



A higher-order model of consumer brand engagement and its impact on loyalty intentions



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ABSTRACT

Consumer brand engagement is increasingly gaining popularity among practitioners and academics as a prominent consumer-brand relationship construct. The emergent literature on consumer brand engagement, largely conceptual, offers various definitions of the construct, though without much consensus. We offer a novel higher-order model of consumer brand engagement that we derive from organizational psychology. We adapt the concept of employee engagement and examine its factorial validity in a consumer-brand relationship context, defining consumer brand engagement as consumers' positive, fulfilling, brand-use-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption. We develop and empirically test a three-dimensional model of brand engagement, outlining relevant antecedents and outcomes. More importantly, we assess the managerial utility of consumer brand engagement by examining its impact on consumer loyalty intentions. We additionally compare the explanatory capability of brand engagement relative to traditional consumer judgments of value, quality and satisfaction. A survey of 408 mobile phone consumers from India provided data for empirical testing. The results support the three-dimensional factor structure of consumer brand engagement. Brand engagement not only exerts a significant impact on loyalty intentions, but also explains significantly more variation in the outcome in addition to the variation explained jointly by value, quality and satisfaction. Theoretically, we offer a holistic multi-dimensional measure of consumer brand engagement, and examine key nomological relationships. Managerially, we demonstrate the explanatory capability of brand engagement in explaining consumer loyalty intentions, offering a useful tool in the relationship-building repertoire of managers.

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1. Introduction

The consumer-brand relationship paradigm has generated substantial academic interest in understanding various forms of consumers' relational behaviors with brands. Consumer brand engagement has emerged as a prominent construct in recent years and is increasingly gaining currency among practitioners and academics, mainly due to its potential to affect consumer behavior (Gambetti and Graffigna, 2010). A survey of 124 Chief Marketing Officers revealed that developing brand engagement among consumers figured among top marketing priorities (Burt, 2013). Similarly, academic interest on the concept has accelerated (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011; Vivek et al., 2012). However, much remains to be understood about the construct. The nature of consumer brand engagement per se remains contentious. For instance, it is debatable whether consumer brand engagement is largely behavioral (van Doorn et al., 2010) or has additional

emotional and cognitive aspects (Hollebeek, 2011). Additionally, the nomological network of the construct is embryonic and largely conceptual (Brodie et al., 2011; Vivek et al., 2012), thus creating opportunities to empirically examine key relationships that have theoretical and managerial implications.

We offer two contributions to the emergent literature on consumer brand engagement. First, we empirically examine the factorial validity of a second-order model of consumer brand engagement that is novel to the domain of consumer-brand relationships. We derive our conceptualization of consumer brand engagement from the domain of organizational psychology (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Sonnentag, 2003), conceiving consumer brand engagement as consumers' positive, fulfilling, brand-use-related state of mind that is characterized by *vigor*, *dedication* and *absorption*. In the context of consumer-brand relationships, *vigor* denotes high levels of energy and mental resilience when interacting with a brand, and the consumer willingness and the ability to invest effort in such interactions (Schaufeli et al., 2002). *Dedication* refers to a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration,

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pride and challenge (Schaufeli et al., 2002). *Absorption* refers to the sense of being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in brand interactions and in which time passes quickly (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Each of the dimensions of vigor, dedication and absorption correspond to behavioral, emotional and cognitive aspects (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011). In this paper we propose and test empirically a holistic measure of consumer brand engagement for use in ongoing research.

Our second contribution relates to assessing the managerial value of consumer brand engagement. The managerial value of the concept lies in its potential ability to explain desired marketing outcomes, such as, consumer loyalty intentions towards a brand. Traditionally, consumer loyalty intentions have been driven largely by consumer judgments of perceived value, perceived quality and overall satisfaction (e.g., Cronin et al., 2000; Yang and Patterson, 2004). In order to have managerial appeal (i.e., practical utility), consumer brand engagement must explain consumer loyalty intentions after having controlled for the effects of these three key judgments. Hence, our second objective is to empirically investigate the influence of consumer brand engagement on consumer loyalty intentions. The results will inform managers of the potential utility of consumer brand engagement and further the theoretical understanding of the nomological network of the construct, positioning consumer loyalty intentions as an outcome. Moreover, we empirically examine whether consumer brand engagement explains variation in loyalty intentions that is above and beyond the amount of explanation attained jointly by perceived value, perceived quality and consumer satisfaction. Therefore, the results will inform practitioners about the potency of consumer brand engagement as a concept for attaining consumer loyalty *relative to* the traditional antecedents. Next, we discuss our adapted higher-order conceptualization of consumer brand engagement, and offer hypotheses pertaining to the nature of the construct as well as its selected antecedents and consequences.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses

2.1. Nature of consumer brand engagement

The concept of engagement has been investigated in the domains of organizational psychology for some time. Increasingly in recent years the concept has been investigated in the consumer behavior domain. Academically, consumer brand engagement has been defined variously as “the level of an individual customer’s motivational, brand-related and context-dependent state of mind characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity in direct brand interactions” (Hollebeek, 2011, p. 790); “the intensity of an individual’s participation in and connection with an organization’s offerings and/or organizational activities, which either the customer or the organization initiate” (Vivek et al., 2012, p. 127); and “a customer’s behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers” (van Doorn et al., 2010, p. 254). Practitioners have defined engagement as “turning on a prospect to a brand idea enhanced by the surrounding context” (Creamer, 2006) and “the emotional attachment that customers have with a brand” (Sullivan, 2009, p. 20). Some commonalities are evident in these definitions. Aspects like “participation in”, “connection with”, “a multifaceted state of mind” (comprising cognitive, emotional and behavioral elements) as well as context-specificity seem to be central to the construct of consumer brand engagement. Despite these early developments, experts agree that the concept is yet to be fully developed (Schultz, 2013; Vivek et al., 2012) and have called for more profound knowledge and understanding of the concept (Gambetti and Graffigna, 2010). Our

present study is an attempt to add to the emergent body of knowledge in the area.

As discussed in Section 1, we draw our conceptualization of consumer brand engagement from the domain of organizational psychology (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Sonnentag, 2003). We therefore define consumer brand engagement as consumers’ positive, fulfilling, brand-use-related state of mind that is characterized by *vigor*, *dedication* and *absorption*. We derive our conceptualization of consumer brand engagement from organizational psychology for two main reasons. Firstly, the organizational psychology measure of engagement effectively captures *individual behavior*, whereby engagement is regarded as a trait aspect (Sonnentag, 2003) and a motivational construct (Salanova et al., 2005). This means that engagement will likely vary between individuals. The “subject” of engagement in organizational psychology as well as marketing literatures is “individuals” – *employees* in the former and *consumers* in the later. Therefore, a trait- and motivational-based measure of individual behavior is likely to perform well in a different setting involving individual behavior. In our present case the setting is consumer behavior. Secondly, the definition of engagement in organizational psychology is *holistic*, capturing multiple facets of individual engagement – cognitive (absorption), emotional (dedication) and behavioral (vigor) – under a single framework. This holistic view of engagement has been validated over time in the organizational psychology literature. The emergent marketing literature on engagement is beginning to elucidate a holistic nature of brand engagement, though a concrete dimensionality of the construct is yet to be firmly established. Thus, a well-validated measure of engagement will potentially contribute to a better understanding of consumer engagement.

Given the newness of consumer brand engagement, it is important to conceptualize the level of abstraction at which the construct operates. We conceive consumer brand engagement as an individual-level construct which is supported by the early work on the nature of the construct (Hollebeek, 2011). Related to the level of abstraction, is the issue of specificity of the construct. In other words, the “subject” of engagement is the individual consumer and the “object” is a *specific* brand (Hollebeek, 2011). The consumer-brand relationship paradigm has spawned new constructs that tend to capture consumer relational behaviors with specific brands. For example the construct of brand love (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006) reflects consumers’ passionate emotional attachment with specific brands. Likewise, supported by previous work (Goldsmith, 2012), our conceptualization of consumer brand engagement seeks to measure consumer (the “subject”) engagement with a specific brand (the “object”). Lastly, consumer brand engagement denotes an *interaction* between consumers and brands. Following Fournier (1998), it is increasingly recognized that brands and consumers interact as partners in various ways. Similarly, consumer brand engagement incorporates the interactive (dyadic) element whereby the consumers may willingly invest effort in maintaining a degree of interaction (i.e., demonstrate vigor) with a brand, be happily engrossed in such interactions (i.e., demonstrate absorption) and feel enthusiastic and inspired in doing so (i.e., demonstrate dedication). Early research into the consumer brand engagement clearly acknowledges such interactive aspect of the construct (Hollebeek, 2011; Vivek et al., 2012).

Our definition of consumer brand engagement above outlines the multi-dimensional nature of the construct. Given that we offer a higher-order conceptualization of consumer brand engagement, it is important to acknowledge how we conceive each of the dimensions as measuring the higher-order construct. We conceive consumer brand engagement as measured reflectively by the three first-order dimensions of vigor, dedication and absorption. This type of measurement model is referred to as a reflective first-order

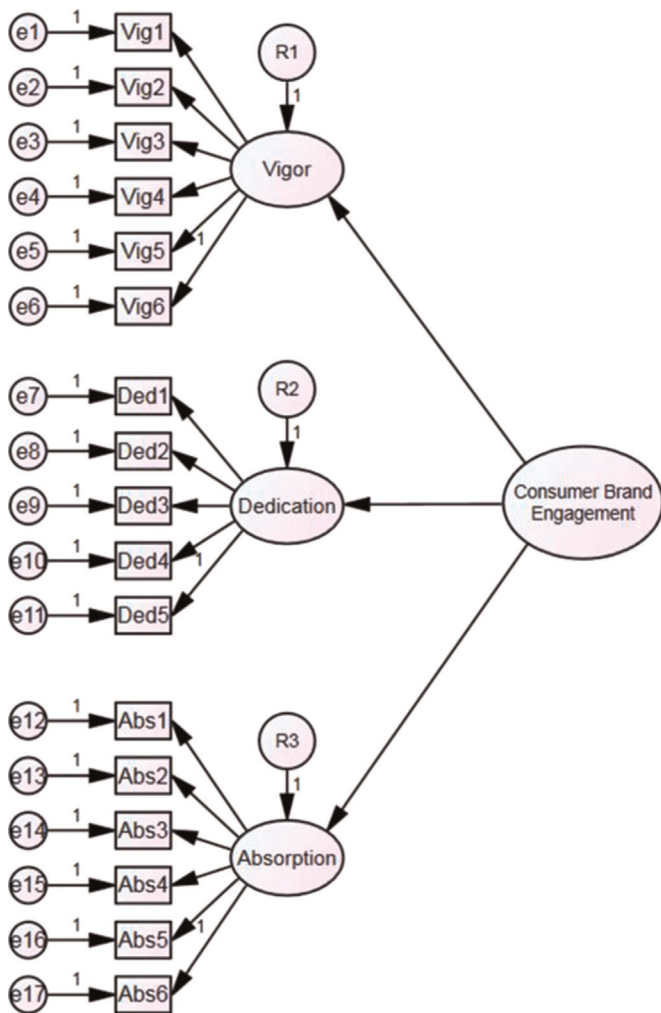


Fig. 1. The higher-order model of consumer brand engagement.

and reflective second-order model (Jarvis et al., 2003). In other words, the three dimensions are jointly reflective of the underlying construct at the second-order. Fig. 1 depicts the higher-order model of consumer brand engagement as envisaged in this research. We expect the direction of causality to flow from the higher-order construct to each of the dimensions, implying positive correlations among the three dimensions. Studies in organizational psychology consistently report positive correlations among the three dimensions (Salanova et al., 2005; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli et al., 2002). As per our conceptualization of consumer brand engagement, we expect a similar pattern of correlations among the dimensions. For instance, consumers investing effort in interacting with a brand (i.e., vigor) is expected to correlate positively with being pleasantly engrossed in brand interactions (i.e., absorption). Thus, we expect the three dimensions to be positively correlated, supporting a reflective measurement stance at the first-order. Against this background, we offer our first hypothesis as follows:

H1. Consumer brand engagement is a second-order construct reflected by the first-order dimensions of vigor, dedication and absorption.

2.2. Antecedents of consumer brand engagement

The nomological network of consumer brand engagement is still in its nascent stage of development. Some researchers have

offered conceptual guidelines on the potential antecedents and outcomes of consumer brand engagement (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011), however most of these relationships have not been empirically validated to date. Additionally, these studies indicate that the direction of causality among constructs in the nomological network of may be different depending on whether consumers are new or existing users of a brand (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011). In the present research, we adopt an existing user perspective on consumer brand engagement. In the present study, we outline two antecedents of consumer brand engagement – *consumer product category involvement* and *brand usage duration*. We outline each of the hypotheses as follows.

2.2.1. Product category involvement

Consumer involvement, defined as the consumer-perceived relevance of a product to the interest, needs and values of the consumer, with a product category has for long been considered as a vital aspect of consumer behavior (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Involvement with a product category has been positively associated with consumer motivation to search for product information, extensive decision making as well as consumer commitment towards brands (Warrington and Shim, 2000; Zaichkowsky, 1985). The consumer brand engagement construct also implies a degree of consumer-perceived *relevance*, but towards *specific* brands. Thus, a clear conceptual distinction needs to be made between the two constructs when investigating consumer brand engagement. Some experts have drawn conceptual distinctions between consumers' product involvement and specific brand engagement (Goldsmith, 2012; Vivek et al., 2012). In a similar vein, we argue that, on one hand, consumer product involvement represents a general consumer proclivity towards considering a class of products (e.g., mobile phones) as relevant, important and meaningful. On the other hand, consumer brand engagement (as conceived in this research) implies a high degree of relevance that consumers attach to a specific brand (e.g., Nokia). Some experts use the term "brand engagement" to denote consumers' brand-specific involvement. Don Schultz for example suggests "Brand engagement drives directly to what the marketer is trying to do-get the customer involved with the brand" (Schultz, 2007, p. 7). Hence, acknowledging this distinction seems vital as product involvement may lead to heightened consumer motivation and arousal (Mano and Oliver, 1993), thereby affecting consumer engagement with specific brands in a product category. From an empirical standpoint, given that the two constructs – consumer product involvement and consumer brand engagement – are apparently related, it is important to empirically consider the effects of the former on the later. This would allow the subsequent effect of consumer brand engagement on loyalty intentions to be elucidated more clearly. Hence, in the present study we specify consumer product involvement as an antecedent to consumer brand engagement, expecting a positive relationship. Hence

H2. Consumer product category involvement has a direct positive impact on consumer brand engagement.

2.2.2. Brand usage duration

We expect consumers' brand usage duration to influence consumer brand engagement. Brand usage duration refers to the total period of time that a consumer has owned and interacted with a brand (Dodd et al., 2005). We derive support for our expectation from the relationship marketing literature that investigates the effect of relationship duration on relationship outcomes (Anderson and Weitz, 1989; Kumar et al., 1995). Although there is mixed evidence regarding the role of relationship duration on relational outcomes in the organizational relationship literature (Verhoef et al., 2002; Palmatier et al., 2006), within a business-to-consumer

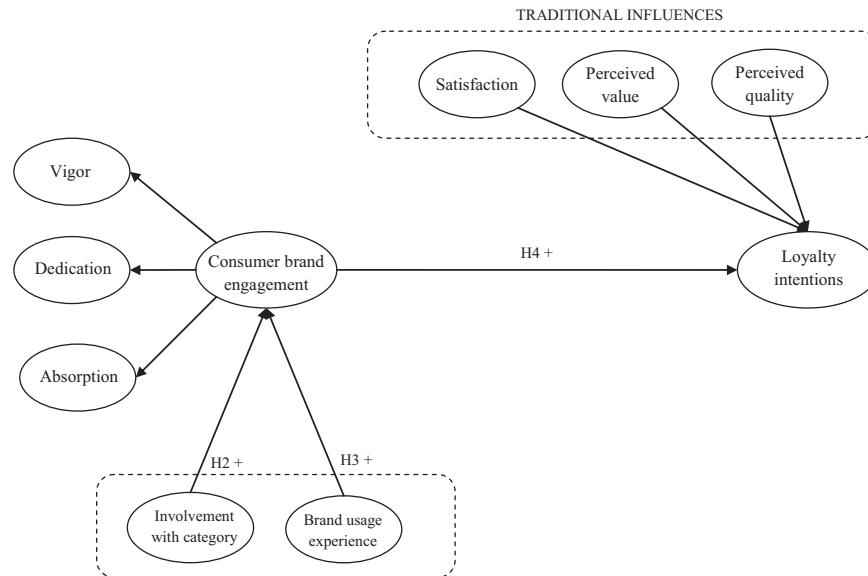


Fig. 2. Examining the impact of consumer brand engagement on loyalty intentions.

services marketing context Dagger et al. (2009) observe a direct positive effect of relationship duration on consumer-perceived relationship strength. Similar results were observed by Bove and Smith (2006). We expect a similar dynamic in the context of consumer brand engagement. It is likely that consumers' prior brand experiences stored in memory over time may affect relational outcomes (Lau and Lee, 1999). Consumers' brand usage experience may naturally facilitate habitual-based attachment towards brands, potentially influencing consumers' assessment of their relationships with brands (Esch et al., 2006). If satisfied with their past interactions, consumers may also experience a sense of dependence on the brand (Bendapudi and Berry, 1997). Further, akin to interpersonal relationships, consumers' total duration of brand interaction may develop self-confidence in their beliefs about brands (Gill et al., 1998), potentially shaping brand engagement (Fig. 2). Hence we hypothesize:

H3. Brand usage duration has a direct positive impact on consumer brand engagement.

2.3. Impact of consumer brand engagement on loyalty intentions

The managerial value of a measure of consumer brand engagement depends on its capability in explaining consumer marketplace behavior. A focal objective of the present research is to examine the impact of consumer brand engagement on consumer loyalty intentions. Consumer loyalty intentions are vital to long-term financial health of a firm since future consumer loyalty has a direct bearing on future sales revenues. Consumer brand engagement is inevitably a relational construct, reflecting an intense consumer bonding with a brand. Additionally, consumer brand engagement represents a rewarding experience for a consumer that is positive and fulfilling. This experience encompasses emotional, cognitive and behavioral aspects as reflected by the dimensions of vigor, dedication, absorption and vigor respectively. Once such a rewarding bond is developed, consumers are likely to commit to preserving such a relationship (Lambe et al., 2001). Developing future loyalty intentions towards a brand acts as a consumer mechanism of preserving their relationship with the preferred brand. Consumer loyalty represents "a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize preferred product/services consistently in the future" (Oliver, 1999, p. 34). Once consumers are engaged with brands, they may develop approach behaviors

(Esch et al., 2006) given the strong emotive aspect of engagement. Further, consumer brand engagement entails sustained interactions between consumers and brands (Hollebeek, 2011), leading to formation of psychological bonds that a consumer is likely to sustain in future. Moreover, a consumer may also refrain from switching to competing offerings (Oliver, 1999), as these may not offer the same rewarding relationship (i.e., engagement). Specifically, consumer may engage in loyalty behaviors such as repeat buying, resist brand switching and spreading positive word-of-mouth. Increasingly researchers are beginning to observe a direct impact of relational constructs on loyalty intentions (Loureiro et al., 2012; Nysveen et al., 2014). Hence we hypothesize

H4. Consumer brand engagement has a direct positive impact on loyalty intentions.

2.4. Consumer brand engagement versus quality, value and satisfaction as predictors

Traditionally, consumer loyalty intentions have been shown to be primarily driven by consumer evaluative judgments, that is, perceptions of product quality, value received and overall satisfaction (e.g., Cronin et al., 2000; Yang and Patterson, 2004; Zeithaml et al., 1996). Satisfaction judgments mainly involve consumers' assessments of a product as meeting expectations (Anderson and Sullivan, 1993), perceived quality is largely a reflection of a product's perceived superiority (Zeithaml, 1988) and, consumer-perceived value mainly entails a "give" (perceived sacrifice) versus "get" (perceived benefit) estimation (Zeithaml, 1988). The three concepts share commonalities. For instance, quality and value are based in consumer' cognitive evaluations (Zeithaml, 1988), and satisfaction denotes consumers' cognitive and affective state post consumption (Aurier and N'Gaola, 2010). The concepts are therefore associated empirically as well. For instance, perceived value and customer satisfaction are considered as closely related (Yang and Patterson, 2004). The traditional judgments are limited however in their ability to adequately capture consumer-brand relational aspects, and hence may not be sufficient for a brand's long-term success (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006).

The consumer-brand relationship paradigm has overtime attempted to move beyond the explanatory capability of these traditional concepts to examine the explanation in consumer outcomes as attained by relational-oriented concepts. In the present

context, we are interested in examining the additional explanatory capability of the effect of consumer brand engagement on consumer loyalty intentions, after controlling for the effects of the three traditional consumer judgments. Although we know that building brand engagement is among managers' top priorities (Burt, 2013), what is more critical is whether consumer brand engagement has explanatory capability above and beyond that of consumers' value, quality and satisfaction judgments. Specifically, we expect consumer brand engagement to attain significantly higher explanation in loyalty intentions relative to the explanation attained by the three judgments cumulatively. We expect the additional explanation in loyalty intentions to arise due to the more interactive and immersive nature of consumer brand engagement as compared to the three traditional judgments (as explained in the preceding sections). Hence, we hypothesize

H5. Consumer brand engagement will explain variance in loyalty intentions that is additional to the variance explained cumulatively by consumer satisfaction, perceived value and perceived quality judgments.

3. Methodology

3.1. Design: survey context and data collection

We collected data using a survey of a convenience sample of 420 mobile phone users in New Delhi, India. The respondents were business students enrolled at a management college. Mobile phones were chosen as the context of the study since India is one of the biggest mobile phone markets in the world (Kenny, 2014) and young consumers represent a major segment in this market (Chaturvedi, 2011). Recent research suggests that consumers actively engage with product brands (Sarkar and Sreejesh, 2014). Mobile phones thus add an interesting context to the study. The Indian mobile phone market is dynamic and becoming fragmented in recent years. Brands such as Samsung, Apple, Nokia, Karbonn and HTC jointly capture over three-quarters of the market share at the time of the survey (Sen, 2013; The Hindu, 2014). We offered these brands as well as other options as choices to respondents in the survey, namely, Samsung, Nokia, Apple, HTC, Karbonn, LG, Sony Ericsson and Blackberry. We also allowed the respondents to nominate an unlisted brand given the rapid changes in the market shares as well as emergence of local brands. Moreover, there is increasing evidence that mobile phone usage per capita is increasing globally. For instance, in the US and the UK, reports suggest that consumers are spending on an average around 34 and 41 hours per month respectively on mobile phones (Nielson, 2014). In India approximately 81% of the population owns a mobile phone (Nielson, 2013), and on an average, consumers spend an approximately 3 hours per day on mobile phones (Ericsson Consumer Lab, 2013). Thus, mobile phones offer a suitable context to study consumer brand engagement.

The survey was paper-based and self-administered. We collected data with the assistance of the academic staff members of the college. The academics were given explicit instructions by the research team regarding how to brief the respondents prior to the start of the survey. The surveys were handed out in classrooms at the beginning of a lecture and the students were requested to voluntarily participate in the survey. The specific research objectives were not revealed to the respondents so as to limit socially-desirable responses. The respondents were assured that there were no right or wrong answers. Respondents were given around 20 minutes to complete the survey. Data was collected over a three week period.

3.2. Questionnaire design and measures

The questionnaire was designed with the objective of potentially minimizing various response biases. The self-administered nature of the survey helped to minimize acquiescence/disacquiescence bias (Jaffe and Pasternak, 1997). The wording of the questions was straightforward in accordance with the usage in the literature, potentially minimizing respondent confusion that might lead to response and non-response error. We maintained respondent anonymity throughout the survey, potentially reducing chances of socially-desirable responses. The general topic of the survey also minimized the chances of social desirability bias. Lastly, the items pertaining to the antecedents and outcome variable (i.e., loyalty intentions) were presented on separate pages, partly addressing the threat of self-generated validity (Feldman and Lynch, 1988). To minimize the incidence of common method bias, the questionnaire was designed in accordance with the guidelines of Podsakoff et al. (2003). Specifically, we sub-divided the questionnaire into sections, avoided the use of negatively-worded items, and also ensured that the survey items did not contain hidden cues to respondents (i.e., item demand characteristics); minimizing potential common method bias. We also conducted post hoc tests to examine the severity of common method bias (discussed later in the paper).

The constructs of the study were measured using multi-item 7-point Likert Scales anchored at strongly agree (7) to strongly disagree (1), with fully-labeled scale points. The measures of constructs were adapted from the literature. The measures for consumer brand engagement were adapted from Menguc et al. (2013). Vigor was measured using six items. Dedication and absorption were operationalized using five and six items respectively. Construct measurement is further discussed in the following section. Overall, the consumer brand engagement scale comprised 17 items. Consumer product category involvement was measured using four items derived from the involvement literature (Albrecht et al., 2013; Mittal, 1995). Brand usage duration was operationalized using a single-item measure in accordance with the literature (Dagger et al., 2009; Dodd et al., 2005). No measurement error was assumed for the single-item measure (Dodd et al., 2005). Perceived quality was measured using four items derived from Spry et al. (2011). Similarly, four items derived from the literature measured perceived value (Johnson et al., 2006), and four items measured consumer satisfaction (Aurier and N'Gaola, 2010). Loyalty intentions were operationalized using four items based on Johnson et al. (2006).

4. Data analysis and results

4.1. Preliminary analyses

The 420 survey questionnaires were first cleaned. There were eight scripts that had extreme responses almost throughout the length of the survey (i.e., respondents had marked "7s" throughout on the 7-point scales, showing no variation). These were deemed unacceptable and suitably omitted (Malhotra, 2010). Additionally, four scripts that had virtually no responses marked were also eliminated. Lack of interest in the study might have led some respondents to leave their script blank. Thus, a total of 408 scripts were available for further analysis. The useable scripts were examined for missing values. Missing values were less than 1% of the total values and these were replaced using Expectation Maximization algorithms (Hair et al., 2010). Next, we examined the extent of common method bias using a common factor test, whereby a single method factor was estimated using confirmatory factor analysis (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The hypothesized

Table 1
Descriptives and bivariate correlations.

Construct	Mean	S.D.	VIG	DED	ABS	DUR	INV	QUL	VAL	SAT
Vigor (VIG)	5.21	1.23								
Dedication (DED)	5.06	1.25	0.81**							
Absorption (ABS)	4.70	1.31	0.65**	0.70**						
Brand usage duration (DUR)	2.09	1.71	−0.02 ^{n.s.}	−0.05 ^{n.s.}	−0.05 ^{n.s.}					
Product category involvement (INV)	5.35	1.21	0.31**	0.38**	0.40**	−0.06 ^{n.s.}				
Perceived quality (QUL)	5.54	1.11	0.69**	0.66**	0.46**	−0.03 ^{n.s.}	0.29**			
Perceived value (VAL)	5.40	1.14	0.59**	0.53**	0.46**	0.00 ^{n.s.}	0.23**	0.65**		
Satisfaction (SAT)	5.60	1.13	0.68**	0.63**	0.43**	0.03 ^{n.s.}	0.22**	0.76**	0.67**	
Loyalty intentions (LOY)	4.82	1.60	0.73**	0.70**	0.57**	−0.02 ^{n.s.}	0.21**	0.62**	0.56**	0.66**

Note: n.s. – not significant.

** Significance at 0.01 level.

Table 2
Reliability and validity estimates of first-order constructs.

First-order constructs and items	Standardized loading (sig.)	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
<i>Vigor</i>		0.87	0.88	0.54
I feel strong and vigorous when using my brand of mobile phone	0.85**	–	–	–
I am passionate about using my brand of mobile phone	0.84**	–	–	–
When interacting with my brand, I feel full of energy	0.75**	–	–	–
I can continue using my brand for very long periods	0.75**	–	–	–
I would like to stick with my brand despite some problems with it	0.63**	–	–	–
When I get up in the morning, I feel like using my mobile	0.56**	–	–	–
<i>Dedication</i>		0.88	0.88	0.60
I feel enthusiastic when interacting with my brand of phone	0.82**	–	–	–
I am proud of my brand of mobile phone	0.80**	–	–	–
My brand of mobile phone inspires me	0.78**	–	–	–
My brand of mobile phone gives me meaning and purpose	0.77**	–	–	–
I use my brand of mobile phone with complete dedication	0.70**	–	–	–
<i>Absorption</i>		0.89	0.90	0.59
I get carried away when I interact with my brand of mobile phone	0.84**	–	–	–
I am usually absorbed when using my brand of mobile phone	0.80**	–	–	–
When I am using my mobile phone, I forget everything else	0.79**	–	–	–
It is difficult to detach myself when I am using my mobile phone	0.77**	–	–	–
I feel happy when I am interacting with my mobile phone	0.70**	–	–	–
Time flies when I am interacting with my mobile phone	0.70**	–	–	–
<i>Product category involvement</i>		0.88	0.88	0.66
Mobile phones interest me a lot	0.86**	–	–	–
Mobile phones matter a lot to me	0.81**	–	–	–
I attach great importance to mobile phones	0.80**	–	–	–
I am fascinated by mobile phones	0.77**	–	–	–
<i>Perceived quality</i>		0.86	0.86	0.61
My brand of mobile phone is of high quality	0.79**	–	–	–
My brand of mobile phone has excellent features	0.79**	–	–	–
My brand of mobile phone is very reliable	0.78**	–	–	–
My brand of mobile phone provides consistent quality	0.77**	–	–	–
<i>Perceived value</i>		0.81	0.81	0.52
My brand of mobile phone provides me good value	0.85**	–	–	–
My brand provides a good deal relative to others	0.75**	–	–	–
My brand offers good quality for a reasonable price	0.69**	–	–	–
My brand of mobile phone is competitively priced	0.56**	–	–	–
<i>Satisfaction</i>		0.86	0.87	0.63
I did the right thing when I bought this brand	0.83**	–	–	–
I am satisfied with my brand	0.82**	–	–	–
My brand meets my expectations	0.80**	–	–	–
My choice is a wise one	0.71**	–	–	–
<i>Loyalty intentions</i>		0.87	0.87	0.63
I would recommend this brand to friends	0.87**	–	–	–
I will buy my chosen brand again	0.84**	–	–	–
I will not buy another brand if this is present in the store	0.79**	–	–	–
If I got any mobile for free, I will choose my brand	0.67**	–	–	–

Note: AVE refers to average variance extracted.

** Significance level $p < 0.01$.

measurement model of this research yielded an acceptable fit ($\chi^2(610)=1453.77$, $p < 0.05$; CFI=0.92; RMSEA=0.058) compared to the single method factor's unacceptable fit to data (i.e., Chi-square, $\chi^2(664)=4228.01$, $p < 0.05$; CFI=0.65; RMSEA=0.115). The test suggests that common method bias does not seem to be a serious threat.

4.2. Descriptives and correlations

A check of item Skewness indicated that all values ranged from -1.70 to -0.34 . Most Kurtosis values were within -1.08 to 1.73 . Only two items pertaining to satisfaction have Kurtosis values of 3.58 and 2.02 , corresponding to items "I am satisfied with my brand of mobile phone" and "The brand of mobile phone meets my expectations" respectively. These values were deemed as not threatening normality (Ory and Mokhtarian, 2010). Moreover, our chosen maximum-likelihood estimation method was considered generally robust to moderate violations of normality (Bollen, 1989). Construct means (factor scores), standard deviations and inter-correlation estimates reported in Table 1. Scaled construct means range from 4.70 to 5.66 (out of 7.0) and corresponding standard deviations range from 1.12 to 1.60 . Brand usage duration had a mean of 2.09 years with a standard deviation of 1.17 . Most correlations were positive and significant for all pairs of constructs. Brand usage duration was not significantly correlated with other constructs.

4.3. Measurement model analysis

Structural equation modeling (SEM) using IBM AMOS 20.0 software was used for data analysis. We estimated our hypothesized measurement model using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The measurement model elicits a significant Chi-square (i.e., $\chi^2(610)=1453.77$, $p < 0.05$). Other fit indices suggest an acceptable fit to data (i.e., Normed $\chi^2=2.36$; Comparative Fit Index, CFI=0.92, Tucker–Lewis Index, TLI=0.91; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, RMSEA=0.058) which suggest construct validity. We also conducted others tests of reliability and validity. Table 2 reports the standardized item loadings, reliability estimates and average variance extracted (AVE) scores. All item loadings were greater than 0.50 , suggesting adequate convergent validity (Hair et al., 2010), further supported by AVE scores greater than 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability estimates were above 0.80 for all constructs, indicating acceptable reliability. Discriminant validity was supported for most constructs as the square-root of AVE for most constructs was greater than the respective standardized correlation coefficient with most other constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). However, the two constructs of vigor and dedication do not seem to meet the Fornell and Larcker criterion of discriminant validity. Hence, we conducted a battery of other tests to examine whether or not the two constructs were statistically distinct. First, we examined the 95% confidence intervals (CIs) around the correlation estimate between vigor and dedication. The 95% CI (0.76 – 0.85) does not include "1.0". This suggests the lack of a perfect correlation among vigor and dedication, indicative of discriminant validity among the two dimensions. Second, we conducted a Chi-square difference test using a CFA. Specifically, we compared our hypothesized three-dimensional factor structure of consumer brand engagement with an alternate two-dimensional factor structure, whereby items of vigor and dedication were allowed to load on a single dimension. The two-dimensional model (i.e., $\chi^2(118)=602.19$, $p < 0.05$) was significantly worse-fitting than the three-dimensional model (i.e., $\chi^2(115)=470.48$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, these tests jointly suggest that vigor and dedication were statistically distinct and that consumer brand engagement was better represented as a three-dimensional construct.

Given that we adapt our measure of consumer brand engagement from the organizational psychology literature (e.g., Menguc et al., 2013), we estimated several other competing confirmatory factor analytic models to affirm the construct's factor structure in the present context. We engaged in this exercise since Menguc et al. (2013) and Salanova et al. (2005) show that the three dimensions are highly correlated, implying that certain dimensions can be potentially collapsed into (i.e., specified to load on to) one or more latent factor/s. So we explicitly test for such possible competing models. We first estimated a single-factor model, specifying all items to load on a single engagement factor ($\chi^2(119)=878.35$, $p < 0.05$). Then we estimated various second-order two-dimensional models whereby the items pertaining to every pair of the hypothesized dimensions of engagement are specified on to a single factor. For instance, one such model was estimated whereby the items of Absorption and Dedication were allowed to load on to a single factor ($\chi^2(119)=750.12$, $p < 0.05$). Other combinations were also examined. The examination suggests that our chosen higher-order three-dimensional model elicits significantly better statistical fit (at 95% confidence level) as compared to the competing measurement models, offering confidence in our operationalization.

4.4. Hypotheses testing

After examining the fit of our measurement model (e.g., $\chi^2(610)=1453.77$, $p < 0.05$; CFI=0.92; RMSEA=0.058), we examined the second-order path loadings of consumer brand engagement. We observed that consumer brand engagement significantly explained the first-order dimensions: vigor (standardized beta coefficient, $\beta=0.95$, Critical Ratio, CR=10.42, $p < 0.01$), dedication ($\beta=0.96$, CR=12.23, $p < 0.01$) and absorption ($\beta=0.79$, CR=10.42, $p < 0.01$). This result supports hypothesis H1. Following this examination, we estimated our structural model. The structural model yielded a significant Chi-square (i.e., $\chi^2(646)=1779.67$, $p < 0.05$). Other fit indices were TLI=0.88, CFI=0.89; RMSEA=0.066. Given the relatively small sample size vis-à-vis the number of observed indicators in the present study, we adopted a somewhat flexible view towards cut-offs of various fit indices. For small samples and models with large number of observed variables, cut-off values for CFI and TLI (i.e., cut-off value of less than 0.90) and RMSEA (i.e., cut-off value: 0.07 – 0.08) are considered to be indicative of acceptable fit (Sharma et al., 2005). Thus, the fit of our structural model was deemed as adequate. Next we examined the hypothesized explanatory paths.

As expected consumers' product category involvement exerted a significant impact on consumer brand engagement ($\beta=0.46$, CR=7.47, $p < 0.01$), supporting hypothesis H2. Contrary to expectations, brand usage duration did not significantly influence consumer brand engagement ($\beta=-0.02$, CR=-0.403, $p=0.69$). Thus, hypothesis H3 was not supported. Consumer brand engagement did exert a significant impact on consumer loyalty intentions ($\beta=0.65$, CR=10.35, $p < 0.01$), thereby supporting hypothesis H4. Regarding the (controlled) impacts of perceived quality, value and satisfaction on loyalty intentions, only satisfaction significantly impacted loyalty intentions ($\beta=0.43$, CR=3.46, $p < 0.01$). The effects of perceived value and quality on loyalty intentions were non-significant. Table 3 reports the relevant structural path estimates.

4.5. Examining additional explanation in loyalty intentions by consumer brand engagement

We also examined the added value of consumer brand engagement in explaining loyalty intentions (i.e., hypothesis H5) in two steps. First, we estimated a base model specifying the effects

Table 3
Structural path estimates.

Explanatory paths	Standardized coefficient (β)	Critical ratio	Significance (p)
Product category involvement → consumer brand engagement	0.46	7.47	**
Brand usage experience → consumer brand engagement	−0.02	−0.40	0.69
Consumer brand engagement → loyalty intentions	0.65	10.35	**
<i>Traditional influences on loyalty intentions (controls)</i>			
Perceived quality → loyalty intentions	−0.11	−0.94	0.35
Perceived value → loyalty intentions	0.08	0.99	0.32
Satisfaction → loyalty intentions	0.43	3.46	**

** $p < 0.01$.

of quality, value and satisfaction on loyalty intentions. The base model fitted the data well (i.e., $\chi^2(98)=221.49$, $p < 0.05$; CFI=0.96; RMSEA=0.056). Consumer judgments of quality ($\beta=0.21$, $p=0.08$) and satisfaction ($\beta=0.46$, $p < 0.01$) exerted significant impacts on loyalty intentions at 10% and 5% levels of significance respectively. Perceived value did not significantly affect the outcome. The base model explained around 57% of the variance in the outcome. Second, we augmented the base model by specifying consumer brand engagement as an added explanatory variable. The augmented model yielded acceptable fit (i.e., $\chi^2(481)=1207.41$, $p < 0.05$; CFI=0.92; RMSEA=0.061). The effect of consumer brand engagement on loyalty intentions was also significant ($\beta=0.66$, $p < 0.01$) and importantly, around 73% of the variance in loyalty intentions was explained. Consumer brand engagement explained variance in loyalty intentions that is additional to the variance explained cumulatively by perceived value, perceived quality and consumer satisfaction judgments. Thus, our results support hypothesis H5. Next, we discuss the results of our study.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The small but growing body of literature on consumer brand engagement emphasizes its role as a pivotal consumer-brand relationship construct. Our first objective was to empirically examine a multi-dimensional model of consumer brand engagement that is defined as consumers' positive, fulfilling, brand-use-related state of mind and is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption. Our results supported a three-dimensional factor structure. Dedication, the emotional component, emerged as the strongest dimension of brand engagement, validating the strong emotive nature of brand engagement. Vigor, the behavioral component, was the second strongest dimension of consumer brand engagement, supporting that mobile phone consumers seem to be investing effort when interacting with their preferred brand. Absorption, the cognitive component was the third strongest dimension, implying that consumers were fully concentrated and happily engrossed in brand interactions. Our results are consistent with the emergent group of studies that suggests a multi-dimensional nature of consumer brand engagement (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011). More broadly, our results compare favorably with notions of value-in-use (Grönroos and Voima, 2013) and relational benefits (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002). Consumers' ongoing interactions with brands are a fundamental characteristic of brand engagement which may be conceived as a kind of value-in-use (e.g., providing pleasurable and absorbing interactions). Similarly, brand engagement seems to offer relational benefits to consumers relative to competitive offerings. Overall, we support the nature of consumer brand engagement as a deep level of bond between consumers and brands. A theoretical implication of our finding is that we offer conceptual clarity to the construct, especially early in

its life-cycle. Attaining such clarity is vital since some experts question the very nature of (and perhaps the need for) the engagement construct. For instance, Don Schultz claims that “engagement, the way that it is seemingly being defined and practiced today by marketers and supported by academic studies, often seems to be nothing more than a reinvention of one of the oldest tools in the marketing arsenal: sales promotion.” (Schultz, 2013, p. 20). Our results offer a clearer picture of the construct, offering a holistic multi-faceted view. Additionally, by empirically validating an organizational-psychology-based engagement measure in the context of consumer-brand relationship, we offer a useable measure for consumer behavior researchers.

The second objective of this research was to examine the impact of consumer brand engagement on consumer loyalty intentions, that is, to examine the managerial utility of brand engagement. First, we observed that consumer brand engagement exerted a strong direct impact on consumer loyalty intentions, after controlling for the effects of the traditional value, quality and satisfaction judgments. This result complements the consumer-brand relationship literature that outlines a pivotal role of relational constructs in explaining marketing outcomes (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Loureiro et al., 2012). Specifically, our study positions consumer brand engagement as a vital predictor of consumer loyalty intentions. From a theoretical perspective, we position loyalty intentions as an outcome of consumer brand engagement, validating the nomological network of the construct that is outlined in some early conceptual work in the area (Brodie et al., 2011). A major contribution of the study has been the added explanatory power of consumer brand engagement in explaining consumer loyalty intentions. Specifically, the results of this study suggest that consumer brand engagement explains significantly more variation in loyalty intentions relative to the variation explained jointly by consumer perceptions of value, quality and satisfaction. We observed that value, quality and satisfaction jointly explained around 57% of variation in loyalty intentions; the estimate significantly improves by 16 percentage points upon the introduction of consumer brand engagement as an added predictor. Besides, the consumer brand engagement emerged as the strongest predictor among the specified antecedents. Thus, our results complement the consumer-brand relationship paradigm, suggesting that relational aspects are better predictors of desired marketing outcomes than the other antecedents considered. A managerial implication of the findings is that consumer brand engagement is a concept that has much practical utility, above and beyond that of value, quality and satisfaction. It seems that provision of value, quality, and satisfaction are bare minimum requirements for brands to compete in a market. It is the relational aspect however, specifically consumer brand engagement, that may provide competitive advantages to brands. Moreover, in an era where consumers seek entertaining and stimulating experiences (Schmitt, 1999), generating consumer brand engagement may help to retain customers. Thus practitioners are advised to

devise ways via investing in product design that offer stimulating and absorbing experiences to consumers.

Additionally, we examined consumer product category involvement as an antecedent of consumer brand engagement. The constructs of involvement and engagement entail a degree of heightened relevance, the former with a product category and the latter with a specific brand. Given the theoretical overlap among the two constructs, it is important to empirically differentiate the two constructs if the subsequent effects of consumer brand engagement are to be better understood. We observed that consumer product category involvement had a significant impact on consumer brand engagement. This is an interesting finding because it signifies that degree of relevance ascribed by consumers to a product category has a direct influence on subsequent post-purchase engagement with specific (preferred) brands in that category. We also provided empirical validation to the involvement–engagement relationship outlined in the conceptual literature (Brodie et al., 2011). A managerial implication of our finding is that practitioners should refrain from treating consumers' product category involvement and consumers' brand-specific engagement as similar (although the two are associated). Category involvement is seemingly a good predictor of specific brand engagement. Consumers who are generally involved with a product category are likely to engage with preferred brands in that category. This may create opportunities for marketers to potentially target highly-involved existing consumers with relationship-building programs.

Further, we also examined the role of brand usage experience in shaping consumer brand engagement. Contrary to expectations, we find that brand usage experience has no direct significant influence on consumer brand engagement. The non-significant finding is interesting. It seems that habitual factors may not play a major role in directly explaining the degree of brand engagement. The non-significant path may be a reflection of post-modern consumer behavior, whereby consumers largely seek ongoing experiences with brands in the present (Schmitt, 1999). Hence, brand usage experiences of the past may not figure in consumer assessments of brand engagement. This dynamic may also be more relevant to the nature of the cohort investigated in this research – “generation Y” consumers. These young consumers tend to live in the present, adopt a short-term perspective and seek instant gratification of needs (Viswanathan and Jain, 2013). Engagement fulfils consumers' relational needs in the present, and hence past experience with a brand seemingly has little impact on engagement. A managerial implication is that a brand's strong historic presence in a market may offer no guarantee of generating consumer brand engagement in the present. This may also imply that new and emerging brands in a market (without a strong historic presence) may yet have a reasonable chance at developing engagement with consumers, potentially developing a reasonable market presence. A case in point is that of a local mobile phone brand in India called Micromax, which has developed a strong market share in the country (relative to major international brands) in a reasonably short span of time (Khan, 2014).

An added contribution of this study has been the product brand context in which the study was conducted. The emergent studies on consumer brand engagement have been conducted within the context of consumers' online behavior (Brodie et al., 2013). However there is emergent evidence that consumers can and do engage with product brands (Sarkar and Sreejesh, 2014). Given the ubiquity of mobile phones and their growing per capita usage, we introduced a novel context to the study of consumer brand engagement. Overall, our study suggests that consumers actively engage with mobile phones, demonstrating vigor, dedication and absorption. More broadly our study complements research that investigates consumers' relationships with product brands (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Loureiro et al., 2012).

5.1. Limitations and future research

A clear limitation is the cross-sectional design, representing a snapshot of consumer-brand dynamics. Consumer brand engagement may evolve time, and so might the weightings of the three dimensions. Future research may investigate this issue using temporal survey designs. Another limitation is the convenience sampling used in the present research. Future research should be therefore conducted using alternative sampling designs in order to achieve generalizability across consumer groups. For instance, systematic random sampling of a brand's customers (enrolled on a brand's product warranty database) can be used to generate a probability sample. Additionally, to further the understanding of the nomological network of consumer brand engagement, it will be useful to examine relationships of brand engagement with other relational constructs. An interesting avenue could be to examine how consumer self-construal process fits in the nomological network of brand engagement. For instance, the role of brand engagement in self-concept (Sprott et al., 2009) may partly explain brand engagement. Research questions may also be framed around the role of consumer relational tendencies (e.g., relationship orientation), as predictors of consumer brand engagement. Finally, this research was conducted using a single country and a single product category as context. Future research should replicate the estimated relationships across different markets using different product categories (and perhaps conduct cross product category comparisons) to attain a much fuller understanding of the consumer brand engagement.

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