

ABSTRACT

The virtual brand community refers to a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand that emerge from the discussion about a specific brand in cyber-space. There are two main research objectives for this study. The first objective is to explore the motivations to participate in virtual brand communities. The second objective is to investigate the relationships between the Big Five personality traits, virtual community motives, frequency, amount, types of use, and membership duration and virtual brand community engagement by using the uses and gratifications theory as a theoretical framework.

Two studies were conducted. In Study 1, Phase 1, the qualitative research method was used to generate virtual brand community motive items by conducting content analysis ($N = 150$). In Study 1, Phase 2, quantitative research was used to explore the factors of virtual brand community motives and to test the validity and reliability of all scales ($N = 110$). In Study 2, quantitative research was used to confirm the factors related to the virtual brand community motives and to investigate the relationships among all variables ($N = 230$).

The results revealed six virtual brand community motives: convenience, new friendships, entertainment, brand affection, product exchange, and passing time. The new friendship motive was the strongest motive among all motives found in the study. The results suggested that personality traits, virtual brand community motives, and virtual brand community use (i.e., overall use and types of use) were positively associated with virtual brand community engagement. However, length of membership duration did not have any influence on virtual brand community engagement.

The results of the study provide contributions to both scholars and marketing practitioners in understanding the role of personality traits, virtual brand community motives, and virtual brand community use in virtual brand community engagement. Further discussion of the managerial implications and academic contributions from this study is provided in detail.