

THE SOCIAL COGNITIVE APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING CONSUMERS'
ENGAGEMENT BEHAVIOR IN ONLINE BRAND COMMUNITIES
IN SOUTH KOREA

by

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to extend research on social cognitive theory (SCT) to explain consumers' engagement behavior in online brand communities (OBCs). Recently, marketers exploited OBCs, a nontraditional form of marketing communication, to reach their target consumers. In the current study, the SCT framework assumed that consumers' engagement behavior in OBCs was a socio-cognitive process that involves major cognitive factors such as self-efficacy and outcome expectation. In the proposed relationship, it was expected that engagement behavior in OBCs was a function of consumers' cognitive evaluation of self-efficacy, the positive (social and functional benefits) and negative (embarrassment) outcome expectations associated with engagement behavior.

Overall, the results supported the proposed model. First, self-efficacy was shown to directly and indirectly influence consumers' engagement behaviors. Second, outcome expectations, especially functional outcome expectations, were found to be important predictors for engagement behaviors. Thus, the current results verified that SCT contributed to the existing OBCs research. Previous studies dominantly employed the social identification approach to explain consumers' engagement behavior in OBCs. However, the current dissertation acknowledged the limitations of social identification approach because it focused only on consumers' social motivations. The proposed model in the current research might be more useful than social identification approach, which is a dominant framework for OBCs research because the proposed model encompasses various important factors such as functional needs in

engagement behavior.

In addition, the current study also investigated the impact of engagement behaviors on consumer-brand relationship (CBR) and proposed two dimensions of CBR: social and functional dimension. CBR suggested that there are interpersonal relationship qualities between consumers and brands. Given that consumers in OBCs communicated about brands through engagement behavior and often became avid advocates of brands, CBR was relevant to the current context. The results showed that engagement behavior influenced CBR. Few studies showed that consumers' engagement behaviors in OBCs led to CBR development. Thus, this result provided the legitimacy for engagement behavior research in the context of OBCs because the current results showed the potential of OBCs as a marketing communication tool for CBR development.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family who stood by me throughout my doctoral program.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>a</i>	Cronbach's index of internal consistency
<i>df</i>	Degrees of freedom: number of values free to vary after certain restrictions have been placed on the data
<i>M</i>	Mean: the sum of a set of measurements divided by the number of measurements in the set
<i>p</i>	Probability associated with the occurrence under the null hypothesis of a value as extreme as or more extreme than the observed value
<i>r</i>	Pearson product-moment correlation
AGFI	Adjusted goodness of fit index
CFI	Comparative fit index
RMSEA	Root mean square error of approximation
CMIN	The minimum value of the discrepancy function between the sample covariance matrix and the estimated covariance matrix

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Online brand communities (OBCs) recently emerged as a powerful marketing communication channel (Nambisan & Watt, 2011) because, unlike traditional media, they enabled meaningful interactions not only between consumers and companies but also between consumers and consumers through consumers' engagement behaviors. OBCs provided venues for consumers to perform various engagement behaviors such as participating in online and offline social events, exchanging brand-related information and creating new brand-related knowledge (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). In some OBCs, consumers became actively involved in engagement behaviors by sharing ideas, expertise, and relevant files. However, it was also not difficult to find ghost town OBCs where newer postings get very few views and zero responses. In other words, for OBCs to evolve and prosper, a large and balanced proportion of consumers must actively engage in the community through various forms of engagement behaviors. The success of an OBC as a marketing communication tool should depend on consumers' engagement behaviors within the OBC. The present study aimed to identify the mechanism of consumers' engagement behavior in OBCs and its marketing outcomes.

Companies or marketers could influence consumers' interactions to foster more engagement behaviors in OBCs. In fact, they already strived to encourage consumers to perform engagement behaviors in OBCs. For example, Adidas used its OBC to announce an in-store event that encouraged consumers' offline gathering at its New York store and

marketers of various brands such as Camaro, Nike, and Target ran events and contests on their OBCs to promote consumers' engagement behaviors. Nevertheless, many OBCs failed to generate enough engagement behaviors to sustain continued participation. Despite its importance, the mechanism of engagement behavior in OBCs remained under-theorized and under-researched. Thus, it is worthwhile to study the mechanism that generates the engagement behaviors needed for successful OBCs because the better marketers understand this mechanism, the better they are able to create and manage OBCs in which consumers are actively involved with communities, companies, and brands.

The present study considered consumers' engagement behaviors as a social cognitive mechanism and employed Bandura's social cognitive theory (SCT) as its theoretical framework. SCT has been employed to understand and predict human behaviors in various contexts. Particularly, it was often employed to investigate various computer-mediated communication and related behaviors such as Internet usage and downloading behavior (e.g., LaRose & Kim, 2007). SCT proposed that human behavior depended on the triadic relationship among environmental (e.g., economic conditions, socioeconomic status and educational/family structures), individual (e.g., self-regulation and cognition) and behavioral (e.g., behavioral pattern and past behavior) factors (Bandura, 2001). Indeed, consumers' engagement behaviors in OBCs were often determined by reciprocal interaction of environmental, individual and behavioral factors (e.g., Dholakia & Vianello, 2009; Hsu & Chiu, 2004; McGershen, 2011).

Among those factors, the current study focused on individual factors, especially individuals' cognition because engagement behaviors were the results of cognitive assessment (Hsu, Ju, Yen, & Chang, 2007; Lopez-Nicolas, Molina-Castillo, & Bouwman, 2008; Shiue, Chiu, & Chang, 2010). For instance, Lopez-Nicolas et al. (2008) reported that consumers are involved in engagement behaviors based on their cognitive assessment of the

outcomes of the behavior. Shiue et al. (2010) showed that consumers' cognitive evaluation of perceived risk affected consumers' engagement behaviors.

In the framework of SCT, cognition is comprised of self-efficacy and outcome expectation, both of which are important factors in behavior. According to Bandura (2001), individuals who have confidence in their capability to produce designated levels of behavior (self-efficacy) and who perceive positive outcomes for a given action (outcome expectation) are more likely to perform the behavior, while individuals who perceive negative outcomes are less likely to perform the behavior. Studies showed that engagement behaviors led to various outcomes such as social, functional, enjoyment and embarrassment outcomes (e.g., Kardaras, Karakostas, & Papathanassiou, 2003; Wachter, Gupta, & Quaddus, 2000), which the current study interpreted as outcome expectations of engagement behavior. Based on this idea, the current study proposes that consumers' engagement behaviors in OBCs are the result of social cognitive assessment of their perceived ability to perform behaviors (self-efficacy) and perceived potential positive and negative consequences associated with the behaviors within OBCs.

The current study focused on cognitive factors of SCT for several reasons. First of all, Bandura (1993) stated that cognition is the most crucial part of SCT. Bandura's central argument (1997) is that the effect of other SCT factors such as environmental and behavioral factors function through cognition. For this reason, the current study proposed that consumers' engagement behaviors were the result of cognitive evaluation of self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Investigating the cognitive mechanism is inevitable to understanding the engagement behaviors in OBCs. Thus, it is relevant to focus on cognitive factors of SCT in the current study.

In identifying the mechanism of engagement behaviors in OBCs, the current study also investigated the impact of engagement behaviors. Specifically, consumer-brand

relationship (CBR) was examined as an outcome of consumers' engagement behaviors in OBCs. Given that OBCs were built on the aggregation of consumers who shared positive feeling toward brand (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005), an OBC might be a place for consumers to develop close connections and relationships with the brand around which the OBC was created. The current study proposed two facets of CBR: social and functional. Positive CBR was likely to form when consumers' social and functional needs were satisfied (Fournier, 2009; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004) through their engagement behaviors. SCT is a theory that predicts consumers' behaviors, not relationship. In other words, investigating CBR as the impact of engagement behaviors go beyond the scope of SCT. In addition, their relationships to positive outcome expectations were empirically explored because positive outcome expectations led to favorable branding outcome (Ha, 2004; Meenaghan, 2001).

In sum, the purpose of current study was to identify the social cognitive mechanism of consumers' engagement behavior and its impact on CBR. Identifying factors that affect consumers' engagement behaviors in OBCs and their likelihood of leading to CBR will extend the literature on OBCs and provide helpful insight for marketers who utilize OBCs as a marketing communication tool.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Online Brand Communities

According to Muniz & O'Guinn (2001), Boorstin (1973) was the first to suggest the concept of consumer community. Several brand communities have been studied since then, including those of Apple (Belk & Tumbat, 2005), Jeep (Algesheimer et al., 2005), Nutella (Cova & Pace, 2006), Mini (Broderick, MacLaran, & Ma, 2003) and Lomo (Schau, Muniz, & Arnould, 2009). The concept of brand communities included consumers who were inclined to build a connection or relationship with brands. According to McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig (2002), a brand community consists of "a fabric of relationships in which the consumer is situated and central relationships include those between the consumer and the brand, between the consumer and the firm, between the consumer and the product in use, and among fellow consumers" (p. 38).

Since the 1990s, Internet technology enabled consumers around the world to share their interest in brands. In the age of the Internet, Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001) defined a brand community as "a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand" (p. 412). Brand communities on the Internet began in the form of simple gatherings of brand advocates such as Harley Davidson motorcycle communities (McAlexander et al., 2002), GM's Hummer vehicle community (Luedicke, 2006), and a community of Apple Newton computer users (Schau & Muñiz, 2007). Since the mid-2000s, the popularity of social media such as Facebook promoted the growth of OBCs. It is now a common practice among companies to launch OBCs as their social

media marketing tool, and many social networking sites (SNSs) began to develop more advanced features that allow companies to interact with consumers. Thanks to the growth of SNSs, OBCs became one of the dominant social media marketing forms for marketers. The basic forms of OBCs on SNSs were brand's account and brand fan sites that engage consumers through interesting content and unique assets (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2008). This new type of OBCs became the mainstream because social media channels were primarily comprised of sets of friends. Consumers were mainly interacting with other consumers who are already in their social circle (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Social media channels reinforced the maintenance of pre-existing social connections, enabling OBCs to potentially use consumers' networks. OBCs on social media became dominant because they easily encouraged existing consumers to invite members of their personal network to the community (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009).

Furthermore, OBCs gained popularity because they allowed diverse consumers to have a connection with brands and other consumers by performing and participating in various activities such as sharing information about brands. Shang, Chen and Liao (2006) described OBCs as an online space where an increasing number of consumers interacted, communicated and created brand-related content. Consumers in OBCs benefited from their engagement behaviors that allowed information seeking or socializing with others because these behaviors led to satisfaction of their needs for functional, social, and enjoyment (Dholakia & Vianello, 2011).

Consumers' engagement behaviors increased their emotional associations with the brand and the community (Martesen & Grønholdt, 2004) the same way fans developed association with a celebrity and that celebrity's fan club (Cova & Pace, 2006). These emotional associations were based upon the nostalgic feeling of association with the brand and develop strongly when the same feeling was shared with others (Arora, 2008). Because

OBCs offered a way to enmesh the consumers in a network of connections with the brand (or company) and other consumers (Cova & Pace, 2006), a strong emotional association formed on an OBC and other consumers might develop into positive and strong CBR.

Theoretical Approaches to Online Brand Communities

Theoretical approaches to OBCs were very wide where many concepts are introduced and explained separately. Even though these studies explained certain aspects of OBCs and helped the understanding of OBCs, the body of literature lacked an integrated and systematic approach to OBCs. Broadly, OBCs literatures could be classified into two streams; the first stream of OBCs research explained outcomes and benefits OBCs engendered (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; McAlexander, Kim & Roberts, 2003; Schouten, McAlexander & Koenig, 2007). The second stream is to understand the nature of OBCs interaction and its antecedents (Luedicke, 2006; Madupu & Cooley, 2010; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).

One of theoretical frameworks used for the first stream of OBCs research is interpersonal communication. Since OBCs are vehicles that allow consumers to communicate with each other, many studies investigated OBCs with interpersonal communication approach. Interpersonal communication approaches centered around a view that perceived OBCs as a platform for electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM). WOM is a consumer-generated channel of communication or message. It is therefore perceived to be more reliable, credible, and trustworthy by consumers compared to company-generated message or communications (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1995; Arndt, 1967). Traditional interpersonal communications theory considers WOM as having a powerful influence on behavior, especially on consumers' information search, evaluation, and subsequent decision-making (Cox, 1963; Brown & Reingen, 1987; Money, Gilly, & Graham, 1998; Silverman, 2001). Studies indeed provided strong evidence that OBCs are important platforms for consumers to share, exchange and

pass along information (e.g., Lee, Kim, & Kim, 2012). For example, Lee *et al.* (2012) showed that in OBCs, consumers' self-construal influenced their intention of eWOM. In OBCs, consumers provided information concerning product performance and the social and psychological consequences of the purchase decision for other consumers.

From the perspective of interpersonal communication, Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) is another approach to OBCs. This theory is used in person-to-person and face-to-face communication context (Berger, 1987). According to URT, OBCs could serve a role in moving a consumer closer to a positive purchase decision. Uncertainty in purchase process is difficult for consumers to deal with. Based on URT, interpersonal communication's main objective is to reduce uncertainty (Parks & Adelman, 1983). Consumers in OBCs communicate and seek information in order to reduce the ambiguity. Quality of information in OBCs was the most fundamental driver of uncertainty reduction in this approach.

Another approach to OBCs was its effect on branding outcome. Literature provided well-documented evidence of branding outcomes. For instance, it has been established that the interaction that occurs within OBCs have positive effects on brand loyalty (McAlexander *et al.*, 2003). In addition, OBCs have been cited for their effects to produce a sense of oppositional loyalty toward competing brands (e.g., Madupu & Cooley, 2010). These branding effects of OBCs made OBCs as one of the most desirable marketing communication tools.

Another line in the outcome-focused research stream was how companies successfully fostered OBCs. Fournier and Lee (2009) proposed that in order to fully exploit OBCs, OBCs should be perceived as a high-level business strategy. Lee, Kim and Kim (2011) reported that OBCs should be perceived in a way that they were not managed or sponsored by marketers.

For the second stream, which focused on consumers' interaction in OBCs, social

network analysis was often employed. This line of research paid attention to the impact of social structure of OBCs. All communication in OBCs took place within a social structure. The relationship in OBCs can be categorized based on the closeness of the relationship, represented by the concept, tie strength (Money et al., 1998; Duhan, Johnson, Wilcox, & Harrel, 1997; Bristor, 1990). Tie strength was defined as “a multidimensional construct that represents the strength of the dyadic interpersonal relationships in the context of social networks” (Money, Gilly, & Graham, 1998, p.79). Tie strength included closeness, intimacy, support, and association (Frenzen & Davis, 1990). The strength of the tie was classified from strong to weak based on the number of interactions and types of resources they shared, the frequency of resource exchanges, and the exchange intimacy within a social structure (Marsden & Campbell, 1984). Research suggested that tie strength affected interactions among consumers in OBCs (e.g., Chu & Kim, 2011). OBCs consumers in a strong tie tended to interact more often and share more resources, compared to consumers in a weak tie. Thus, consumers would contribute more to OBCs when they were in strong tie relationships with other consumers. In addition, consumers in strong ties tended to perceive greater importance of interaction among consumers in OBCs (e.g., Bansal & Voyer, 2000). Gruen, Osmonbekov and Czaplewski (2006) suggested that a strong tie was perceived by OBCs members to have a positive influence on their decision-making.

Another important factor from social network analysis on OBCs was homophily. Homophily explained OBCs based on similarity of OBCs members' attributes: the extent to which consumers in OBCs were similar in terms of their characteristics such as interest, age, sex, lifestyle and education. Homophily exerted the great influence consumers' behaviors in terms of information they accepted, the attitudes they formed, and the interactions they experienced (McPherson & Smith-Lovin, 1987). Homophily predisposed consumers toward a greater level of interpersonal attraction, trust, and understanding. Thus, consumers in OBCs

tended to affiliate with others consumers who share similar interests or who are in a similar situation.

Social identification approach was another approach to examine consumers' interaction in OBCs. Social identification approach argued that individuals were influenced by the 'ingroups' he or she belongs to (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Individuals are motivated to have positive evaluations to their 'in-groups' when compared with 'out-groups' with whom they do not have a relationship. If consumers in OBCs tended to be in strong tie relationship and perceived the high level of homophily, they were likely to identify themselves with OBCs. In other words, they developed the strong identification with OBCs. Indeed, the study of offline and online brand communities, such as the Harley Owners Group (Schouten, McAlexander & Koenig, 2007), revealed that consumers developed identification with their brand communities. Social identification was a dominant approach in OBCs research because it explained consumers' emotional and behavioral attachment to OBCs and brands.

Another line of research, which investigated consumers' interaction in OBCs was consumers' motivations. Studies proposed and developed a conceptual framework of consumers' motivation of OBC participation (Madupu & Cooley, 2010; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004). These studies listed participation motivations such as psychological, functional, social and enjoyment motivations.

Engagement Behavior

Consumers' engagement behavior recently attracted a great deal of attention among researchers (e.g., Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner 2010; Trusov et al., 2009). Both the academic researchers and practitioners rigorously investigated and explored the concept of engagement behavior in the field of marketing communication. However, the concept of engagement behavior was used ambiguously by marketing communication researchers,

indicating that academic attention to consumers' engagement behavior as a separate construct was limited.

Engagement was first conceptualized in the field of psychology by Kahn in 1990. Since then, several researchers strived to define it (Avery, McKay, & Wilson, 2007; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Scholars in psychology defined engagement as a motivational construct (See Table 1). Maslach et al. (2001) stated that engagement was "persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment" (p. 417), while Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) defined it as a "positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption" (p. 295)

Scholars in marketing communication tended to perceive engagement as a behavioral construct (See Table 1). In marketing communication, there has been an especially strong focus on purchase behavior (Reinartz & Kumar, 2000). However, engagement is a behavioral construct that goes beyond simple purchase behavior and should involve interaction with other consumers. Marketing practitioners defined engagement as "facilitating interactions that strengthen the emotional, psychological or physical investment a customer has in a brand" (Sedley, 2006, p. 5), and researchers in academia perceived customer engagement as "intensity of customer participation with both representatives of the organization and with other customers in a collaborative knowledge exchange process" (Wagner & Majchrzak, 2007, p. 20). Thus, engagement behaviors should be conceptualized as a consumer's behavioral affirmations and assertions toward brands. One engagement behavior in the field of marketing communication includes word-of-mouth or eWOM (Ryu & Feick, 2007; Senecal & Nantel, 2004), online postings about brands (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), repeated usage (Bolton, Lemon, & Verhoef, 2004; Mittal & Kamakura, 2001; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996) and other behaviors that could influence the firm and its brands (Keiningham et al., 2007; Morgan & Rego, 2006; Verhoef, Franses, & Hoekstra, 2002). In

Table 1. Review of the Literature on Consumer Engagement

Focus of Definition	Author (Year) (Field)	Definition in the study	Outcomes of Engagement
Behavioral	Sawhney, Verona and Prandelli (2005) (Marketing)	Consumer-centric and continuous back-and-forth interaction with firm	Collaborative product innovation
	Shevlin (2007) (Marketing Practitioner)	Repeated interactions	Product involvement, frequency of purchase, referral behavior
	Sedley (2007) (Marketing Practitioner)	Interaction of consumers with one another, with a company or a brand	Consumer loyalty and advocacy
	Narayan (2007) (Marketing Practitioner)	Interaction between consumers and companies	Consumer loyalty
	Wagner and Majchrzak (2007) (Marketing Practitioner)	Intensity of consumer participation in a knowledge exchange	Community custodianship, community goal alignment
	Erat et al. (2006) (Information)	Exchange of information and knowledge between consumers and companies/consumers	
	Furrer and Skinner (2003) (Education)	Active, goal-directed, flexible, constructive, persistent, focused interactions with the social and physical environments	Feelings of relatedness
Emotional	People Metrics (Marketing Practitioner)	Emotional connection with the company	Referral behavior, Repeated usage, passion, love for the brand
	Rieger and Kamins (2006) (Marketing Practitioner)	Emotional connection between company and consumer	

	Calder and Malthouse (2008) (Communication)	Strong state of connectedness between the individual and media	
	McEwen 2004 (Marketing)	Relationships based on consumers' formed emotional bonds with a brand	Consumers' confidence, integrity, pride, and passion in a brand
	Skinner and Belmont (1993) (Education)	Emotional quality of involvement in learning	Intense effort and concentration in learning
	Salanova, Agut, and Peiró (2005) (Psychology)	Pervasive affective-cognitive state	Increase group morale, cohesion, and rapport
Motivational	Higgins (2006) (Psychology)	Motivational force such as involvement and engrossment	Experienced value
	Sprott, Czellar, and Spangenberg (2009) (Marketing)	Consumers' propensity to include brands as part of how they view themselves	
	Erickson (2005) (Psychology)	Passion and commitment	Willingness to invest oneself and expend one's discretionary effort to help
	Maslach et al. (2001) (Psychology)	Persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment	Job performance
	Kahn (1990) (Psychology)	Psychological presence - The state in which individuals express their self	Organizational commitment
	Schaufeli et al. (2002) (Psychology)	Positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind (vigor, dedication and absorption)	

sum, in the current context, the engagement behavior refers to consumers' voluntary behavioral manifestations toward the brand, the OBCs, or both.

Several themes and dimensions emerged from the existing literature on consumer engagement. First, consumer engagement was found to influence an emotional attachment between a brand (or company) and its consumers (Narayan, 2007; Rieger & Kamins, 2006). Second, engagement was seen as a behavior such as interaction with and participation of customers in knowledge exchange (Nambisan, 2002; Wagner & Majchrzak, 2007). Third, many researchers studied consumer engagement and engagement behavior in the context of co-creation and co-production (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000). Fifth, engagement behavior focused on experiences as the context in which the consumer was engaged. This experience might happen with or without an actual product or service. In sum, the influence of engagement behavior goes beyond simple consumers' interaction with the product and service. It provides an opportunity for consumers to think about a product and give it meaning.

Engagement Behavior in Online Brand Communities

A brand community maintained the function of the community through consumers' engagement behaviors. Consumers were typically involved in the engagement behaviors of sharing stories about the brand and educating other consumers on issues related to product usage and community norms (Schau & Muñiz, 2006). Successful communities are ones in which consumers actively perform various engagement behaviors. Even though it might seem like an easy idea, building brand communities that involve active members is indeed a difficult task. In sum, consumers' engagement behavior in an OBC is a crucial element of the community's development and sustainability in the long term (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Koh

& Kim, 2004) because OBCs are developed due to the collaborations and interactions carried out by the consumers in the communities.

OBCs offered an appealing context in which to study engagement behavior because they often facilitated consumers' participation activities by providing consumers with convenient platforms or tools such as message boards or forums, online and offline events, and live chats in real time. These features implied that the basic premise of OBCs was the quality and quantity of consumers' engagement behavior. Engagement behavior is the primary driving force for OBCs, but the actual mechanism and effects of engagement behavior in OBCs are unclear and unexplored. In other words, despite its importance, the concept of engagement behavior was not fully established in the current OBCs literature. Therefore, it is important to identify factors that are effective in enhancing a consumer's intention to perform engagement behaviors.

In the context of OBCs, engagement behavior focuses on members' behavioral aspects of OBC membership and can be defined as a member's voluntary behavioral manifestations that have a community or brand-focus. In previous studies, researchers suggested that consumers in OBCs were involved in various engagement behaviors because they developed social identification within OBCs (e.g., Fuller, Bartl, Ernst, & Muhlbacher, 2006). Therefore, social identification was acknowledged as the most important element of the research on OBCs. Social identification reflects the degree to which people merge "their sense of self and their evaluations of self-worth with their judgments of the characteristics and status of their groups" (Ines, 2012, p. 583). The construct comes from social identity theory (SIT). According to SIT, social identification leads to one's behavior to favor his or her in-group at the expense of out-group. For example, Playstation users hate the Xbox, and Apple advocates dismiss Samsung, Microsoft and Dell. Scholars found that social identification had a significant positive impact on individuals' levels of engagement in OBCs

(e.g., Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002) such as cooperation behavior with other consumers in OBCs (e.g., Algesheimer et al., 2005; Rao, Davis, & Ward, 2000). Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) also found a correlation between identification and consumers' engagement behavior.

Social identification explains individuals' identification with social groups in light of their need to satisfy social needs. In other words, individuals develop identification with social groups because the groups provide social features that meet their social needs. Dholakia et al. (2004) showed that OBCs were social structures that satisfy consumers' social needs by conveying social meaning and providing social benefits for their members. For example, online communities met various social needs such as social distinctiveness (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995), social meaning (Muñiz & Schau, 2005), opportunities for strengthening interpersonal ties (Arnould & Price, 1993), social support (Cummings, Sproull, & Kiesler, 2002), social integration (McAlexander et al., 2002), and social acceptance (McKenna & Bargh, 1998). Muñiz and Schau (2005) found that brand community members of Apple Newton still supported one another even after Apple officially discontinued the product. These findings indicated that consumers of OBCs were likely to satisfy their social needs by participating in OBCs and thus developing a sense of identification with OBCs.

In sum, consumers constructed their social identity by construing themselves to be a part of OBCs. This social identity in OBCs was the core factor that predicts consumers' behavioral, emotional and affective manifestation toward OBCs such as commitment to OBCs, involvement with OBCs (Ellemers, Kortekaas & Ouwerkerk, 1999), kinship with other consumers (McAlexander, Schouten & Koenig, 2002) and, most importantly, engagement behavior. In other words, social identification approach explained consumers' engagement behavior in terms of dynamic relationship of the socially constructed self and social structure.

However, the social identification approach to engagement behavior might not be sufficient to explain members' engagement behavior in OBCs for several reasons. First, many consumers joined OBCs for purely functional reasons (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004) rather than for social identification. Functional needs were met when consumer went to OBCs to engage in specific activities. For example, consumers seeking online advice about purchase and product often used OBCs where other consumers posted reviews of products, and thus they placed a great deal of importance on information found in OBCs. Such engagement behaviors supported information-seeking/gathering and facilitated consumption-related decision-making. In fact, many OBCs attempted to satisfy consumers' functional needs by providing various features (See Table 2). Specifically, members with a strong interest in certain features of products just wanted to obtain information and others' experiences regarding product usage. OBCs where information could be accessed without concerns about time and geographical limits therefore provided convenience or value to consumers rather than a sense of identification with a particular online community or brand. Even though they were aware that other consumers exist, they did not need to identify themselves as part of the OBC or as being different from the out-group members.

In addition, some consumers expected to satisfy their enjoyment needs in OBCs. Mathwick (2002) stated that consumers satisfied their enjoyment needs by performing various engagement behaviors such as interaction with other members. In fact, OBCs were providing various features that entertain consumers (See Table 2). In other words, consumers' functional and enjoyment needs, not their desire for social identification, could be the reason for being present and engaged in OBCs. Thus, consumers' cognitive evaluation of potential functional enjoyment outcome was crucial for consumers' engagement behavior.

Secondly, many studies showed consumers' participations in computer-mediated communication such as engagement behavior were the result of cognition (e.g., Compeau &

Table 2. Sample of Features that Encourage Engagement Behavior in OBCs

Benefit Category of Engagement Behavior	Benefit (Brand)	Features that Encourage Engagement Behavior
Functional benefits	Monetary (Coca-Cola)	Ahh Giver – Allows consumers to send a friend personalized message with a 99¢ off coupon.
	Information (Toyota Prius)	Ask an Expert – Gives consumers the opportunity to ask anything and everything about Prius, and have their questions answered by a select group of Prius experts.
Social benefits	Social Tie (Diesel)	Diesel Island – A virtual island where avid Diesel consumers can hang out.
	Social Meaning (Porsche)	Porsche Poll – Ask questions that build the meaning of Porsche owners (e.g., what kind of people drive Porsche?)
	Social Support (Nike Football)	Who is Superfly? – Allows consumers to choose their favorite football players and talk about them
	Social Identification (PlayStation)	SOCOM 4 Teammate Finder – Allows consumers to build a team by asking a series of questions about what they look for in a teammate.
Enjoyment benefits	Humor (Pepsi)	Pepsi Poll – Conducts various humorous polls on its consumers.
	Adventure (Ford Explorer)	Go Do Adventure – asks consumers to suggest how they would use Explorer to create their own unique adventure
	Fun (Chevy Camaro)	What type of Camaro are you? – Allows consumers to choose their Camaro by answering quizzes.
	Excitement (Sony Ericsson)	First2Play- Allows consumers to play games

Higgins, 1995a; Park, 2010). For example, past research reported that one's cognitive assessment of his or her capability (self-efficacy) was a crucial factor in computer-mediated communication (Thong et al., 2002; Venkatesh, 2000; Venkatesh & Davis, 1996; Venkatesh et al., 2003). In a similar vein, Compeau and Higgins (1995a) demonstrated that evaluation of outcome had a positive influence on consumers' computer-related behavior. Social identification approach does not highlight the important cognitive aspect of individuals' group-related behavior. Rather, it tends to weigh individuals behavior primarily based on how individuals view themselves in relation to significant groups they belong to.

Finally, the social identification approach did not take environmental factors into account in explaining consumers' engagement behaviors. Several environmental factors including technological features on the internet were found to affect consumers' computer-mediated communication and behavior (Lee & LaRose, 2011; Maloney-Krichmar & Preece, 2005). For example, Lee and LaRose (2011) conceptualized personalized social cues on the web site interface as important environmental factors to influence consumers' behavior online and demonstrated that these interactive technological features influenced consumers online behavior such as revealing personal information. In a similar vein, Maloney-Krichmar and Preece (2005) reported that consumers in online community were involved in community-related behaviors because of value of information in the community. In this sense, consumers' engagement behaviors in OBCs should be regarded as the ones that are often determined by environmental factors of technological features that OBCs provide for their consumers.

In sum, the social identification approach might not fully explain all aspects of consumers' engagement behaviors in OBCs. Given that consumers' engagement behaviors in OBCs could be determined by several factors of human cognition (e.g., evaluation of functional outcome), environmental influences (e.g., technological features of OBCs) and

behavioral factors (previous OBC behaviors), the current study posited that these factors provided strong self-reactive incentives to guide consumers' OBCs engagement behaviors. Consequently, consumers' engagement behaviors should be regarded as the reciprocal interactions between these cognitive, environmental and behavioral influences.

Consumer-Brand Relationship

One salient research stream in the literature on OBCs was their impact on branding outcomes. By definition, brand communities advocate the brand and often actively discourage members to buy and even try other brands. Therefore, it is reasonable to state that consumers' participation in an OBC leads to the development of their loyalty to the brand and even oppositional loyalty (McAlexander, Kim, & Roberts, 2003; Muñiz & Hamer, 2001; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Muñiz & Schau, 2005). For example, Muñiz and Schau (2005) found that even six years after Apple ended their product, Newton, members of its brand community still recommended the product's use to outsiders.

However, the current study employed the concept of consumer-brand relationship (CBR) rather than brand loyalty because OBCs demonstrated the absolute extent of relatedness between a consumer and a brand (Ouwensloot & Odekerken-Schroder, 2008). Little academic attention was given to CBR in the domain of OBC studies. CBR is characterized in terms of intensity of the depth of the psychological connection that consumers have with the brand and thus CBR focuses upon the ultimate relationship that consumers have with the brand and the extent to which they feel that they are in sync with the brand. This study perceived CBR as a consumer's overall connectedness with brands. When it is positive, it is the ultimate degree of relatedness a brand (or company) can achieve with its consumers and is described by a state of engrossment. In this state, consumers communicate with the brand, and feel related to the brand. CBR is an important research area because it

helps companies obtain and retain new consumers as well as reduce marketing costs (Blackston, 2000; Dowling, 2001; Reichheld, 1996; Winer, 2001).

The web of relationships consumers in OBCs developed with their branded products, other consumers, and firms is complex (McAlexander et al., 2002). If consumers are satisfied with their memberships in OBCs, these relationships are likely to be positive, thus leading to positive and strong CBR. CBR can be influenced by consumers' engagement behavior for several reasons. First, studies showed that CBR is formed based on group-level connections (Swaminathan, Page & Gurhan-Canli, 2007). By its nature, consumers' engagement behavior in OBCs favors group connections because it often involves interactions with other consumers (e.g., knowledge exchange). Consumers' engagement behavior in OBCs is particularly meaningful to CBR as it helps form connection between consumers – consumers and consumers - brands. Second, the key premise of CBR was that it was formed with consumers' behaviors toward brands (Aggarwal, 2004; Fournier, 1998). According to Fournier (1998), CBR was comprised of a series of repeated interactions between consumers and brands. Third, consumers' engagement behaviors influenced their emotional associations with the brand (Doorn et al., 2010; Martesen & Grønholdt, 2004). Fourth, CBR was developed because there was a quite high probability for both relationship partners that their partner performed actions that resulted in positive outcomes for them (Fournier, 1998). The literature showed that consumer's engagement behaviors satisfy consumers various outcome expectations such as functional (e.g., Hagel & Armstrong, 1997; Preece, 2000), social (e.g., Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005) and enjoyment expectations (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004).

The current study proposed two dimensions of CBR in the context of OBCs: functional and social. CBR intrinsically has both a functional and a social nature. The functional component of CBR was associated with the reliability and performance of the

brand as well as its ability to satisfy utilitarian needs (Chang & Chieng, 2006). In other words, the functional dimension refers to the aspect of CBR generated from the utilitarian and pragmatic outcomes of brand usage with regard to physical brand attributes (brand performance), meaning that CBR can result from a cognitive and analytical mechanism based on the evaluation of brand's functional execution; consumers develop positive CBR when the consumption of branded products satisfies their functional needs. A connection or relatedness between the brand and the consumer resulted from the augmentation of satisfying usage experience (Evard & Aurier, 1996). Others suggested that functional usage such as problem solving positively affected consumers' connection with the brand (Lau & Lee, 1999; Mohr & Spekman, 1994).

As for the social dimension of CBR, the relationship between a consumer and a brand could go beyond physical possession of a branded object and its functional performance. The social component of CBR is the consumer's judgment of meaningful social interactions between brand and consumer. Some scholars suggested that brands were often perceived as social entities by consumers because brands had various social meanings (e.g., Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Keller, 1998). A brand's social meaning became of prime importance for consumers as it helped them build and communicate their social identities (Dolich, 1969); they developed a social dimension of CBR by socially categorizing themselves with a brand. For example, using brands perceived as similar to a consumer's self-concept helps that consumer maintain his or her social identity, thus enhancing consumers' relationship with the brand. Fournier (1998) also suggested that positive CBR was developed when consumers feel that a brand is part of themselves, similar to their self-image and psychologically close with them. As a result, whether consumers perceive that social meaning of a brand is similar or dissimilar to their own self-concept is a main element

of CBR. The social dimension of CBR is thus a social interaction between consumers and their perception of a brand's social meaning.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employed Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) as its theoretical framework. SCT is a comprehensive theory that takes into account many constructs. At its core, SCT posits that individuals' behavior is determined by the reciprocity of environmental, individual and behavioral factors. These three factors are continually affecting each other. In this model of reciprocal causality, environmental factors (e.g., socioeconomic status), individual factors (e.g., cognition) and behavioral factors (e.g., past behavior) are all influencing one another in a bi-directional manner (Bandura, 2001).

In SCT, environmental factors function through ones' psychological mechanism to affect behavior (Bandura, 2001). Environmental factors influence behavior mainly through their effect on ones' aspiration, affective state, personal standards and sense of efficacy (Bandura, 1993). In the context of OBCs, environmental factors include technological features, information stored in OBCs and promotional offers such as coupons. For example, Internet technology allows consumers to post messages and upload pictures to OBCs directly from their mobile phones, which can lead to the higher sense of efficacy because those technological features make it much easier for consumers to perform engagement behaviors. Also, other environmental factors in the current context include information and coupons in OBCs, which can lead to the behavioral aspiration or positive outcome expectation. Consumers are involved in engagement behaviors because they expect to gain information and coupons in OBCs (Dholakia & Vianello, 2009; McGershen, 2011). Thus, when OBCs have useful environmental factors for consumers such as information and coupons,

consumers are more likely to expect a higher possibility of gaining information and coupon. This expectation would encourage consumers to perform various engagement behaviors in OBCs. In other words, from the social cognitive perspective, environmental factors such as technological features and information/coupon may enhance individuals' cognition (self-efficacy and outcome expectation).

SCT also suggests that behavior is not simply the result of environmental factors. Although behavior can be environmentally constructed, behavioral factors also influence environmental and individual factors of SCT. For example, one's past behavior influences individual factors such as self-efficacy belief because people judge their abilities based on their own direct experience (Bandura, 1997). SCT claims that, in particular, the success of past behavior enhances one's belief of self-efficacy and thus, fosters the likelihood of behavior. If individuals have experiences of successful OBC participation, they are more likely to have enhanced self-efficacy, which, in turn, leads to engagement behaviors. Further, past behaviors can influence environmental factors because individuals alter their environment based on the result of individuals' past behavior (Bandura, 1993). In other words, SCT posits that how individuals interpret the results of their past behavior affects and alters their environments and the individual factors such as cognition, which, in turn, influence future behaviors.

Individual factors of SCT influence behavioral and environmental factors through human agency. The notion of human agency proposes that humans function as entirely independent agents of their own behaviors (Bandura, 1989), meaning that individuals have capabilities of self-regulation rather than being simply reactive to environmental events. Self-regulation refers to the mechanism in which individuals regulate their own behaviors through the self-observation, self-judgment, self-reaction, self-reflection and self-monitoring. With the self-regulation, individuals maintain a positive sense of self-efficacy and a positive

anticipation about the outcome of their actions (Schunk, 1989; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997). In other words, the self-regulation mechanism influences one's cognitive factors: self-efficacy that one can exercise control over one's behaviors and outcome expectations about the expected costs and benefits for one's behaviors.

Self-efficacy is defined as beliefs about one's ability to exercise control over behaviors (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy beliefs greatly influence how individuals motivate themselves to perform behaviors. People with high confidence in their capabilities approach behaviors rather than avoid these behaviors. Such an efficacious belief nurtures inherent interest and profound engrossment in behaviors. These people often challenge themselves and maintain strong persistency for their goals. They raise and sustain their endeavor in the face of impediment or failure. People with stronger self-efficacy believe that "the higher their behavioral aspirations, the greater their motivational investment in their undertakings, the stronger their staying power in the face of impediments, the more robust their resilience to adversity, and the higher their performance accomplishments" (Bandura, 2001, p. 270). In contrast, people who are unsure about their abilities avoid behaviors. They have low motivation and weak aspiration to the behaviors they choose to perform. When faced with difficult obstacles, they concentrate on their personal deficiencies related to the hurdles and on negative outcomes rather than focus on how to perform successfully. They do not invest efforts and avoid the behavior quickly in the face of hurdles. According to SCT, beliefs about personal efficacy play a pivotal role in behavioral change and comprise the foundation of human motivation and action. Consumers' engagement behavior will also be directly influenced by their efficacy judgment of their capabilities to perform activities in OBCs.

SCT identifies four sources of self-efficacy: enactive attainment, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion and psychological state (Bandura, 1986). Enactive attainment is based on authentic mastery experiences. Successes increase self-efficacy beliefs and

failures lower the beliefs. Vicarious experience refers to observing other similar individuals perform behaviors successfully, which raises the efficacy of observers that they also possess the abilities that will enable them to attain what they look for. Verbal persuasion raises efficacy beliefs by talking individuals into believing they have abilities to perform behaviors. One's physiological state also influences individuals' judgment of their capabilities.

Vicarious learning is particularly relevant in the context of engagement behavior in OBCs. In most cases, consumers who are new to OBCs initially make no overt effort to participate in activities, though they observe engagement behaviors of other consumers (e.g., reading others' comments). This vicarious activity of observing others' participation encourages consumers to perform engagement behaviors in OBCs because seeing others' participation without negative outcome can induce expectations that they can perform the behaviors if they invest efforts. They encourage themselves that if others can perform the behavior, they are also able to achieve the same level of performance. As a result, the self-efficacy beliefs for engagement behavior are generated by observing others' OBCs participation.

Along with self-efficacy, the other important cognitive factor in SCT is outcome expectations of behavior (LaRose & Eastin, 2004). Outcome expectations are defined as individuals' "beliefs about the outcomes of prospective future behavior . . . (that) are predicated upon comparisons between incentives expected and incentives attained in the past" (LaRose, Mastro, & Eastin, 2001, p. 399). The positive and negative expectation can be perceived as incentives and disincentives, which regulate individuals' behavior and action (Bandura, 1997). Unless people perceive that the behaviors can generate preferable outcomes, they are not likely to perform the behavior in the face of difficulties. According to SCT, outcome expectations encompass both positive and negative outcomes of the behavior such as the losses and benefits associated with the behavior.

Positive outcome expectations offer incentives for performing behavior, whereas negative outcome expectations provide disincentives (Bandura, 1986). In the proposed model of this study, expected outcomes are organized around two incentives and one disincentive for consumers' engagement behavior. Positive expectations include social and functional outcome incentives. Negative expectations include embarrassment outcome disincentives. For example, engagement behavior is partly promoted by the social outcomes engagement behaviors evoke because engagement behavior in OBCs produces social approval (Oreg & Nov, 2008). In this study, SCT implies that consumers' engagement behaviors will be influenced by a set of individual factors (cognition: self-efficacy and outcome expectations). In other words, the current study proposes that consumers' behavioral motivation for engagement behavior is a socio-cognitive mechanism that involves major cognitive factors such as self-efficacy and outcome expectation.

This study focused on cognitive factors for several reasons. First, SCT is a broad theory that is designed to explain that one's behavior is complicated and is affected by many determinants. For this reason, some criticized that SCT was too comprehensive in which there were so many constructs and variables in its formulation (e.g., Baranowski, Perry & Parcel, 2002), which made it impossible to incorporate all the constructs in one study. Baranowski, Perry and Parcel (2002) suggested that researchers should specify the scope of SCT which was to be empirically tested. Thus, this study limited its scope to cognitive factors of SCT.

Secondly, the effect of environmental and behavioral factors on behavior operates through cognition (Bandura, 1993; 2001). As mentioned earlier, Bandura (1993) stated that environmental factors influenced one's behavior through his or her cognitive factors such as self-efficacy and outcome expectation. When environmental factors such as technological features provide convenient or easy platforms to perform engagement behavior, it is likely to

lead to the one's enhanced self-efficacy, which, in turn, increases the likelihood of behavior. In a similar vein, behavioral factors such as success of past engagement behavior in OBCs are likely to lead to enhanced self-efficacy. In fact, Bandura (1994) emphasized the role of cognition in explaining human behavior in the framework of SCT. According to Bandura (1994), among all the factors in SCT that influence human behaviors, cognition stands at the very center of SCT. Bandura's central argument (1997) about the cognition is that individuals' behavior is dependent on their perceived capability and outcome of behaviors. For this reason, the current study postulates that consumers' engagement behaviors are often best predicted by cognitive evaluation of self-efficacy and outcome expectations.

Lastly, previous literature overlooked the cognitive mechanism for engagement behavior. Consumers cognitively evaluate potential benefits and risks of their engagement behavior. Consumers participated in various online activities because they believed that the OBCs' value was consistent with benefits they seek (Kim, 2000). In other words, consumers cognitively assess the accordance between their needs (potential benefits) and what the OBC offers. This accordance provides stronger motivation to participate in OBCs.

In sum, cognition (self-efficacy and outcome expectation) is the very core of SCT, which is either directly or indirectly (by mediating the effects of environmental and behavioral factors) influence behavior. Further, the cognitive mechanism for consumers' engagement behaviors remained unexplored. Thus, the current study focus on cognitive factors of SCT.

A Social Cognitive Perspective on Engagement Behavior

Some researchers paid attention to engagement behavior in online communities to encourage lurkers to perform activities needed for the community. The bulk of this research suggested that individuals decided whether or not to perform engagement behavior based on

an assessment of the outcomes associated with the behavior, specially the cost and benefits (e.g., Chiu, Hsu, & Wang, 2006; Hsu, Ju, Yen, & Chang, 2007; Shiue, Chiu & Chang, 2010). Lopez-Nicolas and Molina-Castillo (2008) showed that the decision of whether or not to perform engagement behaviors largely depended on a cognitive assessment of the benefits and the risks of the behavior. In this cognitive assessment mechanism, when consumers perceive that the benefit outweighs the risk or cost, they participate in more engagement behaviors. Thus, investigating the cognitive mechanism of consumers' evaluation on perceived benefits and risks of engagement behaviors is critical to understanding the engagement behaviors in OBCs.

Studies (Dholakia & Vianello, 2009; McGershen, 2011; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004) found that the main reason consumers participate in OBCs was to receive functional benefits (e.g., receiving discount information), social benefits (e.g., receiving social support) and enjoyment benefits from engagement behaviors. In other words, consumers obtained these benefits from participating in various activities in OBCs (Trusov et al., 2009). However, consumers are likely to perceive negative outcomes as well. For example, consumers sometimes offered personal information about themselves when they participated in online communities (Rowley, 2002). This behavior involves risk or negative outcomes, since any information about a consumer generates some degree of concern. In this sense, perceived negative outcomes refers to “the cost of what would be lost if the consequences of a behavior were unfavorable, combined with an individual’s subjective feeling of certainty that the consequences will be unfavorable” (Cox, 1967, p. 37). Consumers perceived negative outcomes in their engagement behaviors when the circumstances of engagement behavior created safety loss or psychological loss (Cunningham, 1967). For example, if consumers in OBCs were to publish sensitive information that was obtained during interactions with other consumers, this would lead to embarrassment if an associated consumer's identity were

discerned. Consumers looked certain risks as being uncontrollable and thus refrained from participating in online community activities and became lurkers instead (Whitehead & Simon, 2001). The current study posits that considering risks may be of importance in explaining the mechanism of consumers' engagement behavior in OBCs.

In the proposed relationship, it is expected that engagement behavior in OBCs is a function of consumers' cognitive evaluation of self-efficacy and the positive and negative outcome expectations associated with engagement behavior.

CHAPTER 4

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

As stated previously, this study focused on the cognitive aspect of SCT. SCT conceives of individuals' perceived capability to perform a behavior (self-efficacy) and estimation of a given action lead to a certain outcome (outcome expectation) as crucial cognitive predictors for behaviors (Bandura, 1977). Both self-efficacy and outcome expectation were demonstrated to predict individuals' computer-mediated communication and related-behavior (Hsu & Chiu, 2004; LaRose, Mastro & Eastin, 2001; Lee & LaRose, 2011). In the current context, self-efficacy as a cognitive self-evaluation of their own ability and outcome expectation as cognitive evaluation of potential outcomes of future behavior, affect consumers' decision to undertake engagement behaviors.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is defined as the evaluation of one's ability to exert personal control in behavior change and perceived as an integral factor influencing how likely an individual is involved in a behavior (Bandura, 1991). According to SCT, individuals are more likely to initiate behaviors when their self-efficacy is high (Bandura, 1991) so individuals who believe they have the capability to perform the behavior are more likely to do so. Bandura's (1997) key statement about the role of self-efficacy in individual's behavior is that "people's level of motivation, affective states, and actions are based more on what they believe than on what is objectively true" (p. 2). For this reason, whether people perform a behavior can often be

better predicted by the evaluative beliefs they have about their abilities than by what they are actually able of achieving.

Self-efficacy was used to successfully predict individuals' behavior in computer-mediated environments such as Internet usage (Eastin & LaRose, 2000; LaRose, Mastro, & Eastin, 2001), online shopping (Hsu & Chiu, 2004), online education (DeTure, 2004), and downloading behavior (LaRose & Kim, 2007). Pertinent to the current study, the individual's judgment of his or her ability (self-efficacy) to contribute to an organization (in this case, engagement) has a positive influence on engagement behavior such as knowledge sharing (Kankanhalli et al., 2005).

In light of the studies cited above, self-efficacy should be considered a critical determinant for consumers' engagement behavior such as information and experience sharing. Thus, when individuals are confident about their capability to participate in engagement behaviors in OBCs, they are more likely to be motivated to perform these behaviors than those with low levels of self-efficacy. Based on SCT and the findings in previous literature, the current study predicts a positive relationship between self-efficacy and engagement behavior.

H1: Consumer's self-efficacy will be positively related to engagement behavior.

Bandura (2004) argued that even though other factors in SCT played roles as guides and motivators for performing a behavior, they were often based on the essential belief that one had the ability to generate preferable changes by one's behaviors (self-efficacy). In other words, the effects of outcome expectations on behavior are also governed by self-efficacy. For example, even if performing a behavior guaranteed valued beneficial outcomes, individuals were not engaged in the behavior because they were not sure whether they had

what it took to succeed. Therefore, in the current context, self-efficacy will influence outcome expectations.

Based on previous research, the current study proposes three positive outcomes and one negative outcome associated with consumers' engagement behavior in OBCs: social, functional and enjoyment outcomes. Many researchers explored various outcomes that engagement behaviors engendered. Examples included sharing enjoyment (Kardaras, Karakostas, & Papathanassiou, 2003), gaining a sense of helpfulness to others (Preece, Nonnecke, & Andrews, 2004), seeking/providing advice (Wachter, Gupta, & Quaddus, 2000), satisfying other members' needs (Wasko & Faraj, 2000), finding friends/peers (Kardaras, Karakostas, & Papathanassiou, 2003), enforcing service excellence (Preece, Nonnecke, & Andrews, 2004), and product suggestions/evaluations (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004). Among various outcomes, functional, social and enjoyment motivations received more attention in the literature. In fact, Charney and Greenberg (2001) also proposed three outcome expectations for computer-mediated communication: social, enjoyment and functional (in their term, information) outcome expectations.

Also, negative outcomes such as embarrassment are also associated with engagement behavior in OBCs. When consumers performed engagement behaviors, they were often aware of the risk of censure or embarrassment by other consumers, and their active participation in OBCs led to increased concern about it (Kozinets, 2002).

Previous research on computer-mediated communication confirmed that if individuals believed they were able to perform a behavior in the given situation (e.g., using an Internet and computer technology), they were apt to perceive positive outcomes than those who were not sure about their abilities (e.g., Compeau & Higgins, 1995a). Consumers who are confident about executing engagement behaviors perceive positive consequences of engagement behavior. In other words, strong self-efficacy of consumers should be positively

related to positive outcome expectations and negatively related to negative outcome expectations. Therefore, following hypotheses are constructed.

H2: Consumers' self-efficacy will be positively related to their positive expectations of social outcome.

H3: Consumers' self-efficacy will be positively related to their positive expectations of functional outcome.

H4: Consumers' self-efficacy will be positively related to their positive expectations of enjoyment outcome.

H5: Consumers' self-efficacy will be negatively related to their negative expectations of embarrassment outcome.

Outcome expectation

In SCT, outcome expectation refers to an estimate of likely consequences that a certain behavior will lead to a certain outcome. According to Bandura (1977), an individual chose to perform a behavior in a way because they expected the result of that chosen behavior is desirable. Outcome expectation is another way to regulate human motivation and behavior; positive outcome expectations promote future behavior, while negative outcome expectations discourage future behavior. In the literature on marketing communication, the person's intention to engage in consumer behavior such as searching for information in a brand community increased with the perceived benefits (Dowling & Staelin, 1994). Further, Nambisan and Baron (2007) reported that consumers' participation in OBCs was triggered mainly by a belief or expectation in the benefits of such activities. The current study specifically proposes that engagement behavior entails functional, social and enjoyment outcomes for consumers.

First, engagement behaviors generate functional outcomes. Unlike traditional

marketing tools, OBCs allowed consumers to access, gain, and provide novel information to each consumer. They essentially represented a place where individuals with an interest in a product, brand, or company came together to share information such as purchase advice, complaints or compliments about a product (Cothrel, 2000; Hoffman & Novak, 1996; Kozinets, 1999). The community may also serve as an arena for sharing information about the product usage, maintenance and repair. In a survey on Internet usage conducted by the National Internet Development Agency of Korea (2008) on Internet usage, more than 50% of respondents obtained information about products that they planned to purchase from online communities (such as product reviews, recommendations, and comments).

Functional outcome expectations in the current context are also closely related with promotional offers such as coupon in OBCs. Promotional offer was a widespread common way to attract new consumers in OBCs. Promotional offers in OBCs often required consumers' engagement behaviors because they asked consumers to forward and share with their personal networks (Ryu & Feick, 2007). In sum, consumers have functional needs for OBCs such as information and promotional coupons. These needs were met when community members in OBCs perform engagement behaviors to receive promotional offers and share or exchange information, experiences, and other resources that are aggregated (Hagel & Armstrong, 1997; Preece, 2000), meaning that consumers in OBCs perceived positive functional outcome when they performed engagement behaviors.

Engagement behavior also has social outcomes. Previous studies showed that OBCs were a form of social structure (e.g., McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002). Consumers develop social relationships by interacting with each other through various engagement behaviors. These behaviors were found to lead to various social outcomes such as social acceptance, support, distinctiveness, meaning, spirituality, interpersonal ties and social identity (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005; Arnould & Price, 1993; Cummings,

Sproull, & Kiesler, 2002; McKenna & Bargh, 1998; Muniz & Schau, 2005; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). These findings indicate that members in OBCs are likely to perceive positive social outcomes when participating in OBCs.

Engagement behavior also has the potential for an enjoyment outcome. Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) reported that consumers' engagement in OBCs was driven by enjoyment. People who feel immediate pleasure or joy from a behavior and perceive the behavior as intrinsically enjoyable are likely to engage themselves more extensively in the behavior (Davis, 1992). OBCs provide consumers the opportunity for entertainment. It is easily conceivable that consumers in OBCs conduct engagement behaviors with enjoyment orientations through enjoying sharing their brand or product experiences with and telling their stories to other consumers in OBCs. Enjoying the act of sharing in an online community was shown to be a prominent reason for contributing to OBCs (Lakhani & Wolf, 2005). Thus, consumers who perceive activities in OBCs enjoyable are more likely to participate in engagement behaviors.

Engagement behaviors in OBCs can also lead to negative outcomes such as embarrassment. Activities in OBCs were framed by implicit and explicit norms (Algesheimer et al., 2005) such as evaluation of shared information by a peer-review mechanism (Raymond, 1999). Consumers who join an OBC should be well-aware of norms to prevent any embarrassment or censure from other consumers and be knowledgeable about the history of the OBC to avoid putting up already-posted and answered issues. Uninformed consumers in OBCs risk censure by other consumers because they do not know this history. Individuals might also be hesitant to participate in online discussions because they worried about others' criticism and censure when the information and knowledge they posted was not correct (Kozinets, 2002).

H6: Consumer's positive expectation of functional outcome will be positively related to engagement behavior.

H7: Consumer's positive expectation of social outcome will be positively related to engagement behavior.

H8: Consumer's positive expectation of enjoyment outcome will be positively related to engagement behavior.

H9: Consumer's negative expectation of embarrassment outcome will be negatively related to engagement behavior.

Consumer-brand relationship

Consumer-brand relationship should be considered as an important outcome of OBCs participation. Relationship is built when people perceive that they benefit from their relationship partners, involving a thorough assessment of cost and benefit. Therefore, when consumers expect that engagement behaviors meet their social, functional and enjoyment needs, they are likely to form a relationship. In fact, the perception of benefits was a prerequisite for the advancement of a relationship between consumers and brands (Mummalaneni, 1987). As stated earlier, participations in OBCs satisfied consumers' various needs and outcome expectations (Fournier, 2009; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004). These findings indicate that OBCs have a great potential for marketers or companies to develop relationship with consumers. Therefore, it is reasonable and necessary to investigate the effect of consumers' outcome expectation and engagement behavior on CBR.

Consumers' positive outcome expectations positively influence CBR for several reasons. First, the greater consumers' expectations for positive outcomes were, the greater their propensity to be in a relationship with the brand (Nielsen, 1998). In other words, the advancement of a relationship was heavily dependent on the amount and nature of rewards participants derive from the relationship (Altman & Taylor, 1973).

Second, studies showed that positive outcome expectations led to favorable branding outcome (Ha, 2004; Meenaghan, 2001). Meenaghan (2001) showed that, in the context of sponsorship, positive outcome expectation such as perceived benefit resulted in higher levels of brand attachment. In the online setting, Ha (2004) found that positive outcome expectation was an antecedent of consumers' brand commitment. In a similar vein, Aaker (1996) argued that positive outcome expectation such as perceived quality was a basic component to form brand equity.

Third, when it is positive, outcome expectations are likely to generate positive feeling. Outcome expectations are what consumers believe the engagement behavior can bring them. In other words, outcome expectations are what consumers seek when they are engaged in behaviors. Given that engagement behavior in OBCs by its very nature involves brands in the interaction between the consumer and the brand, positive outcome expectations of engagement behavior are likely to lead to positive feeling about the brand. Consumers' positive outcome expectation facilitated positive feeling toward the OBC and the brand around which the OBCs was created, which in turn led to certain states that consumers hoped to achieve with their brand (Mowen, 1988) such as relationship between the consumer and the brand (Berry, 1995; Ha, 2002; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). In this regard, positive outcome expectation of engagement behavior has greater potential to develop CBR between brand and consumer. This study proposes functional and social dimensions of CBR. Thus, the present study explores whether consumers' positive functional outcome expectation results in the development of functional dimension of CBR and social outcome expectations result in social dimension of CBR. Thus, the following hypotheses are formally proposed.

H10: Consumers' positive expectations of functional outcome will be positively related to the functional dimension of CBR.

H11: Consumers' positive expectations of social outcome will be positively related to the social dimension of CBR.

The current study also explores the effect of consumers' engagement behavior on CBR for several reasons. First, consumers' engagement behavior is often based on stable one-to-one connections (e.g., consumer-consumer). Continued interpersonal interactions around a brand generated common interest in a brand (McAlexander et al., 2002), which was likely to lead to development of shared feeling toward a brand. Consumers' feelings toward a brand can be a starting point of relationship development with a brand.

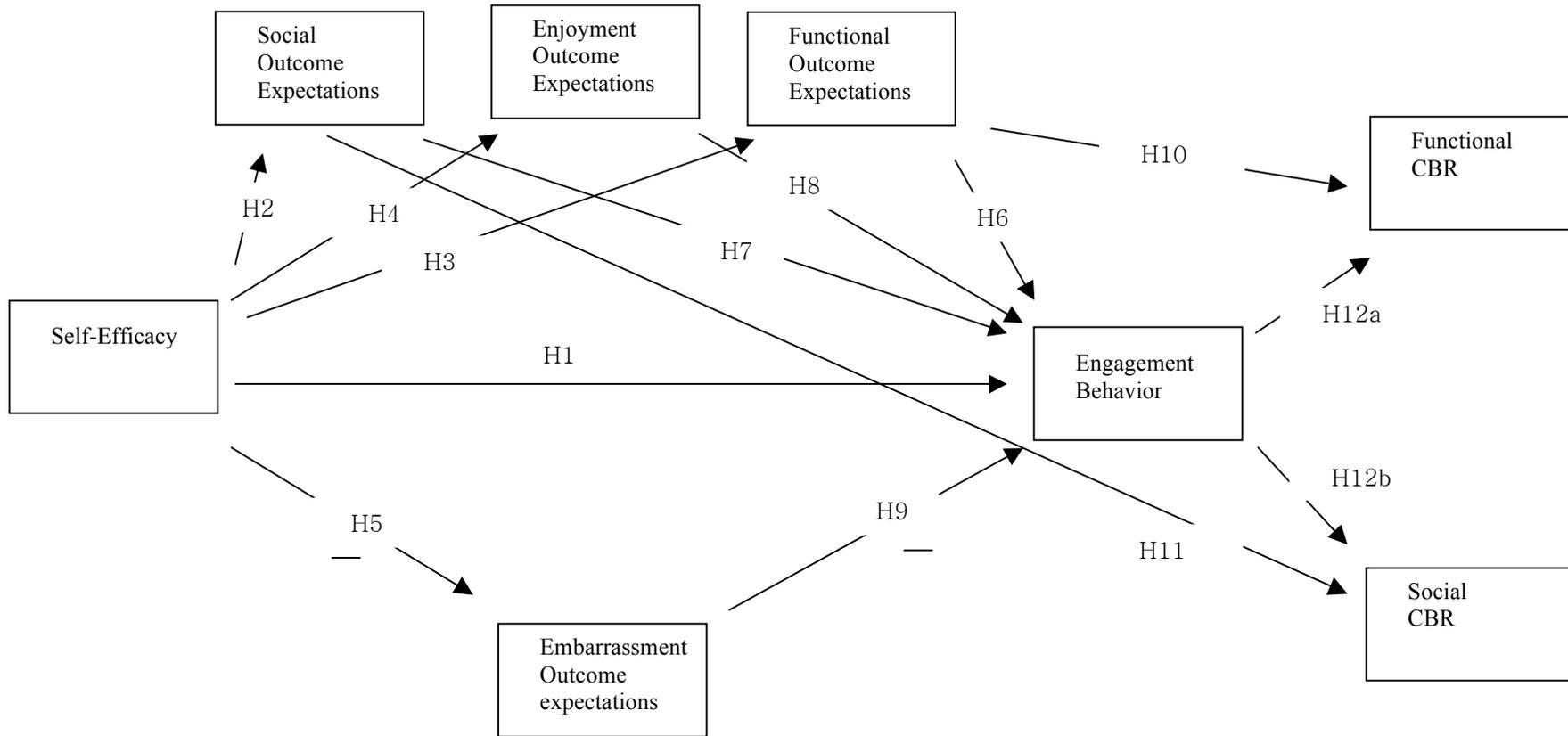
Second, engagement behavior is a form of brand-related experience. Consumers' engagement behavior facilitated experiences that reinforced and strengthened the emotional and psychological involvement a consumer had in a brand (Schau, Muñiz, & Arnould, 2009; Sedley, 2006). Engagement behaviors that generated consumers' positive feeling, bond, or attachment with a brand led to positive CBR because studies showed that CBR resulted from consumers' brand-related experience (Evard & Aurier, 1996; Fournier, 1998; Lau & Lee, 1999; Schmitt, 1999).

Engagement behavior encompasses both social and functional experiential breadth. For example, at the most basic level, engagement behaviors provide an experiential situation for functional usage of the brand by exchanging usage information. In addition, brands or companies sponsor a wide range of online social events in conjunction with their OBCs. Consumers can derive positive social outcomes by participating in such events. For instance, Oliver (1999) documented the case of Harley Davidson motorcycle owners who reinforced their social identity by participating in OBCs. Engagement behavior as brand-related experience led to the development of social and functional dimensions of the relationship between the brand and its consumers (Narayan, 2007; Rieger & Kamins, 2006). In sum,

because engagement behaviors are both functional and social brand-related experiences, consumers are likely to develop a deeper relationship with the brand as they perform engagement behaviors in OBCs. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H12: Consumers' engagement behaviors will be positively related to both (a) functional and (b) social dimensions of the consumer-brand relationship

Figure 1. Proposed Model of Engagement Behavior in OBCs



CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of present study is to identify the mechanism of consumers' engagement behavior in OBCs by evaluating consumers' self-efficacy and outcome expectations. To answer the hypotheses, a survey was utilized to collect data from diverse consumers of actual OBCs. Survey research involves the use of questionnaires to collect data about individuals and their attitudes, thoughts and behaviors. Surveys are useful when scholars attempt to collect data on phenomena that cannot be directly observed, and they are used extensively in marketing communication research to assess attitude, behaviors and characteristics of a wide range of consumers, making this method the most appropriate one for this study.

Pretest

A pretest was conducted with individuals who have OBC experience to see how long it takes to complete the survey and to check for ambiguities in questioning, word choice, and other issues that may cause misunderstanding or otherwise deter respondents from completing the survey. The pretest was a pivotal part of this study because data was collected solely through the questionnaire.

Among OBCs of the top 20 companies (in terms of advertising spending), one was chosen to recruit participants for the pretest. The pretest was administered to 22 participants. After completing the survey, participants were asked to describe any problems they encountered. The researcher also looked for questions that many people did not answer because this might show that the questions were badly written, and then modified the survey

items to increase the clarity of the meaning of each item was clear and that the survey was easy for participants to understand and answer. Adjustments in wording were made based on the results of the pretest. Because participants were consumers in Korea, the questionnaire was presented in Korean. Most of changes were made in the process of translation from English to Korean. Grammar and syntax vary enormously between Korean and English, which posed problems in the pretest. For the pretest, items were translated literally but the translations were confusing and did not express their original meaning properly. For example, originally, respondents were asked how confident they are to perform engagement behaviors for self-efficacy items. However, the items sound unnatural in the Korean language. Therefore, the items were revised to read “I am confident” format.

Procedure

To identify potential participants, a list of Korean companies was compiled based on advertising spending in 2011 (KOBACO, 2012). Korea was chosen because it had the highest Internet penetration rate (95%), with 79.7% of households boasting a broadband Internet connection, compared to only 61.7% of U.S. households (NIDA, 2009). The broad availability and usage of Internet suggests that consumers in Korea have a higher chance to be a member of an OBC than people in any other country. In addition, online community participation levels in Korea are also very high; about half of Internet users are members in online community (50.2%), and 68.4% of those visit their community or communities more than once a week (NIDA, 2008). The percentage of online community users increased from 39.9% in 2007 to 50.2% in 2008, and the use of online communities is projected to continue to increase (NIDA, 2008).

For its sampling frame, the current study identified 20 companies as its sampling frame based on their advertising spending (KOBACO, 2011), indicating that the current study

employs convenience sampling rather than representative random sampling. The author identified the OBCs of the target companies on the most popular portal websites in Korea and contacted moderators of each OBC for permission to do a survey among their members; permission was given by four companies. Two of them are automotive companies and two are in the electronics industry. All of those four brands have a significant market share (at least 10%) in terms of sales. They are all significant brands in their market and have more than 30 years history in Korea market. Three of them are domestic Korean companies. One of them is a foreign company. All of them have international presence and are perceived as major players in international market. They are all medium-priced, functional brands and targeted to general mass consumers in their market positioning. As a part of the agreement, no identification of the brand names would be made in the current study or future publication.

Even though representative sampling is often utilized for research using surveys, this convenience sampling method was more appropriate for several reasons. First, the brands in this study are well-known in Korea. Consumers are likely to know the brands and the brands are likely to be highly relevant to many consumers, leading them to be active participants in their OBCs. Second, it is believed that companies with high advertising spending are likely to put more effort into their marketing communication and have OBCs that are more popular and have more members than other companies that spend less. Third, the current study aims to examine actual OBC users, so representative random sampling is simply not feasible.

A web-based online survey was used to collect data to test the model. The final survey instrument was uploaded to the online survey website SurveyMonkey.com, which generates a web link directing participants to the questionnaire section and allow users to click through the survey. SurveyMonkey.com has a feature that forbids repeated submissions from a single IP address to minimize the possibility of a single respondent answering multiple times.

The rationale for using an online survey as the primary research method is the inherent advantages of the method. Research using the Internet data collection methods has increased enormously since the early 2000s. The trend was generated by a growing number of Internet users, which began to represent the general population in many countries, including the U.S., Western Europe, and several northeastern Asian countries, along with the development of various computer-assisted data collection techniques.

Computerized online surveys offer several attractive questionnaire features traditional survey processes do not have. One of the most prominent is the ability to conduct large-scale data collection. By reducing response time and cost, online surveys greatly increase respondents' freedom and flexibility in the survey-taking process. Other advantages associated with online surveys include the capability to randomize response choices, check for response consistency, and incorporate complex skip patterns. The technological support provided for online surveys has largely reduced the response bias stemming from the way response categories are ordered and improved the accuracy of the data collected. Furthermore, online surveys can be taken from any computer, allowing for more privacy than other methods, such as telephone and paper questionnaires.

Although some sensitive issues may prevent respondents from completing the surveys, the advantages of online surveys still make data collection easy. Therefore, it is believed that online survey is the most appropriate method for this study. Online survey is reasonable given that the general mode of interaction and communication within OBCs is online in nature. It also offers access to a real-world population that might otherwise be difficult to contact.

To solicit participants for the study, a pre-notification e-mail was sent. Using this approach is likely to keep some potential participants from deleting the survey e-mail message when it is sent, and it will reinforce the fact that they are not being "spammed."

Cleary (2007) found that the participants in her study seemed to respond better after she explained that only a selected few were chosen for her study. Thus, the pre-notification email explained that the current study is conducted with a few selected individuals.

Six days after the pre-notification email was sent, the official e-mail invitation with the same information was sent to the e-mail addresses obtained from the sampling frame. The official e-mail invitation included a link generated by the SurveyMonkey.com to the survey's consent to participate page and the actual survey. Three reminder messages were sent, for a total of five contacts (prenotification, e-mail invitation, and three reminders).

Participants

For this study, a total of 24,257 invitations were sent to the sample of members of the four OBCs. 566 complete responses (Response Rate: 2.3%) were collected among four OBCs (OBC 1: 254, OBC 2: 103, OBC 3: 123, OBC 4: 86) with 299 male and 267 female participants, indicating the female/male ratio of 1.11. The female/male ratio in general population of South Korea was 1.07 (http://www.indexmundi.com/south_korea/), making the rate in the current study higher in the general population. The fact that two (OBC 2 and 3) of the four OBCs were automotive products was believed to cause the higher female/male ratio. Members in automotive OBCs were male-dominant, which was consistent with the current sample. Participants from OBC 1 consist of 131 males and 123 females with 55 males and 48 for OBC 2, 69 males and 54 females for OBC 3 and 42 males and 44 females for OBC 4.

In terms of age, 181 participants (32%) fell into the 20-29 age block; 191 participants (34%) into the 30-39 block; 143 participants (25%) into the 40-49 block and 51 participants (9%) into the 50-55 block.

It was noteworthy that the education level of participants showed a similar pattern to the general population in South Korea. According to OECD (www.oecd.org/edu/eag2011),

39% of Koreans received higher education including undergraduate and postgraduate education. Among the 566 participants in this study, 238 (42%) received higher education, 288 (51%) participants had a high school education, 35 participants had a middle school education and 4 participants had an elementary school education. In terms of education level, chi-square test showed non-significant difference between the sample and general population ($\chi^2 = 1.932, df = 3, p > .05$).

These demographic characteristics were not different from the demographics of the target population in the study so it was reasonable to state that the sample was representative of the population, ensuring the external validity.

Operationalization

The main variables used in the survey were as follows: (1) self-efficacy, (2) positive expectations of social outcome, (3) positive expectations of functional outcome, (4) positive expectations of enjoyment outcome, (5) negative outcome expectations of embarrassment, (6) engagement behavior, (7) social dimension of consumer-brand relationship, (8) functional dimension of consumer-brand relationship. The variables that were measured by the questionnaire were described below.

Self-efficacy Six items measured consumers' self-efficacy for engagement behaviors in OBCs. The items were ranked on a 7-point Likert-type ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7= Strongly Agree. Specifically, the six items asked the participants to indicate their perceived abilities to engage in OBCs using items such as (1) I am confident that I have the ability to post relevant information on the OBC of Brand X, (2) I am confident that I have the ability to give answers to questions or inquiries from others, (3) I am confident that I have the ability to provide knowledge that other consumers consider valuable, (4) I am confident that I have the

ability to recommend the OBC of Brand X to anyone who seeks advice about the brand, (5) I am confident that I have the ability to contribute to the goals of the OBC of Brand X, and (6) I am confident that I have the ability to provide experiences for others in OBC of Brand X. (modified from Hsu, Ju, Yen, & Chang, 2007). Scores of items were added for data analysis. Thus, the score ranged from 6 to 42.

Expectation of Social Outcome Seven 7-point Likert-type items (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree) measured positive outcome expectations of social needs. The items asked the participants to respond to how likely or unlikely performing engagement behaviors in OBCs were to help them to 1) get support from others, 2) find something to talk about, 3) feel like I belong to a group, 4) maintain a relationship I value, 5) find others who respect my views, 6) find people like me and 7) provide help to others. The seven items were combined to form the scale for positive expectation of social outcome (LaRose & Eastin, 2004). Scores of items were added for data analysis. Thus, the score ranged from 7 to 49.

Expectation of Functional Outcome Seven 7-point Likert-type items (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree) measured positive outcome expectations of functional needs. The items asked the participants to respond to how likely or unlikely performing various activities in OBCs was to help them 1) find a wealth of information, 2) obtain information that I can't find elsewhere, 3) get immediate knowledge of brand-sponsored events, 4) get products for free, 5) find bargains on products and services, 6) save shopping time and 7) get free information that would otherwise cost me money. The seven items were combined to form the scale for positive outcome expectations of functional outcome (LaRose & Eastin, 2004). Scores of items were added for data analysis. Thus, the score ranged from 7 to 49.

Expectation of Enjoyment Outcome Four 7-point Likert-type items (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree) measured positive outcome expectations of enjoyment. The items asked the participants to respond to how likely or unlikely performing various activities in OBCs was to help them 1) cheer themselves up, 2) feel entertained, 3) relieve boredom, and 4) find a way to pass the time. The four items were combined to form the scale for positive expectations of enjoyment outcome (LaRose & Eastin, 2004). Scores of items were added for data analysis. Thus, the score ranged from 4 to 28.

Negative Expectations of Embarrassment Outcome Participants were asked to rate the perceived likelihood of the negative outcome of embarrassment by indicating the level of embarrassment they expected from their engagement behaviors on a three-item, 7-point embarrassment scale drawn from previous research (Dahl, Manchanda, & Argo, 2001). The items were anchored using the following labels: not embarrassed at all/very embarrassed, not uncomfortable at all/ very uncomfortable, and not awkward at all/very awkward. Scores of items were added for data analysis. Thus, the score ranged from 3 to 21.

Engagement behavior Community engagement behavior refers to the degree that members are actually involved in helping other members, participating in activities, and otherwise acting volitionally in ways that the community endorses and that enhance its value for themselves and others. Because the current study used actual members of OBCs as its subjects, it asked about actual engagement behaviors rather than their intention. Items included: (1) On a typical day, about how much time do you spend on OBC of Brand X you have joined?, (2) In a typical week, how much time do you spend reading the comments of other consumers in OBC of Brand X you have joined?, and (3) In a typical week, how much

time do you spend posting messages in OBC of Brand X you have joined? (modified from Leung, 2009; Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009).

Functional dimension of Consumer-Brand Relationship Five items based on an instrument created by Chang and Chieng (2006) were employed. These items were measured on a 7-point scale ranging from 1= Strongly Disagree to 7= Strongly Agree. The items were as follows: (1) Brand X provides functions that I ask for, (2) Brand X's product is a good value for the money, (3) Brand X is reliable, (4) I value the functional benefits of Brand X, and (5) Brand X satisfies my needs to use (product category). Scores of items were added for data analysis. Thus, the score ranged from 5 to 35.

Social dimension of Consumer-Brand Relationship These items were also based on the instrument by Chang and Chieng (2006) and were measured on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree. The items were as follows: (1) Brand X plays an important role in my life, (2) Brand X reminds me of who I am, (3) Brand X and I have a lot in common, and (4) I have a lot of faith in my future with Brand X. Scores of items were added for data analysis. Thus, the score ranged from 4 to 28.

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS

Principal component factor analysis was used to examine the internal statistical structure of the variables. The factor matrix is shown in Table 3. The factor loadings indicated that items 1 through 7 unambiguously loaded on the first factor. Each of these items addressed the social outcome expectation. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) for the seven-item scale was .861.

The second factor described in Table 3 consisted primarily of items 8 through 13 which were concerned with the consumers' self-efficacy. The reliability coefficient for these items was .853.

The factor loadings indicate that items 14 through 20 tended to load unambiguously on Factor III, while items 21 thru 25 load on Factor IV. Items 14 through 20 appeared to be a measure of functional outcome expectation and reliability coefficient (alpha) of .770. Factor IV addressed the functional aspect of CBR; its Cronbach's alpha was .805.

The next factor described in Table 3 consisted of items of 26, 27, 28 and 29. These items clearly indicated enjoyment outcome expectation. The reliability coefficient (alpha) for the four-item enjoyment outcome expectation scale was .768. Most of the variance in Factor VI was accounted for by items 30 through 33 which were interpreted as a social aspect of CBR. Items 34, 35, and 36 load on Factor VII and appeared to be embarrassment outcome expectancy. Reliability analyses indicated that the alpha coefficient was .757 for the social aspect of the CBR scale computed from items 30 through 33 and .811 for embarrassment outcome expectation computed from items 34, 35 and 36.

Table 3. Factor Analysis Results for Items Related to the Proposed Model

	Rotated Component Matrix						
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Performing activities in OBCs are to help me to	.779						
1) get support from others							
2) maintain a relationship I value	.744						
3) find something to talk about	.741						
4) find people like me	.738						
5) feel like I belong to a group	.709						
6) provide help to others	.709						
7) find others who respect my views	.684						
8) I am confident that I have the ability to recommend OBC of Brand X to anyone who seeks advice about the brand		.819					
9) I am confident that I have the ability to provide knowledge that other consumers consider valuable		.808					
10) I am confident that I have the ability to give answers to questions or inquiries from others		.765					
11) I am confident that I have the ability to contribute the goals of OBC of Brand X		.758					
12) I am confident that I have the ability to provide experiences for others in OBC of Brand X		.663					
13) I am confident that I have the ability to post relevant information on OBC of Brand X		.660					
Performing activities in OBCs are to help me to			.677				
14) save shopping time							
15) find bargains on products and services			.673				
16) get immediate knowledge of brand-sponsored events			.662				

17) get products for free	.654	
18) find a wealth of information	.640	
19) obtain information that I can't find elsewhere	.631	
20) get free information that would otherwise cost me money	.590	
21) Brand X's product is good value for the money	.776	
22) Brand X is reliable	.748	
23) I value the functional benefits of Brand X	.732	
24) Brand X satisfies my needs to use (product category)	.693	
25) Brand X provides functions that I ask for	.679	
Performing activities in OBCs are to help me to	.830	
26) relieve boredom		
27) feel entertained	.801	
28) cheer myself up	.748	
29) find a way to pass the time	.685	
30) Brand X and I have a lot in common	.759	
31) Brand X plays an important role in my life	.737	
32) Brand X reminds me of who I am	.733	
33) I have a lot of faith in my future with Brand X	.633	
34) not uncomfortable at all/very uncomfortable		.864
35) not awkward at all/very awkward		.849
36) not embarrassed at all/very embarrassed		.807

Table 4. Pearson Correlation of the Variable Related to Engagement Behavior

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Mean	SD
1. Engagement Behavior I	1.00										.87	.29
2. Engagement Behavior II	.427**	1.00									.81	.33
3. Engagement Behavior III	.004	-.046	1.00								.83	.34
4. Self-Efficacy	.280**	.216**	.270**	1.00							19.81	5.71
5. Social Outcome Expectation	.109*	.096*	.089*	.268**	1.00						24.90	6.46
6. Functional Outcome Expectation	.169**	.138**	.092*	.144**	-.002	1.00					27.58	5.78
7. Enjoyment Outcome Expectation	-.019	-.016	-.002	.017	.018	.065	1.00				14.89	4.09
8. Embarrassment Outcome Expectation	-.125**	-.043	-.060	-.125**	-.021	-.032	.052	1.00			11.68	3.52
9. Social dimension of CBR	.133**	.026	.032	.131**	.012	-.005	-.033	-.123**	1.00		14.18	3.53
10. Functional dimension of CBR	.110**	.106*	-.028	.115**	-.023	.019	.036	-.092*	.483**	1.00	17.46	4.27

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, Log10 was performed for each engagement behavior item, Mean scores are additive numbers

Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated using SPSS to examine bivariate relationships between the variables of interest. Table 4 showed the matrix of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients for the variables related to the proposed model. Specifically, engagement behavior I (On a typical day, about how much time do you spend on OBC of Brand X you have joined?), II (In a typical week, how much time do you spend reading the comments of other consumers in OBC of Brand X you have joined?), and III (In a typical week, how much time do you spend posting messages in OBC of Brand X you have joined?) were positively associated with self-efficacy (Engagement Behavior I: $r = .28, p < .01$; Engagement Behavior II: $r = .22, p < .01$; Engagement Behavior III: $r = .27, p < .01$) and functional outcome expectation (Engagement Behavior I: $r = .17, p < .01$; Engagement Behavior II: $r = .14, p < .01$; Engagement Behavior III: $r = .09, p < .01$).

The purpose of the present study was to identify the mechanism by which consumers performed engagement behavior and built relationships with brands and to establish a model to explain this mechanism. It was necessary to evaluate the proposed model using structural equation modeling (SEM), an advanced quantitative procedure. It is an extension of the General Linear Model and is a generalized technique. That is, SEM is a statistical approach that uses various types of statistical techniques to explain relationship among observed variables. It does not specify a single statistical technique but refers to a unit of related procedures. In other words, SEM is a useful multivariate statistical technique that can be considered a connection or extension of multiple regression, path analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis. It is more useful and powerful than traditional statistical techniques because it can evaluate or correct for measurement error; incorporate both observed variables and latent variables, the latter of which are measured by observed indicators; and take into account modeling of correlated errors, interrelations, and interactions/mediation effects. SEM is useful to determine the extent to which the proposed model is supported by the collected data.

In sum, SEM is adequate for the current dissertation to test hypotheses in order to advance the understanding of the engagement behavior and relationships among relevant constructs.

It should be noted that Log10 (1+value) transforms were applied to engagement behavior items prior to SEM analysis because an inspection of the distribution of these items scores was found to be skewed (non-normal) due to outliers. SEM analysis assumes that the observed variables are multivariate normally distributed. The normal distribution assumption is fundamental to estimation methods in SEM. Violation of this assumption may distort the standard error of the path coefficient between latent variables and the test statistics.

Accordingly, it was imperative to investigate the observed variables with regard to excessive kurtosis and skewness and to transform the non-normal observed variables to normally distributed variables (Montfort, Mooijaart, & Meijerkink, 2009). That is why Log10 (1+value) transforms were applied to items of engagement behavior. The three items for engagement behavior did not show an acceptable internal validity score. To solve this issue, the current study chose to test the proposed model with each engagement behavior item separately.

First, the proposed model was tested with the engagement behavior item I (On a typical day, about how much time do you spend on the OBC of Brand X you have joined?) to examine the social cognitive processes of how consumers were involved in engagement behaviors. The model fit indices indicated an adequate fit with the data for the path models (AGFI = .972, CFI = .958, RMSEA = .038). Although the chi-square test statistics indicated that the model was not consistent with the data ($\chi^2 = 25.2$, $df = 14$, $p = .032$), this was assumed to be due to the large sample size. In SEM, the higher the probability level (p value) associated with the chi-square test, the better the fit. In other words, a significant chi-square indicates lack of satisfactory model fit. For example, if a chi-square test of a hypothesized model shows $p = .000$, it suggests that the hypothesized model might not be adequate.

However, since the chi-square statistic is in essence a statistical significance test, it is

sensitive to sample size which means that the chi-square statistic nearly always rejects the model when large samples are used (Bentler & Bonnet, 1980; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993). Figure 2 demonstrated the results of path analyses for the proposed model, with all paths

Figure 2. Results of Standardized Path Analysis for the Proposed Model of Engagement Behavior
 (Engagement Behavior - Item I: On a typical day, about how much time do you spend on OBC of Brand X you have joined?)

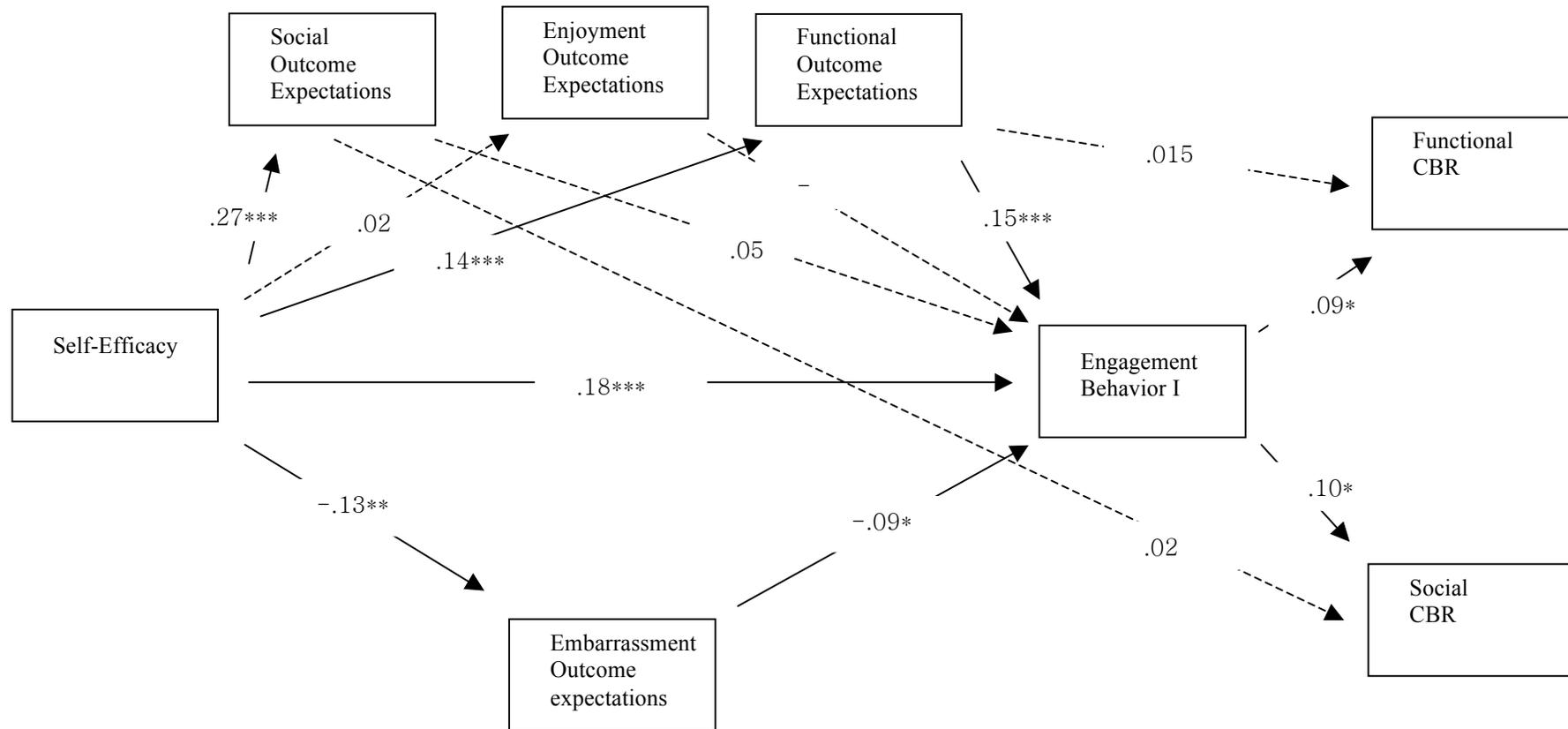
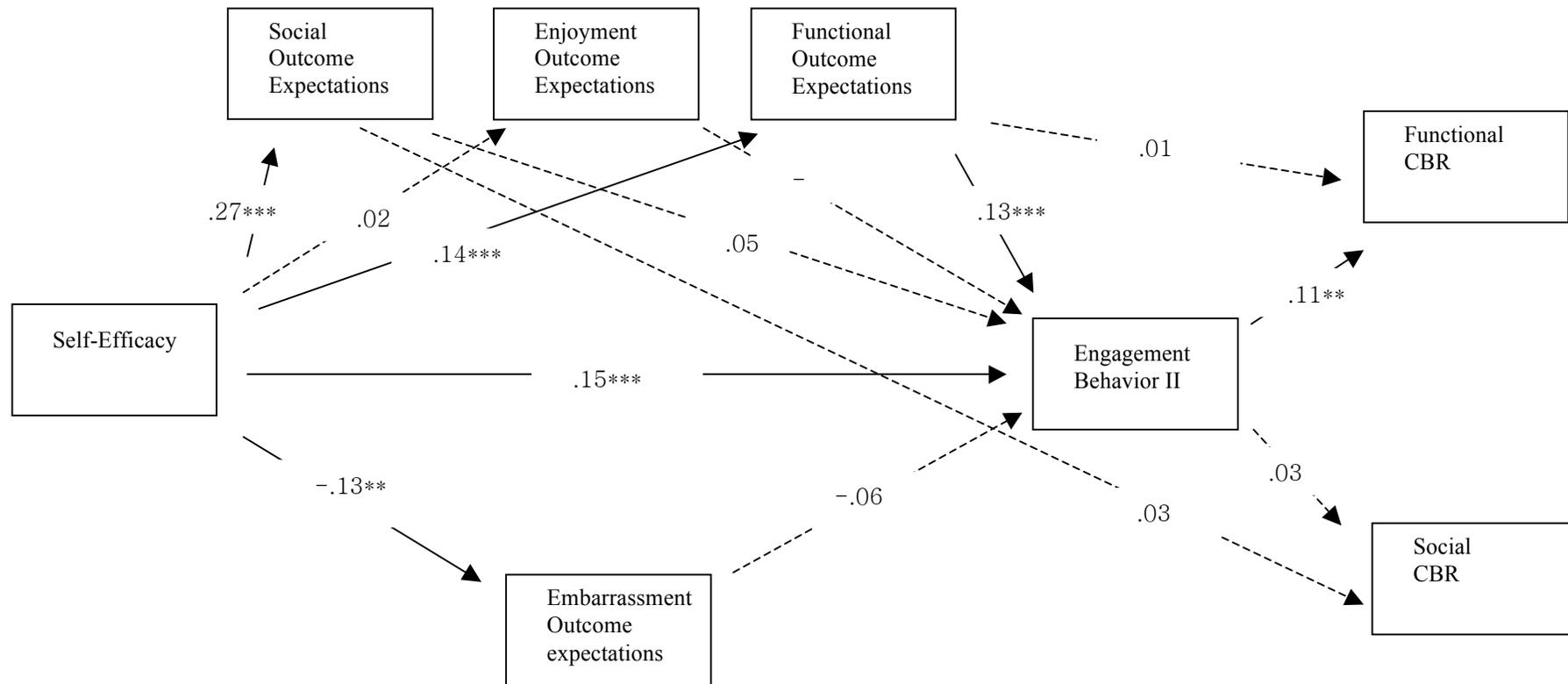


Figure 3. Results of Standardized Path Analysis for the Proposed Model of Engagement Behavior
 (Engagement Behavior - Item II: In a typical week, how much time do you spend reading the comments of other consumers in OBC of Brand X you have joined?)



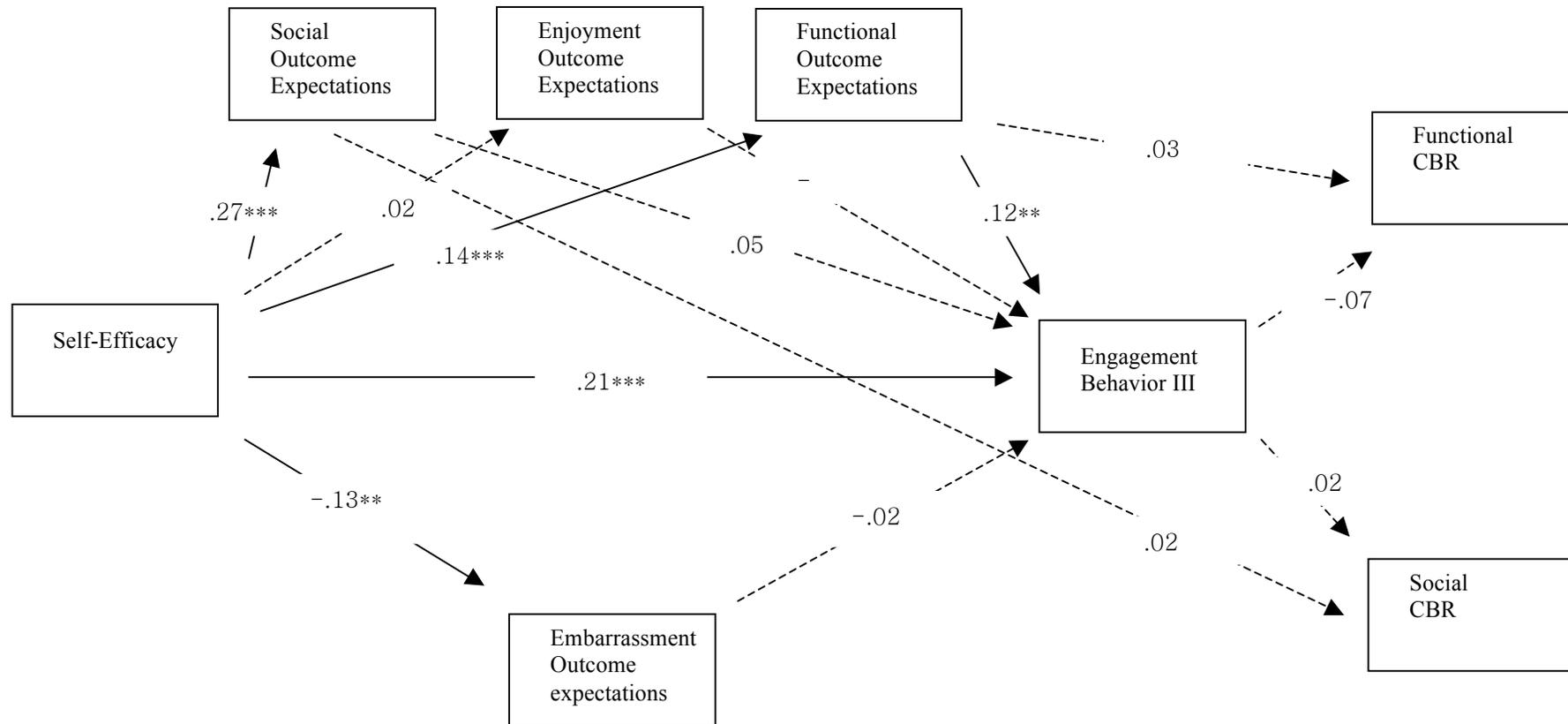
-----> indicates non-significant path

—————> indicates significant path

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

(AGFI = .970, CFI = .948, RMSEA = .041, CMIN = 27.263)

Figure 4. Results of Standardized Path Analysis for the Proposed Model of Engagement Behavior
 (Engagement Behavior - Item III: In a typical week, how much time do you spend posting messages in OBC of Brand X you have joined?)



-----> indicates non-significant path
 ———> indicates significant path

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

(AGFI = .967, CFI = .940, RMSEA = .045, CMIN = 29.807)

Table 5. Results of Hypothesis Testing (Model Testing with Item I)

Hypothesis	Hypothesized Direction	Estimation (β)	Significance (p)
H1	Positive Effect of Self-Efficacy on Engagement Behavior	.184	***
H2	Positive Effect of Self-Efficacy on Social Outcome Expectation	.268	***
H3	Positive Effect of Self-Efficacy on Functional Outcome Expectation	.144	***
H4	Positive Effect of Self-Efficacy on Enjoyment Outcome Expectation	.017	.689
H5	Negative Effect of Self-Efficacy on Embarrassment Outcome Expectation	-.125	.003**
H6	Positive Effect of Functional Outcome Expectation on Engagement Behavior	.151	***
H7	Positive Effect of Social Outcome Expectation on Engagement Behavior	.046	.268
H8	Positive Effect of Enjoyment Outcome Expectation on Engagement Behavior	-.019	.645
H9	Negative Effect of Embarrassment Outcome Expectation on Engagement Behavior	-.090	.027*
H10	Positive Effect of Functional Outcome Expectation on Functional CBR	.015	.692
H11	Positive Effect of Social Outcome Expectation on Social CBR	.018	.632
H12a	Positive Effect of Engagement Behavior on Functional CBR	.086	.043*
H12b	Positive Effect of Engagement Behavior on Social CBR	.100	.017*

(*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$)

Table 6. Results of Hypothesis Testing (Model Testing with Item II)

Hypothesis	Hypothesized Direction	Estimation (β)	Significance (p)
H1	Positive Effect of Self-Efficacy on Engagement Behavior	.209	***
H2	Positive Effect of Self-Efficacy on Social Outcome Expectation	.268	***
H3	Positive Effect of Self-Efficacy on Functional Outcome Expectation	.144	***
H4	Positive Effect of Self-Efficacy on Enjoyment Outcome Expectation	.017	.689
H5	Negative Effect of Self-Efficacy on Embarrassment Outcome Expectation	-.125	.003**
H6	Positive Effect of Functional Outcome Expectation on Engagement Behavior	.115	.005**
H7	Positive Effect of Social Outcome Expectation on Engagement Behavior	.050	.232
H8	Positive Effect of Enjoyment Outcome Expectation on Engagement Behavior	-.034	.403
H9	Negative Effect of Embarrassment Outcome Expectation on Engagement Behavior	-.020	.625
H10	Positive Effect of Functional Outcome Expectation on Functional CBR	.033	.378
H11	Positive Effect of Social Outcome Expectation on Social CBR	.018	.624
H12a	Positive Effect of Engagement Behavior on Functional CBR	-.068	.110
H12b	Positive Effect of Engagement Behavior on Social CBR	.019	.659

(*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$)

Table 7. Results of Hypothesis Testing (Model Testing with Item III)

Hypothesis	Hypothesized Direction	Estimation (β)	Significance (p)
H1	Positive Effect of Self-Efficacy on Engagement Behavior	.151	***
H2	Positive Effect of Self-Efficacy on Social Outcome Expectation	.268	***
H3	Positive Effect of Self-Efficacy on Functional Outcome Expectation	.144	***
H4	Positive Effect of Self-Efficacy on Enjoyment Outcome Expectation	.017	.689
H5	Negative Effect of Self-Efficacy on Embarrassment Outcome Expectation	-.125	.003**
H6	Positive Effect of Functional Outcome Expectation on Engagement Behavior	.130	.002**
H7	Positive Effect of Social Outcome Expectation on Engagement Behavior	.045	.289
H8	Positive Effect of Enjoyment Outcome Expectation on Engagement Behavior	-.027	.514
H9	Negative Effect of Embarrassment Outcome Expectation on Engagement Behavior	-.059	.153
H10	Positive Effect of Functional Outcome Expectation on Functional CBR	.007	.848
H11	Positive Effect of Social Outcome Expectation on Social CBR	.026	.487
H12a	Positive Effect of Engagement Behavior on Functional CBR	.110	.009**
H12b	Positive Effect of Engagement Behavior on Social CBR	.029	.492

(*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$)

reporting standardized coefficients. In this model, H1, H2, H3, H5, H6, H9, H12a and H12b were supported (see Table 5).

Second, the proposed model was tested with the engagement behavior item II (In a typical week, how much time do you spend reading the comments of other consumers in OBC of Brand X you have joined?). The model fit indices indicated an adequate fit with the data for the path models (AGFI = .970, CFI = .948, RMSEA = .041) even though the chi-square test statistics indicate that the model was not consistent with the data ($\chi^2 = 27.263$, $df = 14$, $p = .018$). Figure 3 demonstrated the results of path analyses for the proposed model, with all paths reporting standardized coefficients. In this model, H1, H2, H3, H5, H6, and H12a were supported (see Table 6).

Third, the proposed model was tested with the engagement behavior item III (In a typical week, how much time do you spend posting messages in the OBC of Brand X you have joined?). The model fit indices indicated an adequate fit with the data for the path models (AGFI = .967, CFI = .940, RMSEA = .045) even though the chi-square test statistics indicate that the model was not consistent with the data ($\chi^2 = 29.807$, $df = 14$, $p = .008$). Figure 4 demonstrated the results of path analyses for the proposed model, with all paths reporting standardized coefficients. In this model, H1, H2, H3, H5, and H6 were supported (see Table 7).

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION

This dissertation had several purposes. First, it sought to define the concept of engagement behavior and explain its importance in the context of online brand communities (OBCs). This dissertation started by defining engagement behavior conceptually and explaining its importance as a theoretical construct. Creating and stimulating consumer engagement behavior has recently become an explicit aim of marketing practitioners. Engagement is a holistic characterization of consumers' behaviors in OBCs, encompassing a variety of sub-aspects of consumers' online behavior. Engagement behavior is theoretically distinguished from other similar marketing communication behavioral constructs (e.g., eWOM and purchase intention) in that it is regarded as consumers' voluntary behavioral manifestation toward the brand and company.

Second, the proposed model attempted to demonstrate the utility of the social cognitive theory (SCT) constructs to understand consumers' engagement behavior in OBCs. It examined the social cognitive processes of how consumers were involved in engagement behavior through self-efficacy and through positive (social, functional and enjoyment benefits) and negative (embarrassment) outcome expectations associated with their participation in OBCs. Overall, the findings suggested that consumers were not likely to perform engagement behaviors unless they felt confident in their ability to perform the engagement behavior and they expected to receive a positive functional outcome from the behavior. Specifically, the current results showed that consumers' self-efficacy to perform engagement behavior not only directly influenced their decision to engage in some forms of

OBC activities but also indirectly affected them by instigating assessments of functional benefits associated with their activities. The current dissertation proposed that engagement behavior was an outcome of interactions of two cognitive determinants of human cognition (outcome expectations and self-efficacy). This proposition highlighted human self-regulatory mechanisms in which cognition played a central role in consumers' engagement behavior in OBCs.

Finally, the current dissertation explored the development of consumer-brand relationship (CBR) as an outcome of consumers' engagement behavior in OBCs. CBR was employed as an outcome of consumers' OBCs participation because (1) relationship-building with consumers has become practitioners' central interest and (2) individuals' voluntary activities such as engagement behavior were the cardinal forerunner of CBR (Aggarwal, 2004).

Summary of Results

The current results showed that constructs of SCT predicted consumers' engagement behaviors in OBCs. Specifically, consumers' self-efficacy to perform engagement behavior and their assessment of functional benefits were the two most important factors for engagement behavior. Individuals with high self-efficacy anticipated successful outcomes. Self-efficacy also influenced the negative outcome expectation of embarrassment. When consumers had a high level of self-efficacy, their negative outcome expectation was likely to decrease. This was also consistent with SCT. According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy beliefs help determine the outcomes one expects. Because the outcomes individuals expect are the result of the cognitive judgments of what they can accomplish, outcome expectations are likely to contribute to predictions of behavior (Bandura, 1977). In other words, engagement behaviors can be generated by promoting expectations of the positive

consequences of functional benefits. Such outcome expectations directly motivated consumers' willingness to perform engagement behaviors, which confirmed that outcome expectations of human cognition were a main cognitive component affecting engagement behavior. Consequently, engagement behavior was triggered by social cognitive mechanisms in which consumers cognitively processed and evaluated the potential positive functional consequences associated with engagement behavior in OBCs.

By demonstrating the links of the direct and indirect relationships among self-efficacy, outcome expectations and engagement behavior, the current study highlighted the importance of self-efficacy as another important cognitive component in understanding the social cognitive mechanisms of engagement behavior in OBCs. In fact, few studies have incorporated the role of self-efficacy in explaining consumers' engagement behavior (e.g., DeTure, 2004; Hsu, Ju, Yen & Chang, 2007). The results of the current study showed that self-efficacy was a strong predictor of engagement behavior and suggested that future engagement behavior research should consider self-efficacy.

In particular, the results confirmed that functional outcome expectation was an important construct in predicting consumers' engagement behavior in OBCs. Previous social identification approaches focused on consumers who developed identification with OBCs or brands. However, some members of OBCs may not have this identification and only have functional needs or motivation for their participation. If this is the case, taking functional outcome expectations into account might help explain consumers' engagement behavior in a way that the social identification approach is limited to explain.

In sum, consumers' likelihood of engagement behavior in OBCs may have to be understood as a behavior that requires cognitive effort beyond the social and enjoyment response to the OBCs. Thus, it should be noted that the current approach to engagement behavior should be differentiated from past researchers' perspective of the social

identification approach to engagement behavior. Previous researchers (e.g., Algesheimer, Dholakia & Herrmann, 2005) confined consumers' engagement behavior to one particular domain, reporting that consumers' social identification with OBCs led to engagement behavior. However, the social cognitive model of engagement behavior highlighted the possible interactions of cognitive factors that reciprocally determined consumers' engagement behavior. As such, the previous model of the social identification effect on engagement behavior was limited in the current domain because consumers actively assessed other important determinants of engagement behavior, including self-efficacy and functional outcome expectations.

It is also important to note that the current social cognitive model of engagement behavior agrees with the social identification perspective in terms of regarding the engagement behavior as a social outcome. However, the social cognitive model does not conceptualize a consumer as one who always engages in engagement behavior only as dictated by social identification. This social cognitive perspective extends the social identification perspective because it recognizes factors such as self-efficacy and functional outcome expectation as crucial variables, in addition to social needs, that influence consumers' willingness to perform engagement behavior. Given that the current social cognitive model highlights the role of self-efficacy and functional outcome expectation, the mechanism for engagement behavior may go beyond simply satisfying consumers' social identification. The dynamic relationship among self-efficacy, functional outcome expectation and engagement behavior motivates consumers' interactions in OBCs.

Unexpectedly, neither social nor enjoyment outcome expectations predicted engagement behavior. Unlike prior research on OBCs, the findings of this study did not support the basic tenet of the social and enjoyment aspects of consumers' engagement behavior in OBCs. This indicated that social and enjoyment outcome expectations were not

promoting consumers' engagement behavior in the current study. This result should be interpreted with careful consideration because past research showed the importance of social and enjoyment needs in the context of OBCs (e.g., Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004). It may be that social and enjoyment outcome expectations influence consumers' attitude or affection toward OBCs and brands (e.g., Burnstein & Vinokur, 1977), but might not influence their behavior. It should be noted that this result does not mean that engagement behavior does not generate social and enjoyment outcomes. Many studies indeed showed that consumers' participation in OBCs generated social and enjoyment outcomes (e.g., Lee et al., 2011). It might indicate that even though consumers receive social and enjoyment benefits, they don't lead to consumers' engagement behavior.

Another possible explanation is that participants in this study are OBC members of utilitarian products (automotive and electronics). Due to the nature of the products, consumers in the OBCs might be using them primarily to seek functional benefits such as product and usage-related information. In a similar vein, the brands in this study were functional rather than symbolic brands. Symbolic brands are often built on the premise of offering social status value to a very selective segment of consumers who are more focused on associations than on the underlying price (Bhat & Reddy, 1998). According to Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998), consumers attempted to satisfy their social needs with symbolic brands. In other words, consumers in OBCs for symbolic brands have a strong motivation to satisfy social needs for engagement behaviors in OBCs. However, brands in this study were not symbolic. Brands in this study were medium-priced and often promoted as functional brands in their market positioning. Thus, this might be one of the reasons that social outcome expectations did not show significant relationships with engagement behavior.

Another noteworthy finding was that there was not any significant relationship between outcome expectations and CBR dimensions. Functional outcome expectation was

hypothesized to lead to the development of a functional aspect of CBR and social outcome expectation was hypothesized to lead to the development of a social aspect of CBR. In the literature, individuals have been shown to build relationships with organizations when their expectations were satisfied (Aram, Morgan, & Esbeck, 1971). This means that merely having outcome expectations is not enough to build a relationship. The expectations must be met in order for companies to build a relationship. Therefore, companies that desire to use OBCs as relationship building tools should seek ways to manage OBCs that provide various benefits for consumers.

It should be addressed why the model testing with each item generated somewhat different results. In model 1, engagement behavior influenced both social and functional CBR. In testing model 2, engagement behavior led only to functional CBR. Engagement behavior did not show any significant relationship with social and functional CBR in model 3. This difference was believed to be due to the nature of the items. In model 1, engagement behavior was measured by asking how much time participants spend on the OBC in a typical day. In model 2, the item for engagement behavior specifically measured the time spent reading postings in OBCs. Reading postings was highly relevant to consumers' functional needs. The initial motivation for reading postings may be to find some source of functional information, either in the form of advice or recommendation. In previous studies, consumers' message-reading behaviors were closely related to consumers' satisfaction of their utilitarian needs (e.g., Nonnecke, 2000). Subsequently, the more time spent on reading postings, the more satisfaction with OBCs and brands around which OBCs are created. Therefore, stronger functional CBR would be formed.

In the model 3, engagement behavior was measured in time spent on writing comments on OBCs. Some studies have found that consumers contributed to content creation because they were trying to help other consumers (e.g., Ho & Dempsey, 2010). That is,

consumers might be motivated by altruism to post in OBCs. The interests of consumers who post for altruistic reasons, their interests lie in other consumers' well-being, not in the brand itself. Thus, it is not likely that consumers with this motivation develop engrossment toward the brand. In this sense, it might be reasonable that engagement behavior did not lead to CBR. Another possibility is that consumers are involved in posting behavior to attain certain goals such as information-sharing and price promotion-seeking. In other words, consumers' posting behavior might be simply focused on their goals, not on the brands. Once they achieve their goals through posting behaviors, they might lose interest in the OBC and the brand. Therefore, achievement of goals through posting behaviors might not translate into having a relationship with brands.

It was also interesting that the negative outcome expectation of embarrassment did not influence consumers' engagement behavior in model 2 or 3. In model 2, engagement behavior was measured by asking about consumers' reading behavior. It is unlikely that consumers feel embarrassment from reading others' postings. Studies also showed that individuals were involved only in reading behavior online to avoid embarrassment (e.g., Preece, Nonnecke & Andrews, 2004). Motives for reading behavior can include protecting oneself from embarrassing situations. Thus, it was reasonable that consumers were not likely to feel embarrassment from reading so embarrassment outcome expectations did not influence engagement behavior in model testing 1.

However, it was surprising that engagement behavior was not influenced by embarrassment outcome expectation in model 3, in which engagement behavior was measured by consumers' posting behavior, which could generate embarrassment when other consumers criticized the contents of one's post. Nonnecke (2000) suggested that online posting behaviors demanded self-confidence, meaning that consumers' self-confidence was important in posting comments in online communities. Consumers who are involved in

posting behaviors might have a higher level of self-confidence. Studies have showed that embarrassment is unlikely to occur for individuals with self-confidence (e.g., Manning & Ray, 1993). Thus, it is possible that consumers who are engaged in posting behavior are less likely to feel embarrassment. To an extent, this explanation was supported by the current results. In model 3, self-efficacy, which is conceptually similar to self-confidence, negatively influenced consumers' negative expectation of embarrassment. This might be why embarrassment outcome expectation did not influence consumers' engagement behavior.

CHAPTER 8

LIMITATIONS

The present research was subject to several limitations that require further discussion and investigation. First, this study employed Korean consumers as participants, which might limit the generalizability of the results to populations of other countries. Although actual OBCs were used to recruit participants for the current study, the cultural differences may have influenced the consumers' online behavior and moderated the key relationships of online behavior (Pavlou & Chai, 2002). For example, Ko, Jung, Kim and Shim (2004) indicated that Korean and US consumers perceived the different levels of risk when they shop online. People learn patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting from living within a defined social environment, normally typified by country. As such, culture represents mental programming, which partially predetermines a person's behavior (Hofstede, 1980). Individual consumer tastes and purchasing patterns are thus often determined by the collective values of their culture. Certain consumer reactions become more understandable and predictable when a consumer's cultural background is taken into account. Applying this notion to the OBCs, it is expected that people with different cultural backgrounds respond differently to OBCs. Not only do consumers in different countries with different ethnic origins use OBCs for different purposes, but these different purposes may lead them to have different behavioral patterns in OBCs. For instance, Park (2006) showed that Koreans emphasize functional value when using the Internet. The current results confirmed the importance of functional usage of the Internet among Koreans. In other countries, consumers might have different values for Internet usage. Therefore, different cultural responses would have important implications for

the OBCs research. Thus, it is required to test the proposed model with other populations in future studies.

The second limitation of the present study may be the use of a survey method, which does not allow any causal relationship between variables. In survey, there is no tool of controlling or manipulating the independent variable, so instead all of the constructs are equally measured. Generally, survey design is a research method that investigates the correlational relationship among measured constructs. In survey, it is impossible to identify which variables are independent variable and which are dependent variables. In other words, causal relationships are nearly impossible to prove in survey design because the research method lacks control over the independent variable. It would be worthwhile to investigate if SCT constructs such as self-efficacy and functional outcome expectations can influence consumers' OBC engagement behaviors in an experimental setting.

In the current context, consumers' engagement behavior may influence their self-efficacy. This is true because one's behavior often, if not always, plays a role in shaping one's self-efficacy. SCT also describes human behavior in terms of the interrelationship between behavior and self-efficacy. However, because of the cross-sectional survey method used in this study, the possible bi-directional relationship between engagement behavior and self-efficacy cannot be statistically analyzed. In other words, longitudinal evidence is required.

The current study recruited participants from only four OBCs (two product categories). Further, among 566 participants, 254 participants were recruited from one OBC, making up more than one-third of the whole sample size. This might limit the generalizability of the results to populations of OBCs of other product categories. Thus, it is recommended to recruit a more balanced number of participants from various OBCs and product categories

The current dissertation had to test three separate models because the items for

engagement behavior did not show internal consistency. Engagement behavior is often not manifest or readily observable. A carefully selected and tested set of items should be summed up to accurately assess engagement behavior. One item is not likely to capture the complexity of this construct. Although single items are used to measure variables in some cases, multiple item scales are likely to better assess constructs for a variety of reasons (see DeVellis, 1991).

Low response rate was another problematic issue in this study. Low response rate was often associated with nonresponse bias. Nonresponse bias came from the difference in the estimate between the respondents and non-respondents. Social research makes inferences about a population by drawing a sample. When response rate is low, there is a possibility that individuals from a special subset of the sample are systematically ignored. In this study, it was possible that respondents were systematically different with non-respondents. The links for the survey website were emailed to the sample. To participate in, consumers in OBCs had to click the link, which required consumers' voluntary effort or action. Thus, consumers who were emotionally and cognitively involved with OBCs were more likely to participate in the current survey than consumers who were less involved in OBCs were. In this sense, every member of the population was not equally likely to be included in the sample. In sum, it should be acknowledged that the current low response rate might not provide valid grounds for generalizing about a population.

CHAPTER 9

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of this study provided valuable theoretical and practical implications.

Theoretical Implications

Theoretical implications revolve around Bandura's social cognitive theory (SCT) because the present dissertation employed SCT to understand a social cognitive mechanism for consumers' engagement behavior in OBCs. To date, research on OBCs has not generally considered SCT in predicting consumers' engagement behavior.

First of all, the current findings demonstrated the value of SCT in this area. The current study attempted to provide an overall picture of the social cognitive mechanism of consumers' engagement behavior in the context of OBCs by implementing a theoretical framework which helped to explain and predict consumers' engagement behavior. In doing so, this dissertation confirmed the application of Bandura's SCT to the domain of engagement behavior in OBCs and provided theoretical and empirical evidence for the social cognitive process of engagement behavior. In sum, the current results demonstrated the capability of SCT to explain the consumers' engagement behavior.

Furthermore, by using SCT as a framework, the present study was able to encompass various factors which previous studies found to be important for engagement behaviors, into a single theoretical framework. Previous studies tended to identify factors that influenced engagement behaviors but failed to provide the overall interaction and relationship of those factors. The current framework not only provided the overall mechanism for engagement behavior but also showed the interactions of important factors for engagement behaviors.

Thus, SCT can be seen as an important and overarching theoretical framework for understanding consumers' likelihood of participating in various activities in OBCs.

Specifically, the effect of self-efficacy on engagement behavior presented in this study was similar to the effect shown in other studies. Consumers in this study with high self-efficacy performed engagement behaviors more. Bandura (1997) stated that self-efficacy plays a central role for behavioral change in SCT and it has been recognized as doing so in many studies. In this study, self-efficacy was found to exert a significant influence on consumers' expectations of the outcomes of performing engagement behavior. The results of this study added to the literature on self-efficacy and contributed a clearer understanding of both the concept and its relevance for engagement behavior in a computer-mediated environment.

Based on Bandura (1997), consumers who expected that their behaviors produced desirable outcomes had stronger intentions for behaviors than consumers with weaker outcome expectations. The concept of outcome expectations was derived from the notion that behavior was a joint function of (a) people's expectations of obtaining a particular outcome as a function of performing a behavior and (b) the extent that they valued those outcomes (Schunk, 1989). The concept of outcome expectation assumed that when individuals contemplated various goal attainments in given situations, they made judgments of the likelihood of attaining those goals. In the current study, functional outcome expectation was significant factor for engagement behavior. Consumers who believed that their engagement behaviors hold some functional value performed the behavior. This study indicated that engagement behaviors were results of consumers' expectations of gaining functional outcome and its value for consumers. Research on consumers' engagement behavior to date has often overlooked how consumers' functional outcome expectation influenced behavior. Thus, this study showed the theoretical importance of functional outcome expectation in OBCs.

The results of this study also shed light on the mediating role of outcome expectations in the social cognitive process of engagement behavior. Behavioral intention is predicted by a person's outcome expectations (Bandura, 1997). From the perspective of outcome expectation, self-efficacy is considered a factor that leads to a positive outcome and thus motivates individuals' behavior. Consistent with this idea, this study theoretically posited that self-efficacy, outcome expectation and engagement behavior were interlinked with each other. This suggested a mediation model in which the SCT factors are linked to one's behavior to perform and participate in various activities in OBCs. However, this hypothesis was not directly tested in previous research in the OBCs context. With this mediation model, the current study theoretically suggested that consumers performed engagement behaviors if they believed they would have positive outcomes. The current mediation model, on the other hand, acknowledges that expectations about outcomes might not be sufficient to influence behavior if consumers doubt their capabilities to successfully participate in activities in OBCs. In other words, although positive outcome expectations are important in the current settings, they do not perform engagement behaviors. Consumers who expect positive functional outcomes may not perform engagement behaviors if they doubt their capabilities to perform the behaviors (low self-efficacy). This is consistent with SCT. According to Bandura (1986), outcome expectations influence behavior but do not completely determine it. Individuals' expected outcomes in given situations depend on their judgments of the types of actions they are capable of performing. Outcome expectations are contingent on self-efficacy. In sum, the mediation model added to the understanding of why consumers engaged in OBCs. Thus, the current model provided theoretical implications that an understanding of both self-efficacy and outcome expectations was necessary to understand consumers' engagement behavior in OBCs research.

In sum, this research laid the foundation for future research related to the SCT

perspective on engagement behavior and the influence of consumers' perceptions of their abilities and expectations. The current study should be regarded as a cornerstone for OBC research using the framework of SCT because it provided the evidence that future researchers could use the proposed SCT framework to further examine consumers' engagement behaviors in OBCs.

The findings about consumer-brand relationship (CBR) also provided theoretical implications for scholars. Few researchers have studied CBR in the domain of OBCs. The result that consumers' engagement behaviors in OBCs led to the development of CBR suggests the academic importance of engagement behavior. CBR is defined as the degree of interdependence between a consumer and a brand (Fournier, 1994); it can be strengthened by consumers' behavioral interactions with a brand because behavioral interactions could generate bonding with brands (Aggarwal, 2004). This study conceptually interpreted engagement behaviors as behavioral interactions. Overall, the results indeed confirmed that engagement behaviors influenced CBR even though model 2 and 3 showed the non-significant relationship. This result contributes to the body of CBR literatures and expands the knowledge of CBR because not many studies have empirically investigated the effect of consumers' online behaviors on CBR. It demonstrated that consumers' engagement behavior could positively affect CBR development. In the current study, specifically, engagement behaviors led to a functional aspect of CBR. This is noteworthy because the current results also showed that consumers' functional outcome expectation led to their engagement behaviors. In sum, theoretically, consumers' engagement behaviors in OBCs center on functional motivations, which, in turn, lead to the development of CBR, mediated by engagement behaviors. However, the results of this study for the engagement behavior-CBR relationship do not provide a strong conclusion because in model 3, engagement behavior did not influence CBR. Therefore, more research needs to be done to examine this relationship.

Current participants provided important academic implications. The current study was one of only a few to employ a Korean population; most previous studies attempted to explain consumers' engagement behavior using American populations as samples. The individual members of a culture share certain ideas, values, acts, or emotions with other members of the culture. In marketing communication, culture is considered one of the most influential of the factors that affect consumers' motives, attitudes toward choices, or intentions (Jarvenpaa & Tractinsky, 1999). Thus, even though studies with American populations provided valuable findings, they failed to explain consumers' engagement behaviors in other cultures and countries. By employing Asian population, this study expanded the scope of OBCs research.

Practical Implications

The findings of the dissertation are also of practical significance to those who are interested in prompting consumers' engagement behavior. The findings suggested the importance of finding ways in which to address them. From a practical point of view, the current study provided crucial implications for marketing communication practitioners and corporations for how to facilitate OBCs in practice.

The current study highlighted consumers' self-efficacy as an important construct in predicting their engagement behaviors. In a broader sense, practitioners need to be aware of the concept of self-efficacy and the means for encouraging it. Based on the current results, self-efficacy was the pivotal factor in predicting consumers' engagement behavior because it influenced consumers' engagement behavior directly and indirectly through outcome expectations. In other words, consumers may easily lose interest and be less likely to perform engagement behaviors in OBCs unless their self-efficacy is enhanced. Verifying that self-efficacy is an antecedent of engagement behavior in OBC, it helps marketing practitioners to

find a way to encourage members to be involved in engagement behavior. Specifically, marketers should acknowledge the role of self-efficacy in OBC participation. Many scholars and marketing practitioners already recognized the importance of social identification in OBCs, but they may not realize that self-efficacy can promote engagement behavior in OBCs for existing, new and potential members.

In practice, it might be necessary for practitioners to incorporate strategies that make it easy for existing and potential members to participate in OBCs. OBCs are often perceived as a place for knowledgeable consumers with much experience. Those consumers are likely to have stronger self-efficacy for OBC engagement behavior and may dominate discussions in the OBC. Meanwhile, novice and potential members are not likely to have strong self-efficacy for engagement because they do not have information and experience with the brand, the OBC, or both. They are inclined to worry about the potential embarrassment their participation might bring. If these consumers do not participate in various engagement behaviors, companies lose opportunities to build positive relationships with them. Thus, marketing practitioners should encourage novice consumers to participate in OBCs by incorporating features to enhance their self-efficacy.

According to Bandura (1997), four basic approaches are required to increase self-efficacy: enactive attainment, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion and physiological statement. Enactive attainment and vicarious experience seem relevant to the current context. First, enactive attainment is the most influential source of self-efficacy because it is based on authentic mastery experience. Successes raise one's efficacy beliefs and failures lower them. The more successful interactions consumers have with other consumers in OBCs, the more likely they are to develop high self-efficacy. To achieve enactive attainment in the context of OBCs, it might be necessary for practitioners to incorporate technical features that make it easy for novice and potential members to participate in OBCs. These features are likely to

lead to enactive attainment and ultimately enhance consumers' self-efficacy. For example, consumers often decide not to participate in engagement behavior because it requires a certain level of product or brand-related knowledge or skills. In other words, those skills or knowledge can be barriers for consumers to participate in engagement behavior.

Implementing simple and easy online games that do not require previous skills or knowledge can help minimize these hurdles and lead to enactive attainment.

OBCs by their nature provide an opportunity for vicarious learning. The starting assumption for vicarious learning (Bandura, 1997) is that an individual's behavior occurs through observation of others' behaviors. Compeau and Higgins (1995b) demonstrated that a behavior modeling approach could enhance self-efficacy perceptions and performance in the context of computer usage. OBCs often place an emphasis on information exchange through consumers' message postings, which can be an arena for vicarious learning about engagement behavior without direct experience. As more and more members are actively engaged in engagement behaviors such as message posting, novice consumers in OBCs are likely to be exposed to vicarious learning, which might lead to enhanced self-efficacy. Thus, for practical purposes, marketers should be aware of the importance of consumers' lurking behavior in OBCs. Many scholars and practitioners (e.g., Preece, Nonnecke & Andrews, 2004) argued that lurking was problematic because lurkers took information from the shared resource but did not contribute anything in return. However, marketers should acknowledge that lurking behavior makes indirect contributions through vicarious learning. Lurking behaviors often led to actual participation. This relationship might be explained by the enhanced self-efficacy gained through lurking behaviors. Therefore, practitioners should not aggressively encourage new members to perform engagement behaviors. Rather, they should encourage new members to simply spend more times on their OBCs, which leads to vicarious learning process and the enhance self-efficacy. To accomplish this, marketing communication

practitioners have to consider incorporating the entertainment value into their OBCs so consumers will want to spend more time on them.

The results of this study also clearly suggest that marketing practitioners who are in charge of OBCs should focus their efforts on utilizing outcome expectation to promote consumers' engagement behavior. The results demonstrated that consumers' functional outcome perceptions played a crucial role to influence engagement behavior. Consumers' outcome expectation was overlooked as an important construct in the field of OBCs but the evaluation of potential outcome was essential in this study. It can lead to an overall assessment of experience with OBCs and brand and in turn influence the consumer's overall evaluation of the quality of the OBC and brands. The current results proved the role of outcome expectation by demonstrating its effect on engagement behavior. To exploit the role of outcome expectations, marketing practitioners can provide various activities. For example, for consumers who expect functional outcomes, marketers can offer coupons when consumers contribute to information-sharing. In sum, practitioners should be able to generate consumers' engagement behaviors by increasing their self-efficacy and outcome expectations.

Another practical implication of the current study comes from the discovered effect of engagement behavior on CBR. Previous studies examined engagement behavior as an outcome (Preece, Nonnecke, & Andrews, 2004; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004) and overlooked its role as an antecedent of CBR; the relationship between engagement behavior and CBR had not been tested. The engagement behavior-CBR relationship was explored in this study to examine if such as direct link could be found. Recent studies in marketing and consumer behavior stressed the relationship between brand and consumers (e.g., Breivik & Thorbjørnsen, 2008). This can be meaningful for companies and marketers as well because they always strive to find a way to build relationships with consumers. Marketing practitioners are currently actively using OBCs as marketing communication tools because

their competitors are using them. They frequently do not have clearly defined goals for OBCs as marketing communication tools. The current result of the relationship between consumers' engagement behaviors and CBR can guide practitioners to develop marketing communication goals for OBCs, which should be CBR development.

Lastly, the fact that the current study employed two specific product categories (electronic and automotive) and brands are all functional-focus engendered practical implications. By employing specific product categories and brand types, the current study might have generalizability issue for the results. However, they play a role as a boundary condition of results, meaning that the results are particularly beneficial for those product categories and functional brands. From a practical theoretical standpoint, incorporating specific product categories and brand types can enrich the understanding of specific conditions underlying the social cognitive process of consumers' engagement behavior and may also provide insight into the role of product categories and brand types in predicting consumers' engagement behavior.

Future Studies

Even though, engagement behavior has been increasingly examined in the marketing communication literature, research on it is still in an early stage. Academic examination of defining the term, investigating how the term theoretically differs from similar constructs such as involvement, exploring its dimensions, and developing the solid measurement has been limited.

Most importantly, the definition and dimensions of engagement behavior are not still fully explored, meaning that current research lacks a solid academic foundation. Thus, from a theoretical perspective, explicit academic inquiry to establish the dimensions of engagement behavior is required. Engagement behavior comprises a range of sub-processes reflecting

consumers' different levels of intensity and distinct engagement states. Engagement behavior in the context of OBCs is a manifold, dynamic, complex and multidimensional construct. A quantitative approach like this study is extremely meaningful, but it explains consumers' engagement behaviors in an aggregated form, so that it is limited to explain the multitudinous aspects of consumers' engagement behavior.

Consumers' engagement behaviors as an academic construct center on interactive consumer experiences. Based on this notion, in-depth academic investigation that can reveal consumers' unrevealed psychology is necessary. To accomplish this, qualitative approaches such as in-depth interviews, observational study, and focus group interviews might be appropriate to help researchers shed light on multidimensional aspects of engagement by interweaving the consumers' cognitive, emotional and psychological processes or mechanisms. For example, a focus group interview can be useful to elaborate the multi-dimensions of engagement behavior because focus group interview helps researchers to learn about population with respect to conscious or unconscious psychological and sociocultural traits. Future study should design the interview in a way that it can focus on different aspects and motivations of engagement behavior. For example, Hollebeek (2011) proposed three dimensions of engagement behavior: cognitive, emotional and behavioral components. Schau, Muniz and Arnould (2009) proposed four domains of engagement behavior: documenting, badging, milestone and staking. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) proposed eight specific factors, which could motivate consumers to perform engagement behaviors in OBS. These dimensions or components provide the basis to guide the focus group interview.

More specifically, focus group interviews should be designed with actual members of OBCs to identify various dimensions of engagement behavior. To increase the external validity, which is often weakness of qualitative research methods, multiple focus group interviews should be conducted. Each focus group interview might include 6 - 8 participants.

The participants should be selected very carefully for the interview. The participants should include both novice and expert consumers in OBCs. In addition, the participant-selection should also reflect various product categories because consumers for different products can have different motivation and mechanism for their participation in OBCs.

Questions in the interview might address the various dimensions of engagement behavior that previous studies found. In a focus group interview, developing the questions to be used by the moderator requires careful thought and a considerable amount of effort. Each question should be able to outline a dimension of engagement behavior other studies proposed. For example, Schau, Muniz and Arnould (2009) proposed documenting as one of domains of engagement behavior in OBCs. It was defined as consumers' construction of a narrative of their brand experience in OBCs (Schau, Muniz, & Arnould, 2009). The moderator could ask participants whether they are really involved in documenting behavior. If yes, what makes them involved in the documenting behavior would be asked. If no, whether they see other members in OBCs involved in this behavior and why they think other members perform this behavior should be asked. The moderator of focus group interview should go through this process for each dimension of engagement behavior suggested by previous research. In this process, it is also possible to find dimensions, which were not proposed by previous studies. After the interview, participants' responses for each dimension should be closely scrutinized to see if there is any overlapping area among dimensions. Based on the scrutiny, a more comprehensive structure for dimensions of engagement behavior should emerge. Once the comprehensive structure of dimensions is established, it can also help researchers to come up with a more theoretically solid definition for engagement behavior.

Computer-mediated environments provide interactive technology that gives consumers various modes to actively participate in engagement behaviors such as real-time communication and Tweeting (or re-Tweeting). These environments are also very fast-paced

and motivations that ignite consumers' engagement behaviors can vary. Interviews should be designed in a manner to gain a deeper understanding of consumers' views, needs, interests, experiences, feelings, perceptions, and beliefs about engagement behavior and OBCs in the computer-mediated environments. Thus, future studies on engagement behavior could utilize qualitative approaches in a way that provide insight into drivers or sub-dimensions of engagement behavior.

The establishment of an agreed upon conceptual definition and more insight into the underlying dimensions may also provide further insights for measurement development. A rigorous qualitative research approach can enhance the development of reliable measurements of engagement. In fact, studies suggested that qualitative approach is a valid and reliable way to develop measurement items (e.g., Sofaer, 2002).

Concrete measurement items for engagement behavior in the context of marketing communication have not been developed yet but they are needed in order to maximize prediction (e.g., Doorn et al., 2010; Hoyer et al., 2010). In developing new measures of engagement behavior, reference should be made to the existing measures, in particular the works of Valenzuela, Park and Kee (2009). While each of these measures has some limitations, they offer insights that should be incorporated into a new measure that reflects not only simple components of activities in OBCs but also different levels of the activities. For example, posting a message in OBCs requires a different level of psychological state than reading a message does. In other words, the measurement should be able to capture the strength of engagement behavior. Future research on measurement development should consider the relevant dimensions and strength or magnitude of each dimension of engagement behavior.

Based on the dimensions identified by the proposed focus group interview, research on measures for engagement behavior should be conducted. Such research could first create

measurement items based on previous studies and the proposed focus group interview study. The items should be then submitted to a panel of scholars who have extensive research background on engagement behavior. The items should be revised as suggested by scholars. A further step in preparing the items could be to pilot-test it with about twenty members in actual OBCs to test the difficulty of the items and obtain feedback on their appropriateness and wording. Participants should be instructed to read all items of the questionnaire carefully and to respond on a 5-point scale rating how clear (1 = not clear at all; 5 = very clear) they find each item. After this process, the meaning of each item could be discussed with each participant. Based on the feedback, final modifications should be made to the items. The next step of the measurement development process is distribution of the questionnaire to a large sample of actual members in OBCs in order to test its factorial validity. With this process, future study should develop more solid measurement items.

Further systematic and explicit scholarly scrutiny addressing the outcome of engagement behavior is also required. This study employed CBR as an outcome of consumers' engagement behaviors but CBR is a long-term outcome. It takes time to build a relationship with consumers. However, marketing practitioners want to understand how engagement behaviors can influence their business performance in short period of time. There have not been many studies of how consumers' engagement behaviors in OBCs contribute to business performance. In particular, attention needs to be given to how all dimensions of engagement behavior relate to consumption behavior. How do engagement behaviors influence purchase, consumption and repeated purchase? This question should be answered by future studies.

In addition, engagement behaviors should be examined from the consumers' perspective. What kinds of engagement behaviors do consumers want to perform? What kinds of emotional or psychological states lead to engagement behaviors? How should

marketing practitioners construct OBCs to make it easier for consumers to perform engagement behaviors? How should marketers reward consumers' engagement behaviors in OBCs? In sum, there are still unanswered research questions that can be answered through empirical scrutiny.

This research attempted to demonstrate the utility of SCT to understand consumers' engagement behaviors. The results indicated that constructs like self-efficacy and outcome expectations borrowed from SCT added to our understanding of why consumers perform engagement behaviors. In addition, the research provided meaningful implications for both researchers and practitioners. However, future research should be able to establish solid theoretical foundations and measurement of engagement behavior.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Statement

This study is being conducted by Hyuksoo Kim, a PH.D student at College of Communication & Information Sciences, the University of Alabama. I would like to invite you to participate in a survey to determine the factors influencing consumer's engagement behavior in online brand communities (OBCs). Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in this study.

Background Information and Procedures

The objective of this study is to investigate the consumers' behavior in OBCs and its impact. The research findings will be shared in academic settings through papers and presentations, but not used for any marketing purposes.

Participants are recruited from the actual OBCs. You are being asked to take part in the current study. If you agree to be in this study by clicking "YES, I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN" button and your participation in the study will begin. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to finish. You will only be asked to complete this survey once and your participation is strictly voluntary.

The information from the consent forms and from the questionnaires will be stored in two separate database files in two different folder locations to ensure confidentiality. There will be no way to link your information from the consent forms with your answers on the questionnaire.

Risks of Being in this Study

There will be minimal risks to the participants involved in this study. Participants will be asked about their opinions and thoughts about their behaviors in OBCs. These questions are not expected to cause any feelings of embarrassment or discomfort for the participant or researcher.

Benefits of Being in this Study

This research enables the researcher to investigate how cause-related marketing can increase brand equity and trust toward the company. The findings of this study will assist marketers in developing more effective cause-related marketing campaigns. The minimal risks presented by this study are balanced or outweighed by the benefit of helping to better understand the impacts of cause-related marketing on brand equity building.

Confidentiality and Voluntary Nature of the Study

Please note that there is no place to put participant's name on the questionnaire, nor is there a link between the consent form and the questionnaire. The researcher will not, in any way, be

able to identify your answers. Your confidentiality will be maintained throughout the entire process.

If you decide to participate in this study, please keep in your mind that you can participate in this study only once.

If you agree to be in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do not want to participate.

This study is strictly voluntary. You can skip answering any questions or can withdraw from the survey at any time without any concern of reprisal or without affecting their current or future relations with the instructor of the class or with the College.

Contacts and Questions

If you have further questions about this research project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact Hyuksoo Kim at hkim54@crimson.ua.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant you may contact Ms. Tanta Myles, The University of Alabama Research Compliance Officer, at (205)-348-5152.

YES, I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN. click

NO, I DECIDED NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN click

- | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
- (8) Brand X's product is good value for the money.
- | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
- (9) Brand X is reliable.
- | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
- (10) I value the functional benefits of Brand X.
- | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
- (11) Brand X satisfies my needs to use (product category).
- | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
- (12) Brand X plays an important role in my life
- | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
- (13) Brand X reminds me of who I am
- | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
- (14) Brand X and I have a lot in common
- | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
- (15) I have a lot of faith in my future with Brand X
- | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

2. On average, about how much do you perform various activities in OBC of Brand X?

(1) On a typical day, about how much time do you spend on OBC of Brand X you have joined?

_____ hour(s) _____ minute(s) / day

(2) On a typical week, how much time do you spend reading the comments of other consumers in OBC of Brand X you have joined?

_____ hour(s) _____ minute(s) / week

(3) On a typical week, how much time do you spend posting messages in OBC of Brand X you have joined?

_____ hour(s) _____ minute(s) / week

3. Please check or circle the number that indicates your response.

(1) Performing various activities in OBC of Brand X will help me get support from others
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

(2) Performing various activities in OBC of Brand X will help me find something to talk about.
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

(3) Performing various activities in OBC of Brand X will help me feel like I belong to a group.
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

(4) Performing various activities in OBC of Brand X will help me maintain a relationship I value.
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

(5) Performing various activities in OBC of Brand X will help me find others who respect my views
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

(6) Performing various activities in OBC of Brand X will help me find people like me.
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

(7) Performing various activities in OBC of Brand X will help me provide help to others.
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

(8) Performing various activities in OBC of Brand X will help me find a wealth of information.
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

(9) Performing various activities in OBC of Brand X will help me obtain information that I can't find elsewhere.
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

(10) Performing various activities in OBC of Brand X will help me get immediate knowledge of brand-sponsored events.
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

