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## **Modelling drivers and outcomes of fashion and apparel social media brand communities engagement**

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**Abstract:** In today's highly competitive situation of brands, marketers have acknowledged and embraced the use of brand communities as an effective instrument to attract, engage and retain customers. Regardless of extensive work on customer engagement in the milieu of social media brand communities (SMBC), the nitty-gritty of its factors and their relationships lacks robust understanding. In this regard, this study aims to explore factors of customer engagement in SMBC and construct hierarchical relationships among these factors in the fashion and apparel sector. The study employed a qualitative research design through focus group discussions and interviews with industry and academic experts. The result thereof is analysed using the interpretive structural modelling (ISM) approach. The findings revealed that purchase intention and customer-brand co-creation behaviour led to hierarchical order followed by customer-brand relationships and brand loyalty. The study is limited to the SMBCs of the fashion and apparel sector. Further studies may be carried out for different sectors or product categories. This research work has significant inferences for academicians and brand practitioners involved in the management and promotions of online fashion brand pages to strategise their moves towards engaging customers.

**Keywords:** social media brand communities; SMBC; customer engagement; fashion and apparel; F&A; focus group discussions; FGDs; interpretive structural modelling; ISM; purchase intention; customer brand co-creation behaviour.

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**Biographical notes:** Priyanka Munjal is a faculty in Marketing Communications with over nine years of professional experience in teaching, industry, and research. She was awarded with Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) from Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, New Delhi. She has, to her credit, research laurels which include scholarship from Academy of International Business, Michigan State University at Dubai and Minneapolis (USA). She has presented her research work at various national and international conferences at places like IIT; IIFT, BVIMR; NIT; IBS; IIM; Aston Business School, UK to name a few, her research studies have published in various conference proceedings of international repute and peer reviewed journals. Her interest lies in the purview of consumer behaviour, customer engagement, and brand communities in social media.

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## **1 Introduction**

Global businesses have become boundary-less with the online age, which has led to the digital marketing landscape. The number of internet users worldwide has crossed 4.5 billion in 2019 (Hootsuite, 2019, 2020). This internet boom has evolved virtual businesses and crafted space for social media (viz. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) and its utilisation for building online brand communities (OBCs) worldwide. With the advancement of digital tools and technologies, a shift in consumers’ interest is observed, and their inclination towards web-based platforms is infallible. Mass penetration of digital devices is influencing consumer buying behaviour. Availability and affordability of internet services have enabled customers to make purchasing decisions more rationally (Chang and Fan, 2017). Consumers’ changing profile (growing disposable income, dynamic needs, specific preferences, and advancing lifestyle) has challenged marketers to meet ever-rising expectations. The social media presence of various brands makes it more imperative for brands to secure and engage customers. Companies establish their presence through brand pages and other interactive platforms like blogs, forums on social media and the web to achieve this. The fashion and apparels (F&As) sector is no exception. Brands like Louis Vuitton’s ‘Nowness’, Burberry’s ‘Art of the Trench’ have ensured digital presence through their Facebook and Instagram brand communities.

Creating a unique brand is a mammoth challenge in today’s competitive F&A market due to media clutter (Sung et al., 2010). It has made fashion brands design, implement, and manage social media-based communities (SMBC) strategies to capitalise on customer engagement (Munnukka et al., 2015). Despite its popularity and wide array of scope, scarce studies have explored this domain, especially in apparels. In this regard, this study seeks to understand the drivers and outcomes of customer engagement in social media-based F&A brand communities and model the interrelationships among these factors using focus group discussions (FGDs) and interpretive structural modelling (ISM) approach.

## **2 Literature review**

Engagement is the participation in beings’ behavioural or emotional actions towards something (Vivek et al., 2012). This construct has been studied in subjects like marketing (Brodie et al., 2011), sociology (Morimoto and Friedland, 2013), psychology (Garczynski et al., 2013), organisational behaviour (Kataria et al., 2012) in the form of conceptual and empirical research. Customer engagement refers to a process of reinforcing a person’s

interest in organisational activities and apprehending his/her behavioural arrangements towards the brand. As brick-and-mortar business shifts to ‘click’ ones, the companies pay heed to customer engagement in promising OBCs (Brogi, 2014). Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) proposed the brand community concept. They defined it as “a specialised, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand”. OBCs are defined as “a brand community that takes place in a virtual setting in which the members’ interaction is primarily internet-mediated” (Füller et al., 2007). A thorough investigation of literature (refer to Table 1) in this area indicates that studies have been carried out on engaging customers in SMBC. Many studies are available relating to antecedents and outcomes of engagement (Gummerus et al., 2012). Few have discussed the issues in creating communities (McAlexander et al., 2002b; McWilliam, 2000; Bailey et al., 2021). Other research studies deal with customers’ relationship with the respective brands and other members of the same brand community (Thompson and Sinha, 2008). Table 1 exhibits a detailed summary of select studies on customer engagement in SMBC.

### *2.1 Customer engagement in social media brand communities (SMBC): drivers and outcomes*

Many studies are available relating to drivers and outcomes of engagement. A company’s OBCs’ employment can largely help gather data regarding customers’ needs, actual preferences, and potential desires. Over 40 million people worldwide are believed to be participating and engaging in one or the other form of virtual community (Zaglia, 2013). Irastorza and Vega (2017) examined the motivations behind customer engagement in SMBC. In a study on online social media gaming by Harrigan et al. (2017), cognitive and social benefits are thought to have the maximum encouragement value. In their study, Wirtz et al. (2013a) categorised various background factors for customer engagement with OBCs in three sets of antecedents. In another study, Dessart et al. (2015) opined that loyalty to the brand was one of the drivers in deciding engagement level. Blasco-Arcas et al. (2016) contended that customer engagement with the firm influences brands image during interactions on the online platforms. Belonging to an OBC may augment satisfaction, emotional commitment, and tittle-tattle advertising towards the brand at hand (Royo-Vela and Casamassima, 2011). Park and Cho (2012) asserted that commitment to SMBC and information-seeking behaviour at the community level are positively related. With favourite brands helping to develop the relationship’s quality and increasing customer brand loyalty using online communities in Iran, social interactions can be enhanced (Hajli et al., 2017). Wirtz et al. (2013b) identified that an engaged customer’s shared experiences help in the value creation process, product innovations, spreading the good word about the brand and inspiring others to join the brand pages, resulting in increased brand equity. In their research of online communities, Armstrong and Hagel (1996) also account for increased brand loyalty, better market dispersion, encouraging word of mouth spread of brand and developed desire of product. Table 2 represents the exhaustive list of factors (drivers and outcomes) gathered from the available literary sources in the context of online formed ‘boundary less’ communities.

**Table 1** Literature review on customer engagement in OBCs

S. no.	Author (year)	Product category	Country	Type	Constructs used	Purpose	Findings
1	Mishra (2019)	Multiple	India	Empirical-quantitative	Social media marketing efforts, online interaction propensity, consumption, contribution, creation, overall brand equity, purchase intention	To investigate the effect of brand's social media marketing efforts and individual's online social interaction propensity on various levels of consumers' engagement with brand-related social media content. Additionally, the subsequent effects of consumers' engagement with brand-related social media content on overall brand equity and purchase intention have also been examined.	<p>1 Social media marketing efforts have positive impact on two levels of consumers' social media engagement (consumption and contribution), and no impact was observed on the third level, i.e., creation.</p> <p>2 Positive relationship between online interaction propensity and all three components of consumers' social media engagement.</p> <p>3 Further, the findings depict a significant and positive impact of user consumption of and contribution to social media brand-related content on a brand's overall equity, but these engagement levels failed to impact users' purchase intention. On the other hand, users' creation of brand-related content on social media has been found to affect both brand equity and user purchase intention.</p>
2	Vohta and Bhardwaj (2019)	General	India	Empirical-quantitative	Active participation, community trust and community commitment	To test three competing models of customer engagement to arrive at the best suited model for customer engagement in context of social media. Active participation is an antecedent to customer engagement, in the context of Facebook brand communities of e-commerce portals. Active participation has positive influence on community trust and commitment.	
3	Ananda et al. (2019)	Fashion	Indonesia	Empirical-quantitative	Perceived exposure, intention to engage in eW-O-M	To investigate the perceived exposure of fashion consumers to different types of fashion brands' social media marketing actions in social media, and its relationship with the intention to engage in electronic word-of-mouth behaviours.	<p>1 Fashion consumers in Indonesia are more prone to engage in eWOM behaviours with fashion brands in their SMBCs mostly through endorsing behaviours.</p> <p>2 Members of consumer-initiated SMBCs actively give and share advice, while members of brand-initiated SMBCs participate mainly for utilitarian purposes, such as information search.</p> <p>3 Members of brand-initiated SMBCs are expected to engage less in passing along the marketing messages</p>

**Table 1** Literature review on customer engagement in OBCs (continued)

S. no.	Author (year)	Product category	Country	Type	Constructs used	Purpose	Findings
4	Islam et al. (2018)	Respondent specific	India	Empirical-quantitative	Self-brand image congruity, value congruity, customer engagement (CE), loyalty.	To discover the impact of self-brand image congruity and value congruity on CE in OBCs.	Both self-brand image congruity and value congruity significantly affect consumer engagement. A positive effect of consumer engagement on brand loyalty was also observed.
5	Gong and Yi (2018)	Electronic-Smartphones	South Korea and USA	Empirical-quantitative	Participative brand development, brand familiarity, brand ownership, brand responsibility, self-enhancement, customer brand engagement behaviour (CBEb), power distance, collectivism.	To look into the moderating role of cultural value orientations on the relationship between brand ownership and customer-brand engagement behaviour CBEb through brand responsibility and self-enhancement.	Cultural value orientations influence CBEb which includes brand loyalty, brand-positive word of mouth, brand feedback. Individualism-collectivism and power distance significantly moderate the indirect effect of brand responsibility and self enhancement on the relationship between brand ownership and CBEb.
6	France et al. (2018)	Respondent Specific	Australia	Empirical-quantitative	Category involvement, brand engagement, brand self-congruity, brand interactivity.	To conceptualise, operationalise and contextualise the customer brand co-creation behaviour concept to augment co-creation knowledge from a customer's point of view.	A new four-dimensional co-creation behaviour concept is supported, highlighting the role of development, feedback, advocacy and helping, in the co-creation of brand value.
7	Lin et al. (2018)	Tourism, and Hospitality (Hotels)	China	Empirical-quantitative	Firm-initiated responsiveness, customer initiated conversation, brand strength, advertising effectiveness (click-through rate, conversion rate).	To recognise two forms of brand engagement via social media platforms – consumer-initiated engagement and firm-initiated engagement – and to explore their effects on effectiveness of hotels' display advertising.	Both forms of brand engagement on social media positively influence display advertising effectiveness. For a strong brand, consumer initiated engagement is more influential in increasing display advertising effectiveness; however, for a weak brand, firm-initiated engagement gains more clicks and conversions from advertisements.
8	Poddar et al. (2018)	Banking	Australia	Empirical-qualitative	Engagement process-communication, interaction, experience, satisfaction, continued involvement, bonding, recommendation.	To build up and empirically test a process model for identifying online customer engagement patterns leading to recommendation.	Identified 22 unique pattern of customer engagement, out of which nine patterns resulted in recommendation/advocacy.
9	Kamboj et al. (2018)	Respondent Specific	India	Empirical-quantitative	Participation motivation (interpersonal relation, brand likeability, entertainment, information, incentives), customer social participation in BCs (informational participation, actionable participation, attitudinal participation), brand trust, brand loyalty, branding co-creation.	To find the antecedents of branding co-creation that include social networking sites' participation motivations, customer participation, brand trust and brand loyalty in social media brand communities	SNSs' participation motivations positively influence customer participation, which affects brand trust and brand loyalty. Both brand trust and brand loyalty positively influence branding co-creation in brand communities on social media. Brand trust act as mediator between customer participation and brand loyalty.

**Table 1** Literature review on customer engagement in OBCs (continued)

S. no.	Author (year)	Product category	Country	Type	Constructs used	Purpose	Findings
10	Santos et al. (2018)	Sports	Chile	Empirical-quantitative	Attitude towards the sponsor, congruence, involvement, relationship quality, subjective norm.	To examine the impact of sports sponsorship in virtual brand communities (VBCs) on consumers' engagement within these communities.	The most noteworthy variables which impact engagement are attitude towards the sponsor, congruence, and relationship quality of the VBC.
11	Islam and Rahman (2017)	Respondent Specific	India	Empirical-quantitative	System quality, information quality, virtual interactivity, reward, customer engagement, brand loyalty.	To investigate motivational drivers of customers' engagement with online communities and also to explore whether and how community characteristics like information quality, system quality, virtual interactivity, and rewards affect customer engagement.	Each of the said characteristics positively influences customer engagement, with information quality and virtual interactivity taking the lead. Customer engagement exhibits a strong positive impact on brand loyalty. Impact of four characteristics of online brand communities on customer engagement was invariable across males and females.
12	Martínez-López et al. (2017)	Respondent Specific	-	Empirical-quantitative	Sponsor's control, sponsor's opportunism, OBC experience, OBC trust, OBC identification, OBC engagement, satisfaction, OBC participation.	To explicate OBC engagement of members and explain their relationships with other members and with the community sponsor by proposing a conceptual model incorporating factors like brand trust, OBC identification, and so on with OBC engagement playing a key role.	Using the community for mainly commercial purposes has a negative effect.
13	Chiang et al. (2017)	Electronics (Mobile Phones)	Taiwan	Empirical-quantitative	Customer learning, learning motivations, satisfaction, loyalty, customer engagement behaviour.	To build up a customer-learning model in context of online brand communities.	Learning motivation and collaborative learning are two core components of customer learning that positively influence satisfaction, which in turn has a positive influence on customer engagement behaviours (CEBs) and loyalty.
14	Pongpaew et al. (2017)	IT	Thailand	Empirical-qualitative	Customer brand engagement, perceived social presence, brand perception, product knowledge, return page visits, brand trust, brand loyalty.	To know the views of managers and users towards customer brand engagement (CBE). Also, to examine the effects of perceived social presence on CBE in a corporate Facebook world.	Corporate Facebook sites with high SP functions foster engagement on emotional, cognitive and behavioural levels. PSP enhances product knowledge and encourages return page visits. CBE and PSP build brand trust and loyalty.



Table 1 Literature review on customer engagement in OBCs (continued)

S. no.	Author (year)	Product category	Country	Type	Constructs used	Purpose	Findings
15	Hollebeck et al. (2017)	Fashion and Apparel	-	Empirical-qualitative	Stages in virtual brand community engagement practices.	To develop a refined typology and process model of virtual brand community engagement practices (VBCEPs).	Development of a refined, eight-component VBCEP typology that refines Schau et al.'s (2009) four component model of brand community engagement practices. The model comprises 'greeting', 'regulating', 'assisting', 'celebrating', 'appreciating', 'empathising', 'mingling' and 'ranking'.
16	Hamigan et al. (2017)	Tourism	-	Empirical-quantitative	Customer engagement (Identification, absorption, Interaction), behavioural intention of loyalty (BIL), customer involvement.	To validate the customer engagement with tourism brands media context, and to test customer involvement as an antecedent to engagement by replicating the 25-item scale proposed by So et al., (2014) and by testing another substitute model.	In tourism, customer engagement has been found to boost loyalty, trust and brand evaluations. Also, this study offered an alternative three-factor 11-item version of the scale.
17	Luján and Ozata (2017)	Respondent Specific	Turkey	Empirical-quantitative	Cognitive, affective and behavioural engagement, brand loyalty, satisfaction, commitment and trust.	To find out the consequences of consumer engagement in social networking sites.	Emotional and behavioural engagement dimensions were significant predictors for brand loyalty; emotional engagement for satisfaction, cognitive and behavioural engagement for commitment, while behavioural and emotional engagement dimensions were found to be significant predictors for trust.
18	Islam (2017)	Respondent Specific	India	Empirical-qualitative and quantitative	Openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism.	To provide insight into the relationship between consumer personality traits and consumer engagement (CE) in the online brand community (OBC) context. This study also examines the effect of CE on consumers' ensuing purchase intention.	The results reveal that extraversion represents the strongest driver of CE in OBCs, followed by openness to experience, neuroticism and agreeableness. Conscientiousness was found to be negatively related to CE. The findings also indicate a positive association between CE and purchase intention.
19	Tiruwa et al. (2016)	General	India	Empirical-quantitative	Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, social influence and attachment with brand, consumers' attitudes towards brand, purchase intention.	To understand the influence of online brand communities on customers' attitude and their further influence on purchase intention (PI).	The research finds that the participation in online brand communities have a positive impact on the customers' attitude, which further influence customers' purchase intention.
20	Blasco-Arceas et al. (2016)	Fashion and Apparel	-	Empirical-quantitative	C2C interactions, personalisation, customer engagement.	To investigate the impact of emotions in developing customer engagement and brand image during interactions in virtual service communities.	Customer engagement with the firm's virtual setup influences brand image which in turn positively impact purchase behaviour.

**Table 1** Literature review on customer engagement in OBCs (continued)

S. no.	Author (year)	Product category	Country	Type	Constructs used	Purpose	Findings
21	Islam and Rahman (2016)	Respondent Specific	India	Empirical-quantitative	Customer involvement, customer engagement, trust, word of mouth.	To explore the role of customer engagement in enhancing trust and word-of-mouth on brand communities over Facebook. The effect of customer involvement on customer engagement is also checked.	Higher level of involvement with the brand community leads to a higher level of customer engagement. Customer engagement leads to customer trust and word-of-mouth activities. The results further suggest a direct positive relationship of customer involvement with trust and word-of-mouth, but the mediation of customer engagement strengthens the mentioned effect.
22	Zheng et al. (2015)	Respondent Specific	Hong Kong	Empirical-quantitative	Perceived benefits, perceived costs, participation, promotion, online community commitment.	To explore the concept of user engagement in the context of online brand communities.	User engagement influenced brand loyalty both directly and indirectly through online community commitment. Users tend to focus on the benefits (rather than the costs) derived from the usage when they engage in an OBC.
23	Dessart et al. (2015)	Respondent Specific	UK	Empirical-qualitative	Drivers of customer engagement, dimensions and sub-dimensions, outcome (loyalty)	To precisely describe the meaning, conceptual boundaries and dimensions of consumer engagement within the context of OBCs both in term of the engagement with the brand and the other members. Also, to explore the relationships of consumer engagement with other concepts, suggesting antecedents of engagement.	Data are collected through semi-structured interviews with 21 international online brand community members, covering a variety of brand categories and social media platforms.
24	Chan et al. (2014)	General	China	Empirical-quantitative	Antecedents (system support, community value, freedom of expression, rewards and recognition), CE in OBCs; consequences (repurchase intention, W-O-M intention).	To examine the impact of system's features (support, community value, freedom of expression, and rewards) on customer engagement and its influence on word-of-mouth repurchase intention	Results indicate that customer engagement mediates relationships between community characteristics and brand loyalty.
25	Wirtz et al. (2013)	General	-	Conceptual	Social identity, uncertainty reduction theory.	The purpose of this paper is to explore OBCs from both consumer and company perspectives.	Four key OBC dimensions (brand orientation, internet-use, funding and governance) are identified and three antecedents (brand-related, social and functional) are proposed of consumer-OBC engagement.

**Table 1** Literature review on customer engagement in OBCs (continued)

S. no.	Author (year)	Product category	Country	Type	Constructs used	Purpose	Findings
26	Gummenus et al. (2012)	Online gaming	-	Empirical-quantitative	Community engagement behaviour, transaction engagement behaviour; perceived relationship benefits (social, entertainment economic); satisfaction, loyalty.	To study the effect of customer engagements behaviours on perceived relationship benefits and relationship outcomes.	Customer engagement was divided into 'community engagement behaviours' (CEB) and 'transactional engagement behaviours' (TEB). In addition, three relationship benefits were identified: social benefits, entertainment benefits and economic benefits. Only a small portion of customers actively interact with the content and with other members, while most customers use the brand community mainly as a source of information, reading messages rather than contributing with 'likes' or comments.
27	Zaikaite-Iakste et al. (2012)	Online games	Lithuania	Empirical-qualitative	Interaction, participants, consumer engagement stages and brand equity elements	To analyse how consumers should be engaged in communication in social media in order to build brand equity.	Consumer engagement in brand equity building in social media is analysed from company's and consumer's positions.
28	Royo-Vela et al. (2011)	Fashion and apparel	-	Empirical-qualitative	Belongingness to virtual brand community (active or passive), consumer satisfaction, affective commitment and word-of-mouth	To explore some of the effects of belonging to a virtual brand community on consumer behaviour. It also proposes the concept of belonging as a three-dimensional construct	Results reveal that consumer satisfaction, affective commitment and word-of-mouth advertising towards the brand around which the community is developed can be increased by belonging to a virtual community. Also, another dimension to the construct of belonging, called non-participative belonging is introduced. Further, active participative belonging influences the level of satisfaction and affective commitment more positively than passive and non-participative belonging.
29	Ulusu (2010)	General	Turkey	Empirical-quantitative	BC engagement, BC approach, ad attitude, entertainment, free time.	To find factors affecting the amount of time users spent on Facebook.	The main Facebook usage factors were 'social networking', 'writing on wall', 'entertainment', 'searching for friends' and 'free time'. Another independent variable was brand and advertising engagement, which had three factors named as 'brand community engagement', 'brand community approach', and 'ad attitude'.

**Table 2** Customer engagement factors recognised through research literature

<i>S. no.</i>	<i>Factors (drivers)</i>	<i>References</i>	<i>S. no.</i>	<i>Factors (outcomes)</i>	<i>References (year)</i>
1	Self-image congruence	Wirtz et al. (2013a), Cova (1997), Ashforth and Mael (1989)	19	Positive attitude towards brand	McAlexander et al. (2002a), Armstrong and Hagel (1996)
2	Concern for others	Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)	20	Customer-brand relationship	Hollebeck (2011), Kunz (2012), Fournier and Lee (2009)
3	Self-improvement	Thurau et al. (2004)	21	Attachment with brand	McAlexander et al. (2002)
4	Social-interaction ties	Zaislkaite-Jakste and Kuvykaite (2012)	22	Loyalty	Dessart et al. (2015), Wirtz et al. (2013a), Bowden (2009), McAlexander et al. (2003)
5	Social identification	Bergami and Bagozzi (2000)	23	Commitment	Wirtz et al. (2013a), Brodie et al. (2013), Jahn and Kunz (2012), Vivek et al. (2012), Kim et al. (2008)
6	Social benefits	McKenma and Bragh (1999)	24	Trust	Laroche et al. (2013), Habibi et al. (2013), McAlexander et al. (2002)
7	Brand interactivity	France et al. (2018), Labrecque (2014), Mpinganjira (2016)	25	Word of mouth	Muniz and O'Guinn (2005), Armstrong and Hagel (1996)
8	Brand love	Wallace et al. (2014)	26	Satisfaction	Wirtz et al. (2013a), Gummerus et al. (2012), Brodie et al. (2011), McAlexander et al. (2003)
9	Brand likeability	Kamboj et al. (2018)	27	Increased knowledge	Johnson Dretsch and Kirmani (2014)
10	Brand trust and satisfaction	Dessart et al. (2015)	28	Purchase intention	Adjei et al. (2010)
11	Monetary rewards	Thurau et al. (2004), Dholakia et al. (2004)	29	Helping other members	Muniz and O'Guinn (2001)
12	Entertainment	Teichmann et al. (2015), Dholakia et al. (2004)	30	Improved market penetration	Armstrong and Hagel (1996)
13	Networking	Frijda et al. (1989)	31	Competitive advantage	O'Brien et al. (2015)
14	Persuasive content	Chang et al. (2013), Lee et al. (2011), Dholakia et al. (2004)	32	Idea generation for product innovation	Füller et al. (2008), Von Hippel (2005), Wirtz et al. (2013a)
15	Information quality	Dholakia et al. (2004)	33	Heightened brand equity	Wirtz et al. (2013a)
16	Brand image	Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006)	34	Improved relationship	Wirtz et al. (2013a)
17	Brand responsiveness/interactivity	Mpinganjira (2014)	35	Brand co-creation behaviour	France et al. (2018)
18	Altruism	Lee et al. (2011)	36	Continued intention to use	Chang et al. (2013)

## 2.2 Customer engagement in 'F&A' SMBC

Studies advocate that fashion is allied to self-concept, which incorporates the realisation of self (McNeill, 2018; Titton, 2015). Kim and Jin (2006) contended that apparel retailers selling an assortment of textiles merchandise to young teens in the market had the maximum representation of the OBCs. Hollebeek et al. (2017) pointed that the Louis Vuitton OBC developed eight-component engagement community practice components such as *greeting, regulating, assisting, celebrating, appreciating, empathising, mingling, and ranking* the OBC consciousness. Pihl (2014) emphasised that Sweden's fashion bloggers who, along with their readers, create a kind of community aligned on chic. An elevated level of commitment with affective orientation with a fashion brand leads to greater motivation towards the brand-customer relationship (Choi et al., 2010).

Luxury fashion brand communities are being differentiated from non-luxury fashion brand communities in the context of motivation for engagement with them. In this direction, Irastorza and Perez-Vega (2017) have proved that participants learn more towards online Luxury fashion brand communities because of emotional, brand-related, and utilitarian drivers. Chang and Fan (2017) examined the Taiwanese Facebook fashion brand user's context, the determinants of the uninterrupted customer-brand relationships via company-hosted social networking sites were examined. In their view, the comfort of linking to a Facebook fan page and its basic usage has increased the attractiveness of fast fashion brands on social network platforms demonstrated by 'likes' and 'shares'.

## 2.3 Research gaps

Although the studies on engagement are enough developed, there is a need to understand this construct in OBCs better (Bitter and Grabner-Kräuter, 2016). A thorough investigation of literature indicates few gaps in the light of which the recent research piece is attempted. Many researchers have developed CE frameworks in brand communities where numerous antecedents and consequences were conceptually proposed, but their causal relationship needs to be investigated empirically (O'Brien et al., 2015). For this purpose, the qualitative preposition of antecedents and consequences of CE in SMBC identified, which sets the premises of this study. Also, there is a lack of focus on this concept in developing economies like India, where social media marketing's potential is quite high (Hollebeek, 2018). Regardless of the progressing research on CE in SMBC, the results fail to extend specificity to brand or industry, especially in the high involvement categories like the fashion industry needs to be explored (Islam and Rahman, 2016b). Based on these gaps, researchers propose to look at the interrelationships among the drivers and outcomes of consumer engagement (CE) in online fashion brand communities with the use of ISM in the context.

## 3 Methodology

The methodology for this research work has been adapted from Maheshwari et al. (2018). Three methodological steps are employed to probe into engagement factors and explore the hierarchical relationships among the factors as discussed below.

### 3.1 Research design

*Step one* extensively probed into the existing literature to gather information about the factors (drivers and outcomes) of customer engagement in SMBC. *Step two* employed *focus group*<sup>1</sup> discussions (FGDs) to get insights into real-time consumer participation in SMBC to explore more specific factors to achieve study objectives. *Step three* used these responses for experts structured interviews, which helped to refine the study for further analysis using ISM<sup>2</sup>. The application of ISM can help identify and understand a complex pattern of conceptual relations and hierarchical influence between the components of a system (Sage, 1977). Apart from marketing, ISM has been used in many research areas like education (Sahney et al., 2010); cross-cultural communication (Jedlicka and Meyer, 1980); energy conservation (Saxena et al., 1990); vendor selection (Mandal and Deshmukh, 1994; Haq and Kannan, 2007); waste management (Sharma et al., 1995); relationship marketing (Gupta and Sahu, 2013); knowledge management (Singh et al., 2003); tourism (Lin and Yeh, 2013); logistics outsourcing (Qureshi et al., 2007); and manufacturing (Faisal et al., 2006).

#### 3.1.1 Why literature review?

This research needs to investigate human behaviour, which cannot be abstracted, so a deductive process is followed based on exploring the conceptualisations of customer engagement from the review of the literature.

#### 3.1.2 Why FGDs?

Researchers adopted this exploratory qualitative approach to get the answers to questions like ‘what is happening, ‘what is the new dimension to the existing one’, etc. (Robson, 2002) by encouraging participants to reveal their views and share their experiences by interacting in a natural way. Face-to-face FGDs are less time consuming and more popular than other qualitative techniques like ethnography (Calder, 1977). Thus, the current research employed focus groups with the intent to get consumer responses about their participation in SMBC in the new light.

#### 3.1.3 Why ISM?

ISM is conducted to obtain the appraised opinions of specialists. Also, it seems to be suitable while understanding and identifying certain phenomenal relationships, probably in the specific sector (Saunders et al., 2009; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

### 3.2 Sampling and process: FGD

FGDs were conducted with higher secondary school students, college students and young office goers as they are considered to have experience of participating in communities on social media. Three FGDs [using Dominick and Wimmer’s (2003) guidelines; Lindlof and Taylor, 2002; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998] were conducted with a purposive convenience sample of different age groups and varied educational levels to get the benefit of comprehensive, diverse, unbiased, non-skewed ideas and opinions. Respondents’ profiles were kept different based on the need mentioned in various studies that different individuals have different CECE-related needs that should be traced

separately testing on the demographical basis or even psycho-graphical basis (Rather et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2017). Additionally, many authors have mentioned interactivity, brand knowledge, membership duration, propensity and experience of interaction, etc., may also moderate the variables (Wirtz et al., 2013a; Dessart et al., 2015). Researchers followed the ideal size for a focus group 6–12 as less than six may exclude varied opinions. With more than 12, each member's participation might become a challenge (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). With the help of challenging FGDs, researchers have attempted to effectively handle the group dynamism striking a required equilibrium amid a free-form conversation and organised session (Krueger, 2002). Demographics of group participants are presented in Table 3.

Session durations were limited to one hour, which allowed researchers to build confidence and understanding with the FG participants, a fundamental thing to capture data successfully (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). To ascertain participants' interest in the study, chocolates and other refreshments were given during each FGDs and discussions were conducted in an informal space setting which stimulated the free flow of ideas (Lunt and Livingstone, 1996). Additionally, to record the comments, discussions were video recorded unobtrusively (Fielding, 1993). Two colleagues of the researcher were appointed as observers who noted down all the participant points for future reference. Significant CE factors were identified from the literature review, which was used to formulate relevant question statements for FGDs. All the participants had a decent knowledge of the subject at hand as they were members of different brand communities online. The discussion was started with an introduction of participants, researcher then initiated the discussion to get their opinions on statements like: 'active participation or passive participation depends on some motivational drivers', 'type of community members play an important role for others to engage themselves'. Also, views of participants were sought about possible deterrents and outcomes of customer engagement in SMBC. Their opinions and experience were obtained about their motivations for participating and engaging in social media brand pages. Spontaneous follow-up was probed in between for any clarifications and elaborations to drive these discussions in the right direction. Saturation in findings was achieved during the third discussion round, and hence further rounds were ceased. The goal was to attain detailed factors (drivers and outcomes) of customer engagement in SMBus. With the findings, various factors of customer engagement substantiated by existing literature got narrowed down.

**Table 3** Demographics of Focus group participants.

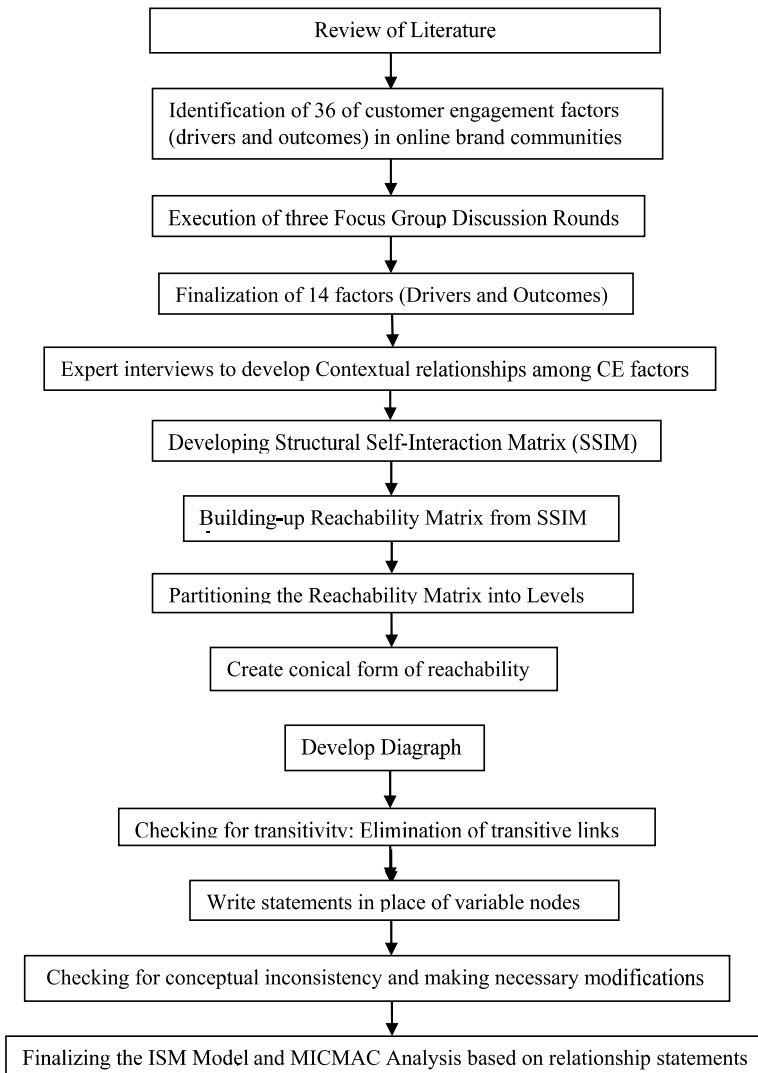
<i>Demographics</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>
Number of participants	10	12	9
Gender	Female-5 Male-5	Female-2 Male-10	Female-4 Male-5
Occupation	Graduate students	Industry executives	School students
Age	21–25	27–38	16–20

### 3.3 Sampling and process: ISM

To organise the obtained factors in the context of customer engagement in F&A SMBC and to develop the hierarchical relationship between them more meticulously, a data

collection interview form was made and sent to the experts for their opinions. Interviews sessions were conducted with academicians (five experts in the marketing area) and industry personnel (three experts from the fashion sector) who were asked to mention the recognised variables' associations. Further analysis was done using ISM, which in general is driven by seven steps (Faisal et al., 2006) followed in subsequent parts of this research, and the procedural research design is presented in Figure 1. Such contextual relationships laid the foundation for developing the structural self-interaction matrix (SSIM) by providing the link showing which variable leads to another, as discussed in the subsequent sections (Barve et al., 2008; Ishizaka and Labib, 2013).

**Figure 1** Detailed research methodology process for the current study



*Source:* Adapted from Gupta and Sahu (2013), Maheshwari et al. (2018) and Khan and Rahman (2015)



## 4 Interpretation and analysis

### 4.1 *Identifying research variables from FGD*

Analysis of respondents' views was done by transcribing the notes and video recordings of the sessions. The prevalent feeling in the group was that information is a vital, engaging driver. One of the participating members (female, 32) said: "Information about new product launch is what matters to her. It is the rational discretion to engage". Another Female, 24, also engages herself through reading reviews to know about the brand's quality before purchasing. "Many a times brand pages help in getting customers introduced to a product", she added. Another female, 23, talked about something extra beyond the basic product and social networking like emotional experience, which can be considered a driver. For many others, entertainment and relaxation are the reasons for getting engaged in brands online. It was found that students were more interested in connecting with like-minded community members.

In contrast, for office goer (male, 35), socialisation is not a motivational factor, but the brand value in a peer group is, for the sake of self-image enhancement. If a brand is popular and active, he will like to be associated. Another factor that was nominated by most of the people is the interactivity of brands. Male, 25, is a member of the marvel community on social media. The interacting feature is the driver, where a person can communicate directly and hassle-free with the brand. Here is a female, 23, who has never been a part of any brand community but thinks of monetary benefits as a strong driver of customer engagement with brands. Two males, 24 and 26 respectively, are also interested in getting incentives and discounts with community participation. The popularity of the brand in a positive way is yet another driver. According to a few participants like this male, 24 said that even if he does not use Louis Philippe, he may still join the page because of its positive brand image. Sometimes, customers identify themselves with the brand, which supports the belief the person also stands for. Most participants agreed that loyalty, feedback, brand recall, word of mouth, increased loyalty, aspiration towards brands are important outcomes of customer engagement in SMBus. Another male, 19, considered word of mouth as the driver to join a community and the outcome of positive engagement. This male, 21, believes that customers may be committed to the brand but not to the other community members. 18 is a part of the Zara online review community and relies heavily on reviews.

#### 4.1.1 *Finalisation of CE Variables for analysis*

Through transcription, responses were then marked as they expressively related to different categories (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). This process is known as coding, a tool for managing the data that 'labelled, separated, compiled, and organised the data' (Charmaz, 1983). Table 4 demonstrates the list of factors, thus, derived, which have been used as stepping prerequisites for input data for subsequent interviews to build a model through ISM (Reagan, 2006).

**Table 4** Finalised 14 variables (factors of customer engagement in brand communities on social media)

<i>Var. no.</i>	<i>Factor name</i>	<i>Definition/meaning/interpretation</i>	<i>Reference</i>
V1	Entertainment	Represents an intrinsic motivation, and refers to the extent that participating in an online community is perceived as enjoying, entertaining and pleasant.	Luo et al. (2011), Dholakia et al. (2004)
V2	Brand likeability	“A brand strategy based on attractiveness, credibility, and expertise in order to create attachment and love by delivering beneficial outcomes for consumers and brands alike”.	Nguyen et al. (2013)
V3	Social benefits	Structural dimension of social capital, indicating the overall pattern and strength of the relationship, such as the amount of time spent, the frequency of interaction and the emotional intensity among individuals in the same network.	Chang and Chuang (2011)
V4	Perceived brand image	“Degree to which a community member perceives the brand as highly reputed, distinctive, impressive, quality-conscious, and customer-friendly.	Nambisan and Baron (2007)
V5	Search for information	Gathering of product information and pre-purchase information, such as looking up product reviews in order to make a well informed and pondered buying decision, accessing experiences and knowledge of others online using know-how and information from user-generated media for practical purposes and to be inspired with fresh ideas.	Whiting and Williams (2013), Heinonen (2011), Muntinga et al. (2011)
V6	Customer brand relationship	Consumer's positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interactions.	Hollebeck et al. (2014)
V7	Brand interactivity	Responsiveness of brand which has positive impact on experiential value of users.	Mpinganjira (2014)
V8	Self-image enhancement	“It is the perceived benefit that a consumer derives from receiving recognition and social approval on account of one’s contributions to or associations with the focal brand”.	Simon et al. (2016), Dholakia et al. (2004)
V9	Brand loyalty	“Customer’s intention to buy” from a brand and that users will not switch to other sites”.	Cyr (2008)
V10	Purchase intention	A consumer willing to buy from a company whenever an item is needed is considered.	Griffin (2002)
V11	Brand love	“The degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name”.	Carroll and Ahuvia (2006)
V12	Co-creation behaviour	A company-consumer interaction (social exchange) for the purpose of attaining added value.	Wikström (1996)
V13	Reward seeking	The conception of perceived usefulness viz. and monetary rewards indicating the cognitive evaluation with respect to the utility.	Zhou and Li (2012)
V14	Brand self-congruity	Consumer tends to embrace a brand based on the congruity between his or her self-concept and the brand image or its symbolic meaning.	Liu et al. (2012), Diamantopoulos et al. (2005)



### 5.3 Developing a reachability matrix

Following doctrines (Barve et al., 2008) is used to replace the codes 'V', 'A', 'X' and 'O' with binary numbers 1 and 0 to transform SSIM into initial reachability matrix:

- If the  $(x, y)$  value in the SSIM is 'V', it makes the  $(x, y)$  value of the reachability matrix 1 while  $(y, x)$  value cracks into 0.
- If the  $(x, y)$  value in the SSIM is 'A', it makes the  $(x, y)$  value of the reachability matrix 0 while  $(y, x)$  value becomes 1.
- If the  $(x, y)$  value in the SSIM is 'X', it makes the  $(x, y)$  value of the reachability matrix 1 while  $(y, x)$  value also befits 1.
- If the  $(x, y)$  value in the SSIM is 'O', it makes the  $(x, y)$  value of the reachability matrix 0 while  $(y, x)$  value to be transformed into 0.

The reachability matrix for the 14 dimensions of customer engagement in F&A SMBC is established with these principles, as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6** Reachability matrix

Variables	Variables														Driving power
	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9	V10	V11	V12	V13	V14	
V1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	8
V2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	5
V3	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	8
V4	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	6
V5	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	9
V6	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	4
V7	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	10
V8	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	6
V9	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	4
V10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
V11	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	4
V12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
V13	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	9
V14	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	10
Dependence	4	6	6	6	2	10	3	7	8	10	8	9	6	1	

### 5.4 Partitioning the reachability matrix into levels

After developing SSIM and its transformation to the reachability matrix, each variable was defined to develop reachability and antecedent set. Eventually, such a process is done to identify each point of intersection of these two sets for all the variables. In this step, partitioning is done by recognising the variable for which both the sets (reachability and intersection) comes alike. Thus, such a variable is positioned at the top of the hierarchy and omitted from the base list. Table 7 manifests that variable 10, i.e., *purchase*

*intention*, is partitioned at level I in the F&A industry. So, it is kept at the top of the ISM hierarchical model. Collective level partitioning is shown in Table 8, which illustrates the result of all the iterations carried out.

**Table 7** Iteration i of level partition

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Reachability set</i>	<i>Antecedent set</i>	<i>Intersection set</i>	<i>Level</i>
V1	1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 11, 13	1, 5, 7, 14	1	
V2	2, 6, 9, 11, 12	1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 13	2	
V3	3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13	1, 3, 5, 7, 13, 14	3, 13	
V4	2, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12	1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 13	4	
V5	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13	5, 14	5	
V6	6, 9, 10, 12	2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14	6, 9	
V7	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13	5, 7, 14	7	
V8	2, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12	1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 13	8	
V9	6, 9, 10, 12	2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 13, 14	6, 9	
V10	10	1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14	10	I
V11	6, 10, 11, 12	1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14	11	
V12	10, 12	2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13	12	
V13	2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13	1, 3, 5, 7, 13, 14	3, 13	
V14	1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14	14	14	

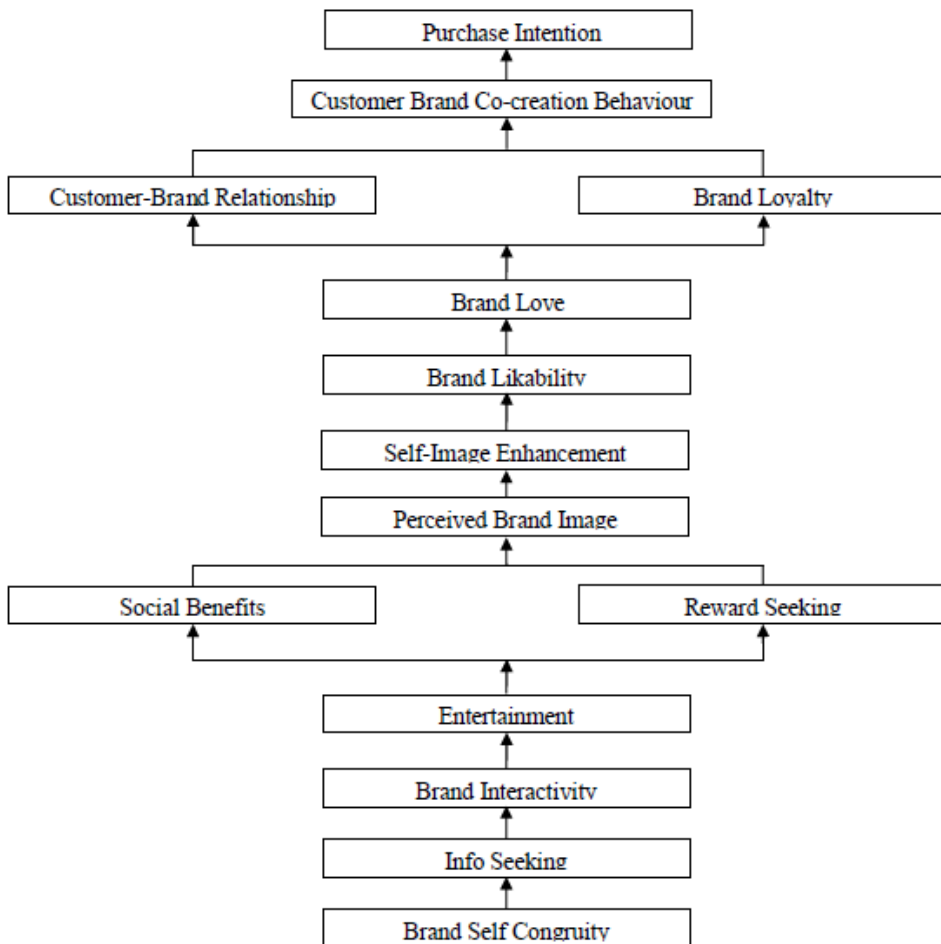
**Table 8** Combined result of level partitions table

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Reachability set</i>	<i>Antecedent set</i>	<i>Intersection set</i>	<i>Level</i>
V1	1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 11, 13	1, 5, 7, 14	1	IX
V2	2, 6, 9, 11, 12	1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 13	2	V
V3	3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13	1, 3, 5, 7, 13, 14	3, 13	VIII
V4	2, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12	1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 13	4	VII
V5	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13	5, 14	5	XI
V6	6, 9, 10, 12	2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14	6, 9	III
V7	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13	5, 7, 14	7	X
V8	2, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12	1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 13	8	VI
V9	6, 9, 10, 12	2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 13, 14	6, 9	III
V10	10	1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14	10	I
V11	6, 10, 11, 12	1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14	11	IV
V12	10, 12	2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13	12	II
V13	2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13	1, 3, 5, 7, 13, 14	3, 13	VIII
V14	1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14	14	14	XII

### 5.5 Constructing the ISM model of customer engagement in F&A SMBC

Repeated iterations resulted in the identification of the level of each factor responsible for customers' engagement in F&A SMBC through partitioning of the reachability matrix. Removal of transitivities is followed next by the ISM methodology as enlightened by Thakkar et al. (2005). As adapted from Maheshwari et al.'s (2018) research works, the ISM approach included the steps mentioned in Figure 1. The reachability matrix development resulted in driving power and dependence of each of the 14 variables (refer Table 6), which facilitated the level partitioning through multiple iterations (refer Tables 7 and 8). The concluding hierarchy was developed with level partitioning based on driving power and dependence (refer to Figure 2). The variables with strong DP and weak D (i.e., Independent variable) should form the ISM hierarchy base. The same is reflected in the developed ISM diagram of the present research work to attain this study's final objective; interrelationships among these factors are figured out. Variable nodes are replaced with statements that transform the digraph into an ISM.

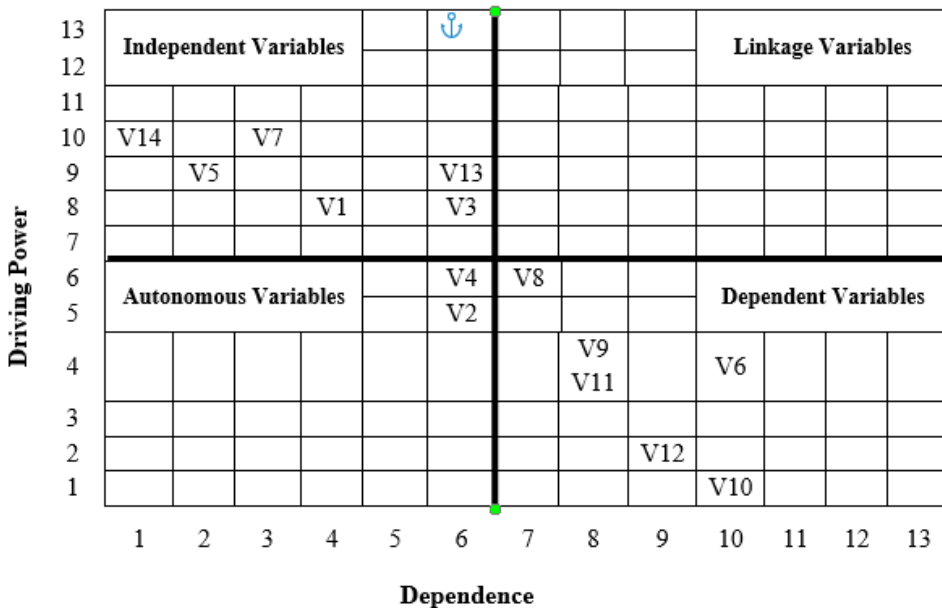
**Figure 2** Hierarchical relationship among variables of customer engagement in F&A communities on social media



5.6 MICMAC analysis

MICMAC stands for ‘matrix impact cross-reference multiplication applied to a classification’ (Maheshwari et al., 2018). Multiplication properties of matrices allowed categorisation of variables (as ‘driving’ and ‘dependent’ variables) based on their powers achieved in the reachability matrix (see Table 6). After establishing the dependence and driving power for these factors in the hierarchical model (see Figure 2), the factors were divided into four groups through MICMAC analysis (Barve et al., 2008). This facilitated categorisation of customer engagement factors in the F&A sector into four sets, i.e., autonomous, dependent, linkage and independent (Barve et al., 2008). Figure 3 illustrates the holistic identification and analysis of dependence and driving power for customer engagement factors with specific reference to customer engagement in F&A SMBC done through MICMAC analysis. From the figure, it is apparent that none of the factors falls under the category of linkage variables which makes it evident that there is no instability amongst the factors.

Figure 3 MICMAC analysis (see online version for colours)



Further, V2 (brand likeability) and V4 (perceived brand image) are counted as autonomous variables (with moderate dependence and moderate driving power), which is linked with other strong variables that can have an impact on the value of customer engagement. Otherwise, they are relatively disconnected. Independent factors with strong driving power and weak dependence are found at the base of hierarchy as V1 (entertainment), V3 (social benefits), V5 (information search), V7 (brand interactivity), V13 (reward seeking) and V14 (brand self-congruity). These are the most influential factors in determining customer engagement in a SMBC in the said sector and thus require due consideration. In contrast, V6 (customer-brand relationship), V8 (self-image enhancement), V9 (brand loyalty), V10 (purchase intention), V11 (brand love), V12

(co-creation behaviour) are found to be the dependent variables, and they need well-planned execution.

## **6 Findings and discussion**

Based on the contextual relationships, variables with high driving power are found out to be brand self-congruity, information, brand interactivity, and entertainment. All of these have a high level of influential power and demonstrate a low degree of dependence. Combined effects of all these factors may lead to perceived brand image, self-image enhancement, brand likeability, and brand love, which may act both as drivers and outcomes, further leading to customer-brand relationship and brand loyalty again at the same level. On the other hand, purchase intention has become the most dependent factor, followed by customer brand co-creation behaviour signifying their high dependence. These bottom level variables have strong driving powers, thus called 'drivers' of the said phenomena, leading to one another. The obtained findings are in line with the previous studies (France et al., 2018), which advocate brand-self-congruity and interactivity provides room for co-creation of the brand. Literature suggests that entertaining content, rewards, and social interactions drive users to get motivated to engage with brands on social media, which positively influences purchase intention (Thakkar et al., 2005; Dessart et al., 2015). Also, customers' engagement is highly dependent on their interest in how they identify themselves with the fashion brand. Self-brand congruity is said to positively impact customer engagement, which in turn influences brand loyalty positively (Islam et al., 2018). As this study witnessed, Irastorza and Perez-Vegab (2017) also support that customers are more inclined towards online luxury fashion brand communities due to love for the brand, functional and brand-related motives.

## **7 Implications**

Understanding customers' underlying motivations towards their participation in F&A SMBC is the key for marketers to develop better strategies for customer engagement. The ISM model developed in this paper acts as a top management tool to understand/identify the key factors. Fashion brands may indulge in entertaining and worthwhile experiences to get users engaged with them in this quest. As indicated by findings, co-creation behaviour in customers can be facilitated by recognising, categorising, and comprehending the factors that motivate them to engage in OBCs of F&A brands. The study also serves to apprise brand community practitioners of the degree of influence of various motivational drivers that lead to purchase intention amongst online users of F&A brands.

## **8 Conclusions, limitations, and future research directions**

Brand community is the imperative building block in the overall management of the brand. To create a thriving community, marketers need to focus on customer engagement (Munjjal et al., 2019). However, it is not the outcome rather a process; if it is constructively managed will lead to word of mouth, customer loyalty, purchase intention,



co-creation behaviour. The current study has attempted to gather the crucial factors determining the driving forces behind customers' engagement towards F&A online communities. A multiple method approach is employed to cater to the objectives like thoroughly-explored literature, FGDs, and expert interviews and put the results in an analysis using ISM. The model so formed represents the structure of a complex issue of concern in a carefully calculated arrangement inferring graphics and words (Attri et al., 2013). Many studies have adopted ISM as an initial method for model development for validation of results and proposed the employment of quantitative methods further (Alawamleh and Popplewell, 2011; Lin and Yeh, 2013; Thakkar et al., 2008). Hence, this study also could be taken ahead for hypothesis development tested quantitatively using other multivariate analysis techniques like structural equation modelling for a robust conceptual framework.

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## Notes

- 1 Focus groups are considered a "group interviewing technique used to understand consumer attitudes and behaviour" [Dominick and Wimmer, (2003), p.124].
- 2 ISM is a used to convert and solve vague, inadequate or complex pattern of variables or roughly expressed mental models to a well-defined multilevel model that serve many objectives in a simplified way (Thakkar et al., 2005).