A SURVEY OF BRAND CO-CREATION AND ONLINE BRAND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITH U.S. CONSUMERS

A Dissertation

presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

at the University of Missouri-Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

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July 2020

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

A SURVEY OF BRAND CO-CREATION AND ONLINE BRAND COMMUNITY

ENGAGEMENT WITH U.S. CONSUMERS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to give thanks to God above for guiding me through my dissertation process and continually blessing my life. I can truly say I would not be here if not for the favor God has shown me.

Next, I would like to thank my dissertation advisor, Dr. Rodgers for her support throughout my dissertation process. It was because of her continued support that I was able to cultivate my ideas and conduct high quality research. I now see research with a level of clarity that I previously lacked. Our relationship has equipped me with knowledge and skills that will be integral to my success as I pursue my goals. Thank you, Dr. Rodgers.

I would like to thank Dr. Luisi for continually motivating me. Dr. Luisi was always willing to lend an empathetic ear, going beyond her role expectations to provide support for me in any way possible. Thank you for being able to seamlessly navigate between the roles of mentor, coach, and friend. To Dr. Frisby, Dr. Sheldon, and Dr. Easter, thank you for serving on my committee. You each left individual imprints on this research that helped elevate the level of intellectual rigor herein. I thank you for your flexibility, patience, and attention during this process.

To Dr. Perry and Dr. Mislan: thank you for constantly reassuring me throughout this process. Whether it be through in-depth one-on-one talks or casual conversations, you both reassured me of my worth and the value I provide to academia. Having you to help remind me of who I am meant the world. Thank you.

To Namyeon: I'm so glad you joined our cohort in 2017. Thank you always being willing to lend an open ear and for helping me navigate the program. Your PowerPoint lessons have been immeasurably crucial to my success. You are a star.

To Ayleen: when I think about the reasons I came to Mizzou, one clear, unequivocal

answer is to meet you. From our first "wait a minute" moment during orientation I knew we would get along well, but I had no idea how important you would be to my life. You are one of the best friends I have ever had. More importantly, you are beyond the shadow of a doubt one of the best human beings I have ever known. You are at once intelligent and sincere. Thank you for being in my life, thank you for enlightening me as you've grown, and thank you for seeing the light in me. You are a genius in your own right, and I am honored to be in your space.

To Lei: I am so grateful I got to know you this year! I love how we were able to connect in so many different ways. We could teach each other about research, teaching, politics, culture, career stuff (and everything in between) and have fun in the process, and that made coming to the office enjoyable. I can honestly say I would not have been able to complete this dissertation without your statistical prowess to consult with. It's a blessing to be around someone as talented and humble as yourself. I can't wait to see all of the amazing things you do throughout your career.

To Marcus: Thank you for always motivating me and giving me something to aspire towards. Going through this climb for the last 10 years has been manageable because I have a friend like you. I have the utmost respect for you as a person and gratitude to you as a friend. Who would've thought that two Black males from St. Louis City would go on to get PhDs? WE did it!

To Ka'Ron: You have no idea how grateful I am for you moving to Columbia. Being able to come home and talk to someone about new theories and concepts I learned in class was so important to furthering my understanding (it helped get me through comps and the dissertation process). You inspire me to pursue what is organic, and your belief in me energized me in a way I cannot put words to. Thank you.

To Brooke: I am so thankful to know someone as kind-hearted and supportive as you. You are a truly special person and I am grateful your light has shined on me all these years. Thank you for always believing in me, always rooting for me, and always looking for ways to help me throughout this process.

To Mom, Dad, Deshauna, Bria, Nicolas: You are the "why" behind everything that I do. Thank you for being the bedrock of my support system, for cultivating me in to the man I am today, and for helping me believe I can do anything. I love you more than you can ever know.

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ABSTRACT

The focus of the research is on the application of brand co-creation and online brand community (OBC) engagement as increasingly popular concepts in the areas of branding, brand management, and advertising. A theoretical orientation is developed upon reviewing the literature, definitions of key concepts are provided, and hypotheses are formulated to address the context of U.S. consumers who engage with OBCs on social networking sites (SNSs). Specifically, the research extends understanding of brand co-creation and OBC engagement by empirically examining the influence of perceived brand co-creation and OBC engagement on OBC membership, OBC commitment, and brand loyalty. The present study was motivated by disagreements in the literature over definitions, overlap, and lack of delineation between engagement and co-creation. Additionally, the study observes whether race plays a role in the relationships between brand co-creation, OBC engagement, OBC membership, OBC commitment, and brand loyalty. This was motivated by a general lack of advertising research on African American consumers, who offer a unique cultural perspective that, if investigated, will enhance understanding. Using Qualtrics, 420 responses were collected from a panel of African American and White American SNS users.

To the researcher's knowledge, this is the first study to evaluate both brand co-creation and OBC engagement within the context of SNSs. The study contributes to branding and advertising research and practice by examining what an OBC is from the perspective of U.S. consumers, how U.S. consumers co-create brand meaning, the relationship between brand co-creation and OBC engagement, and the impact these psychological processes have on consumers' social identities (i.e. OBC membership), OBC commitment, and brand loyalty. The researcher anticipates that results provide theoretical and practical insights about the adoption and usage of OBCs as part of a larger marketing and communication strategy.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The advent of Web 2.0 has transformed the way brands communicate with consumers. Whereas, in the past, brand management was almost completely controlled by the firm, branding is now driven by individuals from the firm (managers and employees) as well as consumers and other stakeholders (Merz et al., 2009). Through their actions and language surrounding the brand, these entities collectively participate in the co-creation of brands, brand meaning, and brand identity (Vallaster & Von Wallpach, 2013). As such, scholars have shown tremendous interest in brand co-creation where brands create a shared meaning of what they stand for (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Muñiz & Schau, 2007; Pentina et al., 2018). Specifically, brand co-creation is "a dynamic process of developing and negotiating brand meaning by a multiplicity of brand stakeholders who continually reflect on, appraise, and contest brand-related associations in the process of negotiating their personal and social life narratives" (Pentina et al., 2018, p. 58). Brand meaning includes internal interpretations (i.e., brand identity, which is interpreted by the brand) and external interpretations (i.e., brand loyalty, which is interpreted by consumers and stakeholders) of a brand (Vallaster & Von Wallpach, 2013).

Particularly, online brand communities (OBCs) serve as an important context for examining brand co-creation (Hatch & Schultz, 2010). An OBC is a specialized, non-geographically bound, *online* community, based on social communications and relationships among a brand's stakeholders (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). Examples of OBCs explored in the literature are dedicated to such brands as Apple, BMW, and the television show *Xena: Warrior Princess* (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001; Schau et al., 2009; Schau & Muñiz, 2002). This work found that through such practices as advocating for the brand, sharing brand-related experiences with one another, and creating content that resembles branded advertising, OBC members co-created

brand meaning (Muñiz & Schau, 2007; Schau et al., 2009). However, the majority of studies were undertaken in the context of Web 1.0 technology, which refers to earlier stages of the internet and included platforms such as online bulletin boards, email lists, and chatrooms, suggesting that examination of OBCs in the context of Web 2.0 is in itself a contribution to the literature.

Advertisers have taken note of the opportunities Web 2.0 provides to communicate with consumers. For example, from 2018 to 2019, social network advertising spending (which includes advertising on OBCs) in the U.S. increased from $26.95 billion to $32.18 billion (Statistica, 2019b). Furthermore, over half of the top 100 global brands have an OBC (Manchanda et al., 2015). Additionally, from 2018 to 2019, ethnic-minority advertising spending in the United States increased from $25.86 billion to (projected) $27.01 billion (PQ Media, 2019). Yet, some brands struggle to build a positive relationship with ethnic-minorities, particularly African Americans (Canty, 2020). For example, brands like H&M, Prada, and Gucci have had to remove online content in recent years after receiving backlash from consumers for insensitivity toward African Americans (White, 2019). By failing to build positive rapport with African Americans, brands miss out on the $1.3 trillion buying power the group possesses (Nielsen, 2019).

OBCs on social networking sites (SNSs) like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram provide an opportunity for brands to build loyalty and commitment with African American OBC users. To illustrate, research suggests that African Americans use SNSs more than all other ethnic groups in the U.S., engage with brands on SNSs more than other ethnic groups, and are more open to branded advertising on SNSs than other ethnic groups (Facebook, 2015; Nielsen, 2018, 2019). Considering this, alongside the significant buying power that African Americans hold

(Nielsen, 2019), it would behoove brands to better understand how to leverage online branding opportunities to build rapport and long-term standing with African American consumers (Robinson, 2019).

Additionally, the relationship between brand co-creation and engagement is still unclear. Previous research has identified brand engagement as a "building block" of brand co-creation (Hatch & Schultz, 2010). However, there is lack of clarity as to whether this means engagement is an antecedent to, consequences of, or synonymous with brand co-creation. This presents theoretical and managerial issues for any further understanding of brand co-creation and the mechanisms by which consumers co-create brands. Conceptual and empirical work that clarifies the conceptual relationship between the constructs and how they may work together to foster the development of brand meaning is another contribution to the literature.

The paradigm of brand co-creation follows a stakeholder perspective on brand building. Stakeholders consist of entities including brand owners, employees, consumers, etc. The present research places a focus on African American consumers, who are seldom represented in the advertising literature and who offer a valuable perspective to the existing knowledge base. A brand is seen through the lens of a social, dynamic process that is constructed through various networked interactions and relations between the OBC, the brand, and consumers. Thus, rather than accept brand meaning ascribed by the OBC brand owner, this research advances thinking on what a brand is and how its meaning is shaped or co-created by consumers as participants in brand co-creation. Indeed, the co-creation concept represents one of the most dominant paradigm shifts in branding research (Galvagno & Dalli, 2014). However, a unique aspect of the present research regards co-creation from the consumer's cultural perspective, i.e., consumption as a

symbolic and cultural activity in which consumers give OBCs and brands that occupy OBCs subjective meanings.

While some researchers have explored brand co-creation in offline brand communities (Black & Veloutsou, 2017; Voyer et al., 2017; Wallpach et al., 2017), few have explored brand co-creation in OBCs (Pentina et al., 2018), and none the author is aware of have explored African Americans' brand co-creation in OBCs and the influence this has on brand relationships. As a result, little is known about the role of race in African American OBC members' brand co-creation processes. The present study seeks to fill this gap by examining brand co-creation and OBC engagement processes among African American consumers with regard to social identity, OBC commitment, and brand loyalty.

Specifically, the focus of the research is on the application of brand co-creation and OBC engagement as increasingly popular concepts in the areas of branding, brand management, and advertising. A theoretical orientation is developed upon reviewing the literature, definitions of key concepts are provided, and hypotheses are formulated to address the context of African Americans and White American consumers who are engaged with OBCs on SNSs. The research extends understanding of brand co-creation and OBC engagement by defining the relationship between the constructs and empirically examining the influence of perceived brand co-creation and OBC engagement on social identity with the OBC, OBC commitment, and brand loyalty. The present study was motivated by disagreements in the literature over definitions, overlap, and delineation between engagement and co-creation. Additionally, the study observes whether race plays a role in the relationship between the constructs. This was motivated by a general lack of advertising research on African American consumers who offer a unique cultural perspective to

enhance understanding. Using Qualtrics, 420 responses were collected from a panel of African American and White American SNS users.

To the researcher's knowledge, this is the first study to evaluate brand co-creation and engagement with OBC members within the context of SNSs. The study contributes to branding and advertising research and practice by examining what an OBC is from the perspective of U.S. consumers, how U.S. consumers co-create brand meaning, the role of race in the relationship OBC engagement and brand co-creation, and the impact these psychological processes have on consumers' OBC membership, OBC commitment, and brand loyalty. The researcher anticipates that results provide theoretical and practical insights about the adoption and usage of OBCs as part of a larger marketing and communication strategy. The purposes of this dissertation are to:

1: Understand the effects of brand co-creation and OBC engagement on consumers' psychological and behavioral responses.

2: Understand the role race plays in the construction of brand meaning.

The remainder of the dissertation is organized as follows: First, online brand community (OBC) is defined in relation to brand community, out of which rose the OBC concept. Next, theoretical orientations are provided to give the reader a sense of the author's perspective and philosophy. Third, Table 1 is used to introduce concept definitions, and Figure 1 is used to introduce hypotheses and research questions. Fourth the methodology for testing the hypotheses are presented, followed by the data analysis plan and results. Finally, the discussion and conclusions are presented.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The main goal of this section is to review relevant literature and develop hypotheses. A first step is to define online brand community (OBC) as the main concept that serves as the study's context. Since OBC arose out of the more general brand community literature, a brief definition of brand community is provided, followed by a more in-depth discussion of OBC, specifically. The researcher notes that the preferred OBC term is used throughout; however, in defining OBC, it is necessary to draw from the broader and more established brand community concept. For clarity, the researcher uses the term OBC as separate from brand community, both of which are defined next.

2.1 Brand Community

The concept of brand community provides a logical starting point upon which to build the more specific concept of OBC, the study's main context. A brand community is "a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand" (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 412). Brand community members include brands, consumers, brand products, and marketers (McAlexander et al., 2002). However, the focus of this study is on consumers as co-creative entities. Therefore, the researcher adopts a customer-centric perspective of brand community, naming the customer as the focal object (McAlexander et al., 2002). This is in contrast to the brand-centric perspective of Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001), which names the brand as the focal object in a brand community.

The classic brand community literature (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; McAlexander, 2002) presents discussions that run parallel to the discussion on OBC below. For example, Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) explain that brand communities are not geographically bound because of technologies like telephone, magazine, and personal computers that help people who are

geographically dispersed build connections. Although they do not focus solely on computer-mediated technology, Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) include computer-mediated brand communities (i.e., OBCs) in their original study of brand communities. They also explain that brand community is largely sustained by notions of imagined, understood others—which connects to the psychological OBC concept discussed in the OBC section. Finally, McAlexander et al. (2002) explains that brand community membership can be temporary or enduring—which connects to the discussion on brand communities on social networking sites (SNSs). In short, most (if not all) of the discussion surrounding brand community has been applied to the discussion surrounding OBC, with OBC providing a mechanism for those processes to take place (i.e., geographical boundlessness, imagined connections with other community members in the absence of social interaction, the temporary or enduring nature of brand community membership). These elements are discussed within the OBC context in the next section.

2.2 Online Brand Community

Adapting Muniz and O'Guinn's (2001) definition, OBC is defined as a specialized, non-geographically bound, *online* community, based on social communications and relationships among a brand's stakeholders. There are four aspects briefly discussed to give the reader an idea of how the researcher defines OBC to narrow the discussion with the goal to improve precision in defining the OBC concept. These four aspects include: 1) social vs. psychological dimensions, 2) consumption communities vs. subcultures, 3) goal orientation, and 4) social media platforms.

First, Carlson et al. (2008) differentiate between dimensions of social and psychological OBCs. Social OBCs consist of members who interact online, whereas psychological OBCs include those who may not socialize with other members but still develop a psychological sense of OBC membership (Carlson et al., 2008). While OBC members may develop social and

psychological connections through their interactions, social interaction is not necessary to develop a psychological sense of OBC membership. The latter interpretation, i.e., psychological OBCs, is adopted in this study to encapsulate the psychological connection OBC members develop with one another. This serves to inform a theoretical and practical perspective. Theoretically, focusing on one main type of brand community enhances precision since, as noted, disagreements exist over definitions. Therefore, the researcher opts to define OBCs in terms of psychological aspects. This is not to suggest that African American OBC members would not engage in social aspects of OBCs, such as interacting or sharing dialogue; indeed, the very concepts selected for study assume that interaction and dialogue are a part of the brand co-creation and OBC engagement processes. However, conceptualizing an OBC as a psychological process locates the concept within the psychological domain and enhances accuracy.

A second aspect of OBCs that deserves consideration is distinguishing between two similar concepts: consumption communities and consumption subcultures. Doing so provides a rationale for selecting OBC as the context for the study as opposed to other alternatives. Similar to OBCs, consumption communities represent communities connected through some type of consumption (McAlexander et al., 2002). However, consumption communities only exist in physical form (McAlexander et al., 2002). Because the focus of this study is on how consumers shape brands in online, digital, and/or virtual spaces, consumption community was not appropriate for examination. In contrast, the present study adopts the more appropriately aligned subcultures of consumption, which represents people's shared connection to a brand that impacts their way of life (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995).

Third, goal-orientation is highlighted, as OBC members are often goal-oriented in their membership (Dholakia et al., 2004; Schau & Muñiz, 2002). Members may be driven by

utilitarian motivations, such as information and remuneration, or by identity motivations, such as personal identity development, empowerment, and social identity development (Baldus et al., 2015; Chi, 2011; Muntinga et al., 2011; Park & McMillan, 2017; Pentina et al., 2018; Saridakis et al., 2016). It is the latter goal-orientation, i.e., identity motivations, that is part of the researcher's conceptualization of OBC. It is, therefore, assumed that OBC members construct personal identity, social identity, and brand meaning through the OBC (Belk, 1988; Black & Veloutsou, 2017; Schau et al., 2009; Schau & Muñiz, 2002).

Fourth, there are several online or virtual platforms on which an OBC may form. The bulk of OBC research has examined OBCs within the context of traditional OBC platforms like electronic bulletin boards, web rings, e-mailing lists, themed virtual locations, and chat rooms, which represent Web 1.0 (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Broderick et al., 2003; Schau & Muñiz, 2002). Specifically, Web 1.0 emphasizes information access (Fırat & Köksal, 2017). On Web 1.0, website owners (not users) are the only users who can manipulate the information displayed (Handsfield et al., 2009). Web 2.0, however, refers to a world wide web that fosters collaboration, information sharing, and communication between people and entities, increasing the functionality of the web for users (Tyagi, 2012). On Web 2.0, users can create and manipulate content online (Handsfield et al., 2009). Because of the evolved functionality of Web 2.0 for OBC members, it is important that OBCs maintained on Web 2.0 platforms like social networking sites (SNSs) are also examined (Broderick et al., 2003; Veirman et al., 2017).

SNSs refer to "web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system" (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 2). Examples of popular SNSs include Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram. Of course, there are literally dozens of examples of SNS and OBCs are presumed to be built within (or around) certain SNS, perhaps

some more than others. For example, it is suggested that within SNSs, OBC may take the form of a brand page on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter (Sung et al., 2010).

Voorveld et al. (2018) categorizes SNSs based on two dimensions: (1) customized messaging vs. broadcast messaging, and (2) profile-based vs. content-based. Customized messaging refers to features that allow users to send messages to individual users or small audiences. Broadcast messaging refers to features that allow users to share messages to anyone who may be interested. Profile-based platforms are those that allow users to connect, communicate, and build relationships with one another. Content-based platforms allow users to collaboratively search for answers to pressing questions. Based on these dimensions, SNSs may be separated into four categories: 1) relationship SNSs, which are profile-based and focus on customized messages (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn), 2) self-media SNSs, which are profile-based and focus on broadcast messages (e.g. Twitter), 3) creative outlet SNS, which are content-based and focus on broadcast messages (e.g. YouTube, Pinterest), and 4) collaboration SNSs, which are content-based and focus on customized messages (e.g. Reddit, Quora). Rather than restrain the research to a specific SNS type, which may be too limiting in scope, the researcher opts to include all four SNS types in the dissertation. This helps develop understanding of how OBC membership develops across SNS platforms.

2.3 Theoretical Orientation

It is important to identify the theoretical orientation of the research, as this helps to understand the study's philosophical underpinnings, situates the study into the broader literature(s), and sets the scene for what is to come with hypothesis development. However, the researcher found it difficult to identify only one theoretical orientation from which to develop thinking due to cross-fertilization of the main concepts, i.e., brand co-creation and OBC

engagement. In light of challenges, the researcher opted to take a "melding" of theoretical approaches. To explain this, a bibliometric analysis of the co-creation literature by Galvagno and Dalli (2014) suggests that co-creation arises from many different theoretical perspectives that are inherently tied to one another and, thus, are difficult to "pull apart." For example, the service science perspective, which is perhaps the most dominant area of value co-creation research, assumes that interaction between providers and customers is seen as the building block in co-creating value (e.g., Gronroos, 2008, 2011).

A second perspective is innovation and technology management, which also focuses on interaction between customers and brands but includes technological platforms as possible mediators. Each approach discussed so far, i.e., service science and innovation and technology management, helps to inform the present study in several important ways. First, each approach assumes that interaction is an important building block in co-creation and engagement of OBCs. Although the researcher agrees with this basic premise, there is disagreement over what exactly constitutes "interaction." For example, interaction can occur between brand-consumer, consumer-consumer, etc. Additionally, there is disagreement as to the nature of the "interaction", e.g., is a like, follow, tweet an interaction?

Next, the literature on co-creation is apparently organized in terms of micro-analytic vs. macro-analytic approaches. The micro-analytic approach views co-creation as involving the processes of a supplier facilitating value by providing resources (i.e., services) to its customer and the customer creating value with those resources through value-generating processes. The value-generating processes may be behavioral (i.e., consumption) or psychological (i.e., engagement). This micro-analytic orientation goes along with an earlier point when it was mentioned that the present study conceptualizes OBC as a psychological rather than solely a

social (i.e., behavioral) process. From the researcher's perspective, a psychological orientation allows for the notion that social interaction, while an ideal goal or by-product of OBCs, is not really necessary for OBC members to have a sense of being part of the OBC (Carlson et al., 2008). This is an important part of the philosophy guiding the research, as it is suggested that consumers are starting to consume less in efforts to reduce their ecological footprint, yet still want to maintain strong relationships with brands (Ziba, 2020).

Additionally, much of the research on co-creation has taken an optimistic perspective when, in fact, negative consequences may also arise. For example, scholars who take a micro-analytic viewpoint criticize the service science perspective and claim that co-creation is socially embedded and also has negative aspects. Thus, involving consumers in the co-creating process may have both positive and potential negative aspects. Cova and Dalli (2009) suggest that consumers may view brand co-creation as a form of exploitation, e.g., when brands put consumers to work but do not compensate them. Others have criticized co-creation as a way to manipulate consumers as "partners" in the selling of brands (e.g., Zwick et al., 2008; Bonsu and Darmody, 2008).

Finally, SNS brand communities have unique features that delineate them from traditional OBCs. First, because consumers can easily join SNS brand communities by "liking" or "following" them, they are more open than traditional OBCs (Gruner et al., 2014). Since membership in SNS brand communities does not require high amounts of effort, SNS users often take membership in multiple SNS brand communities, resulting in lower brand involvement (Veirman et al., 2017). Additionally, consumers can easily like, comment on, and share information about SNS brand communities with their entire network—even those who are not members of the community. This allows brand pages to reach a mass audience more easily than

traditional OBCs, which focus on facilitating communication between community members (Veirman et al., 2017). As such, members in an SNS brand community may serve as a bridge between the community and potential additional "other" members (Liao & Chou, 2012) who may not be as invested in the OBC.

Each of these aspects help to define the researcher's perspective and philosophy and indicate a unique role in co-creating OBC identity and brand meaning. To summarize, the following assumptions form the philosophy upon which the research is based: 1) a "micro" analytic approach is needed to explain OBCs from a psychological orientation; 2) although interaction is a key concept explored in brand co-creation and engagement literature, lack of agreement on concept definition means the concept is murky and social interaction is not really necessary for members to feel a sense of community (i.e., psychological interaction may provide a better alternative); 3) much of co-creation research has taken an optimistic perspective but this ignores potential negative consequences and limits understanding; and, 4) research assumes that co-creation and engagement in OBCs only occurs via community members even though community members serve as a potential bridge to a broader public of individuals (namely, family members, friends, and acquaintances) who may also "participate" in co-creation and engagement with little or no investment into the OBC community.

2.4 Concept Definitions

Table 1 summarizes the main concepts that serve to guide the remainder of the dissertation. The framework broadly conceptualizes five key aspects: (1) brand co-creation (2) OBC engagement, (3) social identity (consisting of OBC membership), (4) OBC commitment, and (5) brand loyalty. The researcher assumes brand co-creation is an important factor in maintenance of the OBC and that by way of OBC engagement influences both the nature of the

OBC members (social identity) and other predicted outcomes. The outcomes in the framework are strategically selected to examine OBC sustainability, i.e., OBCs that last over the long haul. OBC membership, OBC commitment and brand loyalty are a hallmark of nearly any OBC that wishes to keep its OBC community of consumers engaged with the brand long-term. Each of the table's components is defined and explained in relation to the selected context, i.e., African American consumer participants of OBCs. For simplicity, the researcher uses the preferred term online brand community, or OBC, to mean OBCs within social networking sites (SNSs).

Brand co-creation and engagement are closely linked terms that lack clear delineation from one another. This is in large part due to the lack of clear definitions of either concept. The following sections clearly define brand co-creation and engagement, and in doing so, explain the overlap and delineation of the concepts. The delineation provides an rationale for how the influence of brand co-creation and OBC engagement on social identity and brand meaning should be explored. In short, while there is overlap between the brand co-creation and engagement concepts, OBC engagement does not encompass the all of the processes through which consumers co-create value. It is necessary that both constructs are considered when developing an understanding of consumer development of brand meaning and social identity.

Table 1: Summary of Concepts, Variables, and Definitions.

Concept(s)/Variables	***Definition(s)***
Brand Co-Creation	*"A dynamic process of developing and negotiating brand meaning by a multiplicity of brand stakeholders who continually reflect on, appraise, and contest brand-related associations in the process of negotiating their personal and social life narratives" (Pentina et al., 2018, p. 58).*
Dialogue	*Conversations between the consumer and the brand (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).*
Access	*The availability of brand-related resources that allow consumers to construct their own brand-related experience (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).*
Risk Assessment	*The availability of information that allows consumers to understand the potential risks and benefits of their brand-related behavior (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).*
Transparency	*The availability of information about a brand, its products and services (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).*
OBC Engagement	*"Specific interactive experiences between consumers and the brand, and/or other members of the OBC. [OBC engagement] is a context-dependent, psychological state characterized by fluctuating intensity levels that occur within dynamic, iterative engagement processes. [OBC engagement] is a multidimensional concept comprising cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral dimensions" (Brodie et al., 2013, p. 107).*
Affective Engagement	*Enthusiasm and enjoyment associated with the OBC (Dessart et al., 2016).*
Cognitive Engagement	*Mental activity (attention and absorption) focused on the OBC (Dessart, 2017).*
Behavioral Engagement	*Active manifestation (sharing information, learning, endorsing) of engagement (Dessart et al., 2015).*
Social Identity	*One's beliefs regarding her membership in certain social groups (Sirgy, 1982).*
Consciousness of Kind	*OBC members' perceived similarities and felt connection with other OBC members; felt difference from non-OBC members (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001).*
Shared Rituals and Traditions	*Practices through which the meaning of the OBC is communicated (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001).*
Sense of Moral Responsibility	*OBC members' sense of obligation to the OBC and its individual members (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001).*
OBC Commitment	*An "enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship" with the OBC (Moorman et al., 1992, p. 316).*
Brand Loyalty	*Pervasive, non-random brand-related behavior expressed over time (Casaló et al., 2007).*

2.4.1 Brand Co-Creation

Brand co-creation is identified as an antecedent to understanding how or why brand meaning occurs in the OBC context. Brand co-creation is defined as "a dynamic process of developing and negotiating brand meaning by a multiplicity of brand stakeholders who

continually reflect on, appraise, and contest brand-related associations in the process of negotiating their personal and social life narratives" (Pentina et al., 2018, p. 58). As the definition explains, stakeholders develop brand meaning during co-creation, and in doing so develop their own personal and social identities. In short, brand co-creation is the peer-like process of consumers and brands generating new value (Galvagno & Dalli, 2014).

Brand co-creation consists of four building blocks: (1) dialogue, (2) access, (3) risk assessment, and (4) transparency (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Dialogue refers to conversations between the consumer and the brand, which requires willingness to act on both sides. Through dialogue, brands and consumers can work together to solve consumers' brand-related issues. Access refers to the availability of brand-related resources that allow consumers to construct their own brand-related experiences. A prime example is Nike By You, an online platform created by Nike that allows consumers to create customized Nikes. By having access to brand-related resources (like Nike By You), consumers can develop their own brand-related experiences.

Risk assessment refers to the availability of information that allows consumers to understand the potential risks and benefits of their brand-related behavior. These risks could be, for example, financial. To illustrate, when considering whether or not to design Nikes on Nike By You, a consumer may look for information about the price of customized Nikes compared to the price of Nikes that are not customized. Transparency refers to the availability of information about a brand, its prices, products and services. For example, on its website, Nike explains that the soles of its *Nike Air* sneakers are made with 50% recycled materials and are manufactured with 100% renewable energy. Risk assessment and transparency provide consumers with brand-related information that allows them to make well-informed consumption decisions. OBC

members share brand-related information with one another, providing greater access to brand resources, informing risk assessments, and making the brand more transparent for OBC members. Furthermore, OBCs present an opportunity for consumers to communicate with the focal brand. These building blocks are closely related, but not identical to engagement—as Hatch and Schultz (2010) suggest.

Specifically, Hatch and Schultz (2010) argue that dialogue and access should be consolidated into a single "engagement" dimension. From their perspective, brands and consumers simultaneously increase dialogue and access between one another through online engagement with brands. Adopting this perspective, Pentina et al. (2018) suggest that stakeholders co-create brands on SNSs through such engagement practices as commenting on a brand's posts, publishing stories about their brand shopping experiences, and suggesting new uses for the brand. While valuable, this view conflates co-creation and engagement, which does not align with the conceptualization of OBC engagement adopted in this study. OBC engagement is further discussed in the next section.

2.4.2 OBC Engagement

Engagement has been explored extensively in the advertising and branding literatures (Baek & Yoo, 2018; Gavilanes et al., 2018; Pentina et al., 2018; Rodgers & Thorson, 2018; Seo et al., 2018; Voorveld et al., 2018). Definitions of engagement focus on cognitive (Seo et al., 2018; Voorveld et al., 2018), affective (Gavilanes et al., 2018), behavioral (Pentina et al., 2018; Yoon et al., 2018), or a combination of these dimensions (Baek & Yoo, 2018), and largely depends on the platform on which the advertisement appears (Rodgers & Thorson, 2018). For example, in the context of branded applications, Baek and Yoo (2018) conceptualize engagement as the amount of use the app receives and users' positive evaluations of the app. In the context of

social networking sites, Yoon et al. (2018) conceptualize engagement as behavior, and argue that high-effort brand-related behavior constitutes higher levels of engagement. Additionally, Voorveld et al. (2018) conceptualize engagement with social media advertising as a psychological experience consisting of 11 dimensions, including innovation, social interaction, and empowerment. Despite important steps prior research in advertising has taken with regard to digital engagement, current research has lagged in connecting engagement within the OBC context. This may be due, in part, to a lack of common definition of OBC engagement.

In this study, the researcher conceptualizes OBC engagement as a multidimensional construct consisting of cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. This decision is drawn from the work of Brodie et al. (2013) who define, OBC engagement is defined as:

> *Specific interactive experiences between consumers and the brand, and/or other members of the* OBC. *[OBC engagement] is a context-dependent, psychological state characterized by fluctuating intensity levels that occur within dynamic, iterative engagement processes. [OBC engagement] is a multidimensional concept comprising cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral dimensions* (p. 107).

Cognitive engagement refers to the mental activity focused on the OBC, and involves attention and absorption (Dessart, 2017). Affective engagement refers to the enthusiasm and enjoyment associated with the OBC (Dessart et al., 2016). Behavioral engagement refers to the active manifestation of engagement, which includes sharing information, learning, and endorsing behaviors (Dessart et al., 2015). The multidimensional approach is adopted to encapsulate psychological OBC, wherein OBC members perceive membership even in the absence of social interaction (Carlson et al., 2008).

2.4.3 Social Identity

Personal identity refers to one's beliefs about who they are (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998). This includes perceptions regarding capabilities, values, roles, and social relationships (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998). Social identity, an aspect of personal identity and examined here, refers to one's beliefs regarding her membership in certain social groups (Sirgy, 1982). Social identity theory argues that individuals develop their self-concept in part from social groups to which they belong (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). As a social group, OBCs build and shape consumers' personal and social identities (Belk, 1988; Schau & Muñiz, 2002). Consumers support their personal and social identity development by showing admiration for brands, consuming brands, and engaging in OBCs (Dessart et al., 2015). By aligning themselves with certain brands and OBCs, OBC members align themselves with styles and images the brands and OBCs represent. Engaging with or avoiding specific brands and OBCs can signal membership in social groups, serving to boost one's status (Cook, 2008; McQuarrie et al., 2013; Ruane & Wallace, 2015; Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009).

Membership in an OBC is marked by consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions, and sense of moral responsibility. Consciousness of kind refers to OBC members' perceived similarities and felt connection with other OBC members; felt difference from non-OBC members (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). Shared rituals and traditions are practices through which the meaning of the OBC is communicated (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). Sense of moral responsibility refers to OBC members' sense of obligation to the OBC and its individual members (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001).

2.4.4 Brand Meaning

Brand meaning refers to internal interpretations (i.e., brand identity) and external interpretations (i.e., brand loyalty) of a brand (Vallaster & Von Wallpach, 2013; Black & Veloutsou, 2017). Brand identity, which is developed internally, refers to the character of a brand (Barnett et al., 2006). Specifically, brand identity is "the set of unique brand associations that producers aspire to create or maintain and the symbols they use to identify the brand to people" (Black & Veloutsou, 2017, p. 417). Brand identity is manufactured by a brand's management team through brand offerings and the adoption of specific symbolic, visual, and physical representations, through which consumers identify the brand and establish brand associations (Aaker, 1994; Balmer & Greyser, 2006).

External brand interpretations, refer to consumers' assessments of the brand (Basdeo et al., 2006). These assessments may be informed by controlled signals sent out by the brand, such as branded content (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009), or by uncontrolled signals sent by consumers, such as brand-related content (Muñiz & Schau, 2007). Indeed, research suggests brand-related information provided by consumers has a stronger influence on consumers' brand interpretations and brand-related behavior than brand-related information generated by the brand itself (Chiou & Cheng, 2003; Muñiz & Schau, 2007; Payne et al., 2009). Particularly important for an OBC's survival are OBC members' interpretations of their brand loyalty and OBC commitment. Brand loyalty refers to pervasive, non-random brand-related behavior expressed over time (Casaló et al., 2007). These behaviors result from the belief that one brand provides greater value than other brands of the same product category (Casaló et al., 2007). OBC commitment is the "enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship" with the OBC (Moorman

et al., 1992, p. 316). Researchers agree that OBC commitment is integral to the long-term survival of the OBC (Wirtz et al., 2013).

2.5 Research Model, Hypotheses, and Research Question

Explanatory variables identified in Table 1 help to illuminate types of brand-related value that may be derived from brand co-creation practices. However, this explanation does not develop understanding on how brand meaning may be developed through these factors. Drawing from Figure 1 and based on definitions provided in Table 1, the following section develops hypotheses that link brand co-creation, OBC engagement, OBC membership, OBC commitment, and brand loyalty. Figure 1 shows one explanatory variable, also called an independent variable, covariate, or regressor. An independent variable is defined as a variable that causes a change in another variable (Shoemaker et al., 2004). The independent variable in this study is brand co-creation. Additionally, the primary variables of interest are social identity, brand loyalty, and OBC commitment. The researcher refers to these as dependent variables throughout the writing of the dissertation. A dependent variable is defined as a variable whose value depends on the value of the independent variable (Shoemaker et al., 2004). The model also include one mediator (OBC engagement) that links the independent variables to the dependent variables.

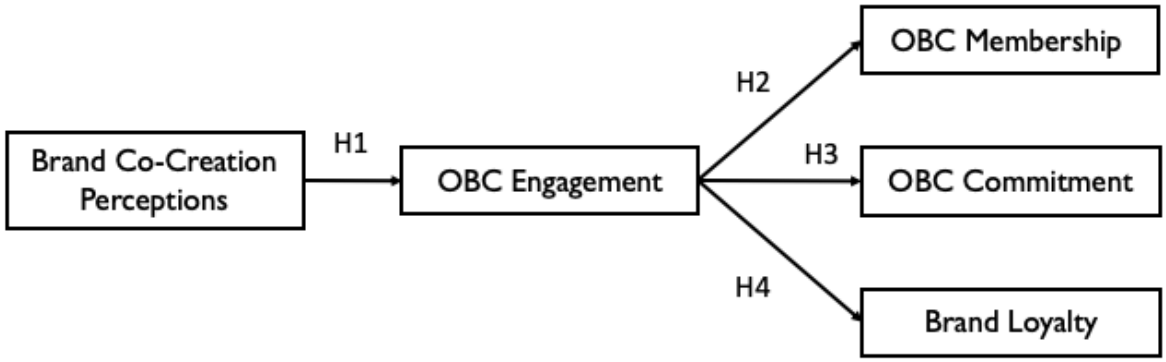


Figure 1. Theoretical model linking Brand Co-Creation, OBC Engagement, OBC Membership, OBC Commitment, and Brand Loyalty

2.5.1 Brand Co-Creation and OBC Engagement

As discussed, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) list four building blocks of co-creation: (1) dialogue, (2) access, (3) risk assessment, and (4) transparency. Each block is supported by the other three. For example, consumers need brand-related information (risk assessment, transparency) and resources (access) for dialogue with the brand to be meaningful. Furthermore, through dialogue, access, and transparency, consumers develop a clearer understanding of the risks and benefits associated with brand-related behavior. Additionally, the more consumers learn about and communicate with the brand, the more transparent the brand becomes (Hatch & Schultz, 2010). Finally, through dialogue, transparency, and risk assessment, consumers learn about opportunities to construct their own brand-related experiences (access). Through these co-creative practices, consumers generate new brand value, ultimately improving their brand-related experiences (Galvagno & Dalli, 2014; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

Brand co-creation is a more general concept that encompasses all the processes through which consumers generate value, and research suggests that brand engagement may be one of these processes (Pentina et al., 2018; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). For example, Pentina et al. (2018) identified several brand engagement behaviors on SNS that serve as mechanisms for co-creation:

(1) "following" the brand and "liking" its SNS page, (2) commenting on the brand's posts, (3) "liking," tagging, and sharing the brand's posts with others on SNS, (4) tagging friends on the brand's SNS wall, (5) using the brand's name in hashtags in posts on SNS, (6) Posting photos of the brand's products, (7) posting photos of self with brand's products, (8) Soliciting comments to personal photos with brand, (9) Starting and maintaining conversations about the brand on SNS, (10) Posting stories about one's experience with the brand, and (11) proposing new uses for the brand's products. Through brand engagement behaviors on SNSs (especially those that require more mental effort, like maintaining brand-related conversations) consumers co-create brand meaning (Pentina et al., 2018).

Additionally, previous research has found that consumers have several motivations for engaging with brands on SNSs, with one of the main motivators found throughout the literature being empowerment, or influence on the brand (Muntinga et al., 2011; Saridakis et al., 2016). In other words, by through brand engagement on SNSs, consumers seek to influence the brand (Saridakis et al., 2016). Due to the fruitful ground that OBCs provide for brand engagement, OBCs serve as a context through which the desire for empowerment may be fulfilled. OBCs in which the opportunity for brand co-creation is perceived to be high should illicit higher levels of engagement from its members. Therefore, the following is hypothesized.

H1: Brand co-creation perceptions positively influence OBC engagement.

2.5.2 OBC Engagement and OBC Membership

OBC members create a shared identity that distinguishes their OBC from others (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). To understand this, the three-part characterization of OBC membership offered by Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001) is offered, specifically: (1) consciousness of kind, (2) shared rituals and traditions, and (3) sense of moral responsibility to the OBC. Importantly,

individuals may develop these hallmarks of membership without being official members of the OBC (i.e., psychological sense of community). Consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions, and sense of moral responsibility are discussed in detail below.

Consciousness of kind refers to OBC members' felt connection towards each other (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). In addition to perceived similarities and shared attitudes, consciousness of kind represents OBC members' shared sense of belonging—a sense of "we-ness" (Bender, 1978). OBC members often feel that they know each other even when they have never met. Consciousness of kind also refers to OBC members' felt difference from non-OBC members (McAlexander et al., 2002). OBC members "tend to identify themselves negatively against objects they do not possess or use, activities they do not engage in, or people who are not like them because they are not members of the same communities" (Pongsakornrungsilp, 2010, p. 80). This aligns with Deshpandé and Stayman's (1994) perspective that people interpret their identity based on the unique traits they possess in relation to their environment. This shared identity may be internalized by OBC members to the point that their personal identities may be subsumed by the OBC identity (Schau & Muñiz, 2002).

Rituals and traditions refer to the practices through which the meaning of the OBC is communicated (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). Whereas consciousness of kind represents "this is who we are," rituals and traditions represent "this is what we do." Some traditions are adopted by all OBC members, while others are adopted by subsects within the OBC. Rituals and traditions may include language, customs, or other norms associated with the OBC. For the most part, rituals and traditions are centered on shared brand consumption experiences, which serve to foster shared consciousness (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). Sense of moral responsibility refers to OBC members' sense of obligation to the OBC and its individual members (Muñiz & O'Guinn,

2001). To maintain the OBC's existence, OBC members are responsible for integrating new OBC members, maintaining current members, and assisting others with their use of the brand (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). In doing so, the connection between OBC members, and thus the collective identity of OBC, is preserved (McAlexander et al., 2002).

Legitimacy refers to processes through which OBC members are acknowledged as "legitimate" brand consumers (Schau & Muñiz, 2002). This may be obtained by engaging in OBC-related or brand-related behavior or by showing OBC-related or brand-related expertise (Schau & Muñiz, 2002). This includes for example, helping other members solve brand-related problems, sharing brand-related information, and providing brand-related resources—essentially brand co-creation practices. By providing useful information to the OBC, members gain legitimacy, and thus status in the OBC (McAlexander et al., 2002). Because OBC members are legitimized by their proper use of the brand, and may be deemed outsiders by their unconventional use of the brand, this creates a hierarchy within the OBC (Schau & Muñiz, 2002).

To illustrate, members of a Harley-Davidson OBC acquired differential levels of legitimacy depending on their form of ritual participation (Schau & Muñiz, 2002). Sharing photos of bike models afforded less legitimacy than attending Harley-Davidson rallies, which in turn afforded less legitimacy than sharing photos of one's Harley-Davidson tattoos. Additionally, members of an OBC dedicated to singer Tom Petty established legitimacy by sharing stories about their concert experiences (Schau & Muñiz, 2002). Attending multiple concerts afforded more legitimacy than attending only a few. By participating in more rituals and traditions, OBC members gain legitimacy in the OBC (Schau & Muñiz, 2002). Because legitimacy is awarded by

other OBC members, the acquisition of legitimacy requires continued OBC engagement on behalf of the OBC member. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

H2: OBC engagement positively influences OBC membership.

2.5.3 OBC Engagement and OBC Commitment

Additionally, affective OBC engagement increases enthusiasm and enjoyment for the OBC, while cognitive engagement indicates attention and absorption towards the OBC. (Dessart, 2016). OBC engagement has been linked to OBC satisfaction, OBC loyalty, OBC membership continuance, and OBC commitment (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Jang et al., 2008; Wirtz et al., 2013). Research suggests that OBC engagement increases OBC members' positive attitudes towards the OBC and thereby improves OBC commitment (Jang et al., 2008; Casaló et al., 2007). Additionally, Zheng et al. (2015) found that OBC engagement led to increased OBC commitment. Put simply, the literature suggests the more one engages in an OBC the stronger one's like for and connection with the OBC. Feelings of oneness indicate a stronger collective identity amongst OBC members, which leads to an increase in OBC commitment (Algesheimer et al., 2005). Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

H3: OBC engagement positively influences OBC commitment.

2.6.4 OBC Engagement and Brand Loyalty

Behavioral brand loyalty is commonly viewed as a measure of success for OBCs (e.g. Algesheimer et al., 2005; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006), and has been observed in the OBC framework (Dessart, 2017). Research has found evidence that OBC engagement leads to brand loyalty. Specifically, Dessart (2017) found OBC engagement led to increased brand commitment, which led to increased brand loyalty (Dessart, 2017). In addition to strengthening their bond with one another through OBC engagement, OBC members strengthen their

commitment to the focal brand, thus increasing brand loyalty. However, there is still a lack of empirical validation of a direct relationship between OBC engagement and brand loyalty. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

H4: OBC engagement positively influences brand loyalty.

2.5.5 African American OBC Members

Though research on African American OBC members is limited, African American OBC members may differ from non-African American OBC members in their perceived brand co-creation, OBC engagement, OBC membership, OBC commitment, and brand loyalty. To illustrate, research shows that African Americans are more active on SNSs than other ethnicities and are more likely to engage with brands on SNSs than other ethnicities (Nielsen, 2018; 2019). This may be related to efforts to influence brands by encouraging them to be more socially conscious (Nielsen, 2018). Additionally, online communities in particular serve as a platform where the legacy of oral communication within the African American community is continued (Steele, 2016). Similar to traditional enclaves within the African American community (i.e. the barbershop, church), online communities represent digital spaces where African Americans construct and manifest shared identity through discourse (Steele, 2016). This includes discourse surrounding brands, which may influence and bolster the symbolic meaning African Americans ascribe to brands. This relates to research that found African Americans signify membership in (or disaffiliation from) mainstream society and their ethnic group through brand consumption (Lamont & Molnar, 2001; Molnar & Lamont, 2002).

Indeed, because of the unique symbolic meaning they ascribe to brands, African Americans develop unique connections with brands. This explains why African Americans spend larger shares of their expenditure on visible goods (i.e. clothing) than White Americans (Charles

et al., 2009). It may also explain why differential levels of brand loyalty may exist between African Americans and other ethnic groups, though the findings on this are mixed. For example, some research (Podoshen, 2008) found no difference in brand loyalty between African Americans and non-African Americans. Other work indicates that African Americans show lower levels of brand loyalty than other ethnic groups (Packaged Facts, 2006, as cited in Podoshen, 2008 p. 213), while alternative research found African Americans show higher levels of brand loyalty than other ethnic groups (Larson & Wales, 1973). As the preceding discussion illuminates, understanding of African American OBC members' perceived brand co-creation, OBC engagement, OBC membership, OBC commitment, and brand loyalty is still unclear. Therefore, the following research question is proposed:

RQ1: Does race moderate the relationship between brand co-creation perceptions and OBC engagement?

RQ2: Does race moderate the relationship between OBC engagement and OBC membership?

RQ3: Does race moderate the relationship between OBC engagement and OBC commitment?

RQ4: Does race moderate the relationship between OBC engagement and brand loyalty?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study is an online survey using paid panelists via Qualtrics. This decision is based on evidence provided by a comparative study that supports the use of Qualtrics in SNS research after comparing data Facebook users in the U.S. and India (Boaz, 2020). An advantage is that it is easy and inexpensive to obtain data from a Qualtrics sample.

3.1 Design of Study

The study employs a self-administered cross-sectional online survey. Online surveys provide several benefits. First, online surveys allow access to groups who would otherwise be near impossible to reach (Garton et al., 1999). Oftentimes, OBCs rarely meet in person or only exist digitally (Muniz, Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001; Wright, 2005). Administering an online survey allows for access to members of these OBCs. Second, online surveys allow researchers to access groups who are geographically dispersed in a relatively short amount of time (Yun & Trumbo, 2000). Because OBCs are not geographically bound, members are not always in close proximity to one another (McAlexander et al., 2002). Posting surveys online allows for access to large numbers of widely dispersed OBC members very quickly. This process would likely take longer if surveys were administered face-to-face.

Third, online surveys are more cost-effective than paper surveys (Llieva et al., 2002). By administering surveys online, researchers avoid costs associated with printing, postage, and data entry (Llieva et al., 2002). Fourth, because anonymity is easier to maintain digitally, online surveys may garner more truthful responses from respondents (Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). In-person survey participants may provide socially desirable responses to survey items due to

perceived social pressure (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). However, taking a survey digitally may alleviate some of that pressure (Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006).

There are, however, disadvantages to online survey research. Specifically, because demographic data is often self-reported, there is no guarantee that all participants will provide accurate data (Stanton, 1998; Wright, 2005). This could potentially lead to inaccurate data. The current study defends against this by administering the online survey to multiple OBCs (Wright, 2005). Administering the survey to multiple OBCs minimizes the potential influence of deceptive respondents.

3.2 Materials

An online survey is created using established measures, which improves precision measurement. Misrepresentation and "cheaters" have been listed among the chief complaints of on panels (Ford, 2017). However, the present study attempted to minimize error and increase validity by careful development to handle two main concerns expressed by advertising scholars, namely, speeders and cheaters (see Ford, 2017). Speeders are assessed by examining the length of time it takes to fill out the survey. An average length is calculated by averaging the total number of minutes by the total number of individuals taking the survey during a pilot test. Speeders are defined as anyone who takes half or less than half the average time to fill out the survey. For example, if the average time is 10 minutes, anyone who takes 5 minutes or less is considered a speeder and whose data will be dropped from the final analysis. Cheaters are defined as respondents who pay little attention to the survey and simply "click buttons" (see Ford, 2017). A speed bump is carefully added to the survey to assess if individuals are paying attention. A speed bump is an instruction or set of instructions that have nothing to do with the

study. For example, a speed bump might simply ask, “On this next question, select the numeral 8. No matter what the question asks you, just select 8.”

3.3 Study’s Context

The study’s context is online brand communities (OBCs) housed within social networking sites (SNSs). OBC is defined as a specialized, non-geographically bound, *online* community, based on social communications and relationships among a brand's stakeholders. To increase awareness of the study’s context and prompt individuals to think specifically of their OBC membership, the following description is provided in advance of the survey items: An online brand community (OBC) is a social media page where brand consumers interact with each other or a specific brand. Examples of OBCs are a brand’s social media page, a social media page created by the fans of a brand, or a social media group focused on a brand (like a Facebook group dedicated to a brand). OBC members are those who follow a brand on social media, follow a social media page dedicated to a brand, or follow a social media group focused on a brand. Which of the following best describes you:

- I have "followed"/"liked" at least one brand or brand-related group on social media
- I have not "followed"/"liked" any brands or brand-related groups on social media, but I do "like" posts from at least one brand or brand-related group
- I have not "followed"/"liked" any brands or brand-related groups on social media, I do not "like" any posts from brands or brand-related groups on social media, but I do feel connected with a brand or brand-related group on social media
- I have not "followed"/"liked" any brands or brand-related groups on social media, I do not "like" any posts from brands or brand-related groups on social media, and I do not feel connected with any brands or brand-related groups on social media

Participants who marked the final option were removed from the survey as they were inapplicable to the OBC-related concepts measured in the survey. Those who marked one of the first three options were directed to the following set of questions:

- *What is the name of the brand-related social media page you had in mind when answering the previous item?*
- *What social media platform is this OBC on? [Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, Reddit, Snapchat, Tumblr, dating app (e.g. Tinder), live streaming services (e.g. Periscope), YouTube, YouTube Red]*
- *Which product category is <u>most</u> reflective of the OBC you selected (select ONE)? [(1) food and beverage, (2) travel, (3) fashion and beauty, (4) entertainment, (5) durable goods, (6) services, (7) technology, (8) retail and (9) others]*

Participation was selected in this way to evaluate how even individuals who may not have official OBC membership respond to brand co-creation and OBC engagement even in the absence of official OBC membership. In essence, the participants who respond "no" serve as a "control group" against which to compare responses of those who indicate official membership to an OBC versus those who do not. This provides an opportunity to isolate official OBC membership as a potential moderator in the relationships investigated (Kenny, 1975). That being said, the control group described here differs from what might be seen in a laboratory experiment. For example, control groups are typically compared with treatment groups who are exposed to a specific manipulation. This point notwithstanding, the proposed yes/no classification and responses allows for a unique aspect of the survey and subsequent comparisons.

3.4 Measures

3.4.1 Explanatory Variables

Going off of Figure 1, there are two explanatory variables: brand co-creation and OBC engagement. To ensure validity and reliability, existing scales were used with all showing moderate to high Cronbach's alphas. Each scale is operationalized next.

Brand co-creation perceptions. Brand co-creation is defined as "a dynamic process of developing and negotiating brand meaning by a multiplicity of brand stakeholders who continually reflect on, appraise, and contest brand-related associations in the process of negotiating their personal and social life narratives" (Pentina et al., 2018, p. 58). Four aspects of brand co-creation are examined in the present study, namely, dialogue, access, risks, and transparency. Dialogue is defined as digital conversations between the OBC members and the brand. Access is defined as the availability of brand-related resources that allow OBC members to construct their own brand-related experience. Risk assessment is defined as the availability of brand-related information that allow OBC members to assess the potential positive or negative consequences of brand co-creation. Transparency is defined as the availability of information about a brand, its products and services on the OBC. All definitions and measures are selected from (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). The DART Scale was adapted to measure each dimension (Albinsson et al., 2016).

Dialogue. Dialogue was measured using nine 7-point Likert scale items. Items include: "The brand communicates with OBC members to receive input on improving the service/product experience," "The brand is interested in communicating with OBC members about the best ways to design and deliver a quality service/product experience," "The brand uses multiple channels of communication to encourage greater exchange of ideas with OBC members about the

service/product experience," "The brand and OBC members have active dialogue on how to add value in the service/product experience," "OBC members are encouraged to communicate with the brand about any and all aspects of the service/product experience," "Multiple lines of communications are used by the brand to gather input and ideas from OBC members," "The brand actively promotes dialogue with OBC members to learn more about the OBC members' reaction to the service/product experience," "OBC members have many opportunities to share their ideas with the brand about adding value to the service/provider experience," and "The brand makes it easy for OBC members to communicate their ideas about the design and delivery of the service/product experience." Cronbach's alpha for the items is .92 (M = 4.6, SD = 1.3).

Access. Access was measured using three 7-point Likert scale items. Items include: "The brand lets OBC members decide how they receive the service/product offering," "OBC members have many options to choose how they experience the service/product offering," and "It is easy for OBC members to receive the service/product offering when, where and how they want it." Cronbach's alpha for the items is .85 (M = 4.6, SD = 1.5).

Risk Assessment. Risk assessment was measured using six 7-point Likert scale items. Items include: "The brand provides the OBC members with comprehensive information pertaining how risks and benefits were assessed for the service experience or product," "OBC members receive comprehensive information pertaining to the risks and benefits of the service/product experience," "The brand fully informs OBC members about all risks stemming from product or service use," "The brand provides OBC members with necessary tools and support to make fully informed decisions as to whether they should participate in the service/product experience," "The brand is very clear and factual about both the negative and positive factors associated with the service/product offering," and "The brand allows OBC

members to make informed decisions regarding the risks and benefits of the product/service experience." Cronbach's alpha for the items is .86 (M = 4.7, SD = 1.3).

Transparency. Transparency was measured using four 7-point Likert scale items. Items include: "The brand fully discloses to OBC members information which might be helpful to improve the outcomes of the service/product experience," "OBC members are given open access to information that might be useful in enhancing the overall design and delivery of the service/product experience," "OBC members and the brand are treated as equal partners in sharing information that is needed to achieve a successful service/product experience," and "The brand fully discloses to OBC members detailed information regarding the costs and pricing associated with the design and delivery of the service/product experience." Cronbach's alpha for the items is .84 (M = 4.6, SD = 1.4).

OBC engagement. OBC engagement is defined as "specific interactive experiences between consumers and the brand, and/or other members of the OBC. [OBC engagement] is a context-dependent, psychological state characterized by fluctuating intensity levels that occur within dynamic, iterative engagement processes. [OBC engagement] is a multidimensional concept comprising cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral dimensions" (Brodie et al., 2013, p. 107). OBC engagement consists of three dimensions: affective OBC engagement, cognitive OBC engagement, and behavioral OBC engagement. Affective OBC engagement is defined as enthusiasm and enjoyment associated with the OBC (Dessart et al., 2016). Cognitive OBC engagement is defined as mental activity (attention and absorption) focused on the OBC (Dessart, 2017). Behavioral OBC engagement is defined as the active manifestation (sharing information, learning, endorsing) of engagement (Dessart et al., 2015). OBC engagement was measured using Dessart et al.'s (2016) OBC engagement scale.

Affective OBC engagement. Affective OBC engagement was measured using six 7-point Likert scale items. Items include: "I feel enthusiastic about this online brand community," "I am interested in anything about this online brand community," "I find this online brand community interesting," "When interacting with this online brand community, I feel happy," "I get pleasure from interacting with this online brand community," and "Interacting with this online brand community is like a treat for me." Cronbach's alpha for the scale is .91 (M = 4.9, SD = 1.3).

Cognitive OBC engagement. Cognitive OBC engagement was measured using six, 7-point Likert-scale items. Items include: "I spend a lot of time thinking about this online brand community," "I make time to think about this online brand community," "When interacting with this online brand community, I forget everything else around me," "Time flies when I am interacting with this online brand community," "When I am interacting with this online brand community, I get carried away," and "When interacting with this online brand community, it is difficult to detach myself." Cronbach's alpha for the scale is .90 (M = 4.3, SD = 1.5).

Behavioral OBC engagement. Behavioral OBC engagement was measured using ten 7-point Likert-scale items. Items include: "I share my ideas with this online brand community," "I share interesting content with this online brand community," "I help this online brand community," "I ask this online brand community questions," "I seek ideas or information from this online brand community," "I seek help from this online brand community," "I promote this online brand community," "I try to get others interested in this online brand community," "I actively defend this online brand community from its critics," and "I say positive things about this online brand community to other people." Cronbach's alpha for the scale is .91 (M = 4.5, SD = 1.4).

3.4.2 Dependent Variables

The dependent measures used in the study include OBC membership, OBC commitment, and brand loyalty. Existing scales were used, with all showing acceptable Cronbach's alphas.

OBC membership. OBC membership includes three dimensions: consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions, and sense of moral responsibility. Consciousness of kind refers to OBC members' felt connection towards each other (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). Rituals and traditions refer to the practices through which the meaning of the OBC is communicated (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). Sense of moral responsibility refers to OBC members' sense of obligation to the OBC and its individual members (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). OBC membership was measured using Madupu's (2006) OBC membership scale.

Consciousness of kind. Consciousness of kind was measured using four, 7-point Likert-scale items adopted from Madupu (2006). Items include "I have a strong sense of belonging to this online brand community," "I feel a strong attachment to this online brand community," "I really feel that I am a part of this online brand community," and "I recognize the strong similarity between myself and other members of this online brand community." Cronbach's alpha for the scale is .88 (M = 4.5, SD = 1.5).

Shared rituals and traditions. Shared rituals and traditions were assessed using four, 7-point Likert-scale items adopted from Madupu (2006). Items include "I understand and recognize the special terms or words and symbols used by the members in the discussion forums in the online brand community," "I know and understand the norms of this online brand community," "I am aware of the conventions of this online brand community," and "I am aware of the best practices of this online brand community." Confirmatory factor analysis during the pilot study revealed low loading for the items "I understand and recognize the special terms or words and symbols used by the members in the discussion forums in the online brand

community" and "I know and understand the norms of this online brand community." The first item was deleted, and the second item was adjusted for the final study to read "I know and understand the normal ways of behaving in this online brand community." Cronbach's alpha is .80 (M = 4.7, SD = 1.4).

Sense of moral responsibility. Sense of moral responsibility was assessed using six, 7-point Likert-scale items adopted from Madupu (2006). Items include "Helping other online brand community members with their problems is very important to me," "I feel morally obligated to this online brand community," "I feel obligated to help other members when directly asked," "It is my duty to help other members of this online brand community when they are in trouble," "I help other members of the online brand community in their consumption of this brand," and "I help the new members of this online brand community." Cronbach's alpha is .92 (M = 4.3, SD = 1.5).

OBC commitment. OBC commitment was measured using five 7-point Likert-scale items adopted from Zhou et al. (2012). Items include "I would feel a loss if this brand community was no longer available," "I really care about the fate of this online brand community," "I feel a great deal of loyalty to this online brand community," "The relationship I have with this online brand community is one I intend to maintain indefinitely," and "The relationship I have with this online brand community is important to me." Confirmatory factor analysis during the pilot study revealed low loading for the item "I really care about the fate of this online brand community." Therefore the item was excluded from the scale used in the final study. Cronbach's alpha of the four-item scale is .86 (M = 4.5, SD = 1.4).

Brand loyalty. Brand loyalty was measured using four 7-point Likert-scale items adopted from Odin et al. (2001). Items included "I am loyal to only one brand (the one I follow),

when I buy this type of product," "For my next purchase, I will buy this brand again," "I always buy this brand," and "I usually buy this brand." After the pilot study, the item "I am loyal to only one brand (the one I follow), when I buy this type of product," was dropped from the scale, as doing so improved the Cronbach's alpha from .70 to .80 in the pilot. Cronbach's alpha of the three remaining items in the final study is .86 (M = 4.9, SD = 1.4).

3.4.3 Additional Measures

OBC Product Category. OBC Product Category was measured by asking participants to select the product category most reflective of the OBC. Adopted from Dessart (2017), brand product categories include (1) food and beverage, (2) travel, (3) fashion and beauty, (4) entertainment, (5) durable goods, (6) services, (7) technology, (8) retail and (9) others.

Social Media Usage. Social Media Usage was measured by asking participants how often they use each of the following social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, Reddit, Snapchat, Tumblr, dating apps (e.g. Tinder), live streaming services (e.g. Facebook Live, Periscope), YouTube, and YouTube Red. Answers included "never," "once a month," "a couple times a month," "once a week," "a couple times a week," "about once a day," and "several times a day."

Sociodemographic characteristics. Sociodemographic characteristics included ethnicity, race, age, gender, educational attainment, employment status, occupation, marital status, and household income.

Ethnicity was measured with the item "What is your ethnicity" [Hispanic or Latino|Not Hispanic or Latino]. Ethnicity categories were based on Census racial categorizations (Census, 2017).

Race was measured with the item "What is your race [White|Black or African American|Asian|American Indian and Alaska Native|Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander|Other (specify)|Two or more races]. Race categories were based on Census racial categorizations (Census, 2017).

Age was measured with the item "How old are you (in years) as of today?" [Specify].

Gender was measured with the item "What gender do you identify with?" [Male/Female/Transgender/Other [specify]/Prefer not to answer].

Educational Attainment was measured with the item "What is your highest completed education level?" [Did not finish high school|High school degree/GED|Some college/currently in college|Associate's degree (community college)|Bachelor's degree|Trade school degree|Graduate/professional degree (e.g., M.A., Ph.D., M.D.)].

Employment Status was measured with the item "Which of the following best describes your employment status?" [Employed full time|Employed part time|Student at a college/university/technical school|Homemaker|Military|Not currently employed|Prefer not to say].

Occupation was measured with the item "Please list your occupation" [*Specify*].

Marital Status was measured with the item "What is your marital status?" [Single, never married|Married or domestic partnership|Widowed|Divorced |Separated].

Household Income was measured with the item "What is your household income?" [Under $15,000|$15,000 to $24,999|$25,000 to $34,999|$35,000 to $49,999|$50,000 to $74,999|$75,000 to $99,999|$100,000 to $149,999|$150,000 to $199,999|$200,000 and over.] Household income brackets were delineated based on the U.S. Census income bracketing (Fontenot, Semega, & Kollar, 2018).

3.5 Pilot Study

Prior to launching the final survey, a pilot study was conducted with OBC participants. Pilot studies allow researchers to check for adequate understanding of the survey items, ensure the wording and sequencing of items is appropriate, and validate the validity and reliability of the instrument (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002). A purposive sample of N = 47 was selected; 22 African American OBC participants and 25 White American OBC participants. Purposive sampling refers to the deliberate selection of participants from the population of interest, which is particularly useful for gathering data from populations who would otherwise not be reachable (Barratt et al., 2015; Groves et al., 2004). Purposive sampling is most appropriate for this study as the population of interest (OBC participants, especially African American OBC participants) would be difficult—if not impossible—to access using another sampling method. Participants were recruited via Qualtrics. This has the advantage of making the population of interest more accessible. However, as panelists participate online, verification of participants' eligibility becomes more difficult to check since the researcher may not know the individuals personally (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). This limitation was overcome by asking participants to identify their ethnicity, age, and country of origin. Those who were 18 years old or older and had either liked/followed an OBC or liked posts from an OBC were permitted to take the survey.

3.6 Sampling and Sampling Procedures

Power analysis was conducted to estimate the number of participants needed for the study. The analysis requires identifying the desired power level, significance level, and the type of statistical analysis to be run with the data. The researcher presents a "best-case" and "worst-case" scenario in light of possible challenges with sample recruitment during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Power refers to the likelihood of a study to reject a false null hypothesis

(VanVoorhis & Morgan, 2007). In other words, it refers to the probability of a study to detect a significant relationship. Setting a power level of .80 means the study is 20 percent likely to fail to reject a false null hypothesis. A power level of .80 is generally acceptable for academic research (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Significance level refers to likelihood that the results found in a study are not due to chance (VanVoorhis & Morgan, 2007). Setting a significance level of .05 means researchers are 95 percent sure the results obtained did not happen by chance (Aron & Aron, 1999). A significance level (or *alpha*) of .05 is generally acceptable in academic research (Cohen, 1990). Given the desired power level of .80 and significance level (alpha) of .05, power analysis suggests obtaining a sample size of at least 150-250 participants to detect small effect sizes on the dependent variables. This is the "worst-case" scenario noted. A "best-case" scenario is an estimated sample size of at least 267-384 participants. The estimate assumes a confidence level of 95% and an (approximate) 5-6% margin of error, with 50 percent accuracy (source: surveysystem.com, 2003). The gathered sample of 420 respondents meets the "best-case scenario described above."

To reduce sample frame error, which occurs when the wrong sub-population is sampled (Sax, Gilmartin, and Bryant 2003), participants were asked a series of screener questions to ensure they were qualified to participate. Screener questions coincided with study goals and included: (1) 18 years of age or older, (2) liking or following an OBC or liking posts made by an OBC, (3) being either African American or White American, and (4) using at least one of eight social media, selected for their popularity among multicultural populations (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, Reddit, Snapchat, Tumblr) (Smith & Anderson, 2018).

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data was analyzed using R-studio. The following sections provide the data analysis plan to test each hypothesis and the data assumptions, followed by the findings.

4.1 Data Analysis

Hypothesis 1 states that brand co-creation perceptions (dialogue, access, risk assessment, transparency) positively influence OBC engagement (affective, cognitive, behavioral). Three multiple regression analyses were conducted in order to determine whether there was a predictive relationship between brand co-creation perceptions and OBC engagement outcomes. Each multiple regression used the same four predictor variables: dialogue, access, risk assessment, and transparency. The dependent variable in the first multiple regression was affective OBC engagement. All predictor variables were entered simultaneously to determine which variables were significant predictors of affective OBC engagement. The dependent variables in the second and third multiple regressions were cognitive OBC engagement and behavioral OBC engagement. All predictor variables were entered simultaneously to determine which variables were significant predictors of cognitive OBC engagement and behavioral OBC engagement. The regression also tested race as a moderator (research question 1).

Hypothesis 2 states that OBC engagement (affective OBC engagement, cognitive OBC engagement, behavioral OBC engagement) positively influences OBC membership (shared consciousness of kind, rituals and traditions, sense of moral responsibility). Three multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine whether there was a predictive relationship between OBC engagement and social identity dimensions. Each multiple regression used the same three predictor variables: affective OBC engagement, cognitive OBC engagement, and behavioral OBC engagement. The criterion variable in the first multiple regression was

consciousness of kind. All predictor variables were entered simultaneously to determine which variables were significant predictors of consciousness of kind. The criterion variable in the second multiple regression was shared rituals and traditions. All predictor variables were entered simultaneously to determine which variables were significant predictors of shared rituals and traditions. The criterion variable in the third multiple regression was sense of moral responsibility. All predictor variables were entered simultaneously to determine which variables were significant predictors of sense of moral responsibility. The regression also tested race as a moderator (research question 2).

Hypothesis 3 states that OBC engagement (affective OBC engagement, cognitive OBC engagement, behavioral OBC engagement) positively influences OBC commitment. One multiple regression analysis was conducted in order to determine whether there was a predictive relationship between OBC engagement and OBC commitment. The multiple regression used three predictor variables: affective OBC engagement, cognitive OBC engagement, and behavioral OBC engagement. The dependent variable in the multiple regression was OBC commitment. All predictor variables were entered simultaneously to determine which variables were significant predictors of OBC commitment. The regression also tested race as a moderator (research question 3).

Hypothesis 4 states that OBC engagement (affective OBC engagement, cognitive OBC engagement, behavioral OBC engagement) positively influences brand loyalty. One multiple regression analysis was conducted in order to determine whether there was a predictive relationship between OBC engagement and brand loyalty. The multiple regression used three predictor variables: affective OBC engagement, cognitive OBC engagement, and behavioral OBC engagement. The dependent variable in the multiple regression was brand loyalty. All

predictor variables were entered simultaneously to determine which variables were significant predictors of brand loyalty. The regression also tested race as a moderator (research question 4).

4.2 Assumptions

Regression analysis requires several assumptions to be met. These are normality, linearity, independence, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity. Normality refers to the assumption that scores on the dependent variables are distributed normally. This can be checked through visual review of the data plots, histograms, and the Shapiro-Wilk Test. Linearity refers to the assumption that criterion variables have a linear relationship with predictor variables. This can be checked through visual review of scatterplots and curve estimation. Independence refers to the assumption that individual scores are independent of each other. This can be checked through a correlation analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. Homoscedasticity refers to the assumption that the variance explained in the criterion variable is constant across all levels of the independent variable. This can be checked through a scatterplot of residuals versus predicted values. Multicollinearity refers to a correlation between independent variables. In multiple regression, multicollinearity is assumed to not be present. This can be checked through Leverage/Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values.

4.3 Results

After screening out participants for demographic qualifications (18+, African American or White American, connection with OBC), and attention reasons (speeders, attention checks), a total sample of 420 panelists was collected through Qualtrics. Of the participants, 210 (50%) were African American and 210 were White. The average age of participants was 32.50 (sd = 12.98). Regarding gender, 259 participants (61.7%) identified as female, 155 identified as male

(36.9%), and 3 identified as transgender (0.7%). Table 2 summarizes respondents' socio-demographics.

Table 2: Respondents' socio-demographics and social media usage.

Variable	Total Sample *n* = ___	
	n	*%*
Ethnicity		
Hispanic or Latino	39	9.3%
Not Hispanic or Latino	381	90.7%
Race		
Black or African American	210	50%
White	210	50%
Age		
18-24 years	150	35.7%
25-34 years	122	29.1%
35-44 years	73	17.4%
45-54 years	44	10.5%
55-64 years	17	4.0%
65 years and older	14	3.3%
Gender		
Male	155	36.9%
Female	259	61.7%
Transgender	3	0.7%
Prefer not to answer	3	0.7%
Educational Attainment		
Some high school	26	6.2%
High school degree/GED	107	25.5%
Some college/currently in college	101	24.0%
Associate's degree	49	11.7%
Bachelor's degree	89	21.2%
Trade school degree	3	0.7%
Graduate/professional degree	45	10.7%
Employment Status		
Employed full time	189	45%
Employed part time	52	12.3%
Student at a college/university/technical school	54	12.8%
Homemaker	25	6.0%

Military	2	0.5%
Not currently employed	83	19.8%
Prefer not to say	15	3.6%
Marital Status		
Single, never married	223	53.1%
Married or domestic partnership	161	38.3%
Widowed	9	2.2%
Divorced	19	4.5%
Separated	8	1.9%
Household Income		
Under $15,000	84	20.0%
$15,000 to $24,999	45	10.7%
$25,000 to $34,999	70	16.7%
$35,000 to $49,999	43	10.3%
$50,000 to $74,999	67	15.9%
$75,000 to $99,999	45	10.7%
$100,000 to $149,999	38	9.0%
$150,000 to $199,999	13	3.1%
$200,000 and over	15	3.6%
OBC Product Category		
Food and beverage	84	20.0
Travel	21	5.0
Fashion and beauty	116	27.6
Entertainment	64	15.2
Durable goods	14	3.4
Services	24	5.7
Technology	33	7.9
Retail	40	9.5
Others	24	5.7
	Mean	sd
Social Media Usage		
Facebook	5.21	2.20
Twitter	3.91	2.37
LinkedIn	2.80	2.07
Instagram	4.93	2.34
Pinterest	3.70	2.25
Reddit	2.85	2.15
Snapchat	4.08	2.84
Tumblr	2.44	2.04
Dating apps	2.39	2.09
Live streaming services	3.31	2.29
YouTube	5.72	1.66

YouTube Red	2.72	2.30

Following Reise, Waller, and Comrey (2000), all measures were subjected to a reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha. All Cronbach's alpha scores were .80 and above, which is an acceptable reliability coefficient score (Santos, 1999). Composite scores were calculated and averaged for each construct. An analysis of the variance inflation factor indicates no issues with multicollinearity among the constructs. Table 3 summarizes means, standard deviations, correlations, and Cronbach's alphas.

Table 3: Summary of Construct Correlations, Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Cronbach's Alphas.

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Dialogue	1.00 ***											
2. Access	0.69 ***	1.00 ***										
3. Risk Assessment	0.65 ***	0.69 ***	1.00 ***									
4. Transparency	0.66 ***	0.69 ***	0.78 ***	1.00 ***								
5. Affective OBC Engagement	0.67 ***	0.64 ***	0.66 ***	0.72 ***	1.00 ***							
6. Cognitive OBC Engagement	0.43 ***	0.45 ***	0.55 ***	0.56 ***	0.58 ***	1.00 ***						
7. Behavioral OBC Engagement	0.47 ***	0.47 ***	0.55 ***	0.58 ***	0.58 ***	0.73 ***	1.00 ***					
8. Consciousness of Kind	0.49 ***	0.54 ***	0.59 ***	0.59 ***	0.68 ***	0.76 ***	0.76 ***	1.00 ***				
9. Rituals and Traditions	0.56 ***	0.58 ***	0.63 ***	0.63 ***	0.66 ***	0.54 ***	0.61 ***	0.72 ***	1.00 ***			
10. Moral Responsibility	0.41 ***	0.46 ***	0.55 ***	0.52 ***	0.48 ***	0.70 ***	0.74 ***	0.76 ***	0.60 ***	1.00 ***		
11. OBC Commitment	0.50 ***	0.49 ***	0.56 ***	0.59 ***	0.63 ***	0.70 ***	0.75 ***	0.81 ***	0.70 ***	0.74 ***	1.00 ***	
12. Brand Loyalty	0.51 ***	0.55 ***	0.52 ***	0.60 ***	0.64 ***	0.45 ***	0.55 ***	0.60 ***	0.69 ***	0.53 ***	0.60 ***	1.00 ***
Mean	4.6	4.6	4.7	4.6	4.9	4.3	4.5	4.5	4.7	4.3	4.5	4.9
SD	1.3	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.4
Alpha	0.92	0.85	0.86	0.84	0.91	0.90	0.91	0.88	0.80	0.92	0.86	0.86

Notes: ***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05; n = 420

Hypothesis 1 states that brand co-creation perceptions positively influence OBC engagement. Dialogue showed a moderate main effect on affective OBC engagement ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < .001$). Access showed a moderate main effect on affective OBC engagement ($\beta = 0.09$, $p = .040$). Risk showed a moderate main effect on affective OBC engagement ($\beta = 0.12$, $p = .026$). Transparency showed a moderate main effect on affective OBC engagement ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < .001$). Product category also had a moderate main effect on affective OBC engagement for participants who were members of OBCs focused on fashion and beauty brands ($\beta = 0.34$, $p = .011$) and "other" product categories ($\beta = 0.48$, $p = .022$). The model with dialogue, access, risk, transparency, and product category explained 59.7% of the variance in affective OBC engagement ($R^2adj = .60$).

Risk showed a main effect on cognitive OBC engagement ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < .001$). Transparency showed a main effect on cognitive OBC engagement ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < .001$). Access and dialogue, however, showed no main effect on cognitive OBC engagement. Income had a small negative main effect on cognitive OBC engagement for participants who had an annual household income between $75,000-$99,999 ($\beta = -0.52$, $p = .02$). Additionally, social media use had a moderate main effect on cognitive OBC engagement ($\beta = 0.15$, $p = .002$). Product category also had a small main effect on cognitive OBC engagement for participants who were members of OBCs focused on fashion and beauty brands ($\beta = 0.59$, $p = .039$). Race had a medium moderating effect on the relationship between dialogue and cognitive OBC engagement ($\beta = -0.36$, $p = .007$). The relationship between dialogue and cognitive OBC engagement was significantly more positive for African Americans than for White Americans. The model with Risk, transparency, income, social media use, product category and the moderating role of race

in the relationship between dialogue and cognitive OBC engagement explained 38% of the variance in cognitive OBC engagement (R^2adj = .38).

Dialogue showed a main effect on behavioral OBC engagement (β = 0.13, p = .02). Risk showed a main effect on behavioral OBC engagement (β = 0.21, p = .002). Transparency showed a main effect on behavioral OBC engagement (β = 0.34, p < .001). Access, however, showed no main effect on behavioral OBC engagement. Additionally, income had a negative main effect on behavioral OBC engagement for participants who had an annual household income between $75,000-$99,999 (β = -0.51, p = .01). Social media use had a main effect on behavioral OBC engagement (β = 0.13, p = .004). The model with dialogue, risk, transparency, income, and social media use explained 37% of the variance in behavioral OBC engagement (R^2adj = .37). Assumption testing noted no concerns with multicollinearity, normality, or homoskedasticity. Results provide partial support for hypothesis 1. Table 4 shows the results of the multiple regression of demographics, dialogue, access, risk, and transparency on affective OBC engagement, cognitive OBC engagement, and behavioral OBC engagement.

Table 4: Regression of Demographics and Brand Co-Creation Perceptions on OBC Engagement

Predictors	Affective OBC Engagement	Cognitive OBC Engagement	Behavioral OBC Engagement
Demographics			
Ethnicity			
Not Hispanic/Latino	-.09	-0.22	-0.19
Race			
White American	-0.32	0.01	-0.88
Age	0.00	-0.01	0.00
Gender			
Male	0.00	0.01	-0.15
Transgender	0.30	-0.46	-0.42
Prefer not say	0.43	0.61	0.24
Education			
High school diploma	0.05	0.06	-0.18
Some college	0.02	0.25	-0.12

Associate's	0.18	0.54	0.19
Bachelor's	-0.18	-0.11	-0.14
Trade School	-0.51	0.20	-0.16
Grad School	0.02	-0.35	-0.24
Employment Status			
Employed part time	-0.05	0.00	0.01
Homemaker	-0.26	-0.04	-0.23
Military	-0.43	0.15	-1.06
Not employed	-0.11	-0.18	-0.12
Student	-0.17	-0.10	-0.11
Prefer not say	-0.32	-0.27	0.43
Marital Status			
Married/Partnership	0.18	0.24	0.25
Divorced	0.33	0.28	0.27
Seperated	-0.47	-0.43	-0.35
Widowed	-0.07	-0.12	-0.34
Income			
$15,000-$24,999	-0.01	-0.40	-0.16
$25,000-$34,999	-0.13	-0.26	-0.13
$35,000-$49,999	-0.06	-0.02	-0.14
$50,000-$74,999	-0.24	-0.35	-0.19
$75,000-$99,999	-0.17	-0.50*	-0.62**
$100,000-$149,999	0.05	-0.09	-0.44
$150,000-$199,999	-0.21	0.18	-0.09
$200,000 and over	-0.11	-0.31	-0.60
Product Category			
Travel	0.31	0.62*	0.50
Fashion and beauty	0.36**	-0.24	-0.21
Entertainment	0.27	0.16	0.26
Durable goods	0.23	0.31	0.13
Services	0.03	0.13	0.40
Technology	0.25	0.46	0.31
Retail	0.05	-0.20	0.09
Other	0.63**	0.26	0.07
Social Media Use	-0.03	0.14**	0.10*
Brand Co-Creation			
Dialogue	0.19**	0.25*	0.26**
Access	0.15*	0.02	-0.02
Risk	0.14	0.16	0.09
Transparency	0.32***	0.27**	0.28**
Dialogue*Race	0.17	-0.36**	-0.22
Access*Race	-0.15	-0.07	0.08
Risk*Race	-0.06	0.16	0.19
Transparency*Race	0.10	0.23	0.13

Total Adjusted R2	0.59	0.39	0.40

Notes: ***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$; $n = 420$

Research question 1 asked whether there was a moderating role of race in the relationship between brand co-creation and OBC engagement. Results indicate no significant moderating role of race in the relationship between brand co-creation and affective OBC engagement. Additionally, there was no significant moderating role of race in the relationship between brand co-creation and behavioral OBC engagement. There was, however, a moderating role of race in the relationship between dialogue and cognitive OBC engagement ($\boldsymbol{\beta} = -0.36$, $p = .007$). The relationship between dialogue and cognitive OBC engagement was significantly more positive for African Americans. Figure 2 shows the moderating role of race in the relationship between dialogue and cognitive OBC engagement.

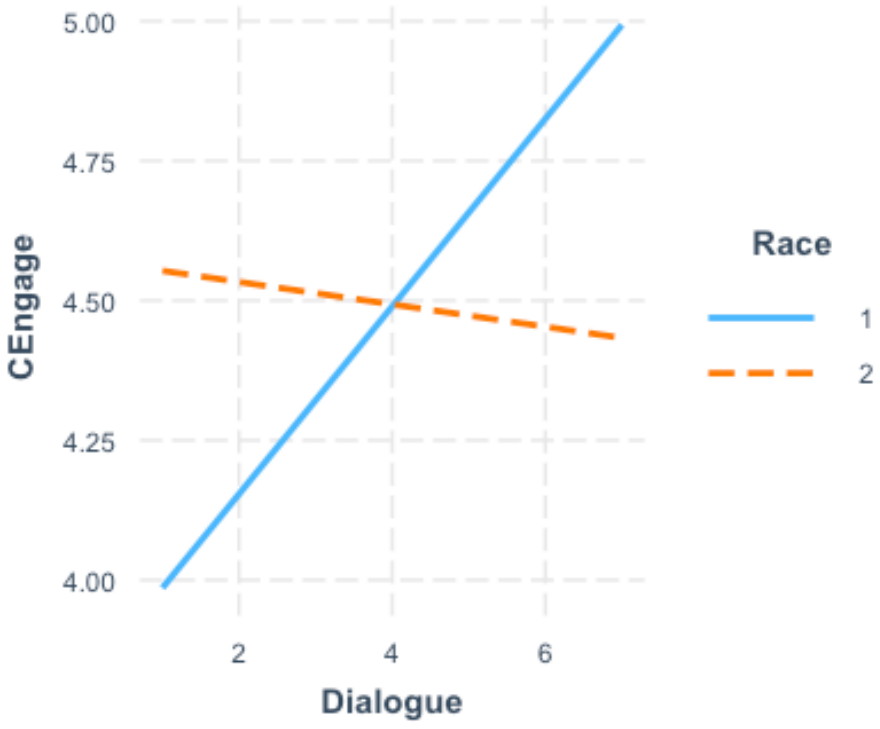


Figure 2. Graph showing the moderating role of race in the relationship between Dialogue and Cognitive OBC Engagement

Hypothesis two states that OBC engagement positively influences social identity. Cognitive OBC engagement ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < .001$), and behavioral OBC engagement ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < .001$) all showed a high main effects on consciousness of kind. Additionally, age showed a small main effect ($\beta = 0.010$, $p = .02$) on consciousness of kinds. Income showed a small negative main effect on consciousness of kind for participants who earn a household income between $15,000-$24,999 ($\beta = -0.33$, $p = .03$) and a small positive main effect for those who earn a household income between $75,000-$99,999 ($\beta = 0.34$, $p = .03$). Race also played a moderating role in the relationship between affective OBC engagement and consciousness of kind ($\beta = -0.20$, $p < .014$). The relationship between affective OBC engagement and consciousness of kind was more positive for African American participants in comparison to African Americans. The model with affective OBC engagement, cognitive OBC engagement, behavioral OBC engagement, age, income, and the moderating role of race in the relationship between affective OBC engagement and consciousness of kind explained 72% of the variance in consciousness of kind ($R^2adj = 0.72$).

Affective OBC engagement ($\beta = 0.47$, $p < .001$) and behavioral OBC engagement ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < .001$) showed high main effects on shared rituals and traditions. Cognitive engagement, however, showed no main effect. The model with affective and behavioral OBC engagement explained 51% of the variance in shared rituals and traditions ($R^2adj = .51$).

Cognitive OBC engagement ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < .001$) showed a main effect on sense of moral responsibility. Race moderated the influence of behavioral OBC engagement ($\beta = 0.26$, $p = .02$) and affective OBC engagement ($\beta = -0.22$, $p = .02$) on sense of moral responsibility. The relationship between affective OBC engagement and sense of moral responsibility was more

positive for African Americans, while the relationship between behavioral OBC engagement and sense of moral responsibility was more positive for White Americans. Additionally, education showed a small negative main effect on sense of moral responsibility for participants who held a bachelor's degree (β = -0.53, p = .03). The model with cognitive OBC engagement, behavioral OBC engagement, affective OBC engagement, education and the moderating role of race explained 60% of the variance in sense of moral responsibility (R^2adj = .60). Assumption testing noted no concerns with multicollinearity, normality, or homoskedasticity. Results provide partial support for hypothesis 2. Table 5 shows the results of the multiple regression of demographics, affective OBC engagement, cognitive OBC engagement, and behavioral OBC engagement on consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions, and sense of moral responsibility.

Table 5: Regression of Demographics and OBC Engagement on OBC Membership

Predictors	Consciousness of Kind	Shared Rituals and Traditions	Sense of Moral Responsibility
Demographics			
Ethnicity			
Not Hispanic/Latino	-0.05	0.26	0.09
Race			
White American	0.56	0.80	0.76
Age	0.01*	0.01	0.01
Gender			
Male	-0.02	0.16	-0.02
Transgender	0.79	0.97	0.16
Prefer not say	0.75	0.35	-0.87
Education			
High school diploma	0.21	-0.05	-0.11
Some college	0.03	-0.12	-0.29
Associate's	-0.05	-0.15	-0.42
Bachelor's	-0.14	-0.04	-0.54*
Trade School	-0.64	-0.10	-0.72
Grad School	-0.11	-0.30	-0.31
Employment Status			
Employed part time	-0.07	-0.07	-0.07
Homemaker	-0.15	0.18	-0.17
Military	-0.01	0.03	0.60

Not employed	-0.23	0.11	-0.18
Student	-0.06	-0.11	0.08
Prefer not say	-0.13	-0.25	-0.18
Marital Status			
Married/Partnership	-0.08	0.16	0.03
Divorced	0.19	-0.03	0.19
Seperated	-0.20	0.11	-0.36
Widowed	-0.03	0.16	-0.27
Income			
$15,000-$24,999	-0.33*	-0.04	-0.09
$25,000-$34,999	0.02	-0.14	0.01
$35,000-$49,999	-0.03	-0.04	0.12
$50,000-$74,999	-0.13	0.03	-0.07
$75,000-$99,999	0.35*	0.23	0.21
$100,000-$149,999	-0.16	-0.09	0.05
$150,000-$199,999	0.29	0.20	0.45
$200,000 and over	0.09	-0.05	-0.23
Product Category			
Travel	-0.04	-0.31	0.17
Fashion and beauty	0.12	-0.11	-0.11
Entertainment	-0.06	-0.14	0.05
Durable goods	0.01	-0.02	0.15
Services	-0.05	-0.11	0.19
Technology	0.00	-0.26	-0.12
Retail	0.07	-0.37	-0.17
Other	0.38	-0.28	-0.10
Social Media Use	0.01	0.04	0.08
OBC Engagement			
Affective OBC Engagement	0.36***	0.47	0.10
Behavioral OBC Engagement	0.35***	0.31	0.42***
Cognitive OBC Engagement	0.33***	0.06	0.38***
Affective OBC Engagement*Race	-0.20*	-0.12***	-0.22*
Behavioral OBC Engagement*Race	0.14	-0.01***	0.23*
Cognitive OBC Engagement*Race	-0.01	-0.01	-0.13
Total Adjusted R2	0.72	0.51	0.60

Notes: ***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$; $n = 420$

Research question 2 asked whether race moderates the relationship between OBC engagement and OBC membership. Results indicate that race played a moderating role in the relationship between affective OBC engagement and consciousness of kind ($\boldsymbol{\beta} = -0.20$, $p < .014$).

This is shown in Figure 3. Race also moderated the influence of behavioral OBC engagement (***β*** = 0.26, *p* = .02; Figure 4) and affective OBC engagement (***β*** = -0.22, *p* = .02; Figure 5) on sense of moral responsibility.

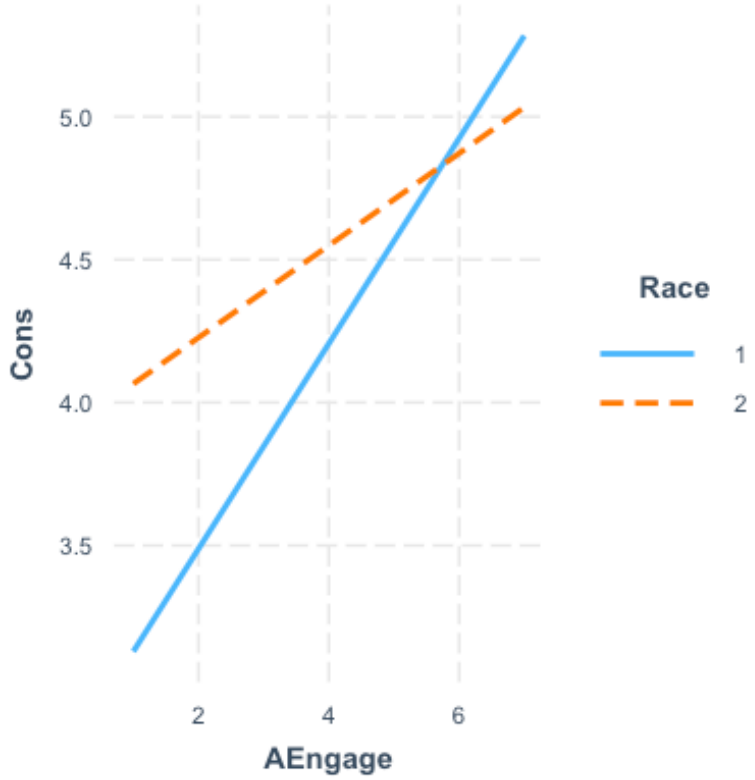


Figure 3. Graph showing the moderating role of race in the relationship between affective OBC engagement and consciousness of kind

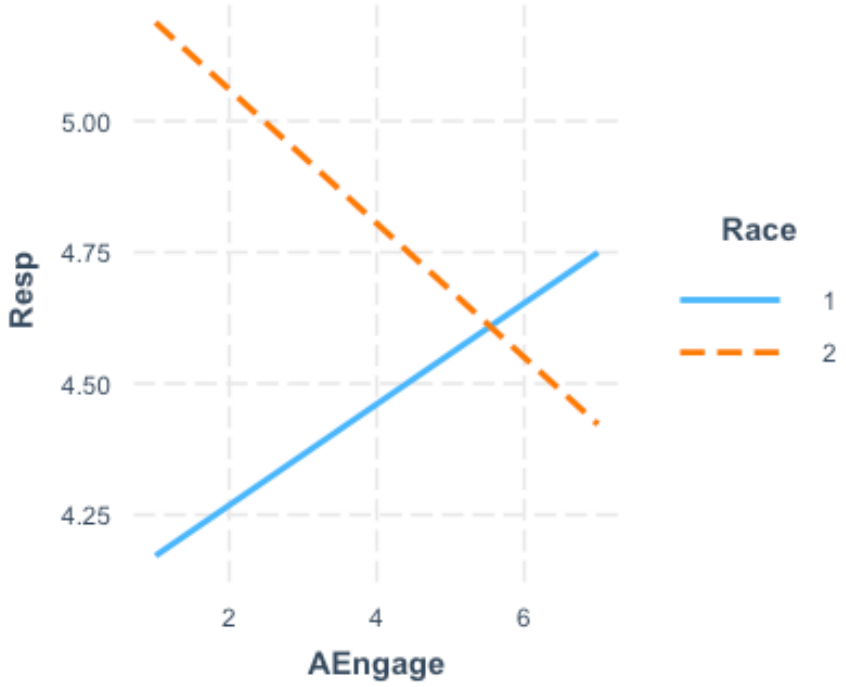
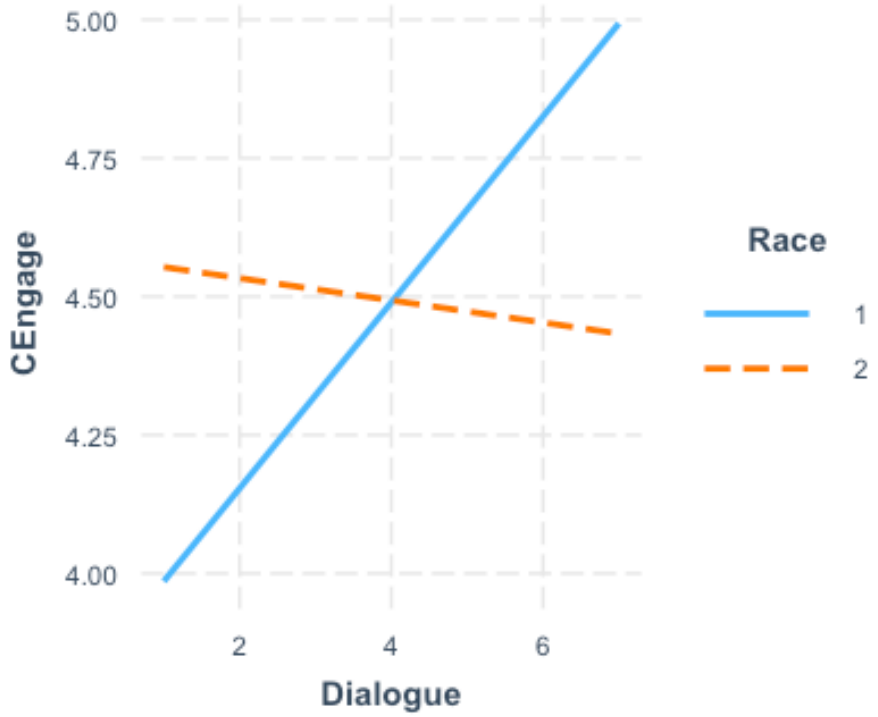
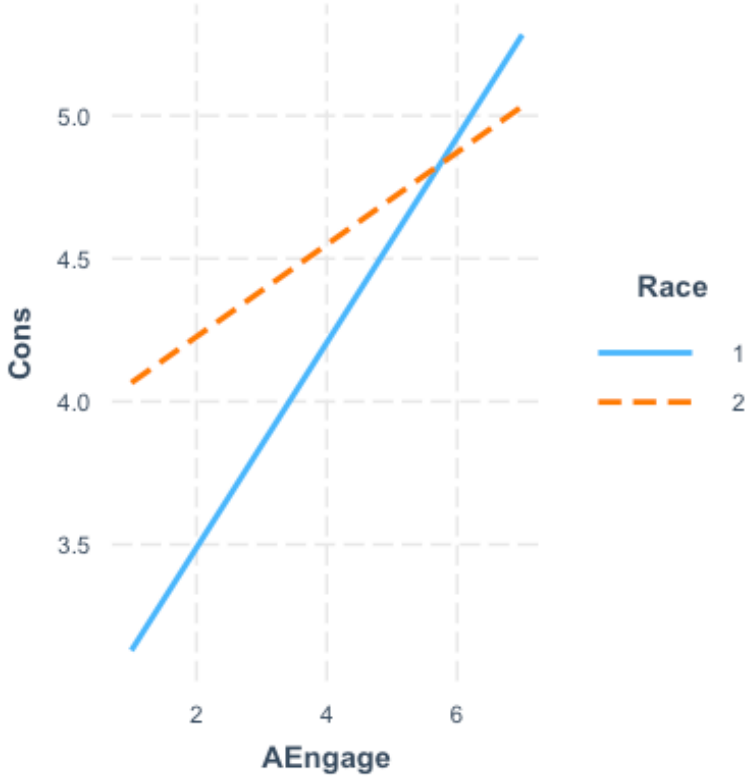


Figure 4. Graph showing the moderating role of race in the relationship between affective OBC engagement and sense of moral responsibility

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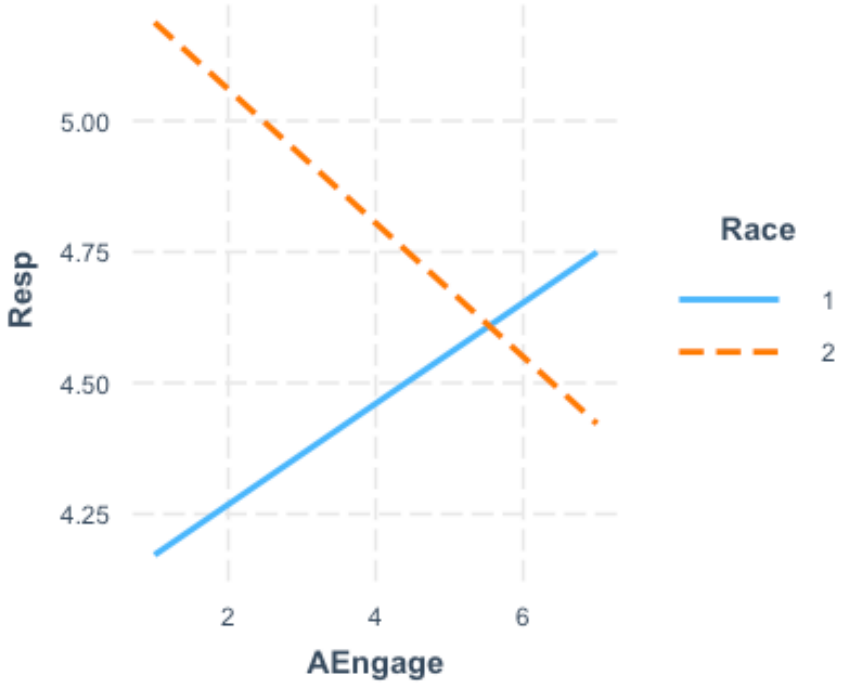
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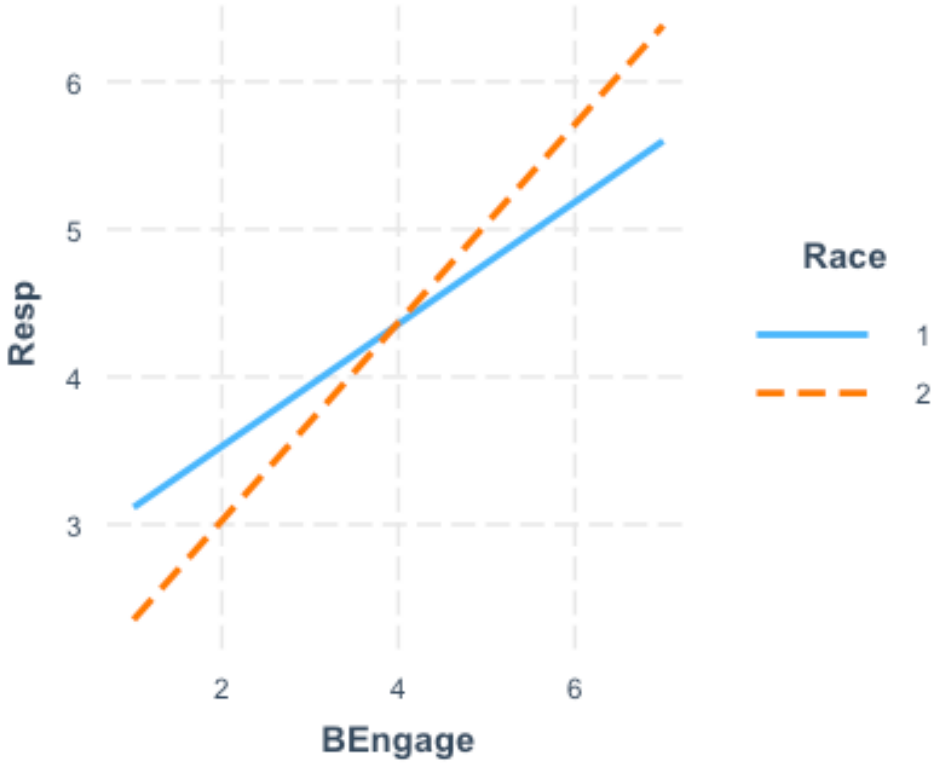

Figure 5. Graph showing the moderating role of race in the relationship between behavioral OBC engagement and sense of moral responsibility

Hypothesis 3 states that OBC engagement positively influences OBC commitment. Affective OBC engagement ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < .001$), cognitive OBC engagement ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < .001$), and behavioral OBC engagement ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < .001$) each had a high main effect on OBC commitment. Additionally, education had a small negative main effect on OBC commitment for participants who had a high school diploma/GED ($\beta = -0.40$, $p = .037$), some college experience ($\beta = -0.42$, $p = .033$), an associate's degree ($\beta = -0.49$, $p = .030$), bachelor's degree ($\beta = -0.52$, $p = .015$), or trade school degree ($\beta = -1.09$, $p = .041$). The model with affective OBC engagement, cognitive OBC engagement, behavioral OBC engagement, and education explained 65% of the variance in sense of moral responsibility ($R^2adj = .65$). Assumption testing noted no concerns with multicollinearity, normality, or homoskedasticity. Results provide support for hypothesis 3.

Research question 3 asked whether race moderates the relationship between OBC engagement and OBC commitment. Results indicate that race did not significantly moderate the relationship. Table 6 summarizes the results of the regression testing the relationship between demographics, OBC engagement and OBC commitment.

Table 6: Regression of Demographics and OBC Engagement on OBC Commitment

Predictors	OBC Commitment
Demographics	
Ethnicity	
Not Hispanic/Latino	0.17
Race	
White American	0.16
Age	0.00
Gender	
Male	0.01
Transgender	0.20
Prefer not say	0.78
Education	
High school diploma	-0.40*
Some college	-0.43*
Associate's	-0.49*
Bachelor's	-0.52*
Trade School	-1.09*
Grad School	-0.47 .
Employment Status	
Employed part time	-0.08
Homemaker	-0.17
Military	0.39
Not employed	0.03
Student	-0.19
Prefer not say	-0.35
Marital Status	
Married/Partnership	0.08
Divorced	0.30
Seperated	0.34
Widowed	-0.43
Income	
$15,000-$24,999	-0.24
$25,000-$34,999	-0.11
$35,000-$49,999	-0.15
$50,000-$74,999	-0.04

$75,000-$99,999	0.22
$100,000-$149,999	-0.25
$150,000-$199,999	-0.20
$200,000 and over	-0.33
Product Category	
Travel	0.07
Fashion and beauty	0.13
Entertainment	0.08
Durable goods	-0.05
Services	0.13
Technology	-0.24
Retail	-0.09
Other	-0.15
Social Media Use	0.01
OBC Engagement	
Affective OBC Engagement	0.21***
Behavioral OBC Engagement	0.41***
Cognitive OBC Engagement	0.31***
Affective OBC Engagement*Race	0.02
Behavioral OBC Engagement*Race	0.04
Cognitive OBC Engagement*Race	-0.08
Total Adjusted R2	0.65

Notes: ***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$; $n = 420$

Hypothesis 4 states that OBC engagement positively influences brand loyalty. Behavioral OBC engagement ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < .001$) had a high main effect on brand loyalty. Cognitive OBC engagement, however, had no main effect on brand loyalty. Race also moderated the relationship between affective OBC engagement and brand loyalty ($\beta = -0.29$, $p = .007$). The relationship between affective OBC engagement and brand loyalty was more positive for African Americans. Product category had a moderate negative main effect for participants who were members of OBCs focused on entertainment brands ($\beta = -0.46$, $p = .01$) and a small negative main effect for participants who were members of OBCs focused on "other" brands ($\beta = -0.55$, $p = .04$). The model with affective OBC engagement, cognitive OBC engagement, marital status, product category, and the moderating role of race explained 47% of the variance in brand loyalty (R^2adj

= .47). Assumption testing noted no concerns with multicollinearity, normality, or homoskedasticity. Results provide partial support for hypothesis 4. Table 7 summarizes the results of the regression testing the relationship between demographics, OBC engagement and brand loyalty.

Table 7: Regression of Demographics and OBC Engagement on Brand Loyalty.

Predictors	Brand Loyalty
Demographics	
Ethnicity	0.14
Not Hispanic/Latino	0.72
Race	
White American	0.01
Age	0.72
Gender	
Male	0.10
Transgender	1.17
Prefer not say	0.37
Education	
High school diploma	0.02
Some college	-0.03
Associate's	-0.27
Bachelor's	-0.11
Trade School	1.23
Grad School	0.16
Employment Status	
Employed part time	-0.14
Homemaker	0.08
Military	0.90
Not employed	-0.11
Student	-0.05
Prefer not say	-0.26
Marital Status	-0.04
Married/Partnership	
Divorced	0.11
Seperated	0.28
Widowed	0.77*
Income	-0.01
$15,000-$24,999	
$25,000-$34,999	-0.26
$35,000-$49,999	0.08
$50,000-$74,999	0.04

$75,000-$99,999	-0.06
$100,000-$149,999	-0.17
$150,000-$199,999	0.02
$200,000 and over	0.11
Product Category	-0.28
Travel	
Fashion and beauty	-0.19
Entertainment	-0.50**
Durable goods	-0.37
Services	-0.50 .
Technology	-0.45*
Retail	-0.36
Other	-0.68*
Social Media Use	-0.01
OBC Engagement	
Affective OBC Engagement	0.65***
Behavioral OBC Engagement	0.31***
Cognitive OBC Engagement	-0.13
Affective OBC Engagement*Race	-0.30**
Behavioral OBC Engagement*Race	0.05
Cognitive OBC Engagement*Race	0.16
Total Adjusted R2	0.47

Research question 4 asks whether race moderates the relationship between OBC engagement and brand loyalty. Results indicate that race moderated the relationship between affective OBC engagement and brand loyalty (β = -0.29, p = .007), but did not significantly moderate the relationship between other dimensions of OBC engagement and brand loyalty.

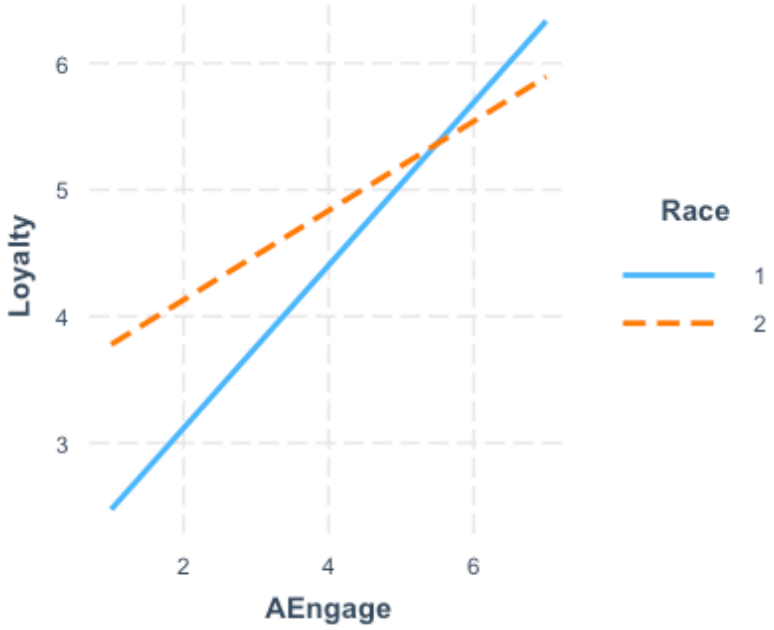

Figure 6. Graph showing the moderating role of race in the relationship between affective OBC engagement and brand loyalty.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was two-fold. First, the study sought to understand the processes through which OBC members develop brand meaning. This included gaining insight into the role of brand co-creation perceptions and OBC engagement in OBC members' brand meaning development. While scholars have noted the influence of brand co-creation on consumers' brand-related experiences (Cova et al., 2013; Galvagno & Dalli, 2014; Gronroos and Voima, 2013), only a few studies have explored this process within the OBC context (Black & Veloutsou, 2017; Schau, Muñiz Jr., & Arnould, 2009). Additionally, the study sought to better understand the role that race potentially plays in brand co-creation. Research on African American consumers has found mixed findings. For example, some research (Podoshen, 2008) found no difference in brand loyalty between African Americans and non-African Americans, while research found African Americans show higher levels of brand loyalty than other ethnic groups (Larson & Wales, 1973). Other research suggests that African Americans use SNSs more than other ethnic groups in the U.S. and engage with brands on SNSs more than other ethnic groups (Facebook, 2015; Nielsen, 2018, 2019). Might the strength of the posed relationships be influenced by race? This research aimed to close these gaps by understanding the mechanisms through which OBC members co-create brand meaning, and by understanding the influence that race may have on this process.

The research model presented in Chapter 2 proposed four hypotheses and asked four accompanying research questions. These hypotheses and research questions were tested using multiple regression analyses on data collected from a sample of 420 OBC members through an online panel collected from a Qualtrics survey. A list of the hypotheses, research questions, and

findings are listed on Table 8. The findings provide some support of the research model and provide mixed answers to the research questions.

Table 8. Summary of Hypotheses, Research Questions, Concepts, Measures, Statistical Analyses, and Results.

Hypothesis/ Research Question	Concepts	Operational Measures	Statistical Analysis	Results
H1: Brand co-creation perceptions (dialogue, access, risk assessment, transparency) positively influence OBC engagement (affective, cognitive, behavioral).	Brand Co-Creation OBC Engagement	Albinsson et al., 2016 Dessart et al., 2016	Regression	Partially supported
H2: OBC engagement positively influences OBC engagement (consciousness of kinds, shared rituals and traditions, sense of moral responsibility).	OBC Engagement OBC Membership	Dessart et al., 2016 Madupu, 2006	Regression	Partially supported
H3: OBC engagement positively influences OBC commitment.	OBC Engagement OBC Commitment	Dessart et al., 2016 Zhou et al., 2012	Regression	Supported
H4: OBC engagement positively influences brand loyalty.	OBC Engagement Brand Loyalty	Dessart et al., 2016 Odin et al., 2001	Regression	Partially supported
RQ1: Does race moderate the relationship between brand co-creation perceptions and OBC engagement?	Brand Co-Creation OBC Engagement Race	Albinsson et al., 2016 Dessart et al., 2016 Census, 2017	Regression	Minimally
RQ2: Does race moderate the relationship between OBC engagement and social identity?	OBC Engagement OBC Membership Race	Dessart et al., 2016 Madupu, 2006 Census, 2017	Regression	Partially
RQ3: Does race moderate the relationship between OBC	OBC Engagement OBC Commitment Race	Dessart et al., 2016 Zhou et al., 2012	Regression	No

engagement and OBC commitment?		Census, 2017		
RQ4: Does race moderate the relationship between OBC engagement significantly predicts brand loyalty?	OBC Engagement Brand Loyalty Race	Dessart et al., 2016 Odin et al., 2001 Census, 2017	Regression	Partially

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings from Chapter 4, the theoretical and practical implications of the findings, the limitations of the study, and directions for future research. The chapter begins with a discussion of the theoretical implications of the findings. Following that, managerial implications are considered. Finally, consideration is put towards limitations of the study and suggestions for future research, followed by the conclusion.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The first major purpose of this dissertation is to develop an understanding of the relationship between brand co-creation and OBC engagement, and explore how the constructs influence consumers' psychological and behavioral responses. Based on the literature review and building on the work of Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), brand co-creation may be conceptualized as a general concept that encompasses the mechanisms through which value is created by consumers. What these processes have in common, according to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), are that they provide the opportunity for conversation with the brand (dialogue), access to brand-related resources that allow OBC members to construct their own brand-related experience, brand-related information that allow OBC members to assess the potential positive or negative consequences of brand co-creation (risk assessment), and information about the brand, its products, and services (transparency). OBC engagement, conceptualized as affective, cognitive, and behavioral experiences between consumers and the brand, and/or other members of the OBC, serves as a mechanism through which co-creation

takes place. It was thus hypothesized that OBC members' perception of dialogue, access, risk and transparency within the OBC would lead to increased affective, cognitive, and behavioral OBC engagement. This hypothesis was partially supported as dialogue and transparency were found to have a significant positive relationship with all three dimensions of OBC engagement. Additionally, access had a significant positive relationship with affective OBC engagement. Risk, however, did not have a significant relationship with any of the dimensions of OBC engagement.

Transparency was significantly related to OBC engagement. This is consistent with previous OBC studies that found gathering information to be one of the most prevalent motivators for OBC engagement (Baldus et al., 2015; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004; Muntinga et al., 2011; J. H. Park & McMillan, 2017; Pentina, Guilloux, & Micu, 2018; Rodgers & Sheldon, 2002; Saridakis et al., 2016; Wirtz et al., 2013). Information relates to the knowledge OBC members derive from the OBC which aids in achieving a specific task. This may include tasks related to brand use or tasks related to the OBC. Indeed, as most OBC members are lurkers (Preece, Nonnecke, and Andrews, 2004), information-seeking is likely a key driver of OBC engagement. Specifically, transparency relates to the information OBC members derive from the OBC which may help in maximizing their brand-related experience. Interestingly, transparency significantly related to each of the OBC engagement dimensions while risk did not relate to any. This sheds light onto the *types* of information OBC members value: rather than gathering information about the risks associated with a new product, the findings suggest that OBC members wish to know more about how they can best utilize the product. It is the latter, this study finds, that drives OBC engagement.

Dialogue also significantly related to all dimensions of OBC engagement, suggesting that having the opportunity to communicate with brands directly influences OBC members' OBC engagement. There are several explanations why this might be the case. For one, being able to communicate directly with the brand increases the likelihood that one may play a role in shaping the brand. This represents empowerment, or influence on the brand. Brand engagement research has found the desire for empowerment as one of the leading motivations for brand engagement, (Muntinga et al., 2011; Saridakis et al., 2016). Providing the opportunity to satisfy OBC members' motivation for empowerment (through frequent contact with the brand), could explain why dialogue has a significant relationship with OBC engagement.

Access refers to consumers' control over when, where, and how they receive product offerings. Access only had a significant relationship with affective OBC engagement, but not behavioral and cognitive OBC engagement. This might be because most OBC members do not receive products and product offerings directly through an OBC, but through the brand's website or other offline location. Findings indicate that access increases affective OBC engagement, or interest in the OBC, but it does not influence the amount of attention paid towards the OBC (cognitive) or time spent on the OBC (behavioral) because the product offering that is received likely is not received directly on the OBC. This is unlike transparency and dialogue, as they constitute two processes that would likely occur directly on the OBC.

The second hypothesis stated that OBC engagement positively influenced OBC membership. As discussed, OBC membership consists of consciousness of kind (i.e. perceived similarity to other OBC members) shared rituals and traditions (understanding of the norms and customs of the OBC) and sense of responsibility for helping other OBC members. This hypothesis was partially supported as all three dimensions of OBC engagement positively related

to consciousness of kind. Additionally, behavioral and cognitive OBC engagement had a positive relationship with sense of moral responsibility. However, none of the engagement dimensions related significantly to shared rituals and traditions.

Affective, behavioral, and cognitive OBC engagement all led to increased levels of consciousness of kind. First, this indicates that OBC members' interest in the OBC leads to a stronger connection with other members. It also suggests that spending more time thinking about and being absorbed into the OBC is connected with feelings of likeness. Finally, by engaging in meaningful behaviors in the OBC (i.e. sharing ideas, helping, and receiving help), OBC members develop stronger attachment to the OBC. This validates previous research finding that affective, behavioral, and cognitive brand engagement leads to increased levels of self-brand connection (Harrigan et al., 2018), and that communication with other OBC members reinforces identity-based attachment to the OBC (Brodie et al., 2013). Findings suggest that OBCs provide a context for consumers to share brand-related information and experiences. Sharing this information and experiences leads members to view building a connection between other members and view themselves as more similar.

Continually, behavioral and cognitive OBC engagement led to increased levels of sense of moral responsibility. This shows that as OBC members receive help from the OBC via brand-related information, they also feel more inclined to help other OBC members in return. It also shows the more absorbed one is to an OBC, the more one feels compelled to help maintain the OBC. Notably, affective OBC engagement did not significantly increase sense of moral responsibility. This suggests that having interest in the OBC is not enough to influence one's felt obligation to it.

Importantly, neither affective, behavioral, nor cognitive OBC engagement significantly influenced shared rituals and traditions. This might indicate that OBC members can come to understand the norms and customs of an OBC without extensive engagement in it. Indeed, one's connection with an OBC (i.e. consciousness of kind) and felt obligation to the OBC (i.e. sense of moral responsibility) may grow and fluctuate over time, thus requiring constant maintenance via OBC engagement. OBC norms such as language and other proper ways of behaving, on the other hand, are less likely to shift as rapidly. This means understanding of the shared rituals and traditions of an OBC may not be predicated on one's OBC engagement.

The third hypothesis stated that OBC engagement positively influenced OBC commitment, defined as one's loyalty to the OBC. This hypothesis was supported, as all three dimensions of OBC engagement significantly predicted OBC commitment.

An OBC's survival is largely predicated on the commitment members make to maintain their membership. This is especially important in OBCs on SNSs, in which membership may be obtained or relinquished fairly easily. This study found affective, cognitive, and behavioral OBC engagement led to increased levels of OBC commitment. These findings support previous OBC research that found OBC participation positively influences OBC commitment and intention to maintain membership (Casalo et al., 2007; Jang et al., 2008; Woisetschlager et al., 2008). OBC members are largely goal-oriented in their membership (i.e. brand influence) (Wirtz et al., 2013). Meeting their goals within the OBC increases satisfaction with the OBC (Woisetschlager et al., 2008), which drives their commitment to the OBC.

Hypothesis 4 stated that OBC engagement positively influenced brand loyalty. This hypothesis was mostly supported, as affective and behavioral OBC engagement had significant positive relationships with brand loyalty. This validates conceptual research that suggests OBC

engagement leads to increased brand loyalty and extends empirical work that found OBC engagement to have an indirect effect on brand loyalty (Dessart, 2017; Wirtz et at., 2013). As discussed, OBC engagement may be motivated by the desire to satisfy a number of OBC and brand-related needs. The satisfaction of these needs creates value for OBC members, and hence their satisfaction within the OBC. The current work suggests creating brand-related value within the OBC also leads to satisfaction with the brand, thereby increasing brand loyalty. If OBC engagement generates brand value for OBC members, then it also generates brand loyalty. This is supported in brand community research by Hollebeek (2011) and McAlexander et al. (2002) linking engagement to brand loyalty.

Research questions 1-5 asked whether race moderated the relationships between (RQ1) brand co-creation perceptions and OBC engagement, (RQ2) OBC engagement and OBC membership, (RQ3) OBC engagement and OBC commitment, and (RQ4) OBC engagement and brand loyalty.

Results indicate that dialogue had a significantly more positive influence on cognitive OBC engagement for African American OBC members than for White American OBC members. Also, Affective OBC engagement had a significantly more positive influence on consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions, sense of moral responsibility, and brand loyalty for African American OBC members. Furthermore, behavioral OBC engagement had a significantly more positive influence on shared rituals and traditions for African American OBC members, while behavioral OBC engagement had a significantly more positive influence on sense of moral responsibility for White OBC members.

These findings suggest that perceived brand co-creation may have a greater influence on OBC engagement for African Americans, which in turn results in higher levels of brand loyalty.

Notably, race only moderated the relationship between dialogue and cognitive OBC engagement. This suggests that communicating with a brand directly is particularly important for driving African Americans' absorption into the OBC. Findings also suggest that eliciting interest and enthusiasm from African American OBC members is especially important for driving OBC membership and brand loyalty. Results pertaining to the moderating role of behavioral OBC engagement were mixed. These findings suggest that behavioral OBC engagement is more important for developing understanding of shared rituals and traditions for African American OBC members, but was more important for developing a sense of moral responsibility for White American OBC members.

5.2 Practical Implications

This study has several practical implications for OBC management practices. The first implication is that brands should put strong consideration into starting an OBC if they do not already have one. OBCs serve as a way for brands to cultivate brand loyalty from consumers. Within the OBC, ensuring that members have positive feelings towards one another and are actively engaged (i.e. liking, commenting, sharing) in the OBC is particularly important for developing brand loyalty. Additionally, communication between brands and OBC members is important for maintaining OBC engagement. Although OBC members often engage in OBCs for the purpose of connecting with each other, they also appreciate when brands take part in discourse as well, and even more so when this discourse includes asking OBC members to share their product-related experiences. Interestingly, there is plenty of evidence that suggests consumers are more trusting of consumer-generated content online than brand generated content (Chari et al., 2016; Pan & Chiou, 2011; Rodgers & Wang, 2011), and that consumers are more likely to engage in consumer-created OBCs than brand-created OBCs (Lee, Kim, & Kim, 2011).

This could indicate that even within consumer-created OBCs, OBC members appreciate when brands communicate with consumers on the consumers' "turf" (e.g. consumer-created OBCs).

Particularly for African American consumers, brands should focus on communicating directly with African American consumers. This will help increase the amount of time they spend on OBCs. Brands should also pay special attention to improving African Americans' enthusiasm for the OBC and connection with OBC members. These, the study shows, are more important in developing brand loyalty for African Americans than for White Americans.

5.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The present study had several limitations. First, the study found that brand co-creation perceptions led to OBC engagement which increased OBC membership, OBC commitment, and brand loyalty. However, this was tested via regression. Future studies can apply a path analysis to provide evidence of the mediation effect of OBC engagement on brand and OBC-related outcomes. Additionally, social identity consists of one's membership into certain groups. This study focused solely on consumers' membership in OBCs. Future study should develop a more elaborate conceptualization of social identity, and investigate how these other dimensions interact with OBC engagement and other OBC and brand-related outcomes, which could also be expanded from OBC commitment and brand loyalty in future research. Third, the study gathered participants through a Qualtrics panel. Since the focus of the study was on examining the theoretical relationship between concepts, the method of sampling was appropriate. However, future studies should consider using random sampling to gather participants. Fourth, the sample focused on two specific racial groups: African Americans and White Americans. "African American" could constitute individuals of African descent who were born in the U.S., or African immigrants in the U.S. These groups are likely to have different lived cultural experiences and

thus might have different relationships with brands and brand communities. Future studies should play close consideration to differences between African Americans born and currently residing in the U.S. and African Americans who were not born or currently do not reside in the U.S. While the decision to focus on African Americans and White Americans was made in light of the scope of the current study, future studies should also consider (a) gathering a sample that includes more racial groups and/or (b) gathering a sample that is more representative of U.S. racial demographics. Sixth, this study focused specifically on the OBC context, i.e. brand SNS pages, brand-related SNS pages, and brand-related groups on SNSs. Future research should investigate the role of SNS type in co-creation processes. Also, there exist other online contexts on which brand co-creation and engagement may take place, like company websites. Future research should consider brand co-creation processes in different contexts.

5.4 Conclusion

The goal of this dissertation was to define and investigate the relationship between brand co-creation and OBC engagement. Specifically, the present study examined the influence of brand co-creation perceptions on OBC engagement and the subsequent influence of OBC engagement on OBC membership, OBC commitment, and brand loyalty in the context of OBCs on social networking sites. The study defines brand co-creation as the general term for processes of consumer value creation and proposes that OBC engagement provides a mechanism for this process. By defining and explaining the relationship between brand co-creation and OBC engagement, the research bridged a gap between the advertising and management literatures. Additionally, the study provides more clarity about the role race plays in the relationship between brand co-creation, OBC engagement, and brand loyalty. Practically, the study suggests that dialogue and transparency are important for driving OBC engagement, with dialogue being

especially important for African Americans. It also suggests that affective OBC engagement is especially important for driving brand loyalty for African Americans.

CHAPTER 6

TABLES

Table 1: Summary of Concepts, Variables, and Definitions.

Concept(s)/Variables	***Definition(s)***
Brand Co-Creation	*"A dynamic process of developing and negotiating brand meaning by a multiplicity of brand stakeholders who continually reflect on, appraise, and contest brand-related associations in the process of negotiating their personal and social life narratives" (Pentina et al., 2018, p. 58).*
Dialogue	*Conversations between the consumer and the brand (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).*
Access	*The availability of brand-related resources that allow consumers to construct their own brand-related experience (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).*
Risk Assessment	*The availability of information that allows consumers to understand the potential risks and benefits of their brand-related behavior (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).*
Transparency	*The availability of information about a brand, its products and services (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).*
OBC Engagement	*"Specific interactive experiences between consumers and the brand, and/or other members of the OBC. [OBC engagement] is a context-dependent, psychological state characterized by fluctuating intensity levels that occur within dynamic, iterative engagement processes. [OBC engagement] is a multidimensional concept comprising cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral dimensions" (Brodie et al., 2013, p. 107).*
Affective Engagement	*Enthusiasm and enjoyment associated with the OBC (Dessart et al., 2016).*
Cognitive Engagement	*Mental activity (attention and absorption) focused on the OBC (Dessart, 2017).*
Behavioral Engagement	*Active manifestation (sharing information, learning, endorsing) of engagement (Dessart et al., 2015).*
Social Identity	*One's beliefs regarding her membership in certain social groups (Sirgy, 1982).*
Consciousness of Kind	*OBC members' perceived similarities and felt connection with other OBC members; felt difference from non-OBC members (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001).*
Shared Rituals and Traditions	*Practices through which the meaning of the OBC is communicated (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001).*
Sense of Moral Responsibility	*OBC members' sense of obligation to the OBC and its individual members (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001).*
OBC Commitment	*An "enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship" with the OBC (Moorman et al., 1992, p. 316).*
Brand Loyalty	*Pervasive, non-random brand-related behavior expressed over time (Casaló et al., 2007).*

Table 2: Respondents' socio-demographics and social media usage.

Variable	Total Sample *N* = ___	
	n	*%*
Ethnicity		
Hispanic or Latino	39	9.3%
Not Hispanic or Latino	381	90.7%
Race		
Black or African American	210	50%
White	210	50%
Age		
18-24 years	150	35.7%
25-34 years	122	29.1%
35-44 years	73	17.4%
45-54 years	44	10.5%
55-64 years	17	4.0%
65 years and older	14	3.3%
Gender		
Male	155	36.9%
Female	259	61.7%
Transgender	3	0.7%
Prefer not to answer	3	0.7%
Educational Attainment		
Some high school	26	6.2%
High school degree/GED	107	25.5%
Some college/currently in college	101	24.7%
Associate's/Trade School degree	52	11.7%
Bachelor's degree	89	21.2%
Graduate/professional degree	45	10.7%
Employment Status		
Employed full time/Military	191	45.5%
Employed part time	52	12.3%
Student at a college/university/technical school	54	12.8%
Homemaker	25	6.0%
Not currently employed	83	19.8%
Prefer not to say	15	3.6%

Marital Status		
Single, never married/Widowed	232	55.4%
Married or domestic partnership	161	38.3%
Divorced/Separated	27	6.3%
Household Income		
Under $15,000	84	20.0%
$15,000 to $24,999	45	10.7%
$25,000 to $34,999	70	16.7%
$35,000 to $49,999	43	10.3%
$50,000 to $74,999	67	15.9%
$75,000 to $99,999	45	10.7%
$100,000 to $149,999	38	9.0%
$150,000 to $199,999	28	6.7%
OBC Product Category		
Food and beverage	84	20.0
Travel	21	5.0
Fashion and beauty	116	27.6
Entertainment	64	15.2
Durable goods	14	3.4
Services	24	5.7
Technology	33	7.9
Retail	40	9.5
Others	24	5.7
	Mean	SD
Social Media Usage		
Facebook	5.21	2.20
Twitter	3.91	2.37
LinkedIn	2.80	2.07
Instagram	4.93	2.34
Pinterest	3.70	2.25
Reddit	2.85	2.15
Snapchat	4.08	2.84
Tumblr	2.44	2.04
Dating apps	2.39	2.09
Live streaming services	3.31	2.29
YouTube	5.72	1.66
YouTube Red	2.72	2.30

Table 3: Summary of Construct Correlations, Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Cronbach's Alphas.

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Dialogue	1.00 ***											
2. Access	0.69 ***	1.00 ***										
3. Risk Assessment	0.65 ***	0.69 ***	1.00 ***									
4. Transparency	0.66 ***	0.69 ***	0.78 ***	1.00 ***								
5. Affective OBC Engagement	0.67 ***	0.64 ***	0.66 ***	0.72 ***	1.00 ***							
6. Cognitive OBC Engagement	0.43 ***	0.45 ***	0.55 ***	0.56 ***	0.58 ***	1.00 ***						
7. Behavioral OBC Engagement	0.47 ***	0.47 ***	0.55 ***	0.58 ***	0.58 ***	0.73 ***	1.00 ***					
8. Consciousness of Kind	0.49 ***	0.54 ***	0.59 ***	0.59 ***	0.68 ***	0.76 ***	0.76 ***	1.00 ***				
9. Rituals and Traditions	0.56 ***	0.58 ***	0.63 ***	0.63 ***	0.66 ***	0.54 ***	0.61 ***	0.72 ***	1.00 ***			
10. Moral Responsibility	0.41 ***	0.46 ***	0.55 ***	0.52 ***	0.48 ***	0.70 ***	0.74 ***	0.76 ***	0.60 ***	1.00 ***		
11. OBC Commitment	0.50 ***	0.49 ***	0.56 ***	0.59 ***	0.63 ***	0.70 ***	0.75 ***	0.81 ***	0.70 ***	0.74 ***	1.00 ***	
12. Brand Loyalty	0.51 ***	0.55 ***	0.52 ***	0.60 ***	0.64 ***	0.45 ***	0.55 ***	0.60 ***	0.69 ***	0.53 ***	0.60 ***	1.00 ***
Mean	4.6	4.6	4.7	4.6	4.9	4.3	4.5	4.5	4.7	4.3	4.5	4.9
SD	1.3	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.4
Alpha	0.92	0.85	0.86	0.84	0.91	0.90	0.91	0.88	0.80	0.92	0.86	0.86

Notes: ***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05; n = 420

Table 4: Regression of Demographics and Brand Co-Creation Perceptions on OBC Engagement

Predictors	Affective OBC	Cognitive OBC	Behavioral OBC

	Engagement	Engagement	Engagement
Demographics			
Ethnicity			
Not Hispanic/Latino	-.09	-0.22	-0.19
Race			
White American	-0.32	0.01	-0.88
Age	0.00	-0.01	0.00
Gender			
Male	0.00	0.01	-0.15
Transgender	0.30	-0.46	-0.42
Prefer not say	0.43	0.61	0.24
Education			
High school diploma	0.05	0.06	-0.18
Some college	0.02	0.25	-0.12
Associate's	0.18	0.54	0.19
Bachelor's	-0.18	-0.11	-0.14
Trade School	-0.51	0.20	-0.16
Grad School	0.02	-0.35	-0.24
Employment Status			
Employed part time	-0.05	0.00	0.01
Homemaker	-0.26	-0.04	-0.23
Military	-0.43	0.15	-1.06
Not employed	-0.11	-0.18	-0.12
Student	-0.17	-0.10	-0.11
Prefer not say	-0.32	-0.27	0.43
Marital Status			
Married/Partnership	0.18	0.24	0.25
Divorced	0.33	0.28	0.27
Seperated	-0.47	-0.43	-0.35
Widowed	-0.07	-0.12	-0.34
Income			
$15,000-$24,999	-0.01	-0.40	-0.16
$25,000-$34,999	-0.13	-0.26	-0.13
$35,000-$49,999	-0.06	-0.02	-0.14
$50,000-$74,999	-0.24	-0.35	-0.19
$75,000-$99,999	-0.17	-0.50*	-0.62**
$100,000-$149,999	0.05	-0.09	-0.44
$150,000-$199,999	-0.21	0.18	-0.09
$200,000 and over	-0.11	-0.31	-0.60
Product Category			
Travel	0.31	0.62*	0.50
Fashion and beauty	0.36**	-0.24	-0.21
Entertainment	0.27	0.16	0.26
Durable goods	0.23	0.31	0.13
Services	0.03	0.13	0.40

Technology	0.25	0.46	0.31
Retail	0.05	-0.20	0.09
Other	0.63**	0.26	0.07
Social Media Use	-0.03	0.14**	0.10*
Brand Co-Creation			
Dialogue	0.19**	0.25*	0.26**
Access	0.15*	0.02	-0.02
Risk	0.14	0.16	0.09
Transparency	0.32***	0.27**	0.28**
Dialogue*Race	0.17	-0.36**	-0.22
Access*Race	-0.15	-0.07	0.08
Risk*Race	-0.06	0.16	0.19
Transparency*Race	0.10	0.23	0.13
Total Adjusted R2	0.59	0.39	0.40

Notes: ***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$; $n = 420$

Table 5: Regression of Demographics and OBC Engagement on OBC Membership

Predictors	Consciousness	Shared Rituals	Sense of Moral

	of Kind	and Traditions	Responsibility
Demographics			
Ethnicity			
Not Hispanic/Latino	-0.05	0.26	0.09
Race			
White American	0.56	0.80	0.76
Age	0.01*	0.01	0.01
Gender			
Male	-0.02	0.16	-0.02
Transgender	0.79	0.97	0.16
Prefer not say	0.75	0.35	-0.87
Education			
High school diploma	0.21	-0.05	-0.11
Some college	0.03	-0.12	-0.29
Associate's	-0.05	-0.15	-0.42
Bachelor's	-0.14	-0.04	-0.54*
Trade School	-0.64	-0.10	-0.72
Grad School	-0.11	-0.30	-0.31
Employment Status			
Employed part time	-0.07	-0.07	-0.07
Homemaker	-0.15	0.18	-0.17
Military	-0.01	0.03	0.60
Not employed	-0.23	0.11	-0.18
Student	-0.06	-0.11	0.08
Prefer not say	-0.13	-0.25	-0.18
Marital Status			
Married/Partnership	-0.08	0.16	0.03
Divorced	0.19	-0.03	0.19
Seperated	-0.20	0.11	-0.36
Widowed	-0.03	0.16	-0.27
Income			
$15,000-$24,999	-0.33*	-0.04	-0.09
$25,000-$34,999	0.02	-0.14	0.01
$35,000-$49,999	-0.03	-0.04	0.12
$50,000-$74,999	-0.13	0.03	-0.07
$75,000-$99,999	0.35*	0.23	0.21
$100,000-$149,999	-0.16	-0.09	0.05
$150,000-$199,999	0.29	0.20	0.45
$200,000 and over	0.09	-0.05	-0.23
Product Category			
Travel	-0.04	-0.31	0.17
Fashion and beauty	0.12	-0.11	-0.11
Entertainment	-0.06	-0.14	0.05
Durable goods	0.01	-0.02	0.15
Services	-0.05	-0.11	0.19

Technology	0.00	-0.26	-0.12
Retail	0.07	-0.37	-0.17
Other	0.38	-0.28	-0.10
Social Media Use	0.01	0.04	0.08
OBC Engagement			
Affective OBC Engagement	0.36***	0.47	0.10
Behavioral OBC Engagement	0.35***	0.31	0.42***
Cognitive OBC Engagement	0.33***	0.06	0.38***
Affective OBC Engagement*Race	-0.20*	-0.12***	-0.22*
Behavioral OBC Engagement*Race	0.14	-0.01***	0.23*
Cognitive OBC Engagement*Race	-0.01	-0.01	-0.13
Total Adjusted R2	0.72	0.51	0.60

Notes: ***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$; $n = 420$

Table 6: Regression of Demographics and OBC Engagement on OBC Commitment

Predictors	OBC Commitment
Demographics	
Ethnicity	
Not Hispanic/Latino	0.17
Race	
White American	0.16
Age	0.00
Gender	
Male	0.01
Transgender	0.20
Prefer not say	0.78
Education	
High school diploma	-0.40*
Some college	-0.43*
Associate's	-0.49*
Bachelor's	-0.52*
Trade School	-1.09*
Grad School	-0.47 .
Employment Status	
Employed part time	-0.08
Homemaker	-0.17
Military	0.39
Not employed	0.03
Student	-0.19
Prefer not say	-0.35
Marital Status	
Married/Partnership	0.08
Divorced	0.30
Seperated	0.34
Widowed	-0.43
Income	
$15,000-$24,999	-0.24
$25,000-$34,999	-0.11
$35,000-$49,999	-0.15
$50,000-$74,999	-0.04
$75,000-$99,999	0.22
$100,000-$149,999	-0.25
$150,000-$199,999	-0.20
$200,000 and over	-0.33
Product Category	
Travel	0.07
Fashion and beauty	0.13
Entertainment	0.08
Durable goods	-0.05
Services	0.13

Technology	-0.24
Retail	-0.09
Other	-0.15
Social Media Use	0.01
OBC Engagement	
Affective OBC Engagement	0.21***
Behavioral OBC Engagement	0.41***
Cognitive OBC Engagement	0.31***
Affective OBC Engagement*Race	0.02
Behavioral OBC Engagement*Race	0.04
Cognitive OBC Engagement*Race	-0.08
Total Adjusted R2	0.65

Notes: ***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$; $n = 420$

Table 7: Regression of Demographics and OBC Engagement on Brand Loyalty.

Predictors	Brand Loyalty
Demographics	
Ethnicity	0.14
Not Hispanic/Latino	0.72
Race	
White American	0.01
Age	0.72
Gender	
Male	0.10
Transgender	1.17
Prefer not say	0.37
Education	
High school diploma	0.02
Some college	-0.03
Associate's	-0.27
Bachelor's	-0.11
Trade School	1.23
Grad School	0.16
Employment Status	
Employed part time	-0.14
Homemaker	0.08
Military	0.90
Not employed	-0.11
Student	-0.05
Prefer not say	-0.26
Marital Status	-0.04
Married/Partnership	
Divorced	0.11
Seperated	0.28
Widowed	0.77*
Income	-0.01
$15,000-$24,999	
$25,000-$34,999	-0.26
$35,000-$49,999	0.08
$50,000-$74,999	0.04
$75,000-$99,999	-0.06
$100,000-$149,999	-0.17
$150,000-$199,999	0.02
$200,000 and over	0.11
Product Category	-0.28
Travel	
Fashion and beauty	-0.19
Entertainment	-0.50**
Durable goods	-0.37
Services	-0.50 .

Technology	-0.45*
Retail	-0.36
Other	-0.68*
Social Media Use	-0.01
OBC Engagement	
Affective OBC Engagement	0.65***
Behavioral OBC Engagement	0.31***
Cognitive OBC Engagement	-0.13
Affective OBC Engagement*Race	-0.30**
Behavioral OBC Engagement*Race	0.05
Cognitive OBC Engagement*Race	0.16
Total Adjusted R2	0.47

Table 8. Summary of Hypotheses, Research Questions, Concepts, Measures, Statistical Analyses, and Results.

Hypothesis/ Research Question	Concepts	Operational Measures	Statistical Analysis	Results
H1: Brand co-creation perceptions (dialogue, access, risk assessment, transparency) positively influence OBC engagement (affective, cognitive, behavioral).	Brand Co-Creation OBC Engagement	Albinsson et al., 2016 Dessart et al., 2016	Regression	Partially supported
H2: OBC engagement positively influences OBC engagement (consciousness of kinds, shared rituals and traditions, sense of moral responsibility).	OBC Engagement OBC Membership	Dessart et al., 2016 Madupu, 2006	Regression	Partially supported
H3: OBC engagement positively influences OBC commitment.	OBC Engagement OBC Commitment	Dessart et al., 2016 Zhou et al., 2012	Regression	Supported
H4: OBC engagement positively influences brand loyalty.	OBC Engagement Brand Loyalty	Dessart et al., 2016 Odin et al., 2001	Regression	Partially supported
RQ1: Does race moderate the relationship between brand co-creation perceptions and OBC engagement?	Brand Co-Creation OBC Engagement Race	Albinsson et al., 2016 Dessart et al., 2016 Census, 2017	Regression	Minimally
RQ2: Does race moderate the relationship between OBC engagement and social identity?	OBC Engagement OBC Membership Race	Dessart et al., 2016 Madupu, 2006 Census, 2017	Regression	Partially
RQ3: Does race moderate the relationship between OBC engagement and OBC commitment?	OBC Engagement OBC Commitment Race	Dessart et al., 2016 Zhou et al., 2012 Census, 2017	Regression	No
RQ4: Does race moderate the relationship between OBC engagement significantly predicts brand loyalty?	OBC Engagement Brand Loyalty Race	Dessart et al., 2016 Odin et al., 2001 Census, 2017	Regression	Partially

CHAPTER 7

FIGURES

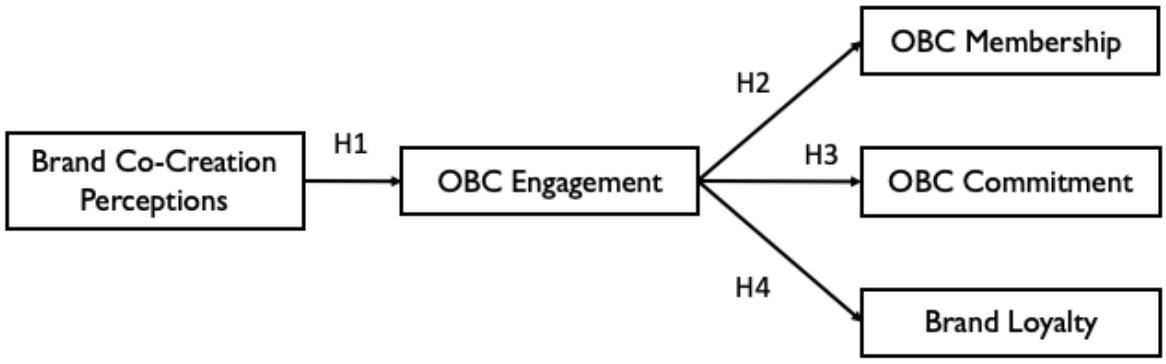

Figure 1. Theoretical model linking Brand Co-Creation, OBC Engagement, OBC Membership, OBC Commitment, and Brand Loyalty

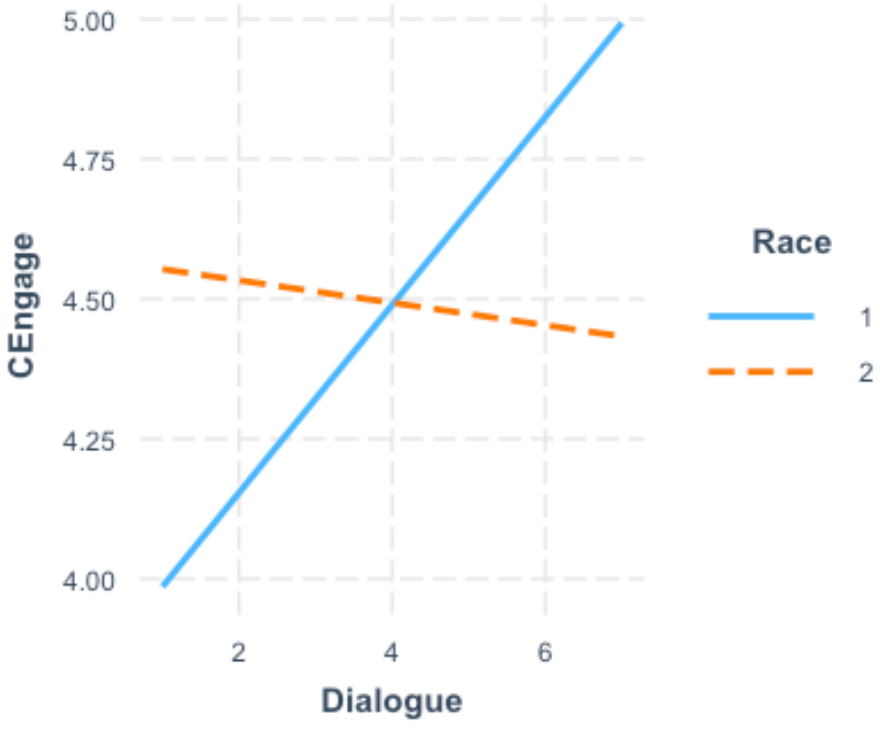

Figure 2. Graph showing the moderating role of race in the relationship between Dialogue and Cognitive OBC Engagement

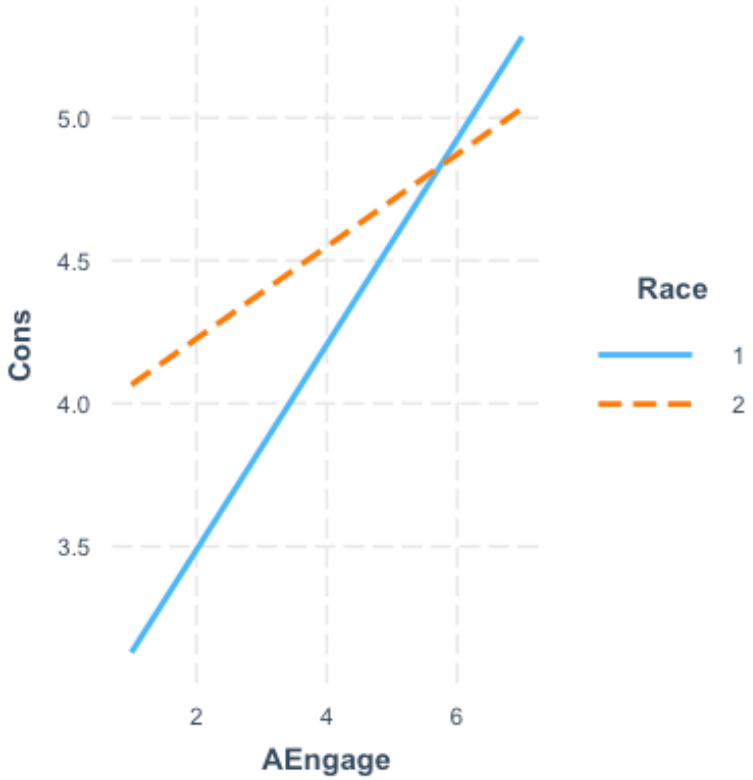

Figure 3. Graph showing the moderating role of race in the relationship between affective OBC engagement and consciousness of kind

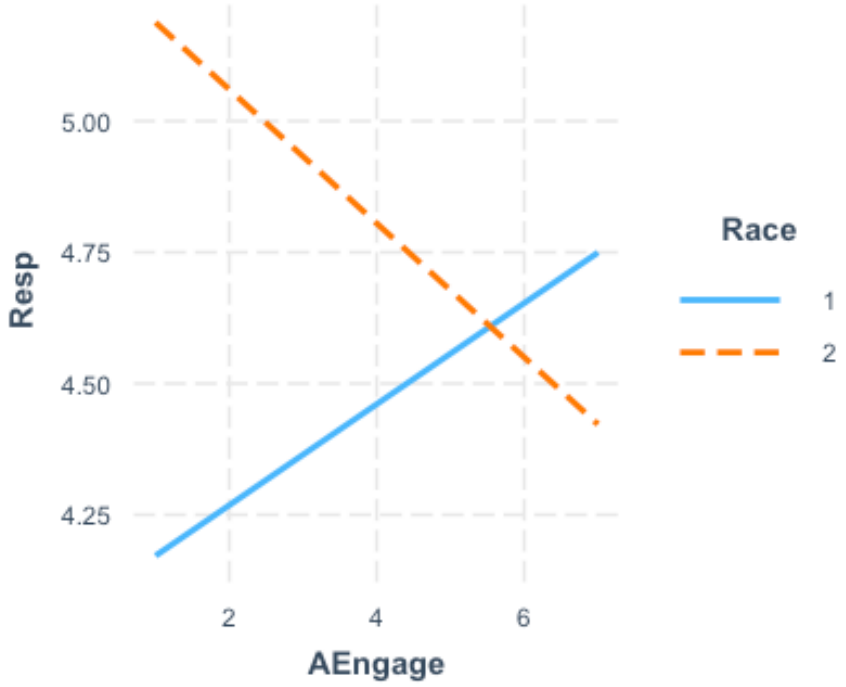

Figure 4. Graph showing the moderating role of race in the relationship between affective OBC engagement and sense of moral responsibility

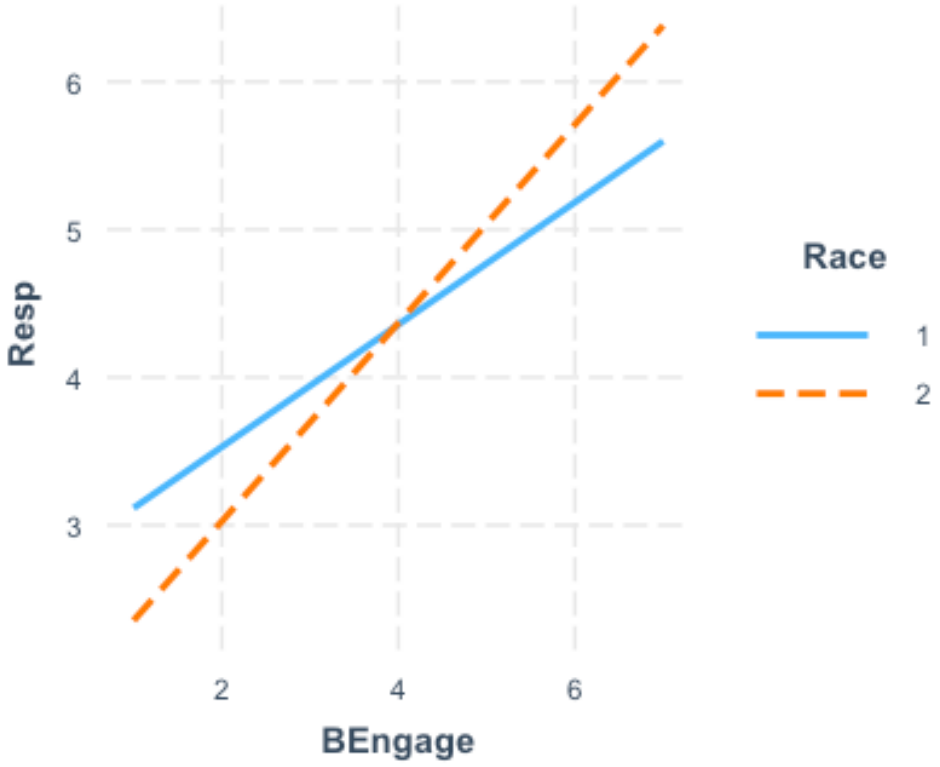

Figure 5. Graph showing the moderating role of race in the relationship between behavioral OBC engagement and sense of moral responsibility

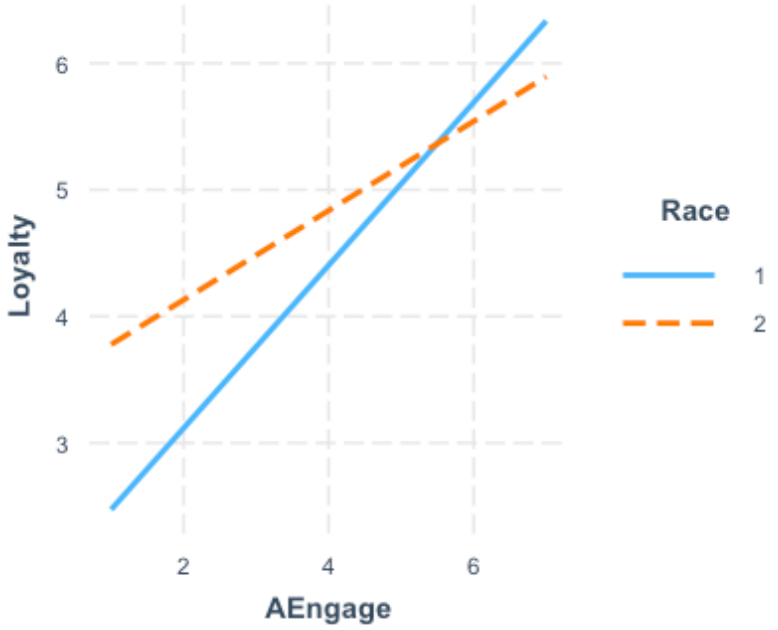

Figure 6. Graph showing the moderating role of race in the relationship between affective OBC engagement and brand loyalty.

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VITA

Rob Jones was born in St. Louis, Missouri. After high school he attended Truman State Unversity, where he earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication. After graduating, Rob served as a Corps Member for Teach For America, Las Vegas Valley. During his time in Vegas he earned a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Rob then came to the University of Missouri to pursue his Ph.D. in journalism. During the Ph.D. program at Mizzou, Rob has taught Principles of Journalism in Democracy and multimedia reporting. His research interests include social media advertising and multicultural advertising, two topics covered in his dissertation.