



A descriptive study on the affective and cognitive dimensions of
consumer engagement and purchase intention, in a social
media context

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Abstract

“Big and small companies, individuals of all walks of life, major and minor events, concepts etc., nowadays lay their base on social network advertising to get recognized in the market” (Jothi, Neelamalar and Prasad, 2011: 235). Due to the use of social network advertising amongst businesses operating in the 21st century, it is important for brand managers to understand the ways in which consumers varying levels and states of engagement with their social network pages/profiles relate to consumers purchase intentions towards their brand and its products/services.

Towards this end, the researcher aimed to describe the relationship between the cognitive and affective dimensions of consumer engagement and purchase intention in this study, using brands Instagram pages as the engagement focus. The researcher made use of a 15-item quantitative survey questionnaire for the purpose of collecting objective data reflecting respondents level of affective and cognitive dimensions of engagement, and their level of purchase intention. This data collection method was deemed fit for the study as the data which it collects could be analysed using descriptive statistics, which enable the researcher to describe the relationship between the respective concepts.

The researcher found a positive and significant relationship between the affective dimension of consumer engagement and purchase intention. Conversely, no positive or significant relationship was found between the cognitive dimension of consumer engagement and purchase intention. This study expands on the existing research of consumer engagement and purchase intention by investigating and describing the relationship between consumer engagement and purchase intention in the context of South Africa.

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Introduction

The use of the term engagement can be traced back all the way to the 17th century, where it was used to describe moral or legal obligations, ties of duty, employment, and military conflicts (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić and Ilić, 2011: 3). The term engagement has been employed in various academic disciplines, including sociology, political sciences, psychology, and organizational behaviour. The differing opinions and views of engagement within varying fields of study have resulted in a variety of conceptual approaches which highlight various aspects of the concept (Brodie et al., 2011: 1). While the idea of 'engagement' in business and business relationships is far from new, with the first application of engagement in the context of work occurring in 1990 and the use of the term engagement within the context of business practice dating back to 2001, there has been a significant growth in practitioner interest in the concept throughout the last decade (Brodie et al., 2011: 1).

Since the explosion of the web as a business medium, one of its primary uses has been for the marketing and spreading of brand communication through social media and social networking sites (Jothi, Neelamalar and Prasad, 2011). In recent years internet-based advertising has taken on new forms which have several advantages over traditional advertising mediums such as print media and television (Jothi et al., 2011).

Furthermore, social networking sites are predicted to become the primary platform for highly targeted marketing and brand communication (Jothi et al., 2011). In the era in which we live, consumers spend more time on social media and pay more attention to the information which is created and shared online (Khadim, Zafar, Younis, 2014: 3). For consumers, the ability to interact with brands is a common theme in the usage of social media (Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas, 2015: 7). Additionally, various previous studies (Aaker, 1991; Goodrich, 2011; Haley & Baldinger, 2000; Keller and Lehmann, 2003; Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2013) argue that social media advertising is a powerful method to foster positive purchase intentions amongst consumers (Khadim et al., 2014).

Conceptual Framework

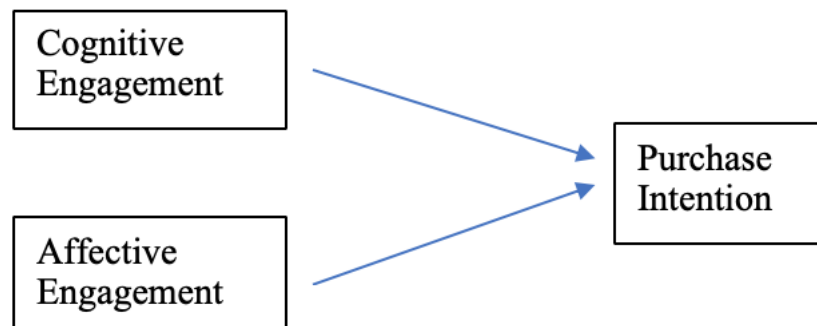


Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework*

Rationale

Various forms of engagement have been conceptualized, including; customer engagement, consumer engagement, online brand engagement, customer engagement process, customer engagement behaviour, customer brand management, engagement behaviour, and engagement (Brodie et al., 2011: 5).

Engagement is viewed as a promising concept which is expected to provide improved predictive and explanatory power of primary consumer behaviour outcomes (Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie, 2014: 3). With its roots in relationship marketing, consumer engagement offers an enhancement of the current theorisations regarding consumer and brand relationships (Dessart et al., 2015: 1). Most successful businesses realize the need to substitute mass marketing strategies with the creation of unique experiences, and encourage consumers to participate and interact with their business (Vivek, 2009: 2). Having an engaged consumer base is quickly becoming one of the imperative objectives of marketing professionals (Dessart et al., 2015: 1). Information and communication technologies, such as social media and websites, are providing significant opportunities for organizations to exchange knowledge and engage with the consumer, thus motivating the importance of organizations engagement in social media activities (Vivek, 2009: 22-23).

Furthermore, consumer engagement acts as a mediator between social network marketing and consumer purchase intention (Toor and Husnain, 2017: 23). Consumer engagement is a crucial factor in arousing purchase intention among consumers, with consumer engagement identified as a leading driver of the consumer decision making process (Toor and Husnain, 2017: 4). Highly engaged consumers bring 23% more revenues as they spend more on every purchase and buy products more frequently (Toor and Husnain, 2017: 12). Consumer engagement is a state which is directed at a particular object, which can be varied

in nature (Dessart et al., 2015: 4). Interest in engagement directed towards the online brand community has seen growth, in both practice and academia (Dessart et al., 2015: 4). Groupings of consumers have shifted online, with over 50 percent of the top 100 global brands having an online brand community (Dessart et al., 2015: 6).

Thus, this study could be seen as relevant and important as it aims to further describe the relationship which exists between consumers engagement with brands social media platforms and consumer purchase intention towards those same brands and their products/services.

The study will be conducted for the purpose of describing the relationship which exists between the cognitive and affective dimensions of engagement and consumer purchase intentions, in the context of social media.

Problem statement

The problem which has been identified is a lack of practitioner understanding as to how consumers cognitive and affective dimensions of engagement with brands Instagram pages relates to the consumers purchase intention towards the brand and its products/services. Thus, this study aims to develop a greater understanding of how consumers respective cognitive and affective dimensions of engagement relate to their purchase intentions towards the brands products and/or services, with brands Instagram pages as the engagement focus. If the potential relationships could be understood between the cognitive and affective dimensions of a consumer's engagement with a brands social media page/profile, and the purchase intention which the consumer has towards the brand, it could be possible for advertisers, social media managers and brand managers to make better use of social media in engaging consumers effectively.

The understanding of these potential relationships could enable brand managers to more effectively formulate social media content for the purpose of appealing to the dimension/s of consumer engagement which have the strongest relationship with consumer purchase intention (Nambisan & Baron, 2007). By doing so, brand and social media managers could more accurately formulate social media content with the end goal of fostering positive consumer purchase intentions towards the brand and its products. The identified knowledge gap relates to brands' use of Instagram pages/profiles for the purpose of engaging consumers and fostering positive purchase intentions towards their products and/or services.

Research goal

The purpose of this study is to determine and describe the relationship between the cognitive and affective dimensions of consumer engagement and the consumers purchase intentions towards brands and their products/services. The researcher will attempt to describe the extent to which consumers levels of cognitive and affective engagement, with a brands Instagram page as the engagement focus, relate to their purchase intention towards that particular brand and its products/services. This study has an applied goal as the findings aim to address a real-life business problem which was elaborated on in the problem statement.

Therefore, the research objectives for this study are as follows:

- 1) To determine and describe the relationship between the cognitive dimension of consumer engagement and consumer purchase intention.
- 2) To determine and describe the relationship between the affective dimension of consumer engagement and consumer purchase intention.

Research question

The primary research question for this particular study is: how do consumers respective cognitive and affective states of engagement with a brands Instagram page relate to their purchase intention towards that brand and its products?

Based on that, the following questions were derived:

RQ1: Does a positive and significant relationship exist between the cognitive dimension of consumer engagement and consumer purchase intention?

RQ2: Does a positive and significant relationship exist between the affective dimension of consumer engagement and consumer purchase intention?

RQ3: Does a stronger and more significant relationship exist between affective engagement and purchase intention, than that of cognitive engagement and purchase intention?

Hypotheses

Due to the quantitative and deductive nature of this study, the hypotheses were developed based on the literature which has been reviewed. Thus, the hypotheses will be developed and featured at the end of the literature review (A Research Guide, 2018).

Theoretical foundation

The theory of planned behaviour will be the theoretical framework supporting the study.

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) was proposed in an attempt to expand the range of behaviours which are encompassed by the Theory of Reasoned Action. The TPB was presented in order to predict and explain these behaviours that were not under complete volitional control of the person wanting to perform them (Hale et al., 2002: 260-286). The components included in the TPB are exactly the same as those featured in the TRA, with the addition of 'perceived behavioural control' – which encompasses the beliefs regarding the possession of the necessary resources and opportunities required in order to perform a given behaviour (Hale et al., 2002: 260-286; Sheppard et al., 1988: 326). Perceived behavioural control is defined as 'one's perception of how easy or difficult it is to perform the behaviour' (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). Perceived behavioural control is included as an external variable which has both a direct impact on behaviour, and an indirect impact on behaviour through behavioural intentions. The indirect impact is based primarily on the assumption that perceived behavioural control has motivational implications on the behavioural intentions of the actor (Madden et al., 1992: 3-9). Simply put, if an individual lacks the resources necessary in order to perform the behaviour – their intentions to perform the behaviour can be low, even in the instance of favourable attitudes and subjective norms towards the performance of the behaviour. It is determined that increased precision in the prediction of intentions as well as target behaviour is achieved through the assessment of the actors perceived behavioural control over the behaviour in question (Madden et al., 1992: 3-9).

The theory of planned behaviour has previously been used as a basis for studies on internet purchasing (George, 2004; Limayem, Khalifa and Frini, 2000; George, 2002). In the study conducted by George (2004) in the context of internet purchasing behaviour, the TPB was found to be robust and effective in helping to explain the internet purchasing behaviour of individuals (George, 2004). Khalifa et al. (2000) make use of the TPB rather than the TRA in the context of online shopping due to the higher ease of operationalization, and substantial support of the theory in other disciplines (Limayem, Khalifa and Frini, 2000: 423).

For the purpose of this study, exploring the relationship between consumer engagement and purchase intentions, the TPB is deemed suitable for the task due to the inclusion of perceived behavioural control as a factor influencing both behavioural intention and the behaviour itself. This perceived behavioural control over purchase intention is influenced by

both the price and the perceived service provided by the product/service in question (Song and Zahedi, 2001: 209). The importance of the consideration of perceived behavioural control in this context is primarily due to the impact which self-efficacy has on a person's sense of control and power, which subsequently reinforces the purchase intention (Song and Zahedi, 2001: 207).

Literature Review

It is imperative for brands operating in an increasingly connected, online and digital marketplace to understand the way in which consumer engagement with their social media pages relates to consumers purchase intention. Additionally, it is of equal importance for these same brands to understand the relationship which exists between the cognitive and affective dimensions of consumer engagement, and consumer purchase intentions. Through the critical review of previous literature, a deeper understanding is developed regarding consumer engagement and purchase intention, and the relationship which exists between them.

Consumer engagement

Engagement remains an emergent rather than mature theme in academic literature (Mollen and Wilson, 2010: 10). According to seminal authors (Patterson, Yu and de Ruyter, 2006; Vivek, Beatty and Morgan, 2010; Mollen and Wilson, 2010; Bowden, 2009) on the topic of consumer engagement, it is defined as 'a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/object in focal service relationships'. It is said to occur under a particular set of context-dependent conditions which generate different consumer engagement (CE) levels, and exists as a dynamic and iterative process within service relationships that co-create value (Brodie et al., 2011: 9). Various definitions of CE have been identified (Vivek, Beatty and Morgan, 2010; Mollen and Wilson, 2010; Hollebeek, 2011) although some authors state that consumer engagement refers to the 'level of a customer's physical, cognitive and emotional presence in their relationship with a service or organization' (Toor and Husnain, 2017: 176). Social media platforms appear to facilitate consumer engagement (Toor and Husnain, 2017: 4). Online engagement is defined as 'a cognitive and affective commitment to an active relationship with the brand, being personified by the website or other computer-mediated entities such as social media pages, designed to communicate brand value' (Mollen and Wilson, 2010: 14). Additionally, social media engagement refers to likes, shares, followers, retweets and comments (Pandey and Pandey, 2018).

There are considerable differences in the literature concerning the dimensions which make up consumer engagement. Most studies concentrate on one object of engagement at a time, with very few studies acknowledging multiple objects of consumer engagement existing simultaneously (Dessart et al., 2015: 2; Vivek, Morgan, Beatty and Dalela, 2014). The majority of consumer engagement conceptualizations reveal a generic three-dimensional engagement dimensionality, including cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions, which exhibit particular context specific variations (Hollebeek, 2011: 5). Consumer engagement is also defined as a multidimensional concept which is subject to context and stakeholder-specific expressions of the relevant cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions (Brodie et al., 2011: 9).

The affective dimension of engagement captures the summative and enduring level of emotions experienced by a customer with regards to their engagement focus. The affective dimension is split into enthusiasm (intrinsic level of excitement and interest) and enjoyment (pleasure and happiness derived from interaction). Cognition refers to a set of enduring and active mental states that a consumer experiences with respect to the focal object of their engagement – cognition is further divided into attention (cognitive energy voluntarily dedicated to interacting) and absorption (inability to detach oneself once interaction has begun). The behavioural dimension of engagement refers to consumers behaviours towards an engagement focus, comprised of: Sharing, involving collaborative and interactive exchange with the brand. Learning, which involves seeking help, ideas, resources and information from the company or other consumers. Endorsing, which is the condoning or sanctioning of activities, content or ideas (Dessart et al., 2015: 10).

In line with the three traditional dimensions of engagement, Hollebeek (2011) defines consumer brand engagement (CBE) as ‘the level of a customer’s cognitive, emotional and behavioural investment in specific brand interactions’ (Hollebeek, 2011: 1) which illustrates dimensional commonalities between the concept of consumer engagement, and consumer brand engagement. Furthermore, three consumer brand engagement dimensions are derived. These are: cognitive processing, affection and activation – which correspond to the generic cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions of engagement as discussed previously (Brodie et al., 2011: 3; Hollebeek et al., 2014: 1-7). Key beliefs typifying CBE include the concepts individual-level, motivational and context-dependent nature, which results in fluctuating CBE levels over time (Hollebeek, 2011: 5). In support of the traditional tri-partite dimensionality of engagement, Pandey and Pandey go on to describe consumer

brand engagement as 'a multidimensional construct comprising of affective, behavioural and cognitive sub-dimensions' (Pandey and Pandey, 2018: 4).

Online engagement is characterized by the dimensions of dynamic and sustained cognitive processing and the satisficing of instrumental value, comprised of utility and relevance. As well as experiential value, which is the consumers emotional congruence with the narrative scheme encountered in computer-mediated entities such as business websites. (Mollen and Wilson, 2010: 14)

Other studies focus on unidimensional concepts of consumer engagement. Van Doorn et al. (2010) looks at consumer engagement behaviours (CEB) and focuses on the behavioural dimension of consumer engagement (Van Doorn, Lemon, Mittal, Nass, Pick, Pirner and Verhoef, 2010). This view is based on the notion that customer engagement behaviours extend beyond mere transactions and can be specifically defined as a customer's behavioural expressions that are focused on a brand or firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational factors. These behavioural manifestations can be positive or negative in nature (Van Doorn et al., 2010: 2). It is proposed that consumer engagement also encompasses cocreation, involving the participation of consumers through spontaneous behaviours which customize the customer-to-brand experience (Van Doorn et al., 2010: 2). This supports the definition of customer engagement as 'a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experience with a focal agent/object'. (Hollebeek et al., 2014: 1)

Vivek explains that the construct of consumer engagement explores the connection which is formed between customers, prospects, potential customers and the organization. These connections are based on the customers experiences with the offerings and activities of the organization, such as their Instagram page (Vivek, 2009: 1). In contrast to the general tri-partite dimensionality of engagement as presented by these various authors, a 5-dimensional model of engagement has also been conceptualized (Vivek, 2009). The five dimensions of engagement are awareness, enthusiasm, interaction, activity and extraordinary experience. It is proposed that this construct of consumer engagement is purely behavioural, as opposed to the traditional model of consumer engagement in being cognitive, affective or motivational (emotional). This is due to the assumption that interactions on issues of common interest create a connection and engage the consumer (Vivek, 2009: 54). The concept of engagement has also been applied as a uni-dimensional

construct comprising solely of the behavioural dimension within the context of education (Downer, Kaufman and Pianta, 2007).

In the context of social network platforms, consumers that participate in brand communities get engaged not only with the focal agent or object, which is often portrayed as a brand but also with the other likeminded individuals that support the brand in the brand communities (Dessart et al., 2015: 13). This highlights a dual focus of engagement, contrasting previous studies focusing on engagement with a single engagement object/focus (Mollen & Wilson, 2010; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Van Doorn et al., 2010). The engagement does not occur along a singular consumer-brand nexus but rather involves a complex web of interactions where the point of engagement seems anchored in multiple sites including the brand, other individuals, and the platform (Dessart et al., 2015: 13). Analysis suggested that engagement with the online brand community and the brand can translate into increased loyalty with the brand (Dessart et al., 2015: 12). Engaging consumers on social media platforms also has the ability to maintain loyalty amongst unsatisfied customers, and prevent them from switching brands (Dessart et al., 2015: 12).

Consumer engagement on social networking sites, such as Instagram, is largely supported by an emotional attachment. This emotional attachment is directed to enhance their purchase behaviour (Toor and Husnain, 2017: 13). The consumers level of engagement is influenced by brand-related factors, such as brand identification, satisfaction from and trust in the brand, identification with the online community and the perceived value which will be derived from group participation (Dessart et al., 2015: 13). This online engagement is suggested to be an antecedent of attitudes and behaviours which are conducive to purchase (Mollen and Wilson, 2010: 3). Finally, consumer engagement is proposed to act as a mediator between social networking marketing and consumers purchase intention – with consumer engagement having a positive relationship with purchase intention (Toor and Husnain, 2017: 22-23).

Purchase intention

Purchase intention has been defined by various authors (Ostrom, 1969; Spears and Singh, 2004; Kumar, Lee and Kim, 2008). Seminal authors on the topic provide the following definition: purchase intentions are personal action tendencies relating to the brand (Ostrom, 1969: 12-30). A revised definition of purchase intention is 'an individual's conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand' (Spears and Singh, 2004: 56). Purchase intention has

also been described as 'a consumer tendency to purchase the brand routinely in the future and resist switching to other brands' (Kumar et al., 2008: 3).

Similar to the definition of purchase intention, various authors provide different explanations regarding the dimensionality, antecedents and factors which impact purchase intention. It is not clear if purchase intention is a multidimensional construct (Spears and Singh, 2004: 2). However, multiple researchers (Li, Monroe and Chan, 1994; Zajonc, 1984) recognize that the cognitive and affective states of individuals influence their purchase behaviour (Kumar et al., 2009: 1). In this cognitive-affective model of purchase intentions, both the cognitive response and the affective response have an influence on the consumers' willingness to buy. The cognitive response refers to the perceived quality of the product or service, while the affective response refers to the extent to which the consumer 'likes' the product or service (Kumar et al., 2008: 2). These cognitive and affective factors are also affected by unique differences amongst consumers, subsequently impacting their purchase behaviour. It is also proposed that not only cognitive or affective components of purchase intention solely influence consumers (Kumar et al., 2008: 3). In addition to this, other factors such as product quality, brand and advertisements can potentially contribute significantly to consumer purchase intentions (Toor and Husnain, 2017: 9). In accordance with the TPB, determinants such as attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control can also impact the consumers purchase intention (Martins, Costa, Oliveira, Gonçalves and Branco, 2019: 2).

In the context of internet shopping, websites present consumers with relevant information regarding the product or service, on which they base their purchase decisions (Jiang, Chan, Tan and Chua, 2010: 60). The visual representation of products online i.e. Instagram posts, has the ability to provide product information which has been known to influence consumer purchase intention (Park, Lennon and Stoel, 2005: 7). It is suggested that involvement with websites has both cognitive and affective components, with consumer involvement being recognized for its strong capability to predict purchasing behaviour (Jiang et al., 2010: 3). Furthermore, websites which possess a high level of active control can lead to both cognitive and affective involvement and increased affective involvement leads to higher purchase intention (Jiang et al., 2010: 9).

It is suggested that the impact of affective involvement on purchase intention is nearly double that of cognitive involvement (Vakratsas and Ambler, 1999: 26-43). The

conceptualization of purchase intention in an online context displays some commonalities with the widely acknowledged cognitive-affective dimensionality of purchase intention. Another factor which can influence purchase intention, particularly in an online context, is that of information and criticism shared by other users on the business website or social media page. I.e. Comments (Toor and Husnain, 2017: 8). However, purchase intention tends to occur within the consumer at the stage of the decision-making process where the consumer has developed an explicit readiness to advance towards a particular product or brand (Toor and Husnain, 2017: 9).

As stated previously, multiple researchers recognize that the cognitive and effective states of individuals influence their purchase behaviour (Kumar et al., 2008: 1). Furthermore, it is suggested that involvement with websites has both cognitive and affective components, with consumer involvement being recognized for its strong capability to predict purchasing behaviour (Jiang et al., 2010: 3). Based on these statements, the following hypotheses have been developed for the study:

H1: The cognitive dimension of consumer engagement will have a positive and significant relationship with consumer purchase intention.

H01: The cognitive dimension of consumer engagement will not have a positive and significant relationship with consumer purchase intention.

H2: The affective dimension of consumer engagement will have a positive and significant relationship with consumer purchase intention.

H02: The affective dimension of consumer engagement will not have a positive and significant relationship with consumer purchase intention.

Conceptualisation

The key concepts identified for the study will now be defined and their relevance to the study will be discussed.

Consumer engagement is defined as ‘the intensity of the consumer’s participation and connection with the organization’s offerings and/ or its organized activities’ (Vivek, 2009: 402)

Cognitive engagement is defined as ‘a set of enduring and active mental states that a consumer experiences with respect to the focal object of his/her engagement’ (Dessart et al., 2015: 35)

Affective engagement is defined as ‘The summative and enduring levels of emotions experienced by a consumer with respect to his/her engagement focus’ (Dessart et al., 2015: 35)

Purchase intention is defined as ‘An individual’s conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand’ (Spears & Singh, 2004: 56)

These concepts are relevant to the study as the researcher aims to describe the relationship which exists between the cognitive and affective dimensions of consumer engagement, and consumer purchase intention. Thus it’s of the utmost importance that the respective concepts of consumer engagement, cognitive engagement, affective engagement and purchase intention are fully understood and concisely defined in order to be effectively operationalized for the purpose of addressing the relevant research questions, and testing the proposed hypotheses.

Methodology

Paradigm

A positivist paradigm was adopted for the purpose of this study. The epistemological position of positivism deems that knowledge can only be generated by objective and observable evidence. Positivism states that knowledge can only be a result of empirical observation and exists in real and objective terms – thus supporting the research task as it aims to generate objective data regarding consumer engagement and its relationship with consumer purchase intention (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 24-25; Maree, 2016: 33).

The ontological position views reality as objective, existent independent of its construction within the minds of individuals, with a single social and physical reality which is governed by laws (Antwi and Hamza, 2015: 218; Maree, 2016: 33). For positivists, it is the duty of the researcher to discover the laws which govern this social reality, developing an understanding from an external point of view (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 25) (Maree, 2016: 33). This position further supports the use of positivism for the chosen study, as the study aims to uncover the laws which govern this reality – particularly those laws governing the

relationship between consumers engagement with business and brands in the context of social media, and their subsequent purchase intentions.

The metatheoretical position of positivism places importance on research which is objective and value-free, where theories are tested through the use of hypotheses (Du-Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014: 26). Similarly, the axiological position of positivism is objective in nature, valuing objective research that is not tainted by personal bias (Maree, 2016: 27). Positivists want to produce research findings that are a faultless representation of an objective reality (Du-Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014: 27).

The methodological position of positivism requires a research methodology that is objective, with an emphasis on the use of valid and reliable methods in order to describe and explain the relevant phenomena (Antwi and Hamza, 2015: 5). Positivists favour recording these 'facts' numerically, using quantities or numbers which can be successfully processed and analysed using statistical techniques (du Plooy-Cilliers et al. 2014: 26-27). The positivist methodological position, making use of a nomothetic approach, supports the research task as the research aims to measure the relevant concepts using numerical scales, with the objective of performing descriptive statistical analysis on the data gathered (Maree, 2016: 34).

Positivism also supports the use of a deductive approach to research, aiming to test relevant hypothesis and theories, thus making it suitable for use within this research task (Bryman and Bell, 2014). The suitability of positivism for this particular study is primarily due to the fact this study aims to develop generalizable theory, based on the testing of hypotheses regarding the relationship between consumer engagement and consumer purchase intention in the context of social media.

Research design

For the purpose of this study, a quantitative approach was adopted. A quantitative approach is best suited for the purpose of addressing the research purpose and objectives as quantitative data and information is best used to describe the phenomena which is being researched and supports the descriptive nature of this study (Maree, 2016: 171).

Furthermore, the epistemological position of positivism holds that knowledge can only be gained from objective and observable evidence (Du-Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014: 25), with

knowledge viewed as real and objective (Maree, 2016: 33). Objective evidence is best acquired through the use of quantitative data collection methods, such as questionnaires and surveys, as quantitative research is objective in the manner in which it uses numerical data to develop and generalize findings (Maree, 2016: 162). The ontological position of positivism holds the view that there is a single, objective and stable social and physical reality which is governed by particular laws (Du-Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014: 25). This further supports the use of the quantitative data collection method of surveys using questionnaires, for the purpose of obtaining objective data and information regarding the phenomena under investigation (Du-Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014: 152).

The study made use of a deductive approach to research, as quantitative research regards research as deductive (Bryman and Bell, 2014). Deductive reasoning, or deduction, is a form of valid reasoning which uses a general statement, or hypothesis, and examines the possibilities to reach a specific logical conclusion (Surbhi, 2018). Furthermore, deductive reasoning was used due to the positivist paradigm adopted for the purpose of the study and its aim to test and verify theories and hypotheses (Du-Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014: 27).

The study was descriptive in nature. In descriptive research the aim is to describe a phenomenon that is identified through the research conducted (Maree, 2016; du Plooy, 2009). This study aimed to describe the phenomenon related to consumers engagement with brands' social media pages, and how it relates to consumer purchase intention – thus necessitating a descriptive study.

The study made use of a non-experimental design, with each sample element being measured on all of the relevant variables at a particular time (Maree, 2016: 171). The particular non-experimental method which was used is that of surveys using questionnaires (Du-Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014: 152), with the purpose of obtaining quantitative data which can be analysed in order to describe and explore the topic at hand (Du-Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014: 171). The reason for the use of a non-experimental design is that it supports the descriptive nature of the study, and the lack of manipulation taking place on the variables (Maree, 2016: 171). The nature of the time dimension of the study is current and cross-sectional (Levin, 2006).

The unit of analysis is defined as the units which data is collected from, and upon which the measurements are made (Maree, 2016: 163). As the sampling unit from which data will be

collected in this study is an individual consumer, the consumer is the unit of analysis which is focused on.

Population & sampling

The target population can be defined as everyone or everything that falls within the established population parameters (Du-Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014: 133). For this study the target population consists of all individuals aged 18 and older, living in South Africa who have an active profile on Instagram and actively follow a brand of their choice.

The accessible population refers only to the particular section of the population which actually be included in the study (Du-Plooy Cilliers et al., 2017: 133). The accessible population for this study is the individuals living in Pretoria and/or enrolled at Vega Pretoria Campus. These individuals form part of the accessible population because they are the researchers peers and are easily accessible for the purpose of engaging in the study.

This study made use of non-probability sampling, which does not make use of a random selection of population elements, thus each element does not have an equal chance of being selected (Maree, 2016: 197). The researcher selected non-probability sampling in order to meet the particular objectives of the research study. Purposive and convenience sampling was used for this study, in order to ensure that all participants met the characteristics which are important to the research, and to enable quick and easy access to the relevant elements (Du-Plooy Cilliers, et al., 2017).

Purposive sampling involves the researcher selecting sample elements based on a specific list of characteristics which are important for the research (Du-Plooy Cilliers et al., 2017: 142). For this study, the inclusion criterion which were deemed important for the sample elements is that the respondents are aged 18 and older, have an active profile/account on Instagram, and follow the profile/account of any brand which they are interested in. The need for respondents to have an Instagram profile/account and to be following a brand which they are interested in relates to the use of the brands Instagram profile as an engagement focus and qualifies the respondent's interest and assumed knowledge of the brand which they will focus on for the purpose of the survey.

Convenience sampling involves the researcher selecting sample elements due to the ease and convenience of their availability, offering the advantages of being quick and inexpensive

(Maree, 2016: 197). These methods are particularly suitable to the research study at hand due to the time and financial resource limitations applicable to the researcher and the research study, and the prerequisites which the sample elements are required to meet/possess. The sample size for this study is $n=20$, as instructed by the supervisor for this particular research study. Of the twenty respondents, ten were male and ten were female, with all respondents in the age range of 18-34.

Extent

The research was carried out during August and September 2019, taking place over a 14-day period in Pretoria, South Africa. The data collection was conducted in Pretoria, Gauteng. This area was chosen based on its proximity to the researcher, as well as the depth and concentration of the accessible population in this area.

Data collection method

Several data collection methods exist for the purpose of collecting data from respondents, some of these methods include mail surveys, telephone surveys, personal interviews and group administration (Du-Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014: 151).

In support of the positivist paradigm underpinning this research study and the proposed research questions, the researcher made use of cross-sectional surveys using questionnaires (Du-Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014: 152). These surveys were presented in the English language only, due to the demographics included in the accessible population, to ensure survey consistency, and to enable ease of data analysis. Four screening questions were used to ensure that each sample element fits the required criteria in order to be relevant for the study (Maree, 2016: 198). The surveys which were utilized for the purpose of collecting data consisted solely of matrix questions, requiring respondents to select the option which best reflects their attitude or opinion, with a total of fifteen questions included in the questionnaire (Du-Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014: 154). The first 11 questions aimed to measure the affective and cognitive dimensions of consumer engagement respectively, and the last four questions measured purchase intention. The benefits of using surveys is that they are less time consuming, inexpensive and can also be completed by respondents anonymously (Du-Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014: 160).

The questions which were utilized for the purpose of measuring consumer engagement have been adapted from a measure developed and validated in a previous consumer

engagement study conducted by Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan Thomas (Dessart et al., 2015). The questions used to measure the cognitive dimension of engagement are divided into two sub-themes, enthusiasm and enjoyment. Each sub-theme (enthusiasm and enjoyment) was measured with three questions, with a total of six questions used to measure the cognitive dimension. The questions used to measure the affective dimension of engagement were also divided into two sub-themes, attention and absorption. Attention was measured with two questions, and absorption was measured with three questions. These eleven questions measuring the cognitive and affective dimension of consumer engagement were answered using a 7-point Likert scale anchored in 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree (Dessart et al., 2015). Likert scales are particularly effective in this study as the researcher aims to measure the construct of consumer engagement (Maree, 2016: 187).

The four questions which were utilized for the purpose of measuring purchase intention have been adapted from an established four-item 7-point semantic differential scale used in a purchase intention study conducted by Li, Daugherty and Biocca (Li, Daugherty and Biocca, 2002). The full questionnaire is available as an annexure (Annexure B).

The chosen data collection method supports the research paradigm and purpose, as the questionnaires utilizing semantic differential and Likert scales produce objective and quantitative data (Maree, 2016). Furthermore, the two scales being used can be coded identically and foster ease of descriptive data analysis, enabling the researcher to effectively describe the phenomena under investigation as set out in the purpose statement.

In order to establish the validity and reliability of quantitative studies, the researcher typically makes use of large sample sizes, random sampling, and reliable research tools (Du-Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014: 254). For this study, validity and reliability have been assured through the use of established measurement tools which have been previously validated by other researchers (Dessart et al., 2015: Li et al., 2002). Furthermore, face validity and content validity have been assured through the careful design of the questionnaire, ensuring that the measurements used represent the specific content being measured (Du-Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014: 256). Similarly, the manner in which the research method is designed should foster internal validity as it has been designed particularly to answer the research questions which have been proposed (Du-Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014: 257).

Additionally, the researcher submitted a draft of the study to their research supervisor for the purpose of assessing the extent to which the chosen research instrument meets the necessary ethical requirements and addresses the relevant concepts, confirming content and face validity (Maree, 2016: 240). Finally, the researcher conducted pre-testing with two respondents which did not form part of the final sample, in order to assess the simplicity and ease of respondent engagement with the chosen measurement tools.

Data analysis method

A deductive data analysis strategy was utilized for the purpose of analysing the quantitative data concerning the cognitive and affective dimensions of engagement, and purchase intention, collected from the twenty respondents ($n = 20$). Thus supporting the positivist paradigm which underpins the study (Maree, 2016: 39). Prior to beginning the analysis of data, the particular questionnaire response categories were coded from 1 to 7 for all three of the constructs being measured, to ensure consistency and simplify the process of analysis.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the quantitative data gathered in the form of numerical values, summarizing the data in two different ways (Maree, 2016: 207). Firstly, the data was summarized in terms of centrality, making use of mean, mode and median. The researcher analysed the data in order of each concept, firstly for affective engagement and its relevant sub-dimensions (Questions 1-6), then for cognitive engagement and its relevant sub-dimensions (Questions 7-11), and finally for purchase intention (Questions 12-15). The researcher calculated these measures of centrality for the total sample, and then separately for males and females, in order to identify trends or significant differences between the genders. These measures of centrality were then compared between cognitive engagement and purchase intention, and affective engagement and purchase intention respectively, in order to identify and describe the potential relationships between these concepts. The data was then summarized through dispersion, using the range, variance and standard deviation (Maree, 2016: 21).

However, due to the small sample size, all respondents being within a single age range, and the sample comprising of an equal amount of males and females, the measures concerning dispersion were determined to be of no real value in developing relevant findings and were subsequently discarded. These descriptive statistical analyses were conducted on Microsoft Excel, making use of various formulas, with the relevant spreadsheets found in Appendix E.

The use of descriptive statistics for the purpose of data analysis supports the descriptive nature and purpose of the study in describing the relationships which exist between the relevant constructs. After conducting the data analysis, the data was graphically represented in the form of pie charts, enabling the researcher to identify the shape, spread and centrality of the data (Maree, 2016: 213). The data is presented utilizing both text and graphics in order to ensure that the reader is able to understand the points being made (Du-Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014: 226).

Findings

Affective engagement findings

Enthusiasm

The population tends to exhibit high levels of enthusiasm, with 45% of the sample's responses to the statements concerning enthusiasm being 7 (strongly agree), and 35% of the samples responses being 6 (agree). The sample median and mode was 7 (strongly agree) for the statements measuring enthusiasm.

80% of both males and female responses were either a 6 (agree) or 7 (strongly agree) for the statements measuring enthusiasm, thus indicating similar high levels of enthusiasm across gender.

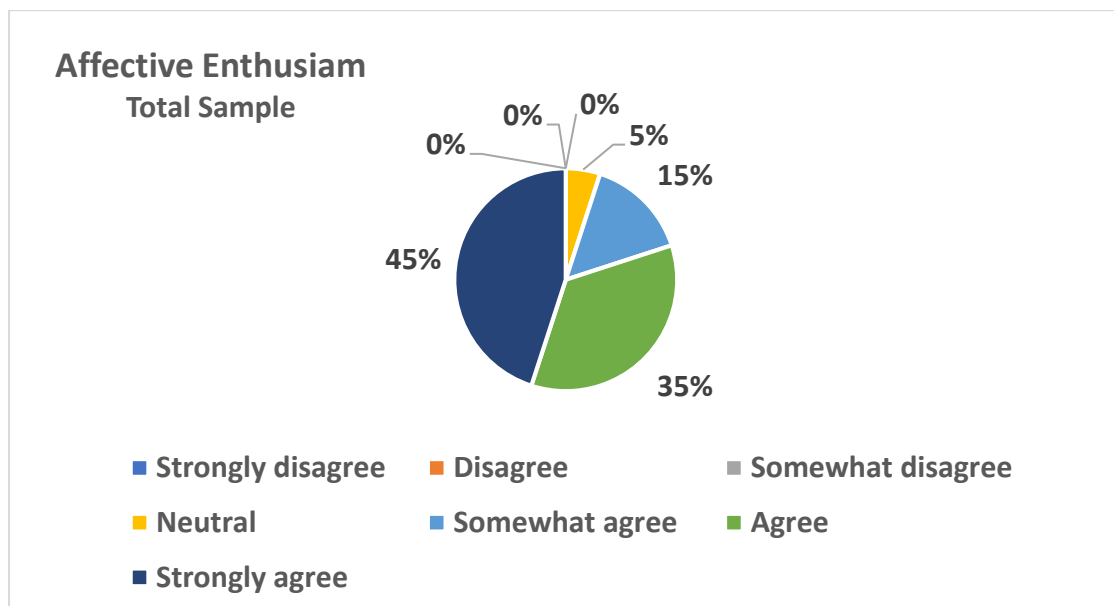


Figure 2: *Affective enthusiasm total sample responses*

Enjoyment

The majority of the population exhibits high levels of affective enjoyment, with 53% of the sample responses being either 7 (strongly agree) or 6 (agree) for the three questions concerning enjoyment.

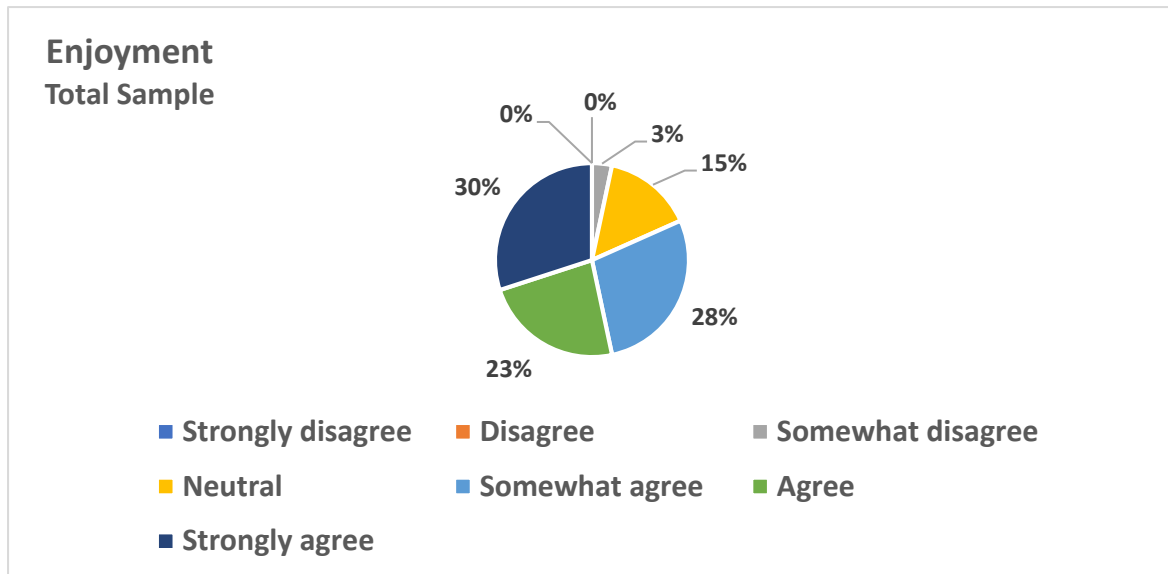


Figure 3: *Affective enjoyment total sample responses*

Interestingly, female respondents exhibited higher levels of enjoyment than males, with 36% of female responses being 7 (strongly agree) and 30% being 6 (agree) for the statements, in comparison to 23% of male responses being 7 (strongly agree) and 17% of male responses being 6 (agree).

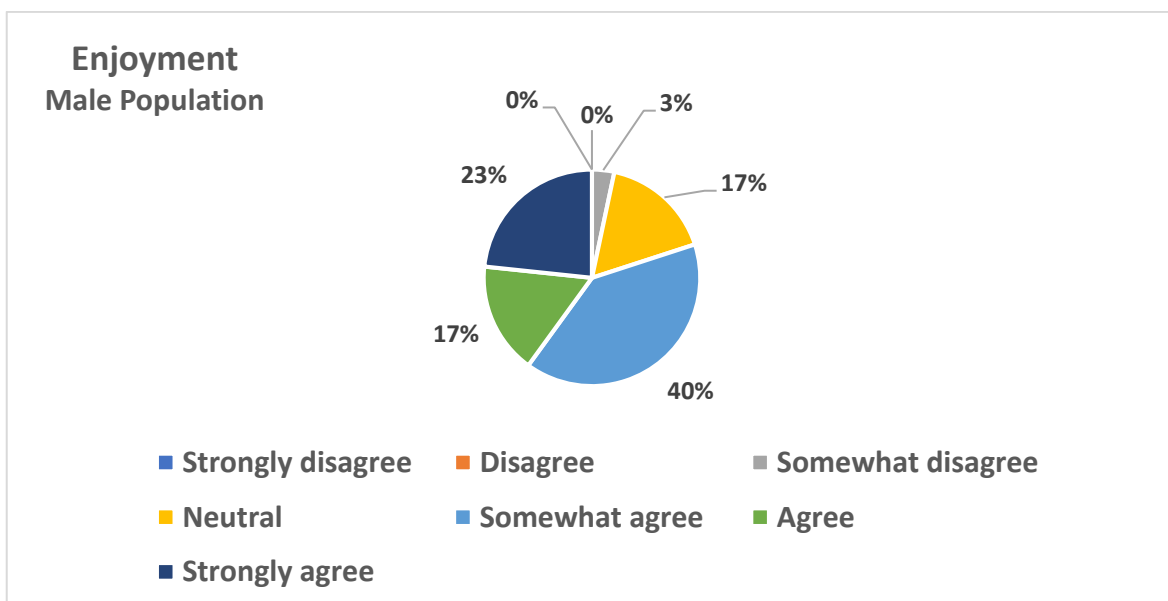


Figure 4: *Affective enjoyment male responses*

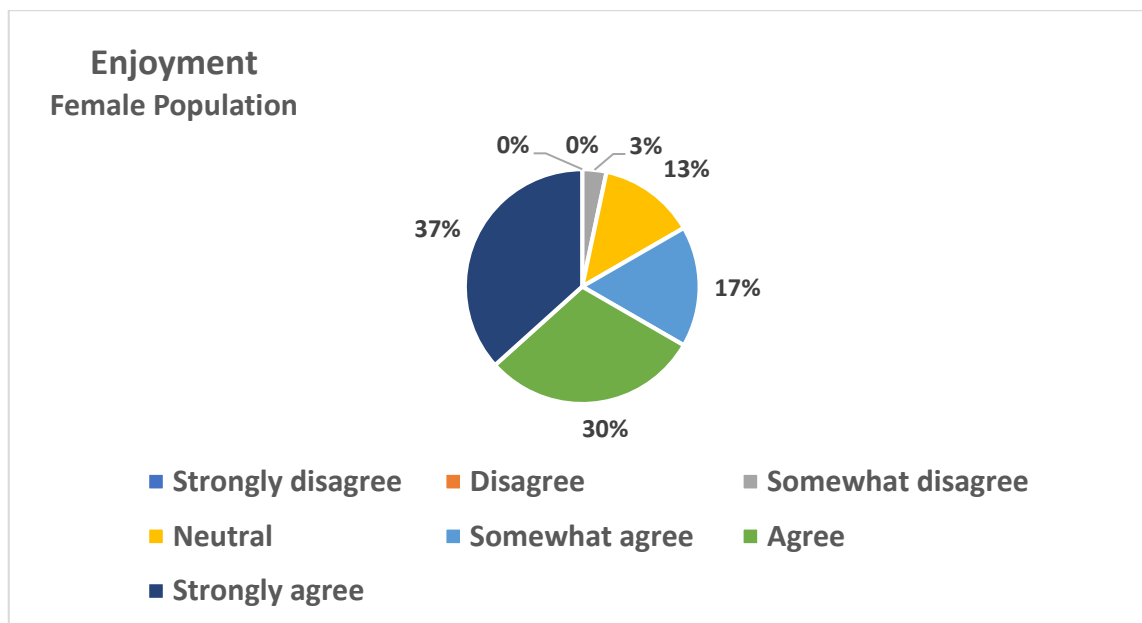


Figure 5: *Affective enjoyment female responses*

The mode for female respondents across the sub-dimension of enjoyment is 7 (strongly agree) and the mean is 6 (agree). Conversely, the mode for male respondents across the three questions measuring the sub-dimension of enjoyment is 5 (somewhat agree), with the mean male answer also being 5 (somewhat agree).

Overall affective engagement findings

67% of the responses to the six statements measuring affective engagement were either agree (6) or strongly agree (7). Thus indicating that the majority of the sample exhibits high levels of affective engagement.

Both males and females exhibit high levels of affective engagement with 60% of male responses to the statements concerning affective engagement being either 6 or 7 (agree or strongly agree), and 74% of female responses being a 6 or 7 (agree or strongly agree).

Cognitive engagement findings

Attention

The total population exhibits low levels of attention, with 51% of the sample either strongly disagreeing (1), disagreeing (2) or somewhat disagreeing (3) with the two statements measuring attention.

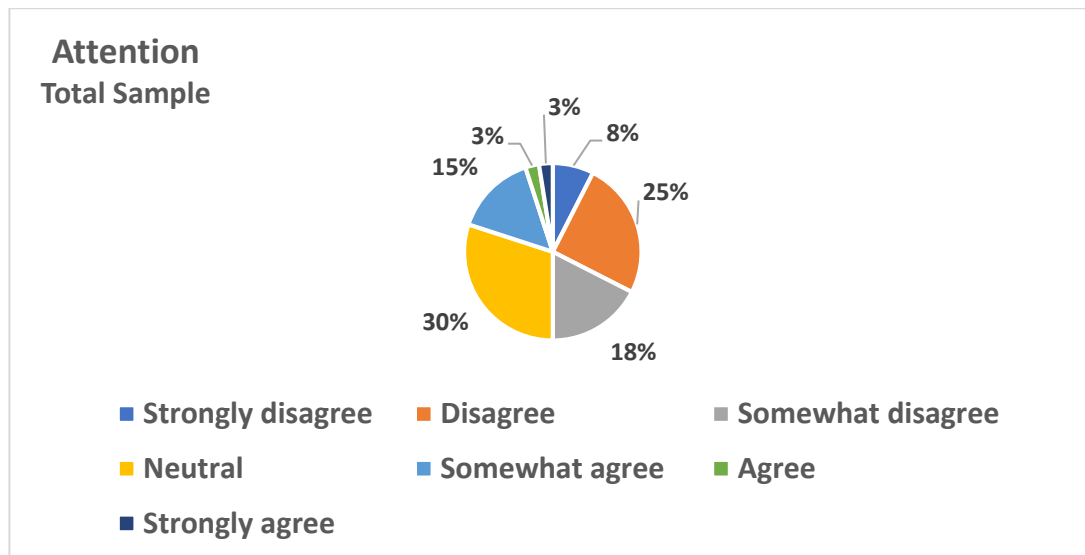


Figure 6: Cognitive attention total sample responses

The mean response to the statements measuring attention was the same across males and females, being 3 (somewhat disagree).

However, the samples mean response to the statements measuring attention was 2 (disagree), indicating that a large percentage of the responses were 1 (strongly disagree) and 2 (disagree) with 25% of male and female responses being 2 (disagree). The mode response was 4 (neutral).

Absorption

The sample exhibits low levels of absorption, with only 13% of the samples responses being a 6 or 7 (agree or strongly agree) to the three statements measuring absorption. Additionally, 50% of the sample responses were either 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree) or 3 (somewhat disagree) to the statements measuring absorption.

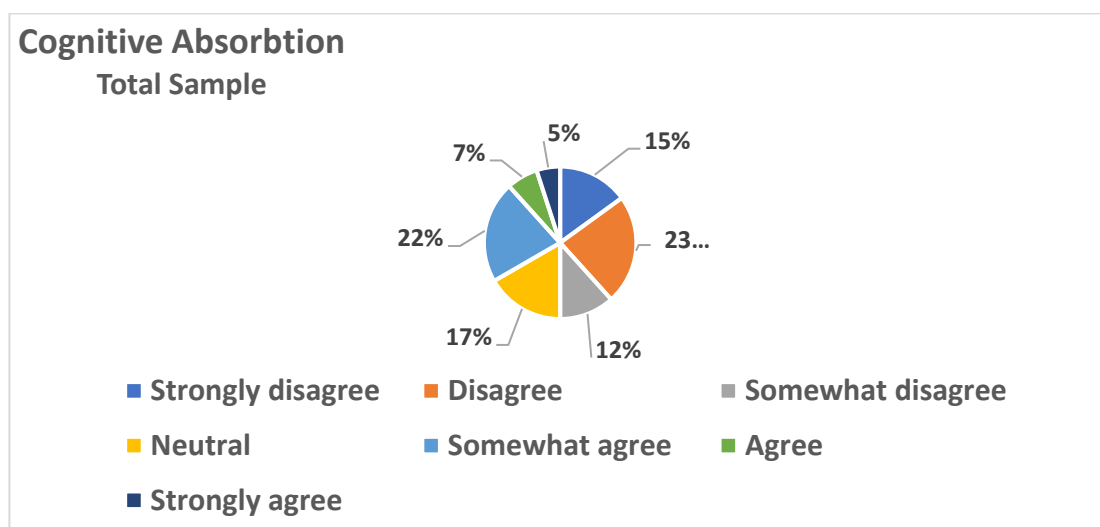


Figure 7: Cognitive absorption total sample responses

The mean response for the sample was 3 (somewhat disagree), with the mean male response being 4 (neutral), and the mean female response being 3 (somewhat disagree).

The mode response for the sample was 2 (disagree), the mode response amongst males was 5 (somewhat agree), while the mode response amongst females was 2 (disagree). These figures together with 40% of female responses being 1 or 2 (strongly disagree or disagree) indicate that females tend to exhibit less absorption in comparison to males.

Overall cognitive stats

The sample exhibited low levels of cognitive engagement in general, with 50% of sample responses disagreeing to some extent with the five statements concerning cognitive engagement, responding either 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree) or 3 (somewhat disagree). This is supported as 30% of male responses were either 2 (disagree) or 1 (strongly disagree) with the statements measuring cognitive engagement. Similarly, 48% of female responses were either 2 (disagree) or 1 (strongly disagree) with the statements measuring cognitive engagement.

Only 9% of the sample responses were either 6 (agree) or 7 (strongly agree) with the statements measuring cognitive engagement. This indicates low levels of cognitive engagement from the sample, as 91% of responses were a 5 (somewhat agree) or lower, for the statements measuring cognitive engagement. Additionally, only 8% of male responses were either 6 (agree) or 7 (strongly agree) and 10% of female responses either 6 (agree) or 7 (strongly agree) across the statements measuring cognitive engagement, indicating similarly low levels of cognitive engagement between males and females.

Purchase intention findings

The sample exhibits high levels of purchase intention (PI), with 58% of the sample responses indicating either a 6 or 7 with the four statements measuring purchase intention. 6 being the second most positive possible response, and a 7 being the most positive possible response.

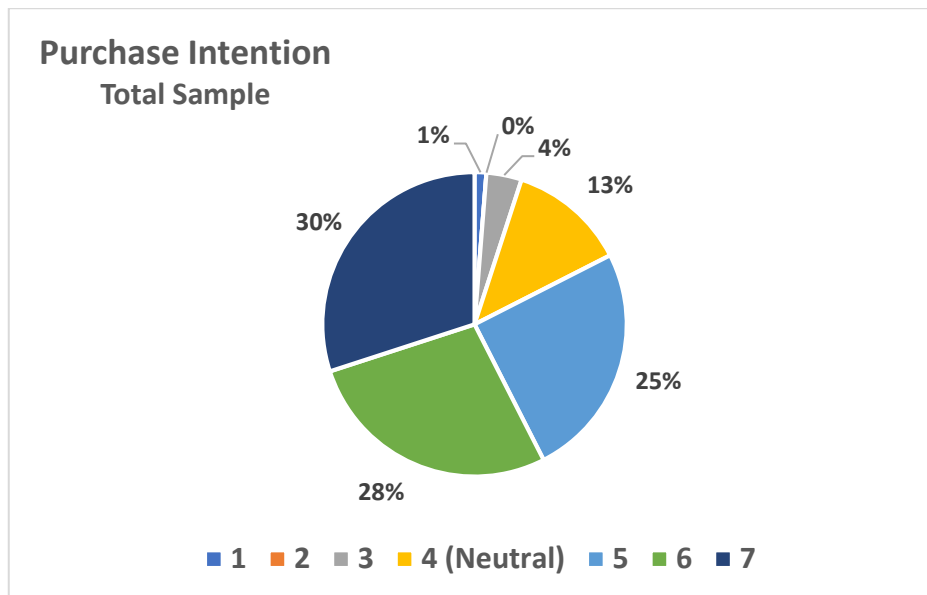


Figure 8: *Purchase intention total sample responses*

The mode response across the whole sample for the four statements was a 7, being the most positive possible option. The mode response amongst the female respondents was a 7, indicating the most positive purchase intention possible. Whereas the mode response amongst the male population was a 5, being just one point more positive than neutral.

The mean response across the whole sample for the four statements was a 5, being just one point more positive than neutral. The mean female response was a 6, being the second most positive option. The mean male response was 5, being one point more positive than neutral. Interestingly, this is an indicator of higher purchase intention on average amongst females in comparison to males.

On a similar note, 53% of male responses were either a 6 or 7 to the four statements measuring purchase intention, with an additional 33% selecting 5. This indicates high levels of PI amongst males, in conjunction with 0% of males responding a 1 or 2 for any of the statements measuring purchase intention. Whereas 63% of female responses were either 6 or 7 for the four statements concerning purchase intention, with an additional 18% selecting a 5. This indicates high levels of PI amongst females, in conjunction with only 3% of females responding either a 1 or 2 to any of the four statements measuring purchase intention. Despite this study not aiming to identify differences between gender, these findings also indicate that females tend to exhibit higher levels of purchase intention on average in comparison to males.

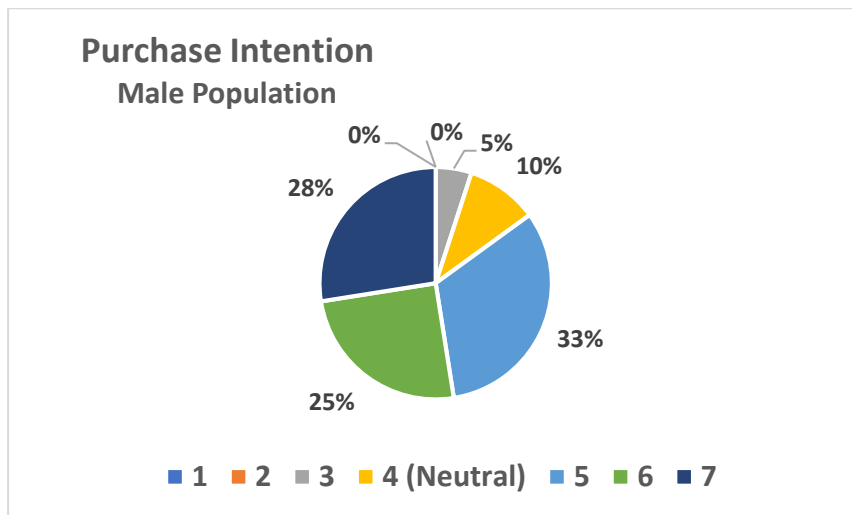


Figure 9: *Purchase intention male responses*

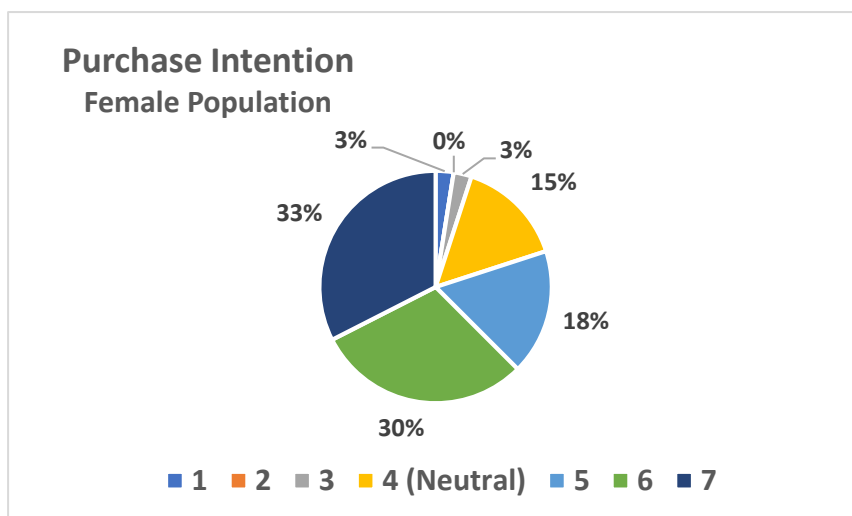


Figure 10: *Purchase intention female responses*

Inter-relationship findings

Affective engagement & Purchase intention

67% of the samples responses to the six statements measuring affective engagement were either 6 (agree) or 7 (strongly agree), thus indicating that the majority of the sample exhibits high levels of affective engagement. Similarly, 58% of the samples responses to the statements concerning purchase intention were either a 6 or 7, indicating that the majority of the sample exhibited high levels of purchase intention.

Subsequently, without the ability to analyse the relationship in any more depth, it can be assumed that the affective dimension of consumer engagement and purchase intention do in fact have a positive and significant relationship.

The affective dimension of consumer engagement captures the summative and enduring level of emotions experienced by a customer with regards to their engagement focus (Dessart et al., 2015: 35). Thus, based on this finding it can be assumed that the summative and enduring level of emotions experienced by a customer with regards to their engagement focus, which in this instance is a brands Instagram page, do in fact have a positive and significant relationship with their purchase intention towards the brand and its products/services.

This finding supports statements made by various researchers in which they state that the affective state of individuals influence their purchase behaviour (Li, Monroe and Chan, 1994; Zajonc, 1984). In their studies, affective response refers to the extent to which the consumer 'likes' the product or service, and this finding illustrates that the consumers subjective 'liking' of the product or service has a strong and positive relationship with their purchase intentions towards the brand and its products and/or services.

This finding could impact the way in which social media and brand managers utilize their social media platforms, and advertise their products and services on these platforms, as it shows that consumers purchase intentions are strongly related to their 'liking' of the product in a subjective manner. Thus, practitioners will have to reduce their focus on communicating the functional benefits and features of the brand and its products/services, and look into impacting consumers subjective attitudes towards the brand. Based on this understanding, practitioners can then design their social media pages and social media content to speak to these subjective and intuitive aspects of the consumers perception in a way that will positively impact the consumers purchase intentions towards the brand.

Cognitive engagement & Purchase intention

The sample exhibited low levels of cognitive engagement in general, with 50% of sample responses disagreeing to some extent with the five statements concerning cognitive engagement. Additionally, only 9% of the sample responses were either 6 (agree) or 7 (strongly agree) for the statements measuring cognitive engagement. This indicates low levels of cognitive engagement from the sample, as 91% of responses were a 5 (somewhat agree) or lower, to the statements measuring cognitive engagement. In contrast, 58% of the samples responses to the statements concerning purchase intention were either a 6 or 7, indicating that the majority of the sample exhibited high levels of purchase intention.

Subsequently, without the ability to analyse the relationship in any more depth, it can be assumed that the cognitive dimension of engagement does not have a positive and significant relationship with purchase intention.

As stated previously, cognitive engagement refers to a set of enduring and active mental states that a consumer experiences with respect to the focal object of their engagement (Dessart et al., 2015: 35). Thus, based on this finding it can be assumed that the enduring and active mental states that the consumer experiences with respect to the focal object of their engagement, which in this instance is a brands Instagram page, do not have a positive and significant relationship with their purchase intentions towards the brand and its products/services.

This finding contradicts the statements made by various researchers in which they state that both the cognitive and affective states of individuals influence their purchase behaviour (Li, Monroe and Chan, 1994; Zajonc, 1984). Interestingly, in their studies the cognitive response refers to the perceived quality of the product or service, and this finding argues that the consumers perceived quality of the product or service does not have a strong and positive relationship with the consumers purchase intentions. However, this finding simultaneously supports statements made by Vakratsas and Ambler, suggesting that the impact of affective involvement on purchase intention is nearly double that of cognitive involvement (Vakratsas and Ambler, 1999: 26-43).

This finding could impact the way in which social media and brand managers utilize their social media platforms, and advertise their products and services on these platforms, as it shows that consumers perception of the quality of the brands products and services does not in fact have a strong relationship with consumers purchase intentions towards the brand. Thus, practitioners will have to reduce their focus on communicating the functional benefits and features of the product, and look into what aspects of the brand and its product or service actually relate to the consumers purchase intentions and have the potential to influence them. After understanding the dimensions of engagement which have the strongest relationship with purchase intention, practitioners can design their social media pages and social media content to communicate to consumers and foster these dimensions in a way that will positively impact the consumers purchase intentions towards the brand.

Final remarks

The findings of this study determine the extent to which a relationship exists between the cognitive and affective dimensions of engagement, and consumer purchase intention. However, the statistical analysis used to develop these findings was not as in depth as necessary to understand these relationships in depth, and determine influence/impact or correlation between the various concepts, as only descriptive statistics were used. Thus, these findings merely illustrate the existence of the statistic relationships between the relevant concepts, while assessing their relative strength, and do not conclusively prove or illustrate the strength of influence which these dimensions of consumer engagement have on consumer purchase intention or the exact correlation between these concepts.

Validity and reliability

The researcher intended to enhance the validity of the study by addressing the relevant factors threatening both internal and external validity. Firstly, the researcher attempted to enhance the validity of the study by designing the research methodology in a manner that ensured the research questions could be answered, ensuring that all questions/statements were easily understood and did not contain any grammatical or diction errors. The threat of instrumentation was minimized by making use of measurement scales which have been validated and utilized previously in other research studies (Maree, 2016: 169). The threat of change in respondents was minimized through conducting the study in a current and cross-sectional manner, reducing the potential for respondents' moods or perceptions to change drastically during their participation in the study. The risk of attrition was minimized by distributing more than twenty questionnaires, as to account for the potential loss of respondents, with the researcher receiving exactly 20 suitable responses. The demand effect was minimized through the succinct and straightforward manner in which the research was presented to respondents, in the form of the consent form and the questionnaire, as to ensure natural behaviours from the beginning of the response process (Maree, 2016: 170).

The reliability of quantitative research refers to the extent to which the research method or instrument can be used at a different time, by a different researcher and produce the same results (Du-Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014: 254). In this study the research instruments which were used have been adapted from the work of authors who have previously made use of these instruments and conducted the relevant tests for validity and reliability (Dessart et al., 2015; Li et al., 2002), thus the study should display reliability in its design (Maree, 2016: 239). Furthermore, the items which were used in order to measure the relevant constructs

display a high degree of similarity which indicates that there is a certain level of internal reliability present in the research instrument (Maree, 2016: 239).

Conclusion

The focus of this research paper was to address a lack of practitioner understanding as to how consumers cognitive and affective dimensions of engagement with brands Instagram pages relates to the consumers purchase intention towards the brand and its products/services. The primary aim of the study was to explore and describe the relationship which exists between the cognitive and affective dimensions of consumer engagement, and purchase intention.

The findings presented previously answered the research questions and addressed the objectives. The results both support and contradict previous findings from various authors, in that they determine a positive and significant relationship between the affective dimension of engagement and purchase intention, and the lack of a positive and significant relationship between the cognitive dimension of engagement and purchase intention (Kumar et al., 2009: 1).

Concluding answers to the research questions

The primary research question was 'How do consumers respective cognitive and affective states of engagement with a brands Instagram page relate to their purchase intention towards that brand and its products?'

The first research question (*RQ1*) was 'Does a positive and significant relationship exist between the cognitive dimension of consumer engagement and consumer purchase intention?'

The second research question (*RQ2*) was 'Does a positive and significant relationship exist between the affective dimension of consumer engagement and consumer purchase intention?'

The third research question (*RQ3*) was 'Does a stronger and more significant relationship exist between affective engagement and purchase intention, than that of cognitive engagement and purchase intention?'

Through the research, it was found that the affective dimension of consumer engagement has a positive and significant relationship with purchase intention. In contrast, it was determined that the cognitive dimension of consumer engagement does not have a positive and significant relationship with purchase intention. Subsequently, it was determined that a stronger and more significant relationship exists between the affective dimension of consumer engagement and purchase intention, than that of the cognitive dimension of consumer engagement and purchase intention.

Thus, the answer to *RQ1* is no – a positive and significant relationship does not exist between the cognitive dimension of consumer engagement and purchase intention.

The answer to *RQ2* is yes – a positive and significant relationship exists between the affective dimension of consumer engagement and purchase intention.

The answer to *RQ3* is yes – a stronger and more significant relationship does exist between the affective dimension of consumer engagement and purchase intention, than that of the cognitive dimension of consumer engagement and purchase intention.

The research questions were answered by first qualifying the respondents interest in and knowledge of a brand by asking for a brand which they follow on Instagram. After indicating a brand which they are interested in and follow on Instagram, the researcher determined the level of the respondents cognitive and affective engagement with a brands Instagram page, through the use of a 11-item 7-point Likert scale (Dessart et al., 2015). The respondents level of purchase intention was then determined through the use of a four-item 7-point semantic differential scale (Li, Daugherty and Biocca, 2002). Finally, the researcher conducted data analysis using Microsoft Excel in order to see the extent to which the respondents respective levels of cognitive and affective engagement related to their purchase intention. This was done by comparing the percentage of respondents indicating high levels of cognitive and affective engagement respectively, against the percentage of respondents indicating high PI.

The hypotheses for this particular study were addressed by examining the relationship between the respondents' levels of cognitive and affective engagement, and their purchase intention. Based on the data analysis, *H1* is rejected and *H2* is accepted.

Thus, the alternative first hypothesis (*HO1*) stating 'The cognitive dimension of consumer engagement will not have a positive and significant relationship with consumer purchase

intention' is proved to be true by this study, and assumed to be true until more data can be gathered and analysed, and potentially prove otherwise (Maree, 2016: 227).

Similarly, the null second hypothesis (H_2) stating 'The affective dimension of consumer engagement will have a positive and significant relationship with consumer purchase intention' is proved to be true by this study, and assumed to be true until there is sufficient data found and analysed to potentially indicate otherwise.

The research problem for this study is a lack of practitioner understanding as to how consumers' cognitive and affective dimensions of engagement with brands' Instagram pages relates to the consumers' purchase intention towards the brand and its products/services. This problem was solved through further describing the relationship which exists between the cognitive and affective dimensions of engagement, and purchase intention, determining that the affective dimension of engagement has a stronger relationship with purchase intention than that of the cognitive dimension. Thus improving practitioner understanding of the relationships between consumers' cognitive and effective engagement states and their purchase intentions, and enabling them to better formulate, develop and utilize their social media pages for the purpose of influencing consumers' affective states of engagement with the end goal of fostering positive consumer purchase intentions towards the brand.

The research goal for this study was to determine and describe the relationship between the cognitive and affective dimensions of consumer engagement and the consumers' purchase intentions towards brands. This goal was achieved through analysing the relevant data using descriptive statistics, and determining the existence of relationships between the cognitive and affective dimensions of engagement respectively, and purchase intention.

Implications of findings for future practices

The key contribution of this study lies in describing the relationship between the affective and cognitive dimensions of engagement, and consumer purchase intention in the context of social media, and Instagram particularly.

Furthermore, this study could make two important contributions. First, the study contributes to consumer engagement and purchase intention literature by further describing the relationship which exists between those two concepts, using social media as the engagement focus. A second contribution is made by showing the varying strength of the relationships which exist between the cognitive and affective dimensions of engagement

and consumer purchase intention, with the affective dimension having a more positive and significant relationship than the cognitive dimension, which could enable managers and marketers to more effectively formulate social media strategies and content for the purpose of influencing consumer purchase intentions by tapping more into their affective engagement states than their cognitive engagement states. This contribution is particularly relevant to brands which utilize an Instagram page for advertising and branding purposes. This study may be of interest to other academic scholars, researchers, managers, and social media managers in particular.

Final conclusions

This study was successful in addressing the relevant objectives and testing the proposed hypotheses. However, the topic/problem can be researched in greater depth in order to develop more comprehensive findings and provide more concrete theoretical contributions.

For future research on this particular topic, the following suggestions could be made for the purpose of enhancing the validity, reliability and generalizability of the study, as well as enhancing its heuristic value:

It is important to use probability sampling and a far larger sample size for the purpose of drawing a representative sample which can ultimately provide data and information that is generalizable (Maree, 2016: 192). Furthermore, the study could be conducted over a longer period of time in order to provide sufficient time for data collection and data analysis, for the purpose of exploring and describing these relationships in greater depth, and potentially even determining the influence/impact of the concepts on one another and uncovering correlations.

It would be interesting to conduct the study across various social media platforms to develop insight as to the varying strength of engagement across the various platforms, and potentially uncover different consumer engagement and purchase intention relationships across these platforms.

The study could be conducted in countries outside of South Africa for the purpose of identifying potentially differing relationships between consumer engagement and purchase intention amongst different nationalities and cultures. This could potentially uncover differences in the way in which consumers in different countries engage with brands and

their social media pages, which could be of great value to practitioners who are looking to expand their brands across borders.

Conducting the study with various age groups would be beneficial in order to determine consumer engagement trends amongst the different age groups and potentially develop a deeper understanding of the differing motivations for engagement across the age groups.

Additionally, this study was quantitative in nature and focused on exploration and description of the relationships between the relevant concepts but did not consider the insights behind the responses. Future research which can be conducted on the topic can delve into the qualitative reasoning behind the consumers engagement. It could involve asking respondents why they responded the way they did, or what aspect/facet of the brands social media page made them respond the way they did. It could be of great value to practitioners in the field of branding and advertising to understand consumer motivation and reasoning behind their respective levels of engagement, across the three dimensions of consumer engagement. If it can be understood what features or aspects of a brands social media page fosters the respective dimensions of engagement which are seen to influence or have a relationship with purchase intention, social media managers can better develop and design their brands social media platforms for the purpose of increasing consumer engagement across the relevant dimensions, and improving their purchase intentions towards the brand.

Ethical considerations

This study is in line with the ethical criterion prescribed in the IIE ethical consideration document. There will be no incentive used for the purpose of fostering participation, as not to cause any insincere participation and potential bias associated with it. The researcher has created a consent form which will be completed by each respondent. The consent form ensures that potential participants are aware that participation is entirely voluntary, and they are able to withdraw at any point, there is no risk or benefit associated with participating or not, and their identity will be kept confidential. Furthermore, the researcher will allow respondents to fill out the survey in a setting of their choice without the presence of the researcher. Additionally, the process of storing the data is explained to participants. The ethical consent form is available as an annexure (Annexure A). The surveys and related data will be kept in a safe location by the researcher for a minimum of five years, with no individual except the researcher being aware of where the data is stored, nor having access to it. This will be done in accordance with the researchers promise of respondent anonymity.

Limitations

This study was subject to several limitations. These limitations include the fact that the research study was cross-sectional in nature, with the researcher being constrained by time constraints from the process of data collection to data analysis and reporting. The assignment criteria for this study stipulated a word count which limits the amount of detail and explanation which can be provided. The limited time and financial resources resulted in a small accessible population, as well as non-probability sampling for the purpose of accessibility and convenience resulting in each population element not having an equal chance to participate (Maree, 2016: 45). In addition to this, the sample size stipulated by the research study criteria ($n=20$) is too small for the findings to be externally valid or generalizable to a larger population (Du-Plooy Cilliers et al., 2017: 257). In this research study a large sample size was not possible due to time and financial limitations, and random sampling was not possible due to prerequisite characteristics required of the sample elements in order to participate, thus validity and reliability could not be comprehensively assured across a variety of validity types (Maree, 2016: 240). The lack of standardization in a South African context of the measurement scales utilized also serves as a limitation to the study, as they might not be optimally designed for use within South Africa. Furthermore, the researchers lack of experience and expertise in using data analysis software such as SPSS limits the extent to which the relationships between concepts can be described, and the depth of statistical analysis which can be conducted.

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Annexures

Annexure A: Consent form

To whom it may concern,

My name is Jason Schutte and I am a student at Vega Pretoria. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Anthony Wingfield concerning a *descriptive study on consumer engagement and purchase intention in a social media context*. My hope is that this research will enhance the understanding of the relation between consumer engagement and consumer purchase intention in a social media context using brands Instagram pages as the focus of engagement.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. In order to explain to you what participating in this study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will attempt to answer fully so that you are able to make an informed decision regarding whether or not you choose to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to contact me and I will gladly provide more information.

Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research because you fall part of my target and accessible population and could potentially provide me with the relevant information required to describe the particular phenomenon being researched. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to give you a structured questionnaire to complete that will take roughly 10-15 minutes of your time.

You can decide whether or not you would like to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to not answer particular questions in the questionnaire if they make you uncomfortable in any way.

Are there any risks or potential discomforts involved in participating in this study?

Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

Do I have to participate in the study?

Your inclusion in this study is purely voluntary. If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so. Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?

I promise to protect your identity. It is not compulsory for your name to be stated on the questionnaire. However, should you wish to include your name, I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also ensure that all of your personal details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. Nobody else, including anybody at Vega, will have access to your questionnaire information.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished conducting and collecting all of the questionnaires, I will perform data analysis and draw conclusions which are to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my Bcom Honours in Strategic Brand Management and Leadership. The data will be stored on a hard drive and kept in a safe location. You may ask me to send you a summary of the final research report if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me regarding this research study, or if there is anything else you would like to know before deciding whether or not you wish to participate.

I urge you not to agree to participate unless you are entirely comfortable with the procedures which will be followed.

My contact details are as follows:

Jason Schutte

0768909390

Jaseschutte@gmail.com

The contact details of my research supervisor:

Anthony Wingfield

45018@iieconnect.co.za

By signing this document I give my written consent, and agree to participate in the research study conducted by Jason Schutte regarding the description of the relationship between consumer engagement and purchase intention in the context of social media.

This research has been sufficiently explained to me and I understand what participating in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. I agree to be questioned for this research study.
2. My confidentiality will be ensured by the researcher, and my name and personal details will also be kept confidential.
3. My participation in this research study is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no consequences or repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the study.
4. I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research survey.
5. My responses may be quoted directly when the research report is published, but my identity will be protected.

.....

Signature

.....

Date

Annexure B: Survey questionnaire

For the following questions/statements, place a tick in the box that is applicable to you.

1) Please indicate your gender

Male	Female	Other

2) Please indicate your age

18 to 34 years	
35 to 50 years	
50 to 70 years	

3) Do you have an active Instagram account/profile?

Yes	No

4) One your account, do you follow a brand or company on Instagram?

Yes	No

5) Please name the brand or company you follow, from Question 4, here:

--

When answering the following questions please refer to the brand you named earlier, whose Instagram page you follow.

For each statement, place a tick in the box which indicates the degree to which you agree with the statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel enthusiastic about (brand)							
I am interested in anything about (brand)							
I find (brand) interesting							
When interacting with (brand) I feel happy							
I get pleasure from interacting with (brand)							
Interacting with (brand) is like a treat for me							
I spend a lot of time thinking about (brand)							
I make time to think about (brand)							
When interacting with (brand) I forget everything else around me							
Time flies when I am interacting with (brand)							
When I am interacting with (brand) it is difficult to detach myself							

Please indicate your attitude towards the following questions on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 being as positive as possible, 4 being neutral, and 1 being as negative as possible.

How likely are you going to buy a product from this brand?

	1	2	3	4 (Neutral)	5	6	7	
Unlikely								Likely

How probable are you going to buy a product from this brand?

	1	2	3	4 (Neutral)	5	6	7	
Improbable								Probable

How certain are you going to buy a product from this brand?

	1	2	3	4 (Neutral)	5	6	7	
Uncertain								Certain

How definite are you going to buy a product from this brand?

	1	2	3	4 (Neutral)	5	6	7	
Definitely not								Definitely

Thank you so much for your participation in this study, it is highly appreciated.

Annexure C: Ethics clearance letter

August 26, 2019

Student name: Jason Schutte

Student number: 18024289



Re: Approval of Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) in Strategic Brand Management Proposal and Ethics Clearance



Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.



Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and we hereby provide you with ethical clearance to proceed with your data collection.

There may be some aspects that you still need to address in your proposal. If this is the case, feedback will be provided to you in writing. You will need to address these aspects in consultation with your supervisor.

In the event of you deciding to change your research topic or methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure that all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued in such instances.

We wish you all the best with your research!

Yours sincerely,

Amalia van Schalkwyk
Supervisor
Coordinator

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Annexure D: Final research report summary document table

Research Purpose/Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/Sources	Literature Review – Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Key Findings	References
Describing the relationship between a consumers cognitive and affective engagement and their purchase intention, in a social media context.	How do consumers cognitive and affective states of engagement with a brands social media page relate to their purchase intention towards that brand and its products?	The study is relevant and important as it aims to further describe the relationship which exists between consumers engagement with brands social media platforms and consumer purchase intention towards those same brands.	Bruno Schivinski, George Christodoulides, Dariusz Dabrowski Nancy Spears, Surendra N. Singh		Paradigm: Positivism Epistemology: Develop knowledge through empirical observation of objective evidence. Ontology: A single, objective external reality governed by laws. Axiology: Research should be objective, and value-free.	Quantitative	Quantitative surveys using questionnaires.	Voluntary participation, written consent, participant confidentiality, no risks or potential harm.	A positive and significant relationship between the level of affective consumer engagement with brand-related social media pages, and their purchase intentions towards that brand and its products..	'Measuring Consumers' Engagement With Brand-Related Social-Media Content: Development and Validation of a Scale that Identifies Levels of Social-Media Engagement with Brands' Bruno Schivinski, George Christodoulides, Dariusz Dabrowski (2016)
						Population				
						Individuals in Pretoria, South Africa. Aged 18+, active on Instagram, following a brand.				
Research Problem	Secondary Questions/Hypotheses/Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories	Theme 1: Consumer engagement Theme 2: Purchase intention		Sampling	Data Analysis Method	Limitations	Anticipated Contribution	
The problem which has been identified is the lack of understanding as to how a consumers engagement with a brands Instagram page and content relates to the consumers purchase intention towards the brands products.	To determine the respondents level of cognitive and affective engagement with the brand which they follow, as well as their purchase intention towards that brand.	Consumer engagement and purchase intention.	The theory of planned behaviour (TPB)			Non-probability Purposive and convenience sampling. n=20	Individuals are the unit of analysis. Descriptive statistics for data analysis	Time and resource limitations, unable to use statistics software	Aiding marketers/advertisers in using social media more effectively and developing more effective content for the purpose of influencing purchase intentions.	'Capturing consumer engagement: duality, dimensionality and measurement' Laurence Dessart, Cleopatra Veloutsou, Anna Morgan-Thomas (2016) 'Engagement, Telepresence and Interactivity in Online Consumer Experience: Reconciling Scholastic and Managerial Perspectives' Anne Mollen and Hugh Wilson (2009)

Annexure E: Microsoft Excel data analysis

		Gender			Age Group			Do you have an active Instagram		Time spent on Instagram per day			Do you follow a Brand or		Name Brand or Company
Respondent Number		Male	Female	Other	18-34	35-50	50-70	Yes	No	0-30	31-60	60+	Yes	No	
1		1			1			1		1			1		Skabanga Co
2			1		1			1			1		1		Vans
3		1			1			1			1		1		Rowdy
4			1		1			1			1		1		Superdry
5			1		1			1			1		1		Misguided
6		1			1			1			1		1		Gert
7			1		1			1			1		1		League of Legends
8		1			1			1			1		1		Shelllife
9		1			1			1		1			1		Audi (South Africa)
10			1		1			1			1		1		I Am Gls
11			1		1			1			1		1		Palm The Brand
12		1			1			1		1			1		Nike
13			1		1			1			1		1		Picash
14		1			1			1			1		1		Nike SB
15		1			1			1		1			1		The Capital Girl
16			1		1			1			1		1		Nike
17			1		1			1			1		1		Spell
18		1			1			1		1			1		Burger King
19			1		1			1			1		1		Esse Skincare
20		1			1			1			1		1		Foot Locker
Total		10	10	0	20	0	0	20	0	4	7	9	20	0	0
		20			20			20		20					
Number		Gender			Age Group			Do you have an active Instagram		Time spent on Instagram per day			Do you follow a Brand or		
		Male	Female	Other	18-34	35-50	50-70	Yes	No	0-30	31-60	60+	Yes	No	
Total		10	10	0	20	0	0	20	0	4	7	9	20	0	
Male		10	0	0	10	0	0	10	0	4	2	4	10	0	
Female		0	10	0	10	0	0	10	0	0	5	5	10	0	
Other		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Analysis by Age Group		Gender			Age Group			Do you have an active Instagram		Time spent on Instagram per day			Do you follow a Brand or		
		Male	Female	Other	18-34	35-50	50-70	Yes	No	0-30	31-60	60+	Yes	No	
Total		10	10	0	20	0	0	20	0	4	7	9	20	0	
18-34		10	0	0	20	0	0	20	0	4	7	9	20	0	
35-50		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
50-70		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Percentage		Gender			Age Group			Do you have an active Instagram		Time spent on Instagram per day			Do you follow a Brand or		
		Male	Female	Other	18-34	35-50	50-70	Yes	No	0-30	31-60	60+	Yes	No	
Total		50%	50%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%	20%	35%	45%	100%	0%	
Male		50%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	50%	0%	20%	10%	20%	50%	0%	
Female		0%	50%	0%	50%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	25%	25%	50%	0%	
Other		0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Analysis by Age Group		Gender			Age Group			Do you have an active Instagram		Time spent on Instagram per day			Do you follow a Brand or		
		Male	Female	Other	18-34	35-50	50-70	Yes	No	0-30	31-60	60+	Yes	No	
Total		50%	50%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%	20%	35%	45%	100%	0%	
18-34		50%	50%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%	20%	35%	45%	100%	0%	
35-50		0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
50-70		0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Question 1															
I feel enthusiastic about it								I am interested in anything about it							
Strongly disagree	Disagree	at disagree	Neutral	Somewh at agree	Agree	Strongly agree		Strongly disagree	Disagree	at disagree	Neutral	Somewh at agree	Agree	Strongly agree	
					1	1								1	
					1	1								1	
					1	1								1	
				1										1	
					1	1								1	
					1	1								1	
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					1	1								1	
					1	1								1	
					1	1								1	
					1	1								1	
					1	1								1	
0	0	0	1	2	6	11		0	0	0	1	6	6	7	
20								20							
Question 2															
I feel enthusiastic about it								I am interested in anything about it							
Strongly disagree	Disagree	at disagree	Neutral	Somewh at agree	Agree	Strongly agree		Strongly disagree	Disagree	at disagree	Neutral	Somewh at agree	Agree	Strongly agree	
0	0	0	1	2	6	11		0	0	0	1	6	6	7	
0	0	0	1	0	5	4		0	0	0	0	3	4	3	
0	0	0	0	2	1	7		0	0	0	1	3	2	4	
0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Question 3															
I feel enthusiastic about it								I am interested in anything about it							
Strongly disagree	Disagree	at disagree	Neutral	Somewh at agree	Agree	Strongly agree		Strongly disagree	Disagree	at disagree	Neutral	Somewh at agree	Agree	Strongly agree	
0	0	0	1	2	6	11		0	0	0	1	6	6	7	
0	0	0	1	2	6	11		0	0	0	1	6	6	7	
0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Question 3															
I feel enthusiastic about it								I am interested in anything about it							
Strongly disagree	Disagree	at disagree	Neutral	Somewh at agree	Agree	Strongly agree		Strongly disagree	Disagree	at disagree	Neutral	Somewh at agree	Agree	Strongly agree	
0%	0%	0%	5%	10%	30%	55%		0%	0%	0%	5%	30%	35%		
0%	0%	0%	5%	10%	25%	20%		0%	0%	0%	5%	15%	20%	15%	
0%	0%	0%	0%	10%	5%	35%		0%	0%	0%	5%	10%	20%	15%	
0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%		0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Question 3															
I feel enthusiastic about it								I am interested in anything about it							
Strongly disagree	Disagree	at disagree	Neutral	Somewh at agree	Agree	Strongly agree		Strongly disagree	Disagree	at disagree	Neutral	Somewh at agree	Agree	Strongly agree	
0%	0%	0%	5%	10%	30%	55%		0%	0%	0%	5%	30%	35%		
0%	0%	0%	5%	10%	30%	55%		0%	0%	0%	5%	30%	35%		
0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%		0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
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Question 4

When interacting with it I feel happy						
Strongly disagree	Disagree	at disagree	Neutral	Somewh at agree	Agree	Strongly agree
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Time flies when I am interacting with it							When I am interacting with it, it is difficult to detach myself						
Strongly disagree	Disagree	at disagree	Neutral	Somewhat at agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	at disagree	Neutral	Somewhat at agree	Agree	Strongly agree
10%	5%	10%	15%	45%	10%	5%	15%	30%	15%	20%	10%	0%	10%
10%	5%	10%	15%	45%	10%	5%	15%	30%	15%	20%	10%	0%	10%
0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
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[illegible]