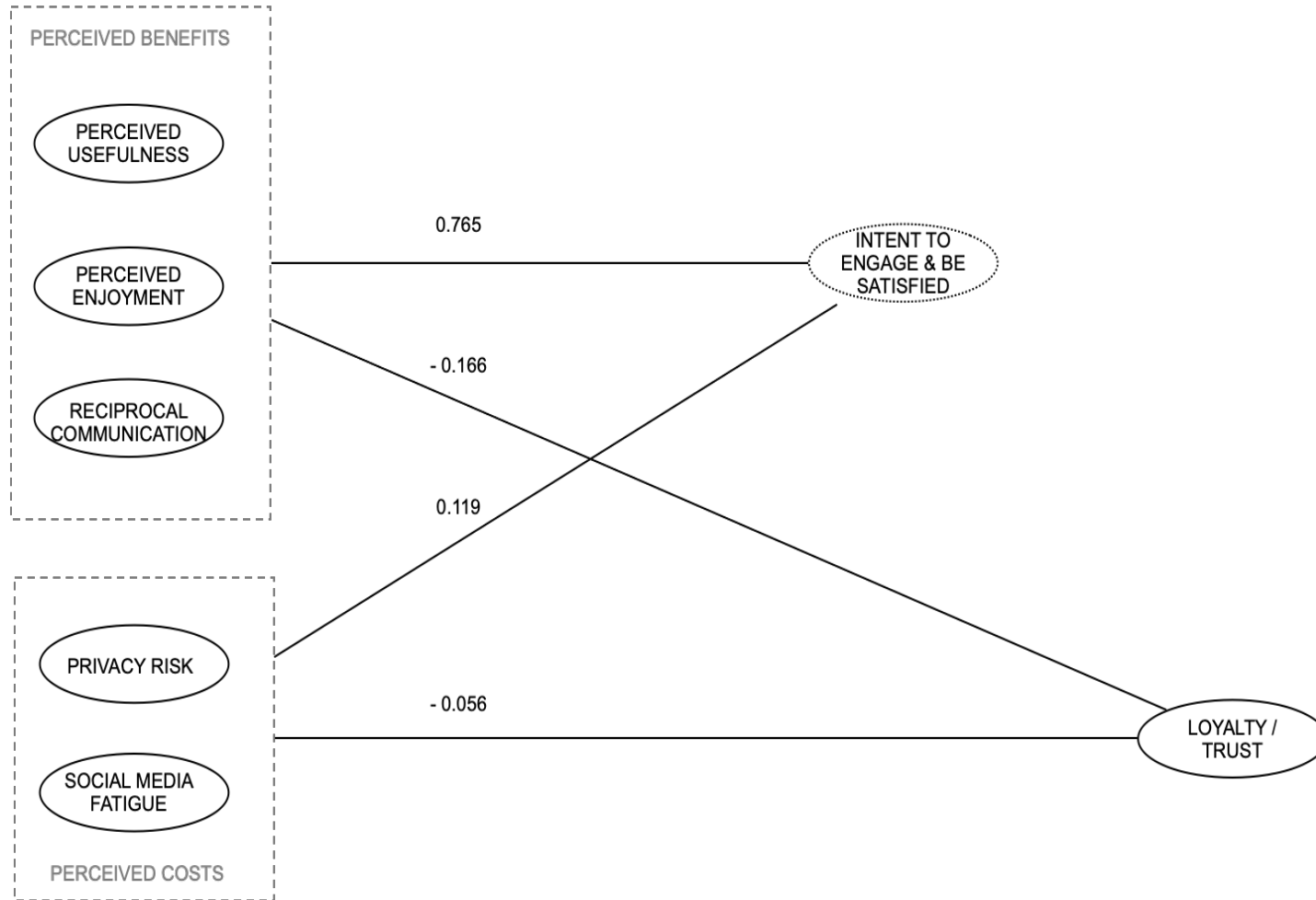


Figure 5.8: Comparative analysis of perceived benefits vs costs

5.9. Multigroup analysis

With the link to loyalty, which is built over time, the research provided an opportunity to analyse the impact of usage on engagement with brands. Hair et al. (2010) suggest the use of multiple group analysis (or multi-group invariance) to explore the difference between groups of consumers.

5.9.1 Frequent versus rare users

The first focus area investigated the impact of frequent versus rare usage by consumers and whether there is a difference on the intent to engage with brands on social media and the output of loyalty and trust.

Findings from the multigroup analysis show a difference across these models. When looking at the detail, this difference sits in two underlying constructs, namely the link between perceived usefulness and the intent to engage and be satisfied for the rare users, and the link between the intent to engage and be satisfied and the loyalty and trust construct.

Based on the behavioural questions in the survey, the sample was divided into two usage groups, consumers who engage frequently (all the time, daily, weekly and monthly) with brands on social media (n = 308) and consumers who engage rarely (a few times a year) with brands on social media (n = 103).

Based on the results between the unconstrained and the structural weights model, the CMIN/DF of 2.686, together with the statistical P value of 0.000, highlights the statistically significant difference between the models and as a result the difference between rare and frequent users.

On further comparison of the constructs, the following Table 29 highlights the key difference in path relationships between the two usage groups:

Table 29: Multigroup analysis of social media usage

Type of social media user	Beta	t-value	p-value	Finding
Rare user (few times a year)				
Perceived usefulness → Intent to engage and be satisfied	0.720	3.894	***	Supported
Frequent user (all the time)				
Intent to engage and be satisfied → Loyalty and trust	0.910	5.398	***	Supported

The analysis highlights that for consumers who rarely engage with brands on social media (a few times a year), perceived usefulness becomes the most important construct driving the intent to engage with brands ($\beta = 0.720$; $P < 0.001$). Whereas for consumers who engage with brands all the time, the impact of their intent to engage and be satisfied has a significant positive relationship with loyalty and trust ($\beta = 0.910$; $p < 0.01$).

5.9.2 Social media usage pre and during COVID-19

The second focus area explored the impact of usage of consumers pre and during COVID-19 (based on the completion time of the survey). Respondents were divided into two groups, those that did not experience an increase in social media usage with COVID-19 ($n = 182$) and those who did experience an increase in usage ($n = 229$). When looking at this in conjunction with the average daily use pre and during COVID-19, the average daily use pre COVID-19 sits at under 4 hours per day whereas during COVID-19 increases to an average of 6 hours per day with a few super users at 8 hours per day.

Findings from the multigroup analysis once again show a significant differential effect between the two groups with a CMIN/DF of 2.036 and a P of 0.000. The TLI of 0.901 and the CFI of 0.912 are both above 0.9, highlighting the acceptable fit.

The differences in path relationships were compared across the two behavioural groups as shown below in Table 30.

Table 30: Path relationships across the two behavioural groups

Path relationship across group	Same usage		Increased usage	
	Beta	p-value	Beta	p-value
Perceived usefulness → Intent to engage and be satisfied	0.651	***	0.341	0.012
Perceived enjoyment → Intent to engage and be satisfied	0.030	0.799	0.439	0.009
Reciprocal communication → Intent to engage and be satisfied	-0.036	0.812	0.158	0.183
Privacy concern → Intent to engage and be satisfied	-0.025	0.735	-0.060	0.324
Social media fatigue → Intent to engage and be satisfied	-0.202	0.045	-0.038	0.699
Loyalty and trust	Beta	p-value	Beta	p-value
Perceived usefulness → Loyalty and trust	-0.651	0.008	-0.319	0.020

Perceived enjoyment → Loyalty and trust	0.326	0.016	0.259	0.044
Reciprocal communication → Loyalty and trust	0.501	0.004	0.036	0.744
Privacy concern → Loyalty and trust	-0.214	0.008	0.002	0.975
Social media fatigue → Loyalty and trust	0.339	0.003	0.044	0.624
Intent to engage and be satisfied → Loyalty and trust	0.844	***	0.928	***

According to the findings in the table above, perceived usefulness is an important construct for consumers intent to engage and be satisfied across all the groups. This construct has a significant relationship in the original model output and for users with the same usage pre/during COVID-19. There is a higher impact for same usage users ($\beta = 0.652; p < 0.001$) suggesting more focus on getting an outcome from the engagement during this time. On the other side, perceived enjoyment shows a significant positive impact in both the original model and for users with an increased usage during COVID-19 ($\beta = 0.439; p < 0.05$) suggesting the increase in usage could be linked to the increase in using social media to pass time as referred to by 55.2% of the respondents. The only other construct that was significant on the intent to engage and be satisfied was social media fatigue, which had a negative impact on same usage users ($\beta = -0.202; P < 0.05$) and could suggest why these users did not increase their usage during COVID-19.

On the loyalty and trust construct, both factors of perceived usefulness and enjoyment show significant impacts, however at differing confidence levels, while the intent to be satisfied has a significant impact on loyalty and trust across all groups. What is interesting is that increased usage during COVID-19 does not show a significant impact on value creation across the remaining constructs, including personalised

communication, privacy concern and social media fatigue, however this could be owing to the increased focus on passing time and enjoyment. What is still apparent however is that users with an increased usage show a higher impact on loyalty and trust once their intent to engage and satisfied has been met ($\beta = 0.928, P < 0.001$). These findings will be explored further in the next chapter.

5.10. Chapter summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings and analysis of this study against the hypotheses identified from literature and based on the methodology as discussed in Chapter 4.

The first section of the chapter provided an overview of the sample, which consisted of a total of 411 completed survey responses. This was followed by the demographic and behavioural profiles of the respondents. While the majority of respondents were from South Africa, there was representation from multiple countries globally with the largest from the United Kingdom and Australia. The behavioural profiles analysed the respondents' usage of social media, with particular focus of usage pre and during COVID-19. As expected, there was an increase from an average of under 4 hours to 6 hours per day during COVID-19. The analysis also looked at the top social media sites (Facebook and Instagram) as well as the top reasons for engaging with brands on these sites (research and inspiration).

This was followed with SEM analysis, which was first rationalised based on the requirement to test multiple relationships and variables. A six-stage approach was followed, starting with CFA to validate the constructs. An overview of the model fit criteria was provided as well as indicated cut-off indices, showing a reasonable fit. The resulting fit statistics for the measurement model required further analysis and resulted in two rounds of optimisation as well as several construct adjustments. The convergent and discriminant validity displayed sufficient validity and therefore the analysis proceeded to the structural model. Based on the R^2 , it was concluded that 65% of the variance was accounted for by the predictor variables of the intent to engage and be

satisfied and 72% for loyalty and trust. Of the 11 adjusted hypotheses, a total of 8 were supported.

The next section of the chapter looked at comparative analysis referencing the lens of SET and the view of perceived benefits versus costs. In line with the SEM findings, the overall impact of benefits had a larger influence, which is supported by literature stating that users do not tend to consider the perceived costs of using social media.

The final section consisted of a multigroup analysis, looking at the impact of usage in two different applications. The first was to look at the difference between frequent and rare social media users. The results showed that there was a significant difference, with rare users focusing more on perceived usefulness as a driver for their intent to engage, while frequent users showed a higher impact of their intent to engage and be satisfied on loyalty and trust.

The findings of the analysis will be discussed further in Chapter 6 before concluding with final remarks, implications and recommendations in Chapter 7.

6. RESEARCH DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1. Introduction

Chapter 6 discusses the findings of this study, which are relevant to the engagement intent and behaviour, resulting in value to brands and organisations.

The chapter starts with an overview of the demographic findings, providing a view into the respondents of the study in 6.2. The focus in 6.3 then shifts back to the theoretical models discussed in the literature review and the adjustments made to the constructs based on the analysis conducted in Chapter 5. The following sections provide comprehensive discussions against each of the research questions. 6.4 discusses research question 1 and the behavioural factors that influence the intent to engage. 6.5 discusses research question 2 and the impact of the intent to engage on value creation of loyalty and trust. 6.6 discusses research question 3 and the influence of social media usage between rare and frequent users. And finally, 6.7 discusses research question 4 and the impact of usage pre and during COVID-19. The chapter is concluded with the summary in 6.8.

Figure 6.1 provides an overview of Chapter 6.

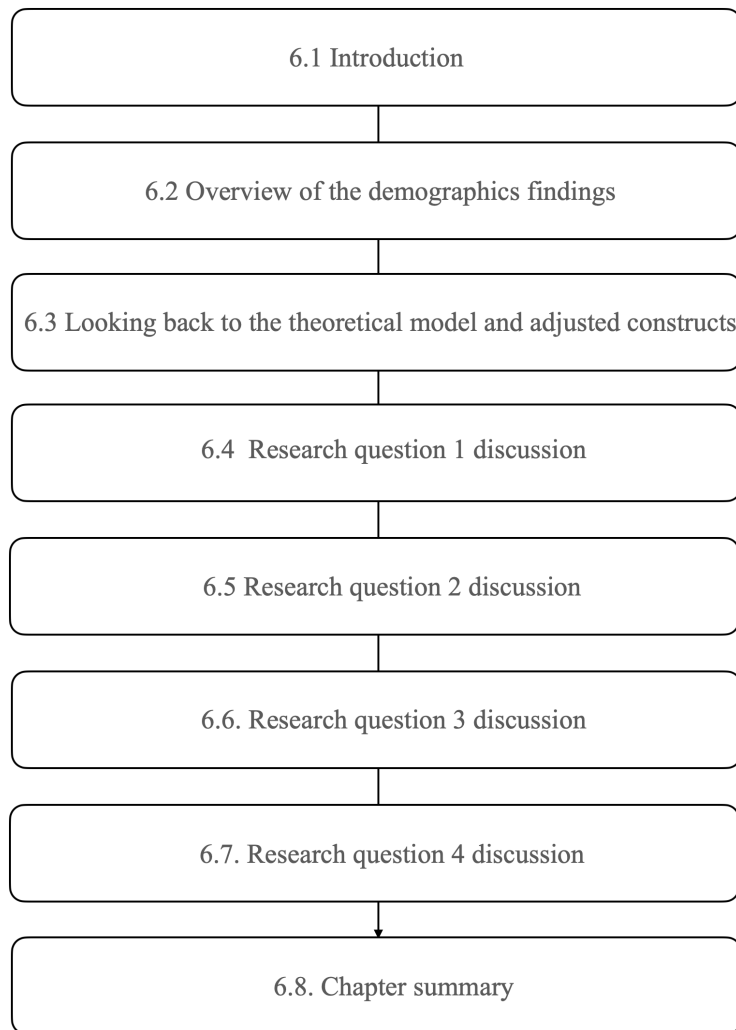


Figure 6.1: Chapter 6 overview

6.2. Overview of the demographic findings

The data for the analysis was obtained from a total of 411 completed survey responses. From a gender perspective, the majority of respondents were female (66.4%), which could be reflective of the use of social media channels for sampling. According to Tufekci (2008), gender is noted to be a strong predictor for social media usage. Traditionally studies often look at gender usage that is descriptive in nature rather than theorised (Trauth, 2013; Krasnova et al., 2017); however, overall research suggests that there are gender differences for online usage. Research on internet usage shows females are more likely to make use of communication platforms (Gefen & Ridings, 2005). By supporting social connection and information exchange, social media might support the relational orientation of female users (Krasnova et al., 2017). Researchers such as

Nadkarni and Hofmann (2012) and Li-Barber (2012) highlight higher female usage of platforms such as Facebook.

Research by Krasnova et al. (2017) looked at gender preferences on social media sites with findings that females look to maintain ties and gather social information on close friends, and have a stronger continuance intention, while males tend to use social media for general information. What is interesting is that female users tend to be more concerned with risk and privacy concern on social media (Garbarino & Strahilevitz, 2004; Gauvin et al, 2010), however still publish more content.

While age was considered in terms of reaching a representative sample, the majority of respondents fell into the 30-39 age group (34.1%), followed closely by the 20-29 age group (30.7%). Based on research by Madden and Savage (2000), there is a relationship between age and the preferred use of social media, however this is not supported by all studies.

In terms of platform use, the top preferred site was Facebook at 72%, followed closely by Instagram at 63.5%. Based on the age vs gender vs platform cross tabulation, snapchat is the top used platform by both genders in the age group 20-29. Snapchat has grown substantially since this survey was completed, however remains a top platform for the younger generation (Grieve, 2017). There are some slight nuances looking at the older age groups across gender, with females 30-39 rating Instagram as the top platform versus males rating LinkedIn. As expected, Facebook ranks top among the older female age groups, particularly 40-49 and 60+ while Twitter ranked highest in the 40-49 male age group. This is supported by studies such as Sinclair & Grieve (2017) stating that Facebook creates a space of social connection for those aged 55 and above.

Based on the timing of this survey and that is coincided with COVID-19, one of the key takeaways was to further understand the use of social media pre-COVID-19 and during COVID-19 and the majority of 55.7% indicated that this had increased. If we look at the increased usage by gender, 66.4% of females indicated they had increased their usage post COVID-19 versus males of 33%. Overall respondents showed an increase in usage of social media platforms with the largest shift overall increasing from 1-2 hours through to 5-6 hours (from 5.1% to 14.8%).

When looking at this against the preferred usage, respondents highlighted research as the top use (63.3%), followed by inspiration (62.3%) and passing time (55.2%). The use of passing time can be seen as a largely COVID-19 inspired use considering the strict lockdown restrictions that were implemented, particularly in South Africa. This is supported by Stockdale and Coyne (2020) highlighting the increased use of social media to alleviate boredom, particularly in the younger generations. Respondents also referred to the increase in time available to spend on social media during COVID-19, which aligns to findings from Nguyen et al. (2020). Several studies support the finding that social media can be used as a way of escapism and relaxation (Sharabati et al., 2022).

The next section will review the theoretical model and adjusted constructs based on the analysis before moving into the findings for each of the three research questions.

6.3. Looking back to the theoretical model and adjusted constructs

With social media continuing to dominate attention and overwhelming consumers with content and information in the virtual world and the constant change being seen in this area, the concept of engagement needs to be continually researched. This is even more relevant post COVID-19, where there was a significant increase in the use of social media platforms (Laato et al., 2020), which has further reshaped consumers' information consumption patterns (Dhir et al., 2019).

While a number of studies have looked at the socio-psychological behaviour of consumers engagement on social media platforms, incorporating theories such as SCT (Chiu et al., 2006; Lin et al., 2009), TAM (Hossain & de Silva, 2009 and Kwon & Wen, 2010), TPB (Casalo et al., 2015; Chang & Zhu, 2011) and SIF (Cheung & Lee, 2010; Koo et al., 2011), few have created a multidimensional model. This study contributes to theory by developing a new holistic model bringing together multiple behavioural theories underpinned through the lens of SET.

Through initial factor analysis and owing to the fact some of these constructs were new at the time of incorporation and had not previously been tested together, there was a requirement to adjust some of these constructs to ensure model fit. While scales from literature were used and relevant when they were the focus construct (for example, personalised communication, engagement, reciprocity etc), when together as a multi-dimensional scale for the first time, it became evident that the results were not always consistent. While the methodology started with a set of scales that were convergently and discriminately valid when tested separately, when tested together they showed different results. With further examination of the face validity and criterion validity, several of these constructs were seen as similar and therefore adapted to a new set of constructs on which the SEM was applied. This in itself is a powerful finding and one that can be further tested as researchers continue to build multidimensional scales with the ever-increasing complexity of social media.

While initially the model defined a total of six perceived benefits, two of the factors including attitude and social influence were removed in the final output owing to marginal convergent validity and unacceptable discriminant validity.

While several studies have focused on the construct of attitude to investigate social media continuance intention (Chang et al., 2015), others have found a significant relationship between attitude and behaviour (Bosnjak et al., 2020) as well as continuance intention (Al-Debei et al., 2015), although findings from Mehrabioun (2024) suggest a weaker relationship, aligning with previous research by Cheung and To, (2021), Hsu et al., (2013) and Leung and Kiang, (2018). There is a contradictory view highlighting a lack of support for attitude-behaviour relationships owing to the fact that a single score for attitude is insufficient to represent and explain attitude.

With the impact of social influence highlighting a significant opportunity in research over the last few years (Harrigan et al., 2021) plus a growing interest in influencer marketing (Ki & Kim, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019), there is an expectation that this will concept will gain importance in social media engagement, however a more defined scale would need to be identified and incorporated with the advancement of theory in this space. Taking into consideration the subjective norm identified as part of TPB (Ajzen, 1991), this looks at an individual's willingness to comply with other people's

expectations, which can be linked to the concept of influence, particularly when looking at the scale of measurement adapted from Bhattacharjee (2001), which includes encouragement to participate in an activity.

Based on an updated factor analysis, two of the factors, including personalised communication and reciprocity were combined to create a new factor, reciprocal communication. When looking at the literature and references to reciprocity in the social media context, Posey et al. (2010) refer to this concept as a willingness to exchange information based on their belief that the other party will reciprocate with an increase in recognition. This is supported in the study of reciprocity within social exchange, which is based on communication between users in online social networks focused on reciprocal balance (Surma, 2016). This links the two concepts of communication (or information) and reciprocity in the context of social exchange, however the importance starts to shift to perceived benefits versus costs and the ease of this reciprocal exchange.

Zhao and Chen (2022) posit that reciprocity, when referencing mutual communication, goes beyond the standard two-way communication between brands and stakeholders (or consumers). Capriotti et al. (2021) refer to this brand-stakeholder dialogue as a transparent conversation where ideas and interactions are exchanged to form a mutual understanding and support the relationship. This is supported by Urbonavicius et al. (2021) who refers to sharing of personal information by consumers on social media in return for recognition and other benefits as an example of reciprocal exchange, as neither party is formally obliged to share or respond.

Zhou and Zu (2020) suggest that users prefer what they term a dialogic orientation when communicating on social media platforms. Reciprocal communication goes beyond the concepts of User Generate Content (UGC) or Firm Generated Content (FGC), which when targeted to the right audience, can result in increased brand awareness, trust and loyalty (Wei et al., 2023). Dialogue can be considered as the antecedent for reciprocal interactions when engaging within a social-mediated community (Lai et al., 2020; Simon & Tossan, 2018) and therefore enhances stakeholder engagement with the organisation (Men et al., 2018; Lai et al., 2020).

The two factors for perceived costs, social media fatigue and privacy concern showed acceptable validity, and both were shown in the model as defined from the theory base and will be discussed in further detail in the research questions below.

One of the biggest adjustments to the model was on the construct of engagement. Initially the model looked to measure the impact of the intent to engage against the engagement behaviour following the traditional TAM and TRB models, however based on further analysis, the factors of intention to engage and satisfaction were combined to create a new construct, the 'intent to engage and be satisfied' while the factor of engagement as a behaviour fell away.

Customer satisfaction has been extensively researched in marketing literature with researchers looking to expand on the link between customer satisfaction and future behavioural intention measures (Martin et al., 2006). It is widely accepted that satisfaction levels and behavioural intention are influenced at pre-actual and post-consumption stages (Cronin et al., 2000; Barsky & Nash, 2002). Studies from Kim and Han (2009) and Kim (2011) empirically validate that prior satisfaction with social media is a prominent factor resulting in social media continuance intention, which is later supported by Gupta et al. (2020) and Rahi et al. (2021). Khan and Saleh (2022) support this finding with factors of perceived usefulness and satisfaction as the most important drivers of continuance intention of Facebook, while results from Sharabati et al. (2022) indicate that satisfaction has affected consumers' intention to use Tiktok. Both these studies echo the findings from Bhattacharjee (2001), who identified the positive link between satisfaction and the continued intention decision.

This shift from intention to engage to intention to engage and be satisfied aligns to expectation confirmation theory (ECT), which can be defined as the expectation of a customer and the degree to which this expectation has been satisfied (Oliver, 1980). This also links to the concept of perceived value (PV), where a trade-off between the benefit vs costs of a brands' product or service is perceived by the customer (Zeithaml, 1988). With so much choice and an overwhelming amount of content available to customers, this trade-off becomes even more significant, and customers are becoming more expectant around what they want from brands and the consumption value of completing social interactions or exchanges with brands (Butz Jr & Goodstein, 2007).

While traditionally satisfaction has been linked to the concept of intention (Battacherjee, 2001; Liao et al., 2014; Chen et al., 2012; Chang & Zhu, 2012), for the purpose of this thesis and based on the adjusted factor analysis, satisfaction is not included as an antecedent of intention but rather an integral part of the construct.

Research also highlights the factor of satisfaction as an antecedent to both brand loyalty (Bennett et al., 2000; Jones & Suh, 2000) as well as trust (Geyskens et al., 1999), which links to the final adjustment to the construct of value creation that consists of loyalty (word of mouth and purchase intent) and trust.

This chapter will provide a discussion of the findings to RQ1, taking into consideration the adjusted constructs against theory, before moving into RQ2 and RQ3.

6.4 Research Question 1 discussion

What behavioural factors influence the intent to engage with brands on social media?

The analysis and findings revealed that two of the total five adjusted constructs had a significant influence on the intent to engage with brands on social media, these included the factors of perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment.

6.4.1 Perceived usefulness

Perceived usefulness showed a significant positive influence ($B = 0.461$; $p < 0.001$) on the intent to engage with brands. This finding shows that consumers who perceive social media as the most useful channel to engage with brands in terms of better communications and more relevant information demonstrate a strong intention to engage with the brand on this channel. This is consistent with prior theories that show a strong and positive association between perceived usefulness and intention or continuance intention across the technology, e-commerce and social media space (Flavian et al., 2006; Hwang, 2010; Benlian & Hess, 2011; Chen et al., 2012; Reiter et al., 2017; Nascimento et al., 2018; Khan & Saleh, 2022). A study from Sullivan and Koh (2019) found perceived usefulness did not have a significant effect on social media continuance intention for Facebook and cited the reason was that social media users tend to participate on sites like Facebook to enjoy the interaction. However, with the

advancement of social media usage, particularly post COVID-19, there is a shift towards using social media for more productive-related uses and not pure enjoyment.

One of the benefits of using social media as a channel of engagement with brands is finding the necessary information to support their purchasing decision (Bianchi & Andrews, 2008), which is supported by the top selection of using social media sites for research on a product or service (63.3%) as well as top ranked access to special offers or promotions (48.9%) and product or service recommendations (42.1%). Based on the lower rankings of customer services (33.6%) and feedback (32.6%), the results of perceived usefulness appear to be more relevant to product or service information.

Research from multiple authors including Lee and Jun (2007), Park et al. (2013), Amin et al. (2014) and Wilson et al. (2021) support the positive link between perceived usefulness and satisfaction, which is combined with the intent construct.

This finding provides further insight into the usage – intention relationship of social media users and extends the TAM (Davis, 1989) theory that posits that perceived usefulness drives behavioural intention. Perceived usefulness had the greatest influence on the intention to engage with brands on social media.

6.4.2 Perceived enjoyment

Perceived enjoyment also showed a positive influence ($B = 0.198$; $p < 0.05$), however this was not as strong as perceived usefulness. Perceived enjoyment referred more to an enjoyable experience that was fun and joyful with brands on social media regardless of the usefulness.

What is interesting is the concept of flow that is linked to perceived enjoyment by Lin et al. (2008) and the increased time spent on social media channels post COVID-19. The combination of social media algorithms together with the short, bite-size content that is shared across platforms enables users to enter a state of flow, scrolling through content without noticing time. The opposite of this state of flow is doom-scrolling, when users get caught in a cycle of negative content, which is associated with impactive mental health (Buchanan et al., 2021). Brand Managers should be cognisant of

balancing out negative information with positive, where applicable, and proactively offering content in an easy to consume and digestible format.

This finding is aligned with previous studies (Davis et al., 1992; Van der Heijden, 2004; Lin et al. 2008) that show that perceived enjoyment is a key factor in the intention to use specific technologies and social media (Sullivan & Koh, 2019). The findings around perceived enjoyment provides further insight into the adapted TAM model (Davis et al., 1992) where perceived enjoyment increases the behavioural intention. Enjoyment in the literature has been defined as an important construct for social media (Venkatesh et al., 2012).

The remaining three constructs, including reciprocal communications, privacy concern and social media fatigue did not show a statistical influence on the intention to engage.

6.4.3 Reciprocal communications

The COVID-19 pandemic has strengthened the use of social media channels as an imperative channel for communicating and interacting with consumers (Wei et al., 2023) and as a result has become an important channel for interactivity between brands and their consumers (Du Plessis, 2017) to mitigate uncertainty (Lin et al., 2015). Research highlights the nature of social media to facilitate two-way communication and the link to user engagement in social media across defined areas such as tourism (Bu et al., 2020 & Huerta-Alvarez et al., 2020) and professional athletes (Watkins, 2017). Analysis post COVID-19 highlights the nature of increased fear of social media communication owing to fake news and misinformation as well as conflicting findings of UGC versus FGC and the resulting impact on consumer behaviour (Wei et al., 2023). Taking this into consideration along with the multidimensional nature of content and communications, this construct of reciprocal communications on the intent to engage and be satisfied will require further investigation.

6.4.4 Privacy concern

Prior research suggests that privacy concern has a negative impact on social media engagement, however it does not necessarily stop the sharing of information on social media channels (Bright et al., 2021). Xiao and Mou (2019) found that consumer

tolerance has increased owing to the ability to opt into many social media services that require sharing of personal information. This is linked to the concept of the privacy paradox, which highlights a disconnect between concern and protection when it comes to privacy and behaviour on social media platforms (Chen, 2018). These paradoxical behaviours on social media warrant further attention and investigation to determine the impact on social media engagement.

6.4.5 Social media fatigue

Research by Bright et al. (2021) showed that privacy concerns has a negative effect on social media engagement where users have a low level of social media fatigue however there was no significant effect for users with a moderate or high level of social media fatigue. Prior research by Bright et al. (2015) showed privacy concern as a driver of social media fatigue, however additional research by Malik et al., 2020 did not find this link. This supports the findings in this study, while although focused on intent to engage, shows no effect of privacy concern. Further investigation would be required to determine if there are nuances depending on the level of social media fatigue.

Interesting the research by Bright et al. (2021) also highlighted the fact that when users have high trust, their engagement with social media is more likely to increase despite their privacy concerns. This is interesting in the context of this research there is an impact in the reduction of loyalty and trust as outcomes owing to increased privacy concerns.

This concept of paradoxical behaviours could also apply to the concept of social media fatigue, with users continuing to engage with social media despite this feeling of tiredness. Factors of default behaviour or a need to find relevant information or simple social media addiction could result in this paradox. Ravindran et al. (2013) highlight that the intensity of users' feelings towards SMF or the response to overwhelming stimulus can vary due to subjectiveness. While previous research has looked at the impact of social media fatigue on intentions to discontinue the use of social media, the findings showed that this is dependent on the intensity of fatigue and the impact on discontinuation could be permanent or for a certain period (Maier et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2016; Xie & Tsai, 2021). Research from Baj-Rogowska (2023) supports this

showing that users with high SMF were more prone to decrease their level of engagement on social media or discontinue the use. Owing to the inconsistencies in the literature for this construct, there is a need for future research on the outcomes of social media fatigue (Baj-Rogowska, 2023).

6.4.6 Research Question 1 conclusion

Overall, the above findings for RQ1 show that perceived usefulness has the strongest positive influence on the intent to engage and be satisfied with a brand on social media, followed by perceived enjoyment. This highlights an interesting shift in the use of social media moving away from pure enjoyment and entertainment towards a more useful role offering product and service information, special offers and promotions and product or service recommendations as suggested by the preferred usage type of respondents. This move towards usefulness has most likely also strengthened because of COVID-19, with social media being an important channel for sharing information and becoming the lifeline for many who were confined during lockdown. However, when looking at respondents with increased social media usage during or post COVID-19, there is a shift back to enjoyment and flow as seen in the output of Research Question 4.

6.5 Research Question 2 discussion

What behavioural factors result in value creation and to what extent does consumer engagement result in value creation for the brand?

The findings revealed that all five of the adjusted constructs had a significant impact on the resulting value outcome of loyalty and trust, however not all findings resulted in the expected hypothesis with perceived usefulness showing a negative influence and social media fatigue showing a positive influence on the loyalty and trust construct. The findings to RQ2 extend the usage behaviour theories by linking the constructs to the value outcome of loyalty and trust. While initially the hypotheses from literature were identified against engagement for RQ1 and the resulting impact on value creation for RQ2, with the adaptation of the constructs and measurement model, the question has been modified to also include the behavioural factors on value creation of loyalty and trust. Following an updated review of the existing literature, there is limited research that supports the direct link between some of these constructs and the value outcome.

6.5.1 Perceived usefulness

While significant, perceived usefulness showed a negative influence ($B = -0.450$; $P < 0.001$) on loyalty and trust, which was not consistent with the literature. While perceived usefulness is important when it comes to the intention to engage and levels of satisfaction with the brand, the findings show that the usefulness of engaging with the brand via social media does not result in an increase in brand trust or a willingness to share positive word of mouth but rather a significantly influential decrease.

Literature shows the construct of perceived usefulness in the case of product benefits as a form of trust through repeat use (Amin et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2021; Samarah et al., 2022), increased satisfaction (Basuki et al., 2022) and finally loyalty (Moon et al., 2023), however few papers have looked at the construct of perceived usefulness directly on loyalty and trust. Wilson et al. (2021) examine the role of perceived usefulness towards satisfaction and trust, which then influences loyalty, while Tarigan (2023) looks at the impact of perceived usefulness loyalty indirectly through brand trust. Prior research by Amin et al. (2014) found that the impact of perceived usefulness not only positively affects satisfaction, as this thesis found in RQ1, but also had a positive impact on trust, which conflicts with the finding of this research.

Research findings from Harianto and Ellyawate (2023) show no positive effect on loyalty when applied to the examination of perceived usefulness for a TikTok shop. The authors suggest that this finding is because of consumers being able to find alternative online shopping alternatives and therefore there are no perceived benefits; however this does not fully address the negative influence of usefulness on trust and loyalty.

This finding could be influenced by the uncertainty that has arisen during COVID-19 and the ever-increasing disinformation and malinformation, whereby users are unable to distinguish if the content shared is real or has been manipulated (Bakowicz, 2023). The increase of AI could result in an overall distrust of content, together with an increase in social media fatigue, and as a result, while there is an increase in perceived usefulness when engaging with the brand on social media channels, this has an inverse effect on trust and loyalty. Further to this, while there is a perceived usefulness of using

social media as a channel to engage and communicate with brands, it is only through a positive interaction that trust and loyalty are actually increased. Research on trust also refers to the requirement for integrity, where the perception needs to adhere to the expected principles (Kim & Peterson, 2017). Findings from Rajaobelina et al. (2021) show the negative influence of negative emotions on loyalty when looking at chatbots, which could therefore become a mediating factor to further investigate.

The concept of perceived usefulness could also be seen as a once-off requirement (i.e. to access certain product or service information), which is therefore not aligned with the longer-term construct of building trust or loyalty.

6.5.2 Perceived enjoyment

Perceived enjoyment showed a significant positive influence ($B = 0.307$, $P < 0.001$) on loyalty and trust. The influence of enjoyment was stronger on loyalty and trust versus the intent to engage and be satisfied. This positive link between perceived enjoyment and loyalty is supported by several researchers including Nevzat et al. (2016), Mulia et al. (2021), Moon et al. (2023), and Xuan et al. (2023), while the positive link between perceived enjoyment and trust and loyalty is supported by Tarigan (2024). While these papers focused on perceived enjoyment different industries and focus areas including banking, education and entertainment, a similar conclusion around perceived enjoyment resulting in repeat use and therefore building trust and loyalty with the brand was found.

6.5.3 Reciprocal communication

Reciprocal communication, although not as strong a predictor, also showed a positive influence on trust and loyalty ($B = 0.198$; $p < 0.05$). This construct refers to a dialogue between brands and stakeholders that ultimately builds relationships, which is consistent with findings from Sahin et al. (2013) where this brand-stakeholder communication positively influences trust. As the relationship grows over time and a mutual exchange is created through dialogue between the brand and consumer, this establishes trust between the parties. Additional research findings show that interactive online communications positively influenced not only trust but also satisfaction and commitment (Kelleher, 2009; Del Mar Galves-Rodriguez, 2018). If this concept of

brand communication is expanded into online communities, literature also shows that consumers who are highly engaged in brand communities tend to form loyalty with the brand (Islam & Rahman, 2017).

6.5.4 Privacy concern

In terms of the perceived costs, privacy concern showed a negative impact on loyalty and trust ($B=-0.110$; $P<0.05$), which is consistent with the research around the impact of privacy and trust. Owing to the increasing data breaches and resulting perception of risks on social media over the years, the concept of privacy concern and trust has continued to be of interest to researchers to explore this negative influence (Malhotra et al., 2004; Yang, 2013).

Multiple research studies show the significant negative link between privacy concerns and trust (Wu et al., 2012); however, interestingly when it comes to the link with engagement as discussed in the previous research question, there is a privacy paradox, where users continue to engage with social media despite the concern (Bright et al., 2021). This is supported by the concept of flow theory within social media behaviour, where users become completely involved without noticing the negative consequences (Lin et al., 2020). The study by Bright et al. (2021) further recommends the importance of building social media trust to continue higher engagement despite privacy concerns based on the findings that trust also acts as a moderating factor.

6.5.5 Social media fatigue

The expected negative impact of social media fatigue was not found, but rather a positive impact of social media fatigue ($B=0.116$; $P<0.05$) on loyalty and trust. This finding shows that as users experience more social media fatigue, there is an increase on loyalty and trust. This finding is not consistent with literature as shown by Liu et al. (2021) where SMF was significantly correlated to the disintention of social media use.

While SMF is still being explored by researchers, Bright et al. (2021) found a similar unexpected result when testing privacy concern and social media fatigue against engagement. The researchers found the relationship between privacy concern and engagement to be positive rather than negative as expected, i.e. users' social media

engagement increased with higher privacy concerns, however this was linked to when users have high trust. While this was not tested on social media fatigue as a direct construct, the significant role of trust could potentially explain why users with increased levels of social media fatigue result in higher trust with a brand. Goasduff and Pettey (2011) and Bright et al. (2022) found that privacy concern was a factor that drives social media fatigue.

With moderate and high levels of social media fatigue, users could become more focused on selected brands, increasing the levels of trust. This link could also be considered with increasing loyalty. With the exposure to overwhelming content and information, users are becoming more loyal to certain brands to keep this experience contained.

6.5.6 Intent to engage and be satisfied

Perhaps the most notable relationship revealed through the SEM analysis was the positive and significant influence of the intent to engage and be satisfied with brands on the outcome of loyalty and trust ($B=0.823$; $P<0.001$), which addressed the official RQ2 looking at the result of engagement (or the intent to engage) on value creation for the brand. This finding shows that consumers who have a strong intent to engage with brands and be satisfied because of that intent are more likely to be loyal to the brand and consider the brand to be more trustworthy. The positive link between behavioural intention and loyalty is supported by Siagian et al. (2023).

While the concept of brand trust has been researched in many forms, including as a mediator (Laroche et al., 2013), an outcome of engagement (Casper Ferm & Thaichon, 2021) and an antecedent to loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001), this thesis has identified trust as an outcome to the intent to engage. This is aligned to research by Vivek et al. (2014); Islam & Rahman (2016) and Dessart (2017) as well as an outcome of CBE (Hollebeek, 2011). Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) state that trust facilitates satisfaction and commitment, which determines the intent to continue a relationship as well as the intent to recommend a brand (Pentina et al., 2013).

Research from Dessart (2017) supports the link of engagement to the outcome of trust and commitment. Owing to the interactivity of engagement, trust is likely to grow over time and with repeat occurrences. The research also considered the impact of brand trust on loyalty; however, this relationship was not supported. Further research from Leckie et al. (2022) also shows the positive relationship between brand engagement and satisfaction and brand trust, which is consistent with research from Carvalho & Fernandes (2018). The positive relationship between satisfaction and trust has also been the focus of several empirical studies (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Sahin et al., 2011; Sahin et al., 2013).

The construct of satisfaction is one that has been researched as an influence on brand outcomes such as loyalty (Oliver, 1999). While there is no debate that these two concepts are linked, Oliver's (1999) paper talks through the plausible relations between satisfaction and loyalty, taking a view that satisfaction becomes the seed from which loyalty can grow. Research from Wilson et al. (2021) supports this positive link of satisfaction on loyalty, suggesting that satisfied customers have a higher tendency to become more loyal.

6.5.7 Research Question 2 conclusion

Overall, the results for RQ2 provide a slightly different view with all five of the constructs having a significant influence on the outcome of trust and loyalty, however two of the constructs provided an unexpected influence on the outcome. While perceived usefulness remains the strongest construct for both the intention and outcome, the result on the outcome of trust and loyalty was negative. This could possibly be owing to the increase in disinformation and malinformation being shared on social media, which results in a decrease in trust or loyalty with the brand even though the interaction or channel is seen as useful. Further investigations around this negative relationship would need to be explored. The other unexpected result was the positive impact of social media fatigue on loyalty and trust, however based on the privacy paradox that was identified, this could be a similar explanation where even though users do have increased levels of fatigue, this does not lead to lower engagement or reduce the levels of trust or loyalty. Rather trust and loyalty increase as users become more overwhelmed and try to keep their trusted brands to a minimum.

The strongest influence on trust and loyalty overall is the positive link between this construct of intent to engage and be satisfied with trust and loyalty. The strength of this link really highlights the existing relationship between satisfaction, trust and loyalty. The shift from pure intention to engage to one that results in the expectation of satisfaction for the consumer strengthens the outcome of both trust and loyalty with the brand if this expectation is met.

A final insight from the research takes into consideration the lens of social exchange theory through which the initial conceptual model was created (benefits versus costs). The comparative research completed shows that while costs have a positive impact to the intended decision to engage with brands on social media, this is less so with trust and loyalty. This aligns with the literature around paradoxical behaviour. While costs are often expected to have a negative influence on engagement or the intent to engage, these costs are not always enough to limit the engagement; for example, with the increase in engagement seen although users have a high concern for privacy. Doom scrolling would be an example of this, where users engage with ongoing negative content. Although the actual costs are higher in terms for doom scrolling, such as impact to mental health, users continue to scroll.

This does not appear to be the case for trust and loyalty, where costs have a negative influence. This suggests that overall, if a user experiences multiple costs with the brand on social media, this will negatively influence their trust and loyalty with the brand. As trust and loyalty are built over time, this would suggest multiple negative experiences over a period. These findings are hypothetical based on the initial findings from this research and would need to be further explored and validated.

6.6 Research Question 3 discussion

What is the impact of usage on intent to engage and engagement as well as value creation?

Social media use (SMU) has become widespread (O'Day & Heimberg 2021), especially with the impact of COVID-19 where social media platforms were used for information

as well as connection during the pandemic. The use of social media has also expanded to all age groups, as is confirmed by this research where respondents range from the ages of 20 years to 60+. While younger adults between the ages of 18 to 29 years are seen as the generation that frequently makes use of social media, there is an increasing use of younger generations spending large amounts of their day online (Smith & Anderson, 2018). For the purpose of this thesis, the focus of respondents was over 20 years of age with the larger proportion between the ages of 30 to 39 years. This could be as a result of the sampling method but might also be reflective of a slightly older audience engaging directly with brands.

Interesting research also looks to differentiate between social media use, including active and passive use. Active use being where users actively engage with actions such as direct messaging, sharing content or links while passive users tend to partake in more monitoring type activities such as scrolling through updates and monitoring other users' updates (Verduyn et al., 2017). While still requiring further research in this area, studies have shown that active social media use tends to be linked to higher levels of well-being whereas passive use is linked to greater anxiety and depression (O'Day & Heimberg, 2021).

To further understand the impact of SMU, multigroup analysis was conducted on both frequent versus rare users of social media with brands. Frequent users ($n = 380$) can be defined as consumers that engage frequently with the brand on social media (all the time, daily, weekly and monthly), while rare users ($n = 103$) make up the remainder of consumers who only engage with brands a few times a year.

The analysis showed a significant difference between the two groups, which is expected. Rare users showed a significant positive impact of perceived usefulness construct on the intent to engage and be satisfied ($\beta = 0.720$; $P < 0.001$). With the limited interactions, this finding suggests that these consumers are looking for something specific and therefore the construct of perceived usefulness is the most relevant.

On the other side, the findings show that frequent users who engage with brands all the time have a positive impact on their intent to engage and be satisfied with loyalty and trust ($\beta = 0.910$; $P < 0.001$). While the subject of frequent usage requires further

study and exploration, O'Day and Heimburg (2021) reference multiple studies where individuals that use social media with greater frequency and intensity tend to show higher levels of social anxiety. These increased levels of anxiety were found to be associated with more passive use by Shaw et al. (2015). While these findings make use of cross-sectional designs and cannot be established as causal, they do present a potential consideration around how brands measure frequent usage and engagement of passive SMU.

While SMU becomes a growing topic of interest, especially with the negative consequences that are being linked to the increasing use of social media, particularly by the younger generation, this area needs to be further researched and understood. Brand Managers also need to be cognisant of their role in this ecosystem where there is a constant push to increase awareness and engagement through the use of influencers, which can result in negative consequences such as comparison and low self-esteem.

6.7 Research Question 4 discussion

What is the impact of social media usage pre and post COVID-19 on the influence of engagement and resulting value creation?

Research shows the significant increase in social media usage as well as the acceleration of this use owing to the COVID-19 pandemic (Thota, 2018; Mason et al., 2020). Mason et al. (2021) further highlight the importance of exploring consumer behaviour post COVID-19. The research states that findings indicate that COVID-19 could result in significant changes to marketing practices based on changing consumer behaviour. This is supported by Laato et al. (2020) showing that few researchers have focused on the impact of the pandemic on consumer behaviour, focusing instead on preventative health.

To better understand the impact of social media usage through the lens of brand engagement, multi-group analysis was conducted. The results showed a significant differential effect between the two groups, respondents' who stated their use of social media remained the same pre and during COVID-19 (n = 182) and respondents' who stated their use of social media increased during the pandemic (n = 229).

When looking at the impact of constructs against the intent to engage, while both groups showed a positive impact of perceived usefulness on the intention, this construct was higher for same usage respondents ($\beta = 0.651; P < 0.001$), suggesting a more focused use of social media during the pandemic and meeting the respondents' needs (Hyun, Thavisay & Lee, 2022). Perceived enjoyment, however, was only significant for increased usage respondents ($\beta = 0.439; P < 0.05$). This could potentially link with the findings that social media is being used for passing time, which 55.2% of respondents selected.

Literature refers to flow theory in social media behaviour (Lin et al., 2020) and a state where users are completely immersed in what they are doing (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). This has been further extended to the online world and TAM (Hyun et al., 2022), where online users encounter positive and enjoyable experiences (Lee & Wu, 2017), which results in a loss of self-awareness (Novak et al., 2000) and can ultimately lead to a further lack of awareness around noticing negative experiences and potential threats (Lin et al., 2020). This could explain the lack of awareness around social media costs including social media fatigue or privacy risk for these higher-usage respondents. Interestingly, respondents with the same social media usage did show a negative impact of social media fatigue when linked to the intent to engage and be satisfied ($\beta = -0.202; p < 0.05$).

The findings for the loyalty and trust construct once again show the impact of both perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment, however in alignment with the original conceptual model, perceived usefulness has a negative impact on loyalty and trust. Same-usage respondents also showed an impact of privacy ($\beta = -0.212; p < 0.05$), social media fatigue ($\beta = 0.339; p < 0.05$) and reciprocal communications ($\beta = 0.501; p < 0.05$). The increase in reciprocal communications against the original model could suggest that these respondents are in fact looking for something quite specific and therefore this personalised and responsive communication becomes more important and ultimately is a predictor in creating loyalty and trust.

The intent to engage and be satisfied across all models shows a significant positive impact on loyalty and trust with increased-usage respondents as the highest ($\beta = 0.928; p < 0.001$). This once again highlights the important link between satisfaction and loyalty and trust.

COVID-19 has been shown to have an impact on the way consumers engage with social media and as a result, requires a shift when considering marketing practices as well as the impact to measurement in the changing ways of engagement.

6.8 Chapter summary

This chapter provided further insight into the analysis and findings from Chapter 5. The chapter started with a discussion around the demographic findings based off the total of 411 completed surveys. The discussion touched on the higher female sample (66.4%), as well as the largest age group falling into the 30-39 age group (34.1%) and the difference in platform preferences based on gender and age group. Based on the timing of the survey, there was also an opportunity to explore the impact of COVID-19 on the usage of social media pre and during COVID-19. The largest shift was seen increasing from 1-2 hours pre COVID-19 to 5-6 hours during COVID-19. Preferred usage was also considered with the top three used on social media including research (63.3%), inspiration (62.3%) and passing time (55.2%).

Before going into each of the research question discussions, the chapter referred back to the theoretical models selected and adapted from the literature and provided an update of the adjusted constructs based on the model optimisation, which included the combination of personalised communication and reciprocity, resulting in reciprocal communication as well as the combination of intent to engage and satisfaction, resulting in the intent to engage and be satisfied. The focus on value creation was also updated to reflect trust and loyalty.

The chapter then provided a thorough discussion of the research question findings:

- RQ1: factors that influence the intent to engage are perceived usefulness as the strongest influencer and perceived enjoyment. Both of these confirm previous

findings from the use of TAM when applied to social media. The remaining constructs of reciprocal communications, privacy concern and social media fatigue did not have a statistical effect on the intent to engage and be satisfied with brands on social media

- RQ2: factors that result in value creation are all five of the constructs, however the strongest link was the intent to engage and be satisfied, which suggests that consumers are looking for satisfaction from brands. In terms of the factors, while high, perceived usefulness had a negative impact, suggesting the impact of misinformation across social media. The remaining factors in order were perceived enjoyment, reciprocal communications, social media fatigue and privacy concern. A new insight was the positive impact of social media fatigue, which like the privacy paradox, can suggested that increased levels of SMF do not lower the engagement or trust and loyalty with brands. This is supported by the comparative analysis that shows that consumers tend to focus on the positive benefits of social media use rather than the negative implications.
- RQ3: the impact of social media usage (SMU) showed a difference between frequent and rare users, with rare users showing a higher impact of perceived usefulness on their intent to engage with brands, suggesting they are engaging to fulfil a specific need, whereas frequent users' intention had a significant positive impact on their trust and loyalty with the brand.
- RQ4: COVID-19 has seen a change in the way consumers engage with social media, from usage through to reasons. The findings from this report showed that users who didn't increase their usage continued to focus on perceived usefulness, while those with higher usage, looked to both usefulness and enjoyment.

The final chapter will conclude with the implications of these findings to theory and practice before providing an overview of the limitations and recommendations for future research.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Introduction

Chapter 7 concludes this study with the overall conclusion and recommendations. The chapter summarizes the implications for both theory and practice in 7.2 before providing a full overview of the research limitations and recommendations for future research directions in 7.3. The chapter and thesis is then completed with the final chapter conclusion bring the full study together in 7.4.

Figure 7.1 provides an overview of Chapter 7.

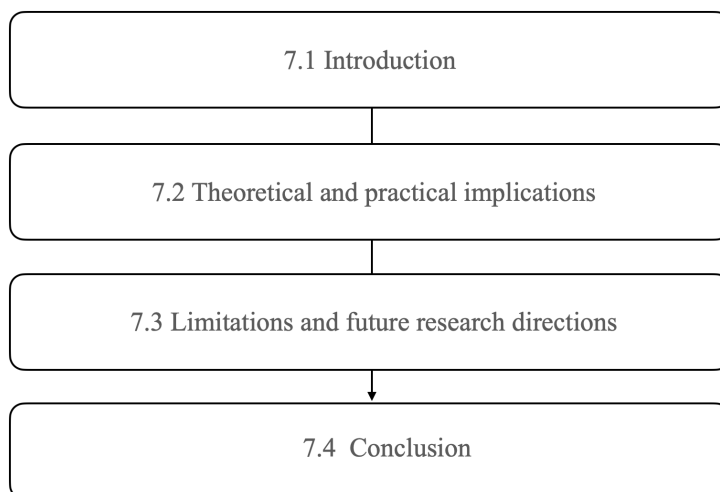


Figure 7.1: Chapter 7 overview

7.2. Theoretical, empirical and practical implications

This thesis proposes an integrated framework for social media brand engagement (SMBE) through the lens of perceived benefits and costs, incorporating multidimensional factors. While there has been an increase in the number of studies looking at the construct of engagement (France et al., 2016) and treating this concept as a multidimensional construct (Hollebeek, 2011; Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart et al., 2015), events such as COVID-19 and new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) are constantly changing the way of the world and as a result, the way consumers engage with brands on social media. This calls for updated research and a need to

develop the theoretical understanding of social media engagement behaviours and understanding the role of these factors in practice (Dolan et al., 2019; Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019). Further to this, based on a review of customer engagement (CE) research by Lim and Rasul (2022), there is an opportunity for advancing knowledge, representation and rigour from an empirical nature on this topic.

In addition, while researchers have been focused on the impact of COVID-19 and social media from a health perspective, there is little attention to the impact of pandemic on the change in consumer behaviour (Laato et al., 2020). As such, this research has important implications for social media engagement literature with the findings providing key insights to brands and marketers around how this might impact their social media strategies, measurement practices and social media policies going forward.

The final model based on the full analysis and findings is shown in Figure 7.2 below.

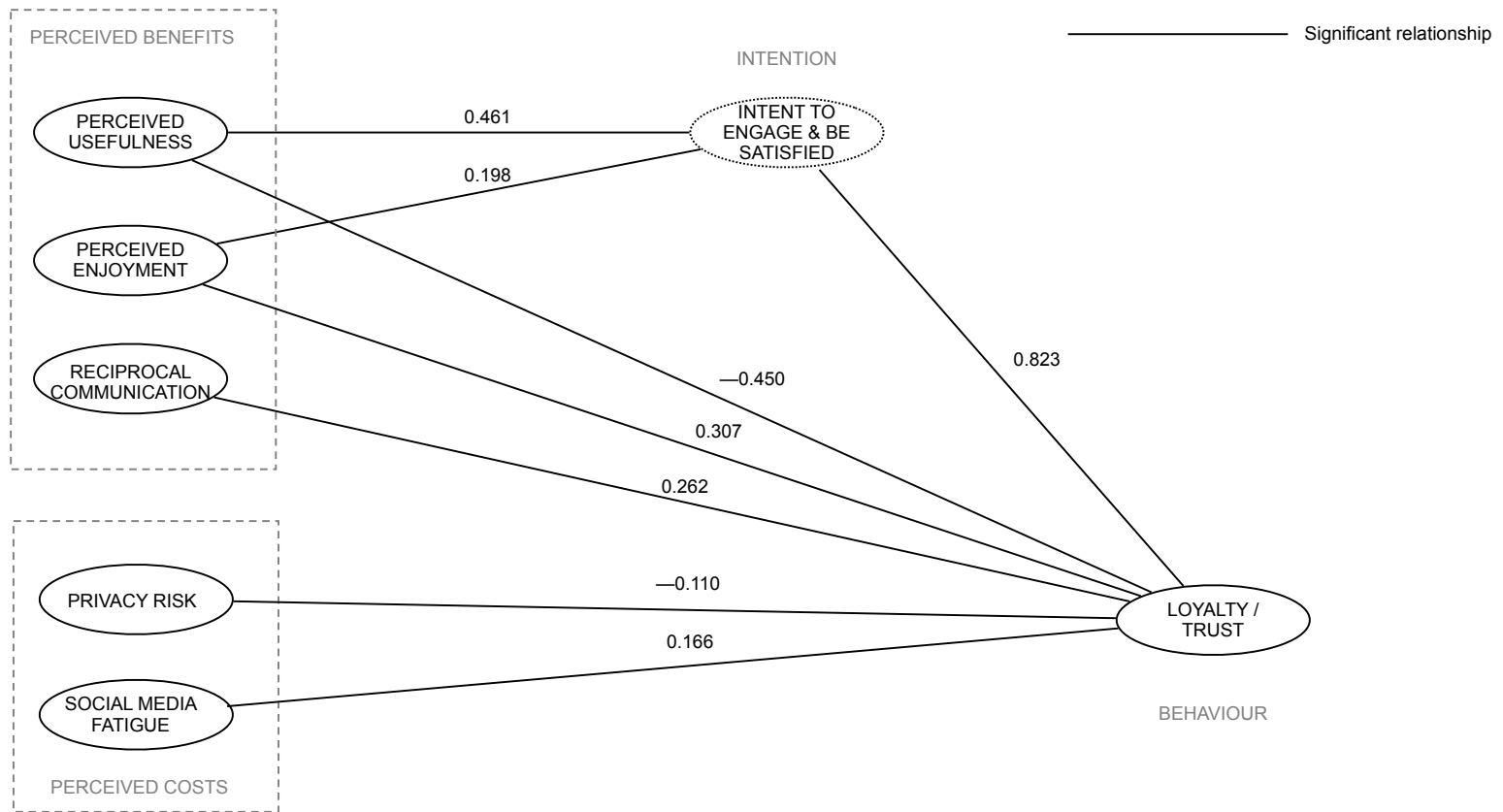


Figure 7.2: Final model

7.2.1 Implications for theory

The main contribution of this thesis was the development of a multi-dimensional and comprehensive model, which provides additional insights to existing behaviour theories and social media literature. This model adds to the literature supporting the change in consumer behaviour as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as constant digital transformation impacts. The model brings together multiple theories, including the TRA, TAM and TPB to create a framework to understand consumer engagement with social media brand communications and the resulting value creation for organisations. Further to this, the model incorporates the lens of SET to consider perceived benefits versus perceived costs and the impact of these to engagement and value creation as well as newer factor considerations including social media fatigue and social influence.

One of the key insights from the model development was the requirement to build more rigorous scales and models as new constructs such as social media fatigue and social influence continue to evolve, and these models become even more multi-dimensional. While this model serves as an initial development of constructs, the findings can be used to build more rigorous models in future research.

The findings of this thesis support several newly adjusted constructs based on the output from factor analysis. The first was the merging of two factors, including reciprocity and personalised communications, resulting in a new construct called reciprocal communications. This construct builds on the two-way engagement that social media is known for and adds to the SPT where the cost-benefit of the reciprocal interaction determines whether the relationship will continue (Posey et al., 2009). The emergence of this factor will be increasingly relevant with the adoption of AI and digital tools such as chatbots and whether consumers are comfortable with the reciprocal automated interaction received or if there is still a requirement for human interaction. There is an initial hypothesis that consumers will begin to accept more automated interactions based on the need for perceived usefulness and if these needs are met; however, there are certain emotive interactions where human connection will be required.

The second newly adjusted construct is the combined effect of the intent to engage and the outcome of satisfaction. This is a noteworthy finding based on the growth and importance of customer experience and the increasing demands of the consumer. With the rise of digital platforms and ease of doing business, consumers are becoming more expectant in their demands of being satisfied and if not, take to social media or servicing platforms to complain. This new satisfaction intent really highlights the growing consumer demand and shift towards the consumer being more in control of determining the perception of the brand. This starts to shift the narrative from a push strategy to a pull strategy when thinking about attraction and acquisition campaigns.

The model also introduces the concept of negative consequences through the SET and a focus on the perceived benefits versus perceived costs. Xiao and Mou (2019) support the need to further investigate the darker side of social media and the impact of these negative consequences. The SET theory highlights the need of users to maximise benefits and minimise costs as part of an exchange. What was interesting from the findings of this research was that while consumers experienced negative consequences to their social media usage such as privacy risk and social media fatigue, these constructs did not always have a negative impact of usage. This supports the finding of the privacy paradox, where consumers continue to use social media regardless of the impact on privacy risk. Another insight from this research extends to a social media fatigue paradox, where similarly, while users might experience fatigue, this did not lead to lower levels of engagement or a reduction in trust and loyalty. Rather trust and loyalty increase as consumers try to reduce the overwhelm experienced from engaging with multiple brands, influencers and across multiple platforms. Both of these findings contribute to the literature on privacy risk and social media fatigue and provide the potential for further research around the overall concept of social media usage paradox.

Based on the SEM output and findings, an interesting shift in the use of social media is the move away from pure enjoyment and entertainment towards more usefulness, including product and service information, special offers and promotions and recommendations. This shift has most likely strengthened as a result of the pandemic and the use of social media as a channel for information sharing as well as online purchasing as a result of lockdowns. This finding is supported by researchers

highlighting the move away from social media as pure hedonic motivation (Sullivan, 2019; Tamilmani et al., 2019). There is however still a need for enjoyment with high-frequency social media users, however this increased usage does suggest more passive use scrolling through posts and profiles rather than actively engaging with the content.

Overall, this research looked to utilise and adapt behavioural and usage theories with insights applied from literature to the gaps identified within the social media engagement body of knowledge. The findings extend these theories with additional insights and theoretical application and further contribute to this dynamic and continuously evolving topic.

7.2.2 Empirical implications

From an empirical perspective, this study provides a consolidation of three core theories, including TRA, TAM, and TPB to quantitatively test the concept of CE and the resulting outcome of value (loyalty and trust) using SEM. In addition, the theories of SET and SPT provide the lens of benefits versus costs as well as input into the constructs of communication and reciprocity. Based on a review of CE, few studies employ multiple studies in this topic and as a result, call for further theoretical integration (Lim & Rasul, 2022).

The study consolidates multiple scales developed for prior studies that have not been tested together. As mentioned above, one of the key insights was the need for more rigorous scales and models as new constructs and theory integrations evolve. Key learnings from this study highlight a similarity in construct scales that can be adapted for further development and testing.

There is also an opportunity to use this initial construct as the foundation to conduct testing across multiple countries. While this study's sample expanded beyond the local context, the sample size was not large enough to look at detailed comparative research between the countries and rather looks at an overall global outlook.

7.2.3 Implications for practice

The findings from this research have important implications for brand managers with a social media presence when it comes to crafting and implementing social media strategies, especially taking into consideration the need for new technological solutions in this new post-COVID world.

Linking back to the Social Media Value Chain (Littlewood & Bick, 2015), the framework provides guidance to organisations around three areas; the first being firm investment and strategy, the second around community management and the third around measurement and ROI.

7.2.3.1 Relevant and useful content strategy

When considering firm investment and strategy, there are several applications based on the findings from this research. The first answers the initial question raised in the introduction around how brands continue to stand out with the increase in platforms, content, influencers and decrease in attention. Results from this research show that there is an increase in the impact of perceived usefulness on the intent to engage and be satisfied and therefore brand managers need to ensure they become more useful to consumers in order to stand out.

Based on the findings, this could be linked to the use of social media as a research tool for products and services. Brand managers can effectively provide more curated information about key products and services, supported by personalised recommendations through effective short-form content such as video. The rise of AI can be used to predict next best products and services and create more personalised content and recommendations for each consumer more accurately. While customer segmentation and personalisation has been a trend in marketing reports over the years, the application of this has not been as successful and many brand managers rely on social media algorithms and tools to determine audience targeting versus structured segmentation models. Research has already started to show the impact of marketers using AI for content creation, targeting and tailoring purposes and report automation, ultimately driving improved customer satisfaction and long-term loyalty (Davenport et al., 2020; Huang & Rust, 2021; Kumar et al., 2024). What becomes extremely

important linked to AI is the consideration of ethics and privacy owing to the use of large datasets (Wirz et al., 2022) as well as the need for policies to understand where AI is going and be cognisant of potential risks and concerns.

With the trend of social search, the use of social media channels could also be adapted to provide insights, expertise and recommendations. This is particularly relevant for younger audiences, who make use of social media channels rather than traditional web searches. This could be owing to the increasing preference of visual versus textual content (Chan et al., 2023). What does become even more important is the trust factor. Consumers need to be able to trust the information and recommendations, so while AI is useful in creating more targeted and curated content, certain information such as recommendations still need to offer that human touch.

Bite-size content that is informative, visual, engaging and relevant becomes even more important as consumers continuously scroll through content with the flick of a thumb. Influencer marketing continues to drive awareness, engagement and purchase intent; however, it is essential that brand managers deeply understand their consumer segments and identify trusted and authentic influencers. The power of influencers is no longer purely based on their following and reach but also their ability to connect and build trust with the right consumers. There needs to be an authentic link to the brand and product or service.

While perceived usefulness had the highest impact, perceived enjoyment still showed a significant positive impact in both the intent to engage as well as trust and loyalty. There is still a place for joy and happiness on social media and this should be incorporated into brand managers' content strategies. By incorporating more positive content, this could also mitigate some of the negative consequences of doom-scrolling.

Post pandemic, there has also been a shift towards the focus on health and wellbeing. While not all companies offer specific products and services in this space, there is the opportunity to think more widely around how their offering can be presented to drive better decision making and behavioural action. This could be providing more information about where the products come from, and the material used so that consumers can make more informed purchase decisions or creating more informative

posts around how to save and invest more for financial wellbeing. Consumers value more authentic and transparent brands and are more likely to trust brands that are open and putting the consumer first.

Brand managers could also introduce more focus around digital wellbeing strategies as part of their social media content strategy. While there is reliance on social media platform algorithms and responding to the community in real time, brand managers could start to build more of a focused social media calendar, encouraging digital breaks or limiting engagement across specific platforms. This needs to align with the values of the organisation to be seen as authentic. With the increase in the use of AI, content teams can create more curated and personalised content that is available at the right time on the right channel. However, brand managers do need to be cognisant that personalisation comes with a risk with the emergence of filter bubbles that result in users presented with content that reinforces their current beliefs and opinions (Yang et al., 2023).

7.2.3.2 Automating customer service

Findings from the research show customer service ranked as one of the lower requirements when engaging with brands on social media channels. While consumers are known to take to social media channels when their voices are not heard, there is an opportunity for companies to automate their service channels, creating more seamless and streamlined customer service. In today's servicing landscape, consumers demand for seamless and immediate service offerings is growing (Ostrom et al., 2021).

This could result in the switching to more private channels such as WhatsApp or AI chatbots and virtual assistants, all of which allow for quick and effective responses, which can be automated and then transferred to a human agent if required. This also reduces the interaction on social media channels, which supports both digital wellbeing for the consumer as well as any negative impact from poor customer service. This strategy does require a deep understanding of consumer preferences in terms of channel, willingness to engage with automated versus human channels and customer service process optimisation to ensure proactive and efficient servicing. The drawback of implementing automated experiences could result in creating unrealistic expectations

of consumers when dealing with human agents or consumers perceiving the chatbots or virtual assistances to be inauthentic and lacking empathy (Kumar et al., 2024).

7.2.3.3 Building trust in the community

Based on the SMVC, the community is made up of customers (both existing and potential), influencers and competitors. This is important to consider as not all voices within the community are trustworthy. Add to this the trend of increased misinformation and disinformation and the need for building trust becomes even more important.

To be trustworthy, brands need to become more human. They need to be authentic and transparent in the content shared with consumers and shift their focus to meeting consumer needs versus pure product and service pushes on social media channels. This can be linked to KPIs and metrics, which are often driven purely by increased awareness, acquisition, engagement, purchases and retention. By including additional metrics to measure brand trust and authenticity, this could result in more loyal consumers and ultimately a higher customer lifetime value.

Brand and community managers should also ensure that the communities are moderated for incorrect information and drive consistent brand voice and messaging so that consumers are able to better recognise fake content or personas. With the increase in scams through digital platforms, the focus on privacy risk becomes even more important. Findings from this research show that privacy risk has a negative impact on trust and loyalty and therefore should be taken into consideration to ensure privacy policies are in place and fully adhered to.

While the trends in social media have moved from multiple brand channels to consolidated platforms and channels, there is an opportunity to move from broad audience communities to more targeted and niche communities, allowing personalised connection and engagement across relevant communities and the potential to drive more active social media communities. This could encourage more engagement, particularly by more socially anxious consumers who prefer smaller and more protected environments.

7.2.3.4 Adapting measurement frameworks

Social media measurement remains one of the greatest challenges for organisations and is becoming even more challenging as consumers switch channels and platforms throughout their path to purchase. Traditional metrics such as number of followers, likes, shares, and comments etc. have been complemented by sentiment analysis to better understand the brand and potential product and service enhancements as well as digital tracking to determine the full customer journey and how consumers are driven through the purchasing funnel.

AI presents an opportunity to marketers to improve their marketing performance measurement. AI-powered tools can not only assist marketers in generating campaign execution but also analysing the campaign performance and providing insights around future enhancements (Kumar et al., 2024). This is not without limitations, the accuracy of forecasting and predictive analytics is based on the integrity of data, which comes with its own set of challenges. AI-powered measurement tools can be used for multiple requirements, including analysing traffic and engagement through to predicting consumer behaviour and estimating sales volumes (Friedman, 2023).

As social media usage continues to grow and negative consequences such as social media addiction, social media fatigue and doom-scrolling start to become more apparent, there is a need to shift the way marketers measure success of their social media programmes. While investment does require a good ROI and business case to further investment, there also needs to be consideration around the greater impact to consumers. This requires a dramatic shift in thinking and crafting of social media strategies to become more intentional.

Another consideration around measurement is the increase in passive users. While this needs to be researched further, this initial finding does suggest that social media measurement currently caters more towards the active user (likes, comments, shares) versus passive users (number of followers and reach). Content tracking such as content or video views and scroll depth can provide an indication of how many people are viewing content and not actively engaging further; however deeper analysis would be required to understand the content preference and consumption patterns between active and passive users. By identifying passive users and linking purchases, organisations are

able to better understand the different paths to purchase between active and passive users and determine the strategies required to personalise and target these different users. The addition and integration of AI will continue to target and measure social media experiences more effectively.

Levels of engagement on the whole are decreasing, potentially owing to overload and the overwhelming number of channels, digital platforms, influences, campaigns and emails that individuals are faced with on a daily basis. Unless these are perceived as relevant and useful, then engagement levels will continue to decline or there will be a discontinuation of use (Lin et al., 2020). Finding flow mitigates levels of fatigue or intention of discontinuation, however there is a balance required to ensure a healthy flow versus ongoing use without noticing time disappearing. The addition of functional offerings such as social commerce has widened the use of social media platforms beyond pure content engagement; however, additional features such as the ability to ask for personalised advice, adding instant recommendations, or the ability to get relevant reviews and inspiration, which could be enabled through GenAI, might drive a new type of relevant and useful engagement.

7.2.3.5 The Brand Managers' role in the dark side of social

While the world speeds ahead with ongoing technical innovation, improving digital experiences, and increasing access to content and information, negative consequences of this fast evolution are starting to appear, whether linked to increased digital or social media usage, decreased attention spans or negative health implications. The proliferation of social media usage has resulted in the increase in attention of researchers on social media addiction (SMA), which includes a lack of self-control through habit-driven addiction as well as excessive use owing to social anxiety (Liao et al., 2023). While this research requires further studies linked to behaviour, an interesting insight in this field is that social media addiction becomes more difficult to address because social media users perceive the benefits to far outweigh the costs. The use of algorithms on these social media platforms adds to this by “increasing user stickiness” and creating a desire for “social recognition” and “excessive use” (Liao et al., 2023, p. 2)

While this area needs further research and potentially the collaboration of organisations to identify potential solutions and actions, there are certain things brand managers can do to limit their role in driving SMA. Firstly, brand managers can promote awareness of the negative consequences of excessive social media use (SMU) and create content to support a more balanced experience with the brand, potentially enabling more of a ‘phygital’ (online and offline) experience. Habits can be enforced through nudges, so companies can help enforce more healthy digital habits for consumers who engage with their digital platforms and social media channels. This could be done in a way that promotes brand trust and ultimately results in loyalty. Companies can also partner with mental health and wellbeing partners or influencers to create relevant initiatives to raise awareness and support.

While this appears to be in contradiction to creating more engagement, the result in trust and loyalty with the brand could potentially increase, resulting in consumer retention. The world of engagement will continue to evolve and adapt, and companies can play an active part in ensuring they are part of the solution, rather than the problem.

7.3. Limitations and future research directions

While this study followed a rigorous research methodology starting with a full literature review and defined Structural Equation Modelling approach, it was not without limitations.

Although the survey design looked to literature and pre-defined scales and was reviewed by a SEM expert prior to data collection, there were limitations identified with the data analysis. While tested in literature, some of these scales had not previously been conducted together or were new at the time of survey design, and as a result, several of the constructs had to be adjusted based on similarity of the scale questions. Although a pilot was completed to test the survey design, length and understanding, full analysis was only run on the final survey dataset. While this is a limitation, this study serves as an initial development of constructs, the findings of which can be used to build more rigorous models in future research. Updated scales could also be

referenced and used as an update to this survey in future research. A replicated study using alternative scales for each of these factors could also be conducted to verify the results for example, a more definitive social media influence construct could draw different results based on literature.

The sample for this research was initially identified as social media consumers in South Africa, however with the use of non-probability snowball sampling, chosen to reduce selection bias, the survey was shared across social media networks and resulted in a global set of respondents. The majority of the sample is from South Africa; however, it was decided to keep in the global respondents for a more global view. The sample is however not reflective of the entire population of social media consumers in South Africa or globally and therefore generalising the findings of this study should be made with caution. Future studies could look at collecting data from a wider global audience to determine if there are statistical differences across global audiences.

While targeting was applied as part of the second survey to reflect a more representative sample, there was a higher number of female participants in the final dataset. While this was aligned to a slightly higher number of South African female social media users at the time, no further comparative analysis was completed using gender or age. To meet the criteria of the larger sample size for SEM, this was maintained as the core focus when reviewing the sample demographics.

Bell and Bryman (2007) suggest that self-administered surveys can often result in a false sense of accuracy and may be sensitive to self-selection bias. Respondents are known to portray an ideal version of themselves in self-reported surveys measuring attitudes and behaviour (Malinen, 2015). As such, this should be taken into consideration when reviewing the results. A pilot of the survey was completed to test the understanding of the survey questions. The questions were also randomised to reduce the chance of bias.

While the survey was run twice and over the period of several months, this study followed a cross-sectional design and gathered data over a particular time. This selection was appropriate for the type of research (Bryman, 2012), however the approach does not take into consideration potential impacts and changes to variables

that could happen over a longer period. As such, a longitudinal study could be conducted to further understand the implications of usage and attitude over a prolonged period. While the pilot study was run in June, the final study was only opened and run for a period of two months with an extension of a further month to reach the required sample number. No significant changes were noted during this time period that would be considered to impact the results.

In addition to the above, recommendations for future studies include extending the model to contain:

- updated scales for factors identified as part of this study (e.g. social media influence and reciprocal communication)
- new/updated/additional behavioural, social or emotive factors identified from current studies or further qualitative research
- additional negative consequences such as social media addiction (SMA) identified through literature or qualitative research to expand on the impact of costs vs benefits

The study could also be replicated post COVID-19 to determine if the findings are still relevant a few years post the pandemic. The survey was conducted during the peak of COVID-19 and therefore while the pandemic was top of mind, there could be some additional insights around whether these findings are still relevant now. The study was also run across multiple social media platforms, future research could look at focusing on one specific platform to get deeper insights or add additional multigroup analysis to look at the impacts across the platforms.

In addition, with the considerable update of artificial intelligence, there could be an opportunity to relook certain variables such as reciprocal communication and to understand the significance of this factor with more personalised and targeted communications through the use of AI.

7.4. Conclusion

Social media continues to be an important consideration for both business and researchers, particularly as the phenomena evolves with constant change and new technological advancements such as artificial intelligence (AI). Additional investment in social media is increasing as businesses continue to develop and expand skills and integrate new technology. Owing to this, the significance of understanding the value of social media becomes even more important for businesses to develop effective strategies and measure the right returns.

The rise of consumer power and influence in regard to social media and overall customer experience also brings a new lens to determine whether the current social media strategies and objectives are in fact meeting consumer requirements and perceptions of value. The impact of the pandemic brought with it a shift in consumer behaviour and fast track of higher digital transformation, particularly in South Africa. This shift requires further consideration around the impact to marketing through ongoing research.

With constant change in the social media landscape and consumer behaviour, there is even more need to continuously research the topic of social media. This thesis deep dives into the topic of social media engagement and value creation, starting off with a review of the existing literature to identify the key research gaps. Through a holistic evaluation of behaviour and usage theories, together with the output from the previously derived SMVC, the study has developed a conceptual model adapting and extending previously tested factors against engagement and value.

Through the review of literature, several gaps were identified, which this research has addressed. The first is a shift in consumer behaviour post COVID-19 and the need to continually research this in the space of social media (Appel et al., 2020). The second refers to the lack of consensus around the definition of engagement in the space of social media (Trunfio & Rossi, 2021) and the call for further research in this space (Chalal et al., 2020; Dolan et al., 2019; Dwivedi et al., 2021). While there have been several multidimensional models from researchers including Hollebeek and Brodie,

there are limited models that bring together aspects from behaviour, emotive, social and usage theories, particularly on the social factors (Bianchi & Andrews, 2018). And finally, while there has been a predominant focus on the positive effects of social media in the engagement space, the focus on negative consequences will provide a more comprehensive understanding of this topic as well as the role brands and organisations can play in mitigating some of these risks (Shen et al., 2023). Based on these gaps, the research aim of this paper was to explore the positive and negative behavioural, emotive, social and usage factors that impact social media engagement and result in value creation for the brand.

The conceptual model based on the literature review adapted several behaviour and usage theories, selecting core constructs such as the behavioural intention and behaviour from TRA and TAM; attitude from TRA/TPB; perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment from TAM; social influence from TRA/TRB and social learning theory and reciprocity from SET. These factors were extended to link the outcome of value creation adapted from the SMVC as well as the concept of integrated communication. In addition, constructs such as privacy risk and social media fatigue were introduced as negative consequences based off SET/SPT, where the lens of perceived benefits versus perceived costs was derived. Value creation incorporated factors identified from literature including trust, loyalty, satisfaction, word of mouth and purchase intent.

A qualitative survey was developed based off the existing scales to collect data from social media consumers. Through rigorous SEM analysis and several optimisations, the final structural model was produced, accounting for 65% of the variance for the intent to engage and be satisfied as well as 72% for trust and loyalty. Out of the total 11 hypotheses, 8 were significant. Additional comparative and multigroup analysis was completed to assess social media usage and the impact of COVID-19.

The research findings show that key factors that significantly drive the intent to engage and be satisfied are beneficial, with a shift to perceived usefulness post COVID-19, followed by perceived enjoyment. Perceived enjoyment also appears to be more of a focus for respondents who increased their usage, where those with the same tend to be more focused around why they are engaging. When it comes to the outcome of trust

and loyalty, a key driver is the satisfaction intention, which links with current findings in practice and more demanding consumers. The remaining factors all showed a significant impact on trust and loyalty, however interesting perceived usefulness showed a negative impact, suggesting that the impact of fake news and information could be impacting consumers experiences online. Another new and interesting insight was the social media fatigue paradox, where although negative, did not show a negative impact on trust and loyalty but rather an increase, suggesting as supported by literature that consumers are not aware of the negative consequences of social media or that owing to constant overwhelm and the resulting fatigue, consumers are consolidating and becoming more loyalty to the brands they follow.

The contribution of this research is threefold. The first and main contribution is applying the lens of various behavioural, social and usage theories to the field of social media intention and engagement through the development and validation of a multi-dimensional conceptual model.

The model uses the lens of SET and the benefits versus costs, which can be applied to social interactions on social media platforms. While traditionally most models focus on either positive or negative factors, this model introduces a cost-benefit analysis, which can be incorporated into future models with the increase of potentially negative factors being identified in extended social media use. The output of this research extends the current findings on the privacy paradox, extending this to the construct of social media fatigue and the outcome that while negative, this does not drive a reduced intention to engage.

Looking at the factors of engagement, the model validates the findings from TAM literature, confirming the significant factors of perceived usefulness and enjoyment. The research also highlights the shift to perceived usefulness post COVID-19, which provides a practical insight for brand managers and marketing managers when planning their social media strategy. Further to this, the research highlighted the impact of misinformation on the perceived usefulness, which enforces the need for risk mitigation, particularly with the growth of GenAI and content creation.

While adjusted based on the factor analysis results, the factor of reciprocal communication, which was adapted from SET and SPT, was shown to have a positive impact on trust and loyalty, which further builds on the findings within this literature. The factors adapted from TRA and TPB, including attitude and social media influence were not included in the final model based on the factor analysis results.

Perhaps the most notable finding, which can further enhance the current TBP literature on behavioural intention is the significant influence of the intent to be satisfied with the value creation of trust and loyalty. Based on the analysis results, the factors of intent to engage and satisfaction were combined to form a new factor, which can provide a further contribution to theory. Finally, all of the theories incorporated into the model have been expanded through their application to the social media engagement literature, which requires constant adaption as it continues to shift to accommodate the dynamic world that continues post COVID-19.

From a methodological perspective, the research focuses an empirical contribution, gathering new data and insights adding to the social media engagement literature, particularly introducing more around the negative consequences of social media usage, including the social media fatigue paradox and finally, the application of factor analysis and structural equation modelling (SEM), to test and validate this conceptual framework, highlighting further recommendations around model development.

From a practical perspective, the research aims to support brands and marketing professionals with insights around the shift in social media behaviour and engagement and what this means from a strategic perspective in terms of content generation, introduction of AI, building trust in the community and automating customer service. Measurement will also be hugely impacted by AI as well as the need for a different lens of reporting and metrics based on the findings. Finally, the growing focus of the negative side of social media becomes even more important, highlighting the need for companies to collaborate and become part of the solution to some of the challenges.

This thesis provides the building blocks and serves as the initial development of a multi-dimensional model, the findings of which can be used by future researchers to adapt and build even stronger models in future.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Pilot survey and updates

Based on pilot testing, the scales were adapted to shorten the survey length and time to complete due to survey fatigue experience during COVID-19. The wording was adapted to be clear that the feedback was about the selected brand that the participant had chosen, and negative statements were included to ensure objective completion.

For changes made to the pilot survey, please see the edits below:

Please select the option that best indicates the extent to which you agree with the statements listed below. Selecting 1 means that you strongly disagree and selecting 5 means that you strongly agree with the statement.

	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Attitudes:							
ATT1	I find it rewarding to engage with the brand on social media	1	2	3	4	5	Kerry Littlewood Deleted: Engaging with a brand on social media is rewarding
ATT2	Engaging with a brand on social media attracts my attention	1	2	3	4	5	Kerry Littlewood Formatted: Strikethrough Kerry Littlewood Deleted: 3
ATT1	I find it meaningful to engage with the brand on social media	1	2	3	4	5	Kerry Littlewood Deleted: Engaging with a brand on social media is meaningful
ATT4	Engaging with a brand on social media gives me contentment	1	2	3	4	5	Kerry Littlewood Formatted: Strikethrough Kerry Littlewood Deleted: 5
ATT3	I find it worth spending time engaging with a brand on social media	1	2	3	4	5	Kerry Littlewood Deleted: It is worth spending time engaging with a brand on social media
Perceived usefulness:							
PU1	I find I have better communication with the brand when using social media	1	2	3	4	5	Kerry Littlewood Deleted: Using social media helps me have better communication with the brand
PU2	Using social media increases my productivity in communicating with the brand	1	2	3	4	5	Kerry Littlewood Formatted: Strikethrough Kerry Littlewood Deleted: 3
PU2	I find it more effective communicating with the brand on social media	1	2	3	4	5	Kerry Littlewood Deleted: Using social media enhances my effectiveness in communicating with the brand
PU3	I find social media to be useful in my communication with the brand	1	2	3	4	5	Kerry Littlewood Deleted: 4
Perceived enjoyment:							
PE1	I find it enjoyable to engage with the brand on social media	1	2	3	4	5	Kerry Littlewood Deleted: engaging with a brand on social media enjoyable
PE2	I find engaging with a brand on social media to be pleasant	1	2	3	4	5	Kerry Littlewood Formatted: Strikethrough

SECTION 3: Scale to measure outcome variables

Below are statements about your engagement, satisfaction and loyalty with a brand based on your social media interactions. Please indicate your response by selecting the option that best indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree:

Intent to engage						
IE1	I intend to continue using social media to engage with brands	1	2	3	4	5
IE2	I will keep on using social media to engage with brands in future	1	2	3	4	5
IE3	I don't believe I would continue using social media to engage with brands	1	2	3	4	5
Engagement						
E1	When I am dealing with the brand on social media, I am deeply engrossed	1	2	3	4	5
E2	I am passionate about the brand	1	2	3	4	5
E3	I have a sense of belonging to the brand	1	2	3	4	5
E4	I am enthusiastic towards the brand	1	2	3	4	5
E3	When involved with the brand on social media, my mind is focused on what is happening	1	2	3	4	5
E6	When interacting with the brand on social media, I concentrate entirely on the brand	1	2	3	4	5
E7	I am a dedicated customer of the brand	1	2	3	4	5
Satisfaction:						
CS1	I am satisfied with my decision to engage with this brand on social media	1	2	3	4	5
CS2	My choice to engage with this brand on social media was a wise one	1	2	3	4	5
CS3	I think I did the right thing when I engaged with this brand on social media	1	2	3	4	5

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CS4	I am happy that I engaged with this brand on social media	1	2	3	4	5
CS5	I truly enjoyed my engagement with this brand on social media	1	2	3	4	5
Loyalty (Word of Mouth and Purchase intent):						
L1	I am willing to complete a survey for this brand	1	2	3	4	5
L2	I am willing to say positive things about the brand to others	1	2	3	4	5
L3	I am willing to encourage others to do business with the brand	1	2	3	4	5
BL4	I am willing to encourage others to engage with the brand on social media	1	2	3	4	5
BL5	I plan to do business with the brand in the next few years	1	2	3	4	5
L4	I plan to purchase products and services from this brand in the next few years	1	2	3	4	5
Trust:						
T1	I trust the brand	1	2	3	4	5
T2	I rely on the brand	1	2	3	4	5
T2	I believe the brand is an honest brand	1	2	3	4	5
T3	I believe the brand gives me everything that I expect out of the engagement	1	2	3	4	5
T5	The brand never disappoints me	1	2	3	4	5

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APPENDIX B: Survey Instrument



RESEARCH TITLE

The social media value framework: development and validation of a conceptual framework for social media engagement and value creation

Thank you so much for your time in response to my PhD research and survey.

The research aims to investigate consumer behaviour and engagement on social media platforms. In order to participate in this survey, you will need to participate with brands and companies on social media platforms. Social media platforms refer to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat etc.

This survey is purely focused on academic research and no individual responses will be mentioned in the research output. All data that is collected will be aggregated and reported as such. The findings of this survey will be presented in a PhD research paper as well as potential conference papers and academic journals.

The survey will take approximately x minutes to complete. Completion of this questionnaire is considered as informed consent to participate in this research and acknowledges the following:

- Participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time.
- You understand that by answering this survey, your data and responses are anonymous, confidential and private.

This research has been approved by the UCT Ethics committee. If you have any questions about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me on the following details:

Kerry Littlewood | Litker001@gsb.uct.ac.za

S1: Are you a social media user?

Yes

Please proceed to next question

No

Thank you for your time, you will not need to continue with this survey

S2: Have you engaged (viewed, liked, commented or chatted) with a brand or company through any social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp etc.)?

Yes

Please proceed to next question

No

Thank you for your time, you will not need to continue with this survey

SECTION 1: Demographics

1: Please indicate your gender identity?

Male

Female

Prefer not to answer

Other

If other, please specify _____

2: Please indicate your age group?

20-29

30-39

40-49

50-59

60+

4: Please indicate in which province you live?

Eastern Cape

Free State

Gauteng

Kwazulu Natal

Limpopo

Mpumalanga

Northern Cape

North West

Western Cape

Other

If other, please specify _____

5: Please indicate your level of education/training?

High school or less

College degree

University undergraduate degree

Postgraduate degree

Masters degree

Other

If other, please specify _____

6: How long have you been using social media?

Less than 1 year

1 – 2 years

3 – 4 years

4 – 5 years

More than 5 years

7: On average, how often did you use social media per day (prior to Covid-19)?

I didn't use it daily

Less than one hour

1-2 hours

3-4 hours

5-6 hours

7-8 hours

More than 8 hours

8: On average, how often do you use social media per day (post Covid-19)?

I don't use it daily

Less than one hour

1-2 hours

3-4 hours

5-6 hours

7-8 hours

More than 8 hours

9: On average, how often do you use social media sites to engage with brands or companies?

All the time

Once a day

Weekly

Monthly

A few times in a year

10. Has your engagement with brands or companies increased post Covid-19?

Yes

No

If yes, why? _____

11: The social media sites I use most often to engage with brands or companies are (select all that apply):

Facebook

Instagram

LinkedIn

Twitter

YouTube

Snapchat

WhatsApp

Tiktok

Other

If other, please specify _____

12: I use these social media sites mostly for (select all that apply):

Research on a product or service

Customer service

Feedback (compliments or complaints)

Enquiries

Inspiration

Special offers

Product or service suggestions

Purchase

Other

If other, please specify _____

SECTION 2: Scale to measure predictor variables

Think about a brand or company that you interacted with using social media and keep these interactions in mind while answering the survey questions.

Please select the option that best indicates the extent to which you agree with the statements listed below. Selecting 1 means that you strongly disagree and selecting 5 means that you strongly agree with the statement.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Attitudes:						
ATT1	I find it rewarding to engage with the brand on social media	1	2	3	4	5
ATT2	I find it meaningful to engage with the brand on social media	1	2	3	4	5
ATT3	I find it worth spending time to engage with the brand on social media	1	2	3	4	5
Perceived usefulness:						

PU1	I find I have better communication with the brand when using social media	1	2	3	4	5
PU2	I find it more effective communicating with the brand on social media	1	2	3	4	5
PU3	I find social media to be useful in my communication with the brand	1	2	3	4	5
Perceived enjoyment:						
PE1	I find it enjoyable to engage with the brand on social media enjoyable	1	2	3	4	5
PE2	I have fun when engaging with a brand on social media	1	2	3	4	5
PE4	I find engaging with a brand on social media does not provide me with a lot of joy	1	2	3	4	5
Personalised communications:						
C1	I am kept informed by the brand on social media	1	2	3	4	5
C2	The brand listens to my feedback on social media	1	2	3	4	5
C3	I am provided with relevant information from the brand on social media	1	2	3	4	5
Social influence:						
SI1	My friends or family recommended that I follow or engage brands on social media	1	2	3	4	5
SI2	My colleagues influence me to engage with brands on social media	1	2	3	4	5
SI3	Influencers inspire me to engage with brands on social media	1	2	3	4	5
Privacy concern:						
PC1	I am concerned about my privacy with the brand on social media	1	2	3	4	5
PC2	I am concerned that the information I submit on social media can be misused by brands	1	2	3	4	5

PC3	I am concerned that brands can find my personal information on social media	1	2	3	4	5
Reciprocity and Interactivity:						
R1	When engaging with the brand on social media, they would respond to me quickly and efficiently	1	2	3	4	5
R2	When engaging with the brand on social media, they would allow me to communicate directly with it	1	2	3	4	5
R3	When engaging with the brand on social media, they will listen to what I have to say	1	2	3	4	5
Social Media Fatigue:						
SMF1	I feel emotionally drained after using social media	1	2	3	4	5
SMF2	Using social media is stressful for me	1	2	3	4	5
SMF3	I feel frustrated when using social media	1	2	3	4	5
SMF4	I feel not interested in whether new content or posts are shared by the brand on social media	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 3: Scale to measure outcome variables

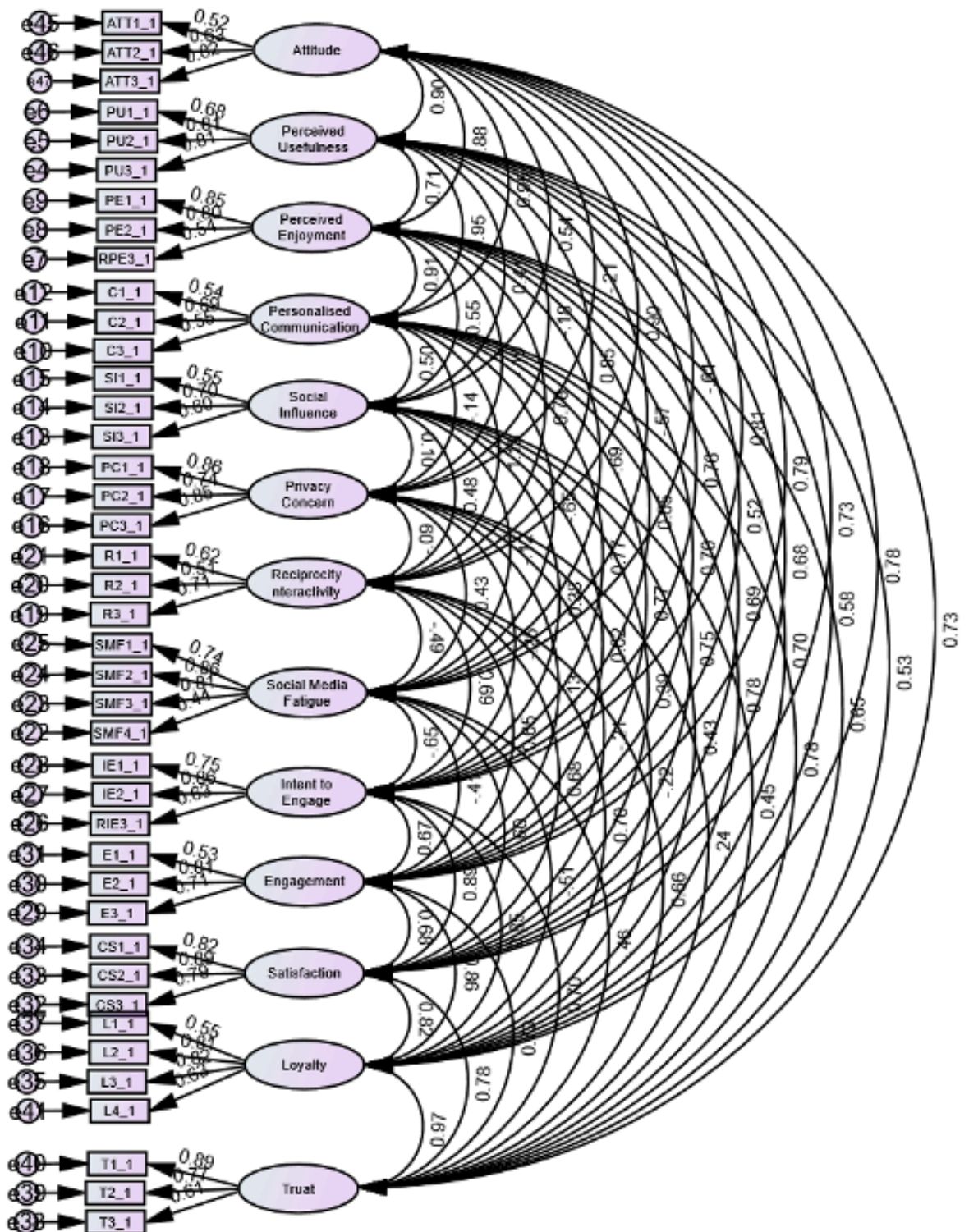
Below are statements about your engagement, satisfaction and loyalty with a brand based on your social media interactions. Please indicate your response by selecting the option that best indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree:

Intent to engage						
IE1	I intend to continue using social media to engage with brands	1	2	3	4	5
IE2	I will keep on using social media to engage with brands in future	1	2	3	4	5
IE3	I don't believe I would continue using social media to engage with brands	1	2	3	4	5
Engagement						

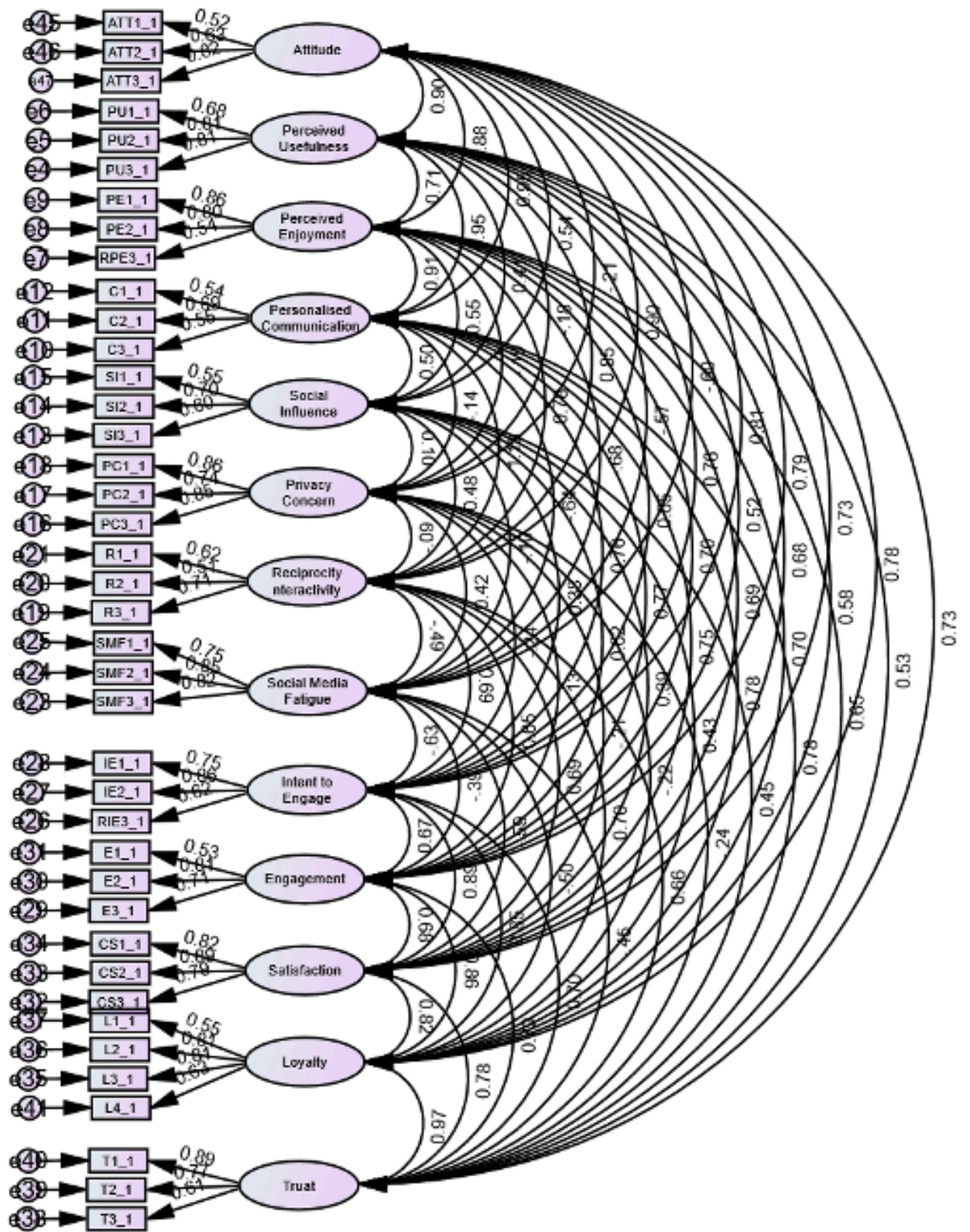
E1	When I am dealing with the brand on social media, I am deeply engrossed	1	2	3	4	5
E2	I am passionate about the brand	1	2	3	4	5
E3	When involved with the brand on social media, my mind is focused on what is happening	1	2	3	4	5
Satisfaction:						
CS1	I am satisfied with my decision to engage with this brand on social media	1	2	3	4	5
CS2	My choice to engage with this brand on social media was a wise one	1	2	3	4	5
CS3	I think I did the right thing when I engaged with this brand on social media	1	2	3	4	5
Loyalty (Word of Mouth and Purchase intent):						
L1	I am willing to complete a survey for this brand	1	2	3	4	5
L2	I am willing to say positive things about the brand to others	1	2	3	4	5
L3	I am willing to encourage others to do business with the brand	1	2	3	4	5
L4	I plan to purchase products and services from this brand in the next few years	1	2	3	4	5
Trust:						
T1	I trust the brand	1	2	3	4	5
T2	I believe the brand is an honest brand	1	2	3	4	5
T3	I believe the brand gives me everything that I expect out of the engagement	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for your time and feedback, your input is greatly appreciated.

APPENDIX C: Model 1

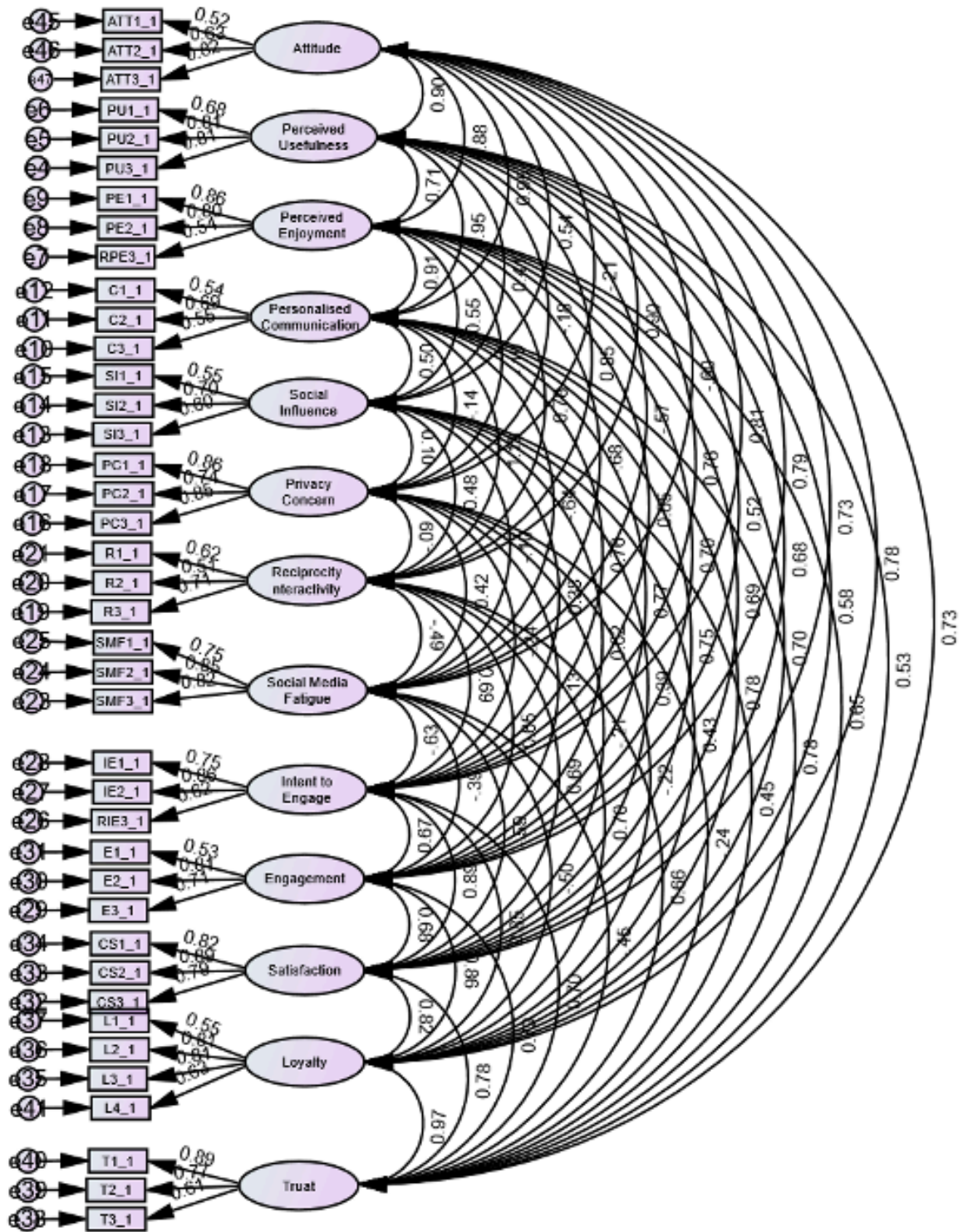


Reciprocity item removed



APPENDIX D: Model 2

The following model removed the non-loading SMF item:



APPENDIX E: EFA Results

Rotated Factor Matrix ^a							
	Factor						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ATT1	0.203	0.258	0.144	0.263	0.156	0.270	-0.028
ATT2	0.329	0.181	0.163	0.278	0.220	0.318	-0.015
ATT3	0.252	0.251	0.253	0.336	0.500	0.282	-0.104
PE1	0.306	0.136	0.401	0.353	0.290	0.384	0.011
PE2	0.271	0.084	0.425	0.265	0.276	0.391	-0.045
PU1	0.142	0.115	0.160	0.226	0.610	0.165	-0.037
PU2	0.068	0.229	0.158	0.270	0.740	0.142	-0.074
PU3	0.123	0.370	0.233	0.370	0.518	0.137	-0.024
SMF1	-0.133	-0.156	-0.687	-0.158	-0.102	0.045	0.211
SMF2	-0.121	-0.223	-0.741	-0.118	-0.223	-0.009	0.216
SMF3	-0.119	-0.208	-0.735	-0.201	-0.175	0.042	0.118
SMF4	-0.071	-0.337	-0.351	0.038	-0.004	-0.271	0.165
C1	0.210	0.096	0.201	0.270	0.315	0.272	-0.055
C2	0.195	0.160	0.180	0.733	0.205	0.136	0.045
C3	0.313	0.131	0.265	0.137	0.448	0.187	-0.046
PC1	-0.053	-0.085	-0.139	0.015	-0.100	0.025	0.834
PC2	-0.088	-0.062	-0.208	-0.017	-0.044	0.063	0.698
PC3	-0.068	-0.073	-0.140	0.021	0.001	0.056	0.822
SI1	0.070	0.029	-0.018	0.052	0.079	0.511	0.027
SI2	0.090	0.058	-0.065	0.071	0.132	0.598	0.105
SI3	0.127	0.191	0.103	0.045	0.094	0.569	0.047
R1	0.209	0.090	0.071	0.563	0.222	0.118	-0.015
R2	0.252	0.051	0.148	0.258	0.195	0.351	-0.022
R3	0.115	0.268	0.147	0.649	0.283	0.129	0.027
IE1	0.261	0.453	0.211	0.167	0.416	0.205	-0.144
IE2	0.321	0.670	0.204	0.160	0.290	0.142	-0.014
T1	0.774	0.268	0.101	0.185	0.137	0.208	-0.095
T2	0.613	0.249	0.141	0.142	0.082	0.211	-0.191
T3	0.383	0.153	0.228	0.455	0.199	0.184	-0.011
L1	0.252	0.403	0.128	0.183	0.038	0.307	-0.118
L2	0.760	0.226	0.183	0.139	0.133	0.133	-0.036
L3	0.669	0.331	0.138	0.176	0.218	0.167	-0.023
L4	0.400	0.395	0.088	0.190	0.206	0.103	-0.133
CS1	0.324	0.621	0.208	0.247	0.154	0.097	-0.057
CS2	0.378	0.615	0.251	0.284	0.186	0.138	-0.045
CS3	0.326	0.564	0.248	0.130	0.184	0.165	-0.058
E1	0.322	0.016	-0.022	0.258	0.032	0.407	0.019
E2	0.480	0.248	0.186	0.146	0.103	0.456	-0.025
E3	0.420	0.281	0.109	0.251	0.075	0.319	-0.099
RPE3	0.136	0.170	0.489	0.100	0.162	0.222	-0.144
RIE3	0.152	0.499	0.429	0.015	0.155	-0.028	-0.157

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.