

Elevating low-effort engagement to cultivate stronger community commitment: A study of social capital within Instagram's brand community

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aimed to analyze the role of social capital in enhancing the engagement of community members, specifically transitioning them from low-effort participation to higher levels of commitment toward the community.

Design/methodology: This study presents the results derived from a quantitative analysis of 483 participants across diverse automotive brand communities found on Instagram.

Findings: Based on the foundation of social capital theory, this research enquires into the effects of shared relational elements of social capital on the commitment of members to communities. The results indicate that when members perceive an adequate degree of social trust and adhere to a recognized norm of reciprocity, there is a notable influence on the potential for heightened commitment to the community.

Research limitations/implications: This study solely focuses on a specific type of social media (Instagram), emphasizing the prominent role of visual presentation style as the primary approach in content creation. In contrast to most previous studies that heavily scrutinize verbal/textual communication presentation platforms regarding online social capital studies, this study has demonstrated that visual presentation communication has a notable impact on the mechanism that triggers positive evaluations among users. Consequently, it significantly incites the development of social trust and reciprocity through social exchange interactions within the community.

Originality/value: In visually oriented settings such as Instagram, the barriers to participating in social interactions are noticeably reduced. Consequently, activities requiring minimal engagement are more likely to evolve into more intensified forms of social exchange among members. This condition facilitates the cultivation of social trust and establishing of a norm of reciprocity. This study offers a different perspective regarding the digitally mediated value co-creation. It is not the factor of information quality through comprehensiveness and detail that increases the value perceived by the members, as the textual mode of social media accomplishes. Instead, the affective and emotional appeal in the visually dominant social interaction that significantly generates a sense of closeness and relatedness that eventually improves the perceived value derived from the community. Thus, visual presentation in social exchange is more proficient for relationship building.

Keywords: Social capital, Social media, Online brand community, Visual content

Jel Codes: L1, D4

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1. Introduction

Social capital plays a significant role in facilitating and fostering prosocial behavior, together for stimulating sense of community (Wellman, Haase, Witte & Hampton, 2001). Earlier research indicates that social capital enables individuals to align their interests and identities with those of the community, thereby helping them overcome the challenges associated with collective action. (Lee, 2022). Despite the widespread acceptance and establishment of the relationship between social capital and civic engagement, scholarly discourse persists concerning the incomparability between the traditional form of social capital ingrained through in-person interactions and the case of online social capital, which derives from digitally mediated non-personal interactions (Lee, 2022). Previous studies (de Zúñiga, Barnidge & Scherman, 2017; Saxton & Guo, 2020) argue that online social capital is a distinct form of social capital, characterized by unique properties and outcomes that differentiate itself from traditional social capital.

Research conducted by Twenge (2013) examining millennials' social media usage reported that social media's influence on social capital establishment is mostly constrained to low-effort engagement, and it may not significantly impact individuals' high-effort engagement behaviors. This notion solidifies the viewpoint that the diminishing face-to-face social exchange, replaced by online interactions (Johnston, Tanner, Lalla & Kawalski, 2013) will consequently negatively impact the sense of community, potentially resulting in reduced community engagement (Lee, 2022). Moreover, numerous studies have revealed that the increasing usage of social media applications, as measured by metrics such as the number of friends, followers, posts or updates, and reactions or comments, is strongly associated with harmful to well-being (Shah, Webster & Kour, 2023) For instance, such excessive usage has been linked to feelings of loneliness and self-isolation (McCain & Campbell, 2018). which may potentially impede the motivation for engaging in prosocial behavior. Building upon this, Sohail (2023) noted that there is limited understanding regarding the factors that impact the motivation to participate actively in an online community. In particular, it is necessary to recognize and investigate the orientation and potency of important theoretical connections between constructs that are relevant to consumer engagement and its implication. (Sohail, 2023).

Contrastingly, in the area of marketing research, recent social capital studies that are subject to online brand community, confirms the positively strong correlation between social capital and brand loyalty (Jeong, Ha & Lee, 2021). Moreover, the presence of social capital in these online communities leads to higher levels of affective and behavioral engagement, although it does not show a significant association with cognitive engagement (Wong & Lee, 2022). This predicament highlights the likely missing link between social capital and behavioral aspects related to attitudinal objects such as the community or the brand. By drawing upon social identity studies, it is evident that engagement behavior and interactivity can be observed through commitment to the community (Marzocchi, Morandin & Bergami, 2013) as the consequence of collective-level social capital that directs loyalty behavior.

With the increasing importance of social media applications in fostering social capital within the digital networks (Bowden, Conduit, Hollebeek, Luoma-aho & Solem, 2018), combined with the divergent findings concerning the impact of social media-based online communities and the implications of virtually evolved social capital, there is a pressing need to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the behavioral effects of social capital established through social media interactions. Therefore, understanding the pivotal role of social media in mediating the brand-consumer-community triadic relationship, particularly in addressing the obstacle of marginal level of member participation in the online brand communities (Kumar & Nayak, 2019) makes the conclusions drawn from studies related to these topics are both timely and crucial. To enhance its

contribution value to the related literature, this study will consider the specific social media platform where the community is initiated.

Acknowledging the nuances of different social media platforms is fundamental for crafting effective consumer engagement strategies. By considering the platform, marketers and researchers can create content and engagement tactics that resonate with the specific audience and context of each platform, ultimately leading to more successful engagement efforts (Waterloo, Baumgartner, Peter & Valkenburg, 2018). Derived from this recognition, social capital studies on virtual communities have heavily gravitated towards text-heavy social media platforms, primarily focusing on Twitter, Facebook, and discussion forums (McCrow-Young, 2021). Consequently, there is a significant gap in understanding the interplay between usage motivation, engagement behavior, and their implications for social capital building that affect member's commitment towards community means, particularly in the context of visual-based social platform settings such as Instagram (Leaver, Highfield & Abidin, 2020). Thus, the overall view of this study is that recognizing commitment in the online brand community will provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play within the community and how members contribute to its growth, sustainability, and overall success. While loyalty is important, it is often a component of commitment, which encompasses a broader set of behaviours and attitudes that have a more significant impact on the community's development and brand support.

Additionally, highlighting the visually dominant content implicates the significance of affective appeals offered by the platform. Corresponding with the nature of low-effort interaction by social media users (Twenge, 2013; Weiss & Cohen, 2019), the initial persuasion to engage is biased toward affect-based messages conveyed via visuals (Jin, Wang & Zhang, 2023). Thus, this notion accentuates that engagement are encountered early, leading up to the phase of collectively accumulating social capital by intensive interactivity. Then, the interactions between community members will support the creation of intangible resources that can be personally derived, generating perceived value, accordingly, catalyzing personal commitment towards the community. And finally, this commitment will be expressed through behavior toward the attitudinal objects, which is loyalty.

This study aims to examine whether low-effort engagement behavior can progress into highly dynamic social interactions that produce collective social capital in a way that nourishes a sense of commitment toward the community. Additionally, this study also considers the predominantly visual environments on Instagram and their impact on social capital accumulation, an aspect that has been lacking in previous studies.

To facilitate readers in comprehending and evaluating the research with clarity, this paper will be organized in a logical arrangement as follows. First, the introductory section will serve as the pathway to the study, conveying contextual background, articulating research problem, and delineating research objectives. Second, the theoretical background conducts examination of existing literature, propose the research's position within the academic discourse. Third, the construction of conceptual framework and hypotheses development. The composition of conceptual structure involves outlining the key concepts, variables, and relationships within the study. The framework assists in clarifying the research focus and describes how various factors can be interconnected. Clear and testable statements, reflecting the conceptual framework, are formulated. These explications, accordingly, serve as the basis for developing hypotheses that can be investigated empirically. Fourth, the methodology section describes the chosen research design, details the data collection methods, and outlines the analytical tools. Fifth, the portion regarding results of the analysis will be presented through tables and figures to effectively convey the research outcomes. Sixth, the discussion section engages into the interpretation of the findings, drawing connections to existing literature and integrating the outcomes into broader implications, including theoretical and managerial aspects. It also addresses research limitations while projecting potential avenues for future studies. Seventh, discloses the study's results in relation to existing research on consumer engagement and brand community.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Social Media Based Communities

The proliferation of social media usage has offered new possibility for consumers to interact with other consumers who share the same interest, experiences, opinion, and knowledge. Revolved around their mutual

interest, consumers cooperatively create their own community. From a marketing perspective, these communities can be classified into two categories: marketer-created and consumer-created (Lee, Kim & Kim, 2011). Among these, communities established by consumers are considered to be more intense and foster a wider range of experiences (Pedeliento, Andreini & Veloutsou, 2020). Based on the circumstances, this study focuses on consumer-initiated community that present on Instagram. Within these communities, members engage in organic collaboration, cultivating productive interactions that provide benefits to individual participants and the community.

2.2. Social Capital

In the purest sense, social capital theory asserts that the connections and relationships among individuals within a social network generate resources for the advantage of both the members and the group collectively, which would not be possible in the absence of these social ties (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Many studies has asserted that continuous social interaction equates to social capital (Chiu, Hsu & Wang, 2006), and by establishing a sustained relationship, consumers simultaneously procure and distribute brand-embedded information as resources (Ghahtarani, Sheikhmohammady & Rostami, 2020) while deepening familiarity and eventually affect consumers attitude towards the community. Essentially, social capital is an essential contributor to the generation of value in the form of brand-related knowledge through continuous social exchange based on networked relationships (Cao, Lin & Zhou, 2022).

Since social capital is rooted in social relationships, it is consequently a multifaceted concept (Hazleton & Kennan, 2000). However, many scholars, particularly those in the area of organizational and management studies, have approved the three-dimensional construct of social capital proposed by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998). The first dimension is the structural scope of social capital, which pertains to the primary linkage of social networks among individuals involved in a community (Chiu et al., 2006). The second dimension is the relational dimension, depicted as the personal relationships people develop over a period of time through repeated exchanges or interactions (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Lastly is the cognitive dimension. The extent of social capital that represents common goals or meanings of a community that facilitates efficient social exchange (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

2.3. Social Media Content Presentation

Individuals of diverse age groups utilize social media platforms for purposes of self-expression, information consumption, entertainment, and active engagement with numerous topics of interest. The variety of modes available for participating in the virtual society includes actions such as liking, commenting, sharing, posting, and tagging (Sormanen, Reinikainen & Wilska, 2022). Social media users are typically drawn to the entertaining content generated on these platforms, however, serious societal topics also garner significant attention (Sormanen et al., 2022). Accordingly, the digital space mediated by social media applications has become a space for civic and expressive participation (Keating & Melis, 2017).

In conjunction with social media usage behavior, one crucial aspect of interaction-based consumer engagement within social capital discourse is content presentation. This factor differentiates one social media platform from another, thus significantly influencing the dynamics of interaction within the platform's environment (Song, Wang & Xu, 2022). Conforming to the cue summation theory, presenting information supported with additional compatible and operative cues results in a superior effect on information adoption (Severin, 1967). In the case of Instagram, images or short videos are the main content presentation, where context or meaning is amplified through text.

3. Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

Building on social capital theory in conjunction with the exposition of social identity theory, this research is oriented toward the transformation of low-effort engagement to a higher level of commitment toward community, where collective social capital serves as the determinant. Online communities enhance the benefits of voluntary social relationships by promoting cooperation, efficient information sharing, and the adoption of information. As a result, this study investigates the impact of informational motivation on collective social capital, which further strengthens community commitment.

3.1. Distinctive Social Media Use Motivation

As an internet-based social application, social media allows the creation and circulation of content generated by users, commonly termed as user-generated content (UGC). Social media initially attracted users intrigued by its social appeal, with user-generated content at its core (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020), and as social media continues to develop, its role extends beyond peer-to-peer communication (Noguti & Waller, 2020). According Kim, Sohn and Choi (2011), today's users predominantly take advantage of social media as information-seeking tools. This realization elicits information-seeking behavior as a specific motivation that justifiably serves as a prerequisite toward the degree of engagement level (Noguti & Waller, 2020).

Given that most social media users tend to be passive participants or lurkers (Sun, Rau & Ma, 2014; Yang, Li & Huang, 2017). Additionally, considering that the primary motivation for using social media is typically driven by informational needs that can be satisfied with minimal content engagement effort (Buzeta, Pelsmacker & Dens, 2020; Vale & Fernandes, 2018), it follows that to encourage sustained engagement, therefore, a content must elicit a response that triggers both emotional and cognitive elaboration (Fox, Nakhata & Deitz, 2019), in which visual presentation in communication can be considered superior compared to textual mode interactivity in this regard (Azer, Blasco-Arcas & Alexander, 2023). Thus, a postulation can be made that when users search for information, their cognitive alertness must be engaged to collect the information they need (Bradley, 2009). In addition, when exploring an environment (community) to fulfill their information needs, selective perception is utilized. Ultimately, in this condition, people are more open-minded to situational factors (Noguti & Waller, 2020) such as affect-rich information that is greatly present on Instagram, thus making it easier for information processing that encourages heightened levels of engagement.

Furthermore, when the information obtained and experienced are congruent with their self-concept, the perception of psychological ownership will occur, leading to more active engagement behavior and a greater inclination to increase their contribution toward the community (Kumar & Nayak, 2019). This enhances the formation of collective social capital (Wong & Lee, 2022). These proactive efforts play a vital role in shaping the relational aspect of social capital (Lesser & Storck, 2001), particularly in cultivating a shared sense of trust and readiness for reciprocal acts of prosocial behavior (Mathwick, Wiertz & De Ruyter, 2008). Accordingly, hypotheses can be stated as follows:

H1: Informational motivation positively affects social trust.

H2: Informational motivation positively affects reciprocity.

3.2. Outcomes of Social Capital

One of the defining traits of social capital is its ability to function across various level. Studies conducted by Mathwick et al. (2008) have demonstrated that social capital at the collective level serves as a valuable resource, offering solutions for individual-level issues. This circumstance is the underpinning factor for the conception of a shared sense of obligation to shape the community's future (Meek, Ogilvie, Lambert & Ryan, 2019). To explore the implications of social capital at the individual level, this study refers to the conjecture of social identity theory which has proven influential in explaining community-mediated phenomena (Hornsey, 2008), while still pertaining the insight of social capital.

Following the consequences of collective social capital, which this study viewed as the relational aspects that constitute social trust and reciprocity, will result in the augmentation of personal commitment toward the community, one of which is self-identification toward a community. Social trust and norm of reciprocity normally involves emotional bonds. (Valenzuela, Park & Kee, 2009). As these emotional connections develop among community members, it often leads to a sense of identification with the community, prompting individuals to dedicate effort to the well-being of the community (Pooley, Cohen & Pike, 2005). Moreover, as member involvement increases, their commitment to the community's activities and initiatives strengthens, thereby solidifying their self-identification as active community members (Jung, 2020).

The core of community membership is the individual's desire to belong to a particular group and to adopt the established values (Heere, Walker, Yoshida, Ko, Jordan & James, 2011). Based on that desire, fostering and forming a personal identity that actualizes affiliations to create a sense of "a consciousness of kind" will

eventually establish social identification (Muniz Jr & O’Guinn, 2001). Strengthening community identity involves accentuating the positive aspects of being part of the community (in-group). This indicates that community membership is not automatic; instead, it relies on individual attitudes toward the community, such as actively participating in social exchange within the community. Ensuring mutual active participation means that there is an existing trusting behavior and an expectation that fellow members will reciprocate (Tanis & Postmes, 2005). Thus, hypotheses can be stated as follows:

H3: Social trust positively affects community identity.

H4: Reciprocity positively affects community identity.

When a well-functioning community disseminates the norm of reciprocity and social trust, the spirit of community is collectively established (Black & Veloutsou, 2017). Combined with the self-reinforcing nature of active interaction, this will result in increased empowerment; in the case of an online brand community, members will perceive ownership of the brand as the purpose of the community (Cova & White, 2010). Expressed equally, members of the community will assume control towards the centrality representation of the community, whether it’s the brand itself or the essence derived from the brand that reflects their values.

Social trust enables positive relationships within the community. When social trust exists among members, they are more willing to communicate, and engage in collective action (Prusak & Cohen, 2001). These interactions often lead to discussions about shared objectives and goals (Tansley & Newell, 2007). Correspondingly, reciprocity enables community members to address challenges and solve problems collectively (Baker & Dutton, 2017). When members work collaboratively to overcome obstacles, they develop a shared sense of purpose and common goals aimed at the improvement of the community (Sturtevant, 2006). Moreover, the norm of reciprocity encourages members to support one another, creating an environment of mutual aid, reinforcing the idea that the community’s success is dependent on collective efforts and common goals (Ostrom & Ahn, 2009). Lastly, trust and reciprocity promote open and honest communication among members, allowing expressions of their ideas and concerns comfortably.

Through these dialogues, common goals can emerge as community members identify shared values and aspirations. Members begin to see themselves as part of a cohesive group working toward a shared purpose, further solidifying their commitment to these goals. In summary, social trust and the norm of reciprocity create an environment of collaboration, mutual support, and shared values within a community (Sánchez-Franco & Roldán, 2015). These factors, in turn, facilitate the emergence and pursuit of common goals that reflect the collective aspirations of community members (Zhao, Lu, Wang, Chau & Zhang, 2012). The potential power of the community to create meaning from its centrality is based on altruistic behavior, with members actively offering their experiences and knowledge as self-organized entities working towards shared common goals (Black & Veloutsou, 2017). The significance of what the community represents allows an increase in members’ cohesion and encourages participation. Therefore, aspirations gathered in the community symbolize common goals (Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998). Consequently, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5: Social trust positively affects common goals.

H6: Reciprocity positively affects common goals.

The very essence of any online community lies in the creation of network relationships through exchanges of knowledge. Efficiently transforming knowledge into useful information can be facilitated by the existing similarity between members (Yuan & Gay, 2006). Regarding online communities, this similarity can be derived from factors like brand affection, lifestyle affinity, or other means that foster cordiality (Canniford, 2011). When individuals share common interests or experiences, it provides a natural basis for connection. People are more likely to form social ties with those who have similar interests because they can relate to each other (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007).

Information exchanged and used as learning resources is considered more valuable when it originates from well-established social trust and the norm of reciprocity, which constitute the relational aspect of social capital (Meek et al., 2019). The combination of these two notions epitomizes that similarity attractions will create a tendency for people with similar traits to interact, and furthermore, the value acquired through these interactions

encourages self-categorization organically (Monge & Contractor, 2003; Yuan & Gay, 2006). Additionally, similar values create a sense of alignment and understanding among individuals in the form of social trust (Grabner-Kräuter & Bitter, 2015). When people hold similar worldview, they are more likely to connect on a deeper level, as they feel their values are validated and shared by others (Naylor, Lamberton & West, 2012). Moreover, similarity in preferences creates social trust that often leads to reduced barriers in communication, facilitates smoother social exchanges, resulting in establishment of social ties (Tavana, Santos-Arteaga & Di Caprio, 2017).

The rationale of similarity breeding connections, supports the premise that self-categorization will lead to a social comparison process that involves in-group and out-group distinctions (Stets & Burke, 2000). Interacting with individuals who are similar, can provide a sense of social validation, a basis for reciprocal interaction, by creating a sense of acceptance and approval, which enhance social ties (Fehr, Fischbacher & Gächter, 2002). The in-group social interaction process will increase the opportunity for social bonding, eventually creating social conformity, and discourage opportunistic behavior to maintain collaborative behavior. Therefore, this study put forth the following hypotheses:

H7: Social trust positively affects social ties.

H8: Reciprocity positively affects social ties.

Based on the projected findings from previous related studies, Figure 1 illustrates the research framework and the proposed order of hypotheses in this study.

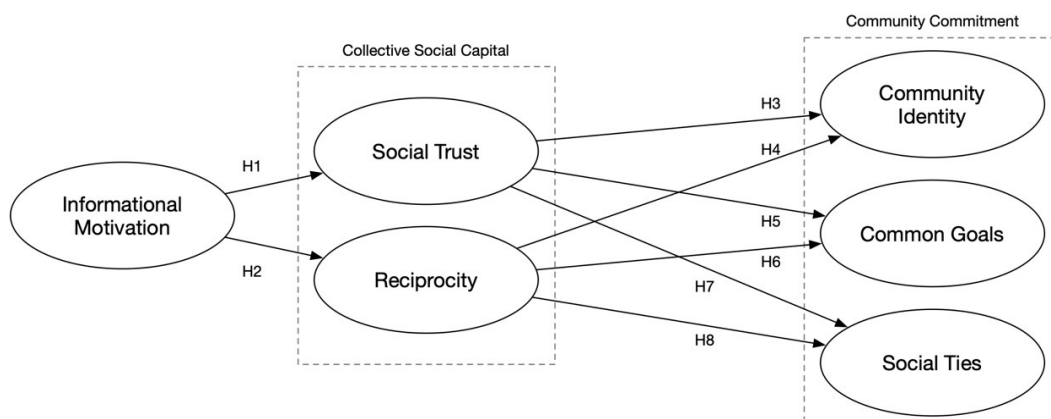


Figure 1. Research Framework

4. Methodology

4.1. Data Collection and Sample

This study focuses on consumer-initiated communities that are based on Instagram, a social media platform that primarily relies on visual presentation for content generation. The ramifications of this type of environment are the highly affective traits that potentially play a critical role in transforming passive participants into more active contributors in social capital accumulation. Considering Instagram's widespread use as a social media application (Leaver et al., 2020), it is recognized as an important tool for today's relationship sustenance between companies, consumers, and consumer groups (Rejeb, Rejeb, Abdollahi & Treiblmaier, 2022). Thus, the context for this study can be considered suitable and relevant.

Regarding data collection, automotive brand communities were selected based on their stronger engagement tendency. This higher engagement is often a result of the unique combination of passion, lifestyle, identity, technical aspects, and the social nature of the automotive community (Essamri, McKechnie & Winklhofer, 2019; Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001; Pedeliento et al., 2020). Furthermore, for most people, cars are a significant financial investment (Le Fur, 2023). This often leads to a desire for advice seeking and experience sharing, which contributes to active community participation (Raji, Mohd-Rashid & Mohd-Ishak, 2019). Lastly, it is worth noting that cars often possess a strong visual appeal (Chang, Lai & Chang, 2007; Heitmann, Landwehr, Schreiner

& van Heerde, 2020), which facilitates the sharing of photos, videos, and related content in the image centric platform.

Given the specified criteria for the targeted population, we employed a non-probability sampling technique, combining convenience and snowball sampling methods for data collection. We distributed the online survey link using the direct message feature available on Instagram. Furthermore, to enhance the data collection rate, we encouraged survey participants to share the survey link with their peers or community members. To accommodate the quantitative nature of our study and the specific characteristics of an online brand community, which are not limited by geography, and given our target population, we find that an estimated sample size of 250 to 350 respondents is both suitable for representing a larger consumer group and statistically significant for conducting our analysis.

The cloud-based, self-administered questionnaire collected responses from 483 community members across five different communities. This data pool, as seen in Table 1, comprises 458 males and 25 females. This slanted distribution can be considered normal in this type of community (Pedeliento et al., 2020). Concerning age, most of the respondents fall within the 30-40 years age range, constituting 44.7% of the samples. Educational categories are predominantly classified as undergraduate level, accounting for 250 respondents. As for the incentive for joining the community, much of the sample (49%) cited informational reasons. Lastly, the length of membership duration in the community is largely composed of members with above 2 years of membership, accounting for 44.1% of the sample.

Demographics		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	458	94.8
	Female	25	5.1
Age	>18-25	67	13.8
	>25-30	124	25.6
	>30-40	216	44.7
	>40-50	71	14.7
	>50	5	1
Education Level	Secondary	191	39.6
	Undergraduate	250	51.8
	Postgraduate	41	8.5
Incentive	Information	237	49
	Social interaction	179	37
	Entertainment	39	8
	Self-expression	25	5.1
	Remuneration	3	0.6
Membership Duration	> 6 months	45	9.3
	> 6 – 12 months	99	20.5
	> 1 – 2 years	126	26
	> 2 years	213	44.1

Table 1. Sample Demographic Characteristics

4.2. Measures

The measurement items in this study are adopted from previous research. With each variable was assessed through a five-point Likert scale (1 = “strongly disagree” and 5 = “strongly agree”). Regarding social media use motivation, informational motive was measured via six items derived from (Asghar, 2015). For collective social capital, by utilizing exclusively the relational dimension, social trust was measured using three items derived from (Chiu et al., 2006). Conversely, reciprocity was measured using three adaptation of items developed by (Tang, Tang, Weng, Cao & Lu, 2012) and (Mathwick et al., 2008). The final part of the model is the consequences of social capital, that is community commitment. The first part is community identity, measured via five items by

(Matzler, Pichler, Füller & Mooradian, 2011) and (Zhao et al., 2012), followed by common goals, measured using five items based on the studies by (Chiu et al., 2006) and (Leana & Pil, 2006). Lastly is social ties variable, measured using five items derived from instrument by (Chiu et al., 2006) and (Liu, 2013).

5. Results

5.1. Measurement Model

Partial Least Squares (PLS) is recommended for structural equation modelling in multivariate analysis, as suggested by (Hair Jr, Sarstedt, Ringle & Gudergan, 2017). Due to its predictive orientation approach, and its flexibility in handling multifaceted constructs with numerous observed indicators and complex relationships, this method is considered well-suited for the current study. Moreover, in which the conceptual model heavily relies on social capital constructs, with the conceptual formation being conjectured based on social identity theory utilizing reflective constructs formation to represent the unobservable variables.

Using smartPLS 4, the criteria of convergent validity, reliability, and discriminant validity were applied to the measurement model (Matthews, Hair & Matthews, 2018).

Table 2 presents the characteristics of the measurement model, incorporating Std. loadings, Cronbach's Alpha (CA), Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). As the conceptualized constructs within the framework of this research are reflective in nature, the assessment of the measurement model involves evaluating indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Hair, Hult, Ringle, Sarstedt, Danks & Ray, 2021). The initial phase in assessing the reflective measurement model involves determining the proportion of variance in each indicator accounted for by its respective construct. To ensure the reliability of indicators, it is advisable to confirm that the standardized loadings (Std. loading) for each indicator are greater than 0.5, indicating acceptable indicator reliability (Hair et al., 2021). As the Table 2 presented, in the case of this study, all indicators are registering values above 0.5, thus, the indicator reliability is well established.

The second step in the reflective model measurement is internal consistency reliability. This step essentially ensures that every indicator grouped within the same construct is consistently related to each other. To assess the strength of the internal consistency reliability of the model, values such as Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR) are typically used (Peterson & Kim, 2013). Referring to Table 2, the values of CA and CR for this study are well above the 0.7 threshold (Hair Jr et al., 2017). These results certify that internal consistency reliability is achieved.

The next phase is the assessment of convergent validity. This examination aims to confirm that different items (indicators) that are supposed to be related actually come together (converge) to explain a construct that cannot be directly measured (Voorhees, Brady, Calantone & Ramirez, 2016). The metric operated for estimating a construct's convergent validity is the average variance extracted (AVE) (Voorhees et al., 2016). The estimation results, demonstrates that the values regarding AVE for each constructs, as Table 2 displayed, counts for above the minimum threshold of 0.5 (Hair Jr et al., 2017). Correspondingly, this result confirms that the construct explains more than 50 percent of the indicators' variance that constitutes the construct.

The fourth step is to assess discriminant validity. The purpose of this assessment is to check if different constructs, which are meant to represent different concepts, are statistically distinct from each other. This ensures that each measurement is unique and does not overlap with the others (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2015). Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) analysis is an approach currently gaining popularity for assessing discriminant validity. This method is recognized for its superiority in sensitivity, outperforming the Fornell and Larcker criteria (Henseler et al., 2015). Therefore, it can be considered a more efficient method for analyzing constructs, especially when they have a tendency to be congeneric, despite being conceptually unique (Roemer, Schuberth & Henseler, 2021). Table 3 indicates that the HTMT ratio of the correlation scores among the constructs is below the .85 threshold, indicating that discriminant validity has been achieved (Hair Jr et al., 2017).

In addition, a multicollinearity check was performed to ensure the absence of symptoms of common method bias, given the self-administered response for data collection were applied in this study. The estimation of variance inflation factors (VIFs) reveals that VIF values ranged from 2.08 to 3.14, which were lower than the

recommended cutoff of 10 (Becker, Ringle, Sarstedt & Völckner, 2015). Consequently, no multicollinearity is present in this study (Schroeder, Lander & Levine-Silverman, 1990).

Constructs and items	Std. loading	Mean	CA	CR	AVE
Informational Motivation			0.89	0.91	0.64
This community is the place to learn about things related to my interest	0,699	4,375			
I feel that to know more about a brand, I must follow its community	0,808	4,238			
I think reading the community feeds is informative	0,817	4,377			
I can interact with people when sharing news or information in the community	0,849	4,236			
I join the community to keep in touch with people with similar interest	0,814	4,253			
It is effective to exchange ideas with other people on the community	0,827	4,255			
Social Trust			0.88	0.92	0.81
Members of the community will not take advantage of others even if opportunities arise	0,866	4,070			
Members of the community will always keep the promises they make to one another	0,918	3,952			
Members of the community are honest in dealing with one another	0,919	4,089			
Reciprocity			0.86	0.91	0.78
When I receive help from the community, I feel it is only right to give back and help others	0,909	4,072			
Members should return favours when the community is in need	0,905	4,222			
My behaviour in the community will lead to cooperation from other members in the future	0,847	3,839			
Community Identity			0.91	0.93	0.74
I feel a strong connection to this community	0,850	4,271			
I have a strong positive feeling toward the community	0,886	4,110			
I am proud to be a member of the community	0,868	4,056			
I feel like I have a lot in common with other members of this community	0,870	4,224			
I feel like I fit in with this online brand community	0,836	4,253			
Common Goals			0.90	0.92	0.71
Members of the community share a goal of helping others	0,857	4,331			
Members of the community share the same goal of learning from each other	0,837	4,350			
Members of the community share the same idea that helping each other is pleasant	0,873	4,358			
There is a commonality of purpose among members at this online brand community	0,798	4,157			
Everyone is in total agreement with the community's vision	0,860	4,155			
Social Ties			0.90	0.93	0.73
I maintain close social relationships with some members of this community	0,843	4,112			
I spend a lot of time interacting with some members of this community	0,836	3,789			
I know some members of this community on a personal level	0,888	3,944			
I have frequent communication with some members in the online brand community	0,894	3,954			
The members in the online brand community has opened the opportunity for me to know other members	0,817	4,170			

Table 2. Measurement model characteristics

	Common Goals	Community Identity	Information	Reciprocity	Social Trust
Common Goals					
Community Identity	0.809				
Information	0.840	0.710			
Reciprocity	0.711	0.696	0.663		
Social Ties	0.687	0.818	0.631	0.708	
Social Trust	0.816	0.737	0.685	0.723	0.689

*HTMT criteria < .85

Table 3. HTMT⁸⁵ Analysis

5.2. Structural Model

Since the evaluation of the measurement of constructs are valid and reliable, the next step addresses the assessment of the structural model results. To emphasize the minimum sample required to test the hypotheses of the study, a priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power 3.1 (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner & Lang, 2009). The findings revealed that a sample size of $N = 20$ for multiple regression is required to achieve 80% power in detecting a large effect size (f^2) of 0.35 at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. Consequently, the acquired sample size of $N = 483$ is well beyond what is needed to test the study hypotheses. Investigating the hypothesized relationships, the bootstrapping procedure was applied using the SmartPLS 4 application, analyzing 5000 resamples. The findings, as presented in Table 4, reveal that all the formulated directional hypotheses are significant. This is based on the one-tailed testing method, which stipulates that a hypothesis can be accepted when t-values are greater than 1.645 with p-values smaller than 0.05. Additionally, the decision is also based on the a priori assumption that the relationships among the variables in the model can only be positive. The informational motive significantly and positively correlates with both aspects of social capital, namely social trust ($\beta = 0.61, p < 0.05$) and reciprocity ($\beta = 0.58, p < 0.05$). Concerning the effects of social capital on community commitment, both social trust ($\beta = 0.45, p < 0.05$) and reciprocity ($\beta = 0.32, p < 0.05$) show significant and positive correlations with community identity. The aspect of common goals within community commitment is significantly and positively correlated with social trust ($\beta = 0.55, p < 0.05$) and reciprocity ($\beta = 0.28, p < 0.05$). Lastly, social trust ($\beta = 0.39, p < 0.05$) and reciprocity ($\beta = 0.37, p < 0.05$) significantly and positively correlate with social ties.

Hypothesis	Std. Coefficients beta	t-value	P-value	95% CI for P-value	f ² value	Support
Informational → Social trust	0,61	16,831	0.00	(0.698, 0.884)	0.61	Yes***
Informational → Reciprocity	0,58	14,730	0.00	(0.648, 0.835)	0.56	Yes***
Social trust → Community Identity	0,45	9,971	0.00	(0.516, 0.632)	0.25	Yes***
Reciprocity → Community Identity	0,32	6,617	0.00	(0.482, 0.606)	0.13	Yes***
Social trust → Common Goals	0,55	13,165	0.00	(0.540, 0.639)	0.44	Yes***
Reciprocity → Common Goals	0,28	5,859	0.00	(0.458, 0.573)	0.11	Yes***
Social trust → Social ties	0,39	7,204	0.00	(0.516, 0.649)	0.15	Yes***
Reciprocity → Social ties	0,37	8,358	0.00	(0.540, 0.674)	0.17	Yes***
	R²					
Social trust	0,382					
Reciprocity	0,345					
Community identity	0,509					
Common goals	0,587					
Social ties	0,477					

Table 4. Hypotheses Testing

Respecting the coefficient of determination (R^2), shows the predictive power and relevance of the model (Hair Jr et al., 2017). Based on the quality criteria output, informational motivation explained 38 percent of the variance

of social trust, and 34 percent of the variance for reciprocity. Moreover, the combination of social trust and reciprocity explained 50 percent of variance regarding community identity, 58 percent of explanation power for common goals, and 47 percent predictive strength towards social ties. Aligned with statistical power analysis and complementing the predictive power derived from R^2 , the f^2 evaluation output also demonstrates a reasonable effect size concerning the explanatory power of the model. In Table 4, only reciprocity to community identity and reciprocity to common goals scored below 0.15, which can be considered small (Cohen, 2013). For other correlations, f^2 scores ranged from 0.15 to 0.61, thereby categorizing the overall effect size of the model as medium to large (Cohen, 2013).

6. Discussion

The manifestation of the affective appeal of social media content towards engagement has paved the way for transforming low-effort participation into a higher frequency and intensity of social interaction within an online community. By utilizing social capital theory in conjunction with the perspective of social identity theory, this study investigates how low engagement driven by informational motives in a specific environment can build collective social capital and eventually increase personal commitment toward the community. The study revealed the following discussions.

First, the analysis of the positive effect of the informational motive toward collective social capital, represented through the relational dimensions of social trust and reciprocity, confirms that although the low-effort nature of information-searching behavior on social media is apparent, it nonetheless requires both passive and active engagement to fulfill the information needs (Asgar, 2015). This condition highlights the significant role of visual presentation on social media platforms, particularly Instagram, in enhancing engagement and, consequently, the relational aspect of social capital. Visual presentations can vividly convey meaning, especially emotional and experiential nuances that are not easily expressed through text alone (Jeong, 2008). The components of imagery in information exchange can impact cognitive aspects such as preferences, attitudes, and attention (Li & Xie, 2019). Simultaneously, they also influence behavioral aspects, including likes, comments, and shares on posts (Li & Xie, 2019).

Importantly, in studies on consumer engagement behavior, visual presentation on social media is considered highly effective due to its initial ability to capture attention (Bruce, Murthi & Rao, 2017). Therefore, when a visual post stands out among the clutter of social media feeds and conveys information that aligns with the viewer's needs, it can influence how a person develops their attitude, subsequently affecting their engagement behavior (Geise & Baden, 2015). Put simply, the breadth and depth of the motive will encompass the activation of cognitive and affective aspects in information processing (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), thus necessitating the correct stimulus to persuade increased engagement. Visually attractive social media content that drives engagement with other users can create a sense of authenticity and closer relations (Argyris, Wang, Kim & Yin, 2020). Based on the existence of similar preferences for a brand or a product, the congruence shared between individuals within a community can foster relationship bonds that cultivate a sense of intimacy, ultimately promoting shared trust and acts of reciprocity among members (Cotter, 2019). Additionally, since social interactions and information exchange within online communities are rooted in voluntary actions (Qiu & Kumar, 2017), this characteristic could foster stronger social connections, facilitating the growth of social trust and the establishment of norms of reciprocity among community members (Lee, 2022). This scenario demonstrates the progression of long-term evolution in collective social capital, where relational aspects are key to value generation for the benefit of community members.

Secondly, the consolidation of social trust and reciprocity as elements of collective social capital significantly impacts community commitment. As indicated by the data analysis, the presence of shared social trust, inseparably influences members to perceive an obligation to reciprocate the assistance provided by other members (Mathwick et al., 2008). This dynamic ultimately fosters more profound interactions and nurtures affiliations (Tan, Hsiao, Tseng & Chan, 2018) thereby fostering a sense of community identity. Further in the analysis, social trust and reciprocity are two elements that symbolize the foundational building blocks for the co-creation process, fostering openness and inclusivity (Pera, Occhiocupo & Clarke, 2016). In practical terms, this communal knowledge sharing and consumption, contribute to the development of a collective

understanding regarding the community's vision and goal orientation. Last part of the analysis is the impact of social trust and reciprocity towards social ties. The analysis affirms a strong correlation between members' behavioral outcomes and their behavior within social networks.

Social groups formed on social media applications consist of networks characterized by non-personal and weak tie relationships (Meek et al., 2019), given the community's structure that encourages interactions, members will consequently recognize commonalities among themselves based on shared interests. This circumstance illustrates the bonding effect of social capital in an online community. When personal satisfaction is derived from the community, individuals are more likely to fully integrate themselves into the community. This, in turn, stimulates them to maintain and strengthen their relationships within the community (Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001). Therefore, relational aspect of social capital will facilitate efficient information exchange through trust and reciprocity, ultimately fostering social bonding as a result of the values assimilated within the network.

6.1. Theoretical Implication

This study highlights that even when starting with the lowest degree of readiness in terms of engagement behavior, specifically informational motives, individuals with the breadth and depth of mental readiness to acquire needed information, eventually with the right stimulus in the form of affective-based presentations (Bruce et al., 2017), will generate a higher degree of engagement in the long run and an increased likelihood of sustained active participation (Asghar, 2015). Furthermore, by applying social capital theory, the conceptual framework contributes to the literature by outlining the concept of low-effort motivation in social media usage, emphasizing how the effectiveness of collective social capital can have a positive impact on community engagement.

Correspondingly, this study also contributes to the online consumer behavior literature by emphasizing the significance of the visual presentation mode as a research context. As highlighted by a few previous studies (Jin & Ryu, 2020; Kim, Hong & Lee, 2021; Leaver et al., 2020), the communication characteristics of Instagram and its implications for brand communities are underappreciated. For this reason, this study demonstrates that a marginally in-depth, visual-centric form of communication does not hinder the ability to sustain a thriving community.

The findings also expand upon the current discourse concerning the role of social capital and its impact within an online community setting, particularly in relation to commitment. Some pitfalls that have been highlighted as obstacles to community commitment include a restricted depth of interactions, which can limit members' inspiration (Cao et al., 2022). Additionally, the perception of significant benefits has been noted as influencing commitment (Petter, Barber & Barber, 2020). Furthermore, the diverse values, preferences, and viewpoints among community members have been recognized as contributing to this challenge (Ozuem, Willis, Howell, Helal, Ranfagni & Lancaster, 2021). Underscoring the crucial role of social trust and reciprocity in driving member participation and investment in an online community (Meek et al., 2019; Wong & Lee, 2022), emphasizes the significance of the relational aspect of social capital which incite and nurture emotional bonds among members, overcoming the obstacles toward community commitment.

6.2. Practical Implications

The findings offer several practical implications for community administrators. While informational motives are significant for social media users (Asghar, 2015), they are not the sole or primary determinant of engagement and impact. Social media users typically have short attention spans (Li & Xie, 2019). Users exhibit a tendency to rapidly scan social media content, instantly forming judgments regarding its worthiness for engagement. Consequently, the pivotal initial step is capturing their attention, irrespective of the informational depth that a post may potentially deliver.

First, administrators must encourage visually striking posts with high-quality images or graphics, capturing attention and inciting engagement. With the tendency of information overload subjected to social media users, every content on social media generally competes for attention. Thus, the affective appeal must come first instead of the cognitive feature. (Cotter, 2019; Li & Xie, 2019). Secondly, administrators must promote engagement behavior that elucidates trust. This shared trust among members is fostered in tandem with the

norm of reciprocity. Honest and beneficial discussion or valuable information exchange can be moderated and supervised collectively within the community. This genuine approach will establish an environment conducive to members maintaining the belief that open and transparent discussions will ultimately result in meaningful social exchanges. Consequently, this will lead to a commitment towards membership that becomes evident through enduring relationships within the community.

Third, the importance of recognizing the contextual setting of this study, namely Instagram, should be highlighted. In contrast to other social media platforms, where interactions predominantly depend on exhaustive cognitive text-based exchanges (Waterloo et al., 2018), this situation can erect barriers for participation in discussions at large (Cao et al., 2022), impeding contributions to the community. Conversely, on Instagram, the visual modality of content can be harnessed to optimize engagement. By leveraging aesthetic appeal, a deliberate blend of visual presentation with minor textual information is likely to generate more immersive experiences (Jin et al., 2023). Through this approach, information can be streamlined for enhanced comprehension, rendering it more relatable and facilitating its dissemination, thus increasing the likelihood of improved engagement.

6.3. Limitations and Future Research

The study was centered around a distinct type of brand community that pertained to a singular product category. That is, consumer-initiated communities oriented towards automotive products, particularly automobiles. Given that automobiles encapsulate both hedonic and utilitarian values, their inclusion within the community context could potentially shape the process of member integration into the community. Additionally, these factors might also play a role in influencing how community members engage both cognitively and emotionally in their interactions with one another. To overcome this limitation, future research should extend across various product category that would enable a more elaborate investigation regarding the fundamental effectiveness of social capital in the online community context.

Further concerning the automotive community, this study takes into consideration that 95 percent of the sample comprises males, which accurately mirrors the composition of this particular community. Future studies could potentially enhance the generalizability of the analysis by employing a more balanced distribution of genders within the collected sample. This approach aims to harness a broader spectrum of responses and insights, as gender significantly influences reactions to both rational and emotional appeals (Keshari & Jain, 2016).

Lastly, this study utilizes a cross-sectional design to examine user engagement within a social media-based online brand community. Cross-sectional studies are generally appropriate for generating hypotheses or exploring associations rather than establishing causality. Therefore, to verify causality, future studies can employ experimental designs or longitudinal research to observe changes over time.

7. Conclusion

This study addresses the necessity of examining the mechanisms that influence the engagement of passive members in online brand communities (Fernandes & Castro, 2020), an issue that has been a significant obstacle to community growth (Kumar & Nayak, 2019). Prior studies that emphasized the issue of low-effort engagement and passive participation have predominantly concentrated on the personal aspect or individual-level factors of the user (Fernandes & Castro, 2020; Huang, Zhang & Zhu, 2022). The significance of this matter is evident in the popularity of theories utilized to understand the phenomena. Two particularly prominent theories are the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Dolan, Conduit, Fahy & Goodman, 2016; Kamboj, 2020) and the Stimulus-Organism-Response Theory (Kamboj, Sarmah, Gupta & Dwivedi, 2018; Ul-Islam & Rahman, 2017).

Beginning with the premise that visual presentation is effective in capturing attention and establishing perceived authenticity, this study aims to examine whether the relational aspects of social capital, representing collectively shared values, can enhance and intensify the engagement behavior of community members, thus adopting a different approach concerning the subject. Drawing from the conceptualization of brand community that emphasized on “we-ness” (Muniz Jr & O’Guinn, 2001), this study demonstrates that collective action shapes the behavior of community members. Utilizing the relational aspect of social capital, collectively accrued social resources such as social trust and reciprocity have been proven to be a powerful force in promoting active and social interaction. Fundamentally, relational social capital represents a cohesive unit within a community,

encouraging social conformity that stimulates collective action (Fonseca, Lukosch & Brazier, 2019). This self-reinforcing mechanism (Fehr et al., 2002) highlights the role of collective social capital, instigated through social trust and reciprocity, in nurturing the integration of individuals into the community. This personal integration plays a formative role in fostering higher commitment among community members (Chiu, Huang, Cheng & Sun, 2015). It cultivates shared core commonalities, elevating individuals' emotional connection to the group (Leake, 2022). Consequently, this heightened connection results in enhanced collaboration and cooperation among members, signifying a thriving community.

Considering that this study specifically focuses on a particular community with significant emotional and practical appeal related to its focal point (automotive products), it naturally becomes one of its limitations. Correspondingly, to gain a deeper understanding of how collective action influences members' participation through visual presentation communications, future studies are advised to undertake a comprehensive examination of engagement dynamics by considering various types of online brand communities (OBC) in conjunction with diverse products. This scrutiny should encompass an array of OBC structures and dynamics, ranging from those centered around highly technical products to those associated with highly emotional goods.

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